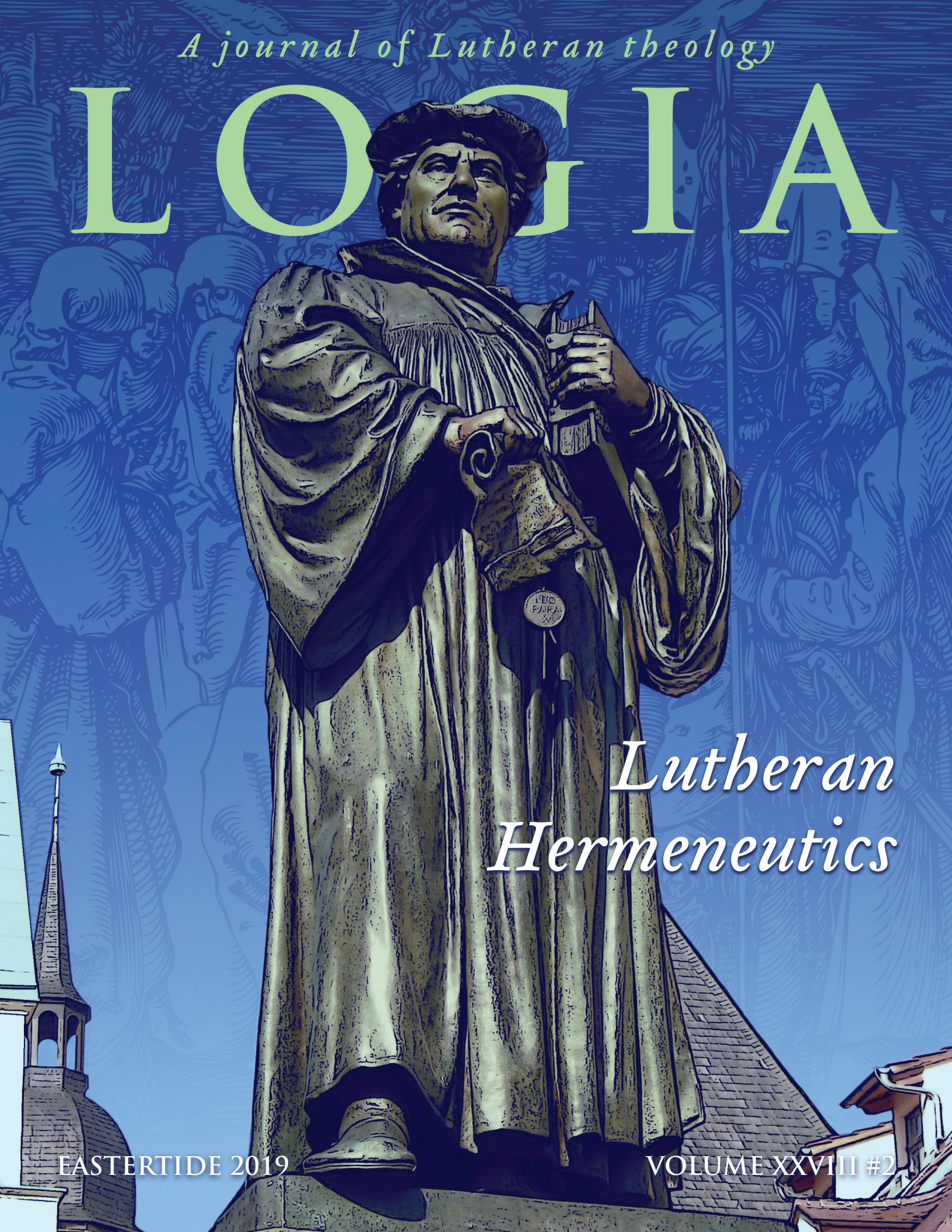
A journal of Lutheran theology

LOGIA



Lutheran Hermeneutics

EASTERTIDE 2019 VOLUME XXVIII #2

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εἴ τις λαλεῖ,
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LOGIA is a journal of Lutheran theology. As such it publishes articles on exegetical, historical, systematic, and liturgical theology that promote the orthodox theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. We cling to God's divinely instituted marks of the church: the gospel, preached purely in all its articles, and the sacraments, administered according to Christ's institution. This name expresses what this journal wants to be. In Greek, ΛΟΓΙΑ functions either as an adjective meaning "eloquent," "learned," or "cultured," or as a plural noun meaning "divine revelations," "words," or "messages." The word is found in 1 Peter 4:11, Acts 7:38, and Romans 3:2. Its compound forms include ὁμολογία (confession), ἀπολογία (defense), and ἀναλογία (right relationship). Each of these concepts and all of them together express the purpose and method of this journal. *Logia* considers itself a *free conference in print* and is committed to providing an independent theological forum normed by the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. At the heart of our journal we want our readers to find a love for the sacred Scriptures as the very Word of God, not merely as rule and norm, but especially as Spirit, truth, and life that reveals Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life—Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, we confess the church, without apology and without rancor, only with a sincere and fervent love for the precious Bride of Christ, the holy Christian church, "the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God," as Martin Luther says in the Large Catechism (LC II, 42). We are animated by the conviction that the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession represents the true expression of the church that we confess as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

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FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

AC [CA]	Augsburg Confession
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
Ep	Epitome of the Formula of Concord
FC	Formula of Concord
LC	Large Catechism
LSB	*Lutheran Service Book*
LW	*Luther's Works,* American Edition
SA	Smalcald Articles
SC	Small Catechism
SD	Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord
SL	St. Louis Edition of Luther's Works
Tappert	*The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.* Trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert
Triglotta	Concordia Triglotta
TLH	*The Lutheran Hymnal*
Tr	Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope
WA	*Luthers Werke,* Weimarer Ausgabe [Weimar Edition]
Kolb-Wengert	Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).
NPNF[1]	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* Series 1
NPNF[2]	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* Series 2

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EASTERTIDE 2019 VOLUME XXVIII, NUMBER 2

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Editor's Introduction

Lutheran Hermeneutics

Logia has not previously devoted an entire issue to the theme of hermeneutics. That's surprising, since sola scriptura is so important to confessional Lutherans. However, the subject has not exactly been neglected. The interpretation of Scripture touches every doctrine of Christianity. Discussions in our pages on the doctrines of God, sin, justification, sanctification, the Holy Spirit, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the keys, absolution, election, eschatology, and other articles of the faith rest on the foundation of how one hears the word of God and confesses it. The Augsburg Confession does not have an article on Scripture, but each article lays out (a) the way the Lutheran confessors understand Scripture on that doctrine in the positive statements of belief, and (b) the rejected doctrinal positions (antithetical statements), which originate in how other confessions understand Scripture on each doctrine.

This is a basic part of our heritage, from Luther's position as professor of Bible at the University of Wittenberg, to Matthias Flacius Illyricus's 1567 Clavis Scripturae (The Key to Scripture), to C. F. W. Walther's lectures on the proper distinction of law and gospel (which a recent translation subtitles "How to Read and Apply the Bible"). Luther's wrestling with the "fourfold sense of Scripture" that he inherited from the church of his day also is part of this long, ongoing, "What does this mean?" conversation. It is not simply philosophical speculation. It is part of the delight in God's word that the Psalms encourage us to have.

In this issue on hermeneutics, Adam D. Hensley looks at a specific text, Ephesians 5:22–33, to explore issues of biblical metaphor and typology. He asks whether human marriage or Christ's marriage to the church is primary in the text; is Christ's relationship to the church merely "like" human marriage? The reality of God's marriage to his people is an important and ongoing reality, not simply a point of comparison for speaking about human marriage or for preaching a wedding sermon. We learn what post-Enlightenment philosophy has to contribute to this conversation, in Johann G. Hamann's critique of Immanuel Kant.

The clarity of Scripture is the subject of an essay by Anthony Oliphant. He examines Luther's discussion of this with Erasmus in The Bondage of the Will. The internal clarity found in the written word of God is not enough; the external clarity of the word found in the preaching of the word completes the picture.

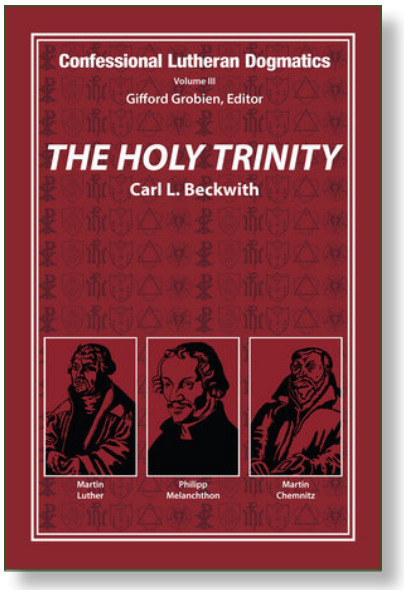
How did we get from the "fourfold sense of Scripture" in the medieval period to one proper and genuine sense? Jason Lane tracks how this occurred from Luther through the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy. Luther reduced this interpretive method to two senses, the literal sense and the mystical (or christological) sense. Johann Gerhard and his successor in Jena, Salomon Glassius, developed this further to insist that the mystical sense is contained within the literal sense intended by the Holy Spirit. The mystical sense—or what the modern hearer might call application—is not a whim of the interpreter (or preacher) but comes through the grammar of the Holy Spirit's text.

Karl Böhmer's informative article on property issues in South Africa not only gives an introduction to current events globally, but allows the reader to consider the texts in the Book of Acts that address communal property in the church, study the history of Luther's struggles with Anabaptists, and meditate on pastoral responses to these issues.

A personal narrative by Robb Ring about moving a congregation from being contemporary evangelical to confessional Lutheran allows the reader to think about hermeneutical assumptions of evangelicals and the challenges of catechesis. This article also shows that applying Scripture requires pastoral sensitivity. The word of God is addressed to people.

Jerry Gernander

from Luther Academy Books



Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics

The Holy Trinity

by

Carl L. Beckwith

The Holy Trinity, volume 3 of the Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics series, explains the difficulties we face in confessing the Trinity in our world today and how we overcome these challenges by placing Christ and the Gospel at the center of our preaching and teaching. *The Holy Trinity* returns us to Scripture and shows how the Old and New Testaments carefully and decisively present the indivisible oneness and irreducible threeness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Finally, *The Holy Trinity* introduces readers to the sound pattern of words used by the Fathers and Lutheran reformers to clarify and defend the trinitarian witness of Scripture. We confess, worship, and glorify the Holy Trinity rightly when we boldly proclaim the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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The "Metaphor" of Marriage in the Bible

Adam D. Hensley

In Ephesians 5:22–33 the apostle Paul delivers instructions to Christian husbands and wives according to the pattern of Christ as bridegroom to his bride the church. What is immediately striking is how Christian marriages are to reflect the divine marriage, not the other way around. Christ's relationship to the church is not "like" marriage in human experience according to a simile; it *is* a marriage—*the* marriage of which Christian marriages provide a dim but real reflection as they bear witness to Christ's self-sacrificing love for his bride and her subordination (ὑποτάσσω) to her Bridegroom and his word. Nor does St. Paul speak about these things as though Christ's marriage to the church were merely analogous to marriage understood a certain way. The direction of comparison rather runs the other way in Paul's paraenesis as he exhorts husbands and wives to emulate the Lord and his holy bride through loving, self-denying, self-sacrificial headship and faithful subordination.

Accordingly, this paper argues that the biblical witness concerning Christ's marriage to his bride the church goes beyond the usual understanding of *metaphor* as a rhetorical or cognitive-linguistic phenomenon for conveying ideas about God (hence the quotation marks about this term in the title). Rather, the Bible bears witness to this marriage as a *reality* after which the human institution of marriage is patterned according to God's creative purpose. This marriage is the antitype, according to whose pattern the estate of marriage—in particular, *Christian* marriage—is typologically drawn. Nor is the subject of marriage a peripheral one in the Bible, but is at the heart of the biblical witness to God's creative and redemptive work in the world through Israel and culminating in Christ; that is, the Bible consistently testifies to God's marriage to Israel through the covenant. So, when Paul casts the estate of marriage between man and woman in the image of this divine marriage, rather than the other way around, he shows Christian marriage to be a beautiful proclamation of Christ's oneness with his redeemed people at the heart of the whole Bible's prophetic testimony.

To be sure, the Bible draws on the "known" of human marriage and marital experience as the prophets and apostles proclaim this marriage. To that extent the Bible employs the image of marriage in the manner expected of a metaphor in the normal sense, that is, through analogous comparison to communicate the unknown by means of the known. But it does not end there, as though God's marriage were a mere projection of the known onto the unknown to provide a few poignant points of comparison, whereupon the image of marriage outlives its usefulness and can be safely set aside. Rather, according to Scripture God is and remains married to his bride the church (hence the lack of quotation marks about *that* term in the title). The institution of marriage to which the biblical writers appeal in their proclamation itself derives from that marriage, not the other way around. In Paul's paraenesis human marriages are like *it* rather than *it* like them, even as they foreshadow—or "postshadow"—Christ's marriage to his bride the church as a witness to it. Accordingly, *typology* more fully describes the situation than *metaphor* because it prioritizes the "downward" direction of comparison as Paul does in his paraenesis even as the type (human marriage) facilitates the vision of its antitype (Christ's marriage).[1] For, unlike metaphor, typology keeps in view the *ontological* nature of the patterns and analogues involved here. Indeed, in Ephesians 5 the human marriage *reality* derives from the divine *reality* (ontologically)—hence the downward direction of comparison, even as it is known and appreciated through its shadowy human analogue (that is, epistemologically). By contrast, metaphor as studied by modern scholars dwells exclusively in the domain of *epistemology,* which is inherently "upward" in nature because it understands the biblical image as a vehicle for *understanding* the unknown by means of the known. Recognizing the basically "downward"—and not purely "upward"—direction to this pattern is vital, for it prevents us from projecting false attributes onto the divine marriage drawn from abuse within marriages, and allows us to hear Paul's paraenesis to Christian couples clearly for what it is: his call to Christlike self-sacrifice and self-denial.

So, after looking more closely at the New Testament witness and especially Ephesians 5, this paper explores several major biblical examples that reveal the centrality of Christ's marriage to his bride the church within the testimony of Scripture. It then explores the influence of post-Enlightenment thought for understanding the "metaphor" of marriage in the Bible, sug-

Adam D. Hensley is the Lecturer in Old Testament at Australian Lutheran College, North Adelaide, South Australia.

1. See John J. O'Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 69–88.

gesting that Johann G. Hamann's critique of his contemporary Immanuel Kant remains powerfully relevant today. Finally, this paper reflects on pertinent points of contact between the biblical witness concerning the divine marriage and three issues that plague the contemporary church: so-called gay marriage, the disgrace of domestic violence, and the ordination of women into the public office of the ministry.

GOD'S MARRIAGE IN THE BIBLE

As noted above, Paul's paraenesis to Christian husbands and wives is rooted in the marriage of Christ to his bride the church. Wives are to be subordinate to their husbands "*as* [ὡς] to the Lord, because a husband is head of the wife *as* [ὡς] Christ is head of the church" (Eph 5:22–23). Having so patterned a husband's headship regarding his wife on Christ's headship of the church, Paul then presents the flipside: "[A]s [ὡς] the church subordinates herself to Christ, so also [οὕτως καὶ] the wives to their husbands in everything" (Eph 5:24). Though Paul uses the terminology of *simile* (ὡς, οὕτως), it is not a simile in the usual sense wherein the divine is likened to some human reality—the unknown patterned on the known, familiar, and experienced. On the contrary, at every point the direction of comparison is from the divine to the human, not the other way around. It runs *from* Christ's loving headship *to* the church and the church's willing subordination to Christ and his word to Christian husbands and wives and how they should be toward one another.

Some try to problematize headship by suggesting that it is conducive to domestic violence.

When Paul then exhorts husbands to "love your wives," the same direction of comparison undergirds his whole paraenesis: "[J]ust as [καθὼς καὶ] Christ loved the church and gave *himself* up for her, so that *her* he might sanctify, having cleansed her by the washing of water in the word . . . etc."[2] (Eph 5:25–28). Husbands are to love self-sacrificially according to the pattern of Christ's love for the church, putting their wives before themselves. After dwelling on the mysterious depths of Christ's love for the church Paul continues: "[J]ust so ought husbands love their own wives like their own bodies . . . for no one ever hated *his own* flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ [does] the church, for *members* of his body are we" (Eph 5:28–30). (Ironically, although some try to problematize headship by suggesting that it is conducive to domestic violence, the biblical teaching on headship enjoins husbands to the very opposite behavior!) Again, the analogy runs from the divine reality to the human.[3]

Paul then cites Genesis 2:24, "on account of this will a man forsake father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will be one flesh." At first this is unsurprising given Paul's paraenetical purposes in addressing husbands, whom he exhorts to love their wives like their own flesh, since Genesis 2:24 affirms that they are one flesh with their wives. But Paul does something quite unexpected when he follows up the quotation with this statement: "[T]his mystery is great; but I speak of Christ and the church" (Eph 5:32). Rather than apply Genesis 2:24 immediately to human husbands and wives as Genesis 2 appears to do, Paul applies it to Christ's union with his bride the church! Only then does he add—in an almost anticlimactic extension of the thought—"nevertheless also each of you, let each one love his own wife as himself, and the wife that she might revere [φοβῆται] the husband." Whatever Paul says to husbands, then, he draws from the pattern of Christ's love of his own body, the church, with which *he* is *one flesh*. That is the definitive marriage after which Christian marriages are patterned. What is more, that is the definitive fulfillment of Genesis 2:24![4]

Although Paul's immediate application of Genesis 2:24 to Christ and the church may catch the reader a little off balance within his unfolding paraenesis, it is not at all surprising from a broader biblical perspective and in view of Paul's Adamic Christology. As is well known, Genesis 1:26–28 summarily relates God's creation of humanity in his own image and likeness as *male and female,* while Genesis 2 relates the creation of Adam and Eve in greater detail. In Genesis 1:27 we read, "So God created man (האדם) in his image. In the image of God he created him; *male and female* (זכר ונקבה) he created them." Genesis 2 then "zooms in" further as God first creates Adam and then his wife Eve from his side, who is Adam's "flesh and bone" with whom he forms a new familial bond as the two become one flesh (Gen 2:24).

Genesis 2, however, is concerned not just with the estate of the *family*, but also with the estate of the *church,* the people of God in fellowship with God. Eden is the archetypal sanctuary of which Adam is high priest, charged with "guarding" and "keeping it" (לעבדה ולשמרה in Gen 2:15); the same combination of verbal roots applied to the Levites in Numbers 3:7–8 regarding the tabernacle. Numerous other correspondences between the garden and tabernacle confirm the parallel, such

2. Καὶ ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς . . . ἵνα αὐτὴν ἁγιάς; note the emphatic placement of *himself,* underscoring the *self*-sacrificial nature of Christ's love for the church of which he is head. Similarly, note the emphatic placement of *her,* underscoring once again the selflessness of Christ's work, which is entirely for her benefit (sanctification).

3. See Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., *Whoredom: God's Unfaithful Wife in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), especially 152–59. For a more detailed discussion of Ephesians 5:21–33, see Thomas M. Winger's excellent treatment in *Ephesians,* Concordia Commentary Series (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 598–653.

4. See Luther's Treatise on Christian Liberty, *LW* 31:351.

as the river that waters the garden and divides to nourish the earth (2:10; see Ps 46:5 [ET v. 4), the Tree of Life and the seven-branched candelabra giving light to the sanctuary, and the cherubim guarding the garden entrance and adorning the ark and furnishings (Gen 3:24; see Exod 25:18–22; 26:1, 31–33).[5] Having charged Adam with priestly responsibility for the garden sanctuary in 2:15, God then commands Adam not to eat from the tree of knowing good and evil before woman has even been created, then holds Adam accountable for the original couple's disobedience throughout chapter 3 (see especially 3:9, 11, 17). But where Adam had failed his wife by abdicating his responsibility and resorting to blaming her (Gen 3:12), Christ succeeded by cleansing and sanctifying his bride through his self-sacrificial death (Eph 5:26, 27).

In view of all this it is not at all surprising that Paul applies Genesis 2:24 immediately to Christ's marriage to his bride the church. For Paul that verse foreshadows *the* marriage according to which human marriages—especially *Christian* marriages—are typologically patterned. Indeed, elsewhere Paul recognizes Christ *as* the image of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15; see also Heb 1:3)—not merely created "in" it—and in Romans 5:14 recognizes Adam as a "type of the one to come" within his Adamic Christology (see 1 Cor 15:22, 45). According to Paul, then, Christ is Adam's antitype, and as God's enfleshed image he makes present the Godhead in whose image mankind had been created (Gen 1:27). What is more, just as Adam was one with Eve, so Christ is "one flesh" with his body the church of which he is Head (Eph 5:23), the reality after which Christian marriage is patterned (see 1 Cor 11:3).

COVENANT HISTORY AND GOD'S MARRIAGE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Christ's marriage to his bride the church is by no means a novelty within biblical revelation. On the contrary, it is the culmination and fulfillment of covenant history.[6] Indeed, the Bible describes the covenant between God and his people in the terms of the covenant of marriage. As stated by the covenant formula, "I will be your God, and you will be my people" (whose distinctive syntax is found many times throughout the Old Testament), the Sinai covenant joined YHWH to Israel as a groom to his bride.

Correspondingly, the Bible frequently describes Israel's treasonous breach of the covenant in terms of *marital* infidelity. For example, as early as Numbers 25 the children of Israel *whored* (זנה) after the daughters of the Moabites, who called them to the sacrifices of their gods whereupon they "yoked" (צמד) themselves to the Baal of Peor. Though the imagery shifts to that of a beast of burden tethered to Baal by yoke—itself a telling description of their spiritual enslavement—marital imagery persists even in the root צמד, whose cognate צמיד, "bracelet," appears in betrothal texts (see Gen 24:22, 30, 47). Judges makes a similar point more directly when it summarizes Israel's cyclical covenantal unfaithfulness to YHWH: "But even to their judges they did not listen, but whored (זנו) after other gods and worshipped them . . . etc." (Judg 2:17).

Christ's marriage to his bride the church is by no means a novelty within biblical revelation.

Perhaps most famous is Hosea 1–3, where Hosea's marriage to the promiscuous Gomer stood testimony to God's marriage to his people and their faithlessness in running after other gods as "lovers." Chapter 1 has Hosea marrying Gomer and naming their three children appropriately—if cheerlessly—"Jezreel," "No Mercy," and "Not My People" as a prophetic sign of God's judgment of withholding compassion from his people (2:6) and declaring the antithesis of the covenant formula: "[F]or you are not my people, and I am not yours." The discourse of chapter 2 then shifts to address Israel's lusting after Baal, who is portrayed as an imposter "husband" or "master" in accordance with the meaning of that name. As children of YHWH's marriage with Israel, whose monarchy and priesthood have embraced Baal, the people are to plead with their mother who has "played the whore"—that is, institutional Israel's leaders (king, priesthood, etc.)—lest they be accounted illegitimate "children of whoredom." As in Numbers 25 and Judges 2, then, the verb זנה and cognate noun "adulteries" or "whorings" (זנונים) are definitive of Israel's faithlessness toward YHWH in chapter 2 (verses 4, 6, 7 [ET vv. 2, 4, 5]). As a corollary to the "anticovenant formula" in Hosea 1:9 the text even includes a divorce formula, "[S]he is not my wife and I am not her husband" (2:4 [ET 2:2]). Here YHWH proclaims the judgment by giving Israel over to these "lovers" (v. 7 [ET v. 5]) who are nowhere to be found when the chips are down, so that she would again return—that is, repent—to her first husband. The law so proclaimed, chapter 2 draws to a close with gospel as YHWH speaks tenderly to his bride in the wilderness who will answer as when he first brought her out of Egypt (2:16–17 [ET 2:14–15]), a reference to the covenant making in the wilderness at Sinai. Then follows YHWH's commitment to renew the covenant with her, answering his own divine divorce formula with a threefold betrothal:

> "In that day," declares YHWH, "you will call out, 'my Husband' [אישי], and no longer call me 'my Baal.' For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and no longer will they remember their name. And for them I will cut a covenant in that day with the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens and the creeping things of the ground. The bow and sword and war itself I will break off from the earth and will cause them to lie down in security. I betroth

5. See further Lifsa Schachter, "The Garden of Eden as God's First Sanctuary," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 41 (2013): 73–77.
6. See Ortlund, *Whoredom,* 15–45.

> you to myself [וארשׂתיך לי] forever! I betroth you to myself [וארשׂתיך לי] in righteousness, in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy! I betroth you to myself [וארשׂתיך לי] in truth, that you may know YHWH! (Hos 2:18–22 [ET 2:16–20])

In renewing the covenant YHWH betroths Israel to himself anew, restoring his marriage. The Sinai covenant allusions continue into the next verse as the witnesses to the covenant, heaven and earth, respond favorably as God restores his people (Hos 2:23; see Deut 4:26; 30:19; 31:28). The significances attached to each of Hosea's children's names are then addressed in turn, culminating with "I will have mercy on No Mercy, and will say to Not My People, 'You are my people!' and he will say, 'My God!'" Hosea then redeems his wife in chapter 3 as a prophetic sign of this proclamation. Accordingly, verses 4–5 then directly describe the impending exile and future restoration in the latter days when Israel would "return—that is, repent—and seek YHWH their God" with "David" as their king, thus anticipating the restoration of a united Israel.

God the Father is no mere projection of human fatherhood onto the divine.

The depiction of the Sinai covenant as God's marriage to his people even turns up in the famous "new covenant" oracle, Jeremiah 31:31–34. There God announces that he will cut a "new covenant" with the house of Israel and the house of Judah; a covenant characterized by both continuity *and* discontinuity with the great biblical covenants of the Old Testament. Like the "new moon" that is not so much replaced as renewed, this was a "new covenant," a ברית חדשׁה. YHWH would write his torah on the hearts of his people rather than the tablets of stone held in the Ark of the Covenant, and this new covenant would be and remain effectual not on the bilateral basis of the Sinai covenant with its Ten Commandments, but on the forgiveness of the people's sins against those very commandments (Jer 31:34)! YHWH therefore declares it to be "not like the covenant which I cut with their fathers in the day I took them by their hand to bring them out from the land of Egypt—my covenant that they broke, *though I had married them/was husband to them* [בעלתי בם]." But like the old covenant at Sinai—and as just observed in the example of Hosea—the new covenant would realize the relationship summed up in the covenant formula, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer 31:33; see Exod 6:7 and so on). God would restore his bride! Like in Hosea, Jeremiah's new covenant envisions a restored unity between the long-since divided monarchies of Judah and Israel. Davidic kingship and Levitical priesthood would fulfill their proper intended purpose (Jer 33:14–22) as the ancient biblical covenants are *re*newed; a fulfillment we see in Jesus who fulfills the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King.

While the Bible also speaks of God having "feminine" attributes—for example, it has often been pointed out that "compassion" (as in Exod 34:6) and "womb" derive from the same root (רחם)—such metaphoric language is not nearly as developed as that seen above. God's "maternal" compassion, for example, is based on cognate word associations rather than directly naming him a "mother." Though God exercises this especially maternal quality of compassion, he is not a mother. On the other hand, he *is* husband to his bride the church as repeatedly seen above. Other such attributes are achieved through similes whose direction of comparison run *upward.* For example, although Jesus may long to gather Jerusalem *as* a hen gathers her chicks (Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34), he is nonetheless not a hen. Isaiah 66:13 likewise employs a simile when YHWH says, "As a man whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you; in Jerusalem you shall be comforted." Like all similes Isaiah 66 stops well short of identifying YHWH as a mother, however, so that the direction of comparison remains "upward" and descriptive of YHWH's way with people rather than his being. Meanwhile Isaiah 50:1 affirms YHWH's status as Israel's husband, when he asks, "Where is it—this certificate of divorce of your mother, by which I dismissed her?" (see 63:16; 64:8).

This brief tour of biblical examples shows how pervasively the Bible recognizes God's covenant with his people in terms of a marriage with God as husband and his people as bride, and why Paul applies Genesis 2:24 first to Christ and his bride the church.[7] Returning to the early chapters of Genesis, Adam and Eve's creation in the image of God (Gen 1:27) also affirms the "downward" direction of comparison we observed at the heart of Paul's "metaphoric" correlation between the divine marriage and human marriages. "Male and female" are created in *God's* image, not the other way around. In fact, to reverse the direction of comparison is—quite literally—*idolatry,* the casting of God in the image of humans (see Exod 20:4; Acts 17:19; etc.). Such a reversal was widespread in the ancient world, whose deities included both gods and goddesses as consorts with one another, such as the Canaanite fertility deities, Baal and Asherah. But not so in the Bible where male and female image the *divine* reality. Indeed, the same "downward" direction of comparison—or better, *derivation*—ensues regarding God the Father, "from whom all fatherhood [πατριὰ] in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph 3:15). According to Ephesians 3:15 God the Father is no mere projection of human fatherhood onto the divine—an attempt at a limited analogy. The opposite is rather the case: God *is* the Father after whom human fatherhood is patterned (see Exod 4:22; Hos 11:1). Human fatherhood derives from divine Fatherhood, not the other way around as through some human attempt to describe God by human analogy.

7. There are, of course, many other places that presuppose God's marriage to Israel. For example, even Isaiah 5:1–7, where vineyard imagery dominates, is introduced as YHWH's "love song" for Judah and Jerusalem.

Just as, for Paul, the opening chapters of the Bible foreshadow Christ's cleansing and sanctification of his bride the church—the heart of the biblical testimony—so St. John sees their fulfillment in the Bible's closing chapters. In his eschatological vision of Revelation 21, John sees "the holy city New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride [ὡς νύμφην] adorned for her husband" (v. 2). Although John here uses the language of simile in a more conventional sense, the biblical witness has by this time firmly established the marriage typology. In any case, shortly before St. John hears the voice of a great multitude saying, "Let us rejoice and exult and give him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife/bride [γυνὴ] has prepared herself," whereupon the angel declares, "Blessed are those called to the wedding supper [τὸ δεῖπνον τοῦ γάμου] of the Lamb" (19:7, 9). Moreover, right after this vision of New Jerusalem St. John hears the voice from the throne declaring the covenant formula seen throughout the Bible: "See, the tabernacle [ἡ σκηνὴ; ESV: "dwelling"] of God [is] with people; and he will tabernacle [σκηνώσει] with them, *and they will be his people, and he himself will be with them as their God"* (Rev 21:3), thus describing the renewed covenant Jeremiah had prophesied in the same matrimonial terms.

THE MODERN TURN

The study of metaphor has experienced what Job Jindo describes as a "turn" amid a growing appreciation of metaphor as a deeper conceptual phenomenon rather than more narrowly, as a rhetorical or literary device found chiefly in poetry.[8] Accordingly, biblical scholarship has begun to embrace the broader field of cognitive linguistics, which explores the wider conceptual "mappings" common to human thought and expression. As Jindo puts it, "[M]etaphorical expressions that seem unrelated on the textual surface level are, in fact, conceptually interrelated on the deeper level."[9] This "turn" has yielded mixed blessings. On the one hand, it has led—and continues to lead—to a fuller appreciation of how metaphoric language in the Bible may evoke ancient Near Eastern societal and religious realities, hence also the communicative power of metaphor. On the other, it has fostered interpretive approaches subject to fewer controls, as biblical texts are said to elicit all sorts of ideas and significances not otherwise made plain in the text.[10] These developments and the issues associated with them are indeed too complex and too large to engage here.

Whether we are talking about metaphor pre- or post- the above turn, deeper issues emerge: the notion of "metaphor" cannot do justice to the *downward* direction of comparison inherent to the "metaphor" of marriage seen in our brief accounting of it in the Bible. This is because even sophisticated approaches to metaphor still presuppose that metaphors communicate through *analogy* with its inherently "upward" direction of comparison. The unknown—as, for example, the divine—is analogous to the known; a projection of it by means of "upward" comparison. Contrary to the biblical witness just explored, then, God's "marriage" becomes a conceptual construct or *projection* that properly belongs in quotation marks. To be sure, a fuller account of a metaphor's conceptual entailments is valuable and deepens awareness of the metaphor and its communicative power in specific contexts. Such "metaphorical language" that the Bible applies to Christ's marriage indeed shapes the reader's understanding of the divine reality to which it bears witness. But it does not follow that Christ's marriage is reducible to a cognitive linguistic construct—that the "marriage metaphor" *defines* or *delimits* the divine reality it signifies. The "downward" direction of comparison inherent to the biblical witness suggests, then, that "metaphor" is an inadequate description for Christ's marriage. By contrast, the premodern language and categories of *typology* better account for it, as the above biblical tour implies. At the least, "metaphor" only goes part way to describing what is going on in the biblical witness where Christ's marriage is concerned.

This modern—and postmodern—state of affairs is itself due to a greater and more far-reaching "turn," however, one that occurred with the Enlightenment and especially under Immanuel Kant's influence. Kant distinguished the "phenomenal" world—the world accessible to our senses and intellect that we can see, touch, and experience—from the "noumenal," things in and of themselves according to their objective nature and beyond our knowing because our knowledge is mediated through sensory experience and therefore "phenomenal."[11] For Kant, then, God is impenetrable to human reason, since he is transcendental and belongs to the noumenal. Assuming we could suspend our belief in the *incarnate* God, we might be able to journey this far with Kant. Certainly, we can, together with Kant, acknowledge the limitations of our reason when it comes to knowing God—in the words of Luther's Small Catechism, "we cannot believe in Jesus Christ or come to him." But here Lutheran spiritualty and hermeneutics part ways with Kant.

Since Kant's system leaves us cut off from direct access to God, all that might be said of God are mere *projections* of the divine drawn from the phenomenal world and are finally illusory. Where does this leave us? God can *only* be known by analogy. The problem in fact goes deeper, for who is to know whether the analogy holds true to God's real nature—what he is like in himself—since the noumenal lies beyond reach? This is arguably the basic problem underlying the theological pluralism of our current day. Indeed, it has had far-reaching implications for post-Enlightenment biblical scholarship, which imbibed deeply of Kant's system of thought and applied the

8. See Job Y. Jindo, "Metaphor Theory and Biblical Texts," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation,* ed. Steven McKenzie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2:1–10.
9. Ibid., 2:6.
10. For example, feminist criticism's use of such approaches to problematize God's treatment of his bride in books like Hosea. See the discussion in Sharon Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors in Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 13–16.
11. For a good summary of Kant's thought and influence, see Anthony Kenny, *An Illustrated Brief History of Western Philosophy* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 275–97.

same limitations to the biblical writers whom they assumed were similarly confined by their phenomenal experience. Relevant to our purposes here is the direction of comparison entailed in such analogizing efforts. Within Kant's system of thought the *noumena* or, we might say, the "things above"—for example, who God is and what God is like—can only be approximated by realities and experiences to which we do have access in the phenomenal world. Metaphor can at best be only a crude description of a divine and ultimately unknowable reality and so functions "from the bottom up." It is a projection of things *known* onto someone who is *unknowable,* at best a communication of ideas *about* God, rather than God communicating *himself.* In this view it goes too far to say that God is *really* married to his people, because marriage *really* entails a man and a woman, a sexual bond, progeny, commitment, and so forth. The phenomenal experience is held to be the "real" and full account of the reality at the heart of the metaphor, which at best can only dimly convey the divine reality to which it points. So understood, God is not really "married" to his people. He is not really their "husband" nor they his "bride." This was just a way of communicating certain truths about God's relationship to them, such as his commitment, a sense of obligation and loyalty between God and people, and so forth.

