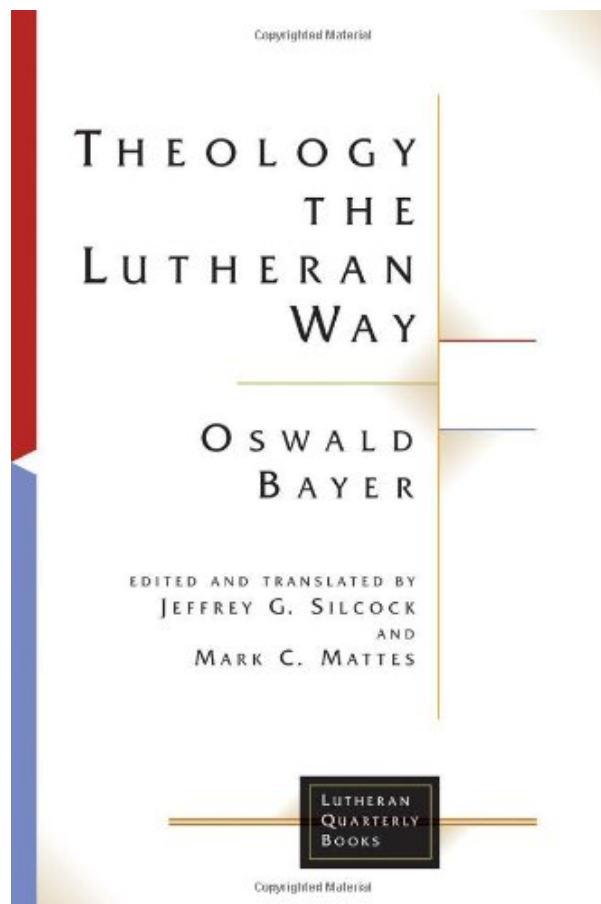


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Review

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— Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

"Here is a fascinating account of the 'nature of theology' in conjunction with its very subject matter, namely, God and God's address to humanity. . . One of the most significant and original Lutheran voices of this generation, in both historical and systematic theology, is finally audible in the English-speaking world."

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About the Author

Oswald Bayer is professor emeritus of systematic theology at the University of Tübingen, Germany, and director of the Luther Academy Sondershausen-Ratzeburg. He is also an ordained pastor of the Lutheran Church of Württemberg and was the editor of *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* from 1986 to 2006. His research focuses especially on Luther and Hamann.

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Rather than asking if theology is theoretical or practical -- a question that reveals a fundamental lack of understanding about the nature of theology in general -- it is better to ask "What exactly is theology?" It is this question that Oswald Bayer attempts to answer in *Theology the Lutheran Way*, clearing up misconceptions about the essence of theology. Along with Luther himself, Bayer claims that theology, rather than being something that we do, is really what God does.

Based primarily on the third section of Bayer's original German work of the same title, this book evaluates certain approaches to theology that have been influential, from Schleiermacher's understanding of theology to debates with Kant, Hegel, and Bultmann. It also includes a substantial section on Luther from the original in order to clarify the Lutheran tradition.

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Mark C. Mattes is professor of philosophy and religion at Grand View University, Des Moines, Iowa.

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Theology is for Divine Service

By Clint Schneklath

This is a great book. The Lutheran Quarterly Books series has concentrated on publishing works from two crucial Lutheran theologians- Gerharde Forde and Oswald Bayer. One easy way to summarize the thesis of Bayer's book is to say that, just as Forde stated that "theology is for proclamation," Bayer here argues that "theology is for divine service."

What does he mean by this? His basic thesis is that theologian has two inseparable sides- the "monastic" side, its liturgical spirituality, the first order discourse of worship. And then it has an "academic" (wissenschaft) side, the secondary discourse on the primary texts (forms of speech and worship). The two are inseparable, just as in Forde's thought, theology drives and leads to proclamation, but also emerges from proclamation and so leads to further proclamation.

The book is also an excellent resource because Bayer summarizes and introduces Luther's understanding of theology. He focuses especially on Luther's three "rules", rules Luther learned from his repeated praying of Psalm 119. In his introduction to the New Testament translation, Luther offered three rules for theology: Oratio (reading out loud), meditatio (praying or contemplating), and tentatio (suffering or undergoing the text).

Along the way, Bayer addresses issues in the philosophy of science, the study of speech acts, and critiques the main modernist proposals- Schleiermacher, Kant, Hegel, and Bultmann.

Anyone could read this book as a fascinating introduction to theology the Lutheran way. Lutherans will be edified, and will be pushed to clarify their own assumptions and reading of Luther.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

bayer is awesome

By frank william sonnek

but he is also a very intense and dense read.

so.... 3 stars

his book on luthers theology is better, but wow. very very deep. he truly captures Luthers theology as few other men have done.

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