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How Is Theology a *Habitus*? Voices from the Past and Why It Matters Today
Glenn K. Fluegge

Exemplar Paterfamilias: Moses' Divine *Vocatio* and His Resistance in Sixteenth-Century Lutheran Exegesis
Christopher D. Durham

Theodosius Harnack and Confessional Subscription
James Ambrose Lee II

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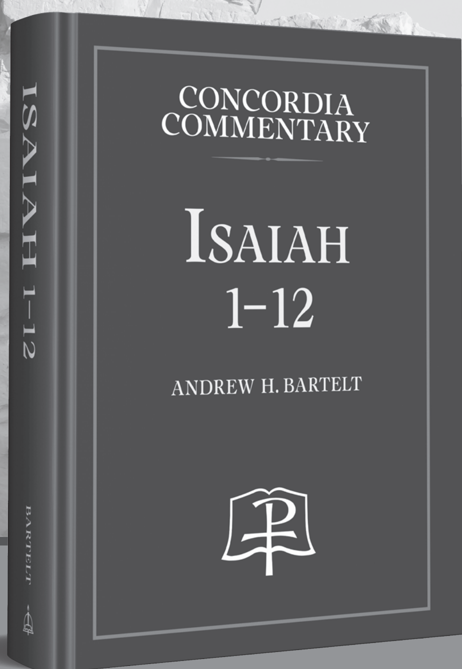

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How Is Theology a *Habitus*? Voices from the Past and Why It Matters Today

Glenn K. Fluegge

In the first volume of his *Christian Dogmatics*, Francis Pieper defines theology as a *habitus*.[1] With this definition, Pieper hearkens back to the "old theologians" from the seventeenth century and follows in their footsteps. This habitual definition of theology has become normative and is often taken as a given in Lutheran circles.

But it was not always so. That definition of theology only entered into Lutheranism a century after Luther famously nailed the ninety-five theses on the Castle Church door. And it only did so with some major misgivings that caused serious contention and led to what came to be known as the *Habitus* Controversy within Lutheranism. Those misgivings revolved around the misunderstandings that could so easily arise from the wholesale adoption of an Aristotelian concept into the field of theology.

Moreover, after its widespread adoption by the seventeenth-century Protestant theologians, it once again fell out of use, especially with the emergence and subsequent prominence of theological encyclopedias during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the view of theology as *Wissenschaft* ("academic discipline"). It resurfaced and gained renewed prominence within mainstream Protestantism in the second half of the twentieth century, in part due to Edward Farley's seminal study on theological education in the 1980s, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*. In an effort to overcome the compartmentalization of theological education into wholly distinct and separate disciplines, Farley likened the study of theology to a paideia, cultivating a theological *habitus* within the theologian.[2] Richard Muller, a historian specializing in Reformed theology during the Age of Orthodoxy, agreed with Farley in emphasizing the formation of a theological disposition as an integral part of theological study, despite his serious reservations about Farley's attempt to find theology's unity in that subjective disposition and while also much more favorably inclined toward the prevailing fourfold model of

[1] Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 44, 46.

[2] Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 152–153, 179–181.

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theological studies.[3] Subsequently, the influential study published in 2006 by the Carnegie Institute, *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination*, also made use of the concept of *habitus*, arguing that "seminary educators seek to form dispositions and the intuitive knowledge, or habitus, of a given religious or intellectual tradition in students."[4] In more recent years, this habitual definition of theology seems to have influenced the work of Eileen R. Campbell-Reed and the Learning Pastoral Imagination project, a national, ecumenical, longitudinal study of ministry in the United States, launched in 2009 and currently ongoing.[5] It seems, therefore, that a habitual understanding of theology has, once again, gained popularity.

This rise in popularity coincides with sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's use of the Aristotelian concept in the field of sociology.[6] Bourdieu used the term *habitus* to describe the habits, skills, and dispositions an individual acquires throughout one's life as a result of the process of socialization that shapes one's thought and action. His social theory involving the concept of *habitus* has had a widespread influence in many fields, including that of theology and theological education. For example, the Carnegie Foundation study on *Educating Clergy* seems to draw from this socio-

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[3] Richard A. Muller, *The Study of Theology: From Biblical Interpretation to Contemporary Formulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 29–32.

[4] Charles R. Foster et al., *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination* (Stanford, CA: Carnegie Foundation for Advancement in Teaching, 2006), 23.

[5] Learning Pastoral Imagination Project, https://pastoralimagination.com/. See, e.g., Eileen Campbell-Reed's explanation in an interview in 2021 about "pastoral imagination": "It is skilled practice. . . . We've made the connection to Aristotle's idea of phronesis. Phronesis is practical wisdom. Pastoral imagination is a way of being a minister or pastor that sees into the fullness of a situation and knows what to do and takes a risk and does it." Eileen R. Campbell-Reed and Jessica L. Anschutz, "Cultivating and Nurturing Pastoral Imagination," Lewis Center for Church Leadership, August 3, 2021, https://www.churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/cultivating-and-nurturing-pastoral-imagination/.

Note that *phronesis*, according to Aristotle, is one of the five intellectual *habitus*, or virtues. There was much debate at the beginning of the seventeenth century over which of Aristotle's *habitus* most closely characterized theology. While a few Protestant theologians (e.g., Keckermann) suggested *phronesis*, most rejected it because, according to Aristotle, *phronesis* did not deal with ultimate foundational principles, which proves problematic for theology and its focus on God and divine matters. See Glenn K. Fluegge, *Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) and the Conceptualization of* Theologia *at the Threshold of the "Age of Orthodoxy": The Making of the Theologian* (Göttingen: Ruprecht, 2018), 114–119.

[6] He developed his theory of *habitus* in several works. See, e.g., Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977). For a helpful introduction to Bourdieu's social theory, see Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu* (London: Routledge, 1992). Bourdieu was certainly not the first to use the concept of the *habitus* in the fields of psychology and sociology, but he is the one who developed it more fully and popularized it. For a brief history of the term over the last few centuries, see Gisèle Sapiro, "Habitus: History of a Concept," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behaviorial Sciences,* 2nd ed., vol. 10, ed. James D. Wright (Oxford: Elsevier, 2015), 484–489.

logical understanding of *habitus*.[7] In fact, habitual understandings of theology nowadays often seem more influenced by Bourdieu's sociological use of that term and less by the original Aristotelian usage of it by the seventeenth-century theologians.

This is problematic for a number of reasons. First of all, it seems to have contributed to some confusion and misunderstanding about the Aristotelian concept of *habitus* itself. Bourdieu's influential use of *habitus* linked it to his theory of *practice*,[8] potentially leading some contemporary theologians to assume anachronistically that the old seventeenth-century theologians were emphasizing theology's practical nature over its speculative or contemplative nature when they labeled it as a *habitus*. This misunderstanding often manifests in two ways. Some mistakenly assume that the old theologians used the term *habitus*, in and of itself, to refer to a kind of affective pastoral disposition rather than a mere speculative pursuit, while others erroneously assume that they used it in an effort to emphasize the technical skills needed for ministry. However, neither of these is the case. According to the Aristotelian framework within which those old theologians were operating, a *habitus* could be speculative just as well as practical, depending on the particular *habitus*. Thus, a theological *habitus*, in and of itself, could very well be a contemplative matter, just as much as it could be a practical matter. It depended on which *habitus* one was talking about. As we will see below, it was this very ambiguity that prompted the seventeenth-century Protestant theologians to debate precisely which type of *habitus* most accurately characterized theology. Many Lutheran theologians, in particular, ultimately concluded that it was not just any *habitus* but specifically a practical one. This distinction is one of the reasons Pieper also emphasizes that the theological *habitus* must be understood as a *spiritual habitus*.[9]

Second, Bourdieu's sociological influence on a habitual understanding of theology may also be problematic theologically. As some theologians have noted, the focus on a subjective disposition shaped by mere sociological factors may neglect the role of the Holy Spirit in the shaping of the theologian.[10] This has traditionally been a concern for many within the Christian tradition. It echoes similar objections raised by certain theologians during the *Habitus* Controversy within Lutheranism four centuries ago. As we will see below, they were cautious of defining theology as a *habitus*, fearing that it could overemphasize human effort in theological pursuits and lead to theological synergism. Those theologians who eventually embraced the term took deliberate steps to modify its usage to mitigate this potential danger.

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[7] Foster et al., *Educating Clergy*, 23.

[8] He develops it most cogently in Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977).

[9] Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 1:46.

[10] Christopher Craig Brittain, "Can a Theology Student be an Evil Genius? On the Concept of Habitus in Theological Education," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60, no. 4 (Nov. 2007): 142.

Third, when applied to theology, such a sociological definition may not give enough attention to the objective, normative nature of theology rooted in Scripture.[11] This, too, has been an important concern for many within Christianity throughout the ages. It raises important questions: What serves as the norm for theological truth? What serves as the standard for Christian morality, or what the old theologians called godliness or piety? Does it pay enough "critical attention to the limitations and blind spots" of the various social milieux?[12] If theological knowledge is seen purely as a social construct, how does it relate to faith and piety? Although long before the rise of sociology as a discipline, the seventeenth-century theologians wrestled with similar questions in their own contexts as they grappled with whether and to what extent one could understand theology as a *habitus*. As we will see below, in the early seventeenth century, of particular concern was this last question over the relation between theology and faith and piety. Could one be a theologian apart from genuine faith and the consequent life of faith? While no one endorsed such a notion, some argued that a *habitus* view of theology might inadvertently allow for it. Again, efforts were made to address and rectify any such potential misunderstandings. These insights may prove helpful in contemporary discussions.

What follows lays out the history of this term *habitus* within Lutheran theological circles, tracing its usage through the Reformation via Melanchthon, who favored it, and Luther, who avoided it, through the *Habitus* Controversy of the early seventeenth century and Johann Gerhard's conciliatory solution, and through the later seventeenth-century theologians König, Calov, and Quenstedt, who fully embraced it. The purpose here is to get at that question: What precisely do Lutheran theologians mean when they say that theology is a *habitus*?

Melanchthon's Use of the Idea of *Habitus*

Philip Melanchthon, trained in Aristotelian rhetorical and logical categories, was very interested in the concept of *habitus*. He rarely uses the idea, however, in his theological writings.[13] He does give a full and detailed explanation of the term in

[11] Muller, *Study of Theology*, 32–37.

[12] Brittain, "Evil Genius," 142. For a related critique of Farley's habitual solution, see Muller, *Study of Theology*, 26–41.

[13] For example, he mentions *habitus* in the earlier editions of his *Loci Communes* (Commonplaces) but only in passing. In the 1535 edition he stresses that faith includes a knowledge component (*notitia*) and adds that it also includes the "*habitus* or action of the will by which it wills to receive the promise of Christ" (Philip Melanchthon, *Loci Communes [1535]*, in *Corpus Reformatorum*, 28 vols., ed. K. G. Bretschneider et al. [Brunswick: Schwetschke et filium, 1834–60], 21:422 [hereafter cited as *CR*]). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. In the later 1559 edition he avoids the term, but in an appendix of "Definitions of Terms" he does identify faith as a "virtue/power of laying hold of the promises and applying them to oneself" (Philip Melanchthon, *Loci Communes [1559]*, in *CR* 21:751; translated as Philip Melanchthon, *The Chief Theological*

his undergraduate philosophy textbook, *Erotemata Dialectices* (Questions of logic).[14] The textbook was immensely popular and shaped the thinking of Protestant university students well into the early seventeenth century.[15] Following Aristotle's lead, Melanchthon defines a *habitus* as "a quality developed from frequent actions in people by which they can accomplish correctly and easily those actions which are controlled and assisted by their own *habitus*."[16] He then gives a concrete example. The painter Lucas Cranach possesses the *habitus* of painting. Of course, he acquired this *habitus* of painting by painting frequently so that he could paint more easily and better than other novice painters. It is important to note that a *habitus*, derived from the Latin verb *habeo* and translated from the Greek verb ἔχω, denotes a "having" or "possession" (hence, we refer to a monk's cowl as a habit), and a person gets it by frequently repeating the action that is to arise from the *habitus*. In other words, a person has to work at it. For example, the soldier comes to possess the *habitus* of bravery by frequently and repeatedly performing brave acts. One can also see from this example that *habitus* are what we often call "dispositions," or, better yet, "virtues." Furthermore, Aristotle had recognized that the various kinds of things one can assert about a thing can be divided into a number of different categories such as substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, etc.[17] Like Aristotle before him, Melanchthon distinctly classifies *habitus* in the category of "quality." In other words, when one says, "This man is brave," one is claiming that the man possesses an internal quality of bravery and, if bravery is indeed a *habitus*, then the man has attained that internal quality by repeatedly working on it. Although this makes sense in day-to-day life, one can already see how the Aristotelian concept of *habitus*

Topics: "Loci Praecipui Theologici" 1559, 2nd ed., trans. J. A. O. Preus [St. Louis: Concordia, 2011], 158.) The passing reference is significant because virtues were *habitus* in the Aristotelian schema. Additionally, when defining *notitiae habituales* in the "Definition of Terms" of the 1553 edition, Melanchthon admits that "the obscurity concerning habits is great," and then adds that in the reborn "'virtue' can be called either the Holy Spirit himself or an emotion that springs from him. You see, the Creator must be distinguished from creation" (Melanchthon, *Chief Theological Topics*, 530–531). One can see here the potential problem of the concept of *habitus* and the possible connection with what would shortly become the Synergistic Controversy between the Philippists and the Gnesio-Lutherans.

[14] Philip Melanchthon, *Erotemata Dialectices*, in *CR* 13:507–752. For a deeper analysis of Melanchthon's explanation, see Fluegge, *Johann Gerhard,* 38–50.

[15] Günter Frank, "Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560): Reformer and Philosopher," trans. Brian McNeil, in *Philosophers of the Renaissance*, ed. Paul Richard (Washington, DC: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2010), 153. See also Joseph S. Freedman, "Aristotle and the Content of Philosophy Instruction at Central European Schools and Universities During the Reformation Era (1500–1650)," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 137, no. 2 (1993): 224.

[16] Melanchthon, *Erotemata Dialectices*, 535.

[17] See G. E. R. Lloyd, *Aristotle: The Growth and Structure of His Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968), 113.

would raise significant questions in the minds of the reformers when applied to theology.

There are many different kinds of *habitus*. Those of the body consist in exercise of the body, such as dancing or running. Melanchthon, however, is especially interested in the *habitus* of the soul. These *habitus* of the soul are often called virtues. And since Aristotelian psychology divided the soul into the intellect and the will, the *habitus* of the soul can be further divided into those of the intellect (intellectual virtues) and those of the will (moral virtues). With regard to the moral virtues, Melanchthon lays out a list similar to that of Aristotle but adds a few extra ones that are specifically "characteristic of the church of God."[18] Among these he lists "faith" (*fides*), more specifically defined as trust (*fiducia*). With regard to the intellect, Aristotle had set forth a list of the five intellectual virtues, or *habitus*: theoretical/transcendental wisdom (*σοφία* or *sapientia*), intuitive understanding (*νοῦς* or *intellectus*), syllogistic/scientific knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη* or *scientia*),[19] practical wisdom/prudence (*φρόνησις* or *prudentia*), and craftsmanship/artistry (*τέχνη* or *ars*).[20] Each denotes a particular way in which a person is able to know the truth about things. Melanchthon follows suit, although curiously leaving out theoretical wisdom (*sapientia*) and adding in historical faith (*fides*).[21] For both Aristotle and Melanchthon, if the moral *habitus* dispose a person to act morally and properly, the intellectual *habitus* dispose him or her to think rightly and properly. In other words, one cannot come to know something unless one first possesses the *habitus* for knowing it.

Regarding the intellectual virtues, one traditionally distinguished between the speculative intellectual *habitus* and the practical intellectual *habitus*. Theoretical wisdom (*sapientia*), understanding (*intellectus*), and scientific knowledge (*scientia*) were considered the speculative *habitus*. Practical wisdom (*prudentia*) and craftsmanship (*ars*) were considered the practical *habitus*. Especially noteworthy is the distinction between what makes a *habitus* speculative and what makes it practical. Aristotle was quite clear on this, and the early modern theologians adopted this same distinction. The distinction had to do with the kind of knowledge and the goal or

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[18] Melanchthon, *Erotemata Dialectices*, 538.

[19] I use the word "scientific" here as derived from the Latin term *scientia* in its original Aristotelian sense. Although often translated "science" in English, it does not at all refer to what have become known as the natural sciences. *Scientia* refers to the mental disposition or aptitude by which a person logically derives valid conclusions from first principles. It refers to the process of mental syllogistic analysis by which the mind infers truths from prior truths and, thus, extends one's knowledge.

[20] Aristotle lists and describes these *habitus* most clearly in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (see especially 11139b15–1140a23).

[21] It was quite common and considered an accepted practice for philosophers at this time to revise and adapt Aristotelian thought for their particular purposes and times. See Freedman, "Aristotle and the Content of Philosophy Instruction," 213–253.

purpose of that knowledge. The speculative *habitus* were those mental dispositions or aptitudes by which a person came to know "necessary truths"—that is, truths that cannot be otherwise. Moreover, the goal or purpose of the speculative *habitus* was the pure contemplation of those truths. In other words, the goal or end of this knowledge was found in the knowing of the knowledge itself. This was considered the highest and purest pursuit. The practical *habitus* were those mental dispositions by which a person came to know "contingent truths"—that is, truths that could be otherwise. Additionally, the goal or purpose of this knowledge was something beyond the mere contemplation of those truths. The practical *habitus* allowed a person to know a truth for the sake of acting in a certain way (practical wisdom, *prudentia*) or making certain things (craftsmanship, *ars*).

If one were to outline the various kinds of habitus according to Melanchthon, it would look something like this:

- I. *Habitus* of the body
- II. *Habitus* of the soul
    - A. *Habitus* of the intellect (which involve knowledge, reasoning, and understanding and lead to right thinking)
        - 1. Opinion
        - 2. Certain knowledge
            - a. Speculative intellectual *habitus* (which deal with knowledge of necessary truths for the sake of pure contemplation)
                - 1) *Sapientia* (theoretical wisdom)[22]
                - 2) *Intellectus* (intuitive understanding)
                - 3) *Scientia* (scientific knowledge)
            - b. Practical intellectual *habitus* (which deal with knowledge of contingent truths in order to act and to make things well)
                - 1) *Prudentia* (practical wisdom)
                - 2) *Ars* (craftsmanship)
                - 3) *Fides* (historical faith)
    - B. *Habitus* of the will (which involve the affections and lead to good behavior)
        - 1. Moral virtues
            - a. Faith (Christian)
            - b. Hope
            - c. Love

[22] Melanchthon omits *sapientia* from his schema of *habitus*. I have included it here to more accurately reflect Aristotle's schema and because of the central role it plays in later seventeenth-century debates over the nature of theology.

In all of Melanchthon's explanations of *habitus* in the sixteenth century, theology is never mentioned. But one can already see how later efforts in the seventeenth century to define theology as a *habitus* would have to deal with the question of how it related to Aristotle's schema. On the one hand, since the speculative *habitus* are the highest forms of knowledge and deal with necessary truths, would a theological *habitus* be mostly speculative? If so, how would one account for the fact that the Scriptures seem to emphasize the goal of salvation and good works, rather than mere contemplation? On the other hand, since the practical *habitus*, especially practical wisdom, would allow one to emphasize salvation and good works, would a theological *habitus* be mostly practical? If so, how would one account for the fact that theology seems to be the highest form of knowledge, since it deals with divine matters and necessary truths?

However, before the seventeenth-century theologians began to debate what kind of *habitus* theology was, a much more basic problem first needed to be addressed. Could the Aristotelian concept of *habitus*, in and of itself, be used in theology without undermining the foundational tenets of the Reformation? For this, we turn to Martin Luther.

Luther's Concern about the Concept of *Habitus*

While Melanchthon wholeheartedly embraces the idea of *habitus* in his philosophical works, Martin Luther tends to reject it in his theological lectures and writings. Much of this can be attributed to his approach to theology, succinctly summed up by the short phrase he scrawled on a scrap of paper shortly before his death: "We are beggars. This is true."[23] Although he was referring to the way in which one understands Scripture, Luther's last words also capture something fundamental about his approach to theology in general. Earlier in his *Lectures on Romans*, Luther had described the whole life of faith as "nothing else but prayer, seeking, and begging . . . always seeking and striving to be made righteous, even to the hour of death, never standing still, never possessing."[24] In other words, the life of faith is receptive, what he had elsewhere referred to as the *vita passiva*, the receptive life, whereby "God is the active subject and . . . humans simply 'suffer' (*passio*) or undergo his work."[25]

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[23] "Wir sind Bettler, Hoc est verum." Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke*: *Tischreden*, 6 vols. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1912–1921), 5:168.

[24] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans* (1515–1516), in *Luther's Works*, *American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1976), vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–1986), vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), 25:251–252 (hereafter cited as AE).

[25] Owsald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey G. Silcock and Mark C. Mattes (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 23; see also 21–24.

This runs fundamentally counter to the very idea of *habitus*, which describes a kind of "having" or "possessing" achieved through one's own diligent effort. On the contrary, faith is not as much about one's own having of divine things as it is about "God's having" of me.[26]

Hence, it comes as no surprise that Luther's use of and allusions to the Aristotelian idea of *habitus* tend to view it negatively, especially when used in specifically theological contexts.[27] This is mostly due to his concern that the concept itself runs counter to the very doctrine that the Reformation had rediscovered—that a person is justified by grace alone through faith alone.

Of the utmost concern was the idea of "infused righteousness" (*iustitia infusa*). Contrary to Aristotle, who viewed a *habitus* as an internal quality that one possessed, Luther insisted that Christian righteousness, by which a person is saved, is an external imputation: "It is a divine imputation or reckoning as righteousness or to righteousness, for the sake of our faith in Christ or for the sake of Christ. When the sophists hear this definition, they laugh; for they suppose that righteousness is a certain quality [i.e., *habitus*] that is first infused into the soul and then distributed through all the members."[28] Far from an intrinsic quality that one comes to possess through diligent practice and effort, early in his career, Luther had called it an "alien righteousness," since it belonged to Christ alone.[29] Later he settles on the term "passive righteousness," for by it "we only receive and permit someone else to work in us, namely God."[30] The idea of a "habitus of grace" (*habitus gratiae*) was problematic for similar reasons. Against the so-called scholastics who taught that "grace is a quality [i.e., *habitus*] hidden in the heart; if someone has it included in his heart like a jewel, God regards him, if he co-operates with his free will," the Augustinian monk insisted that "grace means the favor by which God accepts us, forgiving sins and justifying freely through Christ."[31] Grace is a disposition of God, not something we possess, whether or not it be divinely infused.

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[26] Gerhard Funke, "Gewohnheit," in *Archiv für Begriffgeschichte: Bausteine zu einem historischen Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 3 (Bonn: Bouvier, 1958), 194.

[27] This conclusion and the following discussion are drawn from a broad survey of Luther's comments throughout his writings about the theological use of the Aristotelian idea of *habitus*. At times, Luther refrains from using the term *habitus* itself but clearly refers to the Aristotelian concept of *habitus* by using related terms (e.g., *qualitas*). At other times, Luther uses the term *habitus* but in a way unrelated to the Aristotelian concept (e.g., clothing, general attitude). The research presented here focused mostly on the *American Edition* of Luther's works. A comprehensive analysis of the Latin term and its related German equivalents in the Weimar edition is still ongoing, but preliminary results confirm the conclusions presented here.

[28] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), in AE 26:233; see also 127–128. See also Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, 274.

[29] Martin Luther, *Two Kinds of Righteousness* (1519), in AE 31:297.

[30] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 4–5.

[31] Martin Luther, *Psalm 51* (1532), in AE 12:376–377.

While the refusal to label Christian righteousness and grace as *habitus* is understandable since they are external to the believer, less obvious is Luther's reluctance to use it in describing faith. After all, faith does actually reside within the soul, so the question of how it does so is a legitimate one. Nonetheless, Luther, for the most part, still hesitates to identify even faith as a *habitus*.[32] There seem to be at least two reasons for this. First, Luther insisted that we understand and encounter God in the category of "relation" as opposed to any of Aristotle's other categories: "If you depart from this God whom we are placing in the category of relation and investigate Him in the category of substance or quantity, you will be overwhelmed by His majesty. If you search for Him in the category of quality [e.g., *habitus*], you will be consumed. . . . Therefore stay with God in the category of relation."[33] As mentioned earlier, according to Aristotle, as well as Melanchthon, *habitus* were classified in the category of "quality"—that is, they were considered internal qualities of a person. Consequently, if faith were a *habitus*, then it would merely be an internal quality obtained by repeated practice. But, according to Luther, that will lead to the person being "consumed" because he or she is then dependent on the self. Rather, instead of encountering God through a personal quality such as one's own *habitus* of faith, Luther prefers explanations that tend to be more relational. For example, he remarks that faith "unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom. . . . It follows that everything they have they hold in common."[34] Elsewhere he associates faith with the gift of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within the believer.[35]

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[32] Luther is fairly consistent in avoiding scholastic language to describe faith. There are a few occasions where he does seem to acknowledge faith as a quality (i.e., *habitus*), but, as far as I can tell, these appear to be in passing and almost always in a context where the use of scholastic language is called for, for example, to refute the arguments of opponents (e.g., Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 132). In the academic context of his *Disputation concerning Justification*, he specifically denies that Scripture depicts righteousness, charity, or love as qualities but curiously leaves open the question of faith being a quality or *habitus* by simply saying that it is not a work (Martin Luther, *Disputation concerning Justification* [1536], in AE 34:168–169). In light of this and his enthusiastic support of Melanchthon's textbook *Erotemata Dialectices*, which clearly defined faith as a *habitus*, one could perhaps make the cautious case that Luther's reluctance to use the term to describe faith was more due to the scholastic misuse of the idea than to the terminology itself. In any case, Lutheran theologians in the following generations studiously avoided calling faith a *habitus* in theological contexts, probably because of its close association with the idea of infused righteousness and perhaps also due to the fallout after the synergistic controversies. Interestingly, while avoiding labeling faith as a *habitus* in theological contexts, some fully embraced doing so in other more philosophical contexts; see Kenneth G. Appold, *Abraham Calov's Doctrine of* Vocatio *in Its Systematic Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 156–157.

[33] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis* (1535–1545), in AE 3:122.

[34] Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520), in AE 31:344, 348–349; see also Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis* (1535–1545), in AE 5:38; and Luther, *Two Kinds of Righteousness*, 297.

[35] Martin Luther, *Treatise on Good Works* (1520), in AE 44:26.

But there is a second reason that Luther hesitates to identify faith as a *habitus*. The scholastics were used to viewing faith as inferior to the other virtues, especially that of love, claiming that faith is merely a formless and empty quality until it is informed and adorned by love.[36] For Luther, faith "is not an idle quality [i.e., *habitus*] or an empty husk in the heart," but true faith, as trust in the promises of God, "takes hold of Christ in such a way that Christ is the object of faith, or rather not the object but, so to speak, the One who is present in the faith itself."[37] In fact, by faith alone (not love!) the believer fulfills all of the law and becomes holy, righteous, and "a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none."[38]

In short, Luther rejects the Aristotelian idea of *habitus* in the realm of theology because it left too much room for synergism, human merit in spiritual affairs. Even if divinely infused, as Aquinas claimed, a *habitus* required at least some human effort, a kind of cooperation, in order for it to be actualized in good deeds.[39] In other words, although throughout the millennia the concept has appealed to many as a helpful explanation for character formation, the suggestion ingrained within it that one does certain actions for those actions to become second nature—a kind of "fake it 'till you make it" mentality—simply did not jibe well with the Reformation insistence that humans do not cooperate with God when it comes to salvation.

