

*FÖRSTA ARTIKELN*  
*"Jag tror på Gud Fader allsmäktig,  
himmelens och jordens Skapare":<sup>1</sup>*

**Gustaf Wingren's<sup>2</sup> Confession of the Doctrine of Creation  
for an Understanding of Vocation & Sanctification**

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Abbreviations used (see also bibliography below):<sup>3</sup>

"Concept": "The Concept of Vocation--Its Basis and Its Problems".

"Creation": "The Doctrine of Creation: Not an Appendix but the First Article".

An Exodus Theology: An Exodus Theology: Einar Billing and the Development of Modern Swedish Theology.

Flight: The Flight from Creation.

Gospel: Creation and Gospel.

"Punkten": "Den springande punkten" ("The crucial point").

STK: Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift (Swedish Theological Quarterly.)

Vocation: Luther on Vocation.

Word: The Living Word.

**I.**

**"In the beginning...."**

That is where this investigation into Gustaf Wingren's doctrine of creation, "...his 'Creation Faith'..." (Jay, Gospel, p. v), rightly commences.<sup>4</sup> For it is wholly proper to look at any aspect of Wingren's theology chronologically, grounded as it is on the order of God's acts in the history of mankind.<sup>5</sup> As such, I will examine Wingren's thought on

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<sup>1</sup> My literal translation: "The First Article 'I believe in God the Father almighty, the heaven's and the earth's Creator.'" See the concluding words of Wingren's The Flight from Creation, p. 83, and Doktor Martin Luthers Lilla Katekes (Doctor Martin Luther's Small Catechism [my translation]), pp. 25-26.

<sup>2</sup> Born 1910 in Tryserum, Sweden; taught at Lund (associate professor 1942), Aabo, and Basel; succeeded Anders Nygren as chair of systematic theology at Lund 1951-1977, "...one of only two professorships of systematic theology available at state universities in the entire country. Wingren thus attained to one of the most important posts in Swedish Lutheran state-church culture and life" (Vander Goot, Creation and Gospel, p. xii).

<sup>3</sup> Translations of Swedish titles are mine.

<sup>4</sup> Wingren writes, "...my interests from the very beginning of my theological studies were concerned with the doctrine of creation and the first article..." ("Punkten," p. 101, my translation.) In this study the following terms will often be used interchangeably: doctrine of creation, creation, creation-faith, first article, first article of faith, first article of the Creed, and the like. Also, unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from articles or books by Wingren.

<sup>5</sup> "The tripartite Creed...arranges these wonderful works of God in the order which God chooses when he

creation as it unfolds in some of his major writings, selected from different periods.<sup>6</sup>

## II. (Creation: Luther on Vocation)

A brief overview of Wingren's very early work is helpful. He matriculated at the University of Lund in 1929. In 1936, at the tender age of 26, he was first published: "Marcions kristendomstolkning" ("Marcion's Understanding of Christianity"<sup>7</sup>) in STK. Here Wingren established early his interest in and defense of the Old Testament,<sup>8</sup> specifically creation. In 1940, sections of his licentiate's thesis, subtitled "studies in the area of creation," were published, yet again in STK: "Skapelsen, Lagen och Inkarnationen Enligt Ireneus" ("Creation, Law and Incarnation According to Irenaeus") and "Frälsningens Gud Såsom Skapare och Domare" ("Salvation's God as Creator and Judge").<sup>9</sup>

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does them" ("Creation", p. 356). Note the present tense.

<sup>6</sup> The following research will assist in seeing if there is development, consistency, or both in his thought. The selection of "major" material is, granted, subjective. It is also difficult, because, as Wingren admits, his "...recurring theme [is] the first article of faith..." (Flight, p. 10) from the Apostles' Creed: the doctrine of creation. As such, his "...Theology of Creation-Faith'..." (Jay, p. vi) is the foundation for **all** that he has written. Nonetheless, I have decided to work mainly with those articles and books which deal, more or less, directly with the doctrine of creation. For this is precisely the task at hand: Gustaf Wingren's doctrine of creation, not Gustaf Wingren's writings reviewed. To paraphrase Wingren himself: The task to which we address ourselves in this investigation of Wingren's doctrine of creation is historical in that its only aim is understanding Gustaf Wingren's thought on one special point, within the confines of a theological journal essay. (Cf. Vocation, p. xv.) Within this area of "major" writings, some will receive considerably more attention than others (e.g., Word, Vocation) for various reasons (length of work, "creation" content, Wingren's own assessment of his writings, theological impact, my assessment, etc.) which will be made apparent later. It is tempting to concentrate mostly on Wingren's Word, Theology in Conflict, Creation and Law, and Gospel and the Church, since they are, as their author says, a "...series of four related books..." (Creation and Law, p. v). However, doing this would exclude the influential Vocation, "...one of the outstanding works of present-day Swedish theology [and] perhaps the best introduction into the theology of the Reformer" (Sasse, p. 92), as well as Flight, the author's extremely helpful review of his first article work and its implications. I was greatly aided in my choosing by Henry Vander Goot's bibliography (Creation, "The Writings of Gustaf Wingren", pp. 173-189).

