

Warning: Sevin Dust Needed

A Review Essay of *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims On the Way*

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## Introduction

I keep corn for deer and hogs in my garage. I couldn't figure out why neither were stopping for it. Then I discovered mealworms had gotten to the corn. They had eaten out the inside of the kernels leaving them intact on the outside, but empty of any nutritional value. Even a pig knew there was nothing worth eating in them. Consulting the all-knowing internet I found this was a common problem. The solution? Sevin Dust. Sprinkle around the bucket and on top of the corn. It works. There is helpful theology in Horton's 1052-page tome, but being solidly old school, Calvinistic, Reformed theology there is more there that will eat the very heart out of Lutheran theology, its two chambers being justification and the Real Presence. If you want shorter, but accurate, Lutheran reviews of this book, see Dr. David Scaer's 2012 book review here <https://ctsfwmedia.s3.amazonaws.com/CTQ/CTQ%2076-1%2C2.pdf> . If you just want a pithy conclusion of Scaer's it's "Horton's dogmatics shows that Lutherans and the Reformed live in different universes, not as allies but opponents" (188). You can read Wisconsin Synod's Pastor Benjamin Tomczak's 2015 three-page review at <https://www.wls.wels.net/pilgrim-theology/> .

Perhaps a word is in order for how it is that I came to read this work. In 2000, Concordia Theological Seminary professor Dr. David Scaer recommended *Reformed Confessions* by Jan Rohls as a good 'straight from the horse's mouth' source. I used it as such until a Reformed layman contacted me by phone to talk about closed Communion. We had several conversations with me consistently referencing the aforementioned book. He finally said that the Reformed pastors he consulted said this was liberal Reformed theology akin to him holding me to liberal Lutheran theology. This generous Reformed layman then sent me as gift the book I am now reviewing. About 100 pages in, I asked him if

he had read it. He said that he had not. I said that I'm quite sure if he had *he* wouldn't agree with some of it. In the next section are three such things.

### **Is This Conservative Reformed Theology?**

While in my training, historical criticism was higher criticism and both were a liberal way to read, more accurately, to deconstruct Scripture, for Horton there is a distinction. "While higher criticism proceeds on the basis of antsupernatural and rationalistic presuppositions, historical criticism is a valid and crucial discipline" (177). Liberal theology has held that the Holy Spirit guides His Church today through world events. Liberation Theology says you know where Christ is by where people are fighting for liberty. The feminist movement guided the church into the "truth" of female pastors and we all know where the LGBTQ spirit has guided us. Horton wouldn't agree with either of these, but he does agree with the concept such guidance is predicated on: "Sometime the church is corrected even in its interpretation of Scripture through cultural insights and advances" (170). Finally, Horton doesn't confess that the days of creation were actual days but analogies. "It will not surprise those who have read thus far that I take the days of creation to be *analogical*. That is, they are not literal twenty-four-hour periods, but God's accommodation to the ordinary pattern of six days of labor and a seventh day of rest, which he created for mankind" (381).

### **Helpful Theology**

One of the things the WELS reviewer didn't like was Horton's imposition of a four-part theme on his theology: drama (the Biblical narrative), doctrine, doxology (worship), and discipleship. Tomczak is right; *it is* imposed and Horton is *not* consistent in his use of it. However, Reformed theology at its core imposes the idea of covenant and the litmus test of reason over all theology. I find the former confusing and the latter destructive, but I find Horton's four-part matrix helpful. Horton observes that a healthy Christian life moves from Biblical drama, to doctrine, to doxology (worship), to discipleship; an

unhealthy one moves the opposite way. It starts with reforming life. Periods of decline begin when we question the reliability of the Biblical narrative (This is the LCMS since 1997-*prh.*) but maintain the doctrines are true, nevertheless. But then the doctrines come under criticism as people realize the doctrines depend on the narrative. Without doctrine, worship loses its rational and so gives way to feeling, and finally popular culture, which elicits far more powerful feeling, displaces Christian discipleship ( 25). I have noticed that any reforming or rejuvenating of the church that starts from discipleship (think pushes to do evangelism) or worship (think emerging church), always leads to a watering down of doctrine and displacing the Biblical narrative in favor of the anecdotal. I also found Horton's summary of the distinction between liberalism, atheism, and conservative Christianity worth pondering. He said the paradigm for Man's relationship to God was summed up by liberalism as overcoming a stranger, i.e. overcoming the feeling that one is alienated from God (no wrath, sin, or judgment to be overcome, just your feelings), by atheism as the stranger we never meet, and by conservative Christianity as meeting a stranger by means of God in Christ (625).

Also on the plus side, I found Horton very good in the doctrine of the Trinity, and sanctification was strong and clear. I also found his discussion of the immortality of soul helpful whereas when I read it in Lutheran writings I find it doubt-inducing. Here in a few sentences is a summary of Horton's view. "Christianity therefore does not build on the pagan ruins of the immortality of the soul, but brings 'immortality to light through the gospel.' It is an immortality that is bestowed as a gift in the resurrection, not a given of our nature. In other words, immortality finds its definition in eschatology and soteriology rather than anthropology" (913) "Christianity does not teach salvation by death. It is striking that the Apostles' Creed insists upon our ultimate hope as 'the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting,' not 'going to heaven when I die'" (915).

### **From Annoying to Wrong**

The most annoying with the book was its writing style. In brief: If using 5.00 words when a .50 cent one would be just as clear and if the use of long sentences makes for a better systematic theology, this book is the best. I did find one factual error, which I am surprised escaped proofreading. Page 419 says Luke 5:8 is Jesus calming the storm. Nope, it's Jesus providing the miraculous catch.

### ***The Non Capax Cancer***

Horton's view of the Person of Christ, the written Word, and the Sacraments are of a piece and all flow from the fundamental error that the finite isn't capable of the infinite. As proof of this I cite Horton himself: "The patristic rule that the finite cannot comprehend (i.e. enclose) the infinite (*finitum non capax infiniti*) is applicable to every form of divine revelation" (131). This dictum didn't come from the fathers. It came from the Reformed to the best of my knowledge. A conservative Lutheran says it is a "rationalistic axiom of the Reformed (gleaned from Aristotelian philosophy)." And I agree with him when he says that it is used by them "to argue against a number of different doctrines set forth in Holy Scripture, including the personal union of the divine and human natures in Christ, the omnipresence and omnipotence of the Lord Jesus according to His human nature, and the real presence of the Lord's body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar" (<http://www.concordialutheranconf.com/2014/03/02/is-the-finite-capable-of-the-infinite/>).