But Kant's contemporary and greatest critic, Johann G. Hamann, faulted Kant's system precisely because it disregards God's self-revelation through his divine condescension in the word.[12] God is not the object of "pure" rational thought, but condescends—Hamann speaks of God's *kenosis* (emptying) and self-abasement—to make himself known through phenomenal means, even the ordinary human words of Scripture. The ("economic") Trinity thus makes *himself* accessible to humankind, bridging Kant's impervious divide between the noumenal and the phenomenal. For Hamann, then, it was not only that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity became flesh in order to make God present and accessible to Kant's phenomenal world, but that the Third Person of the Holy Trinity likewise condescended through the Scriptures. The material principle of Christian theology, *solus Christus,* thus holds fast to the formal principle, *sola scriptura,* as the Holy Spirit suffered himself to speak through the divine-human words of Scripture—even the Old Testament, which Luther famously called the swaddling clothes in which one finds God enfleshed in Christ. In other words, Scripture is *word of God* through which God makes himself known and gives access to himself. Returning to the Catechism: "[B]ut the Holy Spirit has called me by the *gospel,* enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified, and kept me in the one true faith." Furthermore, Hamann says that even the *First Person* of the Holy Trinity, the *Father,* condescends in creation. His creatures thus bear the imprint of their Creator, an important insight that makes typology possible as human *realities* foreshadow divine ones.

12. This is the key point for our current purposes, but it should be noted that Hamann's "metacritique" of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is in fact much more extensive.

What does this have to do with biblical metaphor? That the Holy Spirit should so condescend to us through Scripture permits us to see beyond the strictures imposed by Kant's system of thought and so to recognize the opposite direction of comparison at work in the biblical witness to God's marriage to his people. Human marriages are not simply a relatable phenomenon that biblical writers used to give insight into important aspects of God's relationship with his people, an analogy that outlives its usefulness once some pertinent points of comparison have been understood because it is just an idea or concept. Marriage as human beings know and experience it is not merely a cognitive linguistic "vehicle" to communicate certain truths or propositions about how God relates to us, and once the interpreter arrives at the destination—that is, apprehends those propositions—he or she gets out of the car, leaves it at the roadside, and surveys the "real" view. The direction of comparison does not run exclusively upwards from below, but primarily downwards from above. God *is* married to his people and addresses his bride through the Scriptures. This is the marriage of marriages, from which all human, especially Christian, marriages derive, even though they are but a dim reflection of it (see Eph 5:22–33). And although our perceptions and experiences of marriage in the phenomenal world "below" invariably affect our perception of God's marriage to his people when we read about it in Scripture, *through* Scripture the Holy Spirit sets about reshaping those very perceptions according to the image of Christ and his bride the church. Epistemologically, then, the Holy Spirit draws us upward through Scripture, constituting us and our awareness, our wonder, our joy—in short, *creating faith* in the ontological reality of God enfleshed in Christ and married to his bride the church with whom the incarnate Christ is one flesh.

SOME CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS

Gay "Marriage," Domestic Violence, and the Ordination of Women

We shall conclude by observing a few points of contact between the above and some major issues currently besetting Christ's church. First, the church is under significant cultural pressure to sanction gay "marriage." Of course, such a deconstruction and reconception of marriage belies the binary nature of marriage as the one flesh union of "male and female." That in itself is a deal-breaker for those who look to the biblical testimony to shape their understanding of marriage. The matter becomes more involved again, however, when we recognize human marriage in the image of Christ's marriage to his bride the church. Man and woman are *others;* that is, man is *other* to woman, and woman *other* to man. They are altogether different human beings whose union is, on that account, all the more miraculous and whose complementarity is deeply mysterious. As a type and shadow of Christ's marriage to his bride the church, then, Christian marriage bears witness to the *otherness* of God with whom we human beings are united in the resurrected and ascended God-Man Jesus Christ. God did not marry God! He took to himself another, the church—a new humanity whom he has redeemed for himself.

Second, Paul's teaching about marriage in Ephesians 5, which revolves around headship and subordination, calls husbands to self-sacrificial love precluding all violence and abuse against their wives, and wives to honor their husbands through their subordination. As with any typology, where the type is but a shadow of the antitype, marriage as instituted by God in the Bible is finally patterned on Christ's husbandly love for his bride the church and her willing subordination to her Lord. The *downward* direction of comparison that permeates Paul's paraenesis in Ephesians 5 is vital here, for it prevents us from assuming a distorted view of headship detached from the pattern of Christ, or worse, blasphemously attributing an abusive character to Christ's headship through analogy with our own dysfunctional family experiences.

God's fatherhood is not a projection of human fatherhood, but the (perfect) source of it!

Finally, since Christ is husband to the church his Bride, the maleness of pastors is not and cannot be an indifferent matter, since incumbents of the pastoral office do not represent their own persons but the Person of *Christ* (*in persona Christi*) who is both husband to his bride the church and representative of the Father (John 5:19–26; 8:30, 37–38; 12:49–50; 14:6, 9–11). The common suggestion that only Jesus' "humanness" matters in this respect must finally reduce Christ's marriage to his bride the church to merely a construct of the mind, the projection of a cognitively generated image onto a disincarnate god to express something about his relationship to people. But as we have seen, this is no mere "metaphor" from which *we* may determine what is relevant to the *in persona Christi* of the pastoral office. God in Christ has married his people; Christ *is* husband to his bride the church. Accordingly, the maleness of the pastor is inseparable from his vocational representation of Christ as husband and head of the church as well as representative of the Father to it. However capable she may be, a woman cannot image Christ in his capacity as husband to the church anymore than she can *be* a husband within a marriage. The limitation here lies not so much with Christ (though he was born a male human being—a fact congruent with the Old Testament witness to God's husbandly love for Israel observed above). The limitation, rather, lies with men and women in our createdness, since only the former can be husbands and thus "postshadow" Christ as husband to his bride the church, hence represent him liturgically as he hosts us at the foretaste of the wedding feast to come (Rev 19:7, 9).

Since the biblical witness to Christ's marriage is no mere cognitive construct but a reality, the church is not left to—nor does it have the authority to—construct the pastoral office/vocation as she sees fit. Rather, the office is Christ's gift to the church and instituted by his word (Matt 28:19–20; John 20:21–23; Eph 4:11–12; etc.). Indeed, the Pastoral Epistles have much to say about what fits a person for the pastoral office (1 Tim 3:1–7) shortly after forbidding women from teaching in public worship, requirements that prevent many men from exercising the pastoral office as well. But we may note that here, too, sexual differentiation applies, for in doing so 1 Timothy 3:2 requires that an "overseer" or "bishop" (ἐπίσκοπος) be "*husband* of one wife" (μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα) rather than the other way around.

What is more, given Genesis 2–3's foundational theological importance for the estate of marriage and family and also the *church,* it is not at all surprising that Paul should premise his prohibition against women *teaching* in public worship in 1 Timothy 2:11–14 on Genesis 2–3. Set in the context of public worship (1 Tim 2:1–8), the emphasis of his prohibition falls upon women teaching (διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἀνδρός), which he premises on Adam's being formed first—hence his priestly responsibility (v. 13) and Eve's usurpation of the same through her transgression (v. 14). What is more, Christ, the one mediator between God and people (1 Tim 2:5), also represents the Father to the church, and for the same reason a woman cannot impersonate Jesus as he represents the *Father.* In Ephesians 3:15 Paul affirms that—like human marriage—human *fatherhood* is patterned on the fatherhood of God, "from whom all fatherhood [πᾶσα πατριὰ] in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph 3:15). As with marriage, which follows the pattern of Christ's marriage to his bride the church, so the direction of comparison—or rather, the direction of derivation—is *downward.* God's fatherhood is not a projection of human fatherhood, but the (perfect) *source* of it! When a pastor stands in Christ's stead as he mediates the Father's word, he images God's fatherhood.

Nor does Paul's "there is no . . . male and female, for you are all one in Christ" in Galatians 3:28 in any way deny Christ's marriage and its implications for Christian marriage or order in the church.[13] Indeed, any suggestion that Paul should intend this to negate his paraenesis in Ephesians 5:22–33 would be quite absurd! In considering Galatians 3:28, it is important to observe that out of the three differentiated categories Paul speaks about—Jew/Greek, slave/free, male/female—only the last has any relevance to Christ's husbandly relationship to his bride the church, since neither ethnicity nor one's status as a slave/servant precluded a man from being a husband. Moreover, unlike the other two the male/female distinction explicitly belongs to created *order* (Gen 1:27). It is therefore telling that we should find this differentiation only here, and not where Paul gives instruction about how the church is *ordered,* such

13. On the contrary, in Galatians 3 Paul speaks specifically of Christians' baptismal unity within the church, the bride of Christ—in which all are collectively feminine—so it makes sense that the male-female differentiation should have no place there. But when Paul speaks of order in the church where public teaching is concerned, sexual differentiation remains powerfully relevant as already seen above in 1 Timothy 2–3.

as 1 Corinthians 12. There in the lead-up to Paul's admonitions about women's participation in the prophetic activity of the church in 1 Corinthians 14:26–40, Paul does not include this male-female differentiation at 1 Corinthians 12:13 when stressing the oneness of the body, even though he does include the other two (Jew/Greek; slave/free). This is because male-female differentiation remains vitally relevant to how the church is ordered (1 Cor 14:40; see the taxonomical language ὑποτάσσω in verses 32 and 34) as the Spirit prohibits women from publicly scrutinizing the contributions of other prophets in the gathered worship assembly—a point underscored by the divine passive "it is not permitted (οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται) for them to speak . . . etc." in 14:34. What is more Paul appeals to ecumenical practice (14:33), the law (12:34)—itself a reference to created order in Genesis 2 (see 11:8–9), the word of God (12:36), Christ's command (12:37), and his own prophetic authority (12:37), thereby showing that this is no theologically indifferent matter but the revealed will of God. This too is in keeping with chapter 12, for there Paul stresses that such church order concerning prophetic utterances (προφητεία in 12:10) and their prophetic evaluation (διακρίσεις πνευμάτων directly after in 12:10)—the key issues he will pick up in 14:29–38 after the subject of tongues (14:27–28)—is *not* by mere human arrangement but according to the Spirit's apportioning (see καθὼς βούλεται in 1 Cor 12:11). Clearly Paul is not concerned with some general "principle of order," as is sometimes claimed for these verses, but with divinely instituted order where male-female differentiation remains deeply relevant.[14] "God has arranged [ἔθετο] the members" (1 Cor 12:18), "composed the body" (12:24). He has appointed "first apostles, second prophets, and third teachers, etc." (12:28). They are *not* human-appointed offices in the church but subject to his divine ordinances in Scripture.[15]

CONCLUSION

God's covenant of marriage to Israel finds fulfillment in the "great mystery" (Eph 5:32) of Christ's marriage to his bride the church in the new covenant. As such it is central to the biblical witness to God's redemptive love for his people in both the Old and New Testaments. This is no mere cognitive construct or projection of ideas onto a disincarnate god, but a reality culminating in the incarnation of the Son of God, who has assumed human flesh to purify and sanctify the new humanity, his *body* the church, of which he is head, and his *bride,* with whom he is one flesh as her husband (Eph 5:31–32). According to Paul, then, the estate of marriage bears witness to this reality pertaining to the estate of the church as bride of Christ, which human marriages typologically postshadow. The church and the Christian people within her cannot pick and choose points of comparison between the *idea* of marriage and God's relationship to his people, because it is no mere "idea" or cognitive construct to begin with. Rather the church looks to the apostolic teaching of the New Testament to recognize how it may faithfully proclaim the marriage of Christ to his bride the church through both the estates of Christian marriage and of the church.

The estate of marriage bears witness to this reality pertaining to the estate of the church as bride of Christ.

We shall let Martin Luther have the final word from one of his sermons on the Gospel according to John:

> Therefore it behooves us to learn to identify the Bridegroom's voice. If someone should come without Christ, against Christ, or under the name of Christ, tell him: "The name of the Bridegroom and of the bride dare not be blasphemed and dishonored. Christ says so and so. And whoever follows the voice of the Bridegroom will not alter or change this message. In the home it would be intolerable if the wife were to act contrary to the husband's commands. Of course, if he is a dolt, let him rise from his wife's side and permit another to lie with her. If such a situation is unbearable in the home, how much more so in the church! The church has no right either to hear Christ the Bridegroom speak or command, and then to change His orders. Therefore to say: "The church has ordained this or that" is sheer blasphemy. For Bridegroom and bride are but one body; and the bride complies with all the demands of the Groom, as St. Paul declares in the fifth chapter of Ephesians (5:25, 32). Whether someone acts arbitrarily against Christ, without Christ, or under the guise of His name, it is immaterial; it is all against Christ. Therefore we must be on the alert against the devil, who assails us either with doctrine that runs counter to Christ, as the tyrants do, or with doctrine that is devoid of Christ, as the canon laws do. And others will come with the Scriptures and give themselves the semblance of the Lord Christ; this, of course, is also against Christ. Christ alone must remain the Bridegroom; He alone is vested with authority and must be heard, as the voice from heaven declared (Matt 17:5). (*LW* 22:445) LOGIA

14. What is more, Paul specifically invokes *headship* in 11:3 at the beginning of chapters 11–14 dealing with public worship matters and bookended with the apostle's instructions qualifying women's prophetic activities in public worship (11:2–16; 14:26–40). Again, it is clear that sexual differentiation plays a foundational role in Paul's teaching on order in public worship.
15. For a fuller account of 1 Corinthians 14:26–40 see Adam D. Hensley, "Σιγάω, λαλέω, and ὑποτάσσω in 1 Corinthians 14:34 in their Literary and Rhetorical Context," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 55 (2012): 343–64.

The Twofold Clarity of Scripture in Luther's Theology

Anthony J. Oliphant

The clarity of Scripture is a distinctive teaching in Lutheran theology with its roots in the earliest hermeneutical questions of the Reformation. However, over the course of the centuries this teaching has lost much of its robust character. When it is not relegated to history as a quaint naïve doctrine of premodern theologians, it is oversimplified into a simplistic notion of perspicuity or mere comprehension of the words. This is not a true characterization of Luther's understanding of the clarity of Scripture. For him, Scripture is a light. It shines into the dark minds and hearts of sinners to deliver the light of Christ's salvation. As light, it needs to borrow no illumination from other sources. This understanding of Scripture as a light that enlightens fallen man shows how Scripture is to be read and interpreted, providing important implications for anthropology, faith, and life.

For centuries, Augustine's distinction of letter and spirit, and the twofold aspect of Scripture that follows, allowed for discussion of both obscurity and clarity in Scripture. In this late classical and medieval exegetical principle, the "letter-sense" of Scripture was described as typically obscure. On the other hand, the "spirit-sense" was described as having significantly greater clarity.[1] Luther's often-heralded break from the Augustinian *signum-res* hermeneutic of Scripture (seeking the true spiritual meaning of a text by moving beyond the mere words of it) created space for a different way of discussing clarity and obscurity.

Luther's shift away from this hermeneutic to his robust understanding of Scripture's clarity did not come all at once. It was a product of his years of teaching and preaching, further refined by the questions that would rise during the Reformation. A subtle step toward this is discernable quite early in Luther's career in his commentary on Psalm 101. Luther sees that the people praying this psalm are properly recognized as the "people before the advent of Christ,"[2] making it primarily a prayer for deliverance from pride and destruction through the coming of the Messiah. Of course, once the content has been recognized as the people of God crying out for Christ's arrival, it can then be appropriated by those who will later pray this text for Christ's advent, either in the sacrament or the *eschaton*. In this explanation, however, Luther is careful to note, "There is no spirit unless [the letter] is understood" (*LW* 11:286). In this, the psalm is not best understood in a *signum-res* relationship between the letter and the spirit, requiring a leap of understanding between the two, leaving one behind to grasp the other. For this reason Luther declares, "Therefore, to sing psalms is to preach the Gospel and the spirit" (*LW* 11:285). Rather than seeking an allegorical sense to illuminate the literal text, Luther praises the literal text as speaking the gospel. There is no push through the words of the text into something else because the spiritual meaning is proclaimed in the letter of the psalms themselves. Already, Luther sees the intrinsic connection between the announcement of the gospel and the clarity of the external words of Scripture.

An emphasis on the primary importance of the actual words of the text means that there is no need for illumination from any other external source. Underlying this is the presupposition that the external text is clear in and of itself; it delivers the necessary content through its own grammar and vocabulary. In this view, there is less pressure to shed light on the text with something beyond the words themselves. The spiritual sense of the text is recognized in the literal sense. This may not be an earth-shattering shift in Luther's understanding of Scripture (as indeed others had also posited this and Luther himself would still continue to employ various styles of *signum-res* interpretation in exegesis for some time afterward), but it does indicate a development in Luther's understanding of the literal text as not only important for its own sake, but even clear in declaring the promises of the Messiah. Although this subtle shift in hermeneutical understanding by no means displays a full articulation of what would later be his teaching on the twofold clarity of Scripture, it is an important step toward it.

CLARITY AS DECISIVE IN LUTHER'S DISPUTES

As more controversies developed over the course of the Reformation, Luther reiterated his teaching on the clarity of Scripture as the hermeneutical key to the questions at hand. Luther notes in *Against Latomus,* "the pure, simple, original sense

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1. James Callahan, *The Clarity of Scripture: History, Theology & Contemporary Literary Studies* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2001), 104.
2. James Samuel Preus, *From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), 170.

should be sought, unless the context or an evident absurdity forces one to recognize a figurative expression" (*LW* 32:167). Here again Luther emphasizes the reading of what is actually presented in the text. Only in rare cases should a figurative meaning be sought—the exception for interpretation, not the rule. This idea is repeated in 1528 in his *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper,* with slight change. Luther writes, "For the text must be quite unambiguous and plain, and must have one single, definite interpretation if it is to form the basis of a clear and definite article of faith" (*LW* 37:163). The language of "unambiguous and plain" indicates that Luther not only asserts the intrinsic intelligibility of the words in Scripture, but he even relies upon this intelligibility in establishing and explaining articles of faith.

Luther argues for the clarity of Scripture, not an immediately comprehensible simplicity.

This is not to say that all passages are immediately understood. Luther argues for the clarity of Scripture, not an immediately comprehensible simplicity. If a passage is found that seems obscure or difficult, Luther states, "one passage of Scripture must be clarified by other passages" (*LW* 37:177). This hermeneutical principle of allowing Scripture to illuminate its own meaning is built upon an even deeper foundational principle that it is not obscure; Scripture illuminates itself. Even if some passages seem dark, Scripture casts light on itself, allowing these more difficult passages to be understood. Scripture is itself a light, even to itself. The clarity of Scripture, then, is more than perspicuity of words. It is an interpretive principle that not only allows intertextuality, but demands it. This is done to the end that articles of faith may be established and taught so that faith would be kindled in the hearer. As Luther himself stated as early as 1518, "Therefore it happens in the New Testament that while the Word of life, grace, and salvation is proclaimed outside, the Holy Spirit teaches inside at the same time" (*LW* 29:198).

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Luther's teaching on Scripture's clarity is much broader than the notion of simple perspicuity. In *The Bondage of the Will,* Luther becomes more precise in his explication of this clarity of Scripture when he describes it as a light that shines both externally and internally. When employing the concept of *claritas* in *The Bondage of the Will,* Luther responds to Erasmus's claim that Scripture is dark: "Truly it is stupid and impious, when we know that the subject matter of Scripture has all been placed in the clearest light, to call it obscure on account of a few obscure words."[3] The context of Luther's usage of the word *claritas* shows that the definition of "brightness" or "brilliance" is to be preferred to any other term in its semantic range.[4] In the same way, the passages of Scripture cited by Luther in this debate also indicate that one should interpret his usage of *claritas* as "brightness" or "light." The passages quoted by Luther include Psalm 119:105, in which Scripture is called "a lamp to my feet and light to my path"; 2 Peter 1:19, where the word of God is named "a lamp shining in a dark place"; and John 1:5, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend it." Luther's concept of the *claritas* of Scripture is that of an actual light that actively illumines and reveals. The concept of the clearness, which is frequently termed *perspicuity,* can certainly be found within this wider concept of the *claritas* of Scripture, but it is only a part of the wider arc.

Speaking of the twofold *claritas* of Scripture in terms of light also affords the opportunity to speak of seeming darkness or obscurity of Scripture. This he attributes to man's sinful nature. Whereas Scripture has a twofold *claritas* or light—external and internal—fallen man has an external and an internal darkness. Armin Buchholz rightly notes that at no point in *The Bondage of the Will* does Luther use the terms external or internal obscurity. However, "because he explicitly distinguishes the duplex clarity in an external and internal clarity, he implies the *duplex* obscurity in an analogous distinction."[5] The external darkness of man is "our ignorance of [the Scriptures'] vocabulary and grammar."[6] The internal darkness comes from the fact that "all men have a darkened heart, so that even if they can recite everything in Scripture, and know how to quote it, yet they apprehend and truly understand nothing of it. They neither believe in God, nor that they themselves are creatures of God."[7]

It is at this critical juncture—whether one is readily identified as a creature of God or not—that the issue of Scripture's clarity meets with the question of a free or bound will. Agreement can be found with Buchholz on this point: "So Luther shows here that his discourse on the obscurity of the heart is synonymous with the alleged free will of Erasmus, 'the force of will, which can itself will and not will the word and work of God.'"[8] This is not the entire problem, however. The supposed free will defended by Erasmus "is not even capable, having

3. Martin Luther, *On the Bondage of the Will*, trans. and ed. Philip S. Watson, in *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, ed. E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 110–11.
4. The semantic range of *claritas* includes the concepts of loudness, vividness, clearness, distinctness, brightness, and brilliance, as found in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. G. W. Glare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 332.
5. Armin Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit: Luthers Schriftverständnis und Schriftauslegung in seinen drei großen Lehrstreitigkeiten der Jahre 1521–28, Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe XXIII, 487* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993), 78; the translation here and later are the author's.
6. Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, 110.
7. Ibid., 112.
8. Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes*, 79.

with the ears and seen with the eyes the word and work of God, to will or not will by itself, because it is a bound will under the powerful dominion of Satan: 'the free will by itself in all men is the kingdom of Satan.'"[9] This is such a critical problem that Buchholz observes, "if Satan did not exist, then all of mankind could be converted by hearing a single sermon of God, i.e., go to gather at the word of God."[10]

The reason that Scripture may appear to be dark is that man projects his own darkness upon the text. This rejection of what God has set before man in brilliant light is nothing less than the sin of unfaith. This is damning for man due to his complicity in both will and deed. "Human reason as the cognitive ability of the 'free will or the human heart,' hearing the word of God, takes offense and 'with all the works and words of God is blind, deaf, and foolish and impious and sacrilegious.'"[11] Luther's thorough understanding of sin is what makes him realize that it is not the Scriptures that are dark, but rather man's natural state as sinner and heir of Adam. The fallen sinner outside of faith may indeed understand the words of the text, but it remains for him a dark text. In an effort to justify himself, man attempts to project his own darkness onto Scripture. This is evil beyond excuse in Luther's thinking: "Let miserable men, therefore, stop imputing with blasphemous perversity the darkness and obscurity of their own hearts to the wholly clear Scriptures of God."[12] Luther's doctrine of the complete corruption of man's sinful condition and hostility toward the things of God removes the shades of obscurity from Scripture and recognizes them as logs in the eye of humanity.

This understanding of the depths of original sin locates all obscurity in man and his natural ruler, the devil, leaving Scripture as a pure light. This light (or *claritas*) is both external and internal:

> To put it briefly, there are two kinds of clarity of Scripture, just as there are also two kinds of obscurity: the one external and pertaining to the ministry of the Word, the other located in the understanding of the heart. If you speak of the internal clarity, no man perceives one iota of what is in the Scriptures unless he has the Spirit of God. . . . For the Spirit is required for the understanding of Scripture, both as a whole and in any part of it. If, on the other hand, you speak of the external clarity, nothing at all is left obscure or ambiguous, but everything there is in the Scriptures has been brought out by the Word into the most definite light, and published to all the world.[13]

The external clarity is said to be found "in the ministry of the word," that is, where the word is preached.[14] Hence, the ministry of the word, the preaching office, serves as the way in which the light of Scripture shines through to fallen man so that he might understand the vocabulary and grammar of Scripture. In this way, "nothing at all is left obscure or ambiguous" — the meaning of the words themselves can be learned by hearing the word preached. This is what it means that "everything there is in Scripture has been brought out . . . and published to all the world."

The reason that Scripture may appear to be dark is that man projects his own darkness upon the text.

The Holy Spirit must be given to man in order for him to understand that this is *for him*. External clarity is not enough by itself. If it were, if Satan were not seated in the heart of man, then the entire world would be converted by a single sermon.[15] Fallen reason that refuses to hear God speaking through these words will always return to misgivings.[16] The internal "heart-darkness" of man is so definitive that it cannot be cancelled by the external clarity of the text alone. This requires nothing less than a re-creation of fallen man by means of speaking again. It requires God himself to act in an internal way, battling with the devil and working in a "creative way."[17] The Spirit gives the light of faith to understand the promises of the gospel. In this way, the internal light of Scripture shines forth to illumine man fully, both externally and internally.

CLARITY IN THE WIDER ARC OF THEOLOGY

While Luther differentiates between the lights of the twofold *claritas,* he never separates them. Faith given by the Spirit, the internal *claritas*, never exists on its own. It is always joined to the external *claritas*. Likewise, Luther speaks about the preaching of the external word while also describing the resulting inward illumination provided by the Holy Spirit. It is at this point that the importance of the preaching of the word in Luther's understanding of the twofold *claritas* begins to unfold. The proclamation of Scripture is what clearly delivers life, grace, and salvation to the hearer. It is the God *who is preached* that is the concern of the Christian.[18] These preached words regarding God and his salvation are not simply informative, but creative, as the Holy Spirit works through them. In this seemingly purely external work of preaching, the Holy Spirit gives faith and "teaches inside at the same time" (*LW* 29:198).

9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, 111.
13. Ibid., 112.
14. Friedrich Beisser, *Claritas scripturae bei Martin Luther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 82.
15. Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes*, 79.
16. Beisser, *Claritas scripturae*, 86.
17. Ibid., 78–81.
18. Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, 200.

In Luther's theology, the word and Spirit are always found together. This is in no small part due to the interconnected nature of the external and internal clarity of Scripture. Even beyond *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther holds to this understanding. He confesses in the Smalcald Articles, "In these matters, which concern the spoken, external Word, it must be firmly maintained that God gives no one his Spirit or grace apart from the external Word, which goes before" (SA III III, 3). The Spirit, who works conversion along with the creation and preservation of faith, leads to the internal *claritas* of Scripture. As stated repeatedly by Luther, this is never to be separated from the external word. This external word, in turn, is important not only because it is the vehicle for the Holy Spirit, but also because without this word, the Christian could know nothing about the God who saves him.[19] The believer, through the externally understandable promises in the word and the internal faith worked by the Spirit in the word, learns of Christ—who he is, what he has done, and what he continues to do for sinners.

In Luther's theology, the word and Spirit are always found together.

This Christocentric understanding of Scripture serves as the lynchpin and heart for Luther's doctrine of the twofold clarity of Scripture. When Christ is confessed and taught as the center of all Scripture, this teaching finds its fullest and richest articulation. The Scriptures are a light because Christ is *the* Light. Christ shines through the Scriptures both externally and internally to those who hear them. The clear words of Scripture (its external *claritas*), whether in prophecy or narrative, are a light because of the Christ they proclaim. This proper proclamation of Christ gives understanding to what is being said in the text. This same Christ, as the object of faith, is what gives Scripture its internal *claritas*, shining into the heart of the hearer and creating faith in his saving work. Because both have Christ at their heart, the external and internal clarity can never be separated. One Christ, one Light, shines through in this double way. As Luther confessed in *The Bondage of the Will:*

> For what still sublimer thing can remain hidden in the Scriptures, now that the seals have been broken, the stone rolled from the door of the sepulcher, and the supreme mystery brought to light, namely, that Christ the Son of God has been made man, that God is three and one, that Christ has suffered for us and is to reign eternally? Are not these things known and sung even in the highways and the byways? Take Christ out of the Scriptures, and what will you find left in them?[20]

At the heart, as the full content of the Scriptures, holding them together and shining forth with his own light, is Christ. It is the preaching of Christ in the word of Scripture that provides a clear light that enlightens the mind and heart of the Christian.

As noted above, of equal importance in the discussion of the twofold *claritas* is the understanding of how the external and internal lights interact in this unity. Although these two types of *claritas* are distinct, each continually refers to the other. The external *claritas* casts the light of the message of salvation in Christ, to which the believer says, "Amen." This amen is nothing less than the internal *claritas*—the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit that recognizes that these promises are meant for the sinner. Luther explains this interaction:

> Now when I say that you should fix the Word of God in your heart I do not mean merely that you should know it and meditate on it. That is nothing. I mean rather that you should regard and esteem it as it ought to be regarded and esteemed. That is, you should hold it to be a living, eternal, all-powerful Word that can make you alive, free from sin and death, and keep you so eternally. . . . In short, the proper honor for the Word is nothing else than a genuine faith from the bottom of one's heart, a faith that holds the Word to be true, that trusts it and stakes its life upon it for eternity. (*LW* 36:278–79)

Faith, the internal *claritas*, is drawn from the external word, but it is not identified with that word. Indeed, without the light of faith, the external word benefits "nothing." Only when the heart is illumined by the internal light of faith does one know that he is "free from sin and death." Once fostered, this internal clarity never rests in itself, but it continually refers back to the bright promises of the external word, it is a "faith that holds the Word to be true." Whenever a Christian holds to *only* in one or the other, he runs the risk of losing the comfort of the gospel. It is either concealed in the supposed obscurity of the words or shaded by the lack of faith that these words are spoken to and for him.

This misappropriation of *claritas* may be seen in the teaching of the Zwickau prophets. These claimed to have the illumination of the Spirit (i.e., internal clarity) apart from the external word. In his response, Luther further specified the proper understanding of the relationship between the two types of clarity. In writing against Karlstadt and his followers, Luther maintains that there is no such thing as internal clarity without the preaching of the external word:

19. Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 247.

20. Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, 110.

> Now when God sends forth his holy gospel he deals with us in a twofold manner, first outwardly, then inwardly. Outwardly he deals with us through oral word of the gospel and through material signs, that is, baptism and the sacrament of the altar. Inwardly he deals with us through the Holy Spirit, faith and other gifts. But whatever their measure or order the outward factors should and must precede. The inward experience follows and is effected by the outward. God has determined to give the inward to no one except through the outward. For he wants to give no one the Spirit or faith outside of the outward Word and sign instituted by him. (*LW* 40:146)

For Luther, the order was of prime importance. The problem with the Enthusiasts was that the order had been reversed: first internal illumination, apart from the word, was necessary. This informed the reading of the external word. Luther writes, "[T]hey do not come through the external Word to the spirit, but from the spirit they come to the external Word" (*LW* 40:195). Luther was forced to argue the clarity of the external word, as it is preached and received in the "material signs" of the sacraments. Only after it has been delivered can one have the internal clarity of faith through the Holy Spirit that appropriates the word and teaches what the text brings to the believer. Thus, while there must be a distinction between the light of the external word and the light of faith, the two can never be divided or pitted against each other, nor can they be conflated.[21]

CLARITY OF SCRIPTURE AS A PASTORAL CONCERN

Luther's concern for focusing on this duplex clarity of Scripture was exceedingly pastoral. The reason for his insistence upon the external *claritas* was that all people are to read and hear Scripture in order to be given faith, the internal *claritas*, which reveals Christ's redemptive work for that hearer. Luther insists, "[I]f Scripture is obscure or ambiguous, what point was there in God's giving it to us?"[22] At the heart of this hermeneutical argument was justification through the very faith created by the effective word. At the center of it all was the conviction that God was actually speaking to man through Holy Scripture. Scripture is more than a tome of ecclesiastical regulations and a dictionary of doctrine. Scripture is the conversation of the triune God with man. As such, it is illuminating, both externally and internally.

As would be expected, the doctrine of Scripture's clarity is inextricably connected to other assertions about Scripture. The clarity of Scripture is closely bound to the teaching of Scripture's sufficiency for salvation.[23] This sufficiency rests in the promises of forgiveness and salvation. The sufficiency of Scripture's words is then bound up in the authority of Scripture; the promises of God's word would mean nothing if they were not spoken authoritatively by God himself. Clarity is linked to sufficiency; sufficiency is linked to authority.[24] Ultimately, all of these facets are seen as components of Luther's confession of Christ as the ἀρχή and τέλος of all Scripture, the delivery of Christ as the purpose of Scripture, and faith in Christ as the end of Scripture. The centrality of Christ in Scripture predicates that those things disclosed to man in Scripture are clear, because the word, written and preached, is nothing less than God's own self-disclosure for the sake of salvation.

The problem with the Enthusiasts was that the order had been reversed: first internal illumination, apart from the word, was necessary.

It was this soteriological and christological concern that led Luther to his clearest articulation of the clarity of Scripture in his later disputes with Rome and the Enthusiasts. He was not arguing the point in search of the academically correct answer. Luther was willing to go into such contentions because he saw the doctrine of the twofold and indivisible clarity of Scripture as vital to the proclamation of salvation. Rejection of the bright and clear promises of Scripture and the brightness of the faith that clings to them removes the true comfort of the gospel and places man at risk of despair and condemnation.