<sup>7</sup> My translation. Wingren later comments on this article: Marcion contended that "the God who reveals himself in Jesus Christ has nothing to do with the creation of the world--the physical, the material. It is an evil god, Demiurge, who is the source of our bodies. The same evil God is responsible for the holy book of the Jews, 'the Old Testament,' a disgusting book, filled with cruelties. As Irenaeus pursues his battle against Gnosticism, he is also, at the same time, saying 'Yes' to creation and the Old Testament" ("Creation," p. 356).

<sup>8</sup> Here Wingren was to a great extent inspired and influenced by Einar Billing: 1871-1939; 1900-1908 associate professor, 1908 assistant professor, and 1909-1920 full professor at the University of Uppsala; 1920 Bishop of Västerås, as his father, Gottfrid Billing, was in the late 1800's. One of Billing's students at Uppsala was Gustaf Aulen. In 1913 Aulen began teaching at Lund; Anders Nygren was one of his students. Wingren studied under Nygren. Wingren called Billing "...the most original of all Swedish systematic theologians of the 20th century and the outstanding figure in Swedish church life even today" (Flight, p. 28). "Billing's theology from 1907 on became primarily a theology of the Old Testament" (An Exodus Theology, pp. 1-2), but one which peculiarly and basically ignored the doctrine of creation. (Ibid., pp. 154-160).

<sup>9</sup> Translations of Swedish titles are mine.

Being surrounded at Lund by a number of Luther scholars and experts, Wingren was encouraged to concentrate on the Reformer toward his doctoral dissertation. Wingren comments: "But it was still the idea of creation that I wanted to deal with. It was the given assumption for all my work. The point on which I fastened finally was Luther's doctrine of vocation, that is, of everyday life and occupations as the place for the Christian to serve his neighbor. Underlying the whole of Luther's argument is the conviction that God is the Creator who is still creating life and who, in doing so, uses intercourse between man and woman, the act of birth, suckling one's young, seedtime and harvest, the everyday round" (Flight, pp. 16-17).

As such, Luthers Lära Om Kallelsen (Luther's Doctrine of the Calling<sup>10</sup>/Luther on Vocation) was published in 1942. The "idea of creation" permeates perhaps Wingren's most important and outstanding work. I shall address and summarize some specific areas of Vocation in which this idea is present.<sup>11</sup>

First, however, it is good to relate four fundamental points which undergird Wingren's theology throughout Vocation.<sup>12</sup> These four points are: belief in the Creator-God whose creative work is not finished; the struggle between God and Devil is an on-going one, even at the present; eschatological outlook: we are not yet at the end but wait for the resurrection from the dead; Christ is in us now through the means of grace, effecting death and resurrection which is everlasting life. ("Concept", p. 87).

"Here we are inquiring only into Luther's conception<sup>13</sup> of earthly work, not vocation in any other sense"<sup>14</sup> (Vocation, p. 2). In the first section, "Earth and Heaven",<sup>15</sup> the writer explores and astutely explains Luther's theory of the two realms: the heavenly kingdom (Gospel: forgiveness of sin) and the earthly kingdom (Law: "God's providence, protection, and direction in material matters" [Ibid., p. 71]). Both are of God, created by him. (Ibid., p. 24). It is in the earthly kingdom that God as Creator gives stations to all.<sup>16</sup>

Wingren fights against the "...theology [which] was aimed at showing the gulf, the

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<sup>10</sup> My translation. It was first published in the United States in 1947 under the title Luther on Vocation.

<sup>11</sup> I will lean heavily on Wingren's "Concept." Written 26 years after Vocation, the article is an excellent summary, by Wingren himself, of his and Luther's view on vocation. It clearly shows how Wingren relates vocation, and much else, to the doctrine of creation. It is very helpful and insightful.

<sup>12</sup> The reader would do well, actually, to keep these four points in mind throughout this study of Wingren's creation-faith.

<sup>13</sup> I would posit that Luther's conception is also Wingren's conception. Through my reading of Wingren's books and articles (see bibliography) it has become apparent to me that Wingren leans heavily on Luther. Wingren's theology, and specifically his doctrine of creation, is greatly shaped and influenced by the Reformer. Wingren maintains that "...Luther is the biblical interpreter for the whole church. Luther is *doctor ecclesiae universalis*..." (An Exodus Theology, p. 124). Wingren considers this to be, perhaps, the most characteristic principle of his theological work.

<sup>14</sup> "**Everything** that brings me into relation with other people, everything that makes my actions events in other people's lives is contained in 'vocation'" ("Concept", p. 94).

