

BOTH GOOD AND BAD THINGS GLOBALIZE

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I'm addressing an initial word to the reader under quarantine's impact. Due to the globalization of Covid-19, a disease caused by the Corona virus, identified in December 2019.

The Corona virus was identified in December 2019 and, according to Johns Hopkins University's data (USA), it has already taken more than 216,000 people lives in the world by April 29¹. The reality imposed by this situation may generate multiple learning experiences to the whole people in the world whether Christians or not.

Personally, this whole context reminds me the words of God in the book of Ecclesiastes and also the book of James. **“On the day of prosperity, be happy; but on the day of adversity, consider that God has made both this and that, so that man may discover nothing of what is to come after him”** (Eccl. 7:14). God describes life as it really is: with unexpected ups and downs, with reversals happening in the world, around us, on our own existence. Despite the serious limitations to which we are submitted, especially when tomorrow is unknown, with God's wisdom we will be able to trust in the Heavenly Father's care.

Therefore, the recommendation is to pursue happiness in good times and

1 <<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>>
Accessed: April 29th, 2020.

when one can joyfully enjoy work which is God's gift, as the book of Ecclesiastes often states (2:24-26; 3:13; 5:18-19) and, in dark days, to stop and react as any human being normally reacts. Observe and reflect. Guarded by the peace of mind and heart, which comes from Him who rules kindly in heaven and earth, because of his beloved son Jesus Christ, we can recognize that God reigns over everything and over all, and the globalization of his reign, which began on the first day of creation, works for the good of all humanity (BOLLHAGEN, 2011, p.254-255).

In my point of view, the most important reflection on Ecclesiastes' words, considering the current context of uncertainty and instability, has to do with the reality we are not tomorrow's masters of our destiny. But it is to repeat together with the apostle James, **"if God wills, we will not only live, but we will also do this or that"** (James 4:15).

These passages from the word of God have alerted me [again] to the truth that neither presumption about tomorrow's day nor morbid concern for the future are healthy and do not fit in with the Christian hope. God requires of us a realistic attitude to life and in the face of the uncertainty of the future, he teaches us to trust in him and properly appreciate the blessings of the present time.

Under the impact of the Corona virus, I was also led to recognize [again] that my role as a theologian as well as Theology itself has its limitations. Not that anyone is spreading this idea. However, it is important to note that the development of the scientific spirit in a linear and Cartesian way, as if Theology could assign itself the mission of answering all questions, has no support in times like these, but only to bow down before God. Bollhagen (2011, p.14), states that the enigmas in Ecclesiastes should lead us to a more humbling posture and recognition of our limitations, not only in relation to what will happen tomorrow, but in the theological reflection itself.

Conundrums in Ecclesiastes and other books of Scripture sabotage human efforts to develop a consistent and linear theology that leaves no mystery or questions unanswered, as if it could be done without humility and trust in God, even if it is contrary to human experience and perception.

Bachelar (2005) warns us that geometrization of the knowledge, whether by the Cartesianism's success or by Newton's discoveries, became insufficient, especially since 1905, when a new scientific spirit began with Einstein's relativity. Whitehead (2006) states that to see everything from the point of view of

the reason is to see with one eye (p.80) and “the scientific defect of the 18th century was not to take care of any of the elements that make up the immediate psychological experiences of humanity” (p.97). In the scheme of scientific research – *subject/object – spirit/matter* – it is necessary to admit that “[...] between both we find the concepts of life, organism, function, instant reality, interaction, order of nature, which together form the heel of the whole system” (p.77). Even relativism, which sometimes seems to us to be the main enemy, can become legitimate if the aim is to facilitate explanations from the perspective of the observer (WHITEHEAD, 2006, p.151; VOELZ, 1999).

In fact, Theology is not a common science like other sciences, because its object of study is not common. It is God, who cannot be grasped by any of our senses, except in Jesus, the revealer of the Father’s heart and in whom we can believe. See in the water of Baptism. Hear through the proclamation of the Gospel. See, hear and feel in his Holy Supper.

In this sense, elements of absolute solidity and “hypertheorism” in our theological formulations, should make room for a recognizing posture that formation and theological research go through the action of God and they cannot be acquired at a “low price”, as if this were to fall from heaven in a spirit of alienation from the world and what happens in it, with people and with the theologian himself. Humility, a spirit of prayer and “theological resonance”² are needed.

This means recognizing, as obvious as this may seem, that we are theologians and human beings. We are humans subject to feelings proper to a human being and events around us impact and affect us in our way of doing theology, which in turn is directed at “human” people. **“We are also human beings like yourselves, subject to the same feelings, and we preach the gospel to you”** (Acts 14:15).

