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The YHWH Christology of the Gospel of John[1]

Charles A. Gieschen

Although there is little debate about the presentation of Jesus in the Gospel of John being a high Christology that climaxes in the post-resurrection confession of Thomas, "my Lord and my God" (John 20:28), misunderstanding still exists as to what the evangelist was doing in his presentation of Jesus.[2] Early in the twentieth century, scholars such as Wilhelm Bousset marginalized such a high confession of Jesus as "Lord and God" with the argument that such confessions were made in the latter part of the first century among Gentile Christians who had been polytheists confessing many gods and many lords before confessing Jesus as Lord and God.[3] Larry Hurtado, among other scholars in the latter part of the twentieth century, dismantled this argument because the author of John is clearly a Jew writing to monotheistic Jewish Christians for whom there is only *one* Lord and God, namely, YHWH.[4]

Differences, however, exist among those who emphasize that an early high Christology is being reflected in the Gospel of John. For example, Richard Bauckham argues that writers like John are seeking to identify Jesus within the mystery of the one God YHWH, so they have a Divine Identity Christology that includes Jesus within the mystery of YHWH.[5] While agreeing with Bauckham's

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[1] The transliteration of the tetragrammaton יְהוָה as YHWH will be used in this article. The title "YHWH Christology" is used to indicate that the Son, including the incarnate Son, is presented as the visible image of YHWH in this Gospel. Although the portrayal of the Son as divine is the focus of this study, I completely disagree with Ernst Käsemann's well-known and influential conclusion that the Gospel of John is "naively docetic"; see *Jesu letzter Wille nach Johannes 17*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971). For a balanced critique of Käsemann's conclusion, see Marianne Meye Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

[2] All English translations of biblical texts are my own.

[3] This is the primary thesis argued in Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus*, trans. J. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), which is a translation of the German fifth edition. The German first edition is *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus,* FRLANT 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1913).

[4] Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

[5] This basic argument is expressed in Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

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emphasis on early expressions of divine Christology, the teaching of Jesus and the evangelist John in this Gospel requires one to think of Christology even more radically than Jesus as being identified within the mystery of YHWH. It was not so much that early Christians like the evangelist John had to fit the Son into their understanding of God, but that they understood the Son to be the visible YHWH seen throughout history, now climactically present in the flesh-and-blood Jesus. Thus, it was not so much of a need to express the identity of the Son within YHWH, as there was a need to express an understanding of the Father and the Spirit in relationship to the Son whom they confessed to be the visible YHWH seen and speaking all through history as recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures.

William Weinrich notes that John 5:39 is the hermeneutical key to this Gospel, which he summarizes as "all Scripture testifies to the incarnate Word."[6] Weinrich's statement could be nuanced to say that Jesus' statement, "It is they that bear witness to me" as well as his statement in the same discourse that "he [i.e., Moses] wrote of me" (John 5:46) both encapsulate a central revelation and theme of this Gospel: that all the Old Testament Scriptures testify to the eternal Son as the visible YHWH. *This study will demonstrate that the Gospel of John presents the flesh-and-blood Jesus as the eternal Son who has always been the visible YHWH throughout history.* In short, it will argue that John presents a YHWH Christology throughout his Gospel. The focus of this study is on the person of the Son in John, especially his divine nature and preexistence from eternity, not his work.[7]

I. The Son as Lord and God

An appropriate starting point for this study is the major confession in John by Thomas in John 20:28 noted above: ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου ("my Lord and my God"). Two things are striking in this confession. First, it is a distinct confession of Jesus' divine identity from the more typical confession found in the Synoptic Gospels where Jesus is confessed to be "the Christ" by Jews like Peter (Matt 16:16; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20) and "the Son of God" by Gentiles like the centurion (Matt 27:54; Mark 15:39). The evangelist John is familiar with this more traditional confession and includes both "Christ" and "Son of God" in his narrative: in the list of messianic titles spoken by John the Baptist, Andrew, and Nathanael after they have encountered Jesus (John 1:34, 41, 49); in Martha's confession before the raising of Lazarus (John 11:27); and also in the summary of the purpose of his Gospel (John

[6] William C. Weinrich, *John 1:1–7:1* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 87.

[7] For my discussion of the work of Christ as presented in John, see Charles A. Gieschen, "The Death of Jesus in the Gospel of John: Atonement for Sin?" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 72 (2008): 243–261. It should be noted that the repeated emphasis on the identity of the Son in this Gospel (i.e., his person) is done in service to one's understanding of the Son's work.

20:31). This confession—especially Jesus as "the Son of God"—which is featured so prominently in the Synoptic Gospels, however, plays a relatively minor role in John's Gospel.[8] The climactic confessions in this Gospel are by Peter ("You are the Holy One of God" in John 6:69) and Thomas ("my Lord and my God" in John 20:28). In the Gospel of John, Jesus is primarily "the Son," which means he is also "Lord and God" just as the Father is also "Lord and God."

The second striking feature of this confession is that it echoes the *Shema*ʿ confessed daily by pious Jews: שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד ("Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one," Deut 6:4). It must be emphasized that the Divine Name יְהוָה (YHWH) is used twice here in the Hebrew text, along with the title אֱלֹהֵינוּ(*Elohim*). For a Jew to use the language of *κύριος* for Jesus is typically to confess Jesus as YHWH.[9] On this point, it may also be helpful to compare and contrast John's use of this *Shema*ʿ theology with Paul's.[10] One of the most important Pauline texts that sheds light on his understanding of the relationship between the Father and the Son as the one God who creates all is 1 Corinthians 8:6. It is especially important to see the careful parallel structure in Paul's statements about the Father and the Son in relation to the act of creation.

> but for us there is one God [εἷς θεός], the Father
>
> from whom are all things [ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα] and we for him,
>
> and one Lord [εἷς *κύριος*], Jesus Christ,
>
> through whom are all things [δι'*οὗ τὰ πάντα*] and we through him.

Paul's confession of "one God, one Lord" here is a terse exposition of the *Shema*ʿ. The *Shema*ʿ is behind Paul's frequent use of the title θεός ("God") for Father and κύριος ("Lord") for Jesus throughout his epistles, especially in his frequent salutation: "Grace to you and peace from *God* our Father and our *Lord* Jesus Christ" (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4; Phlm 3). In Greek, there are twenty-six words in 1 Corinthians 8:6; both halves of the verse are perfectly balanced with thirteen words each.[11] Thirteen also happens to be the numerical value of אֶחָד, the Hebrew word

[8] "Son of God" occurs a few other times (John 3:18; 5:25; 9:35; 10:36; 11:4; 19:7).

[9] See Charles A. Gieschen, "The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology," *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003): 115–158, esp. 116–118.

[10] For a broader discussion of this important topic, see Erik Waaler, *The Shema and the First Commandment in First Corinthians: An Intertextual Approach to Paul's Re-reading of Deuteronomy*, WUNT 2.253 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

[11] See the numerical discussion of 1 Corinthians 8:6 in Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism,* vol. 1: *Christological Origins: The Emerging Consensus and Beyond* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2015), 40–54. The numerical balance of the two halves of 1 Corinthians 8:6 is also present in the syllable count; the thirteen words in each half contain nineteen syllables.

for "one" at the end or climax of the *Shema*ʿ. Bauckham explains the christological and monotheistic significance of Paul's formulation.

> Paul apportions the words of the *Shema*ʿ between Jesus and God in order to include Jesus in the unique identity of the one God YHWH confessed in the *Shema*ʿ. Similarly, he apportions between Jesus and God the threefold description of God's unique identifying relationship as Creator to all things, in order to include Jesus in the unique identity of the one Creator.[12]

In contrast to this balanced expression of both monotheism and trinitarian theology of the Father as "God" and the Son as "Lord" in Paul, Thomas's confession in John's Gospel stresses that the crucified and risen Jesus is the embodied YHWH *Elohim* confessed by pious Jews in the *Shema*ʿ. Jesus is not just being stealthily slid into the identity of YHWH with this confession; he is being confessed as defining the identity of YHWH. Given John's widespread use of Isaiah, Thomas's confession may also function as an affirmation of Isaiah 42:8, "I am YHWH *Elohim* [LXX: κύριος ὁ θεός], this is my name." In the Gospel of John, Jesus is not just "Lord" while the Father has the title "God"; he is both "Lord and God." Obviously, the Father is also referred to as "God" regularly in this Gospel, most notably by Jesus in the resurrection narrative when he tells Mary Magdalene, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (John 20:17).

II. The Son as the Word

One of the most misunderstood titles for the Son in John, in my opinion, is the first one to appear in the Gospel: ὁ λόγος ("the Word" in John 1:1). The widespread way of understanding "Word" here is the Son as God's speech, address, or communication.[13] The use of λόγος as a title for the preexistent Son in the prologue is widely recognized (John 1:1, 14), but its source is often sought solely in traditions about a personal Wisdom (e.g., Prov 8:22–36) rather than in theophanic texts where God's visible image is called "the Word," "the Word of YHWH," or "the Word of God."[14] Why is YHWH's visible image in the Old Testament sometimes called "the

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[12] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 216–217.

[13] E.g., Weinrich, *John 1:1–7:1*, 92–93. He also asserts that the Son as the Word should be understood as Torah (see 131–132).

[14] For the understanding that the background of this language in the prologue is to be found in Second Temple Jewish wisdom tradition, see James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 163–250. For a corrective, see Charles A. Gieschen, "The Divine Name That the Son Shares with the Father in the Gospel of John," *Reading the Gospel of John's Christology as Jewish Messianism: Royal, Prophetic, and Divine Messiahs*, ed. Benjamin Reynolds and Gabriele Boccaccini, AGJU 106 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 387–410. Often overlooked is the evidence of the possible relationship between the Divine Name and the Aramaic *Memra* in the Targumim; see

Word of YHWH" (e.g., Jer 1:4–13)? Not just because he speaks words of YHWH, but because he shares the Divine Name. An important christological use of λόγος as shorthand for the eternal Son because he has the non-vocalized Divine Name is Revelation 19:12–13, where he is depicted as a warrior on a white horse in the last day battle having "a name that no one knows but himself" (namely, the Divine Name) and "the name by which he is called is the Word of God" (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ). A similar usage appears to be present in the prologue of John: ὁ λόγος is used as a "safe" title for the Son who has the unvocalized Divine Name.

It is important to notice that the λόγος tradition is found in the Gospel beyond the prologue, despite opinions to the contrary. It is much more natural to expect this Gospel, with its dominant prologue introducing "the Word," to continue this theme in some way in the body of the narrative. Although one does not find further examples of ὁ λόγος exactly as it appears in the prologue, one does find λόγος in the singular form modified by a personal pronoun in chapters 5, 8, and 17.[15] In the polemical dialogue of chapter 5, Jesus speaks about God's unique "Word" (singular) that is not abiding in those with whom he is dialoguing.

> Neither his voice have you ever heard, nor his image have you ever seen, and *his Word* [τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ] you do not have abiding in you. (John 5:37–38)

Based on the reciprocal relationship between Word and Name in the prologue, and the prominence of Name theology elsewhere in John, including in this immediate context (John 5:43), the referent of "his Word" in John 5:38 should be interpreted to be "his Name" rather than "his communication or teaching." The sense of the sentence is this: these Jews have obviously neither heard the *voice* of the God of Israel (YHWH), nor seen the *image* of God, nor had the *name* of God in them, otherwise they would not be rejecting Jesus (in whom one *hears* God, *sees* God, and has his *name* revealed). The technical understanding of λόγος here as "name" is supported by the observation that the immediate context uses a plural form of ῥῆμα—not λόγος—to refer to "words" in the sense of "teachings" (John 5:47; cf. 17:8): "But if you do not believe his [Moses'] writings, how will you believe my words [τοῖς ἐμοῖς ῥήμασιν]?"

Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*, AGJU 42 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 112–114, 275; and especially John Ronning, *The Jewish Targums and John's Logos Theology* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2010). For the theophanic "Word" traditions in the literature of ancient Israel and second temple Judaism, see Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology,* 103–114.

[15] John 14:23–24 is one text that does not fit neatly into this theory because it shifts between λόγος (singular), λόγοι (plural), and λόγος (singular). Even here, however, keeping "my Word [Name]" could be understood as the key to keeping "my words [teachings]."

This technical usage of λόγος is especially dense in John 8, as visible in these lines of that polemical dialogue.

> If you abide *in my Word* [ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ ἐμῷ] you are truly my disciples and you will know the Truth, and the Truth will free you. (John 8:31–32)
>
> I know that you are seed of Abraham, yet you are seeking to kill me, because *my Word* [ὁ λόγος ὁ ἐμός] finds no place in you. (John 8:37)
>
> Why do you not understand *my speech* [τὴν λαλιὰν τὴν ἐμήν]? Because you are not able to hear *my Word* [τὸν λόγον τὸν ἐμόν]. (John 8:43)
>
> Amen, Amen, I say to you, if anyone keeps *my Word* [τὸν ἐμὸν λόγον], he will surely not see death unto the ages. (John 8:51)
>
> But I know him [i.e., God/the Father] and I keep *his Word* [τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ]. (John 8:55)

The identity of Jesus is a central question throughout the Gospel, including this chapter. The sayings here about "my Word," therefore, can better be understood if their referent is interpreted as Jesus' "Name" rather than his "teaching." For example, this approach enables one to make sense of John 8:43: "Why do you not understand *my speech*? Because you are not able to hear *my Word* " (i.e., "If you confessed my Word/Name to be the Divine Name, you would receive and understand my speech as the speech of YHWH"). Understanding John 8:31 in the sense of "abide in my Name" fits better with the organic and personal union described later in John with the same verb: "Abide in me, and I in you" (John 15:4). Furthermore, "keeps my Word" in John 8:51 fits better with the soteriology of the rest of the Gospel if understood in the sense of "confesses my Name," rather than in the sense of "obeys my teaching."

This relationship between Word and the Divine Name in the Gospel of John may have already been present in the Targumim that were read in the synagogues of the first century. Previous scholarship has confirmed that the Aramaic term *Memra* ("Word") in the Targumim is very closely related to the Divine Name.[16] An antecedent to the close linking of Word with the Divine Name in the Gospel of John may be reflected in the Targumim with the substitution of "the name of the *Memra*

[16] See especially Ronning, *The Jewish Targums and John's Logos Theology*; see also C. T. R. Hayward, "The Holy Name of the God of Moses and the Prologue of St John's Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 25 (1978): 16–32. While it is important to be aware of the methodological challenge presented by making proposals about the first century based upon Targumim manuscripts that date from a much later period, yet this evidence should not be ignored because it probably preserves traditions that existed in the first century.

of YHWH" for "YHWH" when it appears in the Masoretic Text (MT), as seen in these two examples.[17]

> They *believed in YHWH* and in his servant Moses. (Exod 14:31)
>
> They *believed in the name of the Word of YHWH* and in the prophecy of his servant Moses. (*Tg. Neof.* and *Tg. Ps.-J.* Exod 14:31)
>
> Yet in this matter *you were not believing in the YHWH your God*, who goes before you on the way, to seek out a place for you to camp. (Deut 1:32–33)
>
> Yet in this matter *you were not believing in the name of the Word of YHWH your God*, who led before you in the way to prepare a place for your encampment. (*Tg. Neof.* Deut 1:32–33)

The reciprocal relationship between Word and Name in John is woven tightly together in the prayer of John 17 at the close of the farewell discourse, a prayer that returns the reader to the central themes of the prologue.[18]

> *I revealed your Name* [*ἐφανέρωσά σου τὸ ὄνομα*] to those you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept *your Word* [*τὸν λόγον σου*]. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words [*τὰ ῥήματα*] that you gave to me I have given to them. (John 17:6–8)
>
> I have given them *your Word* [*τὸν λόγον σου*], and the world hated them. (John 17:14)
>
> Sanctify them in the truth; *your Word* [*ὁ λόγος ὁ σός*] is truth. (John 17:17)

Gilles Quispel made the intriguing suggestion that one expects to read John 17:6 as: "I revealed your Name . . . and they have kept your *Name*."[19] That the author intends the reader to understand "Word" here in the sense of "Name" is supported by the careful switch in successive sentences from the singular τὸν λόγον (John 17:6) to the plural τὰ ῥήματα (John 17:7).[20] Furthermore, in light of Jesus' earlier claim in

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[17] These English translations of the MT and Targumim are from Ronning, *The Jewish Targums and John's Logos Theology*, 160, 176.

[18] To state it another way, it is my understanding that the farewell prayer of John 17 is the source for much of the theology presented in the prologue (John 1:1–18).

[19] Gilles Quispel, "John and Jewish Christianity," *John and Qumran*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (London: Chapman, 1972), 137–155; see also Jarl E. Fossum, *Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism on Early Christology*, NTOA 30 (Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Göttingen, 1995), 125–126.

[20] The same type of switch from the singular form of λόγος to the plural form of ῥῆμα is found in John 5:47, as noted above. See also the similar contrast in John 8:43 between *τὴν λαλιὰν τὴν ἐμήν* ("my speech") and *τὸν λόγον τὸν ἐμόν* ("my Word").

John 14:6 ("I am . . . the Truth"), his statement in John 17:17 could be understood as reinterpreting Psalm 119:160 as a self-reference: "Your Word [i.e., the Son] is [the] Truth."[21]

III. The Son as the Name

There are many titles used for God, but only one personal name, the four-letter Divine Name יהוה (YHWH).[22] Another important characteristic of God's visible form in the Old Testament was interest in his Divine Name as well as the soteriological function of revealing the Divine Name. One does not have to look long or far in the Gospel of John for evidence of both.[23] Both already come forth in the prologue: "To whomever received him, he gave to them authority to become children of God, to the ones who are believing *in his name* [εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ]" (John 1:12). This is stating that faith is not to be placed in the person of Jesus apart from believing that this flesh-and-blood man is the incarnation of the visible form of YHWH. This Gospel unambiguously confesses that Jesus shares the name of the Father: "I have come *in my Father's name* [ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ πατρός μου], and you do not receive me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive" (John 5:43). It also depicts Jesus demonstrating what his true name is by what he says (i.e., his words are YHWH's words) and especially by what he does (i.e., his works are YHWH's works): "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness to me" (John 10:25; cf. 14:10–11).[24] In light of the use of the verb σφραγίζω with the Divine Name in early baptismal texts, it is possible that the possession of the Divine Name is also behind Jesus' claim that God the Father "sealed [ἐσφραγίσεν]" the Son of Man (John 6:27).[25]

The Gospel of John even depicts Jesus as the embodiment of the Divine Name of the Father, to the extent that Jesus prays, "*Father, glorify your Name* [πάτερ,

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[21] This is similar to Jesus' reference to himself as "your Name" in the prayer of John 12:28, "Glorify your Name," which will be discussed below.

[22] For a broad introduction to this area of research, see Gieschen, "The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology," 115–158. The discussion below draws on this previous research.

[23] For discussion of the Divine Name in the Christology of John, see especially Gieschen, "The Divine Name That the Father Shares with the Son in the Gospel of John," 387–410; see also Joshua J. F. Coutts, *The Divine Name in the Gospel of John*, WUNT 2.447 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

[24] See further the discussion in Part VII below.

[25] E.g., see Revelation 7:2–3 and Herm. *Sim.* 9.16.3–4. John's prologue indicates that the Son as the Word existed before creation and "became flesh" (John 1:14). In light of this and the use of a title in John 6:27 that emphasizes preexistence ("the Son of Man") as well as the testimony that Jesus received the Glory of the Father in eternity before creation (John 17:5, 24), John 6:27 appears to reflect the understanding that the Son was also sealed with the Divine Name in eternity before creation. The idea of the Son of Man possessing the Divine Name prior to creation is present in 1 Enoch 48.2–3, a pre-Christian Jewish text (see also n. 27 below).

δόξασόν σου τὸ ὄνομα]” (John 12:28). This is not simply a pious prayer that God’s name be honored through Jesus’ death; it is the identification of Jesus as the Son of Man who shares the Divine Name. This indicates that he can be identified as “the Name,” much like the visible manifestations of the Name of YHWH in some Old Testament texts.[26] This personal identification of “the Name” as Jesus is supported by the parallel announcement that comes shortly before this prayer: “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (John 12:23). The “Son of Man,” therefore, is also known as “your [the Father’s] Name.”[27] That “glorify your Name” should be understood in this manner is confirmed by two strikingly similar petitions of Jesus in the farewell prayer: “glorify your Son” (John 17:1) and “glorify me” (John 17:5).

This prayer at the close of the farewell discourse is the most profound presentation of testimony in John that Jesus shares the Divine Name of the Father.

> I revealed *your name* [*σου τὸ ὄνομα*] to those you gave me from the world. (John 17:6)
>
> And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to you, Holy Father, keep them *in your name which you have given me* [*ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ᾧ δέδωκάς μοι*] that they be one, even as we are. While I was with them, I was keeping them *in your name* [*ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου*] which you have given me; and I guarded them, and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. (John 17:11–12)
>
> I made *your name* [*τὸ ὄνομά σου*] known to them and will continue to make it known. (John 17:26)

A few conclusions can be drawn from these petitions. First, the repeated use of the personal pronoun makes it evident that the name discussed here is the Divine Name of the Father, to whom this prayer is directed.[28] Second, the Divine Name was given to the Son (John 17:11). Based upon the testimony in this prayer that the Son received the Father’s Glory before the foundation of the world (John 17:24), the

[26] E.g., Deuteronomy 12:5–11 and 1 Kings 8:12–21; see the discussion in Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 70–78. For a similar use of “the Name” as a title for Jesus, see 3 John 7.

[27] The relationship between this Divine Name tradition and the prominent Son of Man sayings in John can be understood in light of traditions like those in 1 Enoch 37–71; see Charles A. Gieschen, “The Name of the Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch,” *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 238–249.

[28] Most scholars argue that here “name” denotes the “revealed character and nature of God” rather than the Divine Name; e.g., Catrin H. Williams, *I Am He: The Interpretation of ’Anî Hû’ in Jewish and Early Christian Literature*, WUNT 2.113 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 280 n. 85. Quispel argues that these verses refer to the Divine Name that was hidden but this Gospel presents as having been revealed by Jesus; see “John and Jewish Christianity,” 148–155.

giving of the Divine Name is probably also understood to have taken place before creation.[29] Third, the prayer states that Jesus has made the Divine Name, normally a hidden and heavenly mystery, known to his disciples on earth because it has a soteriological function.[30] The eschatological revelation of the Divine Name was promised in Isaiah and is now seen as being fulfilled in Jesus. For example, YHWH promises in Isaiah 52:6 that, after all the past despising of his name, finally "my people shall know my name; therefore in that day they shall know that I am he who speaks."[31] Fourth, the Divine Name that was revealed to the disciples by Jesus has protecting power (John 17:11). This power is especially reassuring to the disciples because earlier in the farewell discourse Jesus spoke of his departure (John 14:1–4) and warned of their suffering "on account of my name" (John 15:21). This power of the Divine Name for the one who believes in the true identity of Jesus (i.e., that he is the Glory and the Son of Man, the visible form of YHWH, incarnate) is a subject that is explained several times earlier in the farewell discourse (John 14:13–14; 15:16; 16:23–24, 26). Here is but one representative example: "[Jesus said:] 'Whatever you ask *in my name* [ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου], I will do it, that the Father be glorified in the Son; if you ask anything *in my name* [ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου], I will do it'" (John 14:13–14). This certainly does not refer to using the personal name "Jesus" as some kind of theurgic formula, but asking in the confession that Jesus' true name is YHWH, a word of power.

Testimony to the vital importance of knowing the name possessed by the Son is frequent in the Gospel of John. As noted above, this is seen already in John 1:12, where the focus is not only believing in the *person* Jesus, but specifically believing in his *name*. This idea is also expressed in the reaction of the disciples to Jesus' sign at Cana: "*Many believed in his name* [πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ]" (John 2:23). Knowing the true name of Christ is the source of "life" according to the thematic conclusion of this Gospel: "in order that *you have life in his name because you believe* [πιστεύοντες ζωὴν ἔχητε ἐν τῷ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ]" (John 20:31). Conversely,

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[29] This conclusion is also based upon the identification of the preexistent "Word" as the one who possesses the Divine Name in both the prologue and the farewell prayer; see Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 271–280, and Gieschen, "The Divine Name That the Father Shares with the Son," 387–410.

[30] This function of the Divine Name is also found elsewhere in John (1:12; 2:23; 3:18; and 20:31). For the soteriological function of the Divine Name in relationship to Baptism in early Christianity, see Gieschen, "The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology," 115–158; and Charles A. Gieschen, "Sacramental Theology in the Book of Revelation," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (2003): 149–174.

[31] Coutts, *The Divine Name in the Gospel of John*, 44. The fact that Isaiah 52:6 speaks about the Divine Name in the same context with the self-disclosure formula (i.e., "I am he" or "I am") is also significant because these two are closely related in the Gospel of John, as will be discussed below. There is a direct allusion to Isaiah 52:6 LXX in John 4:26.

the lack of belief that Jesus possesses the Divine Name brings eschatological judgment: "he who does not believe is condemned already, because *he has not believed in the name* [*μὴ πεπίστευκεν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα*] of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). The Divine Name has a clear soteriological function. In light of this Gospel's testimony that Jesus shares the Divine Name of the Father, "believe in his name" should be understood as trusting that Jesus possesses the Divine Name as the Glory and the Son of Man in the flesh and, thus, is identified as the visible YHWH in whom the one God of Israel is revealed.[32]

IV. The Son as the Glory

Beholding the כבוד יהוה ("the Glory of YHWH") is an important part of some major theophanies in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Exodus 24 and Ezekiel 1) as well as an important theme in several of the mystical ascent texts in Second Temple Jewish literature.[33] The Hebrew term כבוד signifies the weightiness or tangibility of YHWH; the use of *δόξα* to translate it in the Septuagint certainly nuances the understanding of *δόξα* among early Christians in the direction of it being used as a title for YHWH's visible image.[34] There is significant interest within the Gospel of John in beholding Jesus as the visible image or form of God, the Glory of YHWH seen by Moses at Sinai, by Israel in the tabernacle and temple, then by the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel in their call visions. Isaiah, for example, states that YHWH gives his Glory to no other (Isa 42:8; 48:11) but also holds out the prophetic hope that "the Glory will be revealed and all flesh shall see it" (Isa 40:5). In light of John's use of Isaiah elsewhere, there can be little doubt that this Gospel's interest in Jesus as the Glory is influenced by the focus on the eschatological revelation of the Glory of YHWH.[35] For John, the Glory who departed from the first temple before its destruction in 587 BC had never returned to the temple; he came to tabernacle in the flesh of Jesus, who becomes the new temple, and the Glory never enters the Jerusalem temple but briefly in Jesus to cleanse it and declare, "Destroy this temple [i.e., the body of Jesus], and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). One only

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[32] The sharing of the same Divine Name between the Father and the Son is a profound way of expressing their unity. It should also be noted that the Son states that the Father will send the Holy Spirit "in my name" (John 14:26), implying that the Spirit also shares the Name of the Son and the Father.

