

# Lutheran Theological Review

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# Lutheran Theological Review

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## Standard Abbreviations

AE	<i>Luther's Works</i> , American edition, 55 vols (St. Louis: Concordia, and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958- ).
	Bauer, Walter, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
BAG	1 <sup>st</sup> ed., edited by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 1957.
BAGD	2 <sup>nd</sup> ed., edited by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, 1979.
BDAG	3 <sup>rd</sup> ed., edited by Frederick W. Danker, 2000.
BELK	<i>Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche</i> , 12 editions [cite edition used] (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1930- ).
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1984).
LSB	<i>Lutheran Service Book</i> (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006).
LW	<i>Lutheran Worship</i> (St. Louis: Concordia, 1982).
NA <sup>27</sup>	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , ed. Kurt and Barbara Aland, et al. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993).
TDNT	Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964- ).
TLH	<i>The Lutheran Hymnal</i> (St. Louis: Concordia, 1941).
W <sup>2</sup>	Walch, Johann Georg, ed. <i>D. Martin Luthers sämtlichen Schriften</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> ["St. Louis"] ed., 23 vols (St. Louis: Concordia, 1880-1910).
WA	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> , Weimarer Ausgabe ["Weimar ed."] (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1883- ).
	WA DB Weimarer Ausgabe Deutsche Bibel [German Bible]
	WA Br Weimarer Ausgabe Briefe [Letters]
	WA Tr Weimarer Ausgabe Tischreden [Table talk]
	Abbreviations for the Lutheran confessional writings:
AC	Augsburg Confession
Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
SA	Smalcald Articles
Tr	Tractate/Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope
SC	Small Catechism
LC	Large Catechism
FC Ep	Formula of Concord, Epitome
FC SD	Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration

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## Editorial Foreword

“WHAT’S SO SPECIAL ABOUT PAUL GERHARDT?” asks Joseph Herl. Perhaps part of the answer lies not in Gerhardt but in the church in which he served as pastor, poet, and confessor. We Lutherans value him so highly because he is (in our estimation) second only to Luther himself as poet laureate of our confession. But before we value him, we value hymnody. Gerhardt’s hymns epitomize what we seek in congregational song: not pure adoration of either God or man, but true praise that proclaims the saving works of God to Him and to one another. That is to say, we value great hymnody because it is filled with Gospel. We love Gerhardt because we love the Gospel.

This volume of *LTR* contains the most significant essays from a symposium on the life and work of Paul Gerhardt, sponsored by Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, and held at Christ Lutheran Church, St. Catharines, 7-9 May 2007. The symposium honoured the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gerhardt’s birth. Like the warmly received Hermann Sasse symposium of 1995, it was combined with the LCC East District Pastors’ Conference (now pastors and deacons).

In contrast to the C. S. Lewis Symposium, held in conjunction with Brock University in March 2006, the Gerhardt symposium was a distinctly churchly event, and was held in a church building to allow for regular and lively singing of the hymns themselves in the appropriate context of Matins and Vespers. We were grateful for the contribution of Cantor Richard Resch and the Kantorei of Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, for their offering of a choral Vespers on the first evening. Thanks are due also to Joseph Herl for his virtuosic organ playing, and to a small choir of pastors who showed what the home team can do.

Gerald Krispin, newly-installed president of Concordia University College of Alberta in Edmonton, is widely recognized for his expertise on Paul Gerhardt. In a typically lively display, Krispin presented photos, artwork, and texts that brought Gerhardt to life. He focussed on the historical setting of Gerhardt’s life in that moment of confession when the Elector of Brandenburg tried to force his Lutheran pastors to deny the Real Presence and adopt the Reformed position. Gerhardt suffered greatly for his refusal. In this volume of *LTR* we offer the full text of Krispin’s extensive study of the matter. Though it is somewhat longer than our customary offerings, we present it with the realization that this busy new president may not have the time to bring his long-awaited biography of Gerhardt to print!

In characteristic manner, John Kleinig, the keynote speaker, brought together solid scholarship and “spirituality”. That oft-maligned word takes on new meaning as Kleinig roots it in a Lutheran ethos of liturgically-located Word and Sacrament. Though Gerhardt’s hymns are found to be “pious”, they are certainly not “Pietistic”. Kleinig deftly weaves a path

through Gerhardt's hymns that finds the "Christ for me" without degenerating into "me, me, me".

Joseph Herl, who must be acknowledged as one of the greatest living experts on early Lutheran hymnody (witness his doctoral dissertation recently published by Oxford University Press), enlightened the masses on what precisely made Gerhardt's hymns great. Herl's essay offers a concise survey of how Gerhardt's collected hymns came into print, and what we can learn from surveying the mix.

Peter Erb was a delightful departure from the usual myopia of Lutheran conferences. A former Mennonite turned Roman Catholic, Erb offered an outsider's view. While comparing Gerhardt to Silesius, a contemporary who abandoned the Lutheran Church to become Roman Catholic, Erb surprisingly gives superior marks to Gerhardt's accomplishments. At the same time, Erb shows great theological dexterity in identifying how Silesius' hymns were modified to make them suitable for use in the Lutheran Church.

Finally, Kurt Lantz came off the bench for the home team, demonstrating how well suited good Lutheran hymnody is for preaching. In a short study, he shows how the move from hymn to homily is made, and the sermon is given so the reader can decide how it came off.

Our two small seminaries in Lutheran Church-Canada cannot hope to match the resources of larger institutions that can do symposia every year. But we hope to offer the occasional alternative, and are pleased to hear comments from attendees like "That was the best conference I've ever attended!" We look forward to the Luther 2017 Countdown!

With this volume, the new series of *LTR* enters its 20<sup>th</sup> year. We thought a slight refresh of the design was in order. We hope that the new layout is also more suitable to the electronic format available on our websites. You may download this issue, and all previous issues, at:

[www.brocku.ca/concordiaseminary/ltr.php](http://www.brocku.ca/concordiaseminary/ltr.php)

[www.concordiasem.ab.ca/research/lutheran\\_theological\\_review.php](http://www.concordiasem.ab.ca/research/lutheran_theological_review.php)

TMW

Epiphany 2009

**Paul Gerhardt, 1607-76**



Emil Fröhlich, Paul Gerhardt, oil on canvas, 148x120cm, 1935

## Short Study

# Hymn to Homily: Reflections on Writing a Sermon Based on Paul Gerhardt's "Now Rest beneath Night's Shadow"\*

Kurt A. Lantz

**HYMNS CAN BE USED IN SERMONS** in different ways. The most common is likely quoting a couple of lines to underscore a major theological point. In the recent past it was not uncommon for the preacher to conclude his sermon with one or two stanzas of a hymn. When the hymn itself becomes the topic of the sermon it is a slightly different game.

I heard that on Super Bowl Sunday a pastor preached a sermon naming all of the teams of the National Football League. You could probably do the same with the hymns of Paul Gerhardt, combining the first lines into a specific order, and come up with a much better sermon, but such triviality ought not to be exercised in the preaching task. We are not called to proclaim the NFL franchises, nor the hymns of any poet (Christian or pagan) but the Word of God. So the task of turning hymn to homily begins by retracing Paul Gerhardt's process of turning the Word of God into poetry.

For some of Gerhardt's hymns this is easier than for others. "A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth" (*LSB* 438) immediately calls to mind Isaiah 53:7, "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth"; and the words of John the Baptist "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). But some of Gerhardt's hymns do not immediately cause you to recall any specific Scripture; rather, they seem to launch off from a small starting pad into a whole universe of theology.<sup>1</sup> "All My Heart, Again Rejoices" (*LSB* 360) begins with reference to the angelic proclamation of the Saviour's birth, which we can easily cite from Luke 2; but then off the hymn

\* In the fall of 2006 Rev. Todd Hoeffs of Redeemer Lutheran Church, Edmonton, Alberta, contacted several other LCC pastors, including me, in order to arrange a series of sermons for the 2007 season of Lent. In order to commemorate this 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the birth of Paul Gerhardt in our parishes, Pastor Hoeffs suggested basing our sermons on Gerhardt hymns or the Scripture texts on which they were based. This essay was presented to the Paul Gerhardt Symposium, hosted by Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, Ontario, 8 May 2007.

<sup>1</sup> Here *LSB* does us a tremendous service by citing an exhaustive list of Scripture references beneath the hymns.



soars to speak of the Conqueror over sin, woe, death and hell (redemption); atonement; sanctification; providence; and eternal life.

Indeed, Gerhardt's hymns are, for the most part, not expository in the sense of expounding one passage of Scripture phrase by phrase. No, Gerhardt invites the Divine Word to enter into the human experience in order to heal humanity's frailty, as our Saviour did Himself in His incarnation. The Word became flesh. Within the Christian hymn writer, the Word of God first becomes a part of his flesh and he then expresses it on paper. Is this not also what we strive for as preachers?

I chose to write a homily on a Gerhardt hymn that is a favourite of many, "Now Rest beneath Night's Shadow", thinking it appropriate, too, that it would be used in midweek evening services.<sup>2</sup> Where is the Divine Word that inspired Gerhardt to pen these lines?<sup>3</sup> Gerhardt does not necessarily start with a specific passage of Scripture. Rather, first the Scripture is in his heart, not just as a series of memorized Bible passages, but as the Word indwelling him through his years as a recipient of God's grace. The Word entered his flesh through the preaching he heard from himself and others, through his Baptism and subsequent baptismal life, and through his eating and drinking of the Body and Blood of Christ. Then the Christian poet allows the Word to flow through him and out of him to express the condition of his own life redeemed by Christ, the union of himself with the Divine Word. So, although *Lutheran Service Book* lists a few Scripture passages under the hymn "Now Rest Beneath Night's Shadow", the hymn is perhaps more truthfully referencing the Christian life experiencing all that the Word tells us and works in us.

The *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* (1931) has all 9 stanzas in English translation. They help to follow Gerhardt's direction in thought through the hymn. In stanza 1, as the world settles in for the night, our hearts are stirred to thank our God. In stanza 2 we confess that Jesus Christ is our Light even after the sun has set. In stanza 3 going to sleep at night is compared with the sleep of death. In stanza 4, as we undress for bed, we are reminded that we will be undressed of this body in death, and we will be clothed with immortality at the resurrection. In stanza 5, the rest from the day's toil points to the relief from the curse of sin. Stanza 6 reminds us that death is inevitable. Stanza 7 declares that we must commend ourselves into the hands of God. Stanza 8, perhaps the most beloved, is our prayer for God's protection through the night, along with stanza 9 which proclaims our confidence that God hears and will answer this prayer.

<sup>2</sup> [The resulting sermon is reproduced at the end of this volume of *LTR* – ed.]

<sup>3</sup> Preparation for this homily began before the release of *LSB*, which references Ps. 4:8; 91:4, 11-12; Lk. 1:78-79; Ps. 139:11-14.

In addition to the text of the hymn itself, we have some of the details of Paul Gerhardt's life, the trials and tribulations he experienced himself as well as the struggles and hardships of those to whom he preached. I am indebted to Theodore Brown Hewitt's *Paul Gerhardt as a Hymn Writer and His Influence on English Hymnody*.<sup>4</sup> From this document I gleaned illustrations of night-time fear from Swedish marauders. Of course, the people in my parish do not get night terrors about Swedish marauders. Some of them, however, are terrified by dark visions, and all of them have the darkness of their own sin, which needs the Light of Christ in order to have a quiet night and peace at the last.

So now, the hymn is beginning to take the form of homily. Scripture passages begin to suggest themselves, including Psalm 4:8, "I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety." Gerhardt's hymns and historical accounts from his life-time are applicable to the people in the parish today because the great Lutheran poet has let the Word have its way with him and given expression to his experience of God's grace.

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<sup>4</sup> (Yale University Press, 1918). Hypertext version of this book is available from the Christian Classic Ethereal Library at <[www.ccel.org/ccel/hewitt/gerhardt.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/hewitt/gerhardt.html)>.

## From Paul Gerhardt to Johann Scheffler (Angelus Silesius): Poetry and Polemic in the Baroque Era\*

Peter C. Erb

READERS OF THE CONTEMPORARY ESPIONAGE WRITER, JOHN LE CARRÉ, are most often drawn to his central character, the unassuming George Smiley, who negotiates the twisted halls of MI5 during the day and returns home in the evening to polish his eye-glasses with his tie and relax with the rhythms of German baroque literature. A cursory reading of the Le Carré novels might lead one to suppose that Smiley's evening solitude with poetry was the means by which he escaped the East-West polemics of the day, and that the insanity of his vocation was healed, or at least managed, by his aesthetic avocation, whereas, in fact, Smiley's tragedy is that the world of his night-time reading mirrored his daily world shaped by the paradoxes of cold-war intrigue. As Smiley himself noted, his world and that of the seventeenth century baroque into which he escaped for his evening reverie, reflected the dilemma of a life in which one was required to be "inhuman in defence of our humanity, ... harsh in the defence of compassion ... single-minded in defence of our disparity."<sup>1</sup>

It serves us well to keep Smiley's dilemma before us when we interpret writers such as Paul Gerhardt (1607-76). However much we may separate the violent conflicts of his time, sealing off the polemical from the poetic, the theological and national wars that raged during his life from the beauty of his hymns, so as to suit our present purposes, Gerhardt and his contemporaries could and did not do so, and by their practice call us to reflect more closely on the polemical framework of our own past and present traditions. In the following paper, as a result, I have chosen to comment on Gerhardt's poetry in the context of his theological opponents: on the one side, the radical "mystical spiritualists", Jakob Boehme and his followers, including those Lutheran and Reformed Pietists, his ostensible supporters, who would later use and misuse Gerhardt's hymns for their own purposes, and on the other, the Catholic poets and spiritual writers, who so fiercely opposed the Lutheran tradition, often, like Gerhardt's intra-Lutheran opponents, formulating an apologetic that was at times "inhuman

\* Presented at the Paul Gerhardt Symposium, hosted by Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, Ontario, 8 May 2007.

<sup>1</sup> JOHN LE CARRÉ, *The Honourable Schoolboy* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), 522.

in defence of ... humanity, ... harsh in the defence of compassion ... single-minded in defence of ... disparity.”<sup>2</sup>

Few today would support the ongoing polemic that marked the baroque or the cold-war eras, but since the collapse of the iron-curtain and the resulting rise in global religious tensions, even fewer would suppose that we can bracket deep-rooted political, ideological, and theological contentions with impunity. What we face with the end of “enlightened” Liberalism is not the death of ecumenical hope for a united Christianity, but the recognition that such hope must be pursued in full and clear acceptance of differences which cannot be swept aside as mere *adiaphora*, and that in a manner, unlike that of the Le Carré world, it must be intended to humanize the defence of humanity and irenicize that of compassion, while remaining necessarily single-minded in defence, not of disparity, but of respective diversities. One small way to begin such a programme within a Christian framework is to consider Gerhardt from the perspective of a single opponent—in this case one who combines in his own work the two disparities noted above (the “mystical-spiritualist and the Catholic)—Gerhardt’s contemporary, Johann Scheffler (1634-77), who wrote under the pen name, Angelus Silesius (Silesius, after his homeland). Both parts of my argument, the comparison of the two poets and an analysis of the ways in which Lutherans and the Lutheran Church in Canada in particular have made use Scheffler’s work, are developed toward a better understanding of Gerhardt’s own writing in the broader context of his time and toward a fuller exposition of the Christian hymnic tradition as a whole in contemporary ecumenical dialogue.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For bibliography and overview of the various aspects of these debates see my “Gottfried Arnold” in CARTER LINDBERG, ed., *The Pietist Theologians* (Oxford: Blackwells, 2004), 175-91; the Lindberg volume generally; and my *Pietists, Protestants, and Mysticism: The Use of Late Medieval Spiritual Texts in the Work of Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714)* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> For examples of the “mis-use” of earlier mediaeval, Catholic, and, *mutatis mutandi*, earlier Lutheran writing, see my *Pietists, Protestants, and Mysticism*, passim, “Gottfried Arnold’s Defense of Mystical Theology” in DIETRICH MEYER and UDO STRAETER, eds, *Zur Rezeption mystischer Tradition im Protestantismus des 16. bis 19. Jahrhunderts* (Köln: Rheinland Verlag, 2002), 203-22; the strikingly different context outlined in my “Pietism and Tractarian Oxford: Edward Bouverie Pusey, Evangelicalism, and the Interpretation of German Theology” in WOLFGANG BREUL-KUNKEL and LOTHAR VOGEL, eds, *Rezeption und Reform: Festschrift für Hans Schneider zu seinem 60. Geburtstag* (Darmstadt und Kassel: Verlag der hessischen Kirchengeschichtlichen Vereinigung, 2001), 399-412; in this respect note as well the ongoing practice of “redirecting” earlier writing for later purposes in the reprint of GERARD TERSTEEGEN, *The Quiet Way: A Christian Path to Inner Peace*, trans. Emily Chisholm [reprint of 1950 edition] (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2008), somewhat mitigated by my “Introduction”, vi-xxvii.

## The hymnists in their time

The lives of Paul Gerhardt and Johann Scheffler are strikingly similar. Although Scheffler was born seventeen years later than Gerhard, they died within a year of one another, both were orphaned in their early teens,<sup>4</sup> and both were born Lutherans, Scheffler to an irascible and wealthy Polish nobleman (he seems to have inherited the personality trait along with parental monies) in Breslau, Silesia. In 1628, when Gerhardt entered theology at Wittenberg, Scheffler was but four years old; and in 1643 when Gerhardt was first appointed a candidate in Berlin, Scheffler began to study medicine and law in Strasbourg, moving on to Leiden and then Padua. He was appointed as private physician to firmly orthodox Duke Silvius Nimrod of Oels in his native Silesia in 1649. Silesia at the time was in many areas largely Lutheran, but Counter-Reformation action under the Jesuits was already underway there, and, unlike Gerhardt, Scheffler's religious experience was shaped not so much by the devastation of the Thirty Years War as by the politico-theological battles that followed the complex religious compromises in the Treaty of Westphalia and the physical re-appropriation of Lutheran churches to Roman Catholic control.

Although a Lutheran, Scheffler was not attracted by the central formulae of that tradition. In Silesia he became close friends with Abraham von Franckenberg (1593-1652), the disciple of the Breslau shoemaker and mystic, Jakob Boehme (1575-1624),<sup>5</sup> and the Boehmist circle in Ludwigsdorf nearby Oels, immersing himself as did they and his fellow Silesian poet, Daniel Czepko von Reigersfeld (1605-60), in the spiritual (and medical) significance of alchemical imagery, the search for holiness, the celibate love of the Virgin Sophia, and, above all, the Christian mystical tradition. Like many in this group, Scheffler's "Lutheranism" differed significantly from that of Gerhardt's firm adherence to the "Formula of Concord". When asked by his duke whether he was Catholic, Lutheran, or Calvinist, he is supposed to have replied: "I am the heart of these religions."

Scheffler was not to retain such a position for long. In 1652 (one year after Gerhardt's appointment as Inspector in Mittenwalde), Franckenberg died, leaving the poet his extensive library. Scheffler compiled an anthology of mystical texts, but publication was forbidden by the Lutheran censor. Almost immediately on hearing the decision, Scheffler returned to Breslau,

<sup>4</sup> Gerhardt died on 27 May 1676, Scheffler on 9 July 1677. Gerhardt lost his father at 11, his mother at 14; Scheffler lost his father at 13 and his mother, the daughter of the Court Physician at Breslau, at 15.

<sup>5</sup> On Boehme see, above all, ANDREW WEEKS, *Boehme: An intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth-century Philosopher and Mystic* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1991).

engaged in a more intensive study of the mediaeval mystics and other Catholic works, and, shortly after, in 1653, was received into the Roman Catholic Church. He was befriended by Sebastian von Rostock (1607-71), Vicar-General of the Cathedral at Breslau and a member of the Imperial Commission responsible for furthering the counter-reformation in Silesia, who found Scheffler a position as court physician at Breslau in 1654. Then as now much speculation has been directed to the reasons for Scheffler's conversion. He was certainly offended by the act of the Lutheran censor, and counter-reformation activity in Silesia at the time was at its heights, offering him rapid rise in status (the charge of opportunism was quickly laid), but psychological and political explanations, all too common in our own time, fail to recognize that theology was then and can still be taken seriously, and his action was a reasonable direction for a Boehmist of his type. He was, after all, deeply imbued with the mediaeval mystical tradition and its ongoing development in baroque Catholicism, and his Boehmist orientation provided him with a high anthropology and an essentialist view of human growth in holiness, much more Catholic than Lutheran. Nor should one be surprised that in the highly-charged atmosphere of his day Scheffler immediately published a polemical tract against his former religionists, defending these and other theological themes against his former co-believers,<sup>6</sup> or that the tone of his polemic was as "hot-blooded" or "intemperate" as it was. In the contentious atmosphere of the time, Gerhardt's "firm" and "principled" Lutheran stance against Reformed teachings in the 1660s appeared equally "intemperate" to his opponents.

Scheffler's most important works, the *Geistliche Sinn- und Schlussreime*<sup>7</sup> and the *Heilige Seelen-Lust Oder Geistliche Hirten-Lieder*,<sup>8</sup> were published four

<sup>6</sup> *Johannis Schefflers ... Gründtliche Ursachen und Motiven, Warumb er von dem Lutherthum abgetreten / Und sich zu der Catholischen Kyrchen bekennet hat: ... mit beygefügtten 16 Religions-Fragen* (Ingolstatt: Hänlin, 1653). See also the Latin version, *Causae Fundatae: Denuo Pleniusque Redditae; Propter quas, abiecto Lutheranism, Catholicam Religionem sibi capessendam fuisse, animadvertit* (Straubingae: Gallus, 1654); and *Idea Causarum Fundatarum, Cur, Eiuurato Sectariorum consortio, in Ecclesiae Catholicae gremium necessario coniecerint sese Joannes Schefflerus, aliaque magnae ... Animae ... Adiuncta est Paraenesis R. P. Iodoci Kedd Societatis Jesu ...* (Ingolstadii: Haenlin, 1653). For a Lutheran defence see Christian Chemnitz (1615-66), *Veritas Religionis Lutheranae Defensio. Sive Breve Examen Argumentorum & Fundamentorum, Quibus Johannes Schefflerus, Wratislaviensis, Phil. & Medic. Doctor, antehac Archiater Ducalis Oelsensis, Religionem nostram impugnavit, & quibus se ad Apostasiam commotum fuisse, publico scripto est testatus: Cui sub finem, ipsum scriptum Germanicum est subiunctum* (Ienae: Nisius, 1655).

<sup>7</sup> *Geistreiche Sinn- und Schlussreime Johannis Angeli Silesii* (Wien: Kürner, 1657). For a complete edition of Scheffler's poetic corpus see ANGELUS SILESIVS, *Sämtlich Poetische*, ed. Hans Ludwig Held, 3 vols (München: C. Hanser, 1949-52). Note as well *Angelus Silesius sämtliche poetische Werke und eine Auswahl aus seinen Streitschriften: mit einem Lebensbilde*, ed. Georg Ellinger, 2 vols (Berlin: Propyläen-Verlage, 1923).

years later, in 1657, the year of Gerhardt's appointment as Deacon at St Nicolai in Berlin. The *Geistliche Sinn- und Schlußreime*, best known through its later expanded edition, the *Cherubinischer Wandersmann*,<sup>9</sup> was a collection of five books of short couplets and quatrains, most dependent on earlier mystical writings, the Boehmist tone not fully removed in all cases.<sup>10</sup> Scheffler, hereafter best known under his chosen name, Angelus Silesius, gained an imprimatur for the work from von Rostock, who also wrote a preface to the verses, interpreting what may have been seen as dubious passages in an orthodox Roman Catholic light. The *Heilige Seelen-Lust* was a compilation of his 205 finest hymns, gathered into five books, comprising, as the title indicates of lyrics addressed by the beloved soul to Jesus. It is this work on which his reputation as a hymnist depended.

In May of 1661, the year before Gerhardt's association with the Lutheran-Reformed conversations, Scheffler was ordained a priest; his life thereafter was marked by a generous philanthropy and service to the poor, but much more by highly aggressive Roman Catholic evangelical activities, closing for the most part his creative poetic career and furthering his composition of fierce anti-Lutheran tracts (55 in all under varying pseudonyms<sup>11</sup> and genres—and published together in the last year of his life as *Ecclesiologia oder Kirchen-Beschreibung*<sup>12</sup>) and his promotion of deliberately confrontational, elaborate religious processions in Lutheran areas. In 1664 von Rostock was consecrated Bishop at Breslau and immediately raised Scheffler to the office of Court Marshal. With the death of his bishop in 1671, Scheffler turned for support to the Abbot of the Cistercian monastery

<sup>8</sup> *Heilige Seelen-Lust/ Oder Geistliche Hirten-Lieder / Der in ihren Jesum verliebten Psyche / Gesungen Von Johann Angelo Silesio, Und von Herren Georgio Josepho mit auszubundig schönen Melodeyen geziert ... zu Lob und Ehren Gottes an Tag gegeben* (Breszlaw: Baumannische Druckerey, 1657). Note as well the edition (used throughout this study) with a biography of the author, *Heilige Seelenlust, oder, Geistliche Hirtenlieder der in ihren Jesum verliebten Psyche 1657, 1668*, ed. Georg Ellinger (Halle a. S.: Max Niemeyer, 1901).

<sup>9</sup> *Cherubinischer Wandersmann oder Geist-Reiche Sinn- und Schlußreime zur Göttlichen beschauligkeit anleitende Ausgabe: Von dem Urheber aufs neue übersehn / und mit dem Sechsten Buche vermehrt / den Liebhabern der geheimen Theologie und beschaulichen Lebens zur Geistlichen Ergötzlichkeit zum andernmahl herauß gegeben* (Glatz : Schubarth, 1675).

<sup>10</sup> For a brief source analysis see the introduction and notes to the edition of the *Cherubinischer Wandersmann* by WILL-ERICH PEUCKERT (Leipzig: Dieterich, o.d.).

<sup>11</sup> Christian Bonamicus, Christianus Conscientiosus, Candidus Philaethes, among others.

<sup>12</sup> *D. Johannis Schefflers Der H. Römischen Kirchen Pristers Ecclesiologia Oder Kirche-Beschreibung: Bestehende In Neun und dreyssig unterschiedenen außerlesenen Tractätlein von der Catholischen Kirche und dero wahren Glauben / wie auch von den Uncatholischen Gelachen und dero falschem Wahn ...* (Grüssau: Rosa und Neysz, Glatz: Schubart, 1677). Note as well his earlier works, *Sinnliche Beschreibung Der Vier Letzten Dinge: Zu heilsamem Schröken und Auffmunterung aller Menschen inn Druck gegeben ...* (Schweidnitz: Jonisch, 1675).

at Grüssau. There he died, increasingly isolated by foes and friends, who, even in the latter case, had reservations with his proselytizing tactics.

## Parallel themes, differing perspectives

The differences observed in the biographies of these two contemporaries become even more evident in their writing, choosing as they often did (along with other baroque writers of their time) similar themes. For present purposes, we can note their distinctive and differing perspectives best by comparing their treatment of the Nativity. We begin with Gerhardt's "Kommt, und laszt uns Christum ehren"<sup>13</sup> which I quote in full with the translation from *The Lutheran Hymnal* for discussion:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Come, your hearts and voices raising,<br>Christ the Lord with gladness praising;<br>Loudly sing His love amazing,<br>Worthy folk of Christendom. | 5. Jacob's Star in all its splendour<br>Beams with comfort sweet and tender,<br>Forcing Satan to surrender,<br>Breaking all the powers of hell.                |
| 2. Sin and death may well be groaning,<br>Satan now may well be moaning;<br>We, our full salvation owning,<br>Cast our every care away.             | 6. From the bondage that oppressed us,<br>From sin's fetters that possessed us,<br>From the grief that sore distressed us,<br>We, the captives, now are free.  |
| 3. See how God, for us providing,<br>Gave His Son and life abiding;<br>He our weary steps is guiding<br>From earth's woe to heavenly joy.           | 7. Oh, the joy beyond expressing<br>When by faith we grasp this blessing<br>And to Thee we come confessing,<br>That our freedom Thou hast wrought!             |
| 4. Christ, from heaven to us descending<br>And in love our race befriending,<br>In our need His help extending,<br>Saved us from the wily Foe.      | 8. Gracious Child, we pray Thee, hear us,<br>From Thy lowly manger cheer us,<br>Gently lead us and be near us<br>Till we join the angelic choir. <sup>14</sup> |

<sup>13</sup> German text from PHILIPP WACKERNAGEL, ed. *Paulus Gerhardts geistliche Lieder getreu nach der bei seinen Lebzeiten erschienenen Ausgabe wiederaufgedruckt*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Stuttgart: S. G. Liesching, 1853), 6. The English is a composite translation from *TLH* 90.

<sup>14</sup> 1. Kommt und laßt uns Christum ehren, / Herz und Sinnen zu ihm kehren! / Singet fröhlich, laßt euch hören, / Wertes Volk der Christenheit!  
2. Sünd' und Hölle mag sich grämen, / Tod und Teufel mag sich schämen. / Wir, die unser Heil annehmen, / Werfen allen Kummer hin.  
3. Sehet, was hat Gott gegeben! / Seinen Sohn zum ew'gen Leben! / Dieser kann und will uns heben / Aus dem Leid in's Himmels Freud'.  
4. Seine Seel' ist uns gewogen, / Lieb' und Gunst hat ihn gezogen, / Uns, die Satanas betrogen, / Zu besuchen aus der Höh'.



What needs first to be noted in this hymn is the nature of the apostrophe (the address). The poet calls on us (*uns* [cf. the *pro nobis* of the Creed]), his fellow worshippers, to join together with him and sing the praises of the Christ. The address to this communal “we” is maintained through the first six stanzas, as is the objective tone of the piece as a whole. What the singers are directed to is the child Jesus in the manger—the “historical” Jesus; they are led back to the event of the Nativity and the salvific act of God in the real time of history. Here there is little mark of what Charles Taylor has designated as the birth of the modern punctular (and egocentric) self.<sup>15</sup> Gerhardt directs all attention outward from the “interior”. The opening stanza is doxological—it calls worshippers to “raise” their hearts, the *sursum corda* here linking hearts to the “loud” physicality of voice, negating any psychological turn to a theology of human glory and focussing the “gladness” communally focussed on its end (“His love amazing”) rather than on an individualistic and personally experienced emotion. The emotions are those of sin, death, and Satan, now groaning and moaning before God’s gracious provision. On the part of the believer, “cares” are cast aside; indeed, all emotional language related to the believer in the first seven stanzas (the German original here makes this more obvious than the translation) are objective states (bondage and captivity oppresses, stanza 6) and are structured against a reified eschatological victory (joy, height, – cf. the closing words of stanzas 3-4). Indeed, as stanza 5 indicates, the *sehnlliche Verlangen* of human desire is stilled by the rise of Jacob’s star and the “breaking [of] all the powers of hell.”

Only in the seventh stanza is the perspective shifted, the hymnist no longer addressing the worshippers and their redeemed state; but now, in the opening line and in full continuity with his earlier focus on the manger, Gerhardt moves to consider not the place of the Nativity, but its time, demarking that “hour” (*Stunde*) both as the moment of the Incarnation and, by allusion, of the Crucifixion, as well as the objective historical moment “when we ... believed” from the very ground of our being (*Hertzensgrunde*). This opening change of perspective allows the poet a further move in the

5. Jakobs Stern ist aufgegangen, / Stillt das sehnlliche Verlangen, / Bricht den Kopf der alten Schlange / Und zerstört der Hölle Reich.

6. Unser Kerker, da wir saßen / Und mit Sorgen ohne Maßen / Uns das Herze selbst abfraßen, / Ist entzwei, und wir sind frei.

7. O du hochgesegn'te Stunde, / Da wir das von Hertzensgrunde / Glauben und mit unserm Munde / Danken dir, o Jesulein!

8. Schönstes Kindlein in dem Stalle, / Sei uns freundlich, bring uns alle / Dahin, wo mit süßem Schalle / Dich der Engel Heer erhöht!

<sup>15</sup> Above all in his *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

final line of the stanza to maintain the worshippers' continuing act of thanks and subtly to shift the apostrophe to the child Jesus. It continues this direction in the final stanza, although here again, avoiding any personal focus on an inner emotion that might be confused with a prideful assurance. The prayer is that the child lead the worshippers to the final end of the doxological initiation and setting of the hymn, their full praise of the divine in glory.<sup>16</sup>

What Scheffler might have thought of these Gerhardt hymns we cannot say. Despite his fierce polemicism, it is unlikely he would have been greatly troubled (supposing he did not know they were by a Lutheran!); in fact, considering the way in which he treats other texts, it is far more likely that he would simply have read them "into" his own world. But it is highly doubtful that he would have chosen to use them. Scheffler's "approach" is strikingly different from Gerhardt's, and, one might argue, that it is his poetic "approach" that determined his eventual religious and theological choice. A brief review, for example, of Scheffler's Nativity lyric, "Willkommen Edles Knäbelein",<sup>17</sup> distinguishes him immediately from Gerhardt.

1. Willkommen Edles Knäbelein,  
Willkommen liebes Kind:  
Willkommen süßes Jesulein  
Durch dich mein Leid verschwindt:  
Du bist mein Heil und Seligkeit,  
Du bringst mir tausend Freuden:  
Du machst dasz ich in Ewigkeit  
Von Gott bleib ungescheiden

3. Ich bin ganz unauszsprechlich froh,  
Dasz du gekommen bist;  
Dasz du ob zwar auff Heu und Stoh,  
Wirst Mensch und Kind gegrüst:  
Ach lasz dein Sukker Mündelein  
Mein' arme Seel erquikken,  
Und die verliebten äugelein,  
Erfreulich auff mich blikken.

<sup>16</sup> Compare as well in this respect Gerhardt's "O Jesu Christ, Dein Kripplein ist" (German text from WACKERNAGEL, 8, comprising 15 stanzas). The abbreviated English composite translation appears in *TLH* 81. Although the piece is initially addressed to the child in the manger and is the response of an individual, rather than the community, the piece shifts quickly to a "we" perspective in the second stanza and a similar "objective stance is taken throughout. Note also "Froehlich soll mein Hertze springen" (WACKERNAGEL, 5; *TLH* 77, "All my Heart this night rejoices") and "Wir singen dir Immanuel" (WACKERNAGEL, 10; *TLH* 108, "We sing, Immanuel Thy praise").

<sup>17</sup> *Heilige Seelenlust*, 1:16.

