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Sacrificial Atonement by Jesus and God's Wrath in the Light of the Old Testament

John W. Kleinig

People in the ancient world believed that they could atone for their sins by offering sacrifices to their gods and the spirits that haunted their world. In a stark reversal of that conviction, the Bible teaches that God himself atones for the sins of the world by the sacrifice that he provides for them. In fact, God so loved the world, it claims, that he offered his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). So, "whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36).[1]

In the third article of the Augsburg Confession, we confess that Jesus was truly born, suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried in order to be a sacrifice (offering) not only for original sin but also for other sins and to propitiate God's wrath. Then in the following fourth article, we confess that those who believe in Christ are justified for the sake of him who by his death made satisfaction for their sins.[2] So through faith in him, they receive God's favor, his pardon for their sins, righteousness, and eternal life. Thus our justification is the result of his self-sacrifice. His blood justifies us.

This confessional Lutheran teaching has recently been challenged on many fronts by those who cannot stomach this whole "bloody" business. In our own circles, the most forceful attack on this teaching has come from those who are uneasy about the propitiation of God's wrath by Christ's sacrificial death.[3] They separate justification from its foundation in Christ's atoning death and his fulfilment of God's law by what he suffered on our behalf.[4] While we may lament these challenges,

[1] All Scripture quotations are the author's translation.

[2] For further references to Christ's atoning sacrifice as an act of satisfaction for guilt and punishment, see AC XXIV 21, 25–27; Ap IV 178; XXIV 19, 23, 55; SA III III 38; LC II 31; FC SD III 56–57. The clearest explanation of what is meant is given in Ap XXIV 19. There an atoning sacrifice is defined as "a work of satisfaction for guilt and punishment that reconciles God, conciliates the wrath of God, or merits the forgiveness of sins for others."

[3] Jack D. Kilcrease discusses this in his article "Atonement and Justification in Gerhard Forde," *CTQ* 76 (2012): 269–293. For a comprehensive study of how the atonement has been understood from the Reformation to the present time, see Jack D. Kilcrease, *The Doctrine of the Atonement from Luther to Forde* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018).

[4] The radical critics of the classical teaching on atonement as propitiation share an aversion to the relevance of God's law for believers, because Christ is the end of the law for them.

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they do give us occasion to reassess our teaching biblically and present it appropriately in our secular context where nothing is held to be holy any longer and in the church where the teaching of it has, at best, been largely one-dimensional.

I want to show how the teaching of atonement in the New Testament is best understood in the light of the much more explicit treatment of it in the Old Testament. I intend to examine four topics all too briefly: the role of atonement in its actual context, God's provision of atonement for his people, the association of atonement with God's wrath, and the delivery and reception of it and its benefits. In all this, I assume that teaching of atonement does not really explain the significance of some sacrifices but what is accomplished by them.

But before I do that, I want to define what I mean by atonement.[5] It is an act performed by the high priest in the old covenant and Jesus in the new covenant that has three complementary purposes: (1) it gains God's gracious acceptance of unclean sinners (propitiation)[6]; (2) it obtains pardon for sin and cleansing from its impurity (expiation); and (3) it grants beneficial access to his presence (reconciliation). Through Jesus as victim and priest, we have a gracious God, a clean conscience, and fellowship with him as our heavenly Father.

What Is the Role of Atonement in Its Actual Context?

The Role of Atonement in the Old Covenant

To grasp what is accomplished by atonement in the Old Testament, we need to realize that it was a rite, a divinely instituted ritual enactment, that fulfilled a very practical purpose. The rite of atonement was meant to provide the Israelites with safe access to God's presence at the tabernacle and the temple.

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[5] In the legislation for sacrifice in the Pentateuch, the high priest is authorized by God to make atonement "on behalf of" (Hebrew עַל) other people (Lev 1:4; 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:6, 10, 13, 16, 18, 26 [6:7]; 8:34; 10:17; 12:7, 8; 14:18, 19, 20, 21, 29, 31; 15:15, 30; 16:16, 30, 33; 19:22; 23:28; Num 8:12, 19, 21; 15:25, 28; 28:22, 30; 29:5) "by means of" (Hebrew בְּ) the victim (Exod 29:36, 37; Lev 5:16; 7:7; 19:22) and its blood (Lev 17:11) "upon" (Hebrew עַל) the altar for burnt offering (Lev 8:15; 17:11) and the incense altar (Exod 30: 9–10; Lev 16:18) "before" (Hebrew לִפְנֵי) the Lord (Lev 5:26 [6:7]; 14:18; 19:22) "on account of" (Hebrew עַל) their sin as well as "from" (Hebrew מִן) their sin (Lev 4:26; 5:6, 10; 16:34) and its impurity (Lev 14:19; 15:15, 30; 16:16).

[6] Even though the Augsburg Confession and the Apology refer repeatedly to atonement as an act of propitiation, atonement, apart from the German text of AC III 3 and the Latin text in Ap XXIV 19, is not usually understood as the appeasement of God's wrath but as the provision of his favor. In the Latin text, Christ reconciles the Father to us (AC XX 9), so that we are received into his grace (see the Latin text of AC IV 2; V 3; IX 2; XX 9; XXVI 5; XXVII 37); in the German text, he reconciles the Father to us (AC II 3; XX 9), so that we obtain his grace (AC XXVI 5; XXVII 37) and are pleasing to him (AC IX 2) and thus have a gracious God (AC V 3; XX 15).

The performance of atonement presupposed two practical, spiritual realities. First, all Israelites were more or less unclean before God from their sins and their sinful environment. Second, their impurity was incompatible with God's holiness, like darkness with light and gasoline with fire.

The provision of atonement was God's solution to an immensely vexing, practical problem. The basic problem was this: how could unclean Israelites approach their holy God, safely and beneficially, without desecrating his holiness by their impurity and thereby incurring his wrath? Or, how could a holy God make his dwelling with his people in the midst of their impurities, in order to meet with them there (Lev 16:16; cf. Exod 29:46; Lev 26:11)?

God instituted the rite of atonement as his solution to this dilemma. He instituted it as an essential part of the divine service at the tabernacle to cleanse them from their impurity and demonstrate his approval and acceptance of them. It was his gift to them. Through its enactment, he provided safe and beneficial access to himself and his blessings, like the rite of absolution in the divine service. After the rite of purification, both the priests and the people could draw near to God in the daily service and be sure of a favorable reception from him; they could bring their offerings to him and eat the holy bread and meat from his table as his guests.

The rite of atonement was the first enactment of every morning and evening service because it was the basis for all that followed in them. It was also augmented and expanded pastorally by God's institution of personal and corporate sin offerings for purification from sin,[7] as well as his institution of personal guilt offerings in compensation for acts of desecration.[8] These occasional offerings atoned for transgressions against the Lord's commandments.[9] Like our rite of private confession and absolution, they provided pardon for the Israelites who were burdened by specific sins.

The Role of Atonement in the New Covenant

While the issue of atonement is largely the same in the New Testament, its context is changed. Jesus makes atonement by his self-sacrifice for the sins of the whole world rather than just the Israelites. In this, he is not just the priest but, surprisingly, also the victim. As both high priest and victim, he makes atonement by

[7] See Exod 29:10–14; Lev 4:1–5:12; 6:24–29; 8:14–17; 9:7–12, 15; 12:6–7; 14:19, 30–31; 15:13–15, 28–30; 16:11–19; Num 6:10–11; 8:12; 15:22–29; 28:15, 22, 30; 29:5, 11, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 38. For an analysis of the sin offerings and their fulfilment by Jesus, see John W. Kleinig, *Leviticus* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 109–124.

[8] See Lev 5:14–6:7; 7:1–10; 14:12–18; Num 6:12. For an analysis of the guilt offerings and their fulfilment by Jesus, see Kleinig, *Leviticus*, 128–138.

[9] See Lev 4:1–2, 13, 22, 27; 5:17; Num 15:22–23.

his self-sacrificial death. By his suffering and death, he brings unrighteous people into God's presence (1 Pet 3:18).

Because Jesus is God's Son, atonement is a trinitarian enactment. He was chosen by his holy Father as a sacrificial offering before the creation of the world and revealed in the last times for the sake of humanity (1 Pet 1:19–20). Since God loved all people, he sent his Son to be the atonement for their sins (1 John 4:10; cf. Rom 5:8); he offered up his Son once and for all to bear the sins of the world (Heb 9:28). Through the eternal Spirit, the Son in turn offered himself without blemish to God the Father (Heb 9:14).[10] Since he loved the church, he gave himself up on her behalf as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God the Father (Eph 5:2, 25). So because it is a trinitarian enactment, it is eschatological in its nature and scope. It occurs in human history for the benefit of humanity, reaches God's presence in heaven, and anticipates the last judgment. Its practical purpose is the favorable reception of sinners by God now in the divine service and on the last day.

Thus, since it has to do with the last judgment, the focus of atonement in the New Testament shifts from God's holiness to God's righteousness. The basic issue now is this: how can an ungodly sinner gain the approval and acceptance of God the holy judge now and in the last judgment? Or, how can God the holy judge justify sinners and admit them safely and beneficially into his presence, without justifying their sin and compromising his righteousness? Or, how can sinners already now participate in the eternal life of God here on earth?

Three other things have therefore also been changed by the death of Jesus. First, the act of atonement is now no longer performed repeatedly as a regular rite each morning and evening at the temple in Jerusalem, because Jesus has made atonement for all human sin, once and for all, in human history by offering himself as the perfect, sinless sacrifice (Heb 7:27; 9:28; 10:10, 14; 1 Pet 3:18). Second, through Jesus as high priest all people, Jews and Gentiles, now have safe access to God the Father (Eph 2:13; Col 1:19–22). Through him and his blood, they may now "draw near" to God the Father with boldness and confidence to receive grace and mercy from him (Heb 4:16).[11] Since they have been justified by his blood, they have access to the grace in which they now stand (Rom 5:1–2, 9). Third, through Jesus and together with him they may draw near to God's presence in his heavenly sanctuary, participate in heavenly worship together with the angels, and serve as his holy priests here on earth (Heb 10:19–21; 12:22–24, 28–29).

[10] See John W. Kleinig, *Hebrews* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 430.
[11] See also Heb 7:25; 10:1, 22; 11:6; 12:18, 22; 1 Pet 2:4.

How Does God Provide Atonement for His People?

God's Institution of the Rite of Atonement in the Old Covenant

The foundational passage for atonement in the Pentateuch is Leviticus 17:11 where God makes this decree: "the life (soul) of the flesh is in the blood, and I myself have given it to you on the altar to make atonement on behalf of your lives (souls), because it is the blood that makes atonement by means of the life (soul)."[12] Here two things need to be noted. God gives the blood that by right belongs to him to his people; he gives it on the altar to give them atonement by it, for it is not the death of the animal but the blood from the slaughtered animal that makes atonement. Here as elsewhere in a liturgical context, the Hebrew verb *kipper* ("make atonement") is used as a technical term for the performance of the rite of atonement[13] by the high priest.[14] It refers to an act in which the blood from the victim is poured out by being splashed against the sides of the altar for burnt offering. By its association with the word for "ransom," the rite of atonement is also understood as the payment that God makes to ransom his people.

The divine decree that institutes the rite of atonement also makes that rite a divine enactment. It is the word that empowers it, like Christ's command in Baptism. The focus in God's institution of atonement is on the blood of the sacrificed animal and its use in the divine service. God gives that blood and atonement through it as his gifts to his people. The blood must be splashed against the altar for burnt offering for God to provide atonement for them through his appointed high priest.[15] Three things need to be noted. First, God institutes the use of blood as the means by which he grants atonement. Second, God institutes this rite as a vicarious act by which the life of an animal is exchanged for the life of the Israelites, so that its death provides life from him through it.[16] Third, the Israelites are ransomed from death by its blood.

Since God instituted the rite of atonement as part of the service of burnt offering each morning and evening, its place in the order of service there shows us its nature

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[12] For an analysis of the role of blood in atonement, see Kleinig, *Leviticus*, 358–372, and *Hebrews*, 433–437.

[13] See Baruch Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 64–65, and John W. Kleinig, "The Blood for Sprinkling," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 33, no. 3 (1999): 129–130.

[14] See Exod 29:33, 36, 37; 30:10; Lev 1:4; 6:30 [6:23]; 7:7; 8:15, 34; 9:7; 10:17; 14:18, 19, 20, 38; 15:30; 16:6, 11, 16, 23, 27, 30, 32, 33; 23:28; Num 5:8; 8:12, 19, 21; 15:25, 28; 28:22, 30; 29:5.

[15] The altar for burnt offering is not the place for the slaughter of the victim but the place for the offering of its blood and meat to God.

[16] See Bernd Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen: Studien zur Sühnetheologie der Priesterschrift und zur Wurzel KPR im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 199–221, 242–247.

and purpose.[17] Each service at the sanctuary was enacted in three stages that revolved around three main rites that were performed by the high priest on behalf of the congregation. The first of these was the rite of atonement. In it, the high priest splashed the blood from a slaughtered lamb against the four sides of the altar for burnt offering as an act by which both the priests and the people were cleansed from impurity.[18] It came first because it provided the basis for the rest of the service. The second was the rite in which the priest burned the most holy incense on the golden altar of the Holy Place as an act of intercession for God's favorable reception of his people.[19] The third was the rite of burnt offering in which the high priest burned up the meat from the lamb and some of the flour from the grain offering on the altar for burnt offering and offered it to God in a column of smoke.[20] Like the glory cloud, God thereby met with his people to give them safe and beneficial access to his presence (Exod 29:42–44). All this culminated in the performance of the Aaronic benediction by the high priest.[21] Through it, God gave his blessing and protection, his acceptance and his grace, his approval and his peace to the congregation.

The rite of atonement came first in the divine service because it ensured that the priests and the people had safe access to God in it; it ensured his acceptance of them and their offerings; it ensured that they did not defile the sanctuary and desecrate the holy things of God (Lev 1:3–5). When it was combined with the rite of atonement for a sin offering or a guilt offering, the blood by which atonement was made brought three additional benefits from God: the remission of specific transgressions,[22] the cleansing of the impurity from them,[23] and, in the case of priests at their ordination, their consecration by him.[24]

God's Provision of Atonement in the New Covenant

There are at least three foundational passages in which Jesus establishes the doctrine and practice of atonement in the New Testament. The first of these is his

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[17] See the description and analysis of the divine service by Robert D. Macina, *The LORD's Service: A Ritual Analysis of the Order, Function, and Purpose of the Daily Divine Service in the Pentateuch* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019).

[18] For an examination of the nature and purpose of the blood rite, see Macina, *The LORD's Service*, 102–121.

[19] For an examination of the nature and purpose of the incense rite, see Macina, *The LORD's Service,* 121–142.

[20] For an examination of the nature and purpose of the burning rite, see Macina, *The LORD's Service,* 142–158.

[21] For an examination of the nature and purpose of the blessing rite, see Macina, *The LORD's Service,* 158–168.

[22] See Lev 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7; 19:22; Num 15:25, 26. For the sense of the formula for remission, see Kleinig, *Leviticus*, 104–105.

[23] See Lev 12:7, 8; 14:19, 20, 31, 53; 16:30; Num 8:19.

[24] See Exod 29:33, 37; Lev 8:15, 20.

declaration that he, the Son of Man, had come "to give his life, his soul, as a ransom in exchange for many" (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45). Here "many" is to be understood in the light of Isaiah 53:11 as the whole of humanity. His eschatological mission as the representative of humanity was to sacrifice his life for the human race.

Second, in his institution of Holy Communion in Matthew 26:28, Jesus declared that his blood was about to be poured out on behalf of many for the remission of sins, like the blood from the sin offerings that was "poured out" on the altar for burnt offering (Lev 4:4, 18, 25, 30, 34 LXX).

The third and much less noted passage is the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee in Luke 18:9–14, which, significantly, is set in the temple. There the tax collector prays: "God grant atonement to me, sinner that I am!" (Luke 18:13). The Greek passive imperative here is difficult to translate into good English. Its literal sense is "God make atonement for me; God be propitiated for me and propitious to me."[25] Jesus draws a surprising conclusion to this parable. He does not say, as one would expect from the Old Testament, that the tax collector was forgiven, but declares that he went home justified. Jesus therefore associates God's provision of atonement with the justification of sinners. That was something new. It fulfills the prophecy in Isaiah 53:11 that God's servant would justify many by bearing their iniquities.

God's provision of atonement for sinners is explored in a number of ways in the epistles. In 1 John 4:10, we are told that out of love for us God sent his Son to be the atonement for our sins.[26] That was the purpose of the incarnation. He himself is our propitiator and expiator.[27]

In Romans 8:1–4,[28] Paul teaches that God the Father sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.[29] Jesus satisfied all God's righteous demands by presenting himself as a sin offering. By his atoning death, God condemned sin in the flesh and freed sinners from condemnation to death as transgressors. As a result of this sin offering, God also now gives his life-giving Holy Spirit to them, so that his just demands, the righteous requirements of his law (cf. Rom 2:26), might be fulfilled

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[25] The Greek ἱλάσθητι is also used as a plea to God in LXX Ps 78[79]:9 and Dan Theod 9:19.

[26] The term for atonement here and in 1 John 2:2 is ἱλασμός. It is used in the LXX for a sin offering in Num 5:8; Ezek 44:27; 2 Macc 3:33, the Day of Atonement in Lev 25:9, and forgiveness in Ps 129[130].

[27] See Bruce G. Schuchard, *1–3 John* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012), 147, 441 n. 56, and 449–450.

[28] For a good analysis of this passage, see Michael P. Middendorf, *Romans 1–8* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 609–615.

[29] The Hebrew term for sin and its guilt is also the technical term for a sin offering. While the LXX usually translates this by περὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας, "the one for the sin," or "the one of the sin offering," it also, in some instances, translates it by ἁμαρτία (Lev 4:20, 24, 29; 5:12; 6:18). This seems to be the sense here and perhaps also in 2 Corinthians 5:21. See Kleinig, *Leviticus*, 122.

in those who walk by the Spirit rather than the flesh.[30] The passive here indicates that this is what God does in us and together with us. The fulfilment of God's law comes from Christ's death for those who are in Christ Jesus. Thus his death for sinners does not give them a license to sin but results in the fulfilment of God's law. The same Jesus who fulfilled God's law for them also now fulfils God's law in them through the Holy Spirit, who transforms their minds and enables them to put to death the misdeeds of the body. They therefore cooperate with the Holy Spirit in fulfilling God's righteous demands.[31]

The benefits of his atonement for sin are enumerated in the passages that tell us what his blood accomplishes for us who are its beneficiaries. By the atoning blood of Jesus (Rom 3:25), God cleanses us in our conscience from all sin (1 John 1:7; Heb 9:14) and justifies us (Rom 5:9); by his blood God remits our sins (Matt 26:28; 1 Cor 11:25; Heb 9:22; 12:24) and redeems us (Eph 1:7; Heb 9:12; 1 Pet 1:18–19; Rev 5:7–9); the blood of Jesus brings us near to God the Father (Eph 2:13) and gives us unrestricted access to the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 10:19–22); by his blood God makes peace with us (Col 1:20), sanctifies us as his holy priests (Heb 10:29; 13:12), and equips us for God-pleasing service together with Jesus (Heb 13:20–21).

The goal of all this is explained in Hebrews. In 9:11–17, we are told that the blood of Jesus, the anointed high priest who offered himself without blemish to God through the eternal Spirit, purifies our conscience from dead works, so that we already now in this life can serve the living God; we have been purified by his blood for participation in the heavenly liturgy. There, we offer well-pleasing service together with Jesus and the angels (Heb 1:14; 8:2, 5; 12:20–29).

Our cleansing for divine service is the foundation for the amazing appeal in Hebrews 10:19–22: "Therefore brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, (the way) of his flesh, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled from a bad conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." Since Jesus is our high priest in God's heavenly temple, and since we have been sprinkled with his most holy blood, we have access to God the Father in heaven itself. We all may go where no high priest ever went even on the Day of Atonement. We may draw near to God's presence in heaven with a good conscience in the full assurance of faith. The blood by which he atoned for our sins qualifies us for

[30] This includes his righteous decree of death for sinners in Romans 1:32.

[31] See the discussion on cooperation in FC SD II 63–66, 88, 90.

heavenly service. We not only have unrestricted access to God in heaven, but we also have the assurance of a favorable reception from him.[32]

What Is the Connection between Atonement and God's Wrath?

Atonement and God's Wrath in the Old Covenant

Since human impurity is incompatible with God's holiness, proximity with God's holy presence is, as the prophet Isaiah realized in his great vision of God's theophany at the temple in Jerusalem, fraught with great danger, like entry into a nuclear reactor. God's holy presence is both life-giving and death-dealing; it annihilates anything that is unholy and unclean.

There are, in fact, two correlated dangers that threaten those who come into unprotected contact with God. The first and most obvious danger is the defilement of God's dwelling place by human impurity from sins against the second table of the Decalogue (Lev 15:31). This has severe, inescapable consequences, like the burnt skin of a finger that touches the hot plate of a stove. So the first basic rule for God's people is that no unclean person was allowed to handle any holy thing or eat any holy food.

The second danger is the desecration of the most holy things, the things that sanctify the sanctuary, the priests, and the people. They are not just desecrated by contact with unclean people but also profaned by their unauthorized use; they are desecrated when unauthorized people handle them or even when authorized people handle them in an unauthorized way or for an unauthorized purpose. So the second basic rule is that no unauthorized person was allowed to approach the sanctuary (Num 3:10, 38; 4:19–20; 16:40; 18:4, 7).

The defilement and desecration of the most holy things resulted in God's wrath (Lev 10:16; Num 1:53; 16:22; 18:5; 25:11). By his wrath, God not only showed that he could not tolerate the desecration of his holiness, but he also dealt with it in keeping with his holiness and righteousness. He manifested his wrath and dealt with its cause by afflicting a plague on the congregation (Num 8:19; 16:46–50; 25:8–9, 18; 26:1; 31:16; cf. Exod 32:35) and putting the perpetrators to death (Lev 10:2; 15:31; 16:1; Num 3:4, 10, 38; 4:19–20; 18:3, 7, 32). Thus the usual penalty for defilement and desecration was death. We see how this happens in three exemplary cases: the desecration of the tabernacle by Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10:1–11, the rebellion of Korah in Numbers 16–17, and the atrocity at Baal Peor in Numbers 25. The ultimate penalty for the most severe cases, as at the end of the monarchy, was their exclusion from his presence in the land where he resided with them (Lev 18:24–28).

[32] For further consideration of this passage, see Kleinig, *Hebrews*, 501–509.

The consequent dilemma for God's people is voiced by the congregation in the case of Korah's rebellion. They unleash this complaint against Moses in Numbers 17:12–13: "Behold, we perish, we are undone, we are all undone. Everyone who comes near, who comes near to the tabernacle of the Lord shall die. Are we all to perish?" In response to their justifiable complaint, God decrees that the priests and Levites would be liable for the transgressions of the people. They would protect the people from violating God's holiness and bear their iniquity in cases of desecration (Num 18:1, 23, 32), just as the scapegoat bore the iniquity of all Israel on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:22). The penalty for desecration would fall on them rather than the people. By their faithful service of God, the priests would avert God's wrath from the congregation (cf. Num 25:10–13).

Atonement and God's Wrath in the New Covenant

Even though little is taught about this in the New Testament, what is taught by St. Paul in Romans is significant. There Paul claims that just as God's righteousness has been revealed through the gospel (1:17), so his wrath is also revealed from heaven against all human ungodliness and unrighteousness (1:18). By ungodliness, Paul most likely refers to sins against the first three commandments, sins that desecrate God's holiness; by unrighteousness, he refers to the last seven commandments, sins that violate the order of creation and defile their transgressors.[33] His wrath, however, is not revealed directly but through the consequences of these transgressions. The revelation of the wrath that he inflicts in the present age foreshadows the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be openly revealed to the whole world (2:5; cf. Matt 3:7; Eph 5:6; Col 3:6; 1 Thess 1:10). The teaching about the revelation of God's wrath is the backdrop for the teaching about the revelation of God's righteousness through Jesus as the mercy seat in God's new temple in Romans 3:21–26. Jesus is now the place of atonement, the place where God the Father provides atonement for us through his blood, the place of redemption and justification for us. So in 5:9, Paul concludes that since we have been justified by his blood, we will be saved from God's wrath now and in the last judgment.[34] By his atonement, Jesus not only saves all believers from God's wrath and the death penalty that it exacts, but also gives them eternal life with him. They have life from him rather than death apart from him.

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[33] See A. Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit. Ein Kommentar zum Römerbrief* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1965), 49, and Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957), 53.

[34] See the discussion on the propitiation of God's wrath by Christ in Ap IV 46, 80, 82, 142, 224, 291; XII 146–147; XXVII 17.

How Are the Benefits of Atonement Delivered and Received?

The answer to this in the Old Testament is relatively straightforward. God grants atonement for his people through the obedient performance of the divine service by the priests and the obedient participation of the Israelites in it. God's law prescribed how this was to be done by them. The Israelites therefore receive the benefits of atonement by approaching God in a state of ritual purity as defined by the Ten Commandments.

In the New Testament, the teaching on the delivery and reception of the benefits from Christ's atoning death is much more complex and open to misunderstanding. Based on the final words of Jesus in John 19:30, the most common misunderstanding is that Christ's work of atonement ended at his death. We are said to benefit from it when we acknowledge that this is so for us, or when we commit ourselves to him and live in obedience to him. This is partly true. His sacrifice of atonement is complete. But his service as high priest still continues. In the present age, he delivers its benefits to his disciples in and through the church; they receive them through faith in him.

This ongoing delivery of atonement is taught in at least four places. The first is 1 John 2:1–2: "But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the atonement for our sins, and not just ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." John's use of the present tense is significant and emphatic. The risen Lord Jesus is the atonement for all sins; as our advocate with the Father, he is both our propitiator and expiator. He mediates God's grace to us and his pardon for our sins. Through his presence with us, he now offers us the atonement that he won for us by his death.

The second place is Hebrews 2:17: "He (Jesus) has been made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to atone the sins of the people." According to this letter, Jesus was installed as high priest at his exaltation. There at God's right hand, he now officiates as our priest. There he now atones the sins of the people by forgiving their sins and reconciling them with God the Father. Through him as their merciful high priest, they have a gracious God. Through him as their faithful high priest, they can now "approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16).[35]

The third place is 2 Corinthians 5:18–21. There Paul maintains that God has given the ministry of reconciliation to the apostles and their successors. Through their proclamation of Jesus as our sin offering who took on our sins to give us his righteousness, God declares that he no longer holds our trespasses against us and

[35] For further consideration of this passage, see Kleinig, *Hebrews,* 124–127 and 138–142.

calls us to be reconciled to him by received reconciliation from him. Through this ministry, reconciliation is proclaimed and delivered to people on earth.

The fourth place is Romans 3:21–25: "But now the righteousness of God has been revealed through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe . . . being justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God presented as the mercy seat/place of atonement through faith in his blood/by his blood."[36] The redemption that comes from the sacrificial death of Jesus is now available to us in Jesus. Just as the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant was the place from which God provided full atonement for his people on the Day of Atonement, he now presents Jesus to us as our mercy seat, the place where we may find atonement for sin. Just as God provided atonement for sin and its impurity through the blood of the sin offerings in the old covenant, so he now presents its benefits to us in and through the blood of Jesus. Here Paul's use of the phrase "in his blood" is, I think, most likely meant to recall the words of institution in 1 Corinthians 11:25, in order to show that he delivers the benefits of atonement to us most obviously and completely in the Lord's Supper.[37] There the blood by which he atoned for us delivers the benefits of his atoning sacrifice to those who believe in him. The benefits that he delivers to us in his blood are received by us through faith in him. Faith receives what he won for us by his death.

Luther explains this most memorably in his tractate "Against the Heavenly Prophets," where he says (AE 40:213–214):

> We treat of the forgiveness of sins in two ways. First, how it is achieved and won. Second, how it is distributed and given to us. Christ has achieved it on the cross, it is true. . . . He has not won it in the supper or the sacrament. There he has distributed and given it through the Word, as also in the gospel, where it is preached. He has won it once and for all on the cross. But the distribution takes place continuously. . . . If now I seek the forgiveness of sins, I do not run to the cross, for I will not find it there. . . . But I will find in the sacrament or gospel the word which distributes, presents, offers, and gives to me that forgiveness which was won on the cross.[38]

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[36] See Middendorf, *Romans 1–8*, 272–274, 285–289, and Stephen Hultgren, "*Hilastērion* (Rom. 3:25) and the Union of Divine Justice and Mercy. Part II: Atonement in the Old Testament and in Romans 1–5," *Journal of Theological Studies* 70, no. 2 (2019): 546–599.

[37] See also Luke 22:20; Rom 5:9; Eph 2:13; Heb 10:19; Rev 1:5; 5:9; 7:14.

[38] Martin Luther, *Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and the Sacrament* (1525): vol. 40, 213–214, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–76); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–86); vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–).

Conclusion

Since secular people have no sense for God's holiness, they find it hard to make sense of God's provision of atonement for sin in both testaments. Yet their behavior shows that it is not alien to them. They may be disgusted by the whole bloody business and have nothing but contempt for God's holy wrath, even as they become increasingly wrathful; they may reject God's law and any suggestion that they are sinners, even as they regard those who differ from them as irredeemably wicked. Their hearts betray them in many ways, racked as they are by a vague sense of guilt and shame, pollutedness and unworthiness. They frantically seek vindication for themselves as victims of oppression by some law other than God's law and use it to condemn others for their perceived wrongdoing. They seek to purify themselves in what they think and how they live, because they feel polluted and long for a world free from pollution. They try to atone for the human pollution of planet earth by the sacrifices that they make and require others to make.

So we would be remiss if we capitulate to secular rationalism by disregarding the doctrine of the atonement. The biblical teaching on God's provision of atonement for the sins of the world needs to be heard and heeded now as much as it ever was, even though it has always been utterly offensive to human sensibilities. To be sure, we would be wise to follow the example of the New Testament in speaking of it in other ways than by the exclusive use of this word. The New Testament itself does this for us by its proclamation of Christ's death and its benefits in many different ways.

I maintain that the classical doctrine of the atonement is not theoretical but immensely practical. The full teaching of it equips us pastors for effective ministry in six ways.

1. To engage relevantly and practically in the ministry of reconciliation together with Jesus for people who have been estranged from God and one another.
2. To deliver people from bondage to the devil and the polluting powers of darkness with the blood of Jesus.
3. To provide a clear conscience with God's word as law and gospel for people who feel unclean and unworthy of God's love.
4. To give people actual access to God the Father and his manifold grace in the divine service.
5. To minister pastorally to people who have sinned as well as those who have been abused by others.

6. To reach out with the gospel to Muslims, Buddhists, and secular animists who have a deep awareness of retribution and their own spiritual pollution.

In conclusion, the impulse to demand atonement from others and seek it for ourselves shows up in some fashion in all societies. Evil cannot be ignored; it must be dealt with. The gospel of Jesus does not just affirm that, but turns it around. God does not just require atonement for evildoing and injustice; he himself provides vicarious atonement for all people through Jesus.

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Reckoned among the Lawless

Peter J. Scaer

The Apostle Paul makes it clear that the wrath of God comes down upon all unrighteousness (Rom 1:18). No one can escape this wrath, for no one is righteous (Rom 3:10). Through the law, no one is justified, for "through the law comes knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20).[1] All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Rom 3:23). And "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23).

Salvation is a gift, but it comes at a high price: "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood" (Rom 3:24–25; cf. Exod 25:17). Salvation is made possible by Christ, who was handed over for our trespasses (Rom 4:25).

And it was not enough for our Lord to have died on our behalf; so also was it necessary for him to be obedient to the very law that condemns us. "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous" (Rom 5:19). All of this can be found in the opening chapters of Romans.

Turn to Galatians, and the picture becomes fuller still. Paul uses the language of the marketplace, preaching that "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Gal 3:13). He did not skirt the law's demands, but was "born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law" (Gal 4:4–5). As he twice adds in his first letter to the Corinthians, "You were bought with a price" (1 Cor 6:20; 7:23).

Peter likewise reminds diaspora Christians that they have been ransomed not with "silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet 1:18–19). This was not simply God's preferred choice, as if there were another way. As the writer to the Hebrews reminds us, "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb 9:22).

The Gospels themselves testify to this deep truth. The Lord's Prayer speaks of sin as a debt (Matt 6:12; Luke 11:4). Debt cannot be erased; someone will be left

[1] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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footing the bill. This is not an end run around the law. Christ says, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt 5:17). Our Lord says that all of the Law and the Prophets depend on the fulfillment of the law as summarized: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," and then, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:37, 39).

Accordingly, Christ is baptized that he might fulfill all righteousness (Matt 3:15). Our Lord is then promptly led into the desert that he might fulfill the law's first table: "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve" (Matt 4:10). And in denying the desires of the flesh, as well as power and glory, he fulfills the second table of the law as well.

Christ was obedient unto death (Phil 2:8). He proved to be the true son, the one who heard and willingly obeyed his father's command (Matt 21:28–32). Our Lord testifies to his life's purpose: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28). This fulfillment culminates in the "blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:28).

For those who idly speculate whether there was any other way as if to safeguard God's freedom, the Garden of Gethsemane dispels all doubt (Matt 26:36–46). Our Lord would have to drink the cup of suffering and wrath of which the prophets spoke.[2] As the Lord spoke to the nations through Jeremiah, "And if they refuse to accept the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: You must drink!'" (Jer 25:28). The message to the nations becomes the Father's message to the Son. The chief priests were right, "He saved others; he cannot save himself" (Matt 27:42). The Son of Abraham, the true Isaac cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46). The Father must go forward with the sacrifice. There was no other way.

The Gospel of Luke builds on the work of Matthew and prepares us for the Epistles. Zechariah, drawing upon the language of the exodus, tells us that the Lord has redeemed his people (Luke 1:68). This freedom came not only by the strength of our Lord's mighty arm, but by the death of a Passover lamb, and by blood that marked the Israelites' doors. With Moses and Elijah, our Lord speaks about the exodus (Luke 9:31). Luke repeatedly ties Christ's death to the Passover (Luke 22:1, 7, 8, 15) where his blood will be shed, that he might deliver us from sin and death (Luke 22:20).

[2] For an excellent discussion of the cup of God's wrath, see Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018), 1435–1436.

Isaiah 53 foretold that Christ would be "pierced for our transgressions" and "crushed for our iniquities" (Isa 53:5). God himself would offer the sacrifice, for the Suffering Servant would be "smitten by God, and afflicted" (Isa 53:4). Our Lord identifies himself as that Suffering Servant: "For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'" (Luke 22:37; cf. Isa 53:12 LXX), or "among the lawless." But here, the King James Version is better. For he was not simply "numbered" among the lawless, but "reckoned" (ἐλογίσθη) among the lawless.[3] Reckoned among the lawless, he was no outlaw God. Instead, as we see, he was wounded for our lawlessness (Isa 53:5, LXX).

Three times Pilate declares Christ's innocence (Luke 23:4, 14, 22), a verdict affirmed by Herod (Luke 23:9). The penitent thief had it right: "And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41). Luke's centurion punctuates this truth, declaring, "Certainly this man was innocent" (23:47). This truth becomes part of the earliest apostolic kerygma, as when Peter indicts his fellow countrymen for denying "the Holy and Righteous One" (Acts 3:14).

Christ, the righteous one, is reckoned lawless, so that we the lawless might be reckoned righteous. And this brings us back to Romans 4:22, where righteousness was reckoned unto Abraham. And again, Jesus "was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25).

Perhaps this biblical barrage seems unnecessary, or too simple. But when the truth is denied or left unspoken, it is soon forgotten. We might say that this is Lutheranism 101, and now I mean the CPH book that goes by that title. As Scott Bruzek writes in that volume, "Giving His life for the life of the world, His crucifixion atoned for the sins of every person everywhere."[4] And again, "Jesus takes the punishment that we deserve as sinful rebels."[5]

Taking a Step Back: Anselm, Abelard, and Aulén

All this is simple, but not simplistic. So much is accomplished by Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Were it all to be written, I suppose that the world could not contain the books that would be written.

Traditionally, discussion on the atonement has centered on Anselm, Abelard, and Aulén. These are typically said to represent three theories of the atonement. And here lies the beginning of our present predicament. Theories are by their nature

[3] Scripture quotations marked KJV are from the King James or Authorized Version of the Bible.

[4] Scott Bruzek, "Getting Right with God," in *Lutheranism 101*, ed. Scot A. Kinnaman (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010), 46.

[5] Bruzek, "Getting Right with God," 47.

tentative and open to change and challenge. If theology is for proclamation, it must have content; it must be more than simply an event, and it cannot be a matter of opinion in a world of relativity.

The notion that there are theories of atonement changes everything. When we proclaim that Christ's death propitiated the wrath of God, that his death was a payment for sin in fulfillment of the law, we are said to be promoting Anselm's theory,[6] which is then marginalized as medieval or western. Doctrine based on the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world is treated as if it were only an eleventh-century opinion. Nevertheless, other points of view can be helpful.

Peter Abelard's moral model claims that Christ's sacrificial love motivates us to love God and neighbor, with "the result that our hearts should be enkindled by such a gift of divine grace, and true charity should not now shrink from enduring anything for him."[7] Love enkindles love. His death is a spectacle, a passion play to inspire would-be martyrs and cross bearers. Like the blind men of Jericho, our sight is restored, and we follow our Lord into Jerusalem (Matt 20:29–34).

Gustav Aulén is credited for popularizing *Christus Victor*, the idea that by our Lord's crucifixion and resurrection, God conquered death and delivered us from the devil.[8] J. Louis Martyn depicts this as an apocalyptic battle, in which Christ defeats the power and principalities of this fallen age. Thus, Aulén and Martyn remind us that sin and death are mighty and enslaving powers. God's Son must burst upon the scene; the Strong Man must defeat Satan and deliver us from his bondage.

Theories, though, have a way of multiplying. Peter Schmiechen has posited no less than ten models of atonement.[9] Bruce R. Reichenbach adds an atonement as healing.[10] C. Norman Kraus, a missionary to Japan, popularized an atonement model based on the concepts of honor and shame.[11] Surely there are more to come.

These models give us something to consider, and in truth, they often overlap. As such, the faithful may hear all of this as one song, with Anselm singing the melody, Abelard and Aulén adding voices in harmony, and perhaps other voices

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[6] Anselm of Canterbury, "Why God Became Man," in *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, ed. Eugene R. Fairweather (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956), 100–183.

[7] Peter Abelard, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Steven R. Cartwright (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 168.

[8] Gustav Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Motifs of Atonement* (London: SPCK, 1953).

[9] These models include sacrifice, penal substitution, liberation, renewal of creation, restoration of creation, Christ the goal of creation, Christ the way to the knowledge of God, Christ the reconciler, and the love of God. Peter Schmiechen, *Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and Forms of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), vii–viii.

[10] Bruce R. Reichenbach, "Healing View," in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James K. Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 117–142.

[11] C. Norman Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord: Christology from a Disciple's Perspective* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1990).

joining in. In our circles, we do something similar when we speak of a theology of vocation, a theology of mercy, a theology of the cross, and so on. What matters is that we do not lose sight of the fact that the reality is whole, and that we do not deny the truth or let a category or model become a thing unto itself.

Diversity: All but One

Indeed, a multiplicity of so-called atonement theories might be helpful, if they were employed to help us see the multifaceted nature and effects of Christ's death. But that is not the way it has played out.

While those who stand with Anselm typically recognize the truth found in *Christus Victor* and the Moral Atonement, supporters of Abelard and Aulén do not often reciprocate. A fairly typical example of this may be found in Stephen Finlan's *Problems with Atonement*, in which he speaks well of many models of the atonement, but takes aim at substitution, "For the last 250 years, popular notions of atonement have caused embarrassment among Christians who recoil from the idea that the Son's death was either a kind of payment or a divinely demanded penalty."[12] It is strange to worry about embarrassment when Christ calls himself a scandal. But Finlan denies the link between blood and atonement, so much so that he encourages his readers to be suspicious of the narratives that tell of the institution of the Supper.[13]

Likewise, in *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, Joel Green and Mark Baker speak glowingly of the theology of the cross, praising many and various theories of the atonement, but without a positive word to say for substitutionary atonement. Anselm is said to have been too immersed in a medieval world of chivalry and feudalism. Supposedly, Anselm's readers could be led to "think that forgiveness is earned from God by Jesus rather than grasping that forgiveness is God's gracious gift."[14] Such a false dichotomy should be easily spotted, especially in an age where gifts are given along with a receipt, in case the recipient wishes to exchange a gift already paid for.

Divine Child Abuse

If others take their potshots, feminist theology takes dead aim at substitutionary atonement. Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker argue that the traditional idea of Christ's sacrifice promotes an angry and bloodthirsty God, who engages in a

[12] Stephen Finlan, *Problems with Atonement* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 84.
[13] Finlan, *Problems with Atonement*, 116.
[14] Mark D. Baker and Joel B. Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 159.

form of divine child abuse.[15] Carlson Brown and Parker strike at the heart of the Christian enterprise: "The atonement is the central reason for the oppressiveness of Christianity," adding that "Christianity is an abusive theology that glorifies suffering."[16] So much for Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, Michelangelo's *Pietà*, or our Lord himself, when he said that by being lifted up, he would draw all people to himself (John 12:32). The irony is thick. Worried terribly about divine child abuse, this same feminist movement is fundamentally built on the sacrifice of unborn children in the name of individual autonomy, free love, self-advancement, and finally no reason at all, much less the salvation of the world.

How have biblical scholars responded to the feminist critique? Stephen Finlan vacates the field by claiming, "Atonement is not an essential doctrine of Christianity but is in fact derivative. The more central doctrine is Incarnation."[17] While Rudolf Bultmann aimed to demythologize Christ's birth, miracles, and resurrection, Finlan demythologizes Christ's death: "The Incarnation need not issue in the mythology of substitutionary atonement."[18] Be that as it may, arguments that pit the incarnation against the cross happen among us too, and are usually fruitless, as the two go together.

But to say that substitutionary atonement is a secondary doctrine is not enough. It must be discredited. Stephen Finlan notes that the Anselmic view is superstitious, primitive, and destructive of monotheism. Sitting in the seat of scoffers, Finlan equates the idea of purchase or ransom with bribing or manipulating the divine judge. Icing the cake, he adds, "The atonement doctrine is the font of anti-Semitism."[19] This charge is as malicious as it is tiresome.

But What Is the Question?

According to Anselm, sin is a debt that must be paid by the one who owes it, namely, a human being. But since our sin is so great, the one who pays the debt must be God, as one man's death would not be a sufficient payment for the sin of the world. Accordingly, "the satisfaction whereby humanity can be saved can be effected only by One who is God and human."[20] That is Anselm in his own words.

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[15] Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, "For God So Loved the World?," in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), 1–30.

[16] Carlson Brown and Parker, "For God So Loved the World?," 26.

[17] Finlan, *Problems with Atonement*, 104.

[18] Finlan, *Problems with Atonement*, 114.

[19] Finlan, *Problems with Atonement*, 116.

[20] Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* 2.6, cited in Baker and Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 156.

Most objections to Anselm run along these lines. If God is powerful, he can defeat all foes, including sin and death. If he is merciful and loving, he can forgive all sins, quite apart from any payment, whether it is our works or the work of Christ on our behalf. If sin is only an illness, it can be cured. If sin holds us in bondage, we can be freed. In any case, no one can really say for sure why Christ died. As Bruce Reichenbach replies: "His mercy is so great that his forgiveness can be sufficient. God chooses the particular method of atonement for his own reasons, not necessity."[21]

Forde Lives

Anti-atonement theology has been circulating for quite some time, with little obvious effect on the world of confessional Lutheranism. But lately, there seems to be some confusion on this subject even within confessional Lutheranism.

Strident feminism holds little appeal. But Gerhard Forde speaks with a Lutheran accent and employs Lutheran categories. He speaks often of absolution and the power of the Word. He underlines the necessity of preaching, promotes a theology of the cross, and quotes Luther often. And yet, at the heart of his theology is an empty place.

Concerning the feminist theology, Forde writes, "In the main, I agree with many critiques of the traditional doctrines of the atonement in Brown/Parker."[22] Forde argues that if we think of Christ's death as a vicarious satisfaction, God appears to be a "vindictive tyrant demanding his pound of flesh before he can be merciful."[23] Forde's position on this remained largely consistent throughout his life.

Consider, for instance *Where God Meets Man*, written in 1972. Forde begins by exposing what he sees as misguided Lutheran teaching: "We begin by assuming the law is a ladder to heaven. Then we go on to say, 'Of course, no one can climb the ladder, because we all are weakened by sin. We are therefore guilty and lost.'"[24] Lutherans are invited to nod in agreement. None of us can by our own works reach up into heaven. But then something strange happens. Forde describes our "gospel" in this way. "What we need is someone to pay our debt to God and to climb the ladder for us. This supposedly is what Jesus has done for us. As our 'substitute' he has paid off God and climbed the ladder for us. All we have to do now is 'believe'

[21] Reichenbach, "Healing View," 109.

[22] Gerhard Forde, "In Our Place," in *A More Radical Gospel: Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism*, ed. Steven D. Paulson and Mark C. Mattes (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 102.

[23] Forde, "In Our Place," 103.

[24] Gerhard Forde, *Where God Meets Man: Luther's Down-to-Earth Approach to the Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 10.

it."[25] What are we to make of this? In some ways, it captures our belief, but in the worst possible way. I know of no Christian who believes that Christ paid off God, though the Scriptures do say that he paid the price of our sins. And, if Forde is to use the ladder analogy, perhaps that ladder would be the cross, on which Jesus was lifted up.

Though we may wish to give him the benefit of the doubt, Forde pulls no punches, calling traditional teaching about the atonement absurd. He asks, "In the first place, can we so lightly assume that God is one who can be 'bought off'—even by Jesus?"[26] This Forde speaks concerning the one smitten by God, the one upon whom has been laid the iniquity of us all (Isa 53:4, 6).

Forde goes on further to question whether one man's death can save us from our sin. How can we be sure that Christ has paid enough? He scoffs, "Can the suffering and death of one man atone for the sins of the world?"[27] Would that Forde had heard the words of unbelieving Caiaphas: "You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish" (John 11:49–50).

Christians claim that Christ is God and that his death is a sufficient payment for sin. Forde counters that if his suffering were of infinite worth, then "the beating and the crown of thorns would have satisfied God!"[28] Thus, Forde offers a caricature of atonement and turns mystery into mockery. Offering what he seems to consider a decisive blow, he writes: "If God has been paid, how can one say that he really forgives? If a debt is paid, one can hardly say it is forgiven. No one could call God's action mercy."[29]

In *Theology Is for Proclamation*, Forde continues in the same vein: "The favor of God does not have to be purchased by the suffering and death of Jesus. God cannot and does not need to be bought, even by Jesus. It is not that Jesus has to die before God can be forgiving. God out of love and mercy sends Jesus to forgive."[30] Notice again the sleight of hand. Yes, God can be forgiving before Jesus dies. But such forgiveness does not deny, but in fact affirms the necessity of Christ's death. In fact, God's initial mercy and love brought about Christ's sacrifice in the first place. With Paul Gerhardt, we sing, "Love caused thine incarnation,"[31] and add to that the crucifixion as well.

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[25] Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 10.
[26] Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 11.
[27] Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 12.
[28] Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 12.
[29] Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 12.
[30] Gerhard Forde, *Theology Is for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 124.
[31] See *LSB* 334:4. *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006).

Forde offers more of the same in his 1984 essay, "Caught in the Act: Reflections on the Work of Christ." There he claims that Christ's death must be about more than satisfying God's honor or wrath. He asks the same questions, "If death was a *payment*, how could reconciliation be an act of *mercy*? Mercy is mercy, not the act of payment."[32] What a strange thing to say. Surely the Good Samaritan showed mercy to the man lying half dead. He bound up his wounds and took him to the inn. "And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back'" (Luke 10:35). Traditional Lutheran atonement theology is not absurd, but it is absurd to think that the showing of mercy comes at no cost, that a gift given must not first be purchased.

It would seem that Forde does not think too highly of God's mercy, but too little of our sin and its ramifications. Bill Gates may well be able to afford to donate a few dollars to charity, but that would neither make him worthy of great praise, nor would that prove him to be merciful. It would simply show that he was wealthy.

Forde teaches that we cannot make ourselves righteous by means of the law. He is right to note that we need absolution, a word of forgiveness, that theology is for proclamation, and that by the gospel we are set free. But what exactly is that gospel, and from where does that word of forgiveness come? Given the fall into sin, God cannot simply say, "Let there be forgiveness." Our sin has changed the dynamics. Words have to be backed up by action. Christ's death is the payment that makes absolution possible. Anyone can write a check, but it does no good if there is no money in the bank.

Indeed, Christ declares his divinity by offering forgiveness (Mark 2:10). And yet, even in the midst of his ministry of forgiveness, our Lord is preparing for the price that he must pay. When Christ is baptized, the heavens are torn open, prefiguring the tearing of the temple curtain, and signaling that Christ for us was baptized unto death. Having cleansed the leper, he finds himself in the lonely places (Mark 1:45).[33] Though he heals many, he does so at a price, fulfilling Isaiah 53: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases" (Matt 8:17).

Our Lord says, "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!" (Luke 12:49–50). Here Christ speaks of his death not simply as a murder. While Christ is put to death by leaders who fear loss of power and prestige,

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[32] Gerhard Forde, "Caught in the Act: Reflections on the Work of Christ," in *A More Radical Gospel: Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism*, ed. Steven D. Paulson and Mark C. Mattes (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 87.

[33] For more on this, see Peter J. Scaer, "The Atonement in Mark's Sacramental Theology," in *CTQ* 72 (2008): 227–242.

at a deeper level he is sacrificed as the Lamb of God, the Suffering Servant on whom must be placed the iniquity of us all (Isa 53:6).

Forde is correct to assert that God's favor precedes the sending of his Son, and that his forgiveness precedes his death, but not because that forgiveness is somehow untethered from Christ's sacrifice. God, in favor, sends his Son to be the sacrifice. The Son willingly obeys, because of a double love, first for the Father, but then also for the world. In this sense, the crucifixion happened in time, even as the atonement is eternal.

How does Forde avoid the link between shed blood and forgiveness? It should be noted that he removes our trump cards from the deck. The Son of Man came to give his life "as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45). Likewise, Christ offers the blood of the covenant, which is "poured out for many" (Mark 14:24). Indeed, this blood of the covenant is "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:28). This is more than compelling evidence. Yet, in Carl Braaten's *Dogmatics*, Forde disregards these sayings, noting, "Such passages in their present form at least, are usually regarded as having come not from Jesus himself but from later interpretative traditions."[34] If that is what we are dealing with, then there may be little hope of going further.