Luther arrived at his fullest and clearest expression of the twofold *claritas* of Scripture only after decades of wrestling with texts and confronting controversy. He defines the external and internal light of Scripture in *The Bondage of the Will*. When it was misunderstood, he further explained the interaction and interconnected nature of the external and internal in corrective works like *Against the Heavenly Prophets*. This was reiterated and integrated into his wider theology in his Smalcald Articles. As he continued to preach the texts of Scripture

21. The distinction between the two kinds of clarity in their unity has not gone unnoticed by scholars. Friedrich Beisser comments, "Might there exist a correlation here between the fact that the *unio* and the *communicatio idiomatum* stand so strongly in the foreground and the fact that Luther's teaching that Holy Scripture is *the* word as the decisive factor?" Beisser, *Claritas scripturae*, 96.
22. Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, 162.
23. It should be noted that the question of clarity and sufficiency has a long history within the theological traditions with which Luther would have been familiar. Heiko Oberman gives a brief but enlightening diachronic approach to these issues, providing some very useful insight into the connection between the sufficiency of Scripture and its interpretation (Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963]).
24. Robert D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970–1972), 1:311.

and refine his articulation of the truth therein, he came to confess the clarity of Scripture. In doing so, he confessed the foundation for the evangelical understanding of sin, justification, the word, the preaching office, and the nature of faith. Christ is the one who brings together the word and faith. Christ is the Light that is shed in and through the Scriptures. Christ is the brilliant object of faith. Thus it is only in the light of Christ that the light of Scripture can be seen for what it is: a brilliant and clear word from God, bringing salvation and faith into a darkened world. LOGIA

The sensus mysticus *in Lutheran Exegesis*

Jason D. Lane

An enduring feature of the interpretive tradition of Holy Scripture in the early and medieval church was the *sensus mysticus*, as distinct from the *sensus literalis*. Yet the prominence of the mystical sense in biblical interpretation has not made it any easier to define. Medieval exegetes in the Latin Church, to whom Martin Luther was especially indebted, defined the mystical sense within the *quadriga* or fourfold sense of Scripture to take into account the various layers of meaning in a given biblical text. Beginning with John Cassian (360–435), the *quadriga* included, in addition to the literal sense, the allegorical, tropological (moral), and the anagogical. Each interpreter had nuances as to how he treated these last three senses according to the biblical text, but all three belonged to the *sensus mysticus*. If we look ahead to the more fixed definitions of the term in Lutheran Orthodoxy, the *sensus mysticus* consisted not of the allegorical, moral, and eschatological sense, but rather *allegoricus, typicus, parabolicus*.[1] In other words, definitions of the mystical sense have shifted over time and have made it difficult to pin down a clear meaning.

The fourfold sense of Scripture served the church for centuries and gave preachers and commentators tools to mine the riches of the biblical text for the life of the church. According to Karlfried Froehlich, the *quadriga* was a brilliant way of preserving the various and essential strands of patristic exegesis for the church. Froehlich writes,

> Western hermeneutics in the Augustinian tradition finally crystallized its rules into the standard form of a fourfold sense of Scripture—literal, allegorical, tropological (moral), and anagogical. . . . [T]he fourfold sense was never a mechanical set of rules which professional exegetes would have to apply to every passage of Scripture. Rather, in the framework of the Western hermeneutical focus on the life of the church, they offered an ingenious synthesis of all the main strands of patristic hermeneutics to be handed down to the Latin Middle Ages. The attention to be given to the literal sense preserved the grammatical and historical emphases of the Antiochene school; the allegorical sense expressed the typological understanding of the Old Testament and its rich early Christian tradition; the tropological sense allowed for the interests of Jewish and Christian moralists from the rabbis and Philo to Tertullian and Chrysostom; the anagogical sense kept alive the central concern of Alexandrian exegesis for a spiritual reading of the Scriptures.[2]

Typically the *quadriga* was narrowed down to a twofold sense that distinguished between the grammatical signification of the plain words in their historical circumstances (*sensus literalis*) and the deeper signification that points to the *res* or subject matter of those words (*sensus mysticus*).[3]

Early and medieval exegetes were captivated by the fecundity of the biblical text to produce a deeper meaning than the plain literal sense signaled by the words. And although they almost all agreed with St. Augustine that doctrine and proofs of doctrine are drawn only from the literal sense of Scripture, early and medieval interpreters nevertheless saw in many passages the mystical sense inseparably joined with the literal sense. Nicholas of Lyra (1270–1349) argued, for instance, that when the historical and the mystical sense appeared in the same letter, it should be understood as a *duplex sensus literalis*.[4]

Luther, however, appears to deny the possibility of a *sensus duplex*. In an important passage from his late *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther critiques Lyra's practice of finding either a twofold or fourfold sense in one text. The following comment refers to Genesis 15:8 concerning God's promise of land to Abraham and his descendants. Lyra believed that the land of promise referred in a lesser extent to the physical land of Ur and Canaan, but in a greater extent to the realm of hell (Ur) and the eternal home of all believers in Christ (Canaan). Luther says,

> In connection with this passage Lyra draws attention to a fundamental principle that is most necessary for un-

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1. Salomon Glassius, *Philologia Sacra* (Leipzig, 1713), 406.
2. Karlfried Froehlich, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 28–29.
3. Ian Christopher Levy, *Introducing Medieval Biblical Interpretation: The Senses of Scripture in Premodern Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 232. Commenting on Nicholas of Lyra, Levy writes, "The literal sense can thus be reckoned the exterior of Scripture; it is clearer (*patentior*), because it is immediately signified through the words. The interior is the mystical or spiritual sense; it is more obscure (*latentior*) and is revealed only through things that are designated by words."
4. Ibid., 232–36.

> derstanding Scripture, namely, that many passages of Scripture have a twofold meaning: (1) a literal meaning pertaining to earthly things and (2) a meaning pertaining to spiritual and eternal gifts. Among these passages he includes the one before us. And in the schools of the theologians there is a widely known rule that Scripture must be understood in a fourfold manner. . . . I for my part am ready to concede that every one of these senses is richly represented; but if we want to treat Holy Scripture skillfully, our effort must be concentrated on arriving at one simple, pertinent, and sure literal sense [*unum simplicem, germanum et certum sensum literalem*]. (*LW* 3:26–27; WA 42:567.31–568.2)

Luther obviously recognizes that the text is rich enough to bear all four senses, but he denies the usefulness of such divisions, because it makes light of the authority of Scripture (*LW* 3:27). According to Luther, Lyra is trying to do a service to students by having them seek the spiritual meaning of a text, but he does a great disservice to the text by minimizing the historical account and the plain sense of the words. Luther continues,

> It is a serious mistake if Lyra, in keeping with his fundamental principle, tries to give the words a different meaning and to explain them as referring in a less important manner to the physical blessing of a physical Israel. Thus this passage has the specific meaning—the one and only meaning—that the Lord is speaking about the physical promise of the land of Canaan. No twofold meaning of the account or literal sense must be allowed here. . . . Even though the allegory is not inappropriate for teaching, its meaning is nevertheless weak and useless in a dispute. For who would prevent the devising of many such meanings, just as many shapes can be formed from a single piece of wax? (*LW* 3:28)

Under this principle that each passage has "one, simple, germane, and certain literal sense," Luther and his theological heirs articulated their view of Scripture against both the Roman Catholics and the Enthusiasts or Radical Spiritualists. The common characteristic of both Rome and the Enthusiasts, and why Luther critiques Lyra, is that they deny the clarity or perspicuity of Scripture and make the intent of the Holy Spirit ambiguous or *multiplex*. The Roman Catholics claimed, on the one hand, that the Scriptures were unclear, and their meaning could not be understood unless the magisterial authority of the church interpreted them. The literal sense could be one, but only when the text receives a unifying interpretation from the magisterium of the church. On the other hand, the Spiritualists, such as Caspar Schwenckfeld (1490–1561) and later Valentin Weigel (1533–1588), sought to divorce the Holy Spirit from the external word of Holy Scripture. They claimed that the Scriptures were dead letters, and thus inaccessible, unless the Holy Spirit illumined the heart directly or immediately. Thus, the one sense of the Scriptures could not come through the external, plain, clear words, but rather must come from the inner, spiritual word that the Spirit gives immediately without the letter. Against both of these positions, Lutherans derived their understanding of Scripture and its proper interpretation from the Scripture's own testimony: "The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple" (Ps 119:130). "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Ps 19:7). Lutherans claimed against both Rome and the Spiritualists that the Scriptures are authoritative, clear, and perfect, that is, they are sufficient by themselves and used as the Holy Spirit's vehicle to illumine the heart, convert the soul, and give understanding to the mind. As Roland Ziegler notes, Lutherans taught that readers and preachers of Holy Scripture "do not construct the meaning of the text, they follow the word, and they paraphrase what the word says."[5] Other governing principles of interpretation, such as "Scripture interprets Scripture," flow from the statement that each passage within its context has one intended sense. God communicates plainly to us through an external word, and that word is powerful to do what it says (Isa 55:10–11; Heb 4:12). Obscurity and hidden meanings, Luther argued, are not characteristics of Scripture, but traits of the sinful human heart.[6]

Luther and his theological heirs articulated their view of Scripture against both the Roman Catholics and the Enthusiasts or Radical Spiritualists.

Within this dogmatic-polemical context, the literal sense took center stage as the Spirit's clear and plain intent. Because the Scriptures are θεόπνευστος, according to 2 Timothy 3:16, and useful for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, they are sufficient for accomplishing the purpose for which God breathed them into existence. Nothing must be added, because nothing is lacking. The oneness of the literal sense is thus bound to the Holy Spirit's clear intent. Without a firm trust that all Scripture is clear and from God, we are left with Scripture inspired by a God who does not desire to be known with any certainty, who is himself dark. And

5. Roland Ziegler, "Luther and Lutheran Orthodoxy: Claritas and Perspicuitas Scripturae," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 81 (2017): 135.
6. Martin Luther, *On the Bondage of the Will*, trans. and ed. Philip S. Watson, in *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, ed. E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 111.

if we are left with uncertainty concerning what should be believed, then no standard of faith or assurance of our confession is possible. In other words, the perspicuity or clarity of Scripture is inseparably bound with the *sensus literalis* and directly impacts whether consciences find consolation in the gospel. If the assurance of one's faith is built on anything less than the foundation of Christ and his clear words, it will eventually fall like a house built on sand (Matt 7:26).

This principle of one sense has been so firmly established in the Lutheran church that it is often forgotten that the mystical sense had a place in the Lutheran exegetical tradition from the very beginning.[7] The modest goal of this essay is to present the often-misunderstood *sensus mysticus* or spiritual interpretation of Holy Scripture as it was defined and taught in the Lutheran church from Luther to Lutheran Orthodoxy. In order to define the *sensus mysticus*, it is necessary to pay careful attention to what Luther and later Lutherans meant by the literal sense of Scripture. Although the task seems to be straightforward enough, it proves rather difficult, since the boundary between the literal and the mystical sense in Lutheran exegesis is so thin, even permeable. I will demonstrate this further from some of Luther's comments about the mystical sense, or his frequent term "spiritual sense" (*geistliche Deutung*), as well as his definition of the literal sense. I argue that in order to understand Luther and his theological heirs on mystical exegesis we will need to distinguish, ironically, between various senses. The literal sense for Luther sometimes means negatively the historical or grammatical sense such as an unbeliever or Jewish interpreters without Christ may have. This is to have the *signa* without the *res*. At other times the literal sense means, as it does for Luther in the above quotations, the one, true sense. Likewise, the mystical sense can mean for Luther quite specifically the christological sense or the sense intended by the Holy Spirit that is only revealed to those who interpret the grammar spiritually, that is, according to the revelation of Christ and his salvation. At other times it refers to the medieval practice of seeking the allegorical, moral, or anagogical sense that may at times be helpful for teaching but is not the one sense of the Holy Spirit.

I suggest that Luther redefines the mystical sense in a narrow sense to account for the Holy Spirit's own intent. One might call this a christological sense, but it appears in a way that is distinct from the mystical and christological sense of Augustine and the medieval exegetes. Luther's contribution to the exegetical tradition is not in fact his christological exegesis but his mystical sense that is subsumed within the *sensus literalis* to be received as the one, intended sense. Against Rome, the meaning is one and is clear. Against the Enthusiasts, he argues that there is no separation of the word and the Spirit, but the word and Spirit are joined in an inseparable union wherein the Holy Spirit laid the eternal Son of God in the grammar of the Holy Scriptures. Luther expresses this union between the literal and mystical beautifully in his "Preface to the Old Testament":

It is often forgotten that the mystical sense had a place in the Lutheran exegetical tradition from the very beginning.

> For these are the Scriptures which make fools of all the wise and understanding, and are open only to the small and simple, as Christ says in Matthew 11[:25]. Therefore dismiss your own opinions and feelings, and think of the Scriptures as the loftiest and noblest of holy things, as the richest of mines which can never be sufficiently explored, in order that you may find that divine wisdom which God here lays before you in such simple guise as to quench all pride. Here you will find the swaddling cloths and the manger in which Christ lies, and to which the angel points the shepherds [Luke 2:12]. Simple and lowly are these swaddling cloths, but dear is the treasure, Christ, who lies in them. (*LW* 35:236)

Part of the work is to understand in what sense Luther and later Lutherans redefined or reformed the *sensus mysticus* and incorporated it into their exegesis. Those who are leery of mystical exegesis are faced in the Lutheran interpretive tradition with a wave of mystical exegesis in such works as Philipp Nicolai's *Freudenspiegel deß ewigen Lebens* (Frankfurt a. M., 1599), Johann Arndt's *Vier Bücher vom wahren Christentum* (1610) and his *Postilla* (1616), and Valerius Herberger's *Magnalia Dei* (1602–1622), to name just a few. Those who have some acquaintance with these texts would likely agree that there is some ambiguity as to whether their mystical exegesis is merely application or appropriation of the one literal sense or whether they believed that their interpretation is an exposition of the text's meaning and reveals the Holy Spirit's true intentions. Whether the mystical sense was the Spirit's intent is the real question under discussion.

7. The last time the *sensus mysticus* appeared in officially Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod documents was in the late 1920s. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, "The Mystical Sense of Scripture According to Johann Jacob Rambach," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 72 (2008): 47 n. 13. Mayes writes, "Even up until the late 1920s the *sensus mysticus* had not been excluded from LCMS instruction on hermeneutics, as can be seen from *Theologische Hermeneutik: Leitfaden für Vorlesungen* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1929), 14, §22, Anm. 5. Here, the rule *sensus lieralis unus est* does not exclude the *sensus mysticus*." It is perhaps worthy of note that it was around the 1920s and early 1930s that Concordia Seminary in St. Louis abandoned lectures in the Latin language, the language of the Lutheran church's hermeneutical textbooks that taught the mystical sense.

Since we are taking up only the definition of *mystical sense* and how the mystical sense was understood and taught by Luther and others, I will not get into specific examples of mystical exegesis, other than a few brief hints in the notes. It will have to suffice to take a more theoretical approach on the basis of Luther's writings and the more stable definitions of the mystical sense as they appear in the dogmatic texts and hermeneutical textbooks of Lutheran Orthodoxy. I briefly examine two bright lights in the area of seventeenth-century biblical interpretation to demonstrate how Lutherans treated the mystical sense. The first is Johann Gerhard (1582–1637), in his response to Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1541–1621) concerning the interpretation of Scripture, and the second is Salomon Glassius (1593–1656), Gerhard's student and successor in Jena, whose five-volume work on biblical interpretation, *Philologia Sacra* (1623–1636) became the textbook for biblical studies for almost two centuries in the Lutheran church.

WHAT DID LUTHER MEAN BY THE MYSTICAL SENSE?

It is well-known that Luther separated himself from the *quadriga* early in his exegetical work on the Psalms, and it is often thought that Luther abandoned the mystical sense altogether. One can illustrate the absence of Luther's mystical exegesis, for instance, by doing a search for *sensus mysticus* or *geistliche Sinn* (spiritual sense) or *geistliche Bedeutung* (spiritual meaning) and their variants in *Luthers Werke* (Weimarer Ausgabe). Rarely after 1519 do we find any references to the spiritual or mystical sense, although there are some noteworthy exceptions.[8] Already in the *Dictata* (1513–1515), Luther had set limits on the *quadriga:* "Thus, in the Scriptures, nothing can be interpreted by means of allegory, tropology, or by anagogy unless the same is expressly stated elsewhere [in Scripture] according to the historical sense" (WA 55, 1:4.21–22; my translation). As Luther developed as a doctor of Scripture, he appears to move from the fourfold sense down to a twofold sense of the Spirit and the letter — or the mystical and literal sense of Scripture — toward what some have called the historical sense. Theories of this process in Luther abound, but the observations of A. Skevington Wood serve as an example to show that this process is easily oversimplified.

> By the time Luther came to handle Galatians in the autumn of 1516, he rid himself more completely of the legacy he had inherited. The *glossae* and *scholia* have disappeared altogether. The *quadriga* has been largely replaced by a major stress on the literal sense, in conjunction with a notion of a spiritual sense, since it ignored Augustine's distinction between the spirit and the letter. It was not until after his confrontation with the papal theologians, however, that Luther finally discarded the multiple pattern of exegesis, and relied on what he came to call the historical sense. In this Luther may rightly be hailed, not only as the father of Protestant exegesis, but of modern exegesis too.[9]

Some have concluded from Luther's new emphasis on the one sense that he entirely rejected allegories or any mystical interpretation.

The great triumph of Luther's exegetical discovery is apparently the "historical sense." Yet historical-critical scholars have abused this language in Luther and used it as authorization from the Reformer to search out the historical *Sitz im Leben* of the biblical author and audience to discover the true, original meaning of the text, which they tend to argue is void of Christ. Brian German has shown in his recent work on Luther's *Dictata* that reducing Luther's view to "historical" can be misleading. He writes, "Luther speaks of 'historical' in a way that caters to two different but deeply traditional usages: (1) using '*historicus*' as synonymous with the *sensus literalis* (and thus as foundational for exegesis) and (2) using '*historicus*' for that which is carnal or Jewish."[10] Luther would have regarded the historical-critical search for the "historical sense" to be carnal.

A further confusion in Luther's definition of the *sensus literalis* is where the mystical sense fits into it. Some have concluded from Luther's new emphasis on the one sense that he entirely rejected allegories or any mystical interpretation. However, it was not the use of the mystical interpretation (allegory, tropology, and anagogy) that Luther rejected, but merely the misuse. In his early *Commentary on Galatians* in 1519, Luther instructs

8. Two exceptions stand out. First, in Luther's sermon on Genesis 6 from the summer of 1523, in which he clarifies how St. Peter gives us the "mystical sense" of the flood and the ark: WA 14:178.18–27. This is expected, since St. Peter gives us the spiritual interpretation of the flood. A second "mystical interpretation" appears in his comments on Psalm 147 from 1532, WA 31, 1:451.24–452.1. At Psalm 147:18, "He sends out his word, and melts them [crystals of ice]; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow," Luther says that the "spiritual meaning" (*geistliche Bedeutung*) is that the spiritual winter of the soul must be blown away by the wind, that is, the Holy Spirit. According to Luther, the spiritual winter is twofold: first, when the inner man is frozen by sin and brings with it the law and the devil with their *Anfechtungen*, and second, when the outer man is put under the cross and the wicked world denies Christians any fire of love, but can only spew at them the frost of hate in order to freeze us to death. Luther seems to be expounding the literal sense of Psalm 147:18.

9. A. Skevington Wood, *Captive to the Word: Martin Luther, Doctor of Sacred Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1969), 83.

10. Brian T. German, *Psalms of the Faithful: Luther's Early Reading of the Psalter in Canonical Context* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 8.

his students in light of Paul's allegory of Sarah and Hagar not to use allegories to establish doctrine, but instead to beautify with allegories once the consoling doctrine is in place. Once one has established faith with the literal sense and consoled troubled consciences, then one can safely dress up and furnish the building of faith with allegory or mystical interpretation (WA 2:531.29–34). Thus the literal sense establishes faith and the use of the mystical sense, in the sense of allegory, beautifies and adorns the literal sense. One could say that the literal sense is the meaning of the text and the mystical is a way of application. The definition of both the literal and mystical senses seem already fixed with Luther in 1519.

Yet the conclusion that the literal sense, which is strictly the grammatical-historical sense, is the true, one sense of the Scriptures, whereas the mystical sense is limited to the application of the preacher or interpreter is an oversimplification of Luther's position. In the same vein as his comments on Galatians 4, Luther famously warned in his "Preface to the Old Testament" against a strictly mystical interpretation of the Old Testament.

> There are some who have a small opinion of the Old Testament, thinking of it as a book that was given to the Jewish people only, and is now out of date, containing only stories of past times. They think that they have enough in the New Testament and pretend to seek in the Old Testament only a mystical sense. (WA DB 5:12.1–7)

In other words, Luther rejected a subjective interpretation of the Scriptures that in any way distracted the reader from Christ or the clear historical details of the biblical narrative. This warning, however, does not apply to the mystical interpretation that leads to Christ and enlivens the historical details of the text. In the very same preface where Luther warns against mystical exegesis, Luther writes of the Old Testament worship:

> In conclusion I ought also to indicate the spiritual meaning [*geistliche Deutung*] presented to us by the Levitical law and priesthood of Moses. But there is too much of this to write; it requires space and time and should be expounded with the living voice. For Moses is, indeed, a well of all wisdom and understanding, out of which has sprung all that the prophets knew and said. Moreover even the New Testament flows out of it and is grounded in it, as we have heard. It is my duty, however, to give at least some little clue to those who have the grace and understanding to pursue the matter further.
>
> If you would interpret well and confidently, set Christ before you, for he is the man to whom it all applies, every bit of it. Make the high priest Aaron, then, to be nobody but Christ alone, as does the Epistle to the Hebrews, which is sufficient, all by itself, to interpret all the figures of Moses. (*LW* 35:247)

For Luther, the mystical interpretation (*geistliche Deutung*) of the Levitical laws and rites is the true, genuine, and literal sense. There is not an historical sense that applied to the Israelites and now a higher spiritual signification for Christians. The sense is one, and the Hebrews were Christians who believed that their entire worship pointed to the God who would tabernacle among them (John 1:14).

One could say that the literal sense is the meaning of the text and the mystical is a way of application.

One may argue at this point that Luther only defines an Old Testament interpretation to be spiritual when something is clearly indicated in the New Testament, as we have with the Epistle to the Hebrews. Yet Luther sees the richness of the Old Testament not merely in the grammatical sense or the historical sense that is void of the mystical. Rather, the spiritual sense enlightens the grammar. In his famous *Treatise on the Last Words of David* of 1543, Luther argues that the Psalms have a twofold sweetness and therefore a twofold sense:

> David boasts of being *the sweet psalmist of Israel*, that is, he did not keep this certain promise of the Messiah to himself nor for himself. . . . When David uses the word *sweet* he not only means the sweetness and the charm of the Psalms according to the *Grammatica* and *Musica*, when the words are delightfully and artistically married, and the song or score sounds sweet and lovely, so that there is beautiful text and beautiful notes, but much more he means sweet according to *Theologia*, according to the spiritual sense [*geistlichen verstand*]. For this reason, the Psalms are lovely and sweet. They are comforting to all depressed and pitiful consciences, who are trapped in the terror of sin, in the agony of death and fear, and all manner of affliction and misery.[11]

We may notice here that Luther makes a distinction between the spirit and the letter, between the grammar/music and theology. It is not by the grammar itself that one is comforted, that is, until they come to the spiritual understanding of the Scriptures, as David does. It is the one full sense (*sensus literalis*) that comforts troubled consciences, and not the grammatical sense alone. There is a kind of *duplex sensus* here in Luther, but it is not the same that we find in Lyra.

One might expect that the emphasis on the spiritual sense would lead Luther away from the grammar or the historical context, as it did for Lyra, but instead it leads him deeper into the words of Scripture and to their powerful effect on sinners. Luther writes: "The Psalter is for those troubled hearts, because

11. WA 54:33.15 and 30–36 (my translation); see also *LW* 15:273.

it sings and preaches of the Messiah, a sweet, comforting, lovely song, even when one just reads the plain words, and reads or says them without notes."[12] The boundary between the two senses is permeable, and the two communicate in such a way that we can say that the sense of the passage or text is one. For Luther the literal sense can only be the literal sense when it subsumes the mystical, which is the christological sense. The grammar of Scripture (*signa*) takes on new meaning because the subject matter (*res*) is Christ, and therefore can be called a *nova lingua*. "Not that it signifies a new or different thing, but that it signifies in a new and different way, unless you want to call this too a new thing."[13] We find this re-signification not only in Luther's translation of Scripture but also in his exegesis. Again Luther:

> We Christians have the sense and understanding [*synn und verstand*] of the Bible, because we have the New Testament, that is, we have Jesus Christ, who was promised in the Old Testament and who later came, and brought with Him the light and understanding [*verstand*] of Scripture, as He says John 5[:46]: "If you believe Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote of Me." Also Luke 24:44–45: "Everything written about Me in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. (WA 54:29.3–9; *LW* 15:268)

Without the sense of Scripture, the grammar is of no real help. But with Christ, the grammar is pregnant with meaning.

The grammar of Scripture* (signa) *takes on new meaning because the subject matter* (res) *is Christ.

Luther therefore argued for the literal sense against the mystical exegesis commonly practiced in the early and medieval church that magnified the whim of the interpreter rather than the person and work of Christ. At the same time, Luther restored the mystical sense, which he understood as seeing Christ as the subject matter of Scripture. This mystical exegesis did not detract from the grammar of the text but came through it, giving new significance to the words and therefore creating a new language: Christ is subject, and all things have their meaning in reference to him.

Since Christ is the subject of the Scriptures, Luther would also insist that an explicit interpretation of the Old Testament in the New Testament Scriptures is not necessary to find Christ and the Holy Spirit's intent in the Old Testament. The Spirit instructs us to interpret the Scriptures spiritually in Christ. As St. Paul says, "God has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). For those who have Christ by faith, the veil of Moses is lifted, and with unveiled faces they see him in all the Scriptures. The veil of the law has been lifted by the revelation of the gospel. Christ himself invites all Christians to search the Scriptures that testify of him (John 5:39), to find him swaddled in the grammar, stories, figures, images, etc. of the Old Testament. Luther saw the Lord's sermon on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24), without any specific exegesis of the Old Testament, as an invitation to find Christ in every word. In Christ, then, we are given the Spirit's own interpretive key to unlock the Old Testament. What looks to be clear signifiers concerning the figures, times, places, images, and events of ancient Israel, as mere historical circumstances, are given new signification in Christ. They are not altogether new. Israel, too, hoped in the Lord and sought out the promise of the Messiah in their history and in the Scriptures. The grammar and history still remain. But all of these take on an entirely new meaning in Christ. Luther can therefore argue in his polemical exegesis, *Concerning the Last Words of David* (1543), "Whenever the Hebrew text happily lends itself and rhymes with the New Testament then that should be and must be the one, proper understanding of that Scripture [*der einige rechte verstand der schrift*]. Everything else, regardless of how Jews, Hebraists, or whoever want to blather against it with their doctored, twisted, and coerced grammar, is for us pure lies" (WA 54:55.13–17). In other words, the grammar receives new signification in Christ, who is himself the New Testament, and therefore the Old Testament must be interpreted in light of him. He is the one sense.

Christ as the one sense, however, is not a reduction of the text down to Christ. That was part of Luther's trouble early on, when he had a hyperchristological interpretation of the Scriptures.[14] He could not see the clear sense of the words because he did not have the sense of the Scriptures rightly. Christ was still judge. But when those words of Romans 1:17 broke through, and Luther got the *sensus* right, the words of the Old Testament took on new signification and, as he recalls, "a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me" (WA 54:186.3–16; *LW* 34:337). Without Christ as gift, the Scriptures remained a closed book to him, filled with the old language of the law and God's righteous demand and wrathful power. But with Christ as gift and promise, he interpreted not only the righteousness of God as gift, but also the work of God, the power of God, the wisdom of God, the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God, and so on. The very things that signified God's wrath began at once to signify something new to him, namely, God's grace and mercy in Christ. Rather than reducing the

12. WA 54:33.36–39. Luther continues by praising the *musica* as a gift of God that uplifts the troubled soul.
13. WA 39, 11:94.25–26, "Disputation on the Divinity and Humanity of Christ, 1540," Thesis 24.
14. German, *Psalms of the Faithful*, 10 n. 26.

grammar and the history of the Old Testament down to Christ, Luther saw through Christ the grammar and the history as sacred in their own right, that is, because their true sense contained Christ from the very beginning.

Christ as promise and gift, is not mere poetic analogy for Luther but constitutes the one, literal sense, which we can never sufficiently explore.

Again, Christ as the subject matter of the Old Testament can also be abused. For Luther, the narratives, figures, images, examples, types, and whatever else we find in the Old Testament are not, as is sometimes the case in typological preaching today, reduced to a one-to-one correlation of type and antitype, so that the type is abolished by the antitype. Spiritual interpretations should not cloud the grammar but flow freely from it. Because Luther, in his mature reading of Scripture, was so convinced of the subject matter, he was not at all pressed to reduce all things down to Christ. Instead he treats the Old Testament as Christian Scripture.[15] Thus Luther can, for instance, through his entire *Commentary on Jonah*, 1526 (LW 19:3–105), interpret the book while only mentioning Jonah as a prefiguring or example of Christ's death and resurrection once, when the reference to Matthew 12 was obvious.[16] The rest of his commentary deals with Jonah's death and resurrection as the death and resurrection of all Christians who must suffer God's wrath and be revived by the gospel. He also explores the office of preaching, the mystery of God's mercy and eternal election, and a Christian's life of repentance. Christ is in the text already, and Luther did not feel the need to force him in and miss the subtleties of the Holy Spirit who magnifies the power of the word to kill and to make alive and to bring about repentance and faith.

In summary, the union of the letters (*litterae*) of Scripture and its spiritual sense (*sensus*), namely Christ as promise and gift, is not mere poetic analogy for Luther but constitutes the one, literal sense, which we can never sufficiently explore. The marriage of the word and Spirit or the grammar and history with the mystical and spiritual interpretation in Christ as the *sensus literalis* and intention of the Holy Spirit makes the definition of the mystical sense, and sometimes the definition of the literal sense, difficult to trace. We now look to the seventeenth century, where the mystical sense was developed as a branch of biblical hermeneutics, for further clarification on Luther's teaching and practice.

RAHTMANN CONTROVERSY (1621–1630)

The Divorce of the sensus literalis and sensus mysticus

Both Johann Gerhard and Salomon Glassius maintained that the one literal sense was capable of subsuming the mystical. But before looking at how they did that, we need to put them in their seventeenth-century context and examine the very real concerns that Lutherans faced when the mystical sense was divorced from the grammatical-literal sense. One of the decisive moments for Lutheran hermeneutics and its maxim, *"sensus literalis unus est,"* occurred in the 1620s with the Rahtmann Controversy (1621–1630),[17] when the Danzig pastor Hermann Rahtmann (1585–1628), under the influence of Johann Arndt's spiritual program, insisted that Holy Scripture is not identical with the eternal word of the Father. Rahtmann was convinced that the words of Scripture were not enough to give the Spirit, due to the very obvious fact that many people read the Scriptures or hear them preached, but to no avail. Although Scripture may serve as a spark, according to Rahtmann, something is nevertheless lacking in the grammar of Scripture. To explain the apparent insufficiency of both the written and preached word (*externum verbum*), Rahtmann distinguished between the external written word of God and the divinely inspired internal word of God. The written or preached word is a signpost (*signum*), which without the Spirit becomes a dead word, whereas the *res signata* or the thing signified remains a gift of the internal word that comes only by way of the Spirit's direct illumination.[18]

In response to Rahtmann, orthodox Lutherans sought more carefully to explain the "literal sense" and what belongs to it. Bengt Hägglund summarizes what orthodox Lutherans reinforced after the controversy:

15. This point is well-argued in William Marsh, *Martin Luther on Reading the Bible as Christian Scripture: The Messiah in Luther's Biblical Hermeneutic and Theology*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017).
16. WA 19:249.16–25. It is noteworthy that Luther does not call Christ's reference to Jonah from Matthew 12 a spiritual interpretation in the usual sense. Instead, Luther argues from Jesus' own words that it is a "sign" or example. More importantly than the one-to-one correlation between type and antitype is, for Luther, Christ's use of Jonah as an example or a parable to demonstrate the wisdom of the cross for those who believe and the scandal of the cross for those who do not believe.
17. For a summary and helpful analysis of the controversy, see Johann Anselm Steiger, "Interpretation of the Sacred Scripture in the Age of Orthodoxy," in *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, ed. Magne Sæbø (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996–2005), 2:710–15; Bengt Hägglund, *History of Theology*, trans. Gene Lund (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), 307–8. The faculties of Jena and Königsberg, and Helmstädt issued censures of Rahtmann's position and frequently connected it to the radical spiritualists, such as Valentin Weigel and Caspar Schwenckfeld: *Censuren und Bedencken von theologischen Faculteten und Doctoren zu Wittenberg / Königsberg / Jehna / Helmstädt uber M. Hermanni Rathmanni Predigers zu S. Catharinen binnen Dantzig außgegangenen Büchern* (Jena, 1626).
18. Steiger, "Interpretation of the Sacred Scripture," 2:710–11.

> Great weight was attached to the literal interpretation. There can be only one original meaning, *sensus literalis*. Allegorical expositions were also recognized, but they were looked upon as a posteriori figurative applications — unless they were intended by the text itself, as was thought to be the case in the Song of Solomon, thus constituting its original *sensus literalis*. This concept did not imply a historical interpretation in the modern sense, but it rather pointed, in general, to the meaning originally intended by the Holy Spirit. Typology or allegory was looked upon (even where suggested by the text itself) as an application and not as an original "mystical" meaning in the text. In later orthodoxy, reference was made to a real *duplex sensus*, i.e., a literal and mystical meaning in one and the same text.[19]

As Hägglund describes, Orthodoxy's insistence on the *sensus literalis* against Rahtmann's position was necessary in order to guard against any Enthusiasm that would seek to divorce the word and the Spirit. Yet as his example from the Song of Songs demonstrates, even the *sensus literalis* has to account for layers of meaning, and the one, literal sense later became the one literal sense that is in reality a "real *duplex sensus*." The literal sense and the mystical sense are joined together in one text in a real union. But is this twofold sense merely a late development and departure from the Lutheran Orthodoxy position, as Hägglund suggests?