<sup>15</sup> Vocation, pp. 1-77. See also footnote 1.

<sup>16</sup> See Vocation, pp. 1-3 for further explanation of terms related to "vocation".

discontinuity between Christian faith and human life in general..."<sup>17</sup> (Flight, p. 15). As Gerhard Forde points out, for Wingren "Creation comprises the fact that we are given the gift of life and in this gift of life we are related to God. Creation is not merely an act of God in the past about which man may or may not know. It is an immediate<sup>18</sup> relationship given in the present, an on-going activity of God. To live means to be related to God, to be dependent on him" (Forde, p. 78). These thoughts form the foundation of Vocation, because "...Luther puts worldly labor before the life of the cloister and celibacy, [and] belief in creation plays an important part in [his] argument" (Flight, p. 8). "The belief in God as creating at the present time..." ("Concept," p. 87) is key to understanding Wingren's theology and Vocation. God is Creator and creating.<sup>19</sup> (p. iii).

Thus God creates through man. God serves neighbor through man (*larvae Dei*)<sup>20</sup> and thus preserves creation against the destroyer, the devil.<sup>21</sup> God created us to live a life of love: the Christian serves all of God's creation, even "...the worst rogues and rascals on earth.' [Luther]. This is a pattern for Christian love, which must be willing to be misused, and to be a 'lost love.' Just as God scatters other gifts, so he also scatters this creation of his, for Christian love itself is the creation of God's Spirit" (Vocation, p. 171). Even the office through which God does this is created by him: "[Luther:] 'God gives you office that you may serve'" (Ibid., pp. 128-129). This God does *ex nihilo*: for without him, man is helpless and dead. "It is just in man's need, in times and occasions which look hopeless, that God out of such helplessness, out of 'nothing,' creates something new" (Ibid., p. 160). Even so, man suffers under vocation's lowly cross. God's creation "out of nothing" is exemplified best by **the Cross**: "...he who was despised by the world showed himself a true Creator, one who makes his costliest work out of that which is nothing" (Ibid., p. 129).

So, the Creator is not merely concerned with the beginning of the world. He is the creator of "...*me* and all that exists..." and he "...provides me daily and abundantly

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<sup>17</sup> God has given us gifts of creation to use freely for our benefit. "[Luther:] 'Even though we are certain of God's providence and care for us, we must know that the things and means which God has placed in our hands are to be used, that we do not tempt God....' He who turns to God in prayer for help..., without doing all he can with the help of the outward gifts God has given, is putting God to the test and cannot expect his prayer to be heard. When work does not avail, when one's strength no longer suffices, the time for prayer has come" (Vocation, p. 135). There is a paradox, though, for "...not to turn to God in prayer for help in vocation, when all outward available possibilities are exhausted, is to blaspheme God and treat his promises as lies. It is *desperatio*, unbelief" (Ibid., p. 136). The Swedish word *förtvivlan* has here been translated as "unbelief"; a better translation would be "hopelessness" or "despair".

<sup>18</sup> Poor choice of word, perhaps. God does, after all, work mediately through, as Wingren said above (p. 4), "...intercourse between man and woman..., suckling one's young..." (Flight, p. 17).

<sup>19</sup> The first words of Wingren's Gospel are:

"*Creare est semper novum facere.*

Creation is continuously to make new.

Martin Luther"

<sup>20</sup> "Faith trusts that the mandate of a man's vocation leads to something good; behind all stations and offices stands the Creator, who is none other than the God of the gospel" (Vocation, p. 211).

<sup>21</sup> Section II of Vocation is "God and the Devil," pp. 78-161. Section III is "Man," pp. 162-251.

with all the necessities of life..." (Small Catechism II:2). These are concrete acts of God as Creator. Man is completely dependent on the active hand of God for life; if he draws it away, we die.<sup>22</sup> As such, God does not pull away, but gives occupations which continue the work of creation and sustain life: in fields, barns, mills, factories, board rooms.

Also, through the sexual act, we are actually pro-creators with God. We even have dominion over creation. "Luther asks how man can have dominion..., as the biblical account of creation says he does. His answer is that we can make use of things in the now. We can only wait for the future; but right where the future becomes the present, we can act...in the interest of service to...neighbor" (Vocation, p. 218). Yet, only God controls time. He sets the hour for proper action. "God has his purpose for every hour, and his direction is constant, for we can never free ourselves from our neighbor and our vocation" (Ibid., p. 219).

Just as we cannot understand creation aright if we limit it to the past, so it is with the fall into sin. The devil, the destroyer, is at work now, too. Thus, man is a battlefield upon which the devil and God wage war. The Creator even uses evil for his purposes: for example, the self-seeking businessman is greedy, but thus produces good products for customers. God uses means to accomplish his purposes.