[33] For an overview of evidence in Israelite and Jewish literature, see Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 78–88.

[34] G. von Rad and G. Kittel, "δόξα," *TDNT* 2:233–255. In light of its use in the LXX, BDAG, 258, offers the specialized meaning of "a transcendent being deserving of honor" (definition 4 of 4).

[35] Coutts, *The Divine Name in the Gospel of John*, 31–42.

needs to note the frequent use of the noun δόξα in the Gospel of John in order to see an unmistakable intertextual relationship between the theophanic Glory traditions found in the Old Testament (especially Exodus, Isaiah, and Ezekiel) and these Johannine texts.

> The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld *his Glory* [τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ], *Glory* [δόξαν] as of the Only-Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.[36] (John 1:14)

> This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and *manifested his Glory* [ἐφανέρωσεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ]; and his disciples believed in him. (John 2:11)

> How are you able to believe while you are receiving *glory* [δόξαν] from one another, but you are not seeking *the Glory* [τὴν δόξαν] who comes from the only God?[37] (John 5:44)

> Jesus said to her [Martha], "Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see *the Glory of God* [τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ]?" (John 11:40)

> Isaiah said these things [cf. quotations of Isa 53:1 and 6:10] because he saw *his Glory* [τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ] and he spoke concerning him [i.e., the Son]. . . . For they loved the glory of man more than *the Glory of God* [τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ]. (John 12:41, 43)

> So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with *the Glory* [τῇ δόξῃ] that I had in your presence before the world began. (John 17:5)

> *The Glory* [τὴν δόξαν] that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, even as we are one. (John 17:22)

> Father, I desire that those also whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see *my Glory* [τὴν δόξαν τὴν εμὴν], which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:24)

These texts indicate that Jesus himself and also the evangelist John understood Jesus' identity in light of the theophanic traditions about the Glory, especially as found in Exodus, Isaiah, Ezekiel, widely in the Targumim, and also in the Second Temple Jewish literature that used these texts as their starting point.[38] Like the Old Testament and later Jewish apocalyptic literature, the Gospel of John is very intent

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[36] There is a strong echo of Exodus 33–34 in John 1:14–18, especially with the repeated mention of "grace" in John 1:14, 16 (cf. Exod 34:6–7).

[37] The context for this statement is the prior revelation of YHWH in Israel's past history, especially with Moses (John 5:37–38).

[38] Gieschen, "The Death of Jesus in the Gospel of John," 243–261; see also Craig A. Evans, *Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John's Prologue*, JSNTSup, 89 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

on offering "revelation" of the Glory. The Glory is not seen in this Gospel by mystically ascending to a heavenly realm to behold him upon the *merkabah* throne, but through the Son of Man descending repeatedly over history and revealing himself as the Glory, especially when he becomes incarnate and is lifted up on the cross (John 3:13–14).[39] As Jesus states to Nicodemus, "No one has ascended, but he who has descended from heaven, the Son of Man" (John 3:13). The lifting up of Jesus on the cross becomes the holy place where one sees the ultimate vision of the enthroned Glory because one sees the Glory offering himself for the salvation of the world: "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I Am [ἐγώ εἰμι]" (John 8:28).[40]

V. The Son as the Son of Man

Because of the opening vision in Ezekiel, interest in seeing the Glory within Jewish mystical literature is virtually synonymous with seeing the manlike form of YHWH. The primary title used for the manlike form of YHWH in John is not "the Glory," however, but "the Son of Man." Many scholars miss the strong intertextual relationship between the appearance of YHWH as "a man" in Ezekiel 1:26 and the appearance of one as "a son of man" enthroned in Daniel 7:13, and most scholars even dismiss the foundational significance of Daniel for interpreting the Son of Man in John.[41] The Gospel of John is evidence of a close relationship between these two scenes, as well as the scenes in Jacob's dream (Gen 28:10–17) and Isaiah's call vision (Isa 6:1–7). The interrelationship of these texts is seen already in the promise given to Nathanael as well as the hearer/readers of this Gospel: "You will see greater things than these; you will see angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (John 1:51). The stark contrast that one finds between the Gospel of John and 1 Enoch 37–71 is that the revelation of the Son of Man does not happen through mystical *ascent* to view the sacred confines of *heaven*, but through the *descent* of the Son of Man in order to be widely seen on this *earth*, especially in his crucifixion. As

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[39] See especially Charles A. Gieschen, "The Descending Son of Man in the Gospel of John: A Polemic against Mystical Ascent to See God," *The Open Mind: Essays in Honour of Christopher Rowland*, ed. Jonathan Knight and Kevin Sullivan, LNTS 522 (London: Bloomsbury/T & T Clark, 2015), 105–129.

[40] For the use of the absolute form (i.e., without a predicate) of ἐγώ εἰμι as a divine disclosure formula, see the discussion below.

[41] Benjamin E. Reynolds has very helpfully restored focus on Daniel 7 for interpretation of the Johannine Son of Man; see *The Apocalyptic Son of Man in the Gospel of John*, WUNT 2.249 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). Reynolds could have drawn a clearer line back from Daniel 7 to Ezekiel 1.

noted by both John Ashton and Christopher Rowland, this Gospel is "an apocalypse in reverse."[42]

The promise to Nathanael comes as the climactic end of a narrative unit filled with titles that identify Jesus to be the fulfillment of various messianic expectations. The evangelist sees the revelation of "the Son of Man" as the ultimate Jewish hope, the proverbial icing on the messianic cake served to the hearer/reader in John 1:19–51. The close relationship between the Glory traditions discussed above and Son of Man traditions in this Gospel is especially found in the use of the verb *δοξάζω* ("I glorify") with the Son of Man title (John 12:23; 13:31). With the movement in John 12 to passion week, the dialogue about Jesus' death moves from the language of the Son of Man "being lifted up" to the language of him "being glorified," the second verb in the pair of verbs drawn from Isaiah 52:13 LXX.[43] These are distinct verbs describing a synonymous reality as is very visible in the careful weaving together of both "lifting up" (John 12:32, 34) and "being glorified" language (John 12:23, 28) in the same context. Notice the abundant use of the verb *δοξάζω* in these texts.

> And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man *to be glorified* [*δοξασθῇ*]. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (John 12:23–24)

> [Jesus said:] "Now my entire self has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save me from this hour?' But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father**,** *glorify* [*δόξασον*] your Name." There came therefore a voice out of heaven: "I *have glorified* [*ἐδόξασα*] him and *will glorify* [*δοξάσω*] him again." (John 12:27–28)

> When therefore he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man *is glorified* [ἐδόξασθη], and God *is glorified* [*ἐδόξασθη*] in him; if God *is glorified* [*ἐδόξασθη*] in him, God also *will glorify* [*δοξάσει*] him in himself, and *will glorify* [*δοξάσει*] him immediately." (John 13:31–32)

> [Jesus prayed,] "Father, the hour has come; *glorify* [*δόξασον*] your Son in order that the Son *glorify* [*δοξάσῃ*] you. . . . And now, Father, *glorify* [*δόξασον*] me in your own presence with *the Glory* [*τῇ δόξῃ*] that I had with you before the world existed." (John 17:1, 5)

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[42] Rowland expresses agreement with Ashton's characterization in Christopher Rowland and Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 131. See also John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 383–406, esp. 405.

[43] What follows is from my discussion of these two verbs in Gieschen, "The Death of Jesus in the Gospel of John," 246–254.

What does δοξάζω mean in these Johannine texts? Although the basic semantic field of δοξάζω centers on "to honor, praise, or extol" someone or something, it is necessary to understand this verb as used in the Gospel of John, especially in relationship to the use of the noun δόξα.[44] It has already been noted that this Gospel frequently uses the noun δόξα with its profound theophanic connotations from the Septuagint where it is used as a designation for YHWH's visible form.[45] The use of the verb δοξάζω in these texts takes on the theophanic or revelatory connotations of the noun usage. A translation like "to honor by tangibly showing forth divine identity" is very clumsy, but it gets to the heart of what is being communicated. The irony is that the Son of Man is "glorified," namely, honored by his divine identity being shown forth, not primarily in his resurrection and ascension, but in his death.[46] Many first-century Jews longed to see the Son of Man, the mystery of YHWH's tangible form, revealed; John indicates that this apocalyptic vision took place in the crucifixion.[47] In this Gospel, Jesus stresses that even if people reject his words, they should believe his works (John 14:11). His death, above all, reveals his true identity.[48] It is the moment when one not only sees the presence of the Son of Man, but also sees him doing what only YHWH can do by bringing life through the giving of himself on behalf of the world. This is the apocalyptic vision promised to Nathanael and the hearer/readers of this Gospel: the Son of Man is seen enthroned on earth providing life and access to the Father in heaven through his death (John 1:51).

VI. The Son Speaks as YHWH: The I Am Self-Disclosure Formula

There has been some excellent research published on the ἐγώ εἰμι sayings in the Gospel of John in recent years.[49] These Greek words are the combination of the

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[44] The definition offered in BDAG, 258, for the Johannine use of δοξάζω ("cause to have splendid greatness, clothe in splendor") seems to emphasize outward appearance more than revelation of the divine identity of the Glory. G. Kittel, "δοξάζω," *TDNT* 2:252, properly stresses the relationship with the noun δόξα.

[45] See Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 78–88.

[46] It is worthy to note again that this "glorification" language is from an interpretation of Isaiah 53 that sees glorification happening in the humiliating suffering of the servant.

[47] For a prominent example of first-century Jewish interest in the Son of Man, see I Enoch 37–71. See Charles A. Gieschen, "The Importance of *I Enoch* for Understanding the Son of Man in the Four Gospels," *Jewish Roots of Eastern Christian Mysticism: Studies in Honor of Alexander Golitzin*, ed. Andrei A. Orlov (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 52–65.

[48] C. H. Dodd states that the death of Jesus is the "final and all-inclusive" sign in this Gospel because it reveals Jesus' true identity in the ultimate manner; see *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 439.

[49] This summary draws on the research of the following scholars: David Mark Ball, *"I Am" in John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications*, JSNTSup 124 (Sheffield:

emphatic first person personal pronoun (ἐγώ) with the first person singular form of the "to be" verb (εἰμί). Depending upon the context in John, this construction is usually translated "I am" or "It is I," the latter being used more frequently in most translations. All of its occurrences in John will be translated in this study consistently as "I Am" in order to help the English reader see that it is a technical formula used in this Gospel to disclose the divine identity of Jesus as YHWH. *The Lutheran Study Bible* directs the reader's attention to these sayings in a helpful summary section, yet this section and the textual notes say very little about the occurrences of ἐγώ εἰμι where there is no predicate, especially the Old Testament background of these sayings in YHWH's self-disclosure formulae found at the end of Deuteronomy and several places in the second half of Isaiah.[50] It will be demonstrated here that the Old Testament self-disclosure formulae are vital for understanding all of the sayings in the Gospel of John as Jesus identifying himself as YHWH, speaking as YHWH speaks (see John 3:34; 6:68; 7:16–18; 8:28; 12:47–50; 14:10). These *words*, along with the *works* of Jesus (see John 10:37–38; 14:11–12), especially his death and resurrection, prepare the hearer of the Gospel for the climactic confession of Thomas, "my Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

There are two different groups of sayings in the Gospel of John: predicate "I Am" sayings and absolute "I Am" sayings. Most readers of John are very familiar with the predicate sayings but much less aware of the absolute sayings, mainly because of variation in the way ἐγώ εἰμι is translated into English. It is significant that there are seven different occurrences of each of these constructions, although the individual predicate nominative construction is sometimes used two or three times in each occurrence.

Predicate "I Am" Sayings in John (Usually translated "I am . . .")

1. I Am the Bread of Life (6:35, 41, 48).
2. I Am the Light of the World (8:12; cf. 9:5).
3. I Am the Gate (10:7, 9).
4. I Am the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14).
5. I Am the Resurrection and the Life (11:25).

Sheffield University Press, 1996); Catrin H. Williams, *I Am He: The Interpretation of 'Anî Hû' in Jewish and Early Christian Literature*; Richard Bauckham, "Monotheism and Christology in the Gospel of John," *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 148–166 [this article subsequently became a chapter in Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 239–252]. I have discussed this previously in Gieschen, "The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology," 140–141.

[50] *The Lutheran Study Bible: English Standard Version* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 1784–1785.

6. I Am the Way and the Truth and the Life (14:6).

7. I Am the True Vine (15:1).

Absolute "I Am" Sayings in John (Usually translated "I am he," except in 8:58)[51]

1. Jesus said to her [the Samaritan woman], "I Am, the one who is speaking to you" (4:26).

2. But he said to them [the disciples in the boat], "I Am; do not be afraid" (6:20).

3. You [the Jews] will die in your sins unless you believe that I Am (8:24).

4. When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I Am, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me (8:28).

5. Amen, amen, I tell you, before Abraham was, I Am (8:58).

6. I tell you this now [Judas's betrayal], before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you believe that I Am (13:19).

7. "Whom are you looking for?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I Am." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, "I Am," they stepped back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered, "I told you that I Am. So if you are looking for me, let these men go" (18:4–8).

The background for this usage of ἐγώ εἰμι is often connected to the revelation of the meaning of the Divine Name to Moses in Exodus 3:14, especially in light of the Greek translation in the Septuagint: ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν ("I am the one who is"). Several scholars have argued that a better antecedent of this usage in John is found in the *absolute* self-revelatory statements at the end of Deuteronomy and the second part of Isaiah (40–66). Richard Bauckham has noted that there are nine occurrences in Masoretic Text (MT) and seven in the Septuagint (LXX). The Gospel of John has seven occurrences, but the last one consists of three for a total of nine. These phrases are found in the Old Testament as follows:

Hebrew (MT)

אני אני הוא (Deut 32:39)

אני הוא (Isa 41:4; 43:10, 13; 46:4; 48:12; 52:6)

אנכי אנכי הוא (Isa 43:25; 51:12)

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[51] Although not nearly as prominent as in John, similar absolute forms of ἐγώ εἰμι in the Synoptic Gospels that draw on the Old Testament self-disclosure formula are found in the following synoptic accounts: the stilling of the storm (Matt 14:27; Mark 6:50; but *not* Luke 8:24); the eschatological discourse (Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8; but *not* Matt 24:23); the trial before the council (Mark 14:62; Luke 22:70; but *not* Matt 26:64); and the resurrection (Matt 28:20; Luke 24:39).

Greek (LXX)
ἐγώ εἰμι (Deut 32:39; Isa 41:4; 43:10; 45:18)
ἐγώ εἰμι ἐγώ εἰμι (Isa 43:25; 46:4; 51:12)

Regarding the relationship between the seven signs,[52] the seven predicate "I Am" sayings, and the seven absolute forms of "I Am," Richard Bauckham states:

> In their different ways all three series of sevens reveal who Jesus is and the salvation he gives. Salvation in the Fourth Gospel can be summarized as knowing the true God and receiving eternal life from him. The signs reveal God's glory in Jesus and the salvation Jesus brings. As acts of evident divine power, they demonstrate what the sayings can only say, but the two sets of "I am" sayings make fully explicit what the signs signify. One series, the "I am" sayings with predicates, focus on Jesus as the only Savior, in a variety of images instancing the inexhaustible fullness of what salvation means. In these sayings, as in the signs, it is implicit that Jesus can be the only Savior only because he is identified with the only God. To reveal the glory of God's unique identity, to give eternal life that God alone has in himself, Jesus must himself belong to God's own unique identity. This is what the absolute "I am" sayings make fully explicit, in a sevenfold series of progressive clarity, in which Jesus utters the most concise and comprehensive expression for all that it means for God to be uniquely and truly God. They identify Jesus with God, not just in an abstract way, but in a way that the Scriptures associate with the universal revelation of God's unique divinity in his eschatological act of salvation for Israel and the nations. Jesus' identity with God is thus essential and intrinsic to his work of revelation and salvation.[53]

VII. The Son Acts as YHWH

Another aspect of the YHWH Christology in this Gospel is that the Son acts as YHWH acts. This is established already in the prologue where it is stated that the Son was not only present at creation, but all things came to be through him (John 1:3). In light of the Old Testament testimony that YHWH created all things, not only in Genesis but especially in the Psalter, there is no more clear affirmation of the Son

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[52] These seven signs are as follows: (1) miracle at Cana (John 2:1–12); (2) healing of the official's son (4:43–54); (3) healing at Bethzatha (5:1–47); (4) feeding of the five thousand (6:1–15); (5) walking on water (6:16–24); (6) healing of the blind man (9:1–41); and (7) the raising of Lazarus (11:1–54). There is some debate about whether the walking on water miracle is one of the seven signs. Some argue that John presents Jesus' resurrection as the seventh sign; e.g., see Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 56.

[53] Bauckham, *Testimony of the Beloved Disciple*, 250.

being YHWH that could be expressed than confessing that all things were created through the Son.[54]

That the Son acts as YHWH acts is also the argument of Jesus' extensive speech after the healing of the crippled man on the Sabbath (John 5:19–47). The Son does what he sees the Father doing (John 5:19). Testimony that Jesus acts as YHWH acts is vividly depicted in the seven signs presented in John's Gospel; all are actions that YHWH does (e.g., YHWH heals on the Sabbath, YHWH feeds Israel in the wilderness, YHWH walks on water and rescues Israel through water, and YHWH raises the dead). Furthermore, there are divine actions, such as eschatological judgment, that the Father has given to the Son (John 5:21–26). Jesus highlights the testimony of his works even over his words when he says, "If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father" (John 10:37–38; see also 5:19–20; 10:25; 14:10–11).

Perhaps one of the most vivid titles that identifies Jesus acting as YHWH is "the noble Shepherd" (John 10:11, 14). While shepherd is certainly an image used for David in the Old Testament, it is primarily an image used for YHWH himself (e.g., Ps 23). Ezekiel 34, where YHWH promises that he himself will come to shepherd his people, is the primary background for Jesus' applying this shepherd image as well as the act of shepherding to himself. He is depicting himself as YHWH, the shepherd of Israel, who gathers and protects his sheep by sacrificing his own self on their behalf (John 10:15, 17).

VIII. The Son Is Worshiped

Proper worship of YHWH is a significant theme in the Gospel of John, as introduced in the cleansing of the temple (John 2:13–22), further discussed in Jesus' exchange with the Samaritan woman (John 4:16–26), and illustrated by Jesus teaching in the context of various Jewish festivals throughout John 2–10. This Gospel depicts the place of YHWH's presence—which was the Jerusalem temple—is now Jesus, the source of "life" is Jesus, and the redemptive acts commemorated in the Jewish festivals now take on new eschatological significance in the redemptive action of Jesus. True and faithful Jewish worship is depicted as centered in Jesus. To worship other than where the Son is present, to meditate on the Torah without seeing the Son, and to observe the Jewish feasts without seeing their eschatological fulfillment in the Son lifted on the cross, is idolatry: "You are of your father the devil,

[54] See esp. Bauckham, *Testimony of the Beloved Disciple*, 240–242.

and your will is to do your father's desires" (John 8:44). The most striking scene in John with this worship theme is the action of the healed blind man after he has been excommunicated from the synagogue, the spiritual home where he worshiped YHWH. The healed blind man illustrates that the true "Jew" finds his true spiritual home in Jesus, who both fulfills and subsumes faithful Jewish worship of YHWH: "and *he worshiped him* [προσεκύνησεν αὐτῷ]" (John 9:38). Jesus is depicted here as YHWH, who is worthy of worship. If Jesus is not YHWH, then this would be a vivid example of idolatry.

IX. Conclusion

The message is clear in John's Gospel: Jesus is the eternal Word who shares the Divine Name, he is the manlike form of YHWH known as the Glory and the Son of Man. Jesus' work (seven signs) is the full revelation of YHWH's work, his words (seven predicate "I Am" sayings) are the full revelation of YHWH's words of salvation, and his self-declarations (seven absolute "I Am" sayings) are a complete revelation of himself as the same YHWH who made this type of self-declaration in the Old Testament. In sum, his saving works are those of YHWH, his saving words are those of YHWH, and his self-declarations are those of YHWH.

The Son is specifically the visible YHWH, as the conclusion to the prologue makes clear: "No one, at any time, has seen God [i.e., the Father] at any time; the only-begotten Son being at the side of the Father has exegeted him" (John 1:18). Abraham saw the Son (John 8:58), Jacob saw the Son (John 1:51), Moses saw the Son (John 5:46), and Isaiah saw the Son (John 12:41). In this YHWH Christology, the evangelist is simply reflecting the teaching of Jesus in this Gospel: "not that anyone has seen the Father, except the Son; that one has seen the Father" (John 6:46).

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Speak as the Oracles of God: Reinhold Pieper's Classical Lutheran Homiletic

Adam C. Koontz

Introduction

Preaching always vanishes. Sermons can be written down or recorded on audio or video, and choice quotes can be tweeted out, but the live presence of the man proclaiming God's Word is for and in that moment. We read Luther's sermons but do not hear his voice. We have Chrysostom's admonitions to the rich but not the energy in the building as they bristled at his exhortations.

It is fitting that one of the greatest preachers produced by the Missouri Synod and perhaps its greatest homiletician has himself practically vanished. Reinhold Pieper (1850–1920) was a professor and president of Concordia Theological Seminary (1891–1914) for more than two decades and a parish pastor before, during, and after his time at the seminary in Springfield, Illinois, but only his last name is now known to most of us because of his more famous younger brother, Franz. The Southern Baptists still know Spurgeon and Broadus. The Presbyterians still read Alexander and Dabney. The Lutherans do not know their own best preachers, most of whom preached and wrote in a different mother tongue. Pieper's preaching and his understanding of how to preach have vanished.

Why should we remember him? It would be enough for the sake of his works and his words to remember him, but his significance is greater than his own accomplishments. We will look not at Pieper's enormous number of published sermons,[1] but we will examine his *Evangelisch-Lutherische Homiletik*[2] for its

[1] *Predigt über das Evangelium am 23. Sonntag nach Trinitatis, gehalten in der Ev. luth. Dreieinigkeits Kirche zu Springfield, Ill.* (St. Louis: L. Lange, 1892); *Rede am Sarge des sel. Prof. A. Crämer u. Rede zur Einweihung des neuen Seminargebäudes* (St. Louis: L. Lange, 1893); *Gottes Wort und Luthers Lehr', vergehet nun und nimmermehr: Vortraege Gehalten in den Lutherstunden* (Springfield: Concordia Seminary, 1893); *Predigten ueber Freie Texte* (Milwaukee: Germania, 1902); *Predigten ueber saemmtliche Sonn- und Festtags-Episteln des Kirchenjahres (Springfield: self-published, 1905); Kasual- und Festpredigten* (Springfield: self-published, 1908*); Passionspredigten* (Springfield: self-published, 1908); *Predigten ueber saemmtliche Sonn- und Festtags-Evangelien des Kirchenjahres* (Milwaukee: Germania, 1909); *Predigten ueber alttestamentliche Texte: vornehmlich mit Beruecksichtigung messianischer Weissagungen* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1915).

[2] There were two editions of R. Pieper, *Evangelisch-Lutherische Homiletik: Nach der Erläuterung über die* Praecepta Homiletica *von Dr. J. J. Rambach* identical in their pagination

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distinctive attachment to the biblical text at every stage of sermon preparation and the preacher's career. For Pieper, the text of the Bible governed everything from the timbre of the preacher's voice to his homiletical outlining, and the deployment of the fivefold use of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16; Rom 15:4) as the key means of applying the biblical text to the hearer will be fruitful for us through its present unfamiliarity and long pedigree. His understanding of what preaching should be vanished along with the German language's dominance in the Missouri Synod. The homileticians who came after him, their influences, and their impact on what happens in our pulpits do not cite his 474-page treatise on homiletics, much less repeat it, argue with it, or otherwise engage it. In Pieper's preaching and homiletic, we hear a vanished voice in Missouri.[3] It is now time to hear him again.

Life

Reinhold Pieper was born in 1850 in Pomerania and immigrated to the United States with his family in 1869. The Pieper family settled in Wisconsin and joined a Wisconsin Synod congregation, so Reinhold attended the Wisconsin Synod's Northwestern College before going on to the Missouri Synod's St. Louis seminary during an interlude when the Wisconsin Synod was not operating its own seminary. Pieper thus attended seminary under the teaching of C. F. W. Walther, alongside his brothers Franz (1852–1931) and August (1857–1946), as well as the later Wisconsin professors J. P. Koehler (1859–1951) and John Schaller (1859–1920). In Pieper's time, Walther's personal presence and his methodological sharpening in the Election Controversy's refining fire were enormous in the formation in the great majority of Synodical Conference ministers.[4]

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published in Pieper's lifetime, the first by the Germania Publishing Company of Milwaukee in 1895 and the second by Concordia Publishing House at St. Louis in 1901.

[3] In generations he had directly taught, his legacy was large. "I think the weakest part of Lutheran preaching is the poor preaching itself. I have known the seminary and listened to preachers for seventy years. I find preaching in the Missouri Synod not only mediocre but bad. One of the reasons for this is that our homiletics departments have been filled with very mediocre men, except in the Springfield seminary where they had Reinhold Pieper and Louis Wessel. Springfield and Synod owe these men, as it was generally conceded that Springfield produced much better preachers than St. Louis," Berthold von Schenk, *Lively Stone: The Autobiography of Berthold von Schenk*, ed. C. George Fry and J. R. Kurz (Delhi, N.Y.: ALPB Books, 2006), 82. By "good," von Schenk means a preacher's style, delivery, and affect, not his grasp of doctrinal truth. Cf. his simultaneous love of Harry Emerson Fosdick's preaching and Luther's, 78–79. This gives us a sense of what Pieper achieved in his homiletical instruction, apart from his orthodoxy or his students' orthodoxy, of which von Schenk would not have been the best judge.

