
Lutheran Quarterly, Past and Future

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As *Lutheran Quarterly*, new series, begins its thirtieth year of publication, we are grateful for predecessors stretching back over a century and for the new publishing partnership for print and online editions now underway with Johns Hopkins University Press.

Learning from the past

Lutheran Quarterly is an independent, pan-Lutheran publication for reliable history and evangelical (*sola fide*) theology in the tradition of the *Evangelical Review* (1849), *Lutheran Church Review* (1882), the *Augustana Quarterly* (1922), *The Lutheran Church Quarterly* (1928), and our immediate predecessor, *The Lutheran Quarterly* (1949–1977). The aims articulated in 1949 remain unchanged and appear in the front matter of every issue:

to provide a forum 1) for the discussion of Christian faith and life on the basis of the Lutheran Confession; 2) for the application of the principles of the Lutheran Church to the changing problems of religion and society; 3) for the fostering of world Lutheranism, and 4) for the promotion of understanding between Lutherans and other Christians.

Our first issue, in 1987, was intentionally indicative of doctrinal emphasis and historical method. Leading the way as the very first essay was Gerhard O. Forde's "Radical Lutheranism," providing a theological direction for the journal in terms of the radical implications of justification by faith alone. Ever since, *Lutheran Quarterly* has championed the biblical and confessional emphasis on death and resurrection as a way to understand the effective power of the justifying Word. Many authors have taken up this emphasis over the years, especially Oswald Bayer, our most frequent contributor. Next in that same inaugural issue was an essay titled "Theodore Tappert's Journal, *The Lutheran Quarterly* from 1953 to 1965," indicating not only the legacy being carried forward but also the historical method and rigor to be applied. As in Tappert's publications overall, the goal of *Lutheran Quarterly* has long been the effective presentation of careful research in the original languages, with comprehensive coverage of the secondary literature.

Taking his cues from Tappert, Oliver K. Olson, the founding editor of the new series, continued several features of the predecessor journals that I, as current editor, have also considered distinctive:

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editorial independence, scholarly essays with detailed history and "radical" Lutheran theology, inclusive personnel (now, especially ELCA and LCMS), authoritative book reviews on Lutheran history and theology, and no editorials. The spectrum of Lutheran journals should include some quick reading for busy pastors, but *Lutheran Quarterly* wants to be of long-term use at the scholarly end of that spectrum, with as much length and detail as it takes to cover a topic well. Our readers worldwide are scholars, thoughtful pastors, and well-educated laity, with many non-Lutheran libraries also among our institutional subscribers. In recent years, *Lutheran Quarterly* has also published related books, principally with Wm. B. Eerdmans (fourteen titles 2003–2014) but also with Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht and Wipf & Stock.

In planning an issue, I, as editor, supervise an anonymous peer-review process for the manuscripts submitted, working toward a balance of history and theology in each issue: an essay on Martin Luther, an essay on some other aspect of the sixteenth-century Reformation besides Luther, something on American Lutheranism, something besides Reformation or American studies (another era or another continent), and at least one essay of theological weight and challenge. For recent examples of issues and books, plus some additional features, see our website (www.lutheranquarterly.com).

Envisioning the future

Going forward, we all as readers expect (and even demand) more and more current material online in full text, and we count on quick access to back issues as well. Even as *Lutheran Quarterly* now adds an online full-text option for our subscribers, it will continue to be available in print as well, as a journal of record. The danger in being digital only is that the access points may not always remain easily available as the technology evolves over time. Every congregational library has video-cassettes, to use a

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twentieth-century example, but you need an old-fashioned VCR to access the contents. Old or new books and magazines, however, still open up nicely. The codex form is a remarkably durable technology, accessible for centuries if quality paper is used. (However, ancient scholars accustomed to scrolls probably did need some “I.T.” help with the new medium, as in the now-classic video on

You Tube.) And, in fact, the predicted demise of hard-copy books in the digital age is not occurring.

Ideally, a journal should be available in print and full text online, *and* be part of a digital platform of resources far larger than one journal or even the combined resources of a school or church body. Lutheran history and theology deserve to be part of the global conversation in the humanities broadly defined, and here is where the horizon has now expanded dramatically for *Lutheran Quarterly*. Johns Hopkins University Press (JHUP), America’s oldest university press, is a leader in digital publishing through its Project MUSE. Home to dozens of quality periodicals in many fields including history and religion, JHUP has taken in only three new journals for 2016; *Lutheran Quarterly* is one of them, exactly because of our scholarly portfolio of peer-reviewed essays and book reviews, with no editorials or sermons. The contents remain up to our editorial staff, answerable only to our Board of Directors, but the printing and distribution of hard copy and the hosting and promotion of the digital version will now be in the experienced hands of colleagues at Johns Hopkins. We at *Lutheran Quarterly* look forward to it, and believe that our predecessors would be glad to know that this long tradition has a promising future.