

Forde, "Perspectives on Critical Issues," in *The One Mediator, The Saints, and Mary. Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue 8*. Edited by H. George Anderson, J. Francis Stafford, and Joseph A. Burgess. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992, pp. 35-41; here 38-39.

PART ONE: ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

Lutheran view, Christ's mediation is such that his life, death, and resurrection authorize and institute a speaking and doing (word and sacrament) through which he *himself* is imparted to create faith. The act of salvation is not, as the word suggests, that of a "go-between" who imparts some "thing" or prior timelessly existing divine favor or "grace."<sup>55</sup> He gives himself. He *is* what and who is to be given, and the proclamation of his life, death, and resurrection *is* the giving. His self-giving is such that it can be perpetuated only in the proclamation in word and sacrament. Thus it reaches its goal only in the proclamation of the victory achieved in the concrete event of the cross and the resurrection. Christ enters the world of sin and death, becomes a curse for us, and the outcome hangs in the balance. If the victory is not won, if there is no resurrection, sin and death win the battle and there is no mediation because there is nothing to be proclaimed. Since, however, Christ is raised, he alone is to be proclaimed, and only through faith in him can one stand in the judgment. The only mediation there is occurs in the speaking, the promising, and the sacramental giving engendered by the event itself. For Lutherans Christ alone engenders such speaking and doing, and Christ alone is therefore not only the sole Mediator, but the one who is mediated.

(45) It goes almost without saying, therefore, that the sole mediatorship of Christ does not exclude but rather impels to further "mediation" in the sense of a transmitting through word and sacrament. But Lutherans rarely speak of "mediation" in this connection and prefer rather to speak of the ministry of word and sacrament, the actual doing of the deed in the living present. They confess that this ministry was instituted by God for the sake of the gospel, to instill faith in Christ, the sole source of salvation. Salvation is thus "mediated" or communicated through the gospel, preached and heard as well as sacramentally enacted. Thus the word and the sacraments are sometimes spoken of as "means" (*Mittel, instrumenta*) through which the Holy Spirit gives faith to those who receive the gospel (CA 5). Ministry is thus service impelled by the sole mediatorship of Christ. One may be said to "cooperate" with God when one obeys the commission of the risen Christ to serve as his ambassador and declare him to be the Lord. In other words, one "cooperates" with God when one lives and acts in the belief that Christ alone is the sole mediator, trusting that we are saved *sola fide, sola gratia*.

(46) The differing "thought structures" referred to in our dialogue on justification<sup>56</sup> no doubt affect views on mediation and subsequent attitudes toward the practice of invoking saints and Mary.

Lutherans fear that a "transformationist model" tends to understand mediation too much as the distribution of "transforming grace" from the "treasury" of the superabundant merits of Christ and the saints through exemplary or properly authorized "intermediaries." The result is to extend mediation ecclesiologically via sacramental ordination, episcopacy, and perhaps speaking of the church as sacrament here on earth and the activity of saints and Mary on behalf of the faithful in heaven. Lutherans, however, think about mediation more in christological than ecclesiological terms: Christ gives himself in word and sacrament, thus continuing to be present to those who receive him in faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who, through the power of the Spirit, in faith receive Christ in word and sacrament experience "mediation" of salvation. Thus Christ himself is the mediation. He takes our sin and gives us his righteousness. In such a view any suggestion that the righteousness of the saints somehow avails before God, even if such righteousness is acquired by the power of grace, will appear to question Christ's sole mediatorship and become cause for turmoil of conscience. Nevertheless, in the Lutheran view, deceased saints may still be exemplary models of faith in Christ alone, but they are not perceived as mediators additional to the Christ communicated in the gospel.

(47) The Lutheran Reformation called for a redefinition of the term "saint" in the light of the gospel of justification by faith alone. A saint is one who is justified by faith alone and who consequently lives and acts on that basis, one who claims and desires nothing for self but lives in the light of divine grace. Implicit in this view of sainthood is a critique of what Lutherans understood to be a theology of merit and the idea that saints were those who because of meritorious service enjoyed the immediate beatific vision and so could share their merits or be invoked. Lutherans held that saints are those who, being justified by faith, are freed to turn their attention toward the living saints, the neighbor, the naked, hungry, thirsty, and poor. Saints who do this in conspicuous fashion are celebrated and held up as examples and encouragement for the life of faith in this world. In other words, they are not viewed as gaining extraordinary status in the afterlife according to a scale of merit, but rather simply as prominent examples of the obedience and perseverance of faith in suffering and trial. This issues in a somewhat different understanding of the "communion of saints." Saints are those who because of faith participate in the sufferings and the joys of brothers and sisters here on earth, identifying with their