"When Luther talks about 'equity'<sup>23</sup> or about 'heroic men' [Ibid., pp. 156-161]...as the means by which God, creating afresh, 'breaks through the law', then this statement is a testimony to his dual view of the natural and the Christian. For of the Christian's love, too, he says: it 'rises above all laws', 'it breaks through the law'. And in both cases the breakthrough, the new creation is the result of **a struggle** going on. A static system without any changes is quickly occupied by demonic powers.<sup>24</sup> God must

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<sup>22</sup> **All** creatures (created beings), and thus even vocation, fall under the law in God's kingdom of the left. "The world is independent in relation to the church and to the preaching of the gospel, but it is not independent in relation to **God**. On the contrary: in this very world God acts anew as the Creator" ("Concept", p. 95).

<sup>23</sup> Terms related to "equity": moderation, fairness. "[Regarding]...fairness.... [Luther] has neither regard nor respect for a moralistic exactness bound to the letter, requiring fulfillment of the law in every jot and tittle. This moral preciseness is not concerned with realities, for it is concerned, not with one's neighbor, but only with a counterfeit irreproachableness which is counterfeit because there is no life without sin, and it ought not to be set up as the standard. The goal of action must be this: In the midst of a sinful world in which we inescapably participate, we must live to help our fellow-men and further their well-being. This is impossible by any other course than by taking our place between God and our neighbor and doing 'whatever comes to hand.' In our actual relation with God, one action is called for in one hour, another when the external setting has changed" (Vocation, pp. 153-154). Thus, doing all things in love towards neighbor and in faith towards God, we are free to write new decalogues. (Ibid., p. 95). Some have held that by "equity" Luther was referring to natural law. Others have maintained that equity is Christian morality. "It is impossible to draw a sharp line of distinction. Equity is something God demands..., but God demands it of Christians and non-Christians alike, for on earth there is no decisive difference between Christians and non-Christians. Where works and external behavior are concerned it is not merely difficult to make a sharp demarcation between Christians and non-Christians; it is erroneous" (Ibid., p. 151).

<sup>24</sup> "The devil impels his victim to misuse the external good, to the *abusus* of his office, of strength, of

constantly do **new** things in order to maintain his created world" ("Concept", p. 89). "Such eruptions and fresh beginnings are characteristic of Luther's belief on creation, for the fact that God creates implies for Luther something that goes on ceaselessly, 'to create is always to do something new' (*creare est semper novum facere*)" (Vocation, p. 159). God's love takes creative form. God creates: in the face of conflict, he creates life.

Central to all theology is Christ's death and resurrection. Through his baptism, the Christian lives daily in death and resurrection. This resurrection is "...the new creation" ("Concept", p. 89). Sin, even the cross of Christian suffering also borne in and through vocation, is death. Eternal life comes forth from daily sorrow and repentance. (Small Catechism IV). The gospel is regenerative.<sup>25</sup> "God the Creator acts through both the talent given in natural birth and the love of the new man given by new birth in the Word" (Vocation, p. 153).

Eternal life is not separate from earthly life. In his earthly life, the Christian is constantly surrounded by God's creation. "Round about him are his fellow-men, whom, according to God's commandment, he shall serve. The worldly acts which provide my fellow-man with his livelihood are acts of Christian love and at the same time they mould me in Christ's image, through death and resurrection to eternal life" ("Concept", p. 90). Wingren sees this as a converging point in Luther's theology. Certainly it is connected to the two realms, law and gospel, death and resurrection, even baptism.<sup>26</sup> "The Christian is crucified by the law in his vocation, under the earthly government; and he arises through the gospel, in the church under the spiritual government" (Vocation, p. 30). But "Baptism is... completely only fulfilled in death" (Ibid., p. 31). Then man's position as battlefield between God and the devil is over. "Then man's struggle is at an end" (Ibid., p. 251).<sup>27</sup>

### III. (Creation: The Living Word)

Wingren's creation-faith remained the foundation for works subsequent to Vocation. Continuing work on his licentiate's thesis resulted in the publication of Människan och inkarnationen (Man and the Incarnation) in 1947. The book is properly subtitled, A Study in the Biblical Theology of Irenaeus.<sup>28</sup> Its focus is creation and law. He wishes to establish a "...mediating position between the complete rejection of so-called 'natural theology' manifested in the writings of Karl Barth and the now defunct 'philosophy of religion' approach which sees Christianity merely as the climax of all

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wealth, and of all of God's creation" (Vocation, p. 170).

<sup>25</sup> However, it is "...not necessary for the preservation of earthly life" ("Concept", p. 94).

<sup>26</sup> See the entire paragraph in Vocation from which the following quotation is taken.

<sup>27</sup> Wingren offers that "All the Lutheran concepts which we noted in our discussion of God's new creation are intimately connected with the idea of 'the time.' A summary reference to this is in order" (Vocation, p. 230). This helpful summary is contained in pp. 230-234.

