

Theology of the Lutheran Confessions

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evidently quoted as a presupposition rather than developed and proved dogmatically. After all, it is taken over as a finished and settled doctrine. This fact, however, should not prevent us from recognizing two decisive contributions of the Confessions to the doctrine of the Trinity as proclaimed by the ancient church:

a) They emphatically point out that the triune God is not yet recognized when we acknowledge the "unity of the divine essence," "the three persons in this one divine essence" (A.C. I, 1 f.), but do not acknowledge the *works* of these three persons in creation, redemption, and sanctification. ". . . the entire *essence* of God, his *will*, and his *work*" belong together (L.C. II, 63). I confess the works of the triune God only when I believe "that *I* am a creature of God" (L.C. II, 13), that Jesus Christ "is *my* LORD" (S.C. II; L.C. II, 27), that "the Holy Spirit makes *me* holy" (L.C. II, 40). 'Jesus Christ the Lord' means not only that he is equal in essence with God, "true God, begotten of the Father from eternity," but also "that he has redeemed me from sin, from the devil, from death, and from all evil" (L.C. II, 27). The doctrine of the immanent Trinity dare not be separated from the economic Trinity, nor the doctrine of the *opera trinitatis ad intra* from the *opera trinitatis ad extra*. In reality the triune God is known only by that man who confesses him as the Lord who daily performs his creative, redemptive, and sanctifying activity on the confessing man himself.

b) The triune God is not yet known if he is presented without the distinction of law and Gospel. In the Roman church the dreadful fact had become evident that, in spite of the preservation of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, God was not known any more, since the Gospel had been lost. But to know God's essence means to know "the most profound depths of his fatherly heart, and his sheer, unutterable love" (L.C. II, 64). To know God's love means to receive his gracious love. However, the love of God the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier is not given through the demands of the law but through the gift of the Gospel. The triune God, therefore, is known only in the distinction of law and Gospel, that is, by faith in the Gospel. The train of thought in this chapter has shown that the Creator is known only in the Gospel. The same holds true of knowing God the Sanctifier, for the Holy Spirit is given only through the Gospel. Of every knowledge of God the statement applies: "Thus the entire Holy Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, directs all men to Christ as to the book of life" (S.D. XI, 66).