"How did Luther's teaching become a doctrine?"

Lecture sponsored by the Theology Department presented at Marquette University Thursday, September 1, 2009 at 3:30 PM Weasler Auditorium by Markus Wriedt, Regular Visiting Professor of Theology
I. Introduction

- What makes the articulation of my faith valid?
- What binds my faith to that of my neighbor?
- Does individual faith hinder communion?
- What are the leading sources for evangelical faith?
- Is there an overall binding doctrine articulated in the Confessions?
Historical survey I

Worms
1521
Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen.
Historical survey II

Catechism
1529
Historical survey III

Augsburg 1530
Historical survey III

Augsburg Confession 1530
Historical survey IV

Schmalkalden
1537
The first and chief article is this: Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died for our sins and was raised again for our justification (Romans 3:24–25). He alone is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29), and God has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6). All have sinned and are justified freely, without their own works and merits, by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, in His blood (Romans 3:23–25). This is necessary to believe. This cannot be otherwise acquired or grasped by any work, law, or merit. Therefore, it is clear and certain that this faith alone justifies us... Nothing of this article can be yielded or surrendered, even though heaven and earth and everything else falls (Mark 13:31)
The goal to establish a modern, effective and flexible government.

An attempt to work out models for social discipline and an homogeneous culture to express the unity of a social and political entity.

The overall leading principles had to be formulated in a binding confession of faith as the leading principle of government and loyalty. These principles would be promoted through propaganda especially using the new techniques of mass communication.

Thus methods such as censorship, persecution, and forceful obedience to the legal authorities arose.

Dissenters, non-conformists and radicals were persecuted, expelled or even executed. The witch-hunt became one of the expressions of confessional fear for the dissolving of cultural, political and social unity or conformity.

Centers for education and the training of leading elites had to be established.
Historical survey VI

Dispute over the Interim 1548
- adiaphora, i.e. rites, ceremonies, vestments, etc.
- the amount of free choice within the human act
- questions of law and gospel and the need for penance
- justification and sanctification, the effects of justification by faith
- questions surrounding original sin, predestination and perseverance, and
- Christ’s presence in the Eucharist.
Historical survey VII

Konkordienformel

1577
The Book of Concord (1580) contains:
- Symbols (Athanasian, Apostolic, and Nicean Creed)
- Augsburg Confession of 1530
- its Apology
- Schmalkald Articles from 1537
- treatise on the power and primacy of the Pope
- Small and the Greater Catechisms
- Formula of Concord and an appendix with quotations from the auctoritas patrum.
To sum up

1. Evangelical Confession arose from conflict: either an outward enemy or inner controversy made it necessary to give an ultimate binding articulation of what had to be believed and to articulate adequately the consensus of at least one denomination within the larger Christianity.

2. At no time did the confessions understand themselves to be the ultimate, everlasting articulation of Christian truth. Their authors were aware of the fact that they had to find formulations here and now in order to avoid further division.
3. Since all of these confessions originated in the wake of consensus and with the intention to overcome conflict, they contain hermeneutically a large amount of tolerance. The Augsburg Confession and the Formula of Concord reformulate the anathemas of the Early Church but do not add newer ones to them. The confessions as formulated in the 16th century were aware of their particularity and allowed diversity.

4. Even though they had been initially launched to extinguish the flames of conflict, they did not succeed in this attempt. Even larger conflict and more diversity developed in the following decennia and centuries. Diversity, pluriformity, and even contradicting positions became the birthmark of the evangelical faith and its public performance.
Bible, Luther, and the Lutherans
Theology of Relation

- Heaven and Earth
- Law and Gospel
- God and Man
- Sin and Redemption
- Flesh and Spirit
- Paradox Theology: Simul iustus et peccator
- And much more ....
Ecumenical Outlook

- The Word of God that has to be proclaimed every day anew.
- A subtle and thorough investigation of the nuts and bolts of an expression of faith beyond its original context. Theologians have to answer the question whether a personal expression of faith can be taken out of its context and made a general, binding formula.
- Two thousand years of lively expressions of faith have accumulated much insight that helps one understand whether an individual saying can be accepted or not.
- Future needs roots. History reveals the roots of our faith, our piety. That’s why Augustine could say that his faith contains nothing which he had not received from Holy Mother Church.
- However, tradition can err and mislead. We need the correction through the word of God. Tradition should not overcome the proclamation of the Gospel.
- Thus, the evangelical tradition, which is rooted deeply in controversy and conflict, never should overcome a vital expression of faith here and today.
Thank you for your patience!

Wir sein pettler – das ist war.

We are beggars – that is the only truth ...

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