Horton carries *non capax* to the logical place of infecting and effecting all revelation. Horton says that older Reformed theologians following Aquinas argued human knowledge is analogical not univocal or equivocal. He defines analogical as similar, univocal as identical, and equivocal as having nothing in common. He says a univocal view threatens God's transcendence and leads to rationalism and equivocal threatens God's immanence and leads to skepticism. Not all Reformed believe this, Horton admits. Gordon Clark thought truth was only given in propositional statements and if our knowledge of God is only analogical of God's, we have no foundation for certainty. Carl Henry said: "The main

logical difficulty with the doctrine of analogy lies in its failure to recognize that only univocal assertions protect us from equivocation;” ( 55, 56).

The book’s glossary defines Horton’s terms. Archetypal knowledge is God’s knowledge which is original and complete (991). Ectypal knowledge is creaturely knowledge revealed by God accommodated to our finite capacity; it’s always imperfect and dependent on God’s perfect knowledge (994). This is over against Analogical knowledge, which is creaturely knowledge as a copy, an analog of divine knowledge both similar (991) and dissimilar, and Equivocal knowledge is creaturely knowledge that has nothing in common with God’s (994). Univocal knowledge Horton defines as only one kind of reality and in epistemology that God’s knowledge and creatures are identical (1002). The Confessional Lutheran position, which Horton denies, is more Univocal knowledge, i.e. that God is able to communicate all of His knowledge that He wants us to know accurately in His Word. If this is not true than there is no way we could have the *ipissima verba* of God. We could not say of Scripture “Thus says the Lord” and not be thinking we’re speaking in ectypes or in analogies, let alone equivocation.

What does Horton’s position say about revelation, the Person of Christ, the Man Jesus? What can we actually say we know? To me, Horton himself expose the “Satanic” nature of the distinction he is making between God’s Word and ours: “The decisive point, says Dietrich Bonhoeffer, ‘is that this question suggests to man that he should go behind the Word of God and establish what it is by himself, out of his understanding of the being of God.... Beyond this given Word of God the serpent pretends somehow to know something about the profundity of the true God who is so badly misrepresented in this human Word.’ The serpent claims a path to the knowledge of the real God behind the Word. It is not atheism that is introduced by the serpent but idolatrous religion, says Bonhoeffer” ( 409).

### **False Choices for Revelation**

Horton, while saying he is avoiding false choices, makes his argument on one. For example: “The divine Word always remains *in and through* the human words, not just *alongside* them (as Barth’s interpretation often suggests) or *overwhelming* them (as in the tendency of fundamentalism)” (emphasis original 165). Here he says he is taking the high ground between the false choices left to him by people like us who hold to accurate, divine revelation through human words and the liberals who hold that human words cannot contain the divine. “God can reach us through frail, finite, limited creatures with ectypal truth accommodated to our capacity while preserving that revelation from error by his Spirit. Thus, we need not accept the false choice between an encyclopedia of propositions that correspond univocally to God’s mind and a merely human testimony to Christ that is related only equivocally to God’s Word” (182). But then we never really say “Thus says the Lord”. No, we must we say. “Thus says the Lord for the most part”. Here’s Horton’s take, the italics are his: “*Third, we must recognize that God speaks to us in terms adequate to our understanding rather than adequate to his being*” (249).

### **Linguistic Philosophy and a Low View of Scripture**

At this point we can introduce Horton’s love of 1950s linguistic philosophy that shot through the disciplines of law and letters before rampaging through late 20<sup>th</sup> century theology. Confessional Lutheran pastors trained in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be familiar with this mumbo-jumbo. First, I will provide definitions and then quote Horton. Locutionary – relating to the physical act of saying something apart from a statements effect or intention. Illocutionary – the effect of a statement. Perlocutionary – an act performed by a speaker on a listener by means of a statement. “*Therefore, the external call includes the locutionary act of the Father’s speaking and the Son as the illocutionary content. The internal call (effectual calling), synonymous with regeneration, occurs through the Spirit’s perlocutionary effect.*” “Conversion and sanctification can therefore be seen as the Spirit’s work of bringing about the perlocutionary effect of the illocutionary speech act (Christ in the gospel), originating in the locutionary

act of the Father.” “Analogous to a wedding, the public ratification of an international treaty...the *illocutionary* speech act (such as promising) is given through the *locutionary* act of uttering certain words in a certain context, which then have the *perlocutionary* effect of creating a new state of affairs, such as union between husband and wife or between nations” (emphasis original, 573, 611, 753).

First, don't miss, as Pastor Tomczak's review points out that “effectual calling” is what the older Reformed called “irresistible grace.” Second, if you really understand what Horton is and isn't saying, you're way beyond me. Third, Horton appears to speak out of both sides of his mouth. He warns against the “danger of the hermeneutics of signification” found in Philo, Origen, and according to Horton, also in Augustine, saying in a footnote: “Whereas according to the biblical outlook we accomplish things by speaking, in this worldview [of Philo and Origen] words ‘stand for’ or ‘re-present’ (visual metaphors) the reality signified” (86). But then he says some 80 pages later there is a useful distinction between God's essence and energies. Authorized words of commissioned agents aren't transubstantiated into God's Word. Not God's essence but his energies are communicated through these human agents. “In the covenant context, their words *count as* God's speech” (italics original, 164). Wouldn't another way of saying this be: they “signify” speech? They aren't absolutely God's Words in the mouth of a man; they just count as that.

Horton understands that this is not Lutheran theology. “For Luther everything depends upon the Bible; hearing, using, and preaching it as the living voice of the gospel (*viva vox evangelii*).’ This is in contrast to Augustine, for whom ‘the external Word is a sign (*signum*) that simply points us to the [thing itself] (*res*)’” (93). I think what Horton said was true of Augustine is *certainly* true for him. But this is not how the church before the Reformed viewed Augustine's position. Large Catechism, III, 18 says, “From the Word it derives its nature as a sacrament, as St. Augustine taught...[quotes him in Latin]. This means that when the Word is added to the element or the natural substance it becomes a sacrament,

that is, a holy, divine thing (*res* in Latin) and a sign.” Than in LC, IV (The Lord’s Supper), 10 we again reference Augustine’s words. “‘When the Word is joined to the external element, it becomes a sacrament.’ This saying of St. Augustine is so accurate and well put that it is doubtful if he has said anything better. The Word must make the element a sacrament; otherwise it remains a mere element.”