Reintroduction of *Habitus* into Lutheran Theology

In light of Luther's misgivings and, at times, vehement rejection of the term as applied to faith, one may wonder how the term came to be used so commonly among Lutherans to describe theology. The occasion for its reentry into German Protestant thought and theology was a renewed interest in metaphysics that occurred toward the beginning of the seventeenth century.[40] The metaphysical question of essence naturally gave rise to curiosity about the epistemological question of knowableness. Hence, a genre of literature, bearing titles such as *Hexilogia*, *Technologia*, and *Gnostologia*, emerged around this time seeking to explain how one comes to know something. Influenced by the Italian philosopher Jacob Zabarella (1533–1589), the authors adopted and adapted an Aristotelian approach to epistemology

[36] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, quest. 4, art. 3.

[37] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 129.

[38] Luther, *Freedom of a Christian*, 344, 348–349.

[39] See Clare Carlisle, "The Question of Habit in Theology and Philosophy: From Hexis to Plasticity," *Body & Society* 19, no. 2–3: 66–67.

[40] For the "return of metaphysics" and its influence on German theological thought, see Max Wundt, *Die deutsche Schulmetaphysik des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1939); Hans Emil Weber, *Der Einfluss der protestantischen Schulphilosophie auf die orthodox-lutherische Dogmatik* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1908).

emphasizing the five intellectual *habitus*.[41] It was generally agreed that one had to possess the correct intellectual *habitus* in order to know something.[42]

In fact, again influenced by Zabarella, this came to be applied to the individual disciplines within the university curriculum. So, for example, the Reformed professor of philosophy Clemens Timpler (1563–1624), whose works were commonly read in the German territories, specifically distinguished between external and internal liberal arts. The external liberal arts were systems of "doctrines" arranged in orderly fashion to facilitate the handing down of teachings within the respective disciplines, such as grammar, rhetoric, poetry, music, logic, history, metaphysics, physics, mathematics, ethics, and so on and so forth.[43] The internal liberal arts were the corresponding intellectual *habitus*—that is, dispositions or virtues within the student's mind allowing him to learn and become knowledgeable in the various disciplines.[44] Consequently, a field of study at the university could be and often was defined both objectively as a doctrine and subjectively as a *habitus*. It is significant that such *habitus* were explicitly of the intellect and not of the will.

Of course, this placed theology in a bit of a quandary. Was it a discipline similar to other disciplines at the university? If not, then why was it studied at the university? If so, then it must be some sort of knowledge and, therefore, should be considered subjectively as a *habitus*. But what distinguished it from the other disciplines? After all, although taught at the university like other disciplines, it seemed that theology was somehow different, not just in terms of content but also in terms of how one acquired theological knowledge. As Timpler himself admits, some argued that theology should not even be numbered among the liberal arts for this very reason: "It is not proper to number theology among the liberal arts, if it is established not from natural but supernatural principles. Neither is it arrived at or established from the light of natural senses and reason, or from human study and effort, but it is revealed to men by the supernatural light of the divine word."[45] Labeling it as a *habitus* like any other discipline, acquired through one's own hard work and diligent effort, underestimated the sinful corruption of the human mind and opened the door to a

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[41] Although Aristotle's influence was certainly widely felt throughout the schools and universities of central Europe in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is also important to recognize a wide variety of uses and adaptations of Aristotle's writings. See Freedman, "Aristotle and the Content of Philosophy Instruction," 213–253.

[42] Bengt Hägglund, *Die Heilige Schrift und ihre Deutung in der Theologie Johann Gerhards: Eine Untersuchung über das altlutherische Schriftverständis* (Lund: Gleerup, 1951), 47–49. See also Funke, "Gewohnheit," 238–239.

[43] Clemens Timpler, "Technologia, Seu Tractatus Generalis, De Natura & Differentis Artium Liberalium," in *Metaphysicae Systema Methodicum* (Hanover: Perrius Antonius, [1604] 1616), 1–3; for the various disciplines, see 26–28.

[44] Timpler, "Technologia," 30–31.

[45] Timpler, "Technologia," 27.

kind of theological synergism, whereby a person could presumably make progress in spiritual matters completely apart from God's intervention. This was precisely what caused Luther's misgivings about the idea of faith as a *habitus* a few generations earlier.

In any case, the term did make its way into Protestant theological thought, first among the Reformed and then into Lutheran circles. Balthasar Meisner (1567–1626) seems to have been one of the first Lutheran theologians to make use of term in defining theology in the first volume of his systematic textbook, published in 1612.[46] Notably, however, he adds the explicit qualification that it is a *habitus theosdotos* ("God-given *habitus*") in an effort to express how the source of theology is different than that of the other university disciplines.

The *Habitus* Controversy in Lutheranism and the Problem of a Theological *Habitus*

But another problem soon presented itself. What was the relation between theology and such things as faith and piety (godliness)?[47] After all, if theology were similar to the other university disciplines that did not necessarily implicate such things as faith and piety, could one also learn theology apart from faith and divorced from piety? An important question at this time arose over whether or not the nonbeliever could arrive at a true understanding of theology—that is, the possibility or impossibility of a *theologia non renatorum* ("theology of the unregenerate"). In fact, in the first volume of his systematic compendium, Meisner had even conceded such a possibility when he first labeled it as a *habitus* in 1612.[48] Of course, no one at this time, least of all Meisner, believed that studying theology apart from faith was a good thing, but the fact that he even suggested the possibility reveals a shift in the way scholars were beginning to view theology and how one acquires theological knowledge. Curiously, in the third volume of the same series, published in 1623, Meisner no longer mentions such a possibility when describing theology.[49] It is likely that this was due in part to a dispute that had since arisen over this very topic.

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[46] Balthasar Meisner, *Philosophia Sobria, hoc est, Pia Consideratio Quaestionum Philosophicarum*, vol. 1 (Giessen: Nicolas Hampelius, 1612), sec. 2, chap. 2, quest. 1, assert. 2, p. 457.

[47] *Pietas*, or "piety," was a commonly used word during this period in history and did not, at this time, carry with it the connotations, positive or negative, that have come to be associated with the term because of the later "Pietist movement." In any case, I have chosen to use the word "piety" because it seems the closest translation of *pietas*.

[48] Meisner, *Philosophia Sobria*, vol. 1, sec. 2, chap. 2, quest. 1, pp. 454, 458. For a more deeply nuanced understanding of Meisner's conceptualization of theology in its context, see David R. Preus, "The Practical Orthodoxy of Balthasar Meisner: The Content and Context of His Theology" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2018).

[49] Balthasar Meisner, *Philosophia Sobria, hoc est, Pia Consideratio Quaestionum Philosophicarum*, vol. 3 (Wittenberg: Nicolas Hampelius, 1623).

The question of how theology should be viewed in relation to faith and piety was a matter of serious debate throughout the first two decades of the seventeenth century, with related disputes flaring up over the role of philosophy and reason within theology. On the one side, theologians such as Johann Arndt insisted on an inseparably close relation between theology and faith/piety and warned repeatedly about the dangers of an unduly academic theology focused purely on disputation: "The practice of academic theology is the exercise of faith and of the Christian life or sincere piety. . . . Therefore, let the beginning of true learning be piety, fear and true knowledge of God, serious prayer and the grace of the Holy Spirit. Without these things experience confirms that the study of books is most unfortunate and comes to the saddest end."[50] Arndt's four books on *True Christianity* (1606–1610) reiterating this same theme were the most widely read devotional works throughout Europe at this time. On the opposite extreme, philosophy professors such as Cornelius Martini (1594–1621) at the University of Helmstedt, who was partly responsible for reintroducing Aristotelian metaphysics into Lutheran thought,[51] and the later theology professor of the same university Georg Calixt (1613–1658) clearly tended to emphasize the role of natural reason in theology and deemphasize its relation to faith and the pious life.

The mounting tension over this issue came to a boiling point in what has been called the *Habitus* Controversy within Lutheranism.[52] Sigismund Evenius, the newly commissioned rector of the *Gymnasium* (university-preparatory school) in Magdeburg, organized a disputation on November 20, 1622, treating the topic of the relation between philosophy and theology. Johannes Kotzebue, a local pastor in Magdeburg, defended the theses. The theses presented theology as an academic discipline and, consequently, defined it as an intellectual *habitus*. In doing so, they also indicated that theology, similar to other disciplines at the university, could be carried out independent of the Holy Spirit, because its goal was simply familiarity with the truths of the faith that could be obtained through hard work, diligent study, and talent.[53] In fact, to defend their position, Evenius and Kotzebue even referenced Meisner's previous recognition that one could study theology apart from faith.

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[50] Johann Arndt, "Dissertatio D. Johannis Arnds, theses 2 & 22," in Johann Gerhard, *Aphorismi Sacri Praecipua Theologiae Practicae Complectentes* (Jena: Tobia Steinmann, 1616); originally published in 1597 as a separate tract.

[51] Wundt, *Die deutsche Schulmetaphysik*, 240; also Kenneth Appold, "Academic Life and Teaching in Post-Reformation Lutheranism," in *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture, 1550–1675*, ed. Robert Kolb (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 89.

[52] For an insightful analysis of the *Habitus* Controversy, including what led up to it and its repercussions throughout Lutheranism, see Markus Friedrich, *Die Grenzen der Vernunft: Theologie, Philosophie und gelehrte Luthertum um 1600* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

[53] Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 195, 303–304.

Unlike Meisner, however, they notably neglected to describe the *habitus* of theology as God-given, *theosdotos*.[54]

At the disputation was another pastor from Magdeburg, Andreas Cramer. Although not officially part of the proceedings, Cramer felt obligated to enter into the debate. He argued vehemently that such a view of theology distorted its very nature. For him, theology was closely associated with, if not identical to, saving faith. Labeling theology as a *habitus*, he insisted, essentially separated it from any intervention of the Holy Spirit and divorced it from such things as faith and piety. In retrospect, Cramer held a strongly pessimistic view of humanity and believed that the flesh, including the mind, was under the constant dominion of the devil and, therefore, opposed to God.[55] This contrasted rather sharply with the idea of an intellectual *habitus* as proposed by Evenius. Following the lead of some of the other Lutheran philosophy professors at his time (e.g., Georg Gutke at the University of Wittenberg), Evenius assumed that the mind was simply an "empty slate" that could readily be filled with the necessary *habitus* if one worked hard enough at it.[56]

Hence, one can see that, from Cramer's point of view, there were two fundamental problems with a theological *habitus*. Firstly, it jeopardized the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone apart from works by leaving open the possibility of a kind of theological works-righteousness by which one could make headway in spiritual matters apart from God's intervention. It tended to place too much confidence in the natural abilities of the theologian. In this regard, Cramer seems to have shared Luther's previous concern over the use of *habitus* in the arena of theology. But there was another related problem unique to the context of the early seventeenth century. Cramer also complained that any talk of a theological *habitus* treated theology as an academic pursuit like any other discipline at the university that did not require faith and the resulting pious life. For Cramer, this was simply unimaginable. On the contrary, he maintained that just as Christ was given through faith and dwells in the heart, true theology must always take place "in the heart of the person."[57] Any legitimate study of theology necessarily involved saving faith.

In retrospect, the debate itself shows that the way in which people defined theology and envisaged its study was beginning to evolve. Luther, for instance, some seventy years earlier, would surely have never even left open the possibility of a person studying Christian theology apart from faith. On the contrary, faith was inherently indispensable to his threefold method of how to study theology: prayer,

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[54] Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 304.

[55] Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 195, 290–295.

[56] Wundt, *Die deutsche Schulmetaphysik*, 246; Sascha Salatowsky, *De Anima: Die Rezeption der aristotelischen Psychologie im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Amsterdam: Grüner, 2006), 365.

[57] Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 195, 306.

meditation, and trial.[58] It is telling that, generally speaking, Luther's famous remarks regarding the proper way to study theology began to fall out of use around the same time that it was becoming popular to treat theology as a mere academic discipline.[59] Melanchthon, for his part, never attempted a definition of theology, per se, but he had hinted that faith was indeed a *habitus* in his theological works and very clearly labeled it as such in his philosophical writings. It is telling, however, that Melanchthon specifically identifies faith as a *moral habitus* seated in the will, not an *intellectual habitus* of the intellect.[60] It seems, then, that for Melanchthon, as well as for Luther, theology could never be understood merely as an academic discipline.

Johann Gerhard's Conciliatory Solution: A "God-Given *Habitus*" That is "Mostly Practical"

The conflict went beyond the 1622 disputation and led to a literary battle, with both sides taking to the printing press.[61] As is often the case with such scholarly debates, the conflict also began to play out on a more popular level with Cramer gaining the support of some of the local pastors from Magdeburg and the surrounding region. Within that region sits the smaller village of Quedlinburg. It so happens that Cramer had served as the rector of the school in Quedlinburg from 1606 to 1613

[58] Luther explains the "right way to study theology" in his *Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of Luther's German Writings* (1539), in AE 34:283–288.

[59] The connection between the decline of Luther's famous "method" and the rise of defining theology as a *habitus* merits further study, but it seems generally to be the case. See Chi-Won Kang, *Frömmigkeit und Gelehrsamkeit: Die Reform des Theologiestudiums im lutherischen Pietismus des 17. und des frühen 18. Jahrhunderts* (Giessen: Brunnen, 2001), 120–121. Georg Calixt, for instance, refrains from using Luther's "method." This is not surprising in light of his more academic approach to theology, but we also find no mention of it in the advice about theological study from such Wittenberg professors as Johann Förster (1576–1613), Leonard Hütter (1563–1616), and Johann Hülsemann (1602–1661). See Marcel Nieden, *Die Erfindung des Theologens: Wittenberger Anweisungen zum Theologiestudium im Zeitalter von Reformation und Konfessionalisierung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 231–232.

[60] Melanchthon, *Erotemata Dialectices*, 538. In placing it among the moral *habitus*, Melanchthon defines it thus: "Faith is knowledge by which we embrace with firm assent the entire teaching that God has handed down to his church and, in it, the promise of reconciliation, which we grasp and through which we receive the forgiveness of sins by trust [*fiducia*] in the Son of God." Melanchthon had also categorized a kind of faith among the intellectual virtues, but he is clearly referring to a kind of historical faith that is other than the faith of the Christian believer. For a deeper analysis, see Fluegge, *Johann Gerhard*, 45–50.

[61] See, e.g., Johann Kotzebue and Sigismundus Evenius, *Enodatio quaestionis de habitu theologico, Das ist: Kurtze und Einfeltige Erörterung aus und nach Gottes Wort der new entstandenen Frage: Ob die Theologia oder Wissenschafft der heyligen Schrift, welche von tüchtigen Predigern und Lehrern erfordert wird, ein habitus oder Fertigkeit und Geschicklichkeit von göttlichen Dingen zu handeln, könne und möge genennet werden?* (Magdeburg: Betzel, 1623); and Andreas Cramer, *Kurtze Erinnerung vom Grunde des wahren Christenthumbs, darinn die Apologia Kotzebuvii abgelehnet wird* (Magdeburg: Pohl, 1623).

and, incidentally, had been succeeded by Kotzebue until his own dismissal around 1620. The sharp differences in how each approached education were already evident early on. On the one hand, Cramer viewed the school's sole objective as the faith-edification of the students, such that "any education outside of faith and without contributing to the strengthening of faith is of the devil."[62] His eventual dismissal seems to have been due in part to the poor performance of the school during his tenure. On the other hand, his successor, Kotzebue, was later dismissed for "syncretistic disputes," seemingly because of his affinity with the theology of Calixt, who tended to distance theology from faith and piety.[63] The point is that the villagers of Quedlinburg were not only aware of the later *habitus* controversy taking place in the neighboring city of Magdeburg but were also quite likely embroiled in the ongoing dispute that had been simmering for some time even before it came to the fore in the disputation on November 20, 1622.

Quedlinburg also happened to be the hometown of Johann Gerhard. By the early twenties, Gerhard was already becoming a prominent voice in Lutheran circles. After having served as ecclesiastical superintendent of Heldburg and then regional superintendent of Coburg, he was called by the University of Jena in 1617 as a professor of theology. Even as a superintendent he had already established himself as a prolific writer and had published quite a few significant works before accepting the offer at the university, where he continued writing and publishing.

One such writing was a five-volume series on what he called the *Schola Pietatis* (School of piety), the purpose of which seemed to have been, at least in part, to offer a kind of corrective to Johann Arndt's four books *On True Christianity,* which had been criticized by some for making inappropriate use of unscriptural sources.[64] In a dedicatory letter introducing the second volume of *Schola Pietatis*, Gerhard offers a brief excursus that seems to address the controversy at hand. This is evident from both the context and the content. Gerhard penned the letter on October 17, 1622, amid the mounting tension that would eventually erupt into a full-scale conflict sparked by the disputation a month later. The letter was addressed to Dorothea Sophia and Anna Maria, both daughters of Friedrich Wilhelm, the former Duke of Saxony. Duchess Dorothea Sophia (1587–1645) was Abbess of Quedlinburg and, one can assume, quite aware of the theological tension simmering under the surface within her territory.[65] Throughout the letter Gerhard insists on the need for both

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[62] As quoted in Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 319.

[63] Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 189.

[64] Erdmann Fischer, *The Life of John Gerhard* (1723), trans. Richard Dinda and Elmer Hohle (Malone, TX: Repristination, 2000), 371–373.

[65] The duchess was not only the ruler of the city of Quedlinburg and surrounding territory but also the abbess of the Lutheran abbey in that same city. At this time, Lutherans continued to practice the female monastic life in Quedlinburg.

intellectual knowledge and practical piety as integral to true Christianity. Although he does not use the term "theology" in the letter or directly mention the names of any involved, he adamantly rejects the extreme positions of those who would spiritualize the faith to the point of disregarding the need for correct knowledge and pure doctrine, on the one hand, and those who would intellectualize the faith to the point of dismissing the need for pious, godly living, on the other hand.

Addressing the first extreme, the Jena professor argues that, without true faith, piety "has no status" or validity or place (*hat nicht Statt*).[66] In other words, unless one's godly life flows from faith, such works, although seemingly good, are essentially worthless. And "genuine, true faith" consists of three parts: conceptual knowledge as drawn from God's word (*notitia*), willing assent and commitment to these truths (*assensus*), and trust and confident assurance in God's promises of grace and forgiveness (*fiducia*).[67] He then cites a long list of Bible passages that warn against false teaching and underscore the importance of pure doctrine. In so doing, Gerhard is clearly emphasizing the intellectual-knowledge dimension of faith. He then concludes, "It is a totally useless, mad delusion [*ein ganß vergeblicher Wahn*] what many people think; namely that it is sufficient for one to busy himself with godliness and good works, even though he does not concern himself much about purity of doctrine [*die Reinigkeit der Lehre*] and lets others do battle and fight over that. For true, God-pleasing godliness and proper God-pleasing good works can have no status [*konnen keine Statt haben*] without faith[-knowledge]."[68] Gerhard then goes on to reject the second, opposite extreme. Just as a godly life without faith and its requisite knowledge is worthless, "so also it is useless if a person wants to boast about pure doctrine and proper faith but does not show this by works and instead with his pure faith wants to knowingly lead an unholy, unclean, sinful life."[69] Again, he cites a similarly long list of Bible passages, but this time the emphasis is clearly on the life of godliness that flows from faith.

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[66] English translations are from Johann Gerhard, *Schola Pietatis: The Practice of Godliness* (1622), 2nd ed., ed. Rachel Melvin, trans. Elmer Hohle, 2 vols. (Malone, TX: Repristination, 2013), 2:11, 14. For the German version, see Johann Gerhard, *Schola Pietatis, Oder Ubung der Gottseeligkeit*, ed. Johann Georg Walch (Nürnberg: in Verlegung W. M. Endters seel. Töchter und J. A. Engelbrechts seel. Wittib., 1736), 220, 222.

[67] Gerhard, *The Practice of Godliness*, 2:10–11 (= Gerhard, *Ubung der Gottseeligkeit*, 219–220). This medieval threefold way of conceptualizing faith was introduced into Lutheran thought by Melanchthon and was commonly used by the seventeenth-century Lutheran theologians, though with some variations. See Jaroslav Pelikan, "The Origins of the Object-Subject Antithesis in Lutheran Dogmatics: A Study in Terminology," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 21, no. 3 (1950): 94–104.

[68] Gerhard, *The Practice of Godliness*, 2:13–14 (= Gerhard, *Ubung der Gottseeligkeit*, 222).

[69] Gerhard, *The Practice of Godliness*, 2:14 (= Gerhard, *Ubung der Gottseeligkeit*, 222).

Gerhard seems to view this "faith-knowledge" (*notitia*) as the equivalent of "theology,"[70] so in this letter he is actually dealing with the proper relation between theology and piety. He emphasizes the need for both but in such a way as to distinguish them one from another (against Cramer, who would equate them) while also establishing an integral and indispensable connection between them (against Evenius and Kotzebue, who would separate them). That connection is none other than fiducial trust in God's promises of grace and forgiveness (*fiducia*).[71] Within his threefold concept of faith, theological knowledge about God always leads to fiducial trust in God and his promises.[72] And within his concept of piety, fiducial trust always gives rise to good works.[73] Hence, the true Christian cannot have one without the other.

Nowhere in the letter or, for that matter, in any of his translated writings thus far, has Gerhard referred to theology as a *habitus*. In fact, he refrains from doing so even in his advice on the proper *Method of Theological Study*, a series of lectures delivered in 1617 shortly after his arrival at the University of Jena and published three years later in 1620.[74] This is noteworthy since other Lutheran theologians (e.g., Meisner) had done so a decade earlier.

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[70] This was pointed out initially by Johannes Wallmann, *Der Theologiebegriff bei Johann Gerhard und Georg Calixt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1961), 33–36. Wallmann calls it *Glaubenserkenntnis*, which, despite the awkwardness of it, translates into English as "faith-knowledge."

[71] For a helpful diagram and fuller explanation of the relation between theology and piety according to Gerhard, see Fluegge, *Johann Gerhard*, 177–184; and Glenn K. Fluegge, "Johann Gerhard's Transitional Concept of *Theologia*," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 109 (2018): 243–252.

[72] Gerhard cannot conceive of a theological knowledge of God apart from fiducial trust. Such empty knowledge would not be "theology" per se but "vain discussion" about God. See Johann Gerhard, "On the Nature of Theology," in *On the Nature of Theology and on Scripture*, trans. Richard J. Dinda, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, vol. Exegesis 1 of *Theological Commonplaces* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018), sec. 26. Although he makes use of the commonly accepted threefold conceptualization of faith, he posits an "indivisible bond" between the "parts" of faith such that they are indispensably, integrally, and seamlessly connected in the one psychological faith event (Johann Gerhard, *On Justification through Faith*, trans. Richard J. Dinda, ed. Joshua J. Hayes and Heath R. Curtis, vol. 19 of *Theological Commonplaces*, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018], sec. 69; see also secs. 67–81). See Wallmann, *Theologiebegriff*, 36, 104, 117; and Martti Vaahtoranta, *Restauratio Imaginis Divinae. Die Vereinigung von Gott und Mensch, ihre Voraussetzungen und Implikationem bei Johann Gerhard* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft, 1998), 215, 218.

[73] That the concept of "piety" included fiducial trust and other associated internal movements of the heart had already been established by Gerhard in the first volume of his *Schola Pietatis*: "Indeed, [piety encompasses] also the font and source of this holy obedience; namely, true, proper, contrite repentance and the true living faith in Christ" (Gerhard, *The Practice of Godliness*, 1:10–11 [= Gerhard, *Ubung der Gottseeligkeit*, 2]). See also Renatus Hupfeld, *Die Ethik Johann Gerhards: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der lutherischen Ethik* (Berlin: Trowitzsch & Sohn, 1908), 9; and Fluegge, *Johann Gerhard*, 181; for a detailed analysis of Gerhard's understanding of piety, see Fluegge, *Johann Gerhard*, 124–128.

[74] See below, n. 80.

Then, in 1625, shortly after the *Habitus* Controversy and perhaps as a result of it, in his preface "On the Nature of Theology," Gerhard concedes and, for the first time, uses the term to identify the genus of theology: "If we must assign to theology some genus from the intellectual conditions [*habitus*] that Aristotle enumerates, among them all, wisdom most closely approximates its nature. But were one to make an absolute consideration, he would define it more accurately as a 'God-given habit' [*habitus* θεόσδοτος] than through a genus drawn from Aristotle's intellectual conditions."[75] Similar to Meisner before him, Gerhard recognizes the inherent synergistic tendencies of Aristotle's schema of *habitus* when it comes to defining theology and, consequently, creates a wholly new genus: a God-given *habitus*.[76] By qualifying the theological *habitus* as "God-given" Gerhard means to say that true theological understanding does not simply come about through one's own hard work and diligent study but through the illumination of the mind worked by the Holy Spirit through the word.[77] This addressed Luther's previous misgivings about Aristotle's *habitus* jeopardizing the doctrine of justification by faith alone. But what about Cramer's related concern about divorcing faith and piety from theology? For this, Gerhard immediately explains that theology is "more practical" than speculative because "the ultimate end of theology is not bare knowledge [γνῶσις], but action [πρᾶξις]."[78] This he shows through a list of quotations from Scripture and past theologians culminating in a final quotation from the medieval theologian Jean Gerson (1363–1429) whereby he insists that the theologian must "transfer" what he understands intellectually into the "affection of his heart" and the carrying out of good works.[79]

Gerhard apparently considered the language of this final quotation from Gerson definitive, because he expressly includes it in his final definition of theology at the end of the preface:

> Theology (considered habitually and concretely) is a God-given *habitus* conferred on a person by the Holy Spirit through the Word by which he is not only

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[75] Gerhard, "Nature of Theology," sec. 10; brackets in the original.

[76] This being said, Gerhard's understanding of the God-given nature of theology goes beyond that of Meisner, viewing Scripture not only as the source of all theology (something that Meisner also claimed) but also as an efficacious means of grace that creates faith and gives rise to piety as an integral part of what happens when one engages in studying theology. See Hägglund, *Heilige Schrift*, 209–210, 242–255.

[77] For Gerhard's theory of religious epistemology, especially his understanding of "illumination" and how it differed from that of other contemporary and later theologians, see Hägglund, *Heilige Schrift*, 212–218; and Bengt Hägglund, "Illuminatio—Aufklärung: Ein Beitrag zur Begriffsgeschichte," in *Chemnitz—Gerhard—Arndt—Rudbeckius: Aufsätze zum Studium der altlutherischen Theologie*, ed. A. Bitzel and Johann Anselm Steiger (Watrop: Spenner, 2003); cf. Appold, *Calov's Doctrine of* Vocatio, 134–135.

[78] Gerhard, "Nature of Theology," secs. 11–12.

[79] Gerhard, "Nature of Theology," sec. 12.

> instructed in the knowledge of divine mysteries through the illumination of the mind, so that in a salutary way he transfers what he understands into the affections of the heart and the carrying out of [good] works, but concerning those divine mysteries he is also rendered apt and ready to both inform others about the way of salvation and free the heavenly truth from the corruption of adversaries, so that people might be led to the kingdom of heaven, glowing with true faith and good works.[80]

Compared to subsequent definitions by later Lutheran theologians, Gerhard's is much longer and, admittedly, somewhat cumbersome. This is likely the case because he is including elements from both sides of the debate going on within Lutheranism at that time. Most notably, he accepts theology as a *habitus* and, therefore, concedes that it is an intellectual endeavor that includes things like instruction, knowledge, and intellectual understanding. As such, it does indeed belong in the university curriculum. However, the necessary and automatic result of that instruction is the transfer from the intellect to the affections of the heart—that is, feelings of the will,[81] where trust is kindled in the redemptive work of Christ, giving rise to a life of piety. In short, by this definition Gerhard addresses the concerns of both Evenius and Kotzebue, on the one hand, and the objections of Cramer and his supporters, on the other.

