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Veli-Matti Karkkainen

‘Evil, Love and the Left Hand of God’: The Contribution of Luther’s Theology of the Cross to an Evangelical Theology of Evil¹

Dr Karkkainen teaches systematic theology at Fuller Theological Seminary. He presents us here with an introduction to the current school of Luther interpretation in his native country of Finland.

Key words: Cross; Finland; Luther; theology.

Now it is not sufficient for anyone, and it does him no good to recognise God in his glory and majesty, unless he recognizes him in the humility and shame of the cross.²

That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as if they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened . . . He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest³ things of God seen through suffering and the cross.⁴

In April 1518, Martin Luther presided over the opening disputation of the chapter of his Augustinian Order at Heidelberg. The disputation concerned a series of theses that Luther had drawn up for

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- 1 An earlier version of this paper was read at the Evangelical Theology section of the American Academy of Religion/Society for Biblical Studies Annual Meeting at Nashville, Tenn., November 18–21, 2000. I am grateful to my respondents and colleagues for their criticism and encouragement.
 - 2 *Heidelberg Disputation* [= HDT] 20; LW 31, 52. With regard to the Heidelberg Disputation, the focus of this essay, I give references in two ways: the number of the thesis and volume and page number in *LW*. Other references to Luther are from the standard *WA*-edition. The most reliable original (Latin) version of the *Heidelberg Disputation* is found in Martin Luther, *Studienausgabe*, in Zusammenarbeit mit Helmar Junghans, Reinhold Pietz, Joachim Rogge und Guenther Wartenberg, hrsg. von Hans-Ulrich Delius (Berlin 1979).
 - 3 Surprisingly, here the English translation is not only inadequate but also misleading as it gives almost the opposite idea from the original: the term *posteriora (Dei)* means literally ‘rearward’, i.e., [God’s] back (referring to Luther’s exposition of Ex. 33 where Moses is allowed to know only God’s back instead of his face).
 - 4 *HDT* 19, 20; *LW* 31, 52.

the occasion at the invitation of Johannes von Staupitz.⁵ In the Heidelberg Disputation a new phrase was added to the Christian thesaurus, namely *theologia crucis*, the theology of the cross. It is a consensus among recent Lutheran scholars that the *theologia crucis*, far more than being just a topic among others, is the programmatic theme underlying all of Luther's theology.⁶

Although Luther's theology of the cross is a topic that has drawn much interest since the beginning of the twentieth century, only recently has a major monograph on the Heidelberg Disputation been written by a Finnish Lutheran scholar Kari Kopperi, titled *Paradoksien teologia: Lutherin disputaatio Heidelbergissä 1518 (Theology of Paradoxes: Luther's Disputation in Heidelberg 1518)*.⁷

This groundbreaking dissertation, written in Finnish, is part of a larger research program of the so-called 'Modern Finnish Luther Research', or as it has been also called, the 'Mannermaa School', after its founder, Professor Tuomo Mannermaa. Research on the ecumenical implications of Luther's theology conducted by the scholars in the Department of Systematic Theology of the University of Helsinki since about the mid-seventies has elicited both enthusiasm and critique especially in continental Europe, the traditional bulwark

5 In the previous year (1517), Luther had posted the Theses on Indulgences at Wittenberg, and 1519, the year following the Heidelberg Disputation, he had the historic Leipzig Disputation with Johannes Eck.

6 In recent years, Luther's theology of the cross has elicited a lot of new ecumenical research worldwide. Since Vatican II several Catholic scholars have developed *theologia crucis* and appreciated its ecumenical potential. The major recent work is Hubertus Blaumeiser, *Martin Luthers Kreuzestheologie: Schlüssel zu seiner Deutung vom Mensch und Wirklichkeit: Ein Untersuchung anhand der Operationes in Psalms (1519-1521)*, KKTS 60 (Paderborn, 1995); see also Peter Manns, *Vater im Glauben: Studien zur theologie Martin Luthers* (Stuttgart, 1989); J.E. Vercauteren 'Luther's Theology of the Cross: Its Relevance for Ecumenism', *Centro pro Unione* 35 (Spring 1989): 2-11, 19.

J. Moltmann's *Der gekreuzigte Gott* (1972; ET *The Crucified God* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993]) is a major restatement of the theology of the cross in terms of political theology. Its appearance created worldwide discussion (for a response to a critique of Moltmann's interpretation, see P. Buehler, *Kreuz und Eschatologie: Eine Auseinandersetzung mit der politischen Theologie, mit Anschluss an Luthers theologia crucis* [Tübingen, 1981].) The main Evangelical contributor has been Alistair E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough* (Oxford, UK/New York, USA: Oxford Press, 1985).

7 Suomalaisen Teologisen Kirjallisuusseuran julkaisu 208 (Saarijärvi: Gummerrus, 1997).

of Lutheran scholarship.⁸ The dissemination of the results and methodological orientations of this rapidly growing Scandinavian school of Luther studies has been very meagre in the English-speaking academy on both sides of the Atlantic since the studies are written in German, Finnish, or other Scandinavian languages.⁹ The main contribution of the Mannermaa School has been the creation of a new methodological framework for the interpretation of Luther.¹⁰

In this essay I will focus on the contribution of Luther's theology of the cross as it is presented in the Heidelberg Disputation and his view of God's love. First, I will briefly introduce the main orientations of the Mannermaa School's approach to Luther studies and its methodological orientation. Second, I will focus on Luther's theology of the cross in the Heidelberg Disputation. Third, I will inquire into the concept of *nihil* in Luther as it relates to our theme. Fourth, I will examine how Christ's real presence in faith affects the believer's response to evil in his/her own life and in relation to one's neighbour. I will conclude with a reflection on the implications for an Evangelical theology of evil and love, and pose some research tasks for the future.