2. Du bist mir lieber als die Welt  
 Und hundert Himmel seyn:  
 Auf dasz ich all mein Tun gestelt,  
 Du wehrtes Jesulein:  
 Der wil ich was ich hab und bin  
 Von Grund desz Hertzens schenken;  
 Auf dich sol mein Gemüt und Sinn  
 Ohn unterlasz gedenken.

4. Wie hertzlich sehn' ich mich nach dir  
 O freudenreiches Kind!  
 Verlasz die Kripp' und komm zu mir,  
 Komm eilends komm geschwind:  
 Ich will ein kleines Krippelein  
 Ausz meinem Hertzen machen,  
 Dasz du darin mein Jesulein  
 Stäts schlafen solst und wachen.

What the reader will notice immediately in this piece is the nature of the apostrophe: the poet addresses Christ directly. The setting is ahistorical and the noble, beloved, sweet child Jesus is welcomed not into the world in which the poet resides, but “into” the poet, with immediate emotional results: sorrow disappears, salvation (*Heil*) is accompanied by bliss (*Seligkeit*), and the child brings “a thousand joys”. This psychological concern (the title of the collection in which the poem designates the speaker in good baroque fashion as the “Psyche”) shapes the closing lines of the first stanza, making present and permanent the eschaton (*Ewigkeit*). Likewise in the second stanza, action is initiated by the poet, playing the role of the lover and not the beloved: it is the human person who is able to reach to the ground of his being (contrast the place of “Herzensgrund” in the Gerhardt piece quoted above), give all that he “has and is,” and, not surprisingly as a result, maintain a permanent (*ohn unterlasz*) interior thought-union in mind and sensation (*Gemüt und Sinn*). The third stanza intensifies the egocentricity of the piece. It is the poet’s happiness at Christ’s coming, not the latter, that is enunciated. What is emphasized is the sweetness in the poet’s mouth, the revitalization of his impoverished soul, the joy at the beloved’s glance.

In the fourth stanza the clearly allegorical nature of the piece becomes evident. Gerhardt’s hymn is consistently rooted in history; Scheffler’s consistently allegorical. In an important sense the Lutheran Gerhardt is pre-modern—the literal-historical interprets reality and the poet in it; the biblical letter is carried across (meta-phor) to the human situation. Scheffler’s baroque Catholicism has already shifted into modernity, readjusting medieval mystical themes of the birth of Christ in the soul to serve as a foundational framework on which to build a personal identity. A theocentric world has shifted to an anthropocentric one: The individual strains toward the divinity (“Wie hertzlich sehn’ ich mich nach dir”) on the basis of his own emotional intensity (*hertzlich* is here adjectival and not a structural *Grund*) and its end is not the child but the kingdom of joys the child brings (*freudenreiches Kind*). The “I/me” vocabulary in the final stanza has a possessive ring, distant from a *pro me* theology, and so reformulates kenotic themes that self-giving is ever that of the other. The objective crib is to be forsaken for the sake of “this” soul alone, a soul demanding immediate and sudden satisfaction (*eilends ... geschwind*), willing to serve as a personal crib for the divine child in which it is to (*solst*) remain continuously interiorized,

sleeping or waking. What we have, as it were, is an historical *Heilsgeschichte* transmuted into a personalized spiritual *ordo salutis*, in which so much attention is directed to the sensitive Self, that a twenty-first century reader cannot avoid comparing the thought structure to that of a New Age spirituality, perhaps find the latter's sources in this baroque form, or at least not be surprised that her contemporary "spiritual but not religious" advocates return regularly to highly selective translations of Silesius *Cherubinischer Wandersmann*.

In contrast it is useful to consider Gerhardt's "Ich steh an deiner Krippe",<sup>18</sup> which bears some similarities to the Scheffler's piece, but despite parallels stands in radical juxtaposition to it. In Gerhardt's hymn the Christ-child's crib remains the objective reality against which the poet is formed. To this place he brings his interiority (spirit and sense, heart, soul, and mind) to be pleasing to the child, not himself.<sup>19</sup> The child was born, chose him, and illuminated his world before the poet was born.<sup>20</sup> Internal joys and comfort from cares are found in faith's reflection on this reality.<sup>21</sup> The birth of Christ in the soul remains a theme in the piece but it is so as a hope in faith<sup>22</sup> and never aside from a clear sense of one's own nothingness before so great a creator.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> German text hereafter from WACKERNAGEL, 9.

<sup>19</sup> 1. Ich steh an deiner Krippe hier, / O Jesu du mein Leben; / Ich komme, bring und schenke dir, / Was du mir hast gegeben. / Nimm hin, es ist mein Geist und Sinn, / Herz, Seel und Mut, nimm alles hin / Und laß dir's wohlgefallen.

<sup>20</sup> 3. Da ich noch nicht geboren war, / Da bist du mir geboren / Und hast mich dir zu eigen gar, / Eh ich dich kannt, erkoren. / Eh ich durch deine Hand gemacht, / Da hast du schon bei dir bedacht, / Wie du mein wolltest werden.

<sup>21</sup> 5. Ich sehe dich mit Freuden an / Und kann mich nicht satt sehen; / Und weil ich nun nichts weiter kann, / Bleib ich anbetend stehen. / O daß mein Sinn ein Abgrund wär / Und meine Seel ein weites Meer, / Daß ich dich möchte fassen!

<sup>22</sup> 14. Eins aber hoff ich wirst du mir, / Mein Heiland, nicht versagen: / Daß ich dich möge für und für / In meinem Herzen tragen. / So laß mich doch dein Kripplein sein; / Komm, komm und lege bei mir ein / Dich und all deine Freuden!

<sup>23</sup> 15. Zwar sollt ich denken, wie gering / Ich dich bewirten werde: / Du bist der Schöpfer aller Ding, / Ich bin nur Staub und Erde. / Doch du bist so ein frommer Gast, / Daß du noch nie verschmähet hast / Den der dich gerne siehet.

## Transferring traditions: Use or Abuse?

Reflecting on these poets, one is reminded of the now well-known adage from Lateran IV: “The greater the similarity, the greater the dissimilarity”,<sup>24</sup> and the insights to be gained by applying it to both Gerhardt’s “Ich steh an deiner Krippe” in itself and the comparison between Gerhardt and Scheffler. But comparisons always have their danger, particularly in theological or religious matters. In the present case, comparing a Lutheran and a Catholic, the danger is a metonymic one, making use of a particular to represent a whole, falling prey again to Smiley’s Cold-War strategies, remaining “inhuman in defence of our humanity, ... harsh in the defence of compassion... single-minded in defence of our disparity”, and at the best settling for religious *détante*. The difficulty is that, although both men were contemporary baroque figures, the periodized “baroque” is not our modern or post-modern era and, as already noted, despite their biographic parallels, Scheffler already in his own time represents a turn to modernity. As such, he serves as a case study, not so much to illuminate Lutheran-Roman Catholic distinctions, as to offer a monition to his chosen religious tradition, contemporary Roman Catholics and our own struggles with the very mixed baroque theology and pieties we have inherited. The propositional and dogmatic aspects of this inheritance have often been noted. What is sometimes forgotten however, is the quite different spirituality that lurks alongside it. Some elements of a strict order Thomism may raise problems for the health of contemporary Christianity, but fade before those of a now widely inculcated, but no longer named, progressive spirituality, the latter often as mistaken in its reading of earlier Catholic mystics and the doctrine of the birth of God in the soul, as, for example, was the character in the “Catholic” Martin Scorsese’s 1991 film, “Cape Fear”, who quoted Silesius: “I am like God and God like me ....”<sup>25</sup>

Nor is the problem simply one for Roman Catholics: the transmission of earlier religious materials, unless carefully monitored, bears its own perils, however comic some might be. I recall attendance at a Mass one evening during which “This little light of mine” served as an announced “traditional Catholic” processional hymn and the “congregation” was encouraged to sing as a recessional “that well known and long loved Catholic [*sic*] hymn

<sup>24</sup> “For between creator and creature there can be noted no similarity so great that a greater dissimilarity cannot be seen between them”, NORMAN P. TANNER, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990); “Lateran IV”, sect. 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Cherubinischer Wandersmann*, 1:10: “Ich bin so gross als Gott, er is als ich so klein; / Er kann nicht unter mich, ich unter ihm nicht sein.” For a full discussion of the theological complexities in the uses of the mediaeval theme of the birth of God in the soul, see HANS URS VON BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama V* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998), 433-62 and ff.

‘How great Thou art’.” Fortunately, I could recall happily at the time a number of Protestant services in which a fiercely anti-Catholic sermon was followed by the singing of “There’s a wideness in God’s mercy” and “Faith of our Fathers”, the worshippers unaware that both were the compositions of an ultramontane Catholic convert, Frederick W. Faber (1814-63). An equally delightful case is that of the ultra High Anglo-Catholic, Sabine Baring Gould (1834-1924), who wrote the now fully “Evangelical” hymn, “Onward Christian Soldiers”, to serve for processions with the Sacrament, and when forbidden to use it by a Low Church Bishop, offered to change the refrain to “with the Cross of Jesus, hid behind the door.”<sup>26</sup>

Less comic and perhaps more insidious examples of such re-visionary activity can be noted in the translations made of Scheffler poems and their use in Lutheran hymnals. The reasons for the changes made will be immediately obvious; the difficulties arise when they are not noted and then used as they appear in their new forms to serve as examples of an “ecumenical” spirit. Thus, Scheffler’s “Ich will dich lieben, meine Stärke”<sup>27</sup> appears in *Lutheran Service Book* (2006), 694, “Thee will I love”,<sup>28</sup> in a composite translation based on that of Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878):<sup>29</sup>

1.<sup>30</sup> Thee will I love, my Strength, my Tower;  
Thee will I love, my Hope, my Joy;  
Thee will I love with all my power,  
With ardour time shall ne’er destroy.  
Thee will I love, O Light Divine,  
So long as life is mine.

2. Thee will I love, my Life, my Saviour,  
Who art my best and truest Friend;  
Thee will I love and praise forever,  
For never shall Thy kindness end;  
Thee will I love with all my heart,  
Thou my Redeemer art.

6. Oh, keep me watchful, then, and humble  
And suffer me no more to stray;  
Uphold me when my feet would stumble,  
Nor let me loiter by the way.  
Fill all my nature with Thy light,  
O Radianc strong and bright!

7. Oh, teach me, Lord, to love Thee truly  
With soul and body, head and heart,  
And grant me grace that I may duly  
Practice fore’er love’s sacred art.  
Grant that my every thought may be  
Directed e’er to Thee.

<sup>26</sup> On both Faber and Baring Gould see entries in *The Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>27</sup> *Heilige Seelen Lust*, 1:10.

<sup>28</sup> See also *LW* 375 and *TLH* 399.

<sup>29</sup> *The Chorale Book for England; A Complete Hymn-book for Public and Private Worship, in Accordance with the Services and Festivals of the Church of England, the Hymns from the Lyra Germanica and other Sources*, trans. Catherine Winkworth; *The Tunes from the Sacred Music of the Lutheran, Latin, and other Churches*, ... Compiled and ed. WILLIAM STERNDALÉ BENNETT, Professor of Music in the University of Cambridge, and OTTO GOLDSCHMIDT (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1863), 150. On Winkworth see *The Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>30</sup> Stanza numbers according to the number in Scheffler’s original.

5. I thank Thee, Jesus, Sun from heaven,  
Whose radiance hath bro't light to me;  
I thank Thee, who hast richly given  
All that could make me glad and free;  
I thank Thee that my soul is healed  
By what Thy lips revealed.

8. Thee will I love, my Crown of gladness;  
Thee will I love, my God and Lord,  
Amid the darkest depths of sadness,  
Not for the hope of high reward—  
For Thine own sake, O Light Divine,  
So long as life is mine.

As expected Scheffler's, "mit dem Werke" in the first stanza is replaced by "with all my power",<sup>31</sup> and his "Solange mich dein Glanz bescheint, / Ich will dich lieben, Gottes Lamm, / Als meinen Bräutigam" suitably reworked in the second. Nor is it surprising that Scheffler's third and fourth stanzas (here quoted from Winkworth's translation) are omitted from the Lutheran publication with their baroque Catholic allusions to Augustine's "Too late have I love Thee":<sup>32</sup>

3. Alas! that I so late have known Thee,  
Who art the Fairest and the Best;  
Nor sooner for my Lord could own Thee,  
Our highest Good, our only Rest!  
Now bitter shame and grief I prove  
O'er this my tardy love.

4. I wander'd long in willing blindness,  
I sought Thee, but I found Thee not,  
For still I shunn'd Thy beams of kindness,  
The creature light fill'd all my thought;  
And if at last I see Thee now,  
'Twas Thou to me didst bow!

Likewise the closing of Scheffler's fifth stanza with its doctrine of growth in holiness required change as did his seventh:<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Winkworth's original reads "Thee in Thy works, with all my power." Compare as well here Wesley's "Methodist" rendition: "THEE will I love, my strength, my tower, / Thee will I love, my joy, my crown, / Thee will I love with all my power, / In all thy works, and thee alone; / Thee will I love, till the pure fire / Fill my whole soul with chaste desire." *A Collection of Hymns, for the Use of the People called Methodists. By the Rev. John Wesley, ... With a New Supplement* (London: Wesleyan-Methodist Book-Room, 1889), 210.

<sup>32</sup> 3. Ach, daß ich dich so spät erkennet, / Du hochgelobte Schönheit du! / Und dich nicht eher mein genennet, / Du höchstes Gut und wahre Ruh! / Es ist mir leid und bin betrübt, / Daß ich so spät geliebt.

4. Ich lief verirrt und war verblendet, / Ich suchte dich und fand dich nicht, / Ich hatte mich von dir gewendet / Und liebte das geschaffne Licht. / Nun aber ists durch dich geschehn, / Daß ich dich hab ersehnt.

<sup>33</sup> Compare Wesley's lesser concern and more literal translation of 7: "Give to mine eyes refreshing tears, / Give to my heart chaste, hallowed fires, / Give to my soul, with filial fears, / The love that all heaven's host inspires; / That all my powers, with all their might, / In thy sole glory may unite."

5. Ich danke dir, du wahre Sonne,  
 Daß mir dein Glanz hat Licht gebracht,  
 Ich danke dir, du Himmelswonne,  
 Daß du mich froh und frei gemacht.  
 Ich danke dir, du güldner Mund,  
 Daß du mich machst gesund.

7. Gib meinen Augen süße Tränen,  
 Gib meinem Herzen keusche Brunst,  
 Laß meine Seele sich gewöhnen,  
 Zu üben in der Liebe Kunst.  
 Laß meinen Sinn, Geist und Verstand  
 Stets sein zu dir gewandt.

Similar theological shifts can be seen in the use of “Come Follow me”,<sup>34</sup> based on Scheffler’s “Mir nach / spricht Christus unser Held”,<sup>35</sup> “O Love, who madest me to wear”<sup>36</sup> (Scheffler’s “Liebe, die du mich zum Bilde”<sup>37</sup>) and “Jesus, Saviour, Come to Me”<sup>38</sup> (Scheffler’s “Jesu, komm doch selbst zu mir”<sup>39</sup>).

It may be objected that such comparisons as here outlined prove once again the effective intolerance of dogmatic religion, its “inhuman[ity] in defence of [its own particular form of] humanity, ... [its] harsh[ness] in the defence of [a supposed] compassion [for the benighted souls led astray by a false poetic rhetoric] ... [and its] single-minded[ness] in [editorial revision and] defence of [its own distinctive] disparity.” According to this argument, the practice of writing hymns (or silently revising them) to proselytize for a singular theological proposition functions solely as a closed conversation in a now open, multi-cultural, pluralistic society; it is the stuff of the Thirty Year’s War, the bull-headedness of Gerhardt against Reformed infiltrations, the militant, aggressive subjugation of Lutheran churches favoured by Scheffler—in sum: an unacceptable, polemical, baroque theology. Implicitly, from such a point of view, there is little place for a Gerhardt symposium, and none for a Gerhardt celebration.

“Tolerance” and “dialogue” bear many connotations, however, too complex to discuss at length at the close of a paper such as this. A few comments must suffice. First, the obvious: without “particulars” (I prefer this term to “opposites”) there can be no dialogue, and for the sake of a healthy dialogue, it behoves participants to strengthen their and their partner’s particular identities so as to maintain the dialogue. In the case of Gerhardt and Scheffler, the point is not to set aside their differences or the ways in which their respective traditions recycled their creations, but rather

<sup>34</sup> *LSB* 688; *LW* 379, and *TLH* 421.

<sup>35</sup> *Heilige Seelen Lust*, 5:16.

<sup>36</sup> *TLH* 397.

<sup>37</sup> *Heilige Seelen Lust*, 3:197.

<sup>38</sup> *TLH* 356; trans. Matthias Loy (1828-1915).

<sup>39</sup> *Heilige Seelen Lust*, 1:3.



to clarify them.<sup>40</sup> Second, and more importantly, in the Christian tradition, life and dialogue are co-extensive: We have been created “male and female”—“it is not good that man should live alone.” Contrast and therefore dialogue lies at the root of our created being. Indeed, it maintains being: God, the perichoretic Trinity or divine persons, speaks the world and the world is called to answer. Fittingly, then, in numerous copies of Gerhardt’s collected poetry, Colossians 3:16 (that other 3:16 passage) serves as an introductory admonition<sup>41</sup> (fulfilled by Gerhardt and Scheffler, I would argue), and as an invitation to us as readers and singers to participate with them in their poetry: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another [dialogue?] in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

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<sup>40</sup> The argument here owes much to the practice of Hans Urs von Balthasar; for a survey of his views, particularly with respect to Luther, see RODNEY A. HOWSARE, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and Protestantism: The Ecumenical Implications of his Theological Style* (London: T&T Clark, 2005).

<sup>41</sup> See for example, WACKERNAGEL, xxxii.

## What's So Special about Paul Gerhardt?\*

Joseph Herl

**WRITING HYMNS WAS A POPULAR PASTIME IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY GERMANY.** Albert Fischer's scholarly collection of seventeenth-century Protestant hymn texts, published in the early twentieth century, runs to six volumes, and it only scratches the surface.<sup>1</sup> Somehow Paul Gerhardt's hymns have managed to stand out from the crowd. What makes his hymns so special that they were universally praised by his contemporaries, Orthodox and Pietist alike? Why do present-day German Lutherans cheerfully memorize twelve or fifteen stanzas of a single Gerhardt hymn? And why are we devoting an entire conference to his work?

The answer lies in a combination of the hymns themselves and the historical circumstances that led to their popularity among Gerhardt's contemporaries. Regarding the texts themselves, we may note in particular their poetic style, their devotional content, and their theology. The poetic style of seventeenth-century German hymns differs greatly from those of the sixteenth century. This is due largely to the influence of the most important German poet of the early seventeenth century, Martin Opitz. We know him for his hymn "Arise and Shine in Splendour", but to his contemporaries he was the author of a book that turned the craft of writing poetry in German on its head: the *Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey* ("Book of German Poetic Writing") of 1624. In it, he put forth the idea of bringing German poetry closer in style to that of Latin and the Romance languages. Opitz suggested several methods for doing this, but for our purposes the most important one was to take word stresses into account when writing verse so that stressed syllables in a line of verse alternate with unstressed syllables in a regular pattern. We take this for granted in English poetry ("Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"), but this was not yet the case in sixteenth-century Germany. Witness, for example, Luther's translation of the Latin hymn *Veni redemptor gentium* ("Saviour of the Nations, Come"). In German, the first line is "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland". The stresses in this phrase do, in fact, fall on every other syllable, but they fall exactly opposite where they should when sung to the proper tune: NUN komm, DER Hei-DEN

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<sup>1</sup> ALBERT FISCHER, *Das deutsche evangelische Kirchenlied des 17. Jahrhunderts*, completed after the author's death by WILHELM TÜMPEL, 6 vols (Gütersloh: 1904-16).

Hei-LAND. The stresses in phrases 2 and 3 are correct, but the fourth phrase has one syllable out of place: instead of “GOTT solch Ge-BURT IHM be-STELLT” the tune requires “GOTT solch GE-burt IHM be-STELLT.”

This casual approach to poetic meter came to an end in the seventeenth century through the influence of Opitz's ideas, with which Gerhardt was familiar. To us today, German hymns of the sixteenth century seem more rugged than later hymns, but also less polished, and any discrepancies between metrical stress and tune meter are immediately apparent. They are still sung, especially those of Luther, because they are so familiar and so valuable. But seventeenth-century hymns are closer to the modern poetic spirit and thus easier in form to grasp and retain.

Simplicity of language is another characteristic of Gerhardt's hymns. Uncommon words are rare, and most words have only one syllable. That is not to say that the language itself is common: it abounds in devices that make it attractive and memorable, especially the use of similar vowels and consonants in close proximity with one another.

But this is not a lecture on German poetry, so let us move on to the second characteristic of Gerhardt's hymns: their devotional content. It is impossible to appreciate Gerhardt's hymns fully without knowing something about the historical and social context in which they appeared. The Thirty Years' War, which began in 1618, was devastating. The war itself affected individual cities and towns only occasionally during the thirty years; but the economic impact was huge, and the war's privations hastened the spread of disease. By the time it was over, people had long been ready for peace, and they were asking the question “Why can't Christians treat each other better?”

Even before the war, the conduct of Christians toward each other was a concern as pastors wondered why the Gospel teaching of the Reformation seemed to bear so little fruit in people's lives. One of those concerned was Johann Arndt, pastor of St Martin's Church in Braunschweig and later general superintendent of the duchy of Braunschweig-Lüneburg. In 1605 he brought out a little book bearing the title *Vom wahren Christenthum* (“True Christianity”), in which he challenged his readers, and especially his fellow pastors, with the question “You know you have been saved solely by the grace of God; now how are you going to respond?” This book proved so successful that he brought out three more volumes over the next several years. These later volumes, which dealt more with the consolation of Christ than with a call to repentance, were soon gathered together with the first book into a single volume called, oddly enough, *Four Books on True Christianity*. After Arndt's death two more books were added containing excerpts from his other writings, for a total of six books in one volume.

*True Christianity* was well received by its Orthodox Lutheran contemporaries, with the only serious criticism being a review published in

1623 by the theology faculty of the University of Tübingen, who objected especially to Arndt's reliance on mystical writers, notably Johann Tauler.<sup>2</sup> Another book by Arndt also became popular: the *Paradies-Gärtlein* ("Little Garden of Paradise") of 1612, a collection of meditations on various aspects of the Christian life set in the form of prayers. The headings to five of Paul Gerhardt's hymns reference specific sections of this book.

Arndt's *True Christianity* has acquired a less-than-stellar reputation among our theologians today, largely because it was an inspiration to the Pietist movement of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. But we must not look at Arndt's book as simply a precursor to Pietism which, after all, did not come into its own as a movement until over seventy years after the book was first published. In fact, *True Christianity*, judging from the number of reprints, translations into other languages, and quotations in other sources, appears to have been after the Bible nothing less than the most widely read book in the history of Protestantism. The concerns it both reflected and unleashed are better viewed as a desire for piety, not Pietism.

It was not the only such influence on Gerhardt. The book in which his hymns first appeared in 1647 was called *Praxis pietatis melica* ("Musical Practice of Piety"). Its compiler was Johann Crüger, the cantor of St Nicholas Church in Berlin and a colleague of Gerhardt. We do not know for sure how Crüger came up with the book's title; but his readers could not have failed to notice, and Crüger may well have intended it, that the title was quite close to that of another book popular at the time, *Praxis pietatis*, a German translation of a devotional manual by the Welsh divine Lewis Bayly. Bayly's book *The Practice of Piety* was first published around 1611 (the same year as the King James Bible), when Bayly was chaplain to Prince Henry; he was later appointed bishop of Bangor. It appeared in a German translation in 1630, and both the English original and its many translations were frequently reprinted during the course of the century.

Bayly's theology was essentially Calvinist, especially his views on predestination. What is distinctive about his book is its emphasis on meditation: the immediate effect of, for example, a sermon is limited; it achieves its full effect only after the hearers meditate on it, then carry it out in their lives. Bayly's views do not appear to have had any direct effect on Gerhardt, but the title of Crüger's hymnbook demonstrates the interconnectedness and ubiquitous influence of the piety movements of the early to mid-seventeenth centuries. Gerhardt's hymns drew upon this movement and the popular desire for "something more" in one's religion, and they gave the people an outlet and form of expression for their

<sup>2</sup> *Theologisches Bedencken und christlich-treuhertzige Erinnerung über Arndts Wahres Christenthum* (Tübingen: 1623).

devotional impulses. They served a function similar to that of Christian radio today.

The third feature that contributed to the continuing success of Gerhardt's hymns is their theology. Simply put, Gerhardt was extremely careful that what he wrote reflected the understanding of God's work and our place in it that he had learned through a study of the Lutheran Confessions and other Lutheran works. In 1694 Conrad Tiburtius Rango, general superintendent of Pomerania, objected to the introduction of new hymns into the church because so many of them contained poor theology. But he made an exception for those of Gerhardt, "because they stem not from a fantastical kind of poetry, but from a theological spirit."<sup>3</sup>

Paul Gerhardt's first German poem was published in 1643, a wedding poem beginning "Der aller Herz und Willen lenkt".<sup>4</sup> The following year another wedding poem appeared. Then in 1647 Johann Crüger published his *Praxis pietatis melica*. The first edition of this book contained eighteen hymns by Gerhardt. Forty-five editions of the hymnal were published in Berlin through 1736, and fifteen appeared in Frankfurt. The 1653 edition contained eighty-two Gerhardt hymns, and a few more appeared from time to time in various subsequent editions.

In 1655 Gerhardt married Anna Maria Berthold, who was fifteen years his junior. They had five children, four of whom died in infancy, a situation all too common at the time. By this time Gerhardt was provost (senior pastor) in the town of Mittenwalde, which had about 700 people. He returned to Berlin in 1657, accepting a call as first deacon at St Nicholas. In this position he was the third pastor in seniority after the provost and the archdeacon. He was therefore able to work closely with cantor Johann Crüger for another five years until Crüger's death in 1662.

Crüger was succeeded by Johann Georg Ebeling, who was to play a significant role in disseminating Gerhardt's hymns. This might never have happened had it not been for the religious controversies that came to a head in the next few years. The trouble had started all the way back in 1613, when Elector Johann Sigismund of Brandenburg converted to Calvinism, but his subjects remained Lutheran. Over the next few decades Calvinists gradually accumulated greater influence in political and religious circles. In 1662 Elector Friedrich Wilhelm promulgated the Edict of Toleration, which forbade Lutheran pastors from stirring up controversy by preaching against Calvinist doctrines. In the same year the Formula of Concord was removed

<sup>3</sup> *Von der Musica, alten und neuen Liedern* (Greifswald: 1694), 6, 29.

<sup>4</sup> Most of the biographical information in this and the following paragraphs is from CHRISTIAN BUNNERS' excellent biography *Paul Gerhardt: Weg, Werk, Wirkung*, rev. ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

from the list of Lutheran confessions, and students from the Electorate were forbidden to study theology at the university in Wittenberg, which was regarded as too solidly Lutheran.

The Edict of Toleration was renewed in September 1664, and pastors were now required to subscribe to it. The provost of St Nicholas refused to subscribe and was removed from office the following April; another leading pastor was exiled from the country. In February 1666 Gerhardt notified the consistory of his intention not to sign the edict, and he was removed from office within the month. But Gerhardt was especially popular among the people, and the citizens of Berlin began a campaign to have him reinstated. It was at this time that Ebeling began to edit Gerhardt's collected hymns to date. They were published as a series of ten booklets that appeared between February 1666 and May 1667.

The publication of Gerhardt's hymns at this time may be seen first of all as an attempt to rally support for Gerhardt in his effort to have his position reinstated and secondly as a way to provide him with some income during a time when his usual salary would not have been forthcoming. Buying Gerhardt's book would have been one of the few ways in which ordinary people could show their displeasure with the Elector for leading his realm in a Calvinist direction. It is possible that Gerhardt's hymns might have become widely known even without this historical circumstance, but it is unlikely that it would have happened either so quickly or so definitively.

For us, Ebeling's publication is a treasure trove, as the booklets collectively contain twenty-six previously unpublished texts by Gerhardt. The first booklet contains hymns on Christ's passion, beginning with "A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth" and another hymn. The next seven hymns in the set are meditations on various parts of his body: the knees, the hands, the side, the chest, the heart, and the face (this one is "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded"). Four other hymns conclude the first book. Book 2 contains hymns of consolation, many of which are based on psalms. Book 3 contains hymns for times of day and seasons (including one headed "On the Appearance of a Comet") and a few miscellaneous hymns. Book 4 has more of the same. Book 5 contains hymns for Advent, Christmas, and New Year's. Book 6 includes five hymns based on sections of Johann Arndt's *Little Garden of Paradise* and several hymns on the subject of death. Book 7 contains hymns for Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and Trinity. Book 8 contains miscellaneous hymns. Book 9 contains hymns based on psalms. Book 10 contains hymns of praise and sacramental hymns. Throughout the ten booklets, some hymns indicate a familiar hymn tune to be used for singing, while others include a new tune by Ebeling.

A recent editor of Gerhardt's hymns, Eberhard von Cranach-Sichart, lists the hymns by subject matter. Of the 134 hymns, he writes, there are 29 hymns of cross and comfort, 24 hymns of praise and thanksgiving, 19 on death and eternal life, and 16 on prayer and penitence, with most of the

remainder dealing with liturgical seasons and times of day. There are only two sacramental hymns, one each on Baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>5</sup>

During the time that Gerhardt's collected hymns were being published, the situation in Berlin for Lutheran pastors went from bad to worse. The provost of the church in nearby Cölln fled the country after being removed from office; he finally settled in Prague, where he converted to Catholicism. The recently installed second deacon at St Nicholas accused the government in a sermon of spying on pastors; in retrospect this was probably not a good idea, as he spent four and a half months in jail. In Gerhardt's case, the government finally gave in to pressure and reinstated Gerhardt, but this was not to last: Gerhardt could not in good conscience continue in his post while other pastors were being removed and exiled; and although the city council, which was Lutheran, tried for several months to save Gerhardt's job, his position was finally declared vacant, and his successor was installed in August 1668, five months after Gerhardt's wife Anna Maria died following a long illness (probably tuberculosis). That same year cantor Ebeling left Berlin for Stettin, where he became cantor and professor of Greek; he died just eight years later at age 40.

Gerhardt, for his part, at age 62 accepted a call as archdeacon in the city of Lübben (which happens to be the German sister city of Seward, Nebraska, where I live). His tenure there began poorly, as Gerhardt refused to move until the archdeaconage, which had fallen into disrepair during the war, could be repaired and enlarged. Gerhardt also wanted the city council to add a couple of clauses to his contract. First, he wanted the council to agree to provide a substitute to visit the sick in times of pestilence (this isn't so odd as it seems, as there was apparently precedent in other cities); second, he wanted permission to import non-local beer for the use of his household. The council denied both requests and told Gerhardt that he must take up his post by Pentecost. Gerhardt did so—barely—and began his work there. At first he was paid poorly and late due to the economy having been devastated by the war.

We know little about Gerhardt's tenure in Lübben, but by and large it seems that he was not received nearly so well there as he had been in Berlin. In his fifth year there, he was accused of cancelling midweek services. He responded that he had done so on account of his advanced age. In response, the consistory instructed Gerhardt to procure (and pay) a substitute if necessary. Gerhardt protested the decision to the duke, whereupon the consistory accused Gerhardt of obstinacy, negligence, and dereliction of duty. They further charged that he had run up considerable expense in his

<sup>5</sup> EBERHARD VON CRANACH-SICHART, ed., *Paul Gerhardt: Gesamtausgabe seiner Lieder und Gedichte*, (Wuppertal: Oncken, 1982), 16.

move from Berlin and for renovations to his house, and that he had also introduced novelties into the church, such as having a rail constructed around the altar, a reading stand placed on it, and a chair set up for him to sit in while dispensing the Sacrament. As a final jab, the consistory pointedly remarked that Gerhardt was ill suited by the wig he wore while preaching.

Gerhardt served eight years in Lübben until his death in 1676. No hymns by him from this time survive, and it is unknown whether he even wrote any. Lübben was in any case a backwater compared with Berlin: he had there neither a supportive cantor championing his cause, nor easy access to a publisher, nor an eager public waiting for his next publication. We can be all the more grateful that earlier in his career Gerhardt was in the right place at the right time with just the skills needed to produce devotional poetry that has stood the test of time. Of course, as Gerhardt would readily admit, it was all God's doing.

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## Appendix: Events in the Life of Paul Gerhardt<sup>6</sup>

### **Gräfenhainichen**

- 1606 Christian Gerhardt born.
- 1607 (12 March) Paul Gerhardt born.
- 1612 Anna Gerhardt born.
- 1618 Thirty Years' War begins.
- 1619 Agnes Gerhardt born; Gerhardt's father dies.
- 1621 Gerhardt's mother dies.

### **Grimma**

- 1622 (4 April) Paul enrolls in the Fürstenschule.
- 1627 (December) he leaves Grimma for Wittenberg.

### **Wittenberg**

- 1628 (2 January) he matriculates at the university.
- 1642 (26 April) first datable poem by Gerhardt, a Latin congratulatory poem for a fellow student.

### **Berlin**

- 1613 Elector Johann Sigismund of Brandenburg converts to Calvinism, but his subjects remain Lutheran; during the following decades Calvinists gradually achieve greater influence in political and religious circles.
- 1619 Johann Sigismund dies; Georg Wilhelm becomes Elector.
- 1622 Johann Crüger (1598–1662) becomes cantor of the Nicolaikirche in Berlin.
- 1640 Georg Wilhelm dies; Friedrich Wilhelm becomes Elector.
- 1640 Crüger publishes his first hymnal, the *Neues vollkömmliches Gesangbuch Augsburgerischer Confession*.
- 1642 or 1643 Gerhardt arrives in Berlin.
- 1643 first German poem of Gerhardt published, the wedding poem “Der aller Herz und Willen lenkt”.
- 1644 another wedding poem published, “Also treten wir nun an”.
- 1647 Crüger publishes *Praxis Pietatis Melica* in Berlin, which contains 18 hymns by Gerhardt. Forty-five Berlin editions published through 1736.
- 1648 Peace of Westfalia ends Thirty Years' War.
- 1648 “Nun, du lebest unsre Krone” written upon the death of Dr Petrus Fritze, consistory president.
- 1650 dedicatory poem “Weltskribenten und Poeten” for Michael Schirmer's *Biblisches Lieder und Lehrsprüche*.