Benjamin Mayes has noted in his study of the mystical sense of Scripture in the Pietist theologian Johann Jacob Rambach (1693–1735) that the *duplex sensus* (literal and mystical) that Rambach advanced was not a product of later orthodoxy (or Pietism) but was already fixed in the late sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries.[20] "Rambach," he writes, "is a part of the Lutheran tradition and not an innovator concerning the mystical sense of Scripture."[21] Mayes argues, as I will for Gerhard and for Glassius, that for Rambach the sense of any scriptural passage, though *duplex*, is one.

Rambach upholds the classic Reformation rule that the literal sense of the Scripture is one, but he also believes that "under the literal sense there is a mystical sense hidden in many, but not in all places of the Holy Scripture." For example, in Numbers 21, the bronze serpent was lifted up on a pole so that whoever would look at the snake would be saved from death caused by snake bites. Rambach insists that this literally took place (*sensus literalis*). Underneath this factual occurrence, however, something else is prophesied or indicated, namely, that the Son of Man would be lifted up on the cross, as Christ himself explains this passage in John 3:14. This is the *sensus mysticus*.[22]

19. Hägglund, *History of Theology*, 307.
20. Mayes, "The Mystical Sense of Scripture," 46. Mayes follows Georg Walch, *Bibliotheca theologica selecta*, 4:229, who pins the first fixed definition of the twofold sense to Lucas Bacmeister, *Explicatio typorum* (Rostock, 1604).
21. Mayes, "The Mystical Sense of Scripture," 46.
22. Ibid.

The Lutheran tradition of the *duplex sensus* (to be distinguished from Lyra's *duplex sensus literalis*) as it was carried on by Gerhard and Glassius merits a closer look. Although all Lutherans critiqued the abuses of mystical exegesis, as had Luther, the mystical sense that Luther refined was received by Johann Gerhard, and Gerhard's student and successor Salomon Glassius (1593–1656), and became an indispensable part of the one *sensus literalis* in the Lutheran exegetical tradition.

THE DEFINITION OF THE MYSTICAL SENSE IN BELLARMINE AND JOHANN GERHARD

Gerhard's discussion of the *sensus literalis* and *sensus mysticus* takes place in response to Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, to whom not only Gerhard but all orthodox Lutherans in the seventeenth century felt the need to respond. Bellarmine taught in his *Disputationes de controversiis* (1593), particularly his *Disputatio de Verbo Dei*, that there is a distinction between the literal and the mystical. He calls them the literal or historical, and the spiritual or mystical sense. He writes, "The *literal* is the meaning which the words carry with them immediately. The *spiritual* is what is referred to in terms other than what the words signify immediately."[23] Bellarmine then defines the literal sense as twofold: "First, the simple, which consists in the words being proper. The second is figurative, where the words are transferred from their natural signification to another meaning. There are as many kinds of this as there are kinds of figures of speech."[24] The spiritual sense, however, is threefold and includes, as inherited from the medieval tradition, the allegorical, the tropological or moral, and finally the anogogical or eschatological.[25] For Bellarmine, the *quadriga* or fourfold sense of medieval exegesis ought to be reduced down to two, with priority given to the literal sense. Unlike the spiritual sense, the literal sense, Bellarmine argues, "is found in every passage of the Old and New Testaments" and "sometimes many literal senses may be found in the same sentence."[26] The spiritual sense is also in both testaments, but "a spiritual sense is not found in every sentence of Scripture, neither in the Old Testament nor in the New."[27] So what is for Bellarmine the difference between the literal and spiritual sense, and why should the literal be favored over the spiritual? He writes,

> [W]e and our opponents are agreed that efficacious proofs should be sought only from the literal sense since the meaning that is gleaned directly from the words is surely

23. The quotations from Bellarmine are taken from Johann Gerhard, *On Interpreting Sacred Scripture and Method of Theological Study*, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, trans. Joshua J. Hayes, Theological Commonplaces I–II (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 93, and refer to Part I, *De Verbo Dei*, bk. 3, ch. 3, in Robert Bellarmine, *Disputationes* (Ingolstadt: Adam Sartorius, 1598). A PDF version of Bellarmine's original text can be downloaded from https://bibliothek.uni-halle.de.
24. Gerhard, *On Interpreting*, 93.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.

> the meaning of the Holy Spirit. The mystical and spiritual senses are diverse, and though beneficial, it is not always clear whether they are the intent of the Holy Spirit.[28]

Bellarmine here seems to be guarding against whimsical allegories of the interpreter, as Luther had, but it is unclear whether Bellarmine would include within the literal sense the mystical sense that points to Christ. The mystical sense for him is merely a matter of the interpreter and therefore one cannot know for certain whether the mystical sense is the intent of the Holy Spirit. One must defer to the literal sense of Scripture as the Holy Spirit's intent.

The arch-orthodox Lutheran theologian Johann Gerhard responded to Bellarmine's work *De Verbo Dei* with his own tract on biblical interpretation, *Tractatus de legitima scripturae sacrae interpretatione* (1610). Gerhard makes a subtle move in his response to Bellarmine's definition of diverse senses of the Scriptures. Rather than say that there are two senses, the literal and the mystical (which Bellarmine had defined as the human interpreter's interpretation), Gerhard asserts that "each passage has one proper and original [*genuinus*] sense that the Holy Spirit intended and can be obtained from the genuine signification of the words. It is from this literal sense alone that efficacious proofs comes."[29] Gerhard, who himself is famous for his mystical interpretation of the Scripture (for instance, in his *Sacred Meditations, Postilla, Sermons of the History of the Passion of Christ,* and his *Commentary on Genesis*), follows Bellarmine's universally accepted definition of the mystical sense as the allegorical, tropological, and anagogical, but he seeks to locate the source of these "applications" in the literal sense. He writes:

> *Allegories, tropologies, and anagogies are not diverse meanings* but various inferences from this one sense or various applications of this one sense and of the thing which the letter expresses. The same narrative [*historia*] can be applied in many ways; it can be treated allegorically, tropologically, or anagogically, but still one proper and literal meaning of the words remains.[30]

Gerhard is quick to point out that the mystical sense is not merely human interpretation but is the Holy Spirit's intention when the sign and the thing signified come together. For example, with Jonah's three days in the belly of a fish, the narrative of Jonah's descent is a sign, but the thing signified is the death and resurrection of Christ, because the Holy Spirit has made it clear (Matt 12:40). Thus, the mystical sense becomes intrinsically attached to the literal sense of the narrative, because the Holy Spirit's intent is explicit. The one sense, however, does not mean for Gerhard that the one sense is flattened out to mean only the death and resurrection of Christ, while the literal narrative is no longer relevant. He agrees with Bellarmine that the literal sense is often twofold. As Gerhard says, "[T]he full and perfect sense is completed when both of these [that is, the literal words and the figurative language given through the Holy Spirit] are combined together" and "{I]t is clear on the basis of the Holy Spirit's own interpretation that the figurative sense is contained in the historical account."[31]

Doctrine or clear proofs can only be sought in the literal sense.

Gerhard therefore agrees with Bellarmine, as well as Jerome and many other church fathers, that doctrine or clear proofs can only be sought in the literal sense. But he refines the definition of the literal sense by arguing that whenever the Holy Spirit interprets literal words and works spiritually, then the spiritual or mystical sense is the literal sense and can be the source of doctrine. Gerhard agrees with Bellarmine that if the Holy Spirit does not give an explicit spiritual interpretation, the mystical sense belongs properly to the category of application, in which the interpreter applies the various inferences of the one sense to himself or others. Yet this *applicatio* for Gerhard is not left to the interpreter alone but flows from the Holy Spirit's intent. One might say this is the "for me" of the gospel that Luther so frequently praised and belongs properly to the word's own effective power.

Gerhard's complaint against Bellarmine is his suggestion that the mystical sense of Scripture is another proof that God speaks in obscure ways and cannot be understood without the aid of the church's magisterium. Gerhard asserts,

> [B]ecause the Maker of thought and language speaks in Scripture, therefore He speaks clearly; His speech expresses everything His mind conceives. Moreover, that speech is best which fully and clearly gives expression to the mind's perceptions. Learned men do not give their ap-

28. Ibid., 93–94.
29. Ibid., 93. This quotation can be found in the original from the collection of statements from the Lutheran dogmaticians on the *sensus literalis:* Heinrich Schmid and Horst Georg Pöhlmann, eds., *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1979), prolegomena, ch. IV, §10, "Perspicuitas." The translator of the American edition unfortunately introduces the misunderstood term *original* for *genuinus*. The term *original sense* is misleading, because it implies that the sense of the text is merely the human author's original intent. Historical-critical scholars picked up on this language of *original sense* and made it synonymous with the *sensus literalis* to advance their critical program. For a discussion of the confusion, Brevard S. Childs, see "The Sensus Literalis of Scripture: An Ancient and Modern Problem," in *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie: Festschrift für Walther Zimmerli zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Herbert Donner, Robert Hanhart, and Rudolf Smend (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 80–93.
30. Gerhard, *On Interpreting*, 94.
31. Ibid.

> proval when one must divine what someone means to say with his words and in what sense they should be understood, if he is saying one thing but concealing another.[32]

Thus, Gerhard defends the clarity of Scripture while still preserving Scripture's richness of meaning so that many inferences can be made from a text (mystical sense), even when the text has "one proper and genuine sense." Gerhard also adds that "if allegories, tropologies, and analogies were the true meaning of Scripture, then surely efficacious proofs would be sought from them as if they were oracles of the Holy Spirit."[33] Gerhard even encourages the mystical interpretation when the words seem to be of little use (2 Tim 3:16): "Usefulness encourages the use of allegories when the words themselves, taken grammatically, do not seem to offer any useful doctrine or instruction, or even if one does present itself but would be much richer combined with an allegorical interpretation."[34] In other words, Gerhard believes that a spiritual interpretation that aligns with the analogy of faith in Christ enriches the grammar and its effect on those who hear.

Glassius insists that the mystical sense is essentially bound to the Spirit's intention and God's revelation in Christ.

Gerhard's issue with Bellarmine is therefore not his view of the mystical sense per se, nor his teaching that the word of God has a twofold meaning, but rather that his twofold meaning presupposes that the word of God is obscure. Bellarmine cites Nicholas of Lyra without mentioning him by name: "Because divine Scripture has God as its author, it is natural for it oftentimes to have two senses: the literal or historical, and the spiritual or mystical."[35] Bellarmine then cites Philo of Alexandria and Gregory of Nazianzus, who argued that the two senses are analogous to the person of Christ: "Just as the begotten Word of God has an invisible divine nature and a visible human nature, so also the written word of God has an external sense and an internal."[36] To summarize, Gerhard's use of allegory and the mystical sense is to affirm the clarity of the Scriptures. On the other hand, Bellarmine maintains the mystical sense and the distinction between literal and spiritual or "external and internal" to demonstrate that the Scriptures are in some way unclear, insufficient, and thus in need of the church's magisterial authority to interpret them according to the Holy Spirit's intent.

GLASSIUS AND THE DIGNITY OF THE SENSUS MYSTICUS

Perhaps no one has added more to the understanding of the *sensus mysticus* in the Lutheran church than Gerhard's student and successor in Jena, Salomon Glassius. As Johann Anselm Steiger notes, the *Philologia Sacra* (1623–1636) of Glassius is regarded with the *Clavis scripturae sacrae* of Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1567) and the *Tractatus* of Gerhard (1610) as the most significant and foundational work in hermeneutics in the Lutheran church.[37] In book five, concerning the *rhetorica sacra*, Glassius gives significant treatment to the mystical sense.

Although Glassius insists that the *sensus literalis* is the most important sense for establishing doctrine and faith, as Luther and many others did, he nevertheless argues in the same vein as Gerhard that the mystical sense belongs to the Holy Spirit's very own rhetoric, thus making the mystical sense an indispensable part of the *rhetorica sacra* of Holy Scripture. Therefore, according to Glassius, although the literal sense is most foundational, the mystical sense is prior to the literal sense in dignity.[38] He writes: "The mystical is prior to the literal in dignity. For the mystical is intended by the Holy Spirit to be nobler and holier than the literal."[39] Glassius insists that the mystical sense is essentially bound to the Spirit's intention and God's revelation in Christ. Steiger observes,

> The *sensus mysticus* has its deepest hermeneutical foundation, according to Glassius, in that the merciful God takes to himself the weakness and comprehension of man and reveals himself in humanly tangible images and stories. God empties himself in Christ of his divinity, and himself becomes an image (Col 1:15) to reveal himself as God and man [*gottmenschlich*] in this act. . . . That God lets himself be recognized typologically, allegorically, and parabolically in human language, in parables, and parable-like stories is for Glassius in no way conceived as an accident of God's "*revelatio*," but as an essential and enduring feature of it.[40]

For Gerhard and Glassius, one learns the mystical exegesis by letting the Holy Spirit's own language and interpretation

32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., 95.
34. Ibid., 98. Gerhard gives the example of Jacob hoping to find Rachel in his marriage bed, but instead finding Leah. He suggests that preachers should use the story to teach that we should not be deceived by worldly lusts, because the things we lust after in the world will be taken from us, just as Jacob, when he awoke, did not find Rachel, but Leah.
35. Ibid., 93.
36. Bellarmine, *Disputationes*, 170.
37. Johann Anselm Steiger, "Salomon Glassius' Hermeneutik des *sensus mysticus*," in *Hebraistik - Hermeneutik - Homiletik: Die "Philologia Sacra" im Frühneuzeitlichen Bibelstudium*, ed. Christoph Bultmann and Lutz Danneberg (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 384–85.
38. Ibid., 391.
39. Glassius, *Philologia Sacra*, 407.
40. Steiger, "Salomon Glassius' Hermeneutik," 385.

lead one to see in the literal sense the mystical, which points to Christ and enriches all those who read and hear Holy Scripture. Steiger notes that for Glassius the mystical sense is not limited only to those places where the Holy Spirit explicitly gives the mystical sense to the narratives, figures, images, and so forth, but that the Holy Spirit has given us his own way to lead us to the mystical sense. Glassius thus distinguishes between allegories and types that are explicit in the Scriptures and those which are implicit or inferred.[41] But whether these mystical interpretations are implicit or inferred, they are nonetheless governed by the *sensus literalis* or the intent of the Holy Spirit. When interpreters follow the Holy Spirit's own way of revealing the mystical sense, they follow the Holy Spirit's own intent and thus reveal the deeper riches of the literal sense that embodies the mystical. The boundary of mystical exegesis, for Glassius, is set by the Holy Spirit himself. Steiger summarizes Glassius's use of mystical exegesis and draws together some important conclusions:

> The common accusation today that the spiritual-figurative interpretation of the biblical texts should be abandoned because it is something foreign that has been read into the text turns comes without any serious reflection on the interpretation. The "eisegesis" is according to Glassius not to be outright abandoned. Rather one should ask whether this interpretation is according to Scripture [*schriftgemäß*], that is, whether the interpretation moves in a similar way as the New Testament does with the Old, so that the *analogia fidei* can be observed and thus be advocated as a biblical-hermeneutical interpretation.[42]

This offers especially to preachers a biblically faithful way to mine the riches of Scripture as Luther had urged. It would certainly serve pastors and students of Holy Scripture well to study more Glassius.[43]

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We set out to define the mystical sense and have concluded that in certain contexts the mystical sense means to use allegory or typology that is only edifying for the faithful who are well-grounded in the *analogia fidei* and only if the allegory is well-grounded in Scripture's own rhetoric. More work needs to be done to see specific examples of how Lutherans practiced this in their preaching and devotional works. The use of this kind of mystical sense, which could be called mystical exegesis in the broad sense, should be limited, especially when it leads us away from Christ toward things less theologically useful, as defined by 2 Timothy 3:16. At other times the mystical sense means reading the Old Testament in reference to Christ and should be constantly sought in the text, not merely because it is edifying but because it *is* the literal sense and the Holy Spirit's intent. This mystical sense, the christological sense to which Luther points throughout his *Treatise on the Last Words of David*, should be defined as mystical exegesis in the narrow sense. It not only points to Christ but also, because it points to Christ, dignifies and sanctifies the history, figures, rites, and so forth of Israel.

This offers especially to preachers a biblically faithful way to mine the riches of Scripture as Luther had urged.

Thus there is, as some have suggested is the case with Glassius, one sense with two natures, a *duplex sensus* that is in reality one, because it is the clear intent of the Holy Spirit. Glassius takes what he finds in Luther to say that the literal sense includes the interpreter's search to find Christ in the Scriptures according to the pattern of New Testament exegesis of the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit has shown us in the New Testament what to look for by means of his sacred rhetoric. Brian German puts it this way: "[T]he literal sense [for Luther] had the capacity to extend across all three advents of Christ, such that the plain sense of the psalmists' words was sufficiently meaningful and edifying for believers both old and new."[44]

If one affirms, contrary to what we see in Luther, Gerhard, and Glassius, that the mystical sense is something more than the literal sense, as was the case with Hermann Rahtmann, it would be only natural to dismiss the historical character of the biblical narratives, since we have found something better. Flights of fancy and nonliteral reading would abound, as they sometimes did in the early and medieval church. On the other hand, if we deny any room for the mystical sense, we inevitably change the definition of the literal and cater to the historical-critical method that wants to isolate historical texts apart from their sense in Christ. Lutherans who live and interpret Scripture in the wake of historical criticism are pressed, sometimes unwillingly, to take the literal sense to mean the

41. Ibid., 391.
42. Ibid.
43. Before he died, Glassius prepared a German and abridged version of his *Philologia Sacra*. It was intended for both pastors and laity and would be a very good place to start, if Glassius were to be made available in English. Salomon Glassius, *Christlicher Glaubens-Grund. Das ist / deutliche Ausführung / daß allein die H. Schrifft der Christlichen Lehr / Glaubens und Lebens / waares principium, vester Grund / sichere Regel / und unbetriegliche Richtschnur; hingegen aber / was dißfals von des Papsts und desselben Kirchen autorität / item von traditionen / Kirchenbräuchen / Vätern / Concilien etc. von alten und neuen Päpstischen Scribenten / vorgegeben wird / falsch / irrig und verführisch sey* (Nürnberg: Gedruckt und verlegt bey Wolfgang Endter dem Ältern, 1654).
44. German, *Psalms of the Faithful*, 198.

scientific-historical sense, if only to preserve the historical integrity of the biblical accounts. But does it bring us much farther if we can finally prove to the unbelieving world that the Scriptures are indeed historically accurate? Or have we not lost something when the only thing we can say, for example, from Genesis 1–2 is that God really did create the world in six 24-hour days? Once we have the right historical answer, no more theological interpretation is necessary. This narrow view of the historical sense has caused some scholars, such as David Steinmetz, to suggest a return to medieval exegesis: "The medieval theory of levels of meaning in the biblical text, with all its undoubted defects, flourished because it is true, while the modern theory of a single meaning, with all its demonstrable virtues, is false."[45] Perhaps, however, we do not need to go back that far.

45. David Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis," *Theology Today* 37 (1980–1981): 27.

The purpose of mystical exegesis as Luther, Gerhard, and Glassius came to define it leads Lutheran preachers and hearers by God's grace to grow in their affection for the word of God and to be trained in the rich language, figures, and images of Scriptures. It is not about getting the right answer to every biblical text, as if we were merely looking for one point of doctrine in every text, nor is it about the preacher using the Scriptures as a springboard to launch into relatable stories or clever examples that often distract from the *res* of Scripture. Instead, mystical exegesis is about letting the multifaceted, image-rich, and powerful word of God present us with and lead us to Christ and his salvation. In this way, Lutherans have seen the Scriptures as the Holy Spirit's own *rhetorica sacra* to paint Christ before our eyes (Gal 3:1). Anyone who learns the Holy Spirit's sacred rhetoric will also learn how to interpret the Scriptures spiritually. Preachers should be compelled by the promise of finding Christ to search the Scriptures diligently and learn the Spirit's way of revealing Christ, so that what sounds forth from the pulpit is what the Spirit says to the churches. LOGIA

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Lutheran Considerations on Community of Property from Acts to the South African Land Issue

Karl Böhmer

More than twenty years after the fall of apartheid, South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world. This inequality is strikingly visible, since it falls along racial lines. The top 10 percent of the population, including much of the white minority, own approximately 95 percent of the country's wealth, while the bottom 80 percent, including most blacks, own no wealth at all.[1] That is a sobering, stark statistic. It is the booming drumbeat on the basis of which various proposals of land expropriation without compensation simply supply snatches of melody. Apart from the challenges attendant to poverty as such, which are legion, this statistic means that 80 percent of South Africa's population is disinvested in the country's current systems and structures, and has nothing to lose if the fundamental basis of society were to be radically changed. Currently this basis includes property rights as enshrined in the country's constitution. But property ownership also reflects the stark inequality. "Huge disparities remain and land ownership continues to be heavily skewed across racial lines twenty years after the end of apartheid."[2]

The acute, racially profiled disparity is all the more striking in light of post-1994 efforts to undo the apartheid legacy. The transition from white minority rule to black majority rule under the leadership of President Nelson Mandela of the African National Congress (ANC) was mediated by the well-known Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was a court-like restorative justice[3] body assembled in South Africa after the end of apartheid. Witnesses who were identified as victims of gross human rights violations were invited to give statements about their experiences, and some were selected for public hearings. Perpetrators of violence could also give testimony and request amnesty from both civil and criminal prosecution. The TRC . . . was seen by many as a crucial component of the transition to full and free democracy in South Africa. Despite some flaws, it is generally (although not universally) thought to have been successful.[4]

Following the TRC, the new South African government instituted a policy of land redistribution to redress the evils of the past. All black South Africans whose land had been expropriated were encouraged to lodge claims with the Land Claims Commission. Where such claims were successful, the land was purchased on a "willing buyer, willing seller" basis at fair market value and redistributed to claimants. Yet the land claims process has dragged on for almost 25 years, with no end in sight. Many cases have become excessively protracted, with the government frequently accusing white landowners of inflating land prices and delaying negotiations, while landowners in turn accuse the government of inefficiency and corruption. Where land has been returned to blacks, it has often subsequently fallen into disuse. Many black agribusiness ventures started on such farms have failed, purportedly due to lack of mentorship, specialized knowledge and equipment, access to financial credit, and long-term government support. Some claimants preferred to receive financial compensation instead of land, with its ownership then reverting to the state. Much of this land also remains underutilized.[5]

Thus while some changes have been made, little success has been achieved. Blacks still own less than 4 percent of South

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1. David Francis, Imraan Valodia, and Eddie Webster, "The Richest 10 Percent Own 95 Percent—Products of an Economic and Social System," *City Press*, accessed 2 August 2018, https://city-press.news24.com/Special-Report/Wealth_Index/the-richest-10-own-95-products-of-an-economic-and-social-system-20180731.
2. Arnim Van Wyk, "Do 40,000 whites own 80 percent of SA?" *Africa Check*, accessed 2 August 2018, https://africacheck.org/reports/do-40000-whites-own-80-of-sa-the-claim-is-incorrect.
3. According to Braithwaite, restorative justice is "a process where all stakeholders affected by an injustice have an opportunity to discuss how they have been affected by the injustice and to decide what should be done to repair the harm. With crime, restorative justice is about the idea that because crime hurts, justice should heal. It follows that conversations with those who have been hurt and with those who have inflicted the harm must be central to the process." John Braithwaite, "Restorative Justice and De-Professionalization," *The Good Society* 13, no. 1 (2004): 28–31.
4. "Truth and Reconciliation Commission (South Africa)," *Wikipedia*, accessed 2 August 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth_and_Reconciliation_Commission_(South_Africa).
5. "Land Restitution in South Africa since 1994," *South African History Online*, accessed 2 August 2018, https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/land-restitution-south-africa-1994; "Re-opening of the Lodgement of Land Claims," *South African Government*, accessed 2 August 2018, https://www.gov.za/about-government/opening-lodgement-land-claims-campaign.

Africa's rural land privately,[6] while another 15 percent or so is communally owned by blacks.[7] The uncomfortable reality is that in South Africa today most farms continue to be owned and managed by a small percentage of the white minority, while most blacks continue to remain landless; most whites are still comfortable, if not well off, while most blacks are still poor.

THE LOOMING PROSPECT OF EXPROPRIATION WITHOUT COMPENSATION

Following the recent election of President Cyril Ramaphosa, the South African parliament passed a motion to review the property clause in the constitution, specifically with regard to removing its requirement for just and equitable compensation where land is expropriated. President Ramaphosa himself has consistently stated that he wishes to avoid a land grab along the lines of what happened in Zimbabwe in 2000, where land was seized from white farmers and redistributed to blacks. This land seizure was a spectacularly catastrophic process, leading not only to nepotism and cronyism in the distribution of farms, but also to a severe national economic decline with ensuing deindustrialization, lost export revenues, hyperinflation, food scarcity, a massive withdrawal of foreign investment, food aid imports, and unemployment rates of over 90 percent. The cost of Zimbabwe's land reform has been estimated at more than US$20 billion.[8] Ramaphosa wants to avoid such a catastrophe in South Africa at all costs.[9] However he has yet to explain how a land redistribution program is to be initiated without impacting the economy or South Africa's food security. The mere proposal that land expropriation be considered has already negatively impacted the South African economy and caused uncertainty among foreign investors.

Even so, the South African president is serious about his intention to implement land expropriation without compensation. He resorts to what appears to be theological language, describing the manner in which white people historically obtained land in South Africa as the country's "original sin": "Land taking was the original sin, causing divisions and pain amongst of our people."[10] At the funeral of Winnie Mandela, former wife of Nelson Mandela, Ramaphosa stated: "We are determined to correct the original sin of the violent dispossession of our people's land and its wealth. We [must] restore the dignity of our people by ensuring that they have an equal claim to the land of their birth. I want to assure all and sundry that on this, we will not retreat."[11] In light of the president's references to land taking by whites as the "original sin," it is highly instructive that Karl Marx himself described land dispossession from laborers by capitalists as capitalism's "original sin."[12] President Ramaphosa's statements thus clearly evoke not Christian dogmatics but Marxist thought, since he echoes Marx's language in referring to land taking.

Radical leftist parties in South Africa go even further, calling for blanket nationalization, for all land to be expropriated and to belong to the state.[13] This is also in line with classic Marxist ideology, according to which land serves as the basis for the means of production and should therefore belong to all, communally. It should therefore come as no surprise that such leftist parties are threatening that to ignore the popular demand for "land expropriation will be to risk a direct revolution."[14]

Together with such parties, the ruling ANC has the necessary majority for a motion on land expropriation to pass in the South African parliament.[15] It has public opinion firmly on its side, as public hearings held throughout the country collectively demonstrate.[16] At one recent meeting, members of a representative group of black senior business and professional people made such statements as these: "The colonial land thieves never debated, they just stole the land, so why should we even debate this issue? Or: it is none of anyone's business what black people do with the land they're going to take, it's theirs and they can do with it what they want. And: how would you feel if someone robbed your house and afterwards wanted to negotiate about

6. Sandiso Phaliso, "Blacks own the least land - report," *Cape Times*, accessed 2 August 2018, https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/news/blacks-own-the-least-land-report-13145254; SAPeople Contributor, "DA Says Land Audit Report Revealing Low Black Ownership Should Be Tabled in Parliament," *SA People News*, accessed 2 August 2018, https://www.sapeople.com/2018/02/05/land-audit-report-showing-black-south-africans-1-2-rural-land-tabled-parliament; Arabile Gumede and Amogelang Mbatha, "Why Land Seizure Is Back in News in South Africa," *Bloomberg*, accessed 2 August 2018, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-01/why-land-seizure-is-back-in-news-in-south-africa-quicktake-q-a.
7. Cheryl Walker and Alex Dubb, "The Distribution of Land in South Africa: An Overview," *Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies*, accessed 2 August 2018, http://www.plaas.org.za/sites/default/files/publications-pdf/No1%20Fact%20check%20web.pdf.
8. Sihlobo and Kapuya, "Special Report," *Rand Daily Mail*, accessed 2 August 2018, https://www.businesslive.co.za/rdm/politics/2018-07-23-special-report-the-truth-about-land-ownership-in-south-africa.
9. Bekezela Phakathi, "Expropriation of land will not be smash and grab, Ramaphosa tells MPs," *BusinessDay*, accessed 3 August 2018, https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/national/2018-02-20-land-expropriation-aims-to-address-the-original-sin-cyril-ramaphosa-tells-mps.
10. Tom Head, "In a nutshell," *The South African*, accessed 3 August 2018, https://www.thesouthafrican.com/cyril-ramaphosa-sona-reply-2018.
11. Cyril Ramaphosa, "She was a symbol of hope to all the oppressed and a source of courage for those who wanted to fight against injustice," politicsweb, accessed 3 August 2018, http://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/we-are-determined-to-correct-original-sin-of-sa--c.
12. Workers' Socialist Party, "Marxism and the Land," *Workers' Socialist Party*, accessed 3 August 2018, https://workerssocialistparty.co.za/marxism-and-the-land.
13. Adriaan Basson, "Malema has no right to threaten SA on land," *News24*, accessed 3 August 2018, https://www.news24.com/Columnists/AdriaanBasson/malema-has-no-right-to-threaten-sa-on-land-20180723.
14. Ibid.
15. Gerber, "Land expropriation without compensation," *News 24*, accessed 3 August 2018, https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/land-expropriation-without-compensation-what-you-need-to-know-20180228; Gumede and Mbatha, "Why Land Seizure Is Back in News."
16. For instance, see Tebogo Letsie, "We want our own land," *City Press*, accessed 4 August 2018, https://city-press.news24.com/News/we-want-our-own-land-20180711-2; Jan Gerber, "What white people need to understand about The Land," *News24*, accessed 3 August 2018, https://www.news24.com/Columnists/Jan_Gerber/what-white-people-need-to-understand-about-the-land-20180727.

the stolen goods?" A prominent columnist concludes that "the land debate is almost more about history, symbolism, redress, justice and black dignity than about land itself."[17]

In summary, it is the stated intention of the South African government to expropriate land from whites in the near future without compensation if deemed justified.

On the basis of what was said above, it is highly unlikely that the status quo will continue much longer. On the contrary, it is likely that at least some whites will lose land without being compensated. Rumors are circulating of some farms which have apparently been targeted for expropriation without compensation on a trial basis, though there seems to be some doubts as to the veracity of such rumors.[18] Be that as it may, in the best-case scenario, the expropriation process will be transparent, limited, and carefully managed under the involvement of stakeholders such as banks, agricultural unions, businesspeople, international governments, and community representatives. In the worst-case scenario, all or most white farmers would be forcefully removed from their land, and South Africa would go the way of Zimbabwe and Venezuela[19] or perhaps even that of the Soviet Union following the 1917 revolution with the implementation of a fully communistic land ownership paradigm.

COMMUNITY OF PROPERTY — A CHRISTIAN IDEAL?

Some Christians throughout the ages have called for a similar ideal. The community of property of Acts 2 and 4 is often viewed in nostalgic or even whimsical fashion by Christians as a quasi-utopian or even ideal form of corporate Christian life. Against this background, the call by radical elements in South Africa for all land to be nationalized suggests the need for an examination of the relevant passages with a view to reassessing our own worldview and for determining their relevance for a majority Christian country such as South Africa today. This is especially important because many members of the ANC are also members or close friends of the South African Communist Party. It would almost seem as if communal land ownership understood in a communist sense were prefigured in the book of Acts. As was shown above, President Ramaphosa has himself resorted to language echoing that of Marxist literature.

At the outset, I should state that our framework does not allow for a thorough historical investigation in this regard. Instead we will only be able to consider a selection of passages and instances in history. Readers dissatisfied with this selection are directed to the more detailed investigation I have provided elsewhere.[20] Our first task will be to consider the community of property in Acts 2 and 4, its context, its dynamics, and its implications for us today, and then to consider parallels between this community of property and life today.

The community of disciples relied on the support of donors, which they received and shared together.

Many Christians romanticize what has come to be known as the "community of property" described by Luke in the Book of Acts, intimating that this community of property should form the ideal life and community model for all Christians. Yet the applicable texts, Acts 2:42–47 and 4:32–35, along with the immediate contexts, contain no divine command for Christians to do likewise. They appear simply to describe aspects of the situation in Jerusalem amongst the early post-Pentecost body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ, that is, Christians. Curiously, however, there have been a number of instances in the history of the church in which Christians have sought programmatically to emulate the community of property of the early church as the God-given model for Christian life in the world.

One might broadly cite the monastic movement as a whole in this regard, at least in its later manifestations. Even in the case of monasteries which held a great amount of wealth, this wealth was held in common, at least in theory, and many individual monks or nuns were nevertheless expected to forgo personal possessions beyond the elemental necessities. Many monastic orders even practiced a total renunciation of personal property and demanded a vow of poverty from all members.[21]

Is this what the early Christians, or indeed, the disciples themselves, practiced? In a sense the entire training period of the disciples under Jesus was lived out in what seems to have been a community of property. From passages such as Luke 8:1–3, it seems that the community of disciples relied on the support of donors, which they received and shared together. This is made explicit in the living conditions Jesus imposed on the disciples in their mission journey in Luke 9, where he instructed them to take nothing beyond what they were wearing; after their return, the twelve assured Jesus that they never suffered any want (Luke 22:35).

17. Du Preez, "Amending the Constitution on land is becoming unavoidable," *News 24*, accessed 3 August 2018, https://www.news24.com/Columnists/MaxduPreez/amending-the-constitution-on-land-is-becoming-unavoidable-20180731.
18. Cele, "139 farms targeted for expropriation without compensation," *News 24*, accessed 3 August 2018, https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/139-farms-targeted-20180805-2.
19. The Editorial Board, "South Africa's Slide: President Ramaphosa tries the Zimbabwe and Venezuela way," *Wall Street Journal*, accessed 10 August 2018, https://www.wsj.com/articles/south-africas-slide-1533598238.
20. Karl Böhmer, "Colonist Mission and Community of Property: August Hardeland's Conflict with the Rhenish and Hermannsburg Mission Societies in Borneo and Southern Africa" (Ph.D. diss., Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN, 2015), 30–80.
21. An example of this is the Fraticelli within the Franciscan order. Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Radikalität der Reformation: Aufsätze und Abhandlungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 220.

It seems legitimate then to argue with Kittel that the community of property of the early church in Acts was a continuation of the communal way of life the disciples had with Jesus.[22] Here, too, the apostles do not seem to have derived any income from means other than the gifts of donors. At least there is no textual evidence for the apostles' pursuing secular employment, although this might hypothetically have been the case.

THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT AND THE COMMUNITY OF PROPERTY

The context in both Acts 2 and 4 serves to underline that the remarkable generosity of the Christians was intricately connected to the work and presence of the Holy Spirit. The summary statement of Acts 2:42–47 follows immediately on the event of Pentecost — the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and Peter's proclamation of Christ crucified. What is described in Acts 2:42–47 is therefore by its juxtaposition understood as the consequence of the presence and work of the Spirit.