### **What’s Revelatory for Horton?**

What really is revelatory for Horton? He says, “Precisely because biblical doctrines are not the revelation of general, timeless truths, our inner experience, church practices, or God’s commands for our daily lives, they decisively shape our experience and prepare us to follow God’s commands in our daily living” (210). If Biblical doctrine doesn’t reveal general timeless truth or God’s command for our daily lives, how can they “prepare us to follow God’s commands in our daily living”? Is the “high ground” in Horton’s mind not to be too sure about ‘thus says the Lord’? “We can avoid onto-theology [Horton says this is Kant not Heidegger’s synthesis of theology and philosophy focusing on knowing God without Scripture or natural revelation. PRH] *and* metaphysical agnosticism by recognizing that only ectypal, not archetypal, knowledge is available to us and that this comes from God in an accommodated and analogical form. A theology for pilgrims, not masters, is the goal of sound theology”(227, fn. 8). Again, he favors doing theology that doesn’t focus on propositional truth. Cognitive-propositionalist theories reduce the faith to doctrine understood as propositional statements. Experiential-expressivists tend to reduce it to doxology which erupts within the individual’s religious experience. Cultural-linguistic model “give pride of place” to ecclesial praxis (discipleship). Narrative theology focuses on the unfolding drama of redemption. This last is Horton’s view and he says Geerhardus Vos’s before him (209).

### **Horton and the Two Natures**

When it comes to the two natures of Christ, Horton remains solidly Reformed but comes across as if he is trying to establish a middle ground between Lutheran and Reformed. For example, he says this about the “‘non-capax’ formula” which I can’t understand, parse, or explain. “In other words, the *person* who is divine can become finite, but the *divine nature* of Jesus Christ cannot become finite, nor can the *human nature* become infinite” (478). Confessional Lutheran’s don’t say this and in fact deny it. We say in Christ, God became Man or took on flesh. In Christ, God dies, but not deity. In Christ, the Man Jesus is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscience but not humanity. Returning to Horton, “The ‘non-capax’ formula does not say that the infinite cannot become incarnate, but only that the incarnate God cannot be enclosed, circumscribed, and fully contained by the finite” (478). Horton clearly states that Calvin did agree with Zwingli that the flesh of Christ was not omnipresent. Some Reformed try to make Zwingli to be the errorist and Calvin the one who corrected him. This Horton doesn’t do in the area of the Person of Christ. He says, “Indeed, the incarnation was as much Calvin’s dominant analogy as Luther’s. However, he agreed with Zwingli that the idea of Christ’s ubiquitous (omnipresent) flesh represented a ‘monstrous phantasm’ rather than an actual human being, even if he is God incarnate” (809).

In a lengthy footnote in the chapter “Baptism and the Lord’s Supper” Horton has this: “62. Chemnitz, *Lord’s Supper*, 203. With Luther, Chemnitz repeats at this point the words of institution and the appeal to divine omnipotence, ‘that Christ with His body can do what He will and be wherever He wills’ (203). Chemnitz argues for poly-spatiality rather than ubiquity (Chemnitz, *The Two Natures of Christ* [trans. and ed. J. A. O. Preus and Nicholas Selnecker; St. Louis: Concordia, 1971], 43-37. While ubiquity implies an ontological omnipresence, poly-spatiality simply means that Christ may be present (in both natures) wherever he chooses. This view is defended in Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), 325” (807). Please note: the pagination Horton cites in *Two Natures* makes

no sense. Even searching 43-47 didn't yield an argument for poly-spatiality. Horton's reference to Pieper lacked a volume number, but I knew it was volume 3. Horton is right that Chemnitz did reject ubiquity but Chemnitz defines it as follows: "namely, that the human body of Christ by some kind of local expansion is extended and diffused immeasurably, so that it fills all things in heaven and earth locally, by the very quantity and enormity of its corporeal and physical size..." (*Two Natures*, 26). However, Chemnitz did assert the omnipresence of the human nature of Christ saying on the next page: "we believe, know, and confess that Christ, God and man, is everywhere and complete (lest under the term *complete* there should be some deception, we add) indissolubly so. Furthermore, never and nowhere is He separated from either the divine or human nature..." (27). Go back and read the Horton quote from page 809 above. He equates the concept of ubiquity and omnipresence. Chemnitz did not.

If you read the page Horton directs you to in Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*, III, 325, you will find Calvin quoted going off on the Lutherans. "But how can they be so senseless [*insane*] as to require the power of God to cause a body to be a body, and not to be a body, at the same time?" And again in footnote 47 Pieper quotes Calvin's *Institutes*: "Some [the Lutherans] are so carried away with the heat of contention, as to affirm, on account of the union of the two natures in Christ, wherever His divinity is, His flesh, which cannot be separated from it, is there also" (IV, 17, 30). While being politer about it, Horton says our Christology violates Christ's having a true human nature. With Calvin, Horton asserts that the human nature of Christ was only different than ours in that it was without sin. So, since we cannot be omnipresent, omniscience, and omnipotent, Jesus couldn't either. Horton says, "His humanity was not charged with superhuman abilities but was like ours in all respects except for sin (Heb. 4:15)" (163). The Man Jesus knew nothing more than His contemporaries, but hear how Horton hedges: It's "unlikely" that in His state of humiliation Jesus had exhaustive knowledge about world plant life. That's why He could say the mustard seed is the smallest. But rather than flatly say that, Horton says Jesus was

answering based on what His hearers knew (178). And in the following quote isn't the Man Jesus no more than a hollow tube through which the Father and the Spirit work? "Rather, the Gospels routinely refer Christ's miracles to the Father and to the Spirit, accomplishing their work in and through Jesus Christ" ( 469). While an orthodox confession of faith would deny the possibility of the Man Jesus, joined as He is to the divine nature, being able to sin, Horton, as one would expect, maintains the opposite. "Like the humanity of Adam before the fall, Christ's humanity was not yet confirmed in righteousness and glory, but it was unfallen" (469). Then Jesus was no more than the perfect Adam, but the perfect Adam was incapable of defeating the Devil.

### **Ascension**

The real differences between Lutheran and Reformed come out in the Ascension. Basically, for the Reformed the flesh of Jesus is absent here on earth being circumscribed in heaven on the right hand of God. Whatever Jesus wants done He does through the Spirit, and here is the genesis of the spiritualizing of the Sacrament, which *Reformed Confessions* is much more upfront about confessing. Horton across 3 different pages dwells on the real absence of Christ in the flesh now, but note how he ends up backhanding the Real Presence as understood by the Orthodox, Rome, and Confessional Lutherans: "His departure is as real and decisive as his incarnation, and he 'will come [again] in the same way as you saw him go into heaven' (Ac 1:11) – that is, in the flesh. For now, he is absent on earth in the flesh, but he reigns in heaven while his Spirit creates for him an ever-expanding kingdom on earth." "Through his heavenly reign, with the Spirit leading the ground war, Jesus Christ loots Satan's kingdom and sets the prisoners free." "Downplaying the significance of Christ's absence in the flesh, the church has sought various means of substitution: the emperor, the pope, Mary (with the infant Jesus in her lap), and an elaborate system of ecclesiastical equipment for making Christ bodily present at the ringing of a bell" ( 531, 532, 534).