<sup>6</sup> Compiled mostly from CHRISTIAN BUNNERS, *Paul Gerhardt: Weg, Werk, Wirkung* (Berlin: Buchverlag Union, 1993; rev. ed. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

## **Mittenwalde**

- 1651 (28 September) Gerhardt preaches an audition sermon in Mittenwalde.
- 1651 (18 November) ordained to the pastorate at the Nicolaikirche in Berlin.
- 1651 (end of November) installed as provost (chief pastor) in Mittenwalde, a town of about 700 (prewar population ca. 1000).
- 1653 5<sup>th</sup> edition of *Praxis Pietatis Melica* is published in Berlin with 500 hymns (82 by Gerhardt).
- 1655 funeral sermon for Joachim Schröder published.
- 1655 (11 February) Gerhardt marries Anna Maria Berthold (1622–1668), daughter of a Berlin jurist with whom Gerhardt had boarded while in Berlin.
- 1656–1660 military expenditures lead to economic hardships and inflation in Berlin.
- 1656 subscription to the Formula of Concord no longer required for new pastors.
- 1656 an edition of *Praxis Pietatis Melica* published in Frankfurt am Main, with 3 additional hymns by Gerhardt. Fifteen editions appear in Frankfurt through 1700.
- 1656 Twenty-five hymns of Gerhardt appear in a Dresden hymnal.
- 1656 (19 May) Maria Elisabeth Gerhardt born.
- 1657 (14 January) Maria Elisabeth Gerhardt dies.

## **Berlin**

- 1657 (4 June) Gerhardt accepts a call as first deacon (third pastor in seniority) of the Nicolaikirche in Berlin. The pastors of this church are, in order of seniority: provost, archdeacon, first deacon, second deacon.
- 1658 (15 January) Anna Katharina Gerhardt baptized.
- 1659 (25 March) Anna Katharina Gerhardt buried.
- 1659 Fifty-three hymns of Gerhardt appear in Heinrich Müller's *Geistliche Seelenmusik*.
- 1659 funeral sermon for Nicolaus Wernicke published.
- 1659 "Leid ist mirs in meinem Herzen" written for a child's death.
- 1660 funeral sermon for Friederich Ludowig Zarlang published, with poem "Liebes Kind, wenn ich bei mir".
- 1660 Andreas Gerhardt born; dies shortly thereafter.
- 1661 funeral sermon for Anna Flörings published.
- 1661 10<sup>th</sup> edition of *Praxis Pietatis Melica* published, with four new texts by Gerhardt.
- 1662 (23 February) Nicolaikantor Johann Crüger dies; succeeded by Johann Georg Ebeling (1637–1676).
- 1662 (2 June) Edict of Toleration promulgated: Formula of Concord omitted from list of Lutheran confessions; Lutheran pastors forbidden to stir up controversy regarding Calvinist doctrines.
- 1662 (21 August) the Elector closes the theology and philosophy programmes at the partisan Lutheran University of Wittenberg to students from his territories.
- 1662 (25 August) Paul Friedrich Gerhardt baptized.
- 1662 (1 September) to 1663 (29 May) doctrinal discussions between Lutherans and Calvinists held in Berlin, in which Gerhardt participates.
- 1664 (February) Andreas Christian Gerhardt born.
- 1664 (September) Andreas Christian Gerhardt dies.

- 1664 (16 September) Edict of Toleration renewed, with added provision that the exorcism be omitted from Baptism if parents so request; pastors are now required to subscribe to the Edict.
- 1665 (28 April) the two leading Lutheran pastors in Berlin, one of whom is the provost of the Nicolaikirche, refuse to subscribe to the Edict of Toleration and are removed from office; the provost of the Nicolaikirche is later reinstated but dies shortly thereafter, and the other is exiled.
- 1666 (6 February) Gerhardt notifies the consistory of his intention not to sign the Edict and is removed from office within the month. The citizens of Berlin begin a campaign to have the popular Gerhardt reinstated.
- 1666 (16 February) to 1667 (12 May) Gerhardt's collected hymns to date are edited by Nicolaikantor Johann Georg Ebeling and published as a series of 10 booklets collectively titled *Pauli Gerhardi Geistliche Andachten*. Twenty-six previously unpublished texts by Gerhardt are included.
- 1666 (20 July) the provost of the church in nearby Cölln flees the country after being removed from office; he finally settles in Prague, where he converts to Catholicism.
- 1667 (1 January) the recently installed second deacon at the Nicolaikirche accuses the government in a sermon of spying on pastors; he subsequently is jailed for 23 weeks.
- 1667 (9 January) upon petition from the Berlin council, the Elector restores Gerhardt to his prior office at the Nicolaikirche; the official bringing Gerhardt the news informs him that even though he was granted an exception to subscribing to the Edict in writing, he is nonetheless expected to conform to it.
- 1667 (19 January) Gerhardt writes to his employer, the city council, asking for a clarification of the Elector's action and its meaning for himself.
- 1667 (22 January) the city council sends Gerhardt the official minutes of the 9 January meeting with the Elector, which do not mention the expectation transmitted to him orally.
- 1667 (26 January) Gerhardt requests the city council to intercede for him a final time, stating that he cannot perform his duties with good conscience if he is not free to adhere to the Lutheran confessions, including the Formula of Concord.
- 1667 (4 February) the Elector instructs the council to declare Gerhardt's post vacant if he is not willing to fulfil his duties. The council prevaricates for several months while officials try to save Gerhardt's job.
- 1667 (6 June) upon pressure from the nobility, the requirement for pastors to subscribe to the Edict is lifted; but adherence to it is still expected, and civil servants are now required to report pastors who violate it.
- 1667 (autumn) a new pastor is called to fill the position of second deacon, but does not plan to arrive until the following year. The Elector makes a temporary appointment to fill the vacancy, but the city council locks the doors of the church so he cannot conduct services.
- 1668 (February) Gerhardt writes "Wer selig stirbt, stirbt nicht" upon the death of a city councillor.
- 1668 (5 March) Anna Maria Gerhardt dies at age 46 after a long illness, probably tuberculosis, having been married 13 years.
- 1668 (summer) the archdeacon of the Nicolaikirche is dismissed and exiled after refusing absolution and communion to the new provost, who had signed the Edict.

- 1668 (15 August) Johann Ernst Schrader is installed to fill Gerhardt's position as first deacon; within a few months he is promoted to archdeacon.
- 1668 Johann Georg Ebeling accepts a position in Stettin as cantor and professor of Greek; he dies in 1676 at age 40.

### **Lübben**

- 1668 (20 September) The 62-year-old Gerhardt is invited to apply for the position of archdeacon at Lübben.
- 1668 (14 October) Gerhardt preaches an audition sermon in Lübben. The next day he indicates his willingness to accept a call, should it be offered.
- 1668 (29 October) Gerhardt is issued a call to Lübben.
- 1668 (4 November) Gerhardt accepts the call, but delays moving until the archdeaconage, which had fallen into disrepair during the war, can be repaired and enlarged. In the meantime, though, he travels from Berlin to fill in as preacher at Christmas 1668 and Easter 1669.
- 1669 (6 June) Gerhardt moves to Lübben with his son and household, which includes his widowed sister-in-law, who manages the house, and her son, a theology student. In Berlin Gerhardt also had at least three servants, but it is not clear whether they moved with him.
- 1669 (16 June) Gerhardt is installed as archdeacon. At first he is paid poorly and late due to the economy having been devastated by the war.
- 1673 A complaint is issued against Gerhardt that he has cancelled midweek sermons. He responds that he has done so on account of his advanced age. The consistory instructs Gerhardt to procure a substitute if necessary. Gerhardt protests the decision to the duke. The consistory thereupon accuses Gerhardt of obstinacy, negligence, and dereliction of duty.
- 1674 (27 May) Gerhardt's sister-in-law is buried.
- 1675 Gerhardt contributes a 3-stanza poem ("Tapfre Leute soll man loben") to Samuel Sturm's collection *Lob und Trauerreden*; this is the last datable poem by Gerhardt.
- 1676 (27 May) Paul Gerhardt dies and is buried in the Lübben church.
- 1678 Paul Friedrich Gerhardt, aged 18, begins theological study in Wittenberg; he dies in 1716.

1. Go forth, my soul, re-joice and sing, your Mak-er's prais-es  
 2. The trees are thick and with leaves, and earth o'er all her  
 3. The thrill-ing lark as-cends the sky, the dove for-sakes her

ech - o - ing a - mid the sum - mer's treas-ure; be - hold the flow-er -  
 dust now weaves a robe of green ten - der; with tu - lip and nar -  
 tower on high, swift to the woods re - fir - ing; the rich - ly gift - ed

lad - en sus - dressed in the woods and wilds their boun - teous yields dis -  
 night - in - gale pours forth her notes fin - er than hill and vale, de -

play - ing for our play - ing for our pleas - ure.  
 Sol - o - mon in Sol - o - mon in splen - dour.  
 light her song in - de - light her song in - spir - ing.

4. The clucking hen leads forth her brood,  
the sparrow gives her children food,  
the stork protects her dwelling;  
the stag and doe, with footsteps light,  
come bounding from the neighb'ring height,  
joy in their movements telling.
5. The brooklets murmur in the sand,  
surrounded there on either hand  
by myrtle deep in shadow;  
the shepherds and the sheep rejoice,  
in joyful mirth they send their voice  
across the bounding meadow.
6. Th'unwearing bees, on busy wing,  
from flower to flower fit murmuring,  
and seek their honeyed treasure;  
while on the vine, from day to day,  
new strength the tender shoots display,  
each day increase in measure.
7. Green ears the cornstalks now unfold,  
and all rejoice, both young and old,  
the God of harvest praising;  
from whom this rich abundance flows,  
who every precious gift bestows,  
our hearts with gladness raising.
8. Nor can I rest when all around  
such great and wondrous works abound,  
their Maker's goodness showing;  
when heaven and earth their praises swell,  
and field and wood God's glory tell,  
I join in praise o'erflowing.
9. Such beauty all around I see;  
if this be earth, I eagerly  
await the coming splendour.  
If worldly scenes delight us so,  
to heaven I would gladly go  
and there my praises render.
10. What high delight, what joyful glee  
in Christ's own garden must there be,  
what sounds forever ringing,  
where thousand seraph hosts rejoice,  
with ceaseless and unwearied voice  
their hallelujahs singing!
11. Oh, that with God's exulting band  
I even now might take my stand,  
with them might now adore Him,  
and, bearing high victorious palms,  
sing praise in thousand joyful psalms,  
as angels do before Him!
12. Nor will I, while I here remain  
and bear this yoke of flesh, refrain  
from praises and thanksgiving:  
my heart, in this and every place,  
shall magnify Your lavish grace  
as long as I am living.
13. Bless me with blessings from above,  
and cause the fruits of faith and love  
to grow in me and flourish;  
oh, may the summer of Your grace  
make fruitful each unfruitful place  
and every virtue nourish.
14. Make for Your Spirit ample room,  
that thus I may forever bloom,  
like plants that root have taken;  
oh, let me in Your garden be  
a flourishing and righteous tree,  
which never shall be shaken.
15. Elect me then to paradise,  
let soul and body, till I rise  
still flourish, tiring never;  
in You alone I shall abide,  
Your glory serve, and none beside,  
both here and there for ever.

*Translation by Joseph Herl*

# Paul Gerhardt as a Teacher of Lutheran Spirituality, pt 1\*

John W. Kleinig

## 1. Singing with Devotion

IN 1664 PAUL GERHARDT WROTE A SHORT POEM as a foreword to a book of poems by his fellow poet and close friend Joachim Pauli. It goes like this:

In the circle of the living	In his circle every singer
Each man works at his own craft,	Who has made a skilful song
Which, he knows, is duly fruitful;	As a present to his Maker
Yet the one that gains most praise	Will receive his due reward;
Brings high honour to his God	But the best is he who sings
With the songs that praise his name.	With devotion in his song. <sup>1</sup>

In this charming little poem of two verses Gerhardt claims that all those craftsmen who work diligently at their craft, no matter what it may be, reap the fruit of their work if they stick at it. They all get their due recognition. But those poets who honour God by singing His praises receive the highest praise of all. Then Gerhardt goes one step further than that. While God is pleased with all those religious poets who sing His praises with well-crafted songs as an offering to Him their Creator, He is most pleased with those who sing them with devotion.

\* Presented at the Paul Gerhardt Symposium, hosted by Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, Ontario, 7 May 2007.

<sup>1</sup> See EBERHARD VON CRANACH-SICHART, *Paul Gerhardt: Wach auf, mein Herz, und singe. Vollständige Ausgabe seiner Lieder und Gedichte*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Brockhaus: Wuppertal, 2007), number 48. Henceforth each song will be cited as ECS with the number assigned to it in this collection. His songs will also be cited with the letters PW with the number assigned to it in the well-known but now incomplete collection compiled by PHILIPP WACKERNAGEL, *Paulus Gerhardts geistliche Lieder* (Stuttgart: Samuel Gottlieb Liesching, 1861). This is my translation. The German text is:

Unter allen, die da leben,	Unter denen, die da singen
Hat ein jeder seinen Fleiss	Und mit wohlgefasster Kunst
Und weiss dessen Frucht zu geben;	Ihrem Schöpfer Opfer bringen,
Doch hat der den grössten Preis,	Hat ein jeder seine Gunst;
Der dem Höchsten Ehre bringt	Doch ist der am besten dran,
Und von Gottes Namen singt.	Der mit Andacht singen kann.

In this Gerhardt tells us something about his own work as a song maker and singer. Singing with devotion is the hallmark of the songs that he composed, the reason why they still sing for us today and touch us so deeply. As a devotional hymn writer he is one of the outstanding teachers of Lutheran spirituality. His songs help us in our practice of evangelical spirituality. Yet that is not a word that Gerhardt and his contemporaries ever used. The term that they used was piety (Latin: *pietas*), godliness (German: *Gottseligkeit*).<sup>2</sup>

Gerhardt was part of a profound devotional movement that swept through the Lutheran churches of Germany in the first half of the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> This movement promoted a practice of piety that was characterized by personal devotion to Jesus. Unlike the later Pietists, its advocates held that liturgy and piety went hand in hand together. They linked orthodoxy in teaching with orthopraxy in corporate worship and personal devotions. The focus of their teaching on piety was the mystical union, from heart to heart, of Christ with each faithful Christian.<sup>4</sup> The leading lights of that devotional movement worked hard to forge a distinctive kind of evangelical piety for themselves and their Lutheran congregations, a piety that focussed on reception rather than performance. Its most obvious instigator and advocate was Johann Arndt in his best-selling book, *True Christianity*, which came out in seven volumes from 1605 to 1610. Its impact was huge. His influence on Paul Gerhardt is evident from the six songs that were inspired by Arndt's devotions in a book called the *Little Garden of Paradise*. Arndt was followed by his friend Johann Gerhard, the greatest Lutheran teacher of theology in that century. He wrote two influential treatises, a book that was meant to teach the art of meditation called *Sacred Meditations* (1606)<sup>5</sup> and a handbook on Lutheran

<sup>2</sup> See the use of this term in Acts 3:12; I Tim. 2:2; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5,6 ,11; II Tim. 3:5; Tit. 1:1; II Pet. 1:3, 6; 3:11.

<sup>3</sup> See UDO STRÄTER, *Meditation und Kirchenreform in der lutherischen Kirche des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> It is significant that the leading teacher of theology at Wittenberg during the time that Gerhardt studied there, Johann Hülsemann, seems to have been the theologian that introduced the topic of the mystical union into dogmatic theology. See CHRISTIAN BUNNERS, *Paul Gerhardt: Weg-Werk-Wirkung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 186.

<sup>5</sup> This work was so popular that by 1700 it had appeared in at least 115 editions in 12 different languages. An English translation of it by C. W. Heisler, which was published in 1896 by the Lutheran Publication Society, Philadelphia, has been reissued by Matthew Harrison with the original Latin text by Concordia Theological Seminary Press, Fort Wayne, Indiana.



spirituality called *The School of Piety* (1622).<sup>6</sup> These two men were not isolated examples but were surrounded by many other teachers and preachers,<sup>7</sup> musicians and hymn writers,<sup>8</sup> who joined with them in this project.

Most of this work on Lutheran spirituality has been lost due to the ravages of the Enlightenment and its split of the head from the heart and the body. Even those of us who claim to be the heirs of Lutheran orthodoxy know far too little about this aspect of our heritage. The little that we know has come down to us in the few hymns of Gerhardt that are found in our hymnals, such as “O Sacred Head” or “Now Rest Beneath Night’s Shadows”. In this paper I would like to explore what we can learn from Gerhardt about the place of meditation and prayer in Lutheran piety. He presents us with a brand of receptive piety that is scriptural, liturgical, sacramental, physical, and joyful.

### **a. Scriptural Piety**

In Colossians 3:16 Paul urges his hearers to let the Word of Christ dwell richly in them, so that it would produce songs in which they teach each other the Gospel communally and respond to the Gospel devotionally. This is what Paul Gerhardt does with his hymns. They do not just arise from meditating and praying scripturally; they, too, teach those who sing them to meditate scripturally and to pray scripturally. They get people to use God’s Word to sing His grace and His Holy Spirit into their hearts. They show them how to exercise their faith in Christ and His Word. By his meditations on God’s Word he teaches the art of meditation.

This happens in a number of different ways. First, many of his songs simply paraphrase Scripture. The most obvious instances of this are his metrical psalms. In all, he recasts 26 psalms in metrical form for singing in the church.<sup>9</sup> This seems to have been part of a deliberate project to get people to sing the Psalter, liturgically and devotionally, because he does not provide versions of those psalms that Luther had already paraphrased. Besides these psalms, he also composed extended paraphrases of other parts of the Bible, such as Paul’s confession of faith in God’s grace in Romans 8

<sup>6</sup> JOHANN GERHARDT, *Schola Pietatis* (Jena: Tobias Steinmann, 1622).

<sup>7</sup> See LUDWIG DUNTE, *Übung des rechtmässigen Christentums* (Lübeck, 1630); and JOHANN SCHMIDT, *Zelus Pietatis* (Stassburg, 1641).

<sup>8</sup> The most noteworthy and most influential teachers of this new Lutheran spirituality were hymn writers such as Philipp Nicolai, Valerius Herberger, Johann Hermann, Johann Meyfart, and Georg Neumark.

<sup>9</sup> They are 1, 13 (2x), 23, 25, 27, 30, 34, 39, 42, 49, 52, 62, 71, 73, 85, 90, 91, 103, 111, 112, 116, 121, 139, 143, 145, 146.

in “If God Himself Be For Me” (*LSB* 724).<sup>10</sup> So Gerhardt, quite deliberately, turns Scripture into poetry that can be easily sung and memorized by being sung.

Second, all of Gerhardt’s hymns are prayerful meditations on texts from the Scriptures. The most artful of these is the acrostic hymn “Entrust Your Days And Burdens” (*LSB* 754), which many of you will know as “Commit Whatever Grieves Thee” (*TLH* uses the words of Psalm 37:5: “Commit/ to the Lord/ your/ way/ and/ hope/ in/ Him/; He/ will/ well/ do it” to provide the initial word for each of the twelve verses of that hymn.<sup>11</sup> While many of these songs look like versified sermons, complete with text, exposition, and application, they do not address people with God’s Word, but use God’s Word to evoke the response of faith in those who sing them. They are meant to arouse devotion and foster piety. In them meditation on God’s Word usually culminates in prayer, or else prayer prepares for further meditation on it.

More generally, Gerhardt’s songs are steeped in the language, contents, and imagery of the Bible, so much so that almost every phrase and sentence alludes to some passage from it. They sing God’s Word from the head into the heart and respond to it in meditation and prayer. The theological reason for this use of the Scriptures is profound and highly significant. Like his peers, Gerhardt held that God-pleasing piety, true godliness, was not produced by human effort or commitment, but by the Holy Spirit. It is a gift of the Spirit. The Spirit works in people’s hearts through God’s Word and faith in that word, for God’s Word is not just inspired by the Spirit but is also filled with His Spirit. The Word is the means of the Spirit. The Spirit does not just produce faith in the hearts of those who hear the Word; it produces meditation and prayer and song in those who pay faithful attention to it. Since it is the Spirit-filled, Spirit-giving Word of God, it is performative and productive; it is both effective and affective. Just listen to how Gerhardt himself describes this connection between the Word and the Spirit in the fourth verse of “I Will Sing My Maker’s Praises”, a verse which is omitted in all English hymnals:

<sup>10</sup> ECS 82, PW 63. See too the song of Moses in Deut. 32:1-43 (ECS 111, PW 88); Job’s confession of hope in his redeemer in 19:25-27 (ECS 130, PW 121); the prayer for moderate wealth from Prov. 30:7-9 (ECS 54, PW 41); the song of praise for a good wife in Prov. 31:10-31 (ECS 45, PW 109); the fourth servant song in Is. 52:13–53:12 (ECS 15, PW 14); God’s lament for Ephraim in Jer. 31:16-20 (ECS 67, PW 77) and Hos. 11:8-9 (ECS 68, PW 78); the call for repentance in Hos. 6:1-4 (ECS 69, PW 79); the prayer of repentance from Micah 7 (ECS 77, PW 56); a meditation on I Tim. 6:6-19 (ECS 72, PW 53); and the vision of John in Rev. 7:9-17 (ECS 134, PW 123).

<sup>11</sup> ECS 84, PW 66. The German text of the verse is: “Befiehl dem Herrn deine Wege und hoffe auf ihn, er wirds wohl machen.”

In his Word God gives His Spirit  
 To me daily as my guide,  
 As I travel on my journey  
 Through this world to be with God.  
 By His Spirit He enlightens  
 Me with faith, that radiant light,  
 Conquering the realm of darkness,  
 Breaking death and hushing hell.<sup>12</sup>

The Holy Spirit lights up the lamp of faith and keeps it alight. He speaks sweet words within us, words that encourage and empower us, words that teach us how to sing and pray, words that produce prayer to God the Father and a song of praise in our hearts.<sup>13</sup> Thus the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of piety and devotion.

So Gerhardt uses God's Word in a way that has become rather alien to us who have been so deeply steeped in generic Protestant piety. He does not use it to show us what we need to do devotionally in response to what God has done for us and in our commitment to Him. Instead, he encourages us to listen to God's Word faithfully in order to receive the Holy Spirit and all the many gifts that God offers to us, day by day, as He accompanies us and travels with us through life here on earth. He helps us who hear God's Word to see what it says, to feel its warmth, and to taste what it gives us. All his songs come from faithful meditation on God and so teach us the art of receptive meditation on God's Word.

### ***b. Liturgical Piety***

Under the influence of pietism in the eighteenth century and of the revival movements that have come in its wake, hymnody has become increasingly disconnected from the divine service in the Lutheran church. It has become privatized. Even though songs are still sung in it by the congregation, their function seems to have changed. They no longer enact the Word of God as

<sup>12</sup> ECS 99, PW 81, v.4. This is my translation. The German text is:

Seinen Geist, den edlen Führer,  
 Gibt er mir in seinem Wort,  
 Dass er werde mein Regierer  
 Durch die Welt zur Himmelsport,  
 Dass er mir mein Herz erfülle  
 Mit dem hellen Glaubenslicht,  
 Das des Todes Reich zerbricht  
 Und die Hölle selbst macht stille.  
 Alles Ding währt seine Zeit,  
 Gottes Lieb in Ewigkeit.

<sup>13</sup> See ECS 29, PW 32, v. 5, 6; ECS 82, PW 63, v. 9.

Law and Gospel and respond to it in faith, but they have become instruments of religious self-expression, or aids for spiritual ascent, as on a ladder, from earth into the heavenly realm. Even if they are still used in their traditional places in the liturgy, they no longer serve a clear liturgical function there. They are no longer based on the readings for the day and no longer relate to the whole counsel of God as it is proclaimed in the year of the church and enacted in the divine service.

At first glance Gerhardt's hymns also seem to promote religious self-expression rather than the liturgical reception of God's gifts together with the congregation, as is the case in the classical Lutheran chorales. But that is rather deceptive. His use of the "I" is corporate and inclusive, like the "I" in the psalms. It is used to speak of our common reception and experience of God's grace. It is the "I" of personal meditation and prayer. Thus his songs still make good sense if that "I" is changed to "We". So Gerhardt speaks personally to promote Lutheran liturgical piety in which faith receives what the triune God gives to each person through His Word.

The clearest evidence for this is his cycle of songs, 39 in all, that follow the liturgical year as they embed the devotional life of the faithful in the divine service. As far as I can gather, he seems to have been the first Lutheran hymn writer to set out to compose a cycle of hymns for the main parts of the liturgical year. Thus we have two hymns for Advent, the most famous of which is "O Lord, How Shall I Greet You" (*LSB* 334),<sup>14</sup> seven hymns for Christmas, three of which are included in *LSB* (360, 372, 375), a hymn for New Year's Eve and another for the Circumcision of our Lord, fourteen hymns for Lent and Holy Week, three of which are included in the *LSB* (438, 449, 453). He also composed three Easter hymns, one of which is "Awake, My Heart, With Gladness" (*LSB* 467),<sup>15</sup> three Pentecost hymns, one hymn for the Holy Trinity, and a series of six songs for the last three Sundays in the church year.<sup>16</sup>

Gerhardt's hymns clearly promote the exercise of personal liturgical piety. Their function is both liturgical and devotional; they encourage involvement in public worship as well as the practice of personal spirituality. This dual function is most evident in Gerhardt's five daily office hymns, which contain some of his finest poetry. He wrote three hymns of prayer

<sup>14</sup> ECS 1, PW 2.

<sup>15</sup> ECS 26, PW 29.

<sup>16</sup> See ECS 128, PW 112; ECS 129, PW 113; ECS 115, PW 120; ECS 130, PW 121; ECS 120, PW 122; ECS 134, PW 123. In many of the Lutheran churches the last three Sundays of the church year focussed on the three last things: death, the Last Day as the day of resurrection and judgement, and eternal life in heaven.

and praise for the morning, including “The Golden Morning”,<sup>17</sup> of which four verses are given in *LSB*, beginning with “Evening And Morning” (*LSB* 726).<sup>18</sup> He also composed two hymns of meditation, prayer, and praise for the evening, including the one that is perhaps still his best loved song, “Now Rest Beneath Night’s Shadows” (*LSB* 880). All of these songs function equally well as songs for Matins and Vespers, for morning and evening prayer and praise at the family altar as taught in Luther’s Small Catechism, and for daily personal devotions. They envisage each day as our whole life in miniature, a life in which we rise with Christ and die with Him, a life that is marked by the daily thanksgiving and prayer, daily reception of God’s gifts and repentance for sin, and daily reliance on protection from Satan and daily commitment to God. Their riches and beauty have yet to be discovered and appropriated by us English-speaking Lutherans.

### c. Sacramental Piety

Gerhardt teaches Lutheran sacramental piety, a piety that presupposes regular participation in the divine service. His songs help those who sing them to meditate on the sacraments and connect all aspects of Christian teaching and life with them.

Thus we have a hymn of twelve verses in which he meditates on the benefits of Holy Baptism, called “All Christians Who Have Been Baptised”.<sup>19</sup> This didactic song addresses God’s people personally as single person, “you”. It begins with a call for me, named as I have been by Christ, to consider the blessings of my Baptism (v. 1). This is followed by a meditation on original sin, its devastating effect of me, and my consequent imprisonment by Satan (vv. 2-4). All this was ended, I am told, by my release from the dominion of Satan, my adoption as God’s son and heir, and my investiture with Christ and His holiness in Baptism (vv. 5-8). Then Baptism itself is praised for its wonder-working power which comes from God’s creative Word and his life-giving Spirit (vv. 9-10). The last two verses of the song call on me to prize my Baptism with thanksgiving for the nourishment that it brings as long as I live, and to use it well by living out my life on earth as a person who been cleansed by Christ and destined for divine honours at my investiture in a royal robe for eternal celebration in the palace of the heavenly king (vv. 11-12).

<sup>17</sup> ECS 37, PW 98.

<sup>18</sup> See also the fine translation of six verses of Gerhardt’s “Morgenlied” (ECS 36, PW 100) by Friedemann Hebart from one of these, “Praise God the Saviour” in *Lutheran Hymnal with Supplement* (Adelaide: Openbook Publishers, 1989), 890.

<sup>19</sup> ECS 33, PW 33. Six of its twelve verses have been included in *LSB* 596.

That meditation on the benefits of Baptism is matched by a prayerful meditation on the Lord's Supper.<sup>20</sup> In this song the accent falls on the provision of rest for the troubled heart in Holy Communion. This meditative prayer begins with an admission that whenever my heart is not fixed on what Christ has won for me by his suffering and death, Satan uses my uneasy, guilty conscience to confuse me and draw me away from Christ (vv. 1-2). To counter the devil's demoralizing attacks on me, Christ hosts the meal in which He gives me His body that was put to death for me and His blood that was shed in payment for my guilt, so that I may remember Him and His faithfulness to me as my redeemer (vv. 3-4). So, whenever I receive His body and blood, I contemplate His longing for me and my salvation that is evident in three things, His suffering for me, His payment of His body and blood as a lasting ransom for me to God the Father, and His gift of them to me as a pledge of His acceptance of me (vv. 5-7). The meditation culminates in a call for all, including those whom Satan has led astray, to receive rest for themselves from Christ in the Sacrament. It concludes with a prayer for healing and for hunger and thirst for the Sacrament as a prelude to my final ennoblement by Him as a prince in His heavenly palace (v. 8).

While Gerhardt wrote only two songs on the sacraments, he mentions them and alludes to them much more often than we can ascertain from our English translations. Thus in his lovely hymn for the invocation of the Holy Spirit, "Zeuch ein zu deinen Toren", he uses vivid imagery to acknowledge the work of the Spirit as life-giver and consecrator in baptism in these two verses:

You pruned my dying branches  
That could produce no wine;  
By grafting me in Jesus,  
Made me a living vine.  
In your baptismal flood  
You drowned cruel death, that tyrant,  
And made my spirit vibrant  
Through Jesus and His blood.

You give us your anointing  
Through God's most holy Word.  
You've made us priests and prophets  
And kings with Christ our Lord.  
You are the holy oil,  
The oil of consecration  
That makes us Christ's possession  
And marks us with His seal.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> ECS 34, PW 34. A fine translation of this hymn by Kurt E. Reinhardt is published by JOHN R. STEPHENSON, *The Lord's Supper*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics, vol. 12 (St. Louis: The Luther Academy, 2003), 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> ECS 29, PW 32, v.3, 4. This is my translation. The German text is:

We also find allusions to Baptism and its ongoing effect in the life of the Christian. Thus the fourth verse of his famous evening hymn: “Now Rest Beneath Night’s Shadow” alludes to Baptism as putting off the old self and putting on the new self (*TLH* 554):

To rest my body hasteth,  
 Aside its garments casteth,  
 Types of mortality;  
 These I put off and ponder  
 How Christ will give me yonder  
 A robe of glorious majesty.<sup>22</sup>

Here the act of undressing before going to bed anticipates the experience of death and interprets it as prelude to my investiture by Christ with a new glorified body in the resurrection. So Baptism interprets the experience of falling sleep, while the experience of falling asleep throws light on what happens when we die.

In his hymns Gerhardt also refers to the Lord’s Supper and alludes to it. So, for example, verses 7-9 of the hymn “A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth”<sup>23</sup> meditate on the blood that flows from the wounds of Jesus. The first four verses of this Eucharistic hymn speak about the Father’s slaughter of His Son as the sacrificial lamb. He Himself opens up the wounds of Jesus so that the blood flows from His arteries and drains His heart. In verses 5 and 6 I, the contemplative believer, embrace Jesus in devotion just as He has embraced me and I dedicate myself to Him in thanksgiving and love. Then in the last four verses my heart is depicted as a shrine for the reception and retention of Christ’s blood. This is transfused from His heart into mine.<sup>24</sup> Now, even though the Lord’s Supper is not explicitly mentioned, the lyrics

Ich war ein wilder Reben,  
 Du hast mich gut gemacht,  
 Der Tod durchdrang mein Leben,  
 Du hast ihn umgebracht  
 Und in der Tauf erstickt,  
 Als wie in einer Flute,  
 Mit dessen Tod und Blute,  
 Der uns im Tod erquickt.

Du bist das heilig Öle,  
 Dadurch gesalbet ist  
 Mein Leib und meine Seele  
 Dem Herren Jesu Christ  
 Zum wahren Eigenthum,  
 Zum Priester und Propheten,  
 Zum Kön’ge, den in Nöten  
 Gott schützt vom Heiligum.

<sup>22</sup> ECS 38, PW 102, v. 4.

<sup>23</sup> ECS 12, PW 13. All of these are missing from *LSB* 438. While verse 8 is included in *TLH* 142, it there refers to Christ rather than His blood.

<sup>24</sup> *The Lutheran Hymnal*, which translates only six of the ten verses of this hymn, obscures its sacramental orientation. It omits verses 4, 6, 7, and 9, and shifts the focus from the reception of life from Christ’s blood to the gift of life by Him through His death on the cross.

make little sense unless they are taken sacramentally.<sup>25</sup> The greatest treasure in the world is the blood of Jesus that flows from His wounds. It gives me protection in the battle, laughter in sorrow, music in celebration. It provides manna when all other food has become tasteless, gives drink to quench thirst, and speaks to me in my loneliness. The blood of Jesus offers me life in the face of death, shelter in times of heat, relief from the pain of depression, and an anchor in the storms of life. But best of all it covers me as with a purple robe and the crown of a queen for my appearance with Christ as His bride before the heavenly Father. All this imagery is inappropriate and overblown unless it refers to the reception of Christ's blood in Holy Communion.

More broadly, all the language of the mystical union and communion between Christ and the believer is based on Christ's gift of Himself in love in Holy Communion. Similarly Gerhardt's talk about "tasting" the sweetness of God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit arises from meditation on the significance of the Lord's Supper for the spiritual life.<sup>26</sup>

#### **d. Physical Piety**

The songs of Gerhardt present us with a kind of piety that is alien to our dissociated modern sensibility and our discarnate post-modern cyber-sensibility. It is much more physical and yet also more spiritual, much more this worldly and yet more other-worldly than our religious poetry. It presupposes a holistic way of knowing and experiencing that integrates the body as a physical entity with the mind as the seat of thought and emotion and with the heart as the seat of the human soul. So curiously it gives far greater weight to the physical realm than we do in our preaching and teaching.

Gerhardt's songs are intensely physical. Their distinctive feature is his poetic appeal to our whole imagination. By imagination I refer to the use of verbal imagery in his poetry to evoke the five senses: sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing. The senses were important to him, because, like most of his contemporaries, he held that the natural realm, the realm of creation, was God's work of art in which He communicated His goodness and blessings physically and mentally to those who were properly disposed to receive them. So both in the church and in the world God uses created things to reach out to us physically in our bodily existence.