The apostles do not seem to have derived any income from means other than the gifts of donors.

The same is true for the second pericope, Acts 4:32–35. It follows on a similar pattern of events and elements. There is the conversion to the faith in great numbers (4:4), a sermon by Peter on the crucified Christ (4:8–12), the presence of the Spirit in that preached word (4:8), the shaking of the place where they were gathered, all being filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking the word of God with boldness (4:31). It is at this point that the second summary of the community of property begins (4:32). This is important for understanding the nature of the κοινωνία in the early church. The "sharing out" was indissolubly linked to the "sharing in" which preceded and continually enabled it. With reference to 1 John 1:3, Stott sees κοινωνία in the first instance as "our common share in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit." This expresses what the Christian receives. By participating with Christ, what is Christ's is his. First the suffering, then the glory. First the death, then the life. The believer receives fellowship with Christ through baptism. The baptized believer receives fellowship with Christ through the Spirit and with the Father through Christ and the Spirit. Secondly, according to Stott, κοινωνία "also expresses what we share out together, what we give as well as what we receive."[23] It is in this sense that κοινωνία is used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:4 and elsewhere for the collection he raises for the needy Christians in Jerusalem.

The description of Barnabas and his actions in Acts 4, in conjunction with that of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1–11, "shows that the sale of property and the sharing of the proceeds was not . . . a universal practice; if it had been done by all there would have been no point in singling out Barnabas for special commendation."[24] Although Luke generalizes the selling and donation of property as a characteristic of the whole church, this should be seen as a synecdochical expression, that is, part for the whole, some for all, since it is likely that the practice would have been restricted to some of those who had significant property in the first place. Barnabas is upheld as a positive example of generosity.

By contrast, Ananias and Sapphira constitute a negative example whose inclusion in Acts adds a note of realism. It indicates that the community of property was not fictitious but real, since there would have been little point in inventing disobedient members. It becomes clear from their story that the sale of land and the donation of the proceeds to the community were neither mandatory nor total. Participating in the community of property cannot have been totally impoverishing for owners of property. Ananias and Sapphira sold "a" parcel of land, not all they had.[25] Neither were they obligated to sell it, but they chose to do so.[26] Acts 5:4 is instructive: "While [the land] remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal?" (ESV). The latter phrase underscores that even after selling the land, Ananias and Sapphira were not obligated to share all of the proceeds. On the contrary, the implication of this passage is that the sale of property was done by Christians on an entirely voluntary basis. Even after selling property, the decision as to how much to donate was also made by the individuals and not by the community. The main point of the story of Ananias and Sapphira seems to be the spiritual origin and character of the community of property. Three references to the presence of the Holy Spirit and God in the community of believers highlight the supernatural character of the fellowship.

THE EARLY CHRISTIANS: THE DIDACHE

Given the common misunderstandings of the community of property as practiced by the early church and described in Acts 2 and 4, as outlined above, it is striking that the *Didache* — which provides a point of comparison for the Christian community within thirty to a hundred fifty years after

22. Gerhard Kittel, et. al., eds., *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Kohlhammer, 1933–79), s.v. "κοινός."
23. John Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 82–83.
24. C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles*, International Critical Commentary (London: T. & T. Clark, 1994–1998), 1:258.
25. Richard Ascough, "Benefaction Gone Wrong: The 'Sin' of Ananias and Sapphira in Context," in *Text and Artifact in the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity: Essays in Honour of Peter Richardson*, ed. Stephen G. Wilson and Michel Desjardins, Studies in Christianity and Judaism 9 (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000), 92.
26. David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmanns, 2009), 210.

Christ's ascension[27]—does not stipulate any such practice for the community it represents. That is to say, the *Didache* mandates no practiced community of goods for Christians as was practiced by, say, the Essenes in their communities. There is no mention of a mandated communism in the extreme sense, or of monastic poverty and a common treasury model in the general sense. Goppelt argues:

> In the earliest Church, the offering of one's belongings was absolutely voluntary (Acts 5 v. 4). Consequently no one could consider it to be a collective economy which centrally administered the regular income, and the practice in the earliest Church appears more to be a radical extension of the care for the poor which the official Pharisaic Judaism organized with the help of generously given alms.[28]

This same pattern can be observed within the instruction of the *Didache*. Generosity is mandated: "Give to everyone who asks you, and do not demand it back, for the Father wants something from his own gifts to be given to everyone. Blessed is the one who gives according to the command, for such a person is innocent."[29] This is echoed later—both hard work and sharing are obligatory:

> Do not be one who stretches out the hands to receive but withdraws them when it comes to giving. If you earn something by working with your hands, you shall give a ransom for your sins. You shall not hesitate to give, nor shall you grumble when giving, for you will know who is the good paymaster of the reward. You shall not turn away from someone in need, but shall share everything with your brother or sister, and do not claim that anything is your own. For if you are sharers in what is imperishable, how much more so in perishable things![30]

The phrasing strongly echoes the language of Acts 2 and 4. Yet the wording implies a situation where private property is the norm. There is no indication of a common treasury for all expenses; rather, the profit gained by industrious labor enables the individual to share with anyone else in need. Such need is to be met generously if and when it arises. The community of imperishable gifts, which are given by the Lord, flows out and leads into the community in perishable gifts, which are also given by the Lord. Private ownership is not an excuse to hoard goods or refuse to share. Only in this sense is "private property" abolished, when the *Didache* states "do not claim that anything is your own."

There is no indication of a common treasury for all expenses.

COMMUNISM OR CHRISTIAN IDEAL?

It would be anachronistic, and more importantly factually incorrect, to equate the community of goods in Acts with the term *communism* in the political sense as espoused by Karl Marx or Friedrich Engels. Not only is that word politically loaded in the modern context, but it also speaks of a communal practice that operates to a very different degree and is based on totally different presuppositions and beliefs. The community of property in the early church was not "communistic." It was a practice of love that provided particular responses to particular problems on an ongoing basis. It was not motivated, as some claim, by a false expectation of an imminent *parousia*, which then caused wholesale poverty among the Jerusalem Christians, for the alleviation of which Paul would later need to raise money.[31] Instead it was a response of love to the need of believers, driven by the love of Christ. With the presence and action of the Holy Spirit, it served as an impetus for Christians to keep the two greatest commandments of Matthew 22:37–39.

Seen in this light, and in the light of such passages as 2 Corinthians 8 that motivate the κοινωνία of "sharing out" with fellow believers in need, the community of property still continues to this day as Christians love one another to help meet need. Admittedly the early Christians were certainly exemplary in this behavior and far more eager to do good than many since then who have grown apathetic and cold to the needs of fellow believers. Many have grown weary of doing good. The only way for the body of believers today to continue in "sharing out" is by continuing to "share in"—not only in the sufferings of Christ, but also in his life, in his Spirit, in the love of God and the blessings of God. This happens when the believers today also "persist continually" in the teaching of the apostles, the κοινωνία, the breaking of bread, and the prayer (Acts 2:42).

While it is important not to understand the community of property as some protocommunist collective, these passages from the Book of Acts still challenge our understanding of private property.[32] "No one who owned anything claimed that it

27. Jonathan A. Draper, "The Didache," in *The Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction*, ed. Wilhelm Pratscher (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010), 8; Georg Schöllgen, "The Didache as a Church Order: An Examination of the Purpose for the Composition of the Didache and its Consequences for Interpretation," in *The Didache in Modern Research*, ed. Jonathan Draper, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 37 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 43; Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 53.
28. Leonhard Goppelt, *Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times*, trans. Robert A. Guelich (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1970), 49–50.
29. Michael W. Holmes, trans. and ed., *The Apostolic Fathers in English, 3rd ed.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 164.
30. Ibid., 165.
31. Stott, The Spirit, 108.
32. Justo L. González, *Faith and Wealth* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 84.

was his own, but they had all things in common." It was need that dictated use of property, driven by love, and not the exclusive right of ownership, legitimate though it may be. This calls for keeping the commandments of the second table not just in the letter, but also in the spirit. To put this into practice today creates great challenges to any materialistic and individualistic, that is, Western, society marked by an entitlement culture.

The New Testament came to be read in Anabaptist circles in a radical, Biblicist manner.

SIXTEENTH-CENTURY PROPONENTS OF THE COMMUNITY OF PROPERTY

A thorough investigation of the practice of community of property would naturally entail the reception of the *Didache* and especially the successive instantiation of community of property–type practices in monastic communities through the ages. However our framework does not allow for such a study. I would like to suggest, however, that Lutherans may consider the position of the Lutheran Confessions on land ownership, or on property ownership in general. When Philipp Melanchthon arrived in Augsburg in 1530 to represent the Lutheran reform movement, he encountered a series of four hundred four propositions edited by John Eck, a Roman Catholic theologian hostile to the Wittenberg representatives. This list grouped together citations from Martin Luther, Melanchthon, and others, together with various statements from other critics, making it seem as if the Wittenbergers espoused all manner of viewpoints then considered heretical by the Roman Catholic Church. It was partly in reaction to this document that Melanchthon formulated what came to be known as the Augsburg Confession.[33] Eck's list of propositions is significant insofar as it contained a statement ascribed to Melanchthon, proposition 391, which stated, "A community of all things is commanded in the New Testament."[34]

It is highly unlikely that Melanchthon espoused such a position, since the wording of the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, which he formulated, reject it in no uncertain terms. However a number of sixteenth-century Anabaptists did in fact espouse this position. Influences on the sixteenth-century Anabaptists include such well-known figures as Andreas Bodenstein or "Karlstadt," who became a spokesperson for anticlericalism and strongly emphasized the role of the laity, an emphasis that led to the emergence of communalism.[35] They also include Thomas Müntzer, who called for the revitalization of the *omnia sunt communia* of Acts, as well as the central concepts for which the "common man" would fight in the 1525 Peasants' War: divine justice, brotherly love, and common use (*gemeiner Nutzen*).[36] Müntzer viewed the temporal government as a godless conspirator in the cause of the clergy to suppress the cause of the common man.[37] Both Erasmus and Zwingli initially were also said to hold a "broadly approving attitude towards community of goods," at least before the Peasants' War.[38]

The sixteenth-century Anabaptists believed that while the Old Testament laws should not be viewed as normative for the Christian, the New Testament should.[39] The New Testament came to be read in Anabaptist circles in a radical, Biblicist manner. The Sermon on the Mount especially was extolled by Anabaptists as divine ordinances to Christians that were to be kept literally in all secular circumstances.[40]

The Anabaptists generally "wanted fellowship and brotherly love to be added to the Reformers' definition of the church . . . and talked much about Acts 2 and 4 and 'the community of goods.'"[41] It seems that there is strong evidence for a widespread preoccupation with Acts 2 and 4 at the time of the inception of the Swiss Anabaptist movement, which is plausible considering the group's involvement with the peasant resistance against the social establishment and order of the day.[42] Yet the early Anabaptists on the whole suffered from much disunity, so that what is said of one group might not necessarily be true for another.[43]

The Seven Articles of Schleitheim were formulated in 1527 as an attempt to unify the disparate Anabaptist movement. They stressed material sharing modeled on the *modus operandi* believed to have been in place among the early church of Acts 2 and 4. When the Schleitheim articles were circulated among Anabaptist groups, evidence suggests that a certain congregational ordinance circulated along with them. This ordinance stated:

33. Kolb-Wengert, 27–28.
34. Henry Eyster Jacobs, "The Four Hundred and Four Theses of Dr. John Eck, Published in 1530," in *Papers of the American Society of Church History*, 2nd series, vol. 2 (1910), 19–36.
35. Hans-Jürgen Goertz, "Karlstadt, Müntzer and the Reformation of the Commoners, 1521–1525," in *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521–1700*, ed. John D. Roth and James M. Stayer, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 1–44.
36. Goertz, *Radikalität* der Reformation, 216–17.
37. Goertz, "Karlstadt, Müntzer," 31; Werner O. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings: Communitarian Experiments during the Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 23.
38. James M. Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods, McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Religion 6* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 105.
39. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings*, 17.
40. Franz Lau, *Luthers Lehre von den beiden Reichen* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1953), 23.
41. Stott, The Spirit, 83.
42. Stayer, *German Peasants' War*, 96.
43. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings*, 55.

> Of all the brothers and sisters of this congregation, none shall have anything of his own, but rather, as the Christians in the time of the apostles held all in common, and especially stored up a common fund, from which aid can be given to the poor, according as each will have need, and as in the apostles' time permit no brother to be in need.

The Lutheran position is that Christians are free to own property and money.

This ordinance is significant because it seems to set the tone for what was practiced in many Anabaptist communities in the early 1530s. It is known, for instance, that a variant of this ordinance formed a part of the codices of the Hutterites of Moravia.[44] They were named after Jakob Hutter, a prominent Anabaptist leader from Tyrol who first appeared in Moravia in 1529.[45] In Moravia, many Anabaptist groups found refuge from the frequent persecutions to which they were subjected. Here a number of Anabaptist congregations sought to practice true Christianity by implementing the community of goods. However it is instructive to note that such attempts did not all end in perfect harmony, as Stayer points out:

> Community of goods turned out to be a bone of contention among the Anabaptists in Moravia. Leaders and congregations argued about which of them really followed the apostolic model of the first Christians in Jerusalem. . . . An aggravating factor was that none of the congregations achieved full equality between leaders and members, or between men and women.

Thus it appears that the community of property which the Anabaptists perceived in Acts 2 and 4 became an ideal that was difficult to put into practice. The anticlericalism of the Roman Catholic Church, which had led to contention between priests and laity, had given way in many Anabaptist circles to antiauthoritarianism and to gender disputes.

Following fierce persecution in 1535–36, many Anabaptist congregations abandoned community of goods, with only the Hutterite Brethren in Moravia preserving the institution in their colonies. It seems that the other Anabaptist groups concluded that perhaps it was God's will that the Acts 2 and 4 community of goods "was practiced for only a short time."[46] The Hutterites on their part continued with the practice and went so far as to make the surrender of all property to the commonwealth a condition of membership in their colonies.[47]

In summary, the Anabaptist position, if we may generalize it for the period in which the Augsburg Confession and its Apology were formulated, was a belief in the divine command to reject the authority of both the clergy and the apostate government, to separate from the world, and to emulate the early Christians in Jerusalem as described in Acts 2 and 4. This belief led to the establishment of communities attempting to practice the community of property according to the ideal that was perceived to have existed in the early church. For the Anabaptists, striving for Christian perfection demanded nothing less. In many instances however, the practice was short-lived. The factors that contributed to this were difficulties in achieving true equality from within, and pressure and persecution from without. However the Moravian Hutterites persisted with the practice, which later became a hallmark of Hutterite colonies worldwide, as is commonly known.

THE LUTHERAN CONFESSORS ON PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

The Lutheran response to the Anabaptist position is recorded in AC XVI as follows: "Concerning public order and secular government it is taught . . . that Christians may without sin . . . possess property; be married; etc. Condemned here are the Anabaptists who teach that none of the things indicated above is Christian" (AC XVI; Kolb-Wengert, 48). In a nutshell, then, the Lutheran position is that property ownership is not sinful in itself, and that Christians are free to own property and money. The Augsburg Confession rejects the position of the Anabaptists who mandate the practice of the community of property for Christians.

The authors of the Roman Catholic Confutation accepted AC XVI without qualification (Ap XVI; Kolb-Wengert, 231). Indeed, they stated that AC XVI is "accepted with pleasure" and that the "princes are commended for condemning the Anabaptists."[48] In the Apology, Melanchthon proceeds to expand on the original article to condemn also the community of property as practiced in its monastic instantiation by Roman Catholic orders.

> [T]he monks had spread many pernicious ideas throughout the church. They called it an evangelical order to hold property in common, and they called it an evangelical

44. James M. Stayer, "Swiss–South German Anabaptism," in A Companion to Anabaptism, 92.
45. John A. Hostetler, *Hutterite Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 17.
46. Stayer, "Swiss–South German Anabaptism," 112–14.
47. For more on the practice of community of goods among the sixteenth-century Anabaptists, see Hans-Dieter Plümper, *Die Gütergemeinschaft bei den Täufern des 16. Jahrhunderts, Göppinger akademische Beiträge 62* (Göppingen: Verlag Alfred Kümmerle, 1972); Peter H. Stephenson, *The Hutterian People: Ritual and Rebirth in the Evolution of Communal Life* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991).
48. As cited in Kolb-Wengert, 231 n. 406.

> counsel not to own property and not to go to court. These notions seriously obscure the gospel and the spiritual kingdom and are dangerous to public matters. For the gospel does not destroy the state or the household but rather approves them, and it orders us to obey them as divine ordinances not only on account of the punishment but also "because of conscience" [Rom. 13:5]. (Ap XVI, 8–12; Kolb-Wengert, 231)

It must be noted that the context of AC XVI and Ap XVI is the confession about the proper order of civil affairs, that is, on the most appropriate outward ordering of society in which Christians are to live. The concern of the reformers in these articles is to uphold the Christian freedom to engage in all vocations, both spiritual and secular, and to uphold the authority and legitimacy of the state and the family as valid and proper *loci* for the Christian to be involved in and in which to live under God and serve him.

The concern of the reformers in these articles is to uphold the Christian freedom to engage in all vocations, both spiritual and secular.

The issue of whether or not it is permissible for Christians to own private property was for the reformers just one part of the question of how the Christian is to live in the world. As both the Hutterite and the monastic practices demonstrate, the only alternatives to holding private property are for Christians to reject property entirely and to embrace poverty as a virtue in itself, seeking to lead a mendicant lifestyle in simple dependence on others; or to own property communally, that is, to establish communes that separate the Christian community from the world. The rejection of the idea of Christians' living and being involved in secular society frequently goes hand in hand with rejecting the order of society itself. Where this happens, the divine sanction of marriage, the family, and the authority of the state are all called into question. Christian perfection then comes to be located outside of this civil order, either in the outward emulation of the perceived ideal of the early Christians, or in the office of the spiritual estate, in religious vocations, and in the separation from the world and its secular order.[49]

In contrast, the Lutheran Confessions uphold the freedom to marry, to live within the family, to buy and sell goods, individually to administer and have private property, to remain under the authority of the government, and to make use of those of its procedures that are in and of themselves God-pleasing for the adjudication of justice, including those pursued in the courtroom. The Lutheran Confessions call the government in itself good, but view its particular God-given responsibility as "the power of the sword providing for external righteousness and peace," while they view the church as wielding spiritual government, which "is the office of preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments."[50] Thus, in effect, the Lutheran Confessions censure the monastic and the Anabaptist positions for confusing the two kingdoms, that is, the spiritual kingdom and the worldly kingdom. As the Apology puts it, the topic being discussed in this article is "the distinction between Christ's kingdom and the civil realm," and with regard to this issue, Lutherans confess that

> Christ's kingdom is spiritual, that is, it is the heart's knowledge of God, fear of God, faith in God, and the beginning of eternal righteousness and eternal life. At the same time, it permits us to make outward use of legitimate political ordinances of whatever nation in which we live, just as it permits us to make use of medicine or architecture or food, drink and air. Neither does the gospel introduce new laws for the civil realm. (Ap XVI, 8–12; Kolb-Wengert, 231)

It is remarkable, as Lau notes, that Luther developed his doctrine of the two kingdoms in his analysis and exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount, which is exactly what the Anabaptists were using to defend many of their beliefs and practices.[51] This then becomes a fundamental disagreement as to the manner and extent to which the gospel shapes Christian life, as well as how the descriptive and prescriptive passages of the New Testament apply to daily Christian life. The Apology captures the Lutheran position and is worth quoting at length here:

> How poorly many writers understood these matters is evident from their erroneous view that the gospel is something external, a new and monastic form of government. They failed to see that the gospel brings eternal righteousness to hearts while outwardly approving the civil realm. It is also completely false to claim that Christian perfection consists in not holding property. For Christian perfection is not found in contempt for civil ordinances but in the inclinations of the heart, in profound fear of God, and in strong faith. Abraham, David, and Daniel also possessed great wealth and held high positions, but they were no less perfect than any hermit. But the monks have spread this outward hypocrisy before the eyes of the people and blinded them from seeing the essence of true perfection. How they have praised as "evangelical" holding property

49. Edward A. Engelbrecht, ed., *The Lutheran Difference* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010), 473.

50. Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), 226.

51. Lau, *Luthers Lehre*, 21–27.

> in common! However, praising such things is fraught with many dangers, especially since it contradicts the Scriptures. For Scripture does not command that property be held in common. Instead, when the Decalogue says, "you shall not steal," it recognizes the rights of ownership and orders each person to keep his or her own. . . . The importance of these matters had been completely obscured by the silly monastic opinions, which far preferred the *ridiculous and completely false* hypocrisy of poverty and humility to the state and household, even though *the latter* have God's command, while the platonic commune does not. (Ap XVI, 4–5; Kolb-Wengert, 232–33)

Thus the Apology locates Christian perfection in true faith, while affirming the freedom to own property. It explicitly rejects the "Platonic commune," a reference to the ideal—and therefore Platonic—community proposed by the Greek philosopher Pythagoras.[52] By extension, it rejects any communal attempt to instantiate it. Indeed the Lutheran Confessions read the Seventh Commandment as not just presupposing private ownership, the holding of property, but mandating it. Luther himself stated: "The community of goods is not in accordance with natural law. It is not commanded; rather, it has been abrogated. Even if it were a commandment, it could not be maintained because of the corruption of nature, since there would be more people consuming the goods than producing them, and so it would result in chaos."[53]

APPLICATION

The Lutheran Confessions hold that "the Decalogue . . . recognizes the rights of ownership and orders each person to keep his or her own." They view Christian perfection as a spiritual, inward matter intricately tied to faith. They uphold the goodness of the secular realm in and of itself and locate the Christian carrying out of good and holy works in his or her respective vocation.[54] The Confessions reject the idea that it is closer to Christian perfection for Christians to practice community of property than to maintain individual, private ownership of property. Where the Anabaptist and monastic position advocates community of property as an "evangelical order" and as "evangelical counsel," the Lutheran Confessions view this position as dangerous, false, hypocritical, pernicious, and obscuring the gospel. The Confessions state unambiguously that community of property is not mandated in the Scriptures, whereas private property is.

Returning to the question of whether the community of property amounts to communism or a Christian ideal, we must conclude that the answer is neither. Rightly understood, none of the early Christians practiced communism, and neither the Sermon on the Mount nor the Book of Acts may be pressed into service as warrants for some kind of Christian communism. There can be no doubt that the early Christians maintained the practice of private property and specifically also the practice of private land ownership. Thus the prospect of blanket nationalization of land today accords far more with Marxist teaching than it does with Christian perfection. As the Lutheran Confessions clarify, Scripture views private property and by extension private land ownership also as a good and God-pleasing thing in and of itself.

Luther himself stated: "The community of goods is not in accordance with natural law."

At the same time, this may not be taken as a blanket Christian endorsement of the Western worldview, the most fundamental economic consideration of which is the accumulation of capital and wealth. Private property and private land ownership may never become an excuse to hoard goods or refuse to share with the needy. This would violate the generosity modeled and mandated by Christ, and despoil the *koinonia* we confess. Thus the same Luther who condemns community of property in the sense of a Platonic ideal and sees it as violating natural law is also very much in accordance with the *Didache* when he writes in *The Freedom of a Christian:*

> The Apostle commands us to work with our hands so that we may give to the needy. . . . This is what makes caring for [one's own] body a Christian work, that through its health and comfort we may be able to work, to acquire, and lay by funds with which to aid those who are in need, that in this way the strong member may serve the weaker. . . . This is a truly Christian life. (*LW* 31:365)

He goes on to note that the Christian, who is "rich" in the "wealth of his faith," is able to offer this service willingly and with joy. One who has received such great spiritual possessions need hardly cling to material possessions, which represent a much inferior good.[55] Luther continues:

52. Hans-Josef Klauck, "Gütergemeinschaft in der klassischen Antike, in Qumran und im Neuen Testament," *Revue de Qumran* 11 (1982–84): 52.
53. "Die Gemeinschaft der Güter ist nicht nach dem Naturrechte. Sie ist nicht etwas Gebotenes, sondern Nachgelassenes. Wenn sie gleich ein Gebot wäre, so könnte sie doch wegen der Verderbtheit der Natur nicht erhalten werden, weil mehr da wären, welche die Güter verzehrten, als herbeischafften, und so würde eine Verwirrung entstehen." Tischreden Nr. 396, 10 November 1538, Anton Lauterbachs Tagebuch (SL 22: 1782–83).
54. Engelbrecht, *The Lutheran Difference*, 472–506.
55. Kathryn D'Arcy Blanchard, "'If you do not do this you are not now a Christian': Martin Luther's Pastoral Teachings on Money," *Word & World* 26 (2006): 302.

> For a man does not serve that he may put men under obligations. He does not distinguish between friends and enemies or anticipate their thankfulness or unthankfulness, but he most freely and most willingly spends himself and all that he has, whether he wastes all on the thankless or whether he gains a reward. As his Father does, distributing all things to men richly and freely . . . so also the son does all things and suffers all things with that freely bestowing joy which is his delight when through Christ he sees it in God, the dispenser of such benefits. (*LW* 31:367)

Luther also says: "If you are rich and see that your neighbor is poor, serve him with your possessions; if you do not do this you are not now a Christian. This is what we are to do with all our possessions both spiritual and material." In Luther's mind, those who are not ready and willing to ease another's pain—with all their available means—must be lacking in saving faith, since those who are truly saved no longer need to cling to material comfort.[56]

So the so-called African worldview is in some respects closer to that of Luther than the Western one.

Luther was thus no capitalist in the modern sense, nor can his endorsement of private property be seen as endorsing the Western worldview per se. Luther is much closer to Acts and the *Didache* than he is to the Western materialism of today. On the contrary, in many ways his comments are a sharp indictment of the Western worldview. "Greed nowadays has come to be viewed as talented, smart, careful stewardship," Luther writes, and thus "sin in general [is] dressed up to look like virtue and not vice."[57] The whole point of private property for Christians is that it is has no intrinsic value at all, but that it is a gift from God and can serve as a gift for God when used in love toward him and the neighbor. This is modeled in Acts, the *Didache*, and by Luther also. As Christians maintain private property, their sharing in Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, and their gratitude for the gifts of forgiveness, God's love, and mercy drives them to generosity with one another and to meet one another's needs and those of outsiders. So the so-called African worldview is in some respects closer to that of Luther than the Western one, since the former encourages and even depends on sharing goods. As we ponder the land issue, we would do well to bear in mind the words of 1 Corinthians 4:7, "What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" (ESV).

THE SOUTH AFRICAN TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION: JUSTICE OR MERCY?

On the basis of what has been said at public hearings on the land issue in South Africa, it seems that many blacks are calling for the redistribution of land as a matter of *justice*. This brings us back to the question: What about the TRC? Was it not intended to bring about justice to all who had been harmed by apartheid? Yet it would seem that many blacks in South Africa do not believe that justice has been done at all, as summed up in the sentiment quoted above: "How would you feel if someone robbed your house and afterwards wanted to negotiate about the stolen goods?" Thus for many in South Africa, it would seem that whites are historically and collectively guilty of theft, and so restitution of the land is necessary for justice to be served. In their view, then, the TRC simply postponed the issue, instead of settling it; indeed, evidently, the TRC failed to meet its objective, since there is still a hunger for justice demanding to be assuaged.

The principle of restorative justice on which the TRC was based rejects the idea of punitive justice and calls for offenders voluntarily to compensate victims instead. "Restorative justice involves a shift from passive responsibility to which offenders are held by professionals for something they have done in the past to citizens taking active responsibility for making things right into the future."[58] Thus architects of the TRC might well argue that the TRC failed because white South Africans en masse refused voluntarily to compensate blacks for their losses and hurts, or to pay reparations tax to them. Indeed, one of the main authors and figureheads of the TRC, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, has for many years called on "white South Africans to pay a reparations wealth tax for benefiting from apartheid," and to do so magnanimously and as a gesture of generosity.[59] In his view, such a gesture would be seen as a key factor in completing the process set in motion by the TRC.

One wonders what the South African situation might be like today if white Christians had more closely and visibly emulated the example of Barnabas in Acts, breaking through social barriers in order to benefit those in need. In individual situations, this might well be the case. But then this becomes a matter of mercy, not justice, because it is to be voluntary. From a Lutheran perspective, the problem with the TRC and its principle of restorative justice is that it confuses the two kingdoms. A proper division of the two kingdoms locates secular justice in the kingdom of the left, which is ruled by the law and administered

56. Ibid. The Luther quotation is drawn from Martin Luther, "Sermon on Palm Sunday" (29 March 1523) (WA 11:76); the English translation is from Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 307 n. 50.
57. As quoted in Blanchard, "If you do not do this," 303.
58. Braithwaite, "Restorative Justice."
59. Philani Nobembe, "Archbishop Tutu punts reparations tax," *Sunday Times*, accessed 4 August 2018, https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2011-08-24-archbishop-tutu-punts-reparations-tax.

by the sword. Spontaneous obedience and voluntary generosity, on the other hand, are located in the kingdom of the right, which is ruled by grace. In other words, mercy cannot be mandated by courts, or it ceases to be mercy; but reparations can be mandated. If the findings of the TRC had been that whites were indeed collectively responsible for the losses and hurts of blacks during apartheid, then a mandatory reparations tax on whites would have gone a long way towards addressing the felt need for justice, since this would have been a punitive measure and within the realm of the left kingdom. If however the TRC had found that whites were not collectively responsible for apartheid, then there would be recourse today against those explicitly or implicitly alleging the contrary. Yet the TRC failed on both accounts, while confusing the two kingdoms. From a Lutheran perspective, then, the TRC was doomed to failure from the outset because it was neither fish nor fowl. This is borne out by the ongoing cry for justice, louder today than ever before. The fact that twenty-four years have passed since the fall of apartheid only exacerbates the issue. The real question is to what extent the whites of today, and white landowners in particular, can or should collectively still be held responsible for the evils of apartheid and the skewed land ownership percentages of today. Here opinions differ widely.

What white landowners should fear most of all is not losing their land, income, or way of life, but God himself and his wrath.

TOWARDS A PASTORAL RESPONSE TO THE DISPOSSESSED

Martin Luther was challenged in his time to answer grievances expressed by peasant farmers who were tenants, not landowners. From today's perspective, it is fascinating that among the Twelve Articles of the peasants of 1525, there is no call for changes to land ownership, only to land usage and the conditions of tenancy (*LW* 46:8–16). Thus we cannot find in Luther's reply to these articles a locus for a direct response to a call for dispossession or expropriation of land, whether just or unjust. Be that as it may, Luther's response to the princes and to the peasants nevertheless provides a helpful guideline as we consider pastoral care for people who may suffer the expropriation of their land. Another helpful source is Luther's treatise on temporal authority. From these two sources, we may take the following:

1. Luther reminds the authorities of his day that God's word will ultimately hold sway. God will eventually raise up the necessary people to ensure that his will be done, and that justice will be done (*LW* 46:18–22). The same applies to the government of South Africa. Thus South African Christians, black and white, may be assured that in the end, justice will be done. What the ANC government should thus fear most of all is not the wrath of people or the prospect of losing the next elections, but God himself and his wrath. Thus its primary directive should be to respect God's law and to implement his justice. What white landowners should fear most of all is not losing their land, income, or way of life, but God himself and his wrath. So their primary directive should also be to respect God's law and seek to align themselves with his justice.

2. Luther calls upon Christians wronged by civil government to begin by examining themselves and considering their actions very carefully. In his *Admonition to Peace* he wrote:

> If you have a good conscience, you have the comforting advantage that God will be with you, and will help you. Even though you did not succeed for a while, or even suffered death, you would win in the end, and would preserve your souls eternally with all the saints. But if you act unjustly and have a bad conscience, you will be defeated. And even though you might win for a while and even kill all the princes, you would suffer the eternal loss of your body and soul in the end. (*LW* 46:22–43)

Consequently, the first response of Christians to dispossession by the government should be to examine themselves, repent of their sins, and bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance wherever necessary, since it may very well be that the Lord God himself is behind the expropriation in his quest to bring about justice.

3. Luther specifically addresses the subject of restitution of *unlawfully* acquired goods. Applying it, we may state that all South African landowners who are Christians are called upon by the current events to examine the manner in which they obtained their land in light of the law of God. Of course, the operative question here is how *lawful* or *unlawful* should be defined—what was considered lawful under the apartheid regime or under colonial rule may well be deemed unlawful by the current administration. By *lawful* here I do not refer to any particular law codex, necessarily, but rather to natural law as expressed by the Decalogue and articulated throughout the Holy Scriptures, and as reflected by an appropriately catechized Christian conscience.

If after thorough examination landowners conclude that their land was even partly acquired in a manner which did not do full justice to their Christian neighbors, Luther would counsel them to consider restitution. Where both parties are Christian, both those who claim land and those who own it, and where the land has been acquired in a manner not entirely in keeping with God's law, Luther directs that restitution be made according to the landowner's means in keeping with the law to love the neighbor. But if only one or neither party is Christian, then secular judges should decide the manner in accordance with the

so-called golden rule, so that both natural law and the law of love may prevail (*LW* 45:126–27). This calls for a settlement to be reached by reasonable decision of the secular judge that is fair to both sides. This suggests a new TRC that operates on the basis of natural law and the law of love, where both sides agree to abide by and act in accordance with the decision of the court. In this light, the South African government should wholeheartedly commend attempts by individual white landowners, commercial landowners such as Nick Serfontein, and agricultural unions who are seeking to cooperate of their own accord with the government, find workable solutions, and take proactive steps to "upscale emerging farmers."[60] If however the government were to ignore such attempts and proceed with wholesale expropriation, it would only result in further injustice.

If the choice would be between resisting injustice or emigration, Luther would undoubtedly counsel for emigration.

4. What if the Christian landowner comes to the conclusion that his or her land was indeed acquired justly in full accordance with secular law and in full accordance with God's law? Here we draw again on Luther's writing to the peasants. The government of South Africa has been appointed by God. Even when the government commits injustice, that is, even if the South African government were to expropriate land unjustly, Christians are forbidden from resisting the government by force, since one injustice cannot be remedied by way of a second injustice. Thus even if the expropriation without compensation were unjust, Christian subjects would have no right to resort to the use of weapons to prevent or avenge such a measure, but would need to suffer the injustice—Luther's motto here is that "no one may serve as his own judge."

