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# Matthias Loy: Theologian of American Lutheran Orthodoxy

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MATTHIAS LOY (1825-1915) was the greatest churchman produced by the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio in its entire one hundred and eighteen year history.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Loy was an educator, serving as a professor at Capital University and the Evangelical Lutheran Theological Seminary in Columbus for forty-one years. Professor Loy was also an administrator, acting as president of Capital University for almost a decade, at a time when "the president's job had come to include just about everything except stoking the furnaces."<sup>2</sup> Concurrently Loy was an editor, having charge of the Ohio Synod's official journal, the *Lutheran Standard*, for more than a quarter of a century. As an adventure in scholarly journalism, Loy founded *The Columbus Theological Magazine* in 1881 and managed it for almost ten years. Loy was also a prolific writer, the author, editor, or translator of more than fourteen books ranging in subject matter from liturgical formulas and hymnals to catechisms and doctrinal essays. Pastor Loy also found time to be President of the Ohio Synod from 1860 until 1878 and again from 1880 until 1894, a period of thirty-two years, more than a third of the denomination's history. During his presidency the Synod ceased to be merely a regional body confined to the Upper Ohio River Valley and became a national church with congregations from coast to coast and even in Canada and Australia. Loy was also an effective pastor and a persuasive preacher. Pre-eminently, however, Matthias Loy was a theologian—ranking with C. F. W. Walther and Charles Porterfield Krauth as one of the three most effective advocates of Lutheran Orthodoxy in the United States in the nineteenth century.

## THE WAY TO ORTHODOXY

During Dr. Loy's funeral service in Grace Church, Columbus, the Reverend Robert E. Golladay predicted in his eulogy that "when men get the right historical perspective, Dr. Loy will receive credit . . . as one of the greatest conservative leaders of the Lutheran Church."<sup>3</sup> What was obvious at the man's burial was not evident at his birth. In fact most of the forces present in his youth served to drive him toward heterodoxy rather than orthodoxy. His advocacy of confessionalism came about in spite of his upbringing, not because of it.

Matthias Loy was the fourth of seven children born to Matthias and Christina Loy, two impoverished German immigrants attempting to make a living as tenant farmers in the Blue Mountains of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. His childhood in that lovely but lonely place was one of physical and spiritual deprivation. The Loyes were marginal farmers, always but one step removed from poverty. In later years Loy recalled that his father, after a trip to Harrisburg

returned with "a toy that even astonished my mother for its beauty and ingenuity, and which had cost the sum of ten cents. I remember how I sought a hiding place when my father pulled the string and a cock leaped from the box. It was amazing."<sup>4</sup> Difficulties multiplied with the years. The land was niggardly in its return for all the labor lavished upon it. Three of the children and then the mother died. Medical and burial expenses, coupled with heavy indebtedness and the frequent unemployment of father Loy, pushed the family into near desperation. The elder Loy forsook the farm, failed as a butcher, and finally, in the 1840's, took up the management of a German saloon in south Harrisburg. Young Matthias was "hired out" at many tasks—farm hand, brickyard worker, and, by the age of thirteen, bartender. He recalled that he was exposed to "gatherings and performances which even then seemed to me of questionable propriety."<sup>5</sup> When on one occasion he dared express his disapproval of the conduct that occurred in his father's house, he was slapped across the face for his "impudent interference" and was promptly expelled from the household for the sake of "the peace of the family." At age fourteen he was apprenticed to the printing establishment of Baab and Hummel in Harrisburg. He never returned to his boyhood home again. He was all alone in the world.

This crisis, coupled with the ordinary anxieties that come with adolescence, caused young Loy to look for religious resources with which to face the future. His spiritual legacy was very scanty. From his sainted mother, a Pietist from Wuerttemberg, he had acquired a casual acquaintance with the rudiments of the Christian religion. This, however, was more than matched by the secularism of his father. Loy remembered that he had not seen a church until he was past six years of age. For a brief period he was enrolled in a community Sunday School operated by the Presbyterians in Hogestown, a post village nine miles west of Harrisburg. The content of the curriculum was largely Deism. Loy later recalled with deep regret that the only prayer he knew as a lad was the rationalistic "Universal Prayer" of Alexander Pope:

Father of all! in every age,  
 In every clime ador'd,  
 By saint, by savage, or by sage,  
 Jehovah, Jove, or Lord.<sup>6</sup>

At the insistence of his mother all the Loy children had been baptized as infants into the Lutheran faith with the exception of an elder brother whose baptism was postponed because the Lutheran circuit rider, when asked to administer the sacrament, refused to do so because he "had become an Anabaptist and was planning to establish a Baptist sect."<sup>7</sup> Loy, however, had never received any instruction in the Lutheran Church. He vaguely remembered, however, that his mother wished him to be a Lutheran. At the age of sixteen, therefore, he turned to the Lutheran Church for help.