In his hymns Gerhardt regards our senses as organs for the reception of God's gifts. In one of his morning songs, "Lobet den Herren", he calls on us

<sup>25</sup> For this sacramental interpretation, see ELKE AXMACHER, *Johann Arndt und Paul Gerhardt* (Tübingen: Franke Verlag, 2001), 209-32.

<sup>26</sup> ECS 29, PW 32 v. 2; ECS 51, PW 35 v. 12; ECS 105, PW 91 v. 4.



to praise God for the newly awakened senses that we have as a gift from God for our enjoyment of our daily lives.<sup>27</sup> God has not just given us our five senses to discover the world around us; their God-given purpose is to find joy in all the good things that he gives us for our enjoyment and delight in God Himself as our loving benefactor. Thus in his marvellous “Summer Song” he encourages himself to seek joy and delight in the natural world because God uses the coming of spring to “awaken” all his five senses. He says:

I cannot rest, I must not rest,  
 When these great deeds from my great God  
 Awaken all my senses.  
 I too must sing when all things sing  
 And let my song flow from my heart  
 To God on high in heaven.<sup>28</sup>

God uses our senses to set our hearts rejoicing, so that we can use our “delighted senses”, already now in this life, to please Him physically and to praise Him verbally.<sup>29</sup> Sadly our senses are so darkened, deluded, and

<sup>27</sup> ECS 36, PW 100, v.3. The English translation of the two relevant verses in the Australian *Lutheran Hymnal with Supplement* (Adelaide: Openbook Publishers, 1989), 890, is:

Lord, you have made us, and the life you gave us  
 all night was safely in your care and keeping.  
 You have awakened us with joy from sleeping:  
 Praise God the Saviour.

That we can daily  
 use our senses freely,  
 our hands and feet, our tongue and lips at leisure  
 All this we owe to his most gracious pleasure:  
 Praise God the Saviour.

<sup>28</sup> ECS 40, PW 103, v. 8. This is my own translation of that verse. The German text is:

Ich selbst kann und mag nicht ruhn;  
 Des grossen Gottes grosses Tun  
 Erweckt mir alle Sinnen;  
 Ich singe mit, wenn alles singt,  
 Und lasse, was dem Höchsten klingt,  
 Aus meinem Herzen rinnen.

<sup>29</sup> ECS 100, PW 82, v. 14. This comes from a wonderful song that thanks God for the gift of good health, for only if our bodies are healthy can we use our senses properly. Here is my translation of the first two and the last two verses of this song:

disturbed that our hearts do not rightly receive the blessings that God showers on us day by day. Sin and the envy of Satan diminish our capacity for enjoyment. That's why God "opens up" both our minds and our senses through the hearing of His word and the illumination of His Holy Spirit, so that we can begin to take in and enjoy what He so graciously gives us.<sup>30</sup> So in keeping with classical teaching on the art of meditation, Gerhardt exercises all his five senses as he meditates.

Since Gerhardt was such an ardent exponent of orthodox Lutheran theology and such a fierce defender of the Formula of Concord, we would expect him as a poet to privilege the sense of hearing in his songs. It is true that he does repeatedly urge us to listen to the voice of God as it addresses us personally. But that is not at all as frequent as the call to see what God says to us and to envisage what He gives us. He communicates his theology affectively mainly by the use of vivid Biblical images which evoke a vision of God's gracious and paradoxical involvement with us in our lives. Let me give just one case of this that appeals to me most vividly. In his song about the coming of spring Gerhardt is amazed at how God dresses up the

Let us, if we have good health,  
 Raise our hearts with gladness;  
 Let us lift our voices high  
 For God's lavish goodness,  
 Thanking Him with healthy songs,  
 Daily, nightly, always,  
 Since He has provided us  
 With our healthy members.  
 Healthy body, healthy blood,  
 Make for life's enjoyment.  
 If we have this gift from God,  
 That's enough for living  
 Well and cheerful here on earth,  
 Since we have a foretaste  
 Of still better things to come,  
 Kept for us in heaven.

So as long as I still have  
 Life and breath within me,  
 Help me to begin to use  
 Every breath to praise You.  
 Help me use my healthy mouth  
 And delighted senses  
 Always with each breath I take  
 To delight and please You.  
 Keep me well and give me strength,  
 Now that I am ageing,  
 Up until the hour shall come  
 For my death and burial.  
 Grant me, while I live on earth,  
 No undue affliction  
 And then in eternity  
 Full complete enjoyment.

<sup>30</sup> ECS 81, PW 61, v.10. Here is my translation of that verse:

Daily God's Word brings me life  
 as I taste the teachings  
 that all Christians long to hear  
 for their sweet refreshment.  
 Thus He opens up my mind  
 with His Holy Spirit,  
 for my senses to absorb  
 all His loving kindness.

formerly barren winter landscape with a fresh green dress.<sup>31</sup> Then his admiration for the greening of the earth moves him to pray for God's greening of him, body and soul, for the whole of his journey here on earth.<sup>32</sup> He uses the same image in a different way in his famous Advent hymn. There he promises that he will green his own heart with thanksgiving and praise as he welcomes his coming Lord.<sup>33</sup> Visual images from the Bible, like this, provide the main stimulus for his practice of meditation. Sadly, most of them are either obscured or lost in our English translations that try to copy his rhyming and attempt to communicate his concepts rather than his imagery.

In his songs Gerhardt also appeals to the sense of taste in many different and surprising ways, some of which seem rather far-fetched and perhaps even grotesque to us with our literal modern mentality. So for example, he evokes the sense of taste repeatedly by his literal and metaphorical use of the adjective "sweet".<sup>34</sup> Thus he relishes the sweet mouth of Jesus that tastes much better than wine and milk and honey.<sup>35</sup> Rather strangely for us, he uses this adjective for what is pleasing to the other four senses besides the sense of taste. So he speaks about the sweet words from the mouth of Jesus.<sup>36</sup> He also enjoys the sweet touch of Christ's embrace,<sup>37</sup> and the sweet perfume of Christ's blood that smells better than wine.<sup>38</sup> He even claims that through His love Christ sweetens human suffering and pain.<sup>39</sup>

Like his contemporaries who were adept in meditation, Gerhardt also at times evokes the sense of smell and appeals to it. A startling instance of this is found in his passion hymn of devotion to the bleeding heart of Jesus as He hangs on the cross. The heart of Jesus is compared with a fragrant blooming rose. Like a rose, His open heart sheds the fragrance of its nectar in order to unite the heart of the singer with itself. It nourishes the human heart with its

<sup>31</sup> ECS 40, PW 103, v. 1, 2.

<sup>32</sup> See also ECS 61, PW 46, v. 3.

<sup>33</sup> ECS 1, PW 3, v. 2. The translation in the *LSB* changes the image by speaking about the "blooming" of the heart instead of its "greening".

<sup>34</sup> For an analysis of the use of "sweet" by Gerhardt and his contemporaries, see WALTRAUT INGBORG SAUER-GEPPERT, *Sprache und Frömmigkeit im deutschen Kirchenlied* (Kassel: Johannes Stauda Verlag, 1984), 35-50.

<sup>35</sup> ECS 6, PW 9, v. 6.

<sup>36</sup> ECS 2, PW 2, v. 8; ECS 53, PW 36, v. 6.

<sup>37</sup> ECS 5, PW 5, v. 12.

<sup>38</sup> ECS 21, PW 19, v. 3.

<sup>39</sup> ECS 21, PW 19, v. 4; ECS 82, PW 63, v. 10.

sweetness and sets it alight with its love.<sup>40</sup> The appeal to the sense of smell, like the appeal to the sense of taste, emphasizes the involvement of the body in meditation and prayer as well as the importance of reception and appreciation in the devotional life.

The most physical of all the senses is the sense of touch. Yet despite that, or, more exactly because of that, Gerhardt evokes it again and again in his hymns. One of his favourite tactile images is the use of our human hands to show affection and love, whether it be the hugging of a child by its father and in its mother's lap, or the holding of hands, or the warm embrace of two bodies. Let me give three examples of this. In his Christmas hymn "Beside Thy Manger Here I Stand" he imagines that the infant Jesus smiles and laughs with joy as he reaches out to us with His little hands.<sup>41</sup> In a hymn for New Year's Eve he compares God's protection of us to a mother who holds her frightened child in her lap during a fierce thunder storm.<sup>42</sup> The last verse of "Why Should Cross And Trial Grieve Me" prays that Jesus will embrace our resurrected bodies with His own body physically as He welcomes us into eternal life with Him.<sup>43</sup> So the sense of touch is used to communicate the physical comfort and emotional warmth<sup>44</sup> that we receive from God the Father and His Son. It affirms the incarnation and real presence of Jesus with us bodily here on earth.

### ***e. Joyful Piety***

The hymns of Paul Gerhardt inculcate a paradoxical kind of spirituality, the spirituality of the cross. They encourage us to embrace the life that comes through dying with Christ and the joy that comes through suffering with Him. Even though they vividly lament human suffering and pain and sorrow, that is not their dominant theme. Their keynote is joy. Whether times are good or bad, his songs lead us on our way through life, singing and rejoicing.

The monastic teachers of spirituality often used the picture of a ladder or a stairway to heaven in their teaching of spirituality. They spoke about the ladder of devotion by which the faithful climbed, step by step and stage by stage, from earth to heaven, the ladder by which they came closer and closer to God until they were united with Him. Amazingly, Gerhardt turns this

<sup>40</sup> ECS 23, PW 21, v. 4, 6.

<sup>41</sup> ECS 6, PW 9, v. 8.

<sup>42</sup> ECS 10, PW 12, vv. 4, 5.

<sup>43</sup> ECS 83, PW 64, v. 12.

<sup>44</sup> It is surprising how frequently he speaks about being warmed by God (e.g. ECS 20, PW 18, v. 3; ECS 21, PW 19, v. 5; ECS 23, PW 21, v. 3; ECS 63, PW 48, v. 4).

image around in the passion hymn that he devoted to the heart of the crucified Saviour. There he contemplates Jesus as He bends down and reaches out with His heart to him to bring his heart, step by step, in rejoicing up the ladder of devotion. So for Gerhardt the ladder of devotion is the ladder of joy. Here is my translation of that verse:

With all my heart I cry to you,  
 My heart that keeps my heart awake;  
 Please answer my petition!  
 Come, bend right down to open up  
 The door of my poor heart and lift  
 Me up in warm devotion  
 From step to step and joy to joy.  
 And let my heart in love and pain  
 Remain devoted to you,  
 So that I always serve you well  
 With all my heart in every place  
 And honour you for ever.<sup>45</sup>

Here Jesus is regarded as the author and agent of devotion.<sup>46</sup> This is the voice of a new kind of piety, the piety of reception, an evangelical piety that has nothing to do with spiritual self-promotion and self-advancement and everything to do with the enjoyment of God's grace and love.

So the keynote, the main theme of Gerhardt's songs, is joy. They take us on a joyful journey through life, our journey together with the crucified and

<sup>45</sup> ECS 23, PW 21, v. 5. The German text is:

Ich ruf aus aller Herzensmacht  
 Dich, Herz, in dem mein Herz erwacht,  
 Ach lass dich doch errufen!  
 Komm, beug und neige dich zu mir  
 An meines Herzens arme Tür,  
 Und zeuch mich auf die Stufen  
 Der Andacht und der Freudigkeit,  
 Gib, dass mein Herz in Lieb und Leid  
 Dein eigen sei und bleibe,  
 Dass dir es dien an allem Ort,  
 Und dir zu Ehren immerfort  
 All seine Zeit vertreibe.

<sup>46</sup> The same idea is also found in the second verse of the passion hymn that is devoted to the breast of Jesus (ECS 22, PW 20, v. 2). Here is my translation of it:

My Jesus, bend right down to me;  
 Reach out and press me to Your breast  
 And fire my heart with Your own love,  
 So that it leaves the world behind.  
 Arouse devotion in my heart  
 And harmonize my will with Yours.

risen Lord Jesus. That heavenly journey does not take us on a detour around trouble and pain, but takes us right through them. It does not offer us a way of escape from all the difficulties of human life on earth, difficulties that Gerhardt knew all too well and lamented so often. Nor does that heavenly journey bypass all that is good in this good world. Rather it takes us from blessing to blessing, blessings that we receive with thanksgiving to God as his gifts for our enjoyment. Here on earth we are His guests who live in His tent for a while and enjoy His hospitality.<sup>47</sup> Yet our journey does not end here with death. All that is good in God's good world is but a foretaste of the best that is still to come. We therefore look forward to a life of full, complete enjoyment,<sup>48</sup> eternal life in God's lovely house in heaven.<sup>49</sup>

In his songs Paul Gerhardt is one of the great teachers of Lutheran spirituality. He does not theorize about it, but actually invites us join with him as he mediates on God's Word and responds to it in prayer. He invites us to travel with him and the risen Lord Jesus on the eternal way. That way is the *Freudenbahn*, the way of joy.<sup>50</sup> It takes us from joy to joy, as we go on our way rejoicing.

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<sup>47</sup> ECS 72, PW 53, v. 2.

<sup>48</sup> See ECS 100, PW 82, v. 15.

<sup>49</sup> See ECS 74, PW 51, v. 16.

<sup>50</sup> See ECS 66, PW 50, v. 20.

# Paul Gerhardt as a Teacher of Lutheran Spirituality, pt 2\*

John W. Kleinig

## 2. Singing the Devil Away

**EACH AGE HAS ITS OWN BLIND SPOTS.** Blind spots obscure our vision, so that we just don't see what's there before us. The worst of these are our mental and spiritual blind spots. They are imposed on us by our culture with its fashionable demands for social, moral, and spiritual correctness. If we follow the demands of spiritual correctness, we choose not to see something that is presented to us by the Scriptures and confirmed by experience. We are embarrassed by any reference to that topic and ignore anything that reminds us of it.

As I read what was written about the songs of Paul Gerhardt on this the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, I have been pleasantly surprised by much of what has been said in appreciation of his songs. I have been even more surprised by the effort that these writers have made to understand Gerhardt himself, his faith, and his Lutheran vision of life. This applies even to his defiance of King Friedrich Wilhelm, who, under the pretext of religious tolerance, forbade the Lutheran pastors of his realm to teach and preach according to the Formula of Concord. Yet despite all their sympathies for him, there is one aspect of his piety that they dismiss, because they are obviously embarrassed by it. It is so embarrassing for them that they dismiss it as outdated before they explain it away. The reason for their embarrassment is his belief in Satan and his repeated reference to spiritual warfare in his songs.

Let me give you just two examples of this. The leading German Lutheran expert on Gerhardt is Christian Bunnens. He is the current president of the Paul Gerhardt Society and the author of the best book on him in German. Yet when he comes to the topic of spiritual warfare, this is all he has to say:

Suffering raises the question of "salvation" and "grace" most acutely. It seems to us as if God Himself has written us off, as if "He no longer asks how we are." Gerhardt associates this temptation with the Biblical discourse

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about Satan. For him it has to do with final annihilation. So too his discourse about hell indicates the conglomeration of all negative powers.<sup>1</sup>

On a much more popular level Frank Pauli has written a lovely little book on Gerhardt.<sup>2</sup> He ends this book with an imaginary letter to Gerhardt in which he engages with him on a number of issues. One of the things that bothers him and so, too, we would surmise, his readers, is Gerhardt's talk about Satan.<sup>3</sup> He admits that Gerhardt would find the disappearance of talk about Satan from the Protestant churches in Germany rather odd and perhaps even silly. How can we deal with evil properly if we do not name it accurately? Yet, while he acknowledges that the silence in the church about Satan impoverishes and damages the life of faith, he cannot accept Satan as anything more than a symbol of evil.

We do, indeed, have some reason to sympathize with this point of view. The unhealthy obsession that many Protestants have with demonology and the exorcism of demons does not commend the topic of spiritual warfare to us. Yet I would maintain that we as Lutherans have something unique to offer the church catholic on this topic. Luther's teaching on spiritual warfare is, I would maintain, an integral part of our piety. That is its proper context. His teaching on spiritual warfare is something that we need to recover if we are going to meet the challenge from the Pentecostals and engage effectively in evangelism at home and abroad.

Luther summed up his practice of spirituality quite succinctly and memorably in the *Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of Luther's German Writings* from 1539.<sup>4</sup> In that short essay he spoke about his three rules for the affective study of theology—*oratio*: **prayer** to God the Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit as his spiritual director; *meditatio*: **meditation** on the external Word as the means for the operation of the Holy Spirit; and *tentatio*: **temptation, spiritual attack** by Satan on those whose hearts receive God's Word and the Spirit through the Word.<sup>5</sup> The German word that Luther uses for temptation is *Anfechtung*, attack. Our experience of attack by the devil is the touchstone of genuine Christian spirituality, for, as we come under attack, we, paradoxically, “experience how right, how true, how sweet, how

<sup>1</sup> See CHRISTIAN BUNNERS, *Paul Gerhardt: Weg-Werk-Wirkung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 184.

<sup>2</sup> FRANK PAULI, *Im Himmel ist ein schönes Haus: Skizzen zu Paul Gerhardt* (Berlin: Wichern Verlag, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> See PAULI, 117f.

<sup>4</sup> See EA 34:283-393.

<sup>5</sup> See my analysis of this in “*Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio*: What Makes a Theologian?” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 66.3 (2002): 255-67.



lovely, how mighty, how comforting God's Word is, wisdom beyond wisdom."<sup>6</sup> The attacks of the devil teach us "to seek and love God's Word."

In this second address on Paul Gerhardt as a teacher of Lutheran spirituality I want first to summarize his teaching on spiritual warfare and then to examine the one song that deals with it at some length, "Rise, My Soul, Up High to God."

### **a. Silencing Satan**

In his songs Gerhardt often refers in passing to Satan and his battle against the people of God. There is little that is original in what he has to say on this topic apart from the way that he says it. He has no interest in demonology as a topic in its own right. His main concern is for competence in spiritual warfare as part of the practice of piety.

Satan is, quite simply, "the enemy of souls",<sup>7</sup> "my enemy".<sup>8</sup> He has gained his power over us through the fall of our primeval parents.<sup>9</sup> Yet even though Satan exercises his power in the world of fallen humanity, Gerhardt pays little attention to his works in the chaotic world around him as he well might have, since he lived through the terrible devastation of the 30 years war. His interest lies in the main battlefield of Satan, the conscience of the faithful, for Satan is the accuser of those who are one flesh with their blood brother, Jesus.

Satan is most crafty and devious in the tricks that he uses to attack our conscience. If we have sinned, he accuses us of falling with Adam<sup>10</sup> and acts as if he has the right to condemn us.<sup>11</sup> Once guilt sets in he fills us with the fear of death and forebodings of punishment.<sup>12</sup> He deceives us by using God's Law to condemn us, so that we deny His grace.<sup>13</sup> He attacks us, when we are most vulnerable, in the witching hours of the night.<sup>14</sup> Even if we have not sinned, he still nags and gnaws at us, like a dog on a bone, trying to draw us away from Christ by undermining our faith in Him; he spreads the fog of doubt over us, doubt about our salvation and the things that God has

<sup>6</sup> EA 34:287.

<sup>7</sup> *Seelenfeind*, ECS 4, PW 8, v. 4.

<sup>8</sup> ECS 34, PW 34, v. 2.

<sup>9</sup> ECS 31, PW 31, v. 3.

<sup>10</sup> ECS 4, PW 8, v. 4.

<sup>11</sup> ECS 81, PW 61, v. 3.

<sup>12</sup> ECS 25, PW 23, v. 5.

<sup>13</sup> ECS 2, PW 2, vv. 2-3; ECS 8, PW 6, v. 5; ECS 25, PW 23, vv. 12-14.

<sup>14</sup> ECS 35, PW 99, vv. 2-5.

instituted for our salvation, such as Baptism, the Absolution, the preaching of the Gospel, and the gift of Christ's blood.<sup>15</sup> Yet despite all that, he has so little hold on us that he has to resort to mockery and ridicule, the weapons of one who has been vanquished and disempowered.<sup>16</sup>

There is one image that recurs repeatedly in Gerhardt's depiction of spiritual warfare. Satan is an evil snake that poisons us with his sting. He injects his venom, his gall, into us, so that we become as bitter and hateful and ill-tempered as he is.<sup>17</sup> He does this in a most unusual way. With his fangs he injects his poison into the wounds that we have in our hearts and on our conscience, the wounds that we inflict on ourselves by our sin as well as the wounds that are inflicted on us by those who have injured us, such as when they slander us.<sup>18</sup> Here is how he describes Satan's attack on us:

Satan comes with his deception  
 And annuls the grace of God,  
 Just as if I too were prisoned  
 There with him in hell itself.  
 Yet still worse than that, my conscience  
 Bites and stings me like a snake.  
 He torments me in my anguish  
 With devouring toxic venom.<sup>19</sup>

The pangs of conscience are "the poisoned wounds", the toxic injuries, that Christ comes to heal with His incarnation.<sup>20</sup> Christ, the snake-treader, removes the snake's sack of venom, so that he can no longer poison us when he sinks his fangs in us.<sup>21</sup>

In all this Satan is motivated by two things. On the one hand, he hates Jesus and all those who are associated with Him; he, quite rightly, regards

<sup>15</sup> ECS 34, PW 34, v. 2.

<sup>16</sup> ECS 82, PW 63, v. 11; ECS 83, PW 64, v. 6.

<sup>17</sup> ECS 4, PW 8, v. 4.

<sup>18</sup> ECS 37, PW 98, v. 5.

<sup>19</sup> ECS 2, PW 2, v. 3. This is my own translation. The German text is:

Dazu, kommt des Teufels Lügen,  
 Der mir all Gnad absagt,  
 Als müsst ich nun ewig liegen  
 In der Höllen, die ihn plagt;  
 Ja auch, was noch ärger ist,  
 So zermartert und zerfrisst  
 Mich mein eigenes Gewissen  
 Mit vergift'nen Schlangenbissen.

<sup>20</sup> ECS 5, PW 5, v. 10.

<sup>21</sup> ECS 26, PW 27, v.3.

Jesus as such a threat to him that he shuns Him.<sup>22</sup> That's why he had his one moment of triumph when Jesus was buried in the grave, for he imagined that he was at last rid of his great enemy.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, the devil is filled with envy for the human race since God has honoured it by making it physically in his image and by exalting it physically together with Jesus over all creation.<sup>24</sup>

For all his huffing and puffing and bluffing, Satan has no power over those who are united with the risen Lord Jesus,<sup>25</sup> for just as the rising sun banishes the darkness, so Christ has vanquished him by His incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension.<sup>26</sup> Together with his cronies, sin and death and hell, the devil has been put to shame by the incarnation of God's Son.<sup>27</sup> By His death He has crushed the devil's head, like the head of a snake, and has harrowed hell.<sup>28</sup> Satan has been forced to submit to the risen Lord Jesus who binds him hand and foot and puts him under His feet.<sup>29</sup> Yet Jesus does none of this by Himself and apart from us. He took us with Him as His companions when He fought His way through sin and death and hell.<sup>30</sup> By raising us with Him as His own flesh and blood to the right hand of the Father, He has silenced the devil once and for all and has seated us safely with Him in the heavenly realm.<sup>31</sup> Through the waters of Baptism He has freed us from the shackles of Satan and has put all the armies of hell under our feet.<sup>32</sup>

Yet for all that, Satan is still not finished with us. He still uses the darkness in our hearts to attack us, the darkness of guilt and shame, anxiety and fear, pain and sorrow, resentment and hatred, doubt and despair, self-pity and depression. He uses these things to undermine our faith in God's word, to disconnect us from Jesus, and to drive the Holy Spirit from our

<sup>22</sup> ECS 82, PW 63, v. 11.

<sup>23</sup> ECS 26, PW 27, v. 2.

<sup>24</sup> ECS 4, PW 8, vv. 4-5; ECS 43, PW 106, v. 15.

<sup>25</sup> ECS 28, PW 28, vv. 6-7.

<sup>26</sup> ECS 4, PW 8, vv. 5-6.

<sup>27</sup> ECS 8, PW 6, v. 2.

<sup>28</sup> ECS 4, PW 8, v. 6; ECS 8, PW 6, v. 5.

<sup>29</sup> ECS 26, PW 27, v. 3.

<sup>30</sup> ECS 26, PW 27, v. 7.

<sup>31</sup> ECS 4, PW 8, vv. 3-5.

<sup>32</sup> ECS 33, PW 33, vv. 4-7.

hearts. We therefore are caught up in a lifelong battle against Satan who dogs and hounds us on our journey through life.<sup>33</sup>

In this battle we have two main weapons: meditation on God's Word and prayer as guided by God's Word.<sup>34</sup> As we listen to the voice of Jesus, the voice of Satan is silenced inside us.<sup>35</sup> We can also pray for the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of victory.<sup>36</sup> He keeps the lamp of faith alight in the storms of life and frees us from all that ails our hearts;<sup>37</sup> He drives away the evil spirit when he attacks us and tries to confuse us;<sup>38</sup> He gives joy and power to resist the devil and all his works.<sup>39</sup>

Just as the evil spirits join Satan in his battle against us, so God sends us His holy angels, the golden heavenly army, as our bodyguards on our journey through life.<sup>40</sup> We may therefore pray for their protection.<sup>41</sup> In this he follows Luther with his prayers for each evening and morning. The holy angels protect us at night when we are most open to spiritual attack.<sup>42</sup> So in the hymn "Now Rest Beneath Night's Shadow" we ask Jesus to post them at our bedsides as our bodyguards and to bid them to sing the devil away from us.<sup>43</sup> They also travel with us daily on our journey through life as they did with Jacob on his journey to his homeland in Canaan.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>33</sup> ECS 29, PW 32, v. 15; ECS 81, PW 61, v. 12.

<sup>34</sup> ECS 91, PW 59, v. 8.

<sup>35</sup> ECS 28, PW 28, vv. 4-6.

<sup>36</sup> ECS 31, PW 31, v. 7.

<sup>37</sup> ECS 31, PW 31, v. 8.

<sup>38</sup> ECS 29, PW 32, v. 14.

<sup>39</sup> ECS 29, PW 32, v. 15.

<sup>40</sup> ECS 2, PW, 2, v. 10.

<sup>41</sup> ECS 38, PW 102, vv. 8-9.; ECS 39, PW 101, v. 5.

<sup>42</sup> ECS 56, PW 49, v. 4; ECS 35, PW 99, vv. 2-5; ECS 36, PW 100, v. 5; ECS 39, PW 101, v. 5; ECS 38, PW 102, vv. 8-9.

<sup>43</sup> ECS 38, PW 102, v.8. See *LSB* 880, v. 4:

Lord Jesus, since you love me,  
Now spread Your wings above me,  
And shield me from alarm.  
Though Satan would devour me,  
Let angel guards sing o'er me:  
This child of God shall meet no harm.

<sup>44</sup> ECS 2, PW 2, v. 10; ECS 99, PW 81, v. 8; ECS 43, PW 106, vv. 1-11, 15.

## b. Calling the Devil's Bluff

Gerhardt wrote a remarkable song about how to deal with the devil and call his bluff in spiritual warfare. He entitled it “A Song of Comfort in Depression and Attack”.<sup>45</sup> In this song he does not begin, as we might expect, with his experience of guilt; he begins with his experience of depression. Just as joy is the hallmark of life with Christ, so depression is the evidence of a soul under attack by Satan.

The song begins with a call to his soul to renounce depression:

Rise, my soul, up high to God  
 From the pit of sadness!  
 Why remain down there, depressed?  
 Why despise his goodness?  
 Can't you see the devil's tricks,  
 Scheming to attack you?  
 He is set to fog and mute  
 Christ's good words of comfort.

Our attention is immediately arrested by what is said here. By the use of a pun, the “pit” of depression, *Höhle* in German, is associated with the “hell” of depression, *Hölle* in German. When we wallow in depression we side with Satan. Our decision to remain in that state may therefore be regarded as mockery of God, scornful disregard of Him and His goodness. So when we yield to depression and revel in it, we fall for the devil's trickery. Even though Satan does not create depression, he uses it, like a grey fog that envelops us and removes all colour from the world around us, to blot out the comfort that we have in Jesus and to mute the message of the Gospel. That's why the singer urges his gloomy soul to turn to God, as to the sun, and rise up to Him, like an eagle uplifted on a thermal current.

In the next three verses he addresses the devil and sends him packing:

I will shake my head and say:	“If you tell me I have sinned,
“Flee, you snake, you dragon!	I will answer boldly:
You can't strike me with your sting;	I don't take my lead from you
You can't make me fearful!	For my self-appraisal.
Christ has crushed your toxic head	Who has given you the right
With His painful passion.	To condemn God's people?
He has snatched me from your reach	Aren't you now already stuck
To His hall for feasting.	In hell's fiery fury?

“If I've sinned and done what's wrong,  
 Then I say I'm sorry.

<sup>45</sup> ECS 81, PW 61.

My one antidote for guilt  
 Is the blood of Jesus.  
 That's the ransom for my soul  
 From all evil-doing.  
 If I show it at God's throne,  
 I have His approval."

He defies the devil because he no longer has any power over him; he has nothing to fear from his toxic insinuations. Christ, the snake-treader, has crushed the snake's head and removed the poison from his fangs. He has snatched the believer from the reach of Satan and brought him, enraptured, to the hall of joy, the bridal hall, the Eucharistic chamber, the place for feasting and celebration where Satan cannot come.<sup>46</sup> So all Satan's efforts to discount God's approval of him and to keep him depressed are an audacious bluff, for he whom Christ has condemned to hell has no right to accuse and condemn anybody. Even if a Christian has sinned, Satan cannot use that against him, for the Christian has the blood of Jesus as his antidote to sin, the ransom for his misdeeds and the proof of God's acceptance of him.

In two vivid verses the singer then meditates on the comfort and protection that he has in Christ.

Jesus is my innocence, Righteousness and glory. He has gained for me a place Where I live in safety, Like a fortress so secure That no foe can conquer. Even hell's artillery Cannot break and take it.	Let the devil rant and rage; Death has lost its danger. God protects me from his threats With His grace and favour. Since He honours me and loves Me as He loves Jesus, All the devil's scornful taunts Will not make me gloomy.
--	---

Like a well-fortified fortress that is safe against the cannon fire of an army that besieges it, Jesus is the one safe place from Satan and all the powers of hell. Because the singer is covered with Christ's blood, everything that belongs to his blood brother Jesus, such as His innocence, His righteousness and all His achievements, belongs to him. So, since God the Father favours him and honours him together with Jesus, death has lost its power to harm him. With all this backing he therefore has good reason to dismiss the devil and his threats.

In three new verses the singer turns away from the devil and defies his ally, the world, the world of godless humanity that contradicts his faith in Jesus and in God's acceptance of him.

<sup>46</sup> This is one of Gerhardt's favourite images (e.g. ECS 1, PW 3, v. 10; ECS 29, PW 32, v. 6). It comes from the Song of Songs 2:4.

Let the crazy world shout out: "God does not accept you." That is nothing but a lie, Nothing but deception. If God were displeased with me, He would not have given All the good things I've received For my sheer enjoyment.	What in all the sky above, Or below the ocean, What is good that does not serve Me and my existence? All the stars that shine at night, All the wind and water, All that's good in all the world Is for my enrichment.
--	---

For my good the rain and dew  
Wet the earth's dry surface.  
For my good the grass grows green,  
Trees and plants all flourish.  
Yes, for me God's blessing fills  
Hills and fields and forests.  
To delight me He provides  
This good earth to house me.

The argument here is quite simple and yet effective. It runs from the lesser to the greater. Since God has given me so many good things in this good world for my bodily sustenance and enjoyment, God is not my enemy; He is not angry with me. Rather, He must be pleased with me and ready to give me still greater spiritual gifts.

The next three verses develop that rich theme.

Daily God's Word brings me life As I taste the teachings That all Christians long to hear For their sweet refreshment. Thus He opens up my mind With His Holy Spirit, For my senses to absorb All His loving kindness.	All that the apostles say, Which confirms the prophets, Is a light in a bleak place, Bright with welcome radiance, Driving shadows from my heart, Bringing me assurance With a faith that's firmly fixed By a peaceful conscience.
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On this holy ground I build  
All my thoughts and actions,  
Even though the hound of hell  
Howls and snaps against it.  
Satan cannot ever shake  
What God has established.  
Everything the devil plans  
Must collapse and vanish.

By itself the experience of all the good things in God's good creation is not enough to banish depression. It is not enough just to silence the combined message of Satan and fallen humanity. So God also gives His Word and Holy Spirit. These two work together to enlighten the mind and the heart of the singer. Through His Word God keeps on giving His Spirit,

just as the sun keeps on giving its light to those who welcome it. The Spirit enlightens the mind of the singer so that he can recognize and enjoy God as the giver of all the good things that he experiences with his five senses. Through the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures the Spirit also illumines his heart, so that he has the assurance of salvation and such a secure foundation for his faith that it not only withstands the rage of Satan, the hound of hell, but also brings about his undoing.

After setting out these things as the foundation for his *Gemüthe*, his mood, his good temper, the proper way of thinking and feeling about himself and his world, the singer tackles the practical problem of depression in its two main guises: its extreme lows and its oscillation between extreme highs and lows.

I am God's and He is mine;  
Who can ever part us?  
Even if the cross slips in  
Painfully between us,  
Let it be because it comes  
From my God who loves me,  
Making, in His time, a door  
Open up before us.

Children whom a father trains  
In what's good and wholesome,  
Seldom grow and flourish well  
Without firm correction.  
So if I am God's dear child,  
Why should I resist Him  
Who instructs me from my sins  
To receive His blessings?

God treats Christian people well  
Even in their troubles.  
Those who cry a while on earth  
Will not wail for ever.  
They will take complete delight  
In Christ's heavenly garden  
Which He has prepared for them  
For their full enjoyment.

Though God's children sow with tears  
In a time of sorrow,  
Yet at last the year brings on  
More than they have longed for.  
After winter comes the time  
To bring in the harvest;  
Then their pain and trouble bear  
Fruit in joy and laughter.

Here Gerhardt is not interested in arguing for the truth of St Paul's teaching that all things work together for good for those who love God. Rather he draws on the wisdom that comes from the practice of piety, the wisdom that is taught by God's Word and His Holy Spirit in the school of life. Those who live wisely do not dwell on the misery of depression, nor do they crave a life of untrammelled happiness. They learn the lessons of life. The spiritual sting of depression has to do with the attack of Satan upon us. He exaggerates it and uses it to propagate his message. The secret of managing depression spiritually is also the secret for the full enjoyment of life. It is the secret of the cross, the holy Easter journey through death to life, through sorrow to joy, through hell to heaven. God is equally at work in times of trouble and in times of happiness. He, in fact, uses our sins and our troubles to refine us and increase our capacity for richer and fuller and deeper enjoyment, both in this life and in the life to come.