## **Horton's Distinction Between Reformed and Lutheran**

Here in Horton's own words are the differences between Reformed and Lutheran Christology: "In short, the Reformed acknowledge a communication of attributes (both divine and human) to the *person*, while Lutherans teach a communication of attributes of one *nature* to the other. It should be observed that in the Lutheran view (contra Monophysitism) the natures do not become fused into one. However, the specter of confusing the natures is raised by the insistence that whatever is done by the human nature is done by the *divine nature* rather than as the Reformed would say, by the *one person*" (409). In footnote 67 on this page Horton says that FC, SD, 62, 67, 68 shows divergent formulations ever since Luther. The Lutheran Brenz, according to Horton, said that to become human the Son exalted his humanity into his majestic divinity while Chemnitz defended the finite cannot comprehend the infinite and denounced the communication of attributes one nature to the other. Then Horton cites, as Pastor Tomczak too laments, Edmund Schlink's *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*. Schlink's says neither Brenz nor Chemnitz got his way in the Formula. And that the Christology the Formula follows denies rather than defends that found in the Augsburg Confession (479). This last allegation is one Lutherans have been denying since the writing of the Formula. But Horton's earlier remarks either come from misunderstanding or misrepresenting the Lutheran position. Lutherans teach that the communication of attributes is natures (plural) to person (singular) and from the divine to the human alone. (Thanks to Rev. Weslie Odom, Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, Arlington, Texas for critiquing Horton's footnote.).

## **Reformed Understanding of Holy Communion**

From Reformed Christology we turn to their understanding of Holy Communion. *Reformed Confessions*, referenced earlier, is crystal clear on this. "The question of why an essential and real presence of Christ's body in the sense of a local presence of Christ's natural body in the supper is not

possible can be answered by turning back to Christology” (Rohls, 230). The Reformed specifically reject a local presence, yet speak of a substantial and a real presence saying Christ is present in the use of the Lord’s Supper (Ibid., 231-2). Horton comes closest to clearly admitting that his view of the Lord’s Supper comes from his Christology when he says, “The danger in all of these views is that of Christ’s presence in the flesh at the altar is announced at the price of having to redefine Christ’s humanity” (810). Those familiar with the Formula of Concord will remember its discussion about the different modes of the presence of Christ, i.e. one that is real but does not take up space in time. FC, EP, VII, 1, 14 says it this way: The fourth ground for believing that “the body and blood Christ are truly and essentially present and are truly distributed and received with the bread and wine. ... ‘is that God has and knows various modes of being in a given place, and not only the single mode which the philosophers call *local*, or spatial.’” Later on in Article VII, Solid Declaration we make it clear that when we say Christ is not present apart from the use of the Sacrament we are *not* saying our using the Sacrament contributes to the Real Presence. No, when we say apart from its use we mean “as when the bread is laid aside or reserved in the tabernacle or carried about and exposed in procession, as happens in the papacy” (15).

When we speak about the modes of Christ presence, we want to be clear we are not trying to explain away the Real Presence or make it into a spiritual one. In SD, VII, 98-100 we mention the three different modes of Christ’s presence: 1) The comprehensible, corporeal mode; 2) The incomprehensible, spiritual mode, and 3) the divine, heavenly mode. We further go on to explain in paragraphs 104 and 105 that when we speak of a spiritual presence we don’t mean what the Reformed do: a “spiritual communion which is established when in spirit through faith the true believers are incorporated into Christ...” “But when Dr. Luther or we use the word ‘spiritual’ in this discussion, we have in mind the spiritual, supernatural, heavenly mode according to which Christ is present in the Holy Supper. ... Thus

we reject the Capernaitic conception of a gross carnal presence which the Sacramentarians [i.e. the Reformed] ascribe to and force upon our churches.”

If you would rightly understand all this talk of different modes of presence, you have to read the Preface to the Book of Concord (1580) which says why and when we speak of them. We say there that we go by the Words of Institution alone as the one and only basis and foundation of our doctrine of the Lord’s Supper. Christ is Almighty God and He cannot lie and is able to do as He promises: to give us His Body and Blood in the Lord’s Supper. When we remain unattacked on the basis of this simple confession, our theologians do not argue from some other basis, i.e. more than one mode that Christ can be present by. But with simple faith we stay with the plain words of institution (Tappert, 10).

### **Confessional Lutheran Description of the Reformed Lutheran Differences**

Here is an accurate, simple summary of the differences between Reformed and Confessional Lutheran penned almost 150 years ago. I cite it here to prepare you for the feints, jigs, bobbing and weaving Horton, in my opinion, does. “Calvin’s communion is one which can take place anywhere and always, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is always present, and faith can always be exercised; Paul’s communion is expressly limited to that which the bread and cup are connected. Calvin’s is a communion of the virtue and efficacy of the body and blood of Christ; Paul’s is a communion of the body and blood themselves. Calvin’s is the communion of the absent body and blood; Paul’s the communion of a present body and blood, so present that bread, broken and given, impart one, and the cup, blessed and taken, imparts the other. "Calvin talks of a faith by which we spiritually eat an absent body, Paul of elements by which we sacramentally eat a present body" (Krauth, *Conservative Reformation*, 631-2).

The Reformed want nothing to do with the Body and Blood of Christ on their altars, or in their hands or mouths. However, Horton shades, clouds, eclipses a simple statement of this Reformed truth. Here are his own words. “While affirming Christ’s presence in the Supper, the Reformed held that he

could not be present bodily anywhere on earth until his return in glory. Therefore, in the Supper the Spirit who unites us to Christ feeds us with the whole divine and human Christ, but in a mystical and heavenly manner” (476-7). “The *Belgic Confession* adds, ‘the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood’ was instituted ‘to testify to us that just as truly as we take and hold the sacraments [*sic*] in our hands and eat and drink it with our mouths, by which our life is then sustained, so truly we receive into our souls, for our spiritual life, the true body and true blood of Christ, our only Savior” (785).

