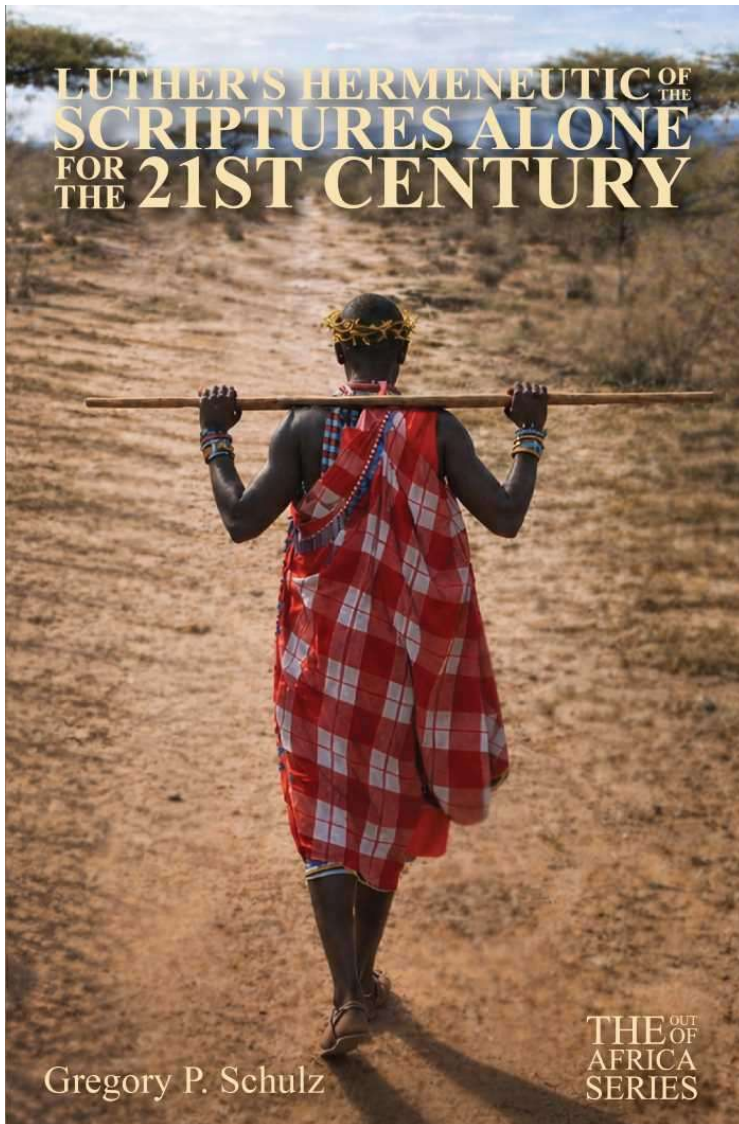




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The Out of Africa Series

**Luther's Hermeneutic of the Scriptures
Alone for the 21st Century**

How the Son of God, the Word Who Became Flesh,
Recreates Human Hearts and Minds in Real Time

Gregory P. Schulz

Luther's Hermeneutic of the Scriptures Alone for the 21st Century

How the Son of God, the Word Who Became Flesh, Recreates Human Hearts and Minds in Real Time

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DEDICATED
to the 2025 graduates from
The Lutheran School of Theology,
Kimuka, Kenya

Pastors
Johnson Ainomugisha, Pacifique Bizimungu, Kennedy Mwenda,
Venuste Nsengiyumva, Anjelo Ongang, and Adelino Upwoth

The Out of Africa Series

“Something new always comes out of Africa!” This is what Pliny the Elder wrote about ten years after our Lord’s crucifixion and resurrection. In the 1st century, Pliny was writing about the spectacular African animals, especially the great cats. Much later, at the beginning of the 20th century, Karen Dinesen repurposed Pliny’s words to make *Out of Africa* the title of her life’s story in Kenya. The famous first line in her book *Out of Africa* is, “I had a farm in Africa, at the foot of the Ngong Hills.”

That brings us to the most recent use of “Out of Africa.” This 21st century book on Luther’s hermeneutic comes to you from the faculty and supporters of The Lutheran School of Theology in Kimuka, Kenya, just west of the Ngong Hills, on the other side from Nairobi and Karen Dinesen’s failed coffee farm. We are located almost within sight of the place where the love of Karen’s life, Denys Finch-Hatton, crashed his DeHavilland “Gypsy Moth” biplane and died in May 1931.

In the 21st century we say, “We have a Lutheran School of Theology in Africa, at the foot of the Ngong Hills, where we are forming African Lutherans to teach the faith.” When we write, “Out of Africa,” we are speaking and thinking of the storeroom of His words and Jesus the Messiah who tells us in His Scriptures, “Therefore, every student of Scripture instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who brings out of his storeroom what is new and what is old” (Matthew 13:52).

Something new is coming out of Africa today, something new from the Old and New Testaments of God’s words, the Scriptures. *Luther’s Hermeneutic of the Scriptures Alone for the 21st Century* is the first and foundational textbook in a series that we plan (under the James 4:15 condition) to make available as a free but copyrighted PDF for Christian theological institutions throughout Africa and elsewhere to print copies for their students. Beyond that, the printed book is available from Amazon.com sites worldwide in bound and Kindle formats for readers, professors, libraries, and students to buy.

Other Books Planned for the Out of Africa Series

In the Fellowship of Christ’s Sufferings: A Handbook and Updated Text of The Problem of Suffering for the Pastoral and Diaconal Care of Souls

Lutheran Preaching for African Pastors: A Workbook Based on Wilhelm Loehe’s “How to Preach Aright” in The Pastor — in collaboration with faculty, students, and graduates of The Lutheran School of Theology

Preface

“As a called and ordained servant of the Word, I announce the grace of God to all of you ...”

“The medium is the message.” Lutheran hermeneutics, whatever their form, must be grounded in the chosen means by which God delivers His grace to human beings. Failing that, they cannot be Lutheran and are probably not hermeneutical. The establishment clause for a Lutheran hermeneutic is the German Reformation motto *sola Scriptura*, Scripture alone.

Jesus tells us in the same Gospel that reveals Him as the Word of God who became flesh, that the written Scriptures testify comprehensively of Him (John 5:31-40), while the first-century apostles taught, as did the prophets before them, that faith comes from hearing the message, and the message that is heard is what Christ spoke. (Romans 10:17, GW; see also Psalm 119).

Furthermore, as Saint Paul wrote to Timothy, a younger pastor, these written words are *the means of ministry* for called servants of the Word incarnate and his flock.

You, however, have followed my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love, my endurance, as well as the persecutions and sufferings that happened to me in Antioch, in Iconium, and in Lystra. I endured these persecutions and the Lord delivered me from them all. Now in fact all who want to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But evil people and charlatans will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived themselves. You, however, must continue in the things you have learned and are confident about. You know who taught you and how from infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the person dedicated to God may be capable and equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:10-17, NET).

In contradiction to Christ, His apostles and prophets, and indeed against the Holy Scriptures, Lutheran professors within my lifetime have been teaching hermeneutics in the church body where I was baptized into the faith as an infant, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LC—MS), as if seminary students and pastors are not servants of the Word, but masters of the Word.

This has meant a fundamental change in attitude toward the Scriptures and toward the ministry. In terms familiar from Lutheran theology, it was a change from *ministerial*, or servant thinking, to *magisterial* thinking (the Latin word *magisterial* means “like a school master, the one who is in charge of all the reading and learning”).

The hermeneutics in question are the *historical-critical method* of biblical interpretation, and *postmodern semiotics*. I have written about these hermeneutics and the fundamental linguistic heresy that lies beneath them.¹ *Luther’s Hermeneutic of the Scriptures Alone for the 21st Century* is my response, for the good of the ministry of the Gospel, especially the Gospel on the vast continent of Africa.

Many thanks to Pastor Philip Hale and everyone at Lutheran News (publishers of *Christian News*), to Pastor Larry Bean for his editing and Grace Beane for her proofreading, to our band of Christian brothers at the LST, Pastors Paul Arndt, James May, and Samwel Owage, and especially to my dear wife, Paula, for sharing her poetic sensibilities and recommendations during my writing, as always.

All glory to the incarnate Word alone!

Rev. Gregory Schulz, DMin, PhD

A called and ordained servant of the Word since 1982

Professor of Theology and Academic Dean

The Lutheran School of Theology “In Africa, at the foot of the Ngong Hills”

Easter 2026

<https://LutheranPhilosopher.com>

¹ Gregory P. Schulz, *Seminex 2.0, The Foundational heresy that has Propelled the LCMS from Explosion to Implosion* (This essay first appeared in *Christian News*, Volume 63, No. 12, March 24, 2025), ISBN #979-8-9895813-4-5.

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Our Lutheran hermeneutic is based on the first chapter of John's Gospel, especially John 1:14. "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us." Jesus of Nazareth is that divine Word who took on a human nature in the virgin's womb. As He tells us in His own words, "These are the very Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39) and "heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Matthew 24:35). Thus, the words of the Scriptures are the eternal words of the incarnate Word. Jesus the Messiah makes it so as He made everything to be what it is as the all-powerful and creative Word of the Father, with the Holy Spirit, in the first chapter of Genesis. Hence our hermeneutic: sola Scriptura, "interpreting the Scriptures via the Scriptures alone!"

Much of this chapter follows Luther's Christmas sermon on John 1:1-14. It is a chapter formed by the first requirement of our sixteenth-century Formula of Concord: to say clearly, "This is what we believe, teach, and confess" concerning the Word incarnate, His words, and our attitude toward the Word and His words. We begin to learn the vital importance of asking today, "Is our hermeneutical attitude the attitude from Christ the incarnate Word that Saint Paul urges us to adopt in Philippians 2?"

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ment of our Formula: to identify clearly the false dogmas or hermeneutic attitudes that we must “reject and condemn.” These false and dogmatic hermeneutics must be rejected and condemned because they teach people to oppose the Scriptures, the omnipotent logoi of the incarnate Logos. Indeed, these hermeneutics contradict the exact means by which God works life and salvation in the minds and hearts of human beings in real time, the incarnate Word’s eternal words, the means of God’s grace to us all. We begin to consider that practicing and teaching false hermeneutics is precisely the stock in trade of the false teachers in the church against whom Peter warns us in his epistles.

In his sermon Luther explicitly condemned and rejected Augustine’s Neo-Platonism. Walking in Luther’s footsteps, we reject Platonism as well and three additional hermeneutics, including the Roman hermeneutic. We conduct a fine-grained analysis and deconstruction of two contemporary hermeneutical heresies that contradict Luther’s hermeneutic: the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation and postmodern semiotics.

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False: Oral tradition takes precedence over the written texts

False: Reason takes precedence over language

First principle of biblical interpretation: *nisi per Verbum*

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Psalm 119, *BETH*

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(1) Luther’s Three Rules of Language, often taught in their Latin words: *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio*, and (2) variant readings, properly considered, emphasize that God took special precautions to preserve His Scriptures by causing so many copies to be made that His written words, the Scriptures, could never pass away.

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In our first three chapters we learned that our incarnate God personally forms us through His all-powerful words, the Scriptures. This chapter is where we work especially on being teachers of the faith, that is, teaching the Scriptures and teaching Luther’s hermeneutic of the Scriptures alone. It is a narrative syllabus for teaching according to sola Scriptura.

The inerrant and inspired grammar of God’s Word is, by and large, the grammar of everyday language. This leads us to the discipline of rhetoric, highly prized by Augustine and Luther. Rhetoric means operating, not in a framework of objective logic, but with attention to the full range of the divine gift of language and the image of God impressed on human nature. Thus, our last chapter is devoted to a rhetoric of logos, pathos, and ethos in direct relation to grammar and the parts of speech, with brief, typical examples from the Old Testament Hebrew (and Aramaic) and the New Testament Greek of the Scriptures.

Grammar-and-Syntax

Definition: Language is communion or fellowship established between and among persons by words—words with prefixes and suffixes, words that signal the role of other words, and words that are ordered meaningfully—first, fellowship established by Christ in His real presence in the Scriptures and then, because we human beings are made to be *logos* beings in His image, fellowship between God Himself and us via the Scriptures alone, *sola Scriptura*.

Rhetoric: The Ingredients of Person-to-Person Fellowship

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Ethos as the character required of pastors and others in the pastoral epistles
Pathos as our compassion flowing from God’s compassion for fallen humanity

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- 1st — Understanding everyday concepts in the context of God’s written words
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- 3rd — Determining the reasons for the truth of statements according to the analogy of the faith

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Luther’s Rhetoric of the Heart

The Basic Rule of Dialectic
The Master Work of Biblical Rhetoric

Hermeneutical Consequences

Language as Metaphysics. In the closing paragraphs of our last chapter, I have sketched out an argument that language—not matter and not being—but language, the Island of Language from which we Map the Ocean of God (Wittgenstein), is the most comprehensive and most basic account of (1) what is real and (2) why what is real continues to be what it is.

That is, as we have seen in our hermeneutic study, (1) what is real and (2) why what is real continues to exist is answered once and for all in the Word who became flesh two thousand years ago and still speaks to us today with all the authority of His divine person in His Scriptures alone in real time.

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Your instructor may use these Applications as prompts for class discussions, for homework essays, or for brief essays on exams. They will also serve for Bible class or book club discussions of Luther’s hermeneutic of sola Scriptura, the Scriptures alone. Readers and future researchers will find them interesting to read and share as well.

1. How to write an essay using the Three Acts
2. How Jagona Kenyagga discovered the lifelong blessing of the written word, from Karen Dinesen in her 1937 book *Out of Africa*
3. Socrates’ reasons for why he would never write anything down—written down by Plato (*Phaedrus*, 274c-277a)

4. Analogy: two definitions
5. Essay theses from Philip Cary's 2008 book, *Outward Signs: The Powerlessness of External Things in Augustine's Thought*
6. An outline of Ludwig Wittgenstein's argument that language is never private but always in the public domain (from *Philosophical Investigations*, Part I, paragraphs 243–271 and 324–350)
7. Elephants in our Heads?! Putnam's thought experiment about language retold by Colin McGinn

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The locale of the Word, which human beings enter in faith, turns out to be the locale of the new creation. The Word is the uterus in which human beings are “conceived, carried, and born.” Here stress falls on the present tense: in and through the Word human beings are placed into the process of creation taking place now. We were in the Word before we were human. John drives us into the Word, teaching “as they will eternally remain in the Word.” —Johannes von Lüpke, *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*

Chapter One

The Atmosphere in Which We Live and Move and Have Our Being

This trifling, weak Word that sinners disregard ... opens access to primary and ultimate things and thus has fundamental significance. As creative Word, it reveals itself not least by renewing the human language into which it enters. —Johannes Von Lüpke, *Luther's Use of Language in The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, 153.

The alpha and omega of our Lutheran hermeneutic of the Word alone is John 1:14, “The Logos became flesh and tabernacled among us. We (apostles) saw His glory, the weighty glory befitting the one-of-a-kind who came from the Father, consisting entirely of grace and truth.”¹ As Martin Luther preached in a CHRISTmas sermon on John 1:1-14, “This is the most important of all the Gospels in the church year, and yet it is not, as some think, obscure or difficult” (Luther, CHRISTmas Sermon, 1).²

Following Luther’s pastoral sensibility about the great importance of the first verses in John’s Gospel we can say that a biblical hermeneutic must begin and end with the use of the Greek word *logos*. In our third chapter we will learn in detail that the Greek word *logos*—which is revealed as a name for Jesus, the second person of the triune God here in John 1:14—also means “the Scriptures,” which are verbatim Christ’s words (*logoi*) written down for us human beings, and thus also means “language.”

Language is not the product of mindless evolution, and it is not an invention or tool of man, to do with whatever he wants—to manipulate language as if it were nothing but propaganda and graffiti, to ignore at will. Language is primordial and it is eternal. *Primordial* means “existing already at the very beginning.” And Jesus says, “My words will never pass away” (Matthew 24:35), making language *everlasting* and, because these are the words of the eternal God the Son, *eternal*.³

¹ This is my translation of the verbatim text by the apostle John: Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας.

² An English translation of this and many of Luther’s sermons by John Nicholas Lenker and others is in the public domain and widely available online. I have included this sermon in Appendix A of our textbook. You can read a great deal of Luther’s preaching on the Gospel of John in Volume 22 in our sets of *Luther’s Works* on the first and second floors of our Lutheran School of Theology Library. The section on John 1:14 starts on page 102. I reference quotes from this sermon as “Luther, CHRISTmas Sermon,” followed by the paragraph number in most editions of the Lenker translations.

³ For more on the intimate, personal link between the incarnate *Logos*, who is the eternal God, and His written words, the Scriptures, see our third chapter on the personal and divine words of the personal and divine Word in his Holy Scriptures, that is, in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Bible.

In this chapter, we first define God's gift of language based on the Scriptures. This centers on Christ the incarnate Logos, revealed as the Word of God in the first chapter of the Gospel of John. Next, we consider an analogy of language as atmosphere and discover, at the same time, that analogical thinking is the primary way of thinking that we learn from language itself and, most importantly for our Lutheran hermeneutic, from the power of the absolute authority and authoritative concepts of the Scriptures.

Defining language as a divine gift based on God the Logos, the Word in human flesh, discloses that language is *divine* in two senses. It is divine (1) because language is how God reaches out to commune and fellowship with us human beings, and it is divine (2) because language was given to us human beings as the *imago dei* or image of the triune God in the beginning. This foundational matter of the divine character of language comes to light in Martin Luther's *new ontology*, which we discuss later in this chapter.

Am I arguing and insisting that Jesus the Logos makes language what it is—especially the language of Scripture, but also everyday language after the Fall? Has Jesus made us human beings to be language beings to commune and fellowship with us? YES, to both questions.

For my argument, we follow Luther's hermeneutic on the most important of the Gospel texts: "In the first place, we should know that all that the apostles taught and wrote, they took out of the Old Testament" (Luther, CHRISTmas Sermon, 2).⁴ Augustine is often credited with making this discovery about 1000 years before Luther by writing, "The New Testament is latent (hidden) in the Old, and the Old is patent (revealed) in the New" (*Questions on the First Seven Books of the Bible*, 2, 73). But Augustine is not the originator either.

Jesus is the originator of the hermeneutic that the Scriptures interpret the Scriptures.

In his account of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus on Easter Sunday, Saint Luke writes that Jesus Himself used the hermeneutic of the Scriptures alone: "Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted (Greek, *dihermeneuein*) for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27).

That language is a divine gift because the divine Word took on human flesh becomes clear when we follow Luther's hermeneutic and contemplate a compound sentence from Genesis 1:1 in the Hebrew Old Testament *and* John 1:1 in the Greek New Testament. This compound sentence is "In the beginning God

⁴ For more on this parallelism between the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, see *the Connecting Scripture New Testament: A Study Bible of Biblical Allusions & Quotations* (Brentwood, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 2025).

created the heavens and the earth *and* in the beginning the Logos already existed.” Let’s see how this comes to light when we use John 1 as our hermeneutic for Genesis 1 and vice versa.

Language is Primordial

As we learn from the first words of the first book of Moses, Genesis, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” God the Holy Spirit hovering. God the Father creating. God the Son already the Logos or Word through whom all things were made that were made.

Over the formless, empty, dark, watery depths, God spoke the words, “Let there be!” and there came into existence at His Word light, an expanse between waters above and below, a separation of dry land from the waters below, the sun and the moon in the upper expanse, sea creatures and birds, livestock and crawling creatures too. All this language from God at the very beginning, in the first six evenings and mornings of the universe (Genesis 1).

From these words of Moses, it is clearly proved that God has a Word, through which or by means of which he spoke, before anything was created, since all things were created by divine utterance, as the text of Moses clearly and forcibly expresses it, when it says, “God said, Let there be light, and there was light.”

But let us go further. If the Word preceded all creatures, and all creatures came by the Word and were created through it, the Word must be a different being than a creature, and not made or created like a creature. It must, therefore, be eternal and without beginning.... Again, the Word and he that speaks it, are not one person (Luther, CHRISTmas sermon, 4-6).

Then on that first Friday, more *logos*, more language regarding us human beings: “God created man in His own image; He created them in the image of God; He created them male and female” (Genesis 1:27). That image, essential to human nature, is the imprint from the Trinity Himself onto our greatest grandparents, including image-and-imprint of language. Thus the wording of the Word became the essence of human nature, both creating and evermore sustaining our human being. God collaborated: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; then spoke in language to Adam and to Eve. “Speaking and hearing were even more important than seeing because the essence of the *imago dei* [the image of God] in a human is that he ‘utters words like God’; God is a *deus dicens* [a speaking God] to whom a *homo audiens* [a listening human] corresponds.”⁵

⁵ Neil R. Leroux, *Luther’s Rhetoric: Strategies and Style from the Invocavit Sermons* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Academic Press, a division of Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 35.

Now we must open wide our hearts and understanding, so as to look upon these words not as insignificant, perishable words of man, but think of them as great as he who speaks them. It is a Word which he speaks of Himself, which remains in him, and is never separated from him God of Himself also utters His Word, so that the whole Godhead accompanies the Word and in its nature remains in, and essentially is, the Word (Luther, CHRISTmas sermon, 13).

These first humans heard and responded in language because language already existed in the beginning. On the first Friday, the day of their creation, they were personally and lovingly created for language. Language is primordial in regard to Jesus the Logos already existing in the beginning. Language is also anthropologically primordial (that is, primordial for human beings). Because the image of God, language, was uniquely imprinted upon Adam and Eve in the beginning, our human species is the language species. We human beings have inherited the divine gift of language.

The pagan philosopher, Aristotle, recognized this linguistic essence of the human being when he defined mankind as *zoon logon echon*, “a living being (that is, not a rock or plant or mere animal) having language” (*Politics*, Book 1; see *logon echon*, also in *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7).⁶ In this same section of *Politics* Aristotle observes that language or *logos* is the means of fellowship (Greek *koinonia*, the same Greek word used by Saint Luke for fellowship in the Acts of the Apostles).⁷

Although Adam and Eve forfeited God’s righteousness in the Fall, they did not stop being human beings, that is, language beings. The Lord continued to speak with them and they with Him. “Is the Creator of the mind and language really unable to speak clearly?”⁸ He is able and we are adequate or *adaequatio* to the task of listening and responding—in the atmosphere of language, the divine gift. After the Fall, God delivered the *protevangelium*, the first articulation of the Gospel, in language.

⁶ Thus *aletheuein* [the revealing of truth] shows itself most immediately in *legein*. *Legein*, “to speak,” is what basically constitutes human *Dasein* [the human being’s kind of being]. In speaking, the human being expresses itself in this way, by speaking about something, about the world. This *legein* was for the Greeks so preponderant and such an everyday affair that they acquired their definition of man in relation to, and on the basis of, this phenomenon and thereby determined it as *zoon echon logon*. Martin Heidegger, *Plato’s Sophist*, 27-28.

⁷ Luther stipulated (that is, he took for granted) Aristotle’s definition of the human being in the opening propositions of his 1536 *Disputation Concerning Man*. See Appendix B for these propositions, along with my annotations for you.

⁸ Johann Gerhard, *On Interpreting Sacred Scripture*, section 25.

The Hermeneutic Attitude, the One that is in Christ Jesus

Selah, let us pause for a moment to consider how the work of Jesus the *Logos*—the Word wording in the beginning, particularly in His personal attention to the creation of our greatest grandparents, makes language a divine gift and in turn profoundly affects our hermeneutic attitude.

A Lutheran hermeneutic must come *from* meditation on the Scriptures; never from methods, insights, or attitudes that professors or authors *impose on* our study of the Scriptures. This is why, as I asserted in our preface, it is crucial to understand and agree that we ought never to be teachers (*magistri* in Latin) over and above God's Word in Genesis and the rest of the Scriptures.

Language is *God's* chosen medium, *His* kingdom. His kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word, as we learn from our Lord's Prayer and experience in the hermeneutic of Luther's Catechism. This happens through language and in no other way, a reality that we study in detail from more Scriptures and our Lutheran Confessions as well in our third chapter.

It follows that we must be reading God's words, the written Scriptures with a certain attitude, a humble servant's attitude. This attitude is imparted to us by God Himself, but only via His Scriptures. We talk more about this attitude and His presence in the Scriptures in our following chapters, but let me mention that the concept of this servant attitude is contained in the Greek word *phronesis*, which God inspired Saint Paul to write down in his letter to the Philippians: "Adopt the same *attitude* as that of Christ Jesus" (2:5). The object of the apostolic imperative is the Greek word *phren*, which refers to the diaphragm.

Phren, usually plural *phrenes*, meaning "diaphragm," was early regarded as the seat of intellectual and spiritual activity. The diaphragm determines the nature and strength of the breath and hence also the human spirit and its emotions...There is no single Hebrew original for *phren* and its cognates. LEV (translated "heart" in English) ... seems to correspond only to the original psychosomatic range of *phren*.⁹

In the everyday language of the Greek philosophers between the Old and New Testaments, *phren* was understood as practical wisdom, getting the right things

⁹ Bertram, G. φρήν, ἄφρων, ἀφροσύνη, φρονέω, φρόνημα, φρόνησις, φρόνιμος. in G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Vol. 9: 220–225), Eerdmans. If you have not yet taken and passed our Introduction to New Testament Greek course, see the much briefer explanation of *phren* in the one-volume "Little Kittel" which is next to the multi-volume set of the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament in our LST Library. For the rest of my footnotes, I will refer to the larger Greek resource as "TDNT" and the one-volume Greek resource (which puts all of the New Testament Greek words into English letters) as "Little Kittel."

done well. However, in the Scriptures of the New Testament *phren* is more. It is a stance, an attitude. In other words, the attitude that is “the same as the attitude in Christ Jesus” is an *affect*, or emotion, not an intellectual or voluntary performance. And it is a disposition toward others; it is not a self-contained or self-centered state of mind. Of course, this is exactly what Paul addresses in the four verses leading to “the attitude that is in Christ Jesus.”

An attitude (Greek, *phren*) is a passion or mood. It is not a feature of human intellect; rather, as I said, it is a disposition, a long-term emotion that connects us with creation, not by thinking things through, but immediately—without our first thinking or willing it.¹⁰

Jesus, the incarnate *Logos*, did not have the attitude of a servant obedient to His Father even to the point of death only now and then; on the contrary, He resolutely maintained this attitude throughout His passion. Consequently, He was exalted forever. As we learn in our following chapters, the faith which comes through the Scriptures is not merely an intellectual agreement with God’s Word; it is a passion instilled in us by God’s Word, “the highest passion of human beings,” as the Lutheran philosopher Søren Kierkegaard wrote—and as we learn from Hebrews 11. See Appendix E.

Now, because this attitude towards the proper reading of the Scriptures comes from Christ Himself and only from His Word, no one can do hermeneutics well if he is not reading and hearing the Scriptures as God’s actual and true speech. It’s just as we love to pray in that collect one month or so before CHRISTmas,

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Practical interpretation, or hermeneutic advice. The best advice for reading the Scriptures is to read the Psalms daily, because they will inform and motivate you to read the other sixty-five books of the Bible. In his *Manual on the Book of Psalms*, Luther advises us,

In the Book of Psalms ... [we are tutored in] the feelings and experiences of all the faithful, both under their sorrows and under their joys, both in their adversity and their prosperity: how they conducted themselves to-

¹⁰ Gregory P. Schulz, *Wednesday’s Child: From Heidegger to Affective Neuroscience, A Field Theory of Angst*, Chapter One, “From a Feeling of *Angst* to a Field Theory of Consciousness”: “An affect such as anger is a quick, short-term emotion; a passion such as hate is a settled, long-term disposition. An affect is like the weather of our being whereas a passion is our climate,” 26.

wards God, towards their friends, and towards their enemies: how they acted in various perils and afflictions, in the midst of temptations, and under the greatest necessities.

And moreover, in addition to the great and blessed doctrines and instructions in godliness which it embraces, the Book of Psalms ought to be most dearly and highly prized by us on this account—because it contains such clear prophecies concerning the death and resurrection of Christ, and holds forth such great and gracious promises concerning the kingdom of Christ, the spread of the Gospel, and the state of the whole church. So that you may truly call the Book of Psalms, a little Bible; for in it all things that are contained in the whole Bible are given to us in the most wonderfully brief and sweet manner, and condensed into a most beautiful manual.¹¹

It is also true that the psalms teach us how contemporary dialogues (or, more precisely, *dialectics*) with the Scriptures are efficacious, that they work God's work in us. Language is language. All language is a divine gift, but in correct human communication derived from His verbatim Scriptures alone (in other words, where Word and sacrament are rightly administered) God Himself is present and is speaking with us language beings. As the incarnate *Logos*, God speaks. So that we can hear His words and then speak in our turn, He has made us language beings. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the enduring Word of Christ," the *Logos* (Romans 10:17, my translation).

Language is Eternal

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words (Greek, *logoi*) will never pass away" (Matthew 24:35). Thus says the Lord. Because our Lord declares that His words will never pass away, it follows that language will never cease to exist. This is because language is a necessary condition for Jesus' words to continue forever. Language is an indispensable ingredient for words to be words.

Preachers and Bible commentators writing on John 1 regularly note that John shows only that language (the second meaning of *logos*, after its use as a revealed name for Jesus the only-begotten Son of God) is everlasting. *Everlasting* is a concept that means "having a beginning but never ceasing to exist." This is due to their failure to follow Luther's biblical hermeneutic of *sola Scriptura* "that all the apostles taught and wrote, they took out of the Old Testament;

¹¹ See *A Manual of the Book of Psalms: or, The Subject-Contents of all the Psalms* (Project Gutenberg), "a religious commentary written in the early 19th century, attributed to Martin Luther and translated into English by Rev. Henry Cole. The work offers an in-depth, Psalm-by-Psalm guide exploring the theological, doctrinal, and experiential dimensions of the Book of Psalms. Its primary focus is to provide spiritual reflection and *practical interpretation*..." (emphasis added).

for in it all things are proclaimed that were to be fulfilled later in Christ, and were to be preached as Paul says in Romans 1:2, ‘God promised afore the Gospel of his son Jesus Christ through his prophets in the holy Scriptures’” (Luther, CHRISTmas sermon, 2). Because Christ the *Logos* is the Word of God wording when God creates everything in the beginning, language partakes of His eternity. To paraphrase Ludwig Wittgenstein’s discovery, “You cannot use language to get between the efficacious words of God in creation and the Word of God which is the Scriptures.”¹²

In his Genesis commentary, after rehearsing the history and happenings at the Tower of Babel, that is, at the Tower of Babylon, when God confused the languages of those descendants of Noah who were defying His command to go out into the world, Luther says,

This latter part of the eleventh chapter seems to be of little importance, because it contains nothing except the generations of the fathers. In reality, however, there is need of this account, especially as an example for our time. For we hear that after the division of languages not only governments and the affairs of the home but also the church was thrown into disorder in various ways. And so, lest we suppose that Satan had been allowed to remove the sunlight of the Word utterly from the world and to suppress the church, the generation of the holy fathers is set before us, to show us that by the mercy of God the remnants were preserved, and the church was not completely wiped out...

This shows that the article of our creed is true when we believe one, holy, catholic church in all ages, from the beginning of the world until the end of the world. God has always preserved for Himself a people that would cling to the Word and would be the guardian of religion and of sound doctrine in the world, lest everything degenerate into ungodliness and there be no knowledge of God among men.¹³

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is filled with proofs that things pass away, but never God’s words. If Jesus’ words would ever pass away—which is impossible—we would cease to be human beings. No language, no human beings. In that case, you and “I would soon come to reside in the place of silence” (Psalm 94:17).

¹² Compare Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world” (Proposition 5.6). In other words, the boundaries of our language define the boundaries of our understanding and engagement with the world. We explore this more deeply in our fourth chapter, in the concluding section The Metaphysics of Language.

¹³ Luther, M. (1999). *Luther’s works, vol. 2: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 6-14* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.; Concordia Publishing House), 228–229.

The Divine Gift of Language: Primordial and Eternal	
The Scriptures (written and preached) inspired verbally by God inerrant righteous always efficacious unsurpassably authoritative not mythological	Everyday Language (written and spoken) abused by human beings ever since the Fall often used to lie and deceive sometimes truthful inherently meaningful subject to Christ’s authority in the Scriptures prone to mythology
Direction of Authority —————→	
Direct of Concept Formation —————→	

Luther’s New Ontology

When Martin Luther, near the start of our modern epoch, introduced the interpretive attitude of studying Scripture *sola Scriptura*, or in terms of Scripture alone, he set the tone for a new, more full-blooded hermeneutic.

Prior to the German Reformation of Luther’s day, biblical hermeneutics were the study of principles, methods, and rules for interpreting the Scriptures—especially, for interpreting it *allegorically*, meaning that the interpreter could impose his own thoughts and expressions on the text despite the divinely inspired words and grammar of God’s written Word.

Luther’s break from the yoke of Roman Catholic tradition had profound hermeneutic consequences, still resonating in our century, over 500 years after the Reformation.¹⁴ The German Reformation initiated what we can call an “ontological turn.”

Instead of restricting hermeneutics to scientific and allegedly objective tools (the traditional principles, methods, and rules) for interpreting Scripture, our hermeneutic field of vision was widened to include not only the inerrant and verbatim texts of the Scriptures by themselves, but the effect and working of the Scriptures on human beings. This taught us to ask in doing hermeneutics how and why God created us to be hearers and doers of His Word, the Scriptures.

Hermeneutics in general became existential, that is, true to life as it is (*Lebensform* in German); no longer an exercise in cool blue logic, ideal languages, and

¹⁴ For the hermeneutic attitude of Roman Catholicism, then and now, see the first page of our second chapter and the paragraph about “Scripture and Tradition” from the Preface to a 2017 Roman Catholic edition of *Novum Testamentum, Vulgatae Editionis* (The New Testament, Latin Edition).

mere theories of man. The incarnation of God, taking a human nature to Himself, changed everything, as Luther discovered by experience from the Scriptures operating in his own life and ministry. Again, John 1:14 is the alpha and omega of a genuine Lutheran hermeneutic.

Before Luther, teaching hermeneutics consisted largely in memorizing and applying traditional scholastic principles and methods of interpretive techniques. After Luther, as became clear at last in twentieth-century German thought, Luther's hermeneutic gave proper attention to the comprehensive activity of biblical interpretation—God in His Scriptures acting in communion with human beings who are essentially *logos* beings.¹⁵ Luther instigated this while experiencing for himself, and then passionately and resolutely preaching the difference, that the inspired words of God, the Scriptures, affect human beings.

The central thesis of the [twentieth century] hermeneutic view ... is that language, far from being an instrument of the thinking and acting subject, is the medium through which thought and action comes to expression (and comes to be). In asserting this proposition, hermeneutics does not deny that language has real representative or communicative power, as some postmodern theories rashly do. The claim is rather that representation and communication presuppose a prior capacity for [linguistic] expression.¹⁶

To keep our attention on the divine gift of language and God's effect on us and our human being through His words, sentences, grammar—the language of His Word, let's reinforce the terms in this definition of hermeneutics today by understanding “representation” as the re-presentation or better, the *exact expression* of Christ Himself in the speaking of His words, and “communication” as *fellowship* or *communion* by God's chosen means of grace.¹⁷

In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. God has appointed him heir of all things and made the universe through him. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word (Hebrews 1:2-3a).

¹⁵ For further reading in the 20th century development of hermeneutics in German thought, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second revised edition, especially Part III: The ontological shift of hermeneutics guided by language, 381-491. By browsing the Table of Contents for Part III or after reading the pages listed in the Subject Index under Language, you will be inspired to study and then teach others to do biblical hermeneutics!

¹⁶ John Protevi, editor, *A Dictionary of Continental Philosophy*, “Hermeneutics,” 282-284.

¹⁷ For more *logos* as fellowship, see the section Language is Primordial earlier in this chapter. For more on *logos* as communion, see William Dembski, *The End of Christianity: Finding a Good God in an Evil World*, Chapter Thirteen, “Being as Communion”: “The divine *Logos* guarantees the world's intelligibility. In particular, it guarantees the ability of human language to make sense of the world to speak meaningfully of God—hence our confidence that our words can speak truly about God,” 101.

To grasp Luther's new ontology, it is essential to understand what *ontology* means. Most philosophical terms come from the Greek language. Often, they are compound words that combine Greek words to express a new concept. *Ontology* is a compound of the Greek participle, or ongoing -ing word, for being (*ontos*) and the Greek word for language (*logos*). You know this from your Introduction to Greek course. It is a study (in language!) of different beings, different kinds of things that exist differently.

Strictly speaking, when we talk about a thing's be-ing, we use just the participle (without the suffix that indicates "study"). So, a change in the being of human beings would be an *ontic* change, not an ontological one. Our study of the change, however, would be *ontological*.

Ontology, the Philosophical Study of Different Kinds of Beings

First, from Luther's CHRISTmas sermon: "If the Word preceded all creatures, and all creatures came by the Word and were created through it, *the Word must be a different being than a creature*, and not made or created like a creature. It must, therefore, be eternal and without beginning ... Again, the Word and he that speaks it, are not one person." This is why God does not fit into this chart of creaturely beings. However, as we know and believe from John 1:14, according to His human nature, Jesus the incarnate *Logos* transcends ontology while also entering into it for us!

[other beings, such as angels]

→ ontological discontinuity; no transitional beings

human being = **m + x + y + z**

→ ontological discontinuity; no transitional beings

animal = **m + x + y**

→ ontological discontinuity; no transitional beings

plant = **m + x**

→ ontological discontinuity; no transitional beings

rock = **m**

[non-being]

KEY

m is matter; **x** is life; **y** is basic consciousness; **z** is *logos* or language

—adapted from E.F. Schumacher, *A Guide for the Perplexed*

While doing ontology, it turns out that we learn more about ourselves than about the other kinds of beings. For example, our kind of being, the human being, is the only kind of being in God's creation that can do ontology. Furthermore, the more we think and talk about our unique kind of being, our human existence, the more we realize that we care deeply about continuing to exist as language beings.