In the last verse of the song the singer actually does what he had urged himself to do in the first verse. He renounces his depression:



So then let me take my pain,  
 My depression boldly,  
 Take and throw it all away  
 Joyfully behind me.  
 Like a candle, let me burn  
 With increased devotion,  
 Praising God for all His help,  
 For His comfort! Amen.

Comforted and strengthened by his faith in Christ, he gets rid of his sadness and pain, as if it now no longer burdened him, as if it had nothing to do with him. In a bold act of will he picks it up and throws it far behind him. He does not hold on to it, nor does he pretend that it does not bother him. He sings it away. Yet he does not just sing it away. By singing it away, he sings the devil away as well.<sup>47</sup>

### c. The Singing Heart

In Colossians 3:16 Saint Paul urges his hearers to let the Word of Christ dwell richly among them and in them, so that it may bring God's grace into their hearts and produce a heartfelt song of thanksgiving and praise to God the Father. Gerhardt and his contemporaries therefore rightly concluded that the practice of piety included the song of the heart. They maintained that *Kirchengesang*, singing the psalms of the Old Testament and the hymns of the church, was meant to produce *Seelengesang*, the song of the soul, "spiritual songs". Gerhardt is a great teacher of Lutheran spirituality because he composed devotional songs that were both hymns of the church and songs of the heart.

Gerhardt's songs teach our hearts to sing at all times and in all places. His songs sing the word of Christ and the Holy Spirit into our hearts, so that they set our hearts singing. Whether we are awake or asleep, they sing the song of Jesus. Whether we lament or rejoice, they keep on singing about the grace of God the Father. They sing in summer and in winter, in prosperity and adversity, in our highs and in our lows, in health and in sickness, in life and in death. Here on earth they begin to sing the song that never ends. And as they sing, they sing the devil away, for he has no hold on the heart that is devoted to Jesus.

<sup>47</sup> See ECS 137, v. 1. There Gerhardt claims that whenever David became distempered and despondent from the attack of the Enemy on his heart, he routed the Enemy by singing a song of praise to God.

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## Paul Gerhardt's Confession of Christ in Song

Gerald Krispin

IN THIS ANNIVERSARY YEAR of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Paul Gerhardt's birth, many symposia such as this are being staged. In all of these, Gerhardt is celebrated as the most endearing of hymn writers, a man acquainted with sorrow and suffering, yet who wrote hymns that helped him and others overcome the crises of life and faith. He is a man of deep piety, a singer of a joyful and steadfast faith. Doubtless many Lutherans are familiar with his hymns, since a significant number occur in the major Lutheran hymnals, many of which are frequently sung during the church year. Yet while his hymns are known, Paul Gerhardt himself shares largely in the anonymity of the vast majority of hymn writers who are but footnotes of acknowledgment within the hymnbooks containing their work; the life and thought of writers and composers behind the hymns remains largely the domain of hymnologists and liturgical scholars. At best the layperson has available to him anecdotal stories, which unhappily are often more apocryphal than factual.

This state of affairs is already lamented by Hermann Petrich, who in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century wrote the first scholarly biography of Paul Gerhardt. Petrich noted that such stories arose within the work of various well-meaning 18<sup>th</sup>-century writers, whose purpose in writing was to be more inspirational than informative. Unhappily their pious fictions were uncritically received as facts by later 19<sup>th</sup>-century writers. Nor were these, or later 20<sup>th</sup>-century writers, immune from recreating a Paul Gerhardt in their own theological image. He was consequently seen by some to have donned the mantle of Johann Arndt's mysticism, only to emerge as a precursor to Pietism, and is often celebrated as such.

Others made the rather disingenuous attempt to dissociate Paul Gerhardt the hymn writer from Paul Gerhardt the ardent defender of Lutheran orthodoxy, deeming the latter to be the result of a rather unhappy infliction upon a rather impressionable soul by the polemical spirit of the times. In other words, there existed an unknown dark side to Paul Gerhardt. This is a Gerhardt who had been forced to drink the vitriol of the Formula of Concord from his youth, which had scarred him with its execrations and acerbic spirit.<sup>1</sup> This is the unknown and best-forgotten Gerhardt, who

<sup>1</sup> Paul Wernle, in a not un-partisan spirit, makes the comment that it is "the purest hereticating spirit of Luther and those of Wittenberg which one can perceive here." PAUL

exuded malevolent religious intolerance in his preaching and writing, especially with respect to the Reformed Calvinists of his day.<sup>2</sup> At best, this side of Paul Gerhardt is lamented as the sad legacy of Lutheran polemical theology of which he was himself a victim; yet his hymns prove that one can even be healed from wounds as deep as those inflicted by religious strife and intolerance. It was therefore argued that only in his hymnody, which was deemed happily divested of the acrimonious tendencies within Lutheran theology, was the true evangelical Gerhardt able to come to the fore; and only such a Gerhardt would be palatable in keeping with the spirit of more tolerant and ecumenical times.

Yet a Paul Gerhardt purged of his Lutheran orthodox faith never lived nor ever wrote any hymn. It is the contention of this paper that Gerhardt's perceived "dark side" was in fact the very source of his joyful, pastoral, and endearing hymnody; in other words, that it was precisely the confessional certainty of the Book of Concord as a whole, and the definitive confessional position of the Formula of Concord in particular, that gave Gerhardt the foundation that made his joyful and enduring hymnody possible. This will be proven as especially evident in Paul Gerhardt's confession of Christ in his songs and in his confession of Christ in the sacraments.

## Paul Gerhardt's Confession of Christ in Song

The polemics of the Thirty Years War in particular overshadow practically all of Gerhardt's life, from his school-days at Grimma, his studies at Wittenberg, to his initial sojourn in Berlin as a live-in tutor. The war had also precluded his receiving a call into the Holy Ministry until he was finally called to be provost in Mittenwalde in 1651 at the age of forty-four. Yet precisely these years of waiting in Berlin, followed by his years at

WERNLE, *Paulus Gerhardt* (Tübingen: J.C.B.Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1907), 14. The "here" refers to Gerhardt's writings in the context of the Berlin Colloquies of 1666 that will be discussed below. All translations from the German sources quoted in this paper are my own.

<sup>2</sup> This judgement prevailed and prevails to the present. Fr. W. Krummacher, during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century put the matter in the following light: "But the well-intentioned endeavours [of the Reformed elector Friedrich Wilhelm] were frustrated by the recalcitrance of the Lutheran theologians." Paul Gerhardt was their secretary and the object of this evaluation. FR. W. KRUMMACHER, "Paul Gerhardt", *Die Zeugen der Wahrheit*, ed. Ferdinand Piper, 4 vols (Leipzig: Verlag von Bernhardt Tauchnitz, 1875), 4:446. More recently this lament was struck again: "Among those who were not able to obey the commandment of Christian love for their enemies was our Gerhardt ...." WALTER FREI, "Gedanken zum 300. Todestag von Paul Gerhardt", *Reformatio* 25 (1976): 335.

Mittenwalde, provided Gerhardt with the quietude in which he was able to write much of his hymnody.

It was while he was employed as a tutor in Berlin that the first 18 hymns of Paul Gerhardt appeared in the 1648 edition of Johann Crüger's *Praxis pietatis melica*.<sup>3</sup> The most well-known among them (from an English-speaking perspective) are the Passion hymns "A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth" and "Upon the Cross Extended"; the Easter hymn "Awake My heart with Gladness", and his Evening hymn, "Now Rest Beneath Night's Shadows".<sup>4</sup> Whether these and the other fourteen had earlier been circulated as tracts, either individually or in combination, is difficult to determine. Nor is it possible even to speculate as to any specific historical circumstances that led to their composition as a result. It seems unlikely that they were written all at once; yet, whatever the specific occasion for their composition was will remain a mystery. No manuscripts have survived. With the printed version found in the *Praxis pietatis melica* they make their first appearance, outfitted with specifically-composed melodies by Johann Crüger; in this rather non-circumstantial manner Gerhardt thus begins his entry into the hearts and minds of the German Lutheran church as the most celebrated writer of Lutheran hymns after Martin Luther.

To the first eighteen hymns found in the 1648 edition of the *Praxis Pietatis melica* a further 63 were added within four years to its 5<sup>th</sup> edition. During these years Gerhardt had finally been called to be a pastor in the near-by village of Mittenwalde. However, whether these new hymns were all written by Gerhardt while still in Berlin, or during the years of his first pastorate in Mittenwalde, is difficult to say. What can be said is that it was at this point

<sup>3</sup> Arnold Schering mentions editions of the *Praxis pietatis* not noted by other authors. According to Schering the first edition appeared in 1644; the second in 1647. Both appeared lost when Schering wrote in 1930, though the title page of the 1647 edition cited by Fischer/Tümpel above indicates that something of these books must have survived into the late 19th century. However, he does not indicate what hymns of Gerhardt, if any, were in the lost 1644 first edition. Thus, whether first, or second, the 1647 edition is the first known to include the first of Gerhardt's 18 hymns. In his reckoning, a third edition already appeared in 1648. ARNOLD SCHERING, "Evangelische Kirchenmusik", *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte*, ed. Guido Adler, 3 vols, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1930), 2:465.

<sup>4</sup> The 18 hymns included were the following: "Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld"; "O Welt, sieh hier dein Leben"; "Auf, auf mein Herz mit Freuden"; "O du allerüßte Freude"; "Wach auf, mein Herz und singe; Nun ruhen alle Wälder"; "Nun danket all und bringet Her"; "Ich habe in Gottes Herz und Sinn"; "Nicht so traurig, nicht so sehr"; "Herr, höre, was mein Mund"; "Ich erhebe, Herr, zu dir"; "Mein Gott, ich habe mir"; "Nach dir, o Herr, verlanget mich"; "O Gott, mein Schöpfer, edler Fürst"; "O Mensch, beweine deine Sünd"; "Warum machet solche Schmerzen"; "Weg, mein Herz, mit den Gedanken"; "Zweierlei bitt ich von dir".

that the first hand-written document that can be attributed to Paul Gerhardt appears: this was his ordination vow, the confessional subscription he made as he was ordained by his future brother-in-law, Jakob Fromm, in Berlin in 1651. The ordination book bears the entry of his ordination on 18 November 1651 in his own hand:

In the name of the holy and indivisible Trinity. Amen. I confess and promise to preach and defend the teaching which is contained in the first and not in the smallest bit Unaltered Augsburg Confession and its Apology, the Smalcald Articles, both Catechisms of Luther and the Formula of Concord, that is, the entire Book of Concord, which are supported by the clearest and most firm witnesses of the prophetic and apostolic writings and with the help of divine grace I intend and will steadfastly persevere in this faith until the end of my life.

Paul Gerhardt  
Called prior of the church of Mittenwalde  
on this day of my ordination,  
the 18<sup>th</sup> of November, 1651.<sup>5</sup>

What is clearly expressed here is that the Lutheran confessions were, in fact, the bedrock upon which Gerhardt's faith was built, and consequently the same foundation upon which his hymnody was established.<sup>6</sup> It would therefore be contrary to fact to laud Gerhardt for having overcome and broken down the dogmatic barriers of Lutheran Orthodoxy with his hymnody. For Gerhardt there could not be a confession of the mouth without the corresponding faith of the heart.<sup>7</sup> He was able to compose his

<sup>5</sup> EBERHARD VON CRANACH-SICHART, *Paul Gerhardt Dichtungen und Schriften* (Munich: Verlag Paul Müller, 1957), 474. All the numbers in the text next to the German hymn stanzas reflect the numbering of this edition of Gerhardt's hymns. Cf. [K?], "Paul Gerhardt der Bekenner," *Lehre und Wehre* 2 (1907): 54. Both offer a German translation for Gerhardt's Ordination entry.

<sup>6</sup> Nelle, who earlier had ascribed extra-confessionalism to Gerhardt, concedes that the Lutheran confessions are the source of his hymnody: "in his poetic activity [Gerhardt appears] ever and again as the man for whom the Reformational confession is the source of the entire spiritual life, who neither can nor wants to go beyond the content of this confession." NELLE, *Paul Gerhardts Lieder und Gedichte*, XLI. Cf. DR. GEBHARDT, "Paul Gerhardt, der Sänger des fröhlichen Glaubens", *Pastoralblätter* 29 (1907): 342. See also GABRIEL, 55.

<sup>7</sup> ERNST BARNIKOL, "Paul Gerhardt—Seine geschichtliche, kirchliche und ökumenische Bedeutung", *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg* 7.2 (1957): 429-50. Barnikol nevertheless finds it possible to dissociate Gerhardt's confession of the mouth with the faith of this heart, and thereby establishes that "the independent right of the faith of the heart and its irresistible living language defends against all preconceptions and reservations of the man-centred knowledge of humanism and presses forward to a blessed, and in turn blessing, certainty of God's guidance that supersedes all dogmas and ideologies." Yet it seems most dubious to attempt such a divorce of

hymns not despite, but precisely because of what would in the 20<sup>th</sup> century be lamented as his theological intransigence. Yet Gerhardt's unyielding conviction that the clear Gospel can only be understood in terms of the Lutheran confessions simply cannot be dissociated from his hymnody.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, Gerhardt's hymns are part of the same confessional structure as the hymns of the sixteenth century.<sup>9</sup>

The fact of Gerhardt's decidedly Lutheran confession is clearly in evidence in his hymnody, albeit coupled with an apocalyptic tenor that was doubtless spawned by Thirty Years' War. In view of ever immanent death due to war or pestilence, themes of judgement and eternity are coupled with

Gerhardt's theology from his hymnody. As heart and mouth belong together (Rom. 10:10) so confession and hymnody are inextricably interwoven. Yet Rudolf Günther finds in Gerhardt a remarkable confluence of contributing factors. In light of these, Günther asks: "And why should the mythological and magical elements of Lutheranism not be found in him? [Yet] they are of less significance for the imagination of the composer and have more meaning for the dogmatician ... so that we encounter mystical and enthusiast suppositions in this ardent devotee of the Formula of Concord." GÜNTHER, 246-47. Only Günther's own presupposition of an adogmatic hymnody can lead him to the conclusion that Gerhardt was helpless in succumbing to "mystic" and "enthusiast suppositions", the question of the mythological and magical elements of Lutheranism notwithstanding. Nor is Günther's observation that Gerhardt was an "ardent devotee" of the Formula of Concord altogether correct. The Formula, as well as the whole Book of Concord, was not merely an object of zealous devotion by Gerhardt, but the articulation of his faith to which he subscribed whole-heartedly as his life and theological struggle in Berlin adequately attests. Günther's conclusions are neither historically founded nor fair to Gerhardt.

- <sup>8</sup> WILHELM LUECKEN, "Zur Gesangbuchreform der Gegenwart", *Theologische Rundschau* 19 (1951): 257, makes the observation: "We have become conscious of the fact, more strongly, perhaps, than has previously been the case, that the hymnbook has its place immediately next to the confessions." What Luecken says of hymnals as a whole is doubtless also the case of the hymns themselves, which give voice to the confessions. Cf. BEYSE, 130. Beyse goes as far as saying that there is only one measure for the hymn: the confession of the church. "That which is not in consonance with the confession of the church has no right to be in a Lutheran hymnbook." Barnikol's contention that Gerhardt's hymnody grew "out of his immediate communion with God" lacks substantiation. See BARNIKOL, 447. Gerhardt's "communion" with God was doubtless personal. He speaks with God as a child with his father. Yet this is always mediated: through Christ, specifically the Christ whom he had learned to confess through the doctrine of the Lutheran church as found in the Book of Concord. This Christology and confession into which Gerhardt placed his life cannot be separated from Gerhardt's hymnody in favour of imposed presuppositional criteria. Gerhardt did not compose in an idyllic vacuum but within confessional certainty.
- <sup>9</sup> KÖBERLE, *Rechtfertigung und Heiligung*, 165, notes that Gerhardt is frequently presented dichotomously, where beside the warm-hearted poet regrettably stands the rigid theologian. "However, one tends to forget that he was only able to write such morning, evening, and summer hymns because he was a confessionally faithful son of his Lutheran church." Cf. KÖBERLE, *Quest for Holiness*, 132-33.

rejoicing in the certainty of salvation that the Gospel has given.<sup>10</sup> All of this is the result of a faith that knows itself personally secure in Christ.<sup>11</sup> The heart of Gerhardt's confession, as it comes to expression within his hymns is consequently "the loving fellowship between God and man that God has

<sup>10</sup> Cf. CORNELIS PIETER VAN ANDEL, "Paul Gerhardt, Ein Mystiker zur Zeit des Barocks", *Traditio-Krisis-Renovatio*, Festschrift für Winfried Zeller, eds Bernd Jaspert and Rudolf Mohr (Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 1976), 183. Van Anandel also points to this note of joy inherent within Gerhardt's confession: "Next to his praise and confession of the faith, his hymns radiate the joy of having received salvation."

<sup>11</sup> See especially the hymns: "If God Himself Be for Me [*Ist Gott für mich, so trete*]" CS 82. "Why Should Trial and Cross Grieve Me [*Warum sollt ich mich denn grämen*]", CS 83. Röbbelen regards the confession of Gerhardt as being nothing other than the confession of man's own love and faithfulness for God. Ingeborg Röbbelen, *Theologie und Frömmigkeit im deutschen evangelisch-lutherischen Gesangbuch des 17. und frühen 18. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1957), 417. Though acknowledging that the work and love of Christ "establishes the conditions" for Gerhardt's statements, such an anthropocentric confession would nevertheless no longer be "a confession of faith". She notes that Gerhardt's confession sometimes occurs without "a direct Christological reference point", citing verse 13 of "Schwing dich auf zu deinem Gott [*Lift Yourself Up Unto God*]" as an example: "Ich bin Gottes, Gott ist mein: wer ist, der uns scheidet?" [I am God's, He is mine: who then can divide us?] CS 81.13. Röbbelen's presentation of evidence is, however, somewhat dubious. The "Christological reference point" may not be in verse seven, but what of verse 1:

Er will durch sein kämpfen  
deinen Trost, den Jesus Christ  
dir erworben, dämpfen.

[Satan would] through his attacks dampen  
The consolation which Jesus Christ  
Has wrought.

or verse 5,

Christi Unschuld ist mein Ruhm,  
Sein Recht meine Krone,  
Sein Verdienst mein Eigentum,  
Da ich frei in Wohne  
Als in einem festen Schloß

Christ's innocence is my glory,  
His righteousness my crown,  
His merit my possession,  
So that I can live freely,  
As in a secure castle

or verse 6, (FT 4)

Stürme, Teufel und du Tod,  
Was könnt ihr mir schaden?  
Deckt mich doch in meiner Not  
Gott mit seiner Gnaden.  
Der Gott, der mir seinen Sohn,  
Selbst verehrt aus Liebe,  
Daß der ewge Spott und Hohn  
Mich nicht dort betrübe.

Storms, Devil and you, Death,  
What harm can you do?  
God covers me in His grace  
In the midst of all my needs.  
The God, who has honoured me  
With His Son in love,  
So that eternal mockery and abuse  
Cannot cause me grief there.

Gerhardt's confession is clearly a confession of the Gospel and salvation, unequivocally not anthropocentric, but very much Christological.



established in Jesus Christ.”<sup>12</sup> On the one hand, Gerhardt therefore confesses that God is my Father through the act of redemption by His Son.<sup>13</sup> The counterpart of this confession, that I am God's child and therefore always “joyful, confident, and undaunted”,<sup>14</sup> also becomes the counterpart for the tenor of his hymnody. Thus Gerhardt's hymnody remains distinctly confessional in character, as it certainly confesses **the** faith. But more than confessing **the** faith, Gerhardt confesses it as **my** faith, even as the Apostles' Creed, though spoken by the whole of the gathered community of believers, begins with the words, “I believe”. And it is the confession of the second article of that creed to which we need now turn.

With the church year as his focus and rhythm of this life of faith, Paul Gerhardt's hymnody flows naturally extolling the Nativity and Passion hymns as Christ-hymns. A Christology therefore comes to the fore more in these hymns than in the remainder of his hymnody, where it informs his thought implicitly.<sup>15</sup> Thus it is Gerhardt's confession of Christ as it comes to expression in these hymns of the church year, that becomes the point at which his theology and piety converge. As Christological hymns, these festival hymns are therefore christocentric, since they proclaim the saving deeds of God in Christ. Accordingly Gerhardt is no less a confessor of God's acts of salvation in Christ in his hymns of the church year than is Luther in those hymns that were part of the repertoire of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Lutheran church.

The Christ before whom Gerhardt stands in his hymnody is the incarnate Son of God as he had come to know Him in Word and Sacrament and confessed in the confessions of the Lutheran church. This doctrinal framework reveals Gerhardt as wanting to be nothing more than a faithful transmitter of the heritage of faith which had been handed to him.<sup>16</sup> His

<sup>12</sup> PETRICH, 235.

<sup>13</sup> PETRICH, 235.

<sup>14</sup> PETRICH, 235.

<sup>15</sup> It is often asserted that Paul Gerhardt is very much a theologian of the First Article, celebrating God the Father as creator and sustainer of the world. However, Gerhardt knows the Lutheran confessions well enough to understand that one cannot have the First Article without the confession of the Second.

<sup>16</sup> Rudolf Günther, who appreciates Gerhardt as a hymn-writer but not a confessional theologian nevertheless admits that Gerhardt is “nur der Dolmetscher des Luthertums; er ist seine Blüte und seine Frucht.” RUDOLF GÜNTHER, “Zum Gedächtnis Paul Gerhardts”, *Monatsschrift für Gottesdienst und kirchliche Kunst* 11 (1907): 246. Cf. PAUL WERNERLE, *Paulus Gerhardt*, Heft 7, *Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher für die deutsche christliche Gegenwart* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1909), 6: “Seine Lieder sind im Luthertum, nur allein dort möglich gewesen.” ERNST KOCHS, *Paul Gerhardt. Sein Leben und seine Lieder* (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung), 50: “An allen seinen

Christmas hymns are therefore not only completely consistent with the theology of the Book of Concord, but consonant with the hymnody of the Reformation, without the latter's polemical thrust.

The accent in Gerhardt's hymnody is undoubtedly individual piety within the context of the church which has and distributes pure Word and Sacrament.<sup>17</sup> He therefore sings of the Giver who gives the gift which is given, and the one who is given to, though not necessarily in that order. Gerhardt's hymn is at the same time confession of Christ, the life of faith in Christ, and the proclamation of Christ.<sup>18</sup>

## Hymns of the Nativity of Christ

The birth of Christ leads Gerhardt not only to describe Christ's work beginning with His incarnation to His death, but also provides the crucial elements which enable him to give expression to his Christology.

Liedern spürt man den Zusammenhang des Dichters mit dem besten Erbe der Väter: ohne Luther kein Gerhardt!"

<sup>17</sup> Cf. CHR. PALMER and CARL BERTHAU, "Paul Gerhardt", *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, ed. Albert Hauck, 24 vols (Leipzig: 1896-), 6:562.

<sup>18</sup> At this juncture a methodological question must be considered. An analysis of Gerhardt's hymnody could doubtless be pursued either thematically, and thereby test material from a large number of hymns against a stated thesis, or systematically by testing stated theses against the content of one hymn at a time. The former approach has as its advantage the compilation and thereby an overview of what otherwise are scattered christological statements imbedded within various contexts. The latter approach enables a full examination of the christology which Gerhardt expresses within its immediate context, whereby both intent and purpose of the hymn can be taken into account.

In effect Gerhardt's hymns have to be approached both systematically and thematically. The examination of Gerhardt's hymnody in a systematic manner cannot be circumvented for the following reasons: "Gestalt und Aussage sind unzertrennbar." WALTER BLANKENBURG, "Paul Gerhardt 1676-1976", *Musik und Kirche* 46 (1976): 108. The preservation of this unity of the form of the hymn and its message precludes the frequently disjointed enumeration of statements which then attain meaning not from the author's intent, but from the stated thesis beneath which they appear. On the one hand, the most valuable and lucid approach therefore is the study of the Christology of these hymns as separate documents in their context of the church year, which then provides data that can be readily verified and subsequently evaluated in a comprehensive manner. On the other hand, the delineation of this process in the framework of this study would certainly be cumbersome and unwieldy.

The data which therefore appear in the text are presented with this dual approach in mind. It is hoped that the submission of the data will bear the marks of clear contextual analysis without being tautological or monotonous and therefore lead to distinct and verifiable conclusions.

The awe-inspiring wonder of the incarnation, especially with respect to the confessional principle of the communication of properties, lies as the foundation of Gerhardt's Christmas proclamation. Virtually all of his Christmas hymns at some juncture confess Jesus Christ as "true God, born of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary ...."<sup>19</sup> Not unlike Luther, Gerhardt celebrates the paradox of the Son of God, ruler of the universe, yet born a helpless infant of the Virgin Mary:<sup>20</sup>

1. Wir singen dir, Immanuel,  
Du Lebensfürst und Gnadenquell,  
Du Himmelblum' und Morgenstern,  
Du Jungfrausohn, Herr aller Herr'n.  
Halleluja!

3. Nun, du bist hier. Da liegest du,  
Hältst in dem Kripplein deine Ruh',  
Bist klein und machst doch alles groß,  
Bekleid'st die Welt und kommst doch bloß.  
Halleluja!

1. We sing, Immanuel, Thy praise,  
Thou Prince of Life and Fount of grace,  
Thou Flower of heaven and Star of morn,  
Thou Lord of lords, Thou Virgin-born.  
Hallelujah!

3. Now art Thou here, Thou Ever-blest!  
In lowly manger dost Thou rest.  
Thou, making all things great, art small;  
So poor art Thou, yet clothest all.  
Hallelujah!

Unsurprisingly, Gerhardt holds fast to the fundamental Christian contention that none other than the eternal God became man in the incarnation celebrated at Christmas.<sup>21</sup> And he reflects upon this confession very much in the spirit of the Scriptures (the Gospel of John specifically) and the Nicene Creed.

Es wird im Fleisch hier vorgestellt,  
Der alles schuf und noch erhält,  
Das Wort, so bald im Anfang war  
Bei Gott, selbst Gott, das lieget dar.  
(7.10)

In human flesh presented here  
is He who holds creation's sphere  
The Word that in beginning was  
with God, is God, now comes to us.

<sup>19</sup> (Small Catechism) *BELK* 511,23-6. Cf. TAPPERT, 345.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Luther in his Christmas hymns, for example, "Christum wyr sollen loben schon":

Der selig schepffer aller ding  
zoch an eyns knechtes leyb gering,  
Das er das fleysch durch fleysch erworw  
und seyn geschepff nicht alls verdorb ....

Des hymels Chor sich frewen drob  
und die engel singen Gott lob,  
Den armen hirtten wird vermeld  
der hirt und schepffer aller welt.

(WA 35:432<sup>3-6, 23-26</sup>)

<sup>21</sup> Cf. FC Ep VII, *BELK* 798, V,11; TAPPERT, 483, 5,11. See also FC SD VII, *BELK* 1006, VII,I; TAPPERT, 586, 1.

Es ist der eingeborne Sohn  
 Des Vaters, unser Gnadenthron,  
 Das A und O, der große Gott,  
 Der Siegesfürst, der Herr Zebaoth.  
 (7.11)<sup>2</sup>

He is the one and only Son,  
 the Father's own, our mercy throne,  
 The Alpha and Omega he,  
 Almighty God, Lord Sabaoth in victory.

*“Schaut, schaut was ist für Wunder da”*

Along with the early church, and against a Nestorian understanding, Gerhardt therefore has no difficulty referring to Mary as Theotokos:<sup>23</sup>

Steht und hört vor allen Dingen,  
 Gottes Mutter fröhlich singen  
 Bei dem Krippelein ihres Sohns. (9.1)

Stand and hear above all things  
 as God's mother joyful sings,  
 by the manger of her Son.

*“Alle, die ihr Gott zu ehren”*

And because God came in the flesh and blood of man in Jesus Christ, he can empathize and feel with the sufferings of all people:

Er weiß und kennt  
 Was beißt und brennt,  
 Verstehet wohl, wie zu Mute sei dem  
 Kranken. (4.12)

He truly knows  
 of all our woes  
 Knows all too well, the pain of all  
 afflicted

Denn eben drum  
 Hat er den Grimm  
 Des Kreuzes auch am Leibe wolle tragen,  
 Daß seine Pein  
 Ihm möge sein  
 Ein unverrückt Erinnerung unser  
 Plagen. (4.13)

In heartfelt care  
 he sought to bear  
 the cross's wrath within his very body  
 so that his pain  
 to him remain  
 of our own plagues a lasting testimony.

*O Jesu Christ, dein Krippelein ist mein Paradies*     *O Jesus Christ, Thy Manger Is*

On the other hand, Gerhardt cannot simply remain untouched by the objective reality of the incarnation. The coming of Christ in the flesh addresses his every day life.

<sup>22</sup> FC SD VII, *BELK* 1019, (1)6-(2)7. TAPPERT, 592 (1)6-(2)7.

<sup>23</sup> FC Ep VIII, *BELK* 806, VII; TAPPERT, 488, 7. See also FC SD VIII, *BELK* 1024, 24; TAPPERT, 595, 24.

2. Heute geht aus seiner Kammer  
 Gottes Held,  
 Der die Wel  
 Reißt aus allem Jammer.  
 Gott wird Mensch dir, Mensch,  
 zugute.  
 Gottes Kind, Das verbind't  
 Sich mit unserm Blute. (5.2)

*Fröhliche soll mein Herze springen*

2. Forth today the Conqueror goeth,  
 Who the foe,  
 Sin and woe,  
 Death and hell, o'erthroweth.  
 God is man, man to deliver;  
 His dear Son  
 Now is one  
 With our blood for ever.

*All My Heart This Night Rejoices*

Jesus is therefore a helper in all need and needful, that is, He alone can avert all of man's destruction.

Sein Licht und Heil  
 Macht alles heil;  
 Der Himmelschatz bringt allen  
 Schaden wieder.  
 Der Freudenquell  
 Immanuel  
 Schlägt Teufel, Höll und all ihr Reich  
 darnieder. (4.6)

*O Jesu Christ, dein Kripplein ist mein  
 Paradies*

3. Thy light and grace  
 our guilt efface,  
 Thy heavenly riches all our loss  
 retrieving.  
 Immanuel,  
 Thy birth doth quell  
 The power of hell and Satan's bold  
 deceiving.

*O Jesus Christ, Thy manger is*

Sehet, was hat Gott gegeben!  
 Seinen Sohn zum ewgen Leben.  
 Dieser kann und will uns heben  
 Aus dem Leid ins Himmels Freud.  
 (8.3)

*Kommt und laßt uns Christum ehren*

3. See how God, for us providing,  
 Gave His Son and life abiding;  
 He our weary steps is guiding  
 From earth's woe to heavenly joy.

*Come, your hearts and voices raising*

With these few verses it is therefore possible to obtain a clear picture of Gerhardt's confessional understanding of the incarnate Christ. And it is evident that Gerhardt's hymns sing of justification and reconciliation as being there within the manger, in the one who became flesh, and this within the sobering context or every-day life with its daily temptations and worries. For Gerhardt the coming of Christ touches the realm of personal experience and life. In fact, it seems impossible to find in Gerhardt's hymnody a dichotomy between confession and life.

Nevertheless Gerhardt himself does not come to the fore with his own personal needs and afflictions. Instead he lets his personal circumstances pale at the birth of the Jesus Christ who is "Immanuel". Not his own circumstances, but the Lord who has come determines the content of his hymns. That is why his hymns are intrinsically hymns of the Gospel. They

are not psychologized attempts to draw upon a God of the gaps. The Christ whom they proclaim does not call for a movement inward and upward to God, but downward into the flesh, into lowliness, where man cannot reasonably expect Him, but is given faith to see Him.<sup>24</sup>

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>2. Dem Meer und Wind<br/>Gehorsam sind,<br/>Gibt sich zum Dienst<br/>Und wird ein Knecht der Sünder.<br/>Du, Gottes Sohn,<br/>Wirst Erd' und Ton,<br/>Gering und schwach<br/>Wie wir und unsre Kinder. (4.9)</p> | <p>2. He whom the sea<br/>And wind obey<br/>Doth come to serve<br/>The sinner in great meekness.<br/>Thou, God's own Son,<br/>With us art one,<br/>Dost join us and<br/>Our children in our weakness.</p> |
|---|---|

When Gerhardt therefore sings of Christ in his hymns, he sings of Him who is both God and man, the creator and yet our own flesh and blood. In and as our flesh and blood he addresses man and meets him in his needs and saves him from his sin.<sup>25</sup>

Gerhardt can, in fact, go as far as to say that without that need, man would have no part in Christ. Though he does not join with John Milton's Adam in declaring the *felix culpa*,<sup>26</sup> he does confess that without his own sinfulness Christ's birth would remain meaningless:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>7. Hätt' ich nicht auf mir Sündenschuld,<br/>Hätt' ich kein Teil an deiner Huld;<br/>Vergeblich wär'st du mir gebor'n,<br/>Wenn ich nicht wär' in Gottes Zorn.<br/>Halleluja! (3.17)</p> | <p>7. Had I no load of sin to bear,<br/>Thy grace, O Lord, I could not share;<br/>In vain hadst Thou been born for me<br/>If from God's wrath I had been free.<br/>Hallelujah!</p> |
|---|--|

<sup>24</sup> Cf. LUTHER, WA 35:460<sup>24-27</sup>:

Bis willekom du Edler gast,  
Den sunder nicht verschmehet hast,  
Und kompst jns elend her zu mir,  
Wie sol ich jmer dancken dir?

<sup>25</sup> NORBERT MÜLLER, "Schwierigkeiten mit Paul Gerhardt?" *Zeichen der Zeit* 30 (1976): 160, can go as far as to say that Gerhardt's "Dichtung ist inspiriert von der ‚Menschlichkeit Gottes‘ in allen ihren Gestalten." This is doubtless a most helpful observation, as Gerhardt indeed rejoices in the Incarnation where he finds God *pro me*. Nevertheless, Gerhardt is not prone to dissociate Christ's humanity from His divinity as Müller's statement might suggest. As has been pointed out above, Gerhardt proclaims with marvel the Son of God, who, though divine, is at once a helpless child in swaddling clothes and lying upon straw in the manger. Gerhardt clearly paid heed to the confessions, especially the Formula of Concord, which warn against any such division. Cf. FC SD VIII, *BELK* 1031, 46-47; 1035-8, 60-3; TAPPERT, 600, 46-47; 602-3, 60-3.