In Steven Paulson, Forde Lives

Though Forde has passed on, faithful students carry his torch. In a work of Forde's collected essays, *A More Radical Gospel*, Mark Mattes and Steven Paulson lay out the problem in Anselm's theology, claiming that it places the necessity of Christ's death upon God. They ask, "If Jesus' death was a payment to God, then how is the reconciliation he establishes one of mercy?"[35] They proceed to ask, "Indeed, why is Christ's death *necessary* at all? Forde's radical response is that—it was not! Why could God not just forgive us? He did!"[36] What meaning might we find in the cross? Mattes and Paulson write, "Christ's death is a historical crime, not a sign, or myth, or piece of the system of salvation."[37] Behind the jargon is a cross that may as well be empty.

Paulson's local appeal, like that of Forde, is that he employs distinctly Lutheran vocabulary, including law and gospel and absolution, along with a heavy dose of the hidden God. As with Forde, he views Christ's work not as the fulfillment of the Law,

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[34] Gerhard Forde, "The Shape of Tradition," in *Christian Dogmatics* 2 vols., ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 1:13.

[35] Mark Mattes and Steven Paulson, "Introduction," in Gerhard Forde, *A More Radical Gospel*, ed. Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), xxv.

[36] Mattes and Paulson, "Introduction," xxv.

[37] Mattes and Paulson, "Introduction," xv.

but the end of the Law entirely. Paulson writes: "Even Christ's own fulfilling of the law is manageable for Satan. But when Christ ceases playing by the rules and irrationally and illegally gives his absolution to the ungodly and elects the unrighteous unfairly and inequitably, he exercises a power that is horrible apart from the law."[38] The key for Paulson is preaching, or more precisely, a word of absolution. As Paulson puts it, "But that means that God really does operate outside the law and his will is not the law—it is something else."[39] Put simply, God freely speaks forgiveness, and therefore God is an outlaw. Paulson's description of the Christ as an outlaw seems closer to his counterfeit foe, described by St. Paul: "And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming" (2 Thess 2:8).

According to what might be called radical Lutheranism, God's Son does not cover sin or pay for sin, instead, he simply ignores it. Paulson writes, "Therefore, it is not the uniting of mercy and justice as attributes in the being of God, but is God forgetting something out of mercy that overcomes justice."[40] Justice is neither maintained, nor is it fulfilled. God simply offers an absolution *ex nihilo*. As Paulson puts it, "The unfettered absolution of sinners, while they are sinners, does not fit the pattern of the law. Here God goes rogue, operating *ex lex*—outside the law."[41] The word of the law is not fulfilled, but simply superseded by another word, a word of promise. So, then, when we say that Christ earned for us salvation, we supposedly fall into the legal scheme, and in doing so, "we crucify the one thing needed for our freedom—God's irrevocable promise."[42] Paulson's absolution is simply a repeat of God's power at creation. Let there be forgiveness, and there is forgiveness.

Paulson draws heavily on Forde's and on Luther's idea of the hidden God. The God revealed in Christ, as made known by the preacher, offers mercy. The hidden God is a menacing figure, who seems not to have been touched by the atonement. Forde writes, "Only the historical, concrete, suffering, and dying Jesus can save us from the wrath of the *deus ipse*."[43] That is, only the revealed God can save us from the hidden God, who seems to be battling his own demons. Perhaps this should not be so surprising, given, as Paulson writes, "the atonement is not an objective fact

[38] Steven D. Paulson, *Luther's Outlaw God: Vol. 1: Hiddenness, Evil, and Predestination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018), 229.

[39] Paulson, *Luther's Outlaw God*, 133.

[40] Steven Paulson, "The Law-Gospel Distinction in Lutheran Theology and Ministry," in *God's Two Words: Law and Gospel in the Lutheran and Reformed Traditions*, ed. Jonathan A. Linebaugh (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 119.

[41] Paulson, "The Law-Gospel Distinction in Lutheran Theology and Ministry," 119.

[42] Paulson, Luther's Outlaw God, 165.

[43] Gerhard O. Forde, "Reconciliation with God," in *Christian Dogmatics*, 2 vols., ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 2:71.

accomplished on Calvary."[44] As Forde puts it, "The cross is what it costs God to remain true to himself, to remain a God of mercy."[45] In this sense, the crucifixion is more a case of anger management.

In Paulson's new scheme, satisfaction is redefined and occurs when the sinner comes to faith. As Paulson and Mattes summarize the theology of Forde: "God will not be satisfied until he has mercy on us, until we become people of faith."[46] Of course, not all will become people of faith. And how this sort of thinking fits in with such teaching as the parable of the wedding banquet is hard to say (Matt 22:1–14; Luke 14:16–24).

We confess that God is fully satisfied on account of Christ, that there is no hidden part of him that has not been touched by the atonement. When Christ said, "It is finished," the work of salvation was complete (John 19:30). Yet this, too, is denied by Paulson, who writes, "The cry of dereliction (Why have you forsaken me?) and Christ's declaration 'It is finished' are not utterances of the Son being faithful in his calling to the end (a martyr, hero, or model), but one in need of a preacher—lamenting, yet having none."[47] Yes, if only our Lord, the incarnate Word, had a preacher, though in quoting Psalm 22, he very well knew how the story would end.

Indeed, the God whom Paulson presents appears schizophrenic. He writes, "Specifically, God's greatest opponent is his own will as revealed clearly in the law. The promise finally conflicts with the law," adding, "God contradicts God at the crucial moment of divine hiddenness—when the absolute law finds itself unexpectedly opposed to the gospel that absolves. Then God is suddenly revealed as an outlaw."[48] With all this God talk, there is strikingly little reference to the life of Christ or the incarnation. God sends his Son to be a man, to take his place among our fallen humanity, to be our representative and stand with us in solidarity. This we see in Luke's baptismal account, where Christ allies himself with a fallen people (Luke 3:21–22).

The Father and Son engage in a concord and enterprise of love. And yet, God's Son must be treated like Adam's son. The one who is declared the Son of God must be thrown out of paradise and into the desert in order to fulfill the law and make the sacrifice for our salvation. This is not simply God versus God, but it is the Son acting in our stead according to his Father's good pleasure, both Father and Son knowing what is at stake, and the terrible price that must be paid.

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[44] Steven Paulson and Nicholas Hopman, "Atonement," in *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 48–51.

[45] Gerhard O. Forde, "Reconciliation with God," 75.

[46] Mattes and Paulson, *A More Radical Gospel*, xxv.

[47] Steven D. Paulson and Nicholas Hopman, "Christ, the Hated God," *Lutheran Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2016): 20.

[48] Paulson, *Luther's Outlaw God*, 109.

Again, following Forde, Paulson thinks of Christ's death as a kind of accident, as might occur when a hero takes the brunt of an oncoming truck, while whisking away a child to safety. But if it were simply a matter of an oncoming truck, why then did God not perform a miracle and simply divert the truck, or make it disappear? Our Lord, as he did in Nazareth, would have simply walked away.

Following Forde, Paulson often refers to substitutionary atonement as a scheme. He denounces the fallacy that a person can become righteous on his own as judged by the law. But so also does he condemn the idea that "sinners can be *declared righteous*, forensically as in a court of law—though they are not actually righteous in themselves. A debtor deserves punishment, but if a generous patron paid the debt it may be right for a judge to let a criminal go free. In either case, the key is that the law remains the form of righteousness."[49] We speak about such things as redemption and justification. Paulson, following Forde, calls it the "legal scheme."[50]

Wrath, Justice, and Mercy

One of the difficulties for Lutherans is that we are thought to hold to the same doctrine of substitutionary atonement as do the Calvinists. Charles Hodge speaks eloquently of Christ's death as a payment for sin, but he prefaces this truth by saying, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him."[51] Surely, God sent his Son to die, but it was hardly pleasant. Drawing upon the Old Testament sacrificial system, especially "the blood, the entrails and the goriness," Thomas Schreiner ably argues that sin's penalty is death.[52] He then explains, "The wrath of God flows from his holiness—from the perfection of his character and the beauty of his goodness, his matchless character."[53] Again, Schreiner writes, "God is angry because of human rejection of his lordship."[54]

Against such a view, the words of Forde and Paulson may seem much more attractive. If God is pictured as caring primarily about his own holiness, then it would seem a self-centered God indeed. This is a God who can be praised even if in his limited atonement he eternally chooses to save some and damn others. There is

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[49] Steven Paulson, *Doing Theology the Lutheran Way* (London and New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011), 124.

[50] Paulson, "The Law-Gospel Distinction in Lutheran Theology and Ministry," 104 and Gerhard Forde, "The Work of Christ," in *Christian Dogmatics* 2 vols., ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 2:24.

[51] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* vol. 2, 517, cited in Ben Pugh, *Atonement Theories: A Way through the Maze* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 86.

[52] Thomas Schreiner, "Penal Substitution View" in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James K. Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 83.

[53] Schreiner, "Penal Substitution View," 80.

[54] Schreiner, "Penal Substitution View," 80.

once more a confusion as to who God is, in and of himself. There is a failure to understand the nature and relationship of his attributes. If his holiness leads us to think that God does not like to get his hands dirty, then we are following along the wrong path.

The Goodness of God's Wrath

It may help to reconsider the relationship between God's love and his wrath. God is love (1 John 4:8). That is the eternal reality, within the Godhead, Father loving Son, Son loving Father, brought full circle and then reaching out in the Holy Spirit. We may also say that God has wrath, or that he is angry. But we may not say that God is wrath, or is anger, or even that God is justice. In a world of perfect love, there is no need for a court system. The first signs of God's justice appear with the dawn of sin, which changes everything.

Adam could not simply be forgiven and reenter paradise. The offspring of Eve would have to pay the price. God's reaction to Abel's murder is telling. Our Lord says to Cain, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground" (Gen 4:10). Our Lord is concerned here not for himself, but for the injustice done to Abel. For good reason, Rachel weeps for her children. When early Christians are imprisoned and put to death, Christ takes it personally, asking, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4). To simply let sin pass shows not love or forgiveness, but only indifference and apathy. Righteous anger is appropriate in the face of grave injustice. Its opposite is not love, but indifference and apathy. Wrongs must be made right, or else Abel's blood will continue to cry out from the ground. In a world filled with justice warriors, this message would seem to resonate.

The Scriptures do not deny God's anger, but say that he is slow to anger (Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Ps 103:8). Sin brings death, yet Cain is allowed to live. In his divine forbearance, our Lord passed over former sins (Rom 3:25). But the wages of sin is indeed death. The cross is the place where mercy and truth have met together; "righteousness and peace kiss each other" (Ps 85:10). There is indeed such a thing as righteous anger, and it flows from love for the innocent. When we deny God's wrath, we are not thereby proclaiming that God is more loving, but instead we are saying that God does not care about injustice, or that he is not angry with me. As such, my life of sin need not be placed before a mirror or under a microscope.

A World without Law, a World without Love

With the psalmist, we delight in the law and meditate on it day and night (Ps 1:2). We give thanks to God for delivering us from sin and its punishment. Of

course, our fallen flesh returns to sin, like a dog to its vomit. But as Christians, we love God's law. Indeed, Luther's hymn on the Ten Commandments is remarkably positive. What therefore is the law? Is it really such an ugly thing? Our Lord summarizes it in the most positive of ways: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:37–39). If we were to summarize the commandments in one word, it would be, "Love." Faith will not be necessary in the heavenly places, for we shall know our Lord by sight. Hope will have been fulfilled. Only love remains: "So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:13).

Love is more than a feeling; it has shape and substance. It is seen in the fear, love, and trust of God. It is in honoring God's name, gladly hearing his word. It is cherishing our parents, holding life sacred, honoring marriage, being thankful for what we have, speaking and thinking well of others. The law lived out is a very attractive world indeed, a world in which there is piety toward God, care and concern for neighbors. This is the law as we see it most positively in the Sermon on the Mount, where we are invited to keep not only the letter, but the spirit of the law. In contrast, Paulson writes, "Luther's Christian freedom then means the human is not being freed from hating the law into loving it, or from being accused by the law to being blessed by it. This Christian is being freed, necessarily, from the law altogether."[55] But, we may ask, who wants to be free from cherishing God's name, honoring parents, and protecting life?

Being free from the punishment of the law is indeed a good thing. But take away the law, and love itself vanishes. For love is simply the law fulfilled, what James calls "the law of liberty" (Jas 1:25). In love, we are taken up into the life of the Trinity. So John tells us, "And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him" (1 John 3:23–24). For Christians as Christians, the second table of the law is simply and beautifully the love of neighbor, the new life in Christ.

God showed his love not simply in words, but in deed. By his death, Jesus is "the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). This was more than an absolution. And it is more than a creation *ex nihilo*, but it was the redemption of our sinful flesh, the taking on of God's wrath. John writes, "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Knowing this, the law looks completely different. "By this we know that we love the children

[55] Paulson, *Luther's Outlaw God*, 73.

of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. . . . And his commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:2–3).

We have overcome the world, because Christ has overcome the world. God's mercy is shown not simply in a love that overlooks sin, which is easy enough, but in a love that pays the price, walks the extra mile, and bears the burden. This is the life that we now embrace.

All False Theology Is Psychology

What, may we ask, is behind the rejection of substitutionary atonement, especially now among some Lutherans? And what does it have to do with the denial of the law's eternality? If we say that Christ died to save us, all is well. Likewise, if we say that Christ came to save us from sin and the devil, we need lose no sleep. But if we say that Christ had to die as a payment for our sin, then we must take stock not only of our former life, but the life we now live. Once we say that Christ had to be obedient to the law, then we have to admit that the law matters, as does the Christian life. But if we say that the word of promise supersedes the law, then any discussion of the law or of Christian life becomes unimportant, secondary at best. Any exhortation to help our unborn neighbor, to defend marriage for the sake of children, or to speak out for confused children who are given puberty blockers and hormone treatment leading to disfiguring surgery is relegated to the place of the now defunct law. In an age of lawlessness, a lawless Savior is appealing. We can say with Forde and Paulson that like Christ, we care not so much for God's law, but for his will, which is indeed a convenient place to be.

The present situation calls for a much more radical Lutheranism, one that recognizes that the Christian life is tied up and defined by the life of Christ, which can be seen in the law's fulfillment. This is not simply a matter of prohibition, but a positive living out of love for neighbor, working not outside of the law, but cheerfully doing even more than the law demands, going as Christ said, the extra mile (Matt 5:41). As such, our lives are themselves confessions of Christ. We confess the law's goodness, even in this sinful flesh. The "I" that is Christ's life in me is unafraid to say that the law is good, and that it is eternal.

While the gospel delivers us from the law's punishment, it also thrusts us back into the law as a cheerful way of life. As Christians, the commandments look stunningly appealing. If we celebrate Christ's life, we celebrate the life of every child, and defend it even while in the womb. If we are moved by the gospel of Christ as bridegroom, we will speak up for earthly marriage, as a reflection of that truth, and as a safe space for children conceived in the male-female union. We may speak of dividing law and gospel, but faith and life go together. This is not simply a matter of

acknowledging law as a kind of penultimate reality, but in seeing that our lives have shape and purpose.

By insisting that Christians advocate for life and natural marriage, we are not engaging in social engineering, nor are we operating only on the level of natural law, fulfilling a civic duty. We enter the public square in defense of our littlest neighbors, whose lives are taken by abortion, and in doing so we confess Christ's incarnation and atoning work. In defending marriage, we honor our creator, and seek justice for children, who have a right to a mother and father. When it comes to the suffering of the innocent, justice matters.

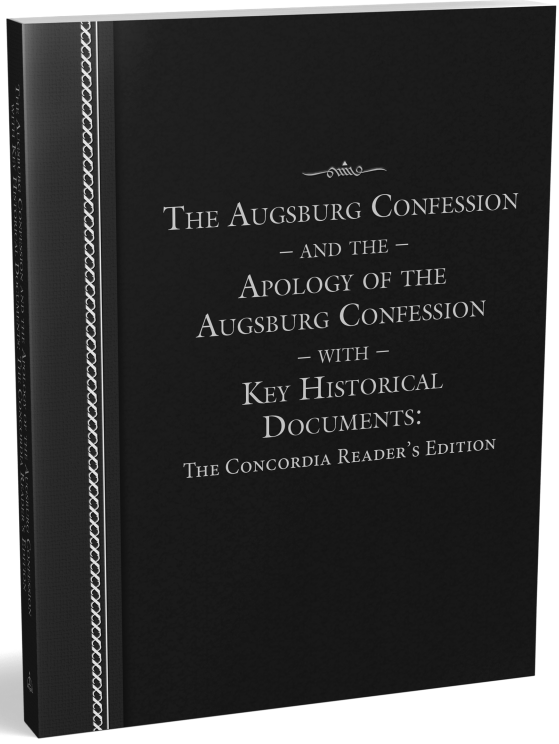
The Christian life, and what often is called the third use of the law, matters. By our advocacy for the unborn and for the truth of marriage, we confess that Christ became one of us in the womb of Mary, and that he has come to be the church's bridegroom. When we are silent about abortion and earthly marriage, we deny the heavenly realities; we deny the very gospel itself.

Speak of the Christian life this way, and be prepared to be told that you are placing yourself again under an oppressive law, or that you are falling into moralism. Liberal atonement theology, in whatever form it may come into our circles, offers an out. Whatever the law may say is easily brushed aside, so that we may set our eyes on the way of the gospel.

But far from moralism, this is a life of love, the very life of Christ, apart from which there is no gospel at all. Apart from such an embodied confession, the gospel is simply an absolution without Christ's death or our life. Our manger scenes are meaningless when we do not stand and speak for the child seen in the ultrasound. All our talk of Christ as bridegroom is undermined when we cannot say a word for marriage. As such, radical Lutheranism is really not countercultural, but far too cultural, a way to affirm the law without taking it seriously or embracing it in the life of love and self-sacrifice, the kind of life that has meaning.

This is not simply a matter of natural law, but a confession of Christ's life lived on our behalf, the very life into which we are invited. Christ lived a life of obedience to the law, and did so according to his Father's good will. So also are we called to live that same life in Christ. It means that our own lives have meaning, deep theological and christological meaning. It may be good to know that Christ saved us, but for what?

One rich theological confession.



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The Cross, the Atonement, and the Eucharist in Luke

Arthur A. Just Jr.

At the dedication of a new building at the Lutheran mission in Seine Bight, Belize, missionary Herbert Burch asked me to dedicate the new altar in the church. Because of the ongoing possibility of hurricanes, this new mission church is built on stilts, but for the dedication the congregants moved the ecclesiastical furniture outside under the church building to accommodate the crowds. This building is set in the midst of the village, with people walking by on the street in front and a school on one side of the church. So during the service, a few of the more curious wandered over and joined the congregation. As I read the words of the dedication in our *LSB Agenda*, I thought they would serve as a perfect introduction to this paper:

> At the altar, we receive the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the altar of the cross and offer to God our sacrifice of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving as the Lord spoke through the prophet Isaiah saying, "Everyone who loves the name of the Lord and holds fast My covenant, their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a place of prayer for all peoples."

And then I prayed:

> O God, You delighted in the praises of Your faithful servants Abel, Noah, and Abraham and accepted the sacrifices offered on their altars. Look upon us and graciously accept the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving we offer at this altar. Grant that the body and blood of Christ Jesus, once offered on the altar of the cross as the full and only atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world and given us on this altar to eat and drink, will nourish and strengthen us until at the last we gather at the heavenly banquet to feast with the Lamb and all His saints; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.[1]

If theology is done through the pastoral acts, if the saying *lex orandi, lex credendi*[2] means that the liturgy, preaching, and hymns constitute the faith of people, this blessing of an altar and the accompanying prayer confess that we partake of the atonement of Christ at the Eucharist. This essay will demonstrate that the New

[1] *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 272–273.

[2] Aidan Kavanagh in *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo, 1984), 91ff., suggests the fuller patristic maxim *lex supplicandi legem statuat credendi.*

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Testament teaches this by investigating the relationship between the cross, atonement, and the Eucharist in Luke.

The Biblical Story as a Story of Blood and Sacrifice in the Presence of God

It seems incredible that there are theological forces in our church that prompted an exegetical symposium at Fort Wayne in 2020 addressing *the Cross, the Atonement, and the Wrath of God.* As Lutherans, how could these things not be unquestioned among us as central to the heart of our theology, the essence of biblical theology? How can Lutherans tell the story of the Bible apart from the cross and the atonement?[3]

And why is this true? Because I believe that a theology of presence is the overarching theme of biblical theology. The theme of divine presence is central to the Old Testament, and this theme continues into the New Testament with the birth of Jesus. In his infancy narrative, Luke accents that God's presence is moving from the temple to the infant conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The Old Testament prepares for this movement of God's presence. God's presence in fire and cloud led the people during the exodus (Exod 13:21) and took up residence in the tabernacle (Exod 40:34–38) and later the temple (1 Kgs 8:10–11). Shortly before the first temple was destroyed, God's presence left it (Ezek 10). God promised that there would be an incarnation that would supersede the second temple (Hag 2; Zech 8–9). The Jerusalem temple would be destroyed in AD 70. No longer would God be present in the temple. The new temple is Jesus (John 1:14; 2:19–22), and wherever Jesus is, there is God offering the eschatological gifts that Israel received through the sacrifices at the dwelling place of God. "One of the critical issues facing the church in Luke's day was the shift in God's presence from the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem temple to the baby in the womb of the Virgin Mary at Jesus' conception and continuing in the flesh of Jesus, who is both God and man."[4]

But the theme of presence does not apply only to Luke. The incarnational and sacramental presence of Christ is at the center of Paul's theology.[5] If one were to tell the story of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, it begins with our first parents

[3] For a definition of atonement, see Simon Gathercole, *Defending Substitution: An Essay on Atonement in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 14–15, "Christ's death for our sins *in our place, instead of us,* is in fact a vital ingredient in the biblical (in the present discussion, Pauline) understanding of atonement. . . . I am defining *substitutionary* atonement for the present purposes as Christ's death in our place, instead of us."

[4] Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 1:1–9:50* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 26, 32.

[5] Arthur A. Just Jr., "'The Elusive Presence': Death of Christ, Gospel, Liberation, Apocalyptic, Justification, Incorporation into Christ, and New Creation in Paul's Homily to the Galatians," unpublished paper for the 21st Annual Symposium on Exegetical Theology, January 17, 2006.

dwelling in God's presence without fear or shame, then their fear and shame in God's presence from their disobedience and fall into sin, their expulsion from the Garden and God's presence, and finally the restoration of that presence with the incarnation (thus the angel Gabriel's command to Mary at the annunciation, "Be not afraid" [Luke 1:30]),[6] so that through Christ's atoning death we could have the same hope offered the thief on the cross that "today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). And then that final promise of Revelation: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God" (Rev 21:3–4). If this is true, that the story of the Bible is the story of God's presence among his people, then this story is also about the concept of holiness and what it means to enter the holy presence of God. One of the core values of first-century Judaism was God's holiness. The presence of God's holiness in creation and the temple was central to how Israel mapped its world. As Jerome Neyrey puts it in *The Social World of Luke–Acts*, "Jesus as the cornerstone of the true temple becomes the new center of the map and all holiness is measured by proximity to him."[7] Where Jesus is, there is God's holiness. For the Jews, to enter or approach God's holiness is to enter eschatological space.

And how does one enter God's holiness and draw near to his presence? By sacrifice and through blood. It's all about the blood, which is why the Epistle of Hebrews is so important to understanding the cross, the sacrifice, and the Eucharist in biblical theology. John Kleinig affirms this again and again in his commentary on Hebrews. He has an excursus on sacrifice and one on blood.[8] He notes that there is no one word for sacrifice in the Old Testament, but the closest is the word "offering" that is derived from the verb meaning "come near." "An 'offering' is something that is 'brought near' to God at the altar in the tabernacle or temple,"[9] that is, brought near into the presence of God. To enter the presence of God, one needed to sacrifice and enter through the blood. Here is how Kleinig connects sacrifice, presence, and blood by showing how the sacrifice of Jesus surpasses the sacrifices in the Old Testament because Jesus' sacrifice encompasses all of his work of redemption:

> In the NT the death of Jesus is much more significant than the death of any animal in the OT. Jesus does God's will by presenting his body as a vicarious offering to atone for sin (10:5–14) and to free sinners from slavery to the fear of death by his death on their behalf (2:14–15). He tastes death on behalf of everyone (2:9) to redeem them from sin (9:15). But his self-sacrifice (9:26) is

[6] Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are the author's own translation.

[7] Jerome Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke–Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 293.

[8] John Kleinig, *Hebrews* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 256–262 and 433–437, respectively.

[9] Kleinig, *Hebrews*, 256.

> much broader than just his death. It also includes the whole of his bodily life on earth (10:10, 14), his willing passive and active obedience to God with his prayers for deliverance from death (5:7–8), his presentation of himself with his blood before God in the heavenly sanctuary at his exaltation (9:12, 24–25), and the sprinkling of the congregation with his blood to cleanse their hearts from sin (9:14; 10:22; 12:24). His work "to atone" for sin (ἱλάσκεσθαι, 2:17) includes his ongoing heavenly ministry. In keeping with the sacrificial significance of his death and its ongoing relevance, the main emphasis in Hebrews is on cleansing, remission, and sanctification through his sacrificial blood (9:14, 22; 10:18, 29; 13:12).[10]

As Lutherans, how can we tell the story of the Bible without blood? As Hebrews reminds us in the climactic ninth chapter, "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (9:22).

But there are other ways of telling the story, as our colleague at our sister seminary reminds us in his article from the Summer 2019 edition of *Concordia Journal,* "The Word of the Cross and the Story of Everything." Joel Okamoto's retelling of the biblical story is to show how Jesus' "death bears on everything; it bears on God and his creation."[11] This is a noble claim. He wants to show that the cross comprehends the entire biblical story—as he repeats again: "this is about everything—God and his creation."[12] But in making this point, he seems to cut out the heart of the story, for his story is bloodless. To be more specific, the story of the Bible, what he calls "the story of everything," is not defined by Christ's atonement. He says as much in his summary of the story of everything:

> So "Christ crucified" and the "word of the cross" can and should stand for more than Christ and his atoning death on the cross.
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> At this point, someone will ask: "How does atonement arise at all from the story of everything? As I followed the story, Jesus's death is not atoning." The point is well taken. The account of God and creation outlined here does not exclude that belief in Jesus's death atoned for sins, but atonement in this sense does not drive the story.[13]

To be fair, Okamoto does *finally* refer to the blood one paragraph after the previous citation, but it reads as a subplot of the biblical story, not its center:

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[10] Kleinig, *Hebrews,* 258.

[11] Joel Okamoto, "The Word of the Cross and the Story of Everything," *Concordia Journal* (Summer 2019): 63.

[12] Okamoto, "The Word of the Cross," 64.

[13] Okamoto, "The Word of the Cross," 64 (emphasis mine).

> This is not to deny nor to minimize Jesus's death as an atoning sacrifice. Once you see that Jesus came and fulfilled all God's promises, it is easy to see that his blood shed on the cross is like the blood of a lamb at Passover, except more. His blood is like the blood of the covenant sprinkled upon the people (Ex 24), except more. His blood is like the blood of bulls and goats shed for sins, except more.[14]

This grudging acknowledgment that the blood of Jesus matters minimizes Jesus' death as an atoning sacrifice because, as he says, "atonement in this sense does not drive the story." To be charitable, a conversation about the meaning of "in this sense" would be clarifying, but it is difficult to get beyond what frames "in this sense," namely, "atonement . . . does not drive the story." I wonder what Abel, Noah, and Abraham would say to this, whose sacrifices offered on their altars were accepted by God, or Zechariah or any of the Levitical priests who offered the daily atonement sacrifices in the temple at the third and ninth hours? Or what would Jesus say, whose destiny was Jerusalem and a cross to atone for sins? So this essay will tell a different story of the Bible, that "the story of everything" is driven by the atonement, driven by blood and sacrifice, and finally by the Eucharist, which is where we partake of Jesus' blood and sacrifice.

Atonement in Luke among Twentieth-Century Scholars

But claiming that the atonement does not drive the biblical story is not new. In fact, it is a common theme in twentieth-century biblical scholarship. In a 1982 seminar on Luke's Gospel I attended as a graduate student, Professor Abraham Malherbe announced that most Lukan scholars believed that the evangelist had no atonement theology since he did not include in his Gospel what Matthew and Mark included in theirs, that is, the clearest statement on the atonement in the Synoptics: "Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (ὥσπερ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἦλθεν διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν Matt 20:28; cf. Mark 10:45). Malherbe proceeded to deconstruct this erroneous claim, and as he did so, assigned me a paper on the passion statements in Luke 24, as I was the only Lutheran in the class and he was confident that I would read Luke through the atonement and the theology of the cross. Thus began my pilgrimage to Emmaus, and the rest of my story is an ongoing feast. So the beginning of my studies of Luke began with the atonement and the cross.

[14] Okamoto, "The Word of the Cross," 64. Because Okamoto does not understand atonement and blood as driving the story, it is not surprising that he makes no reference to the Eucharist in connection with his understanding of "the story of everything."

In the introductory section on the theology of the cross in his commentary on Luke, Joseph Fitzmyer catalogs the scholarly opinion of the first half of the twentieth century on Luke's lack of an atonement theology.[15] "Years ago," Fitzmyer writes, "when C. H. Dodd was discussing various manifestations of the early kerygma in the New Testament, he wrote: 'The Jerusalem *kerygma* does not assert that Christ died *for our sins.* The result of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ is the forgiveness of sins, but this forgiveness is not specifically connected with his death.'"[16] In 1953, Hans Conzelmann carried this forward into Luke's Gospel in his *The Theology of St. Luke* when he wrote: "There is no trace of any Passion mysticism, nor is any direct soteriological significance drawn from Jesus' suffering or death. There is no suggestion of a connection with the forgiveness of sins."[17] Earlier J. M. Creed in *The Gospel according to St. Luke* was even more explicit: "Most striking is the entire absence of a Pauline interpretation of the Cross. The Marcan saying concerning the death of the Son of Man as 'a ransom for many' (Mk. x. 45), and the declaration at the Last Supper that the cup is 'the blood of the Covenant poured out for many,' are absent. There is indeed no *theologia crucis* beyond the affirmation that the Christ must suffer, since so the prophetic scriptures had foretold."[18] As late as 1975, W. G. Kümmel flatly stated, "In Luke the death of Jesus neither has the character of a sacrifice nor is it understood as an atoning work."[19] Even the more conservative I. Howard Marshall affirms Luke's lack of atonement theology in his book *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, "Luke has incorporated traditions about the atoning work of the Servant; there is no evidence that he himself has positively evaluated the Servant concept in terms of redemptive suffering. . . . While Paul has used other ways of expressing the atoning significance of the death of Jesus, Luke has little to offer in this respect."[20]

Luke Was Written from the Eucharist to a Church at the Eucharist

Both Professor Malherbe as well as Joseph Fitzmyer show evidence in Luke that the evangelist does indeed have an atonement theology, but they do not approach

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[15] Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke 1–9* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 22–23.

[16] C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 25.

[17] Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke, trans*. Geoffrey Buswell (New York: Harper, 1967), 201.

[18] J. M. Creed, *The Gospel according to St Luke: The Greek Text, with Introduction, Notes, and Indices* (London: Macmillan, 1930), lxxii.

[19] W. G. Kümmel, "Current Theological Accusations against Luke," *Andover Newton Quarterly* 16 (1975), 138.

[20] I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1970), 172–173.

this question as I will—through the institution narrative of Luke's Gospel. For in their deconstruction of the atonement debate in Luke, they do not accent that Luke wrote his Gospel from the Eucharist to a church at the Eucharist. What I mean is this: Luke's Gospel is a book of the church, written for the church, to be used by the church in its proclamation of the Gospel to the unbaptized and the baptized. The community that receives Luke's Gospel is a catechetical and eucharistic body. Luke was pastor of a eucharistic community in Philippi for seven years, between the "we-sections" in Acts (Acts 16:10–17, AD 51 to Acts 20:5–21:18, AD 58). Presiding over the Eucharist and preaching from Matthew's Gospel, Luke writes his Gospel after his pastorate in Philippi out of that ecclesiological setting (around AD 58), so that the context in which Scripture is written and received is *liturgical and eucharistic*, that is, a church that worships Christ, who is present in the reading and preaching of the Word and the receiving of the body and the blood.[21]

It is also true that from Luke's prologue there are two audiences who receive Luke's Gospel. The first audience is the eyewitnesses who walked and talked with Jesus and were generally clueless about the meaning of the events they were witnessing with their own eyes. The *second audience* is the community of believers who received Luke's Gospel. These are liturgical Christians who are living in a eucharistic community. They receive and use Luke's Gospel in the context of liturgy. The difference between the first and second audiences is that Luke's eucharistic community knows the end of the story—they know that Christ has gone to the cross, risen, and ascended, and that after Pentecost he is continually present in the church through his Spirit *at the Eucharist*. Jesus' presence in his human and divine natures is just as real in his church as it was in his earthly ministry, one of the major themes of Luke's Gospel.[22]

Both Galatians and Hebrews were homilies preached in the context of the Eucharist.[23] Some commentators affirm this, that is, that the New Testament texts are liturgical and eucharistic. One of them is John Kleinig, whose hermeneutical principle for Hebrews offers this very important insight:

> The liturgical setting of this sermon [Hebrews] colors how it is heard and understood both in its original context and in its present context. So, for example, if the congregation heard the words of Christ in the Lord's Supper "this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you," this would, no doubt, have influenced how they understood the mention of "the

[21] Arthur A. Just Jr., "Luke's Canonical Criterion," *CTQ* 79 (2015): 245–250.

[22] See Just, *Luke 1:1–9:50,* 13–16.

[23] See Arthur A. Just Jr., "The Faith of Christ: A Lutheran Appropriation of Richard Hays's Proposal," *CTQ* 70 (2006): 3–15, and "Entering Holiness: Christology and Eucharist in Hebrews," *CTQ* 69, (2005): 75–95.

> new covenant" in 8:8; 9:15; 12:24; "the blood of the [new] covenant" in 10:29; "by/with the blood" in 10:19 and 13:20; and other references to the "blood" of Jesus, including "his own blood" in 9:12; "the blood of Christ" in 9:14; "the blood of sprinkling" of the "new covenant" in 12:24; and "through his blood" in 13:12.[24]

The Institution Narrative as a Lens on Atonement in Luke

So we will use Luke's institution narrative as a lens to see if Luke has an atonement theology. Almost everyone agrees that Luke is a later Gospel—after Matthew, for sure—written after Paul's missionary journeys in AD 58–59. For this reason, the same critics who claim Luke has no atonement theology also accuse him of "early Catholicism." Fitzmyer describes this designation:

> It was used to describe those elements of the early Christian community which characterize it as an ordered institution of salvation, a church with sacraments, hierarchical offices, and a tradition involving a deposit of faith. It was used to characterize the picture of the church found in early patristic writers and in the Pastoral Epistles.[25]

The accusation of "early Catholicism" is meant to be derogatory, but there is some truth that Luke writes about church matters to a church spreading throughout the world. I would like to use this claim against Luke of "early Catholicism" to turn the atonement debate on its head. As Luke is writing after Matthew and Mark to a more established church with her liturgical and eucharistic traditions more fully developed, he preserves that seminal text on the atonement in Matthew 20:28, "Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many," *in the context of his institution narrative*. Whereas Matthew and Mark refer to the atonement as the event that occurs at Calvary, Luke shows that this happens by the very body and blood of Christ given into death, which are present within Christian communities every time the Eucharist is celebrated.

Here is how he does it. First, a comparison of the institution narratives:

Matthew 26

> 26 Ἐσθιόντων δὲ αὐτῶν λαβὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἄρτον καὶ εὐλογήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ δοὺς τοῖς μαθηταῖς εἶπεν· Λάβετε φάγετε, τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου. 27 καὶ λαβὼν ποτήριον καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων· Πίετε ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες,

[24] Kleinig, *Hebrews,* 36.
[25] Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke 1–9,* 24.

28 τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον *εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν·*

Mark 14

22 Καὶ ἐσθιόντων αὐτῶν λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐλογήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς καὶ εἶπεν· Λάβετε, τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου. 23 καὶ λαβὼν ποτήριον εὐχαριστήσας ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἔπιον ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες. 24 καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν.

Luke 22

19 καὶ λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων· Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διδόμενον· τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν. 20 καὶ τὸ ποτήριον ὡσαύτως μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι, λέγων· Τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματί μου, τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐκχυννόμενον.

1 Corinthians 11

23 Ἐγὼ γὰρ παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου, ὃ καὶ παρέδωκα ὑμῖν, ὅτι ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ᾗ παρεδίδετο ἔλαβεν ἄρτον 24 καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ εἶπεν· Τοῦτό μού ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν· τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν. 25 ὡσαύτως καὶ τὸ ποτήριον μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι, λέγων· Τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι· τοῦτο ποιεῖτε, ὁσάκις ἐὰν πίνητε, εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν

Note the language after the cup in Matthew, τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, the only place in the institution narratives in the New Testament where forgiveness is referenced, and the language of Luke after both the body and the cup:

τὸ σῶμά μου τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διδόμενον[26]

Τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματί μου, τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐκχυννόμενον[27]

I. Howard Marshall notes that in Matthew "the word of interpretation over the cup states that the blood is poured out for many 'for the forgiveness of sins' (Matt. 26:28); this addition shows that Matthew understood the death of Jesus in terms of atonement for sin, but it is the only fresh indication of this fact in his Gospel"[28] (apart from the statement on atonement in Matthew 20:28).

[26] Paul is similar to Luke with his τοῦτό μού ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν.
[27] Mark is similar to Luke with his τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν.
[28] Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian,* 171.

Only Luke and Paul have the language of substitutionary atonement in the words over the bread: Jesus states that his body is given ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ("on behalf of you"). The language is reminiscent of the entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament, particularly Leviticus and the atonement offered by the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 52:13–53:12.[29] But only in Luke does Jesus use the same language of vicarious atonement over the cup as he says his blood is shed ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν. But is this prepositional phrase, ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, substitutionary atonement language?

There is almost universal agreement that it speaks of Jesus' death in substitution for us.[30] Luke T. Johnson puts it plainly in connection with the blood poured out: "For you: The sacrifice is vicarious. The phrase ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ('for you') is found in verse 19 and is repeated here; it means both 'in place of you' and even more 'in your behalf.'"[31] As you may recall, there has been much written about the shortened text of Luke's institution narrative as one of Luke's so-called "Western non-interpolations." Those who hold that Luke has no atonement theology[32] take the

[29] See Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 9:51–24:53* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 822.

[30] William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 846, classify it under "after expressions of suffering, dying, devoting oneself, etc. . . . So especially the death of Christ . . . *for, in behalf of* mankind, the world, etc.: Mk 14:24; Lk 22:19f." They also refer to the preposition's use in Galatians 1:4 in reference to the atonement, in other words, "w. gen. of the thing, in which case it must be variously translated ὑπὲρ (τῶν) ἁμαρτιῶν *in order to atone for (the) sins* or *to remove* them." H. Riesenfeld in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* vol. 8, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 508–511, places Luke 22:19–20 in the section entitled: "After terms of sacrifice or dedication ὑπέρ has the literal or transferred sense of 'for'. . . . In christological sayings ὑπέρ is used to show the thrust of the work of salvation. . . .The death and passion of Christ are for men and accrue to their favour. . . . Gal. 3:13 and 2 Cor. 5:21 are passages in which Paul develops the atoning significance of the death and passion of Jesus with the help of typological trains of thought." In connection with the use of ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν in the institution narratives of Mark and Luke, Riesenfeld notes, "The allusion to Is. 53 must have been there before the translation of the eucharistic sayings into Greek, for ὑπέρ does not occur in Is. 53:11f. in the LXX, though πολλοί does. Together with the complex symbolism of the eucharistic action the sense 'for all' interprets the death of Jesus as the saving act which is to the benefit of the people of God. . . . No matter how one may assess the direct influence of Is. 53:11f. on the self-awareness of Jesus and primitive Christian christology, the beneficial quality (ὑπέρ) of the death of someone, even in the categories of Jewish martyr theology, can be understood only against the background of the sacrificial concepts of the Old Testament. Exclusively an act of self-sacrifice, the negative fact of death can become a positive event which may produce fruitful results for others."

[31] Luke T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 339.

[32] For example, I. Howard Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 37–38, notes: "Since, it is argued, he [Luke] had an aversion to an 'atonement' theology (as, it is suggested, may be seen by comparing his version of the saying of Jesus in Mk. 10:45 in Lk. 22:27 and by noting the omission of any theology of atonement in Acts, except for the vestige in Acts 20:28), he could have deliberately omitted a reference here to Jesus' death for others." He does counter this by saying: "The argument that he wanted to avoid any reference to the atoning death of Jesus is quite unconvincing since Luke has left other references to the death of Jesus for the disciples untouched."

shorter *Verba* of Luke 22:19a: "And having taken bread, after giving thanks, he broke and gave to them, saying, 'This is my body.'" For it is in the longer text that we have both substitution phrases, ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, "on behalf of you."

> And having taken bread, after giving thanks, he broke and gave to them, saying, "This is my body. [Luke 22:19a]
>
> which is being given on behalf of you (ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν); this do in my remembrance."
>
> And the cup, likewise, after the eating of the meal, saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is being poured out on behalf of you (ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν)." [Luke 19:b–20]

But Xavier Léon-Dufour counters those who take the shortened text by offering the following summary of the atoning significance of ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν in Luke 22, for he assumes the longer text is original:

> In the Antiochene tradition [Paul and Luke] the body is immediately described as being "for you." The critics are almost unanimous in understanding the words "for you" in light of the cultic model of expiation. That is: in speaking as he does, Jesus is presenting himself as the one who in dying offers God the true expiatory sacrifice by which human beings are really reconciled with God.[33]

Luke's References to the Death of Jesus in His Institution Narrative

What is also overlooked is that the theological meaning of the entire passion account is announced by the simple words, "Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which it was necessary that the Passover lamb be sacrificed" (Luke 22:7) (Ἦλθεν δὲ ἡ ἡμέρα τῶν ἀζύμων, ἐν ᾗ ἔδει θύεσθαι τὸ πάσχα). The narrative concerns two distinct yet related parallel events taking place simultaneously: a celebration of the Passover according to the old covenant (Exodus 12) and the institution of a new covenant to be commemorated by a new Meal, as Jesus will say: "This cup [is] the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20). The hearer must keep both in mind as the narrative progresses. On the one hand, the evangelist is introducing the day on which the Passover lamb was sacrificed in the temple, reporting those things that would happen on an ordinary Passover. The feast has arrived (22:1), the Passover

[33] Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament,* trans. M. J. O'Connell (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 120–121. However, Léon-Dufour, 123, shows that he does not agree with this. His disagreement is not that he does not think it is expiatory, but rather, that the accent is on Jesus "becoming their food and giving them life through himself. . . . The words are doubtless spoken with death on the horizon, but the death is a saving death. It is life, therefore, that provides the controlling perspective."

lamb must be slain (22:7), and the Passover meal must be prepared and eaten (22:8–13) by God's faithful people. By hearing the narrative with this in mind, the hearer approaches the three days—the Triduum—from the perspective of the disciples, who probably expected another Passover like those they had celebrated in previous years.

On the other hand, Luke points to Jesus' death as the sacrificial Passover lamb who fulfills and renders obsolete the sacrifices of the Old Testament. This is the deeper and more important message of the narrative. *This* Feast of Unleavened Bread will be like no other. It falls on the day of Jesus' passion. The Passover lamb whose blood atones for all is Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

The disciples prepared for this meal with expectations of celebrating another Passover with its fixed ritual of remembering God's gracious deliverance from Egypt. But what the disciples experienced on this night in which Jesus was betrayed was not another Jewish Passover, but *Jesus' Passover,* in which he took the fixed ritual of the Passover Seder and gave everything in this meal new meaning. He gave it *christological* meaning, as he interpreted the food at the meal, the story of the exodus, the broken bread, and the cup of blessing *in terms of himself.* He took the old Passover meaning, and he made it *his* meal by instituting a new meal that supersedes all previous meals of God's table fellowship. Jesus is the Passover Lamb the people will now eat in, with, and under bread and wine!

This is *Jesus' Passover* because on this night, the Lamb who must be sacrificed stands on the threshold of the new era of salvation. The old has passed away and the new has come. After this Passover, *Jesus' Passover,* there will be no more need for the Jews to celebrate the Passover because as Paul says, "Christ, *our* Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" (καὶ γὰρ τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ἐτύθη Χριστός—1 Cor 5:7). In Christ, the world has passed over from death to life, and his life-giving flesh is now offered to Christians continually in this new Meal of his body and blood. This is the Passover for which all the previous Passovers were preparation and anticipation and the Passover whose sacrifice will be remembered and sung for all eternity: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain" (Rev 5:12).[34]

Luke also uniquely frames the Last Supper with two references to the death of Jesus: in 22:15, where Jesus says he desired to eat the Passover with the disciples "before I suffer" (καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς· Ἐπιθυμίᾳ ἐπεθύμησα τοῦτο τὸ πάσχα φαγεῖν μεθ' ὑμῶν πρὸ τοῦ με παθεῖν), and in 22:37, where Jesus quotes Isaiah 53:12 to refer to his impending death: "And with transgressors he was reckoned" (Καὶ μετὰ ἀνόμων ἐλογίσθη). All of these are predictions of Jesus' death. Jesus begins the meal

[34] See Just, *Luke 9:51–24:53,* 817–818.

by expressing his knowledge that he must die soon and ends the meal by pointing to the necessity of that death as fulfillment of the Scripture.[35]

So at Luke's Last Supper, Jesus is teaching about himself as the sacrificial Passover Lamb in fulfillment of the Old Testament—the final fulfillment of the exodus deliverance (cf. "exodus" in Luke 9:31). Jesus' impending death signals the beginning of the new, eschatological era of salvation. By stating that the bread is his body "which is being *given on behalf of you*" (22:19) and the cup is the new testament in his blood, *poured out on behalf of you*, Jesus is interpreting the Passover meal as a prophecy of what he will do on the cross, which will then be applied to believers in the church's celebration of his Supper. Those Israelites who ate the first Passover, with the blood of the lamb smeared on their doorways, were in fact spared from God's judgment and his wrath; they then shared in the exodus deliverance from bondage. Those who now feast at the Table of the Lord receive the benefits earned by his crucified body and shed blood: with his body and blood they also receive deliverance from divine wrath, freedom from bondage to evil, and safe passage to the new promised land (cf. Hebrews 4).[36] What they do is participate in the benefits of the atonement in "the body and blood of Christ Jesus, once offered on the altar of the cross as the full and only atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world and [now] given us on this altar to eat and drink."[37]

The Pastoral Character of "Given for You" and "Poured out for You"

Returning to the four institution narratives above, in connection with the cup Matthew and Mark use the word πολλῶν instead of Luke's ὑμῶν (Matt 26:28, τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον; Mark 14:24, τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν).[38] Whereas Matthew and Mark accent the universal atonement, consistent with their atonement saying that "the Son of Man came . . . to give his life as a ransom *for many*" (ἀντὶ πολλῶν), Luke makes it personal—"for you" (ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν), for the disciples and transforms it into a liturgical statement that brings the universal atonement into the mouths of the disciples and us. Joachim Jeremias affirms this, "The ὑμῶν acts so that

[35] Luke is the only evangelist who frames the Triduum with meals, beginning the three days with Jesus' Passover, the final meal of the old era of salvation and the institution of a new meal, and the Emmaus meal, where Jesus now eats and drinks this new meal with his disciples in the kingdom of God.

[36] See Just, *Luke 9:51–24:53,* 832.

[37] *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*, 272–273.

[38] On the atonement character of this phrase, περὶ πολλῶν, see Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1966), 226–231. See also David P. Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew: Jesus Teaches the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004).

each of the worshippers knows himself personally addressed by the Lord. The word of interpretation becomes a formula of distribution."[39]

And is this not the Lutheran way? Do we not say, "The body of Christ, given *for you* . . . The blood of Christ, shed *for you*"? For me, this is one of the most pastoral moments in the liturgy, in the ministry, where I am placing the body and blood of Christ into the mouths of the saints, and *they are at that moment participating in the benefits of the atonement of Christ.*[40]

So this exegesis of ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν in Luke's institution narrative was intended to show that he does have an atonement theology but in a different way than Matthew and Mark's statement that "the Son of Man came . . . to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28—δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν). Luke has taken the objective, historical event of atonement and placed that atonement in the mouths of his communicants.

Διακονία in the Lukan Dialogues following His Institution Narrative

So returning to the atonement statement in Matthew and Mark, where in Luke is the language of service? Only Luke preserves five dialogues of pastoral theology between Jesus and his disciples immediately following his institution narrative. It is the second dialogue in Luke 22:24–27 where an argument breaks out among the disciples over who is greatest and Jesus then calls them to humble service.

24 Ἐγένετο δὲ καὶ φιλονεικία ἐν αὐτοῖς, τὸ τίς αὐτῶν δοκεῖ εἶναι μείζων.

25 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· Οἱ βασιλεῖς τῶν ἐθνῶν κυριεύουσιν αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ ἐξουσιάζοντες αὐτῶν εὐεργέται καλοῦνται.

26 ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐχ οὕτως, ἀλλ' ὁ μείζων ἐν ὑμῖν γινέσθω ὡς ὁ νεώτερος, καὶ ὁ ἡγούμενος ὡς ὁ διακονῶν·

27 τίς γὰρ μείζων, ὁ ἀνακείμενος ἢ ὁ διακονῶν; οὐχὶ ὁ ἀνακείμενος; *ἐγὼ δὲ ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν εἰμι* ὡς ὁ διακονῶν.

24 And an argument also happened among them—the issue of who of them seems to be greatest.

25 But he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those exercising authority over them are called benefactors.

26 You are not thus. But let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the one who serves.

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[39] Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus,* 172–173.
[40] See LC V 33–35.

> 27 For who is greater, the one who reclines [at table] or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines? *But I am in the midst of you* as the one who serves.

"Service," διακονία, in imitation of Christ who served humanity to the point of death, will be a mark of the ministry of the apostles. Here is the parallel to the language of διακονία in Matthew and Mark where Jesus says that "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve" (Matt 20:28—ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἦλθεν διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι). Incredibly, immediately following Jesus' giving of himself to his disciples in body broken and blood poured out, the disciples are arguing among themselves about who is greatest. They have not grasped what Jesus has said and what he is about to do.