It was the year 1843 and the nation was being swept by the Millerite revival. William Miller, a New England Baptist, on the basis of selected passages from the apocalyptic literature in the Bible,

had predicted the imminent second coming of Christ. Across the country great revivals were in progress—and the enthusiasm affected the members of the Zion Lutheran Church in Harrisburg. The pastor, the Reverend C. W. Schaeffer, a “New Measures Lutheran” of the Samuel Simon Schmucker stripe, was conducting “protracted meetings.”<sup>8</sup> Matthias Loy showed up and presented himself at the “anxious bench” where

The revival ‘workers’ whispered into my ears, as I knelt in silence before the altar, some things which were meant for my encouragement, but which only left me unmoved because of their failure to reach my conscience.<sup>9</sup>

After “being saved” Loy enrolled in an adult class in revealed religion and was received into the Lutheran Church. He resolved to become a minister, hoping to attend Gettysburg Theological Seminary, then the center of liberalism in the Lutheran Church. Little did Loy realize how far his spiritual legacy of Pietism, Secularism, Deism, Calvinism, Unionism, Revivalism, and New Measures Lutheranism (which even allowed him to be a member of the Masonic Lodge) was from the Lutheran Orthodoxy of Martin Luther, Martin Chemnitz, and the Confessions of the Church. He had never even heard of the Book of Concord!

Because of a severe attack of “inflammatory rheumatism” Loy’s physician urged him to seek a healthier climate than that of eastern Pennsylvania. When the opportunity presented itself for him to become a printer for the United Brethren Publishing House in Circleville, Ohio, Loy decided to go west. He intended only to remain a brief period, recover his health, save some money, and then return to the East to enroll at Gettysburg. Upon his arrival in Ohio in the autumn of 1847 Loy was surprised to learn from a local Lutheran pastor of the existence of an Ohio Synod and a Columbus theological school. Loy remembered: “I had never heard of such a Seminary and of such a Synod, but that presented no difficulty to my mind.”<sup>10</sup> As a scholarship student, Loy was promptly enrolled in the Evangelical Lutheran Theological Seminary in Columbus. It was at this institution that he received the only two years of formal higher education deemed necessary to be a pastor. In 1849, after a two year “cram course” that included academy, college, and seminary, Loy was graduated and installed as a minister in Delaware, Ohio.

It was in Columbus that young Loy was exposed to Orthodox Lutheranism for the very first time in his life. In part this was due to the influence of W. F. Lehmann, the “Walking Encyclopedia,” who was “dean” of the theological seminary, “headmaster” of its preparatory division, and pastor of Trinity Church, Columbus.<sup>11</sup> The Reverend Christian Spielmann, a Badenser, was another teacher who emphasized Orthodoxy. But it was Spielmann’s task to be a John the Baptist, pointing beyond himself to a more significant person, namely, C. F. W. Walther. Spielmann encouraged Loy to read *Der Lutheraner*.<sup>12</sup> In the pages of that publication Loy learned of the ancient and venerable Lutheranism of the fathers. Beyond all doubt, Matthias Loy was the most important convert that Walther



made. Within a few months Loy had moved from "American Lutheranism" of the S. S. Schmucker variety to a staunch and life-long Confessionalism. The relationship between the two men became much more, however, than that of author and admirer, mentor and student. They were good personal friends, co-workers, and labored together for the creation of a united, orthodox Lutheran Church in the United States. Even the break-up of the Synodical Conference and the outbreak of the "Predestination Controversy" could not erase the ties of faith and friendship which so closely bound the two men. Furthermore, the careers of Walther in the Missouri Synod, Loy in the Ohio Synod, and Charles Porterfield Krauth in the General Council, must be seen as a common effort to preserve traditional Lutheran theology from the corrosive effects of "the acids of modernity" in the last half of the nineteenth century. These three titans — Walther in the West, Krauth in the East, and Loy in the middle—could be compared to three anchors holding fast the ship of Lutheran Confessionalism during the ferocious storms of the Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy.

#### THE DANGERS OF LIBERALISM

The second half of the nineteenth century was a very difficult time for theology in the United States. Professor Arthur Meier Schlesinger, Sr., called it "A Critical Period in American Religion."<sup>13</sup> It was, as the very word "crisis" implies, a time of decision. A whole generation had to choose between adherence to the orthodox doctrines of the church or the search for radical new formulations of faith. The process was painful and divisive. John L. Spalding, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Peoria, Illinois, reported that "the wavering of religious belief has unsettled all other things so that nothing appears any longer to rest upon a firm and immovable basis."<sup>14</sup> As the bishop rightly perceived, though historians called it the conflict of science and religion, the real issue was one of authority—the reliability of the Sacred Scriptures as a source of objective, binding truth.