<sup>28</sup> Published in 1959 in English.

anthropocentric religions"<sup>29</sup> (Carlson, p. 283). Wingren examines closely the doctrine of recapitulation, within the framework of Irenaeus's anthropology over and against the Gnostics. The Old and the New Testaments serve as the unified basis for the doctrine of man, in which creation and incarnation restore man to the place he occupied in the Creator's intention: *recapitulatio*.<sup>30</sup>

Predikan [The Sermon]<sup>31</sup> appeared in 1949. The book is not one dealing with homiletical methods, but rather it is a systematic/dogmatic work in that it "...represents Wingren's entire theological program..." (Vander Goot, p. xxvii) as the backbone of preaching. Its subject matter was in large part a response to the "...negation of the belief in creation..." (Flight, p. 20) that he saw in Karl Barth.<sup>32</sup> "It must be possible to adhere to the belief in creation, to the continuity between the human and the Christian, to the view of salvation as a restoration of the natural..." (Ibid., p. 20).

Wingren speaks of the import of this comprehensive book for understanding his work of later years: Word was "...organically necessary...[and] clearly **all** that I have written over the past quarter of a century is based solidly on this book..." ("Punkten", p. 101, my translation). It is a window to most of what he has since written dealing with God as Creator.

Word from its very beginning, from its first page of text, points to the Old Testament and establishes that preaching is tied to creation: "Man reaches the spring out of which he can draw human life only when the Word of the Creator comes to him" (Word, p. 13). While this particular Word is expounded throughout, creation is directly and specifically brought to the fore in two chapters at the center of the book,<sup>33</sup> in which Wingren not surprisingly leans heavily on Luther and even more so on Scripture.

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<sup>29</sup> For example, see Wingren's fellow Swede, Söderblom, especially p. 23ff.

<sup>30</sup> The doctrine of creation also brackets the work. The first lines of the book: "Our best starting-point for a full understanding of the concept of God in Irenaeus is the sovereignty of God--the absolute power of the Creator" (Man and the Incarnation, p. 1). The last lines of the book: "Creation and redemption are not completely different, and in the fulfillment of the act of Creation redemption is realized and life is present. ...Christ means that God is man. By His becoming man the bond between God and man has been made unbreakable, and man has free access to the source from which his life flows. For God alone is the source of human life" (Ibid., p. 213).

<sup>31</sup> My literal translation: Preaching or The Sermon. It was published in the United States as The Living Word in 1960 and, Wingren admits, "...written in a mood of some arrogance and sometimes in anger..." (Flight, p. 21).

<sup>32</sup> As alluded to in footnote 6, Wingren's four books The Living Word, Theology in Conflict, Creation and Law, and Gospel and Church constitute a series not directly on creation, but rather on Wingren's "...understanding of law-gospel dialectic in opposition to such men as Barth, [Rudolf] Bultmann, [Oscar] Cullmann and his own teacher, Nygren" (Forde, p. 78). In my opinion, Creation and Gospel completes the series. As such, while these books are important works in Wingren's corpus and, as with nearly all his writings, touch on creation, an in-depth investigation of all of them is beyond the scope of the topic of this essay.

<sup>33</sup> "It is my intention to repeat these basic theses as long as I can, for they have not yet achieved their purpose" (Flight, p. 24). As will be seen from hereon, Wingren's themes of creation remain basically the same. This is a sign of consistency of thought. However, it will mean repetition of Wingren and less of my own (what would be repetitive) explanation/summarizing.

In "Conquered Man" (Ibid., pp. 72-84) and in "Creation and Redemption" (Ibid., pp. 85-95) Wingren emphasizes God's continual creative activity. "Confronted with life we are confronted with something which God is in the process of making, and since God creates by his Word, that means that God speaks to us from our actual human life..." (Ibid., p. 72). He is making "...man to be man through succession of acts--a series of mighty words. [It] is not, then, a supernatural addition to human life, but [man's] own free growth towards true life" (Ibid., p. 78). Without God, without the work of the Creator, there is no life for anyone at any time.<sup>34</sup> But he is doing new things: "In [Christ] men are created anew...; they are raised up through him from death and live again, are born anew" (Ibid., p. 73). This, God's recreating activity, is the direct answer to, the defense against, the devil's destructive activity. "Creation and sin are the two most important factors which regulate human life" (Ibid., p. 73). In creation, every earthly event is related to God: "...man can breathe and live, free and unrestrained as a child, and in this state of true humanity he can fulfill God's will in the ordinary and earthly life of every day" (Ibid., p. 93).

God is engaged in conflict and creation; the result will be a new creation through resurrection. But how does God create anew? Answering some critics, Wingren is trinitarian.<sup>35</sup> "God creates anew by giving his Spirit, creates life and renews the face of the earth.... It is the Creator of the world who raises Jesus from the dead and so accomplishes his plan..." (Ibid., p. 74). This plan will reach its ultimate point in the resurrection of the dead, which is made possible only by Jesus' resurrection. The Creator of life thus uses even death for his purpose!