Even at this critical moment of Jesus' final teaching before his betrayal, the disciples misunderstand the nature of Jesus' destiny in Jerusalem and their calling as heirs of his ministry. Jesus responds to their dispute by speaking of greatness in the kingdom of God in terms of service—*table* service: "For who is greater, the one who reclines [at table] or the one who serves?" (Luke 22:27: τίς γὰρ μείζων, ὁ ἀνακείμενος ἢ ὁ διακονῶν;). Jesus ties this teaching to his presence and ministry in their midst as the great "I AM" of the Old Testament: "I am in the midst of you [ἐγὼ δὲ ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν εἰμι] as the one who serves" (22:27). The one who gives his body in bread and his blood in the cup of the new testament *for you* (ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν) reiterates that his atoning presence as servant will be always in their midst. Jesus' language here and in the rest of the passion is part of Luke's vocabulary for the real presence of Jesus. Jesus will continue to be present in the midst of his church through the Eucharist, serving his disciples as they dine at their Lord's Supper.[41]

Luke, then, takes the atonement saying in Matthew and Mark and makes it eucharistic. He goes from the universal to the particular, from the many to the one, showing that what happened on Good Friday is applied to the believer at every eucharistic repast.[42]

"The New Testament in My Blood"

In Luke, Jesus calls the cup "the new testament in my blood" (ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι), whereas in Matthew and Mark, Jesus' words are phrased so that the cup "is my blood of the covenant/testament" (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης). Both wordings reflect Exodus 24:8, with Matthew and Mark closest to the language of the LXX: τὸ αἷμά τῆς διαθήκης, "the blood of the covenant."

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[41] See Just, *Luke 9:51–24:53,* 844–847.

[42] Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 10.

Exodus 24 narrates the ratification of the old/first covenant. In an unusual rite, Moses sprinkled half the blood of the sacrificed offerings on the people. The application of blood formally brought them into the covenant and made them beneficiaries of God's covenant promises. The covenant was then sealed when Moses and the elders ascended Sinai and "ate and drank" a sacred meal in the presence of God (Exod 24:11). The parallels to the Last Supper are clear. The blood of the new covenant is applied to those who drink it in the cup. They are brought into the covenant and receive all its benefits made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus. The new sacred meal, too, is in the presence of God, since God incarnate is the host and he gives his body and blood with the bread and wine.

Luke stresses the "new" testament. "New" is unique to Luke among the Synoptics (and 1 Cor 11:25) and alludes to the promise of a new covenant in passages such as Isaiah 42:9–10; 43:18–21; 55:3; 61:8; and Jeremiah 31:31–34, which Jesus fulfills by the shedding of his blood so that sins may be remembered no more. The theme of forgiveness, which recurs throughout these prophetic passages (notably Jer 31:34), is made explicit in Matthew 26:28, where Jesus says his blood in the cup is shed "for the forgiveness of sins." The phrasing in Luke accents the cup[43]—literally, "this the *cup*"—whereas Matthew and Mark have only "this," whose antecedent is the cup, but the accent falls on the *blood* of Jesus shed to create the covenant: "this is *my blood* of the covenant/testament" (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24). The Lukan accent on the cup may stress the unity of those who partake of the (one) cup, as St. Paul emphasizes in 1 Corinthians 10:16–17 with regard to the *one loaf.*[44] In Luke, Jesus' words over the cup include the same prepositional phrase he used over the bread as he repeats the substitutionary language of vicarious atonement: "on behalf of you" (ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν). "Being poured out" (ἐκχυννόμενον; *present* participle) suggests both the pouring from a cup and the blood that pours from the body of Jesus on the cross (cf. Ps 22:14–15 [MT 22:15–16]).

Considered as a whole, Luke 22:20 emphasizes the connection between the death of Christ and the meal. The whole meal is concluded with these words: "This

[43] On the differences regarding the cup between Matthew and Mark on one hand and Luke on the other, see Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 137–156, and James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1977), 166–167.

[44] The single cup emphasized by Luke should be reflected in church practice. Bread is the food that comes by the sweat of people's brow after the fall into sin (Gen 3:19). The broken bread in the Lord's Supper bears Christ's body, "broken" in the sense of "pierced" and "crushed," with his bones "separated" but not "broken" in death (Isa 53:5, 10; Zech 12:10; Ps 22:14–17 [MT 22:15–18]; John 19:36). Wine is the eschatological drink of heaven that gladdens the heart and declares the presence of the bridegroom at the feast (Luke 5:33–39; cf. John 2:1–11). The shed blood of Jesus drunk from the cup proclaims that the community is now restored and united from its brokenness through Christ's blood.

cup is the new testament in my blood, which is being poured out on behalf of you."[45] God's plan demanded that God's righteous Messiah shed his innocent blood. Jesus fulfills all the many bloody sacrifices of the Old Testament, including "the blood of the [first] covenant," which was poured out or sprinkled on the people (Exod 24:6–8; cf. Isa 52:15, which says the Suffering Servant "will sprinkle many nations"). Jesus completes the long line of suffering prophets who shed their blood in Jerusalem. Yet his suffering and death begin the martyrdom of New Testament apostles.[46]

Jesus says that his disciples are partakers of and beneficiaries of the new testament in his blood as they partake of the cup and thereby drink his blood. The drinking of blood was an extreme offense to the Jews, but through it Christ's death becomes the disciples' life.[47] To accept the cup and drink it is to accept Jesus' suffering and death as the atoning sacrifice for one's sins. To refuse to recognize Christ's body and blood in the Supper is to court condemnation (1 Cor 11:27–30). Christ's suffering and death is the only means to glory—in accord with the interpretation that Jesus gives of his death and resurrection in Luke 24:26: "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into his glory?" As the church now partakes of Christ in the Sacrament of his body and blood, it is bound together as the new creation, the body of Christ. The words over the cup bring the action at the meal to a close by focusing on the death of Jesus—the very topic of the following five dialogues of Jesus with his disciples at the table (22:21–38).[48]

In a longer essay, we could now trace the atonement theme from the beginning of Luke's Gospel when Zechariah is offering the atonement sacrifice in the Holy Place (1:5–25); the atonement language in the Benedictus (1:68—ἐποίησεν λύτρωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ); the shedding of Jesus' blood in his circumcision (2:21); the sacrificial language of the fattened calf in the parable of the prodigal son (θύω—15:23, 27, 30); the atonement language in the parable of the Pharisee and publican (ἱλάσθητί μοι τῷ ἁμαρτωλῷ—18:13); and the language of atonement in the Emmaus story (λυτροῦσθαι τὸν Ἰσραήλ—24:21).

The evangelist Luke shows how Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, looks forward to the moment of his atonement for sins on the cross *on our behalf* and already here in this meal gives his body *for you* and pours out his blood *for you.*

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[45] For a full interpretation of these words, see Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus,* 218–237, and Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread,* 137–156.

[46] Cf. Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread,* 143, 151, 153–154.

[47] Gillian Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table: Eucharist and Passover in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 145–146, relates the drinking of the cup to the kinship laws: "By drinking the wine that is the blood, the participant 'cuts himself off from his kin' exactly as the law requires (Leviticus 7:27, 17:10–14). But by drinking 'the life of the flesh' (Leviticus 17:11), he acquires that life. The separation from kin that is synonymous with death is only the prelude to eternal life in Jesus Christ."

[48] See Just, *Luke 9:51–24:53,* 835–837.

Luke not only has an atonement theology, but his appropriation of the great atonement passage in Matthew and Mark affirms that at our altars "we receive the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the altar of the cross,"[49] so that "the body and blood of Christ Jesus, once offered on the altar of the cross as the full and only atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world and given us on this altar to eat and drink, will nourish and strengthen us until at the last we gather at the heavenly banquet to feast with the Lamb and all his saints."[50]

[49] *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*, 272.
[50] *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*, 272–273.

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Penal Substitutionary Atonement?

Walter A. Maier III

I. Introduction[1]

With regard to the saving work of Jesus Christ, the teaching that had been imparted to me since childhood could be summarized by the phrase "penal substitutionary atonement." Not that those words were actually used when I was a boy, because they would have been too difficult for me to understand. But the phrase captures the essence of what I was taught: that Jesus, for me and for all people, not only lived a perfect life, keeping all of God's commandments, but he also took upon himself the sins of the world and paid fully for those trespasses with his suffering, and with his death, on a cross. In other words, Jesus took our place; as our substitute, he endured the penalty we transgressors deserved, and so made possible our forgiveness and salvation.

However, through discussions carried on by the exegetical department of this seminary, I became aware of another position regarding the saving work of Christ. This position has a different explanation and is opposed to the concept of penal substitutionary atonement. It has had, I learned, some influence in the Christian Church, even among a number of Lutherans. In large measure because of this alternative position and its influence, the exegetical department chose the theme "The Cross, the Atonement, and the Wrath of God" for the 2020 symposium.

The topic of this particular study was chosen to discuss the other viewpoint and offer a response. In order to do so, my focus fell on Gerhard O. Forde, a leading proponent of the alternative position. Forde, who lived from 1927 to 2005, taught as professor of systematic theology at Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. Following will be a review and summary of much of what Forde taught as derived from his writings (especially from his "The Work of Christ"[2] and *Where God Meets Man*[3]), then a brief general response to Forde's understanding of

[1] This article is a slight revision of a paper given at the Exegetical Symposium of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, on January 21, 2020. All translations from Scripture are my own.

[2] Gerhard Forde, "The Work of Christ," in *Christian Dogmatics* 2 vols., ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 2:3–99.

[3] Gerhard Forde, *Where God Meets Man: Luther's Down-to-Earth Approach to the Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972).

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the atonement, and then a response based on specific passages of the Old Testament. From what I could determine in my examination of Forde, he did not much refer to the Old Testament, and yet that portion of Scripture contains crucial truths with regard to the nature of the atonement, and is in addition the lens through which the New Testament must be studied and interpreted.

II. A Review and Summary of Much of What Forde Taught

Forde explains that unconverted man, under the power of unbelief, stands opposed to God's grace and is in bondage to a system of works-righteousness, namely, believing that a person has to earn salvation.[4] God wants to be merciful, but natural man, alienated from and setting himself up against God, rejects God's mercy.[5] This aroused the wrath of God, which in essence was God making himself absent, or hidden, from human beings.[6] To overcome this impasse, God became man and came to us, to be present for us. God came in Christ. God had to come this way to save us, to have mercy, and to show his mercy.[7]

So Christ came, preaching forgiveness and unilaterally forgiving sins, that is, forgiving without any so-called "payment" having been made for them. According to Forde, "we" —"we" being natural, unconverted man—would not have this. So we works-righteous legalists killed Christ. Christ was put to death because he simply forgave sins; it was not for our sins, in order to make forgiveness possible. We regarded what Christ did as wrong, and in this way, as Paul writes, he was made "to be sin for us" (2 Cor 5:21). Christ bore our sins in his body, not in a substitutionary sense, but in this physical manner: we sinned and beat his body, spit on it, crowned his head with thorns, and put nails through his hands and feet.[8]

Thus Forde can liken Christ's death to an accident. He uses this analogy: "A child is playing in the street. A truck is bearing down on the child. A man casts himself in the path of the truck, saves the child, but is himself killed in the process. It is an accident."[9] The death of the man could be called a sacrifice—he gave his life for another. Comparing this example to the spiritual reality, we are the ones driving the truck of legalism. Christ, to save us, put himself in the way of the truck. So his death was a sacrifice; it was for us, but not in the sense of substitutionary atonement.

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[4] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 58, 69, 81. See also Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 9; Gerhard Forde, *A More Radical Gospel*, ed. Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 221–222. In this and following footnotes, the citations of Forde are not exhaustive but constitute representative examples.

[5] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 58, 91.

[6] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 58, 73. Cf. *A More Radical Gospel*, 95.

[7] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 67, 72, 73.

[8] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 79, 80–81, 90–92; *A More Radical Gospel*, 91–93, 96.

[9] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 88.

He died because we by nature are bound to works-righteousness. He did not die for our sins, to pay the penalty for our transgressions.[10]

Forde explains that Christ's death saves in part because it reveals our sin of rejecting the merciful God and his mercy and grace. Christ's sacrifice unmasks our bondage to legalism. At the same time, the death of Jesus reveals God's mercy, love, and grace.[11]

The resurrection vindicates Christ and his message and his exercise of unilateral forgiveness. Thus he can really say, "I forgive you." In that sense, Jesus has won forgiveness for us.[12]

God creates in us faith in the event of the cross and the empty tomb. In this way, God makes us new people. God is satisfied when we believe and trust in him as the God who has and shows mercy. Such faith lets God be God (and not ourselves), fulfills the law, and makes us pleasing to God.[13]

We would all agree with Forde's assertion that natural man is under bondage to belief in works-righteousness. In some areas, Forde seemingly comes close to the traditional Lutheran understanding and formulation regarding salvation. Other aspects of Forde's position, while unique, might at first glance seem unobjectionable. But he is actually investing certain phrases with new meaning, and in the end denies penal substitutionary atonement.

Forde asks, "Why cannot God just pardon, without any payment involving atonement for sin and fulfillment of the law? Why cannot God unilaterally forgive, as we do?"[14] On the other hand, Forde raises the question, "If God has been paid and thus is satisfied, how is that mercy?"[15] Mercy, according to Forde, is relenting from judgment, not a pardon resulting from the fulfillment of judgment.[16]

Forde also asks, "Why should God pay God? Why must God's justice be satisfied before he can be merciful?" Forde responds by writing that divine love is a love that does not need to be bought off. The crucifixion takes place not to make God merciful but because God is merciful and desires to be so concretely for us. The

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[10] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 88–89.

[11] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 67–69, 90.

[12] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 92; *A More Radical Gospel*, 100.

[13] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 50–51, 58, 75–76, 95, 97; cf. 70; *Where God Meets Man*, 38–40, 56–57; *A More Radical Gospel*, 97.

[14] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 21, 23; *A More Radical Gospel*, 90–91.

[15] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 22–23. See also *A More Radical Gospel*, 87.

[16] This phrase is taken from Jack D. Kilcrease, *The Doctrine of Atonement: From Luther to Forde* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 141. Forde writes (*Where God Meets Man*, 12): "If God has been paid, how can one say that he really forgives? If a debt is paid, one can hardly say it is forgiven. Nor could one call God's action mercy."

cross is the price of God remaining a God of mercy, a price paid by God, but not to God.[17]

Forde states that if penal substitutionary atonement is necessary, this makes God into "a kind of celestial and eternal bookkeeper"[18] and "a vindictive tyrant."[19] It restricts the freedom of God (again, why can he not just forgive unilaterally?).[20] Forde believes the demand for innocent blood is cruel, and leads to a gruesome and forbidding picture of the deity.[21] He wonders why God should find the death of the Son so acceptable,[22] and even thinks that "if Jesus' death had been merely a payment to God he would not have done enough."[23] Forde, agreeing with the Socinians, writes, "How can the suffering of one man outweigh the punishment due the whole race? The sufferings of Jesus are finite, not eternal. What was demanded was eternal death, but Jesus was dead only three days."[24]

Another objection Forde has to penal substitutionary atonement deals with the resurrection of Christ. If one says that God must be satisfied, then, according to Forde, "everything depends on Jesus' punishment and death *but not on the resurrection*. There is no need for a resurrection really—one could just as well say that the Son of God suffered and was killed to pay the debt and that's all there is to that. What need is there for anything more?"[25]

According to Forde, another weakness of penal substitutionary atonement, and the final one presented here, is its real Achilles' heel. This is the idea of substitution. He explains: "The transfer of someone else's sin to the innocent is absurd and improper, just as in reverse the transfer of someone else's righteousness to the unrighteous."[26] He questions "how the suffering and obedience of one can be transferred to another."[27]

III. A Brief General Response to Forde

While Forde has much to say about the mercy, grace, and love of God, that is not the case with regard to God's holiness, righteousness, and justice. Forde, it seems, does not like and/or accept all of the teaching of Scripture about God, but in

[17] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 23, 25, 72–75, 81–82; *Where God Meets Man*, 11, 37.
[18] Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 36.
[19] Forde, *A More Radical Gospel*, 103.
[20] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 24.
[21] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 23–24.
[22] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 23.
[23] Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 42. See also p. 12.
[24] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 24.
[25] Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 38.
[26] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 24.
[27] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 25.

a selective manner holds to portions of God's Word. He wants a God who conforms to Forde's preconceived notions of what God should be, and not the God presented by the entirety of Holy Writ. God being holy, righteous, and just, besides being merciful, gracious, and loving, is not a fault or a wrong on the part of God, or an embarrassment to the believer. That is simply the way God is, as taught by Scripture. We are to hold to the whole counsel of God's Word, not parts of it. Forde's emphasizing some attributes or characteristics of God and his greatly downplaying of others results in a distorted picture of God, which does not benefit the church.

Thus, Forde does not have a proper balance between God's mercy, grace, and love on the one hand, and his holiness, righteousness, and justice on the other. This latter set of divine attributes cannot be left out of a discussion concerning man's sin, despite what Forde might prefer. God had to be "true to himself"[28]; God had to be God. In his holiness, righteousness, and justice, God could not just ignore sin or unilaterally forgive the trespasses of mankind. Something had to be done to satisfy, to meet the demands of, to take away the offense to, those attributes of God. We must recognize this, and to use phraseology from Forde, "let God be God."[29]

Forde attempts to bolster his teaching concerning God by using crass terms to portray the concept of penal substitutionary atonement. In so doing, he is denigrating that doctrine. For example, Forde does not speak of God as holy, righteous, and just but rather, as mentioned previously, as "a kind of celestial and eternal bookkeeper" and "a vindictive tyrant." It is not redemption but a matter of God being bought off. It is not justice, righteousness, and holiness that demands innocent blood but cruelty. According to Forde, the necessity of vicarious satisfaction through the shedding of blood does not lead to a recognition of God's justice, righteousness, and holiness but to a gruesome and forbidding picture of the deity.

Forde wonders how, if the judgment has been carried out, one can speak of mercy, since mercy is relenting from judgment. He does not mention that mercy is indeed associated with penal substitutionary atonement because God did not execute the judgment on us, but on his Son, Jesus Christ.

Forde asks incorrectly, "Why must God's justice be satisfied before he can be merciful?" Mercy is an attribute of God, with him from eternity, long before the crucifixion. Because of his mercy, and grace and love, God sent his Son to die for the world.

In his antagonism to penal substitutionary atonement, Forde questions why God should find the death of the Son so acceptable, and he even doubts that the

[28] This phraseology is borrowed from Forde, "The Work of Christ," 75.
[29] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 76.

suffering and death of Jesus were enough to pay for the sins of the whole world. What Forde chooses not to bring into the discussion is the teaching throughout Scripture that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, offered up the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice, namely, himself. That is why his death is so acceptable. Christ could atone for all the transgressions of humanity because he was not only man, but also God. Because God was involved, redemption is complete and universal. Forde acknowledges that this is the teaching of classical Lutheranism, but apparently he rejects it. For example, he writes:

> Can the suffering and death of one man atone for the sins of the whole world? . . . The usual answer is to say that because he is divine, his sufferings have infinite worth. But that is only a further theory which complicates rather than solves matters. For instance, can the divine suffer? According to the old dogmatics divinity and suffering were mutually exclusive. Or if it can, why is his *death* necessary? After all, if all his sufferings have infinite worth, one would think that the beating and the crown of thorns would have satisfied God![30]

Forde exhibits a weak or shallow Christology with his question concerning divinity and suffering, and thus his implying that Christ could not have atoned for the sin of the whole world. We do not divide the person of Christ. He was, is, and remains to all eternity God and man in one indivisible person. Both natures constitute only one person.

On the one hand, it is correct to say that God cannot suffer and die. On the other hand, since the divinity and humanity are one person in Christ, and that *person* suffered and died, it is correct to say that the Son of God suffered and died. Thus Christ's passive obedience has "infinite worth." Christ is our Redeemer according to both his human and his divine nature. The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration (VIII 44–45; K-W, 624:44–45) states:

> Likewise, Dr. Luther wrote in *On the Councils and the Church*, "We Christians should know that if God is not in the scale to give it weight, we, on our side, sink to the ground. I mean it this way: if it cannot be said that God died for us, but only a man, we are lost; but if God's death and a dead God lie in the balance, his side goes down and ours goes up like a light and empty scale . . . But he could not sit on the scale unless he had become a human being like us, so that it could be called God's dying, God's martyrdom, God's blood, and God's death. For God in his own nature cannot die; but now that God and man are united in one person, it is called God's death when the man dies who is one substance or one person with God." From this it is evident that it is incorrect to say or write that these expressions, "God suffered," "God died," are simply

[30] Forde, *Where God Meets Man,* 12.

> *praedicatio verbalis* (that is, simply mere words), which are not in fact true. For our simple Christian creed demonstrates that the Son of God, who became human, suffered for us, died for us, and redeemed us with his blood.[31]

Regarding the necessity of the death of Christ, the message throughout the Old and New Testament is that the redemption of the world required the supreme, ultimate sacrifice: the death of the Substitute/Redeemer. Concerning the Old Testament, this message was made explicit with the animal offering of Abel (Gen 4:4; Heb 11:4) and continued to be proclaimed with the blood sacrifices of the patriarchs and of the Israelite cultic system formalized at Mount Sinai (see below). This was the message of the prophets: for example, Isaiah 52:13–53:12 (see below). The New Testament states, "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23).[32]

Forde wrongly objects that penal substitutionary atonement minimizes the importance of the resurrection and, in fact, really makes it unnecessary. The resurrection proved these three realities. First, Christ had paid fully the penalty for the sins of all people. Second, his self-sacrifice for the world's trespasses totally satisfied the holiness, justice, and righteousness of God. Third, Jesus was the victor, and not sin, death, and the devil. These statements could not be proclaimed as the truth if Jesus had remained in the tomb. If he had, the opposite of those statements would be the reality (1 Cor 15:17–19).

Though Forde regards the idea of substitution and transferal as absurd, that, nevertheless, is what both the Old Testament and New Testament teach. The next portion of this study will discuss representative Old Testament passages that put forth this teaching. What counts is not Forde's opinion concerning propriety but God's chosen method, which he makes known in Scripture.

IV. Relevant Old Testament Passages

The First Gospel Announcement

Forde asks in rhetorical fashion why God cannot just forgive, as we do. The implication is that this is indeed the way God operates. The king in the parable (Matt 18:23–34) forgave his servant the debt of millions of dollars without a cent being

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[31] See also FC Ep III 3 (K-W, 495:3); FC SD III 4 (K-W, 562:4), 55–56 (K-W, 572:55–56), 58 (K-W, 572–573:58). Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles Arand, et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

[32] See also AC (German) XXIV 25 (K-W, 70:25); AC (Latin) XXIV 24–27 (K-W, 71:24–27); Ap XII 140 (K-W, 211:140) and 147 (K-W, 212:147); XXIV 22–24 (K-W, 261–262:22–24) and 53 (K-W, 268:53).

repaid, and we forgive our debtors without demanding repayment. According to Forde, God acts in the same way. Therefore the concept of penal substitutionary atonement is unnecessary and should be discarded.

Forde makes the fundamental error of equating God's forgiving with our forgiving, of making them the same. But they are not. The point of comparison of the parable is that as the king forgave, so are we to forgive, with no strings attached. Many think that the king stands for God, but that is only partly correct. Yes, God forgives, and so we also are to forgive. Yes, the debt God has forgiven each one of us is huge, enormous; next to that, anything we forgive is minute. But the comparison is taken too far if one would say that God forgives us without any payment having been made. That is how *we* are to forgive, but again, do not make our forgiving the same as God's forgiving. Payment has been made to God for every single sin of the human race. Forgiveness by God means that he does not hold *us* accountable for the debt, he does not charge *us* with sin. But God has laid that debt on someone else, held that person accountable. Of course, that person is Jesus Christ, who has rendered full payment for our debt.

Behind every act and pronouncement of forgiveness by God in Scripture lies Genesis 3:15, the first gospel announcement. During the Old Testament era, God always forgave in view of the coming deliverer promised in that verse, who would be wounded, even unto death, to atone for the trespasses of Adam and Eve and their sinful descendants. During the New Testament era, God forgives because the promised Seed has come and carried out his redeeming work.

The Substitutionary Sacrifice

Genesis 22 clearly shows that substitutionary sacrifice was God's plan for humanity and acceptable to him. God put Abraham to the test by telling him to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham, obedient to the Lord, was about to slay his son, but at the last moment the Angel of the Lord stopped him from doing this. Genesis 22:13 recounts how Abraham, looking up and seeing a ram caught by its horns in a thicket, took the ram and offered it up "instead of" (Hebrew תַּחַת) his son. The ram was a substitute for Isaac, and this vicarious sacrifice foreshadowed both the Mosaic sacrificial legislation and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ instead of, in the place of, all people. Walter Kaiser comments concerning Genesis 22:

> Thus the principle of vicariousness is brought into play: one life takes the place of another. Accordingly, Abraham is asked by God to offer life, the life that is dearest to him, his only son's. But in the provision of God, a ram caught in the thicket is interposed by the angel of the Lord, thus pointing out that the

substitution of one life for another is indeed acceptable to God and that is what relieves us from sacrificing average sinful life.[33]

The Sacrificial System

The Old Testament sacrificial system revealed the Lord as holy, just, and righteous, but also as a God of grace, mercy, and love. These sacrifices showed God's plan and activity to deliver sinful humans from their transgressions.[34]

The key verb associated with the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, which appears forty-nine times in the book of Leviticus alone, is the Hebrew כָּפַר (occurring mainly in the Piel). In the context of sacrifice, it is usually translated as "make atonement" and has the basic sense "to be/stand between." A sacrifice "stood between" the holy God, who hates sin, and a sinful person or sinful persons. The guilty sinner deserved the penalty of death from the righteous, just God. However, that penalty instead figuratively fell on the sacrificial victim—whether a lamb, ram, goat, bull, dove, or pigeon—which was put to death *instead of*, as a *substitute for*, the sinner. The innocent, so to speak, died in place of the guilty (cf. 2 Cor 5:21). Symbolically, God's justice was carried out on the sacrifice and thereby satisfied, and thus the sinner was spared death and, in fact, had forgiveness. This basic concept of the sacrifice "being/standing between" with the corresponding result can be rendered by the English verb "atone (for)" and the related noun, "atonement." In Leviticus, the repeated clause, after a description of a sacrifice for a person or persons who had committed sin, is that, in this way, "the priest will atone for him/them, and he/they will be forgiven" (e.g., Lev 4:20, 26, 31; 5:10, 13; 19:22).[35]

This institution of atoning sacrifice foreshadowed the substitutionary sacrificial work of Christ (1 John 2:2). The sacrificial directives, though formally recorded and presented in detail in the Mosaic law, had their roots in Genesis 3:15. In that passage, which presents the Seed of the woman being wounded in his victorious struggle with Satan, the principle of substitutionary sacrifice originates. The promised Savior would be wounded unto death, for that is the penalty required by the world's sin. Yet as a man will recover from a heel wound, so the deliverer would recover from his wound, that is, be raised to life again.[36]

Features of the various animal sacrifices revealed God's holiness, righteousness, and justice; but also his grace, mercy, and love; and his work or activity on behalf of

[33] Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Hard Sayings of the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 55–56.

[34] Walter A. Maier III, *1 Kings 1–11* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018), 638.

[35] Maier, *1 Kings 1–11*, 638.

[36] Maier, *1 Kings 1–11*, 639.

sinful people for their salvation. A cumulative listing of certain features highlights their christological aspects, how they foreshadowed the atoning work of the coming Savior.[37] First, an animal with a defect could not be offered (e.g., Lev 22:17–25; Deut 15:21; Mal 1:8). Only the perfect deliverer could bear the sins of others (1 Pet 1:19). Second, with the burnt, sin, and fellowship (or peace) offerings, the one bringing the animal for sacrifice was specifically directed to place his hand on the head of the animal. Following are representative verses (cf. Lev 8:18, 22):

> Leviticus 1:4—"He will lay his hand on the head of the whole burnt offering and it will be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf."
>
> Leviticus 3:2—"He shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and he shall slaughter it at the entrance of the tent of meeting."
>
> Leviticus 4:4—"He shall bring the bull to the entrance of the tent of meeting before Yahweh and he shall lay his hand on the head of the bull. Then he shall slaughter the bull before Yahweh."
>
> Leviticus 4:15—"The elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before Yahweh. Then one shall slaughter the bull before Yahweh."

John Kleinig explains concerning Leviticus 1:4,

> After the person who brought the animal for sacrifice had offered it [presented it] to the Lord, he laid his right hand on the head of the animal. He thereby presented it as his legal possession and part of his own household so that he and his family would gain the Lord's acceptance by its acceptance. The person who laid his hand on the animal was the ritual beneficiary of the sacrifice.[38]

Moreover, the hand-laying made it plain that the animal was offered up in the stead of the person, as a substitution.[39] Atonement was achieved through this substitutionary sacrifice. It could be suggested that the hand-laying also symbolized, at least with some of the sacrifices, the transferal of guilt from the person to the animal, the sacrifice. Christ, the innocent one, bore the sin of the world (Isa 53:6; 2 Cor 5:21).[40]

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[37] The following listing of five points is taken from Maier, *1 Kings 1–11*, 640–641. That listing in the commentary, in turn, is indebted to the summary provided by J. Barton Payne in his *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 383–385.

[38] John W. Kleinig, *Leviticus* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 63.

[39] Lev 1:4: "It will be accepted *for* him." Payne, (*The Theology of the Older Testament*, 384), for example, has the same understanding: "In the ritual the offerer presented his sacrifice and laid his hands on its head . . . thus appointing it as a proxy for himself . . . to take the sinner's place."

[40] On the Day of Atonement, the high priest laid both of his hands on the head of the goat that was kept alive. The text makes clear that this was a symbolical transferal of guilt to the goat: "Aaron

Third, the animal was slaughtered or slain. Its death, again, was substitutionary, taking the place of the sinner's death. Christ suffered the penalty all people deserved and died in the stead of the human race. Fourth, the sacrificed life was committed to God; one way was burning the whole offering or parts of the animal on the altar (e.g., Lev 1:6–9). The author of Hebrews writes that Christ "offered himself without blemish to God" (Heb 9:14; cf. Eph 5:2). Fifth and finally, there might be some ceremonial indication of the fact that the people were atoned for, that they were cleansed of sin, and that God was able to and would have fellowship with them. This could be indicated by application of the sacrifice to the people by sprinkling sacrificial blood on them (Exod 24:8; cf. Isa 52:15; Heb 9:19–20; 1 Pet 1:1–2).[41] This Old Testament sprinkling of blood is in the background when Jesus is proclaimed "the mediator of a new covenant," whose "sprinkled blood" is superior (Heb 12:24). Moreover, Christians through drinking the wine in the Lord's Supper receive the blood of Christ—to use the words of Christ, "my blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:27–28; cf. Heb 10:29; 13:20).

The principal element of the Old Testament sacrifices, in fact the essence of the sacrificial system, was the blood of the animals. The life of the sacrifice was given in place of that of the sinner or sinners. The chief sign or symbol of that substitutionary life was the blood of the animal, for the basic substance of life is blood. Leviticus 17:11 explains: "Because the life of the flesh is in the blood." As the sacrificial animals symbolized the coming Lamb of God, so the blood of these animals symbolized the blood of the Messiah, which would be shed for the sins of the world (1 John 1:7; 2:2; 4:10; Rev 5:6–9). If the sacrifices were to be understood as portraying substitutionary atonement, the shedding of the blood and the slaying of the animal showed that this

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shall lay both of his hands on the head of the living goat and he shall confess over it all the iniquities of the Children of Israel and all their transgressions with regard to all their sins and put them on the head of the goat. He shall send [it] by the hand of an appointed man into the wilderness" (Lev 16:21). This pictured the sins of the people being sent or taken away forever because of God's grace, mercy, and love, and because of the coming Messiah (Maier, *1 Kings 1–11*, 637; see also Kleinig, *Leviticus*, 347).

[41] After the fellowship, or peace, offerings (the thank offering, the freewill offering, and the votive offering), which were not only (or even primarily) for the atonement of sin, was a communion meal that followed the sacrificial rite in which the meat of the offering was eaten (Lev 7:11–18; 19:5–8; 22:29–30; Ps 22:26–27 [ET 22:25–26]; cf. Exod 24:11). The eating of the sacrifice, Payne explains, served as a tangible proof of fellowship, as God and the person(s) "sat down together at the same table" (*The Theology of the Older Testament*, 384). God was the host, and the people were his guests. God, however, did not eat with them; rather, they ate the meal in his presence.

was specifically *penal* substitutionary atonement. A penalty had to be paid for atonement to take place, and that penalty was death.[42]

Because of the continuing sinfulness of the people and the continuing accusation of the law, ritual atonement was constantly being made before Yahweh at the central sanctuary. The fire on the altar where sacrifices were offered to the Lord burned perpetually (Lev 6:6 [ET 6:13]). Each evening and morning, a lamb was sacrificed as a burnt offering to God on behalf of sinful Israel (Num 28:3–4, 8, 15), as an atonement for the guilt of the people. In addition, general sacrifices were offered up for Israel during the holy days and appointed festivals (see Num 28:9–29:39). So many animals sacrificed and so much blood shed each year! Yet fellowship with the Lord was made possible by this substitutionary sacrifice, the means God used to grant the people forgiveness.[43]

Inside the central sanctuary, in the Most Holy Place, was the ark of the covenant. Over the ark and covering the Tables of the Law inside the ark was the כַּפֹּרֶת (*kappōreth*), "mercy seat" (KJV) or "atonement cover" (Exod 25:17–22; 26:34). The Hebrew noun *kappōreth* came from the verb כָּפַר. This cover, made of pure gold and having the same dimensions as the length and width of the ark (Exod 25:17; see also Exod 25:10), was located between the Tables of the Law (below in the ark) and the Lord, who dwelt above the ark, enthroned on the cherubim who overshadowed the atonement cover (Exod 25:18–22; Num 7:89; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kgs 19:14–15). The cover symbolized the atonement made by Christ, which "stands between" man's sinfulness (as made known by the Tables of the Law) and the holy, righteous, just God. The LXX most often translates כַּפֹּרֶת, "atonement cover," with ἱλαστήριον (see also Heb 9:5), the word Paul uses for Christ in Rom 3:25, where it is commonly translated as "propitiation," but which has a fuller meaning ("a sacrifice/offering of atonement"). In the context of Rom 3:21–31, Paul is speaking of "the righteousness of God" which is "apart from the law" and which comes "through faith in Jesus Christ" (Rom 3:21–22), so that all believers are justified "by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24), "through faith in his blood" (Rom 3:25).[44]

With an understanding of the sacrifices and the atonement cover over the ark of the covenant, there can be a full appreciation of what took place on the Day of Atonement, the most sacred day in the Hebrew religious calendar. Only on that day did the high priest, and only the high priest, enter the Most Holy Place where the ark was located to make ritual atonement for himself and all Israel, using the blood of sacrificed animals. Since the sacrificial blood carried into the Most Holy Place and

[42] Maier, *1 Kings 1–11*, 641. See part III above regarding the necessity of the death of Christ.
[43] Maier, *1 Kings 1–11*, 641–642.
[44] Maier, *1 Kings 1–11*, 635.

the atonement cover on which it was sprinkled both symbolized the atonement that would be effected by the Messiah, this was the strongest assurance to the high priest, his household, and the whole community of Israel that they had forgiveness for all their sins. This was a powerful foreshadowing of what Christ would accomplish (Heb 9:11–12), who as the world's substitute paid the penalty for humanity's transgressions with his shed blood.[45]

The Suffering Servant

Isaiah 52:13–53:12, the Fourth Servant Song and one of the greatest gospel passages in Scripture, has traditionally been interpreted as presenting the Messiah's penal substitutionary atonement. Certain verses in particular can be cited.

Isaiah 53:5—"But he was pierced through because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace [leading to our peace] was on him, and by his stripes [or 'blows'] we have been healed."

Forde, though, could interpret this verse as saying that because we were legalistic sinners we killed Christ. He did not die as one bearing our sins and iniquities. Further, because God has created faith in us in the event of the cross and the empty tomb and made us new people, we have peace and spiritual healing.

Isaiah 53:8—"Because of the transgressions of my people he received blows."

Isaiah 53:11—"And he bore their iniquities."

Isaiah 53:12—"And he carried the sins of many."

Again, however, Forde would not interpret these verses as proclaiming the Messiah as the world's substitute bearing the sins of the world and suffering the punishment for them. Rather, he would explain that we legalists because of our rejection of Christ treated him in a sinful way: we struck him, beat him, pierced him, and killed him.

Another verse for consideration is Isaiah 53:6, "All of us like sheep have gone astray; each to his own way we have turned; and Yahweh has caused to *pāga`* him the iniquity of all of us."

The verbal root involved has been put into English transliteration because different translations are possible. One rendering could be "Yahweh has caused to meet in him the iniquity of all of us." Another possibility is "Yahweh has caused to fall on him the iniquity of all of us." In response to both of these renderings, Forde would probably say that Yahweh sent Christ, who encountered hostile legalists who in their iniquity mistreated him and killed him. Christ did not die, however, because

[45] Maier, *1 Kings 1–11*, 637, 641.

he was the world's substitute, bearing the transgressions of all people and paying the penalty for them.

Of course, another way to interpret verse 6, and all of the other previously cited portions of Isaiah 53, would be the opposite of Forde's explanations. In other words, these verses are indeed proclaiming the Messiah as the substitute for mankind, bearing humanity's transgressions. Edward Young writes this about Isaiah 53:6:

> The first half of the verse sets forth the reason for the servant's suffering, and the second asserts that the Lord Himself made the servant suffer by placing on him the iniquity that belonged to us all. The verb describing the latter act is in the causative [Hiphil] stem and means *to hit* or *strike violently* [additional possible translations]. The iniquity of which we are guilty does not come back to us to meet and strike us as we might rightly expect, but rather strikes him in our stead. . . . The guilt that belonged to us God caused to strike him, i.e. he as our substitute bore the punishment that the guilt of our sins required.[46]

John Oswalt offers these comments on the same verse.

> Sheep are prone to get lost. Like them, we humans seem not to be much aware of the consequences of our choices. And like them, we are frequently helpless in the consequences, especially the eternal ones. So what has happened? The consequences have fallen on the Servant. This is not accidental; the text says explicitly that God has made this happen. What a mystery! The conventional thought of the day said that if a person suffered it was because God was bringing his iniquity on him. . . . Here God has made this person suffer for the iniquity of "all of us."[47]

This interpretation, that Isaiah 53:6, and, indeed, the other verses of the chapter that have been referenced, are proclaiming Christ's penal substitutionary atonement, is supported by Isaiah 53:10, which states: "But Yahweh was pleased to crush him [the Servant] utterly; though you [Yahweh] set forth his life as a guilt offering . . . " This last portion could also be translated "when his soul sets forth a guilt offering . . . "

The first part of verse 10 teaches that the Messiah suffered and died according to the will of Yahweh. The second part, with either translation, indicates that the Savior's life and death may be considered a guilt offering. The use of the phrase "guilt offering" brings to mind the Old Testament sacrificial system. A crucial concept associated with that institution, as already discussed, was vicarious atonement: the, so to speak, "innocent" animal bearing the guilt of a sinful human being and dying

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[46] Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: Vol. 3: Chapters 40–66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 349–350.

[47] John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 389.

in the stead of that person. The mention of "guilt offering" in Isaiah 53:10 provides the key for a proper understanding of the other phrases and verses in Isaiah 53: they, too, are portraying penal substitutionary atonement accomplished by Christ.

The Cry of Dereliction

Another Old Testament passage relevant to this discussion is Psalm 22:2 (verse 1 in the English Text), which states: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

My understanding of Psalm 22 sees the speaker as the preincarnate Christ, giving the Old Testament church a picture of his suffering and death on the cross. Others regard the speaker as David, but that what he reports about his own experience was in some way a foreshadowing of what Christ would have to endure. Be that as it may, there can be no doubt that Jesus made the psalm his own when he on the cross quoted this opening of Psalm 22. So the question arises, what does this verse teach us about the Messiah's suffering? How are we to understand his being forsaken by God the Father? Forde, who holds that Christ *did not* suffer *for* our sins, has this explanation: "The cross is the price of mercy. It is not paid to God; however it is paid *by* God. God gave his divine Son, abandoned him to death for us."[48] Forde also wrote, "He [Christ] suffers the total and ultimately meaningless destruction that is death. In the end he cries, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and enters the dark nowhere of death."[49]

This study respectfully disagrees with Forde. Christ's death was not meaningless; no further comment is necessary. But it can also be said that the Father did not abandon Jesus to death, and that Christ did not enter "the dark nowhere of death." Jesus earlier had promised the repentant thief, "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Right before he died, Jesus cried out, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). The Father surely did receive Christ's spirit, which entered paradise along with the spirit of the thief, as Christ had foretold.

If one does not go along with Forde's explanation, how then should one understand Christ's cry of dereliction? In this way: Jesus, who took our sins upon himself, was suffering the agonies of hell. Bearing our trespasses, he was struck by God with their full punishment. The penalty for our trespasses was everlasting damnation, nothing short of that. The main aspect of hell is being totally, eternally abandoned by God. God had completely withdrawn from the crucified Christ his grace, mercy, and love; Jesus felt only God's terrible wrath. Christ, both man and the infinite God, endured everlasting damnation for everyone in order to redeem us and

[48] Forde, "The Work of Christ," 74.
[49] Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 37.

all people, pay the full price demanded by God's holiness, righteousness, and justice. Christ asked "Why?" in his state of humiliation, when he as a man did not use continually or fully the attributes that belonged to him as God, specifically in this case, his omniscience. Thus in his extreme misery, he forgot.

Derek Kidner writes, "Our Lord's cry of dereliction (quoting this verse in His native Aramaic) told, it would seem, of an objective reality, namely the punitive separation He accepted in our place, 'having become a curse for us' (Gal. 3:13)."[50] Herbert Leupold comments: "Surely, God had forsaken Him who utters this complaint, but the reason was that He had made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin (II Cor. 5:21)."[51]

The Old Testament and the Justification of the Believer before God

The final set of Old Testament passages relate to the justification of the believer before God. First, a brief review of Forde's position is necessary. Once again, he asserts that God unilaterally forgives. In addition, Forde holds that God creates faith in us, and in this way we are new people. God is satisfied when we believe and trust in him as the God who has and shows mercy. Such faith fulfills the law and makes us pleasing to God.

From what I have seen in his writings, Forde, with regard to the matter of salvation, does not write about, or at least he greatly downplays, the idea of the believer receiving something from God. In contrast, traditional Lutheranism, as set forth in the Book of Concord, emphasizes that the believer through faith receives an alien righteousness, that is, the obedience-wrought righteousness of Christ, or to put it another way, that which Christ has acquired with his passive and active obedience.[52] For Forde, however, the imputation of the passive righteousness is replaced by the divine act of forgiveness by fiat—that is, forgiveness without a payment for sin.[53] Instead of the reckoning of the active righteousness of Christ through faith, Forde sets forth the positive righteousness of the new being of faith.[54] So for Forde, as Jack Kilcrease has observed, the basis of one's righteousness before God is not outside of one's self; rather, one becomes righteous in oneself through faith.[55]

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[50] Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 106.

[51] Herbert C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959), 197.

[52] See, for example, Ap XXI 19 (K-W, 240:19); XXIV 12 (K-W, 259:12); FC Ep III 4 (K-W, 495:4); FC SD III 4 (K-W, 562–563:4), 9–10 (K-W, 563–564:9–10), 13–17 (K-W, 564–565:13–17), 23 (K-W, 566:23), 25 (K-W, 566:25), 56 (K-W, 572:56), 58 (K-W, 572–573:58).

[53] Kilcrease, *The Doctrine of Atonement*, 155.

[54] Kilcrease, *The Doctrine of Atonement*, 155.

[55] Kilcrease, *The Doctrine of Atonement*, 149, 158.

This study finds Forde's position unacceptable on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions. Believers do receive, or are given, something through faith; namely, what Christ won for them and all people as the world's *substitute*. This is the righteousness he acquired by perfectly keeping all of God's commandments (active obedience), and by paying totally the penalty that the world's transgressions deserved with his suffering and death (passive obedience). This righteousness covers the believer like a set of brand-new clothes. The result is that God regards the believer, though he is a sinner, as righteous, for Jesus' sake.

The first Old Testament passage to be examined that relates to the doctrine of justification by God's grace through faith in Christ is Isaiah 61:10.

> I will indeed rejoice in Yahweh, my soul will exult in my God, because he has clothed me with garments of salvation, he has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, like the bridegroom who priests[56] it with a turban, and like the bride who adorns herself with her jewelry.

The speaker in the verse represents all believers. The terms "salvation" and "righteousness" are basically equivalent, for the essence of salvation is being right with God. Verse 10 is speaking of God clothing the believer with the Messiah's active and passive obedience. Concerning this verse, Luther writes, "The church is clothed for salvation, conquering world and Satan. My tunic is victory. This is the church's most beautiful adornment, since by faith we overcome and are justified."[57] Reed Lessing observes about verse 10:

> Now, speaking for Zion, Isaiah responds with praise to Yahweh for having cloaked his people with righteousness. Justification is not an improvement, an alteration, a change of heart, or a cleaning up of the old Adam. It is an imputed righteous standing, received by faith, for Christ's sake (Is 53:11; 54:17; Rom 3:24–30; Gal 3:8–14). . . . These garments of salvation are the same clothes John calls white robes washed in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14).[58]

The last two phrases of verse 10 about the bridegroom and the bride bring out the beauty and glory of the garments of salvation, of the robe of righteousness, using

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[56] This is a very literal translation of the verb, taken from BDB, 464. Another rendering in English could be "plays the priest." The idea is that the bridegroom "decks himself with a splendid turban such as the priests wore" (BDB, 464).

[57] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Isaiah* (1527): vol. 17, 341–342, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–76); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–86); vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–).

[58] R. Reed Lessing, *Isaiah 56–66* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014), 293.

wedding imagery. Dealing just with the last phrase, a woman is never more glorious or beautiful in appearance than on her wedding day. Also, her bridal dress and jewelry are things in which she takes great pride. So, too, spiritual Zion takes pride, in a godly sense, in its heavenly robe of righteousness.[59] As the hymn says, "Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress."[60]

The second Old Testament passage, which will be briefly reviewed, is Zechariah 3:4–5. This passage is similar to Isaiah 61:10 in that it portrays the believer's reception of the alien righteousness of Christ as being covered with new, clean clothing. In Zechariah 3, Satan was making accusation against the high priest Joshua to the Lord, but the Lord acted on behalf of Joshua. The high priest, clothed with filthy garments, was standing before the divine Angel. The text of Zechariah 3:4–5 continues as follows:

> And he [the divine Angel] answered and said to those standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him [Joshua]." And he [the divine Angel] said to him [Joshua], "See, I have caused to pass from you your iniquity and have clothed[61] you with splendid robes." And I said, "Let them place a clean turban on his head." So they placed the clean turban on his head and they clothed him with garments, and the Angel of Yahweh was standing there.

The message is that Joshua, wearing the new clothing, stands guiltless before the Lord. The passage presents the Angel of the Lord as the one responsible for Joshua being clothed with the clean, splendid robes. This very Angel would become man and obtain the garments of salvation with his substitutionary holy life and innocent suffering and death. Leupold describes the action of verses 4 and 5 as "symbolical of the forgiveness of sins."

> As completely as a man whose filthy garments disfigure him is cleansed by their removal, so completely does God's pardon remove the guilt of sin. As the bestowing of garments of beauty makes a man presentable, so does the garment of imputed righteousness make him worthy to appear before God and man, only, however, by virtue of the "rich apparel" that God has granted him.[62]

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[59] Young, *The Book of Isaiah: Vol. 3*, 466.

[60] *LSB* 563:1. *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006).

[61] The Hebrew verb is an infinitive absolute. According to *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd ed., ed. E. Kautzsch, trans. A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), Section 113z, the infinitive absolute can serve "as the continuation of a preceding finite verb [in Zech 3:4, the preceding finite verb is 'I have caused to pass']. In the later books especially it often happens that in a succession of several acts only the first (or sometimes more) of the verbs is inflected, while the second (or third, &c.) is added simply in the infinitive absolute." The divine Angel saying here in verse 4 that "I have clothed you with splendid robes" is anticipatory of Joshua in verse 5 being clothed with clean garments.

[62] Herbert C. Leupold, *Exposition of Zechariah* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956), 70.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, while Forde confesses Jesus Christ as Savior, his position regarding salvation should not gain acceptance within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Based on his selective reading of Scripture and novel interpretation of passages, his teaching concerning the saving work of Christ and justification varies too widely from what is presented by the entirety of God's Word and the Book of Concord. Despite Forde's attacks, the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement still stands, and must ever be taught and preached, to the glory of God, in faithfulness to Scripture, and for the everlasting spiritual welfare of many people.

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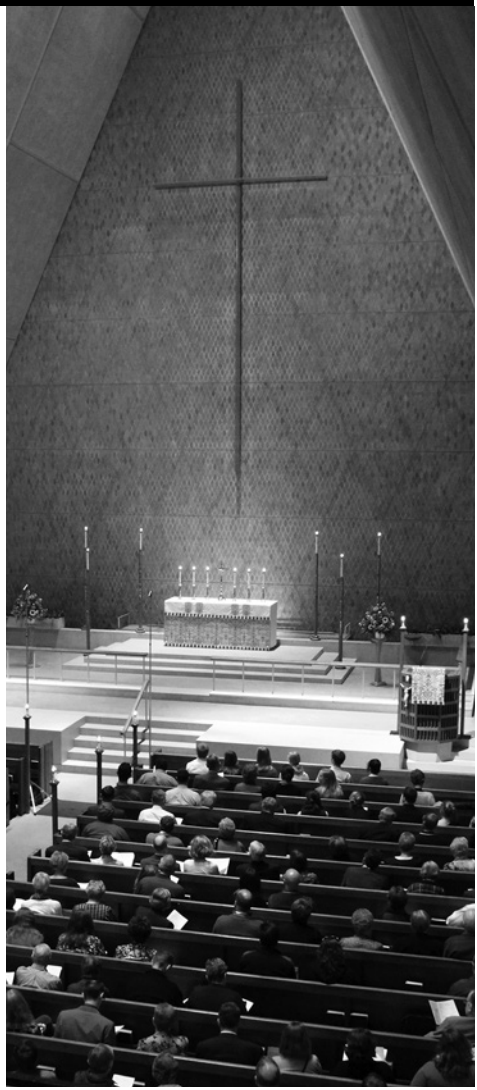

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Justification as the Starting Point of Doing Theology?

David P. Scaer

In popular theological proposals, justification has taken center stage. This is not without reason in a Lutheran context, in which it is said that it is the doctrine by which the church stands or falls.[1] Of course, this could be better said of the resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor 15:12–19). Scott R. Murray notes that C. F. W. Walther lectured on the law and the gospel without attention to the third use of the law.[2] Francis Pieper made salvation by grace the principle in choosing Lutheranism as the true religion.[3] Joshua C. Miller commends Oswald Bayer for his view that "the heart, basis, and boundary of all theology is God's justification of sinners by his effectual word of promise in the gospel of Jesus Christ."[4] In the older dogmatic tradition, this corresponds to subjective justification, distinct from objective justification, which Mathew C. Harrison says "was rendered in the death and resurrection of Christ."[5] Like subjective justification, recent proposals have existential dimensions in that the reality of justification is experienced by its effect in relieving sinners of their guilt.