- 8 A recent brief introduction to the methodological orientations and the main results of the Mannermaa School can be found in Tuomo Mannermaa, 'Why is Luther so Fascinating? Modern Finnish Luther Research', in *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 1-20. For the history and development, see also Eeva Martikainen, 'Luther-tutkimuksen paradigmmat: Suomalainen Luther-tutkimus 1934-1987', *Theologian perusmalleja klassisesta postmoderniin*. Suomalaisen Teologisen Kirjallisuusseuran julkaisu 219 (Helsinki: STKJ, 1999), 57-78.
- 9 Not until 1998 was the first English monograph (a collection of essays) offered to the English speaking world, *Union with Christ*, ed. Braaten and Jenson. This monograph, as the title implies, focuses on soteriological and methodological issues and does not touch, e.g., the research done on the theology of the cross in Luther.
- 10 The main topics of research thus far have been the doctrine of justification in Luther and its relation to the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of *theosis* (see further, T. Mannermaa, *Der im Glauben gegenwärtige Christus: Rechtfertigung und Vergeltung Zum ökumenischen Dialog*. Arbeiten zur Geschichte und Theologie des Luthertums, Neue Folge, Band 8 (Hannover, 1989), based on the Finnish original, *In ipsa fide Christus adest: Luterilaisen ja ortodoksisen kristinuskonkäsitöksen leikkauspiste*, MESJ 30 (Vammala, 1979); *theosis* in Luther's theology (see further, Simo Peura, *Mehr als ein Mensch? Die Vergöttlichung als Thema der Theologie Martin Luthers von 1513-1519*, Veröffentlichungen des Institut für Europäische Geschichte Mainz, Band 152 (Stuttgart, 1994); the meaning of the 'Golden Rule' in Luther (see further, Antti Raunio, *Die Summe des christlichen Lebens: Die 'Goldene Regel' als Gesetz der Liebe in der Theologie Martin Luthers von 1510 bis 1527*, Systemaattisen teologian laitoksen julkaisu 13 [Universität Helsinki, 1993]; the book will be published in Germany by Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte, Mainz). There are several projects under way, such as Luther's pneumatology and the doctrine of the Trinity.

Methodological Orientations

For Mannermaa, the leading idea in Luther's theology is Luther's insistence on 'Christ present in faith' (*in ipsa fide Christus adest*). In other words, Christ in both his person and his work is present in faith and is through this presence identical with the righteousness of faith. This view, traditionally called 'justification', can also be called *theosis* according to the ancient doctrine of the fathers with whom Luther agreed.¹¹ Deification, then, means the 'participation' of the believer in Christ which, because Christ is God, is also a participation in God himself. This deification is the result of God's love: human beings cannot participate in God on the basis of their own love; rather God's love effects their deification.¹² Christian participation in Christ thus is the result of the divine presence in the believer as love.¹³ This participation, following Athanasius and others (cf. the Eastern view of *energeia*) is a participation in the very *ousia* of God.¹⁴ There is, then, a 'real-ontic' unity between Christ and the Christian though the substances themselves do not change into something else.¹⁵

What makes Mannermaa's claim unique – and controversial especially with regard to the established canons of German Luther interpretation – is that the idea of Christ's presence is 'real-ontic',¹⁶ not just a subjective experience (*Erlebnis*) or God's effect on the believer (*Wirkung*) as the neo-Protestant school has exclusively held.

11 For a synopsis in English, see Mannermaa, 'Theosis as a Subject of Finnish Luther Research', *Pro Ecclesia* 4:1 (1995), 37-48. See further, Mannermaa, 'Justification and Theosis in Lutheran-Orthodox Perspective', in *Union with Christ*, 25-41 and idem, 'Luther ja Theosis' [Luther and Theosis], in *Pastor et Episcopus Animarum: Studia in Honorem Episcopi Pauli Verschuren*, ed. Pentti Laukama (Vammala: Vammalan Kirjapaino, 1985), 15-29.

12 See further, Mannermaa, *In ipsa fide Christus adest*, 108-10, 185, among others.

13 Mannermaa, *In ipsa fide Christus adest*, 200.

14 Mannermaa, *In ipsa fide Christus adest*, 99-100; see also Eeva Martikainen, 'Die Unio im Brennpunkt der theologischen Forschung', in *Unio: Gott und Mensch in der nachreformatorischen Theologie*, hrsg. E. Martikainen (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft, 1996), 13-18

15 Mannermaa, *In ipsa fide Christus adest*, 92-93; see also Peura, *Mehr als ein Mensch*, 296-97.

16 For a critical philosophical scrutiny and critique of this concept in Lutheran studies, see Dennis Bielfeldt, 'The Ontology of Deification', in *Caritas Dei: Beiträge zum Verständnis Luthers und der gegenwärtigen Ökumene*, Festschrift für Tuomo Mannermaa zum 60. Geburtstag, hrsg. Oswald Bayer, Robert W. Jenson und Simo Knuutila (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft, 1997), 90-113; see also Bielfeldt, 'Response' [to Luther and Metaphysics: What is the Structure of Being According to Luther? by Sammeli Juntunen] in *Union with Christ*, 161-66. Bielfeldt offers and critically scrutinises several complementary models to describe the 'presence' of Christ in the believer in Luther's theology.

Mannermaa's student Risto Saarinen, in his philosophical-methodological work *Gottes Wirken auf uns: Die transzendente Deutung des Gegenwart-Christi-Motiv in der Lutherforschung*,¹⁷ has shown clear evidence that the 'transcendental effect' orientation, originated by the German philosopher Hermann Lotze of the nineteenth century, has blurred the meaning of the real presence of Christ in Luther research, be it neo-Protestant, Luther Renaissance, or even dialectical theology. W. Herrman, O. Ritschl, and especially A. Ritschl understood Luther's theology as a new kind of *theologisches Erkenntnisprinzip*: they argued that Luther was moving beyond the old scholastic metaphysics with its idea of 'essence' toward a more relational view of knowledge. Based on neo-Kantian philosophy, these scholars argued that theology cannot know anything about the 'essence' (ontology) of God, only recognise his 'effects' in us.¹⁸ Saarinen and Mannermaa¹⁹ argue that this kind of reasoning does not reflect Luther's 'realistic' ontology but rather is a later philosophical construction; I will come back to this issue later on.

Kari Kopperi similarly argues that the nineteenth-century neo-Protestant 'transcendental interpretation' represents a new kind of personal/ethical interpretation foreign to Luther. In this view, *theologia crucis* was seen as an example of *pre-Reformation* development in Luther's thinking rather than as a *summa* of the mature Luther. Even though Walther von Loewenich in his *Luthers theologia crucis* (originally 1929) points out that *theologia crucis* is the leading principle of Luther's Reformation, his work however, with all its merits, still reflects neo-Protestant, neo-Kantian presuppositions. Gerhard Ebeling launched a new paradigm for the interpretation of Luther with

17 Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1989.