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[80] Author's translation from the Latin edition: Johann Gerhard, *Prooemium de Natura Theologiae*, in *Ioannis Gerhardi Loci Theologici cum pro Adstruenda Veritate tum pro Destruenda quorumvis Contradicentium Falsitate per Theses Nervose Solide et Copiose Explicati*, ed. E. Preuss (Berlin: Gust. Schlawitz, 1863), p. 8, sec. 31. For a structural analysis of this definition mapping out the vertical and horizontal flow of its various parts, see Fluegge, *Johann Gerhard*, 153. For the reasons for translating *exsecutionem operis* as "the carrying out of [good] works," see Fluegge, "*Theologia*," 251n81. For further justification, note that in this part of his definition, Gerhard is clearly referencing Jean Gerson's *Consolation of Theology*, which he had cited earlier (sec. 12) to emphasize the godly life as the practical end of theology. Prior to this, he had also made the same reference in his *Method of Theological Study* when insisting that the student of theology must sincerely pursue piety as a necessary prerequisite for theological study. See Johann Gerhard, *Method of Theological Study*, appendix in Johann Gerhard, *On Interpreting Sacred Scripture and Method of Theological Study*, trans. Joshua J. Hayes, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, vol. 1–2 of *Theological Commonplaces* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 140. In this context, Gerhard is clearly referring to the carrying out of good works rather than the performance of one's ministerial duties. See also Mark Stephen Burrows, *Jean Gerson and "De Consolatione Theologiae" (1418): The Consolation of a Biblical and Reforming Theology for a Disordered Age* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 135–143.

[81] The "affection [*affectus*] of the heart" is a subpart of the will that gives rise to passion and desire for the things perceived by the senses or, in this case, understood by the intellect. See Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 29.

Later Lutheran Theologians and the "Professionalization" of Theology

Also noticeable in this final definition is the dual orientation of theology's aim.[82] "Directly . . . [and] immediately," as Gerhard had earlier described it, theology aims at the personal formation and edification of the theologian's own faith life.[83] Both the way in which he has arranged his final definition and comments from his other works seem to indicate that the former pastor and then superintendent viewed the aim of theology as, first and foremost, the salvation and spirituality of the theologian himself. Then and only then, building on this prior personal transformation, is theology's aim that the theologian be enabled to "indirectly . . . [and] mediately" lead others to salvation.[84] In other words, professional ministerial practice must be preceded by and flow from personal spiritual growth.

This is a significant point, because one of Cramer's sharp criticisms of a purely academic approach to theology was that it tended to focus externally on leading others to faith rather than focus inwardly on the personal rebirth and spirituality of the theologian.[85] And this was indeed the case, not just for the philosopher Cornelius Martini and theologians like Calixt and Kotzebue, but even for the Wittenberg theologians, who had otherwise taken an intermediate position between the two sides of the debate.[86]

For instance, Gerhard's friend and colleague from the University of Wittenberg Balthasar Meisner defined theology similarly to Gerhard as a "God-given practical *habitus*." However, there is a noticeable difference in that it lacks the Jena professor's intentional focus on personal salvation and spirituality: "Theology is a God-given practical *habitus* existing in the mind of the theologian, and guiding him so that he may lead fallen people through true religion to eternal blessedness."[87] He contrasted

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[82] This dual orientation and how it sets Gerhard apart from later theologians was first noticed by Walter Sparn, *Wiederkehr der Metaphysik* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1976); Walter Sparn, "Die Krise der Frömmigkeit und ihr theologischer Reflex im nachreformatorishen Luthertum," in *Die lutherische konfessionalisierung in Deutschland: Wissenshaftliches Symposion des Vereins für Reformationgeschichte 1988*, ed. Hans-Christoph Rublack (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1992), 54–82. Nieden more recently coined the terms *auto-praxis* ("self-oriented practice") and *allo-praxis* ("other-oriented practice") to describe this dual orientation; see Nieden, *Erfindung des Theologens*, 192.

[83] The "proximate end" of theology is eternal life, either the formation leading one to it or the actual attainment of it. In either case, this aim of theology has a dual orientation. It can be carried out "either directly or at least indirectly, either immediately or mediately" (Gerhard, "Nature of Theology," sec. 26; see also sec. 12).

[84] Gerhard, "Nature of Theology," sec. 26; again, see also sec. 12.

[85] Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 306–309.

[86] The theologians from University of Wittenberg published a response (*Gutachten*) refuting Cramer's view and claiming that theology could legitimately be defined as a *habitus*. However, contrary to Kotzebue, they stressed the necessary role of the Holy Spirit. See Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 305.

[87] As cited in Nieden, *Erfindung des Theologens*, 192n108.

this externally focused definition with that of Reformed theologian Bartholomew Keckermann (1572–1609), who had earlier defined theology as a *habitus* of personally "coming to salvation,"[88] and ultimately rejected it because it would mean that "theology is primarily a *habitus* of those hearing [i.e., students] and those to be saved but not of teachers. If this is the case, no one can come to salvation unless he is a theologian or is equipped with the *habitus* of theology, which is absurd. Therefore, theology is not the doctrine of coming [*pervenire*], which is for students, but much more of leading [*perducere*] or promoting to salvation, which is for teachers."[89] Meisner is quite clear here. Only teachers are theologians, and they are theologians inasmuch as they lead others to salvation through their teaching. His contemporaries and coworkers at the University of Wittenberg Johann Förster and Leonhart Hütter also adopted a more externally focused view of theology and its purpose.[90] This is markedly different from Gerhard, who seems to have believed that every Christian can be and is a theologian in view of faith, by which he or she "knows and assents to the articles of faith."[91]

Later Lutheran theologians followed in the same vein as Meisner. For instance, a generation later Johann König (1619–1664) defined theology as "an intellectual practical *habitus* drawn from the written word of God about true religion so that by its work *sinful people are led* through faith to life."[92] Similarly, Abraham Calov (1612–1686) claimed that "theology is a practical *habitus* of knowledge drawn from divine revelation about true religion, by which *people after the fall are to be led* through faith to eternal salvation."[93] And Johann Quenstedt (1617–1688) defined it as "an intellectual, God-given, practical *habitus* conferred on a person through the word of Scripture by the Holy Spirit about true religion, by which *people after the fall are to be led* through faith in Christ to eternal life."[94] One notices that all three of

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[88] "Theology is a religious prudence of coming to salvation" (Bartholomew Keckermann, "Systema Sacrosanctae Theologiae," in *Operum Omnium quae Extant*, vol. 2 [Geneva: Petrus Aubertus, 1614], bk. 1, chap. 1, p. 67). See also Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena to Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 212, 219.

[89] Meisner, *Philosophia Sobria*, vol. 3, 192.

[90] For a detailed analysis of their *Consilia* on the study of theology, see Nieden, *Erfindung des Theologens*, 164–186.

[91] Gerhard, "Nature of Theology," sec. 4. Gerhard views theology as having three "forms," as Wallman puts it: the faith-knowledge of the everyday Christian, the ministry of pastors, and the work of academic theologians. This wider view of theology distinguishes him from other theologians such as Calixt or, as seen here, even from Meisner. See Wallmann, *Theologiebegriff*, 42–44.

[92] Johann König, *Systema Positiva Acroamatica* (Rostock: Joachim Wild, 1675), chap. 1, sec. 7; emphasis added.

[93] Abraham Calov, *Systema Locorum Theologicorum* (Wittenberg: Hartmann, 1655), bk. 1, chap. 1, sec. 1; emphasis added.

[94] Johann Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico-Polemica: Siva Systema Theologicum* (Wittenberg: Quenstedt & Schumacher, 1685), bk. 1, 16; emphasis added.

these later definitions view the practical effect of theology as externally focused on *leading others* to salvation. Gerhard's definition does indeed use similar language in its final phrase but only after he makes sure to emphasize that theology first effectuates an internal transfer from the theologian's head to his own heart, something that is conspicuously missing in the later definitions.

Surely, none of these later theologians would ever have imagined an unbelieving theologian as a good, or even acceptable, scenario. Nor did they undervalue the importance of faith and piety, for the student or the teacher.[95] Nonetheless, the nuanced difference in the orientation of their definitions seems to reveal a slight shift in how they conceptualized theology and its implementation. These later Lutheran theologians also tended to differentiate between the *habitus* of theology and that of "true religion,"[96] relegating "true religion" to all true Christians and reserving the theological *habitus* for clergy and teachers. In this way, they sought to emphasize the importance of faith and the pious life, while also underscoring the academic rigor, professional responsibility, and concern for orthodox teaching that characterized the theologian. Such a distinction also unwittingly rendered personal faith an incidental rather than necessary and essential part of theology and theological study and opened the door to the possibility, undesirable as it was, of an unbelieving theologian.[97]

In addition to theological considerations, it seems that certain social factors may also have been at play here. Some have seen this subtle shift toward an external focus on professional ministry as the result of a widespread "professionalization" of clergy happening throughout Europe.[98] Although it differed from one region to another and was not yet akin to modern professions, throughout the seventeenth century clergy began to emerge increasingly as a distinct social group characterized by

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[95] The commonly accepted view that mid- to late-Orthodox theologians were unduly "functionalistic" in their approach to theology and less concerned with personal faith and piety can and has been taken too far, as pointed out by recent scholars. See, e.g., Kenneth G. Appold, "Abraham Calov on the 'Usefulness' of Doctrine: Blueprints for a Theological Mind," in *Hermeneutica Sacra: Studien zur Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift im 16. Und 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Torbjörn Johansson, Robert Kolb, and Johann Anselm Steiger (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 295–312.

[96] This differentiation can be seen as early as Meisner's "doctrine of religion"; see Kenneth Appold, *Orthodoxie als Konsensbildung: Das theologische Disputationswesen an der Universität Wittenberg zwischen 1570–1710* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 241–265. For Calov's use of the term, see Robert D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, vol. 1, *A Study of Theological Prolegomena* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), 207–215.

[97] Cf. Nieden, *Erfindung des Theologens*, 243.

[98] See, e.g., Sparn, "Krise der Frömmigkeit," 72–74; and Walter Sparn, "Zweite Reformation und Traditionalismus. Die Stabilsierung des Protestantismus im Übergang zum 17. Jahrhundert," in *Retrospektive Tendenze in Kunst, Musik und Theologie um 1600: Akten des interdisziplinären Symposions 30/31 März 1990 in Nürnberg*, ed. Kurt Löcher (Nürnberg: Pirckheimer, 1991), 127–131; cf. Nieden, *Erfindung des Theologens*, 241–242.

higher levels of education, more rigorous preparation, heightened vocational awareness, and a growing acceptance of commonly expected pastoral duties beyond that of preaching the word.[99] Undoubtedly this influenced the self-perception of clergy at this time, which may have, in turn, influenced their conceptualizations of theology.

These later definitions would have been wholly unsatisfactory to the likes of Cramer. In fact, they seem somewhat different from how Luther viewed the study of theology over a century earlier. Although the Wittenberg reformer never attempted a definition of theology, per se, and wrote relatively little on the subject compared to the lengthy treatises on it by later theologians, his threefold method of studying theology (*oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio*) emerged from a more monastic approach to theology that viewed it as nearly identical to personal faith and, therefore, its "study" as the purview of all Christians.[100] While it is true that some of these later Lutheran theologians from the mid-seventeenth century (e.g., Calov) do reference Luther's famous method in their discussions about theology, none of them arrange their entire proposed methods of study around it as Gerhard himself had done in his *Method of Theological Study*.[101] This would seem to be more in line with how Luther envisioned it, although direct comparisons between time periods are

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[99] For the general trend in Europe toward the "professionalization" of the clerical office, see C. Scott Dixon and Luise Schorn-Schütte, "Introduction: The Protestant Clergy of Early Modern Europe," in *The Protestant Clergy of Early Modern Europe*, ed. C. Scott Dixon and Luise Schorn-Schütte (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 1–38, as well as the other essays in this same volume; Luise Schorn-Schütte, "Priest, Preacher, Pastor: Research on Clerical Office in Early Modern Europe," *Central European History* 33, no. 1 (2000): 1–39. For the professionalization of theological studies, see Olaf Pedersen, "Tradition and Innovation," in *A History of the University in Europe*, vol. 2, *Universities in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)*, ed. W. Rüeg and H. De Ridder-Symoens (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 474–478. For the increasing levels of clergy education, see Thomas Kaufmann, "The Clergy and Theological Culture of the Age: The Education of Lutheran Pastors in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in Dixon and Schorn-Schütte, *Protestant Clergy of Early Modern Europe*, 120–136.

[100] See Bayer, *Theology*, 21–27; Marcel Nieden, "Theologie—Rechtfertigung des Theologen? Anmerkungen zur 'Methodus Studii Theologici' Johann Gerhards von 1620," in *Zur Rechtfertigungslehre in der Lutherischen Orthodoxie*, ed. Udo Sträter (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlaganhalt, 2003), 55–69; and Appold, *Calov's Doctrine of* Vocatio, 50. Appold calls Luther's famous method of theological study a "form of the life in faith."

[101] Gerhard, *Method*, 138–146, 239–241. In this regard, Gerhard follows the earlier example of David Chytraeus (1530–1600); see Nieden, *Erfindung des Theologens*, 91–95, 231–232. For Gerhard's prominent use of Luther's famous triad, see Kang, *Frömmigkeit und Gelehrsamkeit,* 110–119; and Nieden, "Theologie." Steiger has suggested that Gerhard has almost made Luther's triad the title of his entire book by placing a detailed explanation of it near the beginning. See Johann Anselm Steiger, *Johann Gerhard (1582–1637): Studien zu Theologie und Frömmigkeit des Kirchenvaters der lutherischen Orthodoxie (Doctrina et Pietas)* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1997), 145.

admittedly difficult to make, since Luther's method seems to have been intended to happen primarily outside of the university classroom.[102]

Unsurprisingly, just as Meisner had already suggested early on, some Lutheran theologians a century later did indeed suggest that theology (i.e., the teaching of theological matters) could be done (not that it *may* be done) by an unbelieving theologian and, hence, accepted the possibility of a *theologia non renatorum*, as undesirable as that may have been. John George Neumann, a rigid Orthodox Lutheran theologian who had previously served as a philosophy professor at the University of Wittenberg, published a major theology textbook in 1718 in which he defines theology, similar to earlier theologians, as a God-given practical *habitus* but notably concedes the possibility of an unregenerate theology in the case of the lapsed.[103]

Although Neumann's proposal was undoubtedly in reaction to the increasing popularity of Pietism, it reveals an interesting development in how theology was being viewed in the early 1700s. The challenge of theology has always been to maintain the relation and tension between spirituality and scholarship, between "the heart and the head."[104] Here one notices that the heart and the head seem to have drifted apart. This trend became increasingly pronounced throughout the eighteenth century, as the Pietists squared off against the Rationalists of the Age of Enlightenment, the Pietists emphasizing the "heart" and the Rationalists insisting on the "head." These divergent ways of conceptualizing theology in the eighteenth century can be traced back already to the early seventeenth century and, perhaps, as some have argued, even further back to the Reformation itself.[105] In any case, it should come as no surprise that the catalyst for the Pietist movement, Philip Spener (1635–1705), republished and wrote forwards for several of Cramer's writings toward the end of the seventeenth century.[106] He also wholeheartedly embraced

[102] The difficulty stems from the fact that before and during Luther's time, university studies in theology were seldom a requirement for ordination or ecclesiastical ministry, whereas by the time of Gerhard this was increasingly becoming the norm; see Kaufmann, "Clergy," 127–132. Hence, neither Luther's nor Melanchthon's advice on theological study were necessarily tied to the university. Furthermore, even as university theological studies became increasingly important, it was commonly expected well into the seventeenth century that university theology students would be engaged in daily independent private studies centered on personal reading and summarizing of Scripture and categorizing its content topically. This private self-learning was considered the backbone of their theological studies, even more foundational than public classroom lectures. This begins to change the further one gets into the seventeenth century. See Nieden, *Erfindung des Theologens*, 238–240, 244–246.

[103] See Preus, *Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 1:228–232.

[104] Bayer, *Theology*, 9.

[105] See Wallmann, *Theologiebegriff*. On the basis of a close analysis of the primary texts, Wallmann traces two lines of approach to understanding theology within Lutheranism. The first proceeds from Luther through Gerhard to Spener and the Pietists. The second goes from Melanchthon through Calixt to Selmer and the Rationalists.

[106] Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 314–315.

Luther's threefold method, as did the Pietists who came after him.[107] Nor is it surprising that theologians such as Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1693–1755) and the "father of German rationalism," Johann Salomo Semler (1725–1791), ceased using Luther's threefold method right around the time when it was becoming increasingly popular to categorize theology as a *Wissenschaft* within the university curriculum, a move arguably anticipated by the use of *habitus* to define theology already a century and half earlier.[108] This rationalist approach to theology throughout the following century would open the door to what would eventually give rise to the religious-studies departments of current universities, in which Christianity is studied alongside all other religions and taught by professors for whom personal Christian faith is optional. The heart and the head have been sundered.

Contemporary Issues

Attempts have abounded to bring back together these two strands of theology. One contemporary effort often focuses on ministerial skills as the definitive solution. Commonly found in modern disciplines like nursing and education, this "clerical paradigm," as some have called it, has become increasingly used in theological studies, whereby theology is united by a common end—the techniques of ministry.[109] That students of theology acquire the ministerial skills necessary to serve as effective pastors has always been a concern of theological educators within Lutheranism, tracing back to the Reformation, but in early Lutheranism it tended to happen less formally, mostly outside of formal theological studies, and it was certainly not viewed as that which united theology. The current "technical studies" approach to theology at some seminaries and universities would not only have been entirely unacceptable to Cramer and his supporters, but it is also notably different from what the later seventeenth-century Lutheran theologians were proposing. Although their conceptualizations of theology tended to be externally focused, theology for them was still oriented toward faith and salvation, albeit of the parishioner rather than the

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[107] Kang, *Frömmigkeit und Gelehrsamkeit*, 270–274, 362–366.

[108] For the decline of Luther's triad in university programs of theological study, see Kang, *Frömmigkeit und Gelehrsamkeit*, 58–60; and Nieden, *Erfindung des Theologens*, 81n40. For the development of and debate around the idea of theology as *Wissenschaft*, see Johannes Zachhuber, "Wissenschaft," in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology and Modern European Thought*, ed. Nicholas Adams, George Pattison, and Graham Ward (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), 479–498; and Johannes Wischmeyer, "Continuity and Change: The Study of Protestant Theology in Germany between Reformation and the Humboldtian University Ideal," *Communio Viatorum* 47, no. 3 (2005): 240–256.

[109] Farley, *Theologia*, 61; see also 49–72. For a comparison of different ways of uniting theology, see Glenn K. Fluegge, "The Doctrine of Justification as the 'Unifying Center' of Theology and Missions," in *"Die eininde Mitte": Theologie in konfessioneller und ökumenischer Verantwortung*, ed. Christoph Barnbrock and Gilberto da Silva (Göttingen: Ruprecht, 2018), 554–568.

self.[110] It was not oriented toward a set of skills or techniques as is sometimes the case today.

This functional understanding of theology has recently come under increasing critical scrutiny by some who have pointed out that it exacerbates the problem rather than provides any lasting solutions.[111] Orienting the discipline of theology toward ministerial techniques, they argue, orients it toward something that lies external to it and leads to a permanent disjunction between the theory of theology and what should be its necessary practical dimension. The common side effect is that "practical theology" consists increasingly of skills training derived from other nontheological disciplines (e.g., leadership, rhetoric, education, strategic planning, counseling, organizational psychology), while theology becomes something theorists do in their ivory towers. This then leads to some seminary graduates wondering how theology is in any real way relevant to their day-to-day ministries later in life.

In searching for a solution to this enduring problem, some have proposed refocusing theology on paideia, understood in the classical sense of "understanding related to the cultivation of character and culture."[112] According to this model, engaging in theology would cultivate the necessary *habitus* that underlies the theologian's life and profession, including involvement in later ministerial activities. The proposal is definitely laudable and provides a helpful corrective. However, as we have seen, the reintroduction of the concept of *habitus* into Protestant theology already four centuries ago reveals that it is not a definitive one-stop solution in and of itself. It, too, has a complex and, in many ways, troubled history.

For example, many who use the term today to define theology take their cue from the seventeenth-century Protestant theologians but fail to realize that these former theologians were expressly envisaging an *intellectual habitus* related to Aristotle's *intellectual* virtues. As such, a habitual understanding of theology, as Cramer and his supporters feared, could lead to an overintellectualized theology whereby personal faith and piety become secondary at best. Here, theology would become "secularized" in that it would focus on the individual's personal work and studious effort and less on the intervention of the Holy Spirit, who works not just knowledge but saving knowledge that engenders faith and the pious life. Apparently it is in reaction to this potential misunderstanding of theology that theologians like Pieper have insisted that theology is a *habitus spiritualis*, emphasizing that theology as *habitus* "presupposes, besides natural gifts, personal faith in Christ."[113]

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[110] See Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003), 119–121.

[111] See, e.g., Farley, *Theologia*, 49–72; and Muller, *Study of Theology*.

[112] Muller, *Study of Theology*, 29; see also 214–220; and Farley, *Theologia*, 152–156.

[113] Pieper, *Dogmatics*, 1:46.

As mentioned at the beginning of this essay, some more recent theological educators, such as those who conducted the recent study on *Educating Clergy*, make use of the *habitus* concept in ways similar to sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to express the societal or group habituation that goes on when it comes to the formation of the clergy. But the past still has lessons to teach. Almost in contrast to an intellectual *habitus*, such a sociological *habitus* could leave theology devoid of any normative content and unattached to any normative sacred texts. In some ways, this is why the seventeenth-century theologians reintroduced the concept of *habitus* into discussions about the nature of theology in the first place—to underscore the fact that it does indeed have a specific content that can and must be understood, in part, by the intellect, similar to other academic disciplines. Moreover, a theology merely derived from the socialization of one's own social group could still leave one wondering what role God plays in any of it. In this regard, it may be appropriate to reintroduce into the ongoing dialogue the seventeenth-century proposal of a *habitus* that is specifically *God-given*, an idea that seems conspicuously absent from present-day discussions.

In any case, the past sets the stage for the future. Engaging directly with these seventeenth-century theologians may help chart a way forward in the ongoing conversation about what theology is and how one goes about forming the theologian.

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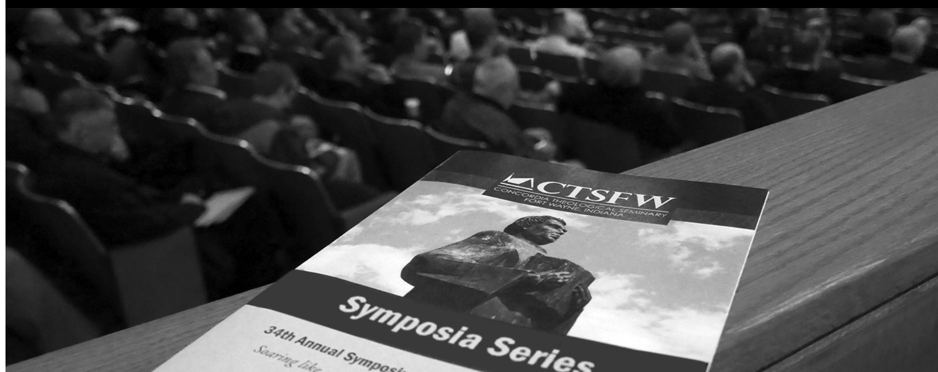

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CTQ 89 (2025): 33–59

Exemplar Paterfamilias: Moses' Divine *Vocatio* and His Resistance in Sixteenth-Century Lutheran Exegesis

Christopher D. Durham

How did Lutheran theologians after Luther receive the Reformation exegesis of the prophetic office? This study will seek to offer a partial answer to that question in the assessment of three of Luther's heirs: Johannes Brenz (1499–1570), Peder Palladius (1503–1560), and David Chytraeus (1530–1600). These three theologians were significant for the propagation of the Reformation in their respective regions, and all wrote exegetical commentaries on the book of Exodus and Moses' call. These commentaries are relevant as they reflect first-generation reactions to Luther's teaching and writing from his own students, and they offer us primary text to assess the question of prophecy. This study of the exegetical commentaries of these three students of the Reformer will also corroborate and engage with G. Suijan Pak's assessment of Reformation interpretation of prophecy.[1] In accord with Pak's assessment of the reception of Luther's interpretation, I will show that these three commentators exemplify the new interpretive paradigm of prophets—in this case, Moses—put forward by Luther.[2] Namely, Luther's heirs viewed "prophecy" not as ecstasy and the revelation of new doctrines but as deep insight into Scripture's meaning. While Luther emphasized the application of the prophets' histories to the pastoral office, some of his heirs applied them also to civil magistrates. We will see how the Reformer's shift from a medieval, unduly positive view of Moses did not mean that Moses must be viewed in a thoroughly negative light, but in fact that his students found both positive and negative examples to derive from Moses. To show such adherence and development, we will note how the students of the Reformer analyze *what* doctrines may be given witness in the call of Moses, *how* Moses is understood to receive the divine call, and what other scriptural texts three Reformation-era commentators highlighted in their assessment of the Mosaic call. I will survey the comments of these four exegetes on the following passages from Exodus:

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[1] G. Suijan Pak, *The Reformation of Prophecy: Early Modern Interpretations of the Prophet and Old Testament Prophecy*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2018).

[2] By the phrase "interpretive paradigm" I have in mind several conceptual items: the basic description or summary of a given passage, the referent of a given passage (Christ and/or the historical person Moses), and the exposition given to a passage. Thus, when Peder Palladius summarizes Exod 3 as Moses' "call" instead of his "sending" he gives evidence of a new pattern for describing biblical texts and prophecy.

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the first excuse (Exod 3:11), the last excuse (Exod 4:10–17), and Moses' doubt after Pharoah punishes the Israelites (Exod 5:23).

State of the Question

In the mid-twentieth century, Emil Kraeling described Luther's Old Testament exegesis as focusing on the literal sense and turning away from christological allegory.[3] He also thought that Luther viewed some parts of the prophetic writings as irrelevant for Christians.[4] For him, the post-Reformation theologians were fundamentally different from Luther. While Luther supposedly criticized the Bible at times, the post-Reformation theologians treated the Bible as perfect and fell into legalistic "biblicism."[5] Thankfully, such characterizations have been challenged. Robert Kolb, while not denying some differences between the exegesis of Luther and the post-Reformation theologians, notes that the latter strove to follow Luther's biblical exposition.[6] G. Suijan Pak notes that Luther saw a "twofold history" in the Old Testament prophetic texts: the first dealing with Christ, and the second dealing with the historical circumstances of the prophets' times.[7] Lutheran Orthodox exegesis has also been appreciated as "dogmatic." The old Lutheran exegetes strove to identify the doctrines that were contained in the biblical texts and to make contemporary application to their hearers.[8]

Scholars have noted development in how Christians understood "prophecy." According to Brian Fitzgerald, the Middle Ages saw disagreement on whether "prophecy" involved ecstatic revelation, on one hand, or deep understanding of biblical revelation, on the other.[9] Luther tended toward the latter view. Faced with

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[3] Emil G. Kraeling, *The Old Testament Since the Reformation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), 13–15.

[4] Kraeling, *Old Testament Since the Reformation,* 17. Kraeling asserts later, "There was no attempt [on the part of Luther's students] to develop further the liberal insights of Luther or the thoughts of Carlstadt" (33).

[5] Kraeling, *Old Testament Since the Reformation,* 40, 42.

[6] Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther as Prophet*, *Teacher*, *and Hero*: *Images of the Reformer*, *1520–1620* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 12.

[7] Pak, *Reformation of Prophecy*, 218–223.

[8] A sympathetic overview may be found in Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*: *Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 10–14; the disciplined practice of later Lutheran exegesis is exemplified by Benjamin T. G. Mayes, "Friedrich Balduin's Use of Exegesis for Doctrine," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 79, no. 1–2 (January/April 2015): 103–120; see also Robert Preus, *The Inspiration of Scripture*: *A Study of the Theology of the 17th-Century Lutheran Dogmaticians* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), 193–194.