5. When experiencing injustice, the right of the Christian is to suffer. Of course, she may oppose injustice by all legal means, but when such means do not avail, then the only recourse is to suffer. Yet this is unpopular. Luther writes: "You do not want to endure evil or suffering, but rather want to be free and to experience only goodness and justice. However, Christ says that we should not resist evil or injustice but always yield, suffer, and let things be taken from us" (*LW* 46:28). Again Luther states: "Even a child can understand that the Christian law tells us not to strive against injustice, not to grasp the sword, not to protect ourselves, not to avenge ourselves, but to give up life and property, and let whoever takes it have it. We have all we need in our Lord, who will not leave us, as he has promised. Suffering! suffering! Cross! cross! This and nothing else is the Christian law!" (*LW* 46:29). Only those who have received power and authority from God to use the sword should do so.

6. Instead of resorting to the sword, then, Christians suffering wrongful expropriation should follow Christ in committing the matter to him who judges justly. They should pray that the name of Christ would not be put to shame, but instead be hallowed in South Africa. They should not despise prayer, but pray to God with full confidence in his promises to save them in trouble, that his will be done, and to deliver them from evil.

7. With reference to Christ's injunction in Matthew 10:23, "When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next" and to 1 Corinthians 4:11, where Paul says that Christians are in fact homeless, Luther counsels: "And if it does happen that a Christian must, for the sake of the gospel, constantly move from one place to another, and leave all his possessions behind him, or even if his situation is very uncertain and he expects to have to move at any moment, he is only experiencing what is appropriate for a Christian. For because he will not suffer the gospel to be taken from him, he has to let his city, town, property, and everything that he is and has be taken and kept from him" (*LW* 46:36). Of course, in the South African situation, it would not be a matter of suffering for the sake of the gospel, at least not overtly. Even so, if the choice would be between resisting injustice or emigration, Luther would undoubtedly counsel for emigration.

Ultimately, there is no better pastoral advice than that given by the apostle Peter: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you" (1 Pet 5:6–7). Following this pastoral advice in the strength of the gospel, South African Christians may confess the literal meaning of Luther's hymn:

> And take they our life,
> Goods, fame, child, and wife,
> Let these all be gone,
> They yet have nothing won;
> The kingdom ours remaineth. (*TLH* 262:4) LOGIA

60. For example, see Nick Serfontein, "Dear Mr. President, send us, commercial farmers," *News24*, accessed 9 August 2018, https://www.news24.com/Columnists/GuestColumn/dear-mr-president-send-us-commercial-farmers-20180726.

A Contemporary Evangelical Congregation Becomes Confessional Lutheran

Robb C. Ring

East Anaheim Christian Church, a contemporary evangelical congregation in Anaheim, California, on 22 May 2011, officially became Christ Lutheran Church of Anaheim, a congregation of the Conservative Lutheran Association (CLA). On 6 July 2014, the church then merged into a local congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) upon its pastor's certification through colloquy. The following is a brief case study and overview of the process, challenges, and key observations of this transition, which took place over a period of approximately three years.

East Anaheim Christian Church was founded in 1965, a church plant of a larger congregation associated with the Christian Church/Church of Christ, a denomination that came from the Stone-Campbell Movement of the nineteenth century. The church campus, including the sanctuary and educational buildings, had been established in a residential community less than five miles east of downtown Anaheim. During its forty-six-year history, the congregation, which at its peak had about 350 baptized members, gradually dwindled down to 100. Initially it depended upon the local aerospace industry for the population from which its members came; by 2011, the make-up of the congregation was a generationally mixed, primarily Caucasian, lower-to-middle-class population.

Theologically, the church was, initially, a solid "restorationist movement" congregation that identified with the Christian Church/Churches of Christ. This and other Southern California Christian Churches/Churches of Christ were supported by the then Pacific Christian College (founded in 1928 as Pacific Bible Seminary), one of the Christian Church institutions providing pastoral training and a sense of connection between congregations it served. Over the past twenty years, however, the church and the seminary both came to follow the more "generic" evangelicalism that was and is prevalent throughout Southern California and beyond. That is to say, they had an ecclesiology and, at times, even Christology, that was defined by its missiology. According to George Barna's succinct definition, "ministry happens when a person's needs are met."[1] By 2011, there were few, if any, members of East Anaheim Christian Church who had any real connection to the historical values of the church. In general, by that time, the doctrinal disposition of the congregation was somewhat pietistic, with the members coming from varied religious backgrounds and adhering to the "no creed but Christ" standard of doctrine. They generally held a very legalistic view of the sacraments as important but only symbolic, and a custom of expository preaching and teaching, but with emphasis on contemporary issues and felt needs.

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

The American Restoration Movement (also known as the Stone-Campbell Movement), with its origins in the late 1700s and early 1800s, like the more modern nondenominational evangelicalism, tends to reflect the individualist nature of the developing American culture. This likely contributed to what has become an emphasis on "no creed but Christ," and a more magisterial rather than ministerial use of reason when interpreting Scripture. These had led to conclusions that, though logical by human standards, were less than fully biblical and were contrary to a confessional Lutheran understanding.

Despite their good intentions, churches can and do maintain beliefs and practices that are in error. Scripture speaks clearly as to the responsibility of pastors in their teaching and preaching of pure doctrine (Titus 2:1, 10; 1 Tim 6:3–5), and any practices that reflect those errors.

> All churches that tolerate and follow such perverters of the divine truth are known as heterodox churches (*ecclesiae heterodoxae, ecclesiae impurae*), while churches that teach the Word of God in its truth and purity and administer the Sacraments according to Christ's institution are orthodox, or pure, churches (*ecclesiae orthodoxae, ecclesiae purae*).[2]

Although, by the grace of God, heterodox churches may contain true believers, this cannot allow for indifference when the church is confronted by errors in doctrine or practice. Again, from Mueller:

> Although heterodox churches, in the common sense of the term, still adhere to the fundamentals of the Christian

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1. George Barna, *User Friendly Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991), 43.
2. J. T. Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), 560.

faith and so harbor true believers in their midst, nevertheless all Christians who recognize their error are in duty bound to sever their connection with them, since, on the one hand, one error is bound to produce others, and, on the other, the toleration of a recognized falsehood is a denial of the divine truth, and this is incompatible with the true Christian profession.[3]

A phrase often repeated was, "Why haven't I heard this before?"

The reality of true belief hidden among the errors within a heterodox community prevents the passing of judgment on the community per se, but it does give rise to a duty to correct obvious errors in professed doctrine, public practice, and, at times, those who lead and teach (Rom 16:17–18; 1 Tim 1:3). It was through this understanding and concern that East Anaheim Christian Church, as a body of believers, became a confessional Lutheran Church.

CONGREGATIONAL TRANSITION

The formal process by which this church became a confessional Lutheran congregation occurred over several stages. I had begun my service as pastor of East Anaheim Christian Church in 1996, after completing my undergraduate and graduate studies at Pacific Christian College and my internship at Lytle Creek Christian Church in Lytle Creek, California.

My desire for further depth in my theological understanding led me to the Doctor of Ministry program at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana. This academic study, discussion, and exposure to the historical confessions of the church left me with a deep personal conviction that the church is entrusted with the duty to proclaim the gospel purely and to administer the sacraments rightly.

Although I deeply loved the people of my congregation, after much internal conflict and prayer, I intended simply to resign my call at East Anaheim and begin the LCMS colloquy process. However, upon communicating my convictions and intent to the board of elders and leaders of the congregation, they responded by suggesting that we explore the idea of the entire congregation becoming a Lutheran congregation. Although skeptical as to the likelihood of success, I agreed.

The church began the process by having lengthy, informal discussions with core, member families. These discussions primarily took place in members' homes over coffee. Once it was determined that there was generally a positive attitude toward such a change, a plan was formulated to move forward:

1. A meeting of the voting membership was held in which it was unanimously decided that the congregation would undergo several months of catechetical learning regarding the beliefs and practices of the confessional Lutheran church; and

2. A later, second meeting of the voting membership that, if the vote thereat was also unanimous, would result in a change of the name, constitution, and practices of the church, making it a confessional Lutheran congregation.

As the congregation began to explore Luther's Small Catechism and the Lutheran Confessions—the same "What does this mean?" catechesis that Lutherans have experienced for centuries—they responded with great enthusiasm, as the burden of "What do I do?" began to fall away. A phrase often repeated was, "Why haven't I heard this before?" At the second voters' meeting, the vote was also unanimous: East Anaheim Christian Church became Christ Lutheran Church of Anaheim.

The endeavor, at every stage, depended on the wise counsel of respected LCMS faculty from the Theology Department of Concordia University in Irvine, California, where I had begun teaching part-time. We also received guidance from local LCMS pastors, whose insight, wisdom, and encouragement were also integral to the process.

Prior to joining the LCMS, both the congregation and I, as pastor, initially colloquized into the Conservative Lutheran Association (CLA), which was represented by a nearby congregation.[4] The CLA is a confessional body of Lutherans originating in the Pacific Northwest that began in response to the growing liberalism of the American Lutheran Church in the 1960s. Today, they remain as a small, loosely joined body of Lutherans that remain committed to the inerrancy of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

Although the validity of this decision can be debated, at the time the church's leadership believed that this Lutheran body, having a much less-established culture and more informal polity, would be a more suitable "nursery" for the church as it began to take its first steps and stumbles as a confessional Lutheran congregation. Despite this, the formal changes to belief and practice made during the transition, including the new church constitution, followed LCMS templates and guidelines as well as the *Lutheran Service Book* and *Agenda*.

The final stage of joining the LCMS was somewhat determined by demographic conditions. At the time of East Anaheim Christian's transition to Christ Lutheran Church, there existed an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

3. Ibid.

4. The Conservative Lutheran Association was formed in 1980 by Lutherans Alert National, an organization founded in 1965 by a group of pastors and laypeople who were concerned about trends in the American Lutheran Church and other synods that were contrary to the historical beliefs and confessions of Lutheranism. A seminary was founded in 1969, known as Faith Evangelical Lutheran Seminary, Tacoma, Washington.

congregation almost directly across the street. Although insiders are very aware of the distinctions between these Lutheran bodies, this created a rather awkward visual setting. In addition, the City of Anaheim and surrounding environs grew out of an early German settlement.[5] Thus, the area featured a very dense distribution of LCMS congregations within five miles of Christ Lutheran's campus, one less than a mile away. Furthermore, the church, having had three years to adjust to its new identity, seemed ready to incorporate fully into the confessional Lutheran church at large. With the assistance of the Pacific Southwest District President, Christ Lutheran of Anaheim merged with Zion Lutheran Church of Anaheim, where I also served as a temporary associate pastor to assist with the process of assimilation.

CROSS-DENOMINATIONAL CATECHESIS: DOCTRINAL, HERMENEUTICAL, AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES

Since the Reformation, Lutheran catechesis has been conducted primarily within populations familiar with Lutheran faith and practice. I find most contemporary publications that attempt to explain Lutheran distinctives to non-Lutherans to be well-written but seemingly unaware of many of the cultural and hermeneutical assumptions held by modern evangelicals. This same challenge became an obstacle, in situ, as this congregation attempted to bridge the gap between a contemporary American evangelical understanding of Christianity and the confessional Lutheran understanding. Both speak a similar, but different, language. It is common to find a vastly different meaning or value attached to a religious word or concept that, on the surface, appears to be something held in common.

Although this congregation, as in many modern evangelical communities, lacked any formal systematic approach to biblical interpretation, I observed several, likely subconscious, hermeneutical assumptions that presented challenges to a confessional understanding of Scripture. During the process of catechesis, I found that one of the primary obstacles was the difference in presuppositions regarding the doctrines of man and sin. Prior to Lutheran catechesis, the capability of the human will and work in the minds of almost all the parishioners was exaggerated and, despite the Scriptural witness to the debilitating effects of sin, those effects were minimized. A deconstruction of this misunderstanding in light of the full biblical witness became foundational, almost like a lynchpin, to a confessional understanding of essential concepts such as justification, law and gospel, the sacraments, vocation, and so on.

Such assumptions seem to originate from an apparently purposeful ignorance of the biblical message that addresses such issues. Likely, the presuppositions of most evangelical communities originated from an American sense of identity, general and spiritual, that is rooted in individual achievement and self-determination. As the full biblical expression of anthropology and hamartiology was revealed concerning free will and original sin (*Triglotta*, 43–45), there was both great surprise and interest in the discovery of these previously unknown texts and doctrines. Yet there was also some observable, existential angst as the established paradigms of self-worth and spiritual identity were reexamined in light of these revelations that were so new to them. The commonly held self-help mentality in Christianity depends on this misunderstanding of the sinful nature of humanity. The biblical hearers of Peter's Pentecost sermon were cut to the heart by discovering that they were so hopelessly broken with sin that they themselves had crucified the perfect Jesus of Nazareth and were not the generally good, "repairable" souls they once thought they were (Acts 2:36). A proper, confessional understanding of the doctrine of man and sin opens the door for a confessional understanding of the need for the gospel, the work of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirt, and a correct understanding of the means by which he works: word and sacrament.

I have heard the phrase "Scripture must interpret Scripture" as frequently in non-Lutheran circles as in Lutheran.

The aforementioned elevation of human reason and a culture of individualism created further hermeneutical obstacles. I have heard the phrase "Scripture must interpret Scripture" as frequently in non-Lutheran circles as in Lutheran, but the phrase is understood quite differently. The confessional Lutheran understanding of hermeneutics requires Scripture to interpret Scripture as the analogy of faith (*sedes doctrinae*) that *all* interpretation must be in harmony with the established doctrine of *all* Scripture (Rom 12:6, ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως), as we learn in Lutheran dogmatic texts:

> Modern rationalistic theology, which denies the fundamentals of the Christian doctrine for the very reason that it rejects the divinely inspired Word of God as the only source and norm of faith, seeks to construct its own unified system of teachings (*ein einheitliches Ganzes*) on the basis of "Christian consciousness," "Christian experience," "regenerate reason," etc.[6]

Prior to this catechetical process, parishioners usually had limited resources to interpret the biblical text beyond what was

5. Lucile E. Dickson, "The Founding and Early History of Anaheim, California," *Annual Publication of the Historical Society of Southern California* 11, no. 2 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1919): 26–37.

6. Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*, 82.

driven by a need for personal, immediate application. The realization of both the necessity and the complexity of requiring every interpretation of a biblical text to be in harmony with the known teaching of all biblical texts led to both an understanding and appreciation for the symbolic confessions of the church.

The fundamental understanding of law and gospel presented further challenges in both obvious and surprising ways. In the minds of these participants, and likely many Christians of all traditions, the idea of law is limited to the Ten Commandments or Old Testament regulations rather than any act or failed act of human will or work. The idea that human intellectual belief, decision, or love was a work of law—falling far short of any divine standard—was a challenging and almost alien concept. Salvific work, sanctified living, and the assurance of faith was perceived as an internal rather than external process. Once again, the exposure to the entirety of biblical teaching on these matters had a dynamic effect on the participants' development of a confessional understanding of the Christian faith. Faith is the Holy Spirit's work; the word of God is not only authoritative but causative; justification is not an internal process but an external promise; and Christ's presence in the sacraments strengthens and sustains faith. Again, these are basic teachings of Lutheran doctrine:

> The means of grace thus perform a twofold function: they offer and confer forgiveness (*media oblativa sive dativa*), and they produce faith (*media operativa sive effectiva*). *Media dativa ex parte Dei gignunt fidem sive medium* λητικόν *ex paste hominis*.[7]

Another notable assumption that was expressed by participants throughout this process was that, if God commanded a human work, then humans must be capable of carrying out such a command, or, to put it another way, "What I must do, I can do." But as Werner Elert explains, we are not able.

> Two things we know only too well: that He commands "Thou shalt" and that He lets us be born in a state which makes the fulfillment of this "Thou shalt" impossible for us. The sense and the purpose of this contradiction are hidden from us.[8]

While this assumption that we can do what we must may be logical from a human standpoint, it fails to acknowledge the biblical texts to the contrary, as well as the need for the fulfillment of these commands on our behalf by a perfect Savior.

Modern evangelical culture has become accustomed to viewing biblical texts as something of a how-to manual for developing a sense of personal identity and purpose: divine information for personal improvement. The reversal of this incorrect assumption is crucial to a christological rather than human locus in the understanding of biblical texts. This "What must we do?" hermeneutic is contrasted in The Small Catechism by "What does this mean?" If the work of Christ is the foundational principle of a believer's interpretation of Scripture, then he will see that the text is not about his individual identity or purpose, but about Christ, who is the meaning of Scripture and gives his life true meaning (Luke 24:27; John 1:45; Rom 3:21). The East Anaheim congregation studied the Confessions and Catechism alongside contemporary evangelical texts to ensure that the various distinctions were realized and made clear.

FURTHER CHALLENGES AND OBSERVATIONS

The completion of this process depended on a few essential factors beyond the catechetical. Extraordinary amounts of prayer and divine providence were foremost. In hindsight, I recognize many shortcomings in my efforts to lead the parish through this difficult time. But, despite human failures, God's will is done. I also believe that a key factor in a successful transition such as this is the long-term relationship of the congregation and its pastor. The importance of a trusting relationship cannot be overstated whenever a different way of thinking is being processed, especially concerning truths of eternal consequence.

Further notable challenges included a great deal of peer pressure from some of the parishioners' friends and family who perceived the Lutheran church as a watered-down form of Roman Catholicism. Frequent reference to "Luther" also created concern. Ironically, some parishioners perceived the use of Luther's name on the catechism and other materials as representing some form of papal or divine authority. Having almost no familiarity with confirmation or creeds, the participants held an understandable distrust of anything not directly stated, chapter and verse, from Scripture.

Historic practices of Lutheran worship and liturgy were also incorporated during the process. For the most part, it was enthusiastically embraced, but only after the meaning and use of each component was demonstrated, discussed, and shown to be supported by Scripture. This even resulted in a bit of friendly one-upmanship as church members began reciting the Creed or the Lord's Prayer from memory. I also noticed that the congregants appreciated the increased dignity, reverence, and uniformity of the worship—as long as there remained appropriate moments of spontaneity or humor that seemed to provide a continuity of pastoral connection, encouragement, and care for those worshipping.

Noteworthy among the parishioners was a division between the "doctrinal" and the "visual," especially regarding baptism. This congregation had previously held a firm belief that baptism was limited only to immersion and only to those old enough to express personal belief. Many congregants shared that, while they understood and accepted the biblical justification for the confessional Lutheran practice of baptizing infants and pouring or sprinkling, they were very uncomfortable seeing it actually happen. One effort to overcome this discomfort was, even when baptizing infants, to have all involved enter the three-foot-deep water of the church's baptismal and remain standing while water was poured over the head of the candi-

7. Ibid., 319.
8. Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 35.

date during the actual baptism. While challenging from a logistical standpoint, it appeared to greatly help the congregation adjust to this "new" form.

FINAL QUESTIONS

Whereas the duty to self-correct error is self-evident, is there any responsibility for the confessional, orthodox church to correct heterodox traditions in the church at large? If so, what are the appropriate methods for doing so? This case study demonstrates that there is a hunger among the heterodox traditions for the depth of the gospel found in our confessional Lutheran faith. This is especially so as the teaching of many American evangelical churches becomes increasingly secular and shallow.

There is a hunger among the heterodox traditions for the depth of the gospel found in our confessional Lutheran faith.

A recent Pew research study, "Why Americans Go (and Don't Go) to Religious Services," released 1 August 2018,[9] determined that, even after decades of the modern church adapting to the perceived needs of American culture, 37 percent of those who do not attend religious services state that "a net dislike for congregation/religious services" is the reason they do not attend. Of those who do attend services at least once a month, 81 percent claim it is due to a desire "to become closer to God."

Our historic Lutheran worship, culminating in the intimacy with Christ's perfection, love, and forgiveness through the miracle of his real presence, offers a physical meeting with Christ in sacramental flesh and blood and a closeness to God found nowhere else in this life. What Lutherans have enjoyed for centuries is a treasure that many others are searching for. Out of love for our neighbor, is the confessional Lutheran church obligated to seek more and better ways to engage heterodox Christian teaching and/or leaders? Is there a duty of the *ecclesiae orthodoxae* to the *ecclesiae impurae*? If so, what is the most appropriate and effective means by which to fulfill this duty and share our treasure?

American Lutherans, originating in largely immigrant, like-minded communities and cultures, seem uncomfortable with direct engagement with the non-Lutheran world, especially that which lies beyond the realm of academia. This is evidenced by the fact that so many members of East Anaheim Christian Church had never been exposed to what would be considered the most fundamental truths of confessional Lutheran doctrine. This hesitation to engage is understandable considering the fluidity of modern sectarian boundaries, postmodern revulsion to dogmatic belief, and legitimate concern over issues of fellowship. With that said, this current lack of engagement seems contrary to the values that led the Reformation and produced the Lutheran Confessions, which state:

> In order to preserve the pure doctrine and to maintain a thorough, lasting, and God-pleasing concord within the church, it is essential not only to present the true and wholesome doctrine correctly, but also to accuse the adversaries who teach otherwise (1 Tim 3:9; Titus 1:9; 2 Ti. 2:24; 3:16). "Faithful shepherds," as Luther states, "must both pasture or feed the lambs and guard against wolves so that they will flee from strange voices and separate the precious from the vile" (John 10:12–16, 27; Jer 15:19). (FC SD RN, 14)

Some tension has developed within the confessional Lutheran Church as many therein see mission in contrast to orthodoxy and confession. Some Lutheran pastors and laymen see *Missio Dei* as an adaptation to popular belief systems and practices rather than the need to communicate the gospel in its full measure via confessional orthodoxy. Considering that the confessional Lutheran church began as a force of reform, it is surprising that it is now so divided in this regard. If Lutherans truly believe that the Holy Scriptures are the only objective means for knowing the truth of the gospel, and if they truly believe that the Lutheran Confessions accurately convey those Holy Scriptures, should not *Missio Dei* be *Missio Confessio*? If the gospel remains intact only when proclaimed purely and fully, how can mission and orthodoxy be separated?

> Wherever the gospel of unconditional grace and faith in Christ is not preached and believed, there is darkness and heathenism. The great commission is relevant not only in Christian lands but also in those lands regarded as Christian.[10]

This is not a simple subject or task. The modern landscape of heterodoxy is far more complex than it was in the time of Luther's Wittenberg, and the challenges of language, hermeneutics, and method are far greater. But the mission to proclaim the gospel lovingly to our neighbors in fullness and purity has not changed.

By the grace of Christ, I pray that we ponder the question that has been asked so often by so many non-Lutherans regarding the core teachings of our historic Confessions: "Why have I never heard this before?" LOGIA

9. Pew Research Center, "Why Americans Go (and Don't Go) to Religious Services," Pew Research Center, http://www.pewforum.org/2018/08/01/why-americans-go-to-religious-services/.

10. Ingemar Oberg, *Luther and World Mission: A Historical and Systematic Study*, trans. Dean Apel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), 53.

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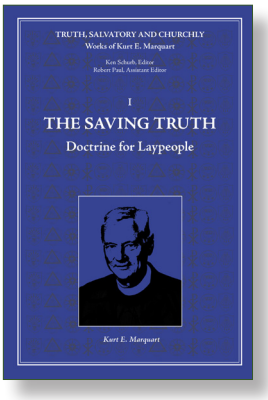

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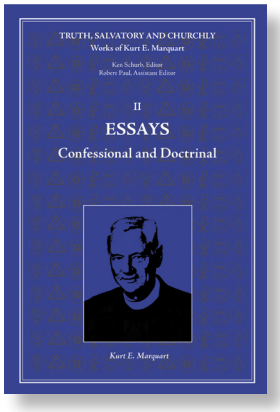

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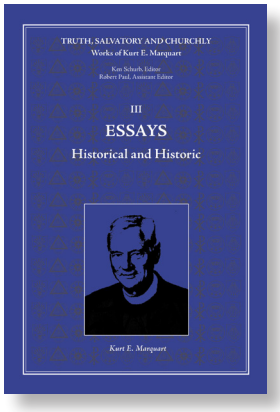

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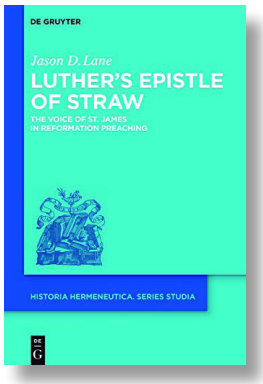
"It is not many books that make men learned . . . but it is a good book frequently read."
Martin Luther



Luther's Epistle of Straw: The Voice of St. James in Reformation Preaching. By Jason Lane. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2018.

Martin Luther's dismissal of the Letter of James as an "epistle of straw" evokes all manner of throat clearing on the part of pastors leading Bible studies or seminary exegetes teaching isagogics. Jason Lane's book, based upon his dissertation under Lutheran Orthodoxy specialist Anselm Steiger of Hamburg, claims it shouldn't. Lane not only dispels the notion that Luther's view of James could be reduced to his infamous epithet but also goes further in suggesting that Luther remained pliable in his understanding of James and deeply pastoral in his use of it. Subsequently, Luther's continued understanding and use of James shaped and influenced Lutheran pastors in over a century's worth of sermons. What one finds through this long history of the interpretation (*Auslegungsgeschichte*) of James is that those Lutherans saw in the epistle a repository of theological and pastoral insights that helped them work through various doctrinal disputes of the late sixteenth century in a sort of ongoing commentary on and extension of Luther's fundamental theological insights regarding justification, faith and works, law and gospel, word and sacrament.

The most profitable element of Lane's book is the methodological premises he lays out in his introduction (a highlight of the book, to be sure, and probably necessary reading for any seminary-level class on the General Epistles). First, he asserts that despite Luther's questions about the canonicity of James in his 1522 *Septembertestament*, Luther still defended its usefulness. Second, following an article by J. A. O. Preus, Lane claims that one must distinguish the question about the canonicity of James from the question of its interpretation. Lane opts to study not the tired debate over whether it should or should not be in the canon, but how Lutherans continued to preach on it and interpret it even after Luther questioned it. Third, Lane again follows Preus in making another important distinction between *antilegomena* and *homolegoumena*. Using an ancient axiom of Augustine that questionable books may be beneficial for the faithful despite not being sufficient for the establishment of doctrine (the "canon within a canon" argument so noxious to many a modern exegete), he argues that in spite of its status as *antilegomenon* Luther and his heirs still believed James could be a means through which the Spirit works.

The remainder of the book then focuses on how a history of the interpretation of Lutherans preaching on James reveals this pastoral utility. The pivotal figure in Lane's narrative is Andreas Althamer (1500–1539), a student at Wittenberg and reformer at Brandenburg-Ansbach. Althamer wrote two very different commentaries on James. The first, in 1527, followed Luther's more critical stance. The second, however, represented a marked about-face, possibly due to his own experience with reform at the parish level. In his 1533 commentary, Althamer presented James as a more pastorally applicable epistle, full of metaphors pertinent to the instruction of the faithful. One important and influential move Althamer made in 1533 was to impose a christological interpretation on James 1:17 ("from the Father of lights"), reading it as "from the Father of *Light*" — the singular "light" being Jesus. This christological interpretation opened a host of theological and practical applications of the subsequent subject matter in James for later interpreters. Luther in fact changed his own translation of that passage to Althamer's in his 1534 edition of the entire *Biblia*. Luther would also go on to interpret many of the metaphors in James similarly to Althamer, as would contemporary Johannes Spangenberg in his 1542–1544 postils.

Lane moves in chapter two to Luther's own sermons on James, delivered on Cantate and Rogate Sundays in Easter from 1535 to 1539. Luther still had his questions about James. He preferred liturgical revisions that would use pericopes from 1 Corinthians instead of James on those dates to better reflect the resurrection themes of Easter. He also doubted the authorship of James, instead positing that it was more likely a collection of apostolic sayings. Yet Luther still preached on James and preached as if it were any other inspired text of Holy Scripture. Moreover, his interpretation, like his translation, echoed Althamer. Like Althamer, he saw the gifts from the "Father of Light" as Christ, the gospel, the law, and the sacraments. Throughout, he emphasizes the power and effect of the word, the way in which that word produces works in the life of the believer, and how the word functions as a mirror to reflect upon the Christian life. Despite his qualifications about the canonicity of James or its place in the lectionary, Luther still preached it as the word of God and saw it as every bit as beneficial for his hearers as the rest of the inspired Holy Scriptures.

The remainder of this volume then sketches out how several generations' worth of Lutheran postil writers interpreted the Epistle readings for Cantate (James 1:16–21) and Rogate (James 1:22–27). The subjects and details in these chapters are best reserved for the student of Lutheran Orthodoxy or the Epistle of James. The more relevant insights come from the way in which these Lutheran interpreters of James fitted the text to their context. In the controversies attending the Formula of Concord, specifically those concerning good works, the relationship between law and gospel, and the third use of the law, they find important insights from James. Even Formulist David Chytraeus develops language he will contribute in FC VI in his postil on James. It is also noteworthy here that the postil sermons of this period regularly employ a *loci* method of preaching that highlights specific topics in the catechism in connection with James, suggesting that the epistle reflected those theological themes. A final shift Lane cites in the generation or two after the Formula is that preachers began to expand beyond the more specific theological concerns to broader pastoral applications.

Yet whether it is Althamer's 1533 commentary, Luther's sermons of the 1530s, or over a century's worth of Lutheran postils after Luther's death, Lutherans were still using James. More than that, they were reading James and preaching on it in very similar ways. They were picking up many of the same metaphors and finding similar theological considerations and pastoral applications. If they did consider James an "epistle of straw," they did not read or preach on it that way.

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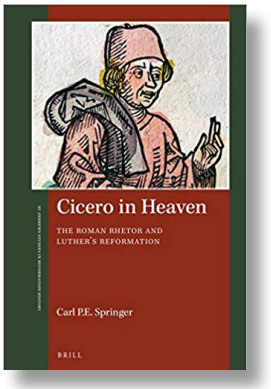

Cicero in Heaven: The Roman Rhetor and Luther's Reformation. By Carl P. E. Springer. Leiden: Brill, 2018.

This book is for classicists and Lutherans "who are interested in understanding more clearly Cicero's import for Martin Luther and his followers," as well as their effect "on Cicero's legacy not only in Europe but also in America" (ix). In writing for two audiences, Carl Springer loses neither, gently introducing both Cicero's Rome and Luther's Wittenberg. Although there are a few pages where the non-Lutheran classicist may well wonder what such things as a "synod" are, the book avoids overspecialization. Not only is it an historical analysis *of* the classics but an argument *for* them. To spoil the ending, the book is a masterful setup for the author's peroration, in which he lambasts the modern educational project that dehumanizes and reduces everything to its immediate utility, arguing instead that education is worth having for its own sake. Given that "the American charges against the ancient classics are so familiar that their repetition almost takes on a liturgical character" (248), it is no surprise that apologies for the classics often sound equally as hackneyed. This one is fresh, yes, even worth the price of Brill's admission fee.

The first two chapters discuss Cicero's contributions to rhetoric, his influence on Renaissance humanism, and Luther's attitude toward Cicero. Luther said that, unlike Aristotle, "the leisured ass, who had more than enough money and time on his hands," Cicero was a man of action, "full of cares and civic burdens" (89). Cicero knew *tentatio* and was willing to die; he spoke boldly, which the Greeks and the New Testament call *parrhesia,* and the Lutherans *confessio* (99). For this reason Luther recommended Cicero's *De officiis* over the works of Aristotle: "Cicero deals with things of substance, Aristotle with dialectic" (83).

The next two chapters analyze Cicero's place in the new educational system crafted by Luther and Melanchthon, as well as Cicero's influence in the schools of Europe and America in subsequent generations, especially among the Lutherans.

The final chapter, which may be the book's greatest contribution, essentially seeks to provide an analysis to the question, "What happened?" Springer discusses the indifference and hostility to Latin, the classics, and Cicero even from Luther's day until our time. In one sense, a book like this should not have to exist, as anyone who has read Cicero and Luther can attest. Yet given that the 2013 *Cambridge Companion to Cicero* has no coverage of Luther and the Reformation in its chapter on "Receptions of Cicero" (47), and given that fewer and fewer Lutheran pastors have any real sense of who Cicero was or why they should care, this book clearly fills a glaring gap.

And this gap is not only historical information but also key knowledge for Lutheran preachers and educators about how to teach and preach the faith, seeing as "what is said cannot really be separated from how it is said" (36). Should the preacher carefully craft his manuscript with Cicero or shoot from the hip with the elder Cato? Is he even aware that this debate is at least as old as Plato? What did Luther think and is that what Luther did? After all, Luther himself admitted that he was a "windbag" who struggled to be concise (128).

As a treat, the footnotes, which never obscure, will take the reader in any direction he so desires. In what other single volume would I have discovered Luther's hilariously offensive toilet-humor *Dysenteria Martini Lutheri* (61), a mock treatise on vulgarity and etiquette authored by a student of Melanchthon's (61), and the homiletical handbook of Johann Michael Reu (182)?

Given their standing as giants among us, it is difficult enough to write concisely about the lasting influence of men like Cicero and Luther, but here Springer has taken up the delightful task of doing both at once. In a subject so vast, he avoids the temptation to say everything so as to achieve the laudable goal of having said something.

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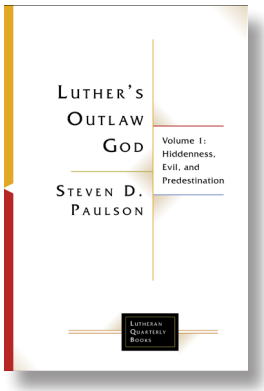
Boulder, Colorado



Luther's Outlaw God, Vol. 1, ***Hiddenness, Evil, and Predestination.*** By Steven Paulson. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018.

In *Hiddenness, Evil, and Predestination*, Steven Paulson explores Luther's teaching regarding the hidden God in *The Bondage of the Will* (1525) and applies its principles to currents in modern theology. This book is the first of a three-volume work that appears to represent something approaching a systematic theology, albeit one almost entirely focused on the captive will and divine hiddenness. The basic theme of the work is Luther's concept of God as an "outlaw." That is to say, God's grace and election are not bound to the law. God elects outside the law in that no one earns their election. Neither is it possible to rationalize election within the framework of the law. Indeed, it is the goal of sinful humanity to rationalize God's often surprising grace on the basis of the law. If this is possible, then humans can meet God's conditions for election and take control of the divine-human relationship through self-justification. Paulson asserts that not only is this an untenable reading of the Bible but also raises the ugly specter of theodicy.