### **Horton Summarizes the Different Views of the Lord’s Supper**

At several points Horton summarizes the difference between the various views of the Lord’s Supper. He is at pains to make Calvin’s position different from Zwingli. “So where Rome, Luther, and Zwingli concentrated on how Christ was or was not present *in the bread and wine*, Calvin directed his attention to how Christ is present *in action* in the sacrament even though he is absent from earth in the flesh until his return” [810]. “Rather than transform the sign into the signified (Rome), confuse the sign and the signified (Luther), or separate the sign and the signified (Zwingli), Calvin affirmed that signs were ‘guarantees of a present reality: the believer’s feeding on the body and blood of Christ’” ( 812). Well that sounds like Calvin believed the body and blood of Christ were present in his space and time. Not so fast. Horton cites Berkhof’s *Systematic Theology*, the authoritative mid-20<sup>th</sup> century summary of Reformed systematic thought: First, Horton says that Christ is “not present locally in the bread and wine.” Then, in referencing Berkhof he says, “Christ nevertheless gives ‘His entire person, both body and blood,’ through the meal. The efficient agent of this sacramental union is the author of the mystical union itself: namely, the Holy Spirit” (812, fn. 90). It’s all about the Spirit not the presence of Christ for the Reformed. You can see this when in his own words Horton summarizes the difference between Lutheran and Reformed: “Lutheran – A meal in which all participants feed on Christ’s true body and blood for salvation in the bread and wine. *Primary Actor: the Triune God*. True Presence in the

elements.” “Reformed – A meal in which God ratifies his covenant of grace by feeding believers with Christ’s true body and blood in heaven through the power of the Spirit. *Primary Actor: the Triune God*. True Presence in the sacrament” (823).

### **The Eating of the Unworthy**

Before we go into Horton’s analogies of the Reformed view versus our view and his reasons why Christ’s body and blood can’t be present to be eaten orally in our space and time, we turn to a traditional dividing line between the two faith groups: the *Manducatio indignorum* - the doctrine that even unbelievers if given the Lord’s Supper eat His body and drink His blood. *Reformed Confessions* in 1997 says, “Therefore the unfaithful and the godless do not receive the body of Christ. In the Supper Christ certainly gives and offers his body as food. But according to the French Confession only those ‘who bring a pure faith, like a vessel, to the sacred table of Christ, receive truly that of which it is a sign’ (S 381)” (236). Again, “According to the Sigismund Confession, the Supper does not benefit unbelievers. Indeed, they do not even receive Christ’s body,…” (Ibid.) Once more, “But Christ’s body and blood are received and enjoyed with bread and wine if and only if faith is present on the side of the recipient” (Ibid.). Clear enough, ; the Reformed do not believe in the *Manducatio indignorum*; Lutherans do. Not so fast. Here is Horton: “This [1 Cor. 11:29] suggests that even those who receive Communion unworthily do in fact receive Christ, as judge rather than as justifier, although in the immediate context temporal rather than eternal punishment is in view.” “‘The integrity of the Sacrament, which the whole world cannot violate,’ says Calvin, ‘lies in this: that the flesh and blood of Christ are no less truly given to the unworthy than to God’s elect believers.’ At the same time, the reality is embraced only through faith” (798, 811). Horton more accurately reflects Calvin, but it is in his tap-dancing. Flesh and blood of Christ are given to the unworthy but only by faith is the reality embraced.

### **Polite Denials of the Real Presence**

Horton denies the Real Presence but in a scholarly sounding way. In brackets, I have put the confession I believe Horton has in mind. “Are creaturely signs elevated ontologically and transubstantiated into the reality they signify [Catholic, Lutheran]? Are they mere symbols or illustrations of that reality but not really conveyors of it [Zwingli]? Or are creaturely signs means of grace, participating in the reality signified, while remaining in every respect natural [Reformed]? Defending this third view, I have argued..”( 862). While our Lutheran Confessions use the analogy of the sun and its rays to illustrate the incomprehensible presence of something (FC, SD, VII, 100), the Reformed use it to illustrate something absent in reality but present in effect. Seventeenth century Swiss Reformed theologian Wollebius “explicitly appeals to the category of energies in discussing the Supper, including the usual analogy of the sun and the rays, so that ‘what is remote spatially is present in efficacy.’ He adds, ‘The presence is opposed not to distance but to absence’” (818). Here again is Horton himself: “With the doctrine of transubstantiation the sign is absorbed (hence, lost) in the reality signified. Rather than natural creatures penetrated by the *energies* of God (while remaining what they are), the bread and wine are simply obliterated and converted into a supernatural *essence*” (825). This last thought appears to be only against Roman Catholicism, but Confessional Lutherans too don’t believe Communion only communicates the energies of God but the body, blood, forgiveness, life, and salvation of God.

### **Conflicting Reformed Theologies**

In Horton’s treatment of the Lord’s Supper, I have pointed out, and Horton does too, conflicting theologies among the Reformed. This is true among Liberal and Confessional Lutherans, but Confessional Lutherans can point to the Book of Concord of 1580 and say: there is our coherent confession. The Reformed deny this to be true, but we do state that all of our Confessional writings are to be taken as a further explication, not a revision or redacting, of the Augsburg Confession. The

Reformed themselves admit they have contradictory confessions in force at the same time. The 19<sup>th</sup> century Reformed theologian Charles Hodge acknowledges that Calvin and some Reformed confessions taught a vivifying person was being communicated in the Supper. He said this was “‘an uncongenial foreign element’ drawn from patristic sources, a too literal reading of John 6, and a desire to placate the Lutherans” (817). 21<sup>st</sup> century Anglican theologian, John Milbank says, “‘Calvin’s sacramental theology is not really coherent. ...the idea of the spiritual participation in a body that is in heaven makes very little sense’” (825). Horton is to be commended for including these dissents in his work, but they highlight that there is *not* a unified conservative Reformed approach to the Lord’s Supper.

### **The Basis for the Confessional Luther and Reformed View of the Lord’s Supper**

As shown in the Preface to the Book of Concord of 1580, Confessional Lutherans go from the Words of Institution. That is our basis and foundation for understanding ‘what it is’ and ‘why we come’. Not Horton. His point of departure to understand Communion is covenant, and so, in direct contradiction to Confessional Lutheranism, he uses the Old Testament to interpret the new. He says that the covenant is the context within which sacraments emerge. He cites Exodus 24: 3-8 and Moses sprinkling Israel with blood as well as God cutting a covenant with Abraham when he introduces the New Testament Sacraments (777). Then when Horton begins treating the Lord’s Supper, he says, “I have already indicated that covenant meals were part and parcel of the treaty-making events in the ancient Near East, and in Israel particularly. As with baptism, then, I will begin with the covenantal context” (798).