<sup>26</sup> *Paradise Lost*, Book XII, 467-78.

*Wir singen dir, Immanuel**We sing, Immanuel, Thy praise*

Though Christ may have been born, He would not have been born **for me**. But now, Jesus, who has been born, is born **for me** and thereby brings with his birth the certainty of God's love and grace. Furthermore, the child in the manger is there **for me** before our knowledge and without our choosing. The whole lot of salvation rests with this child, who has chosen us for Himself.

As Luther, Gerhardt knew of no other God aside from Jesus Christ, specifically the Christ in the manger and upon the cross and upon the altar.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Luther set the precedent for Gerhardt with his confession of Christ which rejoiced in the incarnationality of the babe in the manger, a confession which would make the spiritualizing theologians of glory, including the humanists and philosophically educated sophists of his time, cringe.<sup>28</sup> In consonance with Luther, Gerhardt rejoices in the location of this same Christ in the manger and in the arms of the virgin:<sup>29</sup>

Du kehrest in fremder Hausung ein,	You enter in a foreign home,
Und sind doch alle Himmel dein;	Though heaven itself remains Your throne,
Trinkst Milch aus deiner Mutter Brust	Drink milk from Your dear mother's breast
Und bist doch selbst der Engel Lust.	yet still remain by angels blessed.

(3.7)

For Gerhardt the location of Christ **for me** is in His incarnation as God and man. It is God in the flesh who alone makes God there for us, where His mercy and grace are revealed, and the gifts of salvation are given.<sup>30</sup> Gerhardt's standing next to the manger in personal devotion therefore does

<sup>27</sup> "Sey du mit der Majestate unverborren, sed bleib herunden et audi: 'Vobis salvator' num venit in equis? Non, sed in praesepio .... Ratio et volum vult ascendere et quaerere supra, sed si vis gaudium habere hunc inclinate. Ibi invenies eum puerum tibi datum, qui est creator tuus et iacet ante te in praesepio. Et dicit cor: mebo cum illo puero, wie es seuget, gebadet wird, stirbt ... quod non gaudium sit nisi in isto pello, quo ablato statim adest majestas quae terret .... Ich weiß von kein Gott nicht, nisi de illo qui in cunis." WA 23:732<sup>23-34</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> He could write to his wife just days before his death (7 February 1546):

Las mich zu frieden mit deiner Sorge, Ich hab einen besseren sorger, den du und alle Engel sind, der ligt ynn der krippen und henger and einer Jungfrauen Zitzen, aber sitzet gleich wol Zur rechten hand Gottes des allmechtigen Vaters. Darumb sey zu frieden, Amen. WA 11:286<sup>8-12</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. LUTHER, WA 35:432<sup>19-22</sup>.

Er lag ym hew mit armut gros,  
die Krippen hart yhn nicht verdros,  
Es ward eyn kleyne milch seyn speis,  
der nie keyn voglin hungern lies.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Large Catechism, *BELK*, 660,18-47. TAPPERT, 419, 63-66.

not belittle the wonder of the incarnation or the divinity of Christ; instead, it draws those who sing with him to confesses in wonder the unfathomableness of the incarnation before which he stands.

Ach daß mein Sinn ein Abgrund wär,  
und meine Seel' ein weites Meer,  
daß ich dich möchte fassen. 6.5<sup>31</sup>

Oh that my mind would boundless be,  
my soul as endless as the sea,  
that I might deign to grasp you.

*Ich steh an deiner Krippen hier*

Yet with these words he is not so much addressing the majesty of God, but the fact that God's coming the whole distance all the way to us in Jesus Christ remains an objective truth outside of me. This cannot be contained or grasped within the mind whereby we must do something or need to calculate the distance we must cover. Our reason cannot comprehend what has taken place. But faith can receive it. When Gerhardt therefore speaks of his heart as the receptacle of Christ and all his gifts, he does nothing but let God give to him what he has sought to bestow upon faith:

So laß mich doch dein Kripplein sein,  
Komm, komm und lege bei mir ein,  
Dich und all deine Freuden. 6.14<sup>32</sup>

So let me now Your manger be,  
Come, come and please put into me,  
Yourself and all Your pleasures

<sup>31</sup> Cf. LUTHER, WA 35:461<sup>1-4</sup>:

Und wer die welt viel mal so weit,  
Von eddelstein und gold bereit,  
So wer sie doch dir viel zu klein  
zu sein ein enges wigelein.

<sup>32</sup> See also LUTHER, WA 35:461<sup>13-16</sup>:

Ach mein hertzliebste Jhesulin  
Mach dir ein rein sanfft betteln,  
zu rugen jnn meins hertzen schrein,  
Das ich nimmer vergesse dein.

The distinct *extra nos* character of Gerhardt's hymn about the Christ who gives Himself and all of His joys stands in marked contrast to hymns which later appeared in Pietist hymnals such as that of Freylinghausen: *Geistreiches Gesangbuch. Den Kern alter und neuer Lieder in sich haltend, In gegenwärtiger bequemer Ordnung und Form, Nach denen unter diesem Namen altherischoen edirten Gesang-Büchern eingerichtet*, Herausgegeben von Joh. Anastasio Freylinghausen, 14<sup>th</sup> ed. (Halle: In Verlegung des Waisenhauses, 1766). See for example the hymn "O Liebe, die den himmel hat zerissen", where in verse 5 the writer relates the *in nobis* experience of the birth of Christ:

Die weisheit spielt nun wieder auf der erden,  
dadurch das paradisi im menschen grünt:  
nun können wir aus GOTT geboren werden,  
weil die geburt des HERRn dazu dient;  
die wohlgebohrne seele spürt,  
daß sie ein ander geist aus ihrem ursprung rührt.



It has been shown that a clearly orthodox Christological confession accompanies and informs the basis for all of Gerhardt's thought within his hymnody. Yet in the context of his explicit pastoral purpose in these devotional hymns, the emphasis lies upon the Christ in the manger who has come for me. Gerhardt therefore knows himself called into the presence of the one who has become man, and there bends down to the one who is yet lower than the poet himself (5.7). He knows this child as the creator of the universe and yet can approach him with joy, not fear, because God wants to be found, held and embraced nowhere else than in this child. Not in the soul, not in the spirit, but in the flesh and blood of this little child is Christ to be found, and with Christ, all the gifts which are promised in the incarnation. Gerhardt indeed brings the manger and the cross together when he presents Christ's becoming man not only in terms of taking on man's flesh and blood, but also man's sin.

6. Er nimmt auf sich, was auf Erden  
Wir getan, Gibt sich an,  
Unser Lamm zu werden,  
Unser Lamm, das für uns stirbet  
Und bei Gott Fuer den Tod  
Gnad' und Fried' erwirbet. (5.6)

*Fröhlich soll mein Herze springen*

6. He becomes the Lamb that taketh  
Sin away And for aye  
Full atonement maketh.  
For our life His own He tenders  
And our race, By His grace,  
Meet for glory renders.

*All My Heart This Night Rejoices*

In his Christmas hymns Gerhardt clearly proclaims the Gospel in its totality. He proclaims that Christ, true God, born of the Father in eternity, and true man, born of the Virgin Mary, **is my Lord**. Gerhardt himself cannot find this Christ either in glory or in the spirit, but in the flesh and in the manger. He instead declares Him there **for me** in flesh and blood, lying in the manger and at the breast of the Virgin. Here the shepherds can find him (8). Yet here, too, many others, such as Herod and his theological host are alienated (3.10). Such a Christ as Jesus cannot be seen by unbelief. Nor can such a Christ of whom Gerhardt sings be embraced by any but those of the faith.

It is Gerhardt's grasp of the Gospel which therefore distinguishes his hymnody from that of those who proclaim a heavenly Christ, whose humanity remains seated at the right hand of the Father, to which they are

It is notable that Christ appears as the personification of wisdom, not in the flesh (though verse 3 does state that "das leben selbst ist mensch geboren", which nevertheless falls far short of Luther's as well as Gerhardt's incarnational, flesh and blood Christmas hymnody). Nor is Christ's birth the gift in which Gerhardt rejoices, but the fulfilment of a condition which enables God to do His work *in nobis*. The clear difference between Gerhardt's hymnody which confesses Christ and thereby proclaims the Gospel and what is indeed anthropocentric is plainly distinguishable.

then forced to ascend on their own through an independent and anthropocentric love for Jesus, only to seek to attain certainty of salvation in their religious feelings and experience. Gerhardt's hymns of Christmas actually confess the same Christology as the Christ who is confessed by the orthodox Christian church. This can be none other than the God who gives himself to the believer as this child with all His gifts. Gerhardt's hymnody therefore does both: it confesses the objective reality of the event and brings it clearly before the eyes of those who believe. But it brings not only an event, but proclaims the **for us** of the Gospel.

## Hymns of the Passion of Christ

With the hymns of the incarnation Gerhardt gave expression primarily to his Christological confession of the **person of Christ**. On the other hand, the person of Christ and the work of Christ are for him inseparable. Gerhardt therefore did not find it possible to speak of the manger without at the same time pointing to the cross. Christ's passion began with His birth in the flesh, as He had already delivered Himself into the hands of men in weakness. The passion which is foreshadowed in the Christmas hymnody now becomes the focus as Gerhardt presses toward Good Friday.

Gerhardt composed fourteen hymns concerning the passion of Christ.<sup>33</sup> The Passion hymns of Gerhardt rivet the eyes of the believer on Christ in His suffering and death. Their content naturally reflects the work of Christ in His suffering and death. But Gerhardt's Passion hymnody is not merely descriptive or even evocative. He presents the sufferings of Christ in terms of its "use or purpose",<sup>34</sup> which he proclaims largely in terms of the **benefit**

<sup>33</sup> "Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld"  
 "O Welt, sieh hier dein Leben"  
 "O Mensch, beweine deine Sünd"  
 "Siehe, mein getreuer Knecht"  
 "Hör an, mein Herz, die sieben Wort"  
 "Als Gottes Lamm und Leue"  
 "Sei mir tausendmal begrüßet"  
 "Gegrüßet seist du, meine Kron"  
 "Sei wohl begrüßet, guter Hirt"  
 "Ich grüße dich, du frömmster Mann"  
 "Gegrüßet seist du, Gott mein Heil"  
 "O Herz des Königs aller Welt"  
 "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden"  
 "Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt"

<sup>34</sup> Again Gerhardt follows Luther, who wrote in his "Sommerpostille" of 1526: "Also ist es auch nicht gnug das wir wissen, wie und wenn der Herre Christus aufferstand ist, sondern muß auch predigen und wissen den nutz und gebrauch, bayde des leidens und der

which it delivers to the believer, and the response which this elicits in the one who receives it. Gerhardt therefore stands beneath the cross of the crucified Jesus, who by His passion and death elicits from him the confession of sin. At the same time he is able to rejoice in the gifts which Christ achieved and bestows. This focus upon the crucified Saviour therefore reveals to the believer the knowledge of the enormity of sin and the unfathomable love which has delivered Christ to death upon the cross for the forgiveness of sin and our salvation.

The love of God the Father and the Son is the motivation for the willing suffering and death of Christ:

O Wunderlieb', o Liebesmacht,	O wondrous Love, what hast Thou done!
Du kannst, was nie kein Mensch gedacht,	The Father offers up His Son!
Gott seinem Sohn abzwingen!	The Son, content, descendeth!
O Liebe, Liebe, du bist stark,	O Love, how strong Thou art to save!
Du streckest den ins Grab und Sarg,	Thou beddest Him within the grave
Vor dem die Felsen springen! (12.3) <sup>35</sup>	Whose word the mountains rendeth.

*Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld*      *A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth*

It has been outlined above that Gerhardt had perceived that the child lying in the manger and in the arms of the Virgin in weakness and helplessness was God, the creator and redeemer. Here this same one who willingly lets Himself be delivered into the hands of men as a little child now hangs in total helplessness upon the beams of the cross, though all the fullness of the

auffersteung, nemlich was er uns darmitt erworben hatt. Dann wann die historien allaine da ist, so ists eine unnutze predige, die der Teüfel und die Gotloßen so wol wissen, leßen und versteen als eben wir andern, Denn aber wann man predigt, wartzu es dienett, so ists ein nützliche, hailsame, tröstliche predig." WA 10<sup>1/2</sup>:214<sup>9-16</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> The text at hand has a variant, which warrants a review of the text-critical considerations of AUGUST EBELING, "Gerhardiana", *Monatsschrift für Gottesdienst und kirchliche Kunst* 12 (1907): 307-11. In dispute is the 1647 reading of the dative "seinem" over the 1653 accusative "seinen". That God would give His Son, the reading of the accusative, is understandable. The more difficult reading is doubtless the reading of the dative, which states that "die Liebe Gott dem Sohn abzwingt." In other words, the love of God forces the Father from the Son. In light of John 3:16 the reading is most difficult and doubtless motivated the alteration. The subject of the hymn is not the incarnation, however, but Christ's way to Calvary. The Biblical *Vorlage* for the words "O Wunderlieb, o Liebesmacht, / Du kannst, was nie kein Mensch gedacht, / Gott seinem Sohn abzwingen" therefore is not John 3:16 but the synoptic account of Christ's passion, specifically the account of Matthew, who in 27:46 brings the cry of dereliction: "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me." Gerhardt clearly had this text and its implications in mind when he wrote this hymn. "So machtvoll ist die göttliche Liebe zu den Menschen, daß sie den Vater selbst dem Sohne abwendig macht, ihn um der Menschen willen in seiner schwersten Pein zu verlassen. Dieser Gedanke findet nur dann seinen entsprechenden Ausdruck, wenn man mit den ältesten Quellen den Dativ 'seinem Sohn' liest" (310).

Godhead dwells within Him.<sup>36</sup> Christ whom Gerhardt confesses upon the cross is God, yet God utterly in the flesh and unequivocally given into death for us:

2. Du edles Angesichte,  
Davor sonst schrickt und scheut  
Das große Weltgewichte,  
Wie bist du so bespeit!  
Wie bist du so erbleicht!  
Wer hat dein Augenlicht,  
Dem sonst kein Licht nicht gleichet,  
So schändlich zugericht't?

*O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*

2. Men mock and taunt and jeer Thee,  
Thou noble countenance,  
Though mighty worlds shall fear Thee  
And flee before Thy glance.  
How art thou pale with anguish,  
With sore abuse and scorn!  
How doth Thy visage languish  
That once was bright as morn!

*O Sacred Head Now Wounded*

Gerhardt therefore stands in awe not only at the manger, but also at the foot of the cross as he beholds the face of the crucified. The eternal God has veiled Himself in such weakness. Yet the eyes of faith can clearly see that this is the Son of God who has come to bear man's sin and give him peace in life and in death:

Erscheine mir zum Schilde,  
Zum Trost in meinem Tod,  
Und laß mich sehn dein Bilde  
In deiner Kreuzesnot!  
Da will ich nacht dir blicken,  
Da will ich glaubensvoll  
Dich fest an mein Herz drücken.  
Wer so stirbt, der stirbt wohl.

10. Be Thou my Consolation,  
My Shield when I must die;  
Remind me of Thy Passion  
When my last hour draws nigh.  
Mine eyes shall then behold Thee,  
Upon Thy cross shall dwell,  
My heart by faith enfold Thee.  
Who dieth thus dies well!

Consistently Gerhardt confesses Christ as true God and true Man upon the cross, for only such a God who comes to us in Christ can actually save us from sin, death, and the devil. For it is God in the flesh who dies upon the cross as man for all mankind because He yearns to forgive.<sup>37</sup> This desire to forgive is at the heart of the dialogue which Gerhardt presents to reveal God's gift of salvation:

Geh hin, mein Kind, und nimm dich an  
Der Kinder, die ich ausgetan  
Zur Straf' und Zornesruten.  
Die Straf' ist schwer, der Zorn ist gross,  
Du kannst und sollst sie machen los

"Go forth, My Son," the Father saith,  
"And free men from the fear of death,  
From guilt and condemnation.  
The wrath and stripes are hard to bear,  
But by Thy Passion men shall share

<sup>36</sup> John 1:14; 2:21. Cf. Luther who in the Kirchenpostille of 1522 wrote of Christ: "Darumb sollen wyr die wortt Luce auff's aller eynfeltigst vorstehen von der menscheytt Christi, wilche ist gewesen eyn handgetzeug und hawß der gottheytt, ...." WA 10<sup>1</sup>:447<sup>11-14</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *BELK* 1045<sup>84</sup>; 1023<sup>20</sup>.

Durch Sterben und durch Blüten.  
(12.2)

The fruit of Thy salvation.”

Ja, Vater, ja, von Herzensgrund,  
Leg' auf, ich will dir's tragen;  
Mein Wollen hängt an deinem Mund,  
Mein Wirken ist dein Sagen. (12.3)<sup>38</sup>

“Yea, Father, yea, most willingly  
I'll bear what Thou commandest;  
My will conforms to Thy decree,  
I do what Thou demandest.”

When Gerhardt's proclamation of Christ who comes out of love into the flesh and is found in the manger is compared to his portrayal of Christ who in the flesh gives Himself in love to die upon the cross, a shift in accent with respect to Gerhardt's Christological perception comes to light. The Christmas hymns reveal Christ who is our flesh and blood, our friend and brother, with the emphasis upon his utter earthliness, sharing in all of man's lowliness as has been established above.<sup>39</sup> Although Christ's humanity is

<sup>38</sup> ERNST BARNIKOL, “Paul Gerhardt”, *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg* 7.2 (1957): 444, recognizes that Gerhardt here parallels Luther's “persönlichsten Bekenntnislied, wie Christus zu ihm kam als Befreier von Welt und Teufel.” He also notes that Luther remained within “der Zucht des biblischen Wortes ....” “Paul GERHARDT dagegen geht in den z.T. dichterisch ergreifenden Parallellied darüber leider hinaus und wagt es, mit der Phantasie des Dichters ein mystisches Zwiegespräch zwischen Vater und Sohn vor Weihnachten zu ersinnen, dem zuzustimmen sicher nicht heilsnotwendig ist.” The reasons Barnikol presents to censure Gerhardt's hymns as mystic creations are inconclusive and not borne out by the evidence. On the one hand, 12.2 is no more than a paraphrase of Luther's fifth verse of “Nun freuet euch, lieben Christen gmein,” WA 35:424<sup>18-24</sup>, AE 53:220:

Er [the Father] sprach zu seynem lieben son,  
Die zeyt ist hie zurbarmen,  
Far hyn meyns hertzen werde kron  
Und sey das heyl dem armen,  
Und hilf yhm aus der sunden not,  
Erwurg fur yhn den bitteren tod  
Und las yhn mit dyr leben.

The response of the Son in Luther's hymn is related in terms of His obedience in deed, while Gerhardt relates this willingness to suffer and die in words (12.3). What, then, makes this dialogue mystic? And is what is expressed in these words of both Father and Son not indeed *heilsnotwendig*?

<sup>39</sup> Cf. N. MÜLLER, “Schwierigkeiten mit Paul Gerhardt”, *Zeichen der Zeit* 30 (1976): 161-70. Müller addresses a number of theological queries concerning Gerhardt's hymnody. Among the conclusions which he reaches is the terse statement already cited above: “Seine Dichtung ist inspiriert von der ‚Menschlichkeit Gottes‘ in all ihren Gestalten,” for which he gives the following verse as an example:

Heute geht aus seiner Kammer  
Gottes Held, Der die Welt  
Reißt aus allem Jammer.  
Gott wird Mensch, dir Mensch zugute;

certainly not lost in the Passion hymns either, He nevertheless does not die only the death of the common man. He dies the death of the sinless Lamb of God (12.1). Christ is here the totally other with respect to His sinlessness as compared to man's sinfulness.

<p>Du bist ja nicht ein Sünder Wie wir und unsre Kinder, Von Übeltaten weißt du nicht. (13.3)</p> <p><i>O Welt sieh hier dein Leben</i></p>	<p>While we must make confession Of sin and dire transgression, Thou deeds of evil dost not know.</p> <p><i>Upon the Cross Extended</i></p>
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That Christ is my brother and friend, as found in many of Gerhardt's Christmas hymns, notably fades into the background in the Passion hymns.<sup>40</sup> In fact, the intimate dialogues of Christmas cease. The Lamb who

Gottes Kind, Das verbind't  
Sich mit unserm Blute. (5.2)

Müller further supports his conclusion by citing Bonhoeffer's appraisal of Gerhardt's hymnody as presenting a carefully defined "Diesseitigkeit": "Nicht die platte und banale Diesseitigkeit der aufgeklärten, der Betriebsamen, der Bequemen oder der Lasciven, sondern die tiefe Diesseitigkeit, die volle Zucht ist, und der die Erkenntnis des Todes und der Auferstehung immer gegenwärtig ist, meine ich." Quoted on page 168 from *Widerstand und Ergebung*, 3<sup>rd</sup> expanded ed. (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1972), 401. The "Diesseitigkeit" which Bonhoeffer finds in Gerhardt's hymnody is further defined by Müller as "Leiblichkeit": "Das Wort des Evangeliums meditativ auf unsere Diesseitigkeit zu beziehen (die ausdrücklich auch als Leiblichkeit verstanden wird), es in sie hineinzunehmen, sie dadurch ,tief' werden lassen, das wäre die Hilfe, die Paul Gerhardt uns anbietet" (169).

Yet it has to be queried if it is indeed "help" for a meditative appropriation and application that is given by Gerhardt. If that were the case, Gerhardt's hymnody could definitely be regarded as being mystic, in fact anthropocentric and to some degree synergistic. For man to take the "Word of the Gospel" into "Leiblichkeit" is nothing short of making man the agent of incarnation through meditation. Gerhardt clearly does not offer his hymns for such an enterprise.

Gerhardt is instead consistently confessional and declarative. Rather than drawing the Gospel into "Leiblichkeit", he delivers to faith the reality that this has taken place in Christ. His hymns therefore do not help to give lowliness to Christ's incarnation, or the means by which the Gospel is applied to "Diesseitigkeit" or "Leiblichkeit" through an *in nobis* meditative exercise. This was indeed the work of God alone, as Luther points out in his already cited Kirchenpostille of 1522: "Wyr kunden Christum nicht so tieff ynn die natur und fleisch tziehen, es it unß noch tröstlicher." WA 10:68<sup>5-7</sup>. Within this sermon Luther rejoices and spares no words to show forth the extent of the lowliness into which Christ came in the flesh. Cf. the English translation and discerning summation of Luther at this juncture by NORMAN E. NAGEL, "Martinus. 'Heresy, Doctor Luther, Heresy!' The Person and Work of Christ", in PETER N. BROOKS, ed., *Seven Headed Luther: Essays in Commemoration of a Quincentenary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 40.

<sup>40</sup> Even though Gerhardt does speak of Jesus as "der große Freund" in "Ein Lämmlein geht", for example, it is nevertheless in the third person. Nor does he stay with the thought of friendship. "Er schlägt gleich um in die herben Vokablen ‚Sünden-Feind,‘ ‚Sühner.‘ "

is silent before His shearers speaks no more than His seven words from the cross (16). In his Passion hymnody Gerhardt consequently stands before a passive and virtually mute, suffering and dying Christ. And with Him the Christian stands and is given to hear what Christ preaches in His silent suffering and death upon the cross. On the one hand it proclaims the mentioned enormity of man's sin and the totality of the wrath and judgement of God:

Wie heftig unsere Sünden  
Den frommen Gott entzünden,  
Wie Rach und Eifer gehn,  
Wie grausam seine Ruten,  
Wie zornig seine Fluten,  
Will ich aus diesem Leiden sehen.  
(13.12)

10. How God at our transgression  
To anger gives expression,  
How loud His thunder rolls,  
How fearfully He smiteth,  
How sorely He requiteth,  
All this Thy sufferings teach my soul.

On the other hand it also reflects the certainty of his forgiveness and love:

Ich wills vor Augen setzen,  
Mich stets daran ergötzen,  
Ich sei auch, wo ich sei;  
Es soll mir sein ein Spiegel  
Der Unschuld und ein Siegel  
Der Lieb und unervälschten Treu.  
(13.11)

9. Thy cross I'll place before me,  
Its saving power be o'er me,  
Wherever I may be;  
Thine innocence revealing,  
Thy love and mercy sealing,  
The pledge of truth and constancy.

Gerhardt therefore stands at the side of both John the Baptist (John 1:29) and Isaiah (53:4-7), who themselves in faith had beheld and proclaimed the Lamb of God, who bears the sin of the world.<sup>41</sup>

Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld  
Der Welt und ihrer Kinder;  
Es geht und trägt in Geduld  
Die Sünden aller Sünder;  
Es geht dahin, wird matt und krank,  
Ergibt sich auf die Würgebank,  
Verzeiht sich aller Freuden;  
Es nimmet an Schmach, Hohn und Spott,  
Angst, Wunden, Striemen, Kreuz

A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth,  
The guilt of all men bearing;  
And laden with the sins of earth,  
None else the burden sharing!  
Goes patient on, grow weak and faint,  
To slaughter led without complaint,  
That spotless life to offer;  
Bears shame and stripes, and wounds  
and death,

LOUISE GNÄDIGER, "Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld. Eine Interpretation", *Musik und Gottesdienst* 30 (1976): 93.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. LUTHER, WA 46:683<sup>25-31</sup>; AE 22:169. "Und spricht Gott: ich weis, das dir deine sünde gar zu schwer sind zutragen, derhalben sihe, ich wil sie auff mein lemlin legen von euch wegnemen. Dasselbige glaube du, denn so du es thust, so bist du frey von sünden. Es hat sonst die sünde nur zween örte, da sie ist, entweder sie ist bey dir das sie dir auff dem halse ligt, oder ligt auf Christo, dem lamb Gottes. so sie nu dir auff dem rücken ligt, so bist du verlor, so sie aber auff Christo ruget, so bist du ledig und wirst selig ...."

und Tod  
Und spricht: Ich will's gern leiden.  
(12.1)

Anguish and mockery, and saith,  
"Willing all this I suffer.

At the same time Gerhardt does not speak only of mankind's guilt or the forgiveness of the world's sins alone. Clearly the crucified Saviour does proclaim His death as **for us** to a sinful world. But Gerhardt stands among the multitude who hears the for us of Christ in terms of a clear for me. However, it is a for me which remains inaudible until the question of who is ultimately responsible for the passion and death of Christ has been answered:<sup>42</sup>

Wer hat dich so geschlagen,  
Mein Heil, und dich mit Plagen  
So übel zugericht't? (13.3)

3. Who is it that hath bruised Thee?  
Who hath so sore abused Thee  
And caused Thee all Thy woe?

The answer is unequivocal: it is the individual with his own guilt who inflicts pain upon the Lamb of God. And not just any individual.

Ich, ich und meine Sünden,  
Die sich wie Körnlein finden,  
Des Sandes an dem Meer,  
Die haben dir erreget  
Das Elend, das dich schläget (13.4)

4. I caused Thy grief and sighing  
By evils multiplying  
As countless as the sands.  
I caused the woes unnumbered  
With which Thy soul is cumbered,  
Thy sorrows raised by wicked hands

Nun, was du, Herr, erduldet,  
Ist alles meine Last,  
Ich habe es selbst verschuldet,  
Was du getragen hast! (24.4)<sup>43</sup>

What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered,  
was all for sinners' gain;  
Mine, mine was the transgression,  
but Thine the deadly pain.

Gerhardt draws the entire community of believers, whether they sing these words or merely listen to this proclamation into the company of those who called for Christ to be nailed to the cross. Yet the realization that my sin did not only contribute to but actually caused Christ's suffering and death is coupled with horror of the total damning judgement of the Law which in the cross lays bare Hell itself. Confession and admission of guilt flow forth from

<sup>42</sup> Cf. LUTHER, WA 31<sup>1</sup>:381<sup>15-22</sup>: "Verbum enim Dei est in duplici usu. Primo in manifesta apparentia, sic omnes impii habent verbum Dei: sed sunt tantum die schalen, den kern haben sie nicht, hoc est, locum gratiae, fructum passionis Christi u. Wie wol sie historiam an alle wende gmalet haben, fructum tamen passionis nemo novit, es bleibt immer mysterium. Ratio est, quod nolunt esse peccatores, Christus autem pro peccateribus esse passus. Hinc fit, quod multa de passione Christi dicant et non intelligunt. Cum dicimus: Christus pro te est passus, ergo tu es peccator, da wollen sie nicht hinan."

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Ap II:50, German text, *BELK* 157<sup>27-32</sup>; TAPPERT, 106.



the lips of him who suddenly comprehends: If not for him, I would be there. It is I!

Ich bins, ich sollte büßen,  
an Händen und an Füßen  
Gebunden, in der Höll;  
die Geißeln und die Banden  
und was du ausgestanden,  
das hat verdienet meine Seel. (13.5)

5. 'Tis I who should be smitten  
My doom should here be written:  
Bound hand and foot in hell.  
The fetters and the scourging,  
The floods around Thee surging,  
'Tis I who have deserved them well.

In His suffering and death Christ has taken my place, He suffers and dies in my stead, forgives me all my sins and is Himself the redemption from the consequences of my sins. This redemption was accomplished by the shedding of His blood in death, atoning for man's sins and by suffering the full wrath and punishment of God.<sup>44</sup> The Christology of Gerhardt's passion hymns is therefore at its core an exposition of the article of redemption. In his Passion hymnody Gerhardt reiterates, confesses and proclaims:

that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won [delivered] me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, in order that I may be [wholly] His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.<sup>45</sup>

These few observations from the great range of Gerhardt's passion hymnody clearly indicate the confessional character of a man rooted in the Lutheran confessions, yet for whom the contemplation of the Christ who gives Himself into death **for me** is the prominent element of his Passion hymnody.<sup>46</sup> Nor is this contemplation a foreign element within Gerhardt's

<sup>44</sup> Cf. the hymns "Schwing dich auf zu deinem Gott", 81.4:

Hab ich was nicht recht getan,  
Ist mirs leid von Herzen;  
Dahingegen nehm ich an  
Christi Blut und Schmerzen.  
Denn das ist die Ranzion  
Meiner Missetaten.  
Bring ich dies vor Gottes Thron,  
Ist mir wohl geraten."

<sup>45</sup> SC 3:2, *BELK*, 511<sup>23-33</sup>. TAPPERT, 345:4.

<sup>46</sup> The contemplation of Christ was a recurrent subject within Luther's passion sermons as well. This contemplation revealed both, the extent of man's sin and the magnitude of God's wrath above the sinner. Cf. LUTHER, WA 29:229<sup>3-4</sup>: "quando vides in cuce pendere

confessional Lutheran position. It is intrinsically connected to the Lutheran doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper.<sup>48</sup> A real continuity exists between the blood shed upon the cross and the blood given in the Lord's Supper, for the body and blood which is distributed here is the same body and blood which was given and shed upon the cross.<sup>49</sup> The confession of this continuity is a subject to which we need now turn.

Christum et habere vulnera, ut cogites: haec mea peccata sunt ...." See also WA 46: 286<sup>o</sup> 11: "Ideo quando vides curcifixi figuram, et quod fudit sanguinam, inspicere ut imaginem, das dich billich erschrecke, ut dicat cor: Awe, ist meine sunden et dei zorn so gros uber mich, ut terrearis a peccatis tuis, quae eum trucken und würgen." Cf. F. BENTE, *Historical Introductions to the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 166, (190).

<sup>48</sup> Röbbelen contends that the doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper "einer mystischen Interpretation wenig in den Weg zu legen hatte" (262).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. BERGER, 139-43, who in these pages traces the mystic understanding of the holy blood. The question to be raised is whether Gerhardt, too, conforms to this mystic tradition, which Berger defines in sacramental terminology:

Die Seele versenkt sich mit ‚Geist und Sinnen‘ in das Mysterium der Passion, sie nimmt das Furchtbare in seiner ganzen Furchtbarkeit in sich auf, und es verwandelt sich ihr zur Quelle des Heils und der Seligkeit, wie sich im Abendmahl Brot und Wein dem Gläubigen verwandeln, nicht anders. (139-40)

A dubious parallel is established if this is indeed the right understanding of mystic contemplation of the Passion and specifically Christ's blood. Clearly this immersion in the "Mysterium" is an anthropocentric act where an *in nobis* source of salvation is created with such devotion. Can this actually be compared to the *extra nos* gift of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, or even provide an explanation of the manner in which Christ is present? Berger's definition would reduce the Lord's Supper to an act of remembrance which makes devotion, and not the *verba Christi* the basis of the presence of Christ's body and blood. Consequently Berger's explanation leads to an anthropocentric definition not only of the Lord's Supper, but also precludes his understanding Gerhardt's use of the term blood in his Salve hymns. "Niemals ist das Erleben des Mysteriums der Erlösung so sinnbildlich und so einfältig wahr ausgesprochen worden wie in den Passionslieder des Johann Olearius und Paul Gerhardt .... Wir werden dabei immer wieder auf die nicht ernst genug zu nehmende Symbolik des heiligen Blutes hingewiesen: ein religiöses Symbol aber ist keine dichterische Allegorie. Es kommt auf das im Grunde unsagbare Erlebnis an, das auch in den Abendmahlslieder der Zeit--sie gehören aufs engste mit den Passionslieder zusammen als reine religiöse Erlebnislyrik--widerklingt. Die mystische Vereinigung mit der Gottheit bis zur sinnlichen Empfindung, wo wäre sie diesem Zeitalter fühlbarer als im Nacherleben der Passion Christi?" (140, 142). Cf. RÖBBELEN, 262-64.

## Gerhardt's Confession of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar<sup>50</sup>

The one hymn for which we can find a definitive historical circumstance is his Communion hymn. The circumstances of its writing are to be found in Paul Gerhardt's brief, but tumultuous pastorate in Berlin.

The death of his brother-in-law, the Archdeacon Joachim Fromm at St Nikolai in Berlin on 28 April 1657 created a vacancy which Gerhardt was called to fill. In July of the same year he was installed as third Deacon at St Nikolai, the same congregation in which he had been ordained upon acceptance of the call to Mittenwalde six years before.