18 Also, in that older interpretation, it has been held that Luther's ontological orientation would be anti-metaphysical, emphasising God's work *for me* without making any ontological commitments, in opposition to the Catholic view which embraces 'metaphysical' categories, 'substances' and 'accidents'. For an English synopsis, see Risto Saarinen, 'The Presence of God in Luther's Theology', *Lutheran Quarterly* 3:1 (1994), 3ff. For an ecumenical Catholic treatment, see Oswald Bayer, 'Das Sein Jesus Christi im Glauben', *Theologische Literaturzeitung* (1993), 276-84. I will come back to this issue when treating the topic of *nihil* in Luther.

19 See, e.g., Mannermaa, 'Why is Luther so Fascinating?', 6: 'Whatever Luther's stance on nominalism may be, in his theology, at least, he follows this classical epistemology quite explicitly from beginning to end. Luther says, for example, in his early Christmas sermon (1514): "It is no wonder that I said that we must become word, because the philosophers, too, say that the intellect, through the act of intellectual knowing, is the known object, and that sensuality, through the act of sensual perception, is the sensual object; how much more is this true of the spirit and of the world?"' (WA 1, 29, 15-18).

his emphasis on an existentialist approach.²⁰ Ebeling's existentialist approach has been followed by most of the recent authors. Kopperi's analysis of the Heidelberg Disputation seeks to do justice both to the historical context of Luther and his classical epistemology in which the 'real-ontic' presence of Christ is a prevailing motif.

Theologia crucis – amor crucis

The leading idea in the Heidelberg Disputation, and in much of Luther's theology,²¹ is the difference between two kinds of love: *amor Dei* and *amor hominis*.²² The Disputation culminates in the last thesis: 'The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it . . . Rather than seeking its own good, the love of God flows forth and bestows good.'²³ Human love is oriented towards something inherently good in which self-love defines the content and the object of the love.²⁴ Men and women love something that they believe they can enjoy. Medieval scholastic theology provided an example for Luther of this kind of love.²⁵

God's love is the opposite of human love: it is directed towards something that does not exist in order to create something new. Luther sometimes calls God's love *amor crucis*: 'This is the love of the cross, born of the cross, which turns in the direction where it does

20 Eeva Martikainen ('Lutherin opin käsitteen patristiset ja skolastiset liittymät', *Teologian perusmalleja klassisesta postmoderniin*, 79-80) notes that the alleged anti-metaphysical and anti-ontological position of Luther has also influenced the understanding of the role of doctrine in Luther. For Luther's understanding of the nature of theology (and the relationship between 'theory and praxis'), see Antti Raunio, 'Speculatio practica: Das Betrachten Gottes als Ursprung des aktiven Lebens bei Luther', in *Caritas Dei*, 364-84.

21 Tuomo Mannerman, *Kaksi rakkautta: Johdatus Lutherin uskonmaailmaan*, Suomalaisen Teologisen Kirjallisuusseuran julkaisu 194, 2. painos (Helsinki: STKJ, 1995 (orig., 1983)), 16.

22 The main work here is: T. Mannerman, *Kaksi rakkautta*. See also: Kopperi, *Paradoxien Teologia*, 161-72 especially. Kopperi notes (p. 161) that Luther in fact knows three different notions of love: *amor Dei*, *amor hominis*, and *amor crucis*. Cf. Theodor Dieter, 'Amor hominis-amor crucis: Zu Aristoteleskritik in der Probatio zur 28. These der Heidelberger Disputation', *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie* 29 (1987): 241-58.

23 *HDT* 28; *LW* 31, 57.

24 Mannerman, *Kaksi rakkautta*, 9-11.

25 Luther criticises the medieval notion of love deriving from Aristotle. Luther also criticises the scholastic notion of merit (*meritum*), which was often (at least in popular piety) interpreted as a sort of merit in God's sight (although, of course, it was commonly held that before any human works/merits there was God's free grace, *gratia gratis data*, or some kind of auxiliary help, *auxilium speciale*). An example of

not find good which it may enjoy, but where it may confer good upon the bad and needy person.'²⁶ It is born out of the cross of Christ and is manifested through God's gracious works in the world. In divine love the movement is downward, whereas in human love it is upward.²⁷ By this, Luther does not, however, deny the value of genuine human love *per se*; his mode of speaking is *paradoxical*.²⁸

Luther goes a step further by arguing that the works born out of human love are in fact sin leading to death. Although good works seem to be good in other people's eyes, Luther calls them 'deadly sins'.²⁹ On the contrary, God's works 'are always unattractive and appear evil, (but) they are nevertheless really eternal merits' (*merita immortalia*), insofar as they are in accordance with his true love.³⁰

this interpretation is the notion of Gabriel Biel, Luther's teacher, of *facere quod in se est* (a principle according to which God will not deny his grace for those who do their utmost best; this principle is based on medieval *pactum*-theory: God has covenanted himself to save those who first do what they can). See further, Mannermaa, *Kaksi rakkautta*, 17-40; Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 162. According to Mannermaa (p. 27), the *amor benevolentiae* or *amor amicitiae* (in contradistinction from *amor concupiscentiae*) is not identical with Luther's *amor Dei* since Thomas's love presupposes some sort of mutuality.

26 HDT, 28; LW 31, 57

27 Mannermaa, *Kaksi rakkautta*, 12-13. See WA 7, 547, 1-10 (*Magnificat*).

28 Mannermaa, *Kaksi rakkautta*, 14-15. For the use of 'paradox' as a means of argumentation, see Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 17. For Luther, sexual love between a man and woman is highly appreciated; see further, Heiko O. Oberman, *Luther: Mensch zwischen Gott und Teufel* (Berlin, 1981), 286-90 especially. For the relationship between Luther's idea of love and his view of creation, see Mannermaa, *Kaksi rakkautta*, 63-75.

29 HDT 3, 5; LW 31, 43, 45. Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 103-14. Luther's extremely negative attitude toward human works is sometimes interpreted as nullifying all moral efforts. This is not what Luther means, for to him there is a definite difference between 'theological' and 'moral' perspectives on works; it is the theological perspective that is present here. In God's sight (*coram Deo*), human works are not just worthless but dangerous as they blind the eyes of moral men/women to believe that their works have merit in relation to salvation. From this perspective it becomes understandable why Luther can bluntly say that something which men/women regard as a good work morally could be a deadly sin leading to damnation. Of course, Luther admits, human beings are capable of choosing rightly according to practical reason, in affairs pertaining to human life (*coram hominibus*), and he has no objection to the notion of free will in this regard, but even then what they seek is basically their own good. But in relation to things pertaining to God, the notion of free will is 'an empty word' without any content. See, e.g., Luther's exposition on Romans in WA 56, 355-56.