In response to the 1970 Lutheran World Federation (LWF) convention, at which there was no agreement on justification, I wrote: "Lutherans cannot escape the historical burden that they have been associated with the Pauline-Lutheran

[1] The origin of the exact phrase is unknown, but the phrase is descriptive of Luther's thought (https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/jjustin-tayloer/luthers-saying). Cf. Ap IV 2; XII (V) 11; XII 59; XXIV 46; SA II 5.

[2] Scott R. Murray, *Law, Life, and the Living God: The Third Use of the Law in Modern American Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 26–27. The lectures were published after Walther's death and not intended by him to be a formal theology.

[3] Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950–1953), 1:7–19.

[4] Joshua C. Miller, "Introduction," in *Promising Faith for a Ruptured Age*, ed. John T. Pless, Roland Ziegler, and Joshua C. Miller (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019), xi.

[5] Matthew C. Harrison, "It All Rests on Christ," *The Lutheran Witness* (January 2020): 24.

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doctrine of justification through faith. It is the *sine qua non of* our existence."[6] Even without an agreed-upon definition, it remains central.

The Gospel Principle: It All Began with Werner Elert

Werner Elert proposed justification as the unifying principle of the Augsburg Confession—or at least most of it. Rather than advancing its arguments by biblical exposition, this Confession gives justification the lead role in interpreting the separate articles. Articles after Article I, which stands alone, revolve around forgiveness. Justification is already introduced in Article II on original sin, in which mankind for its sin is placed under God's wrath, for which a solution is provided in Article III in setting forth Christ's death as the propitiation for sin (AC III 2). Article IV shows how the benefits of Christ's propitiation for sin are applied by God justifying believers through faith. While justification has been considered the key to this Confession, Article V is often seen as the core of theology by seeing preaching in the center.[7] Should this be so, justification would be understood existentially, in that by hearing law and gospel one experiences condemnation and then psychological relief from the law. Even according to the old definition, law and gospel are relational and existential doctrines in describing how the sinner stands condemned *coram deo* and then in Christ *coram deo* he is declared righteous.

Werner Elert noted that the doctrine of the Trinity in Article I of the Augsburg Confession was hardly different from that of medieval theology and did not fit his law-gospel paradigm.[8] Brought up in Prussia where Reformed and Lutheran views had equal standing, Elert had an aversion to the Reformed teaching that the law

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[6] David P. Scaer, *The Lutheran World Federation Today* (St. Louis and London: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 15. See Mark C. Mattes, *The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), for the place of justification in the thought of contemporary Lutheran theologians.

[7] Oswald Bayer, "Justification," *Lutheran Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2010): 337. See also Oswald Bayer, *Living by Faith: Justification and Sanctification*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Lutheran Quarterly Books (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 44–45. "It [AC V] is the decisive factor for the understanding of justification in Article IV and of good works and the new obedience in Article VI; it tips the balance." See also Gerhard Forde, Theology Is for Proclamation (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

[8] Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism especially in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 200–202. "Here the ship of Reformation, which has just recently departed from land, seems to be sailing back into the harbor of the medieval church, which produced laws of faith and demanded obedience to them. Faith itself, the most precious treasure, seems to be betrayed! One must say that here of all places it was a mistake to combine the concept of the 'decree' (decretum) with the 'must be believed' (credendum) in the Latin text. . . . But this is actually an isolated mistake on the part of the Augsburg Confession" (202).

along with the gospel incited good works.[9] As a corrective, he denied the third use of the law and in its place put the *evangelischer Ansatz*, "the impact of the gospel,"[10] as the impetus for good works and as the core of Lutheran theology.[11] For some, "gospel" has come to mean little more than telling people their sins are forgiven. This is now popularly paraphrased as "good news," an umbrella phrase that can embrace most any felicitous report, like "I have good news for you. You got a raise." In the New Testament, "gospel" has to do with the oral or written proclamation of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. When Mark writes "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" (1:1), he is referring to his written record of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Matthew also spoke of his document as the gospel which would be proclaimed both within and beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire (Matt 24:14; 26:13; cf. Mark 14:9). The gospel for which Paul was set aside is about Jesus' descent from David and his resurrection (Rom 1:1–4), which are also found in Matthew and Luke. Gospel in the New Testament is substantive, concrete—a flesh and bones kind of a thing, corresponding with the creed's second article.[12] By the preaching of the gospel, which tells what God has done in Jesus, faith is effected in the hearer, who is thereby justified. Elert made the gospel's effect, what it accomplished, what he called the *evangelischer Ansatz*, "the impact of the gospel," determinative: "As soon as the Gospel is understood in the sense of its impact (*Ansatz*), it is not necessary to prove that in the church of the Gospel doctrine must really be of decisive significance."[13] Preaching takes precedence over doctrine, a view proposed by George Lindbeck and then adopted by Gerhard Forde.[14] This was not new. Rudolph Bultmann proposed that justification was little more than living a more authentic life, a view he coupled with his hermeneutical method of demythologizing the gospels.[15]

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[9] See David P. Scaer, *Law and Gospel and the Means of Grace*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics (St. Louis: Luther Academy, 2008), 81.

[10] This is Walter A. Hansen's translation of the phrase in Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*. Alternatively, the phrase can mean the "gospel approach" to theology.

[11] David Yeago notes that Elert came up against a blank wall with the first article of the Augsburg Confession, which demanded faith in the triune God quite apart from the law-gospel paradigm. Yeago, "Gnosticism, Antinomianism, and Reformation Theology," *Pro Ecclesia* 2, no. 1 (1993): 43. See above, note 8.

[12] Scaer, *Law and Gospel and the Means of Grace*, 11–13.

[13] Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, 201.

[14] Jack D. Kilcrease, *The Doctrine of Atonement from Luther to Forde* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 2–15; Jordan Cooper, *Lex Aeterna: A Defense of the Orthodox Lutheran Doctrine of God's Law and Critique of Gerhard Forde* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017), 115–120.

[15] The law-gospel distinction appeared in Bultmann as the letter/spirit distinction, as it did also in Paul Tillich. "Paul Tillich's 'Protestant principle,' according to which the 'finite forms' of religious symbolism must always be relativised by the very grace which they mediate, likewise

Justification is a principle for preaching, as Walther held.[16] But even in the Augsburg Confession it is not a stand-alone doctrine, but derives its content from Article III, that the "one Christ, true God and true man . . . [was set forth] to be a sacrifice not only for original sin but also for all other sins and to propitiate God's wrath."[17] So also Paul. Justification is the effect of Christ's atonement and finds its certainty in the resurrection of Jesus: "if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (1 Cor 15:14).[18] If we cannot come to grips with the fact that the one who was *crucifixus sub Pontio Pilato* was resurrected under the watch of his tomb guards, every other theological proposal, regardless of its effusive Lutheran terms, rests on an inaccessible theorem. The justifying word of the gospel is not a self-contained, autonomous word of God, but it is a word of God whose content is informed by Christ's sacrifice to God to satisfy his wrath over sin. Faith is created by proclamation, but its substance is derived from the historical event of the cross on which it focuses. *Sub Pontio Pilato* directs faith to the historical event of crucifixion,[19] and through it to the atonement, where God through Christ is reconciled to the world. When Paul showed up in Corinth, he preached a composite message that Christ died for sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day (1 Cor 15:1–7). These things were foundational for his apostleship, the message he preached, and the church.

Confusion over justification emerged at the 1963 Helsinki LWF convention and has not ebbed. Then the president of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and former LWF president, Bishop Hanns Lilje, said differences on justification were real and not just imagined or semantic.[20] Yeago notes the current fascination with Luther's writings to show the chief understanding of Luther among modern interpreters is epistemological.[21] This is done by cherry-picking the reformer's writings in which his earlier writings are authentically preferred over later ones. In hearing the justifying word, hearers are relieved of guilt and can begin to live worry-

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reproduces the law/gospel structure in the register of letter and spirit." Yeago, "Gnosticism, Antinomianism, and Reformation Theology," 39.

[16] Scaer, *Law and Gospel and the Means of Grace*, 56–61.

[17] AC III 2–3. Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 29–30.

[18] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

[19] Oswald Bayer, "The Word of the Cross," in *Justification Is for Preaching: Essays by Oswald Bayer, Gerhard O. Forde, and Others*, ed. Virgil Thompson (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 193. "The narrative of the crucified God . . . rivets attention to the historical fact of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth in its temporal and spacial determination and does not allow itself to be pried loose from the texts in which it was originally recorded."

[20] Scaer, *The Lutheran World Federation Today*, 15.

[21] Yeago, "Gnosticism, Antinomianism, and Reformation Theology," 37–38.

free lives. Debatable is whether this is so. Rather than producing a cornucopia of good feeling, things often appear worse to the believers, as they did to the psalmists. The heart of the gospel as the justifying message is not its effect on the hearers, but Christ's propitiation for sin. Current views put the weight of justification on the relational aspects of what the justifying word does for the believer. In this view, the words "for you" in preaching turn raw facts into gospel, and in distributing the sacrament accentuating "for you" adds to its salvific value.[22] For John the apostle, atonement is the cause and justification its effect or result (1 John 2:2) and the order dare not be reversed. The tail cannot be burdened down in wagging the dog. Now if justification is dependent on, and an extension of, the even more profound doctrine of atonement, as it is in the Augsburg Confession and the New Testament, the question moves back to locating atonement and justification in God as Trinity. If incarnation is the *mysterium mysteriorum*, how much more of a mystery the Trinity is.

For example, being in a political office requires explaining one's action. Politicians have to justify themselves continually. Similarly, Bayer understands the human predicament as one in which people attempt to justify themselves in order to be free from accusation.[23] If self-justification belongs to what it means to be human, we can ask if this principle applies to God. Does he have to justify himself to be free of accusation? In justifying us, God proves he is righteous, because Christ has assumed the penalty we deserve. In loving us, he does not set aside his righteousness but confirms it. His justifying of sinners does not compromise, offend, set aside, or ignore his righteousness, but affirms it. God affirms his righteousness by sacrificing his Son as an atonement. By absolving the sinner without payment, he would be unrighteous in exempting himself from rules he imposes on us. What's good for the goslings is first good for the goose. Our forgiving others in the Lord's Prayer assumes God has already forgiven them, and so we forgive sins God already has forgiven. If God forgave without atonement, Satan would have reason to accuse God of unrighteousness, but he doesn't. Not through an act of omnipotence, but through the blood of the lamb, the accuser has been thrown down (Rev 12:10). Since in making atonement God shows us that he is righteous in himself, his promises to deliver his saints can be trusted, as was the case of Job and Jesus, to whom God

[22] Cooper, *Lex Aeterna*, 115. In the Autumn 2010 issue of the *Lutheran Quarterly*, three articles advance the view that justification has to do with believers living in a world free of accusation. Vítor Westhelle, "Justification as Death and Gift"; Klaus Schwarzwäller, "Justification and Reality"; Oswald Bayer, "Justification," *Lutheran Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (Autumn 2010): 249–262, 292–310, 337–340.

[23] Bayer, "The Word of the Cross," in *Justification Is for Preaching*, 189. "What is universally intelligible, is the urge to justify oneself by works or deeds."

responds to his cry of dereliction by raising him from the dead, so proving that he was righteous. Since justification is commonly understood as the declaration that sins are forgiven, it might be off-putting to speak of God justifying Jesus, but that's what Paul says: Jesus "was justified in the spirit" (see 1 Tim 3:16), that is, God showed that he was righteous in raising Jesus, who was wrongly put to death for crimes he did not commit. In justifying the sinner, God is not acting arbitrarily or contrary to who he is, but in accord with who he is. An absolution or any word of justification or forgiveness spoken without atonement, as was advocated by Gerhard Forde,[24] is "a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor 13:1), and Satan could charge God with unrighteousness.

God's justification of the sinner originates from within his trinitarian existence. In love, the Father, who is love in himself, begets the Son in an eternal act of love. The Son's being begotten by the Father has both ontological and moral components in that by the Son's sharing in the Father's being, he also shares in the Father's love, not as if God's being could ever be separated from his love.[25] The Son is the personification of the Father's love. In begetting the Son, the Father gives entirely of himself so that the Son possesses everything the Father is and has. So the divine giver shows himself to be eternally the Father and the divine receiver to be eternally the Son. Each is distinct from the other in that the Father begets Son and the Son is begotten by the Father. In completely giving of himself in begetting the Son, the Father sets down the form for his giving of the Son in the atonement, through which we gain a glimpse into the inscrutable mystery of the Father's eternal begetting of the Son. Love is intrinsic to God's trinitarian life, into which Christ's atonement is the window. In atonement, God is not acting against but in accordance with who and what he is. The God who gives of himself in begetting the Son gives of himself again in the atonement and justification. "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:19). The message of reconciliation is dependent on and distinct from the actual act itself of God's reconciliation to the world. Thus the message of reconciliation dare not be confused with the act of reconciliation in the atonement by crucifixion, to which faith is directed. Reconciliation between God and the sinner is accomplished within God's trinitarian existence in which God shows himself to be righteous by satisfying his wrath over sin by the sacrifice of his Son. Our being reconciled happens through faith, created by the word that depends on and is an extension of the greater mysteries of the atonement and the Trinity. God does not ignore but affirms his righteousness in forgiving sins. In law and

[24] For an evaluation of Forde's view, see Kilcrease, *The Doctrine of Atonement*, 118, 139–141.

[25] "From God's viewpoint there is no distinction between the various divine attributes for they constitute His indivisible essence itself." Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 1:452.

gospel, God does not speak against himself. God is not capable of moral bifurcation so that he says one thing at one time and another thing at another time.

Well known is John 3:16, that God so loved the world that he gave his Son. That love is an extension of the eternal love that the three divine persons have for one another and by which each is joined to the other in Trinity. From love, the Father spoke the word by which the world was created, and this love was extended again by his sacrificing his Son as a propitiation for the sin of the world he had created. By the Spirit who aided Christ in his propitiatory death, God creates faith, and thus the old creation is replaced by the new one. In recognizing God's propitiatory love in Christ, believers come to recognize God not only as Redeemer but Creator. No longer does God lurk as the *deus absconditus* in the dark shadows of human existence as a horrifying unknown, but he comes as *deus revelatus*, who, as Jesus says, is indiscriminate in doing good to believers and unbelievers alike (Matt 5:45). So says Paul Gerhardt in the hymn "I Will Sing My Maker's Praises": "For in all things I see traces of his tender love to me."[26] God who was once hidden in the world by our unbelief can be seen by us through faith in Christ.

Morality, Sanctification, and the Third Use of the Law

If morality, sanctification, and the third use of the law are not precise synonyms, they are overlapping realities. They have to do with behavior, and each has a foundation in the love that defines God's trinitarian existence. From this trinitarian love, God created and redeemed the world, and Christians love one another: "In this is love, not that we have 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). "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love" (1 John 4:7–8). Connecting the dots, John sets forth in reverse order: the doctrine of God, that is, theology in the narrow sense, that God's essence is love, then Christ's death as an expiatory sacrifice for sin, and in conclusion the Christian life, the section in dogmatics called sanctification or in the Formula of Concord the third use of the law (FC VI). Though we customarily say with sound biblical and confessional reasons that faith produces good works (Ap IV 122–182), faith is not an autonomous, self-contained source of good works. Rather, they originate in God's trinitarian existence, which is eminently recognizable to us in Christ's sacrifice for sin. The good that Christians do is really God working in them (Heb 13:20–21). The love that defines who and what God is

[26] *TLH* 25:1. *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941).

comes to expression in Christians loving one another. Descriptions of believers as being born or begotten of God have a subtle trinitarian and incarnational substructure, in that our regeneration is patterned after the Son's eternal birth from the Father and his conception by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary. The Son's being begotten by the Father, his conception by the Holy Spirit, and our conversion are pure monergism, things only God can do. Paul makes the correlation between regeneration by Baptism and the Son's relation to the Father (Gal 4:4–6).

Arguments that the love Christians have for one another originates within the trinitarian life are at the heart of Jesus' final discourse in the Gospel of John. The Father's love, with which he loved the Son, is the love that dwells in believers (John 17:26). The love that binds the Father to the Son and that initiates the atonement is the substructure for the third use of the law, of which the foremost good work is martyrdom. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12–13).[27] Things that belong to the Father also belong to the Son and are given by the Spirit (John 16:13–16). What God accomplishes within his trinitarian life is made available to believers by the Father and the Son dwelling in believers (John 14:23). This new, divine life in believers is described by the law's third use.

Taking the Argument to the Synoptic Gospels

The Synoptic Gospels also place the origin of Christian morality or the third use of the law in God. Serving our purposes are the accounts of the rich young man (Matt 19:16–22; Mark 10:17–22; Luke 18:18–23) and the Pharisees asking Jesus which is the chief commandment of the law (Matt 22:34–40; Mark 12:28–34; cf. Luke 10:25–28).

The rich young man asks Jesus about eternal life. Some Lutherans may desire to impugn his motives by pointing out that he is at heart a synergist seeking affirmation for good behavior. This may be a Lutheran rush to judgment. Mark's description of him as running after Jesus and kneeling (Mark 10:17) suggests that he had been haunted for some time by the question of how to obtain eternal life. According to Ecclesiastes, this question haunts everyone (3:19–20). Jesus is satisfied that the man has kept the commandments and so sees him as a person of good reputation, a necessary prerequisite for the kingdom and maybe also for the ministry of the apostleship—so, it seems, is the real intent for inclusion of the account (Matt 19:27–29). Though expositions on the account zero in on the word "inherit,"

[27] In his *Christian Dogmatics* 1:447–465, Francis Pieper places God's love as a subcategory of God's goodness among his communicable attributes (those that are in contrast to the incommunicable attributes, like immutability and eternity).

Matthew omits it. Intentionally or unintentionally, later copyists inserted it so that Matthew's version would correspond with Mark's and Luke's accounts. Often heard is that inheritances are not earned, an argument that does not fit Matthew's judgment scene in which Jesus specifies the works believers have done to inherit eternal life and others have not done to be excluded (Matt 25:31–46). To get ahead of our argument, the works of the third use of the law are feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, and seeing the sick and imprisoned and visiting them. These anticipate Luther's explanations of the commandments, that the law is ultimately fulfilled in doing good things. This is what the third use of the law is all about and what the man is to do in giving to the poor. By listing the good things the redeemed do, Jesus excises the accusatory function from the law so that it no longer threatens the believer. Eternal life, which the young man craves (Matt 19:16), is given at the judgment to those who have done good works (Matt 25:46).

In Mark's and Luke's accounts, Jesus asks the man to explain why he called him "good teacher." Only Matthew continues with Jesus asking him, "Why do you ask me about the good?" A grammatical alternative would allow the Greek word ἀγαθοῦ to be rendered not as "the good thing" but "the good one," that is, God. So it would read, "Why do you ask me about the good one?" that is, God. In Matthew, Jesus adds, "One there is good," and in Mark and Luke adds, "No one is good but God." All are expositions of the *Shema*, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Deut 6:4). Israel's God is not merely the only God, but he is morally good. Forbidden behaviors in the kingdom are murder, adultery, theft, and giving false witness. Required is honoring one's parents (Matt 19:18–19). If Jesus was dissatisfied with the man's response that he had indeed kept them all, this would have been the place to say so, but he does not. At the end of the list in Matthew, Jesus adds the interpretative summary, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 19:19), which embraces the commandments of the second table as a positive command and description, not as condemnation and threat. In this manner, they originally existed in God. They were not prohibitions but descriptions of the lives of the godly, who live their lives before God, a point Luther makes in his explanations and, more importantly, so did Moses and Jesus before him.[28] Jesus follows up with the command to sell all his possessions and to give the proceeds to the poor not simply because it is the right thing to do, but because it is a mirror image of what God does in giving himself first in Jesus as a propitiation for sin (Matt 20:28) and doing good to all. In terms of the Formula of Concord, this is the third use of the law.

[28] Paul also summarizes that the commandments are fulfilled by loving the neighbor (Rom 13:9). This might suggest he knew Matthew and was dependent on him.

All three synoptic evangelists omit the enumeration of the first three commandments, which deal with one's relation to God; however, these are subsumed in Jesus' question to the young man about what is good or why he called him good. Jesus was, in effect, asking him to examine his own words, in which he wittingly or unwittingly acknowledged that Jesus was in some sense divine, which the evangelists clarified in writing their gospels. This is especially so in Mark where the young man kneels before Jesus (Mark 10:17). Each evangelist captures the man's emotional conflict in contemplating his possessions going on the auction block with the proceeds ending up in the hands of the outcasts of society. In having to choose between Jesus and his wealth, the man's trauma borders on clinical depression (Mark 10:22). Serving both God and wealth is impossible, and for that excruciating moment the young man is caught in a dilemma. Another dimension is what is meant by "if you want to be perfect" (see Matt 19:21), which corresponds to the Sermon on the Mount, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (5:48). Since in the Lord's Prayer the followers of Jesus are to ask continually to be forgiven (Matt 6:12, 14; Luke 11:4), absolute moral perfection is not in view. Helpful for what is intended by perfection is Luke's parallel: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (6:36). By giving his wealth to the poor, the young man would begin to show the mercy and do the good that God himself does and, like God, no one owes him anything. At this point, the third use of the law kicks in: believers do the good things God does. What we believe about God (theology in the narrow sense) is the source of our sanctification, how we live our lives in this world. Law stripped of its accusations is descriptive of the good things God and believers do. This is the third use of the law.

Loving the neighbor takes on an even greater significance in the pericope of the great commandment. Loving God and neighbor are like two pylons on which the Old Testament Scriptures are suspended (Matt 22:34–40; Mark 12:28–34). In the final disputations between Jesus and his adversaries, it is placed after the question of the Sadducees about the resurrection (Matt 22:23–33; Mark 12:18–27), and before Jesus asks them how David's son can be his Lord (Matt 22:41–46; Luke 20:41–44; Mark 12:35–37). Together they form a dogmatic trilogy of resurrection, God and sanctification, and how God manifests himself in a son of David (incarnation). Jesus places loving God and loving the neighbor side by side, almost as equals—and in a way they are. A failure in the latter points to a defect in the former (cf. 1 John 4:20). This thought has already been introduced in the account of the rich man who in failing to aid the poor has not come to terms with his faith in God. The pericope of the great commandment is the more existential of the two accounts in describing the intensity of faith with which God is to be loved—heart, soul, mind—to which Mark adds "strength," a word having to do more with the body, indicating faith has

a physical aspect (Matt 22:37; Mark 12:30). Then comes an equally existential command, that the love of others must equal love of self (Matt 22:39; Mark 12:31). The young man's unwillingness to follow Jesus' directive of divesting himself of what he owns for the sake of others reveals a fatal fissure in his relation to God (Matt 19:22).[29]

Both accounts, that of the young man and that of the great commandment, have to do with Christian behavior and are built on the substructure of what God is in himself and how he relates to us as love. He is the source of how we relate to him and others. In contrast to Islam and classical unitarianism, the trinitarian God is a relational God in that he does not exist as a monad isolated from his creation. God does good, and so the followers of Jesus must also do good. His goodness is expressed in the lives of Christians, who put the interests of others first. This thought is developed by Paul in Philippians (2:3–4) and belongs to our doctrine of sanctification and the third use of the law. Even though Article VI of the Formula devotes most of its space to description of the law's function as accusation, its stated purpose is that Christians do the good works in accordance with the law.

Law Is Not All That Bad

Even law in the first and second uses is not devoid of benefits. A society held together by law is more likely to prosper and is preferable to one that is not.[30] Sinners, by seeing their wretchedness, are prepared for the gospel. The argument that law has no place in how Christians live their lives, based on the Latin words *lex semper accusat* in Ap IV 38, is itself contextually flawed because it does not take into

[29] Mark includes the account of an anonymous scribe who commends Jesus and then repeats word for word what Jesus had just said about loving God and the neighbor. He adds that loving the neighbor is more important than sacrifices (Mark 12:32–33). Technically the scribe is anonymous, but it is not unlikely that he is known to Mark and so this might be an allusion to Matthew and his Gospel, in which Jesus in his self-defense when he dined in the house of Matthew with tax collectors (Matt 9:11) cites Hosea: "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice" (9:13). In his own Gospel, Matthew appears as the anonymous scribe who, trained for the kingdom of the heavens, takes out of his treasure both old and new things (Matt 13:52). In giving up his wealth, Matthew had done what the rich young man was not yet able to do but would later do. If this argument is plausible, then Mark is acknowledging Matthew as one whom he followed. Luke does not have the account of the great commandment, but he includes it in the lawyer's question as prelude to the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:27).

[30] A positive twist is put on the Decalogue by Rémi Brague, professor emeritus at the Sorbonne and currently at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. He points out that the commandments were given to the Israelites who were being set free from bondage. He writes, "Worshiping another god would bring human beings back to slavery. No other god than the one who sets mankind free should be adored." Rémi Brague, "God as a Gentleman," *First Things* 290 (February 2019): 40. Luther also sees the First Commandment in a positive sense.

consideration paragraphs 122 to 132, which appear in the same article under the heading "Love and the Keeping of the Law." In spite of the law's initial encounter with the sinner as an overwhelming horror that accuses and condemns him, law is simply the description of what God has always been in himself.[31] Law is not an untamed force external to God arousing horror, even though this is the sinner's first perception. As accusation, law is functional and relational in how man relates to God. Law as accusation does not belong to God's essence. It has no life of its own that can be destroyed. Being created in the image of God, Adam by nature did the things of the law without a sermon. As God's conversation partner, he conversed with God about the law, which was on both sides of the conversational equation, first in the mouth of God, the divine speaker, and then in the ears of man, the human hearer. God and Adam were conversation partners. When Adam and Eve found a more delightful conversation partner in the serpent, who promised to elevate them to a divine status above and beyond what they already possessed, divine promise became accusation, and so the second use of the law was conceived. Before God accuses Adam, Adam accuses God and assumes the place of God, who is the only lawgiver and judge.[32] This was not simply disregarding one of the Ten Commandments, but an egregious affront against God himself in that the creature put himself in the place of his Creator, a theme picked up in the Epistle of James: "Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?" (Jas 4:11–12). By assuming the law's accusations and penalties to himself, Christ deprived the law of the sting of its accusations, and so believers come to see law as a positive good as it eternally describes God and as that to which the christological component was added. This is exactly the teaching of the Apology: "The law always accuses us, it always shows that God is wrathful. We cannot love until we have his mercy by faith. Only then does he become an object to be loved" (Ap IV 125). The Apology calls the Old Testament passage quoted by Jesus, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart" (Deut 6:5), "the eternal law" (Ap IV 130).

[31] Roland Ziegler, "Foreword," in Kilcrease, *The Doctrine of Atonement*, x.

[32] Gen 3:12: "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Gen 3:17: "And to Adam he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, "You shall not eat of it," cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life.'"

The Triumph of the Third Use of the Law

One casualty in making the law-gospel paradigm the overarching principle of theology is the third use of the law, for which Melanchthon is made the whipping boy.[33] If in this law-gospel scenario, law is no longer the standard of good works for believers, it need not apply to God, who would then have no need of atonement to forgive sins. That's the second causality, as is seen in the title of the book, *Luther's Outlaw God*.[34] What applies to believers also applies to God. By itself, the denial of the third use may not seem that important. In the massive Book of Concord, it is far removed by page count from the doctrine of the Trinity in the Creed. So like an appendectomy, nothing is really lost by its removal, as some may think. We are agreed that the gospel is the impetus for good works, but law provides the skeletal structure on which the flesh of the gospel hangs. It might be that the New Testament devotes more space to the third use of the law than to the second, but who's counting?

Wherever *lex semper accusat* remains in place as an absolute principle for preaching and theology, the doctrine of God is compromised and the definition of the law is perverted.[35] Adam is responsible for turning God's goodness inside out so that now in the law God appears as an overwhelming negative that no one can escape. Presentations of the third use of the law, even by those committed to the Confessions, inevitably come with the demur that the second use, the law as accusation, is its chief use. It would be politically incorrect to say otherwise. So what is given in one hand is taken away by the other. According to Murray, the ascendancy of law and gospel as a principle of theology is of recent origin. "Thus except for Walther's pastoral approach, American Lutheranism before 1940 ignored Law and Gospel and, therefore, ignored the third use of Law."[36] Law and gospel is the most existential and necessary of doctrines for sinners. Everyone stands *coram Deo* as a sinner for accusation and a believer for justification. No one is exempt. In contrast to law as accusation, the third use lasts forever. Law in its third use points beyond itself to that time when the second use will pass away and sanctification will

[33] Attempts to prove this are described by Murray, *Law, Life, and the Living God*, 27.

[34] Steven D. Paulson, *Luther's Outlaw God, Vol. 1: Hiddenness, Evil, and Predestination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018).

[35] Murray, *Law, Life, and the Living God*, 26–27, 36–37 n. 90; also Scaer, *Law and Gospel and the Means of Grace*, 56–61, esp. 61. We need look no further than Paul Speratus's hymn, "Salvation unto Us Has Come," in which the horrors of the law are laid out in glowing detail. However, it lays out the necessity of Christ's atonement: "Christ came and has God's anger stilled, . . . And thus the Father's vengeance stayed" (*LSB* 555:5), a thought not found in the current proposals of justification but the one on which salvation itself depends.

[36] Murray, *Law, Life, and the Living God*, 26.

replace it as the determinative reality between God and man. Paul said the same: "So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:13). We will see what we believed in and receive for what we hoped, and so faith and hope will have outlived their purposes. Then the love by which we now love God and neighbor will reach its perfect and intended goal in the resurrection. The third use of the law is a preview or the trailer of the life to come when, unlike an old car, the third use will no longer slip gears into the second. At that time, the law-gospel paradigm will give way to the triumph of the third use of the law as the overarching reality according to which the redeemed will live under God. "We know that when he appears we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). That's the third use of the law. The third use of the law remains forever.

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Good Works and the Law's Exhortation and Accusation

Gifford A. Grobien

Antinomianism, the opposition to God's law, is inherent in fallen mankind. Due to the Lutheran Church's focus on justification by faith alone, the accusation has been raised repeatedly by our opponents that Lutherans remove God's law from the lives of Christians. Are they right? Lutherans teach good works, but what are good works? Does God's law define what good works are? Are Lutherans inherently antinomians? In the recently published English translation of Johann Gerhard's treatment of good works, we are once again invited into the discussion about the place of the law in the Christian life.[1] Gerhard argues in no uncertain terms that good works conform to the law of God. God's law "is the norm and standard of good works," says Gerhard.[2] If "sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4), then good works are lawfulness. [3] He goes on to cite a number of other passages in support of his claim that the law is the norm of good works (Deut 12:8, 32; Num 15:39–40; Ezek 20:19; Isa 29:13; Matt 15:9; Jer 7:31; Zech 7:5, 9; Amos 5:25–26; Eph 2:10; Rom 12–13; Mic 6:8). Although none of these passages actually use the word *torah* or *nomos*, they use synonyms, words that promulgate and teach those things that ought to be done and ought to be avoided. In Gerhard's understanding and according to the definitions he uses, anything which teaches good works is law.[4]

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[1] Johann Gerhard, *On Good Works*, ed. Joshua J. Hayes and Aaron Jensen, Theological Commonplaces XX (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2019), cited by section number (§) or page number.

[2] Gerhard, *On Good Works*, 17, § 16.

[3] Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

[4] Johann Gerhard, *On the Law*, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes and Joshua J. Hayes, Theological Commonplaces XV–XVI (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 4–7.

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Recent discussions over the relation between the law and good works, however, raise questions for the claim that good works should conform to the law.[5] Although there is disagreement over the law's role and relation with good works, none of the disputants, *prima facie*, claim that a Christian should not do good works. On the contrary, all assert that Christians ought to do good works.

Gerhard Forde, a theologian who has received some criticism recently, admitted that he did not address the topic of good works very often because he was concerned that the prior and more important topic of justification was so often misunderstood, mistaught, and misapplied. But there is not an explicit, conscious opposition to good works in Forde's attitude or approach. Indeed, he does address the topic in a few places, and in analyzing these treatments, we can begin to understand the place of good works in the Christian life and in relation to the law for figures like Forde who oppose the "third use of the law."

First, we should understand Forde's concerns. In wanting to defend the doctrine of justification, he opposes ethics as a "way of salvation."[6] Too often people fall into the error of thinking that, if immorality has disrupted man's relationship with God, then morality must restore it, or, at least, keep it from disrupting further. But in thinking this way, people are tempted to believe that they overcome evil with good.[7] In fact, evil is overcome only through forgiveness. Forde warns his readers not to succumb to the modern tendency to reduce everything to ethics, or, at least, to allow ethics to be the judge of a religious or spiritual system. Men do not become good before God by doing good.[8]

Instead, Forde attempts to address good works by considering St. Paul's admonition in Romans 6:1–2: "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" For Forde, this exclamation that we not live in sin indicates a completely different way of understanding the Christian life than the one prior to conversion under the law. It is not as though we no longer sin because we are being sanctified and the law is now finally in control, when prior to conversion the law had no power other than to point out and spotlight sin. Rather, the Christian really has died to sin. Justification is real

[5] See, e.g., Jack D. Kilcrease, "Gerhard Forde's Doctrine of the Law: A Confessional Lutheran Critique," *CTQ* 75 (2011): 151–179; Nicholas Hopman, "Luther's Antinomian Disputations and *Lex Aeterna*," *Lutheran Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (2016): 152–180; David P. Scaer, "Is Law Intrinsic to God's Essence?" *CTQ* 82 (2018): 3–18.

[6] Gerhard O. Forde, "Luther's 'Ethics,'" in *A More Radical Gospel: Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism*, ed. Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson, Lutheran Quarterly Books (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 138–139.

[7] Forde, "Luther's 'Ethics,'" 142.

[8] Forde, "Luther's 'Ethics,'" 138–139.

death to the sinful nature. And with the death of sin, a Christian simply no longer lives in sin.[9]

Justification does, nevertheless, unveil the totality of sin at the same time that it justifies. The very event of imputation "unmasks the reality and totality of sin *at the same time*. It would make no sense for God to impute righteousness if we were already either partially or wholly righteous." Real sin is forgiven. Real sinners are justified.[10]

Thus justification is not a movement, but a completely "new situation" brought about by God's declaration received through faith. The creation of faith occurs, but this is not a movement, certainly not a moral or righteous movement.[11]

Forde acknowledges, at the same time, that the sinful nature persists.[12] The sinful nature and the justified person are the same person, just in two different "situations." Apart from the justifying word of God, a person is trapped in sin and imprisoned under the law. When justified, the person is dead to sin and alive, new in Christ. This death of the sinful nature, however, does not occur in a simple historical or experiential way. The justified person who still lives in the world exists simultaneously in two situations or ages. The person really is justified, and really lives in Christ, and this will be objectively completed at the resurrection. However, the sinful nature persists also so long as the person exists in the world. Death to sin is not objectively completed until the body experiences death.

So, on the one hand, for Forde, a justified person is in a completely new situation. He no longer lives in sin and, for this reason, no longer lives under the law. That is, the law is not necessary, in Forde's understanding, for the justified person, because the law merely gives knowledge of sin (Rom 3:20), and the "law came in to increase the trespass" (Rom 5:20). Forgiveness and grace initiate a completely new situation in which a person is dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ (Rom 6:1–11). Being dead to sin and overcoming sin is not a matter of moral development, it simply *is* the way things are for the person who is justified, who is forgiven. Sin no longer has any power; death no longer reigns. Such is the meaning, in Forde's understanding, of being dead to sin. The justified person, then, dead to

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[9] Forde, "Luther's 'Ethics,'" 144.

[10] Gerhard O. Forde, "Forensic Justification and the Christian Life: Triumph or Tragedy?," in *A More Radical Gospel: Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism*, ed. Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson, Lutheran Quarterly Books (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 120.

[11] Forde, "Forensic Justification and the Christian Life," 118–119.

[12] Gerhard O. Forde, "*Lex Semper Accusat?* Nineteenth-Century Roots of Our Current Dilemma," in *A More Radical Gospel: Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism*, ed. Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson, Lutheran Quarterly Books (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 47.

sin, simply does the good that "appears good to do." It is "natural and spontaneous," like a good tree.[13] No law is needed to instruct, direct, or prod.

Furthermore, Forde also asserts that it is a mistake to equate sanctification with morality:

> [L]iving morally is indeed an important, wise, and good thing. There is no need to knock it. But it should not be equated with sanctification, being made holy. The moral life is the business of the old being in this world. The Reformers called it "civil righteousness." Sanctification is the result of the dying of the old and the rising of the new. The moral life is the result of the old beings' struggle to climb to the heights of the law. Sanctification has to do with the descent of the new being into humanity, becoming a neighbor, freely, spontaneously, giving of the self in self-forgetful and uncalculating ways. "But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matt. 6:3–4). Sanctification is God's secret, hidden (perhaps especially!) even from the "sanctified." The last thing the sanctified would do would be to talk about it or make claims about achieving it. One would be more likely, with Paul, to talk about one's weaknesses.[14]

With this statement, Forde suggests that the moral life is merely the business of the old being in the world, separate from the sanctifying work of God which keeps a Christian in faith throughout his time in the world.

On the other hand, sanctification for Forde also appears to be the exercise of good works, the descent of the regenerate among the neighbor to serve him, yet in a secret or unknown way. Good works are spontaneous. They are not premeditated, not done in an attempt to please or progress before God, and then they are forgotten so that the right does not know what the left is doing.[15] Nevertheless, they are works that can come only from being in the new situation of sanctification. In acknowledging this, Forde allows for the significance of good works in the Christian life, even if he does not want to dwell on good works.

There is further, for Forde, a distinction between the good works of sanctification and mere civil righteousness that any non-believer can accomplish. Good works of sanctification are unknown to man and known only to God. This characteristic further allows Forde not to give good works much attention. If they cannot truly be known by Christians, in any case, one cannot speak rightly about

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[13] Forde, "Luther's 'Ethics,'" 146.

[14] Gerhard O. Forde, "The Lutheran View of Sanctification," in *The Preached God: Proclamation in Word and Sacrament*, ed. Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson, Lutheran Quarterly Books (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 227.

[15] Forde, "The Lutheran View of Sanctification," 243.

them. Even worse, to try to speak about them would risk returning to a moralistic spirituality, one which attempts to measure one's relation with God by good works.

There are two other points to consider in Forde's way of thinking here. First, we can agree that sanctification should not be equated with morality, if we are saying that sanctification should not be reduced to morality. When Forde says that sanctification is "getting used to unconditional justification," he does not want a person to believe that he contributes anything to justification, or to salvation at all.[16] Sanctification is spiritual work, unique to believers. Yet, secondly, if we understand morality as behavior in accordance with what is good or right—certainly the common, general definition, and Forde offers no alternative definition—then sanctification has *something* to do with morality. Perhaps we need to take the connection a step further: What is the connection between sin and morality?

Some might suggest that sin is more comprehensive than morality in that it comprises a state of being over against God, a state of mistrust and lack of true fear of God. Sin goes beyond morality. Again, we do not dispute this point, yet note that this lack of trust, love, and fear of God already includes evil action. Love, fear, and trust are not neutral. If one does not love, trust, or fear God, he loves, trusts, and fears something else, to his detriment. The sinful nature of fallen humanity is certainly immoral, even if it is worse than this. Sin includes evil behavior. So if sin is put to death and no longer a part of the new situation of the regenerate, then the new situation would include morality: the good, right action of the new man.

Yet Forde persists against this, concerned that intentional subjective action on the part of a human being, even a regenerate one, is reversion to works righteousness.

> [T]he problem is that we attempt to combine the unconditional grace of God with our notions of continuously existing and acting under the law. In other words, the old being does not come up against its death, but goes on pursuing its projects, perhaps a little more morally or piously, but still on its own. There is no death of the old and thus no hope for a resurrection of the new.[17]

Notice what Forde is saying here: any attempt to do good cannot, by definition, be the new man in Christ, but is the old, sinful nature, attempting to perpetuate itself. Any conscious attempt to pursue goodness is simply the old nature. More than this, Forde is saying that anyone attempting to pursue goodness is not justified! Such ideas are utterly contrary to Paul's language, who states emphatically that his new

[16] Forde, "The Lutheran View of Sanctification," 226.
[17] Forde, "The Lutheran View of Sanctification," 228.

man desires to do what is good. It is the old man who prevents him from doing what is good, not the old man who tries to do what is good (Rom 7:15–23).

Forde argues that rather than trying to do what is good, any progress in sanctification needs to be seen as the continuous shaping by total, unconditional grace. The old becomes weaker. The new becomes more prominent. The end is coming closer to us. "The progress, if one can call it that, is that we are being shaped more and more by the totality of the grace coming to us. The progress is due to the steady invasion of the new. That means that we are being taken more and more off our own hands, more and more away from self, and getting used to the idea of being saved by the grace of God alone."[18] Such growth is moving away from oneself, not growing in the new life into which we are born.

Yet Forde speaks of the living character of the new man. We have died. Christ is now our life.[19] The old being is dead. Is not the new man characterized by anything? "The new being by definition *is* one who says *yes*."[20] Also, what does it mean for Forde that a person is alive? Does such a person finally not have a will? Does he not pursue good? Why is the old man the only one with a will, and one in bondage, at that?

In fact, when he finally gets down to it, Forde acknowledges that Christians not only do good works, but that they strive for them and do so with a spirit of charity and humility. The new man is so taken away from sin that his affections are new and his love is new, directed toward God and creation. "In that manner, the law of God is to be fulfilled in us precisely by the uncompromising totality and unconditionality of the grace given."[21] Truly good works are the fruit of being in a completely new situation—under the grace of God. And the grace of God has a real effect. It does give life to the new man such that he no longer sins that grace may abound. Rather the sins of the old man are forgiven, the old is put to death, and the new is alive and loving in Christ.

Such newness of life sends the Christian into the world again, not to sin, but to love and serve others through vocation. Opportunities for good works present themselves to Christians in their various callings, in their relationships toward others. The "morality" and "virtue" that have been brought forth in the new man, then, "are the means by which and through which we care for the world and for the other."[22] The good person returns to creation to do good works for the neighbor. He does not do it for enhancement, nor to be a god, nor to ascend out of creation, nor

[18] Forde, "The Lutheran View of Sanctification," 241.
[19] Forde, "The Lutheran View of Sanctification," 234.
[20] Forde, "The Lutheran View of Sanctification," 235.
[21] Forde, "The Lutheran View of Sanctification," 242.
[22] Forde, "The Lutheran View of Sanctification," 243.

to bring in the kingdom of God.[23] His good works do not make him pleasing before God in any way; they do not atone for sin or make righteous. Instead, the one who has been justified and made new by God, this one now lives and works according to this newness which God has given to him.

Why, then, does Forde say so little about good works, if he recognizes and confesses that they are part of the Christian life? It is because he is ever concerned with the tendency, of both Christians and non-Christians alike, to self-justification. Pursuing good works in a systematic way is the old nature "protect[ing] its continuity by 'adding sanctification.' It seeks to stave off the death involved by becoming 'moral.' Sanctification thus becomes merely another part of its self-defense against grace."[24] A system of morality or of good works seems always in Forde's eyes actually to work against true justification and even true holiness. This is because it works against the death of the moralistic old nature and tries to buttress it up with good works. Instead of dying, the old nature persists in a more deceitful guise, the guise of the moral Christian.

The theological task, therefore, according to Forde, is the proclamation of the "radical" gospel, for it is only by gospel proclamation that the Spirit kills the old, sets free the human being, and makes new. One must be "uncompromising, unconditional" in proclaiming the gospel. "It is preached *to* old beings instead of *for* new beings."[25] The crucial mistake is thinking that one can preach to old beings—those in sin—and somehow persuade and motivate them to change in a way to be right with God. In fact, the old nature is blind and uncomprehending of any other kind of life, of any other situation in which he is righteous outside of his own efforts.[26]

Preaching the gospel, for Forde, is not repair or healing. In fact, the gospel contrasts with anything that would resemble a program of moral improvement. When the gospel ventures into moral improvement, it shifts back into the old situation of the law, of self-justification, of trying to become better to please God—or to please the god of the self. When the gospel has gotten mixed up in this, it ceases to be the gospel at all. Thus, while Forde recognizes that Christians truly do good works, because the old nature is killed and the new man rises in Christ, he balks at acknowledging that theology has anything comprehensive to say about the actions of good works, first, because good works are spontaneous and unpredictable as their

[23] Forde, "Luther's 'Ethics,'" 147–150.

[24] Forde, "The Lutheran View of Sanctification," 228–229.

[25] Gerhard O. Forde, "Radical Lutheranism," in *A More Radical Gospel: Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism*, ed. Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson, Lutheran Quarterly Books (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 15.

[26] Forde, "Radical Lutheranism," 14.

opportunities arise within vocation circumstances, and, second, because teaching about good works inherently becomes a defense and strengthening of the self-justifying old man.

Is this method of treating good works consistent with the Lutheran tradition? Gerhard's *On Good Works* demonstrates that preaching the gospel only without the law or exhortation to good works was not the practice of early Lutherans. Not only are good works "necessary" in an appropriate sense (§§ 21–31), they also must not be avoided in teaching. Although works are excluded from justification, they are not by any means excluded from the Christian life and experience. Precisely because good works are necessary in the Christian life, and are fruits of justification, they are to be taught explicitly and held forth before Christians (§ 37). Rather than ignoring good works, pastors should teach good works appropriately. Quoting Luther, Gerhard points out, "It is difficult and dangerous to teach that we are justified by faith without works and yet to demand works at the same time . . . . The place of both faith and works should be taught and stressed diligently, but in such a way that each remains within its limits. Otherwise, if only works are taught, as happens in the papacy, faith is lost. If only faith is taught, fleshly men instantly dream that works are unnecessary" (§ 42).[27]

Some examples of Gerhard's use of Scripture demonstrate these points further. When addressing the question of the necessity of good works, Gerhard asks if Christian freedom excludes the necessity of good works (§ 30). Drawing from Galatians 5 and 1 Peter 2, Gerhard demonstrates that Christian freedom is not freedom from good works, but the freedom of the conscience from condemnation, that is, freedom from the curse of the law.

Galatians 5:13 proclaims: "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." St. Paul here distinguishes libertine freedom from the freedom that is capable of doing what is good. If we conceive of freedom simply as the untrammeled power of the will to choose any option, then we have mistaken the biblical meaning of freedom. The will of infinite options is devoid of goodness, instead focusing on the choosing capacity of the will. What the will chooses is not important. That the will can choose anything, regardless of what the "anything" is, is what is important to the libertine. Yet St. Paul specifically notes here that freedom is not boundless opportunity. The flesh, that is, the sinful nature, should not have the opportunity

[27] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1531), vol. 26, 334, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–76); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–86); vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–).

for choice or expression in true freedom. Instead, true freedom means to choose what is good: "through love serve one another." Freedom means to be freed from the impotence to do good. Freedom is freedom to love.

Peter makes the point even more strongly: "Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God" (1 Pet 2:16). Peter explicitly excludes from freedom the choice to do evil. Pursuing evil under the guise of freedom is not true freedom, but a masquerade, a return to the condition of servitude in which one lived prior to being freed.

In reality, whether he recognized it or not, Forde falls into agreement with the testimony of Scripture that true freedom is actually freedom to do good. This tacit recognition of good works in Christian freedom is surely what nudges Forde to admit that Christians, as new creatures, actually do good works. The newness of the Christian life, the regeneration of the Christian, the freedom of the Christian, means that he "necessarily" does good works—not in order to be justified, but as the necessary fruit of his justification and regeneration.

Furthermore, the necessity of Christian good works should not be left only to spontaneity. Although Christian good works are fruits of the Spirit, the Spirit himself teaches by means of the Word of God. Jeremiah prophesies that, in the new covenant, the Lord writes the law upon the hearts of believers (31:33). Gerhard notes that such "writing" indicates that the Word is still at work, and that a Christian does not act without guidance (Gerhard, § 17.7). Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel similarly states that the Spirit causes God's people "to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules" (36:27). Again, there are statutes and rules according to which a Christian walks and lives, not according to whim, spontaneity, or mystical direction. Thus the minister of Christ is called to "preach . . . reprove, rebuke, and exhort" (2 Tim 4:2) in accordance with Scripture, which itself lives by the breath of the Spirit, and is thereby "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16). The movement of the Spirit and the freedom of the Christian are in accordance with the Scriptures, so that a minister rightly depends on Scripture for all his work, whether instruction in good works or the consolation of the conscience.

Luther and Gerhard actually have the same concern as Forde; they recognize that teaching justification apart from works while demanding works is dangerous. Yet unlike Forde, they do not avoid teaching works in order to satisfy their concern. Rather, they call all theologians and ministers to do what they are called to do by

their office, and that is rightly to distinguish the place of good works in relation to justification (2 Tim 2:15).[28]

In fact, Forde argues in direct contrast to Gerhard on the teaching of good works. Gerhard points out that good works ought to be taught not only in careful distinction from justification, but that good works need to be taught because of the persistence of the old nature. While Forde says the old nature embraces the teaching of good works, because it can justify itself in this way, Gerhard points out that the old nature, or flesh, opposes such good works, and needs to be coerced and subdued while the inner man is freed in Christ to do good works (Rom 7:14–8:11).[29] This approach of confronting the old nature with the teaching of good works is in full concord with the Lutheran Confessions (FC SD VI 9, 18–21). Indeed, far from embracing truly good works in order to justify itself, the old nature hates truly good works, because they reveal the duplicity and deception of the old nature in its self-justification. That is, when good works are taught in their fullness, as the holy works of God and including the internal faith and love of the one who does them, they reveal the hollowness and façade of the merely external good works of the old nature. The "good works" of the old nature are just a show. The full, comprehensive, and pure teaching of Christian good works, to include the new life, faith, and love that can only exist in the regenerate by the Holy Spirit, cannot be coopted by the old nature for self-justification, but strips away false supports and reveals this "righteousness" for what it is: of no worth to justify.

The explicit and proper teaching of good works thus eliminates concerns about a "tame" third use of the law. Forde frets, "[The third use] assumes, apparently, that the law can really be domesticated so it can be used by us like a friendly pet. Does the law actually work that way? It assumes that we are the users of the law. We do not use the law. The Spirit does. And we really have no control over it. Who knows when it is going to rise up and attack with all its fury?"[30] Forde is correct, certainly, to insist that the Spirit uses the law, that it cannot be domesticated, and that it may—indeed shall—attack the old nature. The category of the third use of the law denies none of these things. Rather, the law is to be preached and taught extensively, in detail, for none of the uses is ever separated from the others. The Christian should be spurred on to good works, and in being so encouraged, will also find that his morality never lives up to the expectations of the law. When the law is properly taught, preached, and believed, the Christian will not resort to a moralistic spirituality, but will again be turned in repentance to the mercy of Christ by the Holy Spirit.