Ontology is evident in the book of Psalms. For example, "Do not be like a horse or mule, without understanding, that must be controlled with bit and bridle or else it will not come near you" (Psalm 32:9). Meditate on the two parts of Psalm 19 side by side: how David (1) sets the speechlessness and silence of the heavens that tell the glory of God (2) in contrast to the written law, testimony, precepts, commandment, and judgments of God's words for us humans to meditate upon as speaking language beings. We submit the everyday language of our mouths to the inerrant and ontologically effective Word and words of God, petitioning our Lord to make our everyday language acceptable in His sight.

Psalm 8 is another example. It is linked with Jesus, who has in His singular person both the divine nature (He is the Son of God) and a human nature (He is also Son of Man). Hebrews 2 proves that Psalm 8 is profoundly ontological and Christological.

When I behold Your heavens,
the work of Your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which You have set in place—
what is man that You are mindful of him,
or the son of man that You care for him?
You made him a little lower than the angels;
You crowned him with glory and honor.
You made him ruler of the works of Your hands;
You have placed everything under his feet:
all sheep and oxen,
and even the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air and the fish of the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas (Psalm 8:3-8).

Everything concerning God and the Gospel—all of creation, as the psalm teaches—is tied up with our unique capacity to think and converse about these things in the divine gift of language. And the divine gift of language is tied into the image of God. We were created by the hands of God the Father and the words of God the Son, brought to life by the breath of God the Spirit of God—and imprinted with language (Greek, *logos*), a divine hallmark that we retain even after the Fall into sin.

Furthermore, it is not just that we have the capacity to participate in language, we have a God who speaks to us in language. Paraphrasing 1 John 1:19, “We speak because He first spoke to us.” He is the wording Word, remember. This capacity, of course, is the image of God imprinted on Adam and Eve in the beginning. Through Christ the Word God created us to hear His words and to read His Scriptures and to engage with Him in language. We commune and fellowship in language with Him and with one another because He first communed and fellowshiped in language with us.

Now we are, following the Fall in Eden, by nature sinful and unclean.¹⁸ At the same time, God is not willing that any should perish but that we human beings should all come to repentance. It is in and through the divine gift of language that God does His creating and His recreating of us sinful human beings.

The ontic change that Luther identifies takes place especially via the Psalms. For example, Psalm 51. “Create in me a clean heart, Oh God, and renew a right spirit within me.” The prayer is not just a petition to God; it is a prayer using God’s words, God’s means of grace. In the words that we love to sing and pray right after the sermon—in, with, and under these words of His, the Lord is working in us what we are praying to Him for, working it in His own all-powerful words.

This Word creates change in our hearts and minds in real time, in the process recognized in Luther’s hermeneutic of the Word: We come as sinners who were guilty from birth, sinful with original sin (or personal and nature sin, as Luther calls it) already when our mothers conceived us (Psalm 51:5). Our hearts are by nature sinful and unclean; our spirits are anything but steadfast and faithful, but we leave with clean hearts and a steadfast spirit. This is an ontic change.

When Luther relies on this ontic change and incorporates it into His preaching and writing, it becomes a new ontology. Just as Baptism with water and God’s Word works on us daily, that same Word, Christ’s never-ending words that comprise the Scriptures creates in us clean hearts and renewed spirits.

This is not a “new way of looking at things;” it’s *a new way of being*, a new mode of existing for us human beings. “Behold, I am making everything new,” says our Lord (Isaiah 43:19; 65:17; Ephesians 2:15, 24; Revelation 21:5). The Word Himself says, “Be clean,” and we are clean. Just as in the beginning. According to Luther,

¹⁸ For more on natural or original sin, see our Formula of Concord, Article 1, On Original Sin. *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, 511-519.

the Word is the uterus in which human beings are “conceived, carried, and born”. . . Here stress falls on the present tense: in and through the Word human beings are placed into the process of creation taking place now.¹⁹

The difference is that this is the Son of God re-creating us. We remain ourselves, but whereas we were blind and dead and enemies of God after the Fall, we are now sighted, resurrected, and reconciled with God by God Himself, because of the person and words of His dear Son become flesh, whose words will never pass away, but will always accomplish what He wants (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Scripture alone is the starting point for this ontological change, recognized because of Luther’s *sola Scriptura* hermeneutic. The Scriptures are God’s means for recreating lost and condemned human beings who still, by Christ alone, retain the divine gift of language.

The standard according to which one may judge in this case exists in the Word itself and its judgment...By concentrating the subject of theology on the point of the promising Word...and finding there its Archimedean point, which supports everything and around which everything turns, the system of [Aristotle’s] categories changed under which the reality of all things—of God, human beings, and the world—is understood.

A new definition of ontology took form, and within it decisively a new understanding of substance and relationship. Through the Word God supports all things (Heb. 1:3), which means: all things exist in and through the Word. Luther understood ‘substance’ as that which bestows existence and in which things ‘subsist’...

Being is thus essentially interpreted as being in relationship. Being in relationship is not only a matter of viewing created being. Simultaneously, the Word in which all creatures subsist says—as God’s Word—something about God Himself. God expresses Himself in His Word. That is true in Christology and in the theology of creation, inasmuch as the Word, which in Jesus Christ became human, is identical with the Word through which and in which all things were created and are preserved. That, and how God relates to His creatures characterizes Him essentially.²⁰

¹⁹ Kolb, Robert; Dingel, Irene; Batka, Lubomir, *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology* (Oxford Handbooks), 153.

²⁰ *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*, 147-148.

From ontological to analogical. Language is how God relates to us. Language is also how we relate to God and His creation.²¹ Next, we consider the primary kind of thinking that language fosters in us. Formed by the language of the Scriptures which creates among us a new ontology, we move on to reconsider everyday language after the fall. In this process, we discover that our thinking and talking as members of the language species having the image of God on our human nature is *analogical*.

The Four Ways or Modes of Thinking

1. Thinking *deductively*, or with certainty.

Example: All men are mortal. Adam is a man. Therefore, Adam is mortal.

2. Thinking *inductively*, or with a high degree of probability.

Example: The sun has risen every morning of my life so far; therefore, the sun will rise tomorrow morning.

3. Thinking *abductively* or producing hypotheses.

Example: Whenever I drop an object, the object falls toward the earth. I hypothesize that this is the force of gravity.

4. Thinking analogically, or from a well-known thing to a similar but less understood thing. Example: A Bible translator says about the Lord's Prayer, "Because few people anymore grow up with a father, I will translate "Our Father who art in heaven" as "Our Mother or Caregiver who art in heaven."

Problem: The translator assumes that "Father" is known by one's social experience. But in fact, the concept "father" is known from the Scriptures in the first place. The translator has the analogy upside down; Our Father in heaven is the *dominant* word, from which the concept comes, while "father" (as in our experiences of fatherhood) is the *target* word, the word we need to understand better.

From the Analogy of the Faith to Analogical Thinking

So far, we have defined language as *the Word wording, primordially and eternally*. We can also think of language *analogically* as the atmosphere in which

²¹ "In Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, the relation of truth to language is described in reference to being. Gadamer expresses this relation in a celebrated motto, "being that can be understood is language" (Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 474). According to this motto, language is primarily a 'medium' that shows us the being, or meaningful order, of the world and the things we encounter in it (Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Part III.1). The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Hermeneutics."

we live and move and have our being. *Analogical* thinking is the main form of thinking that we participate in when reading the Scriptures, and in everyday language.

Before we talk about analogical thinking, we should take a few minutes to make our way through The Four Ways or Modes of Thinking. These are the four natural ways of thinking: deductive, inductive, abductive, and analogical. After a discussion of analogical reasoning, we can move on to Romans 12:6 and the analogy of the faith.

Analogical thinking. Let's now consider how the Word of God teaches us to read and think—not deductively or scientifically, but—*analogically*. Analogical thinking is the first and most basic kind of thinking that we do. Analogies form concepts in a lifelong process.

Without concepts there can be no thought, and without analogies there can be no concepts. This is the thesis... each concept in our mind owes its existence to a long succession of analogies ... initially giving birth to the concept and continuing to enrich it over the course of our lifetime. Furthermore, at every moment of our lives, our concepts are selectively triggered by analogies that our brain makes without letup, in an effort to make sense of the new and unknown in terms of the old and known.²²

When I say that language is the atmosphere in which we live, my analogy helps us to discover something more about the definition of language as *the Word wording*. The definition anchors the concept of language in the work of Jesus the Word incarnate who is wording and working in the medium of words. The right words in the definition rule out other available words. Thus, the definition is concrete and crystal clear. It is specific and not vague; it is orthodox and not heterodox. It is from the Scriptures, *sola Scriptura*.

However, when I put “language” and “atmosphere” together analogically, our definition becomes more relatable to our everyday lives. It makes the definition even more interesting and teachable. A concept is formed which is both true and relatable.

With the analogy, it dawns on you that language is as vital and as invisible as the air we breathe; that it's not something we can do without; that our existence depends on it. This is the power of analogy. And analogy is not something hidden inside our brains or our mind, it is something that happens in the public domain of language. In the atmosphere of language, in language as atmosphere.

²² Douglas Hofstadter and Emmanuel Sander, *Surfaces and Essences: Analogy as the Fuel and Fire of Thinking*, Prologue: Analogy as the Core of Cognition, 3.

In my analogy for language, I included a quote from the apostle Paul to help us to be philosophical, or deeply thoughtful about language. Language is the atmosphere in which “we live and move and have our being.” Look at how each of these three words works. “We live” attaches Paul’s quote to the analogy of atmosphere; we can’t live without an atmosphere. “Have our being,” which is sometimes translated “we exist,” is an ontological term.

We have begun to understand Luther’s new ontology in relation to God’s Word, but in Acts 17 the most important word for our study of hermeneutics and the divine gift of language at this point in our study of hermeneutics is *moves*. In Paul’s original, it is in connection with God that we live and move, but in my analogy of language and atmosphere, it is in language that we live and move.

What kind of moving? We are moved emotionally. The Greek verb in Acts 17:28 is a middle-passive verb form of *kineo*. Think of the English word “kinetic,” meaning “in motion.”

A Greek middle-passive verb indicates that the action happens to the subject, but that the subject is, at the same time, personally involved in the action or being of the verb. This is an apt description of how emotions happen to us, but at the same time, how emotions affect or move us as human beings. The Septuagint translations of the Hebrew Bible use the Greek word *kineo* to translate Daniel 2:3, “and the king says to them, ‘I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit is *moved* to know the dream’” (Literal Standard Version).^{23 24}

Here is an important distinction so that we can move forward hermeneutically and analogically. There is an earlier philosophical use of the term analogy; and there is a New Testament Word-based use of analogy. Knowing this difference is crucial in the translation, or exegesis of Romans 12:6. “God in his kindness gave each of us different gifts. If your gift is speaking God’s word, make sure what you say agrees (*analogia*) with the Christian faith” (God’s Word Translation). Almost every other English translation, traditional or modern, translates the Greek word *analogia* as “in proportion,” as if *analogia* were a property of a single thing—“different gifts,” for instance.²⁵

²³ The Septuagint is a translation of the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures into Greek made in Alexandria, Egypt, about 150 years before God’s birth of the virgin Mary in Bethlehem.

²⁴ The Hebrew word in Daniel 2:3 is *paal* in its niphal or passive form.

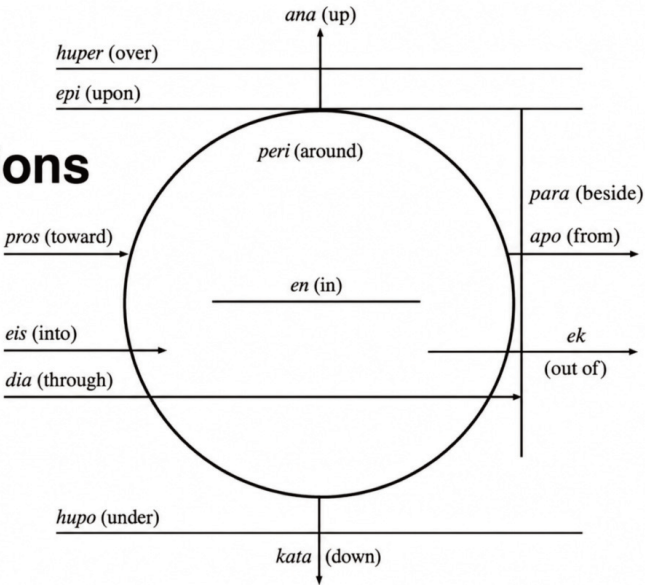
²⁵ For more, see Sauvage, George. “Analogy.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), www.newadvent.org/cathen/01449a.htm: *Analogy*, a philosophical term used to designate, first, a property of things; secondly, a process of reasoning . . . In [biblical] revelation, analogy is necessary, since God cannot reveal the mysteries to men except through conceptions intelligible to the human mind, and therefore analogical.”

But the key word in our Romans passage concerns two things in relation to one another. The two things in relation to one another are (1) what those who have the divine call to be preaching are preaching, and (2) the faith. In between, in the relationship between these two things there is analogical thinking going on. *Analogical* is a compound of *logos* (language or word) and the prefix *ana*. The Greek preposition *ana* is a location or direction word.

With its original spatial meaning of “up” or “up to,” it was probably formed from ἄνω, “upward,” just as κατά was probably formed from κάτω, “downward,” and expresses vertical, upward motion, just as κατά expresses perpendicular, downward motion. Many of the uses of ἀνά match parallel uses of κατά.²⁶

You can see on the chart of Greek Prepositions that *ana* directs us upward, while *kata* directs us downward. Reading Scripture analogically means having a sense of the relationship of the two words in the analogy. It is a vertical, up and down relationship.

Greek Prepositions



(From Dana and Mantey, *Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*)

While there are two things or two experiences involved, we understand the analogy if and only if we recognize that there is the dominant or *higher word* to which we look for a better understanding of the *lower word*. The higher word in analogical reasoning is called the *dominant domain*; while the lower

²⁶ Harris, M. J. (Zondervan: 2012). *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis*, 45.

word is called the *target domain*. *Dominant*, which is a form of the Latin word for “Lord,” is exactly the right term for the higher word in the analogy of Scripture in relation to everyday language. In the analogy of the faith, the higher word is the word or phrase from the Scriptures that enables us to understand what the lower word or phrase from everyday language means.

The hermeneutic direction of authority is from Scripture to everyday language. The direction of concept formation or thinking is from Scripture to everyday language. The words of Jesus our Lord and God are dominant. Analogy is His way of teaching us to “keep training our minds on the higher *ana* things and not on mundane earthy matters” (Colossians 3:2, my translation).

In our Romans passage, Paul writes about the foundational matters down at the root (*kata*), on which the analogical thinking in relation to the “up there” word in Scripture (*ana*) is working. The root matters at issue are the various gifts of grace and the analogical thinking about the faith (introduced with *kata*, the downward direction).

As you can now see, analogical thinking (keep your eyes on the *ana*-prefix) tells us to see these two matters in the proper *relation* to one another: the analogical thinking of the faith and trust in the Scriptures is the dominant term. The term that determines how the different gifts fit conceptually into the lives of believers is the lower conceptualization. First, the faith of the entire Scriptures, only then will our concepts of preaching, and so on be good and beneficial.²⁷

Thus, the various gifts given to us by God, especially prophesying, or preaching, are properly understood only in their relatedness to the faith, that is, in relationship to the dominant words and dominant content of God’s Word and Christ’s words, the Scriptures. The direction of authority and concepts is *from the Scriptures* to everyday language and to serious, philosophical and theological conversations.

We call these serious conversations *dialectic*, that is, a thorough talking through. The dialectic we practice in hermeneutics is analogical in the deep sense of Paul’s use of *ana-logos*, moving from Christ the *Logos* and His Scriptural words into our everyday vocabulary and concepts. Christ teaching with ontological power in His Word to us, working an ontic change in us in our hearts, minds, and spirits.

²⁷ For more on the analogy of faith as an exegetical or translation principle for Luther, see Otto Hof, “Luther’s Exegetical Principle of The Analogy of Faith” in *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, vol. 38, April 1967, 242-257: “The Scripture is by itself utterly certain, without difficulty, and plain; it is its own interpreter; and it tests, judges, and illuminates everything. Thus, the Scripture is its own light. And that is a fine thing when the Scripture expounds itself. That is the nature of Scripture as a whole: It wants to interpret itself by a comparison of passages from all parts, and to be understood under its own direction,” 242, fn. 2.

Note well. The Scriptures are the dominant norm, the formative source, and the ultimate authority for the concepts of everyday language. Be sure to look again at the diagram The Divine Gift of Language. Highlight or underline the direction of authority and concepts *from* the Scriptures *to* everyday language. Take note as well of The Four Ways or Modes of Thinking and (4) analogical thinking, where the Bible translator has the analogy upside down. Now you know *sola Scriptura* what that means.

The direction of authority and concepts from Scripture to everyday language must be followed, for the good of everyone. For example, consider how our everyday concept of “justice” is made substantially more meaningful—and thus impervious to political or ideological *Newspeak*—by reading what God says about justice in His Word.²⁸ In everyday language we may think (vaguely and tentatively) of justice as being fair or even-handed to people who deserve justice.²⁹ But in Scripture we learn,

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God presented him as the mercy seat by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. God presented him to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be just and justify the one who has faith in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:23-26).

This is a fulfilled, New Testament parallel to God’s definition of justice as taught in the Old Testament. For example, in the prophets. “Mankind, He has told you what is good and what it is the LORD requires of you: to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). This is justice as God wants us to think of it and to carry it out.

Analogical reasoning according to the analogy of the faith (Romans 12:6). This is the conceptual core of Lutheran hermeneutics and Lutheran theology. It is also the key to the concept of the *means of grace*, our common Lutheran vocabulary for the Scriptures, Christ’s words, and thus for the sacraments of Baptism, Communion, and Confession and Absolution instituted and powered by Christ’s words. Because of the divine power of Christ in the Scriptures, we

²⁸ For more on *Newspeak*, a literary example of the inhumane treatment of people by abusing language and omitting the Scriptures, see Appendix D.

²⁹ For example, see Plato’s *Republic*, Book One, 331c-339a. Old Cephalus defines justice as “giving back whatever one has ‘borrowed.’” His son Polemarchus defines justice as “giving back to your friends what you owe them.” Thrasymachus, a sophist at the start of the dialectic, defines justice as “Nothing other than what is to the advantage of the current political leadership.” Interestingly, while the different speakers use different terms, speaking through the voice of Socrates, Plato tells us readers at 332c that the concept at issue is the Greek term from *dikaio* the root for the Greek word translated *justification* in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans.

could also talk about preaching and teaching as being sacramental. As we learn in our preaching and teaching courses, analogical reasoning is a necessary ingredient for vivid, gripping sermons and memorable lessons. In the atmosphere of language with its analogical character we live *and move* emotionally as we have learned from the analogy of language as “the atmosphere in which we live and move.”

To repurpose Marshall McLuhan’s famous phrase from communication theory to Lutheran hermeneutics, “the medium is the message” when it comes to the Scriptures and the divine gift of language. Therefore, the literal sense of the Scriptures should never be overwritten. At the same time, the Scriptures literally include allegorical connections, moral and emotional content, and parables and metaphoric parallels as Christ the Word changes us ontically, delivering forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, all the while recreating our hearts and spirits.

Just as we are not entitled to add to God’s words, we are not entitled to subtract words that don’t suit us (Revelation 22:18-19). More to come when we see for ourselves how God teaches through parallelism in the psalms and Hebrew prophets and the parallelism of analogical thinking, linguistic metaphors, and so on in our third chapter.

Hermeneutical Consequences

As Scripture teaches us, language is a divine gift. It is primordial and eternal. The sections of our first chapter provided, from Christ and His Scriptures alone, a definition of language, an analogy of language, and Luther’s new ontology—all in support of the proposition of the Lutheran hermeneutic: *sola Scriptura*. Lutheran hermeneutics in the twenty-first century must sync analogically with the Scriptures. That is, we believe, teach, and confess the Scriptures to be the Word and words of Christ verbatim. Every genuine or confessional Lutheran pastor agrees; every authentic Lutheran institution of higher learning teaches this in every corner of its curriculum, as is the case at The Lutheran School of Theology here at the foot of the Ngong Hills.³⁰

However, some thoughtful reader somewhere is likely to object that throughout this chapter I have been begging the question, or arguing in a circle, something no professor, especially a philosopher, should ever do. Our objector will insist that using Scripture to interpret Scripture is clearly a vicious circle because all I am doing is using the Scriptures to establish that the Scriptures themselves

³⁰ In our third chapter we will discover that this confessional subscription for every called and ordained servant of the Word is in fact the *first principle* of hermeneutics embedded in our Augsburg Confession.

are authoritative. In other words, I am using my conclusion to prove my conclusion.

I respond this way. I agree that it is logically illegitimate to include your conclusion as the linchpin of the argument toward your conclusion, which is arguing in a circle. It is illogical and illegitimate, *except under one and only one circumstance*, namely, if the authority you are using is unsurpassably authoritative. For example, people in the Old Testament took their oaths based on the highest authority. That is, they always invoked the name of the Lord God. “As surely as the Lord lives,” they would swear. When the Lord God took an oath, by whom did He swear? “As surely as I live,” declares the Lord. This is because there is no higher authority than God Himself.

There is no authority higher than Christ and His own divine words (see Matthew 28:18-20 and John 1:1-14). This is why the hermeneutic of *sola Scriptura* or “Only Scripture interprets Scripture,” and the analogy of the faith are not begging the question or arguing in a circle. The reasoning is circular, but it is not a *vicious* or destructive circle; in truth related to our hermeneutic of the Word alone, interpreting the Scriptures exclusively with the Scriptures themselves is the one and only *virtuous* or good and proper circular argument there can ever be. The incarnate *Logos* (the Word) interprets His *verbatim logoi* (his words that never pass away). Remember how Jesus Himself taught His hermeneutic to the disciples on the way to Emmaus.

In addition, there is more than objective logic involved. There is a fuller understanding of the Scriptures in rhetoric, which we explore together in our fourth chapter. Think of this as the experience of the faith, which we experience in real time because of the Scriptures: the person-to-person persuasion and confidence of logic plus emotion plus the character of Christ and the inspired authors of His Scriptures.

The Scriptures are self-verifying. The verification is empirical, not in the limited sense of verification by the canons of current science, but in the process of the Lutheran hermeneutic I am recommending. “Taste and see that the LORD is good. How happy is the man who takes refuge in Him” (Psalm 34:8). Most of the words of the Scriptures have been already vetted, namely, the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament about Jesus the Messiah. Some of the words and prophecies will be empirically verified at our death, others at the apocalypse of the final judgment.

In our third chapter, which is our second, expanded *logos* chapter, we will learn together that the Son of God in His own written Word—communicated originally, infallibly, and normatively by the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Scriptures—personally makes the very words of Scripture as powerful and effective as He Him-

self is: powerful in law and gospel, powerful to save, powerful to create and to re-create now, in real time, in the hearing of these words of the incarnate Word.

Furthermore, there we see for ourselves how Luther and the Lutheran Confessions believe, teach, and confess a servant-of-the-Word attitude toward their hermeneutic interpretation of the Scriptures, namely, “the very same attitude that is in Christ Jesus.”

In our fourth chapter, as I just promised, we will see that logic alone is not sufficient for teaching the Lutheran hermeneutic, but as we learn from Augustine and Luther, practicing and teaching the Lutheran hermeneutic of the Word alone requires *rhetoric*.

Before working together in those last two chapters, though, we understand what a Lutheran hermeneutic *is* by determining what it *is not*. In contrast to our biblical and Lutheran hermeneutic founded on the *Logos* incarnate, in our next chapter we identify and debunk, in other words, we *deconstruct* heretical hermeneutics that have been and still are plaguing seminaries and universities in Africa and worldwide—including so-called conservative Lutheran seminaries and universities.

Two of these false hermeneutics to be analyzed and then deconstructed down to their foundations are *the historical-critical method* and *postmodern semiotics*.

+ + +

*Open my eyes so that I may contemplate
wonderful things from your instruction.*

*I am a resident alien on earth,
do not hide your commands from me.*

*I am continually overcome
with longing for your judgments.*

—Psalm 119:18-20, *Gimel*

Chapter Two

The Formula for Deconstructing Hollow and Deceptive Hermeneutics

Scripture is the Word of God, and that means it has absolute priority over the doctrine of those who interpret it ... Understanding it, therefore, cannot simply be a scientific or scholarly exploration of its meaning.—Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Second Revised Edition, 330-331

In his sermon on John 1:1-14, “the most important of all the Gospels of the church year,” Martin Luther preached two dimensions of a hermeneutic from the Scriptures alone, both in the first pages or so of his sermon. First, he established the unity and parallel relationship of the Old and New Testaments by preaching, “We should know that all that the apostles taught and wrote, they took out of the Old Testament; for in it all things are proclaimed that were to be fulfilled later in Christ and were to be preached” (Luther, CHRISTmas Sermon, 2).

This is what we discovered for ourselves in our first chapter by making a compound sentence of Genesis 1 and John 1 to see that language can be defined as *the Word wording* where “Word” refers to Jesus revealed as the incarnate *Logos* and “wording” is His proper activity as the second person of the triune God of Scripture already at creation—and forever after. From these Scriptures read side by side it follows that language is a divine gift which is both primordial and eternal.

The second dimension of a hermeneutic *sola Scriptura* that Luther teaches in this sermon on John 1 is the necessity of preaching and teaching against heresy. The history of the concept of *heresy* which we read in the New Testament begins with a picture of grabbing or choosing something. For example, in Philippians 2:23 Paul doesn’t know which option to choose or grab (*hairesomai*), which one is better for the cause of the Gospel: to live for Christ or to die for Christ.

From this basic meaning, heresy becomes the term for the destructive, anti-Christ choice of doctrine and hermeneutics practiced by false teachers within Christ’s church, as in 1 Peter 2:1. How exactly do heretics target the church with their false, anti-Christ teaching? Saint Peter writes, “They will exploit you with false words (*plastois logois*). Heretics mangle, deform, refashion the eternal words (*logoi*) of Jesus the Word (the incarnate *Logos*) as if they, not God, were

¹ For more on the Greek word *hairesis* in New Testament usage, see Little Kittel, 27-28 and TDNT, αἵρεσμαι, αἵρεσις, αἵρετικός, αἵρετίζω, διαίρεώ, διαίρεσις, Vol. 1: 180–185.

the potter in charge of creation (Isaiah 45:9).¹

Here are analyses of four linguistic heresies. They include my diagnoses of the first wave of Platonic semiotics plaguing the church of Christ in the time of Augustine in the fifth century, down to the current wave of radical postmodern semiotics plaguing churches in our day, the early decades of the twenty-first century. Because the last two heresies, namely, the historical-critical method and postmodern semiotics are live heresies in Lutheran circles I refer to them not only as heresies but as “dogmatic attitudes.”

Selah, let’s pause. It is heretical to treat language and words as if they were not a divine gift but rather plastic toys for pastors or professors to use as they see fit, to exploit the rest of us. Before moving on to read about the two hermeneutical heresies that I deconstruct in the rest of our chapter, read Jeremiah 23 out loud at least twice. If possible, read it with one or more of your classmates, Christian friends, or family. Then, before returning to your reading of this chapter here in our textbook, think and write down your thoughts about the word *oracle* or burden that God forbids the prophets and priests (the shepherds or pastors in Old Testament Israel) to use in verses 33-40.² Use verses 16-22 to explain why the Lord commanded that they never use that word again.

By the way, in our next section on Platonism be sure to watch for that forbidden word, *oracle*, in the conclusion of Saint Augustine’s early philosophy of language taught in *The Teacher*.

The Problem of the Platonic Hermeneutic

Back to that second hermeneutic dimension concerning heresy from Luther’s sermon. He preached,

The evangelist [John the apostle] intentionally arranged his words so as to refute all heretics ... In this, the Platonic philosophers are famous. They maintain that all creation has its being first in its nature and kind ... and therefore Saint Augustine says that this Word [the *Logos* in John 1] is an image of all creation, and like a bedchamber is hung with images which are called Ideas (Greek for images), according to which the created things were made, each one according to its own image... Therefore, the light of reason has been emphasized and based upon this passage of Scripture [“And the Life was the Light of men”]

² The Hebrew word is מָשָׂא, MASSA. In the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* in our Library, you will find the word study of its root, NASA, meaning “lift” or “carry” beginning on page 1421: מָשָׂא (*maššā*) I. *Load, burden, lifting, bearing, tribute.*” Online at Bible Hub you can read Jeremiah 23:30-40 with the Hebrew words such as MASSA in English letters and in its grammatical context: Jeremiah 23 Interlinear Bible.

These are all human, Platonic, and philosophical thoughts which lead us away from Christ into ourselves; but the evangelist wishes to lead us away from ourselves into Christ. For he would not deal with the divine, almighty, and eternal Word of God, nor speak of it otherwise than as flesh and blood, that sojourned upon earth (Luther, CHRISTmas sermon, 24,31,43-44).

Remember how Peter warned against the “plastic words” of false pastors. Jeremiah wrote a jeremiad against false shepherds and their “worthless words” which they promote and repeat among themselves. Luther’s preaching against Augustine’s recurring Platonism teaches us that heresy springs from and thrives like a virus in flawed, hollow and deceptive hermeneutics. In turn, flawed hermeneutics creates an attitude contrary to the attitude that is in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2).

In the case of Augustine, the Platonic heresy against which Luther preached shows up in his early writing titled *The Teacher*. Augustine’s Latin title is *De Magistro*, an early reflection of the magisterial hermeneutic attitude I mention in our preface as being contrary to the office and work of us Lutheran pastors who are called and ordained *servants* of the Word. Faithful shepherds and pastors do not teach and preach as if they were masters and teachers over the Word.

Very briefly, in this dialogue Augustine is teaching his son Adeodatus the Platonic philosophy of language, namely, that knowing and understanding are based on preexisting images, innate ideas in our minds, and thus based on mere human reason and not on Christ and His words. This turn inward to the inner self is fatal “because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” (Romans 8:7, NKJV).

Augustine’s Platonic theory is that words (*verba* in his Latin, words in grammatical texts and contexts), are merely incidental signs that may stimulate our innate human reasoning, whereas what counts is the reasoning inside a person’s private soul or mind. This Platonic notion that words are nothing but empty signs is known as *semiotics*.

The Teacher is a lengthy and challenging dialogue, but in its conclusion, we plainly see that Augustine has been leading his son and his readers away from Christ the incarnate *Logos* with his semi-semiotic view of language. In effect, Augustine points us deep within ourselves, to our sinful human reason as the final authority, rather than to the ultimately authoritative Word of Christ.

This is the hermeneutic Problem of Platonism: with what Peter refers to as

“plastic, reformed words,” Augustine speculates that Christ is a Teacher deep within every human soul. Consequently, Augustine does not reckon with the divine, almighty, and eternal Word of God, or speak of the Word incarnate as flesh and blood who is *extra nos* or “outside of us,” as Luther insisted, working that ontic change in us *sola Scriptura*.

Augustine: At another time we shall, God willing, look into the whole problem of the usefulness of words—which, if considered properly, is not negligible! For the present, I have prompted you that we should not attribute to words more than is suitable.

Adeodatus: For my part, I have learned from the prompting of your words that words do nothing but prompt man to learn, and that the extent to which the speaker’s thought is apparent in his speaking amounts to very little. Moreover, I have learned that it is He alone [The Inner Teacher, Christ who lives in the mind of every human being] who teaches us whether what is said is true—and, when He spoke externally, He reminded us that He was dwelling within [every human soul] ... that private Oracle answered me about everything exactly as you stated in your words.³

Revisit your reflection on Jeremiah 23:33-40. Does what God had the prophet Jeremiah write about the word *oracle* apply to what Augustine wrote in the last sentence of *The Teacher*?

And so, from Luther’s sermon and from Augustine’s addiction to Platonism, we see that our Lutheran hermeneutic did not begin as a textbook for Lutheran pastors and teachers. It began as a pastoral response against false hermeneutics which teach and treat the divine gift of language as if it is nothing but plastic words to be reshaped according to one’s will.

The Problem of the Roman Hermeneutic

Historically, Luther’s hermeneutic began as a pastoral response against the false and arrogant hermeneutics of the Roman Catholic church. That false hermeneutic came about because Rome added a second authority, its own legal-

³ Augustine, trans. Peter King, *Against the Academicians and The Teacher*, 145-146. At some point you may want to consult Augustine’s text for yourself in Carolyn J.B. Hammond, editor and translator of *Augustine: The Teacher and Teaching Christianity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2025). In her Introduction Prof Hammond makes two points that support points I make here in our second chapter. My two points are (a) that both Augustine and the twentieth century philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein are important for understanding how the divine gift of language works, and (b) that *The Teacher* is an early version of Augustine’s philosophy of language, so that I can speak of him as a “recovering Neo-Platonist” who is not utterly committed to a semiotic view of language, but who falls back into it from time to time.

istic form of reasoning, to the Scriptures. Their manmade authority became an authority *over* the Scriptures because Rome put itself forward as an authority that would serve as the master (*magister* in Latin, remember) of the Scriptures. Instead of acknowledging the ultimate authority and infallibility of Christ and His Scriptures per se (meaning *sola*, Christ alone and His words alone), Rome demanded that the scriptural texts must be interpreted according to their Roman methods and Rome's self-proclaimed infallibility.

This was Rome's hermeneutic in the 1500s, the century of the Reformation, and it is still the case in our twenty-first century. For example, my Latin New Testament, a 2017 Catholic publication, says this in its Preface.

Scripture and Tradition are the two expressions of divine revelation—that set of beliefs that Catholics believe God has given the Church. Acceptance of these is essential to Salvation. Of the two, Tradition is the older, the more complete, and indeed is what has given Scripture both its authority and its content—the canon of Scripture having been decided by the Church. That Tradition (to be distinguished from mere human “tradition”) consists of the unanimous teaching of the Church fathers on any given point, and in the infallible definitions of Popes and Councils.⁴

The claim that the authority of Scripture depends upon “the infallible definitions of Popes and Councils” chains people to their logical fallacies of question begging and appeal to illegitimate authority. No authority exists except that which God has established (Romans 13:1) and God neither recognizes nor authorizes any authority that does not give way to Christ and His eternal words. He has established the absolute authority of Christ alone in Matthew 28, often called “The Great Commission” of CHRISTians and orthodox CHRISTian churches.

Roman tradition, notwithstanding the claim that it is not the “mere human tradition” of Colossians 2:8, is neither primordial nor eternal, as are the *Logos* and the words He articulates in His Scriptures.

On many past occasions and in many different ways, God spoke to our fathers through the prophets. But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature, upholding all things by His powerful word (Hebrews 1:1-3a).

⁴ *Novum Testamentum: Vulgatae Editionis Juxta PP. Clementis VIII Decretum* (Fitzwilliam, New Hampshire: Loreto Publications, 2017), v.

Heaven and earth and Rome will pass away; but as we learn from God's Word and wording work in our first chapter, the everlasting words of Christ will never pass away. Nor will they give way to the alleged "vicar of Christ," as if popes and counsels ever were Christ's *magistri*, as if they are Christ's masters and teachers today. This is where a Lutheran hermeneutic and the liturgical attitude and confession that we Lutheran pastors are called and ordained servants of Christ's Word become mission critical.

In the nineteenth century, Wilhelm Loehe, a German Lutheran pastor, wrote this about homiletics or the faithful preaching of the Scriptures.

"Your Word is the right doctrine," the holy singer prays (Psalm 93:5, Luther's translation) . . . This verse from the psalm, on the one hand puts God's Word on the same level with other teachings; but it also lifts it above all others by saying, "It is the *right* teaching." Other teachings are not equal to it. ...

Nor is it a mere human conviction, but it brings with it a power that can put down the resistance of natural reason or un-reason....It is called *faith*. Just think of the power of Absolution.⁵

As we have seen, language is the Word wording, primordially and eternally. The words of Jesus can never be destroyed. However, people can be convinced of false dogmas that will lead them to despise preaching and God's Word. *Dogma*, the term I am using for hollow and deceptive hermeneutics, can be used for "systematic theology," but in wider usage it means "a person's stubborn opinion." In what follows, *dogmatic* means "a stubbornly held opinion dressed up as systematic theology." There are two dogmatic attitudes that plague hermeneutics today. One is "the historical-critical method." The other is "postmodern semiotics."

Objection and response. At this point in our study, I will anticipate an objection that other professors and readers will raise to this entire chapter, namely, that it is somehow bad form or contrary to Scripture and Lutheran doctrine and practice for me to criticize other hermeneutics based on "my hermeneutic." First, I respond that I am not presenting my own hermeneutic, but (1) a biblical and Lutheran hermeneutic and (2) the proper, biblical hermeneutic attitude.

As Loehe wrote, quoting Luther's translation of Psalm 93:5, "God's Word is *the* right doctrine." There are three touchpoints to enable you to see that my hermeneutic is robustly biblical and authentically Lutheran. In other words, that my hermeneutic is the Lutheran hermeneutic, which I did not invent but cer-

⁵ J.K. Wilhelm Loehe; trans. Wolf Dietrich Knappe and Charles P. Schaum, *The Pastor* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 203.

tainly do believe, teach, and confess. The points of reference are:

1. The words and passages of the Scriptures that we are studying in this textbook;
2. The Lutheran Confessions, especially the Formula of Concord; and
3. Martin Luther's preaching.

Our Scripture study is ongoing, so as we continue, keep searching the Scriptures as the Jewish and Greek Bereans did in the first century A.D. who were "examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Regarding the second touchpoint, the Lutheran Confessions, The Formula of Concord, to which bona fide Lutheran pastors subscribe without reservation, mandates that we pastors "reject and condemn false doctrines and dogmas," which I am following in my published books, as I also do in my teaching as Professor of Theology at The Lutheran School of Theology, Kenya.⁶

Regarding the third touchpoint, Luther's preaching against heresies and the hollow and deceptive philosophy of Platonism, see the sermon quote on the first page of this chapter and the section The Hermeneutic Problem of Platonism.

In this chapter we continue to build on the revelation that language is the Word wording. This has led us to realize that the divine gift of language in the case of the Scriptures works an ontic change in us human beings in real time. For example, recreating in us miserable and lost sinners a clean heart and renewing a right spirit within us.