Of eschatological dimension also is the image of God in which man was created. This image, having been corrupted by sin, is being restored in man "...growing together with Christ, which takes place in the Church, the body of Christ..." (Ibid., p. 75) and will only fully be "...attained in the resurrection of the dead..." (Ibid., p. 75). For "To become like Christ is to become man as the Creator intended he should be..." (Ibid., p. 75). The resurrection of the dead is the ultimate act of creation, for in it "...we are changed into his image..." (Ibid., p. 75). This is the last creation and it alone is a perfect state. It is "...Christ, God's image, [who] conquers sin and death and afterwards fashions humanity into likeness with himself, in his body, by means of preaching of the Word" (Ibid., p. 76) and baptism.<sup>36</sup> Thus we are re-created in *imago Christi*, for which we were originally and purely created! "Life at creation is the same life that Christ redeems..." (Ibid., p. 89).

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<sup>34</sup> "All life is of God's creation: all life--since it is life--is contact with God" (Word, p. 81). But Wingren quotes Luther in order to make an important distinction: "Yes, the natural life is part of the eternal life, a beginning of it, but it ends in death, because it does not know nor honour him from whom it comes. ...those who believe and know him in whom they live die no more, but the natural life is continued in the eternal..." (Word, p. 86, footnote 3).

<sup>35</sup> For example, see Ehrhardt, pp. 308-309.

<sup>36</sup> For more on Wingren's very physical sacramental theology, see "Justification By Faith In Protestant Thought", and Word, pp. 150-163.

The Word that creates is the same from "...'Let it be!' till the mighty Word of the resurrection" (Ibid., p. 80). Wingren tellingly posits that creation, as the continual event and act of God, runs "...from creation in the beginning, through Christ's assumption of humanity to the eternal fulfillment--and everywhere we have seen 'growth', creative activity, interwoven with the conflict against the Devil: man will be fully created and loosed from the hold of the destroyer on the last day" (Ibid., p. 80). This is wonderful gospel, the Creator's act of grace. However, "God's own creative will becomes law where man in his fallen condition sets himself up against the Creator. Forgiveness is the casting out of sin and guilt from the conscience, and along with them the law is cast out as well" (Ibid., p. 83). To set oneself up against the Creator is unnatural, because "Christ does not come to Satan's own world when he comes in the Incarnation, but he comes to **his** own, to the men of the Creator who have been led astray..." (Ibid., p. 88). This is re-creation which is active now and restores: "Through the creative Word which comes to us in preaching we are redeemed--that is, we become men..." (Ibid., p. 94).<sup>37</sup>

#### IV. (Creation: The Flight from Creation)

Teologiens metodfråga<sup>38</sup> (1954), Skapelsen och lagen (Creation and Law)<sup>39</sup> (1958), and Evangeliet och Kyrkan (Gospel and Church)<sup>40</sup> (1960) have already been briefly discussed above.<sup>41</sup> Thus we arrive at The Flight from Creation,<sup>42</sup> it is certainly not Wingren's flight. Rather, he continues to promote the doctrine of creation as the basic foundation for all theological endeavors. No, the flight has been taken by the church. (Flight, p. 10, 80). Wingren attacks this throughout.

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<sup>37</sup> "Salvation is a deliverance to naturalness, to essentially worldly duties, already given to everyone in the creation but lost by rebellion against God" (Word, p. 21). "...what is given in faith signifies the deliverance of man from his unnatural condition, his restoration to the estate in which he was created. For Luther, unbelief is **demonic**. It is not 'human' to doubt and 'paradoxical' to believe; on the contrary, where doubt arises, it is diabolical powers that strive for mastery in human life" (Ibid., p. 93). Also, as has been specifically mentioned and will be mentioned again, Wingren also ties creation to the sacraments. As Luther, Wingren is sacramental and, again, as such very comfortable with the physical of theology: "...redemption includes the **whole** man" (Word, p. 150) and so there is a "...strong bond between the sacraments and **the body**" (Ibid., p. 157). "Man who is created in the image of God, and who in the resurrection of the body shall become what he was destined by God to be...is sealed by baptism with death and resurrection--that is to say, with Christ's image..., with that image which is three things in one: the intention of creation, the future goal of the last day, and the fate that Jesus experienced in the ordinary, outward world of history" (Ibid., p. 154).

<sup>38</sup> My literal translation: The Question [Issue] of Theological Method. Published in the United States as Theology in Conflict in 1958.

<sup>39</sup> Published in 1961 in English.

<sup>40</sup> Published in the United States in 1964.

<sup>41</sup> See footnotes 6 and 32.