30 HDT 17; LW 31, 44. Kopperi, *Paradoksien Teologia*, 115-18 especially. As a fitting conclusion to the section dealing with human works, Luther states that the only way to prepare for the receiving of grace is to preach about sin and the need for repentance (HDT 3; LW 31, 43).

Opus alienum Dei – Deus Absconditus

Whereas good human works appear to be beautiful in human eyes, God's works in this world often appear to be ugly. And whereas people do their best to become good and beautiful by seeking the good and beautiful, according to Luther, God works in the opposite way: God conceals Godself in lowliness to reveal the greatness of God's love. Consequently, God will not reward human works according to their (alleged) merits, but instead reveals their weakness and sinfulness through the cross and suffering.³¹

The natural mind imagines the works of God to be beautiful, fine and attractive, but according to Luther, the opposite is the case. He describes the works of God with biblical imagery, citing Is. 53:2, 'He had no form or comeliness' (*decor*),³² 'The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up.'³³ In other words, God makes us 'nothing' (*nihil*)³⁴ and 'stupid' to reveal his real love to us.³⁵

Here Luther introduces one major aspect of his 'theology of paradoxes': God's alien work (*opus alienum Dei*) and God's proper work (*opus proprium Dei*). God's alien work means putting down, killing, taking away hope, leading to desperation, etc. God's proper work means the opposite: forgiving, giving mercy, taking up, saving, encouraging, etc.³⁶ The following quote clearly depicts how Luther uses these two terms:

You (God) exalt us when you humble us. You make us righteous when you make us sinners. You lead us to heaven when you cast us into hell. You grant us the victory when you cause us to be defended. You give us life when you permit us to be killed.³⁷

The alien works Luther sometimes calls 'the works of the left hand' and the proper works 'the works of the right hand'. It is important to understand that, while these two kinds of works seem to be the opposite of each other, they result from the same love of God. Luther in fact says that God's proper work is veiled in his alien work and takes place simultaneously with it.³⁸

In doing so God turns out to be the devil. To show the paradoxical nature of his theology of the cross, Luther even goes so far as to say

31 Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 115.

32 Is. 53:2.

33 2 Sa. 2:6 (Luther mistakenly refers to 1 Ki. 2:6).

34 For the concept of *nihil* in Luther, see Sammeli Juntunen, *Der Begriff des Nichts bei Luther von 1509 bis 1523* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola Gesellschaft, 1996).

35 *HDT* 4, *LW* 31, 43.

36 *LW* 14, 95 etc.; Mannerman, *Kaksi rakkautta*, 43.

37 *LW* 14, 95.

38 *HDT* 16; *LW* 31, 50; Kopperi, *Paradoksien Teologia*, 115-16.

that God's works are not just veiled in their opposite but they also sometimes create bad results.³⁹ To illustrate his point, Luther compares the working of God in this world with a worker with a bad axe: although the worker himself is skilful, because of the tool the results are bad. Furthermore, Luther argues that sometimes God uses even Satan for his *opus alienum* in order to work out his *opus proprium*.⁴⁰

The God who acts like this is a hidden God. In theses 19-24 Luther turns to this aspect of his theology of the cross. The *theologus crucis* observes God in the shame and lowliness of the cross, whereas the *theologus gloriae* looks for God in majesty and glory.⁴¹ In order to reveal Godself, God works through a process that could be described like this: (1) A human being is not able to reach God with the help of wisdom or works, since God is hidden; (2) The true wisdom and knowledge can be found only in the cross; (3) God makes a human being a *nihil* (4) to make him/her a new being.⁴²

With reference to Ex. 33:18 – 34:9 (especially 33:23), in which Moses asks God to show God's face, God responds: 'But . . . you cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live.' (33:20 RSV). Instead, God lets Moses see God's back. On the basis of this event, Luther differentiates between God's visible properties (*visibilia Dei*) such as *humanitas*, *infirmitas*, and *stultitia* and God's invisible properties such as *virtus*, *divinitas*, *sapientia*, *iustitia*, and *bonitas*.⁴³ The theologian of the glory goes astray in that he/she attempts to know God 'through the creatures' (*per ea quae facta sunt*). Theology of the glory 'calls evil good and good evil' whereas, 'A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is'.⁴⁴ Consequently, Luther's view of reality is dynamic rather than static: the person who looks at the world in light of the cross – in other words, in light of God's revelation – not only observes what is but also what will be in the future.⁴⁵

This brings us to one of the main focal points of Luther's theology in general and the theology of the cross in particular: the all-important role of God's revelation and the Word of God. Luther says, '*Verbum enim gratiae verbum crucis est*'.⁴⁶ Not only God's love, but also

39 HDT 5, 6; LW 31, 45; Kopperi, *Paradoksien Teologia*, 117. Luther says bluntly, 'Non sic sunt opera Dei merita ut eadem.'

40 HDT 6; LW 45; Kopperi, *Paradoksien Teologia*, 118.

41 HDT 20; LW 31, 52.

42 Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 128ff.

43 HDT 20; LW 31, 52; Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 128-29.

44 HDT 21; LW 31, 53.

45 See further, H. Blaumeiser, 'Aus der Mitte der Offenbarung in die Mitte des Lebens', in *Caritas Dei*, 115-16.

46 WA 5, 657, 27-28; See also Blaumeiser, 'Aus der Mitte der Offenbarung in die Mitte des Lebens', 119-20.

God's revelation is cross-formed. Any knowledge of God apart from the cross is not only vain but also misleading. Observing God's visible properties is misleading since God always reveals Godself indirectly, veiling Godself in the opposite of what God actually is.⁴⁷

This is clear: he who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering [*absconditus in passionibus*]. Therefore he prefers works to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and, in general, good to evil.⁴⁸

The concept of *Deus absconditus* in Luther carries several connotations. First, God is *Deus nudus*. Second, because of sin a human being can never know God on his/her own. Third, God is hidden since God reveals Godself in an indirect form.⁴⁹ The cross, so to speak, gives the perspective to know a God who hides Godself *sub contraria specie*.⁵⁰ The cross breaks down the desire of human wisdom to reach to God.⁵¹

Contrary to what the canons of older Luther research claim, Kopperi argues that here Luther is not championing a new reformatory *Offenbarungstheologie* or existentialistic interpretation. He is simply opposing knowledge of God apart from Christ with the cross of Christ.⁵² Luther opposes any attempt to know God without a mediator; consequently, the Philip of John's Gospel is a theologian of the glory: he wanted to see the Father directly.⁵³ Rather, '*Ergo in Christo crucifixo est uera Theologia (et) cognitio Dei*'.⁵⁴ Theologians of the glory are, in fact, enemies of the cross (*inimici crucis Christi*).⁵⁵

For the theologian of the glory, both intellect and love direct themselves only to something that is and that is good.⁵⁶ Paradoxically, God, who reveals Godself in lowliness and shame, appears to be ugly and *nihil*.⁵⁷

47 Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 130-31.