In opposition to Christ and His Scriptures, these two dogmatic attitudes and methods below not only misrepresent language as it is; even worse, they are hermeneutics constructed in such a way as to disrupt the ministry of the Gospel and lead called and ordained servants of the Word and their parishioners to despair of reading and trusting the words of Christ in Word and sacraments. Because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the utterances of Christ (Romans 10:17), the historical-critical method and postmodern semiotics ultimately work to keep people from saving faith.

Not to mention that, like gain of function research into viruses, the historical-critical method and postmodern semiotics are virulent, pathological versions of Platonism hitting at an exceptionally vulnerable time in history when people's doctrinal immune systems have been undeniably weakened—and as

⁶ For more on this Lutheran pastoral requirement and The Formula of Concord, see 1 Timothy 5:20 and Gregory P. Schulz, *Anatomy of an Implosion: One Pastor-Professor's Diagnosis and Lament at the Mission Drift to Woke Marxism in Lutheran Higher Education*, Chapter One, "Studied Ignorance of the Text that Makes Lutheran Schools Lutheran," especially pp. 9-22.

the disintegration of Western culture is well underway.

The Problem of the Scientific Method

First, a word on science and the scientific method in relation to language. I've identified language as primordial. Whereas modern science speaks about "primordial soup," the conditions billions of years ago from which life could hypothetically evolve, the historical record of Genesis and the rest of the Scriptures testify to the truth of creation by God via His Word and language, which happened only about six thousand years ago.

Interestingly, a paper by a number of linguists, or language experts, titled, "The Mystery of Language Evolution," begins by stating, "The evolution of the faculty of language largely remains an enigma" [that is, an unsolvable problem] and concludes, "the relatively sudden origin of language poses difficulties that may be called 'Darwin's problem'" and "as Darwin insisted: 'A complex train of thought can be no more carried out without the use of words, whether spoken or silent, than a long calculation without the use of figures or algebra.'"⁷

This is a good time to explain exactly why modern science and the scientific method are not appropriate for biblical hermeneutics, or for anything biblical. There is a hint in the scientific concept of *primordial soup*. The scientific notion of such "life" that could come out of a so-called primordial soup is a notion of life that is a greatly reduced, materialistic, minimalist notion of mere molecular or cellular life. This tiny notion of life could (hypothetically, we are told), all by itself, and over an imaginary period of uncountable billions of years, produce complex living beings such as we human beings are. This is taught as if we human beings are nothing but cells and biological systems in a complicated arrangement of matter and energy. Notice, too, that Darwin thinks of language as being made up of word-atoms, something analogous to dependent or independent algebraic variables.

As Kurt Marquardt wrote about the historical-critical method of hermeneutics in the 1970s, "Science has no room for privileged authority or sacrosanct texts."⁸ The root problem is that modern science and the scientific method are reductive. Scientific methodology diminishes everything it studies. It diminishes language to fit the narrow range of scientific thinking. To be *reductive*

⁷ Marc D. Hauser, Noam Chomsky, et al., "The Mystery of Language Evolution" in *Frontiers in Psychology*, (May 2014), online at:

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00401/full>.

⁸ Kurt Marquardt, *Anatomy of an Explosion: A Theological Analysis of the Missouri Synod Conflict* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House; reprint, 1978), 120.

means to reduce a thing to a small part of that thing to make it seem more manageable. When the divine gift of language is cut down and resized to reductive scientific language, such as algebraic notation, it turns out that the resulting scientific language is much too small for writing, talking, and thinking about God and His written Word, the Scriptures, and everything that the Scriptures reveal.

Here is a philosophical experiment on language for our hermeneutic work, showing what is lost when the divine gift of language is reduced to fit modern science.

Early in the last century, Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, demonstrating what language would be like if it were reduced to purely scientific facts and scientific language. He wrote with meticulous care, numbering seven key propositions or statements, and adding layers of supporting sub-points to six of those propositions, numbering them to the last decimal point. The first proposition is 1. The world is all that is the case. The last proposition is 7. Whatever one can say can be said clearly; but what cannot be said, this thing one must be quiet about.

Now, as I said, this was an experiment to see what language would be like if it were reduced to language that is scientifically verifiable. When you read it for yourself, you will see this from Wittgenstein's writing and thinking in between Proposition (1) and Proposition (7). According to Wittgenstein's experiment, the first proposition should be understood this way: 1. The *scientific* world is all that can be said *scientifically*. And the last proposition this way: 7. Whatever one can say *scientifically* can be said clearly; but what cannot be said *scientifically*, these things *science* must be quiet about." Recognizing the noun, *science*; the adjective, *scientific*; and the adverb *scientifically* is the key.⁹

Here is what Wittgenstein discovered, something that comes out especially in Proposition 6 and its layers of explanation, which he wrote largely while he was a soldier suffering in the trenches of World War I, and then in a prisoner of war camp.

He discovered that, when language is reduced scientifically, there is no room left to talk and think about the human soul, or beauty, or ethics, or God. Wittgenstein explains that the human soul, beauty, ethics, and God "show up"

⁹ For a very different view of *Tractatus*, see George Steiner, *Language and Silence*, "The Retreat from the Word": "Wittgenstein compels us to wonder whether language can be *spoken of*, when speech is merely a kind of infinite regression [that is, an unending process], words be spoken of other words ... Language can deal only with a special, restricted segment of reality," 21. But as you can see from the quotes of *Tractatus* in this chapter and Wittgenstein's lesson "Mapping God the Ocean by Walking the Island of Language" in our final chapter, Steiner missed Wittgenstein's philosophy of language almost completely. Steiner's misunderstanding is also clear in the opening section of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, where Wittgenstein directly addresses Augustine's philosophy of language.

in our human form of life, that is, in language as it is in real-life; but these things cannot “be said” scientifically. Further, he imagined that language reduced to only scientific language would atomize—that is, it would break into irreducible bits in which elementary, single-use propositions or singular sentences would correspond with atomic facts, period (Proposition 2).

The scientific methodology sees language as a catalogue of unrelated objects affected by various forces such as gravity and weak or strong nuclear forces. Language, as experienced in the Scriptures especially, sees everything in relationship to God. “Now, I can know only imperfectly; but then I shall know just as fully as I myself am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12, NJB).

Talking and thinking about God means reading and talking about His Scriptures. We call this talking and thinking about God and His Scriptures “theology.” How ironic when professors of theology, whom we expect to be talking and thinking about God’s Scriptures, teach hermeneutics based on science and the social sciences.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (excerpts)

Preface

The whole sense of the book might be summed up in the following words: what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence. Thus the aim of the book is to draw a limit to thought, or rather—not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts: for in order to draw a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable (that is, we should have to be able to think that which cannot be thought).

It will therefore only be in language that the limit can be drawn, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense.

- 1 The world* is all that is the case.
- 1.1 The world* is the totality of facts, not of things.
- 4.113 Philosophy sets limits to the much-disputed sphere of natural science.
- 4.116 Everything that can be thought at all can be thought clearly. Everything that can be put into words can be put clearly.
- 5.6 *The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world.
- 6.211 (In philosophy the question, “What do we actually use words for?” repeatedly leads to valuable insights.)

- 6.41 The sense [meaning] of the world* must lie outside the world*.
6.431 So too at death the world* does not alter but comes to an end.
6.53 The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, that is, the propositions of natural science. ...
7 What we cannot speak about** we must pass over in silence**.

KEY

* = "of natural science" or "according to the scientific method"

** = "scientifically"

Now we are prepared to analyze the first of the two modern hermeneutic heresies. The scientific method was taught as a hermeneutical method at the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod's (LC-MS) Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis in the 1970s. They called their scientific method "the historical-critical method." This method is being taught today in African seminaries and in seminaries around the world.

It is important to hear in their own words what those involved meant by this method of Bible interpretation, so here is a report written by one of my seminary professors from over forty years ago, writing about the method at that LC-MS seminary. Note especially the words of what the professors themselves were doing and the attitude they taught their seminary students to have toward the Scriptures.

John Tietjen, the deposed president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, writes, "Since the Scriptures were written by men in particular historical situations, the Scriptures can be studied and researched like other human writings." It is just at this point that the word "critical" in the term "historical-critical" becomes important.

To a greater or lesser degree, all those who employ this method believe that since the Bible was written by men in a specific historical situation (something which no one of us would deny), therefore [they teach] we must study these writings very carefully and in great detail in order to determine whether what they say is really [scientifically] factual. Edgar Krentz, also of Seminex, writes, "The historian challenges all sources in a more or less friendly way, even those he most highly respects." "Therefore," he continues, "the historian must not only determine what his witnesses say but also evaluate their truthfulness."¹⁰

¹⁰ Siegbert Becker, *The Historical-Critical Method of Bible Interpretation* (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Digital Library).

It may be hard at first to see how this is a *scientific* method, so let me help by explaining what “the social sciences” are. Anthropology, sociology, geography, history, law, political science, economics, communication, linguistics, pedagogy, and psychology are all social sciences. We just heard those St. Louis seminary professors who were teaching the historical-critical method talking about the social science of history as the basis for their own challenges “in a more or less friendly way” of the meaning and truthfulness of God’s words in the Scriptures.

These academic specialties, such as history, psychology, and so on, are *social* because they study and teach about human beings as social beings, but the people in these social sciences generally study and teach about human beings *scientifically*, that is, in a scientifically reductionist manner. Social scientists are trained to be objective and to work with scientific data, as physicists are trained. They are trained to be reductive, so the data they use are generally material things, not spiritual realities. They also tend to reduce human beings, the subject of their studies, to their material or mathematical parts.¹¹

This means that Tietjen, Krentz, and their colleagues who taught hermeneutics according to the historical-critical method, were teaching their seminary students to see the Bible as a scientific or reductive project in which things such as miracles, words breathed out by God Himself, Christ’s divine nature, human nature and so on, are always subject to the professors’ and students’ scientific judgments. They were teaching them to be masters of the Scriptures, not servants of the Word.

As mentioned, the scientific historical-critical method is still being taught in Africa and elsewhere today. But in our twenty-first century there is an even more cynical hermeneutic that is being taught—everywhere it seems, but also from the same LC-MS seminary where the historical-critical method was being taught less than one generation ago.¹²

The Problem of Postmodern Semiotics

This hermeneutic goes beyond teaching students to be masters and teachers in charge of the Bible, to teaching students that they are masters and teachers

¹¹ For more on the problem with the social sciences, see Richard Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (Henry Regnery Company, 1953), Chapter VIII “The Rhetoric of Social Science”. Prof. Weaver writes, “The uncertainty of the social scientist about the nature of his datum often leads him to treat empirical [scientific] situations as if they carried moral sanction, and then to turn around and treat some point of contemporary mores [morality and ethics]—which is the definition of a ‘moral question’—as if it had only empirical [scientific] aspects,” 123.

¹² For more, see my monograph (a published 40-page essay) *Seminex 2.0, The Fundamental Heresy that Propelled the LC-MS from Explosion to Implosion* available on Amazon.com sites worldwide.

in charge of the divine gift of language altogether. They are taught that they can interpret any text, including (sooner or later) the Scriptures, in endlessly different ways, and they are led to believe that no one gets to tell them that they are wrong or heretical.

This false dogma is known as “postmodernism” and it has its own philosophy of language, known as “semiotics.” *Semiotics* in the case of postmodern semiotics is a more radical version of Augustine’s teaching of language in *The Teacher*. The title of one book that has been promulgating radical Platonic semiotics for the past 30 years is *What Does This Mean?: Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Post-Modern World*.¹³ Just like the seminary professors imposing their own social science authority on the sacred Scriptures, this Lutheran seminary professor too insists that his hermeneutics is a “friendly” hermeneutic:

Observers from within and without may recognize a “post-modern” ring to what is here advanced. And they are right. . . . But it is the contention of this author that post-modernism, for all of its excesses, is not our enemy, but a sort of friend.¹⁴

For your own reference and research, the postmodernism he is urging us in the Lutheran churches to befriend include the philosophers Friederich Nietzsche, Jean-François Lyotard, Paul-Michel Foucault, Richard Rorty, and Jacques Derrida. There is little or no evidence in this textbook that the author knows these philosophers whom he contends are “friends.” Nor is there evidence that he has read and understood the views of language from the Greek philosophers whom he lists here and there as if they support postmodern semiotics.

Before undertaking our analysis of *postmodern semiotics*, it will help to understand that there are two philosophies of language—two deeply-held contrary views of the divine gift of language from which to choose as the foundation of one’s hermeneutic.

Remember, choosing to do hermeneutics with an unbiblical philosophy of language counts as heresy and inevitably leads to treating Scripture and everyday language as plastic *logoi*. After a scriptural lesson in philosophy (including philosophy of language) from Saint Paul’s epistle to the Colossians, and thus in keeping with the analogy of the faith, we will see how profoundly opposed to Christ and His Scriptures the postmodern semiotic philosophy of language is.

¹³ James W. Voelz, *What Does This Mean?: Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Post-Modern World*, 2nd ed., Concordia Scholarship Today (St. Louis, Missouri: CPH, 1997). Referred to herein as Voelz, *What Does This Mean?*.

¹⁴ Voelz, *What Does This Mean?*, 11.

Diagnosis: The Two Philosophies of Language

There are two mutually exclusive philosophies of language in our world today. My labels for these two competing philosophies are from Philip Cary's book, *Outward Signs: The Powerlessness of External Things in Augustine's Thought*.¹⁵ The author refers to them as two *views* of biblical language, whereas I identify them as two *philosophies* of language so that we can evaluate them according to the analogy of the faith, in this case, Colossians 2:8-10:

Be careful that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elements of the world, rather than Christ. For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ, and you have been filled by him, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

One philosophy of language is biblical; the other is *absurd*, meaning nonsensical, much in the way Wittgenstein identifies nonsense in his preface to *Tractatus*, so please reread his definition in the chart Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* a few pages back.

#1. External Efficacious Means of Grace. This is the recognition that the biblical text is itself meaningful, effective, and that Christ's words are authoritative over everyday language. We could say of the Scriptures what we say of the sacrament of Holy Communion: There is a Real Presence here. God is present, speaking in, with, and under the texts of the Holy Scriptures. The infallible and efficacious words of the biblical text are the means by which God Himself does His work among us. Cary notes that this view was held by Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther.¹⁶

Luther did his theology in language. Luther wrote and preached in many different times and in various ways that God shares Himself in His Word of promise, a creative Word in which God is present.

It is clear that his use of language shaped Luther's theology in its entirety and that it is the subject of his theology. One misses this if one thinks that it is possible to abstract theology from its mediation through language. It makes sense, however, when theology takes God at his word and develops itself consistently as linguistic theory.¹⁷

¹⁵ Philip Cary, *Outward Signs: The Powerlessness of External Things in Augustine's Thought*, ix-x.

¹⁶ For a list of propositions or theses from Professor Cary's support of Luther's hermeneutic see Application 1 below.

¹⁷ Kolb, Robert; Dingel, Irene; Batka, Lubomír, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), 147-148.

Luther's philosophy of language was the External Efficacious Means of Grace philosophy.

It is through God's Word, as we just read in Colossians 2, "that you have been filled by Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority."

#2. Expressionist Semiotics. This is the view that the biblical text is ultimately nothing but signs to be decoded, and that what really counts is what is going on in everyone's soul or mind. So, the *semeia* or "signs" of language are incidental and serve only as opportunities for us to express our individual inner convictions. This *Neoplatonist* view, Cary explains, was held by Augustine and Calvin. Postmodern semiotics is a radicalized version of the more exploratory, tentative semiotics of Plato and then Augustine.

Let me reinforce the contrast between the *sola Scriptura* or Word alone hermeneutic of Luther and the hermeneutic of the author teaching friendship and fellowship with postmodern thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and company. The External Efficacious Means of Grace philosophy is the biblical and Lutheran philosophy. It is the philosophy of language of the Lutheran Confessions, such as the 1577 Formula of Concord (the Formula).¹⁸ It is the view of the language of Scripture held by every confessional thinker from Luther onward.

For example, here is Johann Gerhard (1582-1637), a younger Lutheran theologian from the Reformation century:

With the name "Scripture" we must understand not so much the external form [*formulae*] or signs (that is, the shapes of the letters)—the acts and utterances of writing by which the divine revelation is put into writing—as the material itself or what is designated, and indeed the very thing that the writing denotes and signifies, namely, the very Word of God, which instructs us in the essence and will of God.

Some state this in such a way that the Word of God is taken either essentially, as the very meaning that God expresses, or adventitiously, according to what has happened, which are preaching and writing. For as in every writing brought about by a cause that is understanding or intellectual, so also in this prophetic and apostolic Scripture we must consider two points: first, the very letters, syllables, and phrases that are written—the external symbols that signify and express ideas of the mind—and sec-

¹⁸ See, for example, The Comprehensive Summary, Rule, and Norm at the beginning of the Formula and its third paragraph: "First, we receive and embrace wholeheartedly the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the uncontaminated, crystal clear fountain of Israel. They are the only true standard or norm by which all teachers and teaching must be judged."

ond, the very meanings that are, as it were, something signified and expressed by those external symbols of letters, syllables, and words. Consequently, we include both—and principally the latter—when we use the word “Scripture” here.¹⁹

For another example, here is Edmund Smits in his essay on Lutheran Orthodoxy introducing Martin Chemnitz and Johann Gerhard’s writings of theological anthropology:

Lutheran Orthodox theologians did not countenance [Calvin’s] restrictions upon the efficacy of the Holy Scriptures. In their polemical writings they emphasized the organic character of the content, designating it as a “thing that is alive” (*res animate*). They preferred to compare the Scriptures to the “living incorruptible seed” (1 Peter 1:23), a seed that grows by itself (Mark 4:26-29), penetrating fire (Jeremiah 23:29), oil and wine (Luke 10:34), bread and food, rain that refreshes the earth, shining light, and healing medicine. Here the intrinsic value of Scripture was strongly manifested. The understanding was that the divine revelation and its expression in the Scriptures are so completely united that to divorce them would create a serious distortion. This view inspires greater confidence in the holy will of our Father in heaven than a view which leaves the inspiration of Scripture in suspense. Even the Gentiles can receive God’s light through the reading of the Holy Scriptures.²⁰

This is the External Efficacious Means of Grace philosophy of language. Gerhard is writing about the language of the Scriptures in everyday language. It is the way Scripture presents itself. It is the classical Lutheran view. It is the orthodox view.

Be sure to notice that, while Gerhard uses the word *signified* in his explanation of various synonyms for Scripture, he clearly does not espouse a semiotic philosophy of language. Here is why. First, in direct opposition to Augustine’s Platonism he stresses the power of “those *external* symbols of letters, syllables, and words.”

Secondly, in opposition to postmodern semiotics he writes that “their very meanings” “are, as it were, something signified *and* expressed.” This is not expressivist painting in which a painter tries his best to express his private, individual inner feelings; on the contrary, it is the expression of God Himself in

¹⁹ Johann Gerhard, trans. Richard J. Dinga, *On the Nature of Theology and On the Scriptures* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 36-37.

²⁰ Herman A. Preus and Edmund Smits, eds., *The Doctrine of Man in the Writings of Martin Chemnitz and Johann Gerhard* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), xiv.

the exact words of the incarnate Word. Nothing Platonic or ideal about it. “To know other persons as persons is impossible without honoring their authority to speak for themselves.”²¹ Jesus the *Logos*, the second person of the Trinity, expresses Himself with all authority and in His own words.

Gerhard’s mention of the symbols and significations of Scripture fits with our Lutheran and biblical understanding of Holy Baptism. We confess that baptism symbolizes our union with Christ in His death and in His resurrection, but in addition, that it really unites us with Him in His death and resurrection (Romans 6). This is not a mere figure of speech; it is the literal, metaphysical truth. What we reject is any claim that baptism *merely* symbolizes God’s grace to us. Our confession in the catechisms, for example, is that baptism is a means of grace, not an empty picture of grace (Luther’s Large Catechism, Part 4. Baptism). Similarly, as Gerhard says, the Word of God has an external form, namely, the letters, syllables, and words that God breathed out and which His writers wrote down.

Thus, the Word is not merely a collection of (arbitrary) signs and (pointless or endlessly interpretable) signifiers. It is a means of grace, not a playground for semiotic linguistic theorists. As Gerhard says with crystal clarity, “the external symbols [both] signify *and* express” because the Word of God, the biblical text, is to be taken “essentially [this is the robust vocabulary of the Creed, as in the Son is of one *substance*], as the very meaning that God expresses.”

The Word of God, the written Scriptures, are external, and they are effective, or efficacious, according to what happens in the reading, hearing, remembering, reciting, preaching, teaching, and writing of “those external symbols of letters, syllables, and words.”

Early on, the hermeneutic book *What Does this Mean?* and subtitled *Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Post-Modern World*, written by a professor at Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Saint Louis was officially endorsed in a CTQ symposium issue from Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne. Apparently, Fort Wayne discontinued the use of that textbook in 2011, or so, while the Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis continues to teach and celebrate this hermeneutic of radical Platonism in contradiction to Martin Luther’s CHRIST-mas sermon on 1 John 1:1-14.²²

In concord with the Formula, we can use the *reductio ad absurdum* strategy to show why the semiotics philosophy of language is absurd. To reduce a phi-

²¹ Cary, *Outward Signs*, xiii.

²² Concordia Theological Quarterly, vol 62, no 3, July 1998, *What Does This Mean? A Symposium*, 165-186.

losophy to absurdity does not mean to boil it down to something that's silly or foolish; actually, a *reductio* reveals when a concept or philosophy is non-sensical and without foundation from the Bible. Our *reductio ad absurdum* of Expressivist Semiotics is an actual interview with a prominent postmodern philosopher.

In 1994, just three years before the first edition of *What Does This Mean?: Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Post-modern World* was published and while it was being taught in seminary classes in Saint Louis, there was a round-table discussion in America in which the famous postmodernist, Jacques Derrida, gave his view of the Bible according to his semiotic philosophy of language. Notice how he sees the canonical and authoritative text of the Hebrew Bible as nothing but a springboard to infinite deconstruction in the hands of any interpreter, including (as he mentions in passing), Karl Marx, the arch communist. Here is Derrida in his own words.

First, I have no stable position on the texts you mentioned, the prophets and the Bible. For me, this is an open field, and I can receive the most necessary provocations from these texts as well as, at the same time, from Plato and others. In *Spectres of Marx* I try to reconstitute the link between Marx and some prophets through Shakespeare. ... For me, there is no such thing as "religion." Within what one calls religions ... there are again tensions, heterogeneity, disruptive volcanoes, sometimes texts, especially those of the prophets, which cannot be reduced to an institution, to a corpus, to a system.

I want to keep the right to read these texts in a way that has to be constantly *reinvented*. *It is something which can be totally new at every moment*. ... I would say that religion not only can but should be deconstructed, sometimes in the name of faith.²³

As we learn from this unusually clear explanation—it is almost unheard-of for a postmodern professor to speak or write clearly or unequivocally—the hollow and deceptive philosophy of language taught by postmodernism is mere semiotics. Language, he asserts, is meaningless. What he expresses is just whatever happens to be in his own head at the moment and not tied to the Scriptures or to any other text, for that matter. Again, in Derrida's own words,

The "rationality" ... which governs such a writing thus enlarged and radicalized [by Hegel's and Derrida's interpretation], no longer issues from the logos. Further, it inaugurates ... the deconstruction of all significations that have their source in that of the logos. Particularly the signification

²³John D. Caputo, editor, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 21. (Italics added).

of *truth* ... in the sense of God's infinite understanding, or in the anthropological sense ... The written signifier is always technical and representative. It has no constitutive meaning.²⁴

Notice that Derrida is using the Greek word *logos*. Does *logos* mean Jesus, the *Logos* or the Word of God who already existed in the beginning and became incarnate, or does *logos* mean words? Either way, you can see that semiotics is opposed to words or opposed to Christ the *Logos*. *Logos* is either the Greek name for Jesus in John 1, or it is a way of talking about words and the divine gift of language, which rests upon Christ the *Logos* of John 1.

In fact, Derrida means both. He wants to separate language from Christ the *Logos* and this is why he must separate the words, both the words of Scripture and the words of everyday language, from their inherent meaningfulness.

The absurdity comes out in a meme. (A *meme* is a humorous and contagious picture with a subtext.) The meme pictures Professor Derrida with the caption, "Teaches that language is meaningless; has written many books to prove it."

In all seriousness, though, we see that postmodern semiotics deadens words in order to deny the *Logos* of John 1.

So much for Expressivist Semiotics, the philosophy of language held by post-modernist philosophers such as Derrida. Now, on to the philosophy of post-modernism, which promotes a semiotic view of language and the Scriptures. Recognizing the quote from Luther's Catechism in the book title, *What does this Mean?* and seeing the subtitle about "principles of biblical interpretation in the post-modern world," you may assume that the book is a wonderfully up-to-date Lutheran hermeneutics for the twenty-first century. You would be wrong. There is a contradiction built into the book's subtitle that I will unpack in the form of objection and response, just as we teach you to think and write your own essays. As goes the subtitle, so goes the book.

Objection. Someone, the author of the book, perhaps, may object to my critique of Derrida and semiotics by saying, "We live in a postmodern world. Therefore, Lutheran hermeneutics should befriend postmodern thinking and adopt a semiotic view of language for interpreting the Scriptures!"²⁵

Response. I respond this way. First, there is not and cannot ever be such a thing as a "postmodern world." Whenever someone uses an adjective to describe

²⁴ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 10-11.

²⁵ "Observers from within and without may recognize a 'post-modern' ring to what is here advanced. And they are right. But it is the contention of this author that postmodernism, for all of its excesses, is not our enemy, but a sort of friend." Voelz, *What Does This Mean?*, 11.

the world, he is talking about a *worldview*, a particular way of looking at this one world in which we all live. For example, remember how we have already learned that science has no role in Lutheran hermeneutics because the scientific worldview is reductionist. Science provides a very narrow worldview.

Remember the scientific worldview in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* experiment to see what happens if we limit language to scientific language ("What can be said scientifically can be said clearly; but what cannot be said scientifically, this thing science must be quiet about."). Because the language of science is not big enough to speak about God, ethics, and the human soul (as Wittgenstein says), the language of science (that is, language restricted to the scientific method) provides a terribly nearsighted worldview. That is, the "scientific world" is too small. It is not big enough for God's Word or for the concepts of revelation, bodily resurrection, the justification of sinners, and everything we need to talk about because God speaks to us about these things in His Scriptures.

But postmodernism is different from the *scientism* of the historical-critical method. Scientism means "the misuse of science and the scientific method." It is even worse than imposing scientific methods on the Scriptures. Because postmodern philosophers such as Nietzsche, Lyotard, Rorty, Foucault, and Derrida teach that language can be interpreted however they want, while at the same time insisting that every piece of language, every concept, every word is worn out and no longer dependable, much less useful—because they *deconstruct* their own writing—it is nearly impossible to figure out what postmodernists think postmodernism is.

They despise definitions and, consequently, do not want to tell us exactly what postmodernism is. Perhaps, because of their commitment to their own destructive philosophy, they are largely *unable* to tell the rest of us what postmodernism is.

However, in his 1971 book, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Jean-François Lyotard writes, "Simplifying to the extreme, postmodernism is incredulity toward any meta-narrative." That is, postmodernism is a philosophy of a never-ending disbelief of narratives, especially of any meta- or ultimate narrative. No matter what is written and said, scientifically or religiously, the postmodern attitude is never to believe and never to acknowledge. In this respect, postmodernism is not a philosophy but an anti-philosophy. The postmodern method of methodological disbelief never has and never will produce a worldview, big or small.

Postmodernism does not build worldviews; on the contrary, it is a destroyer of worlds and worldviews. The evidence for this is Derrida's method of deconstruction.

Deconstruction in the postmodernism of Derrida is a bastardization of deconstruction as first taught in German philosophy. (*Bastardization* is the concept of making something or someone illegitimate. Most often, it refers to a father who conceives a son with a woman who is not his wife. Although every son of that man should inherit the man's name and some of his property, the man's adultery makes that son illegitimate and unable ever to inherit the man's name or property. Such an unfortunate son is called a *bastard*.)

In German philosophy, for example, Martin Heidegger taught that deconstruction is the work of scraping away the theories, bracketing off the commentaries, cleaning house, and so on to get rid of anything and everything that conceals a primary text which we need to read and learn for ourselves. In German philosophy, deconstructing means doing whatever needs doing so that we can get back to the source and read the text itself. Just as we want to read the Scriptures without anyone's method or unbiblical philosophy in the way. This original and proper meaning of deconstruction is what I refer to in the heading of this chapter. Heidegger's approach to texts is also called *phenomenology*, a relatively new philosophical way of getting to the source, to the subject itself. In this textbook I am doing a phenomenology of language.

But with Derrida, deconstruction is a weapon of mass destruction. Read, for example, his "deconstruction" of the concept of marriage from the Scriptures. He wants to blow up the concept of marriage, along with its historical and grammatical foundation in the Word of God. This deconstruction of marriage is from the last interview given by Derrida before his death in 2004.

If I were a legislator, I would simply propose the abolition of both the word and the concept of "marriage" in the civil and secular code. "Marriage," religious, sacral, heterosexual value, with its procreative intent, for eternal fidelity, etc., is the State's concession to the Christian church, particularly in its monogamous dimension which is neither Jewish (this was imposed on Jews by Europeans only in the last century and among North African Jews was not an obligation as recently as a few generations ago) nor Muslim, as is well known. In doing away with the concept and the word "marriage," this religious equivocation or hypocrisy, which has no place in a secular constitution, would be replaced by a contractual "civil union," a kind of generalized, improved, flexible pact between partners without limitation to gender or number.²⁶

When Derrida is done with it there is nothing biblical left in the word "marriage." That's the point, of course. He is promoting a radicalized, secularized philosophy of language.

²⁶ Jacques Derrida, "I am at war with myself," in *Le Monde*, 1 August 2004 interview.

Derrida's deconstruction is utterly and obviously opposed to God's Word. You see how he has replaced the significant and almost sacramental concept of marriage as sacred covenant with an adolescent notion of contractual sex at will. Since Derrida confined himself to the Hebrew Old Testament, let me recommend that you compare and contrast his dogmatic opinion of marriage to the words of the Old Testament "closer," the prophet Malachi. By opposing biblical texts Derrida is an anti-Christ professor.

Postmodernism and postmodern authors such as Jacques Derrida are adamantly opposed to Christ, the *Logos* of John 1 and thus to the *logos* of language. In the first pages of his 1967 book *Of Grammatology*, Derrida identifies Christ the *Logos* as the center of Western culture. He goes on to characterize the *Logos* as "ethnic," or racist. This is the basis for his ongoing argument, or deconstructive rant, that we should make human society completely secular by "decentering the *Logos*," "marginalizing the *Logos*," and so on.²⁷

The postmodern project to eliminate Christ the *Logos* (John 1:1 and 14) and thus create a radically secular society, scrubbed of every trace of *logos*, was widely accepted almost immediately throughout society, much as Darwin's theory of evolution in the previous century. This suggests that postmodern professors and other people were looking for a method with which to reject the authority of Christ and His Scriptures academically, something they were already doing anyhow. Darwin attacked the first article of the Christian creeds, the opening paragraph about God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth; Derrida attacked the second and third articles of the creeds, concerning God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Postmodern Architecture

When ... author Ravi Zacharias visited Columbus [a city in the United States southeast of the Great Lakes] to speak at The Ohio State University, his hosts took him to visit the Wexner Center for the Arts. The Wexner Center is a citadel of postmodern architecture. It has stairways leading nowhere, columns that come down but never touch the floor, beams and galleries going everywhere, and a crazy-looking exposed girder system over most of the outside. Like most of postmodernism, it defies every canon of common sense and every law of rationality. Ravi looked at the building and cocked his head. With a grin he asked, "I wonder if they used the same techniques when they laid the foundation?"²⁸

²⁷ Jacques Derrida, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, corrected edition, 1997): In explaining the *Exergue*, or written words of Rousseau and Hegel at the start of his book, Derrida informs us that language is an *ethnocentrism* or racism which he disdains as *logocentrism* in reference to the Greek language and John 1. He anticipates closure to the "logocentric epoch" by "reigning in metaphor, metaphysics, and theology," despite how it is that "to these metaphysico-theological roots many other sentiments cling," 3-11.

²⁸ Dennis McCallum, editor, *The Death of Truth: What's wrong with Multiculturalism, the Rejection of Reason, and the New Postmodern Diversity* (Minnesota: Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996), 262.

Derrida's attack is a nuclear attack on *logos*, the Greek word for Jesus Christ, God incarnate, and for language and words—a disaster for pastoral care and preaching the good news of the Gospel to people in need. Postmodernists demand that everyone agree with them, by hook or by crook. They scheme to throw out the baby with the bathwater without even giving it a second thought. Postmodernism is intent on getting rid of the Baby born of the virgin in Bethlehem and is perfectly willing to get rid of language to get the job done.

Semiotics as taught today (the Expressionist Semiotic philosophy of language from a few pages earlier) is the trademark of secularized Marxist / Islamic / Communist deconstruction, postmodernism's counterpart to the divine means of grace. It is a chemical and biological weapon deployed along with postmodernism—a concoction to choke us and keep us from breathing the atmosphere in which we live and move and have our being. That atmosphere, as you recall from our first chapter, is language—the *divine gift* of language. Postmodernism intends to keep us from breathing in and breathing out the gift of language given to us by God already in the beginning (Genesis 1-2). It does this by deadening and hollowing out words—or, more precisely, by deadening us human beings to words, especially to the words of the Word of God.

Understood philosophically, postmodernism turns out to be a “smart weapon” targeting the means of grace and the preaching of the Word, as well as the sacraments of Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Confession, which according to the Bible, derive their divine and ontological power from Christ's Scriptures. Thus, postmodernism is a terrorist attack on Christ's churches in Africa and around the world, every place in this world where Word and Sacrament are purely and properly administered. Think of it: God's Word will never pass away (Matthew 24:35), but postmodernism and semiotics can make masses of people pass up the saving Scriptures until they pass away and face God's judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

In short, postmodernism, as written and taught by postmodern philosophers in the twentieth and now in our twenty-first century, is a philosophical and theological jihad against the divine gift of language. First against the words of the Bible where God fellowships with us, and secondarily, against the words of everyday language, which unites us as human beings. It is, as believers and disbelievers alike should recognize, an exceptionally hollow and deceptive philosophy based on the sandy elements of this world and thus without a foundation. This philosophy is the epitome of the sort of philosophy that the apostle warns against in Colossians 2:8-9.

Books promoting postmodernism, such as the meandering *On Grammatology* and the confused and confusing textbook on *Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Post-Modern World* camouflaged with Luther's instructional question What does this mean? are in opposition to the ultimate, divine foundation, the *Logos*, to His verbatim *logoi*, and to His gift of biblical and everyday language. The apostle writes,

Christ is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn over all creation.
For everything was created
by Him in heaven and on earth,
The visible and the invisible ...
All things have been created
Through Him and for Him.
He is before all things,
And by Him all things hold together (Colossians 1:16-17).

So, we must ask, “Where is Christ Himself, the primordial, eternal, wording Word, in postmodern semiotics?” This hermeneutic is nothing but “stairways leading nowhere, columns that come down but never touch the floor, beams and galleries going everywhere” all the way down. Professors Krentz and Voelz have insisted that their hermeneutics are “friendly.” If so, then let us be honest and acknowledge that the historical-critical method and postmodern semiotics are *friendly fire* from our Lutheran seminaries, that is, fatal destruction from our own careless soldiers.

One thing more. There is absolutely no excuse for Lutheran pastors and professors, of all people, to fall for this philosophy. As the apostle Paul told the Greek professors in Athens, “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent (Acts 17:30 NASB). We in the holy Christian and apostolic church today should tell these Lutheran professors, “Therefore, having made you heirs of the Lutheran hermeneutic, God expects you to repent of your hollow and deceptive hermeneutics.”

Hermeneutical Consequences

We have seen in this chapter the intellectual carelessness and magisterial attitude of Platonic, Roman, historical-critical, and postmodern semiotic hermeneutics. We have begun to see that the intellectual carelessness of the postmodern semiotic hermeneutic is dishonest.²⁹

The dishonesty that we have seen in the heretical hermeneutic of our century, postmodern semiotics, is the dishonesty of *equivocation*, giving one word (one *logos*) different meanings in different circumstances so that you can fool people into believing you. This is recognized as a logical fallacy. It is also a practice that is forbidden in both the Old and New Testaments.

For example, a man wants to prove that men are rational, but women are not. He

²⁹ For more on intellectual dishonesty of postmodernism in Lutheran and Evangelical writing, see Gregory P. Schulz, “*Nisi Per Verbum: A Disputation Concerning Postmodernism and the Pastoral Ministry*” in *LOGIA, A Journal of Lutheran Theology*, vol. 27, no. 4, Reformation 2018, 23-36.

makes his case this way in a three-statement argument known as a syllogism: (1) Only man is rational. (2) No woman is a man. (3) Therefore, no woman is rational. To make this come out the way he wants, he equivocates the word “man.” In (1) man means “human being.” In (2) man means “male human being.” But the man who wants the conclusion in (3) to persuade us that women are not rational pretends that man has the same meaning in both statements.

As mentioned, equivocation is forbidden in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. In 1 Timothy 3:8 Saint Paul tells us that, just like pastors, deacons must not be *dilogous* men or equivocators of words, they must not be drunkards. The writer of Psalm 119 teaches us to pray with him, “I hate those who are *sa’iph* men (in Hebrew, men *who split the tree* [of God’s words]), but I love your Torah” (119:113).

Furthermore, these four hermeneutical problems all exhibit a common attitudinal problem. The hermeneutics of Plato, Rome, historical-criticism and postmodern semiotics depend upon and foster an anti-hermeneutic attitude against the Lutheran hermeneutic because the Lutheran hermeneutic depends joyfully and entirely on Christ and His Word alone. The proponents of these hermeneutics do not want to “adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). Instead, their attitude is the attitude of Jacques Derrida: “I get to interpret words however I want, and no one has the right to say that I am wrong!”