Hear how he argues from what a human rite can be to what a divine sacrament is: “As in secular treaties, biblical rites are means of binding strangers... . Neither, on the one hand, is it the testator’s transformation of the physical instruments (i.e. parchment and the wax seal) into his personal body nor, on the other hand, is it a merely symbolic event. ...However, the action of ‘cutting a covenant’ is itself neither a magical annihilation of natural substances by supernatural substances nor a merely symbolic

gesture” (777). Later, He uses Hittite covenants as example. They presented a goat’s head as representing a ruler’s son. “They did not imagine that the goat’s head was magically transformed into the head of Mati’ilu and his sons, nor that it was merely symbolic. ...Clearly, these covenantal actions are not merely illustrations. Yet they are also not a magical transformation of earthly substances into divine substances. Rather, they are performative actions that do what they say” (782).

This is not only understanding the Lord’s Supper through ancient treaty making; it’s misunderstanding it with the aid of 1950’s linguistic philosophy. Sacraments are really no different than weddings Horton explains. “Analogous to a wedding, the public ratification of an international treaty...the *illocutionary* speech act (such as promising) is given through the *locutionary* act of uttering certain words in a certain context, which then have the *perlocutionary* effect of creating a new state of affairs..” (753-4). The Words of Institution don’t give Christ’s body and blood but a new state of affairs.

### **It’s Zwingli not the Reformed Who is the Real Errorist**

Like most Calvinists in particular and the Reformed in general, Horton seeks to distance himself, Calvin, and current day Reformed theology from Zwingli. For example, “For Zwingli, spiritual blessings do not come through material means. The Spirit does not need ‘a channel or vehicle.’ While the Reformed view holds that God works through creaturely means, Barth shared Zwingli’s tendency to see divine and creaturely agency as running on parallel tracks that never intersect” ( 824). But no Reformed of any time or stripe would answer Luther’s test question concerning the Real Presence, “When the pastor turns toward you after having said the Words of Institution, what does he have in his hand?” by saying, “The Body of Christ.” No Reformed of any camp would hold Bread and Cup in hand and turn to the congregation and says, “Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.” No Reformed would kneel before Bread and Wine let alone adore the Body and Blood present there. For the Reformed, the Spirit is at work in their means of grace but He is not tied to the elements. Read for

yourself: “A sacrament is not only the signs, but the reality signified that is joined to them. Therefore, the Reformed argued, the whole Christ may be said to be present and to offer himself in the sacrament without being enclosed in the elements. ‘It is one thing to say that Christ is present in the bread, another to assert the presence in the Holy Supper,’ says the Reformed scholastic Johannes Wollebius. Zwingli’s argument seemed to stop at the ascension, whereas Calvin’s equally emphatic affirmation of a true feeding on Christ drew his attention to the activity of the Spirit in this time between the two advents” (815). And here Horton seeks to compare and contrast Lutheran and Catholic with Zwingli which infers his position: “If ‘Zwinglian’ views tend to eclipse our present participation (proleptically) in the eschatological feast, Roman Catholic and Lutheran views exhibit an overrealized eschatology of the Eucharist, resolving the productive tension between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’ that this covenant meal not only reveals but intensifies” (801). That leaves the position of really participating in an eschatological feast that isn’t really here.

We celebrate the Lamb’s High Feast too soon and Zwinglians miss it altogether. So where is Horton’s Reformed middle ground? In the Spirit, always in the Spirit. So it’s no wonder that by Horton’s own admission the epiclesis has become so important in Reformed liturgies. (Here is the danger of the Eucharist Prayer: The Words of Institution become a prayer to God for Him to do something rather than a proclamation of what God in Christ has done and gives us. Both *Lutheran Worship* and *Lutheran Service Book* have one in setting II.) The definition of Epiclesis according to *Lutheran Cyclopedia* is “Petition in East’s anaphora asking God the Father to send the Spirit on the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper to change them into the body and blood of Christ” (272). In Horton’s own words: “It is significant that the prayer for the Spirit’s work in the Eucharist (the epiklesis), crucial in Eastern liturgies but gradually omitted in the West, became an important part of Reformed liturgies” (816). With the Reformed it’s as if Jesus finished the statement in John 14:18, “I

will not leave you as orphans,” with “but I will send My Spirit to take My place.” Think this too strong? Read for yourself: “Our children are not excluded from any promise of the covenant of grace by waiting to receive Communion. The Word, baptism, and the Supper do not convey different realities but are the threefold manner in which God delivers Christ and all of his benefits to us by his Spirit” (818).

### **Spirit is All**

For the Reformed, or at least Horton’s expression of Reformed theology, sacramental theology is all about what is going on by means of the Spirit between persons. “However, in covenantal understandings, sacraments involve a giving of gifts from one person to another, not an exchange of substances. Its interest is not in what happens *to the signs* but in what happens *between persons through them*, not *how* Christ is present in the sacraments, but *that he is present in saving action toward us*” (784). “The focus is not on what the water, bread, and wine really are or whether Christ is substantially present in them but whether through these particular actions Christ is really giving himself to us” (785). The one thing He *cannot* be doing in their view is giving Himself to us orally in Bread and Wine. Horton will even go head to head with the passage, 1 Cor. 10:16, Luther said asserts the Real Presence of Christ in the earthly elements against 10,000 devils denying it. Horton says that it proves the opposite. “Calvin thus interprets the copula (‘is’) in the words of institution (‘This *is* my body’) in the light of Paul’s elaboration. Paul says neither that the bread and cup are mere *symbols* nor that they *are* Christ’s body and blood, much less that Christ’s body and blood are *in, with, and under* the bread and cup. Rather, he says that the bread and wine are ‘*a participation in*’ the body and blood of Christ (I Cor. 10: 16)” (816). This shows how far removed and contradictory Reformed and Confessional Lutheranism is, and what a big deal it was when the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America entered into full altar and pulpit fellowship with the Reformed Church in America, the United Church of Christ, and the Episcopal

Church. The Reformed only know of a spiritual participation in the Body and Blood by believing communicants, not an oral one by all communicants.