[4] This influence is readily seen in Pieper's *Homiletik* as well as the topical range and tone of his non-homiletical works: *Von der Prädestination der Heiligen von Tilemann Hesshusius* (Springfield: Concordia Seminary, 1896); *Wegweiser durch die theologischen Disciplinen und deren Litteratur für theologische Studenten und Pastoren bei Anschaffung einer Bibliothek* (Milwaukee:

On his graduation in 1876, Pieper was placed in Wrightstown, Wisconsin, where he remained for two years before taking a call to Manitowoc, Wisconsin. In Manitowoc, he served as a parish pastor until 1891, when he was called to teach at Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois, where he would spend almost all the rest of his life. Although Pieper's call was to teach, the death of seminary president August Craemer shortly after Craemer's presiding over Pieper's installation meant a call to Pieper (at first temporary, then permanent) to be seminary president as well as professor throughout his time at Springfield. This double load, along with the variety of subjects seminary professors taught at the time, required competencies in leading the faculty; teaching homiletics, pastoral theology, and New Testament; and serving at Trinity Lutheran Church and rural churches in the Springfield area as need arose.

This busy life was marked by noted success as a preacher and homiletician in the Missouri Synod, where his books of sermons, two printings of his *Homiletik*, and other works of pastoral theology were outnumbered in the realm of pastoral theology perhaps only by Walther's publications. In 1914, Pieper relinquished his offices of professor and seminary president to serve two different Springfield-area parishes, which he did until his death in 1920. He links the founders of the Missouri Synod, who were his teachers and his predecessors in office, with the Synod's transition to modern American life in the twentieth century.[5]

How to Preach

Pieper's homiletic was consciously shaped in the image of his homiletics instructor, C. F. W. Walther. Walther's seminary lectures on homiletics were based on J. J. Rambach's *Praecepta*, and Pieper's own lectures employed Rambach alongside his *Collegienheft* of notes taken down two or three decades earlier at Walther's feet.[6] A Waltherian attachment to the works of Lutheran orthodoxy is found in Pieper's citations, full of Johann Andreas Quenstedt, Christian Chemnitz,

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Germania, 1900); *Der Kleine Katechismus Luthers aus der Heiligen Schrift und Luthers Werken: in exegetisch-dogmatischen Vorträgen in den "Lutherstuden"* (Milwaukee: Germania, 1899–1901); "A Brief Summary of Instruction in Homiletics and Pastoral Theology," trans. Wilbert Werling, *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 49, nos. 2–3: 169–176. Pieper's theology appears everywhere as a thorough, pastoral application of Walther's teaching.

[5] Erich H. Heintzen, *Prairie School of the Prophets: The Anatomy of a Seminary, 1846–1976* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1989), 110. Heintzen understands Pieper's importance as a link from one generation to another and as a scholar but provides no analysis of Pieper's oeuvre, a common omission in mentions of Pieper.

[6] Pieper, *Homiletik*, iii–iv. J. J. Rambach, *Erläuterung über die* Praecepta Homiletica (Gießen: Joh. Phil. Fresenius, 1736).

and Johann Gerhard alongside Lutherans of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Theoretical discussion of preaching is fleshed out in references to many preachers, chief of whom in Pieper's mind were Luther and Walther. Quotations of Luther are ubiquitous in Pieper's *Homiletik*, and citations from Walther's gospel and epistle postils occur more frequently than anyone except Luther. Pieper worked within a tradition that in his time was unbroken in its direct connection to the founding of the Missouri Synod and the kind of preaching that shaped so many of its ministers.

This commitment to Walther's preaching should, according to current knowledge of Walther, result in Pieper's exaltation of Walther's lectures on law and gospel and constant discussion of a law-gospel dialectic in preaching. Yet the past is a foreign country, and they did things differently there. Pieper's homiletic is not built around law and gospel as a central component. We will see how he does discuss law and gospel as a means of applying God's Word, but Pieper's homiletic is constructed around meditation on the text of Scripture—its authority and the preacher's capacity to create themes, outlines, and finally sermons that exposit and apply it according to its fivefold use.[7]

The fivefold use was so ubiquitous in Lutheran preaching down to Pieper's time that he reiterated previous centuries' complaints that preachers were twisting Scripture to fit onto the Procrustean bed of the fivefold use as a homiletical outline. Romans 15:4 and 2 Timothy 3:16 identify Scripture's purposes: these are didactic, elenchtic, paedeutic, epanorthotic, or paracletic. He preserved the use of these severely Hellenized terms throughout the *Homiletik* but explicated them as follows: the didactic use is for doctrinal texts; the elenchtic use gives refutations of falsehood; the paedeutic use urges to good works; the epanorthotic use decries vices, blasphemies, and ungodly ways of life; and the paracletic use comforts the saints.[8] Every single divine truth in Scripture or inferred from Scripture can be used in one or more of these ways.[9] A pastor could take John 3:16 and, in addition to its obvious doctrinal value on the nature of divine love and sacrifice of Jesus and its paracletic value to comfort the doubting sinner, also refute the Calvinist doctrine of limited

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[7] Walther's much briefer section on homiletics in his *Pastoraltheologie* discusses application exclusively in terms of the fivefold use. See *Amerikanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie*, 4th ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1897), 80–90.

[8] The German explanations after each word display the unfamiliarity of Hellenistic rhetorical terms to his students, Pieper, *Homiletik*, 58–60. A catalog of rhetorical figures and tropes with accompanying German paraphrases and examples from 399–406 demonstrates a similar gap between the instructor's classical education and the presumptive student's more tenuous grasp on classical literature. For the history of the uses from the late sixteenth century to Walther's time, see Benjamin T. G. Mayes, "The Useful Applications of Scripture in Lutheran Orthodoxy: An Aid to Contemporary Preaching and Exegesis," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 83 (2019): 111–135.

[9] Pieper, *Homiletik*, 58.

atonement, urge the Christian to do good works for a God who has done so much for him, and decry the ungodliness of sleeping in so that you never hear the truth of John 3:16. Some uses of a text are more farfetched than others, and some would be altogether wrong. The entire work of constructing sermons for Pieper came down to the capacity rightly to divide or apportion the word of truth according to those five uses so that the congregation would be edified with God's Word.[10]

Right division of the word of truth began with fervent prayer for God's grace and extensive meditation on the original text of Scripture. The preacher's requirement to know the original languages comes from commitment to the inspired nature of the text before him. If it were less than God's Word, translations would suffice. Since God has spoken these words, the preacher must draw what he says in the pulpit from what he reads in the study. The loop between good exegesis and good preaching recurs constantly in Pieper's description of how to preach, beginning from one's knowledge of what text one will preach on. For Pieper, the text was customarily the gospel or epistle (not the still-unavailable Old Testament reading) in the historic lectionary, but free texts or, more literally in English, texts fitted to the occasion (*Kasualtexten*) could also be chosen. Greater freedom in the choice of text is more evident in Pieper than one often finds in modern preaching resources where one is presumed to be using some lectionary. Pieper does not have significant warnings about caprice in the choice of a free text because the ongoing and general use of the historic lectionary in Lutheran churches meant free texts were an exception to a real rule.

With an established text, the preacher meditated upon it, pored over it, and then composed a theme that expressed the text's basic thought or concept. Every sermon needed a theme because it would otherwise be unmemorable for the preacher (hindering delivery) and for the hearer (hindering edification). Pieper enumerated four different thematic arrangements and ways of outlining: homiletical, analytic, synthetic, and analytico-synthetic. Pieper identified some homiletical themes and outlines as Luther's most frequent way of preaching: working through a text by sentences or paragraphs, and changing one's topic in accord with the textual specificities.[11] Pieper does not decry this method directly but censures it indirectly in his much greater praise for the thematic specificity of preaching analytically or synthetically.

All themes and preaching outlines must be *streng textgemäß*, strictly textually aligned, whatever their form. The three forms Pieper discusses throughout the book are the analytic method, the synthetic method, and the analytico-synthetic method.

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[10] Pieper, *Homiletik*, 133–135, 140–148.
[11] Pieper, *Homiletik*, 80.

An analytic theme and outline are derived directly from the text, so the epistle for the Third Sunday of Easter (Misericordias Domini), 1 Peter 2:21–25, could take the theme "The Calling of Christians to Suffer according to the Example of the Lord," a one-sentence summation of the text's subject and its method of discussing that subject, which are the two marks of an analytic theme.[12] A synthetic theme and outline are derived indirectly from the text by valid inference. That inference could be primary, handling the text's entire scope, or secondary, touching upon only one portion of the text. Primarily synthetic themes on John 4:46–54, the gospel for Trinity 21, would be "The Blessing of the Cross" or "The Growth of Faith," but a secondarily synthetic theme on Luke 18:9–14, the gospel for Trinity 11, would be "The Shame of the Repentant Sinner," since that theme touches upon only the words of Luke 18:13 indicating the tax collector's attitude in repentance, not the full comparison Jesus makes in that parable.[13] An analytico-synthetic theme and outline try to do both of those things, employing analytic directness and synthetic applicability to best advantage while expositing the entirety of the text, something Pieper does not understand as necessary in the purely analytic or synthetic methods.[14] Citing Rambach, Pieper indicates that the nearer a synthetic theme comes to handling a text according to its own logic and in its entirety, the more it becomes "analytico-synthetic."[15] This taxonomy does not function prescriptively in Pieper as if one arrangement were greatly superior to another. Synthetic sermons could be more pointed and more easily received than a very close attachment to the words of a very unfamiliar passage of Scripture, and analytic sermons do not wander so far afield topically as synthetic sermons might. The taxonomy helps the preacher see what he is doing now in his preaching and what he might in some other situation do.

The burden for Pieper is that whatever the arrangement, the sermon's theme and outline must be textual, expressing their teaching, their admonitions, and their emotions in delivery according to the text. Thus the hardest work in preaching was not the process of meditation on a text or the discovery of a theme to focus the preacher's and the hearers' attention. Rather, Pieper identified the proper division of a text as the absolutely most difficult thing in preaching because it is how one moves from exegesis to proclamation, from reading to delivery. That is why the German term *disposition*, which we have spoken of as "division" or "outline," has two senses: abstractly, the preacher's handling of the text, and concretely, the

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12 Pieper, *Homiletik*, 88–89.

13 Pieper, *Homiletik*, 89–90.

14 Pieper, *Homiletik*, 85.

15 Pieper, *Homiletik*, 85, footnote.

preaching outline he produces because of that handling.[16] Knowing how, when, and why to divide a text up—that is, the correct apportionment of Scripture for the congregation's edification—is the real art of preaching, more than rhetorical capacity or fluency in delivery.

So how can one do it? Not through the employment of a preexistent concept of how a sermon should be arranged. Justice to a particular text means that whatever one's prior thoughts on that text or related texts, one cannot enter into meditation on a passage of Scripture with a Procrustean bed already prepared, eager to chop or to stretch the passage into shape. Such prior ideas of what a text ought to say result in poor outlines that repeat themselves and nauseate the hearers, who have in fact heard all that before. One can discover proper theme and arrangement according to divisions the text itself offers (analytic) or according to divisions germane to this Scripture in connection with other portions of Scripture on the same topic (synthetic). Whatever the method, the division of the text should follow the laws of thought to be logical and memorable.[17] Thus our analytic sermon on John 3:16 on *how God has loved the world* would be divided into (1) Who loves the world? and (2) Whom does God love? Variety in synthetic sermons is obviously easier to achieve because one need not confine himself strictly to all of the specific text's internal dynamics, but Pieper is clear that if that text is conflated with other very similar texts, one has not done justice to the text. One must accent what is accented in that text, even when the sermon's theme goes beyond the text's strict confines and references many other texts alongside the preaching text.

Once the preacher has composed a theme and an outline, his delivery must have at least two elements indispensable to preaching: the exposition of Scripture and the application of Scripture. Other elements could be present: an emotional exhortation, for example, especially where high emotion is within the text. The emotions Scripture expresses and the emotions it aims to evoke in its hearers should be present in sermons on those texts,[18] but if a preacher does not exposit and apply what he has exposited, high emotion and everything else will cause froth in people's souls but no growth.

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[16] Pieper, *Homiletik*, 117.

[17] To this end, Pieper inserted in its entirety (*Homiletik*, 126–131) George Schaller's article, "Is Logic Evil in the Composition of Sermons?" *Magazin für ev.-luth. Homiletik und Pastoraltheologie* 6:377ff. For more information on the *Magazin* and the practice of preaching in the early Missouri Synod, cf. Lester Zeitler, "Preaching Christ to the Glory of God for the Salvation of the Hearer: An Analysis of the Preaching Proposed in the Magazin Für Ev.-Luth. Homiletik und Pastoraltheologie, 1877–1929" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 1965), available at https://scholar.csl.edu/thd/40.

[18] Pieper, *Homiletik*, 255–260.

Exposition is not a method of delivery for Pieper like the "expository preaching" of Calvary Chapel's Chuck Smith and his many imitators, which resembles Pieper's description of a "homiletical" method. Exposition is not a style, the latter being mostly a matter of individual capacity and custom, according to Pieper.[19] Exposition is the exact, clear, basic, and orderly explanation of the meaning of the text.[20] Exposition of the text is necessary because among the human faculties, Pieper posits the understanding as the most basic component of one's soul. The will and the emotions can be stirred, but the understanding must above all else be *taught*.[21] This accords with Walther's understanding of preaching, that its most basic purpose is to teach,[22] so that preaching and teaching are equivalent in Walther's pastoral theology and in Pieper's homiletic. The preacher is a teacher, and vice versa. He must provide scriptural proofs for what he teaches because his authority to teach derives only from Scripture.[23] Exposition teaches what the scriptural text says, so if you preach on John 3:16 but say nothing of the Father and the Son's relationship to each other (theology proper) or of the Father's plan to save the world through His Son (soteriology), you have not honored the text. Exposition builds up the church thoroughly and decisively and should be the main component of every sermon.

Application is also requisite because a text that is not applied floats free from the hearers' own lives, especially their emotions and their understanding of good works. Under application, we find once again the fivefold use that Pieper discussed in connection with meditation on Scripture so that the preacher can see again how Scripture wants to be applied. Under application is also found Pieper's only explicit discussion of law and gospel, now often the sole criterion for good preaching among Lutherans. For Pieper, law and gospel are not a sermon outline. They are discussed after the fivefold use as a way of applying the Scripture with psychological acuteness. Pieper almost never discusses the process of conversion, which Walther does

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[19] Pieper, *Homiletik*, 360–364. Pieper distinguished between general requirements of style such as clarity in delivery or good rhythm in one's sentences and paragraphs (*Homiletik*, 364–395) and specific expressions of style such as long or short clauses, an aphoristic or fulsome delivery, etc. General requirements were incumbent on anyone who speaks in public, and he therefore discussed them at length. Remarks on specific expression are briefer because they cannot be prescribed; he is pointed in denouncing anyone who *forbids* emotion in delivery as enforcing his own cold spirit upon everyone (*Homiletik*, 360).

[20] Pieper, *Homiletik*, 207. The adjectives in the above sentence serve as placeholders for Pieper's later discussions of how exposition should be conducted.

[21] Pieper, *Homiletik*, 219–220.

[22] Walther, *Amerikanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie*, 78–80; *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, ed. David W. Loy, trans. Christian C. Tiews (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 97–98.

[23] Pieper, *Homiletik*, 243.

everywhere in his lectures on law and gospel,[24] so in the *Homiletik* we find law and gospel discussed not as a means by which someone becomes a Christian but a means by which the preacher aligns his theme and outline most nearly with the hearers' needs in the course of regular congregational preaching to Christians. If one misjudges how a text will be heard by various hearers, he cannot correctly apportion correction or teaching or comfort or whatever the different hearers might need. The distinction between law and gospel is not an overarching homiletical dynamic nor the sermon outline that it sometimes is with us. It is one of the pastor's tools for aligning the text's teaching and applications with his hearers' needs. After quoting from Walther's *Law and Gospel* without specific attribution to the work, Pieper gives an example of psychologically acute preaching from Walther's theme and outline in a Good Friday sermon on 1 Corinthians 6:20:

> What does the saying, "You were bought with a price," demonstrate to people?
>
> The answer is:
>
> 1. As a word of awakening to repentance,
>
> 2. As a word full of comfort for faith, and
>
> 3. As a word of encouragement to sanctification.[25]

Walther is the exemplar here, and his teaching is also Pieper's. Walther's homiletical discussion in his pastoral theology similarly subordinates the distinction between law and gospel to the fivefold use. Walther covers how to apply Scripture according to the fivefold use[26] with accompanying remarks on proclaiming the whole counsel of God in every sermon—in other words, repentance, faith, and sanctification, plainly visible in the above outline. Within that entire counsel of God, the formula familiar to us from his *Law and Gospel* that the gospel must predominate in a preacher's sermons is found,[27] so that the distinction between law and gospel

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[24] C. F. W. Walther, *Law and Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible*, ed. C. Schaum, J. Hellwege, and T. Manteufel, trans. C. Tiews (St. Louis: Concordia, 2010), especially 93–97 on the conversion of Pharisees within the congregation, 235, 337–340, and Thesis XXII, "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if a false distinction is made between a person's being awakened and being converted; moreover, when a person's *inability* to believe is mistaken for not being *permitted* to believe."

[25] Pieper, *Homiletik*, 122–123.

[26] Walther, *Amerikanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie*, 80–90; *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, 98–109.

[27] Walther, *Amerikanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie*, 93; *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, 112. Cf. *Law and Gospel*'s Thesis XXV, "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you do not allow the Gospel to predominate in your teaching," with the equivalence of teaching being equal to preaching and general remarks on the evangelical nature

concerns the entirety of a preacher's ministry and proclamation (cf. 2 Cor 3:4–11), not specifically how he can apply the Scripture, for which the fivefold use is instead deployed. Walther does not envision pure doctrine that does not rightly distinguish between law and gospel,[28] but like Pieper, he does not discuss law and gospel when discussing the exegesis of Scripture or the outlining or delivery of a sermon. For exegesis and delivery, Pieper's homiletic expands upon the basic emphases of his teacher's insistence on the text of Scripture.

Pieper's homiletic is driven by the text, and his provision of two different discussions of hermeneutics guides the preacher who may at times be uncertain about the meaning of Scripture.[29] Pieper offers helpful examples everywhere and gives lists of hermeneutical principles, good sermon outlines, bad sermon outlines, and remarks on preaching drawn from Lutheran preachers throughout the centuries. Pieper is didactic perhaps not only for the students who listened to his lectures but also for the pastors who in the 1890s or 1910s necessitated the printing of two separate editions of the work. Perusing the Missouri Synod's *Magazin für ev.-luth. Homiletik und Pastoraltheologie*, one finds the same abundant provision of outlines, discussions of the practical difficulties of coming up with a good theme to focus the sermon, and connections between the accurate knowledge of the congregation and pointed, clear sermonizing. Pieper's work in his *Homiletik* is neither unusual nor unusually brilliant, qualities he did not seek. It is compendious and characteristic of his time and place in its concerns; its presumption of a well-meaning, orthodox, but too-busy preacher; and its presumption of certain homiletical commonplaces that are now no longer commonplace.[30]

The theoretical commonplaces and asseverations we reviewed above are joined to Pieper's later discussion of *who* will exegete, exposit, and apply the text of Scripture according to its fivefold use. That *who* is someone who must be healthy, possessing a good voice, and devoting himself above everything else in his ministry to preaching. The truism in the early Missouri Synod that the preaching was the

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of the preaching office in 2 Corinthians 3, e.g., "A New Testament preacher as such should preach nothing else but the Gospel. He is really carrying out an alien function when he preaches the Law," Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 457.

[28] Walther, *Amerikanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie*, 79; *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, 97.

[29] Pieper, *Homiletik*, 44–65, 208–222. There are other hermeneutical discussions in brief in many other places, but these are the two most extended discussions in connection with exegesis and exposition, respectively.

[30] "The idea that the fivefold use of Scripture is applicable to preaching permeates the *Magazin*," Zeitler, "Preaching Christ," 269.

chief duty of the pastoral office[31] must be known to understand what Pieper requires in preaching, as was elsewhere presumed in homiletical discussion: sermons should not be read. This is a different question from the production of a manuscript, which Pieper averred Walther always wrote out, along with Claus Harms and Pieper himself. Notably, an early debate about sermon delivery was framed in terms of a delivery originating from a manuscript or a delivery originating ex tempore,[32] but Pieper castigated the deadness of reading manuscripts in the pulpit and gave extensive recommendations for improving one's memory.[33] The option Pieper finds safest especially for young preachers is the preparation of a complete manuscript by Friday morning, so that with that work behind him, he can devote a few hours on Saturday to the *memorization of the manuscript*. One could also deliver freely from a prearranged theme and outline with or without notes, but Pieper found it best to write out a manuscript, memorize it word for word, and reread it on Sunday morning to deliver its contents in memorized form.[34]

The goal was a lively delivery of interesting, varied, and orthodox content. Pieper found the dangers of preaching without prior conceptualization far too great in their tendency for repetition and their poorly detailed application of the text. Although this was Spurgeon's method and Pieper quoted Spurgeon's homiletical lectures with frequent approval (from a German edition!), Pieper did not commend ex tempore preaching. Whether the preacher uses a manuscript or notes or not, he must beforehand conceptualize what he will say, how he will apportion the text's teachings, admonitions, and everything else, and prepare the sermon before he gets into the pulpit. Once in the pulpit, he must deliver the sermon as speaking live to other people, whether the words were written down beforehand or not.

Where Do We Go from Here?

Reinhold Pieper does not provide something altogether new in the history of Lutheran preaching. For that, Richard Caemmerer and his series of articles[35] and

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[31] Cf. Walther, *Amerikanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie*, 76, "The most important of all requirements of the office of every pastor is public preaching," translation mine. Cf. Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, 95.

[32] Martin Guenther, "Memorieren oder extemporieren?" *Magazin für ev.-luth. Homiletik und Pastoraltheologie* 6, no. 8 (Aug. 1882): 248–252; no. 9 (Sept. 1882): 283–287; no. 10 (Oct. 1882): 314–318; no. 11 (Nov. 1882): 345–350.

[33] Pieper, *Homiletik*, 421–426.

[34] Pieper, *Homiletik*, 412–416, 425.

[35] Aspersions on the third use of the law begin with Richard Caemmerer, "The Melanchthonian Blight," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 18, no. 5 (May 1947): 321–337, especially 334–335. Direct discussion of homiletics was built up successively in "Lutheran Preaching and Its Relation to the Audience," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 18, no. 12 (Dec. 1947): 881–888, prior

books[36] prior to Seminex provided something altogether new in the Missouri Synod's homiletical tradition, a fact not lost on Caemmerer himself.[37] Caemmerer's understanding of the meaning of "the word of God,"[38] heavily informed by neoorthodoxy and the homiletical theory of Wolfgang Trillhaas,[39] fundamentally reshaped American Lutheran preaching, and the fact that we may now be unaware of that is because of its tremendous success. Men who had been raised under an older method of preaching, such as Robert Schultz, were very well aware that Caemmerer was changing things greatly, specifically in the understanding of the distinction between law and gospel and how it applies to preaching.[40] Debates in application shifted from discussions of the fivefold use of Scripture to how many uses the law of God has, something about which one finds no debate in the early Missouri Synod.[41]

Pieper's significance is as a representative for and masterly synthesis of what and who came before him, not least C. F. W. Walther, who taught him to preach and was his exemplar of faithful American Lutheran preaching. Pieper's work was lost because it went untranslated. Similar to the rather recent translation of

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to his homiletical textbooks. He further elaborated on his homiletic in "Current Contributions to Christian Preaching," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 37, no. 1 (Jan. 1966): 38–47; "The New Hermeneutic and Preaching," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 37, no. 2 (Feb. 1966): 99–110; "Preaching and the Recovery of the Church," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 37, no. 3 (Mar. 1966): 146–157; and "How the Gospel Works," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 44, no. 2 (Mar. 1973): 83–88.

[36] Especially Richard Caemmerer, *Preaching to the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Mimeograph Company, 1952) and his magnum opus, *Preaching for the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959).

[37] This is most clearly chronicled in Caemmerer's autobiography, "*No Continuing City: A Memoir of Change toward Deepening and Growth in Jesus Christ,*" *Currents in Theology and Mission* (1977): 281–282.

[38] Caemmerer, "A Concordance Study of the Concept 'Word of God,'" *Concordia Theological Monthly* 22, no. 3 (Mar. 1951): 170–185.

[39] W. Trillhaas, *Evangelische Predigtlehre* (Munich: Kaiser, 1948), cited by Caemmerer as "valuable for integrating the entire process [of sermonizing] with the basic theology," *Preaching for the Church*, 297.

[40] Robert C. Schultz, "From Walther to Caemmerer: A Study in the Development of Homiletics within the Missouri Synod," *American Lutheran* 44 (July 1961): 7–10, 25. Schultz interprets Walther in a hermeneutic of discontinuity with most Missouri Synod preaching that followed him and understands Caemmerer as a rediscoverer of the relevance of law and gospel after its relative eclipse in the Missouri Synod. He makes no mention of Reinhold Pieper, much less any analysis of his work. We have conversely presented a hermeneutic of continuity between Walther and his students and conceded a great discontinuity that Schultz also observed in Caemmerer's work with what preceded him.

[41] E.g., the uncomplicated acceptance that exhortation to good works is a regular part of Christian preaching in Walther's homiletical discussion and in Pieper's *Homiletik*, as demonstrated above, and found as well in H. Spd., "Die evangelische Ermahnung in der öffentlichen Predigt," *Magazin für ev.-luth. Homiletik und Pastoraltheologie* 32, no. 7 (July 1908): 217–223; no. 8 (Aug. 1908): 250–256.

Walther's own sermons, we received the homiletical theory of the early Missouri Synod almost entirely through reading Walther's *Law and Gospel* rather than reading either their sermons or their own homiletical exemplars such as Rambach or homiletical writings such as Pieper's *Homiletik*.