Here is why the Lutheran hermeneutic which we believe, teach, and confess is not just for Lutherans: *only preaching and teaching based on Christ and His Scriptures alone can save and form souls*. Through His Word, the Word incarnate is saving, is forgiving, is training, is comforting those who are suffering—now, in real time, in your witness today.

And the Lutheran hermeneutic of the Word alone is not for Lutherans alone. It is the Rock and foundation on which Christians of every denomination and in every circumstance long for in their heart of hearts, once they hear of it. Therefore, for the sake of Africa, you and I need to share this hermeneutic in the villages, the cities, and all the seminaries and schools of theology on the continent.

Luther’s *sola Scriptura*, the commitment to Scripture itself as the only standard by which to judge our understanding and interpretation of Scripture, is vitally important. Thus says the LORD, the true God. No continent, no country needs another secular tradition or divisive philosophy of this world.

Preaching ... is proclamation; and whether it is successful or not is not decided by the ideas of the preacher, but by the power of the Word itself, which can call men to repentance even though the sermon is a bad one. The proclamation cannot be detached from its fulfillment. The dogmatic establishment of pure doctrine is a secondary matter. Scripture is the word of God,

and that means it has absolute priority over the doctrine of those who interpret it. Interpretation should not overlook this. Even as the scholarly interpretation of the theologian, it must never forget that Scripture is the divine proclamation of salvation. Understanding it, therefore, cannot simply be a scientific or scholarly exploration of its meaning.³⁰

Not only are these four hermeneutics of this chapter not intellectually honest, but have you noticed what is missing? There is in them no Person to person interaction to speak of, no thanksgiving for how God Himself in the Person of Jesus in our flesh communes with and recreates us human persons personally.

In the next chapter, we learn together that the real presence of the incarnate Son of God in His own words makes the words of the Scriptures omnipotent. We learn how to participate in the divine gift of language—in the resounding analogies of the Scriptures, in the down-to-earth metaphors of His written Word, in psalms such as Psalm 119, Luther’s three-step way of meditating on the God’s Word when we are suffering or ministering to those who are suffering. We will also learn the high fidelity of God’s written word with a brief consideration of textual sorting, usually called *textual criticism*.

Overall, we continue to see for ourselves how Luther and the Lutheran Confessions elaborate and inspire us with the servant-of-the-Word attitude toward the Scriptures, “that same attitude that is in Christ Jesus.”

+ + +

*I gain understanding
from your precepts;
therefore I hate
every false way.*

—Psalm 119:104, *MEM*

³⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 331-332.

Chapter Three

The Personal Presence of the Incarnate Lord in His Scriptures

Christianity did not reject the identity of wisdom with the Word... The unity [of the two Testaments of Scripture in Christ] continues to find expression in the three simultaneous meanings of “Word” in Christian theology: the person of the incarnate Christ, the Gospel about Him, and the Scriptures which define those terms. —Horace D. Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh*, 403

The beginning and end of our Lutheran hermeneutic of the Word alone is John 1:14, “The *Logos* became flesh and tabernacled among us. We [apostles] have seen His glory, the weighty glory befitting the one-of-a-kind who came from the Father, consisting entirely of grace and truth.” This has been our thesis from the first paragraphs of this hermeneutic textbook. It is a thesis, not a working hypothesis. It is Christological. It is the gospel of Jesus the Word, the Life who is the Light of mankind.

To paraphrase the activity of God’s Word in real time we can say that when we are using His written Word and words, we are talking with the incarnate Word because He first speaks to us.

Christ’s Real, Personal Presence in His Scriptures

As I suggested earlier, think of the Scriptures in parallel with the Real Presence in our Lord’s Supper, the Eucharist. In the sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation *are given to us through these words*, “Given for you” and “shed for you for the forgiveness of sins... It is not only the eating and drinking that accomplishes these things, but *the words*” (Luther’s Small Catechism, The Sacrament of the Altar).

Thus, there is a Real Presence of Christ in, with, and under the bread and wine in Holy Communion, not because of what the pastor or the communicants are doing, but because of God’s words, *sola Scriptura*. The power is in the Word and the words of the incarnate *Logos*. For there to be a Real Presence in the Lord’s Supper—which there is—there must first be a Real Presence in the words of Christ’s Scriptures. Think of this Real Presence in the Scriptures as our Lord’s Personal Presence.

The Word delivers the divine being. If this Word, which in Jesus Christ became human, ‘embraces God’s entire essence and nature completely in itself’ (... Hebrews 1:1-12), then all of God’s attributes apply to it, in-

cluding those which distinguish God categorically from his creatures. Especially the attribute of omnipotence distinguishes this Word from all human words. It is a creative word, of which Psalm 33:9 says, “when he speaks, it happens.” Precisely this word is so tightly and inseparably bound to a human being in Jesus Christ that it is fully present and efficacious in him.¹

In this parallelism between the sacraments and the words of the Bible we understand that the power and presence of Christ’s divine-and-human personality makes His words omnipotent and personal in the sense of person-to-person fellowship. God in the person of Christ speaks with us in a personal manner. Thus, the words of the Word written by His initiative and inspiration are in themselves all-sufficient—all that we need, the one thing needful. Anything that comes between us sinners and Christ’s written and revealed Word is a personal insult to God.

In other words: hollow and deceptive hermeneutics, equivocation, presuppositions, our own laziness and inattention to the Scriptures—all these are Great Rifts between us and the incarnate God. God is speaking to us word-for-word, powerfully and lovingly, in His Scriptures. He made and still preserves us with the gift of language. Therefore, we are meant to hear His words verbatim, to pray and respond to Him in His own words, and thereby to saturate our everyday language, whatever the tongue or dialect, with His vocabulary and grammar. This, of course, is why and how we adopt the same attitude that is in Him (the *phren* of Philippians 2).

In this chapter we further flesh out the Lutheran hermeneutic of the Word alone by emphasizing the person of Christ. Mostly, this means devoting ourselves, heart and mind, to the texts and the ontic working of God on us in Psalm 119 and Luther’s commentary on this psalm, that is, (1) the hermeneutic priority of the written Word of God and (2) the hermeneutic attitude that God creates in us when we meditate on His Scriptures.

This approach is the hermeneutic attitude from Philippians 2 which we have been talking about since our first chapter. In Hebrew terminology, it is *the way* to live and learn because Jesus is Himself the Way (John 14:6). I have also included in this chapter a very brief introduction to what is known as *textual criticism*, which is often mishandled to create another Great Rift between people and God speaking in His own words.

Before turning to Luther and his hermeneutic approach to Psalm 119, let’s take time to carry over what we learned about wrong philosophies or wrong understandings of language from the problem hermeneutics—the Great Rifts of

¹ Kolb, Robert; Dingel, Irene; Batka, Lubomir, *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*, 151.

Platonism, Rome, the historical-critical method, and postmodern semiotics.

Earlier we considered these problematic and heretical hermeneutics mostly in terms of how they contradict particular words of God regarding the divine gift of language. For example, placing human authority alongside Christ's exclusive authority, and treating the words of Christ which will never pass away as plastic words, as if we, not God, were the potters creating and forming the words of Scripture and the words of everyday language. This time, we will expose the major *presuppositions* to watch out for in these false hermeneutics.

Because the Lutheran hermeneutic concerns the written Scriptures, it is vitally important to be conscious both (a) of secular presuppositions that undercut the Scriptures, and (b) the ontological accomplishments of His words on us. Theological faithfulness and the teaching of the faith depend in it. Linguistic clarity, as we learn from Luther's example, is a necessary condition for the writing and creation of theology, preaching, lecturing, hymns, commentaries, and so on.

Luther put language to work; it is the instrument and constituting element of writing. Simultaneously, his creative foundation lies in language, the source which made his cognitive process possible and set its standard. His use of language shaped his theology and his thinking in general. When he specifically reflected on language, he did so in order to experiment with the proper linguistic usage.²

False Presuppositions Regarding the Written Word

A *presupposition* is a theory or worldview that is so widely taken for granted that no one talks about it. For example, evolution or an evolutionary worldview is a presupposition of modern authors and professors. This is why I began our discussion of the divine gift of language by explaining that language is not an outcome of evolution but is primordial and eternal. Here are two hermeneutical presuppositions to be aware of concerning written texts and the process of the biblical hermeneutic of *sola Scriptura*. Debunking or deconstructing these presuppositions will help us to become at home with Psalm 119 and Luther's commentary more quickly.

The first presupposition is that reason has priority over language. This presupposition is a part of the history of language and hermeneutics in world history. Moving from the Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle about 300 years B.C.

² Kolb, Robert; Dingel, Irene; Batka, Lubomír, *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, 143.

and into the medieval period, beginning about 400 A.D., the movement was away from depending on language and dialogue to seek wisdom and knowledge to dependency on rationality instead. This is the turn toward inner reasoning and the inner teacher that we learned about from Augustine in the previous chapter.

Hans-Georg Gadamer, in his blockbuster book on hermeneutic, *Truth and Method*, explains how the incarnation of God—this is our central hermeneutic text from John 1:14—brought this presupposition into the light. “Because here [first in Plato and then in Aristotle] orientation to the *eidōs* was conceived as determining the *logos*.”³ That is, the notion of the Idea of the Good in Plato’s Story of the Cave, an idea “beyond all being”—this idea and others like it were, to borrow the words of the Formula of Concord, “The Comprehensive Foundation, Rule, and Standard” whereby language (*logos*) should be judged. To be clear, this placement of human reason over the Scriptures and God’s divine gift of language is an inversion of reality. Remember, the *Logos* and language are primordial.

What was it that countered this turn toward human reasoning as a replacement for the divine gift of language? It was the incarnation, the *Logos* becoming flesh.

There is, however, an idea that is not Greek [philosophy] which does more justice to the being of language and so prevented the forgetfulness of language in Western thought from being complete. This is the Christian idea of *incarnation*. Incarnation is obviously not embodiment. Neither the [Platonic] idea of the soul nor [the Platonic] idea of God that is connected with embodiment corresponds to the Christian idea of incarnation... [Incarnation] is a relationship that is strangely different from embodiment and is expressed theologically in the doctrine of the Trinity.

This cornerstone of Christian thought is all the more important for us because for Christian thought too the incarnation is closely connected to the problem of the word... Of course, human language thereby only indirectly becomes an object of reflection. The human word is used only as a counterpart to the theological problem of the Word, the *verbum dei*—that is, the unity of God the Father and God the Son. But the important thing for us [in modern hermeneutics] is precisely the mystery of this unity is reflected in the phenomenon of language...⁴

Since Gadamer refers to the incarnate *Logos* in John 1 with the Latin translation *verbum*, and not *ratio*, the term used for “reason,” this is the perfect

³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Second, Revised Edition (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1998), Part III, 2, The development of the concept of language in Western thought, 418.

⁴ *Truth and Method*, Second, Revised Edition, Language and Verbum, 418-420.

point to mention the First Principle of *Logos* in our Lutheran Confessions as a decisive biblical and hermeneutic confession that reason does not have priority over the written words of the *wording Word*, as we defined language in our first chapter. When our Lutheran forbears in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries wrote about reason, they took it for granted that reasoning depends upon language. However, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it is necessary to make what they took for granted explicit, given the widespread presupposition of postmodern semiotics.

It is noteworthy, then, that the Word and not human reason is how God works faith, an ontological change, is made in this article on justification by faith because justification, as Lutherans confess is the center of gravity of biblical doctrine. You can see for yourself how Luther and the first Lutheran theologians did not use *ratio* (the root of our term “rationality”) as their translation for *logos*; on the contrary, they insisted upon *verbum* (the Latin word for “word and language”) as their word for the words of the Scriptures.

But God cannot be treated with, God cannot be apprehended, except through the Word (Latin, *nisi per verbum*). Accordingly, justification occurs through the Word (*per Verbum*), just as Paul says, Romans 1:16; “The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.” Likewise Romans 10:17, “Faith cometh by hearing.” And proof can be derived from this that faith justifies, because, if justification occurs only through the Word (*per Verbum*), and the Word (*Verbum*) is apprehended only by faith, it follows that faith justifies (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article 4, Of Justification, paragraph 67).

Here is my hermeneutic argument for the First Principle of *Logos*. It comes from the recognition of the First Principle of *Logos* which, in turn, shows up as a *Logos* hierarchy in the Scriptures. In fact, when the first Apostolic fathers called the Scriptures ‘*Logia*,’ they meant ‘divinely-inspired sayings.’⁵

The Three Nested Meanings of *Logos* (Greek) or *Verbum* (Latin) and the First Principle of *Logos*

1. *Lego*, the verb from which *logos* comes, means “to gather,” and “to assemble” in the middle form (Little Kittel, 505), thus expressing the function of language to bring us human or *logos* beings into fellowship (as Aristotle said in *Politics*, 1253a).

2. “In the Old Testament... The roots ‘*mr* and ‘*dbr* are the main equivalents

⁵ Herman A. Preus and Edmund Smits, editors, *The Doctrine of Man in the Writings of Martin Chemnitz and Johann Gerhard* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), xiii. For a list of these Apostolic Church Fathers and the writings in which they speak of the Scriptures as *logia* see footnote 8.

for *logos*... the word (*dabar*) is filled with a power that is felt by who receive it but which is present independently of such reception...

The formula “The word of the Lord came” at the head of prophetic books (Hosea 1:1, Micah 1:1, Zephaniah 1:1) implies that the whole book is God’s word, with no distinction between the divine voice in the prophet and its written expression” (Little Kittel, 507-509).

3. “In the New Testament ... *Lego* and *logos* carry various senses ranging from the everyday to the most pregnant. Indeed, one can even read of empty words (Ephesians 5:6), or evil words (3 John 10), or false words (2 Peter 2:3, or flattering words (1 Thessalonians 2:50). Human words are full of error (James 3:2) ... “ (Little Kittel, 509).
4. “John uses *logos* in many combinations, for example, ‘of God’ in 10:35, ‘of Isaiah’ in 12:38, ‘of Jesus’ in 18:32, ‘my’ in 5:24 and so on. Only in the Prologue do we find *ho Logos* in the absolute” (Little Kittel, 513).
5. Therefore, based on the usage of *logos* in the New Testament, its etymology from *lego*, and its Hebrew synonyms ‘*mr* and *dbr* in the Old Testament (frequently translated as *logos* in the Septuagint), we can determine that ***logos means three related things***:

First, *logos* is the term for the divine gift of language, written and spoken.

Second, *logos* and *logoi* are the terms for Christ’s written words which comprise the Word of God, the written Scriptures.

Third, the divine gift of language in everyday language but inerrantly and all-powerfully in the Scriptures flows directly and personally from Christ, the one-of-a-kind or only-begotten Word made flesh.

6. Thus, **the Logos Himself validates the first hermeneutic principle of Logos, *Nisi Per Verbum*, via the Word Alone in His own Scriptures.**

Note

A First Principle is discovered, not made up. It emerges from the phenomenon itself, from language in the case of our hermeneutic activity. A First Principle is the key, essential ingredient of a phenomenon without which the thing or activity cannot be what it is. For example, read Aristotle’s First Principle of Non-Contradiction in Metaphysics (1005b19–20 and 1011b13–20).

What is a first principle? A *first principle* is not “a good idea” or an arbitrary starting point of some sort. For example, Aristotle lights up the first principle of non-contradiction this way: “The same thing cannot be said both to be and not to be (a) for the same person or thing, (b) at the same time, and (c) in the same respect” (Metaphysics IV, 3, 1005b19–20, my paraphrase). If we insist on saying things that are contradictory, this will lead to the end of all communication. For another example, saying, “God’s Word is really a means of grace,” and saying “God’s Word is really nothing but semiotics” leads only to confusion and eventually makes theology impossible.

A first principle is not something that philosophers invent. First principles are discovered, not made. First principles are the *arche* (Greek), the living origin and substructure of human life, as we understand it. Language, for example. John 1:1, with John’s deployment of the Greek term *arche*, could be translated, “In first principle terms, the Logos already was.”

The second presupposition to be debunked is that oral language has priority over written language. This presupposition is an historical-critical, social science presupposition that still plagues biblical hermeneutic studies today. The irony is when Lutheran professors and authors, whom we expect to be thoroughly Christological in their teaching and writing, could ever invert this priority. Luther’s hermeneutic of the Scriptures alone and its basis *in the person of the incarnate Christ Himself* decisively rules out this presupposition. Indeed, the *sola Scriptura* hermeneutic flowing from John 1:14 reveals this presupposition to be in direct opposition to the person of Christ Himself.

Luther explored the mystery of Christ’s person under the concept of the *communicatio idiomatum*, the mutual exchange of divine and human attributes. From that vantage point the way God’s Word functions in its universal dimensions and especially its relationship to Holy Scripture becomes clear. Here lies the key to Luther’s theology of creation, his biblical hermeneutic, and not the least his understanding of the sacraments... All words take on new meaning when referred to [Christ], presupposing his presence.⁶

The theological claim that oral language has priority over written language is a senseless claim to begin with. That there may have been an oral tradition, for example, from the time of Adam and Eve until Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible and Psalm 90 is hermeneutically irrelevant. After the fulness of time and the completion of the New Testament (about 96 A.D.) such speculation is pointless, arrogant, and perilous (Revelation 22:18).

⁶ Kolb, Robert; Dingel, Irene; Batka, Lubomír, *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*, 152, 154.

Psalm 119 and Luther's Commentary⁷

In our first chapter, I explained that the book of Psalms is especially important for our hermeneutic of *sola Scriptura*, that is, understanding the Scriptures by means of the Scriptures alone, as Luther did—under the influence of God's words breathed out and into Moses and the Prophets (the Old Testament Scriptures) and the apostles and evangelists (the New Testament Scriptures). As one of those apostolic writers, Saint Paul, writes in the Scriptures, "Every scripture is inspired by God" (2 Timothy 3:16, NET). As the incarnate Logos, or Word Himself says in Scripture, the Writing, "It is these same scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39, NET).

There is something else that we discover—and are formed by—especially when praying the psalms. This something else is this: God wants *us* to be personally and constantly involved in conversation with Him. There is nothing abstract or theoretical about it. The word (in Hebrew it's usually a suffix in God's words) most used in Psalm 119 is "you" and "your," showing us how to pray to and be speaking with God in person. In the New Testament, as we know from His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us to pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven." As Luther taught in his Small Catechism, this means that He wants us to pray to Him "as dear children" speaking with "their dear Father." We have heard Luther say that the biblical book of Psalms is our Little Bible. We could say that the Lord's Prayer is the Little Psalms.

"Your" is one of the most frequent and significant words of the Psalm (cf. "Your salvation, ... lovingkindness, ... mercies, ... compassion, ... favor; Your faithfulness, ... righteousness; Your hands, ... mouth, ... face; Your name, You Yourself, Him"). That which is God's brings "blessing" and the one who is God's receives "blessing." The psalmist refers to himself as "Your servant." The psalm frequently parallels God Himself or one of His personal qualities related to salvation. The word "way" has 11 occurrences; "ways" 7 occurrences. The Hebrew, "derek" refers to overall path of life. God's ways are "blameless," "established," "pure," and "faithful;" they are also "sought," and "regarded." "My ways" (4) or "his way" (1) is compared or contrasted with "Your ways" (2) or "His ways" (1). The "false way" (3) or "evil way" (1) is something that the psalmist prays to be kept from. There are "wonderful things from Your law, v. 18; "meditate on Your wonders," v. 27, "Your testimonies are wonderful," v. 127.⁸

⁷ The excerpts in this section are from Martin Luther's Commentary on Psalm 119 in *Luther's Works*, vol. 11: First Lectures on the Psalms II: Psalms, 76-126.

⁸ Synonyms for "God's Word" in Psalm 119, a chart available online at BcResources.net. This is the chart I have excerpted just below. The complete chart is in Appendix C at the end of our textbook.

Selah, pause. In class we read and sing Psalm 119 together, but for now, be sure to read at least one stanza or section of this alphabetical psalm every day during our hermeneutics course, followed by reading from the matching section of Luther's commentary on Psalm 119. As part of your daily reading of this psalm, write out a one-page meditation.⁹

Psalm 119

The Eight Hebrew Words for “The Written Scriptures”

based on the NASB, the New American Standard Bible.¹⁰

TORAH

In NASB: law. In Psalm 119 there are 25 occurrences of the Hebrew, “torah” (vv. 1, 18, 29, 34, 44, 51, 53, 55, 61, 70, 72, 77, 85, 92, 97, 109, 113, 126, 136, 142, 150, 153, 163, 165, and 174). NASB consistently translates it as “law” in Psalm 119, but in Proverbs, etc., it is often translated “instruction” or “teachings.”

DABAR

In NASB: word, words, (answer). Psalm 119 uses the Hebrew, “dabar” 24 times. NASB translates it as “word” or “words” in vv. 9, 16, 17, 25, 28, 42 (cf. also “answer”), 43, 49, 57, 65, 74, 81, 89, 101, 105, 107, 114, 130, 139, 147, 160, 161, and 169. The translation “answer,” in v. 42, concerns the psalmist's response, not God's Word. Since the NASB also translates the Hebrew word *imrah* by word, words, these must be distinguished.

EDAH

In NASB: testimonies, Testimony. In Psalm 119 there are 24 occurrences of the Hebrew, dah” and “edot.” NASB translates as “testimonies” in vv. 2, 14, 22, 24, 31, 36, 46, 59, 79, 88, 95, 99, 111, 119, 125, 129, 138, 144, 146, 152, 157, 167, and 168; “testimony” in v. 86. It is judgments, judgment, justice, manner In Psalm 119 there are 23 occurrences of the Hebrew, “mishpat.” NASB translates as ordinances, 16x (vv. 13, 20, 30, 39, 43, 52, 62, 91, 102, 106, 108, 156, 160, 164, 175); judgments, 4x (vv. 7, 75, 120, 137); judgment, 1x (v. 84); justice, 1x (v. 121); manner, 1x (v. 132).

MITSVAH

In NASB: commandments, commandment. In Psalm 119 there are 21 occurrences of the Hebrew, “mitzvah.” NASB translates as “commandments” (vv. 6, 10, 19, 21, 32, 35, 47, 48, 60, 66, 73, 86, 98, 115, 127, 131, 143, 151, 166, and 172); “commandment” (v. 96).

CHOQ

In NASB: statutes. Psalm 119 uses the Hebrew, “choq” 21 times. NASB consistently translates as “statutes” (vv. 5, 8, 12, 23, 26, 33, 48, 54, 64, 68, 71, 80, 83, 112, 117, 118, 124, 135, 145, 155, and 171. NIV translates choq as “decrees”.

⁹ Remember, for Luther's Commentary on Psalm 119 you will want to use Luther's Works, vol. 11: First Lectures on the Psalms II: Psalms 76-126 from the sets of Luther's Works on both the first and second floors of our LST Library.

¹⁰ The complete chart from which I adapted this chart is our Appendix C. Synonyms for “God's Word” in Psalm 119.

when he speaks of them. People turn to him because they fear God in knowing His testimonies. He is protected from enemies who diligently seek to destroy him. They are associated with the removal of the wicked from the earth (v. 119).

MISHPATIM

In NASB: ordinances, PIQQUDIM. In NASB: precepts Psalm 119 uses the Hebrew “piqqudim” 21 times (4, 15, 27, 40, 45, 56, 63, 69, 78, 87, 93, 94, 100, 104, 110, 128, 134, 141, 159, 168, and 173). The only OT occurrences outside Psalm 119 are also in the Psalms (19:8, 103:18, and 111:7).

IMRAH

In NASB: word, words. In Psalm 119 there are 19 occurrences of the Hebrew, “imrah” (cf. amar, to say). NASB consistently translates as word, or words (vv. 11, 38, 41, 50, 58, 67, 76, 82, 103, 116, 123, 133, 140, 148, 154, 158, 162, 170, 172).

Most occurrences are here in Psalm 119. Since dabar is also translated as word, words by NASB, the two must be distinguished.

Luther’s Hermeneutic of the Scriptures Alone on Psalm 119, TAV

Our first piece of Luther’s commentary on Psalm 119 is from the concluding stanza of the psalm, in which every verse begins with the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. One thing that we do not want to miss is that Luther concludes his commentary—much the way we pastors conclude our sermons—by emphasizing the most important feature of this long, meditative psalm-prayer: *the Word incarnate*.

TAV, or the Z stanza (Psalm 119:169-176, excerpted)

173. *Let Thy hand be with me to save me, for I have chosen Thy precepts.* “I have ordered my mouth not to speak the works of men but to declare only Your commandments, which are righteous and just, and these I have chosen. Therefore, let Your hand be with me to save me.” So it was said of old in the prophets: “And the hand of the Lord was there upon him (Ezek. 1:3). Therefore, this doing can be understood as being said relative to the promise, as if to say: “Your Word and promise were done thus far, but may also the hand and the finished work be there, for this will save me.” And this was done in ***the gracious incarnation of the Son of God***.

174. *I have longed for Thy salvation, O Lord, and Thy law is my meditation.* It is not given to the disdainful. “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matt. 5:6). “But he fills the hungry with good things, and sends the rich away empty” (Luke 1:53). “Everyone who asks, receives, and he who seeks, finds” (Matt. 7:8). What else follows from

this but that he who does not ask does not receive and that he who does not seek does not find? But he who longs, seeks, and hungers for God's salvation without doubt disdains, is fed up with, and hisses off what is of the world. The flesh is tasteless to him because he savors the spirit. O happy craving, blessed thirst, and holy hunger, for it will be abundantly satisfied and become Elizabeth (that is, the fullness of God [this is how Jerome translates the meaning of the name Elizabeth into Latin]). On the contrary, unhappy fullness, for it will hunger eternally.

By learning our hermeneutic from the psalms, we are following what Luther preached, namely, that all that the apostles taught and wrote, they took out of the Old Testament (Luther, CHRISTmas Sermon, 2). When Luther preached about all the apostles taught and wrote he is including the apostolic hermeneutic, along with all the content of the Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament.

The two testaments are part of the same fabric. The eight particular Hebrew terms in this psalm for the written Word of God, such as *pic'cudim* in verse 173, are repeated again and again, but they all have to do with the Gospel, the written promise of God. That's why Luther writes about "the gracious incarnation of the Son of God" as he concludes his commentary.¹¹

Every use of every one of these eight Hebrew words—each word is used over twenty times in Psalm 119—is hammering home the divine power of the written words of God. Taking King David as the author, four hundred years later the prophet Jeremiah must have been thinking of these pounding words when, in the hermeneutic chapter of his book he wrote down what the Lord told him to preach to the Jewish people before the Babylonian Captivity:

"Do not listen to what those lying prophets are saying to you... which of them has ever stood in the LORD's inner circle so they could see and hear what he has to say? Which of them has ever paid attention or listened to what he has said?

"... Let the person who has received my message report that message faithfully. What is straw cannot compare to what is like grain! I, the LORD affirm it! My message is like a fire that purges dross. It is like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces... I, the LORD, so affirm it! So I the LORD affirm that I am opposed to those prophets who steal messages from one another that they claim are from me... I did not send them. I did not commission them. They are not helping this people at all. I, the LORD, affirm it!" (Jeremiah 23:16-32).

¹¹ For an apologetic or 1 Peter 3:15 perspective on the incarnate Christ as Verba with many tie-ins to our hermeneutical work, see Jeremy Holmes, *Cur Deus Verba: Why the Word became Words* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006).

Of course, this brings to mind the careless and reckless hermeneutic heresies of our previous chapter. But mostly and gloriously, it brings to heart and mind the meaning of words written down by God's inspiration. "I, the LORD, affirm it!" In our thesis passage you can hear the LORD in the fulfillment of the promise written and affirmed by God in his Scriptures for more than 1500 years beforehand: "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us" (John 1:14, TLV)

Luther's Hermeneutic of the Scriptures Alone from Psalm 119, *ALEPH*

For our second part of Luther's commentary on Psalm 119, this long psalm all about the written Word of God, here are his opening comments on how to understand or interpret these words from and about the Word incarnate. This is where we learn more of the particulars of the *sola Scriptura* hermeneutic, primarily what Luther calls "the prophetic or literal sense" of the biblical texts. I have added underlining and bold print to Luther's text so that you can see the hermeneutic levels which the Word includes.

ALEPH, or the A stanza (Psalm 119:1-8, excerpted)

1. *Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord. I have not yet seen this psalm expounded by anyone in a prophetic sense, nor is there anyone who has kept the sequence and order of exposition in it without doing violence to and twisting the verses and words. I think this comes about because they did not seek **first the prophetic, that is, the literal sense**, which is the foundation of the rest, the master and light, the author and fountain and origin; but perhaps more so because the sense is hidden and speaks very much in the inward spirit, whence its cause and motivation, why the psalmist has spoken and arranged it in such a way and not otherwise, cannot be seen by those who do not have the same motives. For no one understands another in spiritual writings unless he savors and possesses the same spirit. But we, having now called upon the arm of the Lord, will examine the prophecy. This will be easier than to hunt for the moral dispositions one by one. They are in any case "the ways of a man in youth," of which we are utterly ignorant (Prov. 30:18-19). Youth, I say, which is the soul itself, devoted in spirit, or spiritual through Scripture. In both it is the incomprehensible way of Christ, that is, holy inclinations, how many, when, in what manner, and to what extent they might be on the way.*

Therefore I believe that the Holy Spirit has reserved the full moral understanding of this psalm to Himself.

Therefore the prophet looks with spiritual eyes at the law of Moses and sees hidden and enclosed in it the law of faith, the Gospel of grace, and the invisible things promised, like the kernel under the shell or the treasure under the ground, as the Lord says: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field" (Matt. 13:44), that is, in the toilsome letter, which is the "bread of anxious toil" (Ps. 127:2). He asks that this secret be removed and this hidden thing be brought forth into the light, speaking throughout the psalm in a relative way and speaking and distinguishing by way of comparison between the old and the new law. *Blessed are those whose way is blameless*, as if to say: "We are all on some way, namely, the way of Moses and the letter and human righteousness, according to which we appear without spot in the eyes of men, and yet within we are full of every stain, because we do not have the righteousness of faith and the law of the spirit, according to which we would be undefiled. But now before God we are defiled, however much we may be on the way of the literal law. But blessed are all the spiritual people of Israel, for their way is blameless, since they are those *Who walk in the law of the Lord*, not in the law of Moses or of man. But here we must note first of all that the law of Moses is not evil or defiled in itself, but because the scribes who did not understand and teach it with the spirit make it defiled. For the law of Moses has both, the signifying letter and the spirit signified by the letter. And all who have taken it as signifying and as a figure of things to come are and were truly blessed. Thus Gal. 3:23 says: "We were confined under the Law, shut up unto that faith which was to be revealed." He does not say "unto that law which had been given," but "unto that faith which was promised by the Law as still to be revealed." Therefore, since the Jews isolated and put aside this spirit and did not take the Law as signifying, but as fulfilling and sufficient, they are defiled on the way, as the Lord says through Ezek. 20:26, 30: "I polluted them on their ways," that is, "I regard them as polluted and not undefiled in their letter, because they have put aside the cleanness of the spirit."

And this is the uncleanness of that woman, the synagogue, because of which Christ gave her a bill of divorce, and it is indeed a great uncleanness and defilement. But the commandment of the Lord is undefiled and makes people blessed and undefiled. ***Allegorically*** their imitators are those who, though not putting aside Christ nor faith in Him, as the Jews do, and though they not deny Him or faith in Him, yet they do deny the truth of the faith and the truth of Christ. As the Jews did not deny Christ as man, yet did deny the divinity in Christ, which alone makes Christ out of this man (as if someone were to deny the spirit of man, though ac-

knowledging his body, he would despise him nevertheless); so the heretics do not deny the way of faith, and yet they deny its whole innermost power and spirit. And they have a faith and a gospel that is dead and literal, therefore they also are defiled on that way of theirs. For their faith in Christ is indeed a way, but because it is a dead way, and they have only the words which we have, they despise our meaning. These words together with their grammatical significance are like the flesh of Christ without the divinity, the letter without the spirit, altogether vain and empty. But the true meaning and theological significance in them is like the divinity in the flesh of Christ, the spirit in the letter, the soul in the body, the life in things and the honey in the honeycomb, the kernel in the shell, the wine in the vessel, the oil in the lamps.

Third, in **a moral sense**: Their imitators are all the proud, especially the disobedient ones, who, by neglecting that to which they are held, pursue their own holiness and their own idea. These and all those previously mentioned the angel who transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14) ridicules. They have the words and faith of Christ, which is like the flesh of Christ, but they do not have the truth of the faith, because they do not have obedience and humility in such faith. They prefer their own great things to the little and lowly things that obedience commands. And therefore they also are defiled with the worst kind of stain, however much they may be on the way, having the appearance of godliness but denying its power (2 Tim. 3:5). Therefore whatever work we do without relation to obedience is defiled. For just as the synagogue was held to perform its works in ceremonies, sacrifices, and washings with a view to Christ who was to come and perfect them, at least implicitly, and not to exclude Christ, as if they were righteous and sufficient before God by their own works, so the heretics are held to perform all their works in relation to the fellowship of the church, so that they do not exclude it, as though in separation outside the church and without it they could be pleasing and saved by their own merits. Thus anyone who is disobedient and of his own mind is held to perform his own righteousness in relation to obedience and commandment, so that he in no way excludes it nor trusts that anything he does apart from it and without it will be pleasing to God.

Otherwise he will be self-sufficient, superstitious, in fact, an idolater. Therefore let the religious devotees especially look out for themselves that they do not trust in their own private and secret devotions, if they are indolent, lukewarm, negligent, or disobedient in those things which belong to the convent and are common . . . “Does the Lord want sacrifice and not rather that His voice should be obeyed? For obedience is better than sacrifice, etc.,” as we have it in 1 Sam. 15:22. This is turning robbery into a holocaust, which the Lord hates (Is. 61:8). And these threefold men

are rebuked throughout this psalm . . . they turn away from His commandments and are censured concerning pride (v. 21). And below: “The proud have acted iniquitously” (v. 51).

In this portion of Luther’s commentary, we see three levels of interpretation, that is, three levels of hermeneutics. They are (1) the prophetic or literal level, (2) the allegorical level, and (3) the moral level. Elsewhere we learn about a fourth level, (4) the *anagoge* or overall analogical level, which we have already begun to learn about in our study of the analogy of faith and analogical thinking in our first chapter.

The different levels or ways of interpreting the Scriptures were a checklist for Bible commentators, but the first item in the list, the prophetic or literal level, is the essential element of the Lutheran hermeneutic of the Word alone. Here is a complete enumeration of how the checklist worked for medieval interpreters. I’ve translated and updated the medieval list for the twenty-first century. You may feel that the medieval list sounds like another language you have to learn, but it is straightforward and thorough. If you’re interested in talking more about the virtue of listing one’s hermeneutic steps this way, please ask me for my World War II story of the B-17 Checklist and how it helped improve surgery outcomes first in Africa and later in the United States!

Luther’s Hermeneutic of the Scriptures Alone from Psalm 119, *BETH*

In our third excerpt Luther writes in biblical detail about *the hermeneutic attitude* from our first two chapters. I’ve added underlining to help you notice Luther’s and David’s references to the heart in relation to mind, and how the emotional aspect of our human consciousness is affected by Christ’s written words, the Scriptures.

BETH, or the B stanza (Psalm 119:9-16, excerpted)

10. With my whole heart have I sought Thee. Let me not stray from Thy commandments. What “the whole heart” and “seeking” means was said above in connection with verse 2. It means to seek nothing of one’s own thought or will. Hence there is a big difference between “seeking with the whole mind” and “seeking with the whole heart.” The mind is intelligence, or what the apostle calls mind (*sensus*) in 1 Cor. 2:16: “We have the mind of Christ,” that is, νοῦν in Greek, which is the mind or understanding in the Scriptures. So also elsewhere He admonishes us to be of one mind (Rom. 12:16; Phil. 2:2). Therefore, to seek the Lord with the whole mind means to savor nothing of one’s own thought but to take the intellect captive to the obedience of Christ and of any prelate or

The List of Four Hermeneutic Ways of Interpreting the Written Scriptures

Medieval and Reformation Century levels of exegesis, from Christ's Hebrew and Greek Scriptures:

The **letter** shows what God and our fathers did.

The **allegory** shows us where our faith is hid.

The **moral meaning** gives us rules of daily life.

The **anagoge** shows us where we end our strife.

—Luther's Genesis Lectures, Genesis 2:7 (*Luther's Works*, Vol 1, footnote page 87)

Contemporary levels of exegesis, from Christ's Hebrew and Greek Scriptures:

Literally, or word-for-word in their Verbum context, the Scriptures chronicle the actions of God and our fathers.

Allegorically, or by different metaphors, the Scriptures reform our hearts and minds.

Morally, or with ethical authority, the Scriptures motivate us emotionally.

Analogically, or by participating in God's analogical teaching, the Scriptures recreate us personally. ← *Note well!*

In summary, the Scriptures are literally and analogically efficacious, that is, they are omnipotent and ontically effective. Therefore, we must be utterly attentive to the Word's wording.

Key

Exegesis means "bringing from the text, or interpreting the Scriptures" and so it is a synonym for Luther's hermeneutic of the Scriptures alone, but not for the false hermeneutics of our second chapter.

brother. "The heart," however, is the very power of desiring, namely, the will, in which love is, as knowing is in the mind, there, affection, here, understanding. Hence also our people rightly and in agreement say "with the whole intellect and affection" for what Scripture calls "with the whole mind and also with the whole heart." Thus the Lord says: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21). There without doubt He wanted to express and teach love by the term "heart."