[9] Brian Fitzgerald, *Inspiration and Authority in the Middle Ages*: *Prophets and Their Critics from Scholasticism to Humanism*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2017), 1, 103, 231. Especially significant among reactions against predictive prophecy was that of Aquinas, for which see chapter 4 of this work. See also Paul M. Rogers, *Aquinas on Prophecy:*

Anabaptists and enthusiasts, whose view of "prophecy" undermined the authority of the pastoral office, Luther by the mid-1520s claimed that the biblical examples of prophets and prophecy apply to the pastoral office, not to the laity.[10] This view continued with Luther's heirs. When they regarded Luther as a "prophet," this did not mean a revealer of new doctrines but a proclaimer of the saving doctrine revealed in the Scriptures.[11]

Moysi Vocatio: A Sketch of Moses' Call to Serve YHWH and His Resistance

After Moses flees from Egypt (Exod 2), he becomes a shepherd of the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro. While tending the flock near Mount Horeb, Moses is called by the Lord God, perceived in the burning bush (Exod 3:2–5). Straightaway, the Lord declares his purpose in revealing himself to Moses: "Then the LORD said, 'I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings. . . . Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt'" (Exod 3:7, 10).[12] Moses, for his part, is extremely reticent to accept such a commission and challenges the fittingness of his selection on several scores. First, Moses wonders why he is called: "who am I?" (Exod 3:11). The second objection concerns knowledge of the name of God: "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" (Exod 3:13). Then Moses doubts whether the Israelites will believe him (Exod 4:1-9). Finally, Moses objects that he is not eloquent (Exod 4:10-17); the last objection is climatic and demonstrates a test of God's patience. Moses will later falter once more, wondering whether God will actually come through on his promise and saying, "[Y]ou have not delivered your people at all" (Exod 5:23). Beginning with the initial encounter between Moses and the God of his fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and continuing through the first rebuke Pharoah provides the Israelites, Moses questions God's command and purpose. The textual duration in which Moses resists God's call (the dispute about the nature and purpose of the mission extends from 3:2 through 5:22) to go to Egypt and lead the sons of Israel out of Egypt delimits the scope of this study.

Wisdom and Charism in the "Summa Theologiae" (Washington, DC: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2023), 121–162.

[10] Pak, *Reformation of Prophecy*, 105–106.

[11] Kolb, *Luther as Prophet*, 27, 31–32.

[12] Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations are from the ESV.

Luther's Sermons on Exodus: Contemporary Conflict

As Erik Hermann has pointed out, understanding Luther's distinctive exegesis begins with recognizing Luther's sources of exegesis.[13] Luther largely used what had become common, the *Glossa Ordinaria*, and, plausibly, a Bible edition that included the notes of Nicholas of Lyra's *Postilla*.[14] Luther treated the contents of the first half of Exodus not in the lecture hall but in the pulpit, by preaching upon it and making reference to its central figures during the years of his conflict with Erasmus of Rotterdam, in 1524–1525. Both in the text of *The Bondage of the Will* (*De Servio Arbitrio*) and in the recently translated *Sermons on Exodus: Chapters 1–20*, Luther dealt with the details of the text of Exodus.[15] In none of these texts does Luther list what doctrines can be identified from a given passage of Scripture.[16] Nevertheless, doctrine was certainly Luther's concern as he preached and wrote on these texts. Aside from Erasmus, there was also the increasing dilemma presented by former allies who had labeled themselves "prophets" and claimed to possess revelations of their own that offered significantly different doctrinal perspectives from Luther's.[17] Luther had been preaching against Andreas Karlstadt and Thomas Muntzer already and had called them false prophets.[18] The *Sermons on Exodus* should therefore be read with such figures as Karlstadt and Muntzer in the background, and Luther's concern for understanding the nature of a prophet and of a call stems at least in part from these conflicts.

According to Luther, the gospel of Christ was a central feature of the prophetic message.[19] Luther described God's summons to Moses in Exodus 3 as a call to make the true God known, rather than, for instance, the description offered by Nicholas of Lyra, who explained the literal sense as Moses being sent for the liberation of the

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[13] Erik Hermann, "Luther's Absorption of Medieval Biblical Interpretation and His Use of the Church Fathers," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and L'ubomír Batka (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014), 71–90. See especially 73–76.

[14] Hermann, "Luther's Absorption," 74.

[15] Martin Luther, *Sermons on Exodus: Chapters 1–20* (1524–1525), in *Luther*'s *Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1976), vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–1986), vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), 62:19–418 (hereafter cited as AE) (= *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [*Schriften*], 73 vols. [Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–2009], 16:1–528 [hereafter cited as WA]).

[16] Nevertheless, many of the doctrinal emphases that are expounded upon at length, such as the immortality of the faithful, the divine essence, the divine name, and so on, can be found in Luther's preaching.

[17] Pak, *Reformation of Prophecy*, 70–71; Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521–1532*, trans. James L. Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 137.

[18] Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 156.

[19] Pak, *Reformation of Prophecy*, 107.

people of Israel.[20] For Luther, Moses was a prophet not because he received new teachings or ecstatic visions but because he was the one who taught true Christian doctrine, proclaiming what God has revealed. These emphases appear in the sermons, yet Moses is primarily interpreted as a prophet *with a true call* from God, acting on what has been *revealed* by God and therefore not on his own authority but with a divine imperative and content of salvific importance.

Luther on Moses' Call and Resistance: Continuity and Contrast with the Medieval Exegetical Tradition

Luther recognizes that there is a lesson to be learned concerning the Office of the Ministry in the call of Moses—namely, that no one ought to assert authority where it is not clear that God has given it. It is possible, Luther observes, for anyone to claim that they possess the Spirit of God or that they have been given divine revelation—yet unless there is some way for the church to be confident of this, it is equally possible that it will be led into confusion and false teaching by anyone who wants to teach and direct it. "For it is certain that the Spirit will not move or kindle anyone's heart unless He first confirms it with signs. He has to bring outward proof. That is the inner calling."[21] Such proof has, according to Scripture, two expressions, one where God directly calls men to be prophets and apostles through theophanic revelation, through visions, and the like. The confirmation of this immediate call consists of the miraculous works that God accomplishes through the man; thus, Moses' staff transforms into a snake and, later, a great serpent.

Although Moses' call certainly fits into this category, Luther takes occasion to discuss the other expression, the mediate call, "which is effected by people, is first confirmed by God's commandment on Mount Sinai: 'Love God, and your neighbor as yourself'. . . . Thus I preach without performing any signs at all, and yet the calling is God's because it proceeds from the commandment of love and is caused by God."[22] By implication, the one who discerns within himself a call to serve in the Ministry of the church ought to ask whether such a heartfelt movement is borne by the desire to serve the neighbor and proclaim the holy gospel. Even if so, this impulse alone is not enough. The desire to preach must also be confirmed by external means.

[20] Nicholas of Lyra et al., *Bibliorum Sacrorum Glossa Ordinaria A Strabo Fulgensi Collecta: Nunc Autem Novis, Cum Graecorum, Tum Latinorum Patrum Expositionibus Locupletata*: *annotationis etiam iis quae confuse antea citabantur, locis: et postilla Nicolai Lyrani: additionibus Pauli Burgensis ad ipsum Lyranum: ac ad easdem Matthiae Toringi Replicis*, 6 vols. (Venice: Juntas, 1603), 1:495.

[21] Luther, *Sermons on Exodus*, AE 62:60 (= WA 16:32–33).

[22] Luther, *Sermons on Exodus*, AE 62:62 (= WA 16:35–36).

Later Lutheran theologians would term this expression the mediate call.[23] Luther concludes with a sharp warning: "All this is written to instruct us . . . because no one ought to undertake a matter that concerns God unless he has been called to do so."[24] No one makes himself a prophet, even if he adequately understands the word of God, but only the one who God makes to be his mouth.[25] Precisely as man, Moses is not different from other men who are equally sinful, doubtful, and hesitant—the difference lies in the fact that God has called him and gives confirmation of this call with miraculous signs and promises. Luther extends this difference to ground the prophetic office in the preaching of the gospel of Christ and true doctrine.[26]

As many commentators before,[27] Luther is alert to the tension between Moses' exalted depiction given later in the New Testament and his apparent reluctance to obey God, which borders on unbelief: "He is an excellent man, and yet he resists and refuses to carry out the public office, not wanting to undertake it until he hears God's disfavor, even though he had the momentous, magnificent promise that God would be with him."[28] Luther's new emphasis on the call and its content, however, make him approach this tension in a much different way. Luther does not shy away from perceiving the prophet in a negative light. Luther notes that although Moses' reluctance can be viewed as a sort of confession of his weakness, nevertheless, it must also be said that Moses resists God—that is, that he is unwilling and therefore in some sense culpable for God's anger against him later. Although Luther describes Moses as an "excellent man" at the outset, he qualifies this description in a summary at the conclusion of the passage: "[God] wanted to reveal His greatest wisdom, that this stutterer, Moses, *will be* such an excellent man, who persuades all kings."[29] Thus, it

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[23] Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 3 vols., in *Loci Theologici*, *De Coena Domini*, *De Duabus Naturis in Christo*, *Theologiae Jesuitarum* (Chelsea, MI: Lutheran Heritage Foundation, 2000), 3:121; Balthazar Mentzer, *Exegesis Augustanae Confessionis cuius Articulu XXI Breviter & succincte explicantur, & subjecta ἀντιθέσει τῶν ἑτεροδόξων, Papistarum, Calvinistarum, & Photinianorum illustrantur* (Frankfurt am Main: Georgii Erhardi Martii, 1585), 180; Johann Benedikt Carpzov, *Isagoge In Libros Ecclesiarum Lutheranarum Symbolicos* (Dresden: Johann Christoph Zimmermanni & Johann Nicholii Gerlachii, 1725), 428, 872–873. When he explains how God uses miracles to glorify his name and confirm divine truth, Carpzov is careful to make a distinction between the *organi separati*, an instrument (of a miracle) on its own, such as Moses' staff, and an *organi coniunctissimi activi et efficacissimi*, Jesus' own human nature, which is able to heal those afflicted by the devil, because he is God and man and his very flesh brings life (p. 1529).

[24] Luther, *Sermons on Exodus*, AE 62:62 (= WA 16:48–9). Pak, *Reformation of Prophecy*, 70. Fitzgerald, *Inspiration and Authority*, 113–114, 142–143, notes a like concern for the Dominicans, who dealt with ecstatic and apocalyptic prophets.

[25] Luther, *Sermons on Exodus*, AE 62:110 (= WA 16:110–111).

[26] Luther, *Sermons on Exodus*, AE 62:101 (= WA 16:100–101); Martin Luther, *Lectures on Deuteronomy* (1525), in AE 9:51, 131, 168 (= WA 14:585–586, 648, 670–671).

[27] Hugh of Saint-Cher, *Opera* 1:77.

[28] Luther, *Sermons on Exodus*, AE 62:62 (= WA 16:36).

[29] Luther, *Sermons on Exodus*, AE 62:83 (= WA 16:58); emphasis mine.

seems that Luther's initial description of Moses has to be qualified in his final assessment of Exodus 3–4, for although Moses *will* be a great example of obedience to God's word and call, nevertheless in the moment, precisely on account of his cowardly resistance, he is opposed to God. Moses, Luther could say, does not have a good conscience or confidence in God. In this way, Luther picks up an important narrative focus on the larger text of Exodus, which is the initial unbelief in God's declaration that results in God demonstrating his power and authority so that those he addresses are compelled to recognize his word and works.[30]

After Moses has offered all the possible excuses and says, "Send someone else, whomever You want," Luther states plainly, "Since Moses wants to throw away this calling based on his own will and desire, the Lord becomes very angry at Moses. . . . Now Moses has to acquiesce. Earlier God dealt with him in a friendly manner, but here He is angry. And if God wants to be angry, then you have to stop."[31] Luther interweaves Moses' own experience with that of Christians. If Moses' resistance to God's many persuasive words was shameful and disgraceful, surely that would be the case, too, for Christians to resist and oppose him in the callings that they have been given. For when God sets a person in an office, he then makes him "god" to whomever he chooses; thus, Moses is "god" to Aaron and Pharoah. If anyone despises those whom God sends, then they despise God himself. This of course applies to Moses himself, who despises the divine office given to him by God and thus behaves in a shameful way.[32]

In this regard, Luther distinguishes himself somewhat from the medieval tradition, which tended to find ways to excuse Moses' reluctance to enact God's liberation of Egypt.[33] Denys the Carthusian, for instance, explained Moses' hesitancy by his recognition of the burden of the task: "Moses, wisely considering the magnitude of the undertaking that God laid before him and urged upon him, at length recused himself."[34] Denys explains this disposition by comparing him to other virtuous men, such as Paul, who says that he is not worthy to be called "Apostle" and yet calls himself "Apostle"; or David, who, though recognizing that he has been anointed and

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[30] Cf. Patrick, *The Rhetoric of Revelation*, 34. On the fickleness of the people, see Exod 4:9–31, 5:21, 6:9; on the Lord's demonstration of his power, see Exod 6:7, 7:5, 7:17, 10:2, 14:4, 14:18, 14:31b.

[31] Luther, *Sermons on Exodus*, AE 62:84 (= WA 16:58–60).

[32] Luther, *Sermons on Exodus*, AE 62:85 (= WA 16:60–61).

[33] *Biblia: mit Glossa ordinaria, Postilla litteralis von Nicolaus de Lyra und Expositiones prologorum von Guilelmus Brito* (Venice: Paganinus de Paganinis, 1495), 158.

[34] "Moyses prudenter considerans magnitudinem legationis, quam sibi proponuit et injunxit Dominus, diu se excusavit. . . ." Denys the Carthusian, "Commentaria in Genesim et Exodum (i–xix)," in *Doctoris ecstatici D. Dionysii Cartusiani Opera omnia, in unum corpus digesta ad fidem editionum Coloniensium cura et labore monachorum sacri Ordinis Cartusiensis*, 42 vols. in 44 (Monstrolii: Typis Cartusiæ S. M. de Pratis, 1896–1935), 1:504. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

chosen to be king over Israel, nevertheless thought that he would be killed by the hand of Saul before he took power. Such noble men consider themselves unworthy, but then in view of divine revelation take up the task. The inward process of deliberation is marked by personal humility coupled with divine fortitude: "So it is that whenever virtuous men continue in actions and thoughts of a humble sort, they then regard themselves as inept and unworthy for lofty matters; but sometimes they continue in thoughts and actions of a bold sort, and then from confidence in divine aid they carry themselves as men prepared for great things."[35] In this frame of reference, Moses is judicious for his insistence that he is insufficient, for he demonstrates an appropriate humility of soul. Though Denys likewise follows this positive exposition throughout, as does Nicholas of Lyra and the *Glossa*, when the text clearly explains that God is wrathful with Moses (4:15), he then expresses some doubt about Moses' conduct; perhaps it could be that Moses committed a venial sin.[36] Hugh of Saint-Cher similarly describes Moses' request for God to pick someone else as a result of his wisdom and awareness that, with his weak tongue, he would be physically unimpressive before Pharoah, and therefore was wisely advising God that he was not the ideal candidate to enact God's plan.[37] For Luther, however, the fact that God calls a weak, doubtful, ineloquent, sinful man to such a great and divine office is no remarkable thing; indeed, it is exactly what he continues to do.[38]

Luther surely goes beyond Hugh of Saint-Cher, Nicholas, and Denys in his estimation that initially Moses acts in a shameful way. Luther thus also sets a pattern for the exposition of this text among the sons of the Lutheran Reformation. The early chapters of Exodus teach about offices to which God calls men, typically identified by Luther as the pastoral, parental, and governmental (LC I 158). Luther, however, does not specify to which of these Moses refers, preferring instead to speak only about his own preaching office. When, in Exodus 5:23, Moses again demonstrates his weakness and fear even after so much encouragement from God, saying, "You have not delivered Your people," Luther comments on Moses' return to God with a degree of exasperation. "My goodness, how could God deceive anyone?" Yet, he says, this is written for our instruction, not Moses', "as consolation so that we learn to hold fast to God's Word in our callings and offices and to forsake ourselves,

[35] "Sic viri virtuosi quandoque insistent actibus et considerationibus humilitatis, sicque reputant se ineptos et indignos ad ardua; quandoque vero insistent considerationibus et actibus magnanimitatis, et ita ex confidentia divini subsidii offerunt se paratos ad magna." Denys, "Commentaria," 505.

[36] Denys, "Commentaria," 509.

[37] Hugh of Saint-Cher, *Hugonis Cardinalis Opera Omnia In Universum Vetus, & Novum Testamentum*, 8 vols. (Venice: Pezzana, 1703), 1:78.

[38] Luther, *Sermons on Exodus*, AE 62:83 (= WA 16:57–58).

but to place our trust and hope in God."[39] That is, Luther's exasperation is directed toward his hearers' unbelief, of which Moses is an example here. God does not lie, and he will bring about what he has promised, "even though it did not look like it would happen and even though it seemed difficult and impossible."[40] The pastoral office is not inhabited by men who are exempt from temptation and despair but by those who, like the very clergy that Luther taught, wrestled with unbelief.

In summary, when Luther approaches Moses' call, the primary matter at hand is the nature of a divine call, which especially in regard to the church and the Office of the Ministry cannot be merely an internal call. Moreover, Moses may indeed be the instrument through which God will work great things, causing Moses to be regarded as a great man; but this does not mean that he is unlike ordinary, sinful men. In fact, his wavering demonstrates that God can be angry even with great men and call them to quit their sinful—or, in this case, pusillanimous—disposition. Whether men wish to or not is beside the point. Luther's emphasis on the call subsequently became a standard feature of Reformation commentary on this book to a much greater degree than it previously had, as the following will demonstrate.

Luther's Hermeneutical Offspring: Fellows and Students

Since we have surveyed Luther's discussion of Moses' call, we turn now to other Reformation commentators. We will proceed chronologically, beginning with one of Luther's fellow Reformers, Johannes Brenz, followed by Peder Palladius from the middle period, and concluding with David Chytraeus in the late period of Luther's life and teaching.

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[39] Luther, *Sermons on Exodus*, AE 62:95 (= WA 16:94–96).
[40] Luther, *Sermons on Exodus*, AE 62:95 (= WA 16:94–96).

Johannes Brenz on Moses' Call and Resistance

Author and Text

Johannes Brenz (1499–1570)[41] was Luther's younger contemporary and, though less is known of his time as a student,[42] quickly became a supporter of Reformation theology.[43] In spite of the general lack of detail surrounding his early life, it is known that he was present at the Heidelberg Disputation (1518), where he was persuaded by Luther's rejection of Aristotle.[44] This event triggered a great admiration for Luther and devotion to his theology, which Brenz attempted to pursue all his life.[45]

After his time as a student, Brenz devoted a significant portion of his life to implementing Reformation theology in Schwäbisch Hall, serving as pastor of St. Michael's Church in Hall from 1522 to 1548.[46] It was as a theologian of the Lord's Supper that Brenz's theological convictions were solidified and given expression. When the conflict over the nature of the Eucharist broke out, Brenz sided with Luther against his old teacher Oecolampadius and was the primary author of the *Syngramma Suevicum* (Book of the Swabians), defending Luther's position of the

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[41] Recent biographies and treatments of Brenz include Ernst Volk, *Johannes Brenz: Zeuge biblisch-evangelischer Wahrheit und Reformator im südlichen Deutschland* (Nurnberg: VTR, 2010); Matthias Deutschle, *Brenz als Kontroverstheologe: Die Apologie der Confessio Virtembergica und die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Johannes Brenz und Pedro de Soto*, Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie 138 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); older studies include Julius Hartmann, *Johannes Brenz*: *Leben und Ausgewählte Schriften* (Elberfield: R. L. Friderichs, 1862); L. W. Gräpp, *Magister Johannes Brenz, der Reformator Schwabens: Ein Lebensbild aus der Reformationszeit nach Quellen zusammengestellt und erzählt* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1894); Georg Bayer, *Johannes Brenz der Reformator Württembergs*: *Sein Leben und Wirken dem evangelischen Volk erzählt* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1899).

[42] James Martin Estes, "Johannes Brenz and the German Reformation," *Lutheran Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 373–414. See 374 on Brenz's early life and education.

[43] Martin Brecht, *Die frühe Theologie des Johannes Brenz*, Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie 36, ed. Gerhard Ebeling (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1966), 7; David C. Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1971), 109.

[44] Hermann Ehmer, "Luther und Brenz," in *Luthers Wirkung: Festschrift für Martin Brecht zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, Wilhelm H. Neuser, and Christian Peters (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1992), 97; Gräpp, *Magister Johannes Brenz*, 12.

[45] Robert Kolb has recently noted that Brenz does, on the subject of predestination, deviate somewhat from Luther's stance: "The Swabian reformer followed the Wittenberger in connecting the believer's knowledge and use of God's election of his children to the Word and to faith. Indeed, Brenz did move beyond Luther's more ambiguous statements regarding the damned to teach a predestination to damnation, although he clearly rejected any thought that God might be the cause of evil." Robert Kolb, *Bound Choice, Election, and Wittenberg Theological Method*: *From Martin Luther to the Formula of Concord*, Lutheran Quarterly Books, ed. Paul Rorem (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 70.

[46] Estes, "Brenz and the German Reformation," 375–376.

Sacrament of the Altar.[47] However, his lasting influence at Hall was due not only to his decided preference to remain at his post rather than to depart for more prestigious stations but also to his productivity. Brenz was a remarkably fruitful author. The Swabian reformer produced some five hundred printed writings in his life. He authored church orders and a large catechism that preceded Luther's own and other full-scale Bible commentaries.[48] In all, Brenz published over forty Bible commentaries, and these were influential for generations of pastors to come.[49] As Estes noted, such commentaries were the fruits of his weekly preaching on Sundays and weekdays.[50] Brenz constantly was writing in order to serve the church.

Brenz's commentary on Exodus seems first to have been published in 1539. However, Brenz had already taken occasion during weekday services to preach on the first five books of Moses (and others) in 1536 and would again later in 1557.[51] Brenz's commentary on Exodus was published and republished several times and is included in the posthumously published *Operum* of all his scriptural commentaries. Unless otherwise indicated, I will cite from the *Operum*.[52]

Brenz on Doctrines Derived from Exodus 3–5

Brenz's exegesis of Exodus is more detailed than that in Luther's sermons on this book. Brenz was capable of both general summaries and exhaustive exposition of the text and referred to the Hebrew text to explicate it. In a booklet that was intended to provide a summary of the themes of each book of the Scriptures, Brenz described Exodus in the following way:

> In some other parts, in which the liberation of Israel from Egypt is written of . . . it seems that in this book something else is put forth at length rather than that Christ is described. But if you weigh the matter carefully, all Exodus has this especially in view: that it might commend Christ to the churches of God.

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[47] Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings*, 110; Estes, "Brenz and the German Reformation," 378; Robert Kolb, *Luther's Wittenberg World: The Reformer's Family, Friends, Followers, and Foes* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018), 154.

[48] Martin Brecht reports that Luther highly esteemed Brenz's John commentary: "Luther said of him that none of the Reformers would achieve what Brenz had in his John commentary." Brecht, *Die frühe Theologie des Johannes Brenz*, 180.

[49] Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings*, 111–112; Kolb, *Luther's Wittenberg World*, 155.

[50] Estes, "Brenz and the German Reformation," 405.

[51] Gräpp, *Magister Johannes Brenz*, 73, 114.

[52] Johannes Brenz, *In Exodum, secundum librum Mosis, Ducis et Liberatoris Israelitarum ex AEgypto, Commentarius prior, praelectus in Schola Tubingensi. Anno 1538*, in *Opervm Reverendi Et Clarissimi Theologi D. Ioannis Brentii . . . Tomus Primus* (Tübingen: Georgius Gruppenbachius, 1576), 349–594 (hereafter cited as *In Exodum Commentarius).* The text of the commentary on Exodus is substantially the same as the earlier publication, *In Exodum Mosi Commentarii* (Francoforti: Officina Petri Brubachii, 1550). For the 1538 printing, see Johannes Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius* (Halle: Petri Brubachij, 1538).

> For the Israelites were emancipated unto liberty and were brought together by means of the laws into one body, a republic (as it is described in Exodus), so that they would be a people among whom [*in quo*] the promises concerning Christ might be preserved by holy and public sermons, and so that the family out of which the Christ was to come might surely endure.[53]

This summary exposition of the book follows upon a question whether such arcane history can have much meaning for the life of the church. Brenz is alert to the collective or political development that takes place within Exodus, but this does not mean he wished to see this "republic" as paradigmatic for the laws of nations.[54] Rather, its primary history is the history that pertains to the gospel of Christ and the preservation of God's promises. Precisely because its central content and concern is the preservation of God's people and the fulfillment of God's promise to send an Offspring who would deliver (Gen 3:15), it is a book that concerns Christ and his gospel.[55] This central, underlying concern makes its appearance in the way that Brenz reads Exodus—namely, through God's call to weak men like Moses. For Brenz, as we shall see, Moses is a significant example to learn from, both from his disobedience that arises from unbelief and from his obedience, which is the result of trust in God's promises. And yet, Moses is the minor character in God's activity to create faith among men. All the doctrines that can be discerned in a scriptural text such as Exodus hold together in that we recognize, in the text's particular details, Christ and his redemptive, transformative work to shape our hopes and lives.[56]

Brenz, like Luther, does not make summary lists of doctrines that can be derived from a given chapter or text. However, his commentaries include useful summary headings through which one can glimpse the topic or focus of a given section.

At the end of chapter 2, Brenz highlights that a purpose of the afflictions that God sends to his faithful, such as Moses, is to demonstrate his power: "It is well-established that whoever abandons impiety and will run after the call of God is

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[53] Johannes Brenz, *Argvmenta et Sacrae Scriptvrae summa, librorum Veteris uidelicet et Noui Testamenti* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Braubach, 1546), A3r–A3v. This emphasis accords well with Pak's assertion that Luther and his followers saw a twofold "history" in the Old Testament and prioritized the revealed gospel in their assessment of the basic data of that twofold history. Pak, *Reformation of Prophecy*, 218–223.

[54] Brecht, *Die frühe Theologie des Johannes Brenz*, 311, notes that Moses, for Brenz, was the magistrate of the Jews, and his ordinances for the Jewish people were not binding for the German people. On the manifold understanding of the term *res publica* in the Lutheran Reformation, see Robert von Friedeburg, "Church and State in Lutheran Lands 1550–1675," in *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture, 1550–1675*, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 11, ed. Robert Kolb (Boston: Brill, 2008), 361–410.

[55] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius* (1576), AA2r [2]. Cf. Pak, *Reformation of Prophecy*, 180–181.

[56] Brenz, *Argvmenta*, A2r; Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 352–353, 403.

exposed at once to the greatest dangers and disasters."[57] The call of God is a high office but not one that appears great and awesome in the sight of the world. More broadly, Brenz consistently highlights the reality that Christians must suffer. The purpose of this affliction, however, is not to drive us away from God. Indeed, in afflictions and trials we are to bring precisely these things before God: "Now since God has regard for afflictions and the truth of his promises, nothing is more effective for us than that we pour ourselves out to God in prayer—not, I say, our righteousness, which is filthy, but our affliction and our contrite and humbled heart."[58] Moses is the answer to the afflicted groans and prayers of the enslaved Israelites.[59] Brenz thus distinguished himself as one of the great Reformation theologians who emphasized the reality of suffering in Christian life and vocation.

Brenz concludes his exposition of God's response to Moses' second objection, that his word would be insufficient (Exod 4:10), with his word: "'I will be with you,' [so to say] I have revealed my will to you by a promise, which is 'I will be with you'; furthermore, I will not be present in another way than through this mode of revealing—that which is through my word."[60] Brenz thus echoes Melanchthon in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession: "God cannot be treated with, God cannot be apprehended, except through the Word" (Ap IV 67).[61] Brenz expresses the same thing with potent language: "God does not want to be known apart from his revealed word. For the word of God is the face of God. The word of God is the revealed will of God. The Word of God is the only Son of God, made man in these last times."[62] Thus, according to Brenz a prophet does not generate a fundamentally new message but is rather called to interpret and proclaim the same one that God has always intended and revealed. In this regard, Brenz conforms to the paradigm established by Luther that the word of the prophets from Scripture is God's word and not a human word.[63] Brenz makes an advance upon Luther in his exegesis of this point in the text. Whereas Luther had stressed God's immutability to affirm his promise, Brenz—though he does not deny this reality and discusses it earlier in the commentary—adds that God has given no other way to know him surely than through this word that reveals the only-begotten Son. So then, Brenz was concerned to identify the

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[57] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 368.