Behind the battlelines, which seemed to be a warfare of reason and faith, was the basic issue of the authority of Scripture. The New Geology seemed to question the account of the earth's origin as recorded in the book of Genesis. The New Biology, propounded by Charles Darwin and his disciples, appeared to undermine the Mosaic doctrines of the special creation of man, the ordination of the natural orders, "the fall, original sin, and the proto-evangelical promise of a Saviour. The New Sociology, many said, contradicted the Pauline teachings of total depravity," the "necessity of divine redemption," and "supernatural regeneration." Not "saving sinners," but "social salvation" was suggested as the church's most urgent ministry. Comparative Religion caused some to doubt Christianity's claims, made in the Gospels, to the possession of a unique and saving knowledge of God in the Person of His Son. But all these other questions were minor. The core of the issue became visible in the struggle over Biblical Criticism. The New Theology which emerged in the Gilded Age, made a "fumbling adaptation" to the secular

spirit.<sup>15</sup> It taught the relativity of religious knowledge. Increasingly, many Protestant theologians taught that the canonical Scriptures were an evolutionary moral product of primitive Hebrew culture. To many this meant that the Bible was no longer a binding doctrinal authority. Robert Ingersoll, the noted agnostic, toured the nation lecturing on "Some Mistakes of Moses." A New York rector of the Protestant Episcopal Church was reported to have said publicly what many were secretly thinking: "the New Testament is a book written by a lot of chumps who were thick in the head . . ."<sup>16</sup> Remarks such as this caused most major Protestant denominations—with the exception of the Lutheran—to divide over the issue of the authority of Scripture. Some became Liberals, others Fundamentalists. Into this crisis stepped Loy, who found he had a two-fold task—the restoration of Orthodoxy within Lutheranism and its preservation against the double threat from without—that of both Modernism and the Neo-Revivalism.

Writing in the spring of 1866 Loy carefully surveyed the theological scene and made these penetrating comments:

What was once settled as fundamental orthodoxy has, in various particulars, become strangely disturbed. The old ways of thinking no longer fit and satisfy and command the stern and unflinching consent, as they once did . . . Notice the contradictions, the inconsistencies, the vacillations of theological opinion, in all statements of our time,—how vague the language chosen, how uncertain the note struck, how many the loopholes of evasion! . . . Try if you can get a definite declaration of theological faith from your intelligent friends of any denomination. Question the professed teachers of religion, and notice how slowly, how guardedly, how vaguely they answer direct inquiries . . . There has been an almost universal loosening of old moorings, a breaking away from the firm fastenings of other days, and a drifting no one can tell whither.<sup>17</sup>

Aware of the theological climate of his epoch, Loy knew he could not ignore its consequences for his task as a theologian. But unlike his liberal contemporaries, whom Loy accused of lacking clarity, he did not feel impelled by these developments to formulate a decidedly different understanding of the Gospel than that of his Lutheran forebears. Loy rejected Liberalism, and its central premise of the necessity of theological reconstruction, on four grounds:

First, Liberalism was guilty of presentism. In the words of Dean William Inge, Loy had "no confidence that the spirit of this age is wiser than the spirit of past ages."<sup>18</sup> Loy wrote:

To those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern the signs of the times it cannot be a matter of doubt, that the progress and achievements of our age have been mainly of a material sort, and that the gain which might have accrued to the kingdom of God by facilitating the preaching of the gospel to all nations has been largely neutralized by injecting materialistic notions into that gospel itself, and thus largely

divesting it of its spiritual truth and power. There is a great danger of losing now what . . . was achieved in . . . the great Lutheran Reformation.<sup>19</sup>

Presentism—the exaltation of the current moment over eternity—caused this total capitulation to secularism. Indeed, the very word “secular” means “here and now as opposed to hereafter.” Loy’s insight has been vindicated in more ways than one. Albert Schweitzer, who could hardly be accused of a bias toward Orthodoxy, concurred with Loy’s analysis of the situation. Schweitzer felt that technological progress accompanied by theological retrogression had resulted in a materialistic society dangerously devoid of spiritual resources.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the “Secular Theology of the Sixties,” complete with the “death of God,” is the logical consequence of Liberalism as Loy so eloquently foretold a century ago.

Second, Liberalism was guilty of negativism. Loy felt that the religious thought of the nineteenth century served only a negative function, to act, in the opinion of Professor John Theodore Mueller, as

. . . a kind of foil to set off the beauty of a strictly confessional theology as compared with the frequently false, or at least inadequate, presentation found in the great majority of books on dogmatics which have been issued . . . since the death of Schleiermacher, in 1834.<sup>21</sup>

Loy believed that often things were in fact the exact opposite of what they presented themselves to be. If Liberalism advocated the reconstruction of theology, could it not be that in reality it meant the destruction of the accumulated labor of generations of believers? The result would be a void—a vacuum—which would be filled, not with a finer faith, but with a return to the primal superstitions and primitive paganisms of the race. Loy would not be a bit surprised to see a century of Neo-Rationalism end in a renaissance of occultism in the 1970’s.