[Corollary.] Hence it follows that “the whole heart” is spoken of in a twofold way. First, that there is nothing of one’s own will present, as there is in the heretics and Jews, who worship God with a great heart and want nothing evil but worship according to their own will, nevertheless. Second, when it is full and perfect, not slack and lukewarm. Thus in common usage we generally say that what happens with the most ardent will happen with the whole heart. But this is the moral sense rather than the literal. But the first sense is literal, when someone worships God with the whole heart, even if he worships languidly, if only he does not choose according to his own will what he offers to the Lord. Although the second could also be reduced to the first in such a way that every lukewarm worshiper at least negatively seeks something from his own feeling. But it is much less than the former, because it is negative and pertains to sloth as often as to the weakness of the soul. But the second is positive and pertains to pride. As the blessed Virgin says: “He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart” (Luke 1:51), that is, those who are proud from the imagination of their heart, those who are proud from their idea and understanding, which they themselves love and to which they are attached. Concerning them Ps. 4:2–3 says: “O sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity (that is, why do you have your heart and feeling in your vain mind and understanding, which is a lie nevertheless)? Know (that is, understand), etc.”

Similarly, we speak of the whole mind in a twofold way: First, when we follow or establish nothing of our own idea, but humbly accept and prefer the sense of the Lord and of another, and this is the literal meaning of “with the whole mind.” Second, in a moral sense, when with a perfect and most pure understanding we savor and understand Christ, not in a lax and imperfect way. Therefore, it is clear that God’s commandment about loving Him with the whole mind is given not according to the moral mode but according to the first and literal sense. ... the meaning is: “Behold, I have been turned back and have corrected my way by Your words. And I have sought You with my whole heart, so that You may not as for the rest let me relapse into former and accustomed things, that You may not drive me away, so that I may ever relapse again. But give perseverance in the good purpose which I now have.” And the next verse explains this:

11. Thy words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee. This means: “Behold, I have purposed to serve You with my whole heart. Therefore, I have imprinted Your words on my heart, so that I may no longer sin against them, as I did formerly.” Rightly, therefore, he asks for the help of grace before he proposes. First he says, “Do not drive me away,” and then “because I have hidden and set forth Your words.” For

what we propose is nothing, unless the grace of God disposes it.

12. *Blessed art Thou, O Lord; teach me Thy statutes*, namely, “You who do not drive away and who assist my purpose.” Again, “because You, the Blessed One, bestow blessing, I want to be taught by You, for You are such a lawgiver who gives blessing. You command and grant the grace of fulfilling what You command. You give the Law and at the same time also its fulfillment. Not so Moses: Such a lawgiver did not bestow blessing but curse. For the Law works wrath (Rom. 4:15) and curses those who do not fulfill it. Therefore, I ask to be taught blessed statutes by the Blessed One and to be blessed. These are words that must be hidden in the heart, because they are spiritual. But the words of Moses were displayed on lips and in phylacteries, because they were literal and therefore without blessing.

13. *With my lips I have pronounced all the judgments of Thy mouth. It is not enough to believe with the heart unto righteousness, unless confession unto salvation is also made with the mouth (Rom. 10:10).* . . .

Therefore, it is no small boasting and the courage of a happy presumption to say: “With my lips I have pronounced all the judgments of Thy mouth.” Only those do this who have been taught with blessing and who have hidden the words of God, so that they may not sin against God. Therefore, I beg you, see the individual words: “With my lips,” because, as I have said, many easily reprove in their heart the vices of others which they see but do not dare to do it also with their lips. . . .

Fifth, “judgments,” which are the words of reproof and of the cross of Christ, in which is contained what evils of guilt must be avoided for the purpose of preserving righteousness and which evils of punishment must be borne for the sake of righteousness and Christ. So the Gospel judges, that is, reprove, sins so that they may be avoided, and chastises the old man that the righteousness of the inner man may make progress. And the things that pertain to these two in the Gospel are judgments, because they condemn sins and the flesh of sin. Sixth, “Of Thy mouth,” that is, “prescribed and pretaught by You, O Lord Christ.” For we should not rebuke and judge anyone out of our own head or thought, but according to the Gospel. There it is sufficiently stated what is to be avoided and what is to be endured, so that it is not necessary to stir up our passions for the reproof of another. For we easily get off the track, and therefore the words of Christ must be taken up. And thus it is clear for what reason the words of the Gospel and of the cross of Christ are called “judgments.” But “words” (sermones) are those which teach what blessings have been bestowed on us and which are still to be conferred, namely, concerning grace and mercy in the soul and the spiritual inner man, as he says below

(v. 42), “I have trusted in Thy words,” namely, concerning the grace manifested and the glory promised.

14. I have delighted in the way of Thy testimonies, as in all riches. They, in turn, are called “testimonies,” because they testify concerning future goods. They are not exhibitions of things present, but testimonies of things to come, and therefore they cause faith to be the substance of things to come, not of things that appear (Heb. 11:1). Thus, the grace of God did not yet appear to the ancients, but it was prophesied. And to us it does not yet appear what we shall be (1 John 3:2), but we have the testimonies about them. Or the words of the old law are called “testimonies” spiritually understood, which testify to nothing but only the Christ who was to come, as the words of the new law testify the coming glory. But in both, yes, in their way is delight, because exercise in them calms the conscience, etc. For this reason, as I said above, the whole psalm is nothing but a petition that the spiritual law be revealed and the letter be removed, that the spirit be brought forth and the veil taken away and the face appear, that Christ come and Moses pass away. As he says below (v. 58), “I entreated Thy face,” that is, “Your advent. Let the Law cease and grace reign; let sin be finished and righteousness begin.” Therefore he exclaimed, “Blessed are those whose way is blameless.” For the Law is not without spot, but the spirit of the Law is itself holy and undefiled. Ps. 19:7: “The law of the Lord is undefiled.”

15. I will meditate on Thy precepts, and I will consider Thy ways. This “meditating” means to speak and discuss, as we will say below. Therefore he wants to say that he will be in the coming law of the Lord not only in deed, but in the mouth and in the mind.

16. Besides, I will think of Thy statutes; I will not forget Thy words, “even if I would neither speak nor do them,” as in the case of those who are in prisons and chains, as below.¹³

Selah, let us pause again. Here is how to become at home with Luther’s hermeneutic and truly enjoy using it for your own meditating and teaching and preaching. First, after reading Psalm 119 two times, go back and see if you can find the word that is repeated the most times. It’s the word “you,” but be sure to confirm that by reading for yourself. The psalm is a word-for-word prayer from Christ the incarnate Word given to you to read and pray back to Him word-for-word—just like the Lord’s Prayer in the New Testament. In the Lord’s Prayer Jesus teaches us to pray to God as “our Father who art in heaven.” In Psalm 119, written by King David one thousand years earlier, he teaches us to pray to God as “you.”

Secondly, select one word from our chart The Eight Hebrew Words for “the Written Scriptures”—such as *Torah*, etc. and see if you can figure out which English word in each stanza or each alphabet section is translating that selected word.

Finally, and most importantly, do your reading and writing with the attitude of Christ Jesus as Saint Paul writes in Philippians 2. This is necessary for practicing a proper hermeneutic. As we have learned from John 1:14, the incarnation of the Word changes everything. This includes words and language. The incarnation is relevant to us, personally and in real time. Luther’s new ontology is real.

All words take on new meaning when referred to [Christ], presupposing his presence ... That involves not only new designations for what exists, which retains its characteristics. Rather, the relationship with Christ adds something essential to creatures. By the power of the Word they are more and different than what they had taken themselves to be, what they appeared to be. When Luther appropriates rhetorical figures of speech such as metaphor and synecdoche, as he does especially in his doctrine of the sacraments, he continually stresses their reality. He is concerned with transformations and associations which take place in the reality of the creation. It is renewed because it is placed in a network of new relationships: God in Jesus Christ enters this reality and makes himself present sacramentally.¹³

The words of Christ, the incarnate Word, change our hearts and minds, our attitude and our thinking. As we learn in our next, final chapter, the very grammar of God’s Word is the grammar of His kingdom. In the fourth chapter we also learn more about Luther’s rhetoric of the heart. But first, a few words concerning how to relate to the work of textual criticism, which I recommend thinking of as text sorting.

Hermeneutical Consequences

There are two consequences or outcomes of the Lutheran hermeneutic of the Word and Christ’s personal or real presence in the Scriptures, the wordings of the Word. The first is Luther’s very practical, very pastoral Three Rules of Language, often taught in their Latin words: *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio*.

Luther’s esteem for language and linguistic disciplines was ultimately

¹³ Luther, M. *Luther’s Works*, vol. 11: First Lectures on the Psalms II: Psalms 76-126, J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, eds. (Concordia Publishing House, 1995), 414–422). Keep in mind (and heart!) that the three samples of Luther’s commentary in this chapter are only excerpts or abbreviations of *Luther’s Works*.

grounded in the fact that the subject of theology is comprehended in language. Knowledge of God becomes concrete through hearing and understanding God's Word in human language. The almost axiomatic [meaning "rule-like"] presupposition of Luther's theology presumed that God lets himself be "publicly heard" and "in our human language" offers "to be our God." The basic rules which Luther formulated for studying theology are thus essentially instructions for proper use of language. God is recognized when human beings call on him in prayer (*oratio*), meditate on his Word, as recorded in Holy Scripture (*meditatio*), and rely on his truth despite conflicting experiences (*tentatio*). Engaging the Word embraces and permeates all of life.

Since Luther conceived of theological study under these three rules, he simultaneously clung to experiences which demonstrate that this Word really is true in engaging the biblical Word. The norm, expressed in the form of rules, is grounded in the authority of the Bible, in its own efficacy. Luther found especially the Psalter, most especially Psalm 119, had coined this trio of *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio*. Just as these rules arise from the daily engagement with the psalms in monastic prayer-life, so they aim at fostering use of the biblical Word, now indeed in the boundless, contradictory experience of life outside the monastery.

Together these rules form something like instructions for how to use the Word. The actions and attitudes they recommend are so presented that in using the Word its own power and truth can unfold. Prayer aims at having the person oriented towards "the true master of Scripture," letting the author of Scripture himself speak, instead of exalting one's own reason as "master." Talking with God means first: hearing God's Word in the form of his promise (*promissio*) and his command (*praeceptum*) and responding as it were, "handing [the Word] over," back to him.¹⁴

A second consequence, or a related consequence of the Real Presence of Christ in the Scriptures has to do with *textual criticism*. Since the words *critical* and *criticism* in modern hermeneutics have undertones of the false hermeneutic of the historical-critical method, I teach this as *textual sorting* rather than textual criticism. This is an opportunity to see why footnotes such as the following need not affect anyone reading the Bible, making them doubt the omnipotence and trustworthiness of the written Scriptures:

John 7:53—8:11 is not contained in the earliest and best manuscripts and was almost certainly not an original part of the Gospel of John; one group of manuscripts places it after Luke 21:38 (NET).

¹⁴ Kolb, Robert; Dingel, Irene; Batka, Lubomir. *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology* (Oxford Handbooks), 154.

Matthew 6:13—“NU-Text omits *For Yours* through *Amen*” (NKJV).

These notes are not about translating the biblical text; rather, they are about certain words or, in the case of the woman caught in adultery and in the case of the familiar doxology to our Lord’s Prayer, certain words not being part of the inspired text of the Scriptures in the first place.

The “problem” is a problem with *manuscripts* or handwritten copies of the handwritten originals of the Old and New Testaments. For example,

The materials that the writers of the New Testament used are named by John: ink and paper (2 John 12; 3 John 13). The pens were cut from the stems of reeds; the ink used was black, as its Greek name indicates. The paper used at that time was manufactured from the pith of the papyrus plant, chiefly found in Egypt. The pith was cut into thin strips, which were then pressed or glued together in two layers laid crosswise. This material was quite fragile and therefore perishable. No book made of papyrus endured for a century, even if used only occasionally...

In the early days, Romans and Greeks made up their “books” by gluing the leaves together along the edges so as to form one long strip, which was then wound around a stick of wood. The Jews also used this process of binding. (See Luke 4:17; Jesus unrolled the book!)... We do not possess a single manuscript copy of the New Testament in this form. Before the fourth century, it must have been common practice to bind the manuscript leaves together in the book form with which we are now familiar, because all the major manuscripts now known have this form and are called codices.¹⁵

Regarding those brief comments in the footnotes in John and Matthew, there are two aspects of the manuscripts of the Scriptures, plus one observation regarding the Old Testament, that demonstrate why our hearts and minds can be at rest and not worry that there is a Great Rift between God’s Word and us in the handing down of God’s Scriptures from generation to generation.

First, when working with this “problem of written words,” we do well to remember that copying the Scriptures is better than having them in a printed book or in a data system. Think of the way we do things in Africa. Books are expensive and data is too, so we do almost all of our homework writing by hand. But the main advantage in writing out our notes, our translations, and parts of the Bible in our handwriting is that we learn better. God clearly had this in mind when told Moses to write down the first thing that every king of

¹⁵ For this quote and for much more about these manuscripts or codices of the New Testament, see John Schaller, *Book of Books: A Brief Introduction to the Bible*, Second Edition (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 2002), 337-339. For an explanation of what are called “variant readings”—readings with footnotes in our Bible, such as the footnotes to John 7:53–8:11 and Matthew 6:13, see 341-346.

Israel had to do as soon as he was anointed.

When he sits on his royal throne, he must make a copy of this law on a scroll given to him by the Levitical priests. It must be with him constantly, and he must read it as long as he lives, so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and observe all the words of this law and these statutes and carry them out. Then he will not exalt himself above his fellow citizens or turn from the commandments to the right or left, and he and his descendants will enjoy many years ruling over his kingdom in Israel (Deuteronomy 17:18-20).

What's good for the kings of Israel is good for us today!

Second, in text sorting we often say, "No variation among the manuscripts ever affects doctrine." This is because the Bible is not a collection of different teachings. Rather, the Scriptures are one unified doctrine. This is why our incarnate Lord commanded us before His ascension to baptize all nations and "teach them to obey *everything* I have commanded you." Related to this, the variations in the written texts handed down to us emphasize God's personal involvement, not only inspiring the exact words of His Hebrew and Greek testaments, but with getting the Word to all people in making the Word available to everyone, no matter what happens in the world.

Far from justifying any anxiety on our part, the multitude of variant readings, properly considered, serves to emphasize that God took special precautions to preserve his precious Word by causing so many copies to be made that could not possibly be all destroyed, even in the days when fierce enemies of the Christian faith tried to do so.¹⁶

Suppose that we in Africa had only one copy of the Bible, handed down from the Holy Land to Egypt and Ethiopia and kept in the library of our School in Kimuka, Kenya for everyone to come and read. Imagine that angry atheists or Muslims or other foreigners came and burned down everything, including that one Bible. Suppose that the original books of Scripture, the autographs written by Moses, David and the prophets or by the evangelists and apostles were burned before any copies were made. But neither of these calamities has ever been possible. The Lord God saw to it—and still sees to it today—that His words will never pass away.

As we move on to the explanation of our two New Testament textual matters, a brief word about the trustworthiness of the Old Testament text (OT) as well. Beginning in my seminary days almost fifty years ago, the Hebrew text that I

¹⁶ John Schaller, *Book of Books*, 345.

have been using is a Masoretic text. The Masoretes are scribal families who lived from about 500-1000 A.D. The Masoretes (their work is called *Masorah* in Hebrew) have given us a multi-generational text that helps us to read Hebrew aloud properly, and more. They provide us with specialized notes (not part of the inspired Hebrew text) about the Hebrew texts themselves. For example,

Some OT books or sections conclude with “specialized information about the number of words in the book (or section), the middle word of the book, the middle consonant, and so forth.” The data of the Masorah provided quality control to prevent any additions or subtractions from the text. The accents and vowels preserved the correct reading and intonation of the text.¹⁷

Mass produced books and data files today do not have such quality control, nor the likelihood of enduring anywhere nearly as the Masoretic text has.

Now to the note that John 7:53—8:11 is not contained in the earliest and best manuscripts and was almost certainly not an original part of the Gospel of John. This is *A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament* by Bruce Metzger, an old edition from my college years.

The evidence for the non-Johannine origin of the pericope of the adulteress is overwhelming. It is absent from such early and diverse manuscripts such as [many codices, Alexandrian, Western, Caesarean, and Byzantine Witnesses are referred]... At the same time the account has all the earmarks of historical veracity ...¹⁸

In other words, the incident happened and has been written down. It’s just that it is not an original part of John’s Gospel. This makes many of us think of John’s final note in his Gospel, “this is the disciple who testifies about these things and has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. There are many other things that Jesus did. If every one of them was written down, I suppose the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written” (John 21:24-25).

As to the note that Matthew 6:13—“NU-Text omits *For Yours* through *Amen*.” NU-Text refers to the Alexandrian or Egyptian kind of text found in the two Greek New Testament editions published by Nestle-Aland (N) and the United Bible Society (U).

Most mss (L W Δ Θ 0233 f13 33 565 579 700 1241 1424 Maj sy sa Didache)

¹⁷ Amy Anderson and Wendy Widder, *Textual Criticism of the Bible*, Revised Edition (Bellingham, Washington: Lexham Press, 2018), 58-60.

¹⁸ Amy Anderson and Wendy Widder, *Textual Criticism of the Bible*, 59-60.

read (though some with slight variation) ὅτι σοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν (“for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, amen”) here. The reading without this sentence, though, is attested by generally better witnesses κ) B D Z 0170 f1 lat mae Or). The phrase was probably composed for the liturgy of the early church and most likely was based on 1 Chr 29:11-13; a scribe probably added the phrase at this point in the text for use in public scripture reading (see *TCGNT* 13-14). Both external and internal evidence argue for the shorter reading.¹⁹

Notice the extremely careful and very disciplined text sorting from written copies down the centuries in the listing of the particular hand copies. Again, it is not that the Doxology to the Lord’s Prayer was made up; it’s just that it was inserted into the Gospel sometime after the first century, after the century when the entire God-breathed New Testament was complete. A pastoral recommendation. The NET which I used for this quote about the conclusion of our Lord’s Prayer is a Bible translation that includes commentaries about the Old and New Testament textual variations along with its helpful translation notes, the New English Translation (NET). For most of us, for defending the faith and for proving the word-for-word inerrancy and trustworthiness of the Hebrew and Greek texts of God’s Word in pastoral ministry and in the classroom, the NET textual commentaries in its margins will probably be all that we need.

Next, and finally, we are ready for our fourth chapter. These first three chapters have been mostly about the first part of our mission statement at the Lutheran School of Theology in Kenya, which is personal formation by the Scriptures: to “form African Lutherans to be teachers of the faith.” Our final chapter centers on the second part of the mission, *teaching* the one true faith.

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*Let my cry reach You, LORD;
give me understanding according to Your word.
Let my plea reach you;
rescue me according to your promise.
—Psalm 119:169-170, TAV*

¹⁹ *New English Translation, Full Translation Edition*, free and completely searchable online with full notes on translation, text and background (Biblical Studies Press). This particular note is available side-by-side with the text of Matthew, chapter 6.

Chapter Four

The Grammar of Christ's Word is the Grammar of His Kingdom

The means for fruitfully accomplishing [the proper preaching and teaching of the Scriptures] are analyses: grammatical analysis, logical analysis, and rhetorical analysis. At this point one must think about moving the passions, because, as Augustine said, "It is not only the sacred orator's duty to teach, but also to persuade and move hearts." —Wilhelm Loehe, *The Pastor*, 341-342.

In Chapter One we saw that language is primordial. That is, language was already there, in the beginning, before the LORD God created Adam and Eve on the first Friday of our world. And we saw that language is everlasting, since Jesus' words will never pass away. We learned about the ontic or ontological change in our sinful being that the Incarnate Word works through His everlasting words, the verbatim words of His written Scriptures. In Chapter Two we deconstructed or debunked four hollow and deceptive hermeneutics to better understand Luther's *sola Scriptura* hermeneutic. In Chapter Three we discovered the Personal Presence of God in the Scriptures, the incarnate Word of God, in His Scripture—by following Luther's hermeneutic and his hermeneutic attitude as he unpacked Psalm 119, an entire chapter about the written words of God.

Language is and has always been a divine gift of God, and because the Word of God, the Scriptures, recreate us—as we see in Luther's new ontology and his Three Rules of Meditating, Praying, and Suffering in the Word alone—all language is performative. That is, even everyday language is not static but effective, whereas Scripture inerrantly functions this way by virtue of the incarnate Word's presence, "living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow... able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

Language, as we conclude in the last pages of this last chapter, is our metaphysics, our ultimate foundation. As we discovered in our previous chapter, especially from Psalm 119 and Luther's commentary, the written language of the Scriptures has priority over everyday language because it is the verbatim wording of the Word of God incarnate.

But in our hermeneutic study, we cannot ignore the second part of the gift of language, our everyday language and the factor of our essential being as language or logos beings. Our everyday language can be used to lie and deceive, to slander others, even to take the name of the LORD our God in vain. As

Luther teaches us all in the Small Catechism, we should consider our places in life according to the Ten Commandments, where we see the failure—not of language itself, but our failures and transgressions against this divine gift of language. In old Latin sayings we are taught “The greater the gift, the greater the potential for abuse” and “The abuse of a gift does not authorize us to abandon the gift.”¹

In this concluding chapter, then, we complete our hermeneutic responsibility—and the second part of our promise at The Lutheran School of Theology both (1) “to form African Lutherans” by means of the Word of God, that is, via Word and sacrament, and (2) to form them for this purpose: “to teach the faith.”

Grammar-and-Syntax

The divine gift of language is why teaching the faith is possible, to those uncountable myriads of human beings “from every nation, tribe, people, and language” as Saint John, the author of John 1:14, wrote (Revelation 7:9). Language is language; therefore, all language is a personal gift of God through Jesus. Interestingly, and in keeping with our thesis which includes all language under the term “everyday language,” the grammar of the Scriptures is the grammar of everyday language. Actually, the grammar of Christ’s Scriptures is the grammar of His kingdom.

As Professor Theodore Mueller explains, there are two levels to grammar. The first part is known as *phonology* or the writing and pronouncing of words in Greek. The second level is *syntax*, which he introduces with a memorable example from a children’s book by an Oxford professor. The example is two lines from a poem in *Through the Looking Glass*.

‘Twas brillig and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe.

This is how Mueller shows us that “a language is a syntactic system, and that understanding a language depends on understanding the systematic arrangement of its words, even more than it does on learning their meanings in isolation.” You will also notice that what Mueller is describing is the sentence diagramming that we work so hard on in our first semester of study at the LST.

¹ For much more on how we human beings are fitted by creation for God’s gift of language, see Robert Sokolowski. *Phenomenology of the Human Person*: Cambridge University Press: “The role of syntax in our experience, activity, and speech is the central theme in my analysis, but I begin the book with a particular syntactic form, which I call the ‘declarative’ use of the first—person pronoun. ... Such declaratives ... designate us as *persons in action*, as *acting rationally even as we utter the words*,” 3.

Two types of words, grammar words, such as “was, did, the” etc and words which have no meaning in English, so-called non-sense words are found in the lines quoted above. The grammar words, which have a very high frequency, are also called function words because they fulfill certain grammatical functions in the sentence; they act like signals signalling that a noun is forthcoming, or that a given word group is a verb phrase, or that the group of words is subordinated to another group, etc. Thus, the function words lead us to conclude that “gyre” and “gimble” are verbs, but that “wabe” is a noun. Some of the non-sense words have familiar endings. The “s” is a signal in English indicating plural nouns, while the suffix “-y” often indicates adjectives. Therefore, in spite of the fact that the vocabulary used in these lines has no meaning, we are left with the impression that we understand something...A language is a system which is expressed by affixes, function words and word order.²

I would like to expand Mueller’s grammatical definition of language to say this: *Language is communion or fellowship established between and among persons by words—words with prefixes and suffixes, words that signal the role of other words, and words that are ordered meaningfully—first, fellowship established by Christ in His real presence in the Scriptures and then, because we human beings are made to be logos beings in His image, fellowship between God Himself and us via the Scriptures alone, sola Scriptura.*

You have no doubt begun to wonder during our hermeneutic studies, “Isn’t following this Lutheran hermeneutic basically translating the Bible into our everyday language?” The same conditions or ingredients that make translation possible make this hermeneutic possible, namely, the divine gift of language (which is perfect, word-for-word in the written Scriptures), but deeply affected by our sinful nature and its blindness, deafness, and enmity toward the Word and His words (since the fall in Eden). The image of the triune God, imprinted on us before the fall and maintained by our gracious LORD after the fall and still today, enables us to bridge the fault line between God’s Holy Scriptures and our sinful rebellion against God and His Word.

The study of grammar-and-syntax—which is what I mean when I use the word *grammar* by itself—leads us to focus on predication, on “saying something about something,” as the grammar of analogical thinking. It will also lead me to discuss the nature of definitions, in which we give the genus and specifying difference of things when we wish to show what those things are.

An author I mentioned to you earlier in a second chapter footnote on Wittgen-

² Theodore H. Mueller, *New Testament Greek: A Case Grammar Approach* (Fort Wayne, Indiana: Concordia theological Seminary Press, 1978), 15.

stein's *Tractatus* wrote that language is a proof that God is present among us: "... any coherent understanding of what language is and how it performs ... any coherent account of the capacity of human speech to communicate meaning and feelings is, in the final analysis, underwritten by the assumption of God's presence."³

Without the Scriptures it is impossible to believe this, because we don't want to, and thus cannot acknowledge the presupposition of God evidenced in the divine gift of language. But with the Scriptures and only because of them, everyday language can serve to teach the faith, to practice the analogy of the faith which we learned about in our first chapter (Romans 12:7). This is what the Scriptures are for. As Luther maintained in his own teaching and defending of the faith, "But one thing of which I do not want you to be unaware is that I sought nothing in this hearing except the genuine meaning of Scripture."⁴

In this chapter we learn from the Three Acts (usually called The Three Acts of the Mind), from Richard Weaver's *Rhetoric*, and from Luther's *Rhetoric of the Heart*, how to read and teach the Word of God for all it's worth. In other words, how to do hermeneutics from within the Scriptures, and carry over God's perfect grammar into our everyday language. This is where we see clearly how God imparts "that same attitude that is in Christ Jesus" via His living Word and the divine gift of language.

Luther on various occasions urges 'crawling' into the Word ... Just as God's Word confronts us in simple, lowly, inconspicuous human language—with rhetorical terminology, in *genus humile*—so it points human beings downward, where they may do nothing of themselves but receive everything from God. The locale of the Word, which human beings enter in faith, turns out to be the locale of the new creation ... the Word is the uterus in which human beings are 'conceived, carried, and born'. Here stress falls on the present tense: in and through the Word human beings are placed into the process of creation taking place now. They perceive themselves continually renewed as God's children. They are and remain humans in process, without ever being released from being situated in God's creative Word ...⁵

In our study of rhetoric, let's think of what we are doing as humbly crawling into the womb of the Word while at the same time laboring and rejoicing in the power of God's words in the written Scriptures to be recreating us—to be

³ George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 3.

⁴ Luther said this at the Proceedings at Augsburg in 1518. See Otto Hof, "Luther's Exegetical Principle of the Analogy of Faith" (*Concordia Theological Quarterly*, Vol 38, No. 4, April 1967), footnote, 242.

⁵ Kolb, Robert; Dingel, Irene; Batka, Lubomír, *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology* (Oxford Handbooks), 153.

recreating our everyday language and teaching. Do not forget the real time recreating power of God's Word and the psalms, such as Psalm 51 by King David, a famous ancestor of the Word who became flesh: "God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me!"

Rhetoric: The Ingredients of Person-to-Person Fellowship

Rhetoric. A brief word about rhetoric, the teaching of Scripture in everyday language as *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*. These are the Greek activities that together make up rhetoric, the approach to teaching which was loved and practiced by Augustine of Hippo, the most impactful and important of our African authors, and by Luther, who was initially trained as an Augustinian monk.

Rhetoric = ***pathos*** plus *ethos* plus *logos*. *Pathos*, meaning "emotion," that which moves us, has also come up in our earlier studies and conversations about "the [hermeneutic] *attitude*" that the apostle Paul in Philippians 2 urges us to adopt from Christ Jesus. Because *pathos*, or the emotional aspect of speaking and teaching in language is generally misunderstood and misapplied today, even in contemporary courses and books on rhetoric, let me share this helpful passage from a Hebrew professor who wrote and taught a great deal about the Hebrew prophets and their emotions. This is a long quote, but it is a wonderful, biblically fruitful understanding of how and why we preachers preach and we teachers teach the faith.

Pathos is always disclosed as a particular mode or form. There are, as we have seen, many and variable modes of pathos, such as love and anger, grief and joy, mercy and wrath. What is the basic feature they have in common? What is the ultimate significance of pathos? Pathos in all its forms reveals the extreme pertinence of man to God, His world-directness, attentiveness, and concern. God "looks at" the world and is affected by what happens in it; man is the object of His care and judgment.

The basic feature of pathos and the primary content of the prophet's consciousness is a divine attentiveness and concern. Whatever message he appropriates, it reflects that awareness. It is a divine attentiveness to humanity, an involvement in history, a divine vision of the world in which the prophet shares and which he tries to convey. And it is God's concern for man that is at the root of the prophet's work to save the people.

The great secret is God's hidden pathos. A divine attachment concealed from the eye, a divine concern unnoticed or forgotten, hovers over the history of mankind. Yet there are moments when attachment turns to detachment, when concern is overshadowed by anger.

For biblical theology these ideas are as basic as the ideas of being and becoming are for classical metaphysics. They mark the difference between pagan and prophetic experience. There, existence is experiencing being; here, existence is experiencing concern. It is living in the perpetual awareness of being perceived, apprehended, noted by God, of being an object of the divine Subject. This is the most precious insight: to sense God's participation in existence; to experience oneself as a divine secret (see Ps. 139:7-18).

Yet even here we must not think that we reach God's essence. Transcendent attentiveness merely defines the limits of the prophet's understanding of God. God in Himself, His Being, is a problem for metaphysics. The theme and claim of prophetic theology is God's concern for man, and man's relevance to God. Only one aspect of His Being, His directedness to man, is known to man.

This, then, is the ultimate category of prophetic theology: involvement, attentiveness, concern. Prophetic religion may be defined, not as what man does with his ultimate concern, but rather what man does with God's concern.

He whose thinking is guided by the prophets would say: God's presence is my first thought; His unity and transcendence, my second; His concern and involvement (justice and compassion), my third. Upon deeper reflection, however, he will realize that all three thoughts are one. God's presence in the world is, in essence, His concern for the world. One word stands for both. And both are expressions of His unity. Divine unity implies concern. For unity means love.

The fundamental thought in the Bible is not creation, but God's care for His creation. The sense of wonder for His creation is common to all men. The sense of care for His care is the personal prerequisite for being a prophet. All men care for the world; the prophet cares for God's care. In the process of such redirection, he may be driven to be careless about everything else.

Sympathy opens man to the living God. Unless we share His concern, we know nothing about the living God.⁶

In connection with pathos, let me recommend Johannes von Lüpke's treatment of Luther's Rhetoric of the Heart. I've highlighted the concluding sentence be-

⁶ Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 618-620.

cause it explains how this all works. While there is such a thing as pagan rhetoric which comes from human reason and the ABCs of this world (Colossians 2:8-9), there is also a way of “plundering the Egyptians,” as Augustine would say, to work from the Scriptures and develop a rhetoric based on Christ and His Word (*kata Christon*, as in Paul’s Greek).

As a theological grammar Luther’s use of language rests on the specific tradition of the Bible’s language. It intends to capture biblical usage, translate it into given ‘vernaculars’, and display it anew in proclamation. Precisely for this purpose it made use of general linguistic theory, as it had taken form in the canon of disciplines in the liberal arts bequeathed by the ancients. As defined by the linguistic concept derived from Plato (*Kratylos* 388a), language is an *organon*, an instrument, which can serve various purposes in conveying information and making distinctions, expressing subjective feeling and also requirements and arrangements for common action.

Under this aspect, ancient rhetoric (Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian) distinguished various genre of speech. Luther had a good command of this rhetorical tradition since Melanchthon had adapted and intensively cultivated it at the University of Wittenberg (*De rhetorica libri tres*, 1519; *Institutiones rhetoricae*, 1521). The reformational programme of education continued to be bound to the curriculum of the liberal arts insofar as it accorded the three linguistically grounded disciplines—grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric—foundational significance for the study of theology. Even if Luther had rejected Aristotle’s metaphysics and ethics, he could nonetheless recommend further use of his ‘books on Logic, Rhetoric, and Poetics.’ In connection with learning Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, university study of grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric served the purpose of learning the language of Holy Scripture in its own logic and form and opening it up for preaching.⁷

*Rhetoric = pathos plus **ethos** plus logos.* Ethos is about the speaker’s character, his trustworthiness and reliability, whether his preaching, teaching, and life follow the apostolic traits required of pastors and deacons in the pastoral epistles, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. Here is a more formal definition that connects our ethos and pastors and teachers with our hermeneutic study. “Rhetorical criticism takes the text as we have it, whether the work of a single author or the product of editing, and looks at it from the point of view of the author’s or editor’s intent, the unified results, and how it would be perceived.”⁸

⁷ Kolb, Robert; Dingel, Irene; Batka, Lubomir, *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*, 144.

⁸ Kennedy, George A., *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (The University of North Carolina Press, Kindle Edition.), 4.

The ethos of rhetoric also trains us twenty-first century readers of the Scriptures, who are, as we learned in our second chapter, to impose our notions of hermeneutics on God's words, the Scriptures.

Some modern philosophers, or antiphilosophers, regard logical analysis and exegesis as a negative factor in civilization which has vitiated human efforts to comprehend reality. But "those things which can be learned from men should be learned without pride," Augustine argues in the Prologue to *On Christian Doctrine*. "The condition of man would be lowered if God had not wished to have men supply his word to men." It is rhetoric that supplies words to men, as Augustine well knew, and it is conceptualized rhetoric that describes that process.⁹

Remember that the direction of rhetorical (pathos, ethos, logical) authority is from the Scriptures into our everyday language. This brings us to the final ingredient of rhetoric.

Rhetoric = pathos plus ethos plus logos. We have spent the first three chapters of our textbook on the New Testament Greek word *logos* (1) as the revealed name for Jesus the Christ / Messiah in our flesh, (2) as the term in the singular, *logos*, and in the plural, *logoi* as the eternal Word of God made up of the exact words of Christ, God in our flesh. This brought us to (3) the etymology or original meaning of *logos* as language. The remaining part of this chapter is mostly about (3) *logos* as language, under the influence of the written Scriptures.¹⁰

Because we have the divine gift of language we can write, think, and speak logically. This is the part of *logos* that we pay special attention to in rhetoric. Logic is the part of rhetoric that addresses our intellect, whereas pathos addresses our emotional being, as Professor Heschel explains it, in relation to God's attitude of care and love toward us sinners. Ethos, as we just read from Professor Kennedy, has to do with our respectful stance toward the text. For example, he divides different scriptural narrations, sermons, and speeches, such as our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, into "rhetorical units," which is his way of teaching us to take account of the context of each biblical text.

⁹ Kennedy, George A., *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism*, 159.

¹⁰ For more on these three dimensions of the term *logos*, including its longtime usage in the Greek language before the inspired writing and revelation in John 1, be sure to read Little Kittel, on *logos*, 505-515.

Rhetoric: The Logic of the Three Acts

In rhetoric, the logic of *logos* is what is usually called The Three Acts of the Mind, or of the Soul. It is better to call these The Three Acts of Logic in Language or simply The Three Acts so that we do not slip into the mistake of giving our human reason priority over the written and revealed texts of the Scriptures. Remember that this is the presupposition of reason over language which we debunked at the beginning of our previous chapter.

Here, then, are the Three Acts of *logos* in brief form.¹¹

The Three Acts

First Act Let's look at this crucial word.
What does it mean?

This is the activity of *understanding* that we do as *logos* beings!

Second Act Let's talk about this sentence.
Is this true?

This is the activity of *judging* a statement to be true or false that we do as *logos* beings!

Third Act Let's talk about this entire paragraph or essay.
Is the argument valid? In other words, are these **the right words in the right order to maintain the truth** all the way through, from its thesis sentences to its conclusion?
This is the activity of *reasoning* together that we do as *logos* beings!

Notes

Understanding means "understanding the words in their long-term usage," first and foremost according to their use in the Scriptures; then according to their use over time, etymologically; then according to their accepted use according to authoritative and well-read persons.

Truth is according to the words of Jesus the Word incarnate (John 14:6). This is the *hypostatic or in-person* understanding of truth in the words and actions

¹¹ I learned the Three Acts from many years of teaching logic courses from this textbook: Peter Kreeft, *Socratic Logic: A Logic Text Using Socratic Method, Platonic Questions, & Aristotelian Principles* (South Bend Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2004). My summary of The Three Acts is inevitably a (rather abbreviated) adaptation of Professor Kreeft's teaching.

of this incarnate Person of the Trinity. Because John quotes Jesus in Greek as saying “I am the *Aletheia*, the same word used three hundred years earlier by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* (Γ.7, 1011b26-27), we can also define the truthfulness of our writing and speaking this way: “To say that is is and what is not is not is to speak the truth.” This is the *correspondence* theory of truth. What we say / write / think must correspond with what exists in reality.

Weaver’s Rhetoric, The Parts of Speech (Written and Spoken) with Hebrew and Greek Tie-Ins

In this section, we learn the rhetoric of the parts of speech (written and spoken). On our way to studying grammar and rhetoric, let’s begin with a study of the Hebrew word for *name*. By learning how God had Moses write down exactly how Adam used language before the Fall into sin, we can verify that our hermeneutical approach comes from the Bible and is not a method that we are imposing on the Bible to make it more manageable for our sinful selves. We will also see how everyday language and grammar relate to the words and grammar of the Scriptures.

Hebrew tie-in. Here is the Bible passage about Adam’s first use of language. This naming process included Adam’s realization that “no helper was found corresponding to him.”

The LORD God formed out of the ground every wild animal, and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal (Genesis 2:19-20).

The Hebrew word translated “called” in this passage is *yikra* (to use English letters for the sounds of the Hebrew words). *Yikra* is the word used, for example, when Abraham built an altar and called on the LORD. Luther reminds us that *Yikra* does not mean that Abraham just said the word, “LORD,” but that Abraham preached the name of the LORD.

In other words, the biblical Hebrew word *calling* shows us that language is authoritative and effective, like a biblical sermon, as Richard Weaver put it in the last lecture in his career as a professor of rhetoric, a lecture titled “Language is *Sermonic*.”