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[28] Gerhard, *On Good Works*, § 37.
[29] Gerhard, *On Good Works*, § 29.
[30] Forde, "Luther's 'Ethics,'" 153.

When pressed, all faithful Christians acknowledge that Christians do good works and should pursue them. More than this, Christians should be taught what good works are on the basis of God's moral law and should be taught how to pursue them, because they are part of the Christian life. Such teaching and encouragement, when rightly set in the full ministry of law and gospel, does not turn a Christian to moralism. On the contrary, it heightens his appreciation for the law, for the true, good, and beautiful will of God, and impresses upon him how greatly he needs Christ's mercy. The true teaching of the law, in fact, leads to repentance, to Christ, to mercy, and to that new life in Christ, in which we all confess: "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (Rom 6:1–2).

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Introduction to Martin Luther, "The Antinomian Disputations" (1537–1540)

Jeffrey G. Silcock and Christopher Boyd Brown

[Editors' note: The following article is from the new volume 73 of Luther's Works, *which focuses on the academic disputations in which Luther participated and shows the systematic, dogmatic side of Luther's theology. The present article explains the history of Luther's important "Antinomian Disputations" against the theology of Johann Agricola—a topic which has received much attention of late.*[1] *The editors of*

[1] Abridgments made to the body of the article and footnotes are shown by the use of ellipses. Some footnotes have also been omitted without indication. Readers interested in the original historical footnotes are referred to LW 73. Cross-references in the footnotes have been changed to refer to the present pagination. The article includes several abbreviations, which are explained here. ***ADB***: *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie,* ed. Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1875–1912; reprint, 1967–1971). **Aland**: Kurt Aland, *Hilfsbuch zum Lutherstudium*, 4th ed. (Bielefeld: Luther-Verlag, 1996). **Benzing**: Josef Benzing, *Lutherbibliographie: Verzeichnis der gedruckten Schriften Martin Luthers bis zu dessen Tod* (Baden-Baden: Heitz, 1966). **Brecht**: Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, trans. James L. Schaaf, 3 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985–1993). ***Concordia:*** Paul T. McCain, Edward Engelbrecht, et al., eds., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006). ***CR:*** C. G. Bretschneider and H. E. Bindseil, eds., *Philippi Melanthonis Opera quae supersunt omnia*, 28 vols., Corpus Reformatorum (Halle: C. A. Schwetschke, 1834–1860). **Kolb-Wengert**: Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000). **LCC**: John T. McNeill and Henry P. van Dusen, eds., *Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953–). **Loeb**: *Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912). **LW**: *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–76); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–86); vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–). **LW Bio**: Christopher Boyd Brown, ed., *Sixteenth-Century Biographies of Martin Luther*, Luther's Works Companion Volume (St. Louis:

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CTQ *thank Concordia Publishing House for permission to publish this article, and point the readers' attention to another excellent discussion of the topic in Edward Engelbrecht's* Friends of the Law*, also from CPH.*[2]*]*

An Antinomian (a term coined by Martin Luther from the Greek *anti* ["against"] and *nomos* ["law"]) is one who rejects God's Law in some way. In sixteenth-century Wittenberg, there were two groups of Antinomians claiming fidelity to Luther and two main controversies.[3] The first group, led by Johann Agricola during Luther's lifetime, maintained that repentance [*poenitentia*] is brought about not by the Law, but by the preaching of the Gospel. In the decades after Luther's death, a second group of Lutheran theologians criticized Philip Melanchthon's definition of a third use of the Law [*tertius usus legis*] in its application to the Christian life.[4] That was the chief issue behind Article VI of the Formula of Concord,[5] but—though touched upon—it is not the central topic of the disputations concerning Antinomianism in this volume.[6]

Luther's theological disagreement with Agricola was, to some extent, a debate over words—but the theological terms at stake, such as "Law," "Gospel," and

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Concordia Publishing House, 2018). ***MBW***: Heinz Scheible, ed., *Melanchthons Briefwechsel* (Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1977–). ***ODCC***: F. L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. rev. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). ***OER***: Hans J. Hillerbrand, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, 4 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). ***RPP***: Hans Dieter Betz, et al., eds., *Religion Past & Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion*, 14 vols. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007–2013). **StA**: Hans-Ulrich Delius, Helmar Junghans, et al., eds., *Studienausgabe: Martin Luther*, 6 vols. (Berlin: Evangelische Verlangsanstalt, 1979–1999). ***TRE***: Gerhard Krause, Gerhard Müller, et al., eds., *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, 38 vols. (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1977–2007). ***VD16***: Irmgard Bezzel, ed., *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1983–2000), http://vd16.de. **Wander**: Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Wander, *Deutsches Sprichwörter Lexikon*, 5 vols. (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1867–1880). **WA**: *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [Schriften], 73 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–2009). **WA Br**: *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Briefwechsel*, 18 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1930–). **WA TR**: *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Tischreden*, 6 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1912–1921).

[2] Edward Engelbrecht, *Friends of the Law: Luther's Use of the Law for the Christian Life* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011).

[3] On other expressions of Antinomianism beyond sixteenth-century Wittenberg, see Peter Gemeinhardt, Bernard McGinn, Friedrich Christoph Ilgner, and Kate Bowler, "Antinomianism III," in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, ed. Hans-Josef Klauck et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 2:234–46; Theodor Mahlmann, "Antinomism [*sic*]," *RPP* 1:268–69; *ODCC*, s.v. "Antinomianism."

[4] On Melanchthon (1497–1560), Luther's younger colleague at the University of Wittenberg and fellow reformer, see LW Bio:xxxix–xl.

[5] The leaders of the Second Antinomian Controversy were Andreas Poach (1515–85), Anton Otto (1505–65), and Andreas Musculus (1514–81), who became one of the authors of the Formula of Concord. See Charles P. Arand, James A. Nestingen, and Robert Kolb, *The Lutheran Confessions: History and Theology of the Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), pp. 191–99; FC SD VI (Kolb-Wengert, pp. 587–91; *Concordia*, pp. 557–61).

[6] On the question of the third use of the Law, see below, pp. [309–313].

"repentance," were some of the most fundamental in Evangelical theology. And although the debate was often conducted in the context of learned disputations at the university, the issues involved were at the center of preaching and pastoral care. Accordingly, the Antinomian Controversy, and the texts surrounding it, are deserving of careful attention and help to illuminate the center of Luther's theology and its application.

Luther opposed the teaching of Agricola and his fellow Antinomians and gave his own account of the controversy in sermons and in treatises such as the 1539 *Against the Antinomians* and the posthumously published *Against Johann Agricola of Eisleben*.[7] Luther's most extensive interaction with Antinomian theology, however, was the series of Wittenberg disputations which are presented here. Agricola participated briefly in the second disputation, but expressed his theology in his preaching and exegetical works, as well as in covertly circulated theses. He constructed his own narrative of his controversy with Luther and the other Wittenberg theologians and collected manuscript sources to support his side of the story.[8] Together, along with correspondence from Melanchthon and others,[9] these sources form the basis for modern accounts of the Antinomian Controversy.[10]

Luther's Theology of Law and Gospel

Luther's understanding of the distinction between Law and Gospel was rooted in Augustine's (354–430) discussion of letter and spirit and Law and grace.[11] Yet in

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[7] *Church Postil* (1540–44), sermon for Trinity 5 on Luke 5:1–11, LW 78:204–21; *Against the Antinomians* (1539), LW 47:99–119; *Against Johann Agricola of Eisleben* (1540/1549), WA 51:429–43 (LW 61). See below, pp. [298–299, 321, 324,] [LW 73:]163 n. 10.

[8] See Ernst Thiele, "Denkwürdigkeiten aus dem Leben des Johann Agricola von Eisleben," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 80, no. 2 (1907): 246–70; Gustav Kawerau, "Briefe und Urkunden zur Geschichte des antinomischen Streites," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 4 (1880/1881): 299–324, 437–65. A compilation of sources is edited by Karl Eduard Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der evangelischen Kirchenreformation* (Hamburg: Perthes, 1842), pp. 291–342.

[9] See especially Jonas, Bugenhagen, Amsdorf, and Melanchthon to Elector John Frederick, April 5, 1540, in Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, pp. 325–27 (cf. MBW T9:200–206, no. 2409).

[10] Gustav Kawerau, *Johann Agricola von Eisleben: Ein Beitrag zur Reformationsgeschichte* (Berlin: Wilhelm Hertz, 1881); Joachim Rogge, *Johann Agricolas Lutherverständnis: Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Antinomismus* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1960); Mark U. Edwards Jr., *Luther and the False Brethren* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 156–79; Brecht 3:147–71; Jeffrey G. Silcock, *Law and Gospel in Luther's Antinomian Disputations, with Special Reference to Faith's Use of the Law* (ThD diss., Concordia Seminary, 1996). See also the account of the Antinomian Controversy by Johann Mathesius (1504–65), a contemporary who was present in Wittenberg during at least part of the events, in his *History*, LW Bio:412–17.

[11] See, e.g., *First Lectures on the Psalms* [Psalm 85] (1513–16/1743–1876), LW 11:160, where Luther distinguishes between the Law as "the Word of Moses [that comes up] to us (*ad nos*), while

Luther's distinctive development of the principle, it became central to Luther's mature theology and exegesis. By the distinction between Law and Gospel, Luther did not mean the difference between different parts of the biblical canon—as if the Old Testament were Law and the New Testament were Gospel. Instead, he meant the distinction between two different modes of divine speech, each of which can be found throughout the scriptural canon: the commandments and threats of the Law, which demand the performance of works, and the unconditional promises of the Gospel, which can only be trusted in faith. The preaching of the Law cannot save but only crushes the conscience and drives it to despair; the preaching of the Gospel then gives life and assurance of salvation.[12] Closely linked to Luther's distinction between Law and Gospel was his emphasis on true repentance [*poenitentia*], central to the *Ninety-Five Theses* and frequently repeated thereafter.[13]

Nevertheless, as Luther was well aware, the terms "Law" and "Gospel" and "repentance" were not always used in the same sense. The Latin word *poenitentia* could mean the sacrament of penance, the virtue of penitence, or the state of repentance.[14] "Gospel" could refer to a biblical narrative of the life of Christ, the promise of forgiveness for Christ's sake, or the totality of Christ's teaching.[15] Melanchthon thus sometimes used the term "Gospel" in a broader sense to include the preaching of repentance as well as forgiveness.[16] Did repentance itself mean only the crushing awareness of sin, or did it include turning in faith toward Christ and the desire to forsake sin? Was repentance (in its various meanings) produced by the preaching of the Law, by the preaching of the Gospel, or by the successive combination of the two—and if so in what order?[17] These questions received varying

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the Gospel is the Word of God [that comes] into us (*in nos*)"; cf. Luther's preface to Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter* (1533?/1556), LW 60:35–44.

[12] For Luther's articulation of the distinction between Law and Gospel as central to Christian theology, see *First Lectures on the Psalms* [Psalm 85] (1513–16/1743–1876), LW 11:160; *Freedom of a Christian* (1520), LW 31:348–50; sermon for Advent 3 on Matt. 11:2–10, LW 75:143–46; *How Christians Should Regard Moses* (1525), LW 35:162; *How Law and Gospel Are to Be Thoroughly Distinguished* (1532), LW 57:61–76; *Lectures on Galatians* (1531/1535), LW 26:115–16, 343; *Table Talk* no. 5518 (1542–43), LW 54:442–43; and [LW 73], *First Disputation against the Antinomians* (1537), Luther's prefatory address and Arguments 3 and 16, pp. 70–71, 75, 90. For a historical-systematic discussion, see Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, trans. and ed. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), pp. 267–76.

[13] See, e.g., *Ninety-Five Theses* (1517), LW 31:17–33; *Sermon on Penance* (1518), WA 1:319–24 (LW 70).

[14] See [LW 73,] p. 50 nn. 3–4.

[15] Cf. *Brief Instruction on the Gospels* (1521), LW 35:113–24 (cf. *Short Instruction* [1522], LW 75:7–12).

[16] See, e.g., Melanchthon, Ap IV 62 (Kolb-Wengert, p. 130; *Concordia*, p. 90). Cf. the discussion in FC SD V (Kolb-Wengert, pp. 581–86; *Concordia*, pp. 552–57).

[17] See Timothy J. Wengert, *Law and Gospel: Philip Melanchthon's Debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over Poenitentia* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), pp. 15–18.

answers both in the preceding theological tradition and among Luther's own associates.

Johann Agricola's Dispute with Melanchthon over Repentance and the *Visitation Articles* (1527–28)

Johann Agricola (1494–1566, born with the German family name Schnitter) was, like Luther, a native of Eisleben in County Mansfeld. (Luther sometimes referred to Agricola simply as "Eisleben" or "the Eislebener," though he also used the dismissive nickname "Grickel," contracted from "Agricola.") Agricola had studied in Leipzig and taught school in Braunschweig before matriculating at Wittenberg in 1516, where he became Luther's devoted student and friend.[18] He served as Luther's secretary during the Leipzig disputation in 1519 and received his master of arts degree in the same year. Agricola then continued in Wittenberg with the study of theology, publishing a number of exegetical works in defense of the Wittenberg theology as well as hymns that became a standard part of early Lutheran hymnals.[19] In 1525, at Luther's recommendation, he was called to Eisleben to become a preacher and rector of the Latin school there. In that capacity, he composed one of the first Evangelical catechisms.[20] Luther acknowledged Agricola's skill with language, both in terse dialectical formulations and in more rhetorical exposition.[21]

From his post in Eisleben, Agricola remained in close communication with Wittenberg. When Melanchthon, in the instructions for the Saxon visitations of 1527–28, insisted that the Law should be preached for repentance, in order to combat moral laxity,[22] Agricola fervently protested, insisting that genuine repentance must be based on love of righteousness, produced by the Gospel.[23] In

[18] On Agricola, see Kawerau, *Agricola von Eisleben*; Rogge, *Agricolas Lutherverständnis*; Joachim Rogge, "Agricola, Johann," *TRE* 1:110–18; Steffen Kjeldgaard-Pedersen, *Gesetz, Evangelium und Busse: Theologiegeschichtliche Studien zum Verhältnis zwischen dem jungen Johann Agricola (Eisleben) und Martin Luther* (Leiden: Brill, 1983); Kjeldgaard-Pedersen, "Agricola, Johann," *OER* 1:10–11.

[19] On Agricola's early exegetical work and publications, see Kjeldgaard-Pedersen, *Gesetz, Evangelium und Busse*, pp. 37–212. For Agricola's hymns, see Wackernagel 3:51–55, nos. 74–79.

[20] Agricola, "One Hundred Thirty Common Questions," trans. Timothy J. Wengert, in *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and James A. Nestingen (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), pp. 13–30.

[21] "Martini Lutheri De Joanne Agricola Jslebio Judicium 1528," in Thiele, "Denkwürdigkeiten," p. 252.

[22] See *Instructions for the Visitors* (1528), LW 40:274–77; cf. the discussion of these issues in Melanchthon's 1527 draft: *Liber visitatorius*, CR 26:9–10.

[23] Cf. Melanchthon to Spalatin, after October 19, 1527, MBW T3:183–84, no. 608 (CR 1:898).

Agricola's mind, he was defending Luther's teaching on Christian freedom against Melanchthon's legalism. Luther, for his part, regarded the dispute as chiefly an argument over words. He tried to mediate between Melanchthon and Agricola and proposed a solution that grounded repentance in the proper distinction between Law and Gospel.[24] The visitations continued under the guidance of Melanchthon and Luther, and relations between Luther and Agricola remained cordial. Nonetheless, other members of the Wittenberg faculty, including Justus Jonas, who had been friendly to Agricola before, began to be put on guard against him.[25]

The Cordatus Controversy (1536) and the Necessity of Good Works

Challenges to Melanchthon's teaching on the Law continued, however. The onset of the next phase of the Antinomian Controversy with Agricola was preceded in 1536 by a controversy between Conrad Cordatus and Caspar Cruciger (and behind Cruciger, Melanchthon) over the relationship between justification and good works.[26] Cordatus (1480–1546) was an Austrian humanist and theologian who had first come to Wittenberg in 1524.[27] He became pastor in nearby Niemegk, and in 1536 Cordatus accused Cruciger of teaching in his lectures that good works were necessary for salvation as a cause or condition *sine qua non*. Cruciger defended himself by appealing to Melanchthon as his source.[28] The Wittenberg theologians tried to settle the matter and prevent any further estrangement. Their efforts resulted in a consensus, which was reflected in public disputations at the time:[29] Justification is solely on account of God's mercy, not our works. Hence works cannot be called a partial cause of justification but rather are the result of

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[24] On this phase of the conflict, see Wengert, *Law and Gospel*; Brecht 2:264–66. Luther's solution was incorporated in the revisions to the *Instructions for the Visitors* (1528), LW 40:274–75.

[25] Jonas to Luther, January 3, 1528, WA Br 4:323 (cf. Preserved Smith, trans. and ed., *Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters* [Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1913], 2:428). . . .

[26] On the Cordatus Controversy, see Brecht 3:148–52; Wengert, *Law and Gospel*, pp. 206–10. For the primary documents, see WA Br 7:541–45.

[27] See Robert Rosin, "Cordatus, Conrad," *OER* 1:430.

[28] Cruciger (1504–48), who had heard Luther and Johann Eck (1486–1543) debate when he was a student in Leipzig, came to Wittenberg to complete his studies in 1521. After a period as rector of the Latin school in Magdeburg, Cruciger was called back in April 1528 to the Wittenberg faculty and as preacher at the Castle Church. He became one of Luther's most trusted editors, working on the *Summer Postil* as well as collaborating on the first volumes of the Wittenberg edition of Luther's works. On Cruciger, see the introduction by Benjamin T. G. Mayes, LW 77:xiii–xiv; Timothy J. Wengert, "Caspar Cruciger, 1504–1548: The Case of the Disappearing Reformer," *SCJ* 20, no. 3 (Autumn 1989): 417–41.

[29] See Luther, *Disputation concerning Justification* (1536), LW 34:174 (WA 39/1:104–5); *Disputation on the Works of the Law and of Grace* (1537), WA 39/1:227–29 (LW 72); *Circular Disputation on the Wedding Garment* (1537), WA 39/1:264–65 (LW 72).

justification. Cruciger was happy that Luther had at least conceded that good works were a result of justification, though he did not agree with Luther that such a philosophical term as "necessary," which invited misunderstanding, should be abandoned altogether.

Agricola's Return to Wittenberg, *Summaries of the Gospels*, and the *Theses Circulated among the Brethren* (1537)

While Cordatus' charges were still being resolved, Agricola left Mansfeld and returned to Wittenberg in December 1536, at Luther's invitation, and lodged with his wife and children under Luther's roof. While Luther was absent at the diet in Smalcald from the end of January until mid-March 1537, Agricola watched over Luther's household and substituted for him in the pulpit and lecture hall. Even complaints made by Count Albert of Mansfeld (1480–1560) to Luther and Elector John Frederick (1503–54) in late January denouncing the departing Agricola as quarrelsome, bibulous, and potentially subversive—"an[other] Münzer"—did not shake Luther's confidence and friendship.[30]

The first inkling of further trouble came with Luther's return to Wittenberg at the beginning of March, when he received complaints about Agricola's preaching at the assembly of princes of the league in Zeitz after the Smalcald diet. Agricola was reported to have used "new terminology," rejecting the preaching of the Law and teaching that the revelation of God's wrath should be taught instead from the Gospel.[31] Although Agricola's sermon from Zeitz does not survive, he used similar language in his sermon of February 25, 1537, which was published in Wittenberg in June. Discussing Rom. 1:17–18, Agricola stated:

> For the Gospel, as St. Paul says, whenever and however it may be preached, is a double revelation. It reveals from heaven, in the first place, the righteousness of God—how a person becomes righteous before God—as well as how, with God's help, one may overcome death and all misfortune, both physical and spiritual, and never turn away from God. . . . In the second place, it also reveals

[30] The letter to Luther, Jonas, Bugenhagen, and Melanchthon does not survive, though it is discussed in the contemporaneous letter to Elector John Frederick: see Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, pp. 291–96. Luther mentions Count Albert's letter in *Table Talk* no. 3554 (1537), LW 54:233–34. . . .

[31] See Luther, *Table Talk* no. 4043 (1538), WA TR 4:97: "Johann Agricola enjoyed great influence at the court and was practically a privy councillor, and yet quite apart from anything I did, he ruined his own reputation. When he preached at the assembly at Zeitz, he displeased everyone. That wretched man, puffed up with his arrogance, tricked himself with new terminology: 'It is the revelation of wrath that must be preached,' he urged, 'not the Law'—whereas 'revelation of wrath' and 'Law' are the same thing and synonyms."

> from heaven the wrath of God—the eternal curse upon all those who either scoff at and mock the first revelation, like those who are secure; or abuse it, as we, alas, are now doing; or else persecute it, as the Jews, the heathen, and all the world do.[32]

Meanwhile, Agricola's theological positions had also begun to circulate in Wittenberg in the form of manuscript theses,[33] declaring that "repentance must be taught not from the Decalogue, nor from the Law of Moses in any part, but from the violation of the Son, through the Gospel."[34] Cruciger wrote in a letter of June 27: "Up to this point, [Agricola] has been murmuring, but certain theses have been put in circulation (though among only a few). . . . Now at last he is beginning to show himself. . . . In these last days he has published a book of a few sermons in which he sufficiently exposes himself. . . . I do not know what words Luther has had with him."[35] Melanchthon, though disagreeing with Agricola's formulations, remained relatively conciliatory. Others in the Wittenberg faculty, however, began to distance themselves more sharply from Agricola; the Wittenberg pastor Johann Bugenhagen, departing to advise reforms in Denmark, warned against allowing Agricola to take his place in the Wittenberg pulpit.[36]

Finally, Luther himself was drawn to speak publicly against "our Antinomians." In a July sermon on Luke 5:1–11,[37] later incorporated into the *Church Postil*, Luther

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[32] Agricola, *Drey Sermon und Predigen/ Eine von Abraham und dem heidnischen weiblin am Sontag Reminiscere inn der fasten. Die ander am Ostertag von der Aufferstehung des Herrn Christi. Die dritte am Ostermontage vom brennen des Hertzens der zweier Jünger, die gen Emaus gingen* (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1537) [VD16 A1022–1024], sermon for Reminiscere Sunday (February 25, 1537), fol. D2r–v. Contrast Luther, *Smalcald Articles* (1537) III II 1–4, III III 1–8 (Kolb-Wengert, pp. 311–12, 312–13; *Concordia*, pp. 271–72, 272–73).

[33] According to Melanchthon, Jonas, et al., to Elector John Frederick, April 5, 1540, in Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, p. 326 (cf. MBW T9:201, no. 2409), Agricola had composed and begun to circulate the theses some years previously.

[34] See [LW 73], *Antinomian Theses Circulated among the Brethren* (1537), Thesis 1, p. 44.

[35] Cruciger to Veit Dietrich, CR 3:386. Although CR gives the date as July 10, 1537, the body of the letter (CR 3:387) gives the date as "*die septem dormientium*" or the "Day of the Seven Sleepers" of Ephesus, June 27 (not the Feast of the Seven Holy Brothers honored on July 10): see Wander 4:555, "Siebenschläfer" nos. 2 and 7; cf. WA Br 8:122.

[36] See in addition to the previous letter, Cruciger to Veit Dietrich, August 4, 1537, CR 3:397; Edwards, *Luther and the False Brethren*, p. 158. . . .

[37] *Church Postil* (1540–44), sermon for Trinity 5 on Luke 5:1–11, LW 78:204–21, here pp. 215–21. For reasons of content, it seems best to date the sermon July 1, 1537. This dating is supported by Kjeldgaard-Pedersen, *Gesetz, Evangelium und Busse*, pp. 256–62. However, it is challenged by Brecht (3:409–10 n. 4) for several reasons: (1) It is not in Georg Rörer's (1492–1557) list. (2) On that day Luther preached in the afternoon on a different text, which would be very unusual. (3) Cruciger said on July 10 that Luther's attitude toward Agricola was not yet entirely clear. Yet if the dating of Cruciger's letter is corrected from July 10 to June 27 (see above, n. [35]), then the last difficulty is removed, and the unusual double preaching could be justified by Luther's sense of urgency in addressing the situation.

addressed the question of the proclamation of Christ's Passion and death as a preaching of repentance, framing the discussion in terms of the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. Luther here rejects the Antinomian opinion that Paul in Romans provides them with scriptural warrant for the inversion of Law and Gospel and for preaching repentance through the Gospel (or "from the violation of the Son") instead of through the Law. In opposition to the Antinomian claim that one must first preach grace and comfort and only afterward terrify with wrath, Luther exclaims that the Antinomians understand neither wrath nor grace, neither repentance nor the comfort of the conscience. With a clarity that is hardly surpassed by any other statement in the following years, Luther formulates his own position in the following way: "Everything that preaches about our sins and God's wrath is the Law's preaching, no matter how or when it happens. On the other hand, the Gospel is the preaching that shows and gives nothing but grace and forgiveness in Christ."[38] Although Luther does not mention Agricola by name in the sermon, it is clear he has Agricola in mind.[39]

Tension between the two principal protagonists continued to escalate, spurred by Luther's criticism of—and, eventually, his intervention to prevent publication of—Agricola's *Summaries of the Gospels*, which by the beginning of September had begun to be printed by the Wittenberg printer Hans Lufft (1495–1584).[40] This short commentary on the assigned Gospel readings from Trinity Sunday to Advent incorporated Agricola's "new terminology," describing the Gospel as a revelation of God's wrath as well as of God's righteousness and urging the preaching of repentance not from the Law but from the "violation of the Son." Agricola claimed to have shown the manuscript to Luther at Pentecost (May 20, 1537) and to have received his approval for it—a claim Luther emphatically denied.[41]

In a letter of September 2, Agricola complained that Luther had changed his mind about the work now on press.[42] Agricola affirmed that the *Summaries* taught the same as all his works: that the preaching of Christ's death (the preaching of repentance) terrifies the conscience while the preaching of Christ's resurrection (the

[38] *Church Postil* (1540–44), sermon for Trinity 5 on Luke 5:1–11, LW 78:215.

[39] See Kjeldgaard-Pedersen, *Gesetz, Evangelium und Busse*, pp. 256–61.

[40] Agricola, *Das ander teil der Summarien, von dem ersten Sontag nach Trinitatis anzufahen, bis auff den ersten Sontag des Advents* (Wittenberg: [Hans Lufft], 1537). The surviving text is edited in Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, pp. 296–311.

[41] Agricola to Luther, September 2, 1537, WA Br 8:122. See Luther, *Against Johann Agricola of Eisleben* (1540/1549), WA 51:431–32 (LW 61). Edwards finds Agricola's claim of Luther's endorsement implausible: *Luther and the False Brethren*, pp. 158–60.

[42] WA Br 8:122.

preaching of forgiveness) raises it up again. Agricola argued that this was the teaching of all the apostles and, in fact, Luther's own doctrine as well.

For his part, Luther may not even have deigned to read the letter; he does not seem to have taken direct action to intervene in the publication of the *Summaries* until November, when the matter was brought to his attention by the electoral court. On Agricola's part, his continued work on the project—his dedicatory preface to the *Summaries*, emphasizing his idiosyncratic understanding of the Gospel, is dated September 24, 1537—shows that he was willing to pursue the publication despite awareness that Luther disapproved, and even to sharpen its polemical force.[43]

Meanwhile, on September 30, Luther again engaged Antinomian claims from the Wittenberg pulpit, clearly setting forth his own teaching on the Law: The Law will always prick the conscience, for even Christians do not love God as they should. Christ did not dissolve the Law but came to fulfill it. Yet it is not enough that Christ fulfilled the Law; it must also be fulfilled in the redeemed. Luther stressed, no doubt with Agricola in mind, the indissolubility of Law and Gospel.[44]

By the second half of October 1537, the electoral court had become involved, seeking assurances from Agricola—and confirmation from Luther—that the Eisleben theologian was in fact teaching in harmony with the reformer. Agricola reported that there was substantial agreement between Luther and himself and that the problems had been the result of a misunderstanding. Elector John Frederick, anxious for doctrinal unity, advised Agricola not only to teach the substance of what Luther taught but to use his words as well. As an added precaution, Chancellor Gregor Brück was asked to check whether Luther had in fact approved the publication of Agricola's *Summaries*, which at that time had been printed through the Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity. When Luther found out about this, he ordered the printing stopped and had the manuscript and printed sheets—forty-eight pages—confiscated. He kept one copy for himself on which he wrote critical annotations.[45]

Luther became convinced that, despite all Agricola's protestation, the difference between them was not one simply of words but of substance, and he prepared to publish the anonymous *Theses Circulated among the Brethren* along with his own public disavowal and denunciation. Alerted of Luther's intentions by Melanchthon,

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[43] This is the possibility that Edwards finds most likely. For his discussion, including the possibility that Agricola misdated his letter when publishing it or the dedication to the *Summaries*, see *Luther and the False Brethren*, pp. 158–60.

[44] *Church Postil* (1540–44), sermon for Trinity 18 on Matt. 22:34–46, LW 79:172–80. This September 30 sermon is likely that which Melanchthon enclosed with his letter to Johann Brenz, October 12, 1537, MBW T7:534, no. 1952 (CR 3:390).

[45] For Luther's marginal comments on the *Summaries*, see WA 50:674–75. Cf. [LW 73], p. 46 n. 10.

Agricola scrambled to reconcile, beseeching Luther not to publish the theses, denying his authorship of them, and pledging fervently that he embraced Luther and his teaching. Agricola drafted an outline of his theological ideas which he gave to Luther for review, insisting that he had always taught that the Law was necessary for "the righteousness of the flesh," threatening the ungodly with punishments, and also so that the justified might have "exercises of faith"—but that it should not be allowed to trouble the conscience.

However, Agricola followed this statement with a letter in which he defended his position by arguing that Luther himself in his books had taught about repentance and forgiveness (or justification) in two ways: one, through the Law and the Gospel; the other, through the Gospel alone.[46] As evidence of the latter, Agricola pointed to Luther's 1519 *Meditation on Christ's Passion*, which alluded to Augustine's description of Christ as both sacrament and example [*sacramentum et exemplum*].[47] Agricola saw here his own doctrine of the double proclamation of the Gospel, proclaiming repentance on the basis of Christ's example, a hallmark of Antinomian theology. The implication was that Luther's own teaching of repentance was inconsistent, that it contained two irreconcilable lines of thought.

Agricola's view of Law and Gospel was different from Luther's, even though he was attempting to go as far as he could to accommodate his own doctrine to that of his teacher. The problem is that the doctrine he was trying to accommodate was Luther's early pre-Reformation view of Law and Gospel, which was still firmly grounded in the Augustinian tradition. On the one hand, Agricola can say that the ministry of the Law no longer has anything to do with the Law of Moses, which Luther would readily agree to (even though the Antinomians consistently associate the Law with Moses in order to justify their claim that it is abolished); on the other hand, Agricola says nothing about the fundamental task of the Law as accusation. Instead, Agricola equated the Gospel with the new Law. This is a basic tenet of Antinomian theology—and of medieval Scholasticism.[48]

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[46] Agricola to Luther, between November 24 and December 7, 1537, WA Br 8:279. In addition to Agricola's attempt to claim Luther as his model, the letter is of note because Agricola otherwise hardly ever mentions the doctrine of justification as such. . . .

[47] Luther, *Meditation on Christ's Passion* (1519), LW 42:3–14, especially p. 13. Cf. [LW 73], *Fifth Set of Theses against the Antinomians* (1538), Thesis 50, p. 65; *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Arguments 15 and 27, pp. 146–48, 159.

[48] See, e.g., Agricola, *In Lucae Evangelium Annotationes* (Nürnberg: Petreius, 1525) [VD16 A1001], fol. V5v; Johann Haner (ca. 1480–1549), *Theses Ioannis Haneri Noribergensis de Poenitentia* (Leipzig: N. Wolrab, 1539) [VD16 H513], Thesis 60, fol. B4r; Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–74), *ST*, 1–2 qq. 106–108 (Blackfriars 30:2–65); Rogge, *Agricolas Lutherverständnis*, p. 170. Cf. Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1531/1535), LW 26:177.

Whatever Agricola's intentions, his letter proved highly provocative and set off such a reaction that Agricola noted in retrospect that it "set the Rhine ablaze."[49] Although Luther had largely held back to this point, Agricola's letter was the last straw. Even though Luther's colleagues encouraged him to try to reach agreement through discussion, he would no longer let himself be dissuaded from coming out against Agricola publicly. Agricola, for his part, still held that there was no serious theological difference between himself and Luther but simply personal ill will and misunderstanding. Although Luther did not allow his personal feelings to get in the way, he openly acknowledged the anguish of losing a dear friend.[50]

Antinomian Theses Circulated among the Brethren (1537)

At the beginning of December, therefore, Luther began his public campaign against the Antinomians in the Wittenberg press. First, he published the Antinomian theses which had been circulating in Wittenberg throughout the summer, preceded by his own critical *Response* and followed by additional Antinomian theses which Luther had collected on his own. Although Agricola's patronage of the theses was an open secret, Luther chose to publish them as the work of "some unknown author."[51]

The first part of the *Antinomian Theses Circulated among the Brethren* was a set of eighteen theses advancing Agricola's Antinomian position. The next section presented five "sound" statements from Luther and Melanchthon which the Antinomians could affirm, followed by three "unsound" statements from the Wittenberg reformers. These seem to have constituted the theses distributed by Agricola and his circle.[52] In Luther's edition, this material was followed by "Other Articles" which Luther had apparently gathered from the writings and oral statements of Agricola and his followers and from other apparent Antinomians . . . .

Agricola sought to dissociate himself from the theses.[53] Yet the candor of his protestations is thrown into question by the fact that even some of the theses whose authorship he specifically denied can be found verbatim in his published writings.[54]

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[49] This was Agricola's handwritten note on Luther's letter which he preserved: "This letter, which I wrote in all simplicity, set the Rhine ablaze." See WA Br 8:279. . . .

[50] See *Table Talk* no. 3650a (1537), LW 54:258.

[51] *D. Martinus Lutherus. Venerunt In Manus Meas Quaedam Positiones* ([Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1537]) [Benzing 3220]. Aland 26. See WA 39/1:336–37.

[52] See above, p. [298].

[53] See above, p. [301]; Agricola to Elector John Frederick, March 1, 1540, in Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, pp. 317–20.

[54] See [LW 73], *Antinomian Theses Circulated among the Brethren* (1537), Theses 1 and 18, p. 44 (and n. 4 there) and p. 46 (and n. 10 there); "Other Articles" A3 and B8, p. 48 (and n. 26 there)

Luther was, if anything, at first too ready to believe Agricola's denials, as the marginal notes in Luther's own surviving copy of the printed *Antinomian Theses Circulated among the Brethren* suggest. . . .

The *First Set of Theses against the Antinomians* and the *First Disputation against the Antinomians*

Luther's *Response* prefixed to the *Antinomian Theses Circulated among the Brethren* promised that he would soon engage the theses in public disputations, and almost immediately thereafter Luther formulated and published his own series of thirty-nine theses "against certain Antinomians."[55]

Luther's first set of theses against the Antinomians begins with a discussion of repentance [*poenitentia*] and its sources: sorrow (which must be produced by the Law) and a good intention (which cannot exist without the comfort of the Gospel). The theses condemn the scholastic theologians for exalting human powers both to repent of sin and to form a good intention, even as they minimize original sin and emphasize human traditions—all because they do not understand what Law and Gospel are. But if the Scholastics have created despair by emphasizing the Law, other teachers (the Antinomians) have reacted by seeking to remove the Law from the Church altogether. Yet Scripture teaches and shows by example that "repentance must begin with the Law";[56] only after sin and death have been exposed and reproved by the Law can the Gospel be proclaimed to bring forgiveness and life.

These theses served as the basis of the *First Disputation against the Antinomians*, held in Wittenberg on December 18, 1537, before a large audience. It took the form of a regular academic disputation over which Luther presided. In his opening address, Luther stressed that sound doctrine could be preserved only by properly distinguishing the Law from the Gospel. The Law had to teach the knowledge of sin before the Gospel could forgive sin. He pointed out that this "method" not only had apostolic warrant but that it had also been used by Christ Himself. Whereas the Antinomians claimed that Christ had abolished the Law, Luther countered that Christ had not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17). Thus, Luther says, the Law is never removed, but remains: unfulfilled before Christ, fulfilled in Christ, and to be fulfilled in Christians imperfectly in this life and perfectly in the life to come. Meanwhile, the Law must accuse and kill, and the Gospel give life—together producing true repentance.

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and p. 49 (and n. 35 there). Cf. Luther, *Against Johann Agricola of Eisleben* (1540/1549), WA 51:434–43 (LW 61).

[55] See [LW 73], pp. 50–53. . . .

[56] See [LW 73], *First Set of Theses against the Antinomians* (1537), Thesis 25, p. 52.

Since Agricola did not attend the disputation, and no one else from his circle was willing to step forward,[57] other members of the university took turns representing the Antinomian side objecting to Luther's theses. Luther presided and evidently served as the primary respondent, though sometimes other participants seem to have made an initial response to objections which Luther then followed with a response of his own.[58] In the manuscripts of the disputation, some responses are explicitly identified as Luther's. Yet some others which are not explicitly attributed can be ascribed without reservation to Luther based on personal references made in their contents, and many others also seem fairly clearly to be in Luther's voice. It seems reasonable, therefore, to ascribe the responses as a whole to Luther, either as having been made by him directly or as having been made under his presidency and amended or expanded by him as he saw fit.

Other than Luther, the only participants in the disputation whose names are specifically preserved in the record are Jonas, Cordatus, and Melanchthon. Jonas, who had been one of the first to become suspicious of Agricola, seems to be playing devil's advocate in arguing against the need for the Law. Cordatus, who had opposed Melanchthon in the earlier controversy over the necessity of good works, seems to be advocating Antinomian theses, though he may also be doing so only for the purpose of argument.

Melanchthon's role in the disputation is more complex. Although Melanchthon and Agricola were on opposite sides theologically concerning the doctrine of the Law, differences between Melanchthon and Luther on the necessity of good works for justification had also become apparent in the Cordatus Controversy of 1536. Yet in the conflict between Luther and Agricola between 1537 and 1540, Melanchthon consistently played a mediating role, trying to reconcile the antagonists. He was, moreover, an experienced pedagogue, familiar with the use of university disputations to test different theological understandings. It is thus perilous to assume too much about Melanchthon's own theological position on the basis of his objections to Luther's theses, though Luther himself eventually became publicly exasperated with Melanchthon's willingness to advocate Antinomian positions for the sake of debate in the disputations.[59] In the *First Disputation against the Antinomians*, Melanchthon's objection in Argument 11 seems intended to press

[57] See *Table Talk* no. 3650c (1537), WA TR 3:483. Cf. WA 39/1:360.

[58] See [LW 73], *First Disputation against the Antinomians* (1537), Arguments 2, 4, and 14, pp. 73–74, 76–77, 85–87. Cf. WA 39/1:365 n. 1, which remarks on the omission of the responses made by "students" in some manuscripts.

[59] I.e., in the 1538 *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians*: see in the introduction below, p. [320]; *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians*, Argument 40, [LW 73,] pp. 213–14.

Luther to take a position similar to Melanchthon's own published understanding of human cooperation with divine help.

In Luther's defense of the theses against objections, he further explores the sense in which the Law is—and is not—impossible: impossible for fallen human beings; impossible as a means to justification; but not impossible without qualification since it will be fulfilled by believers in the life to come. Not only the ceremonial and judicial law but also the moral Law expressed in the Decalogue is abolished with the coming of Christ—not in the sense that it is no longer preached, but because Christ has fulfilled it, and it no longer has power to condemn those who have apprehended Christ's perfect fulfillment by faith and imputation. In the life to come, the Law is abolished in that it is fulfilled by believers who no longer need reproof or condemnation, but it remains in its substance: "In the life to come, [the Law] will simply be what it used to demand here"—but then it will be a nonaccusing Law.[60] In the present life, the Law is God's instrument, even though it is not the Gospel. Luther even insists that the Holy Spirit makes use of the Law, distinguishing between the Holy Spirit as God in His divine majesty, who uses the Law to reprove sin, and the Holy Spirit as Gift, given to believers through the Gospel.[61] This distinction gives rise to an extended warning against the dangers of mystical theology and of the theology of [pseudo-]Dionysius the Areopagite in particular.[62] . . .

The *Second, Third,* and *Fourth Set of Theses against the Antinomians* and the *Second Disputation against the Antinomians*

Luther was provoked by Agricola's failure to appear for the first disputation,[63] and he proceeded to publish a second set of forty-eight theses against the Antinomians before the end of December 1537 (indeed, he seems to have at least drafted them at the time of the first disputation on December 18), followed by the third and fourth sets of theses at the beginning of January.

The *Second Set of Theses against the Antinomians*[64] revolves around the proper distinction between Law and Gospel in justification. The theses begin by affirming that the Law is not necessary—indeed, useless and impossible—as a means to justification. Yet Luther insists that this does not mean that the Law should not be preached, for without it human beings will not know their need for deliverance from

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[60] See [LW 73], *First Disputation against the Antinomians* (1537), Argument 34, p. 112.

[61] See [LW 73], *First Disputation against the Antinomians* (1537), Argument 4, pp. 75–77.

[62] See [LW 73], *First Disputation against the Antinomians* (1537), Argument 17, pp. 91–93.

[63] See *Table Talk* no. 3605a (1537), LW 54:248.

[64] *Disputatio Secunda D. Mart. Lutheri* ([Wittenberg, 1537]) [Benzing 3222]. Aland 26. See WA 39/1:337. The theses are translated [in LW 73] from WA 39/1:347–50. . . .

sin, wrath, and death. Whatever exposes and reveals these things and reproves sin is, in fact, Law, no matter what it may be called. Without the Law, there is no need for Christ or for human obedience to God. Despite the satanic teaching of the Antinomians, the Law is, in fact, the work of the Holy Spirit and will remain for eternity; it has been fulfilled in Christ and will be fulfilled in the blessed.

The *Third Set of Theses against the Antinomians*[65] begins by defining repentance not simply as sorrow for particular sins but as the lifelong and continual struggle against original sin in believers, reflected in the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. If Jesus Himself thus teaches the Law, it is shameless to seek to abolish it, not to mention impossible, since it remains written on the human heart regardless.

The *Fourth Set of Theses against the Antinomians*[66] criticizes the teaching of repentance among the Papists for leaving Christians uncertain of God's grace and driving them to despair. Yet it is still more dangerous for the Antinomians to remove repentance altogether by eliminating the Law. The fact that the Law is not necessary for justification does not mean that it should not be taught. The Law shows human beings that they are sinners; it is fulfilled by Christ; and faith, of its own accord, without the Law, does the good works which the Law requires. Christ, therefore, does not abolish the Law but restores it.

Meanwhile, Melanchthon again devoted himself to restoring peace and harmony and persuaded Agricola to write to Luther on December 26 seeking a reconciliation.[67] In this letter, Agricola declared his willingness to submit to Luther's authority and, referring back to the outline he had given to Luther earlier,[68] swore that he had always taught and thought in harmony with him. Although this was not exactly a retraction or an admission of error, Agricola did close by appealing to Gal. 6:1 in asking Luther to deal gently with "one who has been overtaken in a fault." In addition to the letter—which Luther initially refused even to read—Agricola also employed Melanchthon, the usually suspicious Jonas, and Luther's wife, Katy, as intercessors.[69]

Despite these efforts, Luther, as dean of the faculty, sent Agricola his own letter at the beginning of January 1538 to inform him that his permission to lecture in theology at the university had been revoked and that he would need to apply to the university senate for permission if he wanted to continue teaching or to receive a

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[65] *Disputatio Tertia D. Martini Lutheri* ([Wittenberg, 1538]) [Benzing 3223]. Aland 26. See WA 39/1:337. The theses are translated [in LW 73] from WA 39/1:350–52. . . .

[66] *Disputatio Quarta D. Martini Lutheri* ([Wittenberg, 1538]) [Benzing 3224]. Aland 26. See WA 39/1:337–38. The theses are translated [in LW 73] from WA 39/1:352–54. . . .

[67] Agricola to Luther, December 26, [1537], WA Br 8:342–43. . . .

[68] See above, p. [301]. . . .

[69] See Edwards, *Luther and the False Brethren*, pp. 164–65, based on Thiele, "Denkwürdigkeiten," p. 259.

salary. Melanchthon, recognizing the gravity of the situation, advised Agricola to send his wife, Else (whom Luther regarded quite highly), to plead on his behalf. Luther responded by setting two requirements which Agricola would have to fulfill before his right to teach could be restored. First, he had to cease using his strange new terminology, replacing the phrase "revelation of wrath" with "Law." Second, he had to participate in a public disputation with Luther the following Saturday.

Accordingly, the disputation on Luther's *Second Set of Theses against the Antinomians* was held on January 12, 1538. In his introductory address, Luther gives thanks to God for restoring the open teaching of "the true doctrine of the Law and the Gospel" to the Church after it had been obscured by the virtual Pelagianism of the Scholastics.[70] Yet since Satan is constantly seeking to overthrow the doctrine of justification anew, it is necessary to hold disputations such as this to train and equip those doing battle against the devil. In particular, it is necessary to discuss the role of the Law: both to deny that it is "necessary or useful for justification" and nonetheless to affirm that it must be taught in order to overcome carnal presumption and Pelagianism.[71]

As in the *First Disputation against the Antinomians*, Luther himself served as the primary respondent—indeed, though not all of the responses are attributed to him explicitly in the manuscript relations, it is more difficult than in the first disputation to identify any responses which are clearly not his. The only other participant identified by name (apart from Agricola) is Georg Major, who interjects, asking for clarification of an argument.[72]

The arguments engaging the *Second Set of Theses against the Antinomians* draw Luther to insist that neither legalism nor Antinomianism should be accepted. Rather, both the Law and the Gospel are divine doctrines which must be sharply distinguished from each other in their purpose and effects even as they must be taught in connection with each other. The Law is required materially for justification, just as a sinful human being is materially necessary, but this does not make the Law an effective cause of justification. The Law—the *lex accusans* which "accuses, makes guilty, and demands"[73]—is fulfilled in Christ and ceases to accuse those who receive Christ's fulfillment through imputation, by faith. By this alone are believers justified. Yet believers do begin to fulfill the Law now as in the Spirit they

[70] See [LW 73], *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Luther's prefatory address, p. 115. . . .

[71] See [LW 73], *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Luther's prefatory address, p. 119.

[72] See [LW 73], *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 27, p. 159. . . .

[73] See [LW 73], *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 3, p. 127.

fight against sin. In the life to come the Law will continue forever, not as an accuser, but quiescently, as it does for the angels.

Agricola was present at the disputation, as he had agreed. Nevertheless, he did not speak until Argument 14, and even then he presented only two propositions of his own, affirming Luther's theses to be "true and godly" and insisting that he was participating only to gain further insight for himself and to pacify those who believed that he had sometimes expressed himself in ways divergent from Luther's teaching.[74]

Agricola first asked how the righteousness of the Law could be condemned by the Law itself—implying that the condemnation of the sin of self-righteousness must instead be condemned by the Gospel. Luther responded by insisting that the Law, understood spiritually, serves to condemn the carnal righteousness of the Law. Second, Agricola asked why the Law is needed to teach good works, if Christ's example serves this purpose for Christians. Luther responded that the one does not negate the other and that the setting forth of Christ as example is itself the preaching of the Law.

At the conclusion of the response to Agricola's second proposition in Argument 15, Luther made a short public speech. He acknowledged the suspicion that he had harbored toward Agricola but announced that he was now satisfied with what he had heard (perhaps depending heavily on Agricola's blanket acceptance of Luther's theses) and that therefore he and Agricola were no longer in disagreement. Luther concluded by making a heartfelt plea to the audience for unanimity and sincerity in order to give no ground to the "spies" sent by his enemies, who would be happy to see them start fighting again.[75] He was obviously relieved that the painful controversy had been resolved.

As a consequence of this public reconciliation, no disputations were held to debate the third and fourth sets of theses that Luther had published. He could only hope that no more disputations against Antinomian teaching would be necessary, even if he privately doubted whether the matter had really been settled.

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[74] See [LW 73], *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 14, pp. 143–44.

[75] See [LW 73], *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), p. 149. Luther's Roman Catholic opponents such as Johann Cochlaeus (1479–1552) sought to publicize the Antinomian disagreements in Wittenberg in order to discredit the Reformation: see below, p. [320]. The publication of Johann Haner's Antinomian theses (see above, [n. 48]) by Cochlaeus' Leipzig printer Nicholaus Wolrab (d. 1560) was likely part of this effort to discredit the Lutheran theologians.

Excursus on the Conclusion to the *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* and the "Third Use of the Law"

The last paragraph of Luther's brief address at the conclusion of the *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* has provoked considerable discussion among scholars because it is arguably the only passage in the whole corpus of Luther's work in which Luther speaks not of two but of three uses of the Law (though the terminology of "use" is not employed even here).[76] In a seminal essay, Werner Elert (1885–1954), after reviewing the transmission of this passage in the manuscripts of the disputation (where it appears in a minority of the sources) and analyzing its theological content in the light of parallel statements on the Law by Melanchthon and John Calvin (1509–64), declared it to be an interpolation, and this judgment has been generally accepted in subsequent scholarship.[77]

Nonetheless, a close examination of the text suggests that it may not be so problematic, at least not in the way that Elert proposed. The passage in question poses the rhetorical question "Why is the Law to be taught?" and offers three reasons. First, it is to be taught for the sake of discipline. The scriptural warrant cited is 1 Tim. 1:9: "The Law is not laid down for the righteous but for the unrighteous"; and Gal. 3:24: "The Law is our pedagogue to Christ"—thus associating the pedagogical function of the Law with its discipline of the ungodly. Second, the Law is to be taught in order to expose sin and to accuse, terrify, and condemn the conscience. The scriptural basis given is Rom. 3:20: "Through the Law comes knowledge of sin"; and Rom. 4:15: "The Law works wrath." Third, the Law is to be retained "so that the saints know what works God requires, in which they can practice obedience toward Him."[78] No scriptural proof is adduced for this third point.

This enumeration raises a number of questions. First, it is a departure from Luther's customary way of speaking about the twofold use of the Law.[79] Second, the

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[76] Cf. FC SD VI (Kolb-Wengert, pp. 587–91; *Concordia*, pp. 557–61); and above, p. [292].

[77] Werner Elert, "Eine Theologische Fälschung zur Lehre vom Tertius Usus Legis," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 1 (1948): 168–70; this is largely reproduced in his essay *Law and Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971). Before Elert's work, almost all scholars had agreed, on the basis of this conclusion to the *Second Disputation against the Antinomians*, that Luther taught a threefold use of the Law (*triplex usus legis*). Elert also argues that the passage in Luther's 1522 *Church Postil* sermon for New Year's Day on Gal. 3:23–29, LW 76:7 (WA 10/1.1:456), which had been used to prove that Luther taught a threefold use of the Law, cannot be understood in the way in which Melanchthon and the Formula of Concord understand it.