<sup>42</sup> Flight, developed from a series of presentations at the Contemporary Theology Institute in Montreal in the late 1960's and early 1970's, has been used much throughout this paper. As such, this section will only seek to highlight material from the book which I have not yet touched upon directly. Some material will invariably be repeated. The book is short, but is an excellent review and summary of Wingren's work on the doctrine of creation.

In the first chapter, "Creation: A Crucial Article of Faith" (Ibid., pp. 13-30), Wingren reviews and explains in a brief manner his life's work on his life's work: the doctrine of creation. He touches on ecclesiology and his main tertiary sources: "Man is born into this free sovereign state but he loses it when he rebels against the Creator. It is Christ who restores man and gives him back his health, a work of salvation which is now going on in the church. The church cannot be described unless its positive relation to the external world outside the church can also be described. There is a distinct and very fundamental connection between Irenaeus' idea of restoration and Luther's idea of vocation" (Ibid., p. 18). He takes Kierkegaard and Barth, among others, to task for fostering a negative attitude toward creation. "The first article of faith is omitted and we [the church] start at the second--precisely as Barth did" (Ibid., p. 24). "At the bottom of this aversion to the idea of creation lies, I suspect, Soren Kierkegaard and his hatred of everything that smacks of everyday life, his hatred of all natural forms of life..." (Ibid., p. 25). Furthermore, the concept of the law has lost its meaning as a result. Wingren provides an example: "...there is a modern variant of the Roman Catholic theory of 'natural law' which is used, as a rule in an attempt to conserve and defend existing economic and social conditions. No wonder quite a number of people in our time have become allergic to the term 'law'..." (Ibid., p. 25).

In the second essay, "Creation and Ethics" (Ibid., pp. 33-53), Wingren gives us a brief overview of some 20th century European theologians: Emil Brunner (Ibid., p. 34-36), Rudolf Bultmann (Ibid., pp. 36-39), etc. The author contends that *Ordnungstheologie*<sup>43</sup> misrepresented and misunderstood creation. "The distortion of the belief in creation that *Ordnungstheologie* brought about in the 1930's is apparently considered even in the 1960's as a true fruit of the first article of faith. It would be reasonable to start interpreting the first article of faith in different ways so that change and renewal were contained in it" (Ibid., p. 41).<sup>44</sup> In this area, Wingren points positively to the work of K. E. Logstrup<sup>45</sup> of Denmark who deals with "...the idea of creation, and...has concentrated on general human and social problems" (Ibid., p. 42). His work is held up in opposition to *Ordnungen*. In this chapter Wingren also distinguishes between the two realms and speaks of this distinction's impact on social change for all, not just Christians: "...the gospel argument, by means of the idea of creation, is brought **out** and the common sense arguments of suitability are brought **in**..." (Ibid., p. 49). In other words, our works in the created world are to benefit Christians and non-Christians alike; here we cannot base arguments on Christology. Finally, he attacks perversions of the doctrine of creation, specifically Nazi Aryanism, not as reasons to ignore this article of faith, but as impetuses to "...really **analyze** the meaning of belief in creation" (Ibid., p. 50).

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<sup>43</sup> "'Theology of orders [of creation]...' (Lueker, p. 410).

<sup>44</sup> Wingren deals specifically with this in "Från ordningsteologi till revolutionsteologi" ("From *Ordnungstheologie* to Revolution-theology" [My translation]).

<sup>45</sup> Not much of Logstrup's work is available in English. *The Ethical Demand* was published in 1971, which is a translation of the 1956 *Den etiske fording*. Logstrup also has sharp disagreements with Kierkegaard and wrote *Opgør med Kierkegaard* (*Argument against Kierkegaard*) in 1968.

The third lecture, "Creation and Theology" (Ibid., pp. 57-76), is a discussion of creation and "Theology between Dogmatics and Analysis" (Ibid., p. 57). First, some definitions must be stated. "Theology... [is] defined as the scholarly work which, on the basis of historical sources, aims to state what is characteristic of the Christian faith and the Christian ethos as compared with other kinds of religion and philosophy in our times; to state what is 'Christian' in a descriptive way using scientific reasoning, i.e. using arguments which can be tested by everyone" (Ibid., p. 57-58). Dogmatics, meanwhile, is defined as "...the normative process by which the truth of the Christian confession of faith is upheld while that faith is described scientifically" (Ibid., p. 58). Analysis is simply the "...negative scholarly attitude toward any total view of Christianity" (Ibid., p. 59). Wingren does not share this view.