48 *HDT* 21; *LW* 31, 53.

49 Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 131.

50 Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 132.

51 Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 134-36. This does not, however, mean that Luther is critical of any kind of philosophy as has been argued often. See further, Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 137-38.

52 Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 136-38, see also 139-42.

53 *HDT* 20, *LW* 31, 52; Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 139

54 *HDT* 20, *LW* 31, 52; see also *HDT* 4; *LW* 31, 44.

55 *HDT* 21; *LW* 31, 53. For the enemies of the cross, see also *WA* 1, 62, 7-11; 164, 24-165, etc.

56 *HDT* 28; *LW* 31, 57.

57 Mannermaa, 1983, 40-41.

Redigere ad nihilum

The integral connection between the theology of the cross and the theology of love comes to focus in Luther's view of new birth: 'To be born anew, one must consequently first die and then be raised up with the Son of Man. To die, I say, means to feel death at hand'.⁵⁸ In order to save a man/woman, God first kills him/her by God's alien work; this is the work of *annihilatio*; only then God begins God's proper work and causes new birth.⁵⁹

Sammeli Juntunen, another student of Mannermaa, has focused in his research on the use of the concept of *nihil* in Luther. In contrast to the personalist – or, as it can also be called, ethical – Luther interpretation (Gerhard Ebeling, W. Joest) in which Luther replaces an Aristotelian substance-metaphysic with a relational ontology,⁶⁰ Juntunen argues that Luther does not necessarily reject all metaphysical speculations; Luther's concern is that in his view the *amor hominis* is the motivating principle of human philosophy.⁶¹

Luther joins the classical and medieval theological metaphysics in maintaining that our being is being as participation in God⁶² (*contra* his teacher William of Ockham). This applies to both our being as *esse naturae* and *esse gratiae*,⁶³ although there is a difference of degree between these two, especially in view of the fact that in the *esse gratiae* there is participation in God through Christ.⁶⁴

58 HDT 24; LW 31, 55; Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia* 142-43.

59 HDT 16; LW 31, 50, 51. With regard to the story of Abraham in this respect, see Juhani Forsberg, *Das Abrahambild in der Theologie Luthers: Pater fidei sanctissimus*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz, Abteilung Religionsgeschichte Band 117 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1984), 29, 61, 68-69, 83, 179.

60 According to Saarinen (*Gottes Wirken auf uns*, 28, 41, 67-68, 77-78, 93-94) the notion that Luther's thought is antimetaphysical or antiontological is based on the neo-Kantian division between *Geist* and *Natur*. For the critique of neo-Protestant tradition, see Juntunen, *Der Begriff des Nichts bei Luther*, 11-25 and for a corrective along the Mannermaa School's interpretation, pp. 25-33 especially. For a synopsis in English, see Juntunen, 'Luther and Metaphysics: What is the Structure of Being according to Luther?' in *Union with Christ*, 129-60.

61 Juntunen, 'Luther and Metaphysics', 132-33; see also Mannermaa, *In ipsa fide Christus adest*, 129; Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia* 73, 85-86.

62 In other words, a human being is not *ens per se* but rather *ens per participacionem*. Juntunen, *Der Begriff des Nichts bei Luther*, 406.

63 Juntunen, 'Luther and Metaphysics', 148ff. Of note is Luther's praise of the concept of *participatio* in the philosophical portion of the Heidelberg Disputation; see Juntunen, *Der Begriff des Nichts bei Luther*, 43-44.

64 See further, Juntunen, 'Luther and Metaphysics', 152, 154-56; Peura, *Mehr als ein Mensch*; Mannermaa, 'Über die Unmöglichkeit, gegen Texte Luthers zu systematisieren: Antwort an Günther Wenz', in *Unio: Gott und Mensch in der nachreformatorischen Theologie*, hrsg. M. Repo und R. Vinke, *Suomalaisen Teologisen Kirjallisuusseuran julkaisu* 200 (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft, 1996), 383-91

It is against this background that the frequency of the use of *nihil* in Luther comes to light.⁶⁵ It has two main connotations: on the one hand, it denotes total dependence⁶⁶ – ontological dependence – of the human being on God. The human being is *nihil ex se*, he/she has no existence of his/her own but is totally dependent on God both for existence and activity.⁶⁷ On the other hand, *nihil* in Luther is also an indication of the sinfulness of the human being.⁶⁸ For Luther, sin can be identified in the formal sense with *nihil*.

This dual 'being as *nihil*' of a human being is an objective fact for Luther; however, a natural man/woman does not acknowledge his/her state before God. A human being is not willing to acknowledge the state of *nihil* but rather attempts to be just in both natural and spiritual essence. The tragedy of this alleged 'being something' is that God is not allowed to be God. For Luther, God according to God's very nature is *creator ex nihilo* who in God's *agape*-love wants to give good gifts and create new things.⁶⁹ Therefore, to let God be who God is, the Creator and Sustainer, a human being has to be made what he/she really is, i.e., *nihil*.⁷⁰ For this alien work, Luther uses terms such as *redigo ad nihilum* and *annihilo*. Its purpose, though, is not the destruction of a human being but total transformation.⁷¹

In the final analysis, even *annihilatio* is to be understood as a result of God's love.⁷² Its goal is the emergence of *novum esse*⁷³ and the destruction of false human love.⁷⁴ It also results in the real knowledge of self: not *ex se* but rather *ex deo*.⁷⁵ But – and this Juntunen emphasises against the older interpretation tradition – this 'making into nothing' means for Luther more than just transformation of *cognitio* (the human being acknowledges his/her state) or *affectus* (the human being no longer loves him/herself as an independent entity). Rather, it means a 'real' transformation of the human being ('sie enthält einen "stärker seinshaft" ausgerichteten Aspekt').⁷⁶

This paradoxical work of God, however, is nothing foreign to God.