[78] See [LW 73], *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), p. 161.

[79] The term *duplex usus legis* as such only occurs twice in the Antinomian disputations (see [LW 73], *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* [1538], Argument 6, p. 131), though Luther says once that the Law is *duplex* ([LW 73], Argument 14, p. 145), which amounts to the same thing.

association of the Law's "discipline" (its civil use) with its role as "a pedagogue to Christ" is uncharacteristic of Luther, who usually associates the Law's pedagogy with its theological use. Finally, the formulation of the third reason for the Law is (as Elert argues) without direct parallel.

Elert shows that in Luther's 1531 *Lectures on Galatians*, it is the theological or spiritual use of the Law in revealing sins that is primary and fulfills the function of a pedagogue to Christ.[80] It is Melanchthon, in his 1535 *Loci communes*, who recasts Luther's sequence of the uses of the Law and shifts the political use to first place—though Melanchthon still holds that the theological use of the Law is its main function. More important, however, is the fact that Melanchthon now associates the pedagogical function of the Law with its political use rather than with its exposure of sin. Finally, it is Melanchthon who in his *Loci* explicitly identifies a third use of the Law in terms which are close to the language at the end of the *Second Disputation against the Antinomians*: "The third use of the Law in those who are righteous by faith is to instruct them about good works—what works are pleasing to God—and to teach particular works in which they may practice obedience to God."[81] In Elert's view, therefore, the material concluding the *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* is an interpolation of Melanchthonian material, which he sees as an anticipation of Calvin's presentation of the third use of the Law as its goal and chief use.[82]

Yet the idea of a twofold use of the Law is common: see [LW 73], e.g., *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 28, p. 160; and *First Disputation against the Antinomians* (1537), Argument 31, pp. 109, 110; cf., e.g., *Lectures on Galatians* (1531/1535), LW 26:274–75, 308–10. For a full discussion, see Gerhard Ebeling, "On the Doctrine of the *Triplex Usus Legis* in the Theology of the Reformation," in *Word and Faith*, trans. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), pp. 62–78 (where Ebeling corrects some errors in Elert's work); also Lauri Haikola, *Usus legis*, Schriften der Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft A20 (Uppsala: n.p., 1958; repr., Helsinki: [Painatusjaos], 1981), pp. 85–152; Martin Schloemann, *Natürliches und gepredigtes Gesetz bei Luther* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1961), pp. 22–31; Albrecht Peters, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, Handbuch Systematischer Theologie 2, ed. Carl Heinz Ratschow (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1981), pp. 38–41.

[80] See *Lectures on Galatians* (1531/1535), LW 26:347.

[81] Melanchthon, *Loci communes* (1535), CR 21:405–6. Elert argues that the differences between Melanchthon's intermediate *Loci* of 1535 and his final edition of 1559 at this point are insignificant, as can be seen from a comparison (cf. CR 21:716–19, also in MSA 2/1:321–26; J. A. O. Preus, trans., *The Chief Theological Topics: Loci praecipui theologici, 1559*, 2nd ed. [St. Louis: Concordia, 2011], p. 123). Later, the Lutheran dogmatician David Hollaz (1648–1713) would expand the threefold use taught by the Formula of Concord into a fourfold one, splitting off the *usus elenchticus*—the revelation of sin—from the *usus paedagogicus* as understood by Luther (see Hollaz, *Examen Theologicum Acroamaticum*, 3.2.1 qq. 38–39 [Stargard: Johann Nikolaus Ernst, 1707], 3/2:45–47). As Elert points out, this distinction may be possible in theory, but in actual fact it is impossible because the preparation for Christ is bound up precisely with the revelation of sin.

[82] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.7.12–13 (LCC 20:360–62).

Certainly, Luther's usual practice is to identify two uses of the Law. Thus, for example, earlier in the disputation, in Argument 6, Luther lists "two uses of the Law: first, to restrain sins and, then, to reveal sins," and insists that the "pedagogy" of which Paul was speaking in Galatians refers not to external, political discipline but to the spiritual terror created by the Law's exposure of sin.[83] Luther characteristically speaks about the Law in the Christian life by saying, first, that the Law does not bind the saints in anything, insofar as they are in Christ, since they have through imputation what the Law requires; and, second, that believers do spontaneously what the Law requires but not because the Law requires it. But when they fail to do this (since for Luther the complete fulfillment of the Law is strictly reserved for the life to come), they still have the fulfillment by faith, through which God freely imputes righteousness, for Christ's sake.[84]

Later, in the *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians*, Luther will be decidedly cautious of talking about the Law as a guide or admonition to good works among the "converted and godly." In fact, there he chides Melanchthon for conceding too much to the Antinomians by saying that the Law serves only to exercise an "external discipline, by which those who are already godly may be admonished to live in a godly way."[85] Yet even there Luther is concerned to insist that this is not the only use of the Law for believers, not to exclude it categorically.

Luther certainly teaches that the Christian life is not only a matter of being admonished about sin but also includes doing good works that have been commanded by God. Alongside Luther's frequent insistence in the Antinomian disputations that the Law must continue to be preached to believers because they are still sinners who need to have their sin exposed, he can also describe the role of the Law in relation to believers in particular (unlike unbelievers) as those who, in the Spirit, are at battle against sin. For believers, Luther says, the Law functions as "a kind of prompter" [*monitor*].[86] In this connection, the Law "is not to be taught to the godly in such a way that it reproves and condemns, but so as to encourage them to do good"; for them, "the Law . . . is to be softened . . . and should be taught as a kind of pleasant exercise and friendly exhortation."[87] Luther can say that Christ's

[83] See [LW 73], *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Arguments 6 and 8, pp. 131–32, 134–36.

[84] See [LW 73], *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 10, p. 138.

[85] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 40, pp. 213–14.

[86] See [LW 73], *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 3, p. 126.

[87] See [LW 73], *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 21, pp. 153–54.

mission was to restore joyful obedience to the Law;[88] he also says that to speak of Christ as our "example" is nothing else than to say that He shows us how life is to be lived in obedience to God, parents, and superiors.[89]

Perhaps most clearly, in an uncontested passage in a 1544 disputation on repentance, Luther remarks that though the Law must no longer accuse, coerce, or condemn believers as believers, it must be retained in order to give them "a pattern for doing good works."[90] This parallel has been taken by Paul Althaus (1888–1966) as sufficient support for the authenticity of the material at the conclusion of the *Second Disputation against the Antinomians*.[91] For Luther, the Law not only curbs and disciplines Christians and exposes their sin, but it also serves to show them the God-pleasing works in which they can exercise their faith.

When all of these considerations are taken together, it is hard to share Elert's certainty that the passage under discussion is not authentic. The most problematic thing about it is not the statement of the third purpose of the Law but the fact that the pedagogy of the Law is connected with its civil use providing discipline rather than with its theological use exposing sin. Yet this difficult grouping may perhaps be explained by an error on the part of the notetaker in marking the transition from Luther's first point to his second, perhaps under the influence of Melanchthon's pattern of teaching, rather than by a wholesale and deliberate interpolation.

It is true that the language ascribed to Luther describing the third use of the Law at the end of the *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* is very close to that found in Melanchthon's *Loci*. Yet such parallels are not without other examples. Melanchthon's description of the third use of the Law in the *Loci* is also very close to Luther's language in a manuscript note preserved in his correspondence, stating that the Law "is abrogated as an accuser and exactor in the sight of God, and thus it neither justifies nor condemns; it is abrogated with respect to condemnation, not with respect to obligation."[92] The language of the two colleagues could overlap significantly, and the similarity does not prove the presence of an interpolation.

Thus the final paragraph of the *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* is presented here as an authentic part of the text. Although its conflation of the civil discipline of the Law with its role as a "pedagogue to Christ" is not characteristic of

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[88] See [LW 73], *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 21, p. 154.

[89] See [LW 73], *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 15, p. 147.

[90] See [LW 73], *Disputation on the Invocation of God and on Repentance* (1544), Argument 16, p. 441.

[91] See Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), p. 271 n. 123.

[92] "Antwort auf schriftliche Fragen Melanchthons," *Beilage* I, WA Br 12:195. Compare Melanchthon, *Loci communes* (1535), CR 21:406: "For though we are free from the Law with respect to justification, nonetheless the Law remains with respect to obedience" (cf. Preus, *Chief Theological Topics*, p. 123).

Luther, the final portion which may resemble a Melanchthonian "third use of the Law" does not constitute an insurmountable problem. Luther is capable of speaking in such terms, though this remains the exception rather than the rule for him, and he continued to hold to his characteristic description of the twofold use of the Law. Nonetheless, the affirmations that, on the one hand, the Christian does good works spontaneously, without the coercion of the Law, and that, on the other hand, the Law serves for believers as encouragement and pattern for good works coexist not only in the Formula of Concord but in Luther's own language.[93]

The *Fifth Set of Theses against the Antinomians* and the *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians*

The reconciliation between Luther and Agricola achieved at the second disputation did not last long. Agricola took it as vindication and proof of his innocence. The electoral court, encouraged at first by Luther, greeted the news of the reconciliation with joy, but Chancellor Brück and Georg Spalatin remained skeptical. Among the Wittenberg theologians, Nicolaus von Amsdorf (1483–1565), Jonas, and Bugenhagen were particularly sharp in their opposition to Agricola's rehabilitation.[94] (For his part, Agricola did himself no favors by referring to his Wittenberg colleagues with contemptuous nicknames.)[95] Melanchthon stood out for his continuing efforts to mediate, despite his obvious theological differences with Agricola.[96]

Within a month of the *Second Disputation against the Antinomians*, Luther himself became suspicious that things were not as they seemed and that Agricola was again acting duplicitously, out of arrogance.[97] Agricola's public preaching, undertaken at the order of the elector under the surveillance of Luther and the other

[93] On the negotiations over Article VI of the Formula of Concord, see Arand et al., *The Lutheran Confessions*, pp. 198–99.

[94] See Thiele, "Denkwürdigkeiten," p. 261. . . .

[95] See Mathesius, *History*, LW Bio:415–16.

[96] According to Agricola's own report (Thiele, "Denkwürdigkeiten," p. 263), on August 25, 1538, when Brück, Jonas, and Melanchthon were gathered at Luther's home, Melanchthon himself fell under suspicion because he "faithfully" stood up for Agricola.

[97] See Kawerau, *Agricola von Eisleben*, p. 195; and Luther's February 2 conversation with Amsdorf, *Table Talk* no. 3729 (1538), WA TR 3:571–73.

Wittenberg clergy, only confirmed this suspicion.[98] No longer was there any close friendship between Luther and Agricola.[99]

Luther now felt it his duty to distance himself publicly from Agricola's theology.[100] At the end of August 1538, when Luther reviewed his 1531 *Lectures on Galatians*, which had first been published in 1535, for a new edition, he added a paragraph against the Antinomians to the end of his preface. Since this additional material is not included in the 1535 version of the preface translated in LW 27:145–49, it is translated here in full:

> The sum and end of the complaint is this: not to hope for any quiet or for the end of complaining so long as Christ and Belial are not in agreement [cf. 2 Cor. 6:15]. A generation goes; a generation comes [cf. Eccl. 1:4]. If one heresy falls, another rises straightaway, for the devil neither slumbers nor sleeps. For myself (though I am nothing), having been in Christ's ministry for twenty years now, I can testify in truth that I have been assailed by more than twenty sects—some of which have utterly collapsed; others of which are still twitching like the limbs of insects.
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> But Satan daily raises up new [sects], being the god of factious people. And most recently, [he has raised up] one which I would have least foreseen or expected—[a sect] of those who teach that the Decalogue should be removed from the Church and that human beings should not be terrified by the Law but be sweetly admonished through Christ's grace. Thus Micah's prophecy is fulfilled—although the man is not to be reproved, "You shall not drop dew upon us" [Mic. 2:6], as if we did not know and had not taught that the afflicted and contrite in spirit are to be raised up through Christ, whereas the hard Pharaohs, to whom the grace of God is preached in vain, are to be terrified through the Law—since they themselves are compelled to make up "revelations of wrath"[101] for the wicked and unbelieving, as if the Law were or could be anything but a revelation of wrath. So great is the blindness and pride of these self-condemned[102] men [Titus 3:11].
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> Therefore, the ministers of the Word ought to be certain—if they wish to be found faithful and wise [cf. Matt. 24:45] on the day of Christ—that the words

[98] See *Table Talk* no. 3855 (1538), WA TR 3:660, which Brecht 3:164 associates with Luther's reaction to Agricola's preaching; Rogge, *Agricolas Lutherverständnis*, p. 185.

[99] Luther sternly criticized Agricola in his table talk during this period, lumping him together with Münzer, Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1484–1541), Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531), and other opponents: see *Table Talk* no. 4043 (1538), WA TR 4:97.

[100] *Table Talk* no. 3855 (1538), WA TR 3:660. See Edwards, *Luther and the False Brethren*, p. 166; Brecht 3:164.

[101] See above, pp. [297–298].

[102] αὐτοκατακριτῶν.

> of Paul were not spoken in vain and were not spoken concerning a matter of no consequence: "There must be heresies so that those who are approved may be made manifest" [1 Cor. 11:19]. Let a minister of Christ know, I say, that so long as he teaches Christ purely, there will be no lack of perverse men seeking to trouble the Church, even from among our own people. But let him strengthen himself with this consolation: that there is no peace between Christ and Belial or between the seed of the serpent and the Seed of the woman [Gen. 3:15]. To be sure, he shall bite our heel and will not cease to bite. We, in turn, will not cease to crush his head through the one who principally crushes him, even Christ, blessed forever. Amen.[103]

Finally, in September 1538, Luther decided that another public disputation against the Antinomians would be necessary. This seems to have been triggered by reports of the spread of Antinomianism outside Wittenberg. The Mansfeld castle preacher Michael Coelius reported from Eisleben that Agricola was only waiting for Luther to die so that he could then teach whatever he pleased.[104] Meanwhile, Melanchthon received a letter from a group in Lüneburg asserting that, for a believer, neither adultery nor any other breach of the Commandments was a sin and reproaching the Wittenbergers for teaching that such works would result in the loss of faith and grace. Reports also came to Wittenberg of Antinomian teaching in Eisleben and Pomerania.[105] Jacob Schenk, whom the Wittenbergers regarded as an Antinomian, was establishing a following in Torgau. On June 20, Luther received a complaint that Schenk had proclaimed: "Do what you like; so long as you believe, you will be saved."[106] On September 3, upon receiving the latest report of Schenk's activity, Luther demanded a public retraction from Agricola—or else his public shaming.[107] The specter of communities which now identified themselves with Antinomian teaching—and the concern for its consequences—seems to lie behind the distinctive emphases of the new disputation.

Luther's new set of seventy theses against the Antinomians (the longest of any of the sets of Antinomian theses) seems intended to relaunch a comprehensive

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[103] WA 40/1/2:36–37. In the 1538 edition of the *Lectures on Galatians*, this expanded preface is followed by a list of "Fifty praises and virtues of personal righteousness sought from works, according to the apostle Paul [writing] to the Galatians," in sequence according to the chapters of the epistle (WA 40/1/2:37–38).

[104] Thiele, "Denkwürdigkeiten," pp. 262–63. . . .

[105] See the account of the stages of the Antinomian conflict in Melanchthon and Jonas to Elector John Frederick, April 5, 1540, in Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, p. 326; MBW T9:201–3, no. 2409. . . .

[106] *Table Talk* no. 3895 (1538), LW 54:289–90; cf. *Table Talk* no. 3977 (1538), WA TR 4:50–51.

[107] *Table Talk* no. 4307 (1538), WA TR 4:205.

critique of Antinomian teaching from a new starting point. The theses begin with the claim that the Law, together with sin and death, rules over human beings so long as they are in this mortal life. Insofar as believers (who possess Christ's fulfillment of the Law through faith) are still subject to death, they are still under the Law and sin since all three must exist or be removed together. Therefore, the Law must continue to be preached both to believers and to the ungodly since unbelievers must be terrified by their sins and the godly must be admonished about the sin remaining in the flesh (unless the Antinomians madly suppose that their church consists only of those who are completely purified). Luther charges the Antinomians with believing that sin has been removed from believers in its form or substance, whereas in this life sin is in fact removed relatively, by imputation and divine mercy. Augustine's description of Christ as sacrament and example (to which Agricola had appealed and which Luther had discussed already in the arguments of the second disputation)[108] does not mean the Law should be eliminated; to do so would be to eliminate Christ Himself, who cannot be understood without knowing the Law to which human beings are debtors and which Christ fulfills and thereby abolishes—or, rather, establishes.

The exact date of the disputation held on these theses is not entirely certain. Most probably it took place within the framework of Cyriacus Gericke's licentiate examination on Friday, September 6, 1538.[109] . . . In the editions of Luther's collected theses against the Antinomians, this is the fifth set of theses. Yet because no disputations were conducted on Luther's third and fourth sets of theses, this was the third disputation discussing Antinomianism which was actually held. Depending on which sequence is followed, therefore, this is either the "Fifth Disputation against the Antinomians" (as in the printed theses)[110] or the "Third Disputation against the Antinomians" (as in the WA). The disputation is designated [in LW 73] as the *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians*.

When the disputation over the theses was held, Luther once again acted as president as well as chief respondent. In his prefatory address, Luther placed the Antinomians among the "monsters" through whom Satan attacked the article of justification, seducing people into carelessness about sin and, therefore, whatever

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[108] See [LW 73], *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 15, pp. 146–48; and above, p. [301].

[109] The licentiate had been in some medieval universities a degree between the master's degree and the doctorate, after which the candidate would have to engage in further study and disputation in order to be awarded the doctorate. In Wittenberg, the university statutes since 1533 no longer mentioned the licentiate as a formal degree, though the nomenclature seems to have been used for the candidate between his disputation and the formal conferral of the doctorate (the "promotion") which took place shortly thereafter. See Thomas Albert Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 57–58, 65.

[110] Thus also in the translation by Holger Sonntag (see below, p. [328n. 192]).

the Antinomians' intentions, ultimately destroying the Gospel itself.[111] Luther ascribed two propositions to the Antinomians: first, that "Christ removed all sin formally"; and, second, that "their church is therefore pure and whole, without any stain or blemish." When Christ reproaches hypocrites in the Gospels, Luther says that the Antinomians, as "sweet and pleasant theologians," explain that He only intends to admonish concerning the possibility of future sin.[112]

It is difficult to say whether Luther meant to claim that the Antinomians taught such things directly or that they were unavoidable inferences from Antinomian teaching, as the wording of Thesis 46—"It seems quite apparent that the Antinomians' opinion is . . ."—might suggest.[113] It is possible that written or oral reports that have not survived—Agricola's Wittenberg preaching and the reports about Jacob Schenk and teaching in Eisleben—were more explicit in making such claims. There are hints of these propositions in other texts. The Eisleben preacher Caspar Güttel, in an October sermon against the local Antinomians, ascribed the claim that "a person could live an altogether angelic life here on earth, without feeling any kind of sin in the sinful flesh" to the "fanatics and schismatic sectarians."[114] And Agricola himself, already in his 1525 commentary on Luke, had explained Paul's statement in Gal. 3:27 that "as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" to mean that "to 'put on Christ' is clearly to be transformed into Him so that once sin has been removed through faith in Him, He may restore righteousness and direct, lead, and rule us"—a transformative idea of justification that could readily be described as "formal."[115]

On the contrary, Luther says, the Church in the world is always mixed and never composed solely of the pure; and, indeed, the godly themselves must be admonished of the sin that still adheres to the flesh. As in the previous disputations,[116] Luther

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[111] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Luther's prefatory address, pp. 162–63.

[112] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Luther's prefatory address, p. 163; cf. [LW 73], *Fifth Set of Theses against the Antinomians* (1538), Theses 46 and 29, pp. 65, 64.

[113] See [LW 73], *Fifth Set of Theses against the Antinomians* (1538), Thesis 46, p. 65.

[114] Caspar Güttel, *Vom Gesetze* (Wittenberg: Georg Rhau, 1538) [VD16 G3999], fol. D6. Güttel (1471–1542), like Luther, was originally an Augustinian friar but became an early convert to the Reformation. He was regarded as a distinguished pastor and preacher in Agricola's hometown of Eisleben, where he had succeeded Agricola. On Güttel, see the introduction by Robert J. Christman, LW 60:245–46.

[115] Agricola, *In Lucae Evangelium Annotationes* (1525), fol. B2r. Compare Luther's exegesis of the passage in *Lectures on Galatians* (1531/1535), LW 26:352–53.

[116] See [LW 73], *First Disputation against the Antinomians* (1537), Arguments 12 and 14, pp. 83–84, 86; *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Arguments 3 and 7, pp. 125–27, 133.

insists that by faith Christians are made righteous not "formally" or "substantially," but "relatively"—that is, in relation to God, by imputation—and must still, as part of the church militant, do battle against the flesh, the devil, and all temptations, as the "firstfruits" of formal righteousness, which will not be fully attained until the Christian is finally liberated from sin and the Law in the life to come.[117]

The disputation itself extended for some five hours—with twenty-seven arguments in the morning and eighteen more extending well into the afternoon.[118] . . . Luther's participation is explicitly noted in Arguments 25, 28–29, 31, 35–36, 40, and 46, though once again his indirect or direct responsibility as president or respondent for the remainder of the responses may be assumed.[119] Agricola was once again conspicuous by his absence from the proceedings. He had pleaded with Jonas, Cruciger, and Melanchthon that he had already pledged his submission to Luther and could only commend the matter to God.[120]

The arguments in the disputation focused largely on Luther's distinction between the respects in which the Law does and does not apply to the Christian: not with respect to justification, but with respect to life in the flesh among other human beings;[121] not with respect to the Christian as "triumphant" or one who rules over sin, but with respect to the Christian's "militant service."[122] The Law serves "to admonish and reprove the godly," since they still have sin clinging to the flesh, so that they may be "roused as if for battle."[123]

In addition to the metaphor of the Christian as a soldier militant or triumphant, Luther uses the striking images of a child held safely in the bosom of the Father, whose feet nevertheless peek out below his robe and continue to be nipped by the devil and the Law;[124] and of the conscience which is locked in the bridal chamber

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[117] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Luther's prefatory address and Arguments 1 and 3, pp. 166, 168, 169, 173.

[118] See *Table Talk* no. 4310 (1538), WA TR 4:210–11.

[119] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), pp. 200, 201, 205, 206, 208–12, 214, 216–17.

[120] Agricola to Jonas, Cruciger, and Melanchthon, ca. September 4, 1539, in Kawerau, "Briefe," p. 312; MBW T8:278, no. 2131. MBW dates the letter to December 22, 1538, but Agricola (in Thiele, "Denkwürdigkeiten," p. 263) places it before September 6, 1538.

[121] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 1, pp. 168–70.

[122] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Arguments 1, 3, and 10, pp. 169, 173, 183–84.

[123] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Arguments 2–3, 4, and 10, pp. 171, 173, 175, 177, 183–84.

[124] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Arguments 10 and 38, pp. 184, 212.

with Christ its bridegroom (or rests under the wings of the mother hen) while the body is still being disciplined under the Law.[125]

The Law, therefore, is laid down for a Christian "not insofar as he is righteous and holy, but insofar as he is flesh and must be reproved by the Law"; insofar as he is a Christian, he is not under the rule of the Law but rules over sin.[126] The Christian is righteous by faith in Christ, by imputation; in himself, however, he still has sin clinging to him against which he must do battle.[127] Thus the Lord's Prayer, given to the saints, asks for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 6:12).[128] The same distinction applies to the Church as a whole.[129] The Christian "is saint and sinner, dead and alive, all sin and no sin."[130] The Law must, therefore, be preached both to unbelievers and to believers.[131]

Christ Himself preaches both the Law and the Gospel, though His "proper office" is to preach the Gospel.[132] Preaching Christ's blessings and the kindness of God to make sinners recognize their ingratitude can, in fact, be the most devastating proclamation of the Law.[133] To take away the Law which makes frightened and wretched sinners is to take away the material with which Christ the Redeemer works.[134] Even though the Law is known by nature, it must continue to be taught to remind fallen human beings. The Law increases sin, not as an efficient cause but as a "ostensive cause," making the magnitude of sin apparent.[135] This preaching of the

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[125] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Arguments 1, 3, 37, pp. 169, 174–75, 212; cf. Argument 42, pp. 214–15.

[126] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 2, p. 171; cf. Arguments 3, 5, 10–11, 14–15, 21, 26, and 37, pp. 173–76, 177–79, 183–85, 187–88, 195, 200–201, 212.

[127] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Arguments 3, 6, 10–12, and 29–31, pp. 173–76, 179–80, 183–85, 204–6.

[128] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 3, p. 176.

[129] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Arguments 6, 22, 26, and 41, p. 180, 196, 200–201, 214.

[130] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 11, p. 185; cf. Argument 30, p. 206.

[131] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 21, p. 195.

[132] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 18, p. 192.

[133] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Arguments 18 and 43, pp. 190–93, 215.

[134] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 23, pp. 196–99.

[135] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 28, p. 202. An efficient cause is something by means of which something else happens and on which the effect of that happening depends; that which brings about an effect. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.2 (1013a) (Loeb 271 [1933], pp. 210–11); *Physics* 2.3 (194b) (Loeb 228 [1957], pp. 128–29); Luther,

Law does not make human beings uncertain, but it makes them certain of their sin; the Gospel makes them certain of God's grace.[136] Luther responds vehemently to Melanchthon's suggestion that, since the Holy Spirit is given through the Gospel, the Law is of no consequence for those who have already been converted—"except as far as discipline and morals are concerned." Luther insists that the Law continues to prepare the "material" of a broken and contrite heart in which the Holy Spirit works.[137]

Luther concedes that at the beginning of the Reformation he used some language similar to that of the Antinomians, preaching the Gospel without the preceding or accompanying Law, but he argues that the situation then—when the people had already been crushed by the Law under the papacy—was far different. The Law must be preached to the secure; the Gospel, to the afflicted and contrite.[138]

Predictably, Agricola (although absent from the disputation) claimed that peace had once more been achieved.[139] Melanchthon also felt that his position on the Law had been vindicated—but it is difficult to see how both judgments could simultaneously be true.[140] By the middle of October, Luther's longtime Catholic opponent Johann Cochlaeus had published in Leipzig his own edition of the *Fifth Set of Theses against the Antinomians*, adding his own censure, mocking divisions among Evangelical theologians, and claiming for the Roman Catholics a middle position between Luther (who insisted that Christians were still under the Law) and the Antinomians (who insisted that Christians were beyond the Law). Instead, Cochlaeus said, the Catholics maintained the spirit of the Law for Christians but not its letter.[141] The Antinomian Controversy was gaining attention beyond Wittenberg.

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Dialectica (ca. 1540), WA 60:146 (LW 72). Melanchthon, *Initia doctrina physicae*, CR 13:308–14; *Erotemata dialectices*, CR 13:674–79. On ostensive cause, see [LW 73], p. 188 n. 118.

[136] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 29, pp. 204–5.

[137] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 40, pp. 213–14.

[138] See [LW 73], *Fifth (Third) Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), Argument 36, pp. 209–12.

[139] See Thiele, "Denkwürdigkeiten," p. 363.

[140] Melanchthon to Veit Dietrich, September 15, 1538, MBW T8:218–19, no. 2093 (CR 3:588).

[141] Johann Cochlaeus, *Disputatio Quinta M. Lutheri Contra Antinomos Vuittenbergae habita. Censura in eandem, inter Lutheri & Antinomorum extrema medium quoddam, hoc est Regiam veritatis viam, tenens* (Leipzig: N. Wolrab, 1538) [VD16 L4439]. Cochlaeus' preface is dated October 11, 1538. . . .

Agricola's Charges against Luther and Withdrawal from Wittenberg

Agricola claimed to have reached an understanding with Luther in the wake of the third disputation, promising to make a written statement for circulation confirming what he had affirmed "in the disputation"—presumably, that is, in the *Second Disputation against the Antinomians*, in which he had taken part and where he had declared that he accepted Luther's theses as "true and godly."[142] Agricola first brought his statement to Melanchthon, who undertook to revise it.[143] But Agricola then abandoned his own efforts and asked Luther himself to draft a statement indicating what Agricola should correct in his teaching about the Law. Agricola apparently hoped that this display of submission would mollify Luther.[144] Agricola was, apparently, now ready even to confess that the Law should be taught to crush the godly [*ad conterendos pios homine*]. Instead, Luther was irritated by what he took as Agricola's failure to acknowledge his error frankly or to take the situation seriously.[145] By the end of November 1538, Luther was thoroughly disgusted.[146]

Luther resolved to write Agricola's recantation, but "seeking Christ's glory, and not [Agricola's]," and intending to expose Agricola "with his own words as a cowardly, proud, and godless man."[147] The "palinode" which Agricola had entrusted to Luther appeared in print at the beginning of 1539 in the form of Luther's open letter to Caspar Güttel and the rest of the Eisleben clergy: *Against the Antinomians*.[148] The letter was intended to expose Agricola's false teaching, to demonstrate that Luther himself rejected it categorically, and to attest that Agricola himself, at least for the moment, had wished to retract it.[149] Luther reiterated why the Law could not simply be abolished from the Church and warned that the "new spirits" posed serious dangers to orthodox teaching.

Agricola was dismayed by Luther's harsh public denunciation—as well as by the threat to his position and salary—and sought to defend himself again in public. He put forward a set of theses which he defended in Wittenberg on February 1. Agricola

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[142] Thiele, "Denkwürdigkeiten," p. 263; cf. Edwards, *Luther and the False Brethren*, p. 167n. Cf. [LW 73], *Second Disputation against the Antinomians* (1538), p. 143.

[143] Jonas, Bugenhagen, Amsdorf, and Melanchthon to Elector John Frederick, April 5, 1540, in Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, p. 326; MBW T9:202, no. 2409. It is likely that the short treatise published by Agricola in 1539, *De duplici Legis discrimine*, is the text edited by Melanchthon: see below, pp. [322–323].

[144] *Table Talk* no. 4030 (1538), WA TR 4:88. Cf. Brecht 3:165.

[145] Thiele, "Denkwürdigkeiten," p. 263.

[146] See *Table Talk* no. 4156 (1538), WA TR 4:172–73, where Luther announces his intention to publish against Agricola.

[147] *Table Talk* no. 4030 (1538), WA TR 4:88.

[148] LW 47:99–119.

[149] See especially *Against the Antinomians* (1539), LW 47:108–9.

seemed to strive in the second half of the theses to accommodate himself somewhat to Luther's theology and modes of expression—though he continued to assert that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven through the Gospel"[150]—but the first nine of Agricola's theses presented curious (apparently allegorical) judgments on biblical and classical figures—for example, "King Saul troubled Israel when he forbade the people to use honey"—which Luther not unreasonably interpreted as a personal attack.[151] The outcome of the disputation was ambiguous: Luther was confirmed in his detestation of Agricola's teaching, but Agricola retained his positions at the university and in the electoral consistory.

In March 1539, Luther's treatise *On the Councils and the Church* compared the Antinomians with the ancient Nestorians as heretics who in effect divided Christ—in the case of the Antinomians, dividing His work of redemption from the work of sanctification.[152] But Luther declared that "those who refuse to be converted or sanctified again shall be cast out from this holy people, that is, bound and excluded by means of the keys, as happened to the unrepentant Antinomians."[153] Although Luther was still open to a reconciliation, provided that Agricola would frankly acknowledge having taught wrongly,[154] Agricola began a counteroffensive, accusing Luther of obstinacy and slander before the university, the elector, and in open letters to the Eisleben congregation.[155]

Agricola sought to defend himself publicly against criticisms from those in Eisleben, publishing a short Latin treatise *De duplici Legis discrimine* (On the twofold distinction of the Law) addressed to clergy in County Mansfeld—probably

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[150] Thesis 15. Cf. above, pp. [297–298].

[151] Agricola's theses and Luther's glosses are edited in Kawerau, "Briefe," pp. 313–15, and WA Br 12:276–78, no. 4269a (3294a). Cf. Luther to Melanchthon, February 2, 1538, WA Br 8:362; Edwards, *Luther and the False Brethren*, p. 169.

[152] *On the Councils and the Church* (1539), LW 41:113–15, 143–44; cf. pp. 147, 150. Nestorius (ca. 381–451) separated the divine and human natures of Christ; see [LW 73], introduction to *Disputation on the Divinity and Humanity of Christ* (1540), p. 242 and n. 7 there.

[153] *On the Councils and the Church* (1539), LW 41:153.

[154] See *Table Talk* no. 4692 (1539), WA TR 4:433–34, where Luther describes having gone to Agricola's dwellings to seek reconciliation, but not having found him at home.

[155] On Agricola's petitions to the university, see WA 51:426; Agricola to Caspar Böhme, September 24, 1539, in Kawerau, "Briefe," pp. 316–17. For Agricola's charges made with the elector and in open letters, see Agricola to Elector John Frederick, December 21, 1539, in Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, pp. 314–15, and (with nearly the same text) to the preachers and people of Eisleben, January 27, 1540, in Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, p. 315; to Elector John Frederick, March 1, 1540, in Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, pp. 317–20 (Agricola's "Complaint"); and "Vertheidigung seiner Lehre vom Gesetz gegen D. Luther," before June 8, 1540 (Agricola's "Defense"; on its dating, see Edwards, *Luther and the False Brethren*, pp. 228–29 n. 76), in Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, pp. 337–39. On this process, see Edwards, *Luther and the False Brethren*, pp. 170–72. For Luther's reaction to Agricola's decision to proceed against him, see *Table Talk* no. 5021 (1540), WA TR 4:618.

based on the draft of his 1538 retraction which had been edited by Melanchthon.[156] Agricola wrote that he had always taught that the external pedagogy of the Law[157] was God's will for restraining the wild and weak. To be sure, he had taught emphatically that the Law had nothing to contribute to justification, in opposition to the "Pelagianism" of the local Catholic preacher Georg Witzel. With respect to the question of whether the Law should be used in teaching repentance, Agricola acknowledged that he had previously taught that the Law should not be taught to the godly and that true repentance could only be produced by the Gospel. Yet, he wrote, Luther had corrected him, showing that without the Law neither sin nor guilt could be understood. Agricola here acknowledged that the "revelation of wrath" (Rom. 1:18) was indeed the preaching of the Law and that the Law had to be taught alongside the Gospel, even to the converted and godly, in order to reprove the "remnants of sin" and because the Law written in the heart still accused and condemned the believer, who could only overcome these terrors by faith in Christ's promise. (Agricola still implicitly refused to affirm the preaching of the Law before the Gospel.)

Luther's opposition to Agricola was strengthened, however, by new reports from Eisleben about the persistence of the sect devoted to Antinomian teaching, by reports of other teachers advocating Antinomianism elsewhere, and by Agricola's own duplicity, when confronted, in excusing the charges he had made.[158] Agricola had charged Luther with attributing to him positions he had never taken and of drawing unwarranted conclusions from what he had taught. In particular, Agricola accused Luther of having falsely characterized him as believing that the Law should not be taught at all; of having maliciously fabricated the accusation that he had taught that "even though you may commit murder, adultery, and all sins and vices,

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[156] Agricola, *De Duplici Legis Discrimine M. Ioannis Agricolae Isleben sententia ad Wendelinum Fabrum & quosdam alios in Comitatu Mansfeldensi* ([Wittenberg: n.p.], 1539) [VD16 A971]. See above, p. [321]. . . .

[157] Agricola's identification of "pedagogy" with the political use of the Law reflected Melanchthon's categorization rather than Luther's: see above, p. [311].

[158] Caspar Güttel to Luther, April 7, 1540, WA Br 9:86–88 (Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, pp. 327–28); Wendelin Faber to Caspar Güttel, April 20, 1540, in Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, pp. 332–34; Sebastian Fröschel to Luther, after March 31, 1540, WA Br 9:86–87 (Kawerau, "Briefe," pp. 317–18). Luther was concerned about reports of Antinomian teaching by Caspar Adler [Aquilia] (1488–1560) in Saalfeld, by Heinrich Hamm in Brandenburg, and by Johann Haner in Nürnberg, as well as by Jacob Schenk (see above, p. 13): see Luther to Melanchthon, March 2, 1539, WA Br 8:378–79; *Table Talk* no. 4502 (1539), WA TR 4:348–49; no. 4724 (1539), WA TR 4:451; no. 4790 (1539), WA TR 4:512–13. See Edwards, *Luther and the False Brethren*, pp. 172–73. Haner published his own Antinomian theses explicitly directed "against those recently put up in Wittenberg" (*Theses Ioannis Haneri Noribergensis de Poenitentia*; see above, [n. 48]. . .).

if you only believe, it will do you no harm"; and of claiming that he refused to teach the catechism.[159] Agricola insisted that it was perilous to teach the Law "before or without the Gospel," but that it could be helpfully taught "with or through the Gospel," returning to his old proposition that "the Gospel reveals God's wrath."[160] He thereby contradicted his published retraction—or at least suggested that he still maintained that there were two ways of teaching repentance, either through Law and Gospel or through the Gospel alone.[161]

In response, Luther submitted a formal letter to Chancellor Brück, accompanied by a dossier of Agricola's Antinomian theses, his *Summaries*, and the correspondence from the Mansfeld preachers. Luther reproached Agricola for having set up a sect in opposition to the Wittenberg theologians and refused to withdraw any of his charges against Agricola, defending his logical deductions from Agricola's stated positions, which Luther quoted effectively against him. At the end of the decade, Luther's letter to Brück appeared in print, edited by Matthias Flacius (1520–75) under the title *Against Johann Agricola of Eisleben*, as a witness against Agricola's later efforts as an author of the Augsburg Interim.[162]

In the spring of 1540, the elector referred Agricola's complaint to the Wittenberg theologians. They made an initial report detailing the history of the Antinomian Controversy and a second response engaging the theological questions Agricola had raised and vindicating Luther, pointing out *inter alia*, that Luther had generally refrained from identifying Agricola by name throughout the controversy and that the spread of Antinomianism and its theological error fully justified Luther's response, which it would be wrong to expect him to retract.[163] While the matter was being adjudicated by the electoral authorities, Elector John Frederick required Agricola to swear an oath that he would remain in Wittenberg until a final decision had been rendered.[164]

In mid-August, before the elector could finalize the proceedings against him, Agricola broke his promise, to Luther's disgust,[165] and secretly left Wittenberg to

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[159] On the sources for the second proposition, see below, p. [327].

[160] Agricola, "Defense," in Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, p. 336.

[161] See above, p. [301].

[162] [Matthias Flacius, ed.], *Ein Schrifft des Achtbarn und Ehrwirdigen Herren seliger gedechtnis, Doctoris Martini Lutheri, wider den Eisleben, kurtz vor seinem end geschrieben, vormals aber nie im Druck aussgangen* (Magdeburg: Christian Rödinger, 1549) [VD16 L5859]. The printed version is edited in WA 51:429–44 (LW 61) alongside Luther's original manuscript. . . .

[163] Jonas, Bugenhagen, Amsdorf, and Melanchthon to Elector John Frederick, April 5, 1540, MBW T9:200–203, no. 2409 (Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, p. 326); [Melanchthon], Jonas, Cruciger, and Bugenhagen to Elector John Frederick, June 8, 1540, MBW T9:276–80, no. 2446 (Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, pp. 334–36).

[164] Elector John Frederick to Bernhard von Mila, April 18, 1540, in Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, p. 331.

[165] See *Table Talk* no. 5127 (1540), WA TR 4:676; and no. 5273 (1540), WA TR 5:40.

take up the position of court preacher for Elector Joachim II of Brandenburg, who had begun to take tentative steps toward reformation in 1539.[166] Under pressure to normalize relations with Wittenberg, Agricola published in December a new version of his retraction, now in German, in which he disavowed the "errors of the Antinomians" (though he also expanded the recapitulation of some of his own Antinomian arguments, including those from the *Second Disputation against the Antinomians*).[167] He thought this was sufficient, combined with an apology to the Saxon elector, to reconcile him publicly with the Wittenberg theologians.[168]

For Luther personally, however, the recycled retraction was too little and too late to change his estimation of Agricola, whom until the end of his life he continued to consider as an unstable traitor.[169] Agricola, for his part, continued to hail Luther as his esteemed theological father, though he again made himself controversial among Lutherans after Luther's death for his role in drafting the Augsburg Interim in 1548—where, *inter alia*, the distinction between Law and Gospel was completely passed over.[170]

The *Sixth Set of Theses against the Antinomians* and the *Sixth Disputation against the Antinomians*

Meanwhile, Luther closed the chapter on the Antinomian Controversy in Wittenberg with the disputation of Joachim Mörlin,[171] which was most likely held on Friday, September 10, 1540, before Mörlin's festive promotion to the doctorate on September 16. Mörlin was a Wittenberg native who had begun his theological studies in 1532, received the master's degree in 1535, and had served as one of the deacons in the Wittenberg church since August 1539. After receiving his doctorate, Mörlin served as superintendent at Arnstadt in Thuringia.

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[166] See Bodo Nischan, "Brandenburg," *OER* 1:207–9.

[167] Agricola, *Confession und bekentnis Johanns Agricolae Eisslebens/ Vom Gesetze Gottes* (Berlin: Hans Weiß, 1540) [VD16 A1004], in Förstemann, *Neues Urkundenbuch*, pp. 349–51. It is dated December 9 (the Thursday after St. Barbara), 1540. It was reprinted in 1541 [VD16 A1005]. See Rogge, *Agricolas Lutherverständnis*, pp. 217–18.

[168] See Brecht 3:169–70.

[169] See Brecht 3:170, citing Luther's words "shortly before his end" as reported by Flacius in his edition of *Against Johann Agricola of Eisleben* (1540/1549), WA 51:443 (LW 61).

[170] See Rogge, *Agricolas Lutherverständnis*, pp. 248–50. For the Augsburg Interim, see Kolb and Nestingen, *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord*, pp. 144–96.

[171] Mörlin (1514–71), a Lutheran pastor and theologian, played an important role in the doctrinal formation and ecclesiastical administration of North Germany. In 1545, he published the *Enchiridion*, an adaptation of Luther's *Small Catechism* (1529), which became very popular in the second half of the sixteenth century. See Sigrid Looß, "Mörlin, Joachim," *OER* 3:94–95.

The short set of twenty theses which Luther prepared, published shortly before the disputation,[172] responded implicitly to Agricola's charge of drawing unwarranted inferences by proceeding with an audacious series of theological and social conclusions drawn from Antinomian teaching—particularly their denial (per Thesis 12) that the "condemnation of the Law" should be taught.[173] The theses frankly identify the Antinomians as "devils themselves or brothers of the devil," "the most pernicious teachers of licentiousness," from whom—no matter how much they might parrot about Christ and grace—it was "impossible to learn . . . anything about theology or about politics."[174] Luther doubtless had in mind not only the recently departed Agricola but also the network of other Antinomian teachers.[175]

At the disputation, Luther, as president, seems to have given more space for Mörlin as respondent than he had at Gericke's disputation two years before, and both Mörlin and Luther make significant contributions. Mörlin's response to Argument 2 makes a distinction between the condemning Law, which has been abrogated for Christians, and the Law requiring obedience, which has been confirmed for them.[176] As Luther puts it later, "[Christians] are not under the Law but with the Law."[177] Luther reaffirms that the Law is to be taught first, followed by the consolation of the Gospel to those who have been terrified.[178] Among believers, the Law continues to condemn sin in the flesh,[179] but not in the spirit.[180] The Law even gives joy to believers "once the Gospel is added";[181] they have a tranquil conscience "insofar as they look to Christ," even though when they "consider their own nature, they have an unquiet conscience."[182] In their relation to God, by imputation, Christians are without sin; in their own formal quality, however, they are "full of sin." Christians do have the gift of the Holy Spirit, but do not yet have the gift of "[fully] satisfying the Law."[183] In an excursus which is important for understanding the sense in which Luther elsewhere says that the Law is "eternal,"

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[172] *Praesidente D. Martino Luthero Theologiae Doctore Magister Ioachimus Morlin Vittebergensis respondebit proxima die Veneris ad has propositiones pro Licentia ad Doctoratum* ([Wittenberg], 1540) [Benzing 3227]. Aland 26. The theses are translated [in LW 73] from WA 39/1:358. . . .

[173] See [LW 73], *Sixth Set of Theses against the Antimonians* (1540), p. 68.

[174] See [LW 73], *Sixth Set of Theses against the Antimonians* (1540), Theses 7 and 18–19, pp. 67, 68.

[175] See above, p. [323 n. 158].

[176] See [LW 73], *Sixth Disputation against the Antinomians* (1540), p. 219.

[177] See [LW 73], *Sixth Disputation against the Antinomians* (1540), Argument 8A, p. 223.

[178] See [LW 73], *Sixth Disputation against the Antinomians* (1540), Argument 13, p. 227.

[179] See [LW 73], *Sixth Disputation against the Antinomians* (1540), Argument 20, p. 231.

[180] See [LW 73], *Sixth Disputation against the Antinomians* (1540), Argument 14, p. 227.

[181] See [LW 73], *Sixth Disputation against the Antinomians* (1540), Argument 15, p. 227.

[182] See [LW 73], *Sixth Disputation against the Antinomians* (1540), Argument 22, p. 231.

[183] See [LW 73], *Sixth Disputation against the Antinomians* (1540), Argument 28, p. 235.

Luther (or Mörlin under his supervision), echoing William of Ockham (ca. 1285–ca. 1348), frankly affirms the radical contingency of the Law on God's will.[184]

Several of the arguments propose reasons for regarding the Antinomians as true Christians.[185] Luther, however, responds that "even if what [the Antinomians] say is substantially true, the way they put it together makes it false."[186] Luther's response to Argument 19B addresses Agricola's complaint that he was falsely accused of not teaching the catechism by noting that "the Antinomians teach and write catechisms, but they do so in a most ungodly way, claiming that the Law does not condemn or reprove sins."[187]

In addition to Mörlin and Luther, who responded in defense of the theses, a number of other members of the university are noted as having participated as opponents: in addition to the theologians Melanchthon, Bugenhagen, and Cruciger, the masters Ambrose Berndt and Veit Amerbach from the arts faculty and its dean, Heinrich Schmedenstede, offered arguments. The disputation ends with Bugenhagen's reiteration of the seventh Antinomian thesis from 1537—that "anything without which the Holy Spirit is given and human beings are justified does not need to be taught, either as the beginning, as the middle, or as the end of justification"—and a response which succinctly encapsulates Luther's position against the Antinomians: "Human beings come to know their own sins from the Law, and then they seek help from Christ."[188] The long series of Antinomian disputations is thus brought full circle.

Publication of Luther's Theses against the Antinomians and the Antinomian Disputations

For centuries, proceedings of the Antinomian disputations themselves circulated only in manuscript. Occasionally, later theologians would cite and publish portions of this manuscript material: the Wittenberg doctor Peter Palladius incorporated extensive portions of the Antinomian disputations in the chapter on Antinomians in his 1557 *Catalogue of Certain Heresies* (without, however, explicitly

[184] See [LW 73], *Sixth Disputation against the Antinomians* (1540), Argument 11, p. 225. On Ockham, see [LW 73], p. 116 n. 2.

[185] See [LW 73], *Sixth Disputation against the Antinomians* (1540), Arguments 6–7, 16B, 17–19B, and 34, pp. 220–23, 228, 229–31, 237.

[186] See [LW 73], *Sixth Disputation against the Antinomians* (1540), Argument 6, p. 222.

[187] See [LW 73], *Sixth Disputation against the Antinomians* (1540), p. 230. See above, pp. [323–324].

[188] See [LW 73], *Sixth Disputation against the Antinomians* (1540), Argument 37, p. 238; cf. [LW 73], *Antinomian Theses Circulated among the Brethren* (1537), Thesis 7, p. 45.

identifying Luther or the disputations as their source);[189] Valentin Ernst Löscher (1674–1749) quoted Luther's warning against Dionysius' *Mystical Theology* in his 1718 *Timotheus Verinus*.[190] A full edition of the reports on the disputations was not undertaken until the 1895 publication of Luther's disputations by Paul Drews (1858–1912),[191] followed by the edition by Heinrich Hermelink (1877–1958) in WA 39/1 and 39/2. Luther's series of theses against the Antinomians, however, were each published in Wittenberg in advance of the disputations and then reprinted and gathered in collected editions, sometimes with slight changes to the text. . . .

The first complete English translation of the Antinomian theses and disputations was edited by Holger Sonntag in a 2008 edition.[192] The present translation [in LW 73] of the theses and disputations is a new one, based primarily on the text edited in the WA, but taking into account Rudolf Mau's edition of the *Theses Circulated among the Brethren*, *First Set of Theses against the Antinomians*, and *First Disputation against the Antinomians* in the StA,[193] with recourse to the sixteenth-century printings in digitized form as needed. . . .

[189] Peter Palladius, *Catalogus aliquot haeresium huius aetatis, et earum refutatio* (Wittenberg: Peter Seitz Jr., 1557) [VD16 P140], fols. B1r–C6r. . . .

[190] See [LW 73], *First Disputation against the Antinomians* (1537), pp. 91–92.

[191] For bibliographic information, see [LW 73], p. x.

[192] Holger Sonntag, ed., *Solus Decalogus est Aeternus: Martin Luther's Complete Antinomian Theses and Disputations* (Minneapolis: Lutheran Press, 2008).

[193] StA 5:220–325.

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An Embarrassment of Riches: Choosing What to Sing

Paul J. Grime

To begin my examination of the topic at hand, I would like to draw your attention to two historical figures: John Calvin and Martin Luther, specifically to their contribution to the church's song. Calvin, the great reformer based in Geneva, was a generation younger than Luther. By the time he began to exert significant influence on the reformation of worship, a fairly established tradition of psalm singing was already in place in Switzerland and parts of France. The popularity of these psalm hymns was cemented in their original function as songs of protest against the Roman Catholic Church. It was hardly surprising when Calvin, among others, later provided theological justification for the singing of the psalms by arguing that using God's own words was the best way to praise him.[1] And if they were the best, then it was but a short step to contend that they were the only way.

Now compare this approach with Luther's. Rather than make the theological claim that God's own words, namely, the psalms, were the only way to praise him, Luther provided a rationale for congregational singing that was not only less limiting but also theologically more substantive. In the preface to the first large collection of hymns, published in 1524, Luther simply stated that "we should know nothing to sing or say, save Jesus Christ, our Savior."[2] For Luther, it was about the content—Jesus Christ—and not the particular genre or mode that mattered.

[1] Corneliu C. Simuț, "John Calvin and the Complete French Psalter," in *Hymns and Hymnody: Historical and Theological Introductions*, vol. 2, *From Catholic Europe to Protestant Europe*, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest, and Vernon M. Whaley (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019), 55. The entire chapter, pages 49–63, provides a helpful background to the development of the French Psalter.

[2] Martin Luther, *Liturgy and Hymns* (1524): vol. 53, 316, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–76); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–86); vols. 56–82, ed.