Third, Liberalism was guilty of relativism. Loy saw in Liberalism not something new, but instead something old. They might call themselves Modernists, but in reality they were reviving an ancient heresy—neophilia, the “love of the new.” This spiritual disease, according to St. Luke, had its origin not in the Gospel but among the Athenian philosophers who “spent their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new” (Acts 17:21 RSV). Luke’s most famous patient, Paul, had condemned this illness in no uncertain terms when he spoke of those who “occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations rather than the divine training that is in faith” (1 Timothy 1:4 RSV). The Apostle continued, noting that “Certain persons . . . have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions” (1 Timothy 1:6, 7 RSV). Agreeing with Paul, Loy was convinced that

What our age needs most of all is a return to first principles as



laid down in the Word of God and restored to God's people in the Reformation.<sup>22</sup>

An Orthodox theologian, Loy taught, was not under obligation to speak to the "passing fancies" and "old heresies under new names" which were present in this era. Loy was persuaded that he should address himself to matters of timeless and eternal truth, instead of the transitory theories of the moment. He wrote:

The author has no new theories to offer and no new policy to advocate. He has no trust in novelties as substitutes for the old ways of God, though many suppose these to be antiquated.

He pursued his policy of "expounding and urging . . . plain truths before the Christian community" because "we have a higher aim, as we have a higher calling, than that of bandying compliments."<sup>23</sup> Little did Loy suspect that his observations would win support from a whole school of twentieth century philosophers who are persuaded that the terminal illness of our civilization is this very same "neophilia," the "obsession with change."

Fourth, Liberalism was guilty of skepticism. Its proponents might speak of faith, but really they propounded doubt. Loy wrote:

Liberalism is . . . the religion of doubt and despair. It rests finally upon the assumption that when professing believers are not agreed it is impossible to find the truth in the Scripture, and that as no man can know what the meaning of God's Word is, every man must form his own opinion and accord to every other man the equal right to do the same. It is a system claiming for darkness and error and doubt a full equality of right in the Church with light and truth and faith.<sup>24</sup>

The end result is that

Thousands are thus led to reject the doctrine of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, of the Vicarious Atonement, of the Real presence in the Holy Supper, of Regeneration through Baptism, of the Resurrection of the Body. It is not that these doctrines are not found in the words of Holy Scripture that leads to their rejection, but that human reason rejects the doctrines and decides that of right they ought not to be there and in fact cannot be there.<sup>25</sup>

This vicious cycle of reductionism, once started, could end only in total anarchy—Rationalism, Humanism, Skepticism, Moralism, and, finally, random Subjectivism. Let him save himself who can. But then the very heart of the Christian faith, the central teaching of Scripture, salvation by grace alone through faith, has been lost. For to hold on to the doctrine of justification, one must hold fast to the authority of Scripture. Nowhere outside the Bible can one come to "saving knowledge" of Jesus Christ. *Sola Scriptura* and *sola gratia* go together—one is the body, the other the soul of Christian theology. Without one, it is impossible to have the other.

For these reasons, therefore, Loy totally rejected Liberalism as a live option—either for himself or for his Church.



## THE PERILS OF FUNDAMENTALISM

American Protestantism produced an alternative to Modernism. It was called Fundamentalism. The term "Fundamentalist" was first used by D. C. Laws, editor of the Baptist *Watchman-Examiner*, to designate one who held to that irreducible minimum of belief without which, he contended, one could not be a Christian. This minimum consisted in the famous "Five Fundamentals," formulated in 1895 at the Niagara Conference, namely the verbal inerrancy of Scripture, the deity of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Birth of Our Lord, the Substitutionary Atonement, and the physical resurrection and bodily return of the Lord. The Fundamentalists "believe that they alone are marching to the beat of the right drum, that traditional Christianity is incompatible with modern thought."<sup>26</sup> The adherents of this viewpoint held

. . . that man's dilemmas can be resolved entirely through 19th century patterns—revivalism, individualism, moral crusades, benevolence movements, and social paternalism.<sup>27</sup>

While numerous Lutherans were "Fundamentalists in the garb of a strict confessionism,"<sup>28</sup> and although Loy could have subscribed to the "Five Points" without difficulty, there were three significant differences between this approach and Lutheran theology:

First, as Liberalism tended to make reason the measure of theology, Loy felt that the "evangelical Protestants" put an undue stress on the emotions. Loy had never been a Liberal. But he had passed through the fires of Revivalism. From his own experience he wrote that

Among the delusions and dangers which beset the Christian is that of trusting too much to the state of his feelings as the test of his spiritual state.<sup>29</sup>

In this connection Loy saw the "Evangelicals" as akin to the *Schwaermer* and "Spiritualists" of the Reformation Era, and he condemned that "Fanaticism, which makes the natural faculties a criterion of spiritual things," for it

. . . is a more dangerous foe to Christianity than many sincere persons are willing to admit. It leaves the soul at the mercy of ever-changing human opinions and human whims . . . . At the very root of fanaticism is the baseless notion that God deals immediately with men. . . . [this causes] the wild extravagances of those sects who mistake their feelings for the voice of Jehovah . . .<sup>30</sup>

God, Loy was persuaded, dealt with men "mediately" through the "objective" method of "the means of grace," the Word and the Sacraments, which were effective apart from human subjective apprehension of them.

Second, if Liberalism was accused of "subtraction" from the Scriptures, Fundamentalism was found guilty of "addition" to the requirements of salvation.<sup>31</sup> Saving "faith must have firm ground to rest upon," wrote Loy, and this consists in the "imparted promises" of Scripture and the sacraments.<sup>32</sup> Salvation was the work of God, but

. . . man in his pride despises the gracious plan which divine wisdom has formed for his deliverance, because that plan gives no credit to his genius for devising nor to his power for executing it.<sup>33</sup>

The Fundamentalists, Loy felt, had surrendered to “legalism,” and though in their words they spoke of salvation by grace, by their deeds they taught redemption through behavior. Proofs or tests of “conversion” were designed by the Revivalists, and these compromised the doctrine of “grace alone.”

Conversion came to be regarded, not as a free gift of God, but as a good work of man. This Arminian or Semi-Pelagian theology, which flourished among the “hot-gospelers” along the American frontier, claimed to be Radical Protestantism but in fact was a return to the rankest legalism of medieval Catholicism. Once more salvation depended on faith plus works. Both were the righteous works of man. Faith itself became the first act—dedicated believing that gave birth to pious behaving. But was not this the natural corollary of a theology that rested on subjectivism? No wonder law and gospel, redemption and regeneration, grace and works were hopelessly confused in Fundamentalist circles. The end result of this sectarianism, Loy sighed, was that both charity and clarity were lost in the Christian life. Fanaticism and Legalism are the parents of Sectarianism—and the tragedy of America was that there they had spawned a large and plentiful progeny.

Third, the basic difference, however, was one of origin and outlook. To Loy it seemed as if the Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy was something peculiar to the legacy of Reformed theology. As Martin Luther had said to Ulrich Zwingli, “*Sie haben einen anderen Geist,*” So Matthias Loy could say to the Liberals and the Revivalists, “You have a different spirit.” This “different spirit,” Loy felt, was the difference between “Reaction” and “Restoration.” The Modernist-Fundamentalist fight was a polarization occurring within the Calvinistic Churches. As Daniel B. Stevick further observed, “the Fundamentalists defined themselves against Modernism, rather than in relation to central Christianity.”<sup>34</sup> The Fundamentalists were reacting primarily against contemporary developments in the Calvinist tradition. Loy and confessional Lutherans, on the other hand, were “restorationists” in the fullest sense of the word. Their position emerged as a result of a rediscovery of what they were convinced were the central truths of the Reformation as preserved by the divines of the Age of Orthodoxy. Loy and Walther were persuaded that “the closer to Luther, the better a theologian.”<sup>35</sup> It could be said of Loy, as it was of Walther, that

His theological labors were marked by a persistent attempt at purging American Lutheranism of all alien principles and in restoring the theology of the Reformation and post-Reformation period in its full propensities.<sup>36</sup>

Loy was a “Protestant Scholastic,” in the mold of Martin Chemnitz and Johann Gerhard, not an American Fundamentalist in the spirit

of Billy Sunday or William Jennings Bryan. Loy confessed his aim as

. . . setting forth the old doctrines of the Reformation, endeavoring to make English readers acquainted with the treasures of learning and thought contained in old German and Latin folios, exhibiting the solidarity and symmetry of the theological edifice erected by our fathers in an age less hurried and more thorough than the present . . .<sup>37</sup>

H. P. Dannecker wrote that "one could take Dr. Loy for an old fashioned German theologian" and it was reported that "the Confession of our Church was a beloved home to him, in which his heart hung with all its cords."<sup>38</sup> At his death it was stated that "he lives still in the Spirit of Orthodoxy . . ."<sup>39</sup>