[58] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 371.

[59] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 376; Walther Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology in Outline* (Edingburgh: T&T Clark, 1978), 82.

[60] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 380.

[61] In *Triglot Concordia*: *The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. W. H. T. Dau and F. Bente (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 189.

[62] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 380.

[63] Pak, *Reformation of Prophecy*, 183.

revelation of the gospel even in the tangles of Moses' own faulty concern for his security.

Brenz on Moses' Call

With Brenz we see how influential Luther's exegesis of this text was in the earlier period of its reception. "You have, then, the call of Moses here to the guidance of the Israelites and the promises that are added to the call. From this we are warned, so that no one might usurp public duties from his own presumptuousness but should wait for the call from God and in the meanwhile diligently serve in the present vocation."[64] Brenz, too, then, interprets the call of Moses primarily in relation to the Office of the Ministry as does Luther. However, in line with his generally pessimistic view of human nature,[65] Brenz is much more willing, as we shall see, to take Moses to task for his reluctance to follow the divine call. Nevertheless, his thematic emphasis follows Luther by focusing in the early chapters of Exodus on the confirmation of the divine call. Like Luther, Brenz regards the miraculous burning of the bush as a confirmation, for Moses' benefit, that God's summons from the bush is not a mirage but is a true and divine call.[66]

> When the Lord wanted to free Israel from Egypt, he calls and establishes Moses as the leader of the Israelites. Moreover, since it was to deliver an especially vast, miserable, defenseless, and oppressed people from so grave and strenuous tyranny, and it was not fitting for him to usurp public duties without a most certain call from God, for this reason when the Lord God was about to call Moses, in the first place he revealed his presence by means of a great and awesome miracle, so that Moses might make sure that this call was the call of God.[67]

In this case, Brenz emphasizes that Moses' own conscience needed certainty about the divine call. By the same token, if Moses did not have a call from God to lead the Israelites, then it would be utterly improper for him to usurp a public office of this sort.

Brenz closely analyzes the first excuse that Moses raises to God (Exod 4:1). "In order that we might gain understanding of what Moses desires for himself with this question, it must be observed that, at this point, names are put forth for things, so that through names the things themselves may be signified, made clear, and known."[68] Moses is not, then, asking for something more than God's oral command

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[64] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 377.
[65] Kolb, *Bound Choice*, 70.
[66] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 373.
[67] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 373.
[68] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 380.

to go to the Israelites but instead wants a clear manifestation of God. Brenz's point is that Moses wishes to have some clear and obvious sign of certainty that will compel the Israelites to follow him and establish him as their divinely called leader. From this we can understand that Moses is not content with the word of God.

At the climax of Moses' objections to God's call—"'I implore,' [Moses] said, 'O Lord, send whomever you would send'" (Exod 4:13)—Brenz offers this disapproving assessment: "Once more, it seems to me that here in Moses [is] the incapacity of men for believing the word of God and for following the call of God."[69] Brenz likewise here and later describes Moses' disposition and action as "disobedience" (*inobedientia*). Moses, Brenz thinks, trades the mountain for the molehill. "O what mixed up terror! Moses fears such great dangers if he obeys God, yet fears nothing if he does not obey God."[70] The problem of the prophet is unbelief, which results in nearsightedness. Moses thinks only of what he can perceive, even though God has already miraculously shown that what Moses perceives is not all that should be taken into account. What such fear reveals is not only a disordered fear but also that behind it stands the service of Satan, who does not wish to see the kingdom of God come.[71]

Brenz takes this nearsighted fear to be a peculiar vice of those called to the prophetic office, citing Jonah as another example. Shockingly, Brenz thinks, God does not destroy Moses. God is angry, it is true, but wishes to show his clemency.[72] "Here, then, we see such great clemency of God, such great diligence. For his clemency is that he does not at once reject Moses on account of disobedience; and his diligence is that he turns Moses' disobedience into something good."[73] Whereas Luther stated that Moses' resistance was written for our instruction to rely on God's promises, Brenz proceeds by explaining this as a negative example. We should not take Moses' bad behavior and reluctance as an example for our own presumption that God will not reject us if we take occasion to sin, for that would be to tempt God and blaspheme his grace. These examples are set forth for us so that our faith might be confirmed and strengthened when, like Moses, we are called to ventures of which we cannot see the end.[74]

Though here it is most appropriate to take Moses as an example of what not to do, in many other places, Brenz is quick to point out that Moses also offers examples of what Christians should do. When Moses returns, he does not instantly pack his bags and announce that he is leaving but greets Jethro, his father-in-law (Exod 4:18).

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[69] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 389.
[70] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 389.
[71] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 389.
[72] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 389.
[73] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 390.
[74] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 389.

In this regard, Moses is an example of modesty. Further, when Moses sets forth from Midian, he acts as the model head of his household (*paterfamilias*), since in taking up that high office of the divine call, he does not abandon the vocation he already has in the care of a wife and children. It was therefore permissible for pastors to take wives, as Moses, Peter, and other apostles had.[75] Moses' example, however, implies more than possibility: it also implies that the divine call does not mean the abandonment or neglect of family for the sake of the other duty.[76] It would be easy, Brenz points out, to presume that the wife and children would be an impediment to the call, but Moses follows the path later clarified in the Lord's words, "What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matt 19:6; Mark 10:9). Moses' example applies for married men and especially those in the Holy Ministry. It is written for "married men,"[77] so that they will know how they ought to undertake the duty and office of husband—namely, by providing and caring for their wives and children whatever the circumstance. This observation certainly had ramifications for the defense of those called into the Office of the Holy Ministry who chose to take wives and have children, a practice Brenz defended in the Württemberg Confession of 1551.[78] For they, too, have the divine call to serve in the ministration of the church; yet it is not wrongful for those who serve in such an office to take wives and children. Moreover, it is incumbent upon them especially to serve and care for their wives and children as examples for those they serve.

When he analyzes how Moses reacts to Pharoah's punishment of the people (Exod 5:22–23), Brenz asks, "What else does it signify than his own most iniquitous opinion that God cares nothing for his people?"[79] Moses thus becomes the paradigm of the sons of Israel, embodying an initial, if doubtful, willingness to follow God's call, yet wavering back and forth. Brenz leaves aside any extensive comment on this until his notes on Exodus 7, when he again refers to God's clemency in dealing with

[75] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 390–391.

[76] Contrary to the presumption of medieval tradition, which exalted men that abandoned family for the sake of private devotion. See Peter Lombard, *The Sentences—Book 4: On the Doctrine of Signs*, trans. Giulio Silano, Mediaeval Sources in Translation 48 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2010), 163–164.

[77] It is clear that men are implied for Brenz, not merely "married folk." See Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 394, where he juxtaposes wives (*uxores*) and husbands (*mariti*): "For the Lord ordained that the man should rule over his wife, not the wife over the man, Gen. 3. And to this order he promised his blessing. Therefore, where the wife seizes governorship in marriage, that is sedition, contrary to the order of God."

[78] Johannes Brenz et. al., *Confessio illustrissimi Principis et Domini, D. Christophori Ducis Wirtenbergensis & Theccensis, Comitis Montbeligardi &c. una cum Apologeticis Scriptis*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt: Brubachius, 1561), 1:23; for Brenz's defense, see 1:666–697, especially 676. Cf. Johannes Brenz, W*ürttemburgisches Glaubensbekenntnis* (Stuttgart: Evangelische Gesellschaft, 1848), 36.

[79] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, [399].

Moses' fickleness and disobedience.[80] Just as Pharaoh was to be the vehicle through which God demonstrated his power and stern chastisement, so Moses is the instrument through which he shows his mercy: "through which God would bring to light publicly his rich glory and clemency."[81] How does God bring Moses back from timidity to be an obedient servant? "He repeats, reinforces, and makes clear previous promises, prophecies, and miracles."[82] That is to say, God does not deviate from what he has done before, or alter his plans, but reaffirms them and strengthens them, so as to redirect Moses to the accomplishment of his task by belief in God's word. "God preaches nothing novel to Moses in this place but only the same old things."[83] The demarcation between Pharoah and Moses is in order to demonstrate difference with regard to faith. At every stage of the narrative, the question at issue is faith or disbelief in the promises of God. For even if we should fall into sin and deserve damnation, and our actions bring God's wrath, as long as the word of God is preached in such a way that it calls disobedient men to repentance, the door to repentance and salvation remains open.[84] To put it briefly, Moses' external disobedience is a result of his internal unbelief. God strikes at this unbelief as he always does, through his word—yet this works both internal belief and external obedience on Moses' part.

Brenz, then, takes Luther's basic insight concerning Moses' reticence to take up the divine call. In this respect, his exegetical procedure follows Luther. Brenz is more willing, however, to probe the details of the text to demonstrate the peculiar weaknesses of Moses' character than Luther had been in his sermons. At the same time, Moses' call exhibits God's patience in dealing with weak-hearted men. Brenz regards it as an encouragement to weak-hearted men not to fear the offices to which God calls them but to boldly take up their work and do it with diligence on account of the confidence they have from God himself. Thus, the shift from the medieval exegesis, which placed confidence in Moses' character, to the Reformation emphasis on God's revealed word, is exemplified in Brenz's interpretation of Moses' divine call.

Peder Palladius on Moses' Call and Resistance

Peder Palladius (1503–1560) is a remarkable instance of the spread of the Reformation at its earliest developments. Born to a pious lay father in Denmark, Palladius was a schoolteacher until he was sent to study at Wittenberg with Luther and

[80] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 405.
[81] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 406.
[82] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 406.
[83] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 406.
[84] Brenz, *In Exodum Commentarius*, 406.

Melanchthon in autumn of 1531.[85] Although he may have had some awareness of Reformation teaching, it was not until he matriculated as a student that he embraced it. After he sat at Luther's and Melanchthon's feet as a student, Palladius returned to his native Denmark as a new doctor of theology when Bugenhagen traveled there in 1537 at King Christian III's behest.[86] He was therefore close to the seat of power and would give advice to Christian as well as, significantly for his commentary, to his son Frederick.

Palladius was made bishop of the Roskilde residing in Copenhagen[87] as well as professor of theology at the University of Copenhagen. In the years that followed, he offered translations of Luther's catechism and selections of Melancthon's *Loci*.[88] However, after these initial forays, Palladius produced extensive literature of his own and published a great deal of literature with brief expositions of biblical texts, designed for pious souls. Palladius wrote two overviews, which we will refer to in the following, that are instances of these brief expositions. In the first, the *Overview of the Books of Moses*, Palladius provides a basic outline of every chapter of the first five books of Moses. The intended audience of this volume is particular. Following the death of King Christian III, his son Frederick II ascended the throne of Denmark in 1559. Palladius writes in the dedicatory epistle that the purpose of this work is that the new king might have in hand a book of the Law to know and profit from the examples of kings and princes. The work's purpose was also that the evangelical doctrine that the kings of old—especially Frederick's own father—wished to promote might be put forward for the benefit of the churches.[89] Palladius' outline of each chapter of Exodus in this work is broad and does not include a *loci* classification as Chytraeus (see below), though he does provide brief descriptions of each chapter division.

Palladius' other work involving the text of Exodus is the *Introduction to the Prophetic and Apostolic Books*.[90] This work was popular and was reprinted several times

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[85] Ole Peter Grell, "From Popular Evangelical Movement to Lutheran Reformation in Denmark. A Case of Two Reformations," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 101, no. 1 (2011): 33–58; Martin Schwarz Lausten, "Palladius, Peder," in *Religion Past and Present*: *Encyclopedia of Religion and Theology*, ed. Hans Dieter Betz et. al., vol. 9 (Boston: Brill, 2011), 473; Mikkel Lund, "Denne Klare og Lyse Dag: Luthersk subjektivitat I Peder Palladius' visitatsbog" (master's thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2020), 3.

[86] Grell, "From Popular Evangelical Movement," 37.

[87] Kolb, *Luther's Wittenberg World*, 201.

[88] Anna Vind, "Luther in Danish," *Lutheran Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (2021): 155–170. Palladius also, it seems, brought sections of Luther's *Antinomian Theses* without citation into his work against heresies. See Jeffrey G. Silcock and Christopher B. Brown, "Introduction," in AE 73:42.

[89] Peder Palladius, *Librorum Moisi, Qui Sunt Fons Doctrinae Ecclesiae, explicatio brevis & ad usum piorum accommodata* (Wittenberg: Johannes Crato, 1559), A6r.

[90] Peder Palladius, *Isagoge Ad Libros Propheticos Et Apostolicos* (Wittenberg: Johann Krafft d. Ä., 1557).

during his life as well as posthumously by several publishing houses. Though its introduction gives some very helpful delineations of a correct understanding of Holy Scripture, including its sufficiency, clarity, truthfulness, and the like, the overview of individual books must be described as extremely brief. Often a single word designates the meaning of an entire chapter; and the summary descriptions of lengthy books of Scripture take up hardly more than a page.

Palladius on Doctrines Derived from Exodus 3–5

Palladius follows Luther's emphasis on vocation in his own commentary on Exodus. In *The Overview of the Books of Moses, w*hen Palladius divides Exodus into six distinct parts, the first division—chapters 1 through 7—are brought under the rubric of "The Call of Moses."[91] Palladius follows the divisions of Sacred Scripture as Lyra divides them and places the five books of Moses in the category of legal texts, distinct from "historical" texts, because they will describe the public teaching of the Law through Moses, whereas the historical accounts are classified thus because they contain to a much greater degree events that have taken place.[92] Exodus 3 covers the following topics: (1) the care and attention of God regarding his people, (2) the call, (3) the flight from the call, (4) miracles, and (5) dangers and trials in a call.[93] Exodus 4 covers the following topics: (1) signs and miracles, (2) the rejection of the call, (3) the gift of eloquence, (4) the gentleness and diligence of God among those called, (5) moderation, (6) the delay of the wife, (7) the commendation of the verbal call, and (8) that the gospel is received indeed with a gracious spirit but is immediately held in disdain and loathed.[94] Chapter 5 covers the following topics: (1) the works of the call, (2) tyranny and oppression, (3) divine aid and deferment, and (4) ingratitude.[95] These labels, however, do not receive extensive comment from Palladius, and he does not expound on them in any great detail.

Although Palladius does not offer expansive commentary to his readership, it is significant that he clearly presents the paradigm shift brought about by Luther's teaching in the basic description of biblical texts. When we consider his brief works in light of their purpose, especially the *Overview* designed for the edification of a newly crowned king, then the brevity and simplicity with which Palladius writes makes sense. What are the primary words the monarch would see as he glimpsed through this handbook to governance? He would see repeated emphasis on the call

[91] Palladius, *Librorum Moisi*, 162.

[92] Palladius, *Librorum Moisi*, 3. The Law, Palladius succinctly explains, "teaches what must be done and what must be avoided, along with all examples of obedience and transgression of the Law" (4).

[93] Palladius, *Librorum Moisi*, 171.

[94] Palladius, *Librorum Moisi*, 174.

[95] Palladius, *Librorum Moisi*, 177.

of God to governance, diligence, the commendation of the call, and similar things. The concern about tyranny, coupled with the emphasis on vocation (the call) also fits well. Palladius is not thinking here principally of the pastoral office but of kingship, which, for Palladius, is a form of governance given by God for the benefit of the people.

David Chytraeus on Moses' Call and Resistance

Author and Text

David Chytraeus (Kochhafe) (1530–1600) was the son of one of the first Reformation pastors, Matthew Kochhafe, pastor for the village of Ingelfingen, Württemberg.[96] He was born in the Ingelfingen parsonage on February 26, 1530.[97] Chytraeus went to Tübingen to learn the arts, then to study with the reformers at Wittenberg in 1544, where he lived with Melanchthon. Chytraeus fits into the picture of Luther's students as the dusk settled over Luther's career, and though he heard Luther lecture on Genesis, Melancthon was the predominant influence, who secured for Chytraeus a position at Rostock as a lecturer on Christian doctrine and astronomy.[98] Although he could never part himself from the disposition of his teacher, his confessional sentiment lay with that of Luther.[99] As a result, he is most famous among confessional Lutherans as one of the Formulators of the Book of Concord.

The text of his commentary on Exodus appeared first in the year of his arrival at the University of Rostock in 1561 and was followed shortly after by another printing in 1563.[100] In this essay, I will principally refer to the 1563 edition to cite Chytraeus' comments and arrangement. I will also refer to some of Chytraeus' other writings that have some bearing upon the interpretation of Moses' person and work.[101] Chytraeus' commentary is marked by a number of particular features. Like

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[96] John Warwick Montgomery, *Chytraeus on Sacrifice* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 10.

[97] Detloff Klatt, *David Chytraeus als Geschichtslehrer und Geschichtsschreiber* (Rostock: Rats- und Universitätsbuchdruckerei, 1908), 4–5.

[98] Kolb, *Luther's Wittenberg World*, 189–190.

[99] Theodore E. Schmauk and C. Theodore Benze, *The Confessional Principle of the Lutheran Church as Embodying the Evangelical Confession of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: General Council Publication Board, 1891), 597; Kolb, *Bound Choice*, 190.

[100] David Chytraeus, *In Exodum Enarratio* (Wittenberg: Johannes Crato, 1561; 2nd ed., 1563). Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent citations of this work are from the 1563 edition.

[101] David Chytraeus, *Onomasticon Theologicum, Recens Recognitum, In Quo, Praeter Nomina Propria Fere omnia, quae in Bibliis extant, Plerorumque etiam Sanctorum, qui Calendario usitate inscribi solent, Item Doctorum Ecclesiae, Martyrorum, Haereticorum, & Synodorum, nomina & historiae breviter indicantur* (Wittenberg: ex officina Ioannis Cratonis, 1560).

many others in the Lutheran Orthodox tradition,[102] Chytraeus was interested in interpretating Scripture for the benefits that God provided through it: "Particularly by way of the reading and exposition of those books that God has commended to the church, these works especially ought to be given attention, so that we might gather up the testimonies concerning God and concerning each and every article of Christian doctrine necessary to know for the salvation of souls, with which we might further confirm our faith."[103] Chytraeus here carries forward explicit themes emphasized by Luther and other Lutheran forebears, particular the importance of the prophet's role to preserve Christian doctrine.[104]

Chytraeus on Doctrines Derived from Exodus 3–5

Chytraeus' commentary outlines the doctrinal topics of each chapter of a given text. It seems likely that in the outline of his commentary writing, he followed his teacher Philipp Melanchthon, as did many others.[105] In the introduction to the text, he lays out the major doctrines that ought to be considered from the whole text of Exodus: (1) God; (2) the Son of God; (3) the person, office, and benefits of Christ; (4) the law of God; (5) the gospel; (6) justification; (7) good works; (8) the sacraments; (9) repentance; (10) the church; (11) the resurrection; and (12) political overseers (*magistratibus, Iudiciis, legibus politiciis*).[106] This outline manifestly follows the Augsburg Confession, departing only by placing the sacraments before the definition of the church. These by no means are to be understood as independent units, however. "[E]very part of Christian doctrine," Chytraeus explains, "can be referred back to two particular parts, namely, law—that is, the Decalogue—and the gospel, or the promise concerning Christ, the Son of God, and mediator."[107] Like Brenz, Chytraeus does not find that the law or the gospel—the specific promise of salvation through God's Christ—is absent in the texts of Moses or in the saints to which they bear witness. Chytraeus' commentary thus fits into the broad pattern that Pak has identified and that we have seen with Brenz and Palladius. However, his historical sensibility expands, as we will see below, what sort of calls can be discussed from the text of Exodus.

[102] Benjamin T. G. Mayes, "The Useful Applications of Scripture in Lutheran Orthodoxy: An Aid to Contemporary Preaching and Exegesis," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 83, no. 1–2 (January/April 2019): 111–135.

[103] Chytraeus, *In Exodum Enarratio* (1561), 2–3.

[104] Pak, *Reformation of Prophecy*, 180.

[105] Robert Kolb, "Philipp's Foes, but Followers Nonetheless," in *The Harvest of Humanism in Central Europe*: *Essays in Honor of Lewis W. Spitz*, ed. Manfred P. Fleischer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), 159–177; see 162.

[106] Chytraeus, *In Exodum Enarratio*, 4–5.

[107] Chytraeus, *In Exodum Enarratio,* 5. Cf. Pak, *Reformation of Prophecy*, 232.

Chytraeus further mentions in the introduction of the commentary, for Exodus 3, the doctrine of the Trinity, the Son of God, repentance, the call to the Ministry (under the heading of the church), and the resurrection. This list is, however, modified when Chytraeus sets to work on the chapters themselves. According to the section where Chytraeus treats the contents of Exodus 3, this chapter includes the following subjects: (1) the call of Moses, (2) a description of the true God, (3) proof of the resurrection of the dead, (4) the plundering of the Egyptians, and (5) an allegorical interpretation of the burning bush. Exodus 4 covers the following subjects: (1) chief topics (*loci praecipui*) and (2) divergence and variety of divine gifts. Exodus 5 covers the following subjects: (1) an example of the manner in which God delivers the church and all pious men from anguish and (2) the causes that bring about the change of governments.

Along with the reformers surveyed above, Chytraeus follows the paradigm set by Luther in describing Moses' summons by God as a call. Though comparable to Brenz and Palladius on certain points—Brenz highlights the resurrection from the dead, and Palladius notes the divine gifts and duties in offices—Chytraeus advances beyond his contemporaries, if not in detail, then certainly in categorization. It is noticeable, however, that Chytraeus chooses Exodus 4, rather than 3, as the occasion to discuss this call. In Exodus 3 he concentrates his attention on the fact that this text teaches Christians about the true God, especially with his discussion of God's name and the revelation of the divine essence at Exodus 3:14.

Chytraeus on Textual Links

Chytraeus assumes a number of important textual links that form the basis of his interpretation, both about Moses and about the revelation that he received and believed. Chytraeus takes it for granted that what the New Testament says about Moses' life is an accurate portrayal of his historical reality. Thus, in describing Moses in summary, he writes, "[Moses] taught not only the doctrine of the law but also that of the gospel concerning Christ, as in John 5 Christ said, 'If you had believed Moses, you would also believe me, for he wrote of me.'"[108] Unlike Luther, Chytraeus explicitly links Moses' call to other, New Testament, texts. He differs slightly also in the description, since for Luther the "call" is the matter at hand, whereas for Chytraeus the issue is "governance." Whereas Luther seems to have the preaching office chiefly in mind, with scant reference to other offices such as magistrate or parent, Chytraeus highlights that Moses is both prophet and the governor or judge of the new political body of Israel.[109] Whether it is the Office of the Ministry or a governmental post, it

[108] Chytraeus, *Onomasticon Theologicum*, 419.
[109] Chytraeus, *In Exodum Enarratio*, 96.

is inadvisable to take up such an office without a call, "since a governance is not a happy one unless God gives his aid."[110] This conclusion is based not on the text of Exodus itself but rather on three other passages cited by Chytraeus, Hebrew 5, 1 Peter 4, and 1 Corinthians 7.

Chytraeus on Moses' Call

Chytraeus classifies the call of Moses as a historical account.[111] When Chytraeus writes Moses' history, however, he takes for granted that the scriptural witness that comes later in New Testament texts provides accurate historical details of the account, even though they may not have been explicitly provided by the account itself.[112] Moses' life and his internal experience are to be known and explained first from the text itself but, second, with reference to what the rest of Scripture says of that life. Chytraeus exposits Moses' life in Pharoah's court as filled out by Acts 7, and understands that such education, comparable to the liberal arts, is a means by which Moses is educated "in the discipline and knowledge of the Lord."[113] There was, of course, the issue of what sort of education Moses might have received in this pagan god-king's court. Chytraeus fuses a series of texts that explain Moses' own conscience's conviction as well as a judgment of Scripture to resolve the issue:

> The example of the teaching of Psalm 83 [84:10–11], "I prefer to be an outcast in the house of my God, than to reside in the palaces of the wicked, for the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord shall give grace and glory."[114] The epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 11, applies the present history of Moses to this teaching: by faith Moses refused to be called a son of Pharoah's daughter, preferring at once to be associated with the people of God rather than with the wicked, rather than enjoy the temporary advantages of sin, because he judged that the ignominy of Christ was a better wealth than the treasures of the Egyptians.[115]

Thus Chytraeus' view of Moses' narrative history includes Moses' conscience's judgment as well as a pious estimation of his character rooted upon scriptural grounds. By making such intertextual connections more firmly, Chytraeus modestly augments the depiction of Moses from the outset, so that though later issues may be described as sins of disobedience, Moses is nevertheless, viewed from the whole lens

[110] Chytraeus, *In Exodum Enarratio*, 97/G12r. Later Chytraeus links the "call" specifically with the Office of the Ministry. Chytraeus, *In Exodum Enarratio*, 278.

[111] Chytraeus, *In Exodum Enarratio*, 96.

[112] Klatt, *Chytraeus als Geschichtslehrer*, 36.

[113] Chytraeus, *In Exodum Enarratio*, 90.

[114] The text paraphrased is not precisely the same as that of the Vulgate Psalter. For the Vulgate see *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgata Versionem*, ed. Ryan Gryson et al., (n.p.: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1969).

[115] Chytraeus, *In Exodum Enarratio* (1561), 91.

of Scripture, to be understood to act in a way that is devoted to God and loyal to his own people.[116]

As mentioned above, the reformers and the dogmaticians that followed them attempted to articulate what made prophets and those in pastoral office alike in their duty while distinct in the manner of their calling. Chytraeus defines a "prophetic call" as the type that is effected by God immediately, with particular commands and in a particular manner. What makes this kind of call unique is not only that it is immediate but also that it is occasional.[117] The other type, the "common call," is effected in a mediate way, but Chytraeus understands it to be part of the regular life of the church, not the exception to the norm. Chytraeus describes the "common call" as the "one that happens through the church."[118] Chytraeus seems to be emphasizing that part of the distinction between the prophets of the Old Testament and the men called to serve as ministers in the New is not only the manner of their call but also their time in history. The Old Testament prophets were unique because they were called by God to address certain, singular issues, whereas those called into the Office of the Ministry in the New Testament have a regular call. Chytraeus therefore modifies slightly the understanding of a "prophet" as one who not only affirms heavenly doctrine but also as one who was called in a unique way for unique circumstances.[119] The distinction between the immediate and mediate call is reaffirmed later, but Chytraeus notes that the immediate call can also be confirmed in a mediate way, by the testimonies of men. So, although they are historically distinct, Chytraeus still affirms their close relation and shared duty and content.[120]

When he comes to Exodus 4, Chytraeus, intriguingly, sums up the initial excuses of Moses much like Denys the Carthusian had done before him. As Denys had done, Chytraeus compares Moses to other men with high office and attributes his initial hesitancy to a prudent assessment of the duties of the office to which God calls him, while also recognizing his own weakness and flaws. In this respect, Chytraeus' exegesis moves away from the interpretation offered by Luther and Brenz. Nevertheless, Chytraeus' focus upon the nature of the call aligns with Luther and Brenz in its emphasis upon the external, revealed means by which such a call is given and upon the confidence with which it can be undertaken. "As Moses,

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[116] In his commentary on Deuteronomy, Chytraeus highlights Moses' unique standing as the primary prophet, not as in the Hebrew texts with the appellation "servant of God" but for his unique office in giving the Law. "Moses was called an ocean of theology by the ancients." David Chytraeus, *Deuteronomium Moysis Ennaratio* (Wittenberg: Schleich & Schöne, 1575), A1r. He is also therefore the source and fountain of Christian doctrine that the apostles drew from, as for instance Peter on the day of Pentecost deriving his doctrine from Deuteronomy (B3r).

[117] Chytraeus, *In Exodum Enarratio*, 97.

[118] Chytraeus, *In Exodum Enarratio*, 96.

[119] Chytraeus, *In Exodum Enarratio*, 97.