The "great elector" Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg had followed his father Georg Wilhelm and grandfather Johann Sigismund in adhering to the Reformed confessional position. He also sought to follow the precedent of his grandfather, Johann Sigismund, who had actively pursued a union by way of a colloquy that he had called in October of 1614. At that time, Johann Sigismund's chancellor, Dr Prückmann, had opened the colloquy by emphasizing that the elector wanted convincing proof from the Lutherans that Reformed doctrine was indeed against God and His Word, in which case he would immediately abandon his Reformed faith.<sup>51</sup> Johann Sigismund remained unconvinced, and a union remained unrealized. But new hope had dawned for Friedrich Wilhelm. The Thirty Years' War had ended, and he sought to capitalize upon the Peace of Westphalia. Furthermore, the favourable example of tolerance between Lutherans and Reformed which he had encountered in the Netherlands provided him with a model which he sought to implement in his electoral territory.

Yet Brandenburg, with its two and one-half million Lutherans and only fifteen-thousand Reformed was not so readily predisposed to a union. Its geographical proximity to the heartland of the Reformation and the stiff resistance mounted by Wittenberg and its alumni was continually to close the door on any thought on what the Lutherans saw to be a "syncretistic peace". Friedrich Wilhelm remained undeterred. Barring actual peace, the elector sought tolerance. But such accommodation, even to a tolerance that would legitimize the Reformed, was impossible for Paul Gerhardt and the Lutheran ministerium of Berlin. They understood the Reformed not merely as another denomination, but a different religion altogether. Their secretary, Paul Gerhardt wrote the following words to establish their position: "that

<sup>50</sup> The material that follows is a slightly revised and emended version of an article that has already been published as "Paul Gerhardt: Confessional Subscription and the Lord's Supper", *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 4.3 (July 1995): 25-38.

<sup>51</sup> CARL BECKER, *Paul Gerhardt: Der treue Kämpfer und Dulder für die lutherische Kirche* (Scheidemühl: Julius Eichstädt, 1852), 20. Cf. *Lehre und Wehre*, 50-51.

the Reformed as such should be considered fellow Christians, my fellow brothers, my fellow congregation members, this I indeed deny.”<sup>52</sup> It was, in fact, the Berlin ministerium, with Gerhardt as its secretary, that mounted the most persistent and consistent resistance to the Reformed advances of the elector in Brandenburg.<sup>53</sup> At the heart of the Reformed expansion was the desire of the elector for the Lutherans and Reformed to be blended into one denomination.<sup>54</sup> To this end he had already in 1660 ordered the consistory in Berlin to receive the Reformed as members of Lutheran parishes.<sup>55</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm further pursued the tolerant recognition of Reformed theology by the Berlin ministerium, and indeed all Lutherans in electoral Brandenburg by means of a colloquy which he ordered convened 21 August 1662. This call for an “amicable colloquium” was preceded by a not so amicable edict of June 2 of the same year, wherein the elector had determined to press all candidates for the ministry in his land to the point that they desist from all mutual condemnation, so that

the unchristian depiction [of the Reformed] as heretics, the persistent slander and condemnation, as well as the false hair-splitting and aggressive accusations that our doctrines are blasphemous cease.<sup>56</sup>

The Formula of Concord was seen to be the brackish source of these unpalatable invectives. Especially offensive was the fact that it was the Formula that gave the Lutherans the licence to utter the phrase “we condemn” repeatedly against Reformed doctrine, including that of the elector. Paul Gerhardt sought to have these condemnations understood in their proper context, underscoring that such condemnation is never meant to be personal. “Inasmuch as the little word “damnatus” appears to spring up in these present deliberations, [one should know that] in the Formula of Concord it never is applied to the persons, teachers or churches, but always upon the errors and false teachings [themselves] ....”<sup>57</sup> The irritation of the elector and his representatives was not assuaged. Only a complete moratorium on any vilification was acceptable. Failing such compliance, these ministers could seek an office elsewhere. Consequently the Berlin

<sup>52</sup> E. C. G. LANGBECKER, *Leben und Lieder von Paulus Gerhardt* (Berlin: Verlag der Sander'schen Buchhandlung, 1841), 88.

<sup>53</sup> LANGBECKER, 87.

<sup>54</sup> Neve describes the spread of this particular brand of Calvinism to be motivated “... by the lust of aggrandizement on the part of ambitious rulers.” J. L. NEVE, “Paul Gerhardt in the Church Troubles of His Time”, *Theological Quarterly* 27 (1907): 495.

<sup>55</sup> BECKER, 23.

<sup>56</sup> LANGBECKER, 21.

<sup>57</sup> LANGBECKER, 31.

ministerium was in no doubt as to the real tenor and purpose of the “friendly colloquy”. Acquiescence was to follow reticence.

The ministerium therefore went on the offensive. Supported by Calov and the Wittenberg faculty, the Berlin ministerium had Gerhardt set out their position even before the outset of the colloquy. They suspected that the success of the Reformed at Marburg with the help of Lutherans of the town of Rintlingen gave the Reformed of Berlin reason to expect the hand of fellowship, or at the very least a peace accord between the confessions. Gerhardt quickly negated these expectations:

4) If one desires through this colloquy to bring us to such a peace as the Rintlingers accomplished with those of Marburg, whereby the Reformed remained with their previous points of teaching and the Lutherans nevertheless were to recognize and accept them as brothers:

5) [Then] with the help of God none of the Lutheran preachers in the Berlin Ministerium will enter into such a peace.<sup>58</sup>

Gerhardt and the ministerium therefore drew up their battle-lines behind the Formula of Concord, much to the chagrin of the elector and his representatives. This, despite the fact that the Lutherans knew that such a position was “odious” to the elector. However, they knew themselves conscience-bound to stand faithful to the confessional subscription each one of them had made at their ordination. When the colloquy finally convened on 8 September 1662, Gerhardt took the floor and proceeded to stake out the confessional ground of the Lutherans:

Because we have heard how one is grievously dissatisfied with the Formula of Concord, and how odiously we are promoted as having subscribed to it, [we thought it well] to make a renewed public confession prior to the colloquy, that we are not ashamed of the Formula of Concord, that we had indeed subscribed to it, and that we again confessed ourselves to it with heart and mouth, and thereby sought to persevere in it with the help of God until our end.<sup>59</sup>

From this vantage-point Gerhardt unrelentingly voiced his concern that the endeavours of the Reformed were nothing other than an attempt to arrive at a “peaceful syncretism” or at the very least “mutual toleration” at the cost of confessional apostasy. Peace and tolerance at such a cost were out of the question for the Berlin ministerium. The profound doctrinal differences between the Reformed and the Lutherans, specifically in the matter of the Lord’s Supper, could not be resolved so easily. Just how far they would have to come to have a meeting of minds was expressed in Gerhardt’s

<sup>58</sup> LANGBECKER, 26.

<sup>59</sup> LANGBECKER, 30.

*Votum* during the early stages of the colloquy in 1663. The upshot of his preliminary statement was that the Lutherans would fight any attempt at a peace and fellowship based on confessional unfaithfulness tooth and nail:

we always and everywhere denied such peace and brotherhood, even now resist it and will with the help of God never give into it.<sup>60</sup>

At the heart of the resistance to the sought peace and brotherhood by the Reformed was the firm conviction of Gerhardt that Baptism in the name of Jesus and confession of Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah and Saviour does not make a Christian, for otherwise “not only Calvinists, but also Papists could be called Christians ....”<sup>61</sup> Ultimately it was Gerhardt’s conviction that without right faith there cannot be the right God.<sup>62</sup> Consequently only he is a Christian, “who holds to saving faith purely and unadulterated, revealing its fruits in one’s life and walk.”<sup>63</sup> The question of what is the true and saving faith, pure and unadulterated, had been settled by the Book of Concord. Consequently the Reformed rejection of the faith which is confessed in the Book of Concord led Gerhardt to only one conclusion: “I therefore cannot consider the Calvinists as such to be Christians.”<sup>64</sup> For the Lutherans the issue was a matter of true faith, which was inconceivable apart from the confession of the articles under discussion. The ministerium understood all too well that the Reformed desired acceptance into fellowship regardless of what is “true faith”; the ministerium’s ultimate fear was “that we would have to accept them [the Reformed] immediately as fellow brothers in Christ, and as members of our Christian church. For whoever is once accepted as a Christian is necessarily my compatriot in Christendom and also my fellow Christian.”<sup>65</sup>

Seventeen fruitless encounters at the colloquy failed to convince the Lutherans that the confessional differences between the Lutherans and Reformed were a matter of indifference. Nor were they enthralled with the proposition that a real agreement on the truth of doctrines was not a necessity for union or at least tolerance as long as Christ was confessed.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>60</sup> LANGBECKER, 87.

<sup>61</sup> LANGBECKER, 88.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. The First Commandment in Luther’s Large Catechism, in *BELK* 560<sup>15-25</sup>.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* Gerhardt is perhaps echoing the opening words of the Athanasian Creed: “Whoever will be saved shall, above all else, hold the catholic faith. Which faith, except everyone keeps whole and undefiled, without doubt he will perish eternally.”

<sup>64</sup> LANGBECKER, 88.

<sup>65</sup> LANGBECKER, 88

<sup>66</sup> Neve makes the surprising statement that the Lutherans made a grave theological error in their discussions when “[t]hey overlooked the fact that it is not the adoption of single and

Gerhardt refuted this approach as untenable. This was especially the case in the matter of the “oral eating” (*manductio oralis*) of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. The Reformed had purposely posed the question not in terms of the truth of this article,<sup>67</sup> but in relation to the importance of this doctrine, that is, whether it actually is necessary for salvation.<sup>68</sup> Two theses were therefore put on the table by the Reformed at the behest of the Senior President, Freiherr von Schwerin:

1) The teaching concerning the oral eating of the supernatural and imperceptible body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, which is unified in the three confessions, is not of such importance, that God would not save a **Reformed Christian** without such knowledge and recognition.

2) The teaching concerning the oral eating of the supernatural and imperceptible body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, which is unified in the three confessions, is not of such importance, that God would not save a **Reformed Preacher** without such knowledge and recognition.<sup>69</sup>

The Lutherans answered that the **oral eating** could not be quantified in relation to importance but has to be dealt with as a fundamental truth which has a clear bearing on salvation.<sup>70</sup> Nor is it a question of the importance which they as ministers of the word attach to the doctrine:

I know well that this sentence: “the oral eating is not of such importance”, is not absolute but only to be seen in comparative terms. Nevertheless, it is not

separate articles that saves us, but true faith in Christ as the Saviour from sin and guilt.” NEVE, 363. Gerhardt did not overlook this point, as outlined above..

<sup>67</sup> “It is the intent of the Reformed to pose the questions which have been commended before us not according to their truth, but to consider them as articles of controversy ...” [“Ist die Meinung der Reformirten diese daß in den vorgelegten fragen uns befohlen sey, nicht de veritate, sondern de pondere articulorum controversorum zu handeln ....”] LANGBECKER, 52.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. LANGBECKER, p75 (3), 76-7 (3), 80 (7).

<sup>69</sup> “1) Die Lehre von dem mündlichen, jedoch übernatürlichen und unempfindlichen Essen und Trinken des Leibes und Blutes Christi im Abendmahl, welche in den drei confessionen verneinet wird, ist nicht von solcher Wichtigkeit, daß ohne deren Wissenschaft und Erkenntniß Gott keinen *reformirten Christen* wolle selig machen.

“2) Die Lehre von dem mündlichen, jedoch übernatürlichen und unempfindlichen Essen und Trinken des Leibes und Blutes Christi im Abenmahl, welche in den drei Confessionen verneint wird, ist nicht von solcher Wichtigkeit, daß ohne deren Erkenntnis und Bekenntnis Gott keinen *reformirten Prediger* wolle selig machen.” LANGBECKER, 58. The three confessions in question were those of the Reformed which the Berlin ministerium had challenged: The *Confessio Sigismundi*; the *Colloquium Lipsiacum*; and the *Declaratio Thoruniensis*. Cf. BECKER, 26.

<sup>70</sup> LANGBECKER, 74. The right confession of the *coena Domini* and the *persona Christi* is the canon of the documents presented by Langbecker. Cf. pp. 58-62, 73-74, 79-80.

possible for my soul to hear it without pain. It is easy for the Reformed to speak and to think in this manner, since they deny this and refute the oral eating as a figment, indeed as madness. We, however, know this eating to be ordained by our most glorious Saviour and established upon His most clear and certain word, and directed for the salvation of our souls, whereby its weight and importance are weightier than heaven and earth. But that some, who are ignorant of this article are not damned is not, I believe, brought about by defective understanding, but out of the immense mercy of God, who overlooks this weakness in men. The emphasis and the whole weight of the oral eating stems partly from its author and founder, who is the God/man Jesus Christ, partly from the object, which is not a common food, but the body of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Himself; partly out of its end, which is the salvation and blessedness of our souls.<sup>71</sup>

The query of the Reformed should therefore ultimately be addressed to the Lord who instituted the bodily eating of his body and blood. Their dubious attempt to relegate this doctrine to something inconsequential is furthermore not an assault on Lutheran theology or theologians, but on the Lord Himself, whose words they refuse to believe.

That the importance of the oral eating is being disputed by the Reformed deeply grieves us, but not for our sake, but for the sake of our dear Saviour, whose bequest and institution the oral eating is ....<sup>72</sup>

Gerhardt therefore makes it clear that they are dealing with the Lord's Supper, not the Lutheran or the Reformed supper. And the Lord's Supper is nothing other than the deliverance of the body and blood of Christ to be eaten and drunk for the forgiveness of sins. They are therefore pained that such a gift should be so despised and rejected by reasoned and wilful unbelief. Furthermore, what the Lord has instituted indubitably has bearing

<sup>71</sup> "Phrasin istiam: die mündliche Nießung ist von solcher Wichtigkeit nicht, etsi probe videam hic non absolute sed comparate positam esse, tamen absque dolore animi audire eam non possum. Reformatis facile est ita loqui et sentire, ut qui negent et pro figmento, imo pro insania reputent oralem manducationem. Nos autem scimus hanc manducationem esse ordinationem gloriosissimi nostri salvatoris clarissimo et certissimo ejus verbo fundatam et ad animarum nostrarum salutem directam; adeoque pondus ejus ac momentum gravius esse coelo ac terra; quod autem quidam articulum hunc ignorantes non damnentur, non puto fieri ex defectu ponderis, sed ex multitudine miserationum Dei istam imbecillitatem hominibus condonantis. Ponderus sane sibi contrahit oralis manducatio, partim, ex autore et fundatore, qui est Jesus Christus, theanthropos [Greek in text], partim ex objecto, quod non est vulgaris cibus, sed ipsum corpus filii Dei Jesu Christi: partim ex fine, qui est salus et beatitudo animarum nostrarum." LANGBECKER, 58-59.

<sup>72</sup> "Daß uns die Wichtigkeit der oralis manducationis von den Reformirten streitig gemacht wird, thut uns von Herzen wehe nicht eben um unserwillen, sondern um unseres lieben Heilandes willen, dessen Stiftung und Einsetzung solche oralis manducatio ist ...." LANGBECKER, 74.



upon salvation. The onus therefore is not upon the Lutherans to prove the importance of this article, but upon the Reformed to establish that it does not belong to the “teachings which are necessary” and “circumstantial to faith or to theological knowledge”, and finally that it has no basis in the Word of God.<sup>73</sup> Gerhardt pointed out that such arguments to the contrary have been long in coming during the colloquy. Consequently the Lutherans are constrained to remain with the clear words “this is” [My body], which the Reformed have conveniently sought to circumvent.<sup>74</sup> In fact, their refusal to submit their reason to faith cannot be construed as being anything else but a wilful rejection of God’s will and words.<sup>75</sup> No further answer need be given.<sup>76</sup>

The caution which Gerhardt exercised in his response to the Reformed was later revealed to be well founded. With their theses the Reformed were trying to do nothing other than to press the Lutherans toward the spurious

<sup>73</sup> LANGBECKER, 75.

<sup>74</sup> “2. Indeed, since our opinion concerning the consequences of this dear controversy, that is, the “this is” τοῦτό ἐστι is confessed first, and since we place the bodily eating afterward, [these words] are silently passed over as if they are not even written there.” [“2. Ja, da wir unsere Meinung de consequentia controversia carente, item, das τοῦτό ἐστι confessionis erst, hernach de orali manducatione setzen, wird auch das nicht einmal berührt, sondern mit Stillschweigen übergangen, als ob es nicht einmal da stünde u.” LANGBECKER, 76. “8. Again we come to play the same old tune, that we are to prove our “this is” (τοῦτό ἐστι), which is clearly attested in the Scripture *litera A*, even though the letter is plain and clear as day. All that is lacking is that they take it from us and topple it by contrary proof, which, however, has been forbidden them no matter how clever and impertinent they would be, for which we praise and thank God.” [“8. Endlich kommt doch wieder auf die alte Leier, daß wir unser τοῦτό ἐστι welches wir in der Schrift *litera A* vorgeben, beweisen sollen, da doch der Buchstabe hell und klar am Tage liegt, und nur daran fehlet, daß Gegentheile uns demselben nehme, und umstoße, das ist ihnen aber, und wenn sie noch so klug und naseweis wären, wohl verboten, davor wir Gott loben und dankbar sein.” LANGBECKER, 80.

<sup>75</sup> “That the Reformed certainly could know the bodily eating of the body of Christ, which is done by the mouth, but do not want to know it, is certainly and most truly true ....” [“Daß die Reformirten wohl wissen könnten manducationem corporis Christi, quae ore fit, aber nicht wissen wollen, ist gewiß und wahrhaftig wahr... .”] LANGBECKER, 73.

<sup>76</sup> “3. We have plainly enough established the ‘this is’ (τοῦτό ἐστι) but no one has wanted to look or pay attention, proven the contrary nor honoured us with the least response. And because we have the ‘this is’ (τοῦτό ἐστι), we can draw no conclusions nor substantial interpretation which departs from the ‘this is’ (τοῦτό ἐστι) which is confirmed by the consensus of the ancient writers.” [“3. Haben wir das τοῦτό ἐστι ... deutlich genug dargewiesen, aber es hat das niemand sehen und merken wollen, unser Gegentheile hat uns nicht eines Buchstabens Antwort daraus gewürdiget, und weil wir uns das touto est [Greek in text] haben, so dürfen wir keine consequens auch keiner Sachen interpretation die (von dem τοῦτό ἐστι abschnitte et) notario antiquitatis consensu bestätigt werde.” LANGBECKER, 79.

alternatives of either making salvation contingent upon the **oral eating** or admitting that men can be saved even without the **oral eating**. For the Lutherans to affirm either proposition would have pleased the Reformed. In the first instance the Reformed would have wanted to show the Lutherans as being decidedly unevangelical. In the latter case the Lutherans would be found to be in agreement with the Reformed concerning the lack of importance of the **oral eating**. The response of Gerhardt steers between this Scylla and Charybdis:

If we contend that the article concerning the oral eating is a fundamental article of faith, though not a decisive one, yet one which saves, we would nevertheless not be allowed to establish that no one could come to faith, love, and hope, thus to eternal salvation without this teaching.<sup>77</sup>

In other words, it is not the prerogative of the Lutherans to prove that God will save people without external means such as the **oral eating** of the body and blood of Christ, when He has so clearly located the Gospel in such means. When, on the other hand, the Lutherans concede that people will be saved who did not know of or believe in the **oral eating**<sup>78</sup> it does not follow that “the teaching concerning the bodily eating is not a fundamental article of faith.”<sup>79</sup> As far as Gerhardt was concerned, the detractors of the Lutheran faith who had again and again accused the Lutherans of “malice and hostility for virulently denying and opposing the union” remained “damned”.<sup>80</sup>

These responses of the Berlin ministerium as penned by Gerhardt were less than well received. Particular objection was taken to the renewed *damentur* which was now uttered in the context of what had been billed as a

<sup>77</sup> “Geben wir den articulum de orali manducatione zwar vor einen articulum fidei fundamentalem aus, aber nicht vor einem constituentem, sed conservantem und also dürfen wir auch nicht erweisen, daß ohne dieser Lehre Niemand den Glauben, Liebe und Hoffnung, und also die ewige Seligkeit erlangen könne.” LANGBECKER, 79-80.

<sup>78</sup> See note 76 above.

<sup>79</sup> LANGBECKER, 80. Cf., *BELK*, 799:VI-VII; 801-3:V-XVI; XXI; 1012-5:II-XII; HUTTER, 104-44. Gerhardt is also quite unequivocal about the consequences of deliberate (*mutwilligen*) unbelief with respect to the doctrine of the *manducatio oralis*: “whoever is in this way ignorant of the oral eating, and therefore to be sure denies and stubbornly, wickedly, with virulent hostility and blasphemy contradicts us, we are unable to judge him to be free from damnation.” [qui enim oralem manducationem ita ignorat, ut simul eam neget et pertinaciter, malitiose, hostiliter virulenter et blaspheme contradicat illum sane nos a damnationis reatu liberare non possumus.”] LANGBECKER, 60.

<sup>80</sup> “malitiosa, hostili et virulenta negatione et contradictione conjunctam, non doctores modo sed auditores etiam Reformati, damentur.” LANGBECKER, 62. Cf., *BELK*, 993:61. “manducatio in coena non modo accipientibus non salutaris, sed noxia etiam et damnationis causa esse sollet.”

“friendly colloquy”. Yet the Lutherans were convinced of their conclusion that the Reformed were teaching another Gospel. And to those who teach another Gospel the words of Paul in Galatians are applied, namely that they indeed are “damned”.<sup>81</sup> The potential collapse of the colloquy seemed imminent when on 4 April 1663 the Senior President called Lorenz and Helwig of the ministerium to account for not following the mode of procedure established by the elector. Yet what was to be a reproof and reprimand also furnished an opportunity to clarify certain formulations in the submissions of the ministerium.

Surprisingly the Reformed returned to the table on 6 April with a document that rejoiced in the fact that there was agreement in most articles, and only minor differences in three remaining points. They therefore urged that further discussion also include a new article: concerning the person of Christ. Gerhardt and the ministerium were much less jubilant. They regarded this advance as nothing other than an attempt to over-burden the agenda, permitting only a superficial treatment of the “article concerning the supper and specifically the oral eating” in order to press onward “with full force towards syncretism.”<sup>82</sup> Instead the Lutherans suggested leaving all other articles aside in order to devote remaining time for the article concerning the supper of the Lord and to give even greater consideration to the oral eating. Gerhardt was convinced that much still needed to be said before this article could be left behind.

for before we can emerge from the article (concerning the supper of the Lord and the specific point of the oral eating, we are going to continue to remonstrate that we do not accept them as brothers nor compatriots in the faith, nor that they can hope for our fellowship.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>81</sup> LANGBECKER, 71. Paul Wernle, in a not unpartisan spirit, makes the comment that it is “the purest heretic-hating spirit of Luther and those of Wittenberg which one can perceive here.” [“der echtteste ketzerhassende Geist Luthers und der Wittenberger, den wir hier vernehmen.”] PAUL WERNLE, *Paulus Gerhardt* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] 1907), 14. Sasse, though not himself not impartial, doubtless has however grasped the true spirit in which Gerhardt and the Lutherans could utter the “damnamus” when he writes: “The ‘damnamus’ is not a loveless judgment against other Christians but the rejection of false doctrine that is commanded in the New Testament, a duty of pastoral care for those who are straying no less than for those who are endangered by error.” HERMANN SASSE, *We Confess the Sacraments*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1985), 110. Cf. the detailed apology of Gerhardt’s position in an unsigned article of the *Theological Quarterly*: “In Behalf of Paul Gerhardt and the Elenchus”, *Theological Quarterly* 11 (1907): 107-27.

<sup>82</sup> LANGBECKER, 81.

<sup>83</sup> “denn ehe wir aus dem articulo de coena domini et puncto oralis manducationis herauskommen, werden wir ihnen so viel remonstriren, daß weder wir sie für Brüder und Glaubensgenossen annehmen, noch sie unsere Brüderschaft begehren können.”

The ministerium was taking most seriously that the Reformed refusal to confess the oral eating left their understanding of the Lord's Supper dangerously deficient. And in light of their confessional subscription and its implications for the Last Judgement, the Lutherans saw themselves as compelled to exclude the Reformed from their fellowship. To move on to a discussion concerning the person of Christ was therefore all but impossible, since the Reformed had simply refused to see the strength of argument for the oral eating and continued to reject this Lutheran doctrine.<sup>84</sup> For these Lutherans no fellowship was possible apart from Christ.<sup>85</sup> And no

LANGBECKER, 82-3. That the colloquy never did move beyond this point is indicated by the objections to the edict of the elector which followed the colloquy in 1664. The elector had pointed out that the sacraments are not mere signs. The ministerium therefore queried if the Reformed are prepared to confess the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the bread and the wine: "If the holy **sacraments** are not only to be mere signs, types, and representations, that is, if they then are able to propose and interpret this particular chief-article or chief-opinion, namely that they [the bread and body/wine and blood] are unified and joined for present use, according to its **substance**, in other words, as an **example** that the body and blood of Christ are not so far separated and distinct as are heaven and earth." ["Wenn die heil. *Sacramenta* nicht sollen nur bloße Zeichen, Fürbilder und Bedeutungen seyn, ob sie dann mit demjenigen Hauptstück oder Haupt gut welches sie fürbilden und bedeuten können, und Zwar mit dessen *substantz* Zu gegenwärtiger Genießung vereinigt und verbunden seyn, also zum *exempel*, daß der Leib und das Blut Christi nicht so weit als Himmel und Erde von Brod und Wein geschieden und abgesondert seyn."] LANGBECKER, 118.

<sup>84</sup> "If the Reformed stray away from the oral eating impulsively and outside of a Word of God evoke a better conscience, in which conscience the Papists, Photinians, Turks, and Jews also persist, yet reject our Lutheran [conscience], then, however, they, in the same manner, reject the truth and love lies, contrary to a conscience which has been so often better taught from the Word of God. They have certainly seen what foundation and arguments the Lutherans have for the oral eating, but they repress themselves and hide and do not want to see. ["Wenn die Reformirten oralem manducationem nach dem Trieb *erronea et ex verbo Dei meliora edocenda conscientia, qua conscientia, auch die Papisten, Photinianer, Türken, Juden bei ihrer Religion verharren, und unser Lutherische verwerfen, aber so ipso verwerfen sie die Wahrheit und lieben die Lügen, contra conscientiam toties ex verbo Dei meliora edoctam, sie haben wohl gesehen, was fundamenta et argumenta die Lutheraner pro orali manducatione haben, aber sie verhalten und verstecken sich selbst und wollens nicht sehen.*"] LANGBECKER, 89.

<sup>85</sup> It might be noted at this juncture that there were other Lutherans who were much more compliant than Gerhard and the Berlin ministerium, namely those who had met at Kassel in 1661. This meeting between the Reformed of Marburg and Lutheran theologians had produced an agreement whereby "no part was to condemn the other or call them heretics because of the outstanding differences of opinion [!]" ["kein Teil den andern wegen der noch zurückgebliebenen Verschiedenheit der Meinungen [!] verdammen oder verketzern sollte."] *Lehre und Wehre*, 55, note 8. What had these theologians had relegated as indifferent?: "Whether or not the body and blood of Christ is received by believers and unbelievers according to His **nature**? Whether or not God is willing and prepared to offer and give His grace to human beings through the ordinary means? Whether or not Christ died for all people, no less for the reprobate than for the elect? Whether or not certain

confession of Christ was conceivable apart from the Christ who gives His body and blood to be eaten and drunk bodily for the forgiveness of sins. The confession of the oral eating therefore precluded a discussion of Christ apart from the oral eating which was for Gerhardt the *sine qua non* not only of the Lord's Supper, but also of his Christology. Ultimately the doctrine of the oral eating effectively served to stalemate the colloquy.

The expected consequence of the colloquy had therefore been realized on 29 May 1663 with the seventeenth and final meeting.<sup>86</sup> Neither side had budged. The Lutherans had adhered uncompromisingly to the doctrines of the Formula of Concord which had given Gerhardt and the Lutherans he represented clearly developed theses to articulate and present at these meetings.<sup>87</sup> Further recourse had been available by consultation with Wittenberg.<sup>88</sup> Ultimately, however, the ministerium did nothing other than to confess steadfastly the faith to which each of its members had subscribed in the Book of Concord.<sup>89</sup> Neither the tenor nor indeed the substance of the colloquy proved to be any different than previous colloquies concerning the Lord's Supper and Christology which had separated the Lutherans from the Reformed since the time of the Marburg Colloquy in 1527. In fact, these documents fail to reveal any new arguments on either side that had not been

divine attributes can also be predicated from the human nature of the Son of God?" ["Ob Christi Leib und But im Abendmahl dem Wesen nach von Gläubigen und Ungläubigen empfangen werde? Ob Gott willens und bereit sei, allen und jeden Menschen seine Gnade durch die ordentlichen Mittel anzubieten und zu geben? Ob Christus für alle Menschen, für die Verworfenen nicht minder als für die Auserwählten, gestorben sei? Ob gewisse göttliche Eigenschaften auch von der menschlichen Natur des Sohnes Gottes prädicirt werden können?"] *Lehre und Wehre*, 55-56, note 8. The judgement of Wittenberg was unequivocal. The Epicrisis which they had reached along with Jena and Leipzig targeted these "Pseudolutherans" as deniers of the faith and as having succumbed to a most ungodly peace. The Reformed, on the other hand, saw here the potential for success elsewhere as well.

<sup>86</sup> Gerhardt had counseled to reject attending the colloquy, fearing that no matter what the Lutherans did, refuse the colloquy or attend, they would be characterized as being "disobedient, obstinate, peace-hating [people]." ["ungehorsame, widerspenstige, friedhäßige (Leute)."] LANGBECKER, 26.

<sup>87</sup> "The clergy of Berlin refused to budge one inch from the Formula of Concord as its confessional weapon, the Reformed, on the other hand, refused to let it count." ["Die Berlinische Geistlichkeit wich keinen Schritt von der Concordienformel, als ihre symbolische Waffe, die Reformierten dagegen ließen dieselbe nicht gelten."] BECKER, 30.

<sup>88</sup> "He [Gerhardt] was convinced that the true direction of conscience was only to be found in Wittenberg, the source of all Lutheran orthodoxy." ["Er (Gerhardt) war überzeugt, die Rechte Gewissensleitung nur in Wittenberg, an der Quelle der lutherischen Rechtgläubigkeit, zu finden."] PETRICH, 134.

<sup>89</sup> The many documents of the colloquy are reproduced by LANGBECKER, 29-150.

extensively dealt with at previous colloquies.<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, they do reveal Paul Gerhardt as being a faithful transmitter and confessor of the Lutheran confessions.

For their unrelenting confession, the Lutherans, including Gerhardt, had to bear the odium of being regarded as intractable, obstinate, intolerant, contentious and polemical people.<sup>91</sup> Decisive action by the elector followed this thwarting of a negotiated settlement. An edict was published on 16 September 1664, which in sum obligated the disputing parties to cease their polemics and to refrain from drawing conclusions from the disputed doctrinal positions.<sup>92</sup> In fact, the edict essentially disputes the conclusions drawn within the Formula of Concord concerning Reformed doctrine. The Lutherans therefore regarded it as a call for secession from the Formula. As a matter of practice, for example, it called for the exorcism prior to Baptism

<sup>90</sup> *Lehre und Wehre*, 57-8.

<sup>91</sup> This judgement prevailed and prevails to the present. Fr. W. Krummacher, during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century put the matter in the following light: "But the well-intentioned endeavours [of the elector Friedrich Wilhelm] were frustrated by the recalcitrance of the Lutheran theologians." ["Aber seine (des Kurfürsten Friedrich Wilhelm) treugemeinten Bemühungen waren namentlich an der Ungefügigkeit der lutherischen Theologen gescheitert."] FR. W. KRUMMACHER, "Paul Gerhardt," *Die Zeugen der Wahrheit*, ed. Ferdinand Piper, 4 vols (Leipzig: Verlag von Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1875), 4:446. More recently: "Among those who were not able to obey the commandment of **Christian love for their enemies** was our Gerhardt... ." ["Unter denen, die sich diesem Gebot christlicher Feindesliebe nicht zu fügen vermochten, war auch unser Gerhardt ... ."] WALTER FREI, "Gedanken zum 300. Todestag von Paul Gerhardt", *Reformatio* 25 (1976):335. [Emphasis added].

<sup>92</sup> In his edict, the elector commands the termination of the drawing of conclusions from the respective teachings, as well as the attendant condemnations. Such would lead to "a good beginning to an evangelical church peace and Christian tolerance in this our lands of electoral Brandenburg ...." ["einen guten Anfang zum Evangelischen Kirchenfriede, und christlicher Verträglichkeit in diesen Unseren Landen der Chur- und Mark Brandenburg...."] Among the matters to be muzzled were the accusations that the Reformed teach: "That there is no true communication of the two natures and their attributes in Christ, or that only a man died for us, or that Christ is locked up in heaven as in a prison, or that not the whole Christ is with us; ... That the holy Sacraments are mere symbols, examples, and references, ... That the words of Christ: 'This is My body, etc. are not held to be true, and that in the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper are mere empty husks without the grain...." ["Daß keine wirkliche Gemeinschaft der beyden Naturen und Eigenschaft in Christo sey, oder daß nur ein blosser Mensch für uns gestorben, oder daß Christus im Himmel, als in einem Gefängnis, eingeschlossen, oder, daß nicht der ganze Christus bey uns sey; ... Daß die heiligen Sacramenta nur blosser Zeichen, Fürbilder und Bedeutungen, ... Daß die Worte Christi: Daß ist mein Leib u., nicht für wahrhaftig zu halten, und daß im heiligen Abendmahl schlecht Brodt und Wein, und also leere Hülsen ohne Kern seyn ...."] LANGBECKER, 93. Cf. 95.

to be made a matter of choice, not doctrine.<sup>93</sup> In the final analysis the edict sought to legislate the desired "Christian ecclesiastical peace" that the colloquy was unable to achieve, and in effect declared the disputed theological articles as non-essential for salvation.<sup>94</sup> In so doing, Friedrich Wilhelm appealed to precedent:

And since the Lord God has, as in the Reformed church, awakened learned men also among Lutheran theologians, which have written tractates of peace, and proven that evangelical dissent is in itself not a matter of fundamentals, and that a tolerant church can indeed be established: we therefore will not in any way give others, who do not possess such knowledge or peaceful disposition, ... [the right] to chide publicly or damn other peaceful councils.<sup>95</sup>

To ensure compliance with this edict, as well as those which had preceded it in 1614 and 1662, the signing of a declaration was required of the ministerium and indeed all Lutheran ministers throughout Brandenburg.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Cf. WALTHER KILLY, "Paul Gerhardt. Glaube, Schwermut, Dichtung", *Musik und Gottesdienst* 30 (1976): 84, who here cites the exorcism formula during Baptism as the prime cause of Gerhardt's refusal to sign the declaration. Clearly Gerhardt's firm stand against the ordered subscription was not merely the result of the excision of the exorcism formula, but the underlying cause of which its rejection was symptomatic: The Reformed demand for the rejection of the Formula of Concord.