The most obvious thing about rhetoric is that its object is the whole man... Logic is merely the mechanism for organizing the data of other

provinces of knowledge... Rhetoric has a relationship to the world which logic does not have and which forces the rhetorician to keep an eye upon reality as well as upon the character and situation of his audience.¹³

What, then, about the biblical concept of *naming*? Let me summarize the word study of the biblical concept of *name*, or *shēm*, from my favorite Hebrew dictionary, the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*.

Hebrew nouns and verbs are based on a three-letter root. So, along with paying attention to the usage of a Hebrew word in the psalms, in a passage in the prophets, or overall, in the Old Testament, we need to understand as much as possible the meaning of that root. When a Hebrew word such as *shēm* is shortened to two letters, sometimes we also need to figure out what the unwritten third letter of the root is. The latest argument for *shēm* is that it comes from a three-letter Arabic root, *ws'm*, meaning "to mark or brand," but my sense is that we should stay with three-letter Hebrew roots from biblical Hebrew wherever possible, so I am going to stick with what I learned. I learned that *shēm* is from the same root as *shēma*, which is the first Hebrew word in the well-known passage in Deuteronomy.

Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

Taking *naming* and *listening* as being from the same Hebrew root, we understand, then, that while Adam was naming the animals he was loving the LORD his God and listening to, and responding in the language God had given him already on the first day of his existence. That first Friday, the first man was created in the image of God. Then, after the naming and the same day, the first woman was created in the image of God. That imprinted image is the divine gift of language, as we have seen.

The article in the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* goes on to highlight the use of personal names and naming throughout the Old Testament, especially concerning the name of the LORD (*Yahwe* in Hebrew).

The concept of personal names in the OT often included existence, char-

¹³ Johannesen, Strickland, and Eubanks, eds., *Language Is Sermonic* (Baton Rouge and London, Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 205-208.

acter, and reputation (I Sam 25:25). Often the plural form of *šēm* is rendered as “persons,” (e.g. Num 1:2, 18, 20; 3:40, 43; 26:55). Further “to cut off the name” was equal to liquidating the person himself (Deut. 7:24; 9:14; I Sam 24:21 [H 22] etc.). The name chosen for a child was often descriptive of the parent’s wishes or expectations for the personality that was to mature. This is particularly evident in the renaming process, e.g. Jacob becoming Israel (Gen 35:10)

In some passages *šēm Yahweh* is so inextricably bound up with the being of God, that it functions almost like an appearance of Yahweh (Ex 23:20–21; Isa 30:27). Cf. the tabernacling of the Name at various spots almost like a *Christophany* (Ex 20:24; Deut 12:5; II Sam 7:13, etc.) ... The name of God also signifies the whole self-disclosure of God in his holiness and truth (Ps 22:22 [H 23]). This Name can be “walked in,” i.e. people are to live according to its teaching (Mic 4:5)¹⁴

Christophany means that Jesus Christ was making an epiphany, an appearance, in the Old Testament, centuries before His incarnation and birth of the Virgin Mary. This pre-incarnation epiphany occurred when The Name, *Yahweh*, or LORD is proclaimed. Talk about the Real Presence of the LORD God in His written Word! He presents Himself *Nisi Per Verbum*, as you remember from the first principle of the Word.

You noticed, didn’t you, that we have been talking about the Scriptures and their concepts of *calling out* and *naming* in everyday language? This is an example of *dialectic*, or disciplined, careful dialogue, with God’s Word and on the basis of Christ and His Word. The direction of the authority and concepts is from God’s Word to our everyday language. You can hear and feel the wording of the Word at work on your entire person, your mind and heart, can’t you?

Rhetoric is something which creates an informed appetite for the good. We must recognize the rhetorical force of things existing outside the realm of speech. [That is, we must recognize the inherent *aboutness* of language. Language, whether written or spoken, is never “just words;” it is always *intentional*, or *about things*, seen or unseen.]

The best philosophers of language, the best and most faithful professors of language, recognize and teach that language is never an *idiosyncratic*, merely personal activity; but always in the public domain. Rhetoric affects us primarily by setting forth images which inform and attract. Because this is accomplished in the public domain of language, it is not a free-for-all. Rhetoric is tied more

¹⁴ Kaiser, W. C. (1999). 2405 שֵׁם. In R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., & B. K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Moody Press: electronic ed.), 934–935.

or less closely to the forms of usage. The more general and rigid of these forms we recognize as *grammar*, which is a system of forms of language. Broadly speaking, language is at once bound and free; but in rhetoric and grammar we are interested to discover how the bound character of language affects our ability to teach and to persuade. In other words, as we learned in Chapter One, the postmodern semiotic dogma is not convincing, and simply doesn't work because it acts as if there are no boundaries in language itself. Thus, Derrida claims—in opposition to words and grammar—that he can interpret any text any way he wants to. In other words, postmodern semiotics is anarchic and lawless.

How Grammar Forms Us¹²

Rhetoric in practice is a matter of selection and arrangement, but conventional grammar imposes restraints upon both of these. All this amounts to saying what every sensitive user of language has sometimes felt; namely, that language is not a purely passive instrument, but while you are doing something with it, it is doing something with you, or with your attitude. Language does not exactly fight back; rather it has a set of postures and balances which somehow modify your thrusts and holds.

The sentence form is certainly one of these. You pour into it your meaning, and it deflects, and molds into certain shapes. One cannot, for example, employ just any modifier to stand for a noun or just any noun to express a quality; or change a stabilized, grammatical arrangement without a change in the overall effect of one's speaking or writing.

In this rhetorical approach to language, then, we are regarding language as a standard objective reality, analyzable into *categories which have inherent potentials*. A language has certain abilities or even inclinations which the wise user can draw into the service of his own rhetorical effort. [Professor Weaver is writing about speaking effectively to one's audience, and is not talking about the divine gift of language or taking any account of the Scriptures. However, notice that he said that *everyday language is active and does things to us, grammatically and rhetorically*.] There is a misuse of language which goes against the grain of the *categories* of grammar. Our task in rhetoric is to explore the proper congruence or fit between how we listen to, and make use of, *language*.

¹²Most of this section is directly from a publication of Prof. Richard Weaver's lecture, "Some Rhetorical Aspects of Grammatical Categories," for which the 1958 copyright expired and was apparently never renewed, even in books that include his lecture. I have taken the liberty of abbreviating the title and substantially abbreviating Weaver's text. In some places I have substituted words and phrases—all to make his invaluable work available to twenty-first century readers, especially my African students. Here and there I have added bracketed comments of my own to help with the teaching of rhetoric in relation to Scripture.

The problem of which category to begin with raises some questions. No single sentence can be appraised apart from the tendency of the whole of speaking and language. Notwithstanding, it seems permissible for us to begin with the largest unit of grammar, which is the sentence. We shall take up first the sentence as such and then show the differences among forms, or types of sentences.

Grammar, Historically and Conceptually

The Sentence

Because a sentence form exists in most if not all languages, consider that the sentence reflects the verbal activity of the mind.

When the mind frames a sentence, it performs a basic intellectual operation of taking things apart and then rebuilding them. Although sentences are supposed to grow out of meanings, we can have sentences before we have the meanings, and this is indeed the central point of our rhetoric of grammar. When we “get” the pattern before we interpret the meaning of the component words, we are being affected by grammar.

There is a lot of work to do when we see the grammar of language, yet it remains true that we take in the sentence (the first sentence in a well-written paragraph, for example) as a formal statement about something.

The subject seems to be peculiarly “the thing named,” whereas all other elements of the sentence are “about the thing named.” The freedom to speak or write a sentence, saying something *about* this or that thing, is a great freedom.

As we turn now to the different formal types of sentences, we shall follow the traditional grammatical classification and discuss the rhetorical affect of each in turn.

The *simple sentence*, with its pattern of subject-verb-object or complement, without major competing elements, leaves our attention fixed upon the classes involved: “Men and boys hunted and fished,” for example. The single subject-predicate frame has the broad sense of listing or itemizing, and the list becomes what the sentence is about semantically, or in terms of its meaningfulness.

Sentences of this kind are often the unconscious style of one who sees the world as just a bunch of things, like a child; sometimes they are the conscious style of one who sees the world as uniform matter. Speaking logically, the sim-

ple sentence is the most “logical” type of sentence because, like the simple categorical proposition, it has this function of relating two classes, a subject and what can be said about the subject. This fact, combined with its usual brevity and its structural simplicity, makes it a useful sentence for beginnings and endings. At the very minimum, we can affirm that the simple sentence tends to throw subject and predicate classes into relief by the structure it presents them in; that the two-part categorical form of “is” indicates a positive mood on the part of the user, and that its brevity often induces a generality of approach. When someone selects the simple sentence, he is going “with the grain”; he is putting the objective form to work for him.

The *complex sentence* has a different potential. The complex sentence emphasizes a more complex relationship; that is to say, it reflects another kind of discriminating activity, which does not stop with seeing discrete classes as co-existing, but distinguishes them according to rank or value, or places them in an order of cause and effect. For example, “If it keeps raining, I will go to the library.” This is evidence that the complex sentence does not appear until experience has undergone some refinement by the mind.

Then, because it goes beyond simple observation and begins to perceive things like causal principle, or begins to grade things according to a standard of interest, the complex sentence brings in the notion of dependence to supplement that of simple togetherness. And consequently the complex sentence will be found nearly always to express some sort of hierarchy, whether spatial, moral, or causal, with its subordinate members describing the lower orders. At the same time the spatial form of ordering to which the complex sentence lends itself makes it a useful tool in scientific analysis, and one can find brilliant examples of it in the work of scientists who have been skillful in communication.

In summation, then, the complex sentence is the branching sentence, or the sentence with parts growing off other parts. [For example, “I love reading the Bible because it’s God’s Word.”] Those who have used it most properly have performed a second act of analysis, in which the objects of perception, after being seen discretely, are put into a ranked structure. This type of sentence imposes the greatest demand upon the reader because it carries him farthest into the reality existing outside self.

The *compound sentence* can be a very “mature” sentence when its structure conforms with a settled view of the world. When a sentence consists of two main clauses we have two saying-this-about-that statements of similar structure bidding for our attention. [For example, Saul went to Athens and Luke stayed in Berea.”] This seems to produce a sentence of unusual tension, with two equal parts (and of course sometimes more than two equal parts) in a sort of competition. Yet this tension is a tension of stasis. There is congeniality

between its internal balance and a concept of the world as an equilibrium of forces. As a general rule, it appears that whereas the complex sentence favors the presentation of the world as a system of facts or as a dynamism, the compound sentence favors the presentation of it in a more or less philosophical picture. [For example, see my compound sentence on the first page of Chapter One, where I link Genesis 1:1 to John1:1 with *and*.].

One finds these compounds recurring: an abstract statement is balanced (in a second independent clause) by a more concrete expression of the same thing; a fact is balanced by its causal explanation; a statement of positive mode is balanced by one of negative mode; a clause of praise is balanced by a clause of qualified censure; a description of one part is balanced by a description of a contrasting part, and so on through a good many conventional pairings.

Since the difference between a sentence and a clause (that is, a phrase or part of a longer sentence) is negligible as far as the issues of this subject are concerned, we shall next look at *the word*. This brings up at once the convention of parts of speech. Whatever may be said for the merits of some other and more scientific classification, it is grammatical categories which have rhetorical force [*to affect people's attitudes*].

The Noun

It is difficult not to agree on the rhetorical force of nouns. The noun derives its special dignity from being a *name* word, and names persist, in spite of all modern notions of the meaninglessness of language, in being thought of as words for substances.

[**Note:** *Substance*, as in the Nicene Creed where we confess that God the Son is “of *one substance* with God the Father,” is a philosophical term for the grammatical term *subject*. The Greek philosopher Aristotle, whose philosophy of language Luther and Aquinas followed, taught the same thing about language

Aristotle’s 10 Categories

Language	Metaphysics (the basis of real things)
1. The subject, what all the rest of the sentence is about, such as man or Socrates.	1. Substance, the underlying being or essence of real things, such as the human being or the individual Socrates.
2-10. Things that can be said about the subject, but which can never be subjects themselves.	2-10. Further attributes or accidents that attach to the being or essence of substance.

Note. Aristotle had no contact with the Scriptures. However, (1) major churchmen such as Aquinas and Martin Luther found Aristotle's *Organon*, as his works on language and logic are called, to be very useful for teaching and understanding language, including the language of Scripture. In retrospect, (2) just as our Lord used Alexander the Great to make the upcoming Greek language of the New Testament Scriptures to become the universal language, so he used Aristotle and other Greek philosophers to warm up the Greek words that the New Testament writers would use to their fullest.

For example, Aristotle's Greek term for language was *logos*. And, as you can see from the above parallel table of language and metaphysics, Aristotle used *the grammar of language* to understand *the grammar of the world*.

and reality, side by side. Here is a diagram to help.]

We apprehend the significance of that when we realize that in the ancient philosophical regimen to which the West is heir, and which influences our thought far more than we are aware at any one moment, substances are assigned a higher degree of being than actions or qualities.

Substance is that which primordially *is*, and one may doubt whether recent attempts to revolutionize both ontology and grammar have made any impression at all against this feeling. For that reason a substantive comes to us as something that is peculiarly fulfilled; or it is like a piece in a game which has superior powers of movement and capture. The fact that a substantive is the word in a sentence which the other words are "about" in various relationships gives it a superior status.

Nouns then express things whose being is completed, not whose being is in process, or whose being depends upon some other being. And that no doubt accounts for the feeling that when one is using nouns, one is manipulating the re-presentations of a self-subsistent reality. And this fact has importance when we come to compare the noun with the adjective in power to convince by making real. Suffice it to say here that the noun, whether it be a pointer to things that one can touch and see, as *apple*, *bird*, *sky*, or to the more or less hypothetical substances such as *fairness*, *spook*, *nothingness*, by rule stands at the head of things and is ministered to by the other parts of speech and by combinations.

The Adjective

The adjective is, by the principle of determination just used, a word of secondary status and force. Its burden is an attribute, or something added. In the order of being, the noun can exist without the adjective, but not the adjective without the noun. Thus we can have "men" without having "excellent men"; but we cannot have "excellent" without having something (if only something

understood) to receive the attribution.

There are very practical rhetorical lessons to be drawn from this truth. Since adjectives express attributes which are conceptually dispensable to the substances, the adjective tends to be an unnecessary leftover. Our intuition of speech seems to tell us that the adjective is question-begging; that is to say, if the thing to be expressed is real, it will be expressed through a substantive; if it is expressed mainly through adjectives, there is something defective about its reality, and it urgently needs to be propped up. In strictest thought one might say that every noun contains its own analysis, but an adjective applied to a noun is apparatus brought in from the outside; and the result is the object slightly "fictionized."

Having laid down this relationship between adjective and substantive (subject) as a principle, we must not ignore the real or seeming exceptions. We have to admit that there are certain examples in which the adjective may eclipse the substantive. This may occur (1) when one's intonation (or italics) directs attention to the modifier: "*white* horses"; "*five* dollars, not four." (2) when there is a striking clash of meaning between the adjective and the substantive, such that one gives a second thought to the modifier: "a murderous smile"; "a gentleman gambler." (3) when the adjective is naturally of such exciting associations that it has become a sort of traditional introduction to matter of moment: "a warlike nation"; "a desperate deed"; etc. In brief, when the immediate act of our mind does not tell us whether an expression should be in this form or the other, the principle of the relationship of adjective and subject may settle the matter.

The Adverb

The adverb is distinguished from the other parts of speech by its superior mobility; roughly speaking, it can locate itself anywhere in the sentence, and this affords a clue to its character. "Certainly the day is warm"; "The day certainly is warm"; "The day is certainly warm"; "The day is warm certainly" are all "normal" utterances. This superior mobility, amounting to a kind of detachment, makes the adverb peculiarly a word of judgment. Here the distinction between the adverb and the adjective seems to be that the latter depends more upon public agreement and less upon private intention in its applications. It is a matter of common observation that the adverb is used frequently to express an attitude which is the speaker's projection of himself.

The caution against presumptuous use of the adjective can be repeated with somewhat greater force for the adverb. It is the most tempting of all the parts of speech to question-beg with. It costs little, for instance, to say "certainly," "surely," or even "terribly," "awfully," "undoubtedly"; is asking the reader to accept one's judgment upon the strength of one's adverb is obviously a form of taking without earning. In summary, the adverb is frequently dependent upon the character of its user. This is why beginners should use it least—should use it only after they

have demonstrated that they can get their results by other means.

The Verb

The verb is regularly ranked with the noun in force, and it seems that these two parts of speech express the two aspects under which we habitually see phenomena, that of determinate things and that of actions or states of being. Between them the two divide up the world at a pretty fundamental depth; and it is a commonplace of rhetorical instruction that a style made up predominantly of nouns and verbs will be a vigorous style.

These are the prime entities, words of stasis and words of movement (even when the verb is said to express a “state of being,” we accept that as a kind of modal action, a process of going on, or having existential quality), which set forth the broad circumstances of any subject of discussion. This truth is supported by the facts that the substantive is the heart of a grammatical subject and the verb of a grammatical predicate.

It is necessary to point out, even to some practiced readers and writers, that *the verb itself can modify the action it asserts*, or, so to put it, can carry its own epithet. Looking at the huge supply of verbs in English, we often find it possible to choose one so selective in meaning that no adverb is needed to accompany it. If we wish to assert that “the man moves *quickly*,” we can say, depending on the tone of our passage and the general signification, that he *hastens*, *rushes*, *flies*, *scrambles*, *speeds*, *tears*, *races*, *bolts*, to name only a few. If we wish to assert that a man is not telling the truth, we have the choice of *lies*, *prevaricates*, *falsifies*, *distorts*, *exaggerates*, and some others. So, there is such a thing as the characterizing verb, and there is no telling how many words could have been saved, how many passages could have dispensed with a lumbering and perhaps inaccurate adverb, if this simple truth about the verb were better appreciated.

There is a rough parallelism between the use of the complex sentence, with its detail put away in subordinate constructions, and the use of the verb epithet (that is, any add-ons to the verb). In both instances the user has learned to dispense with a second member of equal or nearly equal weight in order to get an effect. As the adverbial qualification is fused with the verb, so in lesser degree, of course, is the detail of the complex sentence fused with its principal assertion. These devices of economy and compression, although they may be carried to a point at which the style seems forced and unnatural, are among the most important means of rhetoric.

The Conjunction

The conjunction, in its simple role as joiner, seems not to have much character, yet it expresses the relatedness of things, which is bound to have signification. As either coordinator or subordinator of entities, *it puts the world into a condition of mutual relationship* through which a large variety of ideas may be suggested. From the different ways in which this relationship is expressed, the

reader will consciously and even unconsciously infer different things. Sometimes the simple “and ... and” coordination is the expression of childlike mentality, as we saw in our discussion of the compound sentence. On the other hand, in a different speech situation it can produce a quite different effect: readers of the King James version of the Bible are aware of how the “and” which joins long sequences of verses sets up a kind of expectancy which is peculiarly in keeping with sacred text. One gets the feeling from the reiteration of “and” that the story is confirmed and inevitable; there are no contingencies, and everything happens with the double assurance of something foretold. When this pattern is dropped, as it is in a recent “American” version of the Bible, the text collapses into a kind of news story.

The use of “but” to join the parts of a compound sentence indicates a fussy mindset because it makes this sort of disjunction, whereas “and” generously joins everything up.

Since *conjunctions usually give the plot of one’s thought*, it is essential to realize that they have implicit meanings. They usually come at points where a pause is natural, and there is a temptation, if one may judge by indulgence in the habit, to lean upon the first one that comes to mind without reflecting critically upon its significance. A common instance of this fault is the casual interchange of “therefore” and “thus.” “Therefore” means “in consequence of,” but “thus” means “in this manner” and so indicates that some manner has already been described. “Hence” may take the place of “therefore” but “thus” may not. “Also” is a connective used with unimaginative regularity by poor speakers and writers, for whom it seems to signal, “Here comes my next thought!” To signal the extension of an idea, “moreover” is usually more appropriate than “also.” Although “while” is often used in place of “whereas” to mean “on the other hand,” it has its other duty of signifying “at the same time.” “Whereas,” despite its heavy legalistic overtone, will be preferred in passages where precise relationship is the governing consideration.

On the whole it would seem that the average writer suffers, in the department of conjunctions, from a poverty of vocabulary. What he does is to keep a small set of conjunctions in his pocket and to use them in a sort of rotation without giving attention to how their distinctive meanings could further his purpose.

The Preposition

The preposition too is a word expressing relationships, but this definition gives only a faint idea of its great resources. When the false rules about the preposition have been set aside, it is seen that *this is a tremendously inventive word*. Like the adverb, it is a free rover, standing almost anywhere; it is constantly entering into combinations with verbs and nouns, in which it may direct, qualify, intensify, or even add something quite new to the meaning; at other times it combines with some other preposition to produce an indispensable idiom. It has given us “get out,” “put over,” “come across,” “eat up,” “butt in,” “off of,”

“in between,” and many other expressions without which English, especially on the vital everyday conversational level, would be poorer indeed.

The preposition seems to do what the adverb does, but to do it with a kind of substantive force. “Groundward,” for example, seems weak beside “toward the ground,” “lengthwise” beside “along the length of,” or “centrally” beside “in the center of.” The explanation may well lie in the preposition’s characteristic position; as a regular orderer of nouns and of verbs, it takes upon itself something of their solidity of meaning. “What is that for?” and “Where did you send it to?” lose none of their force through being terminated by these brief words of relationship.

The Phrase

It will not be necessary to say much about the phrase because its possibilities have been fairly well covered by our discussion of the noun and adjective. One remark, though. The strength found in *the prepositional phrase* can be greatly diminished by connection with an abstract noun. That is to say, when the object of the preposition is lacking in concreteness, the whole expression may succumb to vagueness, in which cases the single adjective or adverb will be stronger by comparison. Thus the idea conveyed by “lazy” is largely frustrated by “of a lazy disposition”; that of “mercenary” by “of a mercenary character”; that of “deep” by “of depth,” and so on.

After the prepositional phrase, the most important phrasal combination to examine, from the standpoint of rhetorical usages, is *the participial phrase*. We could infer this truth from the fact alone that *the Greeks made a very extensive use of the participle*, as every student of that marvelous language knows. Greek will frequently use a participle where English employs a dependent clause or even a full sentence, so that the English expression “the man who is carrying a spear” would be in Greek “the spear carrying man”; “the one who spoke” would be “the one having spoken” and further accordingly, with even more economy of language than these examples indicate. I am disposed to think that the Greeks developed this habit because they were very quick to see opportunities of subordination.

The clarity and subtlety of the Greek language derives in no small part from this highly “organized” character, in which auxiliary thoughts are compactly placed in auxiliary structures, where they permit the central thought to emerge more readily. In English the auxiliary status of the participle (recognized formally through its classification as an adjective) is not always used to like advantage.

One consequence of this is that although English intonation and normal word order tend to make the last part of a sentence the most emphatic, unskillful writers sometimes lose this emphasis by concluding a sentence with a participial phrase. We may take as examples “He returned home in September, hav-

ing been gone for a year”; and “Having been gone for a year, he returned home in September.” The second of these puts the weightier construction in the emphatic position. In the majority of utterances the participle contributes best by modifying at some internal position, or by expressing some detail or some condition at the beginning of the sentence.

In English the participle is formally a weak member of the grammatical family [*but in Greek it has a force to be reckoned with*, added]. Perhaps it is enough to say that only the mature writer [that is, the person who knows Greek, or who reads the Greek New Testament in a literal translation] knows and can use the power of the participle.

In Conclusion

I can imagine being told that this chapter is all a matter of interpretation, and that every principle discussed here can be defied. Still, we have to remember that there is such a thing as a vector of forces in language. Even though an effect may sometimes be obtained by crowding or even breaking a rule, the lines of force are still there, to be used by the skillful writer with linguistic knowledge, and grammar is a vital type of knowledge. [Indeed, as we have seen, language is the medium, the kingdom in which learning and knowing takes place. The grammar of language forms us metaphysically and ontically. The effort to get rid of grammar and language as they exist is an effort to eliminate the created order, including the *logos* creatures imprinted with the image of the God who speaks with us in language.]

Like the political citizenship defined by Aristotle, language citizenship makes one a potential magistrate, or one empowered to decide. The work is best carried on, however, by those who are aware that language must have some connection with the intelligible world, and that is why one must think about the rhetorical nature even of grammatical categories.¹⁵

Luther's Rhetoric of the Heart

As we leave Weaver's Rhetoric of Speech, Written and Spoken, I hope that in the near future, perhaps at The Lutheran School of Theology, our African Lutheran Lecturers and Professors will produce a new version of his old *A Rhetoric and Handbook* for our continent and for our century. Perhaps it will come from other people in other places, but in the opening decades of our century the study of rhetoric has been lacking in our Lutheran schools of higher learning—except for watered-down courses here and there taught by social scientists.

We in Christ's churches today need rhetoric for our teaching of the faith. Rhetoric

¹⁵ This is the end of my adaptation and augmenting of Professor Weaver's lecture, "Some Rhetorical Aspects of Grammatical Categories."

was vital to Augustine, the great African bishop and it was invaluable to Luther, whose hermeneutic we have been taking to heart and mind. Luther's Rhetoric of the Heart, as explained by Johannes von Lüpke in his chapter on Luther's Use of Language in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology* has two parts.

The Basic Rule of Dialectic

In precise philosophical language, *dialectic* is used as a term for "intellectually serious conversation." Ever since Hegel [the favorite philosopher of Karl Marx and atheistic Marxism], who taught that what is real is rational and whatever is rational is real, has meant conversations apart from the Scriptures, which are treated as irrational and mythological. So, for about two centuries in philosophy, dialectic has meant secular philosophy with no Scriptures allowed. This is actually an-unphilosophical practice because philosophy means "befriending wisdom" and passages such as Proverbs 8 and 1 Corinthians 1 reveal that Christ is Wisdom incarnate. In Saint Paul's Greek, wisdom is *Sophos*, the original Greek word in *philosophy*.

But in my writings and our theological discussions in the classroom, *dialectical* means dialect as used and taught by Luther: "Luther insists upon a 'dialectical union' ... he uses the term 'dialectical' in a special sense to mean a union of unequal opposites. . . reason must subordinate itself to faith" (Edmund Smits). In so many words, reason must be in submission to the Scriptures.

As Johannes Von Lüpke explains,

The Word in which all creatures subsist says—as God's Word—something about God himself. God expresses himself in his Word. ... He is "an eternal source ... which pours out pure goodness, from which all that is and is called good, flows." ... The concept of substance is therefore theologically not at all to be understood as if God were without relationship, complete in and of himself. That is precisely what Luther saw as the chief error of a metaphysical doctrine of God, as decisively shaped by Aristotle.

Against it Luther posited a basic rule of theological dialectic: 'God is not to be sought under the category of substance but under the category of relationship' ... While the "Aristotelian or philosophical God", which Luther simultaneously identifies as the God of Jews, Turks, and papists, is not at all in relationship with us and reveals himself therefore as a "totally miserable essence", Holy Scripture presents the God who "is God for us because he gives us his Epiphany, his appearance ... and speaks with us."¹⁶

¹⁶ Kolb, Robert; Dingel, Irene; Batka, Lubomír, *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, 148.

Look again at the chart earlier in our chapter, Aristotle's 10 Categories. There you will see "substance" on the metaphysical or theoretical side and "subject" on the language and grammar side. Do you remember how, in our second chapter under the historical-critical hermeneutic, we learned from Wittgenstein that the natural sciences atomize and reduce language? It's the same with Aristotle. His substances and subjects are never in relation to the whole of creation. They are only about individual substance atoms and elementary individual subjects. Luther's basic rule of dialectic is real and complete, however, because it is based on God's Scriptures and God's Scriptures are decisive for creative things in relation to one another because all things exist in relation to God.

The Master Work of Biblical Rhetoric

The second aspect of Luther's rhetoric of the heart has to do with complete persons, which we have already talked about a great deal. This brings the emotional aspect of our human being back into the dialectic. The Bible, most notably in the psalms, refers to this *ontic* (or ontological) work of our LORD God as the *lev* or heart in Hebrew. So does Luther in his rhetoric of the heart.

Characteristic for Luther's understanding of human language is the implied close connection between language and heart. The proximity of language to the heart means first: the heart and the emotions working in it express themselves in language: "the first things to burst forth and emerge from the heart are words." In words one recognizes what is in the human heart; its innermost state appears externally through language. That is seen in the psalms, which let us see into the saints' hearts. With a proverbial expression Luther can say, "speech is the image or portrait of the heart."¹⁷

I have referred to this aspect of rhetoric a few times already as the fuller, *existential* understanding of human beings. This existential anthropology has also formed what we today know as *phenomenology*, a form of existentialism that can interface with, and even inform neurology, the medical study of the human mind and consciousness. Why is this important for hermeneutics? Because true faith, as defined, described, and delivered in real time by God's Word, written and proclaimed, is clearly not an intellectual process. Faith is a matter of the mind and the heart, especially of the heart. This is also true of God's relationship to us in the first place. God did not assess the world and calculate that it would be reasonable to send His Son. No, He so *loved* us that He gave His Only Begotten Son, who is the Word made flesh, to redeem and save us all. Not simply cool blue logic, but full-blooded rhetoric. This is the faith that

¹⁷ *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, 149.

comes by hearing the Word. For more, see Appendix E.

Rhetoric is here understood concisely as “rhetoric of the heart.” While dialectic as theory simply reaches the intellectus, rhetoric is concerned with the emotions, particularly the powers of the will, which define the human being as a whole. To influence and alter them, a language is needed which affects human beings sensually and addresses them in their ability to imagine concrete images. In short, it needs a language which utilizes poetic qualities. From this angle Luther can appreciate particularly the language of the psalms...

In the relationship of these two disciplines [dialectic and rhetoric] the relationship of law and gospel becomes clear, according to Luther: ‘The decalogue is the dialectic of the gospel and the gospel is the rhetoric of the decalogue’ (WABr5.409,28–29). In the decalogue the proper relationship of God and human beings is presented clearly; in the gospel the human being is placed into the proper relationship to God.¹⁸

To continue our grammar-and-syntax teaching of Luther’s rhetoric of the heart, here are some seed-thoughts from Professor Weaver for that upcoming *Lutheran Rhetoric and Handbook*. Weaver writes about *metaphor*, which is a type of analogy, under four categories. *Giving Concreteness*: “A good figure of speech is among the best means to actualize an idea, scene, or action.” *Clarifying the Unknown*: “A basic value of all analogy is that we can communicate meaning by comparing something that is less well known to something that is known. This allows the reader to see, to a helpful extent, the one in terms of the other.” *Expressing the Subjective*: “Metaphor is particularly a vehicle for giving expression to our feelings ... generally our feelings have to be expressed through an objective correlative—through something from the outer world that will bear illuminating comparison with them ...” *Assisting Thought*: “A final and most interesting function of metaphor is its heuristic (from the Greek *heuriskein*, “to find, discover”) use ... Metaphor lies very close to the creative power of speech [and language] ... Whether you think of metaphors with the passive object of understanding, or use them with the active object of giving life and meaning to your expression, you will find them to be the most rewarding resource of language.”¹⁹

Here too is an application of analogy and metaphor specifically for the Scriptures and rhetoric. Thanks to the abundant, fruitful, inspiring language of the Word of God disclosed in the Lutheran hermeneutic of the Word alone, here are two navigation points for the upcoming work of African Lutheran professors and scholars.

¹⁸ *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*, 150.

¹⁹ Richard M. Weaver, *A Rhetoric and Handbook* (New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1957), 252-257.

First, here is a provocative description of the working relationship between analogy and metaphor in the Scriptures.

[Philosopher Paul] Ricoeur allows that for the Bible to refer to God both metaphor and analogy might be necessary, so that analogy verticalizes metaphor and metaphor gives analogy its concrete form. ... Analogy allows for the Bible to be about God while metaphor provides the content. To believe that the Biblical text refers to God, and that therefore God has already been named, requires that as listeners we must attend to both what is literally said and how this is then about God ... As human beings we begin with what is given to us through literal and established means, but as Christians we believe that what is given also reveals God. The faithful reader is called to attend to the Biblical text because the Bible, with its literal and spiritual senses, is about God, and therefore God has already been named in it.²⁰

Second, here is a closing reminder of the world-changing hermeneutic that we inherit from Martin Luther that holds promise for an African Reformation of Anthropology,²¹ the understanding of what it means to be members of the *logos* / language species.

There is the revelation that Jesus the Logos is the Second person of the Trinity, very God of very God, who once and for all took on our human flesh. This completely altered the philosophy of language and the philosophy of man. It also creates the experience of biblical hermeneutics ...

When the Greek idea of logic is penetrated by Christian theology, something new is born: the medium of language, in which the mediation of the incarnation event achieves its full truth. Christology prepares the way for a new philosophy of man ...²²

Hermeneutical Consequences

What is your metaphysics? Professor Weaver, whose books on rhetoric have been formative for my teaching, was, in his lectures and writing toward the end of his life, passionate in urging each of us to articulate our *metaphysics*.

²⁰ Phil Enns, *To What Does the Bible Refer? On Metaphor and Analogy*, 71-72.

²¹ For more African sources for this hermeneutic Reformation, including Augustine, see Thomas C. Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Recovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2007). "The rules and methods for interpreting Scripture were decisively shaped not only by Africa's greatest scientific investigator of sacred texts, Origen, but also by fourth- and fifth-century exegetes like Didymus the Blind, Tyconius and Augustine of Hippo," 45.

²² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 428.

For example, in one of his last lectures he said, “Rhetorical force must be conceived as a power transmitted through the links of a chain that extends upward *toward some ultimate source*.”²³ There is wisdom in that admonition to think about ultimate metaphysical matters. In another place he wrote, “All metaphysical community depends on the ability of men to understand each other.”

... as myth gives way to philosophy ... a principle of divinity in language endures. Thus we learn that in the late ancient world the Hebrew *memra* and the Greek *logos* merged, and in the Gospel of John we find an explicit identification: “In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” A following verse declares that *logos* as God lies behind the design of the cosmos, for “without him was not anything made that was made.”

Speech begins to appear [as] the principal of intelligibility. So when wisdom came to man in Christ, in continuation of this story, “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” The allegory [that is, the startling new thing being said] need give no difficulty; knowledge of the prime reality comes to man through the word; the word is a sort of delivery from the shifting world of appearances ...

The fact that language is suprapersonal, uniting countless minds which somehow stand in relationship to an overruling divinity, lies at the root of this concept ...

Certainly one of the most important revelations about a period comes in its theory of language, for that informs us whether language is viewed as a bridge to the noumenal [that is, to what is real] or as a body of fictions convenient for grappling with transitory phenomena [that is, with temporary, hollow and deceptive things].²⁴

Our period in God’s creation, the beginning of the twenty-first century, is a period in which language is generally viewed as a body of fictions. The post-modern semiotic view of language is a global presupposition, from the disintegrating of Western culture to many of our institutions of higher learning in Africa. To paraphrase the twentieth-century Lutheran martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the concept of the divine gift of language is homeless, and you will find it only in Christ and Christ’s churches and schools.²⁵

²³ See the opening of Weaver’s lecture, “Ultimate Terms in Contemporary Rhetoric,” in the uncopyrighted *The Ethics of Rhetoric* from Henry Regnery Company. (italics added).

²⁴ Richard Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences*, Expanded Edition (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 134-136.

²⁵ See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 345.

What I am speaking of is not metaphysical speculation, but metaphysical certainty and confidence in Logos alone, the apostolic Word. As Saint Peter wrote, “For we did not follow cleverly concocted fables [that is, myths and fictions] when we made known to you the power and return of our Lord Jesus Christ; no, we were eyewitnesses of his grandeur” (2 Peter 1:16, NET). Saint John, you will remember, said the same thing about the incarnate Word in John 1:14.

Metaphysics, let’s agree (according to the First Act!), is “a systematic and comprehensive account of what is first and final, what is primordially and ultimately real, an explanation of what is and why the real is as it is.”²⁶ In other words, metaphysics is our very best response to the fundamental question in the textbook that I used when teaching my Metaphysics course for college students: “Why are there existing beings at all, rather than absolutely nothing?”²⁷

Our study of Luther’s Scripture alone hermeneutic and the divine gift of language is a comprehensive account of what is primordially and ultimately (or eternally) real, of reality as it is. *This includes the reality of his continuing work of creation and re-creation in real time!* The fundamental question can—contrary to Heidegger’s directions—be answered by the words of the incarnate Word (John 1 and Genesis 1). In other words, by affirming the apostolic Word:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, for all things in heaven and on earth were created in Him—all things, whether visible or invisible, whether thrones or dominions, whether principalities or powers—all things were created through him and for him.

He himself is before all things and all things are held together in him.

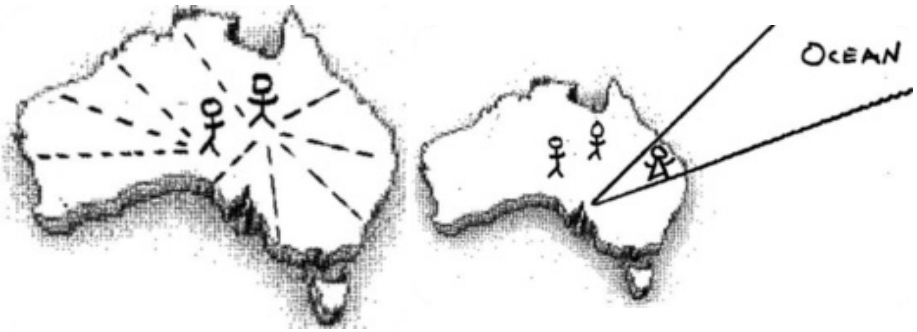
He is the head of the body, the church, as well as the beginning, the first-born from the dead, so that he himself may become first in all things.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in the Son and through him to reconcile all things to himself by making peace through the blood of his cross—through him, whether things on earth or things in heaven (Colossians 1:15-20, NET).

²⁶ Robert McTeigue, *Real Philosophy for Real People: Tools for Truthful Living* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2020), 107.