What we stand to gain from a renewed reading of Reinhold Pieper is a fresh understanding of a biblically textual sermon. A textual sermon is not the imposition of predetermined dogmatic or psychological structures upon the biblical text, squeezing a certain amount of "law" or "gospel" from this or that phrase. A textual sermon proceeds from meditation on the text of Scripture and apportions its theme, outline, and applications according to that text's and concomitant biblical texts' wording. A textual sermon uses Scripture according to its own internally expressed *fivefold* use (2 Tim 3:16; Rom 15:4) and employs the distinction between law and gospel as a particularly brilliant light upon the application of God's Word to people's consciences. Law and gospel functions fruitfully within the field of sermonic application rather than swamping all other rubrics for interpreting Scripture, whether in the study or in the pulpit. Pieper is a witness from another time and place, but his witness is that Walther's preaching is consistent with Walther's understanding of law and gospel. Pieper saw no disjunction between his teacher's homiletical discussions and sermons. What we have lost, and what Pieper demonstrates and recommends, can be recovered. Our homiletical tradition is not lost so much as buried and unknown. It can be found and recovered, dusted off, and put to use.

Appendix: Reinhold Pieper's Obituary[42]

On Holy Saturday [April 3, 1920] Prof. Reinhold Pieper, for years professor and president of our theological seminary in Springfield, Ill., was unexpectedly quickly called from this life and entered into the rest of the blessed in light. He was born on March 2, 1850 in Carwitz, Pomerania, immigrated to our country in the year 1869, attended the college of the Wisconsin Synod at Watertown, Wis., and in the year 1876 passed his theological examination in our St. Louis preachers' seminary. He held pastoral positions at first in two parishes in the Wisconsin Synod: Wrightstown, Wis., from 1876 to 1878 and Manitowoc, Wis., from 1878 to 1891. Then he was called as professor to Springfield and after the soon-following death of Prof. Craemer took over the presidency of the institution. Both offices, heavily laden with work, he held for twenty-three years with great skill until 1914. Then he moved to Chatham, Ill., and served the congregation there until 1918 and the congregation

[42] *Der Lutheraner* 76, no. 8 (April 20, 1920): 138.

in nearby Riverton up to his death. A painful blow hit him, when on March 24th [1920] his spouse Emilie, nee Koehn, was torn from him by death. Since then he, who for a long time had felt the pains of age, longed for home, asked his children repeatedly to pray the Lord that he would soon ("even before Easter") be taken home. He set his house in order, went on Good Friday to the Holy Supper in Chatham, prepared on Saturday for a Confession- and Lord's Supper-Divine Service in Riverton, fell suddenly to the floor about 10 in the evening, and the doctor who was called in could establish only his immediate death. In a letter written in his last days to his longtime Springfield colleague, Prof. J. Herzer, he pointed to the beautiful passage of the mercy and forgiveness of sins of God, Micah 7:18–19, "Where is such a God, as you are? Who forgives sin and passes over the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? Who does not retain his wrath eternally, because he is merciful. He shall again have mercy, to put away our transgression and to throw all our sins into the depths of the sea"—The burial took place on April 6. In the house of mourning at Chatham, the local pastor, E. C. Wegehaupt, spoke in the German and the English languages on Job 19:25–27 and Rev. 14:13. Then the body was brought to Springfield. In the place of his many years of activity, in the auditorium of the seminary, President F. Pfotenhauer spoke of the blessing God had given to his church through the man now fallen asleep, District President W. Heyne of the divine grace in which he [R. Pieper] shared, Prof. R. Biedermann in the English language of the rule and guide to which he always adhered in his work and of the goal that was at all times before his eyes. At the graveside in Springfield President Heyne officiated. The man now fallen asleep left behind eight children, three of whom had gone before him into eternity, three sons and five daughters. One of his sons is in the preaching office, and two sons-in-law. — "Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord, from now on. 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'because they rest from their labor, for their works follow after them.'"

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On the Sufficiency and Clarity of Scripture

Korey D. Maas

It remains impossible to spend much time in Lutheran circles without hearing invocations of Scripture's sufficiency and, very much related, its clarity. Each is often encompassed in the phrase "Scripture alone," which is of course one of the famous *solas* that would become a slogan of the Reformation. Like most oft-repeated slogans, it has even become something of a cliché. To say so need not be to disparage, however; clichés, after all, only become clichés because they concisely and helpfully express a recognized truth. But precisely because they are so concise, it is not always possible for slogans or clichés to express the relevant truth clearly or fully. More problematic, as George Orwell emphasizes in his famous essay on "Politics and the English Language,"[1] clichés very easily become substitutes for actual thought, and so discourage or prevent clear thinking. Their ready use can prevent one from seriously thinking about and thinking through the original ideas they were meant to convey. If and when this is the case, misunderstanding inevitably arises. The kernel of truth expressed in a concise formula can be mistaken for the whole truth. Even those invoking the slogan might begin to forget what the whole truth is, why it is true, and why it was articulated and defended in the first place.

Such forgetfulness is of course problematic for a whole host of reasons, not the least of which is that the attendant misunderstandings might make it especially easy for Lutherans to have their faith shaken if and when they encounter some fairly standard objections. Some of the more common objections to the Lutheran profession of Scripture's sufficiency and clarity will be addressed below, but it is worth noting at the outset that many of them are indeed predicated upon what are quite obviously caricatures of the Lutheran confession. Or, at least, their nature as caricatures would be obvious if we—clergy and laity alike—better remembered and understood the truths intended to be conveyed by concise references to Scripture's sufficiency or clarity. By way of attempting to recover this understanding, then, it will be worth asking some relatively straightforward questions of each doctrine. The first is simple: "What does this mean?" What, exactly, is meant by the Lutheran claim that Scripture is sufficient, or that it is clear? Addressing that question will then allow clarification with respect to a second: "What does this not mean?" What

[1] George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language," in George Orwell, *A Collection of Essays* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1981), 156–171.

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mischaracterizations of these teachings should one be wary of accepting or (even unintentionally) promoting? Beyond these basic definitional questions, it will be further helpful to address some of the implications suggested by their answers. Namely: "What does the Lutheran confession intentionally and necessarily exclude, or prevent us from saying and believing?" and "What does it not necessarily exclude?" In light of the answers to these questions, then, brief attention can be given to some of the more popular objections to these fundamental Lutheran doctrines of Scripture.

The Sufficiency of Scripture

Because the Lutheran confession of Scripture's sufficiency is so frequently summarized with the phrase *sola scriptura*, an obvious point deserves to be made even more obvious. Namely, the phrase is precisely that: a phrase. Because it is not a complete sentence, it does not express a complete thought; it does not provide a coherent propositional statement to which one might actually say, "yes, that is correct," or "no, that is incorrect." This perhaps becomes clearer if, rather than "Scripture alone," one uses the equally legitimate translation, "only Scripture." The slogan can be repeated as often and as loudly as one likes, but it invites only one logical response. Only Scripture . . . well, what, exactly?

What Does This Mean?

This is the question the Smalcald Articles answer when, for example, Luther writes that "the Word of God—and no one else, not even an angel—should establish articles of faith" (SA II II 15),[2] and when the Formula of Concord more fully states, "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 Testament alone" (FC Ep Rule and Norm 1).[3] In short, the Lutheran confession of *sola scriptura* is that only Scripture can "establish articles of faith," and that only Scripture is the standard by which such articles are to be judged. Not only is Scripture necessary for defining and judging doctrine, but Scripture, all by itself, is sufficient for these tasks.

Though both of these claims were debated in the sixteenth century—and remain contested today—it was the latter that received the greater attention. No contemporary Catholic doubted or denied that Scripture was an inspired revelation, and so an important source for establishing and judging doctrine. The disputed

[2] 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), 304.

[3] Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 486.

question, however, was whether Scripture by itself was a sufficient source for doing so, or whether additional, and equally authoritative, sources such as tradition or the church's magisterium might be necessary in addition to Scripture. Similarly, no sixteenth-century Catholic doubted or denied that Scripture was an infallible source of doctrinal authority. But again, the disputed question was whether Scripture is the only infallible authority by which doctrine might be established or judged, or whether other authorities, such as popes and councils, might also and equally be deemed infallible.

It is something like this latter question that the Formula addresses when it declares that "other symbols" and "other writings" are "not judges, as is Holy Scripture, but they are only witnesses and explanations of the faith" (FC Ep Rule and Norm 8).[4] The fact that "other symbols" and "writings" can be and indeed are cited in the Formula indicates that its authors did recognize them to be authorities in some sense. When the authors appeal to early church fathers, to the Augsburg Confession, or even to Luther's own writings, what they are quite clearly doing is making an appeal to authority. Such authorities are understood to be important witnesses to true doctrine. But because one might speak truthfully even if not possessing infallibility, such witnesses cannot be ultimate judges of doctrine, "as is Holy Scripture." It is because only Scripture is recognized as having infallible authority that Scripture alone must establish and judge articles of faith.

Finally, what is already implicit in the Formula is made further explicit by Martin Chemnitz, one of its authors, when he writes in his *Enchiridion* that Scripture contains "the sum of the whole heavenly doctrine, as much as is necessary for the church and suffices for the faith by which believers obtain life eternal."[5] Though Scripture may not contain within its pages all that is true, it preserves and proclaims those truths that are both necessary and sufficient for salvation. Though perhaps an obvious point, it is especially important for avoiding misunderstanding or caricature. The properties and effects of certain chemical compounds, for example, are truths that can be discerned, and to be licensed as a pharmacist one might even be required to assent to those truths. But because they are not revealed in Scripture, their acknowledgment is not necessary for salvation; assent to them cannot be required of Christians as Christians. Or, to use an example a bit closer to home, a congregation's use of synodically approved worship materials might legitimately be deemed a necessary requirement of membership in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. But since Scripture itself speaks neither of hymnals nor

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[4] Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 487.

[5] Martin Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion*, trans. Luther Poellot (St. Louis: Concordia, 1981), 41.

of the Missouri Synod, one is not at liberty to say the use of certain hymnals is a requirement of salvation. In view of the above, then, what, precisely, do Lutherans mean by their confession of *sola scriptura*? Simply this: Scripture alone, being the infallible revelation of God, is both necessary and sufficient for establishing and judging the doctrines necessary for salvation.

What Does This Not Mean?

Articulating *sola scriptura* in this fuller and more precise manner not only encapsulates the various emphases of the Lutheran Confessions; it also thereby helps to clarify what the phrase does not and cannot mean when used by Lutherans. In so doing, it therefore reveals the erroneous assumptions of critics, such as the popular Catholic apologist Karl Keating, who does battle with a straw man when he describes the doctrine as a belief that "anything extraneous to the Bible is simply wrong or hinders rather than helps one toward salvation."[6] Keating is surely aware that the Bible nowhere explains that, at sea level, water comes to a boil at 100 degrees Celsius. But equally surely he has never met a Lutheran who says this non-biblical datum is therefore "simply wrong." Similarly, one very much doubts there are many Lutherans who have felt their salvation hindered by the process of making spaghetti or boiling an egg.

Unfortunately, though, it is not simply Catholic polemicists who mischaracterize this doctrine, intentionally or otherwise. Even an astute Protestant academic like Alec Ryrie can give the wrong impression when writing that "Protestantism was in the truest sense a fundamentalist movement; it only accepted a single authority, Holy Scripture."[7] It is instead the case that, while acknowledging many authorities (from the Council and Creed of Nicaea, through the Book of Concord, and down to the local parish pastor), Lutherans, at least, accept only a single authority as infallible, and so capable of establishing those doctrines necessary to salvation. A final example, from another academic, manages to combine the errors of both Keating and Ryrie when presuming *sola scriptura* to mean that non-scriptural writing "lacks all authority or truthfulness."[8] No, a second grade math book, despite lacking the infallibility of divine inspiration, does not lack all

[6] Karl Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism: The Attack on "Romanism" by "Bible Christians"* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), 121.

[7] Alec Ryrie, "The Problem of Legitimacy and Precedent in English Protestantism, 1539–47," in *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, vol. 1, The Medieval Inheritance, ed. Bruce Gordon (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), 78.

[8] Thomas Betteridge, *Tudor Histories of the English Reformations, 1530–83* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 97.

truthfulness when it teaches that 2 + 2 = 4. Nor do similarly non-biblical traffic laws lack all authority when they prohibit drag racing in residential neighborhoods.

What Does This Exclude?

If the confession of *sola scriptura* was never meant to prohibit belief in extrabiblical truths or to reject any and all authorities other than Scripture, what exactly was it intended to safeguard against? The answer to this question is not difficult to discern in light of the previous clarification of the phrase as a concise manner of professing that, since only Scripture is infallible, only Scripture is to establish and judge Christian doctrine. Since the confession was initially articulated this way in controversy with Rome, however, its implications might become even clearer in view of what Rome taught—and continues to teach—on this point.

Again, since no medieval theologian doubted or denied that Scripture was the inspired and infallible word of God, and therefore an important source for establishing and judging doctrine, the question that came into dispute was whether Scripture is the only inspired and infallible word of God, and so whether it is the entirely sufficient source for establishing and judging doctrine. Whatever freedom pre-Reformation Christians might have had to debate these questions, it was in part the reformers' own affirmative answer that finally informed Rome's official answer in the negative. The Council of Trent, for example, though emphasizing the veneration due Holy Scripture on account of its divine inspiration, does not allow that Scripture is the only source of divine revelation. It therefore speaks of the same veneration being due also to "the traditions, whether they relate to faith or to morals, as having been dictated either orally by Christ or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church in unbroken succession."[9]

Trent's manner of speaking is illustrative of what historians and theologians have referred to as the "two-source" theory of revelation, the proposal that God has revealed and preserved his word in two forms: written Scripture and unwritten tradition. The late Heiko Oberman would bluntly offer that this was a theory formulated because Rome came to recognize that some of her teachings "could not be found explicitly or implicitly in Holy Scripture."[10] That is, rather than this teaching being itself part of an "unbroken" tradition, it was an *ad hoc* theory developed to avoid the otherwise undesirable implications of requiring the faithful

[9] Council of Trent, "Decree concerning the Canonical Scriptures," in *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, trans. H. J. Schroeder, OP (Rockford: Tan, 1978), 17.

[10] Heiko A. Oberman, "*Quo Vadis, Petre*? Tradition from Irenaeus to Humani Generis," in Heiko A. Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation: Essays in Late Medieval and Early Reformation Thought* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 294.

to believe extrabiblical doctrines. Whatever its original impetus or motivation, what is clear is that Rome continues to embrace the theory even into the present. *Dei Verbum*, the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, ratified and promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1965, is emphatic on the point: "It is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything that has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence." Further, and more explicitly, Scripture is to be held "together with sacred tradition, as the supreme rule of faith."[11]

Clearly, then, Rome insists even today that Scripture is not sufficient. If Trent and Vatican II are understood to claim that some binding doctrines were communicated "orally by Christ or by the Holy Ghost" and yet not recorded in Scripture, it further follows that Rome denies, at least in some cases, that scriptural revelation is even necessary for defining doctrine. Precisely such claims are what the Lutheran confession of *sola scriptura* originally and most specifically intended to exclude. And the implications of not excluding tradition as an authority by which doctrines might be established can briefly be illustrated with reference to Rome's formal definition of the bodily assumption of Mary, promulgated only as recently as 1950. In that year, Pope Pius XII officially proclaimed it to be a "divinely revealed dogma." Note first the explicit claim that, despite nowhere being recorded in Scripture, the ostensibly traditional teaching of the assumption is to be regarded as a divine revelation. This being the case, therefore, it is not merely entertained as a possible historical fact, or even encouraged as a pious opinion, but defined as a conscience-binding article of faith, "dogma." Finally, since the assumption is so defined, it can further be decreed that any who doubt or deny it have "fallen away completely" from the faith.[12]

A conscientious Lutheran must of course find this all very problematic. But the precise reason a Lutheran deems it problematic deserves emphasis. It is certainly not problematic to believe God capable of assuming someone into heaven, body and soul, before the final judgment. In fact, not only will a Lutheran acknowledge that he could do so; any sincere Christian must confess that God has in fact done so, as with the prophet Elijah (2 Kgs 2:11). Nor is it necessarily problematic to believe that God did so—or at least might have done so—with Mary herself. If the Lord had some good reason for already assuming Elijah to his side, there is no *prima facie* reason to insist he could not have had a good reason to do the same with Mary, even if he did

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[11] Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, 2.9 and 6.21, in Heinrich Denzinger and Peter Hünermann, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 43rd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2012), 919, 927.

[12] Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, in Denzinger and Hünermann, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 809.

not consider it necessary to reveal his doing so in the Scriptures. But that, of course, is the rub; he did not tell us he did so in the Scriptures. The fundamental problem with the doctrine of the assumption, then, is not simply that it permits one to believe something not found in Scripture, but that it requires one to believe it. More specifically, it requires one to believe it as necessary to salvation; to doubt or deny it, says Rome, is to incur damnation. This is precisely what the Lutheran confession of *sola scriptura* intends to prohibit or exclude—making extrabiblical beliefs conscience-binding articles of faith, necessary for salvation.

What Does This Not Exclude?

In light of the above, then, it also becomes clearer what need not be excluded by the confession that Scripture, being infallible, is both necessary and sufficient for establishing and judging those doctrines necessary to salvation. Such a confession does not exclude, for example, the acknowledgment and use of extrabiblical authorities, such as creeds and confessions, pastors and parents—understanding, of course, that such authorities, not being infallible, cannot be ultimate norms of doctrine. It does not exclude respect for and use of extrabiblical customs or traditions, such as the church calendar, liturgy, or vestments—understanding that such are not, strictly speaking, "necessary for the church" or absolutely necessary to "the faith by which believers obtain life eternal" (Cf. Ap XXIV). It does not prohibit articulations of biblical teaching by use of extrabiblical vocabulary, such as the terms *Trinity* or *homoousios*—understanding that such articulations, like the phrase *sola scriptura* itself, simply serve as concise expressions of fuller doctrines that are found in Scripture. Nor need it prevent the entertainment or embrace of "pious opinions" that, while not expressed in Scripture, do not contradict Scripture—understanding that, since such opinions are not clearly expressed in Scripture, they may not be made "articles of faith," or deemed necessary for salvation.

Objections Considered

Better understanding what the Lutheran confession of *sola scriptura* means and does not mean, what it excludes and does not exclude, makes clearer how and why commonly heard objections to the doctrine lose their force. Space does not permit treating all of these, or any of them in detail; but a few might be addressed at least briefly by way of example. One of the more clever of these is the claim that "Scripture alone" cannot be found in Scripture alone, and so is inherently self-contradictory. This, though, is (as the British say) too clever by half once it is acknowledged that the phrase "Scripture alone" is merely meant (like the term *Trinity*) to encapsulate in concise form a fuller teaching that is found in Scripture. So, for example, Paul reminds Timothy that "from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:15; see also vv. 16–17). [13] Since he mentions nothing in addition to the Scriptures being necessary for this purpose, he seems clearly to think they are sufficient for this purpose. It is Paul who likewise exhorts his readers "not to go beyond what is written" (1 Cor 4:6). And it was going "beyond what is written" for which even Jesus himself rebuked the traditionalism of the Pharisees, who were "teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:7). Such passages testify to the central tenet of *sola scriptura*: that Scripture alone is necessary and sufficient for establishing those doctrines which are themselves necessary and sufficient for salvation.

A second objection, however, counters that Scripture itself acknowledges that it does not contain all that Christ or his apostles said and did. John concludes his Gospel, for example, with the reminder that it is not exhaustive, but that "there are also many other things that Jesus did" (John 21:25). That is of course true, and John had already said the same in the previous chapter, when he wrote that "Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book." He continued, however: "But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30–31). In other words, what is written might not be exhaustive, but it remains nonetheless sufficient. Thus, already in his *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Martin Chemnitz acknowledged that "it is clear that though not everything . . . was written, nevertheless, whatever of the doctrine and miracles of Christ is necessary and sufficient for true faith and eternal life has been written."[14] It is worth simply adding in passing that, if Scripture is deemed insufficient merely because it is not exhaustive, then oral tradition quite obviously becomes equally problematic, since no church claims to have preserved even in unwritten form everything Jesus said or did.

A further objection, however, perhaps carries a bit more weight, and deserves greater attention. This is the claim that Scripture actually requires the faithful to hold extrabiblical teachings. Paul is invoked here, when he tells his audience to "stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter" (2 Thess 2:15). The first thing that might be said here

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[13] 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.

[14] Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, vol. 1, trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia, 1971), 93.

is that there is no immediately obvious reason to assume that Paul taught something by his "spoken word" that he had not also taught in writing. More importantly, though, there is a specific context in which Paul speaks this way. The opening verses of his epistle's second chapter make clear that someone was teaching the Thessalonians contrary to what Paul had taught them. More specifically, Paul mentions that this teaching occurred in "a letter seeming to be from us" (2 Thess 2:2). That is to say, someone was teaching error, but claiming to teach with apostolic authority. This in itself serves as a warning that a simple claim of apostolic tradition or authority is no guarantee of the fact. The New Testament elsewhere reports similarly erroneous teachings circulating with at least implied claims of apostolicity (e.g., John 21:23; Acts 15:24), and the congregations at Corinth and Galatia amply demonstrate that even those founded by the apostles themselves were not immune to error. In each of these cases, though, actual apostles remained alive and able not only to correct the errors mentioned, but also to confirm that certain teachings claiming their authority actually had no such thing. With the death of the last apostle, however, it would be presumptuous—and indeed dangerous—to claim with dogmatic confidence that "the apostles taught X," unless one can point to that teaching in their actual writings.

What the objections thus far share in common is that, despite their attempts to refute the doctrine of Scripture alone, those attempts appeal only to Scripture. They are tentatively willing to concede the point for the sake of attempting to show why it is ultimately untenable. One final objection is different, moving from the field of Scripture onto the ground of tradition itself. This objection is simply that *sola scriptura* is not part of the church's tradition, but is instead the novel invention of the sixteenth-century reformers. Here, though again simply for the sake of argument, the Lutheran might also provisionally concede the premise—namely, that tradition might authoritatively determine a matter—for the purpose of demonstrating that the conclusion drawn from that premise is itself untenable. One might appeal to the patristic tradition, and the example of Cyril of Jerusalem, who insisted that "concerning the divine and holy mysteries of the Faith, not even a casual statement must be delivered without the Holy Scriptures."[15] Athanasius similarly confessed that "the sacred and inspired Scriptures are sufficient to declare the truth,"[16] and so criticized those who "run about with the pretext that they have

[15] Cyril of Jerusalem, "Catechetical Lectures," 4.17, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, 14 vols., ed.* Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952–1957), vol. 7:23. Hereafter *NPNF²*.

[16] Athanasius of Alexandria, "Against the Heathen," 1.3, in *NPNF²* 4:4.

demanded Councils for the faith's sake; for divine Scripture is sufficient."[17] Augustine likewise professed that "among the things that are plainly laid down in Scripture are to be found all matters that concern faith."[18] Examples could be multiplied.

Earlier than any of these, though, and even more revealing, is Irenaeus's teaching against the Gnostic claim that Scripture was insufficient. This was the case, Gnostics proposed, because, in addition to Scripture, Jesus had given his original disciples further teachings that had not been committed to writing, but which had been transmitted via oral tradition. Irenaeus explicitly rebuked the doctrine of the Gnostics because they "gather their views from other sources than the Scriptures."[19] In view of the debates inaugurated with the Reformation, the irony here is difficult to miss. The earliest heresy with which the church had to contend was predicated on the idea that Scripture is insufficient, and that salvation required the embrace of doctrines not revealed in Scripture, but which were ostensibly preserved in unwritten tradition. Equally as significant as the patristic testimony, however, is its endorsement even by esteemed medieval theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, who similarly insisted, "We believe the successors of the apostles only in so far as they tell us those things which the apostles and prophets have left in their writings."[20] Though he certainly did not dismiss extrabiblical authorities such as councils, church fathers, and philosophers, he nevertheless explained that "sacred doctrine makes use of these authorities as extrinsic and probable arguments; but properly uses the authority of the canonical Scriptures as a necessary demonstration." In support of this position, he cites Augustine's conclusion that "only those books of Scripture which are called canonical have I learned to hold in such honor as to believe their authors have not erred in any way in writing them."[21] If patristic and medieval theologians alike could testify to Scripture's necessity and sufficiency, and ground those claims in Scripture's unique infallibility, any objection that the Lutheran confession of the same is a sixteenth-century novelty clearly falls flat. Indeed, not only does Irenaeus confirm the Lutheran suspicion that the real novelty is any appeal to an authoritative unwritten tradition; Aquinas's invocation of

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[17] Athanasius of Alexandria, "De Synodis," 1.1.6, in *NPNF*[2] 4:453.

[18] Augustine of Hippo, "On Christian Doctrine," 2.9.14, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* First Series, 14 vols., ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969–1976), vol. 2:539. Hereafter *NPNF*[1].

[19] Irenaeus of Lyon, "Against Heresies," 1.8.1, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to AD 325, 10 vols.,* ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), vol. 1:326. Hereafter *ANF*.

[20] Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Truth*, Q. 14, Art. 10, repl. to 11, trans. James V. McGlynn, *Truth*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Regnery, 1953), 258.

[21] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part I, Q. 1, Art. 8, repl. to 2, in *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 2 vols, ed. Anton C. Pegis (New York: Random House, 1945), 1:14.

Augustine further suggests that, even in the thirteenth century, he understood that the "Lutheran" teaching is just the church's traditional teaching.

The Clarity of Scripture

By way of transition to the Lutheran confession of Scripture's clarity, it is worth emphasizing that, while Scripture's sufficiency and its clarity are indeed intimately related, they are also in fact distinct concepts. If for no other reason, this deserves emphasis because a number of popular objections to *sola scriptura* are, upon closer examination, not so much objections to Scripture's sufficiency as they are to its purported clarity. One often hears, for example, that Scripture alone is self-evidently untenable because the various Protestant traditions all confess *sola scriptura*, all read the same books of Scripture, and yet all reach different conclusions about the doctrines professed by Scripture. This is a potentially cogent critique of any claim that Scripture is clear in what it teaches; but it does not actually touch the confession that Scripture is the only source from which doctrine is to be drawn and by which it is to be judged. The premillennialist, for example, might be wrong to say that, according to Scripture, Christ will return to reign on earth for a thousand years before the final judgment; but his error is not that he believes this doctrine must stand or fall on the testimony of Scripture alone. He can be criticized for misreading Scripture; but he is to be commended at least for attempting to ground his doctrine in Scripture, rather than by appeal to an unwritten tradition or the simple fiat of an extrabiblical authority.