Luther (1972) states that the common belief is that in general people know what is good and want to do good, however, this thought can only be applied when it is said in cases in particular. In this subject, the human being knows and wants to do good, but in general, he does not know and does not want to do good. The reason for this is that he generally knows only his own good, that is, what is useful to himself. However, knowing what is good for God and for other people, this is not within his natural reach. “For this reason, unless faith gives birth and love sets us free, no one is capable of having or doing anything good, but only evil, even when he does good” (LUTHER, 1972, p.345).

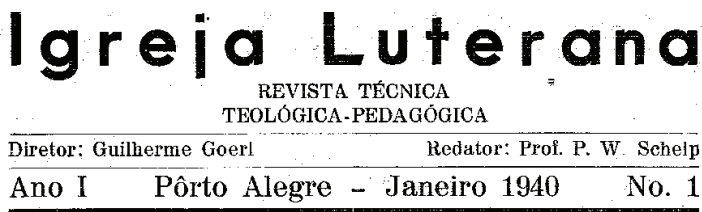
2 The concept of “resonance” is developed by the German sociologist Harmut Rosa and consists of opposing alienation and the impermeability of what happens around us.

Bowed down in faith before God, we can wait for this light and this love. It is interesting to note that the apostle Paul gives a very frank warning to the Christians of Corinth about knowledge and love. **“Knowledge leads to pride, but love builds”** (1 Corinthians 8:1). It can be illustrated by Fromm’s (1981) analysis of the productive character of a human being, characterized by love and responsibility. He uses Jonah as an example. God calls Jonah to preach repentance to the people of Nineveh. After fleeing from his mission, God saves him and he goes to Nineveh to preach as he was once commanded. In Nineveh what Jonah least want happens: people repent, and God forgives them. Jonah is angry and wants to die as he realizes that God’s love and forgiveness are granted to Nineveh’s people. In this sense, “Jonah’s story suggests that love cannot be separated from *responsibility*. Jonah does not feel responsible for the life of his brothers” (FROMM, 1981, p.91 – author’s emphasis) and therefore his character is lacking love.

I’m also writing this initial word to the reader, under the impact of the *Igreja Luterana Journal* 80th year’s anniversary. This accomplishment that begun in 1940 gives enough reason to give many thanks to God for all the people who made part and are taking part of this project of theological productions. It aims, since its very beginning to benefit people and the mission of the church in its multiple roles.

The *Igreja Luterana Journal* had its first edition in January 1940. In the beginning it was called “Revista Técnica Teológica – Pedagógica” (Technical Theological and Pedagogical Journal), directed by Guilherme Goerl, while the editor was Professor P. W. Schelp, as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: Header of the first issue of the *Igreja Luterana Journal*



Source: *Igreja Luterana Journal* – January/1940

It is interesting to note the specification of the target audience in the header of the second issue of the journal as shown in figure 2: “Technical magazine for pastors and teachers” [from parish schools]. In addition to this change, the director of the journal was changed to Pastor Carlos Henrique Warth, who remained in this office until 1954 (BLANK, 2018, p.33).

Figure 2: Header of the second issue of the *Igreja Luterana* Journal



Source: *Igreja Luterana* Journal – February/1940

Another interesting detail to note is that according to data in Chart 1, there were some variations in the focus or in the target audience of the Journal.

Chart 1: Summary view of changes in focus of *Igreja Luterana* Journal

Year	Focus
1940 (January)	Igreja Luterana: Technical Theological and Pedagogical Journal
1940 (February)	Igreja Luterana: Technical Journal for Lutheran Church pastors and teachers
1954 (August)	Igreja Luterana: Theological Journal
1974 (Spring)	Igreja Luterana: A Journal for adults in Christ
1981/3	Igreja Luterana: Theological-pastoral Journal
1987/1	Igreja Luterana: Semestral Journal of Theology
2020/1	Igreja Luterana: Theology's Journal of Seminario Concordia

Source: Own authorship (2020) according to data available in: <<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Z7ZW446hWNVQ2ndPj0skzSAXPFx6puUJ>>, Accessed: April 20, 2020.

In this year that *Igreja Luterana* Journal is marking its 80th anniversary, God is reopening the doors for this theological journal to continue the path of globalization, begun in 1940. Since its beginning, it is possible to see that this globalizing objective has existed already. “The Journal was aimed to reach pastors and teachers of the Synod in Latin America” (BLANK, 2018, p.33). Thus, in the year we celebrate 80 years of existence, this issue is also historical, since it intends to be intercontinental, since it will contemplate the studies presented at the VII Conference of the Lutheran International Council (ILC), held in the

city of Baguio, Philippines, from October 15 to 18, 2019. Literally, the whole world will have access to the productions of that event.