²⁷ Martin Heidegger, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polk, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000). “Why are there beings at all instead of nothing? That is the question. Presumably it is no ordinary question. ‘Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?’—this is obviously the first of all questions,” 1.

Mapping the Ocean (God) by Walking the Island of Language



This is a metaphor about the divine gift of language, an analogy from Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Think of language as an island. Being human or *logos* creatures, the limits of language set a boundary to our ability to think and know (*Tractatus*, Preface). Now, the most important thing for us to think and know about is God.

Think of God as the ocean just beyond the coast or limit of the island. As the lefthand diagram shows, all we can know about the ocean (God) is that we cannot think or know anything about the ocean. All we can do is walk so far, that is, walk to the limits of language, and then we must stop. This is as far as Wittgenstein goes; but let's add John 1:14 to the picture, "The Word (the ocean in the analogy) became flesh and tabernacled among us ..."

The incarnation means that God Himself has come onto our island of language. The ocean reveals Himself as the Logos, the Word by whom all things were created who speaks with us via His Word, the Scriptures. As the righthand diagram shows, Christ the Word has come to us. Thus, we are now able to think and know about God the Ocean via Luther's hermeneutic of *sola Scriptura*, the Scriptures alone!

There is no philosophical or other reason to reject language as our metaphysic. First, there is a persuasive case being made for language as metaphysic by William Dembski.²⁸ Secondly, there is the inescapability of language, the atmosphere in which we live and move and have our being. The reason for being metaphysical about language is to defeat the postmodernism of Lyotard an-

²⁸ See William A. Dembski, *The End of Christianity: Finding a Good God in an Evil World* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&J Publishing, 2009): "Because the divine *Logos* is the prime instrument of creation, the world is not a buzzing confusion but an orderly composition: it is a *cosmos* rather than a *chaos*. The divine *Logos* guarantees the world's intelligibility" 101. See also William A. Dembski, *Being as Communion: A Metaphysics of Information* (Dorchester: Dorchester Press, 2014). Please note, Dembski in this second book writes philosophically, not biblically, although he regards God as the prime reality: "The issue, rather, is the primacy of information for science," 91.

Derrida. Postmodern philosophers, along with their friends and allies are like captains of submarines or commanders of space expeditions trying to convince their crews to step outside without the oxygen of language, to be free of the Scriptures and the divine gift of language, claiming that theses are nothing but a metanarrative of which they should be incredulous, disbelieving.

It is, I think, metaphysically relevant to realize that we can only work out the metaphysics of language from within language—in fact, it's not possible to work philosophically or theologically apart from language—as Wittgenstein argues in *Tractatus* (which we have already experienced in our second chapter concerning the reduced and atomized language of science):

Thus the aim of the book is to draw a limit to thought, or rather—not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts: for in order to draw a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable (that is, we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought (*Tractatus*, Preface).

Taking our lead from Wittgenstein's own writing about *Tractatus*, we can express the boundary between thought and language, on the one hand, and God on the other, this way: Our vocation as *logos* beings is to learn everything possible about God, recognizing that the means by which we carry this out is language—nothing more and nothing less.

The key to Wittgenstein's metaphor of Mapping God the Ocean by Walking the Island of Language is first, to recognize the boundary and acknowledge that we human beings are confined to the island of everyday language after the fall. Secondly, though, God comes onto the island with us—in the Word incarnate, and thus in the Word of the Scriptures.

But as it is written: What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, and what has never come into a man's heart, is what God has prepared for those who love Him.

Now God has revealed them to us by the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the deep things of God.

For who among men knows the concerns of a man except the spirit of the man that is in him? In the same way, no one knows the concerns of God except the Spirit of God.

Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, in order to know what has been freely given to us by God.

We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people.

But the natural man does not welcome what comes from God's Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to know it since it is evaluated

spiritually.

The spiritual person, however, can evaluate everything, yet he himself cannot be evaluated by anyone.

For: who has known the Lord's mind, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:9-16).

Against the darkness of this world which, like Derrida, opposes the *logos* in all its dimensions: the incarnate *Logos*, his *logoi* in the Scriptures, His divine gift of language with its *logoi* and grammar—we preach and teach according to the Scriptures alone. To whom shall we go? You, the Logos who became flesh have the *logoi* of eternal life (see John 6:68)!

+ + +

*I long for Your salvation, LORD,
And Your instruction is my delight.
Let me live and I will praise You;
May Your judgments help me.
I wander like a lost sheep;
Seek Your servant,
For I do not forget your commands.*

— Psalm 119:174-176, TAW

GLOSSARY

In keeping with The First Act, these definitions will help us to understand and to discuss Luther's hermeneutic of the Scriptures alone (*sola Scriptura* in Latin) in contrast to competing hermeneutics.

Analogy. The fundamental way that the divine gift of language works on us human beings. Essentially, analogy translates our thinking from thinking about earthly items to thinking faithfully about the whole of revealed reality in relation to Christ and the Trinity. An analogy reveals a relationship between two different things or events, establishing a language bridge by which we can move from knowing a sensible, earthly part of reality to understanding a feature of the bigger, holistic reality of God's everlasting kingdom, that is, the "visible and invisible" of the Nicene Creed.

Analogy is a parallelism of words and phrases, the parallelism of the psalms, for example. Thus, the various figures of speech in the Scriptures are never "mere" or "nothing but" metaphors, parables and so on. On the contrary, they are linguistic means by which Jesus the incarnate Word opens or closes the path to meaning and understanding (Matthew 13:13, Isaiah 32:3, 35:5 and Jeremiah 5:21). This book is concerned with *semantic analogy*, usually associated with medieval theology (see the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*) but put into modern terms.

Anthropology. The study of what it is to live as humans—rather than as animal or angelic beings. This is not the social science of anthropology. Instead, it is the more original study of human being in terms of the Scriptures, a modern hermeneutical study which pay attention not to the Bible as if it existed in an ideal universe all alone, but to the Scriptures in terms of the way that the Scriptures ontologically affect human consciousness: our wills, intellects, and emotions.

Attitude: Ministerial versus Magisterial. An attitude or mood is a long-term emotion. For example, joy or despair. Think of it as "the climate of your soul," not as the daily weather of this or that emotion (Schulz, *Wednesday's Child*). The hermeneutic attitudes or dispositions are known by their Latin names: a magisterial attitude is the attitude of the interpreter who subjects the text of the Scriptures to his own habits and methods, or to the current theories of the day—as if he were the master teacher (magister). By contrast, the attitude of the interpreter who submits his interpreting, and thus his preaching and teaching, to the words of the Scriptures has the ministerial attitude of our Logos and Archetype, the Word incarnate (Philippians 2:2:5ff).

Befriending postmodernism. This is the abnormal fellowship (see Romans 16:17) taught in *What Does This Mean?: Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Post-Modern World*, a textbook taught and celebrated at the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's seminary in Saint Louis for the past thirty years: "Observers from within and without may recognize a 'post-modern' ring to what is here advanced. And they are right. . . But it is the contention of this author that post-modernism, for all of its excesses, is not our enemy, but a sort of friend." It is also the secular attitude that fueled the implosion of that church body's Concordia universities. Apparently, the textbook was discontinued at the LC-MS seminary in Fort Wayne about 2011.

Deconstruction. In postmodernism this term means "total destruction and secularization." However, in its original use in Martin Heidegger's German philosophy, it means to get rid of every impediment that stands between the words of the original text and the reader. It is this latter sense of deconstruction that is in the heading of our second chapter.

Dialectic. In everyday language and in more precise philosophical language, *dialectic* is used as a term for "serious conversation" which, ever since Hegel's assertion that what is real is rational and whatever is rational is real, has meant conversations apart from the Scriptures, which are treated as irrational and mythological. But in my writings and our theological discussions in the classroom, *dialectical* means dialect as used and taught by Luther: "Luther insists upon a 'dialectical union' ... he uses the term 'dialectical' in a special sense to mean a union of unequal opposites. . . reason must subordinate itself to faith" (Edmund Smits). In so many words, reason must be in submission to the Scriptures. See *Analogy*, *Attitude*, and *Hermeneutic*.

Equivocation. In logic, it is a deliberate ambiguity by which a writer or speaker lies about the meaning of a word by his hasty usage out of context. For example: "Only man is rational. No woman is a man. Therefore, no woman is rational." In biblical terminology, equivocation is a bifurcation, a branching off or splitting of a word from Christ's Scriptures, the tree trunk. For example, *dialogous* ("those who divide the *logos*") or equivocating pastors and deacons alike are rejected by the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 3:8. Likewise, David teaches us to pray with him, "I hate those who are *saypheh* men (in Hebrew, "men who split the tree [of God's Word]"), but I love your Torah" (119:113).

Figure of Speech (Written or Spoken). See *Analogy*.

Grammar-and-Syntax. The structure and ordering of words. In our textbook, I generally refer to both grammar and syntax with the single word *grammar*. See *Hermeneutic* and *Language*.

Hermeneutic. A pastor's, a church body's, or a reader's way of interpreting the written text of the Bible. Because the Scriptures are the words (Greek, *logoi*) of Christ the incarnate Word (Greek, the *Logos*) in His own grammar and syntax, Luther insisted that only the Scriptures can interpret the Scriptures. This is the hermeneutic of *sola Scriptura* (Latin). It is "the Lutheran principle of the intelligibility of Scripture based on its strictly immanent, that is to say, its grammatical investigation" (Jakub Koryl, *By grammar alone? Humanism overcome by the hermeneutics of Matthias Flacius Illyricus*).

Hermeneutics. The plural of *hermeneutic*. Professors and authors generally use the plural to indicate that they are taking a scientifically objective stance toward various ways of interpreting the biblical text.

Language. Language is the verbal atmosphere in which God establishes communion or fellowship between and among persons by words—words with prefixes and suffixes, words that signal the role of other words, and words that are ordered meaningfully (last part adapted from Theodore Mueller). It is the thesis of this textbook that language itself is a *divine* gift. A hermeneutical consequence of my thesis, taken from Luther's hermeneutic of the Scriptures alone, is that its verbal inerrancy, unsurpassable divine authority, and omnipotent characteristic make Scriptures the only antidote in church and in society for postmodern relativism, the inhumane philosophy of language of Jaques Derrida, Woke Marxists, and Muslims of our twenty-first century.

Logia. The way that the earliest Apostolic Fathers of the church referred to the Scriptures as divinely-inspired writings (Edmund Smits).

Logos, logoi. This New Testament Greek noun in the singular means "language" (from the verb *lego*, "to bring together"). It is, most importantly, a revealed name for the Son of God (the *Logos*) who became flesh. In the plural it means "words." In biblical Lutheran thought, these words form a hermeneutic and scriptural hierarchy this way: (1) Christ is God in person, the *Logos* who took on human flesh. (2) Christ's words (spoken and written *logoi*) will never pass away. (3) The Scriptures, being the *logoi* of the incarnate *Logos*, are of a piece with His divine-and-human person, that is, they are ultimately authoritative, inerrant, and all powerful.

Nisi Per Verbum. Latin for "except through the Word" (Apology, Article 4, On Justification). The complete sentence is "But God cannot be treated with, God cannot be apprehended, except through the Word." My contention is that *Nisi Per Verbum* is the first principle of Luther's hermeneutic.

Parable. See *Analogy*.

Parallelism. See *Analogy*.

Platonism and Neo-Platonism. The view of Plato (*Republic*) before the fullness of time and or Plotinus (*Enneads*) after the completion of the New Testament that dismisses the inherent meaningfulness of created things. For example, the ink and letters in which the autographs or original letters of the inspired books of the Scriptures were written. In our textbook I refer to both Plato's philosophy and Plotinus' Neo-Platonist philosophy as *Platonism*.

Postmodernism. A philosophy or attitude of systemic disbelief toward every scientific worldview and every authoritative text, especially the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. The first postmodern philosopher was the 5th century B.C. sophist Protagoras, who promoted radical cognitive and moral relativism: "Man is the measure of all things," etc. (DK 80 B1 and Plato, *Theaetetus* (152a). Twentieth century postmodern relativists include Nietzsche, Foucault, Lyotard, Rorty—and Derrida, who asserted the right to interpret biblical text however he chose in pursuit of his goal to eliminate the *logos* from Western culture.

Rhetoric. The interpretive framework of *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* that Luther used for teaching his hermeneutic of the Scriptures alone. I provide explicitly biblical definitions of these classical terms in our fourth chapter.

Secular. Originally a Latin term meaning "in sync with the current century," it has come to mean "scrubbed of the text and faith of the Bible, or of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures." Secularism or functional atheism appears to be the dominant feature of the late 20th and the early 21st centuries. See *Western Culture*.

Semantics. The study of the inherent meaningfulness of language. Not to be confused with semiotics. Note well: because of the dominance of the semiotic view in the social sciences, and the educational impact of the social sciences, *semantics* is often defined in linguistic discussions in our century as if it were just another name for semiotics. See *Semiotics*.

Semiotics. Radicalized Platonism. A theory from the social science of linguistics taken up by postmodern philosophers, professors, and authors who teach incredulity, disbelief toward metanarratives (Lyotard), that is, toward authoritative texts of any kind, including especially the Scriptures. While postmodernists such as Jacques Derrida wield semiotics as a cudgel to secularize the divine gift of language, theorists such as Umberto Eco (*The Limits of Interpretation*) provide the academic fuel and literature for the postmodernist insistence on semiotics. This is a modern inversion of the Greek term *semeia*. The apostle John, for example, unequivocally uses *semeion* as meaning the miracles of our Lord which established His divinity and worked faith in people.

See *Platonism*.

Social Sciences. Academic professions such as anthropology, sociology, geography, history, law, political science, economics, communication, linguistics, pedagogy, and psychology are all social sciences. They study and teach the social aspect of being human with methodologies that are almost always confined to the scientific method, which reduces and atomizes human beings to their scientifically observable aspects.

Three Acts. A classic way of writing and analyzing texts: The 1st Act is defining key terms so that everyone understands what it is we are talking about. The 2nd Act is judging sentences, particularly the thesis statement of an essay, article, or book to be either True or False. The 3rd Act is articulating the reasons that prove why the thesis sentence is either True or False. The Three Acts are the heart of *logos* in rhetoric. See *Rhetoric*.

True or False. The 2nd Act is the linguistic activity of judging a sentence, the most basic unit of thought, to be either True or False. *Truth* is, according to the words of the Word incarnate, Jesus Himself (John 14:6). This is the *hypostatic* (or “in-the-person-of-Christ”) understanding of truth in the incarnate Person of the Trinity (John 14:6). Because John quotes Jesus in Greek as saying “I am the *Aletheia*, the same word used three hundred years earlier by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* (Γ.7, 1011b26-27), we can also define the truthfulness of our writing and speaking as Aristotle says: “To say that what is is and what is not is not is to speak the truth.” This is the *correspondence* theory of truth. What we say / write / think must correspond with what is in reality. Reality is much more than Aristotle imagined; it is everything that exists and continues to exist only in relation to Christ the Truth (Colossians 1:15-20). See *Three Acts*.

Western Culture. Often undefined and assumed to be something like the various descriptions from social sciences of how different people in different times and places chose to live. By contrast, my working definition is a normative definition adapted from the philosopher Roger Scruton (*Culture Counts: Faith and Feeling in a World Besieged*). *Culture* is moral judgments passed from one generation to another, and what distinguishes *Western culture* is its moral judgments passed from one generation to another by means of Greek forms of thinking applied to the *logos* of the Scriptures.

Zoon logon echon. Greek for “the animated type of being distinguished by *logos*” (Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1). Luther stipulated Aristotle’s essential definition of man in the opening propositions or theses of his 1536 Disputation Concerning Man. See Appendix B.

APPLICATIONS

Application 1 - How to write an essay using the Three Acts

The Three Acts

1st Act — Let's look at this key word.

What does it mean?

This is the activity of *understanding* that we do as *logos* beings!

2nd Act — Let's talk about this sentence.

Is this true?

This is the activity of *judging* a statement to be true or false that we do as *logos* beings!

3rd Act — Let's talk about this entire paragraph or essay.

Is the argument valid? In other words, are these *the right words in the right order to maintain the truth* all the way through, from its thesis sentences to its conclusion?

This is the activity of *reasoning* together that we do as *logos* beings!

The Process

1. First, the thesis sentence. Either (a) use a quote from the assigned text for the essay, or (b) paraphrase a quote from the essay in your own words, or (c) use the sentence assigned by your instructor as your thesis.

Example. "Language is a divine gift."

2. Locate the crucial words or terms in the thesis and define each one in the first paragraph. This is the 1st Act.

Example. *Divine gift* means "a blessing or gift from God Himself." After defining each crucial term, complete the first paragraph by restating the thesis and moving on to (3).

3. Determine whether the thesis sentence is True or False. This is the 2nd Act. I teach my students to judge the thesis statement to be True or False according to Aristotle's definition of speaking a lie or speaking the truth from his *Metaphysics*, 1011b25-28. This is known as the *cor-*

respondence understanding of truth.

To say that what is is not, or what is not is, is to speak a lie (*pseudos*);

To say that what is is and what is not is not, is to speak the truth (*aletheia*).

Example. “Language is a divine gift is true for the following reasons.”

4. The rest of your essay consists of one or two paragraphs for each reason that the thesis is True or False. This is the 3rd Act. For each reason, be sure to (a) state it clearly, using the 1st Act for your wording, (b) to anticipate an objection someone could make to your reason, and (c) to provide your response to that objection.

Example. The first reason that my thesis that language is a divine gift is true is from the Scriptures. In John 1 and Genesis 1 we learn that language is primordial. Someone may object by saying, “Well, I do not believe in the Bible; I believe in evolution.” My response is that the scientific theory of evolution, because it follows the scientific method which can explain only the universe as it exists, is not capable of explaining either the origin of the universe or the origin of mankind’s capacity for language, whereas the Scriptures, which are God’s words to us, can and do.

Note: Depending on the length of your essay, the paragraphs explaining each reason and responding to objections can be expanded or kept very brief.

5. The essay concludes with a two- or three-sentence paragraph that reiterates what the thesis is and why it is True or False as briefly as possible. Never introduce a new thought at the end; just summarize your analysis or argument.

Application 2 — How Jagona Kenyagga discovered the lifelong blessing of the written word, from Karen Dinesen’s 1937 book Out of Africa

Jagona Kanyagga has been involved in an African tribunal, a Kyama or official assembly of the local elders, concerning the shooting of a child by a young man. The Kyama has lasted for six years and Jagona has been suffering all that time from false testimonies and unfair judgments against him—until Karen Dinesen interviewed him and wrote down all the details of the case so the Kyama of elders could know the truth of his innocence and give him justice.

When Jogona had at last come to the end of his tale, and I had got it all down, I told him that I was now going to read it to him. He turned away from me while I was reading, as if to avoid all distractions. But as I read out his own name, 'And he sent for Jogona Kanyagga, who was his friend and who lived not far away,' he swiftly turned his face to me, and gave me a great fierce flaming glance, so exuberant with laughter that it changed the old man into a boy, into the very symbol of youth.

Again as I had finished the document and was reading out his name, where it figured as a verification below his thumb-mark, the vital direct glance was repeated, this time deepened and calmed, with a new dignity.

Such a glance did Adam give the Lord when He formed him out of the dust, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. I had created him and shown him himself: Jogona Kanyagga of life everlasting. When I handed him the paper, he took it reverently and greedily, folded it up in a corner of his cloak and kept his hand upon it. He could not afford to lose it, for his soul was in it, and it was the proof of his existence. Here was something which Jogona Kanyagga had performed, and which would preserve his name for ever: the flesh was made word and dwelt among us full of grace and truth.

The world of the written word was opened to the Native of Africa at the time when I lived out there. I had then, if I wanted to, an opportunity of catching the past by its tail and of living through a bit of our own history: the period when the large plain population of Europe had in the same way had the letter revealed to them. In Denmark it happened a good hundred years ago, and from what I have been told by people who were very old when I was a child, I believe that the reaction in both cases has been nearly exactly the same. . .

The document now became Jogona's great treasure. I saw it again more than once. Jogona made a little leather-bag for it, embroidered with beads, and hung it on a strap round his neck. From time to time, mostly on Sunday mornings, he would suddenly appear in my door, lift the bag off and take out the paper to have it read to him. Once when I had been ill, and was for the first time again out riding, he caught sight of me at a distance, ran after me a long way, and stood by my horse all out of breath, to hand me his document. At each reading his face took on the same impress of deep religious triumph, and after the reading he solicitously smoothed out his paper, folded it up and put it back in the bag. The importance of the account was not lessened but augmented with time, as if to Jogona the greatest wonder about it was that it did not change. The past, that had been so difficult to bring to memory, and that had probably seemed to be changing every time it was thought of, had here been caught, conquered and pinned down before his eyes. It had become History; with it there was now no variableness neither shadow of turning.

Karen Dinesen (writing as Isak Dinesen), *Out of Africa* (New York: The Modern Library, 1992 edition), 125-126 and 129-130.

Application 3 — Socrates' reasons for why he would never write words down—written down by Plato

In this passage from Plato's dialogue Phaedrus, Socrates presents his reasoning about the limitations of written words compared to spoken discourse or dialectic, namely, that writing can (a) lead to forgetfulness and (b) a false sense of wisdom. Like his student Plato after him, Socrates argues that true understanding is in the soul and not in the words themselves. He argues (in spoken words) that written words cannot speak for themselves. Also, he argues that written words cannot adapt rhetorically to the needs of the audience.

Note: Phaedrus' name is written phonetically, that is, as it sounds: Fedro.

Plato, *Phaedrus*, 274c-277a

Socrates: But we must examine the convenience or inconvenience that there may be in it written. Isn't it true?

Fedro (Phaidros): Without a doubt.

Socrates: Do you know what the best way to please the gods is through your written speeches or spoken?

Fedro: No, and you?

Socrates: I can tell you a tradition of the ancients, who knew the truth. If we could discover it for ourselves, would we still worry about what the have men thought before us?

Fedro: Ridiculous question! Tell me, then, that ancient tradition.

Socrates: Well, I heard that near Naucratis, in Egypt, there was a god, one of the oldest of the country, the same to which the bird that the Egyptians call Ibis is dedicated. This god is he was called Teut. It is said that he invented numbers, calculus, geometry, astronomy, as well as the games of chess and dice, and, in short, writing. ...

Teut said, "Writing ... will only produce forgetfulness in the souls of those who know her, making them despise their memories. Trusting in this strange assis-

tance of writing, they will abandon the care of material characters and preserving memories, whose trace will have lost its spirit. You have not found a way to cultivate memory, but to awaken empty musings; and you give your students the shadow of science and not science itself. Because, when your students see that they can learn many things without teachers, they will be considered wise, and they will mostly be nothing but ignorant and false wise men unbearable in the trade of life.”

Fedro: My dear Socrates, you have a special grace for delivering Egyptian speeches, and the same you could be from all the countries in the universe, if you wanted. . .

Socrates: He who thinks to transmit an art by putting it down in a book, and he who believes in turn take it from this, as if these characters could give him any clear and solid instruction, I think he seems a great fool; and surely he is unaware of the oracle of Ammon, if he thinks that a writing cannot be more than a means of awakening reminiscences in one who already knows the object of which it is about

Fedro: What you just said is very accurate.

Socrates: This is, my dear Phaedrus, the drawback of both writing and painting; the Productions of this last art seem alive, but interrogate them, and you will see that they hold a serious silence. The same happens with written speeches: when you hear them or read them, you think they are thinking, but ask them for an explanation about the object they contain, and they always respond the same thing.

What is once written rolls from hand to hand, passing from those who understand the subject to those for whom the work has not been written, knowing therefore neither with whom it should be possible to speak, nor with whom to remain silent. If a written work feels insulted or unjustly despised, it has always in need of his father’s help, because he is unable to reject the attacks and to defend oneself. . .

Fedro: You are also right.

Socrates: But let us consider speeches of another kind, a legitimate sister to this eloquence which is a bastard; let’s see how it is born and how it is better and more powerful than the other.

Fedro: What speech is it and what is its origin?

Socrates: The discourse that is written with the characters of science in the

soul of the one who studies. It is the one who can defend themselves, the one who knows when to speak and when to be silent.

Fedro: You speak of the lively and animated discourse that resides in the soul of the one who possesses it. Science, next to which written discourse is nothing more than a vain simulacrum.

Socrates: No doubt. . .

Application 4 — Analogy: Two Definitions

Analogical Reasoning

Analogical reasoning stands as a cornerstone of human cognition, defined fundamentally as the process of transferring knowledge or structure from one familiar domain, known as the source domain, to another less familiar domain, the target domain. This complex cognitive operation is not merely a superficial comparison of attributes but relies crucially on the detection and alignment of relational structures.

Unlike simple association or categorization, analogy requires the reasoner to look beyond surface similarities—such as shared physical features—and identify deep, systemic correspondences between the underlying networks of relations that connect objects within each domain. This ability to perceive structural isomorphism is what distinguishes true analogical thought and allows for sophisticated inferential leaps across disparate conceptual spaces, serving as a primary mechanism for learning, prediction, and creative problem-solving across diverse fields including science, mathematics, and everyday decision-making.

Accessed at Analogical Reasoning: Definition, Examples & Types - Psychepedia

The Use of Analogy in Philosophical Reasoning

Henry Montgomery in Reasoning Philosophy Logic Relation, November 7, 2025

Analogy, at its heart, is the art of understanding something new by comparing it to something familiar. In the grand tapestry of philosophical *reasoning*, it stands as a venerable tool, employed by thinkers across millennia to illuminate abstract concepts, build arguments, and explore the very nature of existence... We will explore its historical prominence, its logical underpinnings, and the

critical discernment required to wield it effectively, ultimately seeking to understand the delicate *relation* between comparison and comprehension.

Unpacking Analogy: A Core Philosophical Device

At its simplest, an analogy draws a comparison between two distinct things or systems, highlighting similarities in their structure, function, or *relation* to other elements. It posits that because two things are alike in some known respects, they are likely to be alike in others. For philosophers, this isn't merely a rhetorical flourish; it's a fundamental mode of *reasoning* that helps bridge the gap between the concrete and the abstract, the observed and the inferred.

Key Components of an Analogy:

- **Target Domain:** The concept or phenomenon we are trying to understand or explain.
- **Source Domain:** The familiar concept or phenomenon used for comparison.
- **Inferred Similarities:** The properties, structures, or *relations* transferred from the source to the target.

Constructing and Evaluating Philosophical Analogies

To leverage analogy effectively in *philosophy*, one must be adept at both constructing compelling comparisons and critically evaluating their validity.

1. **Identify the Core Relation:** What is the fundamental structure or function being compared? Is it a *relation* of cause and effect, part to whole, means to end, or something else?
2. **Assess Relevance:** Are the similarities truly relevant to the point being made? Do they pertain to the essential aspects of the target phenomenon?
3. **Scrutinize Disanalogies:** Actively seek out differences between the source and target domains. Are these differences significant enough to invalidate the comparison? A strong analogy can withstand significant disanalogies if the core *relation* holds firm.
4. **Distinguish Explanatory from Argumentative Analogy:**

Explanatory analogies (like Plato's Cave) aim to illustrate and clarify, making a concept easier to grasp.

Argumentative analogies (like the design argument) aim to prove

a conclusion based on the observed similarities. These require a much higher standard of *logic* and rigor.

- 5. Avoid Begging the Question:** Ensure the analogy doesn't presuppose the very point it aims to prove.

Application 5 — Essay theses from Phillip Cary's 2008 *Outward Signs*

Outward Signs — Phillip Cary's Sentences for Essays and Class Discussion

I was led into this investigation by Luther, that great enemy of the religion of inner spiritual experience. According to Luther, God gives himself to us through his external word, but not according to Augustine (p. viii).

At stake is nothing less than the nature of the Gospel, which for Luther has a sacramental kind of efficacy (p. viii).

"The words of Christ are sacraments by which he works our salvation," says Luther, because "the Gospel words and stories are a kind of sacrament, that is, *a sacred sign, by which God effects what they signify* in those who believe" (p. viii).

"... the Augustinian framework assumes the superiority of the inner as well as the inferiority of the external ... " (p. viii).

"... the contrast between inner and outer, which defines expressionist semiotics, is ... a substantive ontological thesis characteristic of Platonism" (p. xi).

"I must ask you to consider that words may not so much express our experience as shape it and give it being, making it a distinctively articulate human rather than animal experience. Although we have intuitions ... our deepest intuitions could not have gotten into our hearts unless human words were there first" (p. xii).

"Persons are present for us not in our experience but in their flesh, and therefore knowing other persons, including God, is always dependent on external authority" (p. xiii).

"What a theologian says about the sacraments is doubly important because it parallels what he says about Christ in the flesh. If there is no external efficacy

in the one, there is none in the other” (p. 222).

“Whereas Calvin warns that we must not ‘cling too tightly to the outer sign,’ Luther insists that not to ‘cling to the outward signs by which God has revealed himself in Christ . . . is to lose Christ altogether’” (p. 227).

As in all matter of piety, the crucial issue here is where we are to direct our attention: do we cling to external things as if they give us God in the flesh or do we take them to be admonitions directing our attention elsewhere? ... Because God is a person—is this person, Jesus Christ the second hypostasis [Greek for person] of the Trinity who is a person in exactly the same sense as we are—his word is not just an admonition to look elsewhere but the efficacious means by which he gives himself to us” (p. 255).

“The roots of community lie within the soul which is not by nature a private world but the intelligible world of eternal Truth and Beauty which all souls have in common. Sin disrupts this inner community and privatizes the inner space of the soul, but redemption restores it” (pp. 257-258).

“The presence of God in the human heart is radically dependent on the church’s faithfulness to the authority of the external authority of the Gospel. For the church is constituted by this word as a marriage is constituted by wedding vows. Without this set of eternal signs [the Scriptures] she has no being, and no Bridegroom or God to offer to the world” (p. 258).

From Outward Signs: The Powerlessness of External Things in Augustine’s Thought (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Application 6. - Language is never private but always in the public domain

1. Assume that we have a private language such that there can be no outward signs for private objects (reductio ad absurdum strategy). That is, names for sensations cannot be taught.
2. Let 'E' be a term in this private language. The crucial question is whether we can describe the use of this term.
 - a) One can't give an ostensive (pointing) definition of 'E' to anyone else.
 - b) Presumably, I must give myself a private ostensive definition—by fixing my attention on E while repeating 'E.' Any other kind of definition would assume a public language.
3. Suppose I give a definition of 'E'; then I am giving a definition of a kind of private object.
4. When I use 'E' in the future, I am applying it to a sensation of kind E.
5. When I write 'E' on my calendar, I am correctly using it if I am having a sensation of kind E.
6. Now, a sign in a language must be capable of being used correctly or incorrectly. If there is such a thing as a use, then there is a correct usage and incorrect usage.
7. It follows that there must therefore be a criterion, a way of distinguishing correct from incorrect usage.
8. But, how can correct uses of sign 'E' be distinguished from incorrect uses?
 - a. No one else can tell me that I am using the sign correctly or incorrectly:
 - i. I've defined the sign privately. No one else can tell if I'm fixing my attention on an object of kind E.
 - ii. There are no outward manifestations of E.
 - iii. Thus no one else has any grounds for saying I'm using 'E' correctly or incorrectly.
 - b. Only I can distinguish correct or incorrect uses of 'E'.
9. But how is even my own correct usage possible?
 - a. 'E' is defined to me as the name of the kind of sensation I had at time t.
 - b. Suppose at time t^1 I have a sensation which I call 'G'.
 - c. If I claim that G is a sensation of kind E, how can I know that I am correct?
 - d. I must remember the sensation I had at t^1 and compare it with G at t^2 .
 - e. But suppose I believe the sensation I had at t^2 is of the same kind as the one I had at t^1 .
Can I be sure that I cannot be mistaken?
 - f. Suppose it was not an E that I was having!
 - g. Either it is possible for me to use 'E' incorrectly or it is not.
 - h. Suppose it is possible for me to use 'E' incorrectly unknowingly.
 - i. Then when I use sign 'E' at t^1 neither I nor anyone else will know whether I use it correctly.

A logical interlude. Let's consider the statement: 'I am having an E again.'

Q1. Can anyone understand this?

Q2. Can I understand it?

- A. No! to (Q1) and (Q2), for no other person can know what an E is—nor even what "sensation" means in this context.
- B. If I can't distinguish a correct from an incorrect use of a sign, then I don't understand the sign.

- i. I only know what it means to say I have an E if I know what 'E' means.
 - ii. But to do this I must remember what I had at t^1 .
 - iii. If I am mistaken, it is because I don't remember it. (And if I don't remember, how can I be said to understand it?)
- j. Then if my statement can be understood by anyone, it must be impossible for me to be mistaken in my use of sign 'E'.
- k. Then whatever I call 'E' is an E.
- l. Then there is no such thing as an incorrect use of 'E'.
- m. Therefore 'E' is not a sign in a language.
- n. Then our private language is not a language.
10. In order to reject this argument, we must make (8b, "only I can distinguish correct / incorrect uses...") intelligible, which involves the overcoming of (9i, "if I use it unknowingly, neither I nor anyone will know if I use it correctly ...").
- a. Suppose that
 - i. there is such a thing as correct and incorrect use of 'E';
 - ii. no one else can tell if I use it correctly or incorrectly;
 - iii. in fact I never use it incorrectly;
 - iv. I know what it would be to use 'E' incorrectly.
 - v. So, I assume that I can reject (9i) on some as-yet unmentioned basis.
 - b. This assumption entails that I have a way of knowing if I am using 'E' correctly.
 - c. But my way of knowing I am using 'E' correctly cannot be that I'm using it in accordance with its established (public) use. How does one establish a use? We can't do it by verbal definition, because here we define it in terms which already have an established use.
 - d. Then my only way of knowing if I'm using a sign correctly is this: I have a way of knowing that I am having a sensation of kind E.
 - e. What can my way of knowing be?
 - i. It can't be by asking anyone else.
 - ii. It can't be by appeal to anything public.
 - iii. It can't be by appeal to the original sensation.
 - iv. It can't be by appeal to what I have now—identification has to be in comparison to something else.
 - v. Therefore it must be (let us say) by memory.
 - f. Call the memory sensation 'M'.
 - g. My appeal to M gets me the right answers if M is accurate.
 - h. I know what I'm having is of kind E only if I know whether M is accurate.
 - i. How do I know M is an accurate memory impression?
 - i. Suppose that I have no way of knowing that M is accurate. Then I have no way of knowing that I am having a sensation of kind E.
 - ii. Suppose I do have a way of knowing M is correct. It must only be by an appeal to another memory impression M^1 .
 - iii. We can ask the same questions about M^1 , so we are caught in an infinite regress.
 - j. Thus, I have no way of knowing if my current impression is of kind E.
 - k. I have no way of telling whether I use 'E' correctly.
 - l. Therefore, private language is impossible.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 256-258; outline by Marc Cohen; adapted

Application 7. — Elephants in Our Heads?! Putnam’s thought experiment about language retold by Colin McGinn

The following is my adaptation of S. Marc Cohen’s reconstruction of Wittgenstein’s argument against the possibility of private language, based on Philosophical Investigations 257, 258, 260, 261, 265. E = (sensory) experience; also, E = (emotional) experience

A thought experiment is a story told for the purpose of a philosophical study or dialectic about a philosophical problem. There are many: Nagel’s what’s it like to be a bat? Putnam’s the brain in a vat. Ibn Sīnā’s (Avicenna’s) floating man.

This one is a thought experiment about language. You will notice that this is a scientific way of approaching language—very different from the philosophers I cite in Luther’s Hermeneutic of the Scriptures Alone for Our 21st Century.

Imagine somebody pointing to an elephant. When the speaker says “that elephant,” imagine that his brain is in a certain state that he perceives the elephant in a certain way (as big, gray, etc.). Now imagine him on Twin Earth or some other place on earth that there is an exact twin of that person who says “that elephant,” pointing to a different elephant. He is a molecular twin of the first speaker, so everything is internally the same in both of their minds. However, when the first speaker says “that elephant” he refers to a different elephant from the one his twin refers to. They refer to different animals even though they are in exactly the same psychological state, because they are pointing at different elephants. The context fixes the reference, not the ideas and perceptions in their minds. . .

Putnam assumes that meaning determines reference and hence concludes that meaning is not in the head. *If* meaning determines reference, *then* meanings are not in the head. But what if meaning does *not* determine reference? Then meaning can stay in the head, while failing to determine reference . . . We can summarize by saying that meaning is a *social phenomenon* . . . we must distinguish different dimensions of semantic significance. To say simply “Meaning is not in the head” is incomplete and ambiguous.

From Colin McGinn’s 2015 book, *Philosophy of Language: The Classics Explained*, 138-143.

APPENDIX A

Christ's Titles of Honour and His Attributes

Third Christmas Day sermon on Jn. 1:1-14 by Martin Luther from his Church Postil, 1521-1522 (Lenker 1:171).

1. This is the most important of the Gospels of the church year, and yet it is not, as some think, obscure or difficult. For upon it is clearly founded the important article of faith concerning the divinity of Christ, with which all Christians ought to be acquainted, and which they are able to understand. Nothing is too great for faith. Therefore let us consider this Gospel lesson in the simplest manner possible, and not as the scholastics did with their fabricated subtleties, conceal its doctrine from the common people and frighten them away from it. There is no need of many fine and sharp distinctions, but only of a plain, simple explanation of the words of the text.
2. In the first place, we should know that all that the apostles taught and wrote, they took out of the Old Testament; for in it all things are proclaimed that were to be fulfilled later in Christ, and were to be preached, as Paul says in Rom. 1, 2: "God promised afore the Gospel of his son Jesus Christ through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures." Therefore all their preaching is based upon the Old Testament, and there is not a word in the New Testament that does not look back into the Old, where it had been foretold. Thus we have seen in the Epistle how the divinity of Christ is confirmed by the Apostle from passages in the Old Testament. For the New Testament is nothing more than a revelation of the Old. Just as one receives a sealed letter which is not to be opened until after the writer's death, so the Old Testament is the will and testament of Christ, which he has had opened after his death and read and everywhere proclaimed through the Gospel, as it is declared in Rev. 5, 5, where the Lamb of God alone is able to open the book with the seven seals, which no one else could open, neither in heaven, nor on earth, nor under the earth.

