

Dear Friends of the Foundation:

Today I ran across a paragraph in the preface to one of Barth's part-volumes, and while the paragraph is intended as a stern warning to at least some Lutherans, it certainly stands as a warning to me not to conceive of the work of the Foundation as an attempt to return to the Reformation but instead as an attempt to learn from the Reformation in order to continue in faithfulness and reformation today.

The other path which *rebus sic stantibus* [things thus standing] I regard as a blind alley is that which to-day especially is taken by many (luckily not all) Lutherans—the way of a modernizing restoration of 16th century Protestant dogma and its early presuppositions. Against the reproach that I have slighted the theological fathers I need make no protest in view of the contents of the earlier volumes of this *Dogmatics* and my other writings. But it is one thing to take one's bearings from the fathers, to learn from them and actually to accept their imperishable insights—if this is what is meant, I am happy to be dubbed “orthodox” by my neighbors on the left—but quite another thing to try as a matter of principle to think and speak according to their judgments and confessions, or according to a particular ecclesiastical structure. Nobody should maintain that he has learned to do this from me (though I have been held responsible for giving the impetus to this endeavour). **“Confessions” exist in order that we may go through them (not once but continually), but not that we should return to them, take our abode in them, and conduct our further thinking from their standpoint and in bondage to them.** The Church never did well to attach itself stubbornly to one man—whether his name was Thomas (let us rejoice that we neither have nor need a Thomas), or Luther, or Calvin—and in his school to attach itself to one form of its doctrine. And it was never at any time good for it to look back instead of forwards as a matter of principle, as if accepting a “realized eschatology,” as if not believing in the coming of the Lord.

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, Vol. 3, *The Doctrine of Creation*, Part 4 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), p. xiii (emphasis added).

So let us go through the historic confessions continually but not live in them.

Grace and Peace,

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