65 For statistics, see Juntunen, *Der Begriff des Nichts bei Luther*, 148.

66 Juntunen, *Ibid.*, 405.

67 Juntunen, *Ibid.*, 149-200. Juntunen (pp. 167-74) argues convincingly that for Luther being dependent on God this way is an expression of *creatio continua*.

68 Juntunen, *Ibid.*, 201-28.

69 Juntunen, *Ibid.*, 244-45 especially.

70 Juntunen, *Ibid.*, 229ff.

71 Juntunen, *Ibid.*, 238-53.

72 Juntunen, *Ibid.*, 245, 262-76.

73 Juntunen, *Ibid.*, 293ff.

74 Juntunen, *Ibid.*, 383-403.

75 Juntunen, *Ibid.*, 349.

76 Juntunen, *Ibid.*, 411.

According to Luther this kind of 'action which is alien to God's nature results in a deed belonging to his very nature'.⁷⁷ The purpose of this paradoxical work is to free a human being from *praesumptio* in order to let him/her open up to God's love which, as we have seen, is directed towards sinful, weak, and nothing to make it holy, strong, and wise.⁷⁸ Putting their trust on human love men and women in fact rely on *creatura* and thus do not allow God be God.⁷⁹ The root of evil and the bedrock of all sin for Luther is pride (*superbia*) and perverted self-confidence (*securitas*).⁸⁰

He, however, who has emptied himself through suffering no longer does works but knows that God works and does all things in him. For this reason, whether God does works or not, it is all the same to him.⁸¹

According to Luther, amidst this anxiety a human being senses the presence of death (*morten praesentem sentire*)⁸² akin to hell and considers God as his/her opponent. Luther goes a step further in saying that an afflicted person in fact regards the opposition between God and a human being as real.⁸³ For Luther, this is nothing less than the union between the suffering of Christ and us.⁸⁴ In his exposition on justification, Luther emphasises that a justified person does not require anything more of God but is satisfied with becoming more *nihil*.⁸⁵ To do justice to Luther, a modern psychological interpretation of the loss of self-confidence has to be set aside.⁸⁶

An important note has to be added to the understanding of the

77 HDT 16; LW 31, 51

78 HDT 16; LW 31, 50-51.

79 Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 112.

80 We always have to keep in mind that Luther was not only a member of the Augustinian Order but also a keen student of Augustine's theology, even after he broke with the Catholic Church.

81 HDT 24; LW 31; 55.

82 HDT 24; LW 31, 55. Eero Huovinen (*Kuolemattomuudesta osallinen: Martti Lutherin kuoleman teologian ekumeeninen perusongelma*, Suomalaisen Teologisen Kirjallisuusseuran julkaisuja 130 (Helsinki: STKJ, 1981)) (shows that for Luther in his Exposition on Genesis the important concept of *imago Dei* implies that in the beginning a human being participated in God in a 'real-ontic' way and therefore death meant losing this real participation; the only way to re-participate in the divine life is through faith in Christ mediated by the Word and the sacraments.

83 See further, Lennart Pinomaa, *Lutherin kilvoitteleva usko* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1952), 59-76.

84 See further, e.g., WA 1, 101, 16-21; 571, 34-572, 3; WA 2, 548, 20-29; Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 144-45.

85 HDT 24; LW 31, 51.

86 Cf. Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 143 n. 76 and Mannermaa, 'Evankeliumin puhtaus ja terapeutinen sielunhoito', in *Evankeliumi ja sen ulottuvuudet*, Suomalaisen Teologisen Kirjallisuusseuran vuosikirja 1990, toim. Antti Raunio, STKSJ 172 (Helsinki, 1990), 95-106.

nature of God's alien work in Luther: the principle of 'from death to life' governs God's work both in creation and new birth: '*revera nihil differat creatio et recreatio, cum utraque ex nihilo operetur*'.⁸⁷ There is a continuity rather than discontinuity between God's work in natural and graced spheres of life. It also means that for Luther – and this is the strength of the recent work of the Catholic theologian Hubertus Blaumeiser⁸⁸ – the resurrection is the focal point of hope. When God kills, He kills in order to raise up.⁸⁹

In ipsa fide Christus adest

For a person who has been made form-less (*deformis*), God gives a new *forma*, in other words, *in-forms* him to an image of Christ. Consequently, Christ is the *forma fidei* rather than our faith.⁹⁰ Christ as the 'greatest sinner' (*maximus peccator; peccator peccatorum*)⁹¹ assumes our sinfulness and weakness. Luther also uses the concept of 'Christ as the 'greatest person' (*maxima persona*) in whom the persons of all human beings are united in a real manner' and through a 'happy exchange' (cf. *communicatio idiomatum*) gives Himself to us to make it possible for us to participate in Him.⁹²

In other words, it is not love but rather faith that makes our relationship to God possible, namely the faith that is not something that men/women choose for themselves but is a gift from God. Faith changes human will in such a way that through their works they are

87 WA 5, 544, 9-10; cf. WA 7, 547, 1-3. See further, Hubertus Blaumeiser, 'Aus der Mitte der Offenbarung in die Mitte des Lebens', 116.

88 Blaumeiser, *Martin Luthers Kreuzestheologie*.

89 See also Ulrich Asendorf, 'Die Ökumenische Bedeutung von Luthers Genesis-Vorlesung (1535-1545)', in *Caritas Dei*, 21. Asendorf notes elsewhere (p. 33) that Luther's theology carries a lot of ecumenical potential especially with regard to the Eastern Orthodox tradition. I will come back to this issue in the conclusions.

90 Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 148-49. See further WA 56 (The Exposition of Romans), 218, 17-219 and WA 40 (The Exposition of Galatians) (I, 226, 13-229, 35 and Mannerman, *In ipsa fide Christus adest: Luterilaisen ja ortodoksisen kristinuskäsitelyksen leikkauspiste*, 27-32 and *Kaksi rakkautta*, 48-49, 75-77. Mannerman contrasts the scholastic *fides charitate formata*, in which faith informed by love is the determining factor, with Luther's *fides Christo formata*, according to which it is through faith itself that we participate in Christ.

91 Luther also knows the term 'Christ as the "only sinner"' (*solus peccator*). Mannerman, *In ipsa fide Christus adest: Luterilaisen ja ortodoksisen kristinuskäsitelyksen leikkauspiste*, 21; so also idem, 'Justification and *Theosis* in Lutheran-Orthodox Perspective', 31.