In theodicy, human suffering and evil are rationalized on the basis of the law. According to most attempts at theodicy, humans suffer because they possess a free will, which if it could properly apply itself to obeying the law could avoid evil. This is not a tenable answer to the question of evil because even if one posits an original state of righteousness, the question can still be raised as to why God set up circumstances within which Adam and Eve were allowed to fall into evil. If one follows this line of reasoning to its logical conclusion, the result is despairing atheism.

As Luther notes, God works all things by necessity and needs no justification in doing so. This does not mean that God jerks his creatures around like a puppeteer. Rather, God shapes creatures through his speech so as to actualize them as entities that act out of the spontaneity of their nature (what Luther calls "the necessity of immutability"). God addresses creatures through mediums of his creatures—whether it be in works of nature or in the word and sacrament ministry of the church. God's two words of law and promise are like train tracks that inevitably lead to a specific location. In addressing his creatures through the law, God necessarily drives them on to judgment and damnation. Through the gospel ministry of the church, the creature is driven by necessity to salvation.

Paulson's emphasis in discussing the law is on its unrelenting nature as judgment, as well as the end of the law brought by the advent of the gospel. Much like his teacher, Gerhard Forde, Paulson also goes so far as to reject the eternity of the law (*lex aeterna*) on a number of occasions. Indeed, Paulson will even talk about the law as the enemy of God's grace, as if the law were really not God's will. This sort of rhetoric has earned Paulson the reputation from many conservative Lutherans of being an antinomian, or even Manichaean.

These concerns generally tend to be misplaced for a number of reasons. First, Paulson does certainly believe that the law is the will of God. Much of his language about the law being the enemy of God's grace is either rhetorical exaggeration for sermonic effect (the text is written essentially as a 250-page sermon) or simply signifies that the law has the opposite soteriological function to the gospel. Secondly, it must be understood that Paulson is defining the law in a somewhat different manner than many Lutherans typically would. Following Luther's argument in *Antinomian Disputations*, Paulson generally defines the law as anything that manifests God's wrath. This would include the Ten Commandments, along with all the other vicissitudes of fallen human existence. Hence, for Paulson *law* means what Luther would usually refer to as God's "alien work" (*opus alienum*).

These considerations bring into focus Paulson's rejection of the concept of the eternity of the law (*lex aeterna*) as well. By rejecting the eternity of the law, Paulson does not mean that God's will ceases once the gospel arrives. Neither does he mean to suggest that God's commandments do not possess an important guiding role in the life of a Christian. For those who have heard him speak on ethical issues, it must be observed that Paulson is a strong supporter of natural marriage, as well as an ardent advocate for the pro-life cause. Rather, what Paulson means is that when the gospel arrives, it abrogates the negative judgment of the law. This abrogation pertains exclusively to the divine-human relationship, rather than the believer's life in the kingdom of the world. For the practical purposes of the current life, Paulson would thoroughly endorse the Ten Commandments as a proper guide to Christian living.

Putting aside these clarifications, one is still prompted to ask: Does Paulson ultimately succeed in showing that God is truly an "outlaw"? The answer is both yes and no. To fully understand Paulson's position here, we must understand the background to the discussion in modern continental Protestant theology that informs his work. This discussion begins with a question raised by Albrecht Ritschl in the first volume of his dogmatic treatment of justification. Essentially, Ritschl argued that there was an inherent contradiction in Western soteriology from Anselm forward: God needed the law to be fulfilled, but he had to employ extralegal means to fulfill the law (that is, send Jesus minus the fulfillment of the law). This raises the question as to why God needed the law to be fulfilled in the first place, if God could act outside the law. Ritschl sees this as inherently contradictory. Paulson essentially agrees with Ritschl (much like Forde before him). Substitutionary atonement is an unnecessary synthesis of law and grace. Both law and grace remain in tension with one another in the temporal world until the end of time, when their hidden unity in God will be revealed. Moreover, if God can act out of grace without satisfaction (that is, by electing the patriarchs and sending Jesus), then no satisfaction is actually necessary to achieve salvation. The crucifixion was in the end an attack of sinful humanity on God's unilateral grace.

Paulson is certainly correct that God's reality is not exhausted by the law and that God's will to save cannot be rationalized within the rubric of the law. Moreover, God's operations

within the law and gospel possess a mysterious hidden unity that is not fully visible in this life. Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that the New Testament is quite clear that in the event of the atonement, God expresses faithfulness to his word of law as well as his surprising and unilateral grace (Rom 3:26). God could send Jesus without any fulfillment of the law, but in redeeming humanity God did not leave the law unfulfilled.

Ultimately, the major problem with Paulson's line of reasoning is that it tends to collapse the categories of atonement, justification, and election into one another. The New Testament, as well as the Lutheran Confessions, very clearly differentiate between these realities. Election derives from objective justification and objective justification is only the result of universal atonement (Rom 4:25; Eph 1:4–5). From this, the Trinitarian pattern of redemption becomes clear: Christ offered himself up to the Father and elicited a response of the judgment of universal justification. In time, this pronouncement of universal absolution by the Father manifests itself in the resurrection and the giving of the Holy Spirit, who in turn elects individual believers through the word and sacrament ministry of the church.

Seen in this light, reconciliation as well as divine hiddenness take on a Trinitarian shape. The hiddenness of God first manifests itself as the *aporia* between the God of law and creation (Father) and the God of unilateral grace (Son). In the death of the Messiah, the unity of law and grace are mysteriously manifest in the cross, while still remaining distinct. Beyond this, the hiddenness of God also manifests itself in the *aporia* between the universality of grace manifest in the cross (atonement) and resurrection (justification), and the particularity of election revealed in the activity of the electing God (Holy Spirit in word and sacrament). Seen from this perspective, the hiddenness of God would be defined as the manifest tension between the differing activities of the persons of the Trinity in time. Such a tension will remain until the light of glory (spoken of by Luther at the end of *The Bondage of the Will*) when the unity of the one God and the coherence of his actions in time will be revealed to the redeemed.

Contrary to this, Paulson embraces the simple dialectic between a hidden God of the law who is manifest as unrelenting demanding judgment and a God of the gospel who unilaterally elects the faithful apart from the law minus atonement and objective justification. This tendency to collapse justification and atonement into election in many regards mirrors Barth's teachings in *Church Dogmatics* IV.1–3, as well as Gerhard Forde's theory of atonement. Paulson's dualistic, rather than Trinitarian, development of the theme of divine hiddenness (in spite of seeming promises to the contrary in the first chapter) shares much in common with Theodosius Harnack, as well as Forde and the Luther Renaissance.

In spite of these criticisms, there are numerous valuable insights in this work that cannot be ignored. It is highly recommended for its insightful treatment of divine and human agency under hiddenness and bondage.

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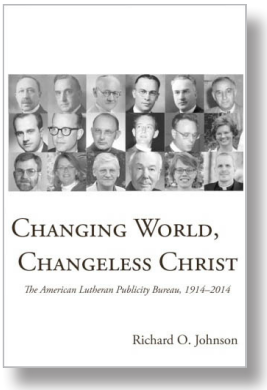

Changing World, Changeless Christ: The American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, 1914–2014. By Richard O. Johnson. Delhi, NY: ALPB Books, 2018.

An American centennial is always a celebration of change. In a nation so young, it cannot be otherwise. The small group of clergy, mostly from the East, who founded the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau (ALPB) in 1914 restricted their membership to "any church, society, club or individual affiliated with the Synodical Conference," an institution that collapsed in 1967. Despite many debates about changing its name throughout its first one hundred years, the organization still named the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau celebrated its centennial in 2014 with a desire to broaden its representation from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), the rock whence it was hewn, a rock that has undergone much change of its own in a century; the ALPB had devoted so much time to the sexuality debates of the 1980s through the 2000s in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), an institution whose regnant theology was perhaps unimaginable to any Lutheran in 1914, that a refocusing on ALPB's "evangelical catholicism" (a term decidedly not kosher in 1914) in all strands of American Lutheranism was felt to be needed.

Johnson lovingly and meticulously chronicles, documents, and analyzes the ALPB's odyssey from Missouri, within Missouri's midcentury wars, beyond Missouri, through the ELCA's turmoil, and into the formation of the NALC. The ALPB and its most widely known work in its periodicals, once *The American Lutheran* and now *Lutheran Forum* and *Forum Letter*, have always been firmly independent in outlook, but that independence has been in service to the various American Lutheran church bodies. Though it began with an apparently untheological and singular focus on "practical church work"—such as tracts, the placement of notices of service times in newspapers, and the need for Synodical Conference Lutherans to speak English and to be American—the cultural shift away from older ways of doing things was always a theological critique of those older ways, whether or not it meant to be one. The inseparability of what is taught and how it's taught meant instant and constant misunderstanding between New York and St. Louis, taking those cities as representative of ALPB and of "old Missouri." From controversy about the synod's provision of chaplains for the Great War onward, letters flew back and forth, sometimes recriminating, sometimes congratulating, often collaborating, with Theodore Graebner indulging in something of everything. ALPB's comfort with advertising, teaching on stewardship, and evangelizing all Americans rather than only Germanophone ones was in large measure absorbed by the LCMS over time, so that in the mid-1960s—as its way of doing "practical church work," its intense concern for Lutheran unity in America, and what detractors called its "high-churchism" all seemed to be on the rise in

the LCMS—*Lutheran Forum* editor John Tietjen, soon-to-be president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, wondered openly whether the ALPB had "run out of mission."

What had New York to do with St. Louis? Much in every way, and not even the acerbic and brilliant writing of Richard John Neuhaus, editor of *Forum Letter*, could outrage enough readers to put asunder what decades of hard work and promotion had brought together. It seemed at what would turn out to be the end of the Harms administration in the LCMS that "evangelical catholicism" would be the way to bring the LCMS forward into modern America and to bring all Lutheran bodies together into one Lutheran church. That this did not happen and that *Lutheran Forum* and *Forum Letter* would be consumed by debates about "the new church" that became the ELCA—abortion, sexuality, and so much else that was likely unimaginable in 1954, let alone 1914—is the fascinating story of more than half the book. Johnson does not tell a comprehensive history of American Lutheranism since the 1960s, but he did not need to. Nevertheless, the reader will want to fill in with more detail what is seen in the book only from the perspective of the ALPB Archives. For example, the Missouri Synod that came out of "the battle for the Bible" is characterized as "isolationist," and the Wisconsin Synod is a shadowy bogeyman of recalcitrance in the book, maintaining traditions such as prayer fellowship/unit fellowship that are neither biblical nor confessional. These portraits and the tragic divorce of the Synodical Conference are not filled out through the considered theological perspectives of those who disagreed with the ALPB. The Synodical Conference was Missouri's first and longest-lasting ecumenical endeavor toward a single American Lutheran church, but its death in the book is not mourned.

Mourning there is, nonetheless. The book's chapters on the ELCA and Missouri in the past twenty years chronicle growing unrecognition of one another's language and an inability for each one to comprehend why certain debates are even transpiring in the other's church body. If one reads the book at a couple long goes, like one of Trollope's political novels, to which it is similar in heft and pace, the elegiac quality of the narrative stands out very strongly. The whiggishness of the first fifty years as the bureau goes with some hiccoughs from strength to strength is not completed in triumph in its second half-century. The institution goes on, and some notable successes, such as the sales of the four-volume breviary *For All the Saints* that have kept ALPB solvent through many years, are had. It is the feeling of being lost between two major church bodies that do not fit its vision of Lutheranism's evangelical and catholic nature that pervades the second half of the book.

My quibbles with the book are merely quibbles. A subject index would have been helpful, and a few more zingers from Paul Lindemann or Neuhaus would have been delightful. The book is made by its characters and their vision of what it means to be Lutheran. So many Lutherans are now accustomed to things once as outré as full eucharistic vestments, every-Sunday communion, church marketing, and the use of the English language that one forgets how much has changed in the past century and how great a part the ALPB had in those changes and in so much else. Any Lutheran in America will gain greater light on our common history from this volume.

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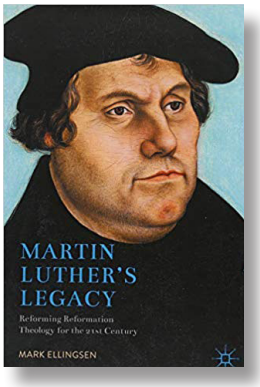

Martin Luther's Legacy: Reforming Reformation Theology for the Twenty-first Century. By Mark Ellingsen. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

The commemoration of the five-hundredth anniversary of Luther's posting of the *Ninety-five Theses* instigated a deluge of new publications treating every imaginable aspect of Luther's life, legacy, and theology from almost every conceivable vantage point. Mark Ellingsen's latest monograph approaches Luther's work and relevance with a constructive interest in the pastoral utility of Luther's theology, especially in view of the world's increasingly diverse and complex religious landscape. In this, Ellingsen sets out to subvert a tendency he perceives in contemporary Luther studies that prioritizes existing dogmatic concerns as orienting and configuring the Reformer's scholarly retrieval. Ellingsen suggests that a "contextual," as opposed to a "doctrinal," approach will provide a more sustainable procedure for putting Luther's witness to good use in the setting of the twenty-first century.

An apparent feature of this strategy is the preference for ample quotation that marks this text. Rather than supply extended exposition of Luther's thinking on various issues, guided by systematic analysis, Ellingsen chooses to document numerous instances of Luther's occasional treatment of a plethora of topics. At the same time, however, and somewhat ironically, *Martin Luther's Legacy* is also arranged by precisely the doctrinal coordinates that it claims, or seems to claim, must be set aside so that Luther's contextually and pastorally polyphonic voice can be rendered in its full richness. Consequently, the classic doctrinal *loci* (topics), roughly appropriated from the ordering of the Apostles' Creed, are used to organize the contents of the book.

After inspecting Luther's views on a number of foundational items—Scripture and theological method, the doctrine of God, Christology, and pneumatology—Ellingsen focuses his analysis on a number of more granular elements of Luther's theological and pastoral work. With his chapter on "Creation and Providence" (119–34), Ellingsen disputes denigrations of Luther's theology that construe Luther's christocentrism as entailing a weak doctrine of creation. "Justification" (167–216) receives a somewhat lengthier appraisal, compared to some of the other chapters, given its crucial and relevant status in Luther's thought. Ellingsen favors the position of the new Finnish school of Luther studies on the question of Christ's presence in faith (*in ipsa fide Christus adest*) (181). In his treatment of

sanctification, Ellingsen holds that, in certain contexts, Luther indeed teaches that there is a third use of the law that positively guides believers (236–40).

The church, the ministry, and the sacraments receive somewhat shorter exposition than seems adequate in a study of Luther's theology such as this one. Finally, Ellingsen provides a rather intriguing chapter on Luther's "Social Ethics" (307–33), which contains some interesting information on Luther's views on political economy within his sixteenth-century German setting. *Martin Luther's Legacy* finishes with a short conclusion that offers some reflections on how Luther's witness might continue to reform theology today (335–38). An appendix containing a chart documenting Luther's pastoral application of classic doctrinal topics precedes the index.

Martin Luther's Legacy parallels, in some ways, past initiatives to provide secondary summaries of Luther's theology following the structure of a dogmatics—in spite of this book's contention that dogmatically driven Luther scholarship is limited by its use of doctrinal categories to guide its reading of the Reformer. Even so, this copiously documented book would serve very well as a reference for those looking to excavate Luther's views on various issues across the breadth of his corpus. The reader should be aware, however, that (at least in the copy received by the reviewer) a number of typos and formatting errors remain throughout the text.

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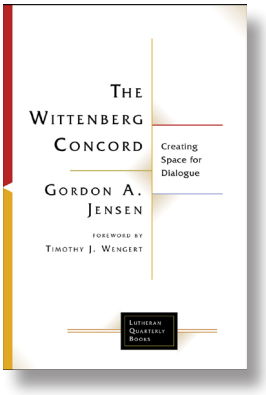

The Wittenberg Concord: Creating Space for Dialogue. By Gordon A. Jensen. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018.

Gordon Jensen's new book on the Wittenberg Concord of 1536 deals both with the history of the agreement as well as its theological implications for contemporary Lutheranism. For those unfamiliar with it, the Wittenberg Concord was a confession of faith made by Luther and Melanchthon along with a number of the southern German reformers, including Wolfgang Capito and Martin Bucer. The Concord is primarily concerned with the nature of the sacraments, most notably the question of the substantial presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Much of Jensen's book recounts the history leading up to the agreement. He draws on much of the best contemporary scholarship on the subject, such as the work of Amy Nelson Burnett.

Luther's debates concerning the Lord's Supper began in the early 1520s. Initially, Luther's chief target was not Ulrich Zwingli but his own colleague at Wittenberg, Andreas Karlstadt. While Luther was away at the Wartburg, Karlstadt initiated a campaign of iconoclasm, smashing church property and leading riots. Karlstadt also attacked the doctrine that Christ's body and blood were genuinely present in the Lord's Supper. Instead, he offered the novel explanation of the words of institution that Christ had been pointing at his own body while speaking the words "this is my body." Luther's negative encounter with Karlstadt colored how he would view subsequent opponents with similar sacramental theologies, namely, Zwingli and Johannes Oecolampadius. Both men held a symbolic interpretation of the Lord's Supper and were roundly attacked for it by Luther at the Marburg Colloquy in 1529.

As Jensen shows, not all theologians took positions as extreme as Zwingli and Oecolampadius. Others like Wolfgang Capito and Martin Bucer were willing to talk about the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper in spiritualistic terms. That is, they speak of the presence of Christ (unlike Zwingli), but only through the Holy Spirit—not according to his substantial, mysteriously physical presence, as with Luther. These positions, combined with their desire for an alliance with Lutherans, made them willing to move closer to the Lutheran belief in the substantial presence of Christ in the sacrament. Negotiations were also helped by the fact that both Zwingli and Oecolampadius died in 1531.

After letters and discussions, the parties met in Wittenberg to hammer out an agreement in 1536. In the common statement known as the "Wittenberg Concord," Bucer agreed to a formula that stated that the body and blood of Christ were received "with" the bread and wine. This satisfied Luther and also assured the southern reformers that the Lutherans did not think that the body and blood of Christ were in some sense locally implanted in the sacramental elements. This language would later be utilized in the Formula of Concord in the much stronger words "in, under, and *with*." Likewise, Luther seems to have successfully pressed Bucer to accept language that affirmed the objective presence of Christ to all, not just the faithful.

The subsequent history of the Concord was not quite what the signers hoped it would be. Although Jensen tries to soften the reality, Bucer did not appear entirely sincere in his affirmation of the substantial presence of Christ in the sacrament. When selling the Concord to the Swiss Reformed, Bucer argued that all that was really affirmed was a spiritualistic understanding of the Supper. Even this was problematic, since there was a feeling among the Swiss Reformed that Bucer had used language in the Concord that had betrayed Zwingli's legacy. Most of the Swiss Reformed were eventually absorbed into the Calvinist tradition by Bullinger's signing of the *Consensus Tigurinus* (1549) with Calvin. Interestingly, those regions that ended up accepting the Wittenberg Concord, such as Strasbourg, later accepted the Augsburg Confession.

Despite the claims of Jensen, in light of this history the Wittenberg Concord does not appear to be a model ecumenical agreement. Indeed, the ultimate failure of the agreement can be attributed to the fundamental flaws in its composition. Much like the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, the Wittenberg Concord used overly vague language and dodged issues where agreement was lacking. Jensen thinks that

the avoidance of areas of disagreement was a strength, but the fact remains that these issues inevitably had to be addressed. When they were addressed in the 1550s, they became major points of contention between Lutheran and Reformed theologians, thereby cementing ecclesiastical divisions.

For this reason, unless ecumenical agreements represent an actual, total convergence on all essential points, they will invariably have the negative effect of pressuring people to accept positions that they do not actually hold, or to give up fundamental theological principles merely for the sake of political expediency. Either outcome is highly undesirable.

This being said, although Jensen's theological conclusions are not very convincing, the work is a fine piece of historical scholarship. It is definitely recommended for those interested in a lesser-known incident in the history of the Lutheran Reformation.

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Logia Forum

Short Studies and Commentary

The Hermeneutics of the Eye

Hermeneutics is a forbidding loanword of Greek extraction, but the topic underlying this arcane vocable is the stuff of everyday experience among folk of every educational level. We interpret language already in the way we articulate it on our tongues as well as through the visual signs with which we accompany it. In the latter context an English historian teaching at Scotland's St. Andrew's University, who appears to have no confessional axe to grind, had the distinction of unwittingly publishing a Lutheran classic during the year recently celebrated under the rubric of Reformation 500.

Bridget Heal, an industrious researcher with a stellar grasp of German who has written in the area of the Second Reformation, demonstrates how the massive push by a dozen or so German princes in the second half of the sixteenth century to force their territories from the orbit of the Lutheran Reformation into that of Reformed Christendom caused those who remained faithful to the Lutheran confession to cherish specific liturgical rites and customs all the more as markers of their religious identity.

In *A Magnificent Faith: Art and Identity in Lutheran Germany*, a volume slightly more than three hundred pages issued by Oxford University Press in 2017, Dr. Heal comprehensively shows how Luther's decision in the early 1520s not to go along with Andrew Karlstadt's iconoclastic program slowly but surely bore rich fruit in church building and decoration, leading to a visible *via media* between Roman excess and Reformed barrenness. Starting with the father-and-son team of Lukas Cranach Sr. and Jr. headquartered in Wittenberg's town square, Lutherans made their good confession in the medium of visual beauty, not only appealing to so-called intellectuals but also touching a powerful chord in the hearts of the lower orders of society. Above all the crucifix became an expression of Lutheran distinctiveness vis-à-vis the Reformed. *A Magnificent Faith* comes with rich illustrations that demonstrate Dr. Heal's thesis, including a photograph of the silver crucifix that adorned miners' coffins in funeral processions held in Freiberg in the Erzgebirge region of Saxony (182). When the commander of a marauding imperial army confiscated the treasured crucifix during the Thirty Years' War, the miners soon had it replaced.

Alas, the Second Reformation carried off many victories, but there were successful Lutheran pushbacks here and there. After being gutted under Reformed convert Landgrave Moritz of Hesse-Kassel in 1605, Marburg's Marienkirche was restored for Lutheran worship when the city and parts of the territory fell to a Lutheran member of the dynasty in 1624. The glorious high altar and retable are featured on page 71. Mary and John stand on each side of the Crucified and an angel collects the Lord's blood in a chalice. A surf to the website of this still ostensibly Lutheran (Landeskirche) parish took me to a photograph of this stunning altar decorated for harvest festival; it seems not to have occurred to those in charge of the homepage that their church's architectural glory was and is made for the full-blown Lutheran mass.

Dr. Heal concludes her narrative with an account of the building and dedication (by Valentine Ernst Löscher) of Dresden's famous Frauenkirche, to which one could add mention of the two churches, one in Romanesque, the other in Gothic, style erected in Neuendettelsau within a generation of Wilhelm Löhe's death and in tribute to his ministry. As I heartily commend *A Magnificent Faith* as a wondrous account of the comely cultural fruit of the Lutheran Reformation, I raise the question whether the twentieth-century North American Lutheran preferential option for iconoclasm has had and continues to have deleterious effects on the interpretation of the message that orthodox pastors endeavor to convey in their preaching and teaching. In particular, does the regular appearance of an empty cross over the altar have anything to do with the catastrophic increase of cremations among us, and with the lamentable tendency to suppose that the hosts distributed in Holy Communion are likewise empty? The more Dr. Heal's book features on the coffee tables of our laity and clergy, the likelier we are to witness the happy phenomenon of spiritual pilgrimages from Zurich to Wittenberg among those who frequent our churches.

John Stephenson

God's Law: Good or Bad?

A three-year-old reasons in a way that should be familiar to our profoundly narcissistic generation. He thinks that if you say he is bad this means that you are bad. He does not want to hear that he is bad. For a three-year-old, the theological principle, "the law always accuses," is proof that the law is bad. It must be bad because it stands opposed to me. It accuses me. It threatens me. It makes me feel bad about myself.

If the law is bad, the gospel cannot meet its demands. That would be giving it a status it does not deserve. It must rather shut its mouth! If the gospel were to meet the law's demands by offering to it the pure obedience it requires and receiving from it the curse it threatens, it would thereby sanctify the law and declare it to be nothing less than the eternal will of God. This would place the gospel in service to the law. It would grant to the law a status it does not deserve. If the law is bad, the gospel must supersede it, but not pay homage to it. Says who? Says the three-year-old theologian. He reasons that if it stands against him, it must be bad.

We reply to the three-year-old: No, you are bad. Yes, you! The principle, "the law always accuses," is not an indictment of the law. It is an indictment of you. The law is good. It reflects the goodness of God. The law is eternal. It exhibits the very nature of God. God is love. That is what his law requires. The law of love is not incidental, provisional, inadequate, or merely temporal. It is eternal. God is eternal. Love is eternal. God's law is eternal.

It is fashionable among adult theologians these days to argue against the vicarious satisfaction of Jesus as if it is some kind of legalistic arrangement that makes God captive to the law. But God is love. He must require it of his children. He may not tolerate anything less. God insists on love. That we do not and cannot love as his law demands does not change the nature of God. Since God is love, his law requires it. By God insisting on love, that is, by God insisting on being God, God also insists on the incarnation, the vicarious obedience, and the propitiatory sacrifice. God made man in his own image. Only Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, could become our brother and, as the God who gives the law, become a man to do what the law requires and suffer from the law what the law exacts. The gospel does not negate the law. It fulfills it. It does it. Christ does it. Our God and brother, Jesus, does it. He who is love does love and by doing love vicariously for those trapped in their hatred of God and their neighbor triumphs over their sin and destroys their death. It's not a matter of the gospel being obligated to the law. It is a matter of God being faithful. He cannot deny himself. Christus Victor is victor because his perfect love did what the eternal law of God required of us. The vicarious satisfaction is no mere theory of atonement. It is atonement.

Christ's atonement establishes the law as eternal. We preachers need not be afraid to preach it as an ongoing—indeed, eternal—standard of living to those entrusted to our care. We teach God's law as a rule for Christian living without teaching that the power to live a Christian life comes from the law. We rely on the gospel to set the conscience free. The power of God's forgiveness, grounded in Christ's vicarious satisfaction and suffering, is the power to lift the guilty out of his guilt and to elicit faith. That the law always accuses us as long as we live in these dying bodies does not mean that it only accuses. It also informs, teaches, and guides. The notion that the gospel is all we need to live a Christian life will inevitably turn the gospel into another law. "Just believe. That's all you must do." Oh no, dear Christian! You must obey God's law of love because God is love and he must require love of you. You may not trust in your obedience. It is laced with sin. To trust in sin is to embrace condemnation. You trust in him who is love incarnate, love in his humble and obedient living, love in his bitter suffering and dying, and love in his words of forgiveness you hear and believe. Christ's love, rendered to the penal justice of the God of love, is for you the forgiveness of your sins. It justifies you, sets you free from guilt, grants you peace with God, and delivers you from every evil of body and soul.

Yes, the law still tells you that you are bad. The law is right. But the gospel tells you that you are good. And the gospel is right. You live within this contradiction. God's good law tells you that you are not good. You have not loved as God's law demands. You cannot deny it. But your faith holds onto him whose love fulfilled the law of love's demands and has done so for you. "The just shall live by faith." You are righteous in God's sight. God says so. Living by faith, the law that always accuses now serves you. It teaches you what the life of faith does. It loves.

"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:10–11).

Rolf Preus

Speaking with Authority

"And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes" (Mark 1:22).

Nearly a decade ago, people in Lincoln, Nebraska, were shocked to see a picture of two men kissing each other on the front page of the daily newspaper. No doubt some folks saw this as a victory for inclusiveness and gay rights in a "red state," but the overall reaction, even from some political progressives, was shock and awe. My reaction was more one of disgust; I may have thrown up a little in my mouth.

My shock and awe came as I read the article. It described the plight of two men who were deeply "in love" but continually denied the "right" to get married. It also described the bravery of the Episcopalian campus pastor who defied church

rules and state law to officiate at this ceremony, which was purely symbolic. (Isn't it amazing that what caused shock and awe ten years ago would barely bring a yawn today? But I digress . . .) The article didn't stop there. The attention-seeking pastor was quoted at length regarding his motives for participating and officiating. He said, "God will bless this union; God will bless this marriage. And we should too."

Normally, when I read this type of nonsense, I simply roll my eyes and move on. But not this time! I couldn't let it go. I didn't need to bring it up at Sunday morning Bible class, because several of my members had cut the article out and were outraged. But they weren't outraged at exactly the same thing I was. They were deeply offended that the newspaper had promoted the topic of same-sex marriage and that now they had to explain the picture to their children and grandchildren. That offended me too, but I was used to that, having served in a liberal college town for over a decade. What offended and perplexed me the most were the comments of the pastor. He claimed to be speaking an authoritative word from God. He had to be challenged.

I sent the pastor a letter, perhaps more of a short note, on church stationery. I told him that I had read the article and had a simple question: "By what authority do you make the claim that God will bless this same-sex union?" I told him that I wondered if he was speaking with the authority of reason or logic or emotion or politics, since he clearly was not speaking with the authority of the State of Nebraska or his own church body. I asked for his biblical reasoning for the bold and authoritative statement that "God will bless this union." I never received a reply.

I cringe when I hear pastors say things like, "The way I read the text . . . " or "In my opinion . . . " or "Most commentaries believe that . . . " and then go on with their sermon. I want and expect a pastor, a man who has been given the charge to proclaim the word of God to the people of God and beyond, to speak with authority. Some pastors have great difficulty preaching and teaching with authority. For this there needs to be repentance. Some pastors speak with great authority, but that authority is something other than the inspired, inerrant, infallible word of God, namely the Bible. Again, for this there needs to be repentance.

Jesus astonished the crowds because he spoke with authority. Jesus spoke with authority and you can and must, too. We preach and teach not a self-proclaimed authority but the authority that comes from the God who created all things by the power and authority of his word. Authoritatively, we pastors must preach that the Word of God who became flesh and blood for us offered up that flesh and blood as the once-and-for-all sacrifice for the sin of the world. Authoritatively, we preach that God delivers the crucified and risen Word to us in the waters of Holy Baptism and the gift of the Lord's Supper. God has given us his authoritative word, the Holy Scriptures. Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest his authoritative word and then preach and teach it with boldness and confidence and authority. God's people deserve nothing less.

Clint Poppe

Sir, We Would See Jesus!

This past month, I had the experience of twice preaching from the pulpit of a neighboring parish. The first was for an evening prayer service with university students and the second for a wedding ceremony. A preacher's "home pulpit" is comfortable for him like a well-broken-in baseball glove. He knows it well and how to work in it. Not so for the "away pulpit." The pulpit I experienced this past month isn't much to look at or stand behind for that matter. It is less like a traditional pulpit and more like a stand from which the lessons would be read. Yet it is a grand pulpit! What makes it so is not the size but the plaque that confronts the preacher when he approaches. It reads, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." This, of course, is the famous quote from John 12:20 and is a common inscription on pulpits across the world. "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." This reminds the preacher that the task at hand in the pulpit is the clear proclamation of Jesus Christ for those gathered to hear. That would be Jesus Christ crucified and raised from the dead for the forgiveness of sins and the justification of the sinner.

Such is the task of Lutheran hermeneutics. The principles are clear: stick with the plain, simple sense of a text. Scripture interprets Scripture. Context. Properly distinguish law and gospel. Interpret Scripture in view of the *regula fidei*. Recognize the centrality of Christ and his work. In that last hermeneutical principle, one finds the answer to the request of the Greeks who approached Philip for an audience with Jesus. Jesus' work of glorification through the cross (John 12:20–36), according to his own word, is where people truly "see" him. The last hermeneutical principle is actually foremost of them all. Because Christ is primary in Lutheran theology (and so in hermeneutics), we recognize that it is not simply an academic pastime. In the end, the goal of applying Lutheran hermeneutical principles to the word is to deliver Jesus to the world, Jews, Greeks, and everyone in between. Removing hermeneutics from the clutches of purely academic pursuit and putting it into practice in preaching and teaching is a gift of the theology of the Lutheran Reformation. Luther understood this clearly. He wrote, "If you want to interpret well and confidently, set Christ before you, for He is the man to whom it all applies, every bit of it."

This means that when the Lutheran preacher approaches the pulpit to interpret the Scriptures for his hearers, he does so with confidence that the word proclaimed there will reveal and give Christ to them. This applies not only to the preaching task but to every area of pastoral care. Think of it this way: When a pastor stands by the sick (or death) bed and prays Psalm 23, he does so with Christ always at the center. The pastor recognizes, with Luther, that "the true, the only sense of the Psalms is the Christ-sense." When the pastor conducts a wedding ceremony and proclaims the mystery of marriage as an image of Christ and the church, he is following a biblical and Lutheran hermeneutic. When pastors provide care to troubled souls and pronounce absolution, "in the stead and by the command of Christ," they are doing so with the topmost hermeneutical principle in view. This does not

eliminate the preaching and application of God's law, for when pastors admonish the erring and proclaim God's law, they are doing so in order that the word of the law might work repentance and lead to absolution — the gospel.

In the end, proper Lutheran hermeneutics will lead the sinner to Jesus. Luther wrote:

> Christ would indicate the principal reason why the Scripture was given by God. Men are to study and search in it and to learn that He, He, Mary's Son, is the one who can give eternal life to all who come to Him and believe in Him. Therefore, he who would correctly and profitably read Scripture should see to it that he finds Christ in it; then he finds life eternal without fail. On the other hand, if I do not so study and understand Moses and the prophets as to find that Christ came from heaven for the sake of my salvation, became man, suffered, died, was buried, rose, and ascended into heaven so that through Him I enjoy reconciliation with God, forgiveness of all my sins, grace, righteousness, and life eternal, then my reading in Scripture is of no help whatsoever to my salvation. I may, of course, become a learned man by reading and studying Scripture and preach what I have acquired; yet all this would do me no good whatever. (WA 51:4)

"Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

Dave Magruder

Two Pieces from J. G. Hamann

Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788) was a confessional Lutheran polymath. He lived during the Enlightenment and came under its intellectual spell before he became, and still is, its most trenchant critic. The following two pieces come from his London Writings, which were penned in 1758 in the aftermath of his return to orthodox Christianity. I am now translating them for publication by Ballast Press. — John Kleinig

On the Interpretation of Sacred Scripture

God an author! (The Creator of the world and the Father of humanity is denied and criticized, the God-man was crucified, and the Inspirer of the divine word is mocked and slandered.) The inspiration of this book is as great an act of self-effacement and condescension as the creation by the Father and the incarnation of the Son. Thus, a humble heart is the only frame of mind for reading the Bible and the essential preparation for doing that.