[120] Chytraeus, *In Exodum Enarratio*, 278.

considering his own great incapacity and inability to speak refused to undertake a most difficult and dangerous call in leading the people of Israel from Egypt, so all modest and prudent men . . . understand the multitude of dangers and impediments to governance."[121] From this we in the church know that the divine call must be obeyed, he explains. Even if we should regard ourselves as insufficient, God himself will supply the need of those who call upon him. The tasks, though difficult, will not be in vain with God's help. "Therefore," Chytraeus concludes, "the divine call is not to be resisted on the pretense of our incapacity but obeyed with reverence."[122] Chytraeus concludes his reflection with the observation that this matter is not one of choice but of doctrine, and for this reason Moses is given as an example, that we might put the doctrine into practice in a God-pleasing and faithful way. Taken on the whole, Moses sets aside his own reserves and puts his confidence in God, his help, and his promises.[123]

Chytraeus therefore shows an approach to Moses, as well as to the prophetic call, that is removed from the turmoil and conflict of the early period of the Reformation. The concern for Protestant visionary prophets has moved to the background, while historical and systematic interests move to the foreground. While he affirms the distinction between the mediate and immediate call, Chytraeus' definition of the prophetic office is more precise than those of his predecessors, adding historical circumstance to the formal processes by which prophets, on the one hand, and ministers, on the other, are called. At the same time, Luther's doctrinal concern for the nature of the call remains evident and significant for Chytraeus, as do other major points of doctrine. Though Chytraeus interprets Moses in a somewhat more positive fashion, this is not due, it seems, to a reluctance on his part to identify sinfulness in prophets. It is rather due to his careful weighing of later texts of the New Testament that treat Moses' intentions positively and in a pious way. Chytraeus seems compelled to harmonize his overall presentation of Moses with Acts 7 and Hebrews 5, taking Moses' character as a whole, rather than, as with Luther, making careful differentiations between Moses' initial reaction and his later one.

Conclusion: Reformation Exegesis at a Midpoint

Brenz, Palladius, and Chytraeus stand in line with Luther as faithful students and fellow reformers, rather than, as Kraeling painted the Reformer's students, as rigid hardliners who missed Luther's spirit and failed his exegetical legacy. As Pak has shown, the traditional exegetical lines that were established with Luther

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[121] Chytraeus, *In Exodum Enarratio*, 105.
[122] Chytraeus, *In Exodum Enarratio*, 107.
[123] Chytraeus, *In Exodum Enarratio*, 97.

remained in place for generations.[124] Yet the line of traditional interpretation was not simply a recasting of the text. The heirs of the Reformation were not parrots but took the insights of the theological exegesis they learned and applied them to the particular issues they faced. That is to say, even as Luther functioned "prophetically" in his office as a pastor and teacher of the church, and therefore was an example of how to conduct the ministration of the gospel, they too sought to provide examples through their reading of Scripture to the Christians who read them. As the understanding of "prophet" was transformed and set in relation to the pastoral office, it also clearly had applications for other offices that God ordains, such as governance and family. The duties are distinct, but the source of the offices is not. Just as pastors are called to serve God's church by the preaching of the word and are answerable to God for their fidelity to that word, so also magistrates and governors are under God's authority and answerable to him for their governance. Likewise, the estate of marriage is established by God and given its order and form by God himself. These all possess duties given by God, without being identical to one another. This is clearly the intent of Palladius' commentary, designed as it was to magnify good governance under the word of God. It is also true of the commentary of Brenz, who wrote in the face of criticism of Reformation doctrine concerning the pastoral office, priesthood, and marriage.

This initial demonstration shows that the paradigm shift of Reformation exegesis blossomed in its own way for new, practical insights while remaining faithful to the doctrinal assertions of Luther and the confessors at Augsburg. Close attention to the details of Scripture permitted these students of Luther to apply the word of God to the particulars of the life and experience of their audience. This sampling, through the example of Moses, shows how much the Reformers recognized what Scripture had to offer. To conform the life of their listeners and readers to the word of God, they carefully inspected the details of every word so that nothing of this sacred treasure might be lost, nor any portion of life left untouched. Such exegesis may rightly be considered exemplary. In this kind of exegesis, we are conformed to the word of God, not the other way round. The significance for Luther and his students of demarcating the divine call to the pastoral office from other duties given by God ought to be illustrative for our own vocabulary today, for instance. The example of the Reformer and his exegetical heirs also may be of service to those of us who stand in such offices, both as encouragement and exhortation. It is an encouragement insofar as they highlight how many and how great are the trials those whom God calls must endure. It is also an exhortation that we, like them, turn our eyes

[124] Pak, *Reformation of Prophecy*, 272.

keenly towards the Scriptures, to set our lives and service in the Holy Ministry under the eternal gospel of the Son of God, the light and glory of the church in every age.

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Theodosius Harnack and Confessional Subscription

James Ambrose Lee II

I. Introduction

One of the distinctive features of the nineteenth-century Neo-Lutheran awakening was the importance accorded to the Lutheran Confessions. Neo-Lutheran theologians were characterized by several similarities, but arguably the most significant was the great esteem that these figures attributed to the confessional writings of the Lutheran church. Hence, other sobriquets used to designate this theological movement include the "confessional awakening" and the "confessional revival."[1]

[1] Within nineteenth-century Germany, several terms were employed in describing theologians who more intentionally aligned themselves with the Lutheran Confessions over and against the contemporary theology of their day. Terms such as "Neo-Lutheranism" (*Neulutherthum*), "modern Lutheranism" (*das moderne Lutherthum*), "Hyper-Lutheranism" (*Hyperlutherthum*), and "confessionalism" (*Confessionalismus*) were used to describe this theological phenomenon. Frequently, these terms were used negatively, from the vantage point of the author, to describe a reactionary theological development that was hostile to current academic theology. For example, from the perspective of Gotha theologian Karl Schwarz (1812–1855), the articulation of a confessional Lutheran theology was an extreme counterreaction to the emergence of midcentury radical theology. Moreover, according to Schwarz's estimation, in responding to the most extreme theologies of the day, some of the confessionally minded Lutherans landed in extreme positions, moving beyond Luther and the Confessions, "openly flaunting their sympathies for Catholicism." See Karl Schwarz, *Zur Geschichte der neuesten Theologie*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1864), 223–225, 232.

Within this essay, the terms "Neo-Lutheran" and "confessional Lutheran" are employed synonymously. This usage does not suggest that there were no differences among nineteenth-century Lutherans who intentionally embraced a Lutheran identity anchored to the Lutheran Confessions. Far from it. Theological differences were widespread, touching upon theological methodology, hermeneutics, Christology, ecclesiology, the Office of the Ministry, eschatology, and—as discussed in this essay—the nature of confessional subscription; even politics became divisive. But perhaps with the exceptions of the "Old Lutherans" (*Altlutherthum*) and the "Erlangen School," many of the titles used to describe nineteenth-century German confessional Lutherans do not easily permit a restricted application to a narrow grouping within the larger confessional development. See James Ambrose Lee II, *Confessional Lutheranism and German Theological Science: Adolf Harleß, August Vilmar, and Johannes Christian Konrad von Hofmann* (Boston: de Gruyter, 2022), 8–10, 103–106, 270–282. See also Herman Fischer, "Konfessionalismus," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 19 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), 426–430; Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach and Joachim Mehlhausen, "Neuluthertum," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 24 (New York: de Gruyter, 1994), 327–341; and Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach, *Gestalten und Typen des Neuluthertums: Beiträge zur Erforschung des Neokonfessionalismus im 19. Jahrhundert* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1968).

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In the time before the confessional awakening, the Confessions had not been forgotten. Far from it. For example, while maintaining and even extending religious tolerance within Prussia, Wollner's Religious Edict of 1788 also compelled the maintenance of the confessional writings of the respective Christian churches in Prussia. Clergy had to adhere to the teachings of their respective confessions as stated in their confessional writings. If a minister could not adhere to the official teachings of his confession and to do so would violate his conscience, he was free to resign his office.[2]

Across Germany in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, numerous essays appeared that devalued the importance of the confessional writings. These texts argued that an overestimation of confessional writings was an affront to the authority of the Scriptures, that the confessional texts, originally composed as a theological witness, were wrongfully elevated as a textbook or universal theological standard. Johann Gottlieb Töllner (1724–1774), professor of theology at the University of Frankfurt an der Oder, argued that the Christian church has no other theological standard than the Scriptures. Moreover, a consequence of elevating the Confessions as a binding text was a restriction of theological study and investigation. "Free investigation" of the Scriptures was seen as being curtailed by binding confessions.[3] When the Christian revival movement known as the Awakening swept across the German lands during the nineteenth century, the confessional texts were not central to this theological phenomenon. A hallmark of the Awakening was its ecumenical character, appealing to Lutherans, Reformed, and even some Roman Catholics.[4]

Only gradually did the Confessions begin to receive attention within certain circles of the Awakening. In his history of the German Awakening in Bavaria, University of Erlangen theologian Gottfried Thomasius (1802–1875) narrates his turn to the Confessions as a development that followed his encounter and embrace of the Scriptures as the living word of God.

> Already from the start, next to the Scriptures, this new evangelical life had nourished itself on the monuments from the Reformation, or from the writings

[2] See Uta Wiggermann, *Woellner und das Religionsedikt: Kirchenpolitik und kirchliche Wirklichkeit im Preußen des späten 18. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 125–153; and Walter Karowski, *Das Bekenntnis und seine Wertung: Eine problemgeschichtliche Monographie*, vol. 1, *Vom 18. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Ebering, 1939), 58–81.

[3] Johann Gottlieb Töllner, *Unterricht von symbolischen Büchern überhaupt* (Züllichau: Waisenhaus und Frommannischen Handlung, 1769). See also Karowski, *Das Bekenntnis und seine Wertung,* 1:14–37.

[4] See Andrew Kloes, *The German Awakening: Protestant Renewal after the Enlightenment, 1815–1848* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2019), 111–146; and Johannes Wallmann, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands seit der Reformation*, 7th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 188–191.

> that were permeated by the spirit of the Reformation. Regarding practical interests—apart from matters of the church and the Confessions—we had immersed ourselves in the spirit of the same [Reformation]. With our faith we stood in the center of the same—in *articulo justificationis* [in the article of justification]. Thus, before we knew it, we were Lutheran. In fact, we were Lutherans, except without much reflection on the confessional particularity of our church, and without the confessional differences that separate it from others. We did not even precisely know the differences. We read the symbolical books of the church as testimonies of sound doctrine for the clarification and fortification of our knowledge of salvation. We had little concern for their confessional meaning. But as soon as we began—according to the way that God led us, according to the testimonies growing out of our faith—to ask about the historical roots of our present in the past of the church, the awareness arose among us that we stood in the midst of Lutheranism. It was that our own Christian salvific faith was simply Lutheran; indeed, just in reality the Lutheran church is and wants to be nothing other than the witness of the one Christian, salvific truth. Its confession is nothing other than the purely scriptural confession of the gospel, which has the free grace of God in Christ as its center. From this center—in which we ourselves found salvation—we lived, and, by the hand of the Scripture, we entered deeper into those confessions, and with joy we recognized in them—or, if one wants, in the central features of the same—the expression of our own conviction of faith. From henceforth it was for us a matter of faith and conscience to hold the Confessions as valuable and to confess with them. For this reason, we blessed the church, and we rejoiced in belonging to her. Thus, from within, we became Lutherans.[5]

Thomasius' quote helps shed some light on one aspect of the revival of the Confessions among the Neo-Lutherans. The Confessions were no longer simply evaluated as historical documents that witnessed to the particular confession of the Lutheran church that accepted these texts. Nor were the Confessions merely legal documents that helped to delimit differences between tolerated and prohibited religious confessions, further delimiting the boundaries of the former. According to Thomasius, the Confessions were recovered as a living witness and confession of faith of the church. "Living" does not intimate a hermeneutical approach that viewed the confessional writings as mutable (e.g., living constitutionalism). The Confessions were vital because they witnessed to the living gospel of Christ. The confessional revivalists realized that the Confessions were not simply doctrinal texts; they were living

[5] Gottfried Thomasius, *Das Wiedererwachen des evangelischen Lebens in der lutherischen Kirche Bayerns: Ein Stück süddeutscher Kirchengeschichte (1800–1840)* (Erlangen: Andrea Deichert, 1867), 244–245. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

confessions of faith imbibed with the life-giving message of the Scriptures: the confession of the "free grace of God in Christ at its center."

The language that Thomasius used in this description is also indicative of another dimension of the reception of the Confessions that marked the confessional awakening. For Lutherans like Thomasius, Johannes von Hofmann (1810–1877), Adolf Harleß (1806–1879), and August Vilmar (1800–1868), the Christian faith was not only confessed and lived, it was *experienced*. These theologians understood the Christian faith to be experiential. They believed that the reality of the living word of God took root within the individual: the weight of the law and the freedom of the gospel were personally felt and experienced.[6] More than a feeling, the experience of Christianity was transformative. "From within," Thomasius writes, "we became Lutherans." The Lutheran Symbols were not simply doctrinal statements; they were "nothing other than the witness of the one Christian, salvific truth" of Jesus Christ, witnessed in the Scriptures. The witness of the Confessions corresponded with the interior transformative experience of the Christian truth that these theologians had and were undergoing.[7] While for many the Confessions were considered doctrinal texts, they especially witnessed to the "salvific truth" of Christianity, Christianity's essence.

But what exactly was this essence to which the Confessions witness? Was this essence found in all sections of the Confessions or only in some parts? What is the relationship between the essence and the theology of the Confessions?

Theodosius Harnack's "Nachwort" (Afterword), appended to Thomasius' tractate *Das Bekenntniß der lutherischen Kirche von der Versöhnung und die Versöhnungslehre D. Chr. K. v. Hofmann's* (The confession of the Lutheran church on the atonement and Dr. [Johannes] Chr[istian] K[onrad] von Hofmann's doctrine of the atonement), allows one to see how some of these issues were navigated among the theologians of the confessional awaking. In these writings, Harnack and Thomasius entered into a theological controversy centered around their Erlangen colleague Johannes von Hofmann's doctrine of the atonement. The purpose of these writings was not simply to critique Hofmann's theory of the atonement but to evaluate it in light of the Confessions. The consideration of Harnack's text permits one to consider some of the questions surrounding the Confessions that emerged as a result of

[6] Consider how Vilmar discussed the experience of justification: "The certainty of eternal salvation is no doctrine but rather an experience, and thus even the formulation of this certainty—justification alone through faith—in the first place must be identified as an experience, and only a doctrine in a dogmatic relationship." See August Christian Friedrich Vilmar, "Vom Rückfall zur römischen Kirche," in *Pastoral-theologische Blätter*, vol. 12 (Stuttgart: Samuel Gottlieb Lieschiung, 1866), 26.

[7] For an analysis of confessional Lutheran understanding of theology as experiential, see Lee, *Confessional Lutheranism and German Theological Science*, 118–282.

Hofmann's theology of the atonement. Before considering Harnack's response to Hofmann, a brief sketch of the atonement controversy will be given.[8]

II. The Atonement Controversy

In 1852 and 1853 Hofmann published parts 1 and 2 of the first part of his *Der Schriftbeweis* (The scriptural proof); the second part appeared in 1855. Within *Der Schriftbeweis*, Hofmann recontextualized Jesus' death and passion within a larger christological and trinitarian framework. Rather than narrowly focusing on Christ's passion, Hofmann situated Christ's death as an episode of the person and office of Christ, whose work was the historical realization of the intradivine fellowship of life and love of the Trinity. Within this christological and trinitarian structure, Jesus, the incarnate Christ, realizes within his person the one, eternal, divine fellowship of love, making it accessible for all humanity. The upshot of this framing was that it allowed Hofmann to articulate a theory of the atonement in which the common features of the atonement (e.g., vicarious satisfaction, the suffering of divine wrath, etc.) were rendered incommensurate with the larger theological context. Interpreting Jesus' passion as a vicarious satisfaction of divine punishment lacked theological coherence within Hofmann's broader trinitarian framework. In denouncing the substitutionary and penal character of Jesus' death, Hofmann maintained that Jesus' suffering and death demonstrated his divine sonship, through which he "presents in his person a realized relationship between God and humanity" no longer characterized by sin and hostility.[9]

Shortly after the appearance of the second part of *Der Schriftbeweis*, Hofmann's work became the subject of criticism that centered on his doctrine of the atonement. Rostock theologian Friedrich Philippi (1809–1882) critiqued Hofmann's theory of

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[8] For a more detailed account see Gunther Wenz, *Geschichte der Versöhnungslehre in der Evangelischen Theologie der Neuzeit*, 2 vols. (Munich: Chr. Kaiser: 1986), 2:32–62.

[9] Johannes von Hofmann, *Der Schriftbeweis: Ein theologischer Versuch*, 1st ed., 2 vols. (Nördlingen: C. H. Beck, 1852–1855), 2:6, 17–19, 70–83, 139–140, 196–197, 201–205, 210–218, 266. Hofmann published a revised edition between 1857 and 1860. All subsequent references will be to the first edition of *Der Schriftbeweis*. See also Johannes von Hofmann, *Die Schutzschriften für eine neue Weise alte Wahrheit zu lehren*, part 3 (Nördlingen: C. H. Beck, 1859). Between 1856 and 1859, Hofmann published four different *Schutzschriften*, parts 1–4.

In his *Christian Dogmatics*, Francis Pieper repeatedly critiqued Hofmann's doctrine of the atonement. In fact, across the entirety of his *Christian Dogmatics*, Pieper regularly lambasted Hofmann, identifying him as "an exponent of Ego theology" (*Ichtheologie*), which in Pieper's estimation described Hofmann's methodology of deriving the entirety of Christian theology from the individual Christian "ego." For some examples of Pieper's treatment of Hofmann, see Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950–1955), 1:60–67, 114–115, 144–149; 2:344–372. For a discussion of Hofmann's so-called *Ichtheologie*, see Matthew Becker, "Hofmann as *Ich-Theologe?* The Object of Theology in Johann von Hofmann's *Werke*," *Concordia Journal* 29, no. 3 (July 2003): 265–293.

the atonement, arguing that it undermined the Lutheran doctrines of the atonement and justification. Hofmann's theory represented a departure from the Lutheran confession of faith. Hofmann's theology of the atonement was "antithetical" to the confession of the Lutheran church.[10]

Schmid's Defense of Hofmann

Hofmann's response, seeking to demonstrate the illegitimacy of Phillipi's accusations and defend the orthodoxy of his theology, did little to quell the swelling controversy.[11] In 1856, Hofmann's Erlangen colleague Heinrich Schmid (1811–1885) entered the controversy, writing in defense of Hofmann.[12] In Schmid's assessment, Hofmann's theology had not exceeded the boundaries of Lutheran orthodoxy properly understood. Hofmann's construal of the atonement fell within the strictures of the Confessions' theology of the atonement. Schmid was quick to observe, however, that Hofmann's theology contained substantive departures from the Lutheran doctrinal tradition. According to Schmid, the Confessions limited themselves to what can be demonstrated in Scripture with absolute certainty. The result of this is that while the Confessions taught the atonement, they were quite circumspect in providing any theological analysis beyond this simple affirmation. The Confessions were silent regarding anything that would approach a theory of the atonement.

In Schmid's view, the Confessions were distinct from the Lutheran dogmatic tradition, wherein the doctrine of the atonement had a long history.[13] Schmid readily admitted that Hofmann diverged substantively from the dogmatic tradition of the Lutheran church. But the question about whether Hofmann had deviated from Lutheran orthodoxy was answered not through assessing Hofmann's fidelity to the Lutheran doctrinal tradition but to the Confessions. Schmid acknowledged that within the Confessions there were statements that intimated that the authors of the Confessions had held to a similar understanding of the atonement as that expressed by the

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[10] Friedrich Adolph Philippi, *Commentar über den Brief Pauli an die Römer*, 2nd rev. ed. (Frankfurt am Main and Erlangen: Heyder & Zimmer, 1856), x–xi; Friedrich Adolph Philippi, *Herr Dr. von Hofmann gegenüber der lutherischen Versöhnungs- und Rechtfertigungslehre* (Frankfurt am Main and Erlangen: Heyder & Zimmer, 1856), 27, 55.

[11] Johannes von Hofmann, *Die Schutzschriften für eine neue Weise alte Wahrheit zu lehren*, part 1 (Nördlingen: C. H. Beck, 1856).

[12] Heinrich Friedrich Ferdinand Schmid, *Dr. v. Hofmann's Lehre von der Versöhnung in ihrem Verhältniß zum kirchlichen Bekenntniß und zur kirchlichen Dogmatik* (Nördlingen: C. H. Beck, 1856).

[13] Schmid noted that within the church's dogmatic tradition, there are three propositions that are connected: through sin humanity has become the object of divine wrath; the wrath of God cannot be removed unless the penalty, demanded by a righteous God, is satisfied; the righteousness of God is satisfied only when this penalty is paid. This is accomplished only through Christ, who has suffered in the stead of humanity, doing what humanity could not accomplish. See Schmid, *Hofmann's Lehre von der Versöhnung*, 37.

dogmaticians; nevertheless, the Confessions refrained from doctrinal exposition, limiting themselves to what was absolutely certain within the Scriptures. The Confessions and church dogmatics, for him, are distinct. The church theologian has freedom with respect to the latter. Schmid believed that Philippi had confounded dogmatics with the Confessions, restricting theological freedom by making theological propositions binding where there was no confessional anchor.[14]

Beyond highlighting the difference between the Symbols and Lutheran dogmatics, Schmid proposed a distinction within the Confessions: "the church's confession is only the 'what' [*daß*], that which is certain from Scripture. Only that through the death of Christ atonement is obtained." For Schmid, this alone "is the object of the Confessions, an article of faith." Beyond this "what" any further theological proposition "is considered as *theologumenon*." Schmid admitted that the Confessions contained some "theological opinions" (*theologumena*), but these opinions existed in areas where the confession of faith was not as precise and was not apparent, such as the Apostles' Creed. By conceding that the Confessions contained both objects to be confessed as articles of faith and theological opinions, Schmid proposed a distinction when reading the Confessions: "[I]t is generally recognized that even in the creeds, one must distinguish between what is in the actual sense confession, the substance of faith, and between what will explain the confession and what belongs to dogmatics."[15] This is a distinction between "dogma" and "theory." In Schmid's interpretation, Hofmann had not repudiated any article of faith maintained by the Lutheran Symbols. He had only disagreed with opinions and theories and, since "theory is no dogma," it was illegitimate to accuse Hofmann of departing from the Lutheran Confessions, for "a person does not cease to be a church theologian when he denies a theory."[16] Schmid proposed that the controversy needed to be reframed as a debate over biblical interpretations rather than confessional fidelity.

III. Harnack's "Nachwort"

Harnack's "Nachwort" and Thomasius' 112-page essay *Das Bekenntniß der lutherischen Kirche* were written in response to Hofmann's theory of the atonement and Schmid's defense of Hofmann. All four theologians were colleagues in the theology faculty at Erlangen. For their part, Thomasius and Harnack attempted to maintain a fraternal tone in their responses. Yet, both colleagues took issue with Hoffman's conception of the atonement, especially his rejection of central features of the Lutheran articulation of the atonement. Thomasius, quite sympathetic to the

[14] Schmid, *Hofmann's Lehre von der Versöhnung,* 4–5, 47–52.
[15] Schmid, *Hofmann's Lehre von der Versöhnung,* 15.
[16] Schmid, *Hofmann's Lehre von der Versöhnung,* 38–39.

concept of doctrinal development, nevertheless held that further theological exposition had to conform with the Confessions. With respect to the atonement, Thomasius was convinced that certain propositions that Hofmann had rejected—contrary to Schmid's reading—were contained within the Book of Concord. Specifically, Thomasius emphasized the following: Jesus' vicarious suffering of God's wrath; that Jesus' death made satisfaction to God for the sins and guilt of humanity; that through this satisfaction, God is reconciled with the world; finally, that through grace, received in faith, men receive the forgiveness of sins and are justified.[17] By rejecting these essential features of the Confessions' presentation of the atonement, Thomasius held that Hofmann's theory was wholly foreign to the Confessions, even where there was apparent agreement.[18]

Whereas Thomasius had considered the Confessions and made observations regarding the seventeenth-century Lutheran dogmaticians, in his "Nachwort" Harnack was primarily concerned about engaging the "decisive and authoritative principles" regarding the relationship between church theology and the confession of the church. Harnack's focus was not limited to Hofmann but included Schmid, who had argued that Hofmann in no way had departed from the Confessions.

Harnack recognized that he and his Erlangen colleagues were equally committed to the belief that a healthy church required both a "further formation of the system of church doctrine" and a "biblical and confessional renewal." This was the task of a church theologian. But in order to produce a church theology, a theologian of the church must "observe and respect" the "entire vision" that accompanies a particular theological truth of the Confessions and the specific "expression" with which the Confessions articulate this truth.[19] Moreover, a theologian of the church needs to submit his theology to the standard of the Lutheran Confessions.[20] For Thomasius, a church theologian is defined by two contrasting features. On the one hand, he has a "progressive" character, exercised in theological freedom, seeking to further the doctrine of the church. On the other hand, the church theologian has a "conservative" character, wherein he seeks to preserve the tradition of the church, because he "without reservation is bound by the truth" of the biblical confession of the church. Both features are "rooted in the Confessions," working together for the edification of the church. But what does it mean to be rooted in the Confessions? A

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[17] Gottfried Thomasius, *Das Bekenntnis der lutherischen Kirche von der Versöhnung und die Versöhnungslehre D. Chr. K. v. Hofmann's: Mit einem Nachwort von Th. Harnack* (Erlangen: T. Bläsing, 1857), 17. See also Martin Hein, *Lutherisches Bekenntnis und Erlanger Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus G. Mohn, 1984), 260–261.

[18] Thomasius, *Das Bekenntnis der lutherischen Kirche*, 107.

[19] Theodosius Harnack, "Nachwort," in Thomasius, *Das Bekenntnis der lutherischen Kirch*e, 120.

[20] Harnack, "Nachwort," 118.

true and firm rooting means "not merely confessing 'what' the church confesses but also confessing 'thusly,' 'how' the church confesses."[21] To confess what and how the church confesses means "[to confess] from the spirit and the faith of the church and, therefore, to confess in the same certainty and completeness, as well as in the mutual illumination and justified connection and in the arrangement, in which the entire confessional writing of the church contains and unites in itself the individual articles of faith with their constitutive elements."[22]

Harnack believed that Hofmann's path, and Schmid's justification, were leading away from church theology. Harnack rejected Schmid's distinction between the "what" and the "how" within the Confessions. To be more accurate, Harnack objected to Schmid's claim that it was sufficient for a theologian to adhere to the "what" of a particular theological subject but not the particular "how" with which the Confessions articulate that specific "what." Interestingly, Harnack did not reject the distinction itself. In fact, he conceded that within the Confessions Schmid was correct to distinguish between substance and form, between subject and expression. His point of disagreement was the manner in which one made this differentiation. The theologian is not to separate substance and form as if substance can be treated as "formless"[23] or as if the particular doctrinal form of a theological substance is "purely accidental or theoretical," as if "content" could be presented apart from its form. The logical conclusion of Schmid's position, in Harnack's estimation, would undermine every doctrinal articulation that the Confessions make, reducing the dogmatic "what" of the Confessions to little more than the basics of faith as articulated in the Apostles' Creed. Such theological minimalization would render superfluous any claim of agreement and acceptance of the Confessions.[24] In saying this, Harnack was not suggesting that the confession of faith in the confessional writings departed from the "one and same, old and simple 'what' of the Christian acts and truths of salvation," such as articulated in the Apostles' Creed. Rather, the Lutheran Symbols were composed to defend the foundational Christian truth. The specific articulations of doctrine were the means by which the Symbols defended this Christian faith. Or to say it another way, the specific doctrinal "hows" were composed for the sake of the foundational "whats" of the Christian faith.[25] Harnack recognized that the particular

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[21] Harnack, "Nachwort," 119.

[22] Harnack, "Nachwort," 119.