Because one of the claims earlier made with respect to the Catholic teaching of Scripture's insufficiency might itself be open to the charge of caricature, it should be clarified that some Catholic theologians do understand the distinction between Scripture's sufficiency as the source of doctrine and the question of its clarity when it comes to discerning what the doctrines of Scripture actually are. Some ecumenically minded Catholics, for example, will suggest that the distinction between Scripture and tradition discussed above is not best understood as entailing two separate sources of doctrine. Instead, they will grant that Scripture is doctrine's only source; by "tradition," then, they simply mean the church's traditional interpretation of Scripture, which interpretation—being traditional—acquires dogmatic status and so prevents alternative interpretations. The claim, in effect, is that the authoritative status granted tradition (and the magisterium) is not a rejection of *sola scriptura* per se, but a complement to it, necessitated by Scripture's lack of clarity; tradition and the magisterium only repeat what is in Scripture, but only tradition and the magisterium can clarify what it is that Scripture actually says.

In some instances, to be sure, this is a plausible explanation. In others, however, it quite clearly is not. Nor does it seem to be a position officially endorsed by the magisterium itself.[22]

The point, nonetheless, is that if even some critics of Lutheran doctrine rightly recognize the distinction between Scripture's necessity and sufficiency as the source of doctrine, and Scripture's clarity in its expression of doctrine, Lutherans especially should not allow the two to be confused or conflated. Having made the point, however, the two are, again, very much related. If the purpose of God's self-revelation of his person, work, and will in Scripture is—as Christ and the apostles regularly reiterate (e.g., John 5:39; 20:31; 2 Tim 3:15)—to effect salvation, it is eminently reasonable to assume that he actually wants readers to understand that revelation, and so it is further reasonable to assume that he has made it clear enough to do so.

What Does This Mean?

But what exactly do Lutherans mean when they speak of Scripture's clarity? The Formula answers, first, by concisely restating Scripture's sufficiency: "In his Word [God] has revealed as much as is necessary for us to know in this life." Not everything has been revealed, and not even as much as the Christian might want to know, but that which is necessary for the accomplishment of its proclaimed purpose. The Formula continues, then: "In this case we have the clear, certain testimonies in the Scripture, which we should simply believe" (FC SD VIII 53).[23] Note well that the claim here is not that "everything is clear in the Scriptures," but that what is "necessary" in "this case" is clear and certain. If such phrasing might appear to leave open the possibility of obscurity in "other cases," Luther himself had made such a qualification even more explicitly. Already in 1521, four years before the famous dispute with Erasmus in which he made some of his boldest claims about Scripture's perspicuity, Luther was insisting that the Scriptures are "clear enough in respect to what is necessary for salvation." Not on all points, perhaps, but on those necessary for salvation. And even then, perhaps not crystal clear or clear in every respect, but "clear enough." Luther then concludes by granting that the Scriptures do in fact

[22] E.g., Cardinal Gerhard Müller, former Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, has recently written that "for 2,000 years, the Catholic Church has infallibly taught that Holy Scripture and Apostolic Tradition are the only *sources* of Revelation" (emphasis added). See "Full Text of Cardinal Müller's Analysis on the Working Document of the Amazon Synod," National Catholic Register, July 16, 2019, https://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/full-text-of-cardinal-muellers-analysis-on-the-working-document-of-the-amaz.

[23] Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 626.

remain, at least in some respects, or in some places, "obscure enough for inquiring minds."[24]

In light of the straw-man arguments being forwarded already in the immediate wake of the Reformation, it is this relatively modest definition of scriptural clarity that will constantly and consistently be reiterated, even by subsequent generations of Lutheran dogmaticians. Johann Gerhard is entirely representative when he writes, "Our intent is merely this: The dogmas that everyone must know for salvation are presented in the Scriptures so clearly and perspicuously that one need not abandon the Scriptures and run for help to traditions, to the judgment of the Roman Church, to the statements of the fathers, to the decrees of the councils, etc."[25] What Gerhard offers is, in effect, a corollary to Scripture's sufficiency. Just as the doctrines revealed in Scripture alone are necessary and sufficient for salvation, so also are the doctrines necessary and sufficient for salvation clearly revealed there. He reduces this claim to a concise informal syllogism: "Knowledge of Christ and faith in Him are sufficient for our salvation. But now, the knowledge of Christ and faith in Him are taught clearly in Scripture. Therefore those things that one must know for his salvation are set forth in Scripture clearly."[26]

By way of further supporting the "logic" of Scripture's clarity, Gerhard both highlights and expands upon a point noted above. "God, who is the principal author of Holy Scripture, was able and wanted to speak clearly to us in it. Therefore Scripture is clear." It would of course be impious to think God incapable of speaking clearly. But given the purpose for which God speaks, it would be no less impious to believe he did not want to speak clearly. "That He *wanted* to speak clearly is revealed from the end for which He recorded Scripture, that He wanted holy men to write

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[24] Martin Luther, *Against Latomus (1521)*: vol. 32, p. 217 in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia, 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, 2009–), hereafter AE. Luther's was a point that had long been commonplace. Already in the sixth century, Gregory I had emphasized that Scripture both "nurses the simple-minded" and "exercises the understanding of the wise" by likening it to a river, "which is both shallow and deep, wherein both the lamb may find a footing, and the elephant float at large." Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, vol. 1, ed. Charles Marriott (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1844), 9. Gregory's imagery, and variations on it, were frequently invoked in subsequent centuries. See, e.g., Thomas More, *A dyaloge of syr Thomas More*, in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol. 6/1, ed. C. H. Miller et al. (New Haven: Yale, 1963–1997), 152, who describes Scripture as "'so mervaylously tempered / that a mouse may wade therin / & an olyphaunt be drowned therin."

[25] Johann Gerhard, *On the Nature of Theology and on Scripture*, Theological Commonplaces: Exegesis I, trans. Richard J. Dinda, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009), 388.

[26] Gerhard, *On the Nature of Theology and on Scripture*, 376.

the revelation of His will for the sake of our instruction to salvation."[27] Thus, the Lutheran confession of Scripture's clarity might concisely be explained to mean "merely" that whatsoever is necessary for salvation is revealed with sufficient clarity in the pages of Scripture itself. Given this modest definition, it becomes more evident what this confession does not and has never meant for Lutherans.

What Does This Not Mean?

First, as Luther himself already acknowledged, it does not mean that everything in Scripture is clear; portions remain "obscure enough for inquiring minds." Luther reiterated this point and added two more in his dialogue with Erasmus. "The subject matter of the Scriptures, therefore, is all quite accessible, even though some texts are still obscure owing to our ignorance of their terms," he wrote; however, "if the words are obscure in one place, yet they are plain in another."[28] With respect to the first of these points, it is entirely possible that Scripture itself is clear, though it appears less than clear to individual readers, "owing to our ignorance." By way of analogy, though the sun might be shining brightly and clearly, this might not be at all evident to someone who happens to be cleaning a windowless basement at the time. Similarly, even a written text as simple as "Spot is a dog," though its meaning is blindingly obvious to readers of English, will remain entirely obscure to a toddler not yet able to read or to an individual with no facility in the English language, those who remain in a particular sense "ignorant." With more explicit reference to the text of Scripture itself, when the Renaissance humanists revived a knowledge of the Greek language, and also of the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, it quickly became evident that some of what had originally been clear in those manuscripts was subsequently obscured in the Latin translation used throughout the Middle Ages. An example well known to Lutherans, because it appears right at the beginning of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses, is Jesus' exhortation to "repent" in Matthew 4:17. That is what Matthew's Greek says: repent; have a change of heart. But in Latin, this was subsequently rendered not as "repent," but as "do penance," a very different idea. The clear teaching of the original became obscured in translation. Or, put differently and perhaps better, while the teaching of Scripture remained clear in itself, it was only clearly perceived by those with the ability to read Scripture in its original language. Concisely, then, in addition to acknowledging that not *everything* is clear in Scripture, Luther and the Lutheran tradition also acknowledge that portions of Scripture will not necessarily be clear to *everybody*.

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[27] Gerhard, *On the Nature of Theology and on Scripture*, 374.

[28] Luther, *Bondage of the Will* (1525), AE 33:26.

The second and related point Luther makes—"if the words are obscure in one place, yet they are plain in another"—might be summed up by saying that not everything in Scripture will be *immediately* clear. One might need to read a bit more widely to contextualize the particular vocabulary, themes, and concepts of any passage of Scripture. This is, of course, the case when interpreting any text or document, and to say that Scripture is perspicuous is not to grant it an exception to the rules common to all literature. This is the point made in the Apology, when Melanchthon notes, "It is necessary to consider passages in their context, because according to the common rule it is improper in an argument to judge or reply to a single passage without taking the whole law into account. When passages are considered in their own context, they often yield their own interpretation" (Ap IV 280).[29] Gerhard effectively encapsulates all of the above when he writes, "We do not deny that some passages of Holy Scripture are difficult and obscure; we add, however, that these are given light from other clear passages or an exact knowledge of them is not absolutely necessary for salvation."[30] Similarly, he repeats, "The question is not whether some things in Scripture are said rather obscurely and are rather difficult to understand, but whether the dogmas of faith, the knowledge of which is necessary to all for their salvation, have been set forth clearly in Scripture."[31] So, again, the Lutheran confession of Scripture's clarity does not mean that everything is clear, that what is clear will be immediately clear, or that it will be clear to everyone.

One final clarification is perhaps more obvious, but nonetheless merits emphasis. To confess that Scripture is clear does not mean that what is clearly stated, and even clearly understood, will actually be believed. As St. Paul already proclaimed, "If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing" (2 Cor 4:3). This point informs Luther's distinction between the "inner" and "outer" clarity of Scripture,[32] which roughly parallel the distinction between faith and knowledge. He provides a vivid example of this distinction in his *Confession* of 1528, where he writes that "these words, 'This is my body,' etc., are clear and lucid. . . . How otherwise could the heathen and the Jews mock us, saying that the Christians eat their God, if they did not understand this text clearly and distinctly?"[33] Such mockery proceeds from unbelief (a lack of that "inner clarity" only provided by the

[29] Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 149.

[30] Gerhard, *On the Nature of Theology and on Scripture*, 376.

[31] Gerhard, *On the Nature of Theology and on Scripture*, 373.

[32] Luther, *Bondage of the Will* (1525), AE 33:28.

[33] Luther, *Confession concerning Christ's Supper* (1528), AE 37:272.

Holy Spirit); but at the same time it would not be possible without the "outer clarity" of the biblical words themselves.

What Does This Exclude?

The above suffices to explain what is and is not meant when Lutherans confess Scripture's clarity. It remains, then, to say a few words about what this confession is intended to exclude and what it is not intended to exclude. Reference to the historical context in which it was originally articulated will again highlight certain specific claims it was meant to exclude. First, it was intended to prevent the claim that Scripture remains so obscure that the right and duty of interpreting belongs exclusively to, for example, an ecclesiastical magisterium. Relatedly, it was meant to exclude the claim that only such a magisterium, endowed with the gift of infallibility, can be presumed to interpret it correctly. Because it is well known that Luther himself often spoke in unhelpfully exaggerated and hyperbolic terms to get his points across, one might be inclined to think he was being less than accurate when he complained, for example, in his 1520 address *To the Christian Nobility*, that "when the attempt is made to reprove them [i.e., Rome and her theologians] with the Scriptures, they raise the objection that only the pope may interpret the Scriptures."[34] In this particular instance, however, Luther was not greatly exaggerating.

Even into the second half of the sixteenth century, for example, the theology faculty of the University of Cologne could condemn the doctrine of perspicuity by arguing that not just some, but "each and every matter included in the Scriptures is covered up with such obscurities that not even the most learned could gather definite knowledge from them unless they borrowed this from another source."[35] The Catholic polemicist Johann Pistorius identified the nature of that source when he wrote that "the Church brings to Scripture a light, without which all Scripture is obscure and dark."[36] This, then, raises the question of what, exactly, is meant by "the Church." And here one need not refer back to the sixteenth century, but can look to what the Catholic Church continues to maintain. According to its catechism, "The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him."[37] In other words, even today Rome essentially concedes that Luther was

[34] Luther, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (1520), AE 44:126.

[35] *Censura . . . Theologica facultate Universitas Coloniensis*, 9, quoted in Gerhard, *On the Nature of Theology and on Scripture*, 384.

[36] Johann Pistorius, *Guide for All Seduced Christians* [*Wegweisser für alle verführte Christen*], c. 3, quoted in Gerhard, *On the Nature of Theology and on Scripture*, 384.

[37] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 100 (New York: Image, 1995), 35.

correct in understanding her position to restrict "authentic" interpretation to the papacy.

To be sure, some check on arbitrary magisterial interpretation is ostensibly maintained by insisting that no interpretation may contradict that of "tradition." Thus, Pope Paul VI with Vatican II insisted that "sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the teaching authority of the Church . . . are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others."[38] By so saying, however, Vatican II not only reiterates Rome's claim that Scripture alone is insufficient, but also implies that even if it were sufficient as a "source" of doctrine, its necessary doctrines could not be sufficiently understood without recourse to tradition and the magisterium. With respect to tradition, its authoritative status as an "authentic" interpreter of Scripture was made evident in a particularly clear but problematic way in the Profession of Faith required by Pope Pius IV and the sixteenth-century Council of Trent: "I shall never accept nor interpret them [i.e., Holy Scriptures] otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers."[39]

The problem here, quite simply, is that there is no such thing as the "unanimous consent" of the fathers, and this is the case even with respect to claims about the ostensibly authoritative magisterium of which the pope is presumed to be the infallible head. Origen of Alexandria, for example, denied that Peter or the Petrine office is the "rock" of Matthew 16, on which Christ promised to build his church. Instead, he says that "a rock is every disciple of Christ."[40] Theodore of Mopsuestia concludes, "This is not the property of Peter alone. . . . Having said that his confession is a rock, he stated that upon this rock I will build my church."[41] Augustine similarly confessed that "Christ, you see, built his Church not on a man but on Peter's confession."[42] Indeed, as even the prominent twentieth-century Roman Catholic scholar Yves Congar acknowledges of Matthew 16: "Except at Rome, this passage was not applied by the Fathers to the papal primacy,"[43] never

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[38] Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, 2.10, in Denzinger and Hünermann, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 922.

[39] Council of Trent, *Iniunctum nobis*, in Denzinger and Hünermann, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 436.

[40] Origen of Alexandria, "*Commentary on Matthew*," 12.10, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 9, ed. Allan Menzies (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896), 456.

[41] Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Fragment 92*, in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament Ib, Matthew 14–28*, ed. Manlio Simonetti (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 45.

[42] Augustine of Hippo, *Sermon* 229 P.1, in *The Works of Saint Augustine, Sermons, vol. 3/6, ed.* John Rotelle (New Rochelle: New City Press, 1993), 327.

[43] Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay* (London: Burns & Oates, 1966), 398.

mind to papal infallibility. For present purposes, it is not especially urgent to determine whose interpretation of Matthew 16 is the best interpretation. It needs merely to be observed that, unless one wants to deny that Origen, Theodore, Augustine, and many others are fathers of the church, one cannot say that there is a "unanimous consensus" of the fathers on this question. Therefore, if Trent is to be taken seriously when it forbids biblical interpretations other than those with unanimous patristic consent, Rome effectively forbids its own interpretation of Matthew 16 as establishing the primacy and infallibility of the papacy.[44]

What Does This Not Exclude?

While the Lutheran confession of Scripture's clarity excludes granting tradition or a magisterium any ultimate or exclusive interpretive authority, it does not exclude—as previously noted—a respect for and use of tradition as a kind of authority. Nor does it exclude recognizing that the successors of the apostles (which Lutherans rightly understand to be all pastors, not only popes and bishops) are in a certain sense authoritative—if not exclusively or infallibly so—interpreters of Scripture. It is to them that the authority of public proclamation is granted, and all proclamation inevitably involves interpretation. Gerhard, for example, explains that "when we assert that Scripture is perspicuous, we wish to exclude neither the internal illumination of the Holy Spirit nor the external work of the ecclesiastical ministry in interpreting Scripture."[45] The profession of Scripture's clarity similarly does not preclude respecting and welcoming the interpretive insights passed down from forefathers in the faith. The wheel need not be reinvented with every generation, and so, as Chemnitz remarked, "We also gratefully and reverently use the labors of the fathers who by their commentaries have profitably clarified many passages of the Scripture." Indeed, he adds, "We confess that we are greatly

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[44] It also deserves noting that appeals to patristic consensus ring especially hollow in light of the manner in which real consensus is often blithely dismissed. E.g., despite the unwavering patristic testimony to Matthew's authorship of the first Gospel, no less a body than the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops can bluntly call that consensus "untenable." See "The Gospel according to Matthew," USCCB, http://www.usccb.org/bible/matthew/0. Conversely, the patristic consensus on the above-discussed assumption of Mary is one of complete silence. As even the traditionalist Ludwig Ott acknowledges in his standard reference work, "the idea of the bodily assumption of Mary is first expressed in certain *Transitus narratives* of the fifth and sixth centuries," which narratives are both "apocryphal" and "legendary." "The first Church author to speak of the bodily ascension of Mary, in association with an apocryphal *Transitus B.M.V.*, is St. Gregory of Tours (†594)." Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Oil City: Baronius Press, 2018), 226–227.

[45] Gerhard, *On the Nature of Theology and on Scripture*, 388.

confirmed by the testimonies of the ancient church in the true and sound understanding of the Scripture."[46]

In summary, then, to say that Scripture is clear is simply to say that what it proclaims as necessary for salvation is sufficiently clear. It is not to say that everything is clear, immediately clear, or clear to everyone. And while it does exclude granting sole or infallible interpretive authority to either tradition or select clergy, it denigrates neither the Office of the Ministry nor the church's tradition as important factors in biblical interpretation. Understood in this historically Lutheran light, the most common objections to the confession of biblical perspicuity also lose their force.

Objections Considered

Though certain biblical passages are often cited as evidence that the Scriptures themselves acknowledge their lack of clarity, these are hardly as problematic as is frequently implied. Paul, for example, testifies that God's judgments are "unsearchable" and his ways "inscrutable" (Rom 11:33). And of course they are—unless and until he chooses to reveal them. Those he has revealed, in Scripture, are sufficient—and sufficiently clear—for our salvation. Similarly, Peter grants that even some of Paul's own writings are "hard to understand." And of course they are. Which is why Peter goes on to complain about the "ignorant and unstable," who "twist [them] to their own destruction," and to warn his readers not to be "carried away with the error of lawless people" (2 Pet 3:16–17). To call something "hard to understand," however, is not at all the same as saying (as the Cologne faculty alleged) that it is "covered up with such obscurities that not even the most learned could gather definite knowledge from" it.[47] Rather, a warning against the errors of the ignorant and unstable itself implies that stable and informed readers will be able to discern which interpretations are twisted and erroneous.

Another common objection is to imply that even Lutherans and other Protestants do not really believe in Scripture's clarity, as evidenced by their interminable production, purchase, and perusal of so many footnoted study Bibles, verse-by-verse commentaries on Scripture, and popular treatments of myriad Bible "difficulties." This is a rhetorically clever and potentially effective jibe, unless one recognizes—as one should—that there is a real and important difference between sufficient understanding and exhaustive understanding, or even fuller understanding. No sufficiently literate reader, for instance, fails to understand the

[46] Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, vol. 1:208.

[47] See p. 52 above, including note 35.

simple narrative of the parable of the prodigal son: an ungrateful and profligate child is lovingly received back into his father's house. In its broader biblical context, almost all recognize also the deeper meaning of the story, its illustration of God's own gracious and forgiving love of his sinful children. Few would dispute that this sufficiently captures the essential point of the parable. But those who have read a work such as Kenneth Bailey's *Poet and Peasant* will know some of the illuminating details of Semitic culture that further enrich one's understanding in significant but not absolutely essential ways.[48] That the father runs to greet his returning son, for example, is particularly noteworthy for a story told in a culture where running brings humiliation to an adult man. The father is not just expressing his love for his son; he humbles himself, and so pays a real price in effecting reconciliation. Though this is unquestionably noteworthy, the parable does not remain obscure to those unaware of such a detail.

Perhaps the single most common—and pointed—objection, though, is that which was noted already in the introduction to this section. Namely, the multiple contradictory interpretations of Scripture amply testify to its lack of clarity. Certainly none can deny, and all should lament, the many disagreements over Scripture's interpretation. At the same time, however, one must ask whether and how many of these interpretations actually contradict one another on the fundamental articles necessary to salvation. Do Lutherans, Calvinists, Arminians, Catholics, and Orthodox interpret Scripture in such contradictory manners that any of their interpretations compels them to reject the ecumenical creeds, for example? Of course, one should not and cannot say that doctrines other than those of the creeds are unimportant. Certainly, also, it is understood that less central doctrines might imply premises that, if pressed to their logical conclusions, would undermine more central articles of the faith. But to return to the example of the premillennialist, the Lutheran will want to say that a premillennial interpretation of the eschaton is wrong; but he does not say that the premillennialist, as such, forfeits salvation.

By way of contrast, if one were to claim, as Rome has historically done, that submission to the papacy is "absolutely necessary" for salvation,[49] then one would have to grant that not everything necessary for salvation is found clearly in Scripture. If one held, as Rome holds, that doubting or denying Mary's bodily assumption does indeed forfeit salvation, then one would have to conclude that not everything necessary to salvation is found clearly in Scripture. But such claims are not and never have been Lutheran claims. The Lutheran can and does lament the disunity of the

[48] Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

[49] Pope Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam*, in Denzinger and Hünermann, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 287.

visible church; he can and does insist that agreement in all articles of faith is necessary to establish visible unity and full communion. But this is not the same as saying that full agreement in all articles is necessary for salvation. Thus, even the honest acknowledgment that some diversity exists with respect to some interpretations of biblical teaching does not fatally undermine what Lutherans mean to express by Scripture's clarity.

Yet because Lutherans do indeed desire a full and visible unity in the faith, and so the prerequisite agreement in all articles of the faith, Catholic critics will further press this point by insisting that such desires simply cannot be fulfilled without conceding that ultimate and infallible interpretive authority resides in only one place: the Roman magisterium. The explicit argument is that since Scripture is not clear, popes and councils must clarify it for the church. Implicit in and necessary to the argument, however, is the claim that magisterial teaching, unlike Scripture, is clear. Anyone paying even the slightest attention to Roman affairs well knows, however, that this claim is hardly credible. To cite only one of the most recent and most public examples, Catholic theologians have been scrambling for two years now to explain—or explain away—what exactly Pope Francis meant when he ordered the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* revised to state that "the Church teaches, in light of the Gospel, that 'the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person.'"[50] On its face, this quite clearly appears to contradict not only Scripture, but also the two-thousand-year tradition of the church, including multiple statements of the Roman magisterium itself.[51] And some Catholic theologians frankly admit that it does, and that Francis's revision is therefore deeply problematic. Most, however, are inclined to say that Scripture, tradition, previous magisterial pronouncements, or the newly revised catechism's text—or all of these—might be interpreted in such a way as to prevent contradiction. And they offer multiple (and contradictory) theories to explain how this is to be done. Examples could be multiplied to include the disparate interpretations of what this pope or that council truly and actually meant to say about any number of topics. To suggest that Scripture's lack of clarity necessitates tradition and the magisterium is therefore not to solve the problem, but only to push it back one step. Because highly educated and credentialed Catholic theologians cannot agree on what

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[50] See the Vatican press release, "New Revision of Number 2267 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the Death Penalty," Holy See Press Office, August 2, 2018, https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2018/08/02/180802a.html.

[51] See, e.g., Edward Feser and Joseph M. Bessette, *By Man Shall His Blood Be Shed: A Catholic Defense of Capital Punishment* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2017).

tradition or the magisterium say and mean, neither of them is apparently clear either.

The final objection here noted simply echoes one of those raised against Scripture's sufficiency, namely, that the doctrine of Scripture's clarity must be dismissed as a novel invention of the sixteenth-century reformers. The response to this objection might therefore also echo that previously provided, by appealing to the patristic tradition itself. Perspicuity is implied by Justin Martyr, for example, when he says that the Scriptures "do not need to be expounded, but only listened to."[52] Anticipating Gerhard, Lactantius also asks whether God was incapable of speaking clearly, and replies, "Rather, with the greatest foresight, He wished those things which are divine to be without adornment, that all might understand the things which He Himself spoke to all."[53] Epiphanius insisted that "everything in the sacred Scripture is clear, to those who will approach God's word with pious reason,"[54] and Chrysostom similarly remarked that "all things are clear and open that are in the divine Scriptures; the necessary things are all plain."[55] Augustine, as previously noted, also declared that "among the things that are plainly laid down in Scripture are to be found all matters that concern faith,"[56] and, again, even into the High Middle Ages Aquinas could acknowledge that "the truth of faith is sufficiently explicit in the teaching of Christ and the apostles."[57] Once again, however, it is Irenaeus in contest with the Gnostic heresy who is perhaps most ironically revealing. He complains that when "they are confuted from the Scriptures, they turn around and accuse these same Scriptures, as if . . . they are ambiguous, and that the truth cannot be extracted from them by those who are ignorant of tradition."[58] Irenaeus himself, however, contends that "the entire Scriptures, the prophets, and the Gospels, can be clearly, unambiguously, and harmoniously understood by all, although all do not believe them."[59] As with Scripture's sufficiency then, so, too, with its clarity the Lutheran confession is neither more nor less than that of the church from its earliest days.

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[52] Justin Martyr, "*Dialogue with Trypho*," 55, in *ANF* 1:222.

[53] Lactantius, "*The Divine Institutes*," 6.21, in *ANF* 7:188.

[54] Epiphanius, "*The Panarion*," 76.7.7, in *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Books II and III. De Fide*, trans. Frank Williams, 2nd rev. ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 518.

[55] John Chrysostom, "*Third Homily on Thessalonians*," in *NPNF*[1] 13:388.

[56] Augustine, "*On Christian Doctrine*," 2.9.14, in *NPNF*[1] 2:539.

[57] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 1, Art. 10, repl. to 1, in *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 2:1073.

[58] Irenaeus, "*Against Heresies*," 3.2.1, in *ANF* 1:415.

[59] Irenaeus, "*Against Heresies*," 2.27.2, in *ANF* 1:398.