The Creator has been denied, the Redeemer has been crucified, and the Spirit of wisdom has been slandered. The word of the Spirit is just as great a work as creation, and just as great a mystery as the redemption of man; yes, this word is the key to the works of the former and the mysteries of the latter. Thus, it is the epitome of atheism and witchcraft to discern God's blindness in revelation and it is an act of sacrilege to scorn this means of grace.

As little as an animal can read the fables of Aesop, Phaedrus, and La Fontaine, or, even if it were able to read them, it would not be able to make such beastly judgments on the sense of the stories and their applicability as people have made in criticizing and philosophizing about God's Book.

We all lie in just as muddy a prison as Jeremiah. Old rags served as ropes to pull him out of it; he was indebted to them for saving him. He was not rescued by looking at them, but by the services that they offered and the use that he made of them (Jer 38:11–13).

Our Redeemer used a pool, for which he prepared the salve for the eyes from his spittle and the dust of the earth, to give sight to a man who had been born blind (John 9:6).

And who can, without fear and trembling, read the story of David in the court of the King of Gath, who distorted his gestures, acted as if he were mad, scribbled on the doors of the gate, and slobbered on his beard, without hearing, in the judgment of Achish, an echo of the thinking of the unbelieving smart alecks and sophists of our time (1 Sam 21:13–15)?

Who would, like Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:25, be so bold as to speak of God's weakness? No one, except the Spirit who searches the depths of the Godhead, could have disclosed to us this prophecy, which has more than ever before been fulfilled in our own times. The prophecy is that not many who are wise according to the flesh, not many who are mighty, not many who are of noble birth, are called to the kingdom of heaven. That the great God has desired to reveal his wisdom and power by deliberately choosing what is foolish in the world to shame the mighty, choosing what is lowly and despised, yes things that are not, in order to bring to nothing things that are, things that boast of what they are.

The Role of the Bible in the Conversion of Johann Georg Hamann

In the tumult of all my passions that so overwhelmed me that I could often hardly breathe, I kept on praying to God for a friend, a wise, sincere friend, such as I could no longer envisage. Instead of that I had tasted, tasted enough, the bitterness of false friendship and the unlikelihood of a better friendship. I prayed for a friend who could give me a key to my heart, the thread that would lead me out of my labyrinth. That was a wish I often had without understanding and discerning its content rightly.

Praise God! I found this friend in my heart, that crept into it just when I most felt its emptiness, darkness, and desolation. By this time, I had read through the Old Testament once entirely and the New Testament twice, if I am not mistaken. So, because I wanted to make a new beginning, it seemed as if I began to be aware of a veil over my reason and my heart, which had at first closed this book to me. I therefore set out to read it with more attention, in a more orderly way, and with more hunger, and to write down the thoughts that would occur to me as I read it.

This beginning, when I still brought rather imperfect and unclear ideas about God's word to my reading of it, was nevertheless made by me on 13 March with more sincerity than before. The further I went, the newer it became for me. The more divine was my experience of its content and effect. I forgot all my books about it; I was even ashamed that I had ever compared them to *God's* Book, had ever set them side by side, and had ever preferred another book to it. I found the unity of the divine will in the redemption of Jesus Christ, so that all history, all miracles, all the commandments and works of God converge at this central point, in order to lead the human soul out of slavery, bondage, blindness, folly, and the death of sin to the greatest happiness, the highest blessedness, and a reception of such good gifts, whose greatness, when they are revealed to us, must shock us even more than our own unworthiness or the possibility of making ourselves worthy of them. I recognized my own offenses in the history of the Jewish people. I read the story of my own life, and thanked God for his forbearance with this his people, because nothing but such an example could justify a similar hope. Above all else, I made an extraordinary discovery in the books of Moses that in some cases the Israelites, however uncouth a people they may appear to us, sought from God nothing but what God wanted them to do. They acknowledged their disobedience just as vividly as any penitent sinner and also forgot their penitence just as quickly. Yet in anguish at their sin they called for nothing but a Redeemer, an Advocate, a Mediator, without whom they could neither rightly fear him nor rightly love him. In the midst of these reflections that seemed rather mysterious to me, I read the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy on the evening of 31 March, fell into deep meditation, and thought of God's word about Abel: "the earth had *opened its mouth* to receive your *brother's blood*." I felt my heart beating. I heard a voice groaning and wailing in its depths as the voice of blood, the voice of a murdered brother, who wanted to avenge his blood, even though at times I did not hear it and continued to shut my ears to it. This was what made Cain restless and unable to escape. At once I felt my heart flowing. It poured itself out in tears and I could no longer—I could no longer hide from God that I was the killer of my brother, the murderer of his only-begotten Son. Despite my great weakness, despite the long resistance that I had, until now, put up against his witness and his tender touch, the Spirit of God kept on revealing to me the mystery of divine love and the benefit of faith in our gracious, only Savior, more and always more.

With groanings that were brought before God by an Interpreter, who is dear and precious to him, I went on reading the divine word, enjoying the same assistance as that by which it was written as the only way to receive the understanding of it. With God's help I brought my work to completion on 21 April, with unusually rich comfort and uninterrupted refreshment.

Praise God! My heart felt more at rest than ever before in my life. In the moments when depression wanted to arise, I was overwhelmed with a sense of comfort whose origin I cannot credit to myself and which no one is able to pour into his neighbor so abundantly. I was shocked by its overflow. It swallowed up all fear, all sadness, all mistrust, so that I could not find any trace of them in my soul any longer. I pray that God may bless the work that he has begun in me, bless my weak faith through his word and gracious Spirit: the abundant Spirit of God, the Spirit of peace that passes all understanding but is not the kind of peace that the world gives. He is the Spirit of love without whom we are nothing but God's enemies . . . , the Spirit of hope that does not disappoint us, like the shadow play of fleshly fancies. . . .

I conclude, from the evidence of my own experience, with heartfelt and sincere thanksgiving for his saving word, which I have tested and found to be the only light by which we not only come to God but also get to know ourselves [as well as] the most precious gift of God's grace that surpasses the whole natural world and all its treasures as much as our immortal spirit surpasses the clay of our flesh and blood. . . . [It is] the only bread and manna for our souls that a Christian can no more do without than an earthly person can do without his daily necessities and sustenance. Yes, I confess that this word of God accomplishes just as great miracles in the soul of a devout Christian, whether he be simple or learned, as those described in it. I confess that the understanding of this book and faith in its contents can therefore be gained by no other means than through the same Spirit, who inspired its authors, and that his unutterable sighs, which he creates in our hearts, are of the same nature as the inexpressible images, which are scattered throughout sacred Scripture with a greater richness than all the seeds of the natural world and its realms.

Is the Law Eternal?

Among the many points of debate in post-Enlightenment Lutheran dogmatics, the question of the eternity of the law (*lex aeterna*) stands out as one of the more obscure to laypeople. Nevertheless, this obscurity by no means makes the question irrelevant.

In discussing the question of the third use of the law, the Formula of Concord (FC VI) very clearly describes the law as the eternal will of God. God exists eternally before time. Consequently, it is only logical that his will is eternal. For example, if God is life itself, he necessarily wills the life of his creatures. Therefore, the prohibition against murder must be eternally rooted in the divine being. In this the Formula of Concord echoes Luther in the *Antinomian Disputations* of the 1530s. There, the Reformer responded to Johann Agricola's rejection of the preaching of the law by affirming that the law cannot be eliminated. It is the will of God and will ever be so into all eternity.

Nevertheless, although the content of God's will is unchanging, its relationship to human beings most certainly

does change. Whereas the eternal divine will was only potentially threatening and condemning before the Fall, it becomes fully actualized as judgment as a result of the first sin. The Erlangen Luther scholar Theodosius Harnack famously explicated Luther's thought on this postlapsarian change by distinguishing between the law's "essence" (*Wesen*) and "office" (*Amt*). According to its essence, the law is God's eternal will. However, regarding its postlapsarian office, the law serves the purpose of condemning sinners.

Therefore, in the present reality of human life the law *always* accuses (*lex semper accusat*). This of course does *not* mean that the law *only* accuses. The law can curb the wicked behavior of the unbelievers through civil coercion (first use), as well as instructing the regenerate in the will of God (third use). But in both cases, God's word of law also necessarily involves accusation and threat. Only after our temporal death will the accusation and demand of the law cease. As Luther puts it, at the eschaton the law will become an "empty law" for the glorified. That is to say, although "Thou shalt not murder" will never cease to be the will of God for all eternity, it will not function as a demand or task to fulfill for the blessed. Our renewed natures will simply automatically obey the law in the same way that an apple tree produces apples. Indeed, as the Formula of Concord notes, even in this life the third use of the law is not for our renewed nature. Insofar as we are renewed, believers perfectly follow the will of God. Rather, the third use of the law is for our old nature. Despite being crippled by our old Adam or Eve, sanctified Christians are still capable of recognizing the law of God and disciplining their evil impulses.

Today, the controversy over the eternal nature of the law centers on the relationship of that doctrine to the Christian life. One side of the debate—what we might call the "Radical Lutheran" faction—argues that the law is not eternal and that there is no third use of the law. Radical Lutherans point to the fact that Luther states in the *Antinomian Disputations* that even if Agricola refuses to preach the law, God still makes his law known in and through conscience, nature, and in the unpleasant vicissitudes of fallen human existence (death, natural disasters, etc.). These negative effects of the law on postlapsarian human existence exhaustively define the law. The law is defined not as a set of commandments that God wills, but more as God's judgment of his creatures.

From this perspective, when the gospel arrives, it both justifies and sanctifies the human subject. This causes a person to stand in harmony with the demands of the law. Hence, the law ceases because its judgment ceases. It should be emphasized that the law ceases not because God stops willing the commandments. Rather, it ceases because God's judging and accusing activity ceases. Though this faction acknowledges that Luther affirmed that the law remains eternally as God's genuine will, there is a tendency among this group to dismiss this by saying that a law that ceases to attack and accuse is not really the law anymore. Hence, it is fundamentally wrong to say that the law is eternal, at least for the redeemed.

This rejection of the eternity of the law is frequently misunderstood by its opponents as teaching that once the gospel arrives, God ceases to will the commandments, and therefore humans are more or less free to run wild. This would be a mistaken interpretation of the Radical Lutheran position though. Insofar as humans are imperfect in this life, the law still continues to hold humans in line through the commandments, as well as call them to repentance. If one were to use the gospel as a justification for moral license, then faith would not be genuine, and one would simply be cast back into the realm of law and its condemnation.

Of course, the weakness of this position is that it tends toward a theological antirealism. To say that the law is not the law anymore when it ceases to judge collapses the reality of the law into something purely existential. Moreover, despite the Radical Lutheran polemic against and caricature of the third use of the law, there is still a belief in the third use tucked into a much more expansive understanding of the first use. The first use according to many Radical Lutherans is simply the law as it exists to order our lives in this world. It is not, as the Formula of Concord defines it, specifically the government's use of the law to coerce nonbelievers. Hence, the Radical Lutheran position ends up not being quite so radical. Rather, it simply confuses the debate through terminological modifications, rhetorical exaggerations, and occasional straw man arguments.

Another position that has been expressed in various circles of North American Lutheranism might be called the "Pro-Nominian" position. According to this interpretation of *lex aeterna*, the eternity of the law and the character of the law as an external command are correlative concepts. In practice at least, those who hold this view tend not to have much of a sense of the connection between justification and sanctification. Justification is a bare forensic judgment that will not really produce spiritual fruit. This means that the minister of the word must activate sanctification by prodding believers with the third use of the law.

Moreover, since the law is God's eternal will, it remains as a task for believers even into all eternity. There is no concept of "empty law" here, because in this perspective the eternity of the law means that it will always possess the same office of external command. In light of this conception, it is easy to see why individuals of this persuasion assume that when Radical Lutherans deny the eternity of the law and the third use, they mean to promote moral license. If the law is defined purely as a set of commandments that demand external compliance, then eternal law means an eternal demand for external compliance.

The main strength of this position is that it takes seriously the need for ministers of the word to offer instruction in the law. It also has the advantage of avoiding the theological antirealism that Radical Lutherans are in danger of by denying the eternity of the law. This being said, this position is problematic because it does not recognize (as the Formula of Concord does) that the third use is primarily a facet of the *simul* of Christian existence and only secondarily an affirmation of the eternity of the law.

As FC VI clearly states, the preaching of the law is only aimed at our old nature. *Coram Deo*, this takes the form of the second use of the law. *Coram mundo*, this entails the church's invocation of the third use of the law. The third use of the law is the means by which the believer disciplines his unregenerate flesh. To the extent that the believer is sanctified, the law ceases to function in its temporal office as an external demand. In eternity, the law will be established in hearts and minds of believers forever. In this state, the law will no longer function as an external demand, but as a spontaneous action of our renewed nature.

Jack Kilcrease

Law and Gospel and Law

Luther asserted as the theme and content of his antinomian disputations, *solus decalogus aeternus est* (only the Decalogue is eternal). Eternality is a divine quality, of course. *Solus Deus aeternus est* (only God is eternal). Luther is saying here that the law is inherent to God. Or as our Confessions state, "The law is God's unchangeable will" (FC Ep VI, 7) and reflects "God's eternal and unchangeable will" (FC SD VI, 3). This is not only to praise the law and put it in its proper place but is essential especially for understanding Christ, the fulfiller of the law, and his gospel.

In the middle of the last century, Werner Elert responded to Barth's *Gospel and Law* with his own *Law and Gospel*, in which he published an overreaction against the law that has become typical of many Lutherans today. While correcting Barth's assertion that "Gospel is Law," Elert so divided law from gospel that the gospel became the end and fulfillment of the law only in the sense that it ended the punishment the law exacts from sinners. The law was reduced in Elert to the *lex talionis*, the law of retribution. It had therefore only negative force. Elert explicitly denies the active obedience of Christ, which, if confessed, must present the law as a good and beautiful thing, because in it is set forth God's eternal will, which Jesus fulfilled in our place. This for Elert was to link the law too closely to the gospel. So he rejected it.

This thinking — no matter the genealogical cause and effect between Elert and American Lutheranism — has become commonplace in American Luther scholarship. And yet it is demonstrably not Luther's position. *Solus decalogus aeternus est*. It is clearly not St. Paul's position: "Do we then nullify the law through faith? God forbid! On the contrary, we establish the law" (Rom 3:31). "Therefore, the law is holy, and the commandment holy and righteous and good" (Rom 7:12). And as we saw above, it is clearly not the position of the Lutheran Confessions.

I have entitled this little article "Law and Gospel and Law" to offer a brief corrective to this false view of law and gospel. The law's theological use is to condemn, which it does, as to its nature, by accident, but as to God's order of saving sinners, quite purposely as a tutor to lead us to Christ (Gal 3:24; SA III II). The gospel is the fulfillment of this law in the person of Christ, who obeyed the law perfectly in our place and suffered the retribution for our breaking of it (Rom 10:4). The greatest display of Christ's active obedience of the law on sinners' behalf is in fact his willing death, as he obeyed his Father's will and trusted him to raise him from the dead (Ps 16:10), just as the greatest display of his passive obedience is his suffering the wrath of God against sinners in our place (Gal 3:13).

When Luther called the gospel a promise or declaration of forgiveness — when he talked of man's justification by faith alone — he was referring solely to the proclamation of forgiveness or righteousness or justification that Christ has won in history by his fulfilling this law in our place. This is why Luther can speak with such praise of the law being fulfilled in us who believe the gospel. Because we trust in Jesus who obeyed the law in our place, the law cannot condemn us, but instead begins to be fulfilled also by us who live through its Fulfiller. So Luther contends: "Christ says in Matt 5:[17]: 'I have not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it,' which means: My office is not to eliminate the law but to fulfill it, and to fulfill it in such a way that those who believe that they are redeemed from the curse of the law because of this, my fulfillment of the law, might also know that the law is now to be fulfilled by them, especially since they have already received the first fruits of the Holy Spirit." And that the law remains forever, Luther states in his second disputation, thesis forty-seven: "Therefore the law is never abolished to all eternity but remains needing to be satisfied in the damned and already satisfied in the blessed." In thesis forty-eight he calls those "disciples of Satan" who say, "the law is temporal, like circumcision." And in thesis forty-five he says that the same law that accuses us before Christ came, "having now been appeased through forgiveness under Christ, remains to be fulfilled in the spirit" (WA 39:349–50).

We defend the gospel by upholding the law, its eternity, our Lord's fulfillment of it in history, and its being fulfilled now in those who are in Christ.

Christian Preus

The Scriptures as Judge

We avoid the old B.I.B.L.E. approach to reading the Scriptures. The acronym "Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth" suggests there's no *res* of the Scriptures, according to which we read the *verba*, and that junking everything of human tradition in Christianity and starting fresh with just a close look at the word of God would not only be sufficient but in fact advisable. This is *Ad fontes*, but not just in a good way, as it tears down indiscriminately only to replace with things that will be torn down by the next generation. As an approach

to existing church teaching and practice, it does not require the Scriptures at all, since it declares everything invalid before the Bible is even opened. This use of the Scriptures differs from their description in the Solid Declaration as *Summary Rule and Norm*, where the Christian doesn't determine but judge doctrine and practice. This task is different enough from the attempt to rebuild from the ground up on the basis of the Scriptures alone to necessitate some rethinking. I suggest the following line of questioning and refer the reader for it (not exclusively) to Apology 12 and Treatise 44:

1. Is the sermon/practice/hymn faithful to the Scriptures?
2. Does the sermon/practice/hymn give all the glory to Christ?
3. Does the sermon/practice/hymn comfort and console troubled consciences?

The first question is the easy one. However, it still needs some clarification since "faithful to the Scriptures" can be understood in different ways. At minimum, it means "not in conflict with the Scriptures," and this seems the appropriate way to take it. But there are any number of worship songs out there that, although not in conflict with the Scriptures, are nevertheless empty of any real salutary character. That's why this question is just a baseline. It can be bolstered by the observation that something can conflict with individual scriptural teachings, or with the summary whole content (the aforementioned *res*) of the Bible. Obviously, the latter option is stronger, but it can be challenging to employ. That work is aided by the next two questions.

Number two: Does the teaching/sermon/practice give all the glory to Christ? This attribution of glory isn't accomplished simply by announcing, "All Glory be to God Alone," although that liturgical sentiment is spot on. Beyond that, it's a question of what actually happens. Melanchthon calls the transgression "obscuring the glory of Christ," and he refers specially to Christ's salvific work. Where Christ's work is assigned a supplementary role, or a primary role in need of supplement, some of the glory that belongs to Christ is covered up and misattributed. When the glory that all belongs to Christ is shared with some human beings, it is a sure sign that a practice needs to be judged as wanting, that a hymn needs to be excised from the repertoire, and that a doctrine has been sourced somewhere other than in the Scriptures.

Finally, one ought to ask if the teaching/sermon/practice comforts troubled consciences. Here one must immediately clarify: These three questions must not be separated from one another but rather belong together precisely because each fails alone. Asking only the first question produces the biblicism described at the beginning of this note. Relying only on the second question threatens to boil Christian worship and Christianity itself down to the common denominator of praise and worship music. If this final question is taken alone, an existentialist Christianity results, which declares anything that brings comfort to troubled consciences the gospel, whether it be faithful to the Scriptures or not, or whether it directs a sinner's eyes to Jesus or not. So the isolation of these questions will not do.

Having said all that, the consolation of the troubled conscience is one of the things against which no preaching, practice, or hymn ought to be found working (except of course, in so far as such is serving the work of the law in its role in service to the gospel). The church accepts the troubled, the hurting, and the physically and spiritually sick. And perhaps even more significantly, the church teaches people to see themselves clearly enough to sometimes evoke feelings of trouble, hurt, and sickness. So, if the church's message, conveyed by preaching, practice, or hymn, does not finally comfort these afflicted people and console their consciences, the alarm bells should be sounding. And then of course it bears mentioning that, if that comfort is achieved in violation of Christ's exclusive claim to glory, it is not the lasting comfort the church is given to offer.

I offer this humbly as some thoughts toward the distinguishing marks of a Lutheran hermeneutic. It seems that a partial answer lies in this confessional use of the Scriptures not only as source but also as judge.

Jacob Corzine

A Song of Comfort

By Fred Berry

(Melody: *Erhalt uns, Herr, LSB* 655)

A song of comfort let us sing
Of Christ our Advent God and King
He comes to set all things aright
He comes the Lord, the Life; the Light.

A song of comfort let us sing
Of Christ our Advent God and King
He comes no more let sin have sway
He comes let all prepare His way.

A song of comfort let us sing
Of Christ our Advent God and King
He comes the promise to fulfill
He comes and with Him comes goodwill.

A song of comfort let us sing
Of Christ our Advent God and King
He comes a babe in straw to lie
He comes a man on cross to die.

A song of comfort let us sing
Of Christ our Advent God and King
He comes at table to recline
His body bread His blood the wine.

Interpreted by God's Word

If Martin Luther taught at a seminary today, he would be an Old Testament professor. This is key to our appreciation of his transition by God's word from late medieval friar to evangelical theologian. Amid his spiritual struggles over God's righteousness (and what that meant), during his first lectures on the Psalms (1513–1515), Scripture was turned around, flipped upside down, and spun backwards to the way his professors had taught Luther to exegete and explain God's word. God's word revealed to Luther that we do not interpret Scripture—Scripture interprets us. In other words, God through the law kills the sinner and through the gospel creates a new creation, the believer in Jesus for salvation. In this way God's word translated Luther, who was being translated from a late medieval understanding of Scriptural exegesis to God's way, his Jesus-way of doing his word to his people.

Luther discovered that he wasn't interpreting God's word so much as he was being carried along by God's word. Luther was cracked wide open by God's word and that led to what we now refer to as Luther's Reformation breakthrough, namely, that we are justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. It was revealed to Luther that Jesus, God's Word in the flesh, exegetes himself.

In the Old Testament he says it. In the New Testament he explains it. Then God's Word made flesh sends his chosen preachers out to proclaim it. All of Scripture is about Jesus, the second Person of the Trinity, the Word of God who took on flesh to save sinners. Our Savior reveals himself to be God for his people and for their salvation, just as he did to Luther, in his own words, in his own way. Consequently, Luther declared: "All the Scriptures point to Christ alone" (*LW* 35:132). And, similarly: "Here [in the Old Testament] you will find the swaddling cloths and the manger in which Christ lies" (*LW* 35:236).

Luther teaches us that all the passages in the Psalms and prophets about the future Savior were not just words put into Jesus' mouth by later Gospel writers. God's Word was speaking through the psalmists and the prophets in order to point to himself. The words that came out of their mouths are the words of God's Word himself. There is no double meaning. No need to figure out the meaning of Scripture for ourselves. There is one meaning, because there is one speaker: the Son, who uses human mouths and speaks with human words through prophet and poet "in the Spirit" to point us to himself through his word of law and gospel.

For Luther, the Son, since he is God's Word, God's promise, is present in the entire history of Israel. He is always present as the God who speaks and the Savior who is prophesied about. The Son is present in the Old Testament. Not symbolically or allegorically, but in concrete reality. That concrete real Word of God received through faith, as Luther noted, is present for his people, stretching from the first Adam until his return in glory. The Son is present in the great signs and wonders done by God in the Old Testament. That is the grace of God. That is Jesus.

For example, regarding the relation of Exodus 17:6 to 1 Corinthians 10:4, Luther asserted, "In this way he applies and relates all these figures and signs which have happened to the people of Israel through God's Word, to Christ. For wherever God's Word is, there is Christ" (Sermon on Septuagesima Sunday, 1525, on 1 Cor 9:24).

God is present for his people just as he was in the days of Noah and David and Paul, and just as he is for his people today. Where God speaks, he acts in the present tense for us. As Luther so often taught, for God to speak is to do. This is faith's certainty that God is always present tense when he speaks. Luther put it this way:

> It follows powerfully and irrefutably that the God who led the people of Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, who guided them in the wilderness through the pillars of cloud and fire, who nourished them with heavenly bread, and who performed all the miracles Moses describes in his book, who also brought them into the land of Canaan and then gave them kings and priests and everything is therefore God and no other than Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the Virgin Mary, whom we call Christ and our God and Lord. . . . Again, it is he who gives Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, saying "I, the Lord, am your God who led you out of Egypt; you shall have no other gods." Yes, Jesus of Nazareth, who died for us on the cross, is the God who says in the First Commandment, "I, the Lord, am your God." (1534, *Treastise on the Last Words of David*)

Luther teaches that everywhere God speaks in the Old Testament, the Son speaks. The God who turns to us, the Word that creates all things, who speaks to the patriarchs and prophets, is God's Word, Jesus our Savior, and he interprets us, translating us into his kingdom through his concrete, real word of promise.

Donavon Riley

Theses on Reforming the Local Congregation

Matthew Richard has written thirteen. We offer the first four in this edition of Forum with more following in future editions.

Thesis I
The Word Is That Which Reforms, Not the Pastor

The word is something—the Holy Spirit works in the congregation through the word granting repentance and faith. That is to say, the word of God is not spoken merely to impart information like an encyclopedia, but rather, it is spoken to form and reform hearers (that is, "those who have ears,

let them hear"). The Holy Spirit through the word is not content to leave people as they are but wants to convert and change people. Therefore, the word must invade. It must continually function as the only source, rule, and norm of the congregation's faith and practice, for apart from it the congregation is left in despair and can do nothing.

In Lutheran and biblical theology, the word is not only authoritative and inerrant but is also living and active. Therefore, any genuine reform in the local congregation must happen via the word of God, for without the word of God, the congregation is no different than a common rotary club. Without the word of God, the pastor has no authority and no lasting and eternal significant influence.

Thesis II
Pastors Need to Take Time

As a general rule of thumb, a pastor should plan on successful reforms in a local congregation taking about half the time it took for a misguided doctrine/practice to take shape. So, for example, if a congregation has been mixing consecrated wine back into the wine jar for twenty years, then a pastor should not expect this practice to be fully corrected in two months but should plan on about ten years as a minimum. In other words, faulty doctrines and practices are often intentionally and unintentionally laid down and cemented within a congregation over long periods of time. Thus, a pastor must understand that undoing and correcting a faulty doctrine and practice will take time as well.

Thesis III
Pastors Should Shepherd by Leading Graciously, Not by An Iron Fist

A congregation can sense quickly if a pastor is treating them like a project and if they are being ruled with an iron fist. More often than not, a congregation can pick up on this when they are pushed along too fast. Pastors cannot forget that shepherding is a long-term vocation. For example, if a pastor wants to correct the practice of mixing consecrated wine back into the wine jar, he can do one of two things. (1) He can say, "I probably will be at this congregation for about five years before moving on to a bigger church, so I better get this fixed in the next couple of years." As a result, the pastor will become pushy (often without knowing so) and maybe even treat his sheep with an iron fist, seeking to accomplish his goal within a short time frame by sheer force. And then, as can be expected, the sheep will eventually bite back. (2) Or, the pastor can say, "This has been the church's pattern for twenty years. I will start working on this problem by teaching God's word and then pray — by God's grace — that it can be corrected in ten years." In the second example, the concern will most likely be remedied in ten years (and often shorter than expected). Furthermore, it will be fixed by the word of God and not by the force of the pastor's gruff heavy hand. Indeed, parishioners respond better to a pastor who patiently and graciously teaches than a pastor who forces his timetable on the sheep with an iron fist.

Thesis IV
Pastors Effect Reform in Practice Primarily Through Teaching Doctrine

Pastors must keep in mind that bad theology or a lack of theology will typically lead to bad practice. So, if the pastor wants to reform incorrect practices, he should start with correct teaching. For example, if a pastor is in a congregation that has open communion and plans to undergo reform towards closed communion, the pastor should first start teaching about the Lord's Supper. Then after a considerable time of teaching, the pastor may get a question like this, "Say, pastor, my Catholic brother-in-law is visiting and wants to take communion. I don't think he should. Am I right?" At this point, the pastor has a tremendous opportunity to teach about communion specifically and within a practical context. That is to say, with one layperson's practical question, a pastor can start the dialog with other laypersons in a more concrete and specific way than before. The pastor can say in a public Bible study with Ted's permission, "Ted and I were talking about whether his brother-in-law can take communion or not. From everything we have learned this last year about communion, what should we say to Ted's brother-in-law?" By going this route, the pastor is appealing to the theology that has already been taught and is then gently pushing the laity to connect the doctrine of communion to its practice. If the theology has been adequately taught and given time to take root in the laity, the laity will most likely arrive at the right conclusion, or they will ask the pastor for his input. If asked for further input, the pastor can then speak very candidly towards the sheep, because the sheep are "asking" for his guidance and input. Indeed, when the pastor is asked specific questions of doctrine, the pastor can rejoice in the opportunity to teach — the specific question towards the pastor generally shows that the ears of his parishioners are open to hearing.

Preaching that Silences Satan

This sermon based on Mark 1:21–28 was preached by John Pless at Kramer Chapel, Concordia Theological Seminary, on 31 January 2018.

Fresh from his victory over Satan's temptations in the wilderness, Jesus begins to preach. His first sermon recorded by the Evangelist Mark is short and to the point: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). It is preaching with authority; preaching that takes captive the fishermen Simon and Andrew, James and John. They leave their nets and boats behind and follow the Lord to be fishers of men. The authority

of our Lord's preaching is put on display in the synagogue, for he teaches with an authority unknown to scribes. His preaching causes the gates of hell to quiver, for it is a proclamation that heralds the coming of the kingdom. The dominion of Satan cannot coexist with the kingdom of God. The kingdom of the Lord Christ never simply annexes neutral territory or takes over unclaimed terrain. The kingdom ruled by Christ Jesus defeats and displaces the reign of the evil one.

The scribes who see themselves as clean with their own righteousness might not know who this new preacher is, but the unclean spirits surely recognize him. One cries out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." Jesus silences the confession of this demon. He has come in the flesh to destroy the work of the devil, not to give him an opportunity to speak.

Mark tells us that Jesus' fame spread throughout Galilee. The whole town shows up, drawn to see this man who heals the sick and liberates from demonic captivity. When and where Jesus preaches, Satan wants to have his say as well. Luther once said, "Where Christ appears, there the devil starts to speak." That is why Luther understood the pulpit to be the battlefield between the Lord Jesus and the old evil foe. Or as Heiko Oberman says, "For Luther, a sermon was an apocalyptic event that set the doors of heaven and hell in motion" (Meuser, 25). The devil fancies himself to be a preacher, too. Satan always tries to get a word in as he did in Eden with his cool and calculating sermon, "Did God really say?" His tactics are not new. To occupy the preaching office is to engage the tempter in battle. It is a war of words, but God has armed you with his word, the word of truth. No other weaponry, no matter how clever, will suffice in this struggle. To preach Christ crucified is to do battle against Satan. Preaching is no detached religious lecture, no soothing inspirational meditation, but a declaration of Christ's victory over sin, death, and hell. Satan is not troubled by platitudes of piety, by ten-ways-to-fix-your-life sermons. He knows that your piety is like a puff of smoke and your attempts at spiritual self-improvement are likely to end with despair or self-righteousness. But the coming of the kingdom whose King reigns on a cross and who exercises authority by extending mercy, that is another matter altogether. Satan cannot help but howl out in protest when the word of absolution, of forgiveness of sins, is spoken.

Jesus will not permit the demons to speak because they know him. Even the demons believe that God is one, says St. James—and they shudder. But that does not make them confessors! Satan can quote Scripture, but that does not make of him a preacher of the gospel.

Jesus' preaching exercises his authority over Satan. Jesus' words unplug deaf ears and loose mute tongues to confess his mighty works. But these same words tie Satan's tongue. That is what the preaching of the foolishness of the cross does. Where the living voice of the gospel is going on, there the crucified and risen Lord Jesus is himself speaking. He speaks a word of forgiveness, and where there is forgiveness of sins, Satan has no say. Where there is forgiveness of sins, the voice of the accuser has no authority, for the blood of Christ cleanses you from all sin. No unclean spirit can hold you captive because Christ himself has washed you with his blood in Holy Baptism. Your life is under the one to whom all authority in heaven and on earth has been given. By his cross, he has triumphed over principalities and powers. He has rescued you from the kingdom of darkness and given you an inheritance in the kingdom of light. Satan has no claim on you. The gospel that has opened your lips to confess that Jesus is Lord renders Satan silent. He has no right to accuse or threaten. Yes, his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him. Where the truth of the cross is proclaimed, the father of lies is muzzled and your lips are open to confess in truth that Jesus is the Holy One of God whose blood sets you free to live before him in holiness and righteousness now and forever. Amen.

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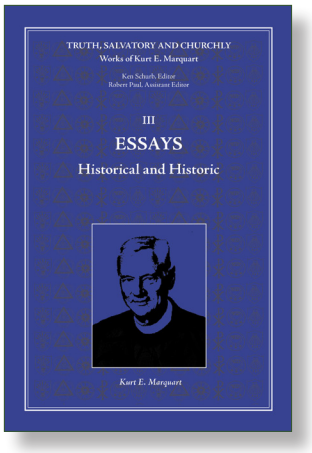

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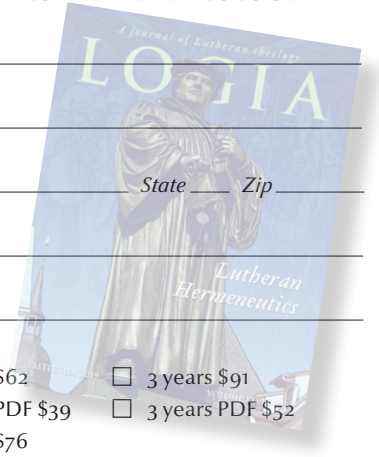

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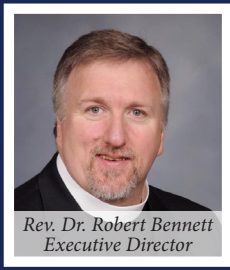

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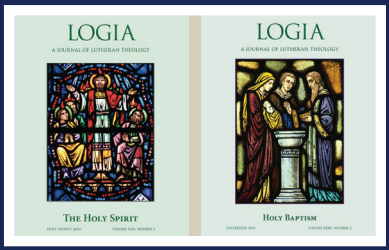

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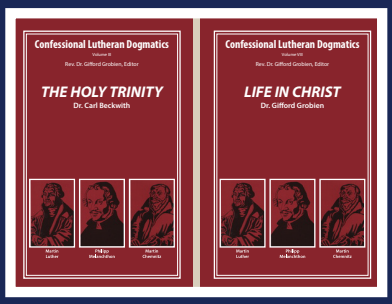

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