Herman Sasse said that the offense that once rested on the cross of Christ now rests on the altar. The Reformed are offended that they cannot commune at Confessional Lutheran altars. They think at worst the divide between Reformed and Confessional Lutheran is an argument about ‘how’ the Body and Blood of Christ are present, but the difference is about ‘what’ it is, whether the body and blood of Jesus are present or absent. In this light, do they flunk the Large Catechism’s test for worthy Communion? “For we do not intend to admit to the sacrament and administer it to those who do not know what they seek or why they come” (LC, V, 2). It’s true; not everyone we withhold the Sacrament from is necessarily an unworthy communicant, but if you’re not discerning the body, the what of the Sacrament, you would be at a Confessional Lutheran altar. Luther, in his 1527 lectures on 1 John does not pull punches. “The spirit of the Sacramentarians denies grossly that Christ came in the flesh when they say that Christ’s ‘flesh profits nothing’ (John 6:63), likewise that the Spirit must do everything, that Baptism amounts to nothing. Therefore he [the Sacramentarian] is not of God. ...Christ came into the flesh to be with us in Baptism and at the Holy Supper. Every spirit who is at pains to teach that Christ does everything through the sacraments of God, is glad to hear about Christ and give thanks. For he understands that Christ is his and that He came in the flesh. Therefore this has been stated emphatically: Behold, this is the test of a spirit, whether he is of God or of the devil” (LW, 30, 286).

### **Predestination**

Horton also shows the divide between Lutherans and Reformed over predestination is still there. It is masked or toned down, but it is there. The layman I was talking to didn’t think so because a Concordia Seminary St. Louis professor told him our objective – subjective justification distinction answered to their dual predestination. No, it does not. Objectively on Easter morning God the Father

declared that the world of sinners effectually justified. For the Reformed this is only true for the elect. “God invites the whole world to salvation in his Son, yet effectually calls and gives faith to all whom he has elected from all eternity” (263). So this means God does *not* will that none should perish but all come to the knowledge of truth. He does indeed desire the death of some of the wicked. Horton sharply states that Luther agreed with him, but admits the Formula of Concord does not. “Luther affirmed both election and reprobation in the strongest terms.” His footnote cites *all* of the Packer [Reformed] edition of *Bondage of the Will*. He goes on to say, though, “The Lutheran confessions, however, affirm God’s unconditional election of those on who he will have mercy but deny his reprobation of the rest as an actual decree” (314). Later on he walks back what Luther said too saying the Formula of Concord rejected conditional election based on foreseen faith, but also rejected reprobation or election to judgment. Luther, says Horton, taught both in *Bondage of the Will* but related it to the hidden God rather than to the God who is revealed in Christ (562, fn. 15, 563, fn. 20). This is always going to be where the pinch point is when the Reformed read Luther. He *does* say that God does know the number to be saved and the number to be damned. He does say that there is no power in all the universe other than God’s. But, as Horton correctly says, Luther says we are to go by the revealed will of God in Christ. There God calls wholeheartedly, effectually to all sinners “Come unto me all you who are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest.”

### **Marks of the Church**

Again what is stated so clearly in *Reformed Confessions* about the marks of the Church is not only muddied by Horton but spatters Luther too. “Alongside word and sacrament as that which grounds the communion of the faithful, discipline takes its place as the third mark of the true church.” The first Helvetic and the Belgic Confessions specifically say that without the third mark, the church cannot be present (175-76). Horton says, “The outward form of the church (its worship, discipline, government,

and order) was so important that it was eventually made a third mark of the church. It is true that Calvin acknowledged only two marks, but he clearly insisted upon the authority of God's Word alone over all matters of faith and practice- which is the intent of the 'third mark' (discipline)" (746). For Confessional Lutherans a mark of the Church can only be that which gives birth to Christians. Church discipline is the disciplining of Christians not the birthing of them. If Horton had only stated the Reformed position, that wouldn't have been so bad, but Horton calls Luther to his side. "*In other words, the mission of the church is identical with the marks of the church* [italics original]. ...Reformed churches therefore recognized discipline as a third mark of the church." Citing the Belgic and Westminster confessions, Horton says, "Calvin acknowledged only the two marks in his writings, while Luther included church discipline as a mark in 'On the Councils and the Church';" (894, 896, fn. 41).

Go to this link:- <https://internetmonk.com/archive/luther-on-the-marks-of-the-church> .

Chaplain Mike "considers himself a post-evangelical disciple seeking a Jesus-shaped life." He is not a Confessional Lutheran, but he explains Luther cites 7 marks of the church in the work Horton refers to but rejects sanctification as one of them: "In addition to these seven marks, Luther goes back to the matter of sanctification and allows that a holy life and growth in sanctification is also meant to mark Christian people out as belonging to Christ. Nevertheless, he does not include this with the other marks, for the following reason: 'However, these signs [of sanctification] cannot be regarded as reliable as those noted before since some heathen too practice these works and indeed at times appear holier than Christians...'" I don't think Chaplain Mike considers himself a scholar or even a theologian but he more accurately depicts Luther's position than Horton does.

### **The Perseverance of the Saints**

*The Lutheran Cyclopedia* defines Perseverance of the Saints, under the heading "Final Perseverance of the Saints", as the Reformed doctrine that the elect once called may lose the exercise of

faith but not the faith itself even if they commit an enormous sin (298). This is opposed to the Lutheran doctrine that the elect can fall from grace as Peter and David certainly did. Horton doesn't back away from this teaching saying, "The justified may fall into grave sin and 'fall under God's fatherly displeasure,' but they 'can never fall from the state of justification'" (He is quoting *The Westminster Confession*, 625). Horton goes out of his way to distance the Reformed doctrine of final perseverance from the Armenian "once saved always saved" by saying that error locates the security of the believer in the believer's decision to accept Christ. He also says Roman Catholicism merely makes final perseverance a possibility in the use of the Sacraments (685).

For the Reformed it is a certainty apart from the means of grace or their use. It's rooted in the sovereign God's election in the dark recesses of eternity. Horton claims this was Augustine's position in *On the Perseverance of the Saints* and is reflected in not just the *Westminster Confession* but in the *39 Articles* (Anglican) *Savoy Declaration* (Congregationalists) & the 1689 *Baptist Confession*, (Calvinistic Baptist) (684). He does prove by these citations that Final Perseverance is a key Reformed doctrine, but merely mentioning a treatise of Augustine doesn't prove he taught it too, and a professor at Gordon-Conwell Seminary disagrees. This does not surprise me. Several times in Horton's work he distinguishes his position from theirs. In my mind, the latter school of thought are the genuine conservative Reformed. Here's what the Gordon-Conwell professor, John Jefferson Davis, said in 2011: According to Augustine "it is uncertain whether anyone has received this gift so long as he is still alive. ... Augustine's understanding of perseverance, then, reflects his understanding of the eternal predestination of God, the warning passages addressed to believers in the NT, and his sacramental theology of grace and baptismal regeneration. He held that God's elect will certainly persevere but that one's election could not be infallibly known in this life — and that in fact one's justification and baptismal regeneration could be rejected and lost through sin and unbelief" (<https://classicalchristianity.com/2011/03/29/on-the->

[perseverance-of-the-saints/](#)). This is more in line with Confessional Lutheranism than Horton with this caveat. Confessional Lutheranism holds that God wants the elect confident in their salvation. Robert Preus shows in his 1997 posthumous work, *Justification and Rome*, that prior to the poison of Pietism, Confessional Lutheranism didn't stop with 'trust' as the third part of saving faith. No, we had a fourth: confidence (82). This was over against Rome and its 'monster of uncertainty.'