Conclusion

Understanding and articulating the sufficiency and clarity of Scripture as actually taught by Luther, the Lutheran Confessions, and the orthodox dogmaticians, and so recognizing their harmony with the patristic tradition and even with prominent medieval doctors, is not simply an exercise in theological pedantry. Though a clearer understanding of Lutheran theology and the Lutheran theological heritage is of course a good in itself, it serves also to safeguard against the kind of reductionism too often made possible by the simple repetition of slogans. That the regular invocation of pious clichés might allow Lutherans to misunderstand or mischaracterize their own doctrine would be lamentable enough; it is more regrettable still that such reductive misunderstandings are encouraged and then easily exploited by Lutheranism's critics. If the profession of Scripture's sufficiency really did require the affirmation that "anything extraneous to the Bible is simply wrong or hinders rather than helps one toward salvation,"[60] then Lutherans could justifiably be charged not only with the invention of a theological novelty, but with embracing an obviously untenable position. If the profession of Scripture's clarity really did require the affirmation that everything in Scripture is immediately clear to all people, the same charges could be made to stick. As made evident above, however, neither implication is entailed by the Lutheran confession. Rather, in the words of the Augsburg Confession, "there is nothing here that departs from the Scriptures or the catholic church" (AC, Conclusion of Part 1, 1).[61]

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[60] Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, 121.
[61] Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 59.

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At Home in the Body: Lutheran Identity

Peter J. Scaer

The days of Lake Wobegon are long gone. Dartball can be found here and there, though church bowling alleys are largely a thing of the past. We still like our coffee, potlucks, and sitting in the back pew. Though some of these customs are more fabrication than fact, we should be hesitant to make too much or too little of them. LWML mite boxes enhanced the church's mission and created a sisterhood. The Walther League encouraged two to become one and then multiply and fill our pews. In our own day, we have seen bobbleheads of the blessed reformer and are known to one another by T-shirts that tell us to "Live Generously." For good reason, the Lord gave Israel certain Levitical laws, that they might be a people set apart. Lutherans, too, are a peculiar people.

But while such customs can serve as identity markers, they also mask what has been lost. The ELCA offers a prime example of a husk hiding the absence of the corn. The fast-growing Lutheran Church of Tanzania has a set of customs all its own, reminding us that we can't judge a book by its cover, and that the proof is in the pudding.

What then holds American Lutheranism together and provides our identity? Perhaps a better answer would center on Luther's Small Catechism, *The Lutheran Study Bible*, and *Lutheran Service Book*. All the better that they sport the same maroon color. The Bible, the hymnal, and the catechism: these are three that testify, and these three agree. Such resources provide a firm foundation. But will even these be enough? While old hymns and confessions keep us rooted, our present age presents us with new and bewildering challenges that call on us to branch out and to bring out of our treasure what is old and what is new.

A New Paganism?

Not long ago, many of us imagined that we would be entering an invigorating post-Constantinian era. No longer taking sacred things for granted, we would embark on a bold enterprise, occupying our place in the Athenian Agora, and competing with philosophers on a level playing field of ideas. Such hopes have not materialized.

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A half dozen years ago, as part of a newly formed ecumenical group Shepherds United, a number of us held a rally for natural marriage at the Allen County Courthouse. An enthusiastic crowd gathered. That now seems a lifetime ago. The arguments for marriage received little national attention, even from those who call themselves conservative Christians. Warnings went unheeded. White flags were raised before shots were fired. Our own children and grandchildren now assume that gay marriage has always been. We have since moved on to polyamory and the very denial of male and female. Young men are victorious in women's sports, and soccer moms do not blink an eye. Surgeons drug and mutilate confused youth, and no one says a word. Talk of tolerance has turned to conformity, and the other side has claimed victory. As Mark Tushnet of Harvard Law puts it, "The culture wars are over." Referencing the defeat of Nazi Germany, Tushnet rejects calls for accommodation. "You lost, live with it."[1]

But who are our foes? Those claiming to be victors? And why are they so vindictive? Charles Taylor argues that we are living in a secular age in which there is no heaven.[2] Imagine. But a rational secularism would be open to new ideas. Christians are not threatened by flat-earthers or scientologists. In a rational world, Christians would be called odd, not evil.

In response, Steven Smith claims we are entering into an era of modern paganism. There is no need for a glorious incarnation, as the divine is present everywhere. For the environmentalists, god is in nature, recycling our sacrifice. For cosmologists, the universe is god, Neil deGrasse Tyson its high priest. Oprah Winfrey and Marianne Williamson serve as spiritual guides for those who would find the god within. Such a conception of the divine leaves the ethical life open to various interpretations. Consciences are sometimes accommodated, but only as a matter of individual choice. As Steven Smith observes, a community that declines to recognize "transcendent authority is nonetheless open to and respectful of immanently sacred values."[3] But speaking about conscience without religion is like speaking about faith without God. In a world in which the divine is everywhere and in everything, personal opinions may be allowed, but an ultimate truth claim, based on the God who judges all things, cannot be tolerated.

So also imperial Rome was home to many gods and many philosophies. It was required only that one burn incense to Caesar. The stakes were high. As Bruce Winter notes, those who did not acknowledge the genius of Caesar "would not have been able to secure provisions for their daily needs, as all goods could only be bought

[1] Mark Tushnet, "Abandoning Defensive Crouch Liberal Constitutionalism," https://balkin.blogspot.com/2016/05/abandoning-defensive-crouch-liberal.html.

[2] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 1.

[3] Steven Smith, *Pagans and Christians in the City* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), *333*.

and sold through the authorized markets in a first-century city."[4] Livelihoods, and then lives, were on the line. Though Christians pledged allegiance to Caesar's earthly rule, they claimed a still higher allegiance, declaring that if push came to shove, they would obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29), asserting one "Lord of heaven and earth" (Acts 17:24).[5] Such thinking could not help but be subversive to a social order in which the emperor's word was final.

An Existential Threat

So also today, Christians, though politically weak, pose an existential threat to the status quo. If it is true that children have a God-given right to life, then the whole societal enterprise based on free love and self-autonomy comes tumbling down. How else to explain the world's interests in confronting bakers, florists, photographers, counselors, pharmacists, professors, clerks, teachers, businessmen, doctors, nurses, and media personalities? Why are these people under fire? Is it really about access to available goods and services? Something deeper lies beneath.

Accordingly, the free exercise of religion has been squeezed into freedom of worship, and even that is not guaranteed. Recently, a candidate for president vowed to take away the tax-exempt status of any church that does not follow the state-approved gender ideology. California's Proposition 8 prohibited same-sex marriage. In what is known as a "finding of fact," Judge Vaughn Walker struck down the amendment, claiming that "religious beliefs that gay and lesbian relationships are sinful or inferior to heterosexual relationships harm gays and lesbians."[6] Two plus two equals five, and it is a crime to say, or even think, otherwise.

Whether our culture is secular or pagan makes for good academic debate. But our enemies fight with a religious fervor. Perhaps, it is as simple as Richard Neuhaus's dictum, "Where orthodoxy is optional, orthodoxy will sooner or later be proscribed."[7] Or to put it another way, the lie cannot abide the truth, any more than the darkness can tolerate the light.

When the time comes, will we be up to the challenge, Lutheran identity intact? Will we say with the blessed reformer, "Here I stand"?

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[4] Bruce Winter, *Divine Honours for the Caesars: The First Christians' Responses* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 286.

[5] Scripture translations are my own.

[6] *Perry vs. Schwarzenegger*, 704 F. Supp. 2d 921, 985 (N.D. Cal. 2010) (factual finding #77).

[7] Richard John Neuhaus, "The Unhappy Fate of Optional Orthodoxy," *First Things*, March 2009, https://www.firstthings.com/article/2009/03/the-unhappy-fate-of-optional-orthodoxy (accessed November 13, 2019).

The Lutheran Crisis Is the Christian Crisis

Ours is no parochial interest. Lutheran identity must be understood in, with, and under Christian identity. The present crisis has hit Christians of all stripes. We have been inspired by Coptic martyrs on Libyan shores. We have witnessed the courage of evangelical bakers, florists, and photographers, as well as Catholic nuns fighting off federal mandates. In such times, we do well to foster a healthy ecumenism. Together, we may gather around Polycarp, who was told to swear by the genius of Caesar or be burned at the stake. To which Polycarp replied, "I am a Christian" (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* X.1).[8]

Our lives are not yet on the line, but our livelihoods are, or may soon be, as well as our pension plans and careers. And these temptations, not quite as stark, may be more insidious. There are also real social costs to maintaining the truth of marriage, male and female. We would prefer not to be numbered among the "deplorables." Writing to the Thessalonians, Paul encourages the flock "not to be shaken by these distresses" (1 Thess 3:3). As Larry Hurtado notes, there is no indication that the Thessalonians were being dragged before magistrates, but they were experiencing the real pain of social opposition, "which may have included everything from expressions of disdain and disapproval to haranguing, ostracism, and even outright physical abuse from relatives and others in the social network of believers."[9] Once more, Christians must be willing to be ridiculed and scorned, to be called haters and bigots. Those who think such things to be easy have typically not experienced it.

We should not discount social pressure's effect on church attendance. In the last decade alone, there has been a 10 percent decline in those who self-identify as Christians, while self-identified "nones" have swelled to 26 percent. But we do not need a Pew research poll to tell us that many pews are empty. We have fewer children, and those we do have are turning away. This should come as no surprise. The culture's propaganda is powerful and pervasive, and it has affected our churches and our families. We are reaping the weeds we have sown, and the seeds we have not.

The Christian Identity Crisis and the Crisis of Human Identity

As Lutheran identity overlaps with Christian identity, so also our Christian identity must be understood in, with, and under our identity as people created in

[8] *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* as found in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings*, Third Edition, ed. and trans. J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, ed. and rev. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2007), 317.

[9] Larry Hurtado, *Why on Earth Did Anyone Become a Christian in the First Three Centuries?* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2016), 62.

God's image. At stake is the very heart of the human enterprise. The first chapters of Genesis loom large. How will we be saved if we do not even know who we are?

In Imperial Rome, the Christian view of sex proved revolutionary. Pagans routinely exposed unwanted children and used pharmacology in service of abortion. Christians, as evidenced in the Didache (2.2), prohibited abortion and infanticide. Early Christians held marriage sacred and asserted the full humanity of little children, "complete human beings from time of birth," and even before, as the incarnation made clear.[10] No longer could sex outside of marriage be seen as the mere satisfaction of an appetite or a rite of passage. As Kyle Harper notes, the Christian notion of *porneia* "would recast the harmless sexual novitiate that was an unobjectionable part of sexual life in antiquity as an unambiguous sin, a transgression against the will of God, echoing in eternity."[11] Christianity's teaching on sexuality blew up the pagan death star. Now, via the sexual revolution, the empire has struck back. According to Jennifer Roback Morse, the ideology of the sexual revolution is encompassed by the ideas that society should "1. separate sex from childbearing: the Contraceptive Ideology; 2. Separate both sex and childbearing from marriage: the Divorce Ideology; 3. Eliminate all distinctions between men and women, except those that individuals explicitly embrace: the Gender Ideology."[12] God created us male and female, telling us to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:27–28). That is gone.

The Sexual Revolution: Allure and Wreckage

The sexual revolution's success is not hard to explain. It heralded an age of pleasure and wild abandonment. But such abandonment has led to a generation that feels abandoned, vulnerable, and lonely. The taste of faux freedom turned sour. Free love came at a hefty price. What looked like chains were actually the ties that bind us together, a man to his wife, a mother and a father to their children.

Long before the advent of gay marriage, marriage had been redefined. Daniel Patrick Moynihan sounded the alarm in 1965, observing that 25 percent of African American children had no father at home; the consequences, he predicted, would be dire. Such a world now looks like Eden. In generations past, marriage was understood to be the lifelong and exclusive union of one man and one woman. This

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[10] See O. M. Bakke, *When Children Became People: The Birth of Childhood in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 284.

[11] Kyle Harper, *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 92.

[12] Jennifer Roback Morse, *The Sexual State: How Elite Ideologies Are Destroying Lives and Why the Church Was Right All Along* (Charlotte, N.C.: TAN Books, 2018), 22.

union was ordered toward children and was thought to be comprehensive, including body, soul, and mind. This conjugal understanding of marriage was replaced by a revisionist view, described thusly: "It is a view of marriage as, in essence, a loving emotional bond, one distinguished by its intensity—a bond that needn't point beyond the partners, in which fidelity is ultimately subject to one's own desires. In marriage, so understood, partners seek emotional fulfillment, and remain as long as they find it."[13] Marriage now lasts as long as they both shall love. Marriage may still be what you make of it, but has no intrinsic meaning. The wedding certificate is a contract with no teeth. And as Maggie Gallagher notes, we have undermined "the only institution ever shown to be capable of raising children well."[14]

As a result of the collapse of marriage, we are living through what Mary Eberstadt has called "The Great Scattering." She notes that up until the present time, "human expectations remained largely the same throughout the ages."[15] A child could reasonably expect to grow up in a home with a mom and dad, and usually in a family that included brothers and sisters. A child was connected to the past by grandparents and great-grandparents. Aunts, uncles, and cousins widened one's social network as well as one's sense of belonging. In such a world, children grew up knowing how they fit into the world. They could claim identity as the son or daughter, brother or sister, nephew or niece, grandchild and cousin.

What have we lost in "The Great Scattering"? Father no longer lives at home. Mothers are more likely to be at work than at home with their infant children. The elderly more frequently die alone. But it gets worse. In marriage, mother and father are better able to create a common culture, a united front, so that their children feel secure and grounded. Children of divorce, on the other hand, are three times more likely to agree with the statement, "I feel like a different person with each of my parents." Having lost their innocence, they are twice as likely strongly to agree with the statement, "I always felt like an adult, even when I was a kid."[16] And so, for the divorced mom, a child often becomes "my little man."

Adding to our children's chaos, divorce often leaves grandparents divided against each other. Roles such as aunt and uncle have become temporary, with honorary titles awarded to a boyfriend's brother, later to be taken away. Given the small size of families, children are less likely to have siblings, and with that the opportunity to learn to understand and respect the opposite sex. The blending of

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[13] Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert George, *What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012), 1–2.

[14] Maggie Gallagher, *The Abolition of Marriage: How We Destroy Lasting Love* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1996), 141.

[15] Mary Eberstadt, *Primal Screams: How the Sexual Revolution Created Identity Politics* (West Conshohocken, Pa.: Templeton Press, 2019), 38.

[16] Eberstadt, *Primal Screams*, 43.

families merely adds to the confusion. Add to this mix sperm donation and surrogacy pregnancy, and we have a whole new generation of people who will, by design, not know one or both of their biological parents. The result is loneliness, isolation, and a lack of identity.

Identity confusion now manifests itself in matters of gender, something once taken for granted. Increasingly, young people do not feel at home in their own body. This is akin to anorexia nervosa, in which one's self-perception does not match reality. As Ryan Anderson explains, "Likewise, some people with gender dysphoria *feel* as if they were the opposite sex but *know* are not, so they struggle with their feelings until their feelings overwhelm them and they come to identify with the opposite sex, and act accordingly."[17] This may be a good explanation but gender dysphoria has resulted in wider dysphoria, regardless of why it has into existence.

Androgyny has become a kind of survival strategy. As Mary Eberstadt notes, girls want to be like boys, and vice versa.[18] What advantage is there in claiming manhood, when masculinity is declared toxic? As Christina Hoff Sommers notes in her work *The War against Boys*, our educational system does not value the natural energy, competitiveness, and corporal daring that characterize a boy's ascent into manhood.[19] Boys are frequently raised by single women who are resentful of men who have done them wrong. Man buns and the Peter Pan Syndrome should alert us to a problem. Conversely, what advantage is there in claiming to be a woman, when they are told that they must imitate men to succeed? Women are pushed into the military or competitive sports. In the Neverland between male and female, many find a safe space, a kind of new identity. As Mary Eberstadt notes, "Like feminism, androgyny appears to offer competitive advantages in a world ruled by the Great Scattering."[20] And like abortion and homosexuality, androgyny does nothing for the advancement of the human race, nor does it give a better or healthier answer to the question, "Who am I?"

The Family and the Bible

So, what can we do about all of this? It can seem overwhelming. Admittedly, my own thinking on the matter has changed. After graduate school, I served a church that put out pamphlets from Focus on the Family. Congregational members were

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[17] Ryan Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment* (New York: Encounter Books, 2018), 96. Emphasis original.

[18] Eberstadt, *Primal Screams,* 78.

[19] Christina Hoff Sommers, *The War against Boys: How Misguided Feminism Is Harming Our Young Men* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000)*, 3.*

[20] Eberstadt, *Primal Screams,* 78.

interested in such groups as Promise Keepers, a men's group that emphasizes fidelity in marriage. A local congregation hired what they called a "Family Life Minister." I was dubious.

Our Lord says, "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt 10:37). And again, "Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother, sister, and mother" (Mark 3:35). That seems to settle it. The earthly family is temporary, the heavenly family eternal. Genealogy must give way to our birth into the family of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19).

But of course, the earthly family does matter. Children need to be fed, clothed, housed, and brought to the font. For emotional well-being, boys and girls need both mom and dad. And even as Christ divides families, so does he bring them together.

Tellingly, the second table of the law begins with the command to honor father and mother. In that one command, we see not only mom and dad, but also the sanctity of marriage and a child's well-being. Notably, the fourth commandment comes with a hopeful purpose. When a child is at harmony with God-fearing parents, he may live long in the land that the Lord gives. For the people of the exodus, that land was Israel, the temple, the place of God's dwelling. And for us, it is the church, the new and everlasting place of promise.

Our incarnate Lord himself reaffirms the sanctity of life by taking residence in Mary's womb. He reaffirms male and female and defines marriage as a lifelong union (Mark 10:9). He blesses marriage at Cana (John 2:1–12) and comes to be our bridegroom (John 3:29). Not surprisingly, at the church's foundation we find not only the apostles, but also Mary and our Lord's brothers (Acts 1:14). Family matters. The early church was built on the household conversions of Cornelius, Lydia, the Roman jailer, and Crispus.[21] From the Scriptures and our own experience, we know that faith and family are more easily distinguished than divided.

Is it then possible for the church to thrive while the family collapses? In Tanzania, the family prospers along with the church. I came to my own congregation questioning the focus on family, but since leaving that small town congregation, I have seen divorce ravage the flock, resulting in a sharp drop in attendance. So, what shall we say?

The River Runs Both Ways

The dominant view has been that the Enlightenment and secularism have taken a toll. As technology advanced, we no longer needed God as provider and protector.

[21] See David L. Crispus, *Household Conversions in Acts: Patterns and Interpretation* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

As we became prosperous, so also did we become spiritually fat and happy. As we moved from the countryside to the city, there were fewer positive social pressures for church attendance. According to this rendering, the church's collapse results in the collapse of the family.

In *How the West Really Lost God*, Mary Eberstadt offers a counter argument.[22] The family's collapse results in the church's collapse. We know the demographic challenge. It is hard to bring young people into the church when church members themselves are having so few children. The same goes for seminary recruitment. And again, a congregation revives when even a few families are fruitful and multiply.

Ireland offers a stark example. In the 1970s, the Irish were having babies at double the replacement rate, four children per couple. By 2000, that number plummeted to 1.89. And along with this decline, weekly mass attendance dropped from 91 percent in 1973 to just 34 percent in 2005. Abortion, then unthinkable on the Emerald Isle, is the law of the land, not only an option, but increasingly for physicians a professional obligation.

How does family life affect life in the church? It is difficult to speak about the fatherhood of God when children have never lived with a father at home. This is especially problematic in Christian homes where our actions contradict our words. The same goes for what we say of Christ as groom and earthly marriage. Likewise, if we say children are a blessing, but put money and pleasure first, people get the message. The story of Madonna and child loses its appeal when motherhood is denigrated. There are also more practical considerations. Apart from children, we are tempted to sleep in, to tend other gardens. Children remind us of tomorrow, as well as the eternal tomorrow, and are a catalyst toward church attendance. The very idea of staging a Christmas pageant in an aging congregation becomes impossible.

The leading indicator of whether a child will remain faithful through high school is the presence of a father who attends church. Then there is the question of time spent apart from the family, beginning with college and into the years that follow. Those who live amidst family are more likely to go to church. Robert Wuthnow, Princeton sociologist, writes, "During the 1950's, the average time between confirmation class and the birth of first child for U.S. young people had only been seven years; by the end of the 1960's, in large measure because of the new contraceptive technologies, this period had more than doubled to fifteen years."[23] Our sons may not be prodigal, but away from home they do stray.

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[22] Mary Eberstadt, *How the West Really Lost God* (West Conshohocken, PA.: Templeton Press, 2013).

[23] Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 67.

Gnosticism and the Body

As we consider our identity, one more factor may be considered. Who exactly are we? Does our body play any role at all? Robert George claims that we live in an age of "Gnostic Liberalism." According to this worldview, "You and I as persons, are identified entirely with the spirit or mind, or psyche, and not at all (or only in the most highly attenuated sense) with the body that we occupy (or are somehow 'associated with') and use."[24] The soul, such as it is, is merely the ghost in the machine. The body is merely the vehicle or container for the inner-self.

When speaking of love, we talk about finding our soul mate. On popular television shows, the sexual union is described as coitus, so that we might think of it as a mechanical process, devoid of meaning or consequences. Perhaps some remember the movie *Pretty Woman*, where the Julia Roberts character would sell her body for sex, but saved her kisses for the man who would be her true love. Does the body matter? Yes, but only as something that functions well, hence diet and exercise. It is to be a well-oiled machine, with batteries fully charged.

In her book *Love Thy Body*, Nancy Pearcey shows how this new gnostic theology has played itself out in our culture.[25] The pro-life movement points to bodily DNA, a beating heart, and pictures in an ultrasound. Biology is on our side. And still Princeton Professor Peter Singer can claim, "The life of a newborn baby is of less value to it than the life of a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee is to the nonhuman animal."[26] A body is not enough to claim personhood. Higher cognitive functions, greater levels of self-awareness, self-reliance, or independence are said to be necessary. The same dynamic is at play in euthanasia, where the plug may be pulled on those who cannot help themselves.

Nancy Pearcey also points to the hookup culture, in which sex is merely a bodily function, separate from anything deeper. But with it comes depression and feelings of worthlessness. As Pearcey notes, "The hookup culture is unraveling the social fabric. It produces isolated, alienated adults."[27] Likewise, consider the transgender phenomenon, according to which the body is trumped by the self-identifying mind. In Indiana, drivers can self-identify as male, female, or x. A child is said to be assigned sex at birth. A teacher is fired for not using the correct pronouns. A Lutheran pastor abdicates his role as husband and claims to transition into a woman. Not at home in their house or their body, is it any wonder our children are confused?

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[24] Robert George, "Gnostic Liberalism," *First Things* (December 2016).

[25] Nancy Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018).

[26] Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 169.

[27] Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 126.

Gnosticism: Get Out of Jail Free

A healthy cynicism might lead us to conclude that Gnosticism is not only a religion, but also an excuse. As St. Paul notes, we all "show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Our conscience bears witness, either accusing or excusing us" (Rom 2:15). Gnosticism, as such, provides us with a ready defense. Along with the Corinthians, we can say that food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food. If the body does not matter, sex is simply an appetite to be satisfied. We might then take our place at the rich fool's table, where we can eat, drink, and be merry without a thought for the future (Luke 12:19). Interestingly, in such a way of thinking, the resurrection is no longer good news. St. Paul says, "The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (1 Cor 6:13). Paul then offers up the resurrection as a warning, saying, "And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power" (1 Cor 6:14). But if the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the resurrection is real, then the desecration of the body will be dealt with in the age to come.

In some ways, I think, our people do understand what is at stake. Their funeral practices point away from bodily afterlife. Caskets and burials have been replaced by urns and cremation. The celebration of a life substitutes for any talk of the life to come. Strikingly, people no longer talk about death as falling asleep, for if they did, they would be reminded that we will one day wake up and see our Lord face-to-face. Underlying such practice seems to be a desire that there not be a resurrection. As a loved one said, I was nothing before I came into this world, and will be nothing after I die. This might seem depressing, but annihilation is the world's great hope. For if the body is gone, then judgment day will never come, and the things that I do today are gloriously inconsequential.

Hope: At Home in the Body

This is not to say we should lose hope. As Kanye West reminds us, Jesus is King. Even as we fight, we must be about the business of seeking and saving the lost. Unlike those who have no hope, we have something to live for and something worth dying for. As the sexual revolution has taken its toll, there are many victims, bruised and battered, who desire something better, children of divorce who long for something more. The mutilated victims of transgender surgery, those who have found the gay lifestyle wanting, and those raised as children in same-sex marriages have come to see that the pot at the end of the rainbow flag was fool's gold. Even now, there are many on the road to Damascus.

This is not about pointing fingers or chastising others for their mistakes. This is a bodily sickness that affects our entire society. And as the body of Christ, we are all in this together. With no need to justify ourselves, we might offer a year of jubilee, a chance for us all to start over.

What might the church have to offer? We have a message of affirmation. A way for our people to be at home once more in their physical body and in the body of Christ. Our message is not one of escape, but of cleansing and recovery, one of re-creation, a new Genesis. We proclaim a truth that is truly natural and holistic, one that can make sense of the world we live in. We speak a message of a fallen nature meant for better things, a humanity created in God's image and redeemed by Christ's blood.

The life to come makes us courageous. Anchoring our hope in Christ's resurrection, we fear no one but God alone. And as we recover the sacredness of the body, we will no longer be nonchalant when a baker or florist is driven out of business. We cannot stand by idly as a Christian teacher is fired for not using the wrong pronouns. For they are with us fellow members of the body of Christ. As St. Paul says, "If one member suffers, all suffer together" (1 Cor 12:26). Their burdens are ours.

But for the sake of the world, we cannot leapfrog to the resurrection. We must speak first of the crucifixion, the body on the cross. As we look at that man, himself scarred and abandoned, we say, "Behold the Man." In that crucified body, we view the hope of the world, the one who invites us into the home of his father. This means a return to the crucifix, so that we can see that our wounds have been sanctified. This means a return to our Baptism into the body of Christ. This means a return to the altar, where we eat true body and true blood. For there is no spiritual worship apart from bodily worship, whether it is the body of Christ or ours.