92 Mannerman, *In ipsa fide Christus adest: Luterilaisen ja ortodoksisen kristinuskäsitelyksen leikkauspiste*, 21-27; 'Justification and *Theosis* in Lutheran-Orthodox Perspective', 29-36.

not seeking good for themselves but for others as well.⁹³

A Christian, then, becomes a 'work of Christ', and even more a 'Christ' to the neighbour;⁹⁴ the Christian does what Christ does. The Christian identifies with the suffering of his/her neighbour.⁹⁵ This is, in other words, *in ipsa fide Christus adest*, the real presence of Christ in the believer. The presence of Christ for Luther is not only 'spiritual' or *extra nos* but rather *in nobis*, in the language of the Mannermaa school, in a 'real-ontic' way. In fact, Luther says, '*Sic enim per fidem Christus in nobis, imo unum cum nobis est*'⁹⁷ and '*Christus in nos habitat per fidem*'.⁹⁸

According to Luther, 'since Christ lives in us through faith . . . he arouses us to do good works through that living faith in his work, for the works which he does are the fulfilment of the commands of God given us through faith'.⁹⁹ As *donum* Christ gives himself in a real way to the Christian to make him/her participate in the divine nature.¹⁰⁰ To emphasise the union between Christ and the Christian, Luther sometimes even borrows expressions from the mystics,¹⁰¹ as in his ref-

93 For the notion of 'good works' in Luther, according to the principle of the Golden Rule, see A. Raunio, *Summe des christlichen Lebens*.

94 For the notion of the Christian as a 'Christ' to the neighbour, see Mannermaa, *Kaksi rakkautta*, 89-100. This idea also permeates Luther's view of the church, in which the church is also seen as a 'hospital' for the sick and weak. For a comprehensive treatment of the theme of love towards one's neighbour on the basis of the presence of Christ living in the believer, see Raunio, *Die Summe des christlichen Lebens*.

95 HDT 25; LW 31, 55-56; Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 154ff.

96 Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia* 155; Mannermaa, *In ipsa fide Christus adest: Luterilaisen ja ortodoksisen kristinuskonkäsityksen leikkauspiste*, 19-27 and idem, 'Uskon ja rakkauten suhde Lutherin teologiassa', *Teologinen Aikakauskirja* 84 (1979): 332-33 especially. See also Peura, *Mehr als ein Mensch*, 270-94 especially; and Reijo Työriö, 'Opus theologicum - Luther ja skolastinen teonteoriat', *Evankeliumi ja sen ulottuvuudet*, 150-60.

97 HDT 26; LW 31, 56.

98 HDT 27; LW 31, 56.

99 HDT 27; LW 31, 56.

100 Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia* 158 especially; Mannermaa, *In ipsa fide Christus adest: Luterilaisen ja ortodoksisen kristinuskonkäsityksen leikkauspiste*, 24-26; Eero Huovinen, 'Lutherin "synergismi"', in *Elävä Dogma: Teologisia tutkielmia ja sovelluksia*, Suomalaisen Teologisen Kirjallisuusseuran julkaisuja 155 (Helsinki, 1987), 61-63. For a recent overview, see Simo Peura, 'Christus als Gunst und Gabe', in *Caritas Dei*, 340-63 and idem, 'Christ as Favor and Gift: The Challenge of Luther's Understanding of Justification', in *Union with Christ*, 42-69.

101 For the disputed question of the role of the mystical in Luther, see Franccen Neufel, 'The Cross of the Living Lord: The Theology of the Cross and Mysticism', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 49:2 (1996), 131-46.

erence to the Song of Songs in the Heidelberg Thesis 27.¹⁰² To interpret this as a sign of existential effect or the union of wills, as has been done in the neo-Protestant interpretation tradition, does not do justice to Luther's ontology.¹⁰³

According to its very nature, God's love is overflowing, seeking for objects not worthy in themselves to be loved: 'This is the love of the cross, born of the cross, which turns in the direction where it does not find good which it may enjoy, but where it may confer good upon the bad and needy person.'¹⁰⁴ The love of the cross, God's love, gives the right perspective to look at other people. In a masterful way Luther says, 'Therefore, sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are not loved because they are attractive.' As far as the Christ present in the believer moves him/her into God's works in the world, he/she participates in God's love.

The Potential and Challenges of the New Methodological Approach to Luther

Before delineating the implications of Luther's theology of the cross for an Evangelical theology of evil, an assessment of the contribution and challenges of the Mannermaa school of Luther studies will be offered.

This new approach to Luther has challenged several tenets of earlier approaches: First, against the prevailing neo-Kantian view, according to which nothing can be known of God-itself, only God's effects upon the believer, the Mannermaa-school maintains that this interpretation does not do justice to Luther's 'realistic' ontology. Consequently, the Mannermaa interpretation freely speaks of the 'real-ontic' presence of Christ in the believer as the leading motif of Luther's theology.

Second, by doing so, this new approach to Luther studies has also questioned the neo-Protestant and existential insistence according to which Christ's presence is only a subjective experience in the believer. In other words, this new interpretation lets Luther be as 'medieval' in his ontology and philosophy as is appropriate against the historical context.

Third, in line with Luther's 'realistic' ontology, this new interpre-

102 'Every act of Christ is instruction for us, indeed, a stimulant. If his action is in us it lives through faith, for it is exceedingly attractive according to the verse, "Draw me after you, let us make haste" [Song of Sol. 1:4] toward the fragrance "of your anointing oils" [Song of Sol. 1:3], that is, "your works"'. *HDT* 27; *LW* 31, 57.

103 Kopperi, *Paradoksien teologia*, 159 especially.

104 *HDT* 28; *LW* 31, 57.

tation maintains that for Luther our being is participation in God, and apart from God, our being is an absolute *nihil*.

Fourth, the focus of this new Luther interpretation, the real presence of Christ in the believer, also opens up unprecedented perspectives on Luther's understanding of the Christian's ethical life and love to the neighbour. Actually Luther regards the Christian as a 'Christ' to the neighbour. This interpretation holds great potential for opening up the complicated question of works versus grace in Luther. It also extends the traditionally limited view of justification in Luther studies.

Finally, the Mannermaa school highlights the fact that for Luther the theology of the cross is the leading principle of his theology, which structures and informs the rest of the theological *loci* from revelation to theology proper to Christology, soteriology and ecclesiology.