The first topic comes from Klän. In his presentation, he addresses two themes, which are sometimes considered antagonist, but which he understands should go together. On the one hand, in these difficult times in which the proclamation of the word of God is often diluted in a message of human origin, Klän argues for the faithful proclamation of the biblical truth, having the Ecumenical Creeds and the Lutheran Confessions as faithful witnesses of the Gospel. On the other hand, the context in which the church is located cannot be underestimated. Faithfulness in the proclamation of the Gospel includes an attentive look at the place where God has placed His people, with the peculiarities of time and space. Klän concludes with a call for confessional Lutherans to value their unity of faith and to advance on their search for a common witness in today's world, whose purpose the ILC should play fundamental role.

Thompson's object of study is based on his Christological reflections within the Asian context. Religious pluralism, poverty, and western colonialism have moved theologians and Asian leaders to build an Asian portrait of Jesus. One of the facets of this construction outside Christianity is to see in Jesus a political/social Messiah, in order to lead the reconstruction of social equality among the Indian castes. There are also attempts by the theologians of the enculturation, who sought to articulate the Gospel using Asian terms, symbols and spiritualities, while remaining faithful to the Christian faith. On the other hand, there were also those who forced Jesus' connection with Indian religious elements to the point of compromising the person and work of Christ. Thompson also presents the source and trajectories of Christology in the Lutheran perspective, whose purpose is to maintain the biblical/confessional character, as well as to be relevant to people context.

Barnbrock's conference on Lutheran identity on the Germanic post-Christian context, explores thoughts from the sociologist Hartmut Rosa, in the perspective that people today are living an increasingly accelerated life, forgetting the present and no longer allowing themselves to be affected by everyday events. Linked to this, he also makes use of the ideas of Nassehi (2019), who deals with the digitalized context in which we are inserted. In this sense, Barnbrock understands that a pious practice based on *oratio, meditatio and tentatio*, "for the formation and preservation of a Lutheran identity in the 21st century", remains vital.

Salifu describes the daily temptations in a spiritual perspective as a battle that a Christian faces in his daily life. In a way, he foresees what is happening in

the world today in all its intensity with Covid-19. He approaches human suffering as an opportunity for the devil to infiltrate and cast doubt on God's love and lordship. To him, the Enlightenment and the advances of science have left in a background the perception of a reality where there are demonic powers on duty to try to co-opt Christian souls. Among the Christian's defenses are the means of grace, a life of prayer and the joy of being in a spiritual battle.

Biermann addresses the "divorce" between the church and American culture as a widely recognized fact. First, by the end of "constantinianism," a term used to describe the mutual and supportive relationship between Church and State, and second, by the rise of religious postures that turn faith into something generic, such as Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTS), whose main emphasis is on the pursuit of happiness, God's readiness to solve eventual problems, and a happy ending for all people in the heavenly mansion. In this context, Biermann argues that sociological studies shouldn't necessarily determine the Christian church's action, but rather do what is proper to the church, namely, "to be church".

Fuhrmann addresses the urban challenges that Lutherans face in Brazil in terms of crossing cultural boundaries in the church's mission. Having emerged in rural areas from a mission principle that focused on German Lutheran immigrants, the church today faces many challenges in Brazilian urban context. The strong ethnic and cultural diversity of the reality of the favelas is one of the greatest of these challenges, according to Fuhrmann, who reminds the reader that the church seeks to preach "Christ to all". In order to help the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (IELB) and trying to foster theological reflection among Lutheran brethren around the world, Fuhrmann explores Luther's theology regarding the relationship between the two types of justice and the Apostolic Creed, seeking to emphasize justification by grace and faith as a starting point to also affirm the presence and action of the church in mission.

Rutt analyzes migration's impact over the world and also the church, suggesting that it offers opportunities for both missiological studies as well as the exercising of Christian love in serving immigrants. Although migration is a phenomenon present throughout human history, it is one of the main characteristics of the 21st century. It is also Rutt's object of study. According to him, there are several organizations linked to LCMS that are fully aware of the situation, carrying on the work among immigrants. Even so, now more than ever, it is necessary to invest studies in missiology and on the migration context in order to better understand this phenomenon that has impacted Christianity in the world in ways that, according to Rutt, "can only be explained by divine providence".

At last, another topic of study in Baguio, Philippines, was the theological curriculum. Graff explored the construction of a theological curriculum and its basis built on the profile of egress or the future Lutheran pastor. The objective was to reflect on elements that concern the composition and execution of a theological curriculum. It is known that pastoral formation has its main basis in the vertical dimension, that is, it is a gift from God to be a pastor. The challenging character lies in how to reconcile this vertical dimension of pastoral formation with horizontal aspects and human responsibility in the formation process, which is also dependent on factors such as a well-constructed curriculum.

May God bless and enlighten everyone, so that the studies proposed in this issue of the Revista Teológica do Seminário Concórdia de São Leopoldo, Brazil, [Theological Review of Concord Seminary] may be for the benefit of Christians, the mission of the Church and the Kingdom of God. You can also access its contents at <www.revistaigrejaluterana.com.br>.

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