### THE WAY OF ORTHODOXY

As a "Protestant Scholastic" Loy's theology reflected the three "formative elements" found by Professor Theodore G. Tappert in late sixteenth and seventeenth century Lutheran Orthodoxy—the Biblical, the Rational, and the Traditional principles.<sup>40</sup>

First, there was the Biblical principle. Orthodox theologians, like Luther, looked for a "fixed and final authority" and found it in the Sacred Scriptures. To Loy, as to most of the Lutheran fathers, there had been a double revelation—both natural and special. Natural Revelation (*lex naturae*) was discerned in creation and in the human conscience, but such "natural religion furnished no ground of hope, and brings . . . no words of peace."<sup>41</sup> Loy taught that

. . . the religion which it [the Christian Church] professes and preaches is not the religion which nature teaches and the natural man accepts and practices. It is supernatural. Of that which constitutes its essence nature reveals nothing, reason knows nothing. The things which it embraces lie in a sphere that is higher than this earth.<sup>42</sup>

Truth could be known only in Special Revelation (*lex divinae*), for

Christianity is wholly a supernatural revelation. The saving truth, to which the researches of science never approximate and of which human philosophy has never dreamed, is given by inspiration of God.<sup>43</sup>

The divine disclosures were contained in the canonical Scriptures which were "the infallible words of the Holy Ghost . . ."<sup>44</sup> Loy, therefore, concurred with John Andrew Quenstedt who taught that the Bible was written by "amanuenses of the Holy Spirit" and that

In the . . . Holy Scriptures there is no lie, no falsity, nor the slightest error, whether in contents or words, but each and every statement transmitted in them is true, whether it is doctrinal, moral, historical, chronological, topographical, or onomastic . . .<sup>45</sup>

Loy explained that



Our English translation of the Bible is a human explanation of the *original*, which original alone is absolutely in every jot and tittle God's Word, but just in proportion as our translation *correctly* explains the meaning of the original, it too, is God's Word.<sup>46</sup>

For this reason Loy rejected Biblical Criticism—and saw the central question of the Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy as the authority of Sacred Scripture. He admonished:

. . . . Christians should jealously guard their sacred treasures . . . and concede nothing to the criticism and the science that arrogantly assert the supposed rights of fallible human opinion against the infallible divine authority.<sup>47</sup>

Second, there was the Rational principle. This element presented the problem of the relationship of revelation and reason. David Hollaz, theologian, pastor, and rector, sainted in 1713, suggested that:

Without the use of reason we cannot understand or prove theological doctrines, or defend them against the artful objections of opponents. Surely not to brutes, but to men using their sound reason, has God revealed the knowledge of eternal salvation in His Word, and upon them He has imposed the earnest injunction to read, hear, and meditate upon His Word. The *intellect* is therefore required as the *receiving subject* or *apprehending instrument*. As we can see nothing without eyes, and hear nothing without ears, so we understand nothing without reason.<sup>48</sup>

Loy, writing in 1864, endorsed the employment of “sanctified intellect” in theology. He concurred with Hollaz, but made clear the qualification that reason be the servant and not the master of Scripture:

The Lutheran Church has always recommended by precept and example the faithful use of reason, and is far from despising such a beneficial gift of our Maker. In things of this world it has a guiding power which renders it indispensable to man; and in spiritual things, also, its formal use is a necessity . . . . But all reason's dictates must be tested and tried before they are received, and whenever it speaks in matters of religion we must refer at once to the law and the testimony, to which it is bound to subordinate itself, and to which, in every sincere Christian, it does cheerfully submit. No dictate of human reason can bind the conscience; this is the prerogative of revelation only.<sup>49</sup>

With this reservation, Loy utilized logic and reason to construct a systematic exposition of the doctrines of Scripture.

Loy's approach, as well as that of the other theologians of Lutheran Orthodoxy, stands in marked contrast to the irrationalism of much twentieth-century thought. Certainly Dr. Loy foresaw the impending anti-intellectualism that was being generated in Western

Culture, and he would concur with Sidney Alexander who recently wrote:

. . . today we can say without exaggeration we are in the full anti-Renaissance.

For the fact is that we live in an age that does not vibrate sympathetically to most of those values nurtured and come to blossom . . . from the fourteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century. Modern man seems to prefer crudity to perfection (indeed we mistrust perfection), potentiality to achievement, process to product, the unformed to the formed, the happening to the happened, savage and primitive art to highly cultivated art, the anti-Hero to the Hero.<sup>50</sup>

Third, there was the Traditional principle. Some would call this the Catholic factor. To Loy, "the preservation of the truth unto salvation is the work of the Church, and the primary work, without which all the rest has little worth."<sup>51</sup> Conservation of the Gospel through the generations is called traditionalism. This truth was revealed to the Apostles and was codified in Scripture. But subsequent generations of Christians have the task of defending the *corpus fidei*. This was done magnificently by the fathers of the first seven centuries. Unfortunately, however, the Catholic faith was then perverted by the ignorance, superstition, paganism, heresy, and corruption of the medieval Church. The Middle Ages were to Loy a "Dark Age" because they lacked the Gospel. With Luther the Gospel was recovered, for