<sup>94</sup> The result of this colloquy mirrored the one called by Friedrich Wilhelm's grandfather in 1614. As Langbecker relates, the chancellor, Dr Prückmann, established the basic tenets of the colloquy in the presence of the elector by declaring: "Since the source of all discord concerned only the oral eating of the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper, he exhorted them toward tolerance and brotherly love, and added, that the chief matter is, after all, the spiritual eating, without which there would be no salvation. Beyond this they were also in agreement about the foundation, namely that Jesus Christ is the sole cornerstone and mediator, etc." ["Da der Grund aller Zwistigkeiten nur die mündliche Genießung des Leibes Christi im heiligen Abendmahle beträfe, so ermahnte er sie zur Duldsamkeit und brüderlichen Liebe, und setzte hinzu, daß die Hauptsache ja das geistige Genießen sei, ohne welches es doch keine Seligkeit gäbe. Ueberdie wären sie ja auch in dem Fundament einig, nämlich: daß Jesus Christus der alleinige rechte Eckstein und Mittler sei u." ] LANGBECKER, 17. The Lutheran clergy at that time implored the elector to abandon the thought of a colloquy with such presuppositions. Their wish was granted upon the promise to abide by the mandate issued by the elector.

<sup>95</sup> "Und weil auch Gott der Herr, gleich wie in der Reformirten Kirche, also auch unter den Lutherischen Theologen, dann und wann gelahrte Männer erwecket hat, welche Friedens-Schriften geschrieben, und erwiesen, daß der Evangelischen dissensus an sich selbst nicht fundamentalis sey, und eine tolerantia Ecclesiastica gar wohl gestiftet werden könne: So wollen wir keinesweges gestatten, daß andere, so solches Erkenntniß und friedliches Gemüthe noch nicht haben, ... andere friedliche Consilia öffentlich tadeln oder verdammen sollen." LANGBECKER, 95.

<sup>96</sup> LANGBECKER, 114-20. The declaration which was to be signed was not in one form. Langbecker produces two examples (101-2), as well as one accepted by the Elector written by Lilje himself (153-54). The content of the declarations, which were all similar in

The substance of this declaration called for submission to the mentioned edicts while permitting faithful adherence to the Augsburg Confession and its Apology. Notably all other confessional writings, including the Formula of Concord, are not mentioned within the declaration. Conscience-bound to their oaths to all the confessions of the Lutheran church, the Berlin ministerium asked for permission not to sign the declaration, citing among their objections specifically the unresolved matter of the oral eating and the ensuing Christological questions. These conspicuous doctrinal differences could not possibly be brushed aside as being insignificant and irrelevant by the ministerium. Conscience-bound, the whole Berlin ministerium made it clear to the elector that they could not and would not desist from warning their congregations that the Reformed were in fact rejecting the Lutheran doctrine of the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper when they teach:

The finite cannot comprehend the infinite. It is not possible for one single body to be [anywhere] at the same time and always except in one place. A permeating body is abhorrent to nature. Whatsoever is digested in the stomach is thrown out ....<sup>97</sup>

At the heart of these Christological questions remained the doctrine of the **oral eating**. The ministerium had made it clear that the oral eating rests upon the clear words of Scripture, and as such it provides the foundation upon which the whole understanding of not only the Lord's Supper but

substance, is exemplified in one of the declaration cited by Langbecker: "That the here-below named preachers of the Lutheran churches in Berlin continue in our teaching office according to the faith and life teachings, and namely that we retain Dr Luther's opinion and explanation in the remaining disputed points between us and the Reformed, as the same are contained in the Augsburg Confession and its Apology. Accordingly we also intend to remain steadfast in the fellowship of the general Lutheran church, yet to keep ourselves inviolable in all negotiations of the considered controversies, as has been commended to us by the edict of the Electors of Brandenburg in the years 1614, 1662, 1664. We promise, document and confess to do such with our own signature to this edict." ["Daß Wir Endes Bennante Prediger Bey den Lutherischen Kirchen Zu Berlin in Unserm Lehr Amte Bey den glaubens- und Lebens Lehren, Undt Nahmentlich auch in denen Zwischen Uns und den Reformirten schwebenden streittigen puncten Bey Dr. Lutheri Meinung und erkläring, wie selbige in Augustana Confessione und deren Apologia enthalten, Undt demnach auch in Gemeinschaft der Allgemeinen Lutherischen Kirchen beständig Zubleiben gemeinet sein, Jedoch aber Bey tractirung der gedachten Controversien uns Zugleich Unverbruchlich halten wollen, wie in den Churfl. Brandenb. Edictis de Anno 1614, 1662, 1664 uns anbefohlen ist, Solches Thun wir mit diesem eignhändig unterschriebenen Declaration angeloben, Uhrkunden und bekennen."] Idem. 101-2.

<sup>97</sup> [Finitum non est capax infiniti, Unum numero corpus non potest esse simul et semel nisi in uno loco. A penetratione Corporum abhorret natura, Quidquid manducatur in ventrem, dejicitur concoquitur.] LANGBECKER, 115. Cf. 84.



Christ Himself depends. To confess the bodily eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ is then to confess the **communication of properties**, especially the **majestic genus**. The ministerium therefore asked these Reformed representatives if, in light of the edict's assertion that the doctrinal points in question were not of consequence, they do indeed confess a true communication of natures in Christ, and so:

if they want to have it understood that the true union of the two natures to be such a union, that one nature also communicates with the other.<sup>98</sup>

This question needed to be asked in light of the conclusions of the Marburg Reformed theologians which stood behind the edict. These had limited the divine power that was communicated to the human nature of Christ. In essence they had taught that

the bestowed omnipotence or the participation in such an attribute of divine nature is not proper to the human nature of Christ. This is nothing else than a desire to posit a limitation of power.<sup>99</sup>

The ministerium suggested that the Reformed refusal to accept the oral eating indicates a glaring inconsistency in their whole Christology. On the one hand they do not want to deny that Christ is not wholly present. On the other hand they do not want to go as far as to admit the real presence of Christ's human nature. Certainly they cannot have it both ways, even though they deny saying that they do not acknowledge the presence of the whole Christ. The Lutherans therefore sought clarity about who, and what was present with Christ,

that not the whole Christ is with us, if it is to be understood that not only **he who is** God and Man, but also **that which is** God and man is in Christ and also that the whole Christ, the whole person with both its unified natures, the divine and the human, is with us. For were there to be only one nature of the Lord Christ and not the other, then, according to our doctrine, the whole Christ would not be there.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>98</sup> "ob sie die wirkl. Gemeinschaft der beyden naturen und Eigenschaften in Christo wollen verstanden haben, von solcher Gemeinschaft, welche auch eine natur an der andern habe." LANGBECKER, 116.

<sup>99</sup> "der Menschlichen natur Christi nicht die mitgetheilte Almacht oder die Gemeinschaft an solcher Eigenschafft Göttlichen natur eigenthümblich Zu stehet, sondern mehr nicht, als eine potentiam finitam zu legen wollen." LANGBECKER, 116-17.

<sup>100</sup> "daß nicht der gantze Christus bey uns sey, ob es also solle aufgenommen werden, daß nicht nur der, der Gott und Mensch ist, sondern auch das was Gott und Mensch ist in Christo und also das totum Christi die gantze Person mit Ihrer beiden vereinigten naturen, der Göttlichen und Menschlichen bey uns sey. Dann wo eine natur nur des Herrn Christi

The consequence of denying the **oral eating** had effectively led the Reformed to confess a **piece-meal** Lord's Supper and therefore a **piece-meal** Christ. The consistent Reformed position could not be construed as being anything but a denial of a real communication of natures and especially the **majestic genus**.

Despite these weighty unresolved doctrinal differences, the ministerium assured the elector with its continued compliance in the matter of accusations of heresy, its willingness to redress the tone with which they would address their opponents, and to set the utterance of the **condemnations** in their proper light.<sup>101</sup> But since they were also conscience-bound to their confessions, they sought to secure the freedom to expose doctrinal error wherever it was found, not for the sake of an alleged desire for strife, honour, and hatred of peace,<sup>102</sup> but because of their office as "servants of the Word of God, who are obligated to give serious account for the souls of the parishioner entrusted to them."<sup>103</sup> The conscience of these men was unequivocally bound to their ordination subscription affixed to the whole of the Book of Concord. To sign the elector's declaration was therefore tantamount to apostasy from the confessions, especially since the edict contained quite a number of points which were insurmountable and would have demanded the compromising of their Lutheran faith. Their appeal to the elector therefore had begun by pointing out that his edict

contains a great number of very significant and important points, which we find to be full of dangerous difficulties for our souls, and, if we should comply with them, would also serve to divorce and separate us from the entire Lutheran church (to which, however, along with all its symbolic books

seyen sollte, und die andere nicht, da wäre nach unserer Lehre nicht der gantze Christus". LANGBECKER, 117. Cf. 46, 82, 116.

<sup>101</sup> "That we also will further, in agreement with our teaching, and in all due refutation use all Christian discretion, and continue to provide obedience to the published edicts of your Illustrious Electoral Highness as concerns the excessive and unchristian condemnation, slander, reviling and mutually placed insults." ["Daß wir auch ferner in fürtrag unsrer Lehre undt gebührende widerlegung unß aller Christlichen Bescheidenheit gebrauchen, Undt denen von Ew. Churfl. Durchl. ergangenen Edicten, waß daß ungebührliche undt Unchristliche verdammen, lästern, schmähen und eineiges vorsetzliche Beschimpffen anlangt, noch ferner gehorsamliche folge leisten."] LANGBECKER, 111. The ministerium had earlier explained that the *dammatus* was never uttered *ad persona* but at erroneous doctrine.

<sup>102</sup> This was the opinion of the elector in his declaration of 4 May 1665. LANGBECKER, 126.

<sup>103</sup> ["Diener am worte Gottes, die wir vor unsern anvertrauten Pfarr-Kinder Seelen, schwehre rechenschaft Zu geben schuldig seyn."] LANGBECKER, 97.

of faith we intend to hold firmly to the end of our lives through the grace of God).<sup>104</sup>

Still, some two-hundred Lutheran ministers in Brandenburg did comply with the declaration in order to remain in their parishes. Among them was one of the ministerium, Provost Lilius, who had composed his own declaration which was found acceptable by the elector. On 6 February 1666 Paul Gerhardt was himself confronted with the option of signing the declaration or being removed from office.

Gerhardt's not unexpected refusal to sign was followed by an immediate call for dismissal from his office as Deacon at St Nikolai. This unhappy state of affairs brought the ministerium, as well as the town council, to the aid of Gerhardt. Their witness confirms in Gerhardt a man bound by conscience, who in no way had ever maligned the Reformed and had done nothing other than stand upon the confessions to which he had subscribed.<sup>105</sup> Yet the elector was not impressed by these attempts at retaining a man who refused the hand of brotherhood to the Reformed, counselled his colleagues to refuse signing the declaration, and by all reports was the most obdurate of the Berlin ministerium.<sup>106</sup> Gerhardt was summarily removed from his office.

More lobbying, however, did bring forth a compromise.<sup>107</sup> Gerhardt would not have to sign for a time since he allegedly did not fully understand

<sup>104</sup> "eine Ziemliche anzahl sehr hoher undt wichtiger puncta in sich begriffet, die wir voller gefährlichen undt uns an die Seele gehenden difficultäten finden, undt durch welche wir auch, wo wir denselben beyfallen sollen, uns von der gesamten Lutherischen Kirchen (an der wir dennoch undt allen Dero Symbolischen glaubens Büchern durch die Gnade Gottes bisher hangen undt bis an das Ende Unseres Lebens Zu verbleiben gedencken) trennen undt absondern müsten." LANGBECKER, 97-98.

<sup>105</sup> Langbecker provides all the documents attendant to Gerhardt's struggle (155-204). The numerous accounts of these events make their detailed restatement unnecessary in this context. See for example PETRICH, 162-89; ZELLER, 122-24; NELLE, "Paul Gerhardt", LXVII-LXI.

<sup>106</sup> *Lehre und Wehre*, 63.

<sup>107</sup> The appeals that were launched by the civic as well as the consistorial authorities testified to Gerhardt's placid character: "For it is certainly been shown that the much talked-about Mr Gerhardt has never in his sermons reviled or scolded with even one word the **religion** of your most Illustrious Electoral Highness, ... to the extent that your most Illustrious Electoral Highness had no misgivings to include within your Brandenburg Hymnal which was issued in your high name in the year 1558, his spiritual hymns or songs, putting a considerable number of them into print and publishing them. ["Dann freilich ists an dem, daß Vielbesagter Herr Gerhard Sich allemahl in seinen Predigen also erwiesen, daß er Ew. Churfürstl. Durchl. Religion niemals mit einem Worte Gedacht, Zu geschweigen, daß Er auff dieselbe Geschmähet oder Gescholten haben solte, ... so gar, daß auch Ew. Churfl. Durchl. Kein Bedencken tragen laßen in Dero Märckisches Gesangbuch, so unter dero Hohen Nahmen Ao. 1558 alhier außgegangen, seine Geistlichen Gesänge oder Lieder, deren eine zimblich Anzahl im Druck Zu Geben, und Publiciren zu laßen."]

the nature of the declaration and would therefore be reinstated. Yet the messenger who brought Gerhardt this piece of news also related to him that the elector is willing to reinstate him in his office since he is satisfied with Gerhardt's moral, albeit unwritten agreement with the spirit of the declaration.<sup>108</sup> Such an implication was unbearable to Gerhardt's conscience.<sup>109</sup> Only under one condition could he resume his office: the complete remission of his obligation to the edicts. He would therefore permit himself to be reinstated if he is permitted to remain faithful to the Formula of Concord and unmuzzled in his teaching.<sup>110</sup> Thus the impasse

LANGBECKER, 160-161. They also saw fit to warn of the dire consequences of being responsible for the extradition of such a man: "how much more unbearable will it be for us when we not only fail to keep such pious and blessed men, but want to cast them away from us. ["wie Viele unerträglich wird es Unß dann ergehen, wann wir auch dieselben nicht behalten, sondern fromme undt Gottseelige Männer von Uns stoßen wollen."] LANGBECKER, 158.

<sup>108</sup> Writing to the Magistrat on 26 January 1667, Gerhardt regrets that the terms of the restitution to office have only aggravated his situation, "inasmuch as it has become known that I had withheld signing the edicts or declaration because I had failed to comprehend the edicts or their intent ... so the situation remains the same one way or the other, that despite not having been exempted from signing the edict, I nevertheless have to live according to them, and show myself as having to be bound in accordance to them." ["indem es ja klar daselbst verlautet, ich hätte darum den Churfl. Edicten oder Declaration n zu unterschreiben mich entzogen, weil ich die Edicten oder derer Meinung nicht begriffen hätte, ... so bleibt es auch noch einen Weg wie den andern dabei, daß ob mir gleich die Unterschrift erlassen würde, ich dennoch den Edicten nachzuleben, und denselben mich gemäß bezeigen verbunden sein sollte."] CRANACH-SICHART, 479.

<sup>109</sup> "for my conscience is filled with restlessness and fear because of this; yet what takes place with a bad conscience is an abomination before God and draws not a blessing but a curse after itself, whereby neither my congregation nor I would prosper." ["denn mein Gewissen will mir darüber voller Unruhe und Schrecken werden, was aber mit bösem Gewissen geschieht, das ist für Gott ein Greuel und zieht nicht den Segen sondern den Fluch nach sich, womit aber weder meiner Gemeinde noch mir würde geraten sein."] CRANACH-SICHART, 479.

<sup>110</sup> "I pray that before the gracious electoral concession comes into effect, that I might, by the gracious release from obedience to the edict, ... remain unmoved with with my Lutheran confessions, specifically the Formula of Concord, that I may also instruct my congregation and listeners accordingly and not have to promise to adhere to any moderation or modesty which does not have a basis in my presently considered faith of the Lutheran confessions." [Ich erbitte das vorher die Churfl. gnädigste Verüßigung geschehe, daß ich nächst gnädigster Erlassung des Gehorsams der Edicta ... bei allen meinen lutherischen Bekenntnissen, namentlich der Formul Concordiae unverrückt verbleiben möge, also daß ich auch nach derselben meine Gemeinde und Zuhörer unterweisen und zu keiner andern moderation oder Bescheidenheit mich anheischig machen dürfte, als welche in jetzgedachten meinen lutherischen Glaubens bekenntnissen Grund habe.] CRANACH-SICHART, 479. In his letter to the elector Gerhardt expressed his distress in greater detail. Due to the great sorrow and anguish in his soul he cannot accept the elector's restitution to office under the given terms, "since with such obedience I would have to abandon and put away from me the Formula of Concord from the confessions of my Lutheran faith ... I

remained. Conscience bound, Gerhardt was compelled to reject his reinstatement,<sup>111</sup> whereupon his position was declared vacant.<sup>112</sup>

The requirement to leave his parish in the care of those who had succumbed to the pressures of the elector led Gerhardt to put into the hands of his parishioners a means by which they could continue the faith into which they had been baptized with the publication of his sole communion hymn "Herr Jesu, meine Liebe." It appeared first within Johann Georg Ebeling's *Pauli Gerhardti Geistreiche Andachten* in 1667. As all of Gerhardt's

am afraid for myself before God, before whose face I walk here upon earth, and before whose judgement-seat I must one day appear, and cannot but feel that I would heap upon myself his wrath and severe punishment if I should again accept my office in the previously mentioned manner."

[... wie ich bey solchem Gehorsam mein Lutherisches Glaubens Bekenntnuß Formulam Concordiae verlassen unnd von mier legen müste... . Ich fürchte mich für Gott, in dessen Anschauen ich hier auf Erden wandle, unnd für welches gerichte ich auch dermaleinst erscheinen muß und kan nach dem, wie mein Gewissen von jugend auff gestunden unnd noch itzo stehet, nicht anders befinden alls das ich, auff die vorher berührte art unnd weise wieder in mein Ampt treten sollte, seinen Zorn und schwehre Straffe auf mich laden werde.] CRANACH-SICHART, 469.

<sup>111</sup> "but Gerhardt's faithful disposition, the inner connection of his heart with his Lord, had given his conscience such tenderness, that he willingly, to the great pain of his congregation and all citizens, relinquished his office." ["aber Gerhardts gläubiges Gemüth, die innige Verbindung seines Herzens mit dem Herrn, hatte seinem Gewissen eine solche Zartheit gegeben, daß er freiwillig, zum großen Schmerz seiner Gemeinde und der ganzen Bürgerschaft seinem Amt entsagte." LANGBECKER, 199-200. Langbecker's observation is somewhat dubious in that Gerhardt certainly had not voluntarily left office but was rather prevented from reassuming it because of the compromising edicts which were still in force. Krummacher, however, follows Langbecker in this evaluation, but adds that the true cause was an erring conscience informed by the Formula of Concord: "He [Gerhardt] followed the voice of his conscience. If it was an erring conscience, it was so only insofar as the Formula of Concord to which he was bound erred in its anathemas of the confession of the Reformed." ["Er (Gerhardt) folgte der Stimme seines Gewissens. War dieses ein irrendes, so war es dies doch nur insoweit, als etwa die Concordienformel, in der er gebunden war, in ihren Bannsprüchen wider die Confession der Reformirten irrte." ] KRUMMACHER, 448.

<sup>112</sup> "If the preacher Paul Gerhardt does not want to assume again the office graciously granted him by his Illustrious Electoral Highness, for which he will have to give account before God, then the magistrat will speedily invite several other peace-loving, adept people to provide a sample sermon. These are not to be called, however, before his Illustrious Electoral Highness has been provided with a report concerning their qualities. Cologne, the 4th of February, 1667." ["Wenn der Prediger Paulus Gerhard das Ihm von Sr. C. D. gnedigst wieder erlaubte Amptt nicht wieder betreten wil, welches Er den vor dem höchsten Gott Zu Verandttworten haben wirdt, So wirdt der Magisterat ehestens eineige andere friedtliebende geschickte leüte Zu ablegung der probepredigt einladen, dieselbe aber nicht ehr vociren bis Sie Zuförderst Sr. Churfl. Durchl. von Dero qualiteten Untgst. bericht abgestattet haben. Cölln, den 4. Febr. 1667."] LANGBECKER, 199. It might be noted that in less than 10 years time, Philip Jakob Spener was to be one of Paul Gerhardt's successors at St Nikolai in Berlin.

hymnody, not the Divine Service of the congregation in public worship, but the quiet of personal devotion was its *Sitz im Leben*. But even in the quiet of their own homes, these parishioners were to be reminded concerning that which is placed into their mouths when they come to the altar during the Divine Service, emphasizing specifically the **oral eating**. The hymn which emerges has what is at times something of a strained dogmatic rhyme, yet one which nevertheless reflects the *Seelsorge* of Paul Gerhardt, which is its primary concern.

In light of the persuasive and reasoned arguments which had confronted the ministerium during the colloquy, Gerhardt knew that his parishioners were going to be severely tempted by Reformed doctrine to abandon the firm institution of Christ in favour of an unfaithful interpretation. He therefore reminds them who it is that tempts and seeks to lead away from the firm institution of Christ. For Gerhardt it is precisely Christ on the altar who delivers from all uncertainty and doubt as to whether Christ in the manger and on the cross is indeed given for me.

1. HErr Jesu, meine Liebe,  
Ich hätte nimmer Ruh und Rast,  
Wo nicht fest in mir bleibe  
Was du für mich geleistet hast;  
Es müßt in meinen Sünden,  
Die sich sehr hoch erhöh'n,  
All meine Kraft verschwinden  
Und wie ein Rauch vergehn,  
Wenn sich mein Herz nicht hielte  
Zu dir und deinem Tod,  
Und ich nicht stets mich kühlte  
An deines Leidens Not. (34.1)

Nun weißt du meine Plagen  
Und Satans, meines Feindes, List.  
Wenn meinen Geist zu nagen,  
Er emsig und bemühet ist,  
Da hat er tausend Künste,  
Von dir mich abzuziehn:  
Bald treibt er mir die Dünste  
Des Zweifels in den Sinn,  
Bald nimmt er mir dein Meinen  
Und Wollen aus der Acht  
Und lehrt mich ganz verneinen,  
Was du doch fest gemacht. (34.2)

*Herr, Jesu meine Liebe*

1. O Lord, my Love, I have no rest  
Outside Your gift with which I'm blest.  
My ever-multiplying sins  
Dispel my strength as passing winds;  
Like smoke it simply wafts away.  
If from Your death my heart should stray,  
When thoughts of Your great passion cease  
My soul's in torment without peace.

2. You know my foe, You know my plight:  
A thousand arts he'll use to fight.  
Sly Satan gnaws upon my soul;  
To strip You from me is his goal.  
Doubt's haze he drives upon my mind,  
He clouds Your will to make me blind,  
He teaches me to call a lie  
What You have firmly set on high.

*O Lord, My Love, I Have No Rest*

Paul Gerhardt AD 1667

Translated by Rev. Kurt E. Reinhardt -  
Pentecost AD 2001

To avert all doubt and uncertainty Christ has instituted His table, where along with the words of forgiveness He gives His body and blood to be eaten and drunk, distributing for me for the forgiveness of sins.

Solch Unheil abzuweisen,  
Hast du, Herr, deinen Tisch gesetzt,  
Da lässest du mich speisen,  
So daß sich Mark und Bein ergötzt.  
Du reichts mir zu genießen  
Dein teures Fleisch und Blut  
Und lässest Worte fließen,  
Da all mein Herz auf ruht.  
Komm, sprichst du, komm und nahe  
Dich ungescheut zu mir,  
Was ich dir geb, empfahe  
Und nimms getrost zu dir. (34.3)<sup>113</sup>

3. Such devastation to evade  
O Lord Your table You have laid.  
You bid me dine for my delight  
To thrill my bones with ev'ry bite;  
Your Flesh and Blood You give to eat  
And spill out words my heart finds  
sweet.  
"Come," You invite me, "come draw  
near,  
Take what I give you without fear."

Gerhardt's source of comfort and certainty is the oral eating of the body and blood of Christ of which his words speak. And as though to preclude any misunderstanding as to what he means, Gerhardt reiterates this same thought all the more carefully on the basis of the Words of Institution:<sup>114</sup>

Hier ist beim Brot vorhanden  
Mein Leib, der dargeben wird  
Zum Tod-und Kreuzesbanden  
Für dich, dir sich von mir verirrt.  
Beim Wein ist, was geflossen  
Zu Tilgung deiner Schuld,  
Mein Blut, das ich vergossen  
In Sanftmut und Geduld.  
Nimms beides mit dem Munde  
Und denk auch mit darbei  
Wie fromm im Herzensgrunde  
Ich, dein Erlöser, sei. 34.4<sup>115</sup>

4. "Here is My Body with this bread;  
It was condemned to join the dead  
And bore the shackles of the tree  
For you who always stray from Me;  
What flowed to cleanse your guilt is here,  
With wine you'll find My Blood so dear,  
Into your mouth now both receive  
And by them to My meekness cleave."

The hymn might indeed be construed as anti-Calvinist polemics when Gerhardt affirms Christ's death and atonement for the whole world as being given so mediately. But Gerhardt's burden is *Seelsorge* not polemics. The Lord's Supper is given for the strengthening of faith, and gives the certainty

<sup>113</sup> Luther, too, is able to speak of the Words of Institution and the body and blood given in the Lord's Supper interchangeably. See LC 5:21-22, *BELK*, 711<sup>38</sup>-712<sup>5</sup>. It is most dubious and indeed not possible to play one off against the other.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Luther's struggle with Karlstadt for the location of Christ in the Lord's Supper, and the location of its distribution: WA 18:203<sup>27</sup>-204<sup>9</sup>; AE 40:213-14.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. LC 5:28-29, 42; *BELK* 713<sup>11-24</sup>; 716.<sup>16-20</sup>

that Christ has done the lot. This is not to say, however, that Gerhardt withdraws from exposing error and false teaching, especially when it should arise in one's mind (the implicit origin of such thoughts remains unnamed). Falsehood and error is met fully by the Saviour himself, this time located specifically in the **use** of the Lord's Supper, where Gerhardt confesses that it is not the priest or the pastor who places the body and blood into my mouth but rather Christ Himself. He, who sits at the right hand of the Father Almighty as true God and true man stretches out His right hand to give Himself for my consolation to eat and to drink:

Und daß ja mein Gedanke,  
Der voller Falschheit und Betrug,  
Nicht im Geringsten wanke,  
Als wär es dir nicht Ernst genug:  
So neigst du dein Gemüte  
Zusamt der rechten Hand  
Und gibst mir große Güte  
Mir das hochwerte Pfand  
Zu essen und zu trinken.  
Ist das nicht Trost und Licht  
Dem, der sich läßt bedünken,  
Du wollest seiner nicht? (34.7)

7. Lest my deceit-plagued mind should sway  
And doubt the truth of what You say,  
Your heart inclines with Your right hand  
And give this pledge on which to stand:  
To eat and drink of Your great might?  
Is this not comfort and true light  
For those who foolishly believe  
That such as they you'll not receive?

What is implicit in all of Gerhardt's hymnody comes to full and explicit expression here, to the point of seeing in this hymn rhymed dogma. The historical circumstances seem to have tempered Gerhardt in such a way that a communion hymn, which clearly belongs to the realm of the Divine Service, should be necessary for the devotion of the home. From the first verse to the last it is proclamation of Christ's work of salvation for us in the way of Christ located in tangible means of grace. In fact, Gerhardt confesses clearly that the very reality of the incarnation would be destroyed by even the most subtle spiritualization of the Lord's Supper which he found explicitly in the doctrine of the Reformed.

The matter of the bodily eating and drinking of the Lord's body and blood therefore was not simply a matter of dogmatic obstinacy. It was the very core of Gerhardt's faith and piety, which in turn was at the very heart of all of his hymns. Neither in his polemics, nor in his hymns could it be a secondary article. For it was the body and blood of Christ which was given for him that alone gave him certainty of salvation [*Heilsgewißheit*], since he knew that here for him is Christ Himself who alone gives him nothing less than the righteousness which lets him stand before God at the last day; and it was this, in the final analysis, that made Gerhardt a faithful confessor of Christ in song and sacrament.

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## Sermon

# Now Rest beneath Night's Shadow

Kurt A. Lantz

**ARE YOU AFRAID OF THE DARK?** Maybe you should be. All the classic ghost stories begin with the phrase, "It was a dark and stormy night..." Death indeed comes in the night. Acts of violence are committed under the cover of night. I sat at my grandfather's bedside when death came upon him in the night. An act of violence as his lungs filled with fluid and squeezed the life out of him.

The great Lutheran pastor and hymn writer, Paul Gerhardt also knew about acts of violence in the night. Theodore Brown Hewitt reports that Gerhardt had himself suffered individual loss.

The Swedes in 1637 determined to punish Johann Georg, the Elector of Saxony, because he, in spite of a signed contract with them, had deserted the Protestant cause, and in their ravages they appeared before Gräfenhainichen and demanded a war tax of 3000 Gulden. It was paid, but notwithstanding the payment the Swedish soldiers set fire to the town. The Gerhardt house and the church with its many records were among the four hundred buildings destroyed.

The community of Mittenwalde had suffered severely in 1637 as had Gräfenhainichen from the Swedish marauders and attacks of pestilence, and Paul Gerhardt undertook his duties here with full understanding of this universal suffering, and fulfilled them with all his strength.<sup>1</sup>

Marauders and pestilence, the Thirty Years War and the plague provided ample opportunity for the people of Gerhardt's parish to develop a sense of fear of the dark. For under the cover of darkness, death comes with violence. And with pastoral and personal understanding, Gerhardt wrote the beloved evening hymn, "Now Rest beneath Night's Shadow."

Is it childish to be afraid of the dark? Some of my children do not like going upstairs at night without a light on. We have a faulty switch at the foot of the stairs that causes them much trepidation. A young lady in my parish was plagued by visits from the dark people at night when she was a

<sup>1</sup> "Paul Gerhardt as a Hymn Writer and His Influence on English Hymnody," Yale University Press, 1918. Hypertext version of this book is available from the Christian Classic Ethereal Library at <[www.ccel.org/ccel/hewitt/gerhardt.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/hewitt/gerhardt.html)>.

little girl. And in the year just past I was told by a four-year-old girl in the congregation about her dreams of the goat-man covered in red with cobwebs over his mouth. Is it childish to be afraid of the dark or do the young have a greater grasp on the reality of darkness and its prince?

The best that adults seem able to do in terms of seriously pondering the darkness of night is a little personal reflection at the end of the day. As the beams of the sun set behind the horizon, we are reminded that our praise on earth will cease in death. The end of our day's work comes upon us and we realize that the end of all toil will arrive for us when we will be laid to rest in the grave. So we undress for bed with the solemn knowledge that we will be undressed of our bodily life in death.

But the night does not have to be darkness as the psalmist David reminds us, "*I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.*"<sup>2</sup> There can be peace in the night hours, but not in the power of man. Peace comes only from the LORD who can give safety. He can protect from both the marauders and the plague, from dark visions and our own mortality.

Again it is David who writes the word about the Word, "Even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You."<sup>3</sup> The LORD was before there was light. When darkness was over the face of the deep it was the LORD who said, "Let there be light."<sup>4</sup> He Himself is "the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world."<sup>5</sup>

The LORD, the creator of light, comes as the Light to lighten our darkness. The darkness of night is lightened by the Gospel, which is our Lord Jesus Christ. The setting light of the sun reveals to us the Light of the world who is the Son of God. The going down of the sun proclaims the Son of God's descent into the grave at His Passion, death and burial. And the dawning of the new day proclaims His resurrection, which beams down God's mercy and grace to us.

With this knowledge—not of the daily movement of the sun but of the movement of the Son of God down to earth and into the grave in our place and His rising again to give us new life—we can lie down and sleep in peace because the Son does not only have the power to protect us from acts of violence in the night, but also from our own sins done in the dark.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 4:8

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 139:11b-12

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 1:2-3

<sup>5</sup> John 1:9

Christ laid down His life in peace, willingly suffering at the violent hands of men, because He wanted to create peace with us. He wanted us to be at peace with the heavenly Father, and the way to do that was to let the sun set on His earthly life as He gave Himself into death for our sins. In peace He went to the cross and the grave so that in peace we can go to our beds, even our deathbeds.

In death our praise stops on earth like the setting beams of the sun, but rises to the heavenly places, like the stars. As we undress for bed to put on clean clothes when we arise, so we shall put off mortality and be clothed with immortality. “*This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*”<sup>6</sup> For as we go to bed to prepare for the next day's activity, so when we sleep in death we do so only in anticipation of the resurrection to eternal life.

Work comes to an end with the close of the day and God sends relief from Adam's curse of toil.<sup>7</sup> Not just rest to toil again, but the peace of sins forgiven to live anew. In the words of the Catechism's Evening Prayer we commend ourselves “body and soul and all things” into the hands of our gracious God, knowing that should this be our last sunset, we are following our Lord Jesus Christ who commended His Spirit into the hands of the heavenly Father.<sup>8</sup>

With the final victory over the darkness of sin and death assured, we can trust that our Lord will also rescue us from every evil of body and soul so that the evil foe will have no power over us or our loved ones. Hewitt relates:

A troop of French soldiers entered Lisberg, a small town of Hesse, on the 14th of September, 1796, plundered and killed the inhabitants, and burned the whole town. A little way distant, at the foot of a mountain, was a small cottage in which a mother sat by the bedside of her sick child. Hearing the noise in the town and seeing the burning houses she locked the door and knelt by the bedside and prayed. As the door burst open and a furious soldier rushed in, she spread her hands over the child and cried:

Lord Jesus, who dost love me,  
O spread Thy wings above me, ... (stanza VIII),

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:53

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 3:17-19

<sup>8</sup> Luke 23:46

and lo! the wild soldier suddenly dropped his arm, stepped to the bed, and laid his rough hand gently on the child's head. Then going outside he stood guard that none of his troop might harm the cottage.<sup>9</sup>

The Light of Christ lightens the darkness of this world of sin, violence and death. Our LORD laid down in death to give us peace. And now we can rest beneath night's shadow.

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<sup>9</sup> "Paul Gerhardt as a Hymn Writer and His Influence on English Hymnody," Yale University Press, 1918. Hypertext version of this book is available from the Christian Classic Ethereal Library at [www.ccel.org/ccel/hewitt/gerhardt.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/hewitt/gerhardt.html)