He does, however, support natural law: "The Christian faith, since it is a belief in a God who is God of the whole world, assumes an elemental ethos of a universal kind; it assumes rules for man's co-existence with his fellows which are quite simply here and functioning as long as life continues" (Ibid., p. 67). Furthermore, within this chapter Wingren touches briefly on the problems with Billing's exodus theology<sup>46</sup> and again recommends the work of Logstrup as a positive corrective. Billing, though having the forgiveness of sins as his keystone,<sup>47</sup> missed the point. "Forgiveness is ethically re-creative even by the very fact that it wipes out and breaks down" (Ibid., p. 70). Regarding God's forgiveness, Wingren says, "...that one 'does not remember' is one of the most powerful re-creative ethical forces in existence...[bringing us] to the pure 'original state' again, Adam's state before the fall (to use the old mythological vocabulary used by the fathers of the church in their doctrine of creation)" (Ibid., p. 71). Forgiveness of sin is a must, for original sin, in all its depth and force, is destruction.<sup>48</sup> Wingren argues that Kierkegaard's analytical and existential philosophy supports "...anthropological nihilism...[because] Christ is really [viewed as] an impediment to the natural manifestations of life" (Ibid., p. 63-64). This is not the Old Testament view of life, not that which is presented in Jesus' preaching.

The last chapter, "Return to Creation" (Ibid., pp. 79-83), is a very brief exhortation to all, Christians and non-Christians, to cooperate in solving common earthly problems. Wingren sees this as possible only if the church returns to creation, because social programs and worldly manifestos cannot "...be justified theologically by the gospel, by the specific words about Christ which the church alone--not the world--acknowledges..." (Ibid., p. 80).<sup>49</sup> These programs can only be justified because they care for all men as those created by the Creator-God in his image.

## V. (Creation: Summary of Wingren's Creation-Faith)

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<sup>46</sup> See footnote 8 above.

<sup>47</sup> See Flight, p. 91, footnote 4.

<sup>48</sup> Logstrup is criticized here for his silence on the destruction of human life, the conflict between God and the devil.

<sup>49</sup> For a lively example, see Flight, pp. 45-48.

It is impossible to "summarize" Wingren's creation-faith. To do so I would have to write a work of considerably larger size than the present, touching on, in no particular order here, vocation, the two realms, conflict of God versus the devil, the first article, continual creation, cooperation of Christians and non-Christians, death and resurrection, the atonement, resurrection of the dead, eschatology, Word and Sacrament, ecclesiology, law and gospel, justification and sanctification, incarnation, the image of God, the unity of Scripture. All of these are weaved together masterfully by Wingren in his confession of the doctrine of creation.<sup>50</sup> It is a daunting, yet simple, task that he sets before himself and us: to see all theology through God's creative act(s).

Wingren does a better job of summarizing all this than I ever could: "'Why is it so important to talk about creation?' First, creation means that God acts directly **in the world**, and that means for all men. Second, creation which is in fact not a past but a present work of God, means that God can work where men are strong and vital--not only in weakness.<sup>51</sup> Third..., the most important point..., the doctrine that man is made whole in Christ **presupposes** that man is created by God and that forgiveness, redemption and liberation are here not being given to a stranger" ("God's World and the Individual", p. 55).

*"Vad är det? Svar:*

*Jag tror, att Gud har skapat mig och alla varelser, givit mig kropp och själ, ögon, öron och alla lemmar, förnuft och alla sinnen, och att han ännu håller det vid makt, därtill försörjer mig rikligen och dagligen med kläder och skor, mat och dryck, hus och hem, hustru och barn, åker, boskap, allt slags egendom, med allt vad jag behöver för att leva, samt beskärmar och bevarar mig från skada, farlighet och allt ont, och allt detta av sin blotta nåd och faderliga godhet utan någon min förtjänst eller värdighet, för vilket allt jag är skyldig att tacka och lova, lyda och tjana honom. Det är helt och hållet sant"<sup>52</sup>*  
(Doktor Martin Luthers Lilla Katekes, p. 26).

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<sup>50</sup> Truly, Wingren's creation theology is of such magnitude and scope, that all of these subjects deserve more attention than that which they have received in this study. For summaries of Wingren's doctrine of creation, the reader is especially referred to: "Concept" (1968), specifically pp. 92-95; "God's World and the Individual" (1975), specifically pp. 53-57; and "Creation" (1984). Please also see the extensive bibliography. Only by reading Wingren's many writings through the years can one get a full appreciation of the depth and richness of his insight on the doctrine of creation.

<sup>51</sup> Wingren affirmably refers us to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Widerstand und Ergebung, E. Behtge, ed., 6th edition, Munich, 1955, pp. 232-236.

<sup>52</sup> My literal translation: "I believe that God has created me and all things, given me body and soul, eyes, ears and all limbs, reason and all faculties, and that he still holds these within his power, thereby provides me richly and daily with clothes and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, field, livestock, all kinds of property, with everything that I need to live, at the same time protects and preserves me from all harm, danger and evil, and all this of his pure mercy and fatherly goodness without any merit or worthiness in me, for all of which I am bound to thank and praise, obey and serve him. That is totally and completely true."

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