When Rome had shrouded earth in night,  
God said again, Let there be light!  
And Luther with the Gospel came  
To spread the truth in Jesus' name.<sup>52</sup>

The Lutheran Church, therefore, in the words of Robert D. Preus, "was no new sect but the continuation of the apostolic church."<sup>53</sup>

The restoration of the Gospel was the work of Martin Luther. The preservation of the Gospel was the work of the Age of Orthodoxy. In the Confessions of the Lutheran Church were summarized the saving truths of the Holy Bible. Around the Confessions arose giants of theology—Martin Chemnitz, Nicholas Selnecker, Johann Gerhard, Abraham Calovius, John Andrew Quenstedt, and David Hollaz. The greatest of these, in Walther's words, was Martin Chemnitz, "the instrument that God selected for the reconstruction of an almost ruined Lutheran Church."<sup>54</sup> To Loy, the principle of Traditionalism meant loyalty to the Confessions, which was loyalty to Luther, which was loyalty to Scripture, which was loyalty to Christ, which was salvation.

#### CONCLUSION

It has been sixty years since Dr. Matthias Loy departed this life on Tuesday evening, January 26, 1915. He died at 9:15 p.m. while writing, and with strange appropriateness, his pen stopped in the middle of an unfinished sentence: "When the Lord makes a demand . . ."<sup>55</sup> How Loy would have finished that sentence, I do not

know. But this I do know—Loy realized that the demand of the Lord was for faithfulness. Faithfulness in life is called morality. Faithfulness in worship is called piety. Faithfulness in doctrine is called Orthodoxy. Of the three, the last is the most important. As Father Luther said, "One little point of doctrine is of more value than heaven and earth," and while "we can very well disregard offenses and lapses of life," we cannot "allow the least jot of it (doctrine) to be corrupted."<sup>56</sup> If that be true, then Loy was faithful in the highest degree possible for any mortal, and the promises of the Resurrected Christ apply to him and all who walk in his ways: "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2: 10 RSV).

### FOOTNOTES

1. For biographies of Dr. Loy see: C. George Fry, "Matthias Loy: Patriarch of Ohio Lutheranism, 1828-1915," unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1965; C. George Fry, "Matthias Loy, Leader of Ohio's Lutherans," *Ohio History*, LXXVI (Autumn 1967), pp. 183-201; George Harvey Genzmer, "Matthias Loy," *Dictionary of American Biography*, edited by Dumas Malone (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), XI, pp. 478-479; T. E. Schmauk, "Dr. Loy's Life and Its Bearing on the Lutheran Church in This Land," *Lutheran Church Review*, XXVI (January 1907), pp. 190-200; "Matthias Loy," *The National Cyclopedia of American Biography* (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1904), XII, p. 191. See also the autobiography, Matthias Loy, *Story of My Life*, second edition (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1905).
2. *Ibid.*, p. 369.
3. *Lutheran Standard*, February 6, 1915, p. 89.
4. Loy, *Story of My Life*, p. 13.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
6. As quoted by Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, *The Lord's Prayer and The Ten Commandments* (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus Company, 1897), p. 19.
7. Loy, *Story of My Life*, p. 14.
8. On the impact of revivalism on Lutherans see Frank H. Seilhamer, "The New Measure Movement Among Lutherans," *The Lutheran Quarterly*, XII (May 1960), pp. 121-143; see also H. E. Jacobs, "In Memoriam: Charles William Schaeffer," *The Lutheran Church Review*, IV (October 1896), p. 376; and George Harvey Genzmer, "Charles William Schaeffer," *Dictionary of American Biography*, XVI, p. 414.
9. Loy, *Story of My Life*, pp. 50-51.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 70. The most recent study of book length about the Lutheran faith in Ohio is Willard D. Allbeck, *A Century of Lutherans in Ohio* (Antioch, Ohio: The Antioch Press, 1966).
11. See C. V. Sheatsley, *History of the First Lutheran Seminary of the West, 1830-1930* (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1930) and David B. Owens, *These Hundred Years: The Centennial History of Capital University* (Columbus: Capital University, 1950), both of which have much useful information on early Lutheran theological education in Ohio.
12. Loy felt he was "more powerfully influenced than the others" at the seminary by Walther's ideas. See *Story of My Life*, pp. 86-87.
13. See Arthur Meier Schlesinger, Sr., "A Critical Period in American Religion," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, LXIV (1932), pp. 523-537.
14. Quoted by Francis P. Weisenburger, *Ordeal of Faith: The Crisis of Church-Going America, 1865-1900* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. iii.