[23] Harnack, "Nachwort," 119–120. Nevertheless, he states that substance is free of form. Harnack states that "but not separating [them] from each other thusly, . . . the substance is no longer handled as free of form [*formfreie*] but as formless [*formlose*]." While this appears confusing, by *formfreie* I believe Harnack means that the substance is not irrevocably joined to a particular form. *Formlose*, on the other hand, means that the substance exists intrinsically without form, only as an abstraction.

[24] Harnack, "Nachwort," 121.

[25] Harnack, "Nachwort," 121.

articulation of doctrine within the Confessions represented a historically developed theological explication of the foundational Christian truth. This led Harnack to a tension point within his own thought: the doctrinal form itself—the "how"—belongs to the content of the Confessions; however, it could be possible for a church theologian to exercise freedom with respect to the "how" while remaining faithful to the "what."[26]

Substance and Form

One of the most intriguing aspects of Harnack's rejoinder to Hofmann and Schmid was his posture towards Schmid's distinctions between the "what" and the "how," substance and form, content and expression. Harnack appeared critical of Schmid's distinctions while also acknowledging their validity. Was the distinction between the parties simply a matter of theoretical application, or was there a greater disagreement in their respective understanding of the Lutheran Confessions? Answering this question will also help illuminate Harnack's curious statements on the binding character of the Confessions.

The distinction between essence and form—and all corresponding distinctions—was neither unique to this debate nor to the nineteenth century. Within the intellectual milieu of the nineteenth century, however, these categories were revitalized through the pervasive theme of organic growth that characterized Romanticism and German idealism. Within this landscape, when considering an object of study, the identification of an object's essence (*Wesen*) was necessary, for it permitted one to reduce a potentially complex object to its essential reality, its foundational principle, the most irreducible expression of its identity. Knowledge of the foundational principle allowed one to examine an object as organic and historically developing. It provided the standard by which to consider growth and development, evaluating growth as the expression of organic development or as, perhaps, a foreign interpolation, contrary to the object's essence. The subject of an academic discipline, the foundational principle, derived from the object's essence, became the primary criterion in establishing the academic study of that object. All content must be shaped and derived—unfolded—from the foundational principle. Forms, in contrast, were secondary.[27] Forms were viewed as the historically conditioned expressions that

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[26] Harnack, "Nachwort," 121.

[27] One of the most influential philosophical texts of the nineteenth century that articulated an idealist epistemology in relation to the university and the formation of academic disciplines was Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Vorlesungen über die Methode des Academischen Studiums* (Tübingen: J. G. Cotta, 1803). In this, his lecture on the discipline of theology, Schelling argued that it was essential for Christian theology to jettison older doctrinal forms that clouded the true principal idea of Christianity, in exchange for newer forms that illuminated the essence of Christianity. See Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, "Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen

manifest the essence of an object. Some scholars compared forms to "husks" or "shells" that contained the true "kernel" and essence of the object.[28] A recurring theme among philosophers and theologians was the need to develop more appropriate forms that better corresponded to the philosophical, theological, and intellectual landscape of the nineteenth century.

Harnack, Schmid, and Hofmann agreed on the validity of the distinction between form and substance. They disagreed in their definition of substance. Hofmann had defined the essence of Christianity as the present divine-human fellowship of love realized in the person of Jesus Christ.[29] Hofmann held that substitutionary atonement, divine wrath, satisfaction, and expiation were not immediately derived from the essence of Christianity. They did not organically cohere with the definitive character of the fellowship of love realized in Jesus. Not only were they not essential, but they were incompatible with Christianity's essence. In other words, they were a theological form incommensurate with Christianity's substance.[30] In Schmid's terminology, these doctrines were an explanatory "how" that sought to explain the essential "what" of the confession of Christ's salvific death. Therefore, Hofmann thought he could reject these theological positions without compromising his confessional integrity. In his view, he had not violated the substance of the Confessions.

Harnack, however, held such an explanation to be untenable. Harnack refused the rigid distinction between substance and form, arguing that substance is not limited to simple undeveloped expressions of faith. Neither would Harnack allow the

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Studiums," in *Schelling Werke*, ed. Manfred Schröter, vol. 5 (Stuttgart and Augsburg: J. G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1859), 209–352; translated as F. W. J. Schelling, *On University Studies*, ed. Norbert Guterman, trans. E. S. Morgan, (Athens, OH: Ohio Univ. Press, 1966).

[28] In his 1799 *Reden*, Schleiermacher famously distinguished between the inner "essence" (*Wesen*) of religion (i.e., intuition and feeling) and the "shells" of metaphysics and morality. See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, in *Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit 1796–1799,* ed. Günter Meckenstock, Kritische Gesamtausgabe I.2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984), 185–326; translated as Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, trans. and ed. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996).

[29] While Harnack and Hofmann employed different terms—in "Nachwort" Harnack used the term "substance" (*Substanz*), while Hofmann's preferred term was "essence" (*Wesen*)—their respective conceptions of these terms are strikingly similar. Although it may be too much to say that Thomasius' "substance" and Hofmann's "essence" are identical, their similarities permit comparison.

For Hofmann's definition of the essence of Christianity, see Johannes von Hofmann, *Die Encyclopädie der Theologie*, ed. H. J. Bestmann (Nördlingen: C. H. Beck, 1879), 10–11. See also Hofmann, *Schriftbeweis,* 1:6; Lee, *Confessional Lutheranism and German Theological Science*, 194–268; and Matthew Becker, *The Self-Giving God and Salvation History: The Trinitarian Theology of Johannes von Hofmann* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 135–158.

[30] For a detailed description of his explanation, see Hofmann, *Schutzschriften*, parts 1 and 3.

simplistic reduction of substance to dogma and form to theory. Harnack promoted a more complex, integrated, and organic relationship. Far from restricting substance to unelaborated statements of faith, Harnack asserted that "the substance lives in the totality of the confession as the soul in the body. . . . It lives and moves in the whole corpus of the Symbols, even in their theoretical explanations."[31] In order to understand how the historical and doctrinal expositions of faith that characterize the church and her history can change and yet somehow remain connected to the past, Harnack maintained that substance simultaneously exists as undeveloped and developed. In this he tried to avoid succumbing to an explanation of doctrinal change that identified the early Christian past with a pristine and simple substance, rendering later articulations as mere historical formations, potentially as historical accretions. Harnack did not attempt to deny that the articulation and formation of Christian doctrine takes place in a historical process. Much rather, Harnack affirmed that historical development was positive, comparing it to human growth and maturation. But in acknowledging the historical theological articulation of Christian belief, Harnack sought to preserve both the simple and the elaborated. By describing the church's theology as organic, Harnack taught that undeveloped and developed theological substance mutually exist within the church as essential features of the church's life, as the church continually returns and reflects upon "the faith in its simplest content," while also seeking to develop the substance of her confession. Simple content and developed expression are not antithetical to the church and her confession of faith, in his view. As an organic being, the church with its confession has growth as an essential characteristic. It "has matured through the path of history, experience, and interaction with the divine Word—[which] is the actual and most profound life process of the growing, contending faith."[32]

While Harnack conceded the distinction between essence and form within the Confessions—at one point even stating that the "*form* per se cannot be binding"[33]—he refused the conclusion that Schmid and Hofmann drew. The theological substance of the Confessions could not be abstracted from the forms, theories, and "hows" without compromising the confessional witness of the texts; they maintained an "essential significance for determining and founding" the Confessions' content.[34] Although distinct from the essence, because the theological forms and theories within the Confessions arise from the church, "derived from Scripture and faith," they are "not foreign" to the Confessions. Ultimately, they become "co-

[31] Harnack, "Nachwort," 127.
[32] Harnack, "Nachwort," 127–128.
[33] Harnack, "Nachwort," 130.
[34] Harnack, "Nachwort," 131.

carriers" of the Confessions' witness and teaching.[35] Harnack was quick to note that explanative theories and forms, though emerging from the church's life of faith, cannot be confounded with the "facts and truths" that shape and define them.[36] Form and theory themselves are not the salvific truths of the Christian faith. Forms and theories are historically conditioned explanations produced by the church. The recognition of this distinction is essential, but this distinction neither permits the separation of substance from form nor denigrates the forms and theories within the symbolic texts. Forms and theories demonstrate "how" the church believes "because they explain in greater detail the more definite sense in which the strict confessional propositions are meant and in which confessing them means confessing them alone."[37]

Hofmann and Schmid maintained that it was possible to distinguish and separate the doctrine of the atonement from the vicarious substitution and satisfaction. The former was the "what" and the latter was the "how," the church's theoretical explanation of the biblical teaching of the salvific activity of Jesus' death. Moreover, since Hofmann held that these theories were not compatible with the essence of Christianity, he maintained that it was appropriate to reject them for the sake of a more appropriate theory. Harnack disagreed.

> Will church theology claim to and be able to say, for example, that the proposition is a binding confessional proposition that "we are justified by grace alone for the sake of Christ through faith," but that the narrower definition of "for the sake of Christ"—namely, the imputation of Christ's righteousness—is a nonbinding *theologoumenon*? And yet the latter definition is a statement about the "how" that clarifies its "that." And it is the same with the doctrine of the atonement in our confession. The narrower definition of the fact that our reconciliation has been effected through the death of Christ—that is to say, through the vicarious satisfaction of divine righteousness—cannot be shoved aside as a mere *theologoumenon*, but it belongs to the content of the confession, and all the more so as the same has also largely been expressed in actual propositions of the confession.[38]

Contrary to Hofmann and Schmid, Harnack asserted that the vicarious satisfaction is not only congruous with the substance of Christianity and its confession, but it is also part of its content—that is to say, the vicarious satisfaction is central to Christianity's essence. The doctrine of the vicarious satisfaction is definitive to *how* the Christian church confesses the doctrine of the atonement. More than a doctrine,

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[35] Harnack, "Nachwort," 133.
[36] Harnack, "Nachwort," 134.
[37] Harnack, "Nachwort," 135.
[38] Harnack, "Nachwort," 135.

Harnack underscored the experiential character of theology, maintaining that the vicarious satisfaction corresponds to both the ecclesial and the personal Christian experience.[39] For this reason, Harnack defended the vicarious satisfaction as part of the church's confessional witness, not based upon theoretical explanations and theories (e.g., Anselm) but "drawn immediately out of Scripture and the Christian experience." The only way to excise satisfaction from the confession of the church would be to expurgate from the Scriptures "the concepts of righteousness and the holiness of God, the law and the conscience, guilt, punishment and judgment, mediator, ransom, [and] imputation."[40]

Freedom and the Binding Character of the Confessions

Central to this debate was the relationship between the freedom of a church theologian and the binding character of the Confessions. Schmid had maintained that a church theologian has freedom in matters of the dogmatic tradition of the church. One was not obligated to follow and uphold theological theories, even if they had a long reception within the church. Obligation was limited to the Confessions, but even the Confessions were not uniformly binding. A theologian was obligated to uphold them, but only where the Confessions spoke concretely with respect to what was certain within the Scriptures. As shown in the Hofmann controversy, Schmid insisted that Hofmann was free regarding theories and forms of the atonement within the Symbols.

Determining Harnack's position on the binding character of the Confessions is more challenging. Clearly, he was critical of Hofmann's position and Schmid's hermeneutical defense of their Erlangen colleague; however, within his "Nachwort" some of Harnack's statements are confounding and convoluted:

> A *formal* obligation does not conform and does not satisfy the [Lutheran church], which simultaneously allows too much to be free and binds too much. She claims the *substantial* [obligation], which more truly grounds, more deeply binds, more surely defends, and simultaneously allows greater freedom, since it does not proceed from external to internal but from internal to external.
>
> Strictly speaking, therefore, church theology, considered in itself, is bound to no doctrinal form as such, if only it stands firmly rooted in fact and truth with its faith in the true, actual, and full substance of the church's faith. The Symbols bind the theologian not insofar as he is a theologian but insofar as he is a Christian and a member of the church and, as such, is a theologian.[41]

[39] Harnack, "Nachwort," 134.
[40] Harnack, "Nachwort," 140.
[41] Harnack, "Nachwort," 125–126.

These statements give the impression that Harnack had restricted confessional obligation only to select statements within the Symbols, or that, like Schmid, he had established an innerconfessional distinction allowing him to identify the binding and nonbinding elements within the texts. To better interpret Harnack's posture towards the binding character of the Confessions, it is necessary to contextualize them within his broader understanding of Christianity's unique substance.

Harnack distinguished between two approaches towards confessional commitment: "substantial obligation" and "formal obligation." With the former, Harnack's position, the Christian substance alone possesses a true binding character. Its authority is intrinsic. For Harnack this substance was found within the Scriptures along with the faith and life of the church, including the communal and individual experience of the Christian. The simple and complete Christian substance permeates the entire Christian church, while simultaneously undergoing development, receiving "greater and sharper definition" in both rejecting error and accumulating a more precise articulation. To be sure, Harnack readily admitted that the historical shapes of the Christian substance could be articulated in unclear and erroneous ways. Even in the best-case scenarios, no form or expression completely exhausts the fullness of the Christian substance.[42]

Harnack's identification of a theologian's commitment to the Lutheran Symbols as a substantial obligation was not a reductive measure that sought to limit the theologian's subscription to an alleged "confession within the Confessions" or an attempt to delineate the inner substance from accidental doctrinal forms and theories. While Harnack distinguished forms and "hows" from substance and "whats," he refused to remove the former from one's confessional obligation:

> [T]he substance binds him not only in its immediate unity but also in its developed specificity, for the one is not to be divorced from the other. Confessing with the church, as we said above, means confessing *what*, [that is] what she confesses, and confessing *thus*, *how* she confesses. Both the "what" and the "how" belong to the content of confession. For this very reason, however, the "how" is to be thought of not in terms of the formal expression but in terms of the *inner* specificity that is peculiar to a given truth of faith in its living and articulated unity with the whole of the confession.[43]

Without reservation, Harnack opined that the "hows" of the Symbols, not merely their "whats," were binding upon the church theologian. To be sure, the forms and formulae of the Confessions were developments that did not exhaust the reality of

[42] Harnack, "Nachwort," 130.
[43] Harnack, "Nachwort," 129–130.

the Christian substance, but such "developed specificities" were faithful explications and organic expositions of the church's substance.[44]

If by "substantial obligation" Harnack was not attempting to segregate an interior confession within the Confessions but upheld both form and substance, what was the purpose of this theory? Harnack's language hints at his larger theological framework, which was likely undergirded by philosophical scaffolding borrowed from German idealism. Harnack established a confessional theory indebted to his larger organic vision of church and theology. For Harnack, the church is "the living organism, brought forth from Christ, of his active Spirit," dually constituted by objective and subjective aspects that correspond to the fact that the church is simultaneously the divine work of Christ and existing within congregations of the faithful.[45] Establishing the church as an organic structure allowed Harnack to characterize other aspects of the church's existence as central features of her organic existence. Characterized as a living organism, the church is constituted by the essential "organs" of "Scripture, tradition, and the personalities of the faithful," through which the Spirit of Christ is present, actively working in and through Christ's church on earth.[46]

In an age when the separation between the university and the church was becoming more acute, when some of the most radical theologians claimed that an interior disposition of faith disqualified one as a theologian,[47] Harnack fought against modern theology's increasing independence from the church. Theology was not separate from the church. Theology grows out of the church, for the purpose of the church: "[T]heology . . . owes its origin and existence only to Christianity as church. [Theology] is not the work of individuals as such but rather the changing product of the church in her position in the world. The church is not merely the object of its work and the goal of its striving, but she is also the maternal bosom, the basis of her origin and existence. She is [theology's] subject, who is active in the same [theology] and manifests one aspect of her life in it—namely, her intellectual aspect."[48] The church is the center of theology. Theology must be from and for the church. Theology comes into existence from the church, through the work of the theologian, who himself is "a living member of the church who conceives of himself as a free organ

[44] Harnack, "Nachwort," 129.

[45] Theodosius Harnack, *Einleitung und Grundlegung der Praktischen Theologie: Theorie und Geschichte des Cultus* (Erlangen: Andreas Deichert, 1877), 72–79.

[46] Theodosius Harnack, *Der christliche Gemeindegottesdienst im apostolischen und altkatholischen Zeitalter* (Erlangen: Theodor Bläsing, 1854), xiii–xxi, 12–14.

[47] For example, see David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet*, vol. 1 (Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1835), vi; translated as David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. George Eliot (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), lii.

[48] Harnack, *Einleitung und Grundlegung der Praktischen Theologie*, 3–4.

of the same."[49] There is an organic relationship that joins church, theology, and the theologian. The same substance unites them.

Harnack understood the Confessions as a part of this organic relationship. In his view, the Confessions were an organic development that issued from the life of the church, for they were nothing other than an articulation and explication of the substance that unites church and theology in a living relationship. The Confessions were not imposed upon the church from an alien authority. Neither were the Confessions the products of theological or philosophical speculation, nor arbitrary doctrinal formulae that demanded obedience. The Confessions arose from the church's own substance. There is an inner, substantial, organic relationship—neither external nor formal—that unites the Confessions to the church and to the Christian theologian. This inherent relationship would not obtain if the Confessions were seen only as an external theological standard, as an amalgam of doctrinal formulae. Consider once again Harnack's curious statement introduced above:

> Strictly speaking, therefore, church theology, considered in itself, is bound to no doctrinal form as such, if only it stands firmly rooted in fact and truth with its faith in the true, actual, and full substance of the church's faith. The Symbols bind the theologian not insofar as he is a theologian but insofar as he is a Christian and a member of the church and, as such, is a theologian. The more he, with his faith and life, exists within the faith and life of the church and knows himself to be one with her, the more freely he can move within the theological form.[50]

Harnack did not deny that the Confessions possess a binding character. He situated this character, however, within his organic, ecclesial relationship, rather than a legal framework. Harnack refused to consider the Symbols as a mere external doctrinal standard imposed upon the church and her theologians in order to restrict them, or as a legal text that only compelled adherence. Harnack derived their binding character internally, as a consequence of the fact that the Confessions maintain an inherent unity with the substance of the church, as an organic development from it. Harnack conceptualized the Confessions not primarily as restrictive formulae but positively as an expression of the inner unity of the "faith and life" that joins the church, the Christian, and Christian teaching. The Christian is called to live within the Confessions because there is a correspondence of identity between their substance and "his own life of faith" formed from the same substance.[51]

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[49] Harnack, *Einleitung und Grundlegung der Praktischen Theologie*, 8.
[50] Harnack, "Nachwort," 126.
[51] Harnack, "Nachwort," 126–129.

The subject of theological freedom, according to Harnack, was only properly considered from the perspective of the organic reality of the church. He defended a theologian's commitment to the church's Confessions at the cost of theological freedom. Harnack did not deny that a theologian possessed some degree of theological freedom, but within a context where theological freedom was a definitive characteristic of modern theology, he exercised caution, cognizant that a theologian was liable to "be taken captive by his freedom." Harnack was dismissive of claims that promoted theological freedom for the sake of the promotion of theological science, which would undermine one's ecclesial obligation. The theologian was primarily a "servant of the church," not the university, tasked with serving the church primarily in the training of pastors. Theological freedom cannot come at the expense of the theologian's obligation to the church.[52] For Harnack, theological freedom was situated within the organic theological relationship constituted by church, tradition, and Christians, unified by the substance of the church. Freedom exists for the theologian only insofar as he is a member of the church, formed and shaped by the same essence that he seeks to articulate. The greater his foundation within the church, the greater his familiarity with her substance, the greater his freedom—so much so that Harnack could say that for the theologian "his obligation is simultaneously his freedom."[53] The theologian is bound to the church's substance but has some degree of freedom with respect to her forms. This is where Harnack appears the most unclear. Although he granted that the church's forms were not binding in themselves, permitting the church theologian freedom, Harnack immediately circumscribed any freedom he saw as legitimate. The theologian must order his expressions to the language of the church that he served.[54] Moreover, as seen above, the theologian is bound to the theological forms of the Confessions, since they belong to the developed substance of the church. Harnack even exercised caution in addressing the relationship between freedom and the church's dogmatic tradition. While acknowledging that a theologian has freedom over and against the church's doctrinal systems and her teachers, this freedom must be exercised with great circumspection. While earlier theologians may appear inadequate in light of the scientific standards of the present day, nevertheless "those universally recognized masters of dogmatics . . . knew very well what the faith of the Lutheran church is and what it is not."[55] Whatever space theological freedom might occupy, Harnack maintained that it could be entered into only with caution for the sake of the church: in continuity with the church's substance, respecting her tradition, and in one's desire to serve.

[52] Harnack, "Nachwort," 126.
[53] Harnack, "Nachwort," 128–129.
[54] Harnack, "Nachwort," 126–127.
[55] Harnack, "Nachwort," 137.

V. Conclusion

What made the Neo-Lutheran theologians distinctive was the importance they placed on the Lutheran Confessions. This was noticed by contemporaries of different theological persuasions[56] and, of course, by the Neo-Lutheran theologians themselves.[57] This brief literary exchange within the larger atonement controversy further elucidates theological complexities that attended the renewed theological interest of the Lutheran confessional documents. Hofmann, Schmid, and Harnack were members of the theological faculty at Erlangen, the center of confessional Lutheranism within Bavaria, arguably the most important theological faculty within the confessional revival. Yet, even among these like-minded colleagues who maintained the importance of confessional subscription, no consensus existed as to what such subscription entailed.

The debate between Hofmann, Schmid, and Harnack helps illustrate that even among figures of the nineteenth-century confessional revival, questions and controversy persisted regarding the interpretation of and subscription to the Lutheran Symbols. The reality of such confessional distinctions and debates is not new. For example, the tension between Wilhelm Löhe (1803–1881) and the theologians of the Missouri Synod, and between the synods of Missouri and Iowa, is well known. Although he was critical of those who distinguished between the Lutheran Confessions themselves and the *confession* of the Lutheran Symbols, nevertheless Löhe argued for his own textual distinction between "what is confessedly spoken and . . . what is not spoken [confessedly]" ("was bekennend gesagt ist, und was nicht also gesagt ist").[58] Löhe argued that he maintained an unqualified subscription to the

[56] See Schwarz, *Zur Geschichte der neuesten Theologie*, 222–225, 232.

[57] Consider Harleß's 1838 letter to Andreas Gottlob Rudelbach (1792–1862), assuring him that despite the name of the journal, *Zeitschrift für Protestantismus und Kirche* was wholly dedicated to "serving the Lutheran church," "excluding everything that is incompatible with the principles and the confession of the same church. . . . Neither in the form nor in the content of our testimony will we forgo anything of the confession of our church." See Karl Richard Kaiser, "Briefwechsel mit D. Andreas Gottlob Rudelbach weil Sup. und Konsistorialrat zu Glauchau i. Sa. 1829–1846," in *Beiträge zur sächsischen Kirchengeschichte* 29 (1916): 85–212, at 140–146.

[58] In his debate with Fürth pastor Lorenz Kraußold (1803–1881) over the nature of confessional subscription, Löhe objected to those who attempted to segregate an inner confession within the Confessions (e.g., "Confessions and confession," or "the confession is contained in the Confessions"). Yet, Löhe expressed reservations over a few sections of the Confessions, specifically certain statements of Luther in the Smalcald Articles. Despite his few objections, Löhe stated that he maintained a *quia* subscription to the Lutheran Confessions "rightly understood." Friedrich Kantzenbach refers to Löhe's confessional subscription as "open '*quia*.'" See Wilhlem Löhe, *Unsere kirchliche Lage im protestantischen Bayern und die Bestrebungen einiger bayerisch-lutherischen Pfarrer in den Jahren 1848 und 1849*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Klaus Ganzert, 7 vols. (Neuendettelsau: Freimund-Verlag, 1951–1986), 5/1:428–433 (hereafter cited as *GW*); and Kantzenbach, *Gestalten und Typen des Neuluthertums*, 74. For the debate between the Missouri and Iowa Synods, see Martin J. Lohrmann, "'A Monument to American Intolerance': The Iowa Synod's 'Open Questions' in

Confessions—vis-à-vis a subjectivist interpretation (i.e., a subjective limitation of what is binding within the Confessions)—while avoiding what he considered an extreme interpretation of the Confessions' authority, which would enthrone them as the "Protestant paper pope"—a swipe directed at the Missouri Synod.[59]

An obvious similarity between Hofmann, Schmid, Harnack, and Löhe is that all four confessional theologians resided in Germany. One might conclude that attempts at creating distinctions within the Confessions, differentiating between the *confession* proper and the unessential, contextual material of the Confessions, was a feature of the confessional revival within the German lands. This assessment is at least partially accurate. In fact, C. F. W. Walther (1811–1887) suggested that his contemporary German Lutherans' inconsistent reception of the Lutheran Confessions was a consequence of their commitment to the belief in doctrinal development. For Walther, an overheightened historical contextualization undermined the fixed biblical foundation of dogma by interjecting "subjective opinions" into the ecclesial formation of dogma, leading to the conclusion that "dogmas are only the ecclesiastically sanctioned opinion of [certain] times." Historicization supported the distinction between biblical and ecclesial dogmatics, which further permitted one to conclude that the church's dogma was ultimately the result of the church's historical activity.[60] For Walther, the historicization of the Confessions enabled one to distinguish between the supposed doctrinal and historical components of the Symbols, permitting the exclusion of the latter.[61]

The accuracy of Walther's observation notwithstanding, it would be inaccurate to restrict the creation of intratextual distinctions within the Confessions to the German wing of the confessional revival. As Hofmann, Schmid, and Harnack were disputing principles of confessional subscription, across the Atlantic Saxon

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their American Context," in *Wilhelm Löhe Erbe und Vision: Loehe Theological Conference II Neuendettelsau 22. bis 26. Juli 2008*, ed. Dietrich Blaufuß (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2009), 294–306. For more on Löhe's confessional distinctions, see James Ambrose Lee II, "The History and Development of Doctrine: Loehe's Posture Towards Nineteenth-Century Theological Trends," in *Currents in Theology and Mission* 51, no. 1 (2024): 23–39.

[59] Wilhelm Löhe to an unspecified correspondent, 1861, in *GW* 5/2:858–859.

[60] In the fifth installment of his series "Was ist es um den Fortschritt der modernen lutherischen Theologie in der Lehre?" (What about the development of doctrine in modern Lutheran theology?), titled "Entstehen die christlichen Dogmen erst nach und nach?" (Do Christian dogmas emerge only gradually?), Walther criticized the German Lutheran acceptance of the historical development of Christian dogma, where, after prolonged controversy, ecclesial doctrine achieves its finalized form as "completed dogma" in the symbolical writings of the church. For the rest of the series, see C. F. W. Walther, "Was ist es um den Fortschritt der modernen lutherischen Theologie in der Lehre?" *Lehre und Wehre* 21, nos. 6, 9, 11, 12 (June, Sept., Nov., Dec.): 161–164, 225–227, 257–262, 322–329, 353–361; 22, nos. 2, 4, 6 (Feb., Apr., June): 40–47, 97–105, 161–169; 24, nos. 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 12 (Feb., Apr., July, Aug., Sept., Dec.): 33–44, 97–104, 193–202, 225–230, 257–264, 353–360.