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The result? A diverse collection of hymns the likes of which Calvin and his followers could not have imagined. To be sure, Luther also dropped his net into the Psalter as a source for hymns. In fact, one of Luther's earliest attempts at hymn writing was likely a psalm paraphrase. In a letter at the end of 1523 to Georg Spalatin, the court chaplain to Frederick the Wise, Luther urged him to have a go at adapting a psalm into a German hymn. Luther even mentioned an example of his own work that he sent along with his letter. Within the year, Luther would produce six examples himself of such psalm hymns.[3] In this regard, he was tracking right along with the French Huguenots who had begun the same process in France and Switzerland.

But even as he was paraphrasing psalms, Luther was reaching beyond that self-imposed limit of those of the Reformed persuasion. Drawing, for example, on his years of praying the eight daily prayer offices while in the monastery, Luther turned to some of the ancient hymns of the Latin tradition that he knew and cherished and gave them new life by translating them into German. That is how "Savior of the Nations, Come," which is attributed to Ambrose, an important pastor and leader of the church in Milan in the fourth century, became a staple of the Advent season among Lutherans. As with the psalm hymns, Luther made no attempt to provide a comprehensive collection of Latin hymns, but was content to produce a half-dozen or so model translations.[4]

Luther was also aware of the simple German hymns that had sprung up in the centuries prior to the Reformation. Contrary to popular opinion, it simply is not true that there was no use of the vernacular in worship before Luther came along. The Mass in all its parts was sung in Latin, of course. But opportunities were found for the people to participate in some fashion. In all likelihood, such singing would have first begun with a choir or cantor singing to the people simple songs that

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Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), hereafter AE.

[3] *Ach Gott, vom Himmel* (Psalm 12), *Es spricht der Unweisen* (Psalm 14), *Es wollt uns Gott* (Psalm 67), *Wär Gott nicht mit* (Psalm 124), *Wohl dem, der* (Psalm 128), *Aus tiefer Not* (Psalm 130).

[4] *Herr Gott, dich loben wir* (*Te deum laudamus*, attributed to Augustine and Ambrose, fourth century), AE 53:288, 171–75, *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* (*Veni redemptor gentium*, Ambrose, fourth century), AE 53:235–36, *Christum wir sollen loben schon* (*A solis ortus cardine*, Sedulius, fifth or sixth century), AE 53:237–39, *Was fürchtst du* (*Hostis Herodes impie*, Sedulius, fifth or sixth century), AE 53:302–03, *Der du bist drei* (*O lux beata trinitas*, fifth century), AE 53:308–09, *Komm, Gott Schöpfer* (*Veni creator spiritus*, falsely attributed to Gregory the Great and Rabanus Maurus, ninth century), AE 53:260–62, *Verleih uns Frieden* (from the antiphon *Da pacem domine*, sixth or seventh century), AE 53:286–87.

concluded with a *Kyrieleis*, a contracted form of the phrase *Kyrie eleison*.[5] It was among these hymns, perhaps the more popular ones, that Luther also dropped his net. But not satisfied with these songs in their simple form, he went about improving (*gebessert*) them by adjusting the text where needed and, more significantly, adding additional stanzas to treat the topic more fully. The works produced from this effort were even more numerous than either the psalm hymns or the Latin hymns.[6]

Even with hymns drawn from psalms, Latin hymns, and medieval hymns, Luther still was not done. A fourth category could be described as Scripture songs, hymns based on specific passages of Scripture. Several of these, his two hymns on the Ten Commandments and another on the Lord's Prayer, for example, served an additional function as catechism hymns. Two other hymns that fall into this category are based on texts that had long-standing use in various services, namely, Luther's paraphrases of the Sanctus in his German Mass and the Nunc Dimittis, which was likely written for the observance of the Presentation of Our Lord.[7]

There are other hymns of Luther that draw heavily from specific passages of Holy Scripture but were then expanded beyond the biblical text to provide further teaching. In Luther's Baptism hymn, "To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord," for example, the first four stanzas unpack the account of Jesus' Baptism, and the fifth stanza turns to the command of Jesus to baptize all nations (Matt 28:19). The familiar hymn "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come" begins with the Christmas

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[5] Anthony Ruff, "Pre-Reformation German Vernacular Hymnody," in *Hymns and Hymnody: Historical and Theological Introductions*, vol. 1, *From Asia Minor to Western Europe*, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest, and Vernon M. Whaley (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019), 224.

[6] *Christ lag* (from the twelfth-century Easter verse *Christ ist erstanden*, which was used in conjunction with the sequence *Victimae paschali laudes*), AE 53:255–57, *Nun bitten wir* (from a twelfth- or thirteenth-century Pentecost verse based on the sequence *Veni sancte spiritus et emitte*), AE 53:265–67, *Gelobet seist du* (from a twelfth-century Christmas verse, which was used together with the sequence *Grates nunc omnes reddamus*), *Gott sei gelobet* (from a fourteenth- or fifteenth-century verse for the Corpus Christi festival, which was used in conjunction with the sequence *Lauda Sion*), AE 53:252–54, *Komm, Heiliger Geist* (from a fifteenth-century Pentecost verse used in conjunction with the antiphon *Veni sancte spiritus reple*), AE 53:265–67, *Mitten wir* (from a fifteenth-century German adaptation of the antiphon *Media vita in morte sumus*), AE 53:274–76, *Gott der Vater* (from a fourteenth- or fifteenth-century litany hymn, which was originally used as a processional hymn on Marian festivals and saints' days), AE 53:268–70, *Wir glauben all* (from fifteenth- and sixteenth-century verses based on the creed), AE 53:271–73, *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland* (a free adaptation of the fifteenth-century Latin hymn *Jesus Christus nostra salus*, attributed to John Hus), AE 53:258–59.

[7] The complete list of the hymns based on passages of Scripture are the following: *Mit Fried und Freud* (Luke 2:29–32, the Canticle of Simeon), AE 53:247–48, *Jesaja, dem Propheten* (Isa 6:1–4, the German Sanctus), AE 53:282, 82–83, *Sie ist mir lieb* (Rev 12:1, 4–6), AE 53:292–94, *Dies sind die heilgen Zehn Gebot* (Exod 20:3–17; Deut 5:6–21, Ten Commandments), AE 53:277–79, *Mensch, willst du* (Exod 20:3–17; Deut 5:6–21, brief, five-stanza versification of Ten Commandments), AE 53:281, *Vater unser* (Matt 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4, the Our Father), AE 53:295–98.

story from Luke 2. The first five stanzas he patterned after the medieval liturgical dramas in which the angel announces to us the good news of the Savior's birth. Luther then continues in the remaining ten stanzas to unpack the significance of that birth for us.[8]

And there are, lastly, wholly original hymns that Luther writes, such as the brief prayer "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word," and his *tour de force*, "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice."[9] Even Luther's small output of a little over three dozen hymns makes plain why I chose to title my paper "An Embarrassment of Riches." By refusing to limit the congregation's song to only one source—the psalms—Luther launched a movement that would result in a flowering of hymn writing. By the end of the sixteenth century, some 1,500 editions of Lutheran hymnals had been published, many of them containing hundreds of hymns.[10] Estimates of the total number of hymns written in the first century of the Reformation number in the thousands, with just as many to come in the following century from the likes of poets such as Philip Nicolai, Paul Gerhardt, and Johann Rist. Just as significant was the immense musical creativity that was spawned by Luther's efforts, with Lutheran composers often leading the way in the development of new musical ideas, all through their treatment of the Lutheran chorale.[11]

This proliferation of hymn writing would expand beyond the Lutheran tradition. Though the Reformation in England initially followed the Calvinist inclination to sing only the psalms, over time that tradition would broaden its definition of a hymn. Though using the psalms as his starting point, Isaac Watts incorporated a wide range of biblical imagery that took the hymn beyond a mere paraphrase. His goal, as he expressed it, was to make a Christian out of King David, the poet. By the eighteenth century, England could boast of perhaps the most prolific hymn writer in all history—Charles Wesley—who penned around 6,600 hymns! While a good number of them are unremarkable and others theologically weak, could we ever imagine Advent without "Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending" or Christmas without "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"?

In the late twentieth century, a new outburst of hymn writing began to take shape. Centered in Great Britain and North America, tens of thousands of hymns have flooded the market, so to speak. Some of these hymns are also unremarkable, many are great poetic creations but with questionable theology, and a good number

[8] AE 53:289–91.

[9] AE 53:304–05, 217–20.

[10] Christopher Boyd Brown, "The Reformation and Lutheran Confessionalism to 1620," in *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Hymns* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2019), 16–17.

[11] See Carl F. Schalk, *Music in Early Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2001).

are trendy in the worst sense of that word. Yet, again, there are gems among this vast output that have enriched us as they express the gospel with fresh images that hymn writers of the past had never before considered.

There is no denying that we have an embarrassingly rich tradition upon which to draw, so much so that we have far more to sing than opportunity to sing it. With fifty-two Sundays in a year, plus another ten or so extra midweek services during Advent and Lent and at festivals, there are really only about sixty-five times a year when a sizeable portion of a congregation gathers together. Singing an average of four to five hymns at each service, that adds up to a total of 260 to 325 hymns that a congregation might sing in a given year. Undoubtedly, some hymns are repeated during that time, so the number of distinctive hymns sung by a congregation is even less. It is also true that the hymns sung from year to year by an individual congregation will vary somewhat, yet the amount of variance probably will not be that much.

So, in the midst of this embarrassingly rich treasure of hymnody, how do we choose what to sing? There are so many theologically meaty hymns just from the first two hundred years of Lutheranism that we could be satisfied singing nothing more than Martin Luther, Paul Speratus, Philip Nicolai, Paul Gerhardt, Johann Rist, and Johann Heermann. And I suppose for good measure we could throw in the Danish hymn writer Thomas Kingo, just so that we won't be accused of being a purely Germanic church!

But we all know that would not work. A lot has transpired since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. And for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, a particularly significant step occurred at the end of the nineteenth century when the first edition of the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book (ELHB)* was published. The year was 1889, and though *ELHB* was not an official hymnal of the Missouri Synod, those who did much of the work in developing it were closely associated with the Synod. The more significant impact of this hymnal would occur in 1912 when an updated version—with the same title—was published as the first official English-language hymnal of the Missouri Synod. Note the date of that publication: 1912. Just two years later, the Great War would erupt in Europe, launching, among other things, the mad dash among German-speaking Americans to the English language. The Missouri Synod was not immune. Within several decades, the vast majority of congregations would move toward English-language services, even if they still held on to a German service for a while.

The impact of *ELHB* cannot be overestimated. Whereas the Synod's German hymnal, produced by C. F. W. Walther in 1847—the same year as the Synod's founding—included hymns of purely Germanic origin, with a handful of German

translations of ancient Latin hymns, the new English hymnal did not. In fact, of its 567 hymns, only about half were hymns of German origin that had been translated into English. The other half were hymns that had originally been written in English, with the vast majority of them originating from outside of Lutheranism. Of those hundreds of English-language hymns, few if any had been written by Lutherans. Naturally, many of the hymns came from a number of theological traditions in England. Even the translations of the German hymns, like those of Luther and Gerhardt, were mostly done by non-Lutherans, including Richard Massie, an Anglican cleric, and Catherine Winkworth, whose past included a brief time under the tutelage of a Unitarian pastor.[12] Despite the occasional shortcoming in translation, however, the availability of the primary corpus of Lutheran chorales in the English language was a boon for Lutherans in this country as the move from German to English progressed.

It was, however, the inclusion of a great number of hymns of non-Lutheran origin that would have an unforeseen impact on the sung confession of the LCMS in the ensuing decades. To be sure, the new hymnal of the Missouri Synod included the great treasures of the past from the pens of Luther, Gerhardt, and others. But suddenly, they appeared on equal footing with the hymns of Methodists, Anglicans, and even the American revivalist tradition.

You may wonder to what degree we can determine the impact of these foreign traditions on the sung confession of the Missouri Synod. Fortunately, we have actual surveys that were conducted at that time, now nearly a century ago.[13] In 1922, *The Lutheran Witness* carried the report of Theodore Buenger, a professor at Concordia College in St. Paul, Minnesota, who related that the president of that institution had recently sought the counsel of pastors regarding hymns in English that all young men should know before heading off to the seminary.[14] The college polled the pastors of the English District, which had at the time been a part of the Synod for only a decade, as well as two (unnamed) professors at the seminary in St. Louis. Twenty-four pastors sent in replies, as did the Cleveland English Conference, which sent in a joint response, and the two (still unnamed) seminary professors. Two lists

[12] Robin Leaver points out that although her early theological opinions were on the liberal side, Winkworth gradually moved toward a more conservative theological stance, perhaps aided by the many great hymns that she translated. See Robin Leaver, *Catherine Winkworth: The Influence of Her Translations on English Hymnody* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), 13.

[13] The following is drawn almost verbatim from Paul J. Grime, "The Lutheran Hymnal after Seventy-Five Years: Its Role in the Shaping of *Lutheran Service Book*," *CTQ* 79 (2015): 199–201.

[14] Theodore Buenger, "Hymns in the Curriculum of Our Colleges," *The Lutheran Witness* 41, no. 5 (1922): 75. The asterisks behind the hymns in the list indicate the recommendations of the Cleveland English Conference's joint response.

of ten hymns were prepared. The first consisted of those hymns deemed important enough to be committed to memory.

Rock of Ages*	24
Just as I Am*	23
Abide with Me	21
What a Friend We Have in Jesus*	21
Jesus, Lover of My Soul*	18
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*	17
My Faith Looks Up to Thee*	16
Come, Thou Almighty King	15
There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood	14
From Greenland's Icy Mountains	13

The second list provided additional hymns that the respondents believed should be sung more frequently in school chapel services in order for future seminarians to become better acquainted with them.

My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*	13
All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name	12
In the Hour of Trial*	11
Alas, and Did My Savior Bleed	9
Holy, Holy, Holy*	9
Holy Ghost, with Light Divine*	8
Thy Life Was Giv'n for Me*	7
I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say*	7
In the Cross of Christ I Glory*	7
Let Me Be Thine Forever	7

The contents of the lists are most revealing. Only one hymn among the twenty originates from sixteenth- or seventeenth-century Germany, "A Mighty Fortress." To think that in just a single generation, and with the transition from German to English far from complete,[15] the Missouri Synod was rapidly losing its hymnic heritage. Though the Synod was undoubtedly still wearing proudly its Lutheran

[15] In 1922, 12 percent of congregations in the LCMS were still worshiping only in German and another 32 percent were worshiping more in German than English. Compare that with only 23 percent that were worshiping only in English or more English than German. By 1935, the time when Theodore Graebner published his essay "Our Liturgical Chaos" in *The Problem of Lutheran Union and Other Essays* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1935), 135-66, only 2 percent of congregations still worshiped solely in German and 10 percent more German than English. *Statistical Yearbook*, 1935 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1936), 149–150.

moniker as the singing church, it was, in reality, sounding a lot more like the general Protestants than Lutherans.

Two interesting comments accompany Buenger's report. First, he writes that "the request has been made that we publish the results of the questionnaire." The passive voice is telling in that someone, again unnamed, wanted the results of this survey to be made known to the Synod but apparently did not want anyone to know who had made the request.[16] The second comment comes at the end of his brief report, where he writes that "this list will be taken as a canon in St. Paul at the present." In other words, it is not necessary to guess what future pastors and teachers were singing in daily chapel in at least one of the Synod's prep schools.

Three years later, another report on hymn preferences appeared in *The Lutheran Witness*. Walter Wismar, a church musician in St. Louis, reported that when he spoke to young people's groups on the topic of hymnody, he would always conclude by polling the students, asking them to write down their three favorite hymns, indicating that they could provide either English or German titles.[17] The top twenty hymns identified by these young people are equally telling:

What a Friend We Have in Jesus	284
Rock of Ages	158
Abide with Me	140
A Mighty Fortress (G)	138
Just as I Am	119
Jesus, Lover of My Soul	109
Savior, I Follow On	106
Nearer, My God, to Thee	98
In the Hour of Trial	82
I'm But a Stranger Here	68
From Greenland's Icy Mountains	54
My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less	53
Abide, O Dearest Jesus (G)	31
Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty	24
O Friend of Souls, How Blest Am I (G)	22
Lamb of God, Most Holy (G)	20
My Faith Looks Up to Thee	18
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (G)	14
Lead, Kindly Light	12

[16] Admittedly, this use of the passive voice with an unnamed agent may simply have been common parlance at that time. The result, however, is still the same: we do not know who requested its dissemination.

[17] Walter Wismar, "Popular Hymns," *The Lutheran Witness* 44, no. 17 (1925): 280.

Beautiful Savior 11

The results are quite similar to the "canon" at Concordia, St. Paul, reported three years earlier. One can, perhaps, take solace in the fact that in this case five of the hymns are identified as being of German origin (marked by Wismar with a "G"), although two of those came from the pens of Pietist hymn writers. Of course, the number of votes for those five German hymns tallied together still falls short of the number one choice on the list. One wonders whether Teacher Wismar submitted his report as a retort, to some degree, to the earlier survey from Concordia, St. Paul. While the results were only marginally better, it provided Wismar the opportunity to make the point that the Synod was heading in a new direction: "Contemplating further the above list and figures, we realize that the German choral is losing favor and prestige." Later, he adds, "While a number of Standard English hymns appear on the list, the best of them are not equal to the German choral."[18]

These two surveys, conducted in the early 1920s, appeared just a decade after the revised edition of *ELHB* appeared in 1912. Surely, such a change in preference could not have occurred in such a short time. As Jon Vieker has convincingly demonstrated in his doctoral dissertation,[19] there were significant precursors to the Synod's first official English-language hymnal that shaped the choices of English-language hymns. Among these was a publication in 1894, *Lieder-Perlen*, that consisted of both German and English spiritual songs that were intended for use in school. This collection was expanded just a few years later and then succeeded in 1901 by an English-language book called the *Sunday School Hymnal*. This book drew not only from the German spiritual song tradition that gained currency in the earlier *Lieder-Perlen*, but expanded by drawing on English sources, including the American revivalist tradition. Regarding this tradition, a significant discussion ensued in *The Lutheran Witness* during the 1880s and 90s.[20] While much of the critique was negative, certain aspects of the revivalist tradition would slip past the theological filters. Even the earlier, 1892 edition of *ELHB* already included a few of these hymns.

[18] Wismar, "Popular Hymns," 280. While the limited scope of this survey is evident, with a "margin of error" that would likely be quite high, the similarities between the results of Wismar's surveys and the Concordia, St. Paul, list suggest that both were fairly indicative of hymn preferences at that time.

[19] Jon D. Vieker, "The Fathers' Faith, the Children's Song: Missouri Lutheranism Encounters American Evangelicalism in Its Hymnals, Hymn Writers, and Hymns, 1889–1912" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 2014). In particular, see his chapter on the *Sunday School Hymnal*, 92–142.

[20] See Vieker, "The Father's Faith," 255–274, for an extensive review of this literature.

But that is enough of the historical review. For our purposes, this trip down memory lane is intended to help us wrestle with the subtitle of this paper: choosing what to sing. The reality is that English-language hymns of the American tradition constitute a significant portion of what the congregations in the LCMS have been singing for a very long time. The move from German to English in the Missouri Synod occurred within an ecclesiastical culture rife with revivalistic hymnody. Not surprisingly, this resulted in a new reality in the worship life of the Synod. While many of the stalwart hymns of Luther and others still appeared in the hymnal, they quickly receded into the background when it came to actual use.[21]

What about today? Three hymnals have followed upon *ELHB*, each of them putting their somewhat unique stamp on the corpus of Missouri Synod hymnody, with some hymns being added and others removed at each step. Considering, for example, only the Christmas hymns, with the appearance of *TLH* in 1941, the following hymns joined the official corpus of Missouri hymnody:

Angels from the Realms of Glory
Behold a Branch Is Growing
Christ the Lord to Us Is Born
Come Rejoicing, Praises Voicing
Now Sing We, Now Rejoice
O Gladsome Light, O Grace
O Little Town of Bethlehem
Of the Father's Love Begotten
Silent Night

With *Lutheran Worship*, these hymns entered our Christmas vocabulary:

Angels We Have Heard on High
Away in a Manger
Every Year the Christ Child
From Shepherding of Stars
Gentle Mary Laid Her Child
Go Tell It on the Mountain
I Am So Glad when Christmas Comes
It Came upon a Midnight Clear
Love Came Down at Christmas
O Savior of Our Fallen Race

[21] Admittedly, I am painting with a rather broad brush. The core hymns of the Reformation were still being sung, in some places more frequently than others. But as the surveys from 1922 and 1925 demonstrate, these hymns, for the most part, were not the ones that were capturing the hearts and imaginations of the people.

On Christmas Night All Christians Sing
Once in Royal David's City
What Child Is This
Who Are These That Earnest Knock

In contrast to these robust additions in the previous hymnals, *LSB* added a relatively modest number of new hymns to the Christmas corpus:

Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light
God Loves Me Dearly
Infant Holy, Infant Lowly
O Sing of Christ
See amid the Winter's Snow
Where Shepherds Lately Knelt

Four of those hymns had already appeared in *Hymnal Supplement 98*, hymns that the Commission on Worship believed should have been included in *LW* but somehow failed to make the cut. So in essence, only two new hymns were added to the Christmas section, and one of those, "God Loves Me Dearly," was already well known.[22]

Hymns have not only been added along the way, but also set aside. An interesting exercise results from returning to those lists of hymns produced in the two surveys of 1922 and 1925 that we considered earlier. Of the thirty-nine hymns in those two lists, ten were duplicates, leaving a total of twenty-nine distinct hymns. Only two of those hymns were not included in *ELHB*, which was the current hymnal at that time: "Beautiful Savior" and "Lead, Kindly Light." When *TLH* appeared several decades later, "Beautiful Savior" was added and "O Friend of Souls, How Blest Am I" was removed. With the arrival of *LW* in 1982, one more was removed, "Savior, I Follow On." As for our current hymnal, *LSB*, five more hymns from those lists have been removed:

From Greenland's Icy Mountains
In the Hour of Trial
Jesus, Lover of My Soul
Nearer My God to Thee
There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood

[22] Given the vast number of Christmas hymns already in use, the *LSB* Hymnody Committee was of the opinion that there was a rather high hymnic saturation for this season that would prevent many new Christmas hymns from ever being able to break in. Thus, they held back in this section in order to save space for new hymns that would more likely be sung at other times of the year.

This little comparison is far too limited to serve as anything more than one small example of how our hymn corpus continues to morph from generation to generation. Even as some of these "favorites" from the early twentieth century have been set aside, hymns of a comparable stripe have been added.[23] And though we have recovered more recently several wonderful hymns from the early centuries of Lutheranism, like Paul Gerhardt's "Evening and Morning" and Johann Lindemann's "In Thee Is Gladness," we have simultaneously seen a reduction in the number of hymns by Luther that are in our current hymnal. Yet, the breadth and depth of the hymnody we now have available is truly remarkable. In addition to our Lutheran treasures, we have a variety of folk traditions represented, with texts and/or tunes from such places as Sweden, Norway, Finland, Ireland, France, Slovakia, Kenya, Tanzania, and China. The Appalachian folk tradition from this country is especially well represented. And this does not begin to take into account the amazing variety of hymns that have come to us in the most recent decades, as I described earlier. It all leads me to say once more that we have an astounding wealth of riches when it comes to all that we might sing.

This leads me yet again to ask the question: what shall we sing? There are some who wish that question could be answered with a simple, "Here you go; sing this." That would be the easiest, would it not? The more limited corpus of past ages allowed for some of this. Not only was a hymn of the day appointed for each Sunday of the year, but other hymns became strongly associated with particular Sundays. Thus, each year the same basic hymns were sung. With the rich corpus of hymns now available, however, that hardly seems a viable option. Choosing four or five hymns and then simply repeating them every time those readings come around misses important opportunities to select other hymns that may capture the congregation's attention at a unique point in time.

Even if there were a synodical guru who would pour heart and soul into choosing just the right hymns for each Sunday of the year, there is no guarantee that those "perfect" choices would be the right fit for any particular congregation. The truth is that each congregation has its own corpus of hymns that is slightly different from every other congregation's. There is overlap, to be sure, with a solid core of hymns that is sung by just about everyone. But each congregation brings with it its own experiences and preferences.

It is for that reason that I give my students the strong encouragement to become familiar with a congregation's hymn corpus. Upon becoming the pastor of a congregation, I believe it is essential to determine what the congregation has sung in recent years. If such records have not been kept, that means digging into every

[23] E.g., "How Great Thou Art."

church bulletin for the past several years and recording the hymns that were sung. It is painstaking work, something I wish I had done more of when I arrived at my parish more than thirty years ago. From such an analysis, one gets a feel for the congregation's hymn preferences. You learn what they sing and how often they sing it. And, not surprisingly, you also learn much by taking note of the hymns that they do not sing. Ideally, you need several years worth of data to get an honest picture of the congregation's hymn repertoire.[24]

Once you have the data at hand, then comes the fun work as you try to tease out some insights. Which hymns are sung most often? What genres of hymns receive the greatest attention? Do the majority come from the Reformation era? Or are the bulk of the hymns from the Pietist and American revivalist traditions? In addition, what can you learn from the hymn genres that are slighted or ignored?

While there are no right or wrong answers at this or any stage in the process of choosing hymns, I would suggest that there are better and worse paths that one might follow. If a congregation sings no hymns from the Reformation era besides "A Mighty Fortress," we would probably agree that there is an impoverishment that could stand some improvement. Imagine the enrichment the congregation would experience by singing "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice." Now, at ten stanzas, that could prove to be an immediate impediment, so one would have to do some careful planning in order to make sure that the congregation does not get worn out. Yet just consider the benefits that might accrue over time by taking Luther's descriptive words of our sinful condition into our own mouths.

> Fast bound in Satan's chains I lay;
> Death brooded darkly o'er me.
> Sin was my torment night and day;
> In sin my mother bore me.
> But daily deeper still I fell;
> My life became a living hell,
> So firmly sin possessed me.[25]

Similarly, Luther's picturesque description of how God's plan of salvation took shape could provide fodder for an entire Bible class hour.

> But God had seen my wretched state

[24] It should be noted that this objective data of how often particular hymns were sung does not take into account the reception that the hymns may have received. Just because a pastor dutifully scheduled Luther's Creed hymn, "We All Believe in One True God," every year on Reformation Sunday does not mean that it went well or that the congregation appreciated it. Such a level of familiarity with a congregation's hymn repertoire can only come from conversation.

[25] *LSB* 556:2. *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006).

Before the world's foundation,
And mindful of His mercies great,
He planned for my salvation.
He turned to me a father's heart;
He did not choose the easy part
But gave His dearest treasure.[26]

Or, if ten stanzas is too daunting to start out—and it truly might be—then one could consider instead Luther's wonderful little prayer, "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word." Trinitarian in structure, it provides the Christian with as fitting a prayer in our age of moral decay as it was in Luther's time as the Muslim conquest was knocking on the door of Europe.

Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word;
Curb those who by deceit or sword
Would wrest the kingdom from Your Son
And bring to naught all He has done.

Lord Jesus Christ, Your pow'r make known,
For You are Lord of lords alone;
Defend Your holy Church that we
May sing Your praise eternally.

O Comforter of priceless worth,
Send peace and unity on earth;
Support us in our final strife
And lead us out of death to life.[27]

And what if your analysis of the congregation's hymn repertoire reveals the opposite, namely, that they sing every hymn of Luther, Gerhardt, and all those stalwart hymn writers of Lutheranism's earliest centuries? That is a great problem to have, wouldn't you agree? But I used the word "problem" on purpose, because I would suggest that limiting one's hymnody to only the classic Lutheran hymns is, in fact, problematic. It is not that those hymns are bad; rather, it is simply that, as good as they are, they do not provide the full range of expression that the church's song has attained over the centuries.

Consider the first two stanzas of the hymn "What Wondrous Love Is This."

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!

[26] *LSB* 556:4.

[27] *LSB* 655. In the original version, the second phrase of stanza 1 reflected quite explicitly the occasion that led Luther to write it: "Restrain the murd'rous Pope and Turk." *ELHB* 274.

What wondrous love is this
That caused the Lord of bliss
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul!

When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down,
When I was sinking down, sinking down,
When I was sinking down
Beneath God's righteous frown,
Christ laid aside His crown for my soul, for my soul,
Christ laid aside His crown for my soul.[28]

A cursory glance at these stanzas suggests something very different from what we saw a short while ago in those stanzas from "Dear Christians, One and All." Yet, similar ground is covered. The culpability of our sin is uniquely described as "sinking down beneath God's righteous frown." Furthermore, we are described as being under a dreadful curse. The good news expressed here, however, is that there is a love almost too good to be true, a wondrous love that would cause the sinless Son of God to lay down his crown in order to bear that curse. No, it is not packed as densely as Luther's text. But there is another matter to consider: the poetry and the music. A distinctive feature of this text is the repetition of short phrases that bear down on us like incessant pleas. Coupled with the music, this hymn haunts us, demanding that we come face-to-face with the very heart of the gospel message, that Christ laid aside his crown *for my soul, for my soul.*

Another hymn that functions in a similar fashion is the Ethiopian hymn "When I Behold Jesus Christ."

When I behold Jesus Christ,
True God who died for me,
I wonder much at His love
As He hung on the tree.

Refrain
What kind of love is this?
What kind of love is this?
You showed Your love, Jesus, there
To me on Calvary.
What kind of love is this?
What kind of love is this?

[28] *LSB* 543:1–2.

You showed Your love, Jesus, there
To me on Calvary.[29]

That incessant question, "What kind of love is this?" draws us deeper and deeper into the message as the stanzas unfold the work of Christ on our behalf. And note how the music reinforces that plea, repeatedly descending from the highest note.

Perhaps these two examples do not do a lot for you. For some folks, the pleading questions and the introspection are not their cup of tea. Instead, they resonate much more to the straightforward language of Paul Speratus's hymn, "Salvation unto Us Has Come."

Since Christ has full atonement made
And brought to us salvation,
Each Christian therefore may be glad
And build on this foundation.
Your grace alone, dear Lord, I plead,
Your death is now my life indeed,
For You have paid my ransom.[30]

What does all of this have to do with the choosing of hymns for congregational singing? I would suggest that an important consideration in the determination of what to sing is to be found in the people who will be doing the singing. God has uniquely created each of us and given us different dispositions. Some folks are cerebral, others quite emotional. Some like simplicity, others thrive on a complexity that invites further contemplation. Some long for the poetic, while others are more matter-of-fact and just want a straightforward telling of the faith.

I would suggest that Christians have different faith languages by which we both take in and express our Christian faith. Some are more emotional in their expression of the faith, while others prefer more precise expressions that carry few emotive characteristics.

The reason I suggest this concept of faith languages is because our congregations have members at every point along this continuum. If a particular hymn does not strike your fancy or does not get you all worked up with a sense of awe, that does not mean that it will not have that effect on someone else. Not everyone thinks or feels the same way I do. Thank God for that! Worship planners need to remember that and plan for worship accordingly. This suggests that a wide swath of hymns from every time and place will best serve the whole congregation and perhaps also us as individuals. Stepping slightly outside my comfort zone forces

[29] *LSB* 542:1.
[30] *LSB* 555:6.

me to consider the work of God in Christ from a slightly different perspective. It also helps me to step into the shoes of my fellow Christians who do not think or feel the way I do, thus teaching me humility and respect.

The two hymns I cited previously, "What Wondrous Love Is This" and "When I Behold Jesus Christ," I would classify as fairly substantive hymns. The gospel is faithfully and accurately presented, which is more than can be said for a lot of popular hymns. But what are we to do when we bump into those less-than-solid hymns that have worked their way into our members' hearts after many decades of use? As an example, consider "I'm But a Stranger Here."

> I'm but a stranger here,
> Heav'n is my home;
> Earth is a desert drear,
> Heav'n is my home.
> Danger and sorrow stand
> Round me on ev'ry hand;
> Heav'n is my fatherland,
> Heav'n is my home.[31]

This hymn was high on the list a century ago, and it has appeared in every synodical hymnal since. While the hymn expresses a commendable sentiment, it really does not go beyond that. At worst, one could argue that it proposes a form of escapism, as though this life is not worth living. What does such a sentiment do, however, to the doctrine of the body and even more significantly to the doctrine of the incarnation, which acknowledges that the Son of God took on our very flesh in order to restore our humanity? It is true that Paul expresses a somewhat similar thought in his letter to the Colossians: "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Col 3:2).[32] But Paul goes on in the very next verse to provide the rationale for his invitation: "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). That is baptismal language that centers our life in Christ, into whose death we have been buried. Such imagery is not found in the hymn, which cannot get past the denigration of this life and longing for the next.

So does that mean that we should not sing "I'm But a Stranger Here"? To be honest, that would be my preference. Not only does it not resonate with my faith language, but it has weaknesses. Yet, I also must acknowledge that it does speak the faith language of some in the congregation. There will be members, for example,

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[31] *LSB* 748:1.

[32] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

who vividly remember the hymn being sung at the funeral of a close relative. For others, whose lives are filled with pain and heartache, the hymn may be a helpful way of expressing the longing desire for their heavenly reward.

As a pastor charged with choosing the hymns that a congregation sings, I might have to continue selecting this one. But I would not leave it at that. There is more to sing, and I would make every effort to sing those deeper truths. Consider, for example, this familiar hymn and the antidote it provides:

> Lord, Thee I love with all my heart;
> I pray Thee, ne'er from me depart,
> With tender mercy cheer me.
> Earth has no pleasure I would share.
> *Yea, heav'n itself were void and bare*
> *If Thou, Lord, wert not near me.*
> And should my heart for sorrow break,
> My trust in Thee can nothing shake.
> Thou art the portion I have sought;
> Thy precious blood my soul has bought.
> Lord Jesus Christ, my God and Lord, my God and Lord,
> Forsake me not! I trust Thy Word.[33]

While still acknowledging that this earth has nothing lasting to offer, Martin Schalling's hymn places Christ squarely at the center of all our desires: "Thou art the portion I have sought; / Thy precious blood my soul has bought." That provides the foundation for the marvelous statement made earlier in the stanza that heaven itself would be of no interest or value if Christ were not there.

A similar example can be seen in the hymn "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." At the top of that 1925 survey, having garnered more than twice as many votes as "A Mighty Fortress," the hymn makes a rather questionable claim about prayer, suggesting that the suffering we endure is a result of our lack of praying, which all but implies a lack of faith on our part. Again, the hymn does not speak my faith language, yet for others it is almost the equivalent of a direct-dial call to God. Pastoral wisdom might necessitate the use of this hymn occasionally, but only with the caveat of introducing stronger hymns that could eventually take its place. In that vein, one might consider the hymn "In Holy Conversation." While I do not resonate particularly well with this Swedish folk tune, I can imagine a lot of people who would simultaneously benefit from the text.

> In holy conversation

[33] *LSB* 708:1. Emphasis added.

We speak to God in prayer,
And at His invitation
Our deepest thoughts we share.
We come, His will obeying,
As children bringing needs;
And to support our praying,
His Spirit intercedes.[34]

This discussion could, quite obviously, go in any number of directions. As an example, consider Jaroslav Vajda's 1969 hymn "Now the Silence." Many look at this hymn and immediately roll their eyes. Perhaps one of the first truly postmodern hymns—completely devoid of punctuation—it presents us one image after another regarding the high points in the Divine Service. I know that most of us do not think this way; it is not how we have been trained. Yet, consider for a moment how it portrays Confession and Absolution, noting in particular the brief but effective reference to the parable of the prodigal son:

Now the empty hands uplifted
Now the kneeling
Now the plea
Now the Father's arms in welcome

The description of proclamation of the word comes through in just two lines:

Now the hearing
Now the pow'r

As for the Sacrament of the Altar,

Now the vessel brimmed for pouring
Now the body
Now the blood
Now the joyful celebration
Now the wedding
Now the songs
Now the heart forgiven leaping[35]

Obviously, this hymn will not speak to everyone. But as we attempt to invite the increasing number of unchurched into our sanctuaries, imagine for a moment how deeply this hymn, sung at the beginning of the service, might communicate the mysteries of the faith to all of those Gen-Xers, millennials, and Gen-Zers.

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[34] *LSB* 772:1.
[35] *LSB* 910.

One other cautionary warning bears noting. Sometimes I fear we have expectations of individual hymns that are simply greater than the hymn intends, or even needs, to provide, and if it does not cover a certain number of points of Christian doctrine, then it is suspect. I think we have to be careful of falling into this trap, lest we disqualify a few of our own favorites. Consider the hymn for the celebration of All Saints' "Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones." I know this is going to sound heretical, but there really is not that much there! Note the text with the alleluia refrains stripped out.

> Ye watchers and ye holy ones,
> Bright seraphs, cherubim, and thrones,
> Raise the glad strain: "Alleluia!"
> Cry out, dominions, princedoms, pow'rs,
> Virtues, archangels, angels' choirs:
>
> O higher than the cherubim,
> More glorious than the seraphim,
> Lead their praises: "Alleluia!"
> Thou bearer of th' eternal Word,
> Most gracious, magnify the Lord:
>
> Respond, ye souls in endless rest,
> Ye patriarchs and prophets blest:
> "Alleluia, alleluia!"
> Ye holy Twelve, ye martyrs strong,
> All saints triumphant, raise the song:
>
> O friends, in gladness let us sing,
> Supernal anthems echoing:
> "Alleluia, alleluia!"
> To God the Father, God the Son,
> And God the Spirit, Three in One:[36]

What this hymn is really doing is providing an expansion of that wonderful conclusion to the Preface that leads us into the Sanctus: "Therefore with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven . . ." There is one oblique reference to Christ in the second stanza where we implore Mary, the "bearer of the eternal Word," to join the heavenly throng in praising God. But nothing much else. No reference to the saving work of Christ, to the forgiveness of sins; nothing about our

[36] *LSB* 670.

sinful condition; nothing about the church. It is just a grand rallying cry for the whole heavenly host to sing praise to God.

So should we stop singing this hymn? Of course not. It fulfills a useful function by focusing our attention on that great company of heaven. My point is simply that the church has never operated on the principle that every hymn must proclaim the whole story of salvation. For that reason, we need to be careful that we not make additional demands of hymns that come from other streams of the tradition.

Selecting hymns from the vast treasury that the church has bequeathed to us should never be an easy task, yet neither should it be a burdensome one. There are no quotas requiring us to sing a certain percentage of hymns from the various eras of the church's history. Imagine trying to make the right choices so that you hit an arbitrary 35 percent of hymns from the Reformation era or 15 percent from modern times. But, I think it's fair to say that our congregations ought to make an effort to draw hymns from every era, past and present. One of the strengths of *LSB*, in my opinion, is that in addition to the treasures from the past it presents a fairly strong collection of new hymns, hymns that for the most part speak directly of the saving work of Christ. I would argue that drawing from the richness of these modern treasures enriches the church's expression of the truths of Holy Scripture. And I would go so far as to say that if we do not draw from the vastness of this great treasure house, we will be shortchanging our people of expressions both with which they can resonate and into which they can grow.

In the end, I cannot choose which hymns you and your congregation should sing. And no one else can either. My encouragement to pastors and musicians is that as they make these decisions, they take into consideration their congregation's past and the varied experiences of all their people. While conversations with fellow pastors and musicians can be insightful, it is of no benefit for anyone to feel pressured by those who are not a part of the congregation. Just because Congregation A in the neighboring county is singing "Isaiah, Mighty Seer" does not mean that your congregation should also be singing it. You are called to serve your people, to guide them to the green pastures of the church's song, and to enable them to lift up their voices to the best of their collective ability. And then you leave it to God to bless that sung confession, the prayer and praises that rise up before God's mighty throne, as, with Luther, you sing of Christ our Savior.

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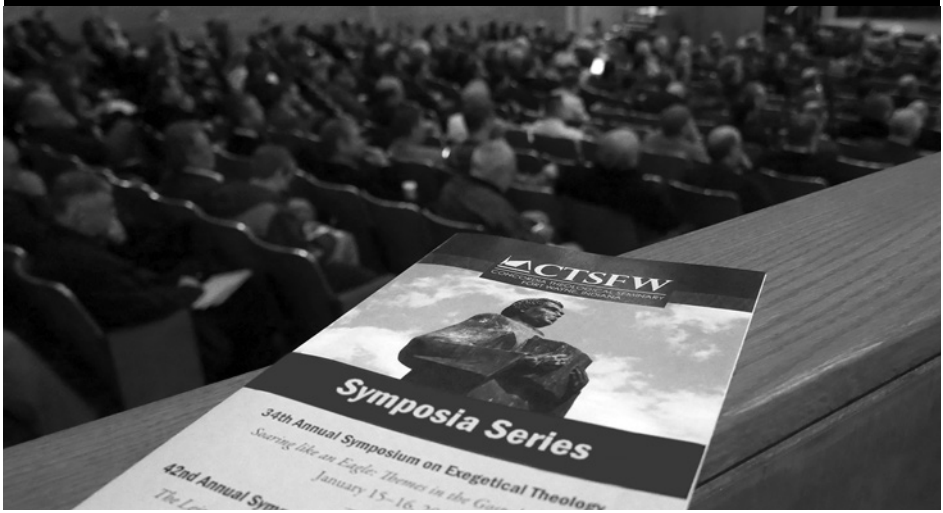

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"God Gave the Son—the Only One" (John 3:16): Theopaschism as Love

Alexey Streltsov

It would be proper to begin with the definitions. What is theopaschism? It means the suffering of God, recognition or admission that God suffers or has suffered in some way. A proper distinction must be maintained though between theopaschism and passibilism. As a version of so-called "open theism," passibilism claims that God suffers, so to speak, *simpliciter*, that it is within his nature to suffer. Passibilism would thus comprise not only representatives of theology that self-identify as Christians but also, to give just a couple of examples, proponents of process philosophy such as Alfred North Whitehead with his famous definition "God is the fellow sufferer who understands,"[1] or a prominent Jewish scholar such as Abraham Heschel[2] who, while demonstrating the marked difference between the passionate God of the prophets and the ideas of impassible Deity within the Greek or Eastern milieu, does not share any trinitarian understanding of the nature of the Godhead. So the concept of the suffering God within the framework of passibilism is not inherently associated with any trinitarian theology.

Unlike passibilism, theopaschism firmly connects the suffering of God with the Second Person of the Holy Trinity and specifically with the incarnation of this Second Person.[3] Martin Chemnitz correctly observes in the beginning of his *magnum opus* on Christology that "the divine nature . . . did not assume the human nature in an absolute sense, but only insofar as it pertains to the person of the Son. For the entire Trinity did not become incarnate, neither the Father nor the Holy

[1] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 351.

[2] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

[3] See Marcel Sarot, "Patripassianism, Theopaschitism and the Suffering of God: Some Historical and Systematic Considerations," *Religious Studies* 26 (1990): 363–375, for a more detailed discussion of these terminological distinctions.

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Ghost, but only the Son."[4] This truth is wonderfully communicated in the famous verse of the Gospel of John: "The Word became flesh"[5] (ὁ λόγος σάρξ ἐγένετο, John 1:14), which is central to the topic at hand.

The classic "theopaschite controversy" transpired in the sixth century revolving around the controversial formula "one of the Trinity has suffered [in the flesh]." After some church-political turmoil, this formula was recognized at the Fifth Ecumenical Council, which compelled Christians to confess that "our Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified in the human flesh, is truly God and the Lord of glory and one of the [members of] holy Trinity."[6]

The spirit of this confession also shines through in the hymn of Justinian that serves prominently as an epigraph to the first volume of the commentary on the Gospel of John by William C. Weinrich.[7] That seems to me to be a fair indication that Weinrich considered this theme to be one of the most significant theological themes in John. Let me quote this hymn to give the context:

> O Only-Begotten Son and Word of God, who, although immortal, for our salvation did yet consent to be incarnated from the holy mother of God, the ever-virgin Mary, who without change was made man and was crucified, Christ, our God, who by death did trample death, who, being one of the Holy Trinity, is glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us!

Weinrich sees within the Christology of Justinian's hymn that "the Son's consent to be incarnated and to suffer for our salvation is located within the preexistent being of the Son with the Father."[8] Observing the nuanced shifts as compared to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, which uses the language of "descent from heaven," Weinrich cites Constantine Newman to make the point that the language of the Word consenting (καταδεξάμενος) in the midst of his immortality to be incarnated from the Virgin Mary means that "the incarnation and passion are transferred back to . . . his eternal life in the bosom of the Father."[9]

Weinrich also observes that the "theopaschite" emphasis means that the obedience of the Son to the Father, such as that expressed in Gethsemane, is founded

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[4] Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 31.

[5] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

[6] *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1, *Nicaea I to Lateran V*, ed. N. P. Tanner (Ann Arbor: Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990), 118.

[7] William C. Weinrich, *John 1:1 –7:1* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), liii.

[8] Weinrich, *John 1:1–7:1*, 528.

[9] Weinrich, *John 1:1–7:1*, 529.

in the reality of God as Trinity, and at the same time reveals "[free] man partaking in the filial obedience of the divine Son."[10]

However, what does it mean that the passion is grounded in the reality of the triune God? Does it mean that God undergoes passion within himself, though suffering in a way different than human suffering (different in a sense that it is not caused by anything external to God) yet utterly true and real?

This is a very serious question. It allows me to draw nearer to the problem or, perhaps, better to say, dilemma that I find in Christian theology, that is, in the Christian discourse on God and who God is, with hope that the Gospel of John would shed some light and hence show the way out of this predicament.

The substance of the question at hand is what really happens at the cross. What is the extent of revelation there? For example, Jesus says concerning the cross event: "When you have lifted up (ὑψώσητε) the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he" (ἐγώ εἰμι) (John 8:28). "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9), Jesus further proclaims to Philip. Finally, Thomas sees the resurrected Jesus with stigmata still in his hands and his side and precisely at this point confesses: "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). Other striking episodes could be deduced, but these suffice for the moment. Let us take it to the extreme: does God reveal himself in the crucified Jesus in such a way that we should reinterpret the inner life of the Trinity through the cross in a manner resembling the approach of Jürgen Moltmann epitomized in his well-known books *The Crucified God* and *The Trinity and the Kingdom*?[11] Should we make God passible in some way and so understand the mutual love of the persons as a kind of sacrificial self-giving characterized by suffering?

Or is it rather that God condescends to us poor humans, comes down to our level and acts, to use Luther's language, *sub contrario*, under the opposite? This is what seems to me to be the thrust of Luther's dichotomy between *Deus absconditus* (the hidden God) and *Deus revelatus* (the revealed God). After all, for Luther the theology of the cross was a matter of theological epistemology, rather than an ontological description of God. The cross is how we can recognize God and get to know him. This condescension motif was prominently picked up by the eighteenth-century theologian J. G. Hamann, now increasingly popular among those who want

[10] Weinrich, *John 1:1–7:1*, 529.

[11] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson and J. Bowden (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991). Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. M. Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

to find new ways to communicate the Gospel to the postmodern world. And it readily appeals to those of us who are touched by the aesthetic side of Christianity.

To cut nearer to the bone, does God play games with us, or is he really different from the God of classical theism, such as the one we find among scholastic theologians? And if the latter is true, should we then discard such traditional attributes of God as immutability and impassibility and excise them from our dogmatic textbooks?

In an attempt to find a possible answer to these questions, let us touch on some key texts of John and the way Weinrich and other commentators treat them. For Weinrich, one of the key texts of the Gospel, to which he goes back over and over in his commentary, is John 1:29, where John the Baptist proclaims: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." Such a designation of Jesus presupposes the Suffering Servant motif in Isaiah 53:7 and also the image of the Paschal Lamb as well as the story of the sacrificial offering of Isaac by Abraham in Genesis 22 as its possible background.[12] Both the image of the "Lamb" and the taking away of the sin of the world, in turn, point to the death of Jesus on the cross as that place where this removal of sin takes place. Any understanding of the lamb imagery has to take into account that the lamb is a sacrificial animal eventually to be slain. So it is precisely as the Lamb of God that Jesus will enter the passion.[13]

Identification of Jesus (as the Word made flesh) with the sacrificial Lamb of God suggests a hermeneutic for the reading of the whole Gospel. The one who makes the sacrifice is the Father, with the Son being in full accord with, and obedient to, the Father. A number of commentators have observed connections between John 1:29, 36 and John 3:16 with its language of God "giving his Son."

For example, Herman Ridderbos correctly states that the "God-given sacrifice of Christ is of central significance."[14] He then continues: "The common component in the two pronouncements is that it is God who makes the all-embracing sacrifice for the world."[15]

John 3:16 is indeed located within this strong sacrificial context, the clearest example of which is the language of Jesus being "lifted up." While C. H. Dodd recognizes that "the 'elevation' . . . suggests the thought of the cross," he remarks

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[12] Weinrich, *John 1:1–7:1*, 245.

[13] Kassian Bezobrazov [Кассиан Безобразов], *By Water and Blood and Spirit: Interpretation of the Gospel of John* [*Водою и кровию и духом. Толкование на Евангелие от Иоанна*] (Paris: Bibliothèque Slave de Paris, 1996), 54.

[14] Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. J. Vriend (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1997), 138.

[15] Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, 138.

that "the suggestion is left undeveloped,"[16] with which I cannot concur. The focus of John here is to draw the reader's attention to the character of God's revelation. Thus, D. A. Carson misses the mark when he claims that the construction behind the phrase "God so loved the world" "emphasizes the intensity of the love,"[17] unlike Weinrich who points out decidedly that this construction demonstrates the form of God's love (οὕτως, "so," not in a sense of "so much" but rather "in such a way"). To love is to give. To love the world, which is fallen and dying, is for God to give his only Son for this world.

It is remarkable that here love is specifically being spoken of not as love within God nor the love of Jesus to his disciples, but as love to the whole world (for characteristics of the world, see John 3:19; 5:42; 8:42).[18] In the whole New Testament, it is Johannine literature (John and 1 John) that marks the greatest contrast between God and the world, which is especially staggering in view of the overwhelmingly positive connotations associated with it in antiquity. In John, the world (κόσμος) is presented as an entity hostile to God, which makes it all the more paradoxical that "the entire process of man's salvation is set in motion by the love of God for the world."[19]

Dodd sees in 3:16 an expression of the idea of unity as mutual indwelling. According to Dodd's interpretation, "[God's] life is the outpouring of love. . . . It is a radically personal form of life, manifested in the concrete activity of Christ in laying down His life for His friends; by which we know that God so loved the world that He gave His Son."[20] Likewise, Alain Marchadour stresses that "the Father and the Son are in communion here in the same love for the world."[21] And if we are to understand John 3:16 as a verse expressing trinitarian reality, then we cannot neglect the preceding Nicodemus story either with its drastic emphasis on the role of the Spirit (John 3:3, 5) for the new life that Jesus brings.