15. Martin E. Marty, *A Short History of Christianity* (New York: Meridian Books, 1959), p. 295.
16. Norman Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1963), p. 19.
17. *Lutheran Standard*, XXVI (May 15, 1866), p. 84.
18. W. R. Inge, *Christian Ethics and Modern Problems* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., 1930), p. ii.
19. Matthias Loy, *The Christian Church in its Foundation, Essence, Appearance, and Work* (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1896), p. 138.
20. See Albert Schweitzer, *The Philosophy of Civilization*, tr. by C. T. Campion (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960).
21. John Theodore Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics: A Handbook of Doctrinal Theology for Pastors, Teachers, and Laymen* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), p. ix.
22. Loy, *The Christian Church*, pp. 138-139.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. iii, 138.
24. Matthias Loy, "The Fallacy of Liberalism," *The Columbus Theological Magazine*, III (April 1883), p. 82.
25. Matthias Loy, "God's Word Without Addition or Subtraction," *The Columbus Theological Magazine*, II (December 1882), pp. 378, 379.
26. John Opie, Jr., "The Modernity of Fundamentalism," *The Christian Century*, LXXXII (May 12, 1965), p. 608.
27. *Ibid.*
28. J. L. Neve and O. W. Heick, *History of Protestant Theology*, Vol. II of *History of Christian Thought* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), p. 311.
29. *Lutheran Standard*, XXVI (July 1, 1866), p. 102. Perhaps it is helpful to point out that the word "Evangelical" has been used in four different ways: (1) for Martin Luther it meant the Lutheran Church which had restored the Holy Gospel and therefore was the fellowship of the Good News; (2) in the nineteenth century it came to mean the Church of the Prussian Union, engineered by King Friedrich Wilhelm III to unite the Lutheran and Reformed confessions in one national community church; (3) in the United States it has come to mean Fundamentalist or the Biblical Literalist; (4) today in North America and much of the Western World "evangelical" refers to the conservative and orthodox wing of Protestantism as opposed to the radical and heterodox schools of thought which have appeared recently. Loy used the word in two ways—to designate the Lutheran faith, but also to condemn American Fundamentalism, which he felt had stolen the term.
30. Matthias Loy, *The Doctrine of Justification*, second edition (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1882), p. 62.
31. See Loy, "God's Word Without Addition or Subtraction," pp. 376-384.
32. Loy, *The Doctrine of Justification*, pp. 80, 81.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
34. Daniel V. Stevick, *Beyond Fundamentalism* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1945), p. 20.
35. Lewis W. Spitz, *The Life of Dr. C. F. W. Walther* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), p. 25.
36. Heick and Neve, *History of Protestant Theology*, p. 305.
37. Matthias Loy, "Introduction to Volume II," *The Columbus Theological Magazine* (February 1882), p. 6.
38. "Man koennte D. Loy fuer einen altmodischen deutschen Theologen halten." *Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, LVI (March 6, 1915), p. 146; "Das Bekenntnis unserer Kirche war ihm eine liebe Heimat, an welcher sein Herz mit allen Fasern hing." *Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, LVI (February 6, 1915), p. 82.
39. *Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, LVI (March, 6, 1915), p. 145.

40. Theodore G. Tappert, "Orthodoxism, Pietism, and Rationalism," *The Lutheran Heritage*, Vol. II of *Christian Social Responsibility*, edited by Harold C. Letts (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), pp. 43-50.
41. Loy, *Doctrine of Justification*, p. 1.
42. Loy, *The Christian Church*, p. 2.
43. Loy, "Introduction to Volume II," p. 9.
44. Loy, *The Christian Church*, p. 89.
45. Quoted by Tappert, "Orthodoxism, Pietism, and Rationalism," p. 44.
46. *Lutheran Standard*, XXVI (December 15, 1866), p. 190.
47. Loy, *The Christian Church*, pp. 94-95.
48. Quoted by Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, tr. Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 30.
49. *Lutheran Standard*, XXIV (December 1, 1864), p. 4.
50. Sidney Alexander, *Lions and Foxes: Men and Ideas of the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company 1974), p. iii.
51. Loy, *The Christian Church*, p. v.
52. Matthias Loy, "When Rome Had Shrouded Earth in Night," *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnal*, Published by Order of the First English District of the Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1908), Number 150.
53. Robert D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism: A Study of Theological Prolegomena* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), p. 36.
54. Quoted by Jaroslav Pelikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard: A Study in the History of Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), p. 43.
55. Owens, *These Hundred Years*, p. 121.
56. Edmund Smits and Herman A. Preus, ed., *The Doctrine of Man in Classical Lutheran Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962), pp. ix, x.