In Christ, we may reclaim our identity as men and women, as husbands and wives, as members of God's family, so that we might feel at home in a body that serves as a temple of the Holy Spirit, at home in the body of Christ, his Church. We proclaim a message that heals the wounds that fill the gaps of our body and soul.

The body matters; it belongs to Christ. "You are not your own for you have been bought with a price" (1 Cor 6:19–20), Paul reminds us.

Now, in an age of autonomy, this might seem off-putting. But in the age of great scattering, it is a great cure. Blest be the ties that bind us to the Lord. The ties that bind husband and wife to each other and to their children and grandchildren. In the age of great scattering, we offer a homecoming, a seat at the family table, a place of belonging, a place where we matter to others and to God, a place where we know who we are, as Christians.

Theological Observer

COVID-19: Tricky Waters for the Good Ship

The COVID crisis has created some tricky waters for the good ship of the church. In Romans 13, Paul rightly urges us to obey those who govern, even as our Lord tells us to give Caesar what is his. Add to this the desire to do everything we can to protect the physical health of our neighbor. We pray for the wisdom of Solomon, that we might find the right balance, knowing that we may come to different conclusions as to how to go forward. One church goes entirely online, another requires masks, while another asks us simply to spread ourselves apart. When it comes to such things, one size does not fit all, and charity is a must.

But even so, Christians need to retain a certain vigor. We comply, but not as those who are unthinking, or without courage. Throughout our land, governors have issued edicts prohibiting the gathering of Christians, in churches and in homes. In some situations, the church has been unjustly targeted. Christians are allowed to enter big box stores but have been told they cannot go to church. This is especially troublesome when we remember that we are the body of Christ, commanded by our Lord to receive the body of Christ often.

While we owe basic obedience to governing authorities, so also must we take into account the spiritual toll that COVID-19 has taken on our people. Isolation from the physical church has left some in despair and depression, leading to both spiritual and physical harm. As a matter of wisdom, Christians are sure to have differing opinions as to where to draw the line. Christian brothers have already shown great courage in resisting government overreach, and this has met with some success. We live in a republic, where we have ample room, and even a duty, to push back. Due to the resistance of Christian leaders, edicts have been withdrawn and churches have been reopened. Great issues are at play. The longer government officials label church as "non-essential," the more likely our own people will come to believe it. Continued absence from church soon becomes a habit. Nor is it good that we become comfortable with livestreaming when we need the real presence.

While we debate where to draw the line, lines must be drawn. Health emergencies matter, but one thing is needful. May the Lord give us charity, wisdom, and courage that we might care for others while remaining faithful, all the while knowing that the church is not much loved today, and that we must be vigilant in defense of her prerogatives.

Peter J. Scaer

CTQ 85 (2021): 75–88

Research Notes

Res and *Signum*: But Does It Work?

On Thursday evenings, WNEP, the local television station out of Scranton, has a regular feature entitled "But Does It Work?" Appliances are tested to see if the results are commensurate with what is advertised. Kurt Aaron, the local weatherman, purchases the advertised item and tests it in a live TV broadcast. Recently tested was an indoor TV antenna advertised to bring in twenty television stations. It performed as advertised. But does it work? Yes. Two thumbs up. At other times, some items have been tested and did not work. Two thumbs down. Some items work, but not as advertised. One thumb up and one thumb down.

A principle like "But does it work?" has value in evaluating a particular theology, and in a sense it has already been used. Classical nineteenth-century liberalism—or, as it was also called, modernism—which promised joy and happiness to society, was proven to be ineffective by the Great War (1914–1918). Adolf von Harnack's stripped-down religion of love of the neighbor brought untold misery and death and readjusted European boundaries. Now to ask the question, "But did it work?" No, liberalism did not produce the Christian utopia it promised. In the place of one theology, another inevitably arises and it has asked again, "But does it work?" In the place of the old liberalism came neoorthodoxy, and the European-born theology soon became the rage in America. "But does it work?" Today one hears little of Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and Paul Tillich. In Lutheran circles, Oswald Bayer is front and center.

The emeritus Tübingen University professor of systematic theology claims to have discovered a previously undeveloped understanding of Luther that was at the heart of his Reformation. For Bayer, the reformer's great discovery was a linguistic one that "the word" or the sign (in Latin *signum*) is itself the thing (in Latin *res*). In 1518, Luther discovered that "the word" or the sign (*signum)* that describes a thing (*res)* are the same, and Bayer discovered that this was motivation for his Reformation. Equating the *signum* with the *res* was proposed first by the twentieth-century linguistic philosophers Ludwig Wittgenstein and John L. Austin, a principle that Bayer recognized in Luther's theology. Until Luther came along, Bayer says,

> Language [was] a system of signs that point to an object or state of affairs, or that express an emotion. In either case, the sign (*signum*), understood as a statement or expression, is not the reality (*res*) itself. However, Luther's great hermeneutical insight, his Reformation discovery in the strict sense, was that

> the verbal sign (*signum*) is the reality itself. This new insight turned the ancient understanding of language on its head.[1]

Here Bayer points out that Augustine distinguished between the thing signified, the *res*, and the sign or signification, the *signum*. The *res/signum* distinction attributed to Augustine probably was taken over from Aristotle, and this is the way most of us think. There is a difference between a real cat (*res*) and the word "cat" (*signum*). If you only have the word "cat," you still don't have a real cat. Now back to Bayer: "But Luther overcame the distinction [between *res* and *signum*] and in doing so shares something in common with the linguistic analysis of the later Wittgenstein."[2] For Luther, the "thing" (*res)*, and the "sign" (*signum)* were one. The *res/signum* as a principle for theology is best seen in how Bayer understands Absolution. "The speech act with the promise of forgiveness in the name of Jesus is not an 'appearance' but the 'essence' itself."[3]

Bayer holds that the *res/signum* equation applies to reality. He says that for both Luther and Wittgenstein, "*Essence* is expressed by grammar." Reality resides in the spoken word. Now it has to be asked whether Wittgenstein and Austin's linguistic philosophy is the key to understanding Luther. How is it that for half a millennium scholars have missed it? While some have endorsed Bayer's perspective on the reformer's theology, others have not. The Lutheran Confessions do not know of the equation, and the next question is whether it is applicable to interpreting the Bible. "But does it work?"

An answer may be found in an essay by Brittany E. Wilson of the Duke University Divinity School, "Seeing Divine Speech: Sensory Intersections in Luke's Birth Narrative and Beyond," appearing in the *Journal of the Study of the New Testament*.[4] Wilson's expertise lies in the field of biblical studies, not philosophical or historical studies. Not unexpectedly, she makes no mention of the speech-act theory proposed by Wittgenstein and Austin and applied by Bayer to Luther's theology.

In examining the biblical texts in Luke and Acts, she demonstrates that in the birth narratives of Luke's first two chapters, divine words are confirmed by visual signs. All who know Luke's Christmas story already know this. The message of the angels that a Savior, Christ the Lord, has been born is confirmed by the sign that the

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[1] Oswald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 129.

[2] Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 137.

[3] Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 137.

[4] Brittany E. Wilson, "Seeing Divine Speech: Sensory Intersections in Luke's Birth Narrative and Beyond," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 42, no. 3 (March 2020): 251–273.

shepherds will find him wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger (Luke 2:8–18). Bayer's *res/signum* equation does not work, at least for Luke.

Wilson goes into detail to show that things spoken by God through angels can be checked by the senses. Divine words correspond with what can be seen. She focuses first and chiefly on Luke 1 and 2 and then on the visions of Jesus to Paul in Acts and intimates that the interrelationship of the sign and the word is applicable to other parts of the Bible. In the introductory abstract, she writes, "This article explores how divine discourse intersects with the sense of sight."[5] She goes on to say, "Divine-human encounters in Luke-Acts almost always focus on divine discourse, and this focus is especially apparent in Lk. 1 and 2."[6] She speaks of "the function of signs in facilitating faith."[7]

Even in sections that place a great emphasis on believing "the word," they can be called "logocentric" signs, and they have a positive role for faith. God speaks through angels, and what he says can be confirmed by what really happens. Promise of a son to Zechariah is confirmed by his inability to speak. As punitive as this is, it brings him to faith.[8] The leaping of the babe in Elizabeth's womb convinces her that the mother of her Lord has come to her. Shepherds confirm the angel's message that the Savior who is Christ the Lord has been born by finding the infant in the manger. "Instead, Luke suggests that seeing is also important when it comes to perceiving divine speech, for divine speech is often accompanied by visual elements."[9] She expands her insights from Luke 1 and 2 throughout the Gospel: "With a closer examination of the Lukan text, however, we have seen the difficulty of maintaining such a hierarchy, even in a section of the text that emphasizes the importance of hearing 'the word.' Instead, sight signals the intrusion of the divine into the earthly realm and verifies divine speech, but it overlaps with speech itself."[10]

This stands at odds with Bayer's *res/signum* equation for which "the word" does not depend on being tested on anything outside of it.

> For the sake of clarity, it is necessary in our discussion of this problem to distinguish between two levels or spheres. On the one hand, there is the primary sphere of the performative speech acts, the sphere of the word and faith. On the other hand, there is the secondary but related sphere of constative speech acts, the sphere of theology (in the narrow sense) and its proposition.

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[5] Wilson, "Seeing Divine Speech," 251.
[6] Wilson, "Seeing Divine Speech," 252.
[7] Wilson, "Seeing Divine Speech," 251.
[8] Wilson, "Seeing Divine Speech," 258.
[9] Wilson, "Seeing Divine Speech," 252.
[10] Wilson, "Seeing Divine Speech," 269.

> The statements to which the theological propositions refer, the promises that create faith, are not premises, as we stressed earlier (3). *Therefore, they are not propositions that can be checked against what they assert.* Rather, their truth and certainty are located in what they are, in what they bring, and in what they constitute. I cannot verify them because they verify me, because they embrace, permeate, and carry my knowledge and actions. I am entirely dependent on them.[11]

Key are these words, "Therefore, they are not propositions that can be checked against what they assert."

Wilson's examination of Luke shows something entirely different from Bayer, for whom the reality (*res*) resides in "the word" (*signum*). Now to ask the question: does Bayer's proposal work? In regard to Luke and Acts, the answer is no. In reading Wilson's argument, a number of things come to mind. The angel's announcement that Jesus has been raised from the dead is accompanied by the invitation to see where the body lay. So propositions can be checked by what they assert.

David P. Scaer

[11] Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 171–172, emphasis added.

Luther Research Tools within the Weimar Edition

Since 2006 the undersigned has labored over Luther's writings as managing editor and co-general editor of *Luther's Works: American Edition* for Concordia Publishing House.[1] The main source of our translation is the Weimar Edition *(Weimarer Ausgabe,* "WA") of Luther's writings.[2] This edition, begun in 1883 and continued for over a century, is rather difficult to navigate. The best guide to finding anything in it is the *Hilfsbuch* by Kurt Aland; in English there is also the more limited *Cross-Reference* by Vogel.[3] A general overview of the WA is given by Helmar Junghans.[4] But what I could not find anywhere was a handy listing of all the important reference tools that are included within the pages of the WA. These are extremely useful for serious, historical Luther research, but previously could only be discovered by word of mouth or by painstakingly paging through each volume.

In order to serve current Luther scholars and to encourage new, younger scholars to approach Luther's writings in the original Latin and German, I present this list of Luther research tools that are found within the WA.

Benjamin T. G. Mayes

Parts of the WA

Schriften ("Writings," abbreviated WA).

Briefwechsel ("Correspondence," abbreviated WA Br).

Deutsche Bibel ("German Bible," abbreviated WA DB).

Tischreden ("Table Talk," abbreviated WA Tr).

Nachträge ("Addenda"). These volumes only exist for vols. 30/2, 30/3, 32, 33, 48. Abbreviated "WA 30/2N."

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[1] *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–).

[2] *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [*Schriften*], 65 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–1993); *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Briefwechsel*, 18 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1930–); *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Deutsche Bibel*, 12 vols. in 15 (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1906–); *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Tischreden*, 6 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1912–21).

[3] Kurt Aland, *Hilfsbuch zum Lutherstudium*, 4th ed. (Bielefeld: Luther-Verlag, 1996); Heinrich J. Vogel, *Vogel's Cross Reference and Index to the Contents of Luther's Works: A Cross Reference between the American Edition and the St. Louis, Weimar, and Erlangen Editions of Luther's Works* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1983; reprint, St. Louis: Concordia, 2012).

[4] Helmar Junghans, "The History, Use and Significance of the Weimar Luther Edition," *Lutheran Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (Autumn 2003): 267–87.

Archiv zur Weimarer Ausgabe (AWA). These are supplemental volumes for the WA.

Special volumes of the Schriften

WA 51:634–731. *Luthers Sprichwörtersammlung*, ed. and explained by Ernst Thiele and Otto Brenner. This explains many of Luther's idiomatic sayings.

WA 55/1–2. Luther's first lectures on the Psalms (1513–1516). A reedition of WA 3–4.

WA 58/1. Indexes of Luther's autobiographical statements, of persons and places.

There is no WA 58/2.

WA 59. Marginal notes of Luther on books: *Theologia Deutsch,* Gabriel Biel's *Collectorium* and *Canonis Misse Expositio*; other recently discovered writings, sermons, lectures, theses, Tischreden.

WA 60. Recently discovered writings; supplements and corrections; marginal notes to Erasmus's *Novum Testamentum* (1527); history of Luther editions by Eike Wolgast and Hans Volz.

WA 61. Contents of the WA according to WA vol. and alphabetical; editors of the volumes.

WA 62. Index of places and peoples.

WA 63. Index of persons and quotations.

WA 64–68. Latin subject index.

WA 69–73. German subject index.

Abbreviations and sigla in WA printings of manuscripts are explained in WA 14:496; 7:303.

Abbreviations referring to archives are explained in WA 7:vii.

Correspondence (Briefwechsel)

WA Br 12. Other letters 1515–1545; receipts and contracts; official university writings of Luther; ordination certificates written by Luther.

WA Br 13. Indexes, supplements, corrections, extra letters.

WA Br 14. Extra letters; description of archival holdings of Luther's letters in manuscript; indexes; history of editions of Luther's correspondence, 16th–20th centuries.

WA Br 15. Index of persons and places.

WA Br 16. Index of Luther's person, correspondents, and Bible passages.

WA Br 17. Index of theology, of things, and of Greek terms.

WA Br 18. Index of incipits; supplements and corrections to WA Br 1–14; supplement to WA Br 14, on manuscripts of Luther's letters; extra letters.

Deutsche Bibel

WA DB 1. Luther's manuscript translation, Judges–Song of Songs.

WA DB 2. Bibliography of printings of the *Lutherbibel*, 1522–1546; Luther's MS translation, Isaiah–Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Wisdom, Sirach.

WA DB 3. Luther's manuscript notes on the Psalter; translation committee minutes, Psalter; Genesis 1–Psalm 150.

WA DB 4. Bible revision committee minutes, and Luther's notes in his own Bibles.

WA DB 5. Vulgate revision of 1529 (Genesis–2 Kings, NT).

WA DB 6. Actual *Lutherbibel*, earliest and latest editions of his life on facing pages, with apparatus, Matthew–Acts.

WA DB 7. *Lutherbibel* 1522 & 1546, Romans–Revelation.

WA DB 8. *Lutherbibel* 1523 & 1545, Genesis–Deuteronomy.

WA DB 9/1. *Lutherbibel* 1524 & 1545, Joshua–1 Kings.

WA DB 9/2. *Lutherbibel* 1524 & 1545, 2 Kings–Esther.

WA DB 10/1. *Lutherbibel* 1524 & 1545, Job–Psalms (Psalms, 1524–1528, 1531, 1545).

WA DB 10/2. *Lutherbibel* 1524 & 1545, Proverbs–Song of Songs Appendixes: Luther's Latin Psalter revisions (1529, 1537); Luther's notes in his Hebrew Psalter.

WA DB 11/1. *Lutherbibel* 1528 & 1545, Isaiah; 1532 & 1545, Jeremiah–Ezekiel.

WA DB 11/2. *Lutherbibel* 1530/1532 & 1545, Daniel–Malachi; bibliography of printings of the prophets; long preface on Daniel.

WA DB 12. *Lutherbibel* 1529–1534 & 1545–1546, Apocrypha.

Tischreden

References marked "FB" in the Tischreden refer to D. Martini Lutheri Colloquia, Meditationes, Consolationes, Judicia, Sententiæ, Narrationes, Responsa, Facetiæ, e codice MS. Bibliothecæ Orphanotrophei Halensis, cum perpetua collatione editionis Rebenstockianæ edita, et prolegomenis indicibusque instructa. Edited by Heinrich Ernst Bindseil. 3 vols. Lemgoviæ & Detmoldiæ: typis sumtibusque Meyeriani, 1863–1866.

WA Tr 6. Indexes.

Archiv zur Weimarer Ausgabe

AWA 1. Introduction to the new edition of the *Operationes in Psalmos*.

AWA 2. *Operationes in Psalmos*, part 1.

AWA 4. Luther's hymns (new ed.).

AWA 5. *Lutheriana*: essays on Luther and Luther studies.

AWA 6. Lectures on Romans (1515–1516), new edition.

AWA 7. Sermons of 1522, new edition.

AWA 10. Sebastian Münster's translation of Luther's sermons on the Decalogue.

A Homily: On the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ—Attributed to Pseudo-Chrysostom

Early Christian paschal homilies are a largely ignored source for theological reflection on the meaning of Easter. Moreover, as a resource for homiletic imagery, linguistic vitality, and rhetorical strategies, ancient paschal homilies provide a rich mine of materials.

The short homily translated below is a wonderful example of such homily. The Greek text for this translation is the critical text provided by Michel Aubineau.[1] In the notes, I have made ample use of the material provided by Aubineau, while also making some observations and comments of my own.

Eight manuscripts, dating from the tenth to the fourteenth century, contain this homily. All of them attribute the homily to St. John Chrysostom. However, as Aubineau notes, "nothing in this homily recalls the manner of saint John Chrysostom." Chrysostom is quite capable of sophisticated rhetoric. Yet his homiletic style is often commonplace, direct, and simple in expression. The rhetorical character of this short homily, on the other hand, is ornate and rich. Aubineau lists the linguistic and rhetorical features of this homily, on which I will also comment in the notes.[2] In view of these characteristics of style, Aubineau concludes that this little homily corresponds to the style of fifth-century preachers such as Hesychius of Jerusalem, Proclus of Constantinople, and Basil of Seleucia.[3]

The theme text of the homily is Psalm 117:24 (LXX): "This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." In various ways, the glory and excellence of this "day" is illustrated and proclaimed. The homilist begins with several "tokens" (τὰ σύμβολα) of the resurrection: strife and jealousy and deceit have been replaced by peace. He then presents ten contrasts (οὐκέτι . . . ἀλλά), which describe the plight of mankind before the resurrection and the free joy of mankind

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[1] Michel Aubineau, *Hésychius de Jérusalem, Basile de Séleucie, Jean de Béryte, Pseudo-Chrysostome, Léonce de Constantinople: Homélies Pascales (cinq homélies inédites)*, Sources Chrétiennes 187 [hereafter SC] (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1972), 307–337 (Greek text: 318–324).

[2] For example, (a) the predilection for rare or made-up words; (b) the love of antitheses, chiasms; (c) the love of assonance and repetition (SC 187:314).

[3] Two further facts argue for a fifth-century dating. Some lines of this homily have been taken from a homily of Asterius the Sophist (+ c. 341). Some portions of this homily have been used by Leontius of Constantinople, a priest who lived in the sixth century (see SC 187:351–352 for the comparison). For homilies of Proclus in English translation, see *Proclus, Bishop of Constantinople: Homilies on the Life of Christ*, Early Christian Studies, 1, trans. Jan Harm Barkhuizen (Brisbane: Centre for Early Christian Studies, Australian Catholic University, 2001). See also William C. Weinrich, "On the Holy Pascha: By the Blessed Hesychius, Presbyter of Jerusalem," in *The Restoration of Creation in Christ: Essays in Honor of Dean O. Wenthe*, ed. Arthur A. Just Jr. and Paul J. Grime (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014), 19–35.

after the resurrection. The excellence of the day explains the central place of *Pascha* in the liturgical calendar, and the excellence of the day is seen especially in the newly baptized. Indeed, the resurrection of Christ and the new birth of the baptized cannot really be separated. The "day which the Lord has made" is precisely the "day" he makes through the rebirth of the sinner! Finally, the homilist lists the fruits of the resurrection, a "day" that culminates and brings to an end the economy of salvation.

With some variation in the manuscripts, the title of the homily is as follows:

> *Τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἰωάννου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου λόγος εἰς τὴν ἀνάστασιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.* (Discourse of John Chrysostom, our father among the saints, Archbishop of Constantinople, On the Resurrection of Our Lord, Jesus Christ)

1. Bright are the tokens of the Lord's resurrection![4] Deceit has ceased! Jealousy is banished! Quarreling is banished! Peace is honored! And war is put to an end!

No longer do we lament for Adam, the first-formed, but we give glory to the second Adam. [5]

No longer do we reproach Eve, who transgressed, but we declare as blessed, Mary, the Mother of God.

No longer do we turn away from the tree, but we carry the cross of the Lord.

No longer do we fear the serpent, but we reverence the Holy Spirit.[6]

No longer do we descend into the earth, but we run up to the heavens.

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[4] "Tokens" translates *τὰ σύμβολα*. *Σύμβολον* comes from the verb *συμβάλλειν* ("to bring together"). *Τὸ σύμβολον* referred to a piece of bone or other object that had been broken in two when a contract or treaty was made. Each side of the contract kept one piece. The identity of the persons making the contract was guaranteed by holding one of the broken pieces, which, when joined to the other, made a whole. From this, *τὸ σύμβολον* came to mean any token or feature that gave proof of identity. In this first section, the homilist mentions those new realities of society and of church that testify to the reality of the resurrection. Each instance is, therefore, a "token" of the resurrection.

[5] The homilist now lists ten contrasts, each with the form *οὐκέτι . . . ἀλλά*, which describe the time before and after the resurrection. Aubineau notes that Gregory of Nyssa also contrasts the two times with a similar rhetorical form (*τότε . . . νῦν*: *In salutare Pascha*). See Gregory of Nyssa, "In sanctum Pascha," in *Patrologia cursus completus: Series graeca,* 162 vols., ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1857–1886), vol. 46:681D [hereafter PG]. The idea that Mary was the new Eve, mother of the living, was common in patristic literature. During the christological conflict with Nestorius, the affirmation that Mary was the "Mother of God" (*ἡ θεοτόκος*) supported the notion that Christ was "one, indivisible person," who was eternally begotten from the Father, but who in these last days was born of the Virgin Mary. Mary as "mother of God" was declared fundamental doctrine at the Council of Ephesus (AD 431).

[6] Greek: *οὐκέτι τὸν ὄφιν φοβούμεθα ἀλλὰ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον δυσωποῦμεν*. The inseparable prefix *δυσ-* gave to words/verbs the connotation of unlucky, bad, difficult (opposite of *εὐ-*). The verb *δυσωπέω* meant "to shame, put to shame," with the general idea of a downtrodden, ashamed face. However, in Christian writers the verb often lost its negative, pejorative sense and meant "respect" or "reverence." See G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford/New York: Clarendon, 1961) s.v. *δυσωπέω*, 3.

No longer are we outside of paradise, but we dwell in the bosom of Abraham.

No longer in a Jewish way do we hear "I have likened" your day "to the night," but we sing in a spiritual way "This is the day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it."[7]

Why? Because no longer is the sun made dark, but it enlightens all things.[8]

No longer is the temple curtain torn asunder, but the church is made known.[9]

No longer do we carry branches of palm, but we carry about those newly illumined.[10]

2. "This is the day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it."[11] "This is the day," this, and not another. For there is one queen, and not many

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[7] The homilist quotes from Hosea 4:5 and Psalm 117:24. Hosea 4:5 reads: *νυκτὶ ὡμοίωσα τὴν μητέρα σου* (LXX). The homilist has changed "your mother" to "your day." This change allows the "day" of the Jews to be compared with the "day" of the Christian. For the Jews, their day is like the night; that is, they remain in the shadow of the law, while the resurrection of Christ has brought about a new day, the true day, the fulfillment of the Old Testament expectation. Aubineau notes that the fathers often regarded the image of "night" as a figure for the synagogue (see Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Hosea*, PG 71:120D). For the contrast *ἰουδαικῶς— πνευματικῶς*, Aubineau thinks of the contrast between literal-spiritual and refers to Origen, *On First Principles* II.11.2–3 (SC 187:327). This may be correct, but a typological contrast rather suggests itself: *οὐκέτι . . . ἀλλά* (see n. 2 above). Psalm 117:24 recurs throughout the homily as its dominant theme text. It was apparently an important text in the paschal liturgy.

[8] Greek: *οὐκέτι ὁ ἥλιος σκοτίζεται ἀλλά πάντα φωτίζεται*. There is a clear double reference to "the sun." The sun is made dark at the crucifixion of Jesus (Matt 27:45), but the Sun, now risen from the dead, gives light to all things. The reference to illumination probably refers to Baptism. If so, the "day," which is so central to this homily, may well refer to the baptized. They are the day.

[9] The temple curtain rent from top to bottom is a symbol of the old covenant, the synagogue. The resurrection gives rise to the new people of God.

[10] The "branches of palm" seems to refer to John 12:13 when Jesus was met by the crowd carrying palm branches and greeting him as the messianic king. The homilist thinks the present celebration superior to that first Palm Sunday. The "newly illumined" (*νεοφωτίστοι*) refers to those persons newly baptized. It is better to carry new children of God in honor of Christ than it was to carry palm branches. Aubineau wonders whether the term here refers to small infants ("petits enfants"): "Is this about the small infants whom one carried to baptism and whom one took back home?" (SC 187:329). But Aubineau is certainly interpreting the verb "to carry about" too literally. The homilist is contrasting the carrying of palm branches to the bringing forth of the newly baptized: as they carried palms, we "carry" the newly baptized. The latter image is reflecting the biblical image.