Implications and Tasks for the Emerging Evangelical Theology of Evil and Love

Luther did not present a theodicy. This is understandable for many reasons. He was not a systematician but rather a biblical expositor. Also, his theology is contextualised and arises out of the controversies of his own times. However, Luther's perspectives on the question of the cross, suffering, evil, and death on the one hand, and his view of God's love and its relation to human love on the other are very relevant to Evangelical theology. The research done by the Mannermaa school has helped to rediscover some crucial perspectives on Luther's own theology, many of which are ecumenically pregnant. I will summarise the main contributions with the following theses.

1) The problem of evil has to be faced in all its seriousness and ugliness. Rather than taking refuge in existential or psychological havens, Evangelical theology should reflect on what it means to live amidst 'the dark night of the soul'. Much of Evangelical spirituality and theology, especially in its popular, devotional form, is a misguided effort in whitewashing the walls of our world with sentimental talk about God's love.

2) The radical nature of evil and sin in human life and creation has to be taken seriously as well. This brings human life into absolute dependence on God and God's mercy. In Luther, anthropology and theology inform each other, and while evil can never be equated with sin in private life (as Evangelicalism too often has implied) neither can it be downplayed, as 'natural' theologies of our day often imply.

3) Luther's basically positive view of creation as an overflow of

God's love has to be appreciated *vis-à-vis* his seriously radical view of evil. Consequently, the dichotomy of much of Evangelical theology in separating creation and the new creation can be corrected. In both spheres, the new arises out of death, but the new always corresponds to what was there, even though it is purified from its corruption.

4) The cross of Christ has not only salvatory but also revelational importance. The way Evangelical theology speaks about evil is determined by its understanding of revelation. For Luther, revelation is the word of the cross. Everything one can say about God and God's world is 'mediated' by the cross, and therefore, by the Christ of the cross.

5) Talk about God's love in a real world is dangerous; much of the love-talk of Evangelical piety seems so vague because it has no theological basis. For Luther, God's love means the essence of loving something that is non-existent, or that exists in weakness and shame, in order to make it something new. This is what it means to be God: to create something out of nothing. Evangelical theology has not paid much attention to the category of love but has rather focused on the grace of God. Luther's theology of love, combined with the biblical, especially the Old Testament's view of God's passionate love, could help Evangelicals to say something worthwhile about agape

6) God has to assume the final responsibility over the evil and suffering in the world. For Luther, God is the all-determining power in the world. God not only allows the evil, but even causes it to some extent and makes use of it in God's alien work. God is not to be excused, but is to be trusted, for out of death a new life springs forth. Even though Luther's theology reflects crucial Augustinian and western influences, his theology of evil and love does not follow the 'Augustinian theodicy' – to utilise the well-known typology of John Hick's *Evil and the God of Love*. In the approach of Augustine and many of his followers, the main motive is to absolve the Creator from the responsibility for the evil and suffering. This is a seriously mistaken course.

The borderline between the Christian belief in an all-determining God and other gods is sharp: either God takes responsibility and in the final analysis is the solution to the problem of evil or we are left to the power of other forces. Wolfhart Pannenberg's theodicy¹⁰⁵ rests on this premise, and even though he does not build here on Luther, his ideas reflect Luther's orientation. The cross shows final evidence of the fact that God assumed the responsibility over the evil by send-

105 W. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 161-74.

ing God's Son to the cross. This is the way the New Testament – which does not know any kind of philosophical theodicy – talks about evil and suffering.¹⁰⁶

7) Since God takes responsibility over evil, God is not a detached observer but a suffering God. For Luther, God's passibility is ontologically constitutive of God; this is '*dei-passionism*'.¹⁰⁷ He is not only a hidden God but in Christ a God who assumes the place of the judged. Evangelical theology that seeks to speak to the questions of the post-modern suffering world should major on *theo-logy* that makes suffering a constitutive part of the Creator and Redeemer God.

8) An Evangelical theology of evil should be a theology of hope. Luther's theology of the cross takes suffering and death seriously, so seriously that it also takes the hope seriously: it is constitutive of God to make the new out of death, out of *nihil*. The Evangelical development of Luther's theology of the cross would want to highlight the significance of resurrection for the rest of the theological *loci*. The Eastern tradition with its accent on resurrection, the goodness of creation (an idea not foreign to Luther although less visible in the later Reformation theology), and *theosis* would provide good seedthought for Evangelicals. In opposition to what has been thought before, the Mannermaa school has established the fact that Luther's theology is not so foreign to some of these key emphases of the Eastern Church.

9) Participation in God, both in *esse naturae* and *esse gratiae* is a constitutive orientation in Luther's theology, and could be in Evangelical theology, too. This brings continuity to God's work. It has been programmatic for Evangelical theology (and much of later Protestantism) to see a contradistinction between nature and grace, and this can be corrected by both a recovery of biblical studies, as well as Luther's theology, and ecumenical contacts with both the Eastern and Catholic traditions.

10) Faith as participation in God – or justification as union, i.e., *theosis* – is one of the key ideas of Luther's theology in the interpretation of the Mannermaa school. Christ present in faith makes Christians 'Christs' to serve their neighbours in God's world. This 'real-ontic' view of participation in God could inform Evangelical theology in its attempt to take seriously faith and love amidst the postmodern cacophony of dissenting voices.

Finally, the talk about God's love and evil has to be ecumenical, since we do not suffer 'confessionally'. An Evangelical theology of

106 Cf. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 2:166.

107 See further, Dennis Ngien, *The Suffering of God According to Martin Luther's 'Theologia Crucis'*. American University Studies, Series VII Theology and Religion, vol. 181 (New York: Peter Lang, 1995).

evil and love can never be anything more' or less' than a spirit-inspired contribution to the thinking of the whole church in all ages and cultures. The wide ecumenical interest in Luther's theology of the cross and the love of God reminds us of our need to work together with other confessional families to make sense of our world, which too often seems to be out of its mind.

Abstract

Luther's leading theological idea, the theology of the cross, is based on his distinctive view of God's love and its relationship to suffering and evil. Luther argues that God's actions in the world are 'cross-formed'. The new Finnish Luther interpretation offers methodologically and thematically fresh perspectives on Luther's understanding of God's love and its relation to human love and to evil. The idea of the 'real' presence of Christ in the believer receives special highlight. On the basis of these considerations, this essay attempts to open up new perspectives for Evangelical theology on the problem of evil and God's love.

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