Besides the above-mentioned connection to John 1:29, John 3:16 alludes to the Prologue with its depiction of who it is that will undergo passion. Merely connecting suffering to the incarnation and seeing a manifestation of the "absolute love" of the

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[16] Charles Harold Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 353.

[17] Donald Arthur Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Leicester, England: Inter-varsity Press, 1991), 204.

[18] Cf. George Raymond Beasley–Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1997), 51.

[19] Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 405.

[20] Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel,* 197.

[21] Alain Marchadour, *Vangelo di Giovanni. Commento pastorale* (Milano: Edizioni san Paolo, 1994), 76.

Father in the giving and sending of the Son[22] just does not quite express the whole dramatic character of the event. The Father gave his Son to die—it was a sacrifice. Thus, Ridderbos again, commenting on John 3:16: "It is love that not only manifests itself in God's power over death . . . in the death of Christ it also identifies with the world in its lostness and thus imparts the deepest meaning to the great statement in the prologue, 'and the Word became flesh.'"[23]

But how can we account for God giving the one who is the "Word made flesh"? How can the "only-begotten Son" be sacrificially given to die (I do not share C. K. Barrett's reluctance in seeing an allusion to Isaiah 53 behind ἔδωκεν[24]). Is there not a contradiction here? Already, Patristic-era witnesses recognized such tension within John 3:16. For example, Theodore of Mopsuestia, teacher of Nestorius, wrote in his commentary on the Gospel: "How then did he say, he gave his Only Begotten Son? For it is obvious that the Godhead cannot suffer; nevertheless they [divinity and humanity] are one through their conjunction. Therefore, even though the other suffers, the whole is attributed to the divinity."[25] One can clearly see incipient Nestorian accents in this exposition of the John 3:16 text by Theodore, namely, that the Christ *qua* man is postulated as the separate subject who truly undergoes suffering, which is only nominally attributed to God on account of conjunction (συνάφεια), the moral union of God and man in Jesus Christ. Basically, Theodore relieves the tension by claiming that this elevated language only emphasizes the grandeur of the event, while nothing *radical* takes place. The view that would claim an "exception" for Theodore here [26] is hardly convincing. I would rather say that Theodore here only reinforces his rigid diophysite Christology and refusal to attribute suffering to God, who is inherently apathetic, and so his position here may be seen as a reinterpretation of the biblical text in an attempt to suit his philosophical presuppositions on the nature of God.

Such a solution, for all its attractiveness to the rationally predisposed reader, cannot help but turn the Gospel into an insipid diet, completely unexciting, and, what is worse, not true to the character of incarnational dialectic of John 1:14. By becoming flesh, the Word did not cease being Word, and, of course, the concept of external conjunction as an explanation of the unity of Christ is totally inadequate in

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[22] Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer*? (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 172.

[23] Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, 138.

[24] Charles Kingsley Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text,* 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 215.

[25] Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Gospel of John,* trans. M. Conti, ed. J. C. Elowsky (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 34.

[26] Maurice Frank Wiles, *The Spiritual Gospel: The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 134–135.

carrying across the sense of incarnation and the character of union between that which is divine and that which is human in Christ.

While Antiochene Christology trivialized the suffering of Christ by placing it within the humanity of Jesus understood only in the most concrete way, modern passibilists generalize the suffering of God by merging it with the suffering of humankind (I have to use modern writers, because we do not find passibilist views as a viable option in Christian theology until the twentieth century).

Moltmann, for example, critiques the axiom of the apathy (ἀπάθεια) of God by replacing it with the opposite one, the axiom of the passion of God. He understands the suffering of Christ as the suffering of the passionate God.[27] And even though Moltmann builds his passibilism (which he himself calls theopatheia) on the cross, one can argue that he creates an alternative metaphysics, which, although opposite to classical theism, is nevertheless a logically coherent system presenting God as the suffering God on account of his trinitarian love. "The divine suffering of love outwards is grounded on the pain of love within."[28] Using early twentieth-century Anglican C. E. Rolt, Moltmann claims that God being love means being able to suffer: "in the eternal joy of the Trinity, pain is not avoided; it is accepted and transmuted into glory."[29]

Moltmann explains love as self-communication of the good, which in turn presupposes the capacity for self-differentiation. It is in discussing this aspect of love that Moltmann utilizes John 3:16: "When we say 'God *loves* the world' (John 3:16), then we mean God's self-communication to the world by virtue of his self-differentiation and his self-identification. When we say 'God is love', then we mean that he is in eternity this process of self-differentiation and self-identification; *a process which contains the whole pain of the negative in itself.*"[30] For Moltmann, the sheer communicability of love implies that theology of love is feministic rather than patriarchal.[31] Thus, the internal passibility of God leads him to "self-subjection to suffering."[32] And this is where Moltmann's panentheism comes forth: "Not only does God suffer with and for the world; liberated men and women suffer with God and for him."[33]

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[27] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 22.

[28] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 25. With such language, Moltmann brings to mind the earlier Japanese theologian K. Kitamori with his extravagant theology of the "pain of God." See Kazoh Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1965).

[29] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 34.

[30] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 57 (emphasis mine).

[31] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 57.

[32] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 60.

[33] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 60.

To be sure, Moltmann is not an easy theologian to read and understand. Being a biased Russian, I tend to think that much of what he says of God's suffering is an adaptation of the thought of the early twentieth-century religious philosopher Nikolay Berdyaev, especially insofar as it pertains to the concept of freedom. But if my reading of Moltmann is correct, he strikes me as a person who attempted to resolve rationally that tension that is present in the biblical narrative and most transparently in John 3:16. So, although he is diametrically opposed to such an Antiochene theologian of late antiquity as Theodore of Mopsuestia, he resembles him in an attempt to create a metaphysics that would be philosophically coherent. For Theodore, God is impassible, and so he cannot be touched by the suffering of Christ. So while it appears that John 3:16 speaks about God giving his only Son to die for the world, for Theodore it is just a matter of language that does not have a referent in the real world: in reality it is *man* who suffers and God is absolutely outside of suffering.

In Moltmann's framework, however, God suffers in Christ. There is no question about it, but it is so because God suffers anyway. To say that God is love presupposes his suffering. While Theodore of Mopsuestia would be radically opposed to theopaschism of any kind, Moltmann would readily embrace it but at the same time relativize the cross by making God passible by nature.

So, within one framework the impassible God does not suffer because he cannot suffer. Within another framework, the passible God suffers because to be God is to be one who suffers. I must confess that I do not find either of these solutions attractive.

While I cannot possibly relate to the impassible God of philosophers, I at the same time do not want to be in pain forever, although in today's world one may encounter people who find pain pleasant and think that pain even intensifies pleasure. Suffice it to say that I find it odd thinking of God in such terms. Let me use an example from the parish setting. There is a lady in my Bible class at the church where I serve who recently suffered greatly because of the prolonged sickness of her mother, of whom she took care on top of all her other responsibilities. When confronted with the passibilist view, the lady said that it is quite depressing to think of the future life with God as implying any suffering. The notion of God suffering within himself or suffering with the world would hardly help the suffering person, as this person desires above all else for his or her personal pain and suffering to stop rather than be consoled by the fact that somebody suffers even in a greater and more radical way.

Is there a way out of this impasse? I believe so, yes, and it has been offered in the history of dogma. It is the language of a God who suffers and does not suffer at the same time, a God who overcomes suffering by his suffering. In the hymn of

Justinian quoted in the beginning, there is another significant theme, namely, that by his death Christ our God "did trample death." Triumph over death in the death itself—that is the key, which figures prominently already in the writing of Origen's disciple Gregory Thaumaturgus on the passibility and impassibility of God, *Ad Theopompum*. Gregory expressly says that "God submitted himself to Passion even though God is by nature impassible."[34] In the encounter between the impassible God and the passion, it is God who gains victory. God is not defeated by the passions but rather overcomes them: God's "impassible nature manifested its impassibility precisely in its passion."[35] So by his suffering, God made the passions suffer, so to speak. Unlike interpretations that see lasting influence of the Greek philosophical idea of ἀπάθεια upon Christian theology,[36] I suggest that the biblical narrative such as the one we find in John 3:16 played a foundational role in Gregory's presentation of the impassible suffering of God as an expression of his will and his love.

This language of God staying impassible even in the midst of suffering was prominently used by Athanasius of Alexandria in the fourth century, but the true champion of this theology is Cyril of Alexandria, fifth-century patriarch of that city. In his mature work *Quod unus sit Christus*, Cyril of Alexandria appeals to John 3:16 by way of proving the essential unity of the Son as the only begotten of the Father. His imaginary opponents, who most likely represent the likes of Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia (whose lasting influence in the eastern part of the church Cyril attempted to disrupt in the end of his career), argue "that to have to say that the same one suffers and does not suffer makes it seem like a fairy tale. . . . For either, as God, he has not suffered at all, or alternatively, if he is said to have suffered, then how can he be God?"[37] This syllogism would lead Cyril's opponents to the inevitable conclusion that the one who suffers is the descendant of David—man, and not God. For Cyril, this reasoning would undermine the numerical unity of Christ and make two subjects: one being a slave and a creature, and the other one his Master and Creator.

It is to counter this false understanding of Christology that Cyril addresses John 3:16. "It was the Only Begotten Son of God who has destroyed the dominion of

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[34] St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Life and Works*, trans. M. Slusser, The Fathers of the Church 98 (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 154.

[35] St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Life and Works*, 156.

[36] Herbert Frohnhofen, *APATHEIA TOU THEOU: Über die Affektlosigkeit Gottes in der griechischen Antike und bei den griechischsprachigen Kirchenvätern bis zu Gregorios Thaumaturgos* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1987), 219–220.

[37] Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, trans. J. A. McGuckin (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 117.

death; not a different son to him joined in a relationship to mediate this economy, but he himself, personally. He confirms this when he says: 'God so loved the world that he gave his Only Begotten Son so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.'"[38]

Let me draw your attention to the victorious motif in Cyril's language: "the only-begotten Son of God has destroyed the dominion of death." So it was for this purpose of destruction of death that the Son of God was given for our sake. Anybody less than he would not do. That is, it must be God himself coming to the cross as the Son, the "Word made flesh." However, Cyril is careful to point out, as he also does in numerous other occasions, that "in his own nature he certainly suffers nothing, for as God he is bodiless and lies entirely outside suffering."[39]

While on the surface this suspiciously resembles elements of Theodore of Mopsuestia's language, their theologies are worlds apart. Suffice it to say that Cyril's mind-blowing expression of the Word "tasting death in the flesh" of his notorious twelfth anathema is utterly incompatible with rigid Antiochene two-subject Christology. Thus, the theopaschism of Cyril demonstrates both that God is love and that God "did trample death" by his death.

Where did this theopaschite element of theology of the Gospel of John exercise itself in the practical sphere in the life of the church? I would say first and foremost in martyrdom. Jesus himself warned his disciples: "They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God" (John 16:2). And in John 16:33: "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

William Weinrich has made the point that the martyrs confessed the first article of the creed at their trial instead of the more expected (from our standpoint) appeal to the christological section, the second article. Weinrich explains this from the doctrine of creation, demonstrating quite convincingly that "martyrdom reveals the living God."[40] To this I wholeheartedly agree, but I would add that the martyr's confession of the first article was also the confession of God as free of the passions that characterized pagan deities, and so in the very event of the suffering of the martyr God would allow him to "suffer impassibly" just as Christ suffered. This comes through in apparent non-perception or overcoming of the physical pain on behalf of the martyr (whether through the experience of ecstasy, as in the case of Perpetua, or some other way is beside the point here). So Christian martyrs remained "impassible" in martyrdom despite the appearance to the contrary.

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[38] Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, 120.

[39] Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, 121.

[40] William C. Weinrich, "Death and Martyrdom: An Important Aspect of Early Christian Eschatology," *CTQ* 66 (2002): 333.

A similar case can be built on the understanding of suffering in general. Patristic scholar Frances Young makes a pertinent remark that the fathers did not appeal to the sufferings of Christ when addressing the problem of suffering.[41] Rhetoric of "impassible suffering" allowed Christians to demonstrate the triumph of God over suffering. "In the world you will have tribulation (θλῖψιν). But take heart; I have overcome (*νενίκηκα*) the world" (John 16:33)—that is the rationale for the christological, impassible suffering of the martyr.

I hope I have been able to demonstrate that while there is a certain degree of incompatibility between the impassibilist and passibilist frameworks, the patristic insight of Cyril, for which John 1:14 was the major influence, provides us with a clue on how to expound correctly the theopaschite character of John 3:16. While obvious solutions of building hermeneutical bridges between two kinds of discourse do not exist, we do well if we also, for our didactic and homiletical purposes, stick to the biblical narrative and for our purpose here the narrative of the fourth evangelist in particular, which combines the language of the one who is "the Word made flesh" with the description of this enfleshed Word undergoing passion and drawing all men to himself by this passion.

I believe that Weinrich's insights—that the passion of John 3:16 is to be transferred back to the eternal life of the Logos at the bosom of the Father and that in the obedience of the free man, Jesus in his incarnation, we see the filial obedience of the divine Son revealed to us—are fundamentally correct, provided that we do not lose the incarnational aspect.

It seems that Cyril's "impassible suffering" as a theological statement avoids the extremes of both the impassibilism of the "God of philosophers" and the passibilism of the modern theologians. The inherent flaw of both these positions is that such approaches do not operate (or at least, inherently do not have to operate) within the incarnational framework. In the formula of "impassible suffering," both sides of the equation must be kept intact and in tension. No Hegelian *Aufhebung* is possible here, no development of any "idea." Even after the resurrection, Thomas would proclaim "my Lord and my God" (John 20:28) when touching the crucified hands and pierced side of Jesus, and in the Book of Revelation, the proclamation of glory and honor to the Lamb continues forever (Rev 5:13). The formula, however, allows also for a certain degree of flexibility. Thus, both patristic theology with its emphasis on impassibility (as long as it does not fall prey to the Neoplatonic hierarchical understanding of reality in the manner of Pseudo-Dionysius) and Luther's approach

[41] Frances Margaret Young, "*Apathos Epathen*: Patristic Reflection on God, Suffering, and the Cross," in *Within the Love of God: Essays on the Doctrine of God in Honour of Paul S. Fiddes*, ed. A. Clarke and A. Moore (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 79.

with its emphasis on the suffering of God, on the cross, and on his revelation (as long as it does not develop into the panentheism of Moltmann or the cultural appropriation of today's sensitivities concerning suffering) may be upheld with the provision that the other side of the equation, so to speak, is not negated.

I further believe that the unifying element between the two accounts—and here the Gospel of John gives a major vision to us—is the understanding of God as love in how he is and how he acts, that is, how he gives in love. I understand that in θεοπάθεια, theopaschism, as a demonstration and revelation of love, God expresses himself. To be God is to be a giver. We humans are on the receiving end in our relationship with God (giving back to him by way of thanksgiving), but we are on the giving side in our relationships with the neighbor. That is, one can speak of God's suffering as an expression of his love to people or one can speak of God overcoming suffering and remaining impassible in his suffering as an expression of his love. Both accounts would essentially state the same thing.

When Jesus speaks to his disciples of his exaltation and being lifted up before the passion, he points to the cross. In the post-resurrection reality, however, this "ascent" embraces both the cross and the action of the Spirit, which comes from the crucified body of the Savior. Thus, there is a difference on this side of the cross and on the other side of the cross. Christ said, τετέλεσται, "it is finished" (John 19:30). God entered human history and said these words within this history. And yet in our personal story there is an eschatological dimension, this proverbial now/not yet tension. We still have the body that will have to die physically so that God can finally kill our sin along with the body that carries it. And so, on this side of the grave, there is love but also pain and suffering. Pain and suffering belong to our existence on this earth. On the other side, sacrificial love as giving oneself will remain, but it will not be accompanied by suffering and torment. God will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and there shall not be pain anymore (Rev 21:4).

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Theological Observer

May We Sing the Sanctus, *Please*?

A not uncommon practice during the Service of the Sacrament in some LCMS congregations is the omission of the Preface, Proper Preface, and Sanctus. In an effort to abbreviate the service (ever so slightly, I might add), the resulting order is usually something like this: sermon, offering, prayers, Lord's Prayer, and then immediately on to the Verba. While the transition is certainly smooth, it is worth pondering what is lost in the process.

What is lost is nothing less than some of the most ancient parts of the Divine Service. The opening Preface dialogue, for example, dates from the early third-century *Apostolic Tradition*, with the implication being that it was in use well before that time. That dialogue, which invites us to set our minds on things above (Colossians 3:1) as we begin our thanksgiving for the Lord's rich blessings in this Sacrament, quickly became the settled start to the Service of the Sacrament in both the East and West. Within another century or so, its expansion was firmly in place throughout the Mediterranean world, with many of the ancient rites literally tripping over themselves in thanksgiving to God: "It is truly fitting and right, suitable and profitable, to praise you, [to hymn you,] to bless you, to worship you, to glorify you, to give thanks to you."[1] The point made in all of these ancient rites is clear. There is no more fitting response to the mercy God shows us in this holy meal than to acknowledge that such thanksgiving is fitting at all times and in all places.

Of course, there is more. Through the Proper Preface, we hear—in little snippets scattered throughout the seasons of the Church Year—the saving deeds of Christ, of all that he accomplished for us. And then, with great fanfare, the Preface concludes with those familiar words ("therefore with angels and archangels") that acknowledge a reality that comes only through faith—namely, that we who are gathered here, whether it be a congregation of hundreds or only a handful, are not alone in offering our thanksgiving. It is, rather, the unshakeable truth that our voices are joined to that grand chorus of saints and angels who dwell in the nearer presence of Christ. At no other place in the service is this mystery so clearly acknowledged or more eloquently stated.

What is it that we then join in saying with this grand company of heaven? It is the "holy, holy, holy" of the angels who are gathered around the throne of God

[1] "Liturgy of St. James," in R. C. D. Jasper and G. J. Cuming, *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed*, 3rd ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1987), 90. Note the similarity of these words with those of the Gloria in Excelsis, which was itself of Eastern origin from this time period.

(Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8); to their ceaseless praise of God our voices are joined for this brief moment. Unlike the ancient Israelites, who were directed to seek the Lord's glory in one specific place (namely, the mercy seat atop the ark of the covenant), we acknowledge that the Lord's glory is now manifested in every place where his mandate to eat and drink of his flesh and blood is faithfully carried out. Thus, we acclaim him with cries for deliverance ("Hosanna!"), confident that the One who rides into our midst through the humble means of bread and wine brings life and salvation. Truly blest is he!

If, for the sake of time, one finds it necessary to shorten the service, let it not be the Preface and Sanctus that take the hit. Say goodbye to the closing hymn, which is not even listed as an option in the service, or the hymn of invocation, which only appears under a "may" rubric. Shave the ninety seconds that are needed from your sermon or prayers, if you must. But do not deprive the faithful of this grand moment when their voices are joined with the whole company of heaven to acknowledge the Lord who is in their midst.

Paul J. Grime

"Male and female he created them." (Gen 1:27)[2]

[*This sermon was preached in Kramer Chapel on February 19, 2020. The biblical text was Matthew 19:1–12. The Editors.*]

She predicted the fall of Troy. Warned about the Trojan horse. Foretold the death of Agamemnon. Yet no one listened. Poor Cassandra. It's no fun being a prophet.

If you're lounging on deck, and ice cubes are rattling around in your cosmopolitan, you don't want to hear about an iceberg. Knowledge can be a downer, and ignorance is bliss. And, maybe tomorrow will never come.

But here we are. Back to Matthew 19. The Pharisees put our Lord to the test, asking him about divorce and marriage. Our Lord responds by affirming the creation account. No surprise. The Gospel of Matthew is, after all, the book of the Genesis of Jesus Christ.

But the topic of marriage has never been an easy one. Not even for Moses. So divorce gets little pulpit time. And the pews are empty, and the fields are barren from seeds not sown.

Perhaps a trip down memory lane.

At Owen Marsh Elementary, I was best friends with Mark Burnett. He was the only kid in class whose parents were divorced. It was, we might say, an honorable estrangement. But those were different times. At the church I pastored twenty years ago, there were five couples we hung out with, all about the same age. All faithful in church attendance. All well matched. All with great kids. And now, twenty years later, all divorced. With kids scattered to the wind. Souls jeopardized. Sheep lost.

So it goes, social issues and church teaching, culture and doctrine, once poured into life's blender, can hardly be separated.

So, what shall we confess? It was once as simple as saying, "Jesus is Lord." Then came the Apostles' Creed, followed by the Nicene. *Homoousius. Homoiousius.* Everything depending on an iota. Now we have the Lutheran Confessions—the truth in even greater clarity. But will it be enough?

A little leaven, and the lump goes sour. And the world creeps into pulpits and pews. You say Jesus is the bridegroom and the church the bride. But you think marriage is just a social issue. You speak glowingly about the nativity of our Lord, but you won't speak out against the holocaust of abortion. But a house divided soon falls. There is no chance of gazing into heaven if we are blind to the world around

[2] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

us. Such an ethereal gospel is nothing but sound and fury, signifying not much at all.

A man journeys from Jerusalem to Jericho, falling among robbers, stripped, and beaten and left half dead. But priests and Levites hurry on, lest they be late for the temple. By our inaction, we confess. And we speak volumes by saying nothing at all.

So, we've seen Satan move up the food chain of Matthew 19. First, there is a dead calm surrounding abortion, accompanied by a silence on divorce. It was all about the adults, who had the power. No thought to the children who suffer the consequences. Before we knew it, marriage lost all definition. Gay marriage, now polyamory. So quickly.

And today's domino? "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female?" (Matt 19:4). But many have not read. Or at least have not believed. Will it matter? Can we sing of Christ as groom and church as bride if we can no longer even confess what marriage is? What will it mean to call God our Father if we say a man can have a baby? If we play along and say that he is she? Or she is he?

There is a growing crisis among us. And it's risen in the last seven years. It's dysphoria among our children. And it's a fast-moving leaven. Boys and girls confused. Puberty blockers, hormone treatment, and mutilating surgery. I've seen the children: girls with low voices, infertility and sterilization, horrible dismemberment. I've talked to desperate moms and dads. So what do we say?

Just across the state line, an Ohio college professor, not wishing to use false pronouns, just lost a lawsuit. A Brownsburg high school teacher likewise was fired for not playing along. Closer to home, a student at Purdue University Fort Wayne, a young Lutheran, received a memo from his employer. Use the new pronouns, or you're fired. I just spoke with a woman desperately trying to save her daughter from the onslaught.

In the early church, it was burning incense to the emperor. Could we offer up a pinch, and then in the next sentence say that Jesus is Lord?

Say 2 + 2 = 5. Cross your fingers behind your back, and pretend it doesn't matter. Say that 2 + 2 = 5. What harm could come from that? Soon, you will find that there is a twist-tie around your tongue, your mind will be imprisoned. If you say that 2 + 2 = 5, then words will have no meaning. And if words have no meaning, then the Word of God has no meaning. And we might as well stop preaching altogether. For we will have become slaves, beholden to the father of all lies.

But our Lord came to release the prisoners. And if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed. Our Lord came to unplug our ears, that we might hear and obey. To open our lips and loosen our tongues that we might sing his praises and speak rightly.

By his death, he has paid the price of our sin, and by his resurrection, he has taken away death's sting. If true, we are free from the threats of the world. Free from fear eternal. Free to confess.

And so we will. We will proclaim that Christ is God's Son. We will tell others that Christ is the groom who laid down his life for his bride the church. And, following St. Paul, in the very same breath, we will speak the truth about marriage. About male and female.

And so our Lord asks, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female?" (Matt 19:4).

Male and female he created them. Male and female he created them. Now say it with me. Male and female he created them. And in doing so, you affirm the God of creation, and you confess that Jesus is Lord.

"We shall soon be in a world in which a man may be howled down for saying that two and two make four, in which furious party cries will be raised against anybody who says that cows have horns, in which people will persecute the heresy of calling a triangle a three-sided figure, and hang a man for maddening a mob with the news that grass is green."[3]

Peter J. Scaer

[3] G. K. Chesterton, *The Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton: The Illustrated London News, 1926-1926* vol. 34 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 144–145.

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Book Reviews

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***Mark 8:27–16:20*. By James W. Voelz and Christopher W. Mitchell. Concordia Commentary. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2019. Pages 589–1320 + xliii. Hardcover. $59.99.**

In response to a request to write a review—"with a special focus on the Greek"—on the second volume of Voelz's commentary on Mark,[1] I read the introduction of the first volume with its exhaustive emphasis on grammar and linguistic features. Voelz helps pastors appreciate such aspects of Marcan Greek as, for example, the so-called "Historical Present," Asyndeton, Patterning, and Scene Setting.[2] Then there are Major and Minor Characters in the story, Plot Characteristics, and much thinking about the End of Mark's Gospel.[3] The features reflect a lifetime of engagement with the Second Gospel, and much collaboration with seasoned Mark scholars. It is worth pointing out in this connection that Voelz often heads up the Mark group at annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature (hereinafter SBL), where he is a frequent and enthusiastic contributor. On the other hand, one wishes Voelz would forego discussion on grammatical "focus," which has all the markings of an esoteric debate at SBL.[4] The *Concordia Commentary Series*, by contrast, is supposed to assist "pastors, missionaries, and teachers of the Scriptures to convey God's Word with greater clarity, understanding, and faithfulness to the divine intent of the text";[5] one sometimes feels that Voelz's preoccupation with syntax and grammar gets the upper hand. Actually, however, Voelz's preoccupation with grammar represents a great boon: both volumes burst with theological insight culled from unpacking resonances from deep within the text of Mark's Gospel.

[1] Email from *CTQ* Editor, June 12, 2020.

[2] James W. Voelz, *Mark 1:1–8:26* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 15–22.

[3] Voelz, *Mark 1:1–8:26*, 40–61.

[4] For example, "According to this analysis, the use of the aorist stem allows the writer or speaker to focus—from his own standpoint—upon a given activity (including what someone did, does, is to do, etc.). The present stem, by contrast, allows that same author to focus upon (a perceived) relationship or connection between the activity and the doer, and to depict it as part of that doer, or to depict that doer as intimately involved with or concerned with the action" (Voelz, Mark 1:1–8:26, 29; original emphases).

[5] "Editor's Preface," in Voelz, *Mark 1:1–8:26*, xi. The statement is almost exactly the same in the "Editor's Preface" in James W. Voelz and Christopher W. Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2019), xiii.

Though never having had the pleasure of being enrolled in a class with him, I feel Voelz has been my teacher also as I have used his *Fundamental Greek Grammar* twice per year to teach incoming Greek students at the seminary since 2006.[6]

I have chosen to examine Voelz's exegetical treatment of Mark 16:1–8, which features what Voelz and many others believe is the climax of the Gospel: "they were afraid, you know [ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ]" (Mark 16:8, Voelz's translation). The strangeness of that rendering is tempered somewhat by Voelz's sense that the Gospel could have been intended from the very beginning to end this way,[7] that there are several biblical and extrabiblical examples that feature "suspended endings,"[8] that ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ is the celebrated conclusion of Mark's Gospel in Sinaiticus (א) and Vaticanus (B),[9] and that several church fathers—Eusebius, Jerome, Hesychius, Victor of Antioch—assert that the long ending (Mark 16:9–20) was absent from the manuscripts known to them.[10] But what is the significance of the *imperfect* tense in ἐφοβοῦντο? Voelz's solution that the voice should rise in oral presentation to "you know" seems insufficient, as well as his (largely undeveloped) suggestion that those hearing/reading the Gospel for the first time may have been facing persecution.[11] This seems likely, but which persecution might it have been? And which textual clues encourage the possibility that such persecution happened within a *Roman* context? Here Voelz's commentary falls strangely silent—and frustratingly so for those of us interested in such matters. But even more significantly: does Voelz's treatment help parish pastors charged to preach our Lord's resurrection on Easter morning in series B? It *kind of* does, to be sure. Out of fairness to Voelz, it appears that other commentators also have had trouble processing the jarring abruptness of Mark 16:8.[12]

It plainly is *not* the case that Mark 16:1–8 lacks a clear witness to Jesus' resurrection, for there is the young man's statement in verse 6, "He *has risen*

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[6] See John G. Nordling, "Using *Fundamental Greek Grammar* to Teach Greek at the Seminary," *CTQ* 83 (2019): 351–354. The grammar in question is Voelz's *Fundamental Greek Grammar*, Fourth revised edition (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2019).

[7] "[T]he answer of the Second Gospel is this: 'It was ever thus. If you had been there, it would not have been any easier than it is today. The evidence would have been ambiguous, even with your Lord. What you have is what the disciples and the women had, also on that Easter morning: you have the promise of his Word, a Word that is ever sure'" (Voelz, *Mark 1:1–8:26*, 61).

[8] Namely, Euripides's *Iphigenia at Aulis*; Virgil's *Aeneid*; Genesis 50:26; Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 28:30–31; and Jonah 4:10–11. Discussed in Voelz, *Mark 1:1–8:26*, 57–59.

[9] Voelz and Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 1201, 1230–1231.

[10] Voelz and Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 1227.

[11] Voelz and Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 1210.

[12] I checked William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 591–592; Henry Barclay Swete, *Commentary on Mark* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977), 399; David E. Garland, *Mark* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 625–630.

[ἠγέρθη]. He is not here."[13] In Voelz's quirky way of rendering the Greek into English, *italicization* is supposed to indicate "a non-literalistic rendering of the underlying Greek to reflect the nuances of Greek verb forms or syntax."[14] But what does this actually *mean* here, and what is the difference, really, from underlined portions of the translation, which likewise indicate "a non-literalistic rendering of the underlying Greek"?[15] The significance Voelz has painstakingly attached to *italicization* and underlining apparently blurs together in practice (see the two preceding footnotes), so that it is difficult to know just what (extremely subtle) shades of meaning may be intended here. Likewise, what is the significance of the MT Imprint Shadow font, which I do not see represented in the master list on page 27 of the first volume? Such inconsistencies cause me to wonder if I have overlooked something (which is admittedly possible)—or if, indeed, Voelz's entire system of using **bold**, *italics*, underlines, CAPITALIZATION, and so on is hopelessly overblown. It seems a cruel question, but nevertheless one that should be asked: how much will such sophistication help busy pastors in the field to preach Jesus' resurrection in Mark's Gospel? Sometimes a more simplified translation—well backed up by grammatical exegesis, to be sure—is more helpful in the end, and this the already existing commentaries provide.

Returning to that ἠγέρθη of the young man's Easter proclamation, Voelz argues that the verb has to mean "he has risen," but not "he has been raised."[16] This instance of a passive intransitive approaches ἀναστῆναι in meaning (BDAG 7, s.v. ἐγείρω) and corresponds to Jesus' own linguistic usage in Mark's Gospel: "after I am raised up [μετὰ τὸ ἐγερθῆναί με]" (14:28 ESV).[17] Voelz wants to emphasize Jesus' rising "on his own steam," as it were, and that our Lord "was not raised by someone else or by some other power"[18]—a valid concern.[19] On the other hand, the Scriptures also teach that the efficient cause (*causa efficiens*) of the resurrection[20] was God the

[13] As translated by Voelz in Voelz and Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 1195.

[14] See the nuances indicated by various font styles discussed in Voelz, *Mark 1:1–8:26*, 27.

[15] Voelz, *Mark 1:1–8:26*, 27.

[16] Voelz and Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 1200.

[17] Voelz and Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 1200.

[18] Voelz and Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 1208.

[19] This understanding is congruent with the three passion and resurrection predictions, each of which uses an intransitive form of ἀνίστημι—namely, "the Son of Man must suffer many things . . . , and after three days rise again [καὶ μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἀναστῆναι]" (8:31 ESV); "the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men . . . , after three days he will rise [μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἀναστήσεται]" (9:31 ESV); "and they will mock him and spit on him . . . , and after three days he will rise [καὶ μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἀναστήσεται]" (10:34 ESV). See Voelz and Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 1200.

[20] See Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951–1953), 2:320.

Father's raising the Son from the dead—for example, "and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead [ὃν ὁ Θεὸς ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν]" (Acts 3:15 ESV).[21] According to Pieper, both series of statements "must be accepted side by side, as they read"[22]—in other words, they should not be played off against one another.[23] Apparently, then, the reason why Voelz emphasizes Jesus' rising "on his own steam" is to make the crucial point that our Lord Jesus Christ is, himself, "the very God of Israel . . . who has authority over death, . . . including, as we see here, his own."[24] Still, it is hard to avoid the impression that Voelz has overlooked much of the extra-Marcan resurrection evidence (see the citations listed in footnote 21 above) where God the Father raised Jesus from the dead—using that significant verb ἐγείρω in the *active* voice (rather than the passive intransitive). The point should be that ἐγείρω and ἀνίστημι are the two principle verbs driving the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus in the apostolic kerygma—and both are well-represented in Mark's Gospel in suggestive contexts[25] even prior to 16:8 where Voelz believes the Gospel ends.

Regarding the last point, there has been a spate of caustic articles in a certain unofficial periodical excoriating Voelz and Mitchell's *Mark 8:27–16:20*[26]—most of which safely can be sidestepped here.[27] I was all set to abide by Voelz's rejection of the Longer Ending (hereinafter LE, referring to Mark 16:9–20) until happening

[21] Recognizably similar forms of this logion (using ἐγείρω) occur also in Acts 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30; Romans 4:24; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:15; 2 Corinthians 4:14; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; and 1 Peter 1:21.

[22] Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:321.

[23] To support the notion that "Christ raised himself" (Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:321), Pieper cites John 2:19, 21 ("Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up") and John 10:17–18.

[24] Voelz and Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 1208–1209.

[25] Ἐγείρω: Mark 1:31; 5:41; 6:14, 16; 9:27; 12:26; 14:28; 16:6, [14]; ἀνίστημι: Mark 8:31; 9:9, 10, 31; 10:34; [16:9]. The two bracketed passages ([]) pertain to evidence contained in the so-called Longer Ending of Mark (Mark 16:9–20), about which see immediately below.

[26] Namely, Jack Cascione, "LCMS Declares God Did Not Write Mark 16:9–20," *Christian News* [hereinafter *CN*] 57, no. 46 (December 9, 2019): 20–22; Jack Cascione, "Proof LCMS Is Wrong in Rejecting Mark 16:9–20," *CN* 57, no. 47 (December 16, 2019): 5–10; Editor, "A Snapshot of the State of Biblical Interpretation at the LCMS Seminaries: Initial Impressions of *Concordia Commentary Mark 8:27–16:20* by Voelz and Mitchell," *CN* 58, no. 2 (January 13, 2020): 1–3; Editor, "What Is the Word of God? Has the LCMS Taken a New Position on the Books of the Bible?" *CN* 58, no. 3 (January 20, 2020): 1–2.

[27] For noticeably more balanced perspectives on the issue, see Phillip Bruce Giessler, "Seeking Common Ground on the Mark 16:9–20 Discussion," *CN* 58, no. 3 (January 20, 2020): 14–16; and John Upton, "Where Does the Gospel of Mark End?" *CN* 58, no. 4 (January 27, 2020): 5–7. Voelz defends himself against Cascione's first blast in "Voelz First Reply to 'LCMS Declares God Did Not Write Mark 16:9–20'" (*CN* 57, no. 48 [December 23, 2019]: 5), followed by a Cascione rebuttal in *CN* 57, no. 48 (December 23, 2019): 6–7. A much briefer response by Voelz to Cascione's second blast appears in *CN* 57, no. 48 (December 23, 2019): 7, followed by another rebuttal by Cascione on the same page.

upon an article by a formidable scholar of a different faith tradition who makes several compelling points *in favor of* keeping the LE—such as, for example, that there were witnesses prior to Eusebius (ca. AD 260–340)[28] who apparently had no problems with the LE:

> If we had only the evidence from this period [the so-called Emergence Period, from the Writing of Mark to ca. AD 300] we would hardly have any inkling of controversy over the text of Mark, but would assume the Traditional Ending as the undisputed conclusion of the second Gospel.[29]

In his Excursus 19 ("A Consideration of the 'Long Ending' of Mark: 16:9–20"), Voelz grapples most extensively with Burgon's *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel according to S. Mark*, written in 1871;[30] still, some much more recent champions of the LE exist that Voelz does not consider at all[31] nor significantly[32]—simply because their contributions depend upon the work and argumentation of Burgon. Certainly, Voelz cannot be expected to tilt at every windmill. Still, let us consider briefly Voelz's principle reasons for rejecting Burgon's acceptance of the LE. First, to reject Vaticanus (B) (and its chief ally Sinaiticus [א]) is to reject the understanding of the Greek profile of Mark that Voelz carefully lays out in the introductory pages of volume I[33]—an argument from grammar, surely, but one that begs the question and is difficult to substantiate at every point. Second, there is the literary factor: Burgon and those committed to the LE treat the Second Gospel as a "simple historical record" of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus,[34] but Voelz argues that Mark is so much more. It is a "dramatic presentation of the person and work of Jesus and, especially, of the surety of the promises of his Word."[35] Yes, the LE does

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[28] Namely, Justin Martyr (ca. 150), Tatian (ca. 160), Irenaeus (ca. 180), Celsus (ca. 180), Hippolytus (ca. 200), and Porphyry (ca. 270). See the table in Jeffrey T. Riddle, "The Ending of Mark as a Canonical Crisis," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 10, no. 1 (2018): 38.

[29] Riddle, "The Ending of Mark as a Canonical Crisis," 39.

[30] John W. Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel according to S. Mark: Vindicated against Recent Critical Objectors and Established* (Oxford: James Parker, 1871). In Voelz and Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 1226–1234.

[31] In addition to Riddle, "The Ending of Mark as a Canonical Crisis," passim, there is especially Nicholas P. Lunn, *The Original Ending of Mark: A New Case for the Authenticity of Mark 16:9–20* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2014).

[32] For example, William R. Farmer, *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and James E. Snapp, "The Authenticity of Mark 16:9–20," available online at curtisvillechristianchurch.org/MarkOne.htm. Accessed July 12, 2020. See Voelz and Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 1226 n. 23.

[33] Voelz and Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 1231 n. 61.

[34] Voelz and Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 1234.

[35] Voelz and Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 1234. Also, see "The Message of the Gospel of Mark" in Voelz, *Mark 1:1–8:26*, 61.

add additional information, to be sure: "But Mark is not interested in 'additional information.' With his Gospel narrative he is interested in *impact* and *appeal*."[36] It bears emphasizing, moreover, that Mark's Gospel does not hide the resurrection (as part of a "secrecy motif"), as is popularly assumed, but calls attention to it on three separate occasions, and from the very mouth of Jesus himself.[37] Voelz pays particular attention to this often overlooked material in Excursus 12: "The Three Passion and Resurrection Predictions in the Gospel of Mark."[38]

If the LE was not written by the evangelist who wrote canonical Mark (i.e., Mark 1:1–16:8), then *by whom* could the LE have been written? On this crucial point, neither Voelz nor Mitchell are forthcoming so far as I can tell—and it would have been helpful for Voelz at least to have "weighed in" on this matter. Mitchell recognizes that throughout most of church history the majority of Christians have considered the Gospel of Mark to conclude with the twelve verses comprising 16:9–20.[39] The clarity and concision of the statement on Baptism (translated: "The one who has believed and has been baptized will be saved, but the one who has disbelieved will be damned" [Mark 16:16]) has led to its frequent citation in the Lutheran Confessions and especially Luther's Small Catechism.

John G. Nordling

***The Care of Souls: Cultivating a Pastor's Heart.* By Harold L. Senkbeil. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019. 312 pages. Hardcover. $21.99.**

This engaging work is a necessary read for any member of the body of Christ. It is a deep well of living water for both clergy and laity alike. Writing from a pastor's heart, Senkbeil plumbs the depths and living reality of both the care of souls and the cure of souls. It is written from a clear Lutheran perspective and language. While aiming at being accessible to all, there may be some difficulty in language and perspective not immediately accessible, or quickly understood, by non-Lutherans. While engaging in this book, it is important to keep in mind its limitations. It is not an academic treatise that lays out any and all detailed situations in which those who are engaged in pastoral care may find themselves. It is also not a clinical textbook or a systematic how-to book on the care of souls.

While not purely theoretical, this book is also not purely practical. Senkbeil weaves together both theory and practice in a tapestry where the rich tradition and deep theological truths in which he has studied and lived come through in clearly

[36] Voelz and Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 1234. Original emphasis.
[37] See the passages cited in footnote 19 above.
[38] In Voelz and Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 768–773.
[39] Voelz and Mitchell, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 1241.

discernable practice. At the outset, an important distinction is made between the care of souls and the cure of souls: "In medical terminology, care and cure are two sides of the same coin. Care is the ongoing treatment you receive for chronic conditions; cure is what you seek when you have an acute need. . . . Pastors offer both: care in public worship and cure in private pastoral care as needed" (65).

Senkbeil speaks not only of the center of pastoral care, but really the core of the life of the pastor. Pastoral care is not simply a function of knowing certain facts and abstractly applying them. Pastoral care flows organically from the heart of the pastor, and it can only be done right and proper as the pastor's heart is the heart of Christ. Pastoral care is not just the care of the pastor to the people; rather, it is the care of Christ to his people. The pastor is merely the instrument by which the gifts of God are given.

It is the life and work of the pastor to give Christ and him alone. Senkbeil points out, "This daily dying to sin and rising to new life through faith in Christ is the pivotal hinge in every Christian's life, and it's an essential ingredient in faithful and consistent care of souls. No pastor can give to others what he himself has not received" (19). What does this mean? How often must one receive? What does this look like?

Senkbeil paints both the life of the pastor and the task of the pastor in Christ, using the distinction of *habitus* vs. *acedia*. *Habitus*, or the pastor's habituation, is a "pastoral temperament or character worked by the Holy Spirit through his means" (17). This *habitus* is not the pastor's work; rather, it is "worked in you through a lifelong process of receiving for yourself the gifts of Christ, and then handing them unto others as he sends you to do, daily tending his beloved sheep and lambs" (270). In this tending of sheep, there are many things with which to be concerned. Senkbeil notes, "While there are multiple dimensions to every person's life—bodily, social, emotional, and psychological—as a pastor I'm especially attentive to that person's relationship to God. Therefore the soul's spiritual life is my ultimate, though not exclusive, concern" (66).

How does the pastor do this? Listening is key. First, the pastor listens to the word of God. "He sends his Spirit by his word. Word and Spirit are inseparably linked. If you want the Spirit of God, you need the word" (40). Senkbeil warns, "Please keep in mind that the Bible is much more than a book of instructions. Whenever you apply the word of God, you have a tiger by the tail. The Bible is the Holy Spirit's book, and it throbs with the life and vitality that is the Spirit's own" (40–41).

Jesus said to his disciples, "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said

to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (John 14:26–27).[40] For this reason, Senkbeil cautions, "So, for God's sake please don't use the word of God casually. Your goal is not to create a soothing, calming mood by mouthing spiritual platitudes. You want to do something with God's word; his word really does what it says—in the very saying. This is the living word of the living God. He doesn't speak in platitudes; he speaks realities" (41). God word is not simply a therapeutic tool; rather, it is a word that kills and gives life.

Second, the pastor engages in listening to the soul. Only by accurate listening can a proper diagnosis be made, to be followed by a proper intentional treatment. Whether listening to God's word or the word of sheep who need care, "Attention and intention are equally important" (67). To help understand these aspects, Senkbeil lays out four pillars of good listening: faith (80), providence (82), holiness (86), and repentance (88).

This work of the pastor can easily lead to burnout, especially if the pastor sees the work as coming more from himself than from God. As the pastor gives and himself is not refreshed in the word, the temptation grows to give of himself more and more. Senkbeil calls attention to this: "Jesus still has the words of eternal life. Whether you are merely bummed out in ministry or well on your way toward burn out, you will find eternal life in the words of Jesus. You'll need to do more than merely read those words or study them. You'll need to chew them over verbally, mull over them mentally, and make them your daily bread and butter; you'll need to meditate on them" (43–44). In other words, the word of God is to be your daily bread. The pastor needs to be fed, just like those he feeds.

Habitus has a devastating enemy: *acedia*. Commonly translated as "sloth," it really has an underlying spiritual cause: "disappointment with and disaffection from God's divinely ordained gifts, be they in the realm of creation or redemption" (210). Sloth draws one away from the words of life, leaving one alone in the words of death. Drawing from both Scripture and personal examples, Senkbeil places important truths in a practical manner to combat this negative habit. Whether chronic or episodic, "Whenever we grow numb to Christ's saving work and the Father's gracious gifts by which he makes us and preserves us, spiritual boredom takes hold, followed by apathy and subsequent despair" (210).

The *habitus* or *acedia* in the life of the pastor is vitally important, both for the pastor himself and for how the pastor is able to care for Christ's sheep. Senkbeil rightly argues, "Soul care isn't an option, it's a given—also in mission. . . . There is

[40] Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

no division between the care of souls and mission" (220). In this mission, "the called servants of Christ are not advertising agents or salesmen, but spokesmen for Jesus. When you open your mouth to speak the gospel you've been given to proclaim, people receive the words of Jesus. In a very real way, they hear Jesus himself" (226). Therefore, "Mission is nothing more than the church in motion to dispense the gifts of life and salvation that are in Christ Jesus" (228).

As one must continue to return and feed from God's holy word, so this work will prove to be one to which readers will often return. This may be a difficult work for some pastors that will challenge them to examine their own *habitus*; may God strengthen them to do so, as this work calls to attention the importance and necessity of properly understanding and practicing pastoral care.

Joel G. Koepp
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***Luther at Leipzig: Martin Luther, the Leipzig Debate, and the Sixteenth-Century Reformations*. Edited by Mickey L. Mattox, Richard J. Serina Jr., and Jonathan Mumme. Leiden: Brill, 2019. 362 pages. Hardback. $155.00.**

Historians love anniversaries—at least I do. Not only do they elicit opportunities for speaking and preaching, but they also produce scholarship. And the book at hand represents scholarship of the highest quality, occasioned by the five-hundredth anniversary of the Leipzig Debate.

There are two events from Luther's early career as a reformer that everyone knows: posting the Ninety-Five Theses and refusing to recant at the Diet of Worms. But this book—and the anniversary it marks—reminds us that between those two milestones was another important episode, perhaps less well known but certainly far more important theologically than either of them. In his debate with John Eck at Leipzig in July 1519, Luther proved willing to challenge the highest authorities of the institutional church, pope and councils. Not only *could* they be wrong, but they *had been* wrong. The Scriptures alone were Luther's standard for Christian truth.

With that confession, Luther sealed his fate as far as Rome was concerned, but he also laid the foundation for all subsequent Lutheran theology, right down to the present. As the Formula of Concord expressed it, "We believe, teach, and confess that the only rule and guiding principle according to which all teachings and

teachers are to be evaluated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments alone" (FC Ep, Rule and Norm, 1).[41]

There are twelve essays in *Luther at Leipzig*, divided into two sections, the first dealing with the historical context for the debate and the second with its implications. They are all of first-rate quality and cover a variety of topics, everything from how it all began (Karlstadt played a key role) to a survey of Roman Catholic interpretations (from Jerome Emser to Brad Gregory). My own favorites include Henning Bühmann's explanation of how debates or disputations developed from academic exercises into major instruments for discussing and implementing church reform and Paul Robinson's study of how Luther's attitude toward church councils, including Nicaea, changed over the course of his career as he learned more and more of their history.

Besides the articles themselves, this volume also includes twenty-three pages of translation by Carl Roth and Richard Serina of important passages from the debate. There is also a timeline that lists the steps toward Leipzig, what happened at Leipzig, and its immediate consequences. Finally, there are two indexes—one for Scripture references as well as a general subject index.

Luther at Leipzig is intended for those already familiar with Luther's career and desirous of more detailed knowledge, but not the casual reader. Even so, it's a great contribution to our understanding of Luther's theological development and of the course of the Reformation. More five-hundredth anniversaries are coming. Those who celebrate them will find it difficult to produce scholarly works that surpass the quality of this one.

Cameron A. MacKenzie

***Essays: Confessional and Doctrinal* and *Essays: Historical and Historic*. By Kurt E. Marquart. Volumes II and III. Edited by Ken Schurb and Robert Paul. Fort Wayne: Luther Academy, 2017 and 2018. 224 & 215 pages. $20.00 each.**

Marquart began defending confessional Lutheran theology in his St. Louis seminary student days in 1954. Until his death in 2006, he was one of the most notable figures in the theological life of the LCMS. Well known is his *Anatomy of an Explosion* in which he traced the intrusion of neoorthodoxy and higher criticism into the LCMS that led up to the Seminex walkout of St. Louis faculty in 1974. In 1990, Luther Academy published *The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance* in its Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics series. But some of Marquart's

[41] Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles Arand, et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 486.

writings remained unpublished. Ken Schurb, a student of Marquart, and Robert Paul were given access to Marquart's papers and took on the task of preparing them for publication in the three-volume series *Truth, Salvatory and Churchly*, also sponsored by Luther Academy.

Volume I appeared under the title *The Saving Truth: Doctrine for Laypeople*. Now the second and third volumes are available. In the first volume are Marquart's more formal essays, and the last one offers a potpourri of topics that are as enticing now as when he first wrote it. He had a way with words, to which his colleagues and students can attest. Volume II is arranged according to dogmatic topics with four of the fourteen chapters having to do explicitly with the Lutheran Confessions. Still contemporary is the chapter "The Third Use of the Law as Confessed in the Formula of Concord," which remains a controverted issue. There are also two chapters on justification. Collected in the third volume are essays in which Marquart addressed ad hoc topics, such as abortion, fellowship with the ELCA, and critique of the theology of the St. Louis seminary faculty, which he prepared shortly before its 1974 walkout. Chapters with such titles as "C. F. W. Walther in Fact and Fiction" and "The Trouble with Task Force Proposals" are invitations that even hesitant readers cannot avoid reading. A bibliography appears in volume III.

Because some time has passed since some essays were written (e.g. his letter to the St. Louis seminary dean of students was written nearly seventy years ago), the editors provide introductory explanations so that readers know the situation for which they were written. In volume II, Lawrence R. Rast Jr. writes a foreword, and Schurb provides an introduction on how the editors went about their task. Martin Noland provides a tributary foreword in volume III. A room in Kroemer Library at the seminary is dedicated to Marquart's memory, where his writings have been set aside for easy reference for students. Luther Academy has done the same task with the publication of these writings.

David P. Scaer

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Books Received

Balduin, Friedrich. *Apostolic Agenda: The Epistles of the Holy Apostle Paul to Titus and Philemon*. Fort Wayne, Indiana: Emmanuel Press, 2020. 264 pages. Softcover. $24.00.

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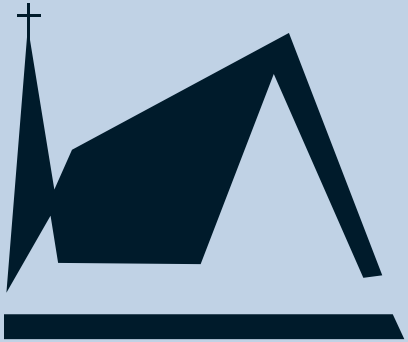

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