### **Limited Atonement**

Another Reformed doctrine clearly confessed in their confessional writings and by their theologians but tip-toed around by Horton is the limited atonement. The *Westminster Confession* says, "The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice" (3:7). *Shedd's Dogmatic Theology*, a 19<sup>th</sup> century work, says that in all the passages where Christ is said to redeem the world, 'world' means Church (II, 479). Calvin reasoned from the fact that not all are saved to the conclusion that all couldn't have been redeemed: Since not all men are actually saved, we must conclude that the Father never did love the world; Christ never did reconcile the world, and the Holy Spirit never did want to create faith in all who hear the word (*Institutes*, III, 21-24). Horton clearly states a limited atonement. "God himself became human and fulfilled in the place of his elect the righteousness required in this original covenant" (423), but then once more muddies the water by speaking of God calling all, but not really. "Reformed theology understands the divine call in terms of an *outward call*, by which God summons the whole world to Christ through the preaching of the gospel, and an inward or *effectual call*, as the Spirit illumines our hearts and gives us faith through the gospel." (566-7). Still later he will reveal that he doesn't believe the Spirit always goes out with the call. "Rather than say that the Spirit *supervenies* on the preached gospel (since regeneration is not always

given with it), Vanhoozer prefers to say that the Spirit *advenes* [added] on it, ‘when and where God wills,’ to make it effective” (571).

## **Image of God**

Another area of disagreement between Lutheran and Reformed is whether or not man after the Fall still has the image of God. The Reformed taking the image of God to mean every way in which humans differ from animals says ‘yes’ man still has the image of God after the Fall because man remains a rational beings with a soul. Confessional Lutheranism citing Scripture and church fathers says that the image of God is His wisdom and righteousness which mankind lost completely after the Fall (Apology, II, 115). I think, perhaps, Horton *has* found a middle ground here. “Nevertheless, Lutheran theology teaches that the image of God was lost in the fall, while Reformed theology teaches that it remains, albeit marred, disfigured, and corrupted in every way. Or at least this is the common contrast that is drawn, usually on the Reformed side. ... Yet the gifts that belonged specifically to the image – namely, true knowledge of God, delight in him and his commands, a genuine stewardship over creation and the hope of everlasting life -are lost.” Luther and others say James 3:9 (“With it we bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;”) and Genesis 9:6 (“Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.”) describe man as he was originally and becomes again in Christ. Other Lutherans say these passages teach a divine image in a wider sense; that after the fall man still has reason and who even now feebly rules over creation. J.T. Muller prefers the narrow definition but says the broader is not contradictory. This is where Horton says Reformed stand. “Where Lutheran commonly refer to the image in the narrow sense of moral integrity (which the Reformed agree has been lost), Reformed theology commonly refers to the image in the wider sense (which Lutherans agree has not been lost)” (435-6). The Wisconsin

Reviewer, citing Horton's discussion of the image of God on pages 123-128 and 154 said it "needs clarification." I think Horton is clear on this score.

### **The One True Faith or Not**

In the opening pages Horton sets forth his broad ecumenical view of things which is also why open Communion is a *sine qua non* of all Reformed: liberal, conservative, and in between. "I do not believe there is any such thing as a 'Reformed faith' any more than there is a 'Lutheran faith' or 'Baptist faith.' There is *one faith* – the Christian faith – and this volume is an attempt to explore that faith as it is summarized in the confessions of Reformed Christianity" (30). Horton is right; there is only one faith once and for all delivered to the saints, but not all Christians confess it fully or accurately. Confessional Lutherans believe they do, and the Reformed don't. Would Horton say we don't and they do? I don't think so. I say this not based on personal knowledge but my dealing with conservative Reformed people. They believe they are and should be in full Communion with us and all Christians. It doesn't seem like there is any doctrine confessed by a another Christian church that is not divisive for them for church fellowship. And the differences between conservative Reformed and conservative Lutherans is very small in their eyes.

### **Overlooked Differences Between Reformed and Lutheran**

Let me highlight some often-overlooked differences. We say testament or promise they say covenant; we say Christ's Body and Blood are present in our time and space and they say absent; we say the Spirit is tied to elements; they say the elements are a 'sign' always and the Spirit *may* be tied to them. We say election to salvation only; they say election to both heaven and hell; we say in Christ the finite is capable of the infinite; they say no not ever. They speak very seriously and piously about Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the Water, the Body and the Blood, but there is no power for them in these things. Hortons says that "...the effects of baptism cannot be tied to the moment of administration"

(791) Contrast this with ancient postbaptismal Collect – “who has begotten thee again of water and the Spirit.”

### **The Different Foundations for Reformed and Confessional Lutheran**

What is foundational in Reformed theology according to Horton? In his own words: “...covenantal thinking forms the foundation of Reformed faith and practice,…” (273). A Confessional Lutheran would say the doctrine of justification or the Person and Work of Christ is. This is a huge fundamental difference that sends the two theologies and therefore practices in different directions. So does this next one. For Confessional Lutherans “the chief function or power of the law is to make original sins manifest and show man to what utter depths his nature has fallen and how corrupt it has become” (SC, III, II, 4). For Calvin “the so called third use (guiding believers in the way of gratitude) is, for the Christian, ‘the primary use’ of the Law” (640). Finally, there is the role of reason. Luther railed against Dame Reason until he met the Heavenly Prophets who were irrational. But I am still uncomfortable with Horton’s take on reason. “While every major Christian doctrine transcends our rational ability to comprehend it (contra rationalism), none transcends our rational ability to apprehend it (contra fideism)” (101). What becomes then of “owning” the mystery of the Trinity (“Holy God We Praise Thy Name, v. 4)? This is the ‘reason’ Sevin Dust is advised.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I can say that Horton did a good job of bridging the gap in my theological education of what was happening outside of Confessional Lutheranism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. If all you have is Piper’s four volume *Christian Dogmatics*, you’ll have the same gap. The *Confessional Lutheran Dogmatic* series that is meant to supplement the aforementioned, certainly help, but it helps to have this treated in one volume. Finally, if all you are trained in is the LCMS’s new two-volume

*Confessing the Gospel*, which could replace Piper, you will be blown out of the water by a Reformed pastor who has only been trained with Horton's book.

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