[61] C. F. W. Walther, "Position der Synode von Iowa zu den Symbolen der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche," *Lehre und Wehre* 4, no. 2 (Feb. 1858): 61–63.

confessional émigrés engaged in their own discussions over the maintenance of legitimate distinctions within the Lutheran Symbols. At the conclusion of the 1840s and throughout the 1850s, Walther himself articulated a principle of interpretation and subscription that differentiated between essential and unessential components within the Lutheran Confessions. Walther advocated for an uncompromising subscription to the Lutheran Symbols, calling for an "unconditional subscription" from all ministers (*Diener*) of the synod. But while Walther could unreservedly reject any notion or form of a conditional subscription to the Symbols—"insofar" (*insofern*) as they agree with Scripture[62]—within the confessional documents, he could still distinguish between those elements that must be maintained and those that were not mandatory, that fell outside the bounds of one's unconditional subscription. Walther's principle was to restrict subscription to the "doctrinal content" (*Lehrgehalt*) of the Confessions. Everything that "does not concern doctrine," according to Walther, is excluded from one's unqualified subscription. Matters outside of doctrine include such issues as "the form, the method, and the proof [of doctrine]," issues governing liturgical rites (such as Luther's "Little Book on Baptism" [*Taufbuchlein*]), and even the Confessions' interpretation "of certain Biblical passages."[63]

As Richard Serina has recently shown, Walther's principle was no obscure position that faded into the annals of synodical history upon Walther's death. Walther's interpretative principle would become normative within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In his *Christian Dogmatics*, Francis Pieper followed and extended Walther's distinction, on the one hand, dismissing various forms of conditional subscription to the Confessions; on the other hand, like Walther, Pieper identified one's unconditional subscription to the Confessions with their doctrinal content.[64] According to Serina, this confessional distinction, articulated by both

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[62] Walther identified seven different "types" of conditional subscription to the Lutheran Confessions. See [C. F. W. Walther], *Antwort auf die Frage: Warum sind die symbolischen Bücher unserer Kirche von denen, welche Diener derselben werden wollen, unbedingt zu unterschreiben? Ein von der deutsche ev. luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio, u. a. St. westlichen Districts bei Gelegenheit der Versammlung derselben im April 1858 zu St. Louis, Mo., angenommenes Referat* (St. Louis: Synodaldruckerei von A. Wiebusch und Sohn, 1858); translated as C. F. W. Walther, "Answer to the Question, 'Why Should our Pastors, Teachers, and Professors Subscribe Unconditionally to the Symbolical Writings of our Church?' Essay Delivered at the Western District Convention in 1858," in *At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth*, [ed.] Matthew C. Harrison (Fort Wayne: Lutheran Legacy, 2009), 119–137.

[63] Walther, "'Why Should our Pastors, Teachers, and Professors Subscribe," 120–123. See also Richard J. Serina Jr., "Confessional Subscription in 'A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles,'" *Concordia Journal* 49, no. 4 (2023): 48–50.

[64] Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 1:355–358. See also Serina, "Confessional Subscription," 50–51.

Walther and Pieper, obtained throughout the history of the Missouri Synod, becoming "a hallmark of Missouri's doctrinal stance," even articulated by figures such as Arthur Carl Piepkorn and Robert Preus.[65]

These concluding comments further underscore the challenges that faced nineteenth-century confessional Lutherans in their embrace of the Lutheran Symbols. One cannot simply dismiss Hofmann, Schmidt, and Harnack by saying that all parties erred by erecting intratextual distinctions within the Confessions that circumscribed the parameters of one's subscription. Even Walther and Pieper recognized the legitimacy of intratextual distinctions that limited confessional subscription. Distinctions in and of themselves were not the issue but rather how and where one demarcated the line of distinction. The nature of the distinction is of ultimate importance. One can neither flatten the various intratextual confessional distinctions nor collapse the respective positions advanced by Hofmann, Schmidt, Harnack, Löhe, and Walther. Even though each theologian advocated for an intratextual distinction, their postures were far from identical. They did not distinguish between the same essential content. Hofmann and Schmid believed that they could identify and separate substance from form. They held that it was possible to uphold the doctrinal substance of the Lutheran Symbols while dismissing the specific doctrinal form in which the theological substance was articulated, without compromising their commitment to the Confessions. While Harnack could appreciate the historical character of doctrinal forms, he rightly recognized that Schmid's and Hofmann's positions undermined the theological integrity of their confessional subscription. The freedom to untether and disregard doctrinal form from its substance would result in a minimalistic theological confession, with little connection to the doctrinal exposition of the Lutheran Confessions.

Walther and the early Missouri Synod rightly refused to countenance the recognition of any intraconfessional distinctions in doctrine. Yes, Walther admitted that the Confessions contained items that were not binding. While a *quia* subscription was absolute, it pertained only to matters of doctrine. And doctrine is clearly revealed in Scripture. For Walther, the boundaries of unconditional subscription are identical to the doctrinal content of the Symbols. Subscription terminates with doctrine. The strength of Walther's position is illustrated in the debate between the Iowa Synod and the Missouri Synod over the issue of open questions. In their 1876 colloquy with representatives of the Iowa Synod, Walther and the six other delegates of the Missouri Synod rejected the Iowa delegates' distinction between "essential and

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[65] Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "Suggested Principles for a Hermeneutics of the Lutheran Symbols," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 29, no. 1 (January 1958): 1–24; Robert Preus, "Confessional Subscription," in *Evangelical Directions for the Lutheran Church*, ed. Erich Kiehl and Waldo J. Werning (Chicago: Lutheran Congress, 1970), 43–52. See also Serina, "Confessional Subscription," 51–55.

unessential" doctrines within the Confessions. As explained by Conrad Sigmund Fritschel (1833–1900), professor at Wartburg Theological Seminary, the Iowa Synod argued that not every doctrine articulated within the Lutheran Symbols was necessarily part of the confession of faith.[66] Although Fritschel and the other Iowa delegates maintained that the quantity of nonbinding doctrine was minuscule, Walther and the Missouri Synod delegates rejected Iowa's distinction between binding and nonbinding doctrine, even if limited to only a handful of doctrines. Walther insisted that "[i]f it is a doctrine that exists within the Symbols, we can permit no difference for Lutherans who subscribe to [the Symbols.]"[67] Walther understood that the acceptance of the distinction between essential and unessential doctrines, between what is and what is not binding, would create an interminable battle over where to demarcate the boundary between essential and binding against unessential and nonbinding.[68] Walther recognized that the failure to secure a binding commitment to the doctrinal content of the Confessions would jeopardize the harmony of congregations by undermining parishioners' ability to know what their pastors believe, teach, and confess.

By anchoring confessional subscription to the doctrinal content of the Confessions, Walther, like Harnack, would have assessed the distinctions advocated by Hofmann and Schmid as transgressing the doctrinal sine qua non of the Confessions. Even Harnack's differentiation between substance and form would likely come across as specious. It is clear that Harnack had no desire to permit the doctrinal content of the Confessions to be jettisoned by identifying them as unessential or historically contingent. In contrast to Walther, however, his defense was more complex, but also more convoluted, contingent upon a large and complicated theoretical framework. The waning of idealistic organicism, upon which his position was dependent, undermines the rhetorical strength of Harnack's defense of the "essential" character of doctrinal forms and, ultimately, one's subscription to the Lutheran Confessions. In avoiding speculative constructions, the simplicity of Walther's doctrinal distinction has persisted, while Harnack's is hardly remembered.

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[66] J. P. Beyer, ed., *Sternographish aufgezeichnetes Colloqium der Vertreter der Synode von Iowa und der von Missouri, Ohio u. a. St., gehalten vom 13.–19. Nov. in Milwaukee, Wis.* (Chicago: Chicago Union, 1863), 29.

[67] Beyer, *Colloqium der Vertreter der Synode von Iowa und der von Missouri*, 33.

[68] Beyer, *Colloqium der Vertreter der Synode von Iowa und der von Missouri*, 31.

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Theological Observer

Banquet Remarks for the Retirement of Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr. as President of Concordia Theological Seminary, May 16, 2024

When I was asked to speak for this occasion, I did something historians like President Rast do all the time: I went to the archives! I found my remarks at the installation banquet celebrating the beginning of the presidency of Dr. Rast on September 11, 2011. Those remarks began with the analogy that as Moses passed the leadership of Israel to younger Joshua, we had witnessed President Wenthe passing his staff to the much younger President Rast. Now turn the clock in your mind back thirteen years and listen as I quote:

> The reason the installation we just witnessed in Kramer Chapel is significant is that it is part of divine history. At the time, few in this world beyond Jericho and some other conquered cities took notice of Joshua and the people of Israel. The reason Moses, Joshua, the people of Israel, Wenthe, Rast, and this seminary in Fort Wayne are significant is because we are part of divine history. Several psalms of the Psalter adeptly express the history of Israel as divine history: it is God acting in and through sinful people, sometimes in spite of them! Who at the time thought that Jesus' three-year training of his first twelve pastors, primarily in the hinterland of Galilee, was important for the world's future? Luke, among others, however, viewed the actions of the apostles as divine history that was transforming the world: "The Word of the Lord grew and multiplied." Why was Luther so important? He was part of divine history, an instrument used by God to testify mightily to God's grace in Christ Jesus. Anyone who has read Erich Heintzen's *Prairie School of the Prophets* realizes that the history of this seminary is very often, as our new president would bluntly put it, rather depressing! Yet, with all its struggles to survive and journeys between three states, we recognize and rejoice that this seminary is part of divine history as Jesus has called, formed, and sent forth countless servants faithful to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, year after year, decade after decade, for 165 years. . . . It is a history unfolding with each service in Kramer Chapel in which Jesus is present with his gifts of life and forgiveness, every class that lifts up his death and resurrection as the source of salvation, every faithful student who is sent from here to testify to Jesus in this world. It is a history that will not end with seminary enrollment struggles or income shortfalls, but with our Lord's glorious return and our resurrection.[1]

[1] Charles A. Gieschen, "An Old Seminary, a New President, and the Unfolding of Divine History," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 75, no. 3–4 (July/October 2011): 369.

Tomorrow marks the close of our 178th academic year. Thirteen more years of *divine history* have unfolded at this seminary and our young Joshua—President Rast—is just a bit older, has journeyed many miles around the world, and has dealt with many challenges that arose here during those years. The video you just saw showed many of the wonderful things God has done in and through this seminary under his leadership.[2] He has served selflessly and sacrificially for Christ, his church, and this seminary. We owe him, his dear wife Amy, and his family our profound appreciation.

For the past thirteen years, before or after each of the annual vicarage, internship, and placement services, Larry and I would typically see one another in the administration building as we put on or took off our vestments. We would habitually say to one another that the sending out of soon-to-be pastors and deaconesses is "why we do what we do." And I would thank him for doing what he did to make sure that sending continued to happen. Historians like our president like hard data, so I will share numbers. Between 2011 and tomorrow, 892 individuals have graduated from all the various CTSFW degree programs. If we add to that those completing the Alternate Route and Specific Ministry Program certificate programs, it pushes the number over 950. Then think of the ministry of these individuals lasting decades each and impacting hundreds of people at a thousand different locations with the love of God in Jesus Christ. And think of the thousands upon thousands who will one day be in heaven because of that ministry. That is the divine history that God has written, Larry, working through you as our president for these thirteen years. On behalf of the faculty, staff, and our students from across the world, I say to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant," and we all look forward to having you back in the classroom full-time teaching church history![3]

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[2] See *Faithfully Forming Servants*, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, video, 12:31, May 16, 2024, https://video.ctsfw.edu/media/Faithfully%20Forming%20Servants/1_8q4nell6.

[3] Dr. Rast is on sabbatical during the 2024–2025 academic year and will return to teaching as Professor of Historical Theology in September 2025.

Remarks at the Faculty and Staff Banquet Prior to the Installation of Dr. Jon S. Bruss as President of Concordia Theological Seminary, September 7, 2024

Dear friends in Christ gathered for this historic and joyous occasion and especially you, Dr. Bruss, our esteemed colleague,

On behalf of the entire faculty I assure you, as our soon-to-be-installed president, of our support and prayers for your shepherding of this seminary. We know you will bring to this new calling wisdom drawn from the text of the Holy Scriptures, confessional integrity as a faithful Lutheran pastor fresh from parish ministry, academic rigor that flows from your many learning and teaching experiences, as well as much energy and compassion. We are confident you will build on the legacy of our past presidents, who shepherded this seminary during the past 178 years. I note especially three of these whose leadership has defined Concordia Theological Seminary since it moved from Springfield to Fort Wayne: Dr. Robert Preus, Dr. Dean Wenthe, and Dr. Lawrence Rast. We fervently pray that the Lord will use you, like he used them, so that this seminary continues to be a bastion of confessional Lutheran theology that is a beacon in this world by forming servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all.

This presidential transition is really about how the Lord of the church, Jesus Christ, will continue to meet the need for called servants through Concordia Theological Seminary. It is about this seminary *continuing* its steadfast commitment to testifying—in our chapel, classrooms, and everywhere we serve in the world—of the Christ revealed throughout the Holy Scriptures, whose atoning death and victorious resurrection offers salvation and life to all sinners. It is about this seminary *continuing* to be a twenty-first-century Wittenberg where this Christ-centered and grace-filled theology of the inspired and inerrant word of God and the Lutheran Confessions is vibrantly and faithfully preached, taught, learned, and lived by faculty and students from across the world. It is about this seminary *continuing* its mission on behalf of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to send forth workers into the harvest fields who courageously offer Jesus Christ with all of his love and forgiveness wrapped in the waters of Holy Baptism, words of gospel, and the bread and wine that are his true body and blood.

As you take on this weighty responsibility, Jon, may you be encouraged that you are not in this alone. Our Lord Jesus remains the ultimate head of this seminary, our fine faculty continues to be its heart, and our dedicated staff continues to be the hands and feet that get things done. As we begin a new academic year under President Bruss, these words from a hymn by Martin Franzmann are an apt prayer to keep in our minds and hearts, and even on our lips.

O Spirit, who didst once restore
Thy Church that it might be again
The bringer of good news to men,
Breathe on Thy cloven Church once more,
That in these gray and latter days
There may be those whose life is praise,
Each life a high doxology
To Father, Son, and unto Thee.[1]

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[1] Martin H. Franzmann, "O God, O Lord of Heaven and Earth," in *Lutheran Service Book*, ed. The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 834, st. 4.

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Book Reviews

***On the Resurrection of the Dead and On the Last Judgment*. By Johann Gerhard. Translated by Richard J. Dinda. Edited by Joshua J. Hayes, Heath R. Curtis, and Aaron Jensen. Vols. 30–31 of *Theological Commonplaces*, edited by Benjamin T. G. Mayes. St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2020. 592 pages. Hardcover. $64.99.**

Since 2002, the editors and staff at Concordia Publishing House and the editors of the Gerhard dogmatics have been undergoing what we might today call an ultra-marathon in the publishing of the celebrated *Loci Theologici* by Johann Gerhard (1582–1637), originally in twenty-three large quarto volumes. On my shelves, the series takes up twenty-six linear inches so far, in seventeen volumes, and I understand more is to come. It might be useful for the reader to consult the book reviews of volumes in this series so far.[1]

Why should a pastor or educated layman purchase and read these volumes, whose content is four hundred years old? They should do so because any theology whose source and norm are only the canonical Scriptures is perennial. Gerhard's dogmatics are perennial. There is no new data that will make the old "theological science" obsolete, as we often find in the natural and historical sciences. The errors that the Christian church dealt with in its first 1,600 years are still with us today. The only thing that is new is the inventiveness of heresy, philosophy, and other academic disciplines that always find new ways to warp the gospel to fit modern ways of thinking and living.

What is particularly useful about Gerhard compared to other Lutheran dogmatics that are available in English? First is Gerhard's mastery of the early church fathers regarding their doctrine. We Lutherans need to remember the method set out for us in the Augsburg Confession: "There is nothing here that departs from the Scriptures or the catholic church or the church of Rome, in so far as the ancient

[1] Jack Kilcrease, review of *On Christ*, *LOGIA* 20, no. 3 (Trinity 2011): 48–49; Martin R. Noland, review of *On the Ecclesiastical Ministry, Part 1*, *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 75, no. 1–2 (January/April 2012): 185–186; Jack Kilcrease, review of *On the Church*, *LOGIA* 22, no. 4 (Reformation 2013): 44–45; Gifford A. Grobien, review of *On Creation and Predestination*, *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 80, no. 1–2 (January/April 2016): 167–171; Gifford A. Grobien, review of *On the Law*, *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 81, no. 3–4 (July/October 2017): 358–359; Tim R. Schmeling, review of *On Justification through Faith*, *LOGIA* 29, no. 2 (Easter 2020): 54–56. Mention should also be made of Roland F. Ziegler, "Chemnitz, Gerhard, Walther, and Concordia Publishing House," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 83, no. 1–2 (January/April 2019): 43–50.

church is known to us from its writers" (AC XXI-B 1 Latin).[2] Gerhard listens to the early church fathers and councils and sifts out the gold from the dross. In this he follows the examples of Luther, Melanchthon, and Chemnitz but is superior to all his Lutheran predecessors in both quantity and use of the early church material.

Second is Gerhard's superb argumentation against all the errors of the Roman Catholic theologians, the Calvinists, the Anabaptists, and the Socinians, which latter group he calls the "Photinians." All his arguments and sources are still useful today when dealing with these groups. Third is Gerhard's consistent use of Aristotle's four causes throughout his dogmatics as subtopics, which might be confusing for the modern reader. In modern usage, only the "efficient cause" is considered a cause per se. The other three—material, formal, and final causes—are really explanatory features in modern usage. Since Gerhard follows this fourfold pattern consistently, it makes it easier for researchers to find whatever subtopic they are looking for. The extensive table of contents from the editors contributes to the ease of finding subtopics and their many chapters and sections.

The topics in the present volume are from two of the original quarto volumes: *On the Resurrection of the Dead* and *On the Last Judgment*. Regarding the resurrection, Gerhard commends the doctrine to his readers because (1) it is a mystery unknown by nature, (2) it is the foundation of every life-giving consolation in all adversity and in death itself, (3) it is the greatest incentive to piety, and (4) it is the proper treasure of the church (9–10). He concludes his introduction to this doctrine by stating that "briefly, the article on the resurrection of the dead is 1) the heart of the Christian religion, 2) the aim of our life, and 3) our shield against every adversity" (10). Here we see, already in a few initial pages, the practical use of the doctrine, which Gerhard concludes with in chapter 12 (238). Gerhard always keeps in mind this practical use. Just like the medical doctor must learn the practical use of an organic chemical, so the parish pastor and theologian must always learn the practical use of the doctrines of the church.

Particular questions that Gerhard addresses that might be of interest to modern readers include (1) whether infants who die in their mothers' wombs will be raised (211), (2) whether miscarried fetuses will be raised (211–212), (3) whether animals will be raised (214–217), (4) the resuscitation of certain people by Christ and the holy men of God (220), (5) the translation of Enoch (220–221), and (6) an extensive discussion about the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:51–53 and 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17 (221–236).

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[2] In *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert, Jaroslav Pelikan, Robert H. Fischer, and Arthur C. Piepkorn (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1959), 47.

Regarding the last judgment, Gerhard commends the doctrine to his readers because (1) it is also a mystery unknown to nature but revealed only in the word, (2) it is the foundation for every life-giving comfort in all the perilous adversities of this life, (3) it is a very effective incentive to piety, and (4) it is a proper treasure of the church (244–245).

Particular questions that Gerhard addresses under this locus that might interest the modern reader include (1) whether Christ's return for judgment will be local (318); (2) what will be the nature of the cloud in which Christ will arrive (318); (3) the judgment of the Antichrist (334–335); (4) why only works of mercy are listed in the description of the judicial process in Matthew 25 (345–349); (5) a lengthy discourse, sections 76–81, on the time when the judgment will begin, in which Gerhard exposes and refutes all the speculative answers to that question from the early church to his time (383–401); and (6) another lengthy discourse, sections 85–111, on the signs that will precede Jesus' return on the last day (405–457). These last two discourses are alone worth the purchase of this book and its study! My hat is off to the author, translator, and editors!

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Suffering, Not Power: Atonement in the Middle Ages. **By Benjamin Wheaton. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2022. 264 pages. Paperback. $26.99.**

The most recent contribution to the debate over the essential meaning of the atonement is Benjamin Wheaton's *Suffering, Not Power: Atonement in the Middle Ages*. The contribution is an important one, being a long-overdue corrective to the false notion that Christ's atonement as vicarious satisfaction may be dismissed as a late-blooming theory first conceived in the Middle Ages and characterized especially by Anselm of Canterbury in the late eleventh century. The false notion was popularized by Swedish Lutheran scholar Gustaf Aulén's *Christus Victor*, first published in English in 1931.[1] Aulén divides the Christian views on the atonement according to their imagery in interpretation of it. His layout of the spectrum of atonement "theories" has gained considerable renown, enough to suggest that his work may be considered a twentieth-century classic. At one end of the spectrum is what Aulén calls the Latin, or "legal satisfaction," view, characterized especially by Anselm, who

[1] Gustaf Aulén, Christus Victor*: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, trans. A. G. Hebert (London: SPCK, 1931).

in his view was introducing medieval conceptions of feudal honor, and, at the other end, which for Aulén is the more legitimate end, is the so-called classical view, expressed in terms of Christ's triumph over the devil, whose grip over mankind his atonement loosed.

The dispute over the vicarious satisfaction, which is the linchpin of Anselm's portrayal of the work of Christ, had begun in earnest in the nineteenth century, when Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann (1810–1877) opposed the "orthodox doctrine of vicarious satisfaction" as biblicism in the name of a *heilsgeschichtliche* theology. Hofmann declared that "the saving truth which the Scripture proclaims authoritatively to the Church does not consist in a series of doctrinal propositions," by which he meant doctrinal formulations having to do with the vicarious satisfaction, "but rather in the fact that Jesus has mediated a connection between God and mankind."[2] For Hofmann, the Bible is not "a text book teaching conceptual truths but rather a document of an historical process"—that is, *Heilsgeschichte*.[3] Hofmann was attacked by a number of his "orthodox" colleagues, among them Theodosius Harnack, who in 1886 brought Luther into the debate, attempting to show the latter's adherence to the vicarious satisfaction. Hofmann responded by working to demonstrate that Luther cannot be associated unambiguously with the doctrine of vicarious satisfaction, quoting Luther at great length, in an attempt to embarrass the orthodox.[4] What Aulén's work did, then, was to participate in reigniting the debate in 1931.

What Wheaton does is to bring important historical evidence to the debate that demonstrates rather decisively that Aulén had been incorrect in contending that the vicarious satisfaction was a medieval novelty coming from Anselm. Rather, it is the notion that the atonement is a matter of God's removal of the devil's power, exclusive of the notion of vicarious satisfaction, that is historically novel, and a misreading of the broad medieval consensus (hence Wheaton's title: *Suffering, Not Power: Atonement in the Middle Ages*).

Wheaton's contribution may be seen as unique, although he admits to having come to it by a careful reading of French theologian Jean Rivière, a lesser-known yet "far more insightful and learned" contemporary of Aulén (8). Rivière "meticulously and acidly dismantled" the arguments of the modernist Joseph Turmel's six-volume *Histoire de dogmes*, whose presentation of the history of the doctrine of the atonement was very similar to (and thus as deficient as) Aulén's. In so doing Rivière concludes decisively that "through all periods of Christian history, the atonement was

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[2] J. C. K. von Hofmann, *Interpreting the Bible*, trans. Christian Preus (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1959), 76.

[3] Hofmann, *Interpreting the Bible*, 204.

[4] Hofmann, *Interpreting the Bible*, 57–58, 63.

at its root seen as a sacrifice of expiation and propitiation made by God to God" (12).

Using Rivière's method, Wheaton's treatment brings the matter up to date, having the advantage of many more available texts and research since Rivière's death in 1943. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, Rivière's own influence was limited, due to the deficiency of translations of his idiomatic French into English and the unfortunately cursory engagement of his arguments even by Aulén, who "breezily dismisses Rivière with two brief mentions of [his] early work, neither of which show any sign of engagement with the French historian" (245). Wheaton's meticulous work serves in part as a correction of that historical oversight.

Wheaton chooses three representative writers from the periods surrounding Anselm's years to demonstrate that Anselm's thought was hardly unique. He then provides "vignettes" from each of these writers to show clear assumptions on their parts, easily seen as assumptions on the part of also their hearers or readers, that the atonement was widely seen as "a sacrifice of expiation and propitiation made by God to God" (12). The first writer he examines is the well-known late medieval poet Dante Alighieri, who died in the early fourteenth century; the second is Caesarius of Arles, also well known, from the late fifth and early sixth centuries; and the third is Haimo of Auxerre, a ninth-century monk of the Benedictine Abbey of Saint-Germain d'Auxerre. Though Haimo is not well known today, Wheaton demonstrates that in authoring many widely read biblical commentaries and theological texts, he can be seen as "the great teacher of Europe in the Middle Ages" (217), which is important for Wheaton's purposes. In short, "all three were thoroughly mainstream teachers in their time and place; this is important to emphasize" (243).

Reading Wheaton is easy, notwithstanding the obvious scholarship he brings to his task. As such, he is accessible to a large readership. One does not need to be a theologian to appreciate this work. In addition, his thorough treatment of these three medieval authors provides a window into what must have been common medieval thought and assumptions regarding the meaning of the atonement. As such, it leaves no doubt in the reader's mind that the atonement was widely understood as a vicarious satisfaction, a sacrifice from God to God to propitiate and expiate sin.

In his treatment of Haimo in particular, Wheaton draws the reader into the Scriptures themselves, because his vignettes are of Haimo's commentaries on Romans and Hebrews, the very same Scriptures Haimo's readers read, and "the clear centrality of the sacrificial aspects of Christ's crucifixion" found there demonstrates that they are also biblical (238). Hence, a careful reader of Wheaton must conclude that Anselm's similar treatment of the atonement was hardly new.

The artfulness of Wheaton's approach is that instead of dealing directly with Aulén, he deals with the debate between Rivière and Turmel, a brilliant move to

demonstrate that in fact Aulén's central argument against Anselm had already been refuted before he even began. A reintroduction of Rivière required a thoroughgoing familiarity with his idiomatic French that had left him mostly inaccessible to non-French audiences, including, so it would seem, even Aulén. But Wheaton accomplishes this task for us, and so succeeds in thoroughly dismantling Aulén, via Rivière's demolition of Turmel.

Yet the reader is left wondering why Wheaton did not in the end turn directly to Aulén, a task that presumably would have been easy after the thoroughness of Wheaton's approach had him hemmed in. After all, Turmel is a historically irrelevant figure, a Roman Catholic who was excommunicated largely due to the Catholic Rivière's work. But the widely known Aulén was a Protestant like Wheaton himself, and it is his work that is clearly the object of his research.

Yet there is a possible benefit to us even here, for in taking on Aulén's view only indirectly, Wheaton's work also indirectly serves the purpose of indirectly taking on figures of more immediate interest to us.

For one, the proponents of liberation theology also have no use for the vicarious satisfaction, seeing rather a mere correspondence between Christ's death and the need for liberation from "social injustice." For them the meaning of the cross is reduced to being the unjust death of a just person under the oppression of religious leaders to which the politically or socially oppressed can somehow relate. Wheaton's work shows that this would certainly have to be characterized as a historical novelty.

Another benefit of Wheaton's indirect approach, which is perhaps of even more value to us, is its application to Aulén's theological heirs. Two examples would be Gerhard Forde (d. 2005), who like Aulén, claimed that the vicarious satisfaction is an Anselmian innovation. For him, atonement does not occur until God succeeds, at the cost of the death of the Son, in "getting through to us who live under wrath."[5] Likewise, Forde's student Steven Paulson, who in 1998 became his successor at Luther Seminary, follows him in disparaging "legal scheme" interpretations of the atonement.[6]

The debates on the meaning of the atonement continue apace, and since they do, at the very least Wheaton's book deserves to be taken seriously as a welcome participant.

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[5] Gerhard R. Forde, "The Work of Christ," in *Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 59.

[6] Steven D. Paulson, *Lutheran Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 2.

Books Received

Bowman, Robert M., Jr., and J. Ed Komoszewski. *The Incarnate Christ and His Critics: A Biblical Defense*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2024. 896 pages. Hardcover. $57.99.

Pfeiffer, Joshua, and Thomas Pietsch, eds. *Shepherding the Flock of God: A Festschrift in Honour of Andrew K. Pfeiffer*. Tarrington, Victoria, Australia: Kairos, 2024. 252 pages. E-book. $10.00.

Jones, Jordan W., and Christopher R. Pascarella. *Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching*. Kerux Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Kregel Ministry, 2024. 360 pages. Hardcover. $34.99.

Welty, Greg. *40 Questions about Suffering and Evil*. 40 Questions Series. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2024. 368 pages. Paperback. $25.99.

Whittaker, William. *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*. Edited by Josiah Leinbach. South Bend, IN: Prolego, forthcoming.

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