[11] The homilist now leads off with the principal theme text, whose language and tone govern the whole text.

princesses.[12] "This is the day," the day properly named (*ἡ κυριώνυμος*);[13] the day triumphal (*ἡ τροπαιοῦχος*); the day by custom dedicated to the resurrection (*ἡ τῆς ἀναστάσεως ἔθιμος*) and which adorns with grace (*τῆς χάριτος καλλωπίστρια*)[14] and which dispenses the spiritual lamb (*τοῦ λογικοῦ ἀμνοῦ διαμερίστρια*);[15] the day which suckles those begotten again from above (*ἡ τῶν ἀναγεννηθέντων γαλακτοδότρια*) and provides for the poor (*ἡ τῶν πενήτων οἰκονομήτρια*).

"Let us rejoice and be glad in it," not by running to the taverns, but by hastening to the sanctuaries (*εἰς μαρτύρια*), not by honoring strong drink, but by loving moderation, not by exulting after the manner of the Jews, but enjoying delicacies in an apostolic manner, not playing in the public places like youth, but singing psalms in our homes.[16]

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[12] Greek: *μία γὰρ βασίλεια καὶ οὐ πολλαὶ τυραννίδες*. Aubineau adopts the pointing: *βασίλεια*, and so translates, "For there is only one *queen*, and not a multitude of *princesses*" (SC 187:321, 329 n. 17). Of course, the Greek could translate: "For there is one rule/kingdom (βασιλεία), and not many sovereignties." Aubineau explains that the homilist wishes to exalt the Pascha over other festivals, that is, making it a queen over other princesses. He refers to Gregory of Nazianzus, who refers to the Pascha as "the queen of days" (ἡ βασίλισσα τῶν ἡμερῶν). See *Oratio* 18, *In Patrem* 28, PG 35:1017D; also *In Novam Dominicam* 10, PG 36:617C.

[13] The homilist was a skilled rhetorician and wordsmith. The term κυριώνυμος is quite rare. Lampe's *Patristic Greek Lexicon* gives but one instance of it (Theodore the Studite, ninth century). Its use in this text, then, is at least three centuries earlier and perhaps the earliest instance in patristic literature. H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, does not cite this adjective, although it does give the related verb (κυριωνυμέω), noun (κυριωνυμία), and adverb (κυριωνυμικῶς). Each of these entries has but one citation each, the verb and noun form in Eustathius, Bishop of Thessalonica (twelfth century) and the adverb in John Pediasimus (1282–1326).

[14] English translation cannot produce the rhetorical effect of the Greek. In these lines, the homilist describes "this day" by seven qualities or benefits. In doing so, he employs two rhetorical strategies: (1) on four occasions he uses the anaphoric definite article (ἡ) to refer to "this day"; and (2) in the last four he uses nouns to depict "this day" (*ἡμέρα*: feminine), which have the feminine ending - *τρια*. Hearers of the homily would certainly have noticed the rhetorical effect. Early on, Greek could indicate a male or female agent with the ending - *τηρ* (also - *της*). Later a feminine form was developed (-*τειρα*, - *τρίς*, - *τρια*). See Aubineau, SC 187:330 n. 20. The four feminine nouns are quite rare. Liddell-Scott lists only two instances of *ἡ καλλωπίστρια* (Musonius; Plutarch). The masculine form *ὁ καλλωπιστής* is listed once in Lampe and twice in Liddell-Scott. Neither lexicon lists *ἡ διαμερίστρια* (although Liddell-Scott has one example of *μερίστρια* and another of *συμμερίστρια*). The term *γαλακτοδότρια* seems to be a creation of the homilist (Lampe gives one instance of the verb, *γαλακτοδοτέω*). The reference may be to the custom of giving milk and honey to the newly baptized. See Tertullian, "Against Marcion" in *Patrologia cursus completus: Series latina,* 217 vols., ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1844–1864), vol. 1:455, I.14; cf. 1 Peter 2:2. For further references, see Aubineau, SC 187:331 n. 24. The term *ἡ οἰκονομήτρια* is also unique to this passage.

[15] The "spiritual lamb" (*ὁ λογικὸς ἀμνός*) refers to the eucharistic lamb, whose Old Testament type was that slain in Egypt to ward off the angel of death (Exod 12:1–11).

[16] Here also the homilist gives a repetition of structure: *μή . . . ἀλλά* (not . . . but). Paschal celebration at times degenerated into immoderate behavior. Eventually, the *Codex Theodosianum* proscribed profane celebrations during Pascha (see Aubineau, SC 187:333 n. 27).

This is a day of resurrection, not of excess. No one goes up to heaven while dancing; no one takes his place beside the king while intoxicated. Therefore, let no one of us dishonor this day, which has been prefigured long ago through the law (*τυπωθεῖσαν*); which has been announced with a promise (*ἐπαγγελθεῖσαν*); which has been proclaimed through the prophetic voice (*κηρυχθεῖσαν*); which has been expected through the promise given to the fathers (*προσδοκηθεῖσαν*); which has been fulfilled through the seeing of the apostles (*πληρωθεῖσαν*); which has been received through the faith of the church (*προσδεχθεῖσαν*).[17]

3. This is the day: in which Adam was set free;[18] in which Eve was delivered from her grief; in which savage death shuddered;[19] in which the power of the mighty stones was undone, having been broken asunder, and the iron bars of the tombs, having been torn apart, were removed;[20] in which the bodies of those who had died long ago were handed over to their former life; in which the laws of the powers of the underworld, throughout time both strong and firm, were abrogated; in which the heavens were opened, since Christ, the Lord, was risen from [the dead]; in which the goodly and fruitful [tree] of the resurrection has sprouted, as in a garden, throughout the world, for the race of men;[21] in which the lilies of the newly

[17] Here, too, the repetitive structure for rhetorical purposes is easily seen: (1) the homilist uses six anaphoric definite articles (*τήν* "which") referring to "this day"; and (2) "this day" is described by six aorist passive participles, each ending in -*θεῖσαν*, which summarize "this day" throughout the economy of salvation: law, prophets, fathers, apostles, church.

[18] The homilist now gives a litany of the beneficial effects associated with the day of resurrection. Each item is introduced by the relative pronoun *ἐν ᾗ*. Again the rhetorical effect of the repetition would be striking and effective. The liberation of the first man from Hades was a common theme of Holy Saturday.

[19] Greek: *ὁ ἀνήμερος θάνατος ἔφριξεν*. The verb *φρίσσειν* ("to shake," "to shudder") occurs frequently in texts describing the effect of Jesus' *descensus* on death or on the demons. See Aubineau, SC 187:335 n. 33.

[20] The reference of this line and the following line is to Matthew 27:51–52. Usually the bars of iron were associated with Hades, as with a prison gate. For example, John Chrysostom's sermon *On the Name 'Koimeterion' and On the Cross of Our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ*: "Today our Sovereign patrols all the regions of Hades. Today he has smashed the bronze gates. Today he has crushed the iron bars. Behold the precision of the speech. It did not say, 'He opened the bronze gates,' but 'He smashed the bronze gates' in order that the prison might become unserviceable. He did not remove the bars; he crushed them in order that the prison might become ineffectual" (PG 49:394–395). In orthodox iconography, the resurrected Christ is depicted coming from his tomb triumphant, his feet standing upon the bronze gates of Hades, now broken and shattered but formed in the shape of a cross to indicate how they were shattered. Here the iron bars are of the tomb. The image reinforces the idea that death is implacable and strong. Only the power of the resurrection can smash the bars and open the tomb, that is, release the dead from death.

[21] The Greek of the first phrase: *τὸ τῆς ἀναστάσεως εὐθαλὲς καὶ εὔκαρπον*. I have interpreted this to refer to the resurrection as the tree of life in the new garden of paradise. The phase "as in a garden" seems to suggest such an image.

enlightened have sprung up;[22] in which the rivers of sinful men have dried up; in which the strength of the devil has been disabled; in which the ranks of the demons have been made to scatter; in which the mob of the Jews have been put to shame; in which the ranks of the faithful rejoice; in which the crowns of the martyrs sprout afresh.[23] Therefore, "this is the day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it," by the grace of Christ, who by his resurrection has enlightened the whole world of men "which sat in darkness and the shadow of death,"[24] with whom may glory and worship be to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit unto the ages of ages. Amen.

William C. Weinrich
Translator

[22] The image of the newly baptized as lilies occurs elsewhere. For example, Proclus, *Homily* 12 *On the Resurrection of Our Lord, Jesus Christ*: "The lilies of the baptismal font are shining. Stars appeared from the waters" (*Homilies*, 168). See also Aubineau, SC 187:336 n. 39.

[23] The image is that of a crown of laurel leaves and flowers given to the victor of a battle or sports event such as wrestling. In their deaths, the martyrs gave witness to the victory of Christ over death. Thus in the Christian celebration of the Pascha, the victory crown of the martyr is, as it were, sprouting new leaves. See Aubineau, SC 187:337 n. 42.

[24] Psalm 107:10; cf. Matthew 4:16.

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Book Reviews

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Senkbeil, Harold L. *Christ and Calamity: Grace and Gratitude in the Darkest Valley*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020. Digital (Logos Edition) $5.99; Paperback $8.99.

Harold L. Senkbeil, author most recently of *Christ and Calamity: Grace and Gratitude in the Darkest Valley*, is a pastors' pastor. At *CTQ*'s invitation, I am happy to provide this brief review of this timely book, calling your pastoral attention to the manner in which this pastors' pastor encourages and equips us to provide pastoral care in times of calamity, that is, during times of unusual and widespread upset and suffering.

I shall also raise two questions about this timely little book. I have one question regarding our pastoral disposition toward the Chinese Virus or Covid-19 calamity, which I will pose but not dwell on. I have a second question regarding a noteworthy editorial deficiency in this must-read book, which I will elaborate for a paragraph or two. I am working from the PDF version of Senkbeil's book, the free version of *Christ and Calamity* widely available early in the summer of 2020.

This book exhibits an experienced writer's mind at work in concert with a profoundly pastoral heart. You can see this for yourself by perusing the warmly personal opening section, which is actually the author's entire book in a nutshell. In fact, the opening pages are a warm, personal summary of the pastors' pastor that many, many of us know Hal Senkbeil to be from his lifetime of service in our LCMS ministerium, also at both of our seminaries, and at the helm of DOXOLOGY: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel; thanks be to God!

A pastors' pastor is speaking to pastors and readers everywhere. Here is his professor-author's Lutheran mind at work: "But here's the thing about faith. What matters isn't the amount of faith we have; it's the object of our faith" (9). Here is his pastor's heart, open for all to see:

> I've seen a lot of suffering in my time. I've been at the bedside of parishioners in agony; I've wrapped my arms around believers collapsing in anguish. I've kept vigil at deathbeds. Once I carried the coffin of a full-term stillborn baby to its tiny grave, grief-stricken parents and clueless young siblings trailing behind me. I've already told you of the chronic physical pain endured daily by both my precious bride and my dearest friend. (18)

While sampling the opening of *Christ and Calamity*, be sure to note that "this is not a book about the coronavirus or the COVID-19 pandemic [but] about you and God—and how you relate to him in times of calamity" (7). This is what our pastor-author delivers in "the eleven, short chapters of this book . . . How you can trust [the LORD God] even when it seems like he's untrustworthy" (7).

Finally, two questions for further thought and discussion as you read and share this pastoral gem. First, even though *Christ and Calamity* is "not a book about the coronavirus or the COVID-19 pandemic," it obliges us to ask nonetheless, "*Where can we find care and counsel for the pastoral care calamity generated by the government mandates and social pressures that have led to suffering souls being deprived of their pastor's presence and means of grace ministry to them in nursing homes, hospices and hospitals?* I have no disagreement at all with Senkbeil's choice to address people suffering in the midst of various personal or family calamities, and the pastors who minister to them. But, strictly speaking, the title term *calamity* evokes wholesale upset and suffering at a national or worldwide level. It's also at the level of wholesale calamity that pastors and congregations need Christ and his word. No pastor worth his salt is going to accept a temporary situation, much less a "new normal" in which senior saints, disabled children of God, and others facing death and suffering are isolated from word and sacrament in their hour of greatest need, preparing for life eternal. But, how to navigate this, as dual citizens? As I say, *Christ and Calamity*, in the very wording of its title, evokes an additional and urgently-needed pastoral care discussion, above and beyond what this book addresses.

Second, while *Christ and Calamity* is indeed rich in verbatim Scripture passages, the very means of ministry (think of the *nisi per Verbum* of our Lutheran *Apology*, Article 4), it is impoverished in regard to the links, the references, the names of authors who can tutor the caring pastor in the how and why of implementing the kind of authentic pastoral care that the author outlines and exemplifies so well. Although it includes a (very) few footnotes, we have to ask, *Where are the footnotes and references to enable readers to learn what the author means by his brief references to evil, to suffering, and to the psalms of lament?*

For example, in his opening pages, Senkbeil counsels us, "Instead of whining, try lamenting. Have you noticed that in the Bible's hymnbook, the Psalms, roughly a third are songs of lament" (12), and then quotes opening verses and excerpts from a few of the psalms of lament. For another example, in his brief chapter "When You Are Weak, Christ Is Your Strength," he alludes to Jeremiah and his book of Lamentations (written during a wholesale, national calamity in the sixth century BC) and provides a few brief excerpts.

In its broader, real-life context, the tutoring and footnotes for the lamenting and suffering mentioned in *Christ and Calamity* began in 2008 and continue today in the curricula and seminars of DOXOLOGY: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel. Sessions on suffering and lengthy lessons on using the psalms and other biblical chapters of lament for pastoral care have featured in the training and mentoring of about 15 percent of our church body's pastors thus far, in addition to pastors and church leaders from other denominations around the world. Nevertheless, whether in PDF or in any other format or medium, books on this central pastoral care issue of suffering and lamenting can and must start to make up for what I have called "the lamentable lacuna" that Ronald Rittgers has diagnosed authoritatively in *The Reformation of Suffering.*[1]

Parish pastors on the front lines of pastoral care—not to mention our deaconesses, laboring for Christ and us in the homes, hospitals, and hospices of our world with those who are suffering and dying—deserve to have more available to them than a small handful of seminary professors talking about Oswald Bayer's case for a theology of lament. Consider, for example, John T. Pless, et al., *Promising Faith for a Ruptured Age: An English-Speaking Appreciation of Oswald Bayer.*[2] Pastors, deaconesses, and all Christian caregivers should be provided with the footnotes and links to genuine theology-of-the-cross authors and highly regarded online authorities such as Emily Cook, author of *Weak and Loved: A Mother-Daughter Love Story.*[3]

Christ and Calamity is another gem for Christ's church and her pastors and caregivers from Harold Senkbeil, a true pastors' pastor. I have my free PDF version, but I'm planning to wait until Lexham Press provides us with the footnoted, fuller edition, presenting Senkbeil's pastoral wisdom *along with the leads, the links, the names—the ways to implement in the field what Hal urges so winsomely in his book*—before buying my own copy, and then buying a few extra copies to give to my pastor and deaconess friends.

Gregory P. Schulz
Professor of Philosophy
Concordia University Wisconsin

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[1] Please see my essay, "Our Lamentable Lacuna: How Western Churches Have Undermined the Plausibility of Christian Faith," in *LOGIA: A Journal of Lutheran Theology*, XXVIII, no. 1 (Epiphany 2019): 7–14.

[2] John T. Pless, et al., eds., *Promising Faith for a Ruptured Age: An English-Speaking Appreciation of Oswald Bayer* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2019).

[3] Emily Cook, *Weak and Loved: A Mother-Daughter Love Story* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012).

Apostolic Agenda: The Epistles of the Holy Apostle Paul to Titus and Philemon. **By Friedrich Balduin. Translated from the Latin by Eric G. Phillips (Titus) and James L. Langebartels (Philemon). Historical Introduction by Benjamin T. G. Mayes. Fort Wayne, IN: Emmanuel Press, 2020. 264 + xxiii pages. Paperback. $24.00.**

Apostolic Agenda: The Epistles of the Holy Apostle Paul to Titus and Philemon is the first full work of the Lutheran casuist Friedrich Balduin (AD 1575–1627) to be translated into English by two Lutheran pastors at home in the Latin of the early seventeenth century. The Master of Divinity class of 2020 at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, was motivated to commission the translation of this work as their class gift, and they were soon joined by the Alternate Route class of 2019 and deaconess students in various degree tracks (xxii; for all the students involved, see "Patrons of This Translation," vii). Benjamin Mayes ought to be commended for heading up this project, dealing with all the intricacies of translating and editing involved, working directly with student leaders from beginning to end, and writing the Historical Introduction, which orients modern readers to the life of Friedrich Balduin (ix–xi), his writings (xi–xiv), the exegetical literature of Lutheran Orthodoxy (xiv–xviii), and exegetical methods used (xviii–xxii).

I was most eager to compare Balduin's treatment of Philemon to my own, prepared some time ago for the Concordia Commentary Series (John G. Nordling, *Philemon* [St. Louis: Concordia, 2004]). Like many conservative commentators still today, Balduin holds that this shortest epistle was really authored by the apostle Paul and that Onesimus was a runaway slave (Latin *fugitivus*) who stole from his master Philemon before fleeing from Colossae to Rome in the mid-first century AD (208–209)—all points challenged by moderns to greater or lesser extent. Mayes is of the opinion that Balduin wrote his commentaries on Titus and Philemon as a result of "academic disputations" (xviii). Thus, he divides each chapter with a simple two-part outline, provides the Greek text with his translation in Latin alongside the Greek, and then adds an "Analysis and Explication" wherein is furnished the context of each verse, parallels to other biblical passages, geography, history (as appropriate), and word definitions—often with reference to classical and patristic literature. Next come "Questions" with their answers, wherein Balduin grapples with apparent contradictions between the text and other passages of Scripture, or the received Evangelical Lutheran doctrine. Finally, there are "Theological Aphorisms," which are things to be believed and done (*credenda et agenda*) as drawn from the text. Balduin follows this pattern of explication for both Titus (1–207) and Philemon (208–251). Again, the translation reads well, and one's sense is that all textual matters are dealt with satisfactorily in the commentaries of these two Pauline letters.

Mayes avers that the literature of Lutheran Orthodoxy has received a bad rap for being rigid, scholastic, and overly given to dogmatic assent (xv). Balduin's masterful writing proves, however, that the common complaints cannot be justified. Whereas many of today's commentaries rely on the exegetical insights of earlier commentaries prone (in many cases) to historical criticism and other harmful influences, Balduin's work more often relies upon the ancient and Lutheran church fathers, classical sources, or, indeed, parallel Scripture passages that arise from the theologian's command of the biblical evidence. (Of course, Balduin also engages hostile interpreters and false doctrine, for such "rebuking" is necessary for the propagation of the true doctrine [2 Tim 3:16].) Still, all Balduin's interpretations are noteworthy for their soundness—that is, for their ongoing pertinence to the church's faith and life, and not for novelty or idiosyncrasy. I predict that Balduin's faithfully sound exegesis will enliven the teaching and preaching of many Lutheran pastors today who use this marvelous translation in the course of their ministries.

John G. Nordling

***The Theology of the Cross: Reflections on His Cross and Ours.* By Daniel M. Deutschlander. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2008. 283 pages. $20.99.**

The phrase "theology of the cross" came into prominence through Gerhard Forde's contribution to the 1984 Braaten-Jenson *Christian Dogmatics* with his redefinition that the "atonement occurs when God succeeds in getting through to us who live under wrath and law. God is satisfied, placated, when his move toward us issues in faith" (47). Atonement did not occur with the Son offering himself as a sacrifice to the Father at Golgotha, but it happens in preaching. Not a past event, atonement continues to happen when preaching effects faith. Though unintended, Wisconsin Synod pastor Daniel M. Deutschland provides an antidote to Forde's definition, though his sights are set on combatting an evangelicalism that wants American Christians "to be healthy, wealthy, and wise" (vi) without suffering and self-denial. There is a correlation between Christ's cross and ours, but his was imposed by God as atonement for sin and is redemptive (22). Ours is self-generated and paradoxical in that the God who promises salvation also allows sorrows and calamities to come into our lives (33–64). Essential to the biblical theology of the cross offered by Deutschland is that without atonement there is no justification, and absolution becomes meaningless.

In contrast to the now popular theology of Forde and his disciples James Nestingen and Steven Paulson, a theology which is based largely on the early Luther, Deutschland writes a biblical theology in a style accessible to the laity. In line with the Northwestern Publishing House's Impact Series, he writes for believers who are perplexed that the God who promises good things allows one sorrow after another. In an appendix, Deutschland cites Hermann Sasse, who said that up until the Middle Ages the cross was presented as a symbol of glory, as it still is in Orthodoxy (223–226). A seismic change occurred when Anselm developed the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement, a view that came to be adopted by Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformed theologians. Deutschland's clear-cut, straightforward presentation of the biblical theology of the cross is a remedy for false views and a reminder of how Christ's death of sins as the true theology of the cross is the heart of the Christian faith.

David P. Scaer

***Nikolaus von Amsdorf: Champion of Martin Luther's Reformation.* By Robert Kolb. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2019. 216 pages. Softcover. $17.99.**

With the publication of Robert Kolb's *Nikolaus von Amsdorf: Champion of Martin Luther's Reformation*, Concordia Publishing House adds yet another significant biography to its impressive collection on Reformation figures. Amsdorf, who was a member of Dr. Martin Luther's inner circle at Wittenberg, is an important addition, and Kolb, considered the dean of Reformation scholars in North America, is certainly the best person for the task.

Kolb has been working with Amsdorf for more than fifty years. The book, a reworking of his thesis originally published in 1978, is four chapters long, including an introduction that is especially helpful for those who are either unfamiliar with or have forgotten this colleague and friend of Luther's. Amsdorf, who was a nobleman, was born three weeks after Luther and outlived the reformer by almost two decades. He is credited in part with saving Luther's Reformation legacy.

The first chapter tells the story of Amsdorf's life as student, as professor, and later as church superintendent and bishop. Amsdorf, who was already at the University of Wittenberg when Luther arrived, became convinced of Luther's theology and teaching before the posting of the Ninety-Five Theses. He was a gifted pastor who had the ability to make clear to common people the gospel and the new evangelical teaching coming out of Wittenberg. He would eventually be called to establish the Reformation in the important city of Magdeburg.

The other three chapters focus in on the controversies over original sin, freedom of the will, justification, good works, third use of the law, election, and adiaphora, especially as they developed between the Gnesio-Lutheran and Philippist parties. (These two parties are briefly described in the introduction.) Later, in what are specifically known as the Adiaphoristic, Majoristic, and Synergistic Controversies, Amsdorf presented and defended Luther's teaching in the Formula of Concord. This places him among the orthodox theologians who staunchly sought to preserve Luther's theology and Reformation.

Luther once praised Amsdorf's preaching, describing him as a natural theologian. But it was after Luther's death that he really shined. Kolb concludes that although Amsdorf was not the genius Luther was, he was key in preserving Luther's message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and that he remained constant in that confession.

As a biography of one of the Wittenberg reformers, and because of his defense of the gospel and involvement in the later controversies, this book on Amsdorf's life is both interesting and helpful to pastors, who are often called to be faithful in the midst of controversy. The book is also highly recommended as a closer look at the controversies that resulted in the Formula of Concord. It is further recommended to the interested reader of the Reformation.

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***Reading the Epistle of James.* Edited by Eric F. Mason and Darian R. Lockett. Atlanta, Georgia: SBL Press, 2019. 342 pages. Paperback. $18.95.**

With the publication of *Reading the Epistle of James*, we have come one step closer to breaking free from Luther's verdict that it was an epistle of straw, *strohern Epistel*, spoken by the reformer about a document he considered canonical yet did not conform to his law-gospel schema. Commentaries on James almost as a rite of passage take note of Luther's view that it is a "strawy epistle." Jason D. Lane in his published doctoral dissertation, *Luther's Epistle of Straw: The Voice of St. James in Reformation Preaching* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018), shows how Lutheran preachers soon made amends in their sermons on James 1:16–21 and 22–27. A comprehensive approach is provided in the sixteen essays in *Reading the Epistle of James*, to which the editors provide a helpful introduction to prepare the readers for what is in store for them.

Problematic in coming to terms with James is the lack of anything resembling a consensus on authorship. Like bookends on a shelf, authorship on one side is ascribed to the Lord's brother and on the other end to an anonymous figure several centuries later, and thus any agreed conclusions to its meaning are illusive. Richard Bauckham lays out parallels between Jesus' sayings in Matthew and Luke, but he does not specify the form in which James came to know them (9–26). In referring to Old Testament figures, Eric F. Mason weaves Old Testament and non-biblical Jewish themes in the author's exhortations to Christians (27–43). An intriguing chapter is provided by Matt Jackson-McCabe in showing that this most Jewish of New Testament books is fluent in Hellenistic rhetoric (45–71). Benjamin Wold holds to a common view that James is wisdom literature (73–86), and while recognizing this, Luke Cheung and Kevin Yu propose it can also be understood as a diaspora letter (87–98). Duane F. Watson takes to task Adolf Deissmann's comments that James is non-literary work, a comment which echoes Luther's assessment that it lacks order (99–115). Remaining chapters take up topics found in James such as God, devils, salvation, and riches and poverty (117–175). Two essays look at James from a sociological aspect (177–207). An essay on the textual criticism of James will be appreciated by those equipped in the mechanics of this discipline (209–229). In the first of the last three essays, John Painter makes a convincing case that the author of the epistle is the brother of the Lord (231–251). Next Darien R. Lockett surveys how James was received in the early church (253–271). In the capstone essay, Stephen J. Chester contrasts Catholic and Lutheran uses of James to advance their understanding of justification and how in the end Luther found a way to conform it to his overriding principle of the law and the gospel (273–289).

As I read through the essays, I came to a composite view that the epistle was written by one familiar with the preaching of Jesus. His profound theology was expressed in the style of Hellenistic rhetoric without compromising his native Jewishness. It was intended as an epistle to despondent Christians displaced from their Jerusalem. Peter H. Davids in "The Good God and the Reigning Lord" recognizes an early trinitarian theology in the epistle now known as binitarian in that the Son shares in the Father's deity (117–128). A theme in James that needs development is its Christology, which embodies the humiliation Jesus expressed in the Gospels by his self-designation as the Son of Man. In preaching on James, the pastor has to cut through the interpretative barnacles to get to the hull. Scraping has begun by the contributors. We can continue the task by not repeating in any sermon, Bible class, or other lecture on James, as flashy as it is, Luther's assessment that James is an epistle of straw. James is a work of theological and rhetorical brilliance and pathos for struggling believers facing persecution.

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