I. Christ's First Title of Honour and Attribute: He is the Word

3. That this Gospel may be clearer and more easily understood, we must go back to the passages in the Old Testament upon which it is founded, namely, the beginning of the first chapter of Genesis. There we read, Gen. 1, 1-3: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And

God said, Let there be light, and there was light," etc. Moses continues how all things were created in like manner as the light, namely, by speaking of the Word of God. Thus: "And God said, Let there be a firmament." And again: "God said, Let there be sun, moon, stars," etc.

4. From these words of Moses it is clearly proved that God has a Word, through which or by means of which he spoke, before anything was created; and this Word does not and cannot be anything that was created, since all things were created through this divine utterance, as the text of Moses clearly and forcibly expresses it, when it says: "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." The Word must therefore have preceded the light, since light came by the Word; consequently it was also before all other creatures, which also came by the Word, as Moses writes.
5. But let us go farther. If the Word preceded all creatures, and all creatures came by the Word and were created through it, the Word must be a different being than a creature, and was not made or created like a creature. It must therefore be eternal and without beginning. For when all things began it was already there, and cannot be confined in time nor in creation, but is above time and creation; yea, time and creation are made and have their beginning through it. Thus it follows that whatever is not temporal must be eternal; and that which has no beginning cannot be temporal; and that which is not a creature must be God. For besides God and his creatures there is nothing. Hence we learn from this text of Moses, that the Word of God, which was in the beginning and through which all things were made and spoken, must be God eternal and not a creature.
6. Again, the Word and he that speaks it, are not one person; for it is not possible that the speaker is himself the Word. What sort of speaker would he be who is himself the Word? He must needs be a mute, or the word must needs sound of itself without the speaker. But Scripture here speaks in strong and lucid words: "God said." And thus God and His Word must be two distinct things. If Moses had written: "There was an utterance," it would not be so evident that there were two, the Word and the Speaker. But when he says: "God said," and names the speaker and his word, he forcibly states that there are two: that the speaker is not the word, and the word is not the speaker, but that the word comes from the speaker, and has its existence not of itself but from the speaker. But the speaker does not come from the word, nor does he have his existence from it, but from himself. Thus, the words of Moses point conclusively to the fact that there are two persons in the Godhead from eternity, before all creatures, that the one has its existence from the other, and the first has its existence from nothing but itself.

7. Again, the Scriptures firmly and everlastingly maintain that there is only one God, as Moses begins, saying: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." And Deut. 6, 4, "Hear, O Israel; Jehovah our God is one God." Thus the Scriptures proceed in simple, comprehensible words, and teach such exalted things so plainly that every one may well understand them, and so forcibly that no one can gainsay them. Who is there that cannot here understand from these words of Moses, that there must be two persons in the Godhead, and yet but one God, unless he wishes to deny the plain Scriptures?
8. Again, who is there so subtle as to be able to contradict this doctrine? He must distinguish or keep apart the Word from God, the speaker; and he must confess that it was before all creatures, and that the creatures were made by it. Consequently he must surely admit it to be God, for besides the creatures there is nothing but God; he must also admit that there is only one God. Thus the Scriptures forcibly conclude that these two persons are one perfect God, and that each one is the only true, real, and perfect God, who has created all things; that the Speaker has his being not from the Word, but that the Word has its being from the Speaker, yet he has his being eternally and from eternity, and outside of all creation.
9. The Arian heretics intended to draw a mist over this clear passage and to bore a hole into heaven, since they could not surmount it, and said that this Word of God was indeed God, not by nature, however, but by creation. They said that all things were created by it, but it had also been created previously, and after that all things were created by it. This they said from their own imagination without any authority from the Scriptures, because they left the simple words of the Scriptures and followed their own fancies.
10. Therefore I have said that he who desires to proceed safely on firm ground, must have no regard for the many subtle and hair-splitting words and fancies, but must cling to the simple, powerful, and explicit words of Scripture, and he will be secure. We shall also see how St. John anticipated these same heretics and refuted them in their subterfuges and fabrications.
11. Therefore we have here in the Books of Moses the real gold mine, from which everything that is written in the New Testament concerning the divinity of Christ has been taken. Here you may see from what source the gospel of St. John is taken, and upon what it is founded; and therefore it is easy to understand.

This is the source of the passage in Ps. 33, 6: "By the Word of Jehovah the heavens were made." Solomon in beautiful words describes the wisdom of God, Prov. 3, 22, saying that this wisdom had been in God before

all things; and he takes his thoughts from this chapter of Moses. So almost all the prophets have worked in this mine and have dug their treasures from it.

12. But there are other passages by this same Moses concerning the Holy Ghost, as for example in Gen. 1,2: "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Thus the Spirit of God must also be something different from him who breathes him into existence, sends him forth, and yet he must be before all creatures. Again, Moses says in Gen. 1, 28-31: "God blessed the creatures, beheld them, and was pleased with them." This benediction and favourable contemplation of the creatures point to the Holy Ghost, since the Scriptures attribute to him life and mercy. But these passages are not so well developed as those which refer to the Son; consequently they are not so prominent. The ore is still halfway in the mines, so that these passages can easily be believed, if reason is so far in subjection as to believe that there are two persons. If anyone will take the time and trouble to compare the passages of the New Testament referring to the Holy Ghost with this text of Moses, he will find much light, as well as pleasure.

13. Now we must open wide our hearts and understanding, so as to look upon these words not as the insignificant, perishable words of man, but think of them as being as great as he is who speaks them. It is a Word which he speaks of himself, which remains in him, and is never separated from him. Therefore according to the thought of the Apostle, we must consider how God speaks with himself and to himself, and how the Word proceeds from within himself. However, this Word is not an empty sound, but brings with it the whole essence of the divine nature. Reference has been made in the Epistle to the brightness of his glory and the image of his person, which constitute the divine nature, so that it accompanies the image in its entirety and thus becomes the very image itself. In the same manner God of himself also utters his Word, so that the whole Godhead accompanies the Word and in its nature remains in, and essentially is, the Word.

14. Behold, here we see whence the Apostle has taken his language, when he calls Christ an image of the divine essence, and the brightness of divine glory. He takes it from this text of Moses, when he says that God spoke the Word of himself; this can be nothing else than an image that represents him, since every word is a sign which means something. But here the thing signified is by its very nature in the sign or in the Word, which is not in any other sign. Therefore he very properly calls it a real image or sign of his nature.

15. The word of man may also in this connection be used in a measure as an illustration; for by it the human heart is known. Thus we commonly

say: I understand his heart or intentions, when we have only heard his words; as out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks, and from the word the heart is known, as though it were in the word. In consequence of this experience the heathen had a saying: *Qualis quisque est talia loquitur*. (As a man speaks, so is he). Again: *Oratio est character animi* (Speech is an image of the heart). When the heart is pure it utters pure words, when it is impure it utters impure words. With this also corresponds the gospel of Matthew, 12, 34, where Christ says: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." And again, "How can ye, being evil, speak good things?" Also John the Baptist says, John 3, 31: "He that is of the earth is of the earth, and of the earth he speaketh." The Germans also have a proverb: "Of what the heart is full, overfloweth out of the mouth." The bird is known by its song, for it sings according to its nature. Therefore all the world knows that nothing represents the condition of the heart so perfectly and so positively as the words of the mouth, just as though the heart were in the word.

16. Thus it is also with God. His word is so much like himself, that the Godhead is wholly in it, and he who has the word has the whole Godhead. But this comparison has its limits. For the human word does not carry with it the essence or the nature of the heart, but simply its meaning, or is a sign of the heart, just as a woodcut or a bronze tablet does not carry with it the human being, but simply represents it. But here in God, the Word does not only carry with it the sign and picture, but the whole being, and is as full of God as he whose word or picture it is. If the human word were pure heart, or the intention of the heart, the comparison would be perfect. But this cannot be; consequently the Word of God is above every word, and without comparison among all creatures.
17. There have indeed been sharp discussions about the inner word in the heart of man, which remains within, since man has been created in the image of God. But it is all so deep and mysterious, and will ever remain so, that it is not possible to understand it. Therefore we shall pass on, and we come, now to our Gospel, which is in itself clear and manifest. "In the beginning was the Word."
18. What beginning does the Evangelist mean except the one of which Moses says: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth?" That was the beginning and origin of creation. Other than this there was no beginning, for God had no beginning, but is eternal. It follows, therefore, that the Word is also eternal, because it did not have its origin in the beginning, but it was already in the beginning, John says. It did not begin, but when other things began it was already in existence; and its existence did not begin when all things began, but it was then already present.

19. How prudently the Evangelist speaks; for he does not say: "In the beginning the Word was made," but it was there," and was not made. The origin of its existence is different from the beginning of creation. Furthermore he says: "In the beginning." Had he been made before the world, as the Arians maintain, he would not have been in the beginning, but he would have himself been the beginning. But John firmly and clearly maintains: "In the beginning was the Word," and he was not the beginning. Whence has St. John these words? From Moses, Gen. 1, 3 "God said, Let there be light." From this text evidently come the words: "In the beginning was the Word." For if God spoke, there had to be a Word. And if he spoke it in the beginning, when the creation began, it was already in the beginning, and did not begin with the creation.

20. But why does he not say: Before the beginning was the Word? This would have made the matter clearer, as it would seem; thus St. Paul often says: Before the creation of the world, etc. The answer is, because, to be in the beginning, and to be before, the beginning, are the same, and one is the consequence of the other. St. John, as an Evangelist, wished to agree with the writings of Moses, wished to open them up, and to disclose the source of his own words, which would not have been the case had he said: "Before" the beginning. Moses says nothing of that which was before the beginning, but describes the Word in the beginning, in order that he can the better describe the creation, which was made by the Word. For the same reason he also calls him a word, when he might as well have called him a light, life or something else, as is done later; for Moses speaks of a word. Now not to begin and to be in the beginning are the same as to be before the beginning. But if the Word had been in the beginning and not before the beginning, it must have begun to be before the beginning, and so the beginning would have been before the beginning, which would be a contradiction, and would be the same as though the beginning were not the beginning. Therefore it is put in a masterly way: In the beginning was the Word, so as to show that it has not begun, and consequently must necessarily have been eternal, before the beginning. "And the Word was with God."

21. Where else should it have been? There never was anything outside of God. Moses says the same thing when he writes: "God said, Let there be light." Whenever God speaks the word must be with him. But here he clearly distinguishes the persons, so that the Word is a different person than God with whom it was. This passage of John does not allow the interpretation that God had been alone, because it says that something had been with God, namely, the Word. If he had been alone, why would he need to say: The Word was with God? To have something with him, is not to be alone or by himself. It should not be forgotten that the Evangelist strongly emphasizes the little word "with." For he repeats it, and clearly expresses the difference in persons to gainsay natural reason and

future heretics. For while natural reason can understand that there is but one God, and many passages of Scripture substantiate it, and this is also true, yet the Scriptures also strongly oppose the idea that this same God is only one person.

22. Thus arose the heresy of Sabellius, who said: The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are only one person. And again Arius, although he admitted that the Word was with God, would not admit that he was true God. The former confesses and teaches too great a simplicity of God; the latter too great a multiplicity. The former mingles the persons; the latter separates the natures. But the true Christian faith takes the mean, teaches and confesses separate persons and an undivided nature. The Father is a different person from the Son, but he is not another God. Natural reason can not comprehend this; it must be apprehended by faith alone. Natural reason produces error and heresy; faith teaches and maintains the truth; for it clings to the Scriptures, which do not deceive nor lie. "And God was the Word."
23. Since there is but one God, it must be true that God himself is the Word, which was in the beginning before all creation. Some change the order of the words and read: And the Word was God, in order to explain that this Word not only is with God and is a different person, but that it is also in its essence the one true God with the Father. But we shall leave the words in the order in which they now stand: And God was the Word; and this is also what it means; there is no other God than the one only God, and this same God must also essentially be the Word, of which the Evangelist speaks; so there is nothing in the divine nature which is not in the Word. It is clearly stated that this Word is truly God, so that it is not only true that the Word is God, but also that God is the Word.
24. Decidedly as this passage opposes Arius, who teaches that the Word is not God, so strongly it appears to favour Sabellius; for it speaks as though it mingled the persons, and thereby revokes or explains away the former passage, which separates the persons and says: The Word was with God. But the Evangelist intentionally arranged his words so as to refute all heretics. Here therefore he overthrows Arius and attributes to the Word the true essential of the Godhead by saying: And God was the Word; as though he would say: I do not simply say, the Word is God, which might be understood as though the Godhead was only asserted of him, and were not essentially his, as you, Arius, claim; but I say: And God was the Word, which can be understood in no other way than that this same being which every one calls God and regards as such, is the Word. Again, that Sabellius and reason may not think that I side with them, and mingle the persons, and revoke what I have said on this point, I repeat it and say again: "The same was in the beginning with God."

25. The Word was with God, with God, and yet God was the Word. Thus the Evangelist contends that both assertions are true: God is the Word, and the Word is with God; one nature of divine essence, and yet not one person only. Each person is God complete and entire, in the beginning and eternally. These are the passages upon which our faith is founded and to which we must hold fast. For it is entirely above reason that there should be three persons and each one perfect and true God, and yet not three Gods but one God.
26. The Scholastics have argued much pro and con with their numerous subtleties, to make this doctrine comprehensible. But if you do not wish to become entangled in the meshes of the enemy, ignore their cunning, arrogance, and subtleties, and hold to these divine words. Press into them and remain in them, like a hare in a rocky crevice. If you come out and deign to listen to human talk, the enemy will lead you on and overcome you, so that you will at last not know where reason, faith, God, or even yourself are.
27. Believe me, as one who has experienced and tried it, and who does not talk into an empty barrel; the Scriptures are not given us for naught. If reason could have kept on the right road, the Scriptures would not have been given us. Take an example in the case of Arius and Sabellius. Had they clung to the Scriptures and disregarded reason, they would not have originated so much trouble in the church. And our Scholastics might have been Christians, had they ceased fooling with their subtleties and had clung to the Scriptures. "All things were made through him."
28. Has this not been put clearly enough? Who would be surprised, if stubborn men reject every effort to convince them of their error, however plainly and earnestly the truth may be told them, when the Arians could evade this clear and explicit passage and say: All things are made by the Word, but the Word was itself first made, and afterwards all things were made by it? And this in opposition to the direct words: "All things were made through him." And there is no doubt that he was not made and cannot be counted among the things that were made. For he who mentions all things excludes nothing, as St. Paul also explains Psalm 8, 6, when he says, in Heb. 2,8: "Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he subjected all things unto him, he left nothing that is not subjected to him." Again, 1 Cor. 15, 27: "For he put all things in subjection under his feet. It is evident that he is expected who did subject all things unto him."

So also the words, "All things were made through him," must certainly be understood to except him by whom all things were made, and without whom is nothing that is made. This passage is also based upon the first chapter of Genesis, 1, 7, where all created things are mentioned which

God had made, and in each case it is said: "And God said, and it was so," in order to show that they were all made by the Word. But St. John continues and explains himself still more fully when he says: "And without him was not anything made that hath been made."

29. If nothing was made without him, much less is he himself made without whom nothing was made; accordingly the error of Arius should never have attracted any attention, and yet it did. There is no need of comment to explain that the Word is God and the real Creator of all created things since without him nothing was made that ever was made.
30. Some have been in doubt about the order of the words in this text; the words "that was made", they take with the following words, in this way: "That which was made, was in him life." Of this opinion was St. Augustine. But the words properly belong to the preceding words as I have given them, thus: "And without him was not anything made that hath been made." He means to say that none of the things that art; made, are made without him; so that he may the more clearly express that all things were made through him, and that he himself was not made. In short, the Evangelist firmly maintains that the Word is true God, yet not of himself, but of the Father. Therefore we say: Made through him, and Begotten of the Father.

II. Christ's Second Title and Attribute: In Him Was Life

31. On this passage there is generally much speculation, and it is often taken to mean something hard to understand in reference to the twofold existence of creation; in this the Platonic philosophers are famous. They maintain that all creation has its being first in its own nature and kind, as it was created. Secondly, all creation has its being in divine Providence from eternity, in that he has resolved in himself to create all things. Therefore as he lives so all things are living in him; and this creative existence in God, they say, is nobler than the existence in its own kind and nature. For in God things do live which in themselves have no life, as stones, earth, water, and the like. And therefore Saint Augustine says that this Word is an image of all creation, and like a bed-chamber is hung with images which are called Ideas (Greek for images), according to which the created things were made, each one according to its own image. Concerning these John is to have said: "In him was life." Then they connect these words with the preceding ones, thus: That which was made was life in him, that is, all that was ever created, before it was created, had its life in him.
32. But this is going too far and is a forced interpretation of this passage. For John speaks very simply and plainly, and does not mean to lead us

into such hair-splitting, subtle contemplations. I do not know that the Scriptures anywhere speak of created beings in this way. They do say that all things were known, elected, and even ready and living in the sight of God, as though creation had already taken place, as Christ says of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Luke 20,38: "He (God) is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him." But we do not find it written in this sense that all things live in him.

33. This passage also implies something more than the life of the creature, which was in him before the world. It signifies in the simplest manner that he is the fountain and cause of life, that all things which live, live by him and through him and in him, and besides him there is no life, as he himself says in John 14, 6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Again, John 11, 25: "I am the resurrection and the life." Consequently John calls him in 1 John 1, 1. "The Word of Life;" and he speaks especially of the life which man receives by him, that is, eternal life; and it was for this very life that John set out to write his Gospel.

34. This is also apparent from the context For he himself explains the life of which he speaks, when he says: "And the life was the light of men." By these words he undoubtedly shows that he speaks of the life and the light Christ gives to man through himself. For this reason also he refers to John the Baptist as a witness of that light. It is therefore evident how John the Baptist preached Christ, not in lofty terms of speculation, as some fable; but he taught in a plain, simple way how Christ is the light and the life of all men for their salvation.

35. Therefore it is well to remember that John wrote his Gospel, as the historians tell us, because Cerinthus, the heretic, arose in his day and taught that Christ did not exist before his mother Mary, thus making a simple human being or creature, of him. In opposition to this heretic he begins his Gospel in an exalted tone and continues thus to the end, so that in almost every letter he preaches the divinity of Christ, which is done by none of the other Evangelists. And so he also purposely introduces Christ as acting strangely towards his mother, and "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" he said to her in John 2, 4. Was not this a strange, harsh expression for a son to use in addressing his mother? So also on the cross he said: "Woman, behold thy son," John 19,26. All this he does in order to set forth Christ as true God over against Cerinthus; and this he does in language so as not only to meet Cerinthus, but also Arius, Sabellius and all other heretics.

36. We read also that this same pious John saw Cerinthus in a bathing-house and said to his followers: "Let us flee quickly hence that we be not destroyed with this man." And after John had come out, the bathing-house is said to have collapsed and destroyed this enemy of the truth. He thus

points and directs all his words against the error of Cerinthus, and says: Christ was not only before his mother, nay, he was in the beginning the Word of which Moses writes in the very beginning, and all things were made by him, and he was with God and the Word was God, and was in the beginning with God; and thus he strikes Cerinthus as with thunderbolts.

37. Thus we take the meaning of the Evangelist in this passage to be simply and plainly this: He who does not recognize and believe Christ to be true God, as I have so far described him, that he was the Word in the beginning with God, and that all things were made by him; but wishes to make him only a creature of time, coming after his mother as Cerinthus teaches, is eternally lost, and cannot attain to eternal life; for there is no life without this Word and Son of God; in him alone is life. The man Christ, separate from, and without, God, would be useless, as he says himself in John 6, 55, 63: "The flesh profiteth nothing. My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." Why does the flesh profit nothing, and yet my flesh is the only true meat? The plain reason is, because I am not mere flesh and simply man, but I am God's son. My flesh is meat not because it is flesh, but because it is my flesh. This is as much as to say: He who believes that I, who am man, and have flesh and blood like other men, am the Son of God, and God, finds in me true nourishment, and will live. But he who believes me to be only man, is not profited by the flesh, for to him it is not my flesh or God's flesh. He also says: "Ye shall die in your sins, except ye believe that I am he," John 8, 24. Again: "If the son shall therefore make you free, ye shall be free indeed." This is also the meaning of the following passage, "In him was life." The Word of God in the beginning, who is himself God, must be our life, meat, light, and salvation. Therefore we cannot attribute to Christ's human nature the power of making us alive, but the life is in the Word, which dwells in the flesh and makes us alive by the flesh.

38. This interpretation is simple and helpful. Thus St. Paul is wont to call the doctrine of the Gospel "*doctrina pietatis*," a doctrine of piety—a doctrine that makes men rich in grace. However, the other interpretation which the heathen also have, namely, that all creatures live in God, does indeed make subtle disputants and is obscure and difficult; but it teaches nothing about grace, nor does it make men rich in grace. Wherefore the Scriptures speak of it as "*idle*." Just as we interpret the words of Christ, when he says: "I am the life," so also should we interpret these words, and say nothing philosophically of the life of the creatures in God; but on the contrary, we should consider how God lives in us, and makes us partakers of his life, so that we live through him, of him, and in him. For it can not be denied that through him natural life also exists, which even unbelievers have from him, as St. Paul says: "In him we live, and move, and have our being; for we are also his offspring." Acts 17, 28.

39. Yes, natural life is a part of eternal life, its beginning, but on account of death it has an end, because it does not acknowledge and honor him from whom it comes; sin cuts it off so that it must die forever. On the other hand, those who believe in him, and acknowledge him from whom they have -their being, shall never die; but this natural life of theirs will be extended into eternal life, so that they will never taste death, as John says, 8, 51: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my word, he shall never see death." And again, John 11, 25: "He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live." These and similar passages are well understood when we rightly learn to know Christ, how he has slain death and has brought us life.
40. But when the Evangelist says: "In him was life." and not, "In him is life," as though he spoke of things past, the words must not be taken to mean the time before creation, or the time of the beginning; for he does not say: "In the beginning life was in him," as he has just before said of the Word, which was in the beginning with God; but these words on earth, when the Word of God appeared to men and among men; for the Evangelist proposes to write about Christ and that life in which he accomplished all things necessary for our life. Just as he says of John the Baptist: "There came a man, sent from God;" and again: "He was not the Light, etc.;" even so he afterward speaks of the Word: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us;" "He was in the world;" "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not," etc. In the same manner does Christ also speak of John the Baptist: "He was the lamp that burneth and shineth," John 5,35.
41. So he says also, here : "In him was life;" and Christ also says of himself: "When I am in the world, I am the light of the world," John 9, 5. The words of the Evangelist therefore simply refer to the sojourn of Christ on earth. For as I said at first, this Gospel is not as difficult as some think; it has been made difficult by their looking for great, mysterious, and mighty things in it. The Evangelist has written it for ordinary Christians, and has made his words perfectly intelligible. For whoever will disregard the life and sojourn of Christ upon earth, and will wish to find him in some other way, as he now sits in heaven, will always fail. He must look for him as he was and as he sojourned on earth and he will then find life. Here Christ was made our life, light and salvation; here all things occurred that we are to believe concerning him. It has really been said in a most befitting manner: "In him was life," not, that he is not our life now, but that he does not now do that which he then did.
42. That this is the meaning can be seen from the words of the text when it says: "John the Baptist came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him." It is sufficiently clear that

John came solely to bear witness of Christ, and yet he has said nothing at all of the life of the creatures in God supporting the above philosophical interpretation; but all his teaching and preaching were concerning the life of Christ upon earth, whereby he became the Life and Light of men. Now follows:

III. Christ's Third Title of Honour and Attribute: He was the Light

A. Christ was the light of men. "And the Life was the Light of men."

43. Just as the word "life" was interpreted differently from the meaning intended by the Evangelist, so was also the word "light." There has been much foolish speculation as to how the Word of God in its divinity could be a light, which naturally shines and has always given light to the minds of men even among the heathen. Therefore the light of reason has been emphasized and based upon this passage of Scripture.

44. These are all human, Platonic, and philosophical thoughts, which lead us away from Christ into ourselves; but the Evangelist wishes to lead us away from ourselves into Christ. For he would not deal with the divine, almighty and eternal Word of God, nor speak of it, otherwise than as flesh and blood, that sojourned upon earth. He would not have us diffuse our thoughts among the creatures which he has created, so as to pursue him, search for him, and speculate about him as the Platonic philosophers do; but he wishes to lead us away from those vague and high flown thoughts and bring us together in Christ.

The Evangelist means to say: Why do you make such extensive excursions and search for him so far away? Behold, in the man Christ are all things. He has made all things; in him is life, and he is the Word by whom all things were made. Remain in him and you will find all; he is the life and the light of all men. Whoever directs you elsewhere, deceives you. For he has offered himself in this flesh and blood, and he must be sought and will be found there. Follow the testimony of John the Baptist; he will show you no other life or light than this man, who is God himself. Therefore this light must mean the true light of grace in Christ, and not the natural light, which also sinners, Jews, heathen, and devils have, who are the greatest enemies of the light.

45. But let no one accuse me of teaching differently from St. Augustine, who interpreted this text to mean the natural light. I do not reject that interpretation, and am well aware that all the light of reason is ignited by the

divine light; and as I have said of the natural life, that it has its origin in, and is a part of, the true life, when it has come to the right knowledge, so also the light of reason has its origin in, and is part of, the true light, when it recognizes and honours him by whom it has been ignited. It however does not do this of itself, but remains separate and by itself, becomes perverted, and likewise perverts all things; therefore it must become extinguished and die out. But the light of grace does not destroy the natural light. To the light of nature it is quite clear that two and three make five. That the good is to be encouraged and the evil avoided is also clear to it; and thus the light of grace does not extinguish the light of nature, but the latter never gets so far as to be able to distinguish the good from the evil. It is with him as one who wishes to go to Rome with Rome behind his back; for he himself well knew that whoever would go to Rome must travel the right way, but he knew not which was the right road. So it is also with the natural light; it does not take the right road to God, nor does it know or recognize the right way, although it knows well that one must get on the right road. Thus reason always prefers the evil to the good; it would never do this if it fully realized with a clear vision that the good only should be chosen.

46. But this interpretation is out of place in this connection, because only the light of grace is preached here. St. Augustine was only a man, and we are not compelled to follow his interpretation, since the text here clearly indicates that the Evangelist speaks of the light of which John the Baptist bore witness, which is ever the light of grace, even Christ himself.

47. And since this is an opportunity, we shall further describe this deceptive natural light, which causes so much trouble and misfortune. This natural light is like all the other members and powers of man. Who doubts that man with all his powers has been created by the eternal Word of God like all other things, and is a creature of God? But yet there is no good in him, as Moses says, Gen. 6,5: "Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually."

48. Although the flesh was created by God, yet it is not inclined to chastity, but to unchastity. Although the heart was created by God, it is not inclined to humility, nor to the love of one's neighbour, but to pride and selfishness, and it acts according to this inclination, where it is not forcibly restrained. So it is with the natural light; although it is naturally so bright as to know that only good is to be done, it is so perverted that it is never sure as to what is good; it calls good whatever is pleasing to itself, is taken up with it, and only concludes to do what it has selected as good. Thus it continues to pursue the evil instead of the good.

49. We shall prove this by examples. Reason knows very well that we ought

to be pious and serve God; of this it knows how to talk, and thinks it can easily beat all the world. Very well, this is true and well said; but when it is to be done, and reason is to show how and in what way we are to be pious and serve God, it knows nothing, is purblind, and says one must fast, pray, sing, and do the works of the law; it continues to act the fool with works, until it has gone so far astray as to imagine that people are serving God in building churches, ringing bells, burning frankincense, whining, singing, wearing hoods, shaving their heads, burning candles, and other innumerable tomfoolery, of which all the world is now full and more than full. In this monstrously blind error reason continues, even while the bright light shines on, that enjoins piety and service to God.

50. When now Christ, the light of grace, comes and also teaches that we are to be pious and serve God, he does not extinguish this natural light, but opposes the way and manner of becoming pious and serving God as taught by reason. He says: To become pious is not to do works; no works are good without faith.
51. Then begins the fight. Reason rises up against grace, and cries out against its light, accuses it of forbidding good works, protests against not having its own way and standard of becoming pious, being thus set aside; but continually rages about being pious and serving God, and so makes the light of grace foolishness, nay error and heresy, and persists in persecuting and banishing it. See, this is the virtue of the light of nature, that it raves against the true light, is constantly boasting of piety, piety, and is always crying "Good works!" "Good works!" but it can not and will not stand to be taught what piety is and what good works are; it insists that which it thinks and proposes must be right and good.
52. Behold, here then you have the cause and origin of all idolatry, of all heresy, of all hypocrisy, of all error, of which all the prophets have spoken, on account of which they were killed, and against which all the Scriptures protest. All this comes from the stubborn, self-willed arrogance and delusion of natural reason, which is self-confident and puffed up because it knows that we ought to be pious, and serve God; it will neither listen to, nor suffer, a teacher to teach them, thinks it knows enough, and would find out for itself what it is to be pious and serve God, and how it may do so. Therefore divine truth cannot and must not submit to reason; for this would be the greatest mistake and be contrary to God's honour and glory. In this way contentions and tribulations arise.
53. Therefore it is clear, I think, that John does not speak here of the false light, nor of that bright natural light, which rightly claims that we must be pious, for it is already here, and Christ did not come to bring it, but to dim and blind this false, self-willed arrogance, and to set in its place the light of grace, to wit, faith. And this also the words themselves indicate

when they say: "The life was the light of men." If it is the light of men, it must be a different light from the one that is in men, since man already has the light of nature in him, and whatever enlightens man, enlightens the light of nature in man, and brings another light, which surpasses the light that is in man. He does not say, that it is the light of irrational animals, but of man, who is a rational being. For there is not a man found in whom there is not the natural light of reason, from which cause alone he is called man and is worthy to be a man. If the Evangelist would have us understand by this light the natural light of reason, he would have said: The life was a light of darkness; as Moses writes in Gen. 1, 2: "And darkness was upon the face of the deep." Therefore this light must be that which was revealed in Christ on earth.

54. Notice also the order of the words. John puts the Life before the Light. He does not say: "The light was the life of men;" but on the contrary: "The life was the light of men;" for the reason that in Christ there is reality and truth, and not simply appearance as in men. St. Luke speaks of Christ's external life thus, 24, 19: "He was a prophet mighty in deed and word;" and Acts 1, 1: "Jesus began both to do and teach," where "doing" precedes the "teaching"; for where there is only teaching without doing there is hypocrisy. Thus John says of John the Baptist, "He was the lamp that burneth and shineth," John 5, 35; for to be simply shining and not burning is deceptive. In order, therefore, that Christ may here also be recognized as the true, unerring light, John says that all things were life in him, and this same life afterwards was the light of men.

55. It follows then that man has no other light than Christ, God's son in the flesh. And whosoever believes that Christ is true God, and that in him is life, will be illumined and quickened by this life. The light supports him, so that he may remain where Christ is. As the Godhead is an eternal life, this same light is an eternal light; and as this same life can never die so also this light can never be extinguished; and faith in it cannot perish.

56. We may also especially notice that the Evangelist assigns life to Christ, as the eternal Word, and not to Christ the man; for he says: "In him," eminently in the Word, "was the life." Although Christ died as man, yet he ever remained alive; for life could not and cannot die; and consequently death was overcome and was swallowed up in life, so much so that his humanity soon again became alive. This same Life is the light of men; for he who recognizes and believes in such a life in Christ, indeed passes through death, yet never dies, as has been stated above. For this Light of life protects him, so that death cannot harm him. Although the body must die and decay, the soul will not feel this death, because it is in that light, and through that light, that it is entirely comprehended in the life of Christ. But he who does not believe this, remains in darkness and death; and although his body is united to him, even as it will be forever

at the day of judgment, yet the soul will nevertheless taste and feel death, and will die eternally.

57. From this we may realize how great was the harm which Cerinthus threatened, and which all do who believe and teach that Christ is only man and not true God. For his humanity would profit us nothing if the divinity were not in it. Yet, on the other hand, God will not and cannot be found, save through and in his humanity, which he has set up as an ensign for the nations, gathering together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth, Is. 11, 12.

58. See now, if you will believe that in Christ there is such life that remains even in death, and has overcome death, this light will lighten you aright, and will remain a light and life within you even at the time of your death. It follows then that such Life and Light cannot be mere creatures, for no creature can overcome death, either in itself or in another. Behold, how easy and becoming this interpretation of the light is, and how much better it is for our salvation; but how very far they are from it who wish to make of this light only the natural light of reason. For this latter light does not improve any one, nay, it leads only farther away from Christ into creation and to false reason. We must enter into Christ, and not look at the lights which come from him, but gaze at his light, which is the origin of all lights. We must follow the streams which lead to the source and not away from it.

B. Christ was the light that shineth in the darkness.

“And the light shineth in the darkness and the darkness apprehended it not.”

59. This passage has also been interpreted with such lofty ideas, and made to mean that reason has a natural light, as I have just mentioned, and that the same is kindled by God; and yet reason does not recognize, understand, nor feel him, the real Light, by whom it is kindled; therefore it is in darkness, and does not behold the Light from which nevertheless it receives all its vision.

60. O, that this interpretation, that reason has a natural light, were rooted out of my heart! How deeply it is seated there. Not that it is false or wrong in itself, but because it is out of place and untimely in this Gospel connection, and it will not allow these blessed and comforting words of the Gospel to remain simple and pure in their true meaning. Why do they not thus speak also of the natural life? For even the natural life is surely quickened by the divine life, just as much as the light of reason is kindled by the divine light. They might just as well say that life quickens the dead and the dead apprehend it not, as to say that the light illumines dark rea-

son and reason apprehends it not. I might also say that the eternal will makes the unwilling willing, and the unwilling do not apprehend it; and in like manner we might speak of all our other natural gifts and powers. But how does reason and its light fall on such speculations? The Platonic philosophers with their useless and senseless prating first led Augustine to his interpretation. The glitter was so fascinating that they were even called the divine philosophers. Augustine then carried us all with him.

61. What more can their talk teach than this, that reason is illumined by God, who is inconceivable and incomprehensible light? Just so life is given by God, who is inconceivable life, and all our powers are made powerful by God, who is inconceivable power. And as he is near to the light of reason with his inconceivable life, and to the powers with his inconceivable power, as St. Paul says, "In him we live, and move, and have our being", Acts 17,28. Again, "Am I a God at hand, saith Jehovah, and not a God afar off? Do not I fill heaven and earth?" Jer. 23,23.24. Thus we have just heard in the Epistle that "He upholds all things by the word of his power," Heb. 1, 3. Therefore he is not only near to the light of reason and illumines it, but he is near also to all creatures, and flows and pours into them, shines and works in them, and fills all things. Accordingly we are not to think that St. John speaks here of the light of reason; he simply sets mankind before him, and tells what kind of light they have in Christ, aside from and above the light of nature.

62. It is also a blind and awkward expression to say of the natural light that the darkness apprehended it not. What else would this be than to say that reason is illumined and kindled by the divine light, and yet, remains in darkness and receives no light? Whence comes this natural light? There can never be darkness where a light is kindled; although there is darkness from the want of the light of grace. But here they are not speaking of the light of grace, and so they can not refer to like or spiritual darkness. Therefore it is a contradiction of terms to say that the light illumined the darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not, or the darkness remained. One might as well say that life is given to a dead person, and the dead person does not apprehend it nor receive it, but remains dead.

63. But if some one should say that we are not able to apprehend him who gives light and life, then I really hear, what angel does apprehend him? What saint apprehends the one who offers him grace? Verily he remains concealed and unapprehended: but this does not mean, as the Evangelist here says, that the Light is not apprehended in darkness; but as the words read, it means: The Light shineth into the darkness, but the darkness remains darkness and is not illuminated; the Light shines upon the darkness, and yet the darkness remains; just as the sun shines upon the blind, and yet they do not perceive it. Behold how many words I must waste in

order to remove this foreign and false interpretation of our text!

64. Therefore let us cling to the simple meaning the words convey when we do no violence to them. All who are illumined by natural reason apprehend the light, each one being illumined according to his talent and capacity. But this Light of grace, which is given to men aside from and above the natural light, shines in darkness, that is, among men of the world, who are blind and without grace; but they do not accept it, yea, they even persecute it. This is what Christ means when he says, John 3, 19: "And as this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light." Behold, Christ was upon earth and among men before he was publicly preached by John the Baptist; but no one took notice of him. He was the Life and Light of men. He lived and did shine; yet there was nothing but darkness, and the darkness did not perceive him. Everybody was worldly blind and benighted. Had they apprehended who he was, they would have given him due honour, as St. Paul says: "Had the rulers of this world known the wisdom of God, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory," 1 Cor. 2, 8.
65. Thus Christ has always been the Life and Light, even before his birth, from the beginning, and will ever remain so to the end. He shines at all times in all creatures, in the Holy Scriptures, through his saints, prophets, and ministers, in his word and works; and he has never ceased to shine. But in whatever place he has shone, there was great darkness, and the darkness apprehended him not.
66. St. John may have indeed directed these words thus against the followers of Cerinthus, so that they saw the plain Scriptures and the truth that enlightened them, yet they did not apprehend their darkness. So it is at all times, and even now. Although the Scriptures are explained to blind teachers so that they may apprehend the truth, yet they do not apprehend it, and the fact remains that the light shineth in the darkness and the darkness apprehends it not.
67. It is especially to be observed that the Evangelist here says the light shineth, *phaenei*, that is, it is manifest and present to the eyes in the darkness. But he who receives nothing more from it remains in darkness; just as the sun shines for the blind man, but he does not on that account see any better. So it is the nature of this light that it shines in darkness, but the darkness does not on that account become brighter. In believers, however, it not only shines, but it makes them transparent and seeing, it lives in them, so that it can properly be said that "The life is the light of men." On the other hand, light without life is a shining of darkness; therefore no light is of any use to unbelievers, for however clear the truth is presented and shown to them, they still remain in darkness.

68. Let us then understand all these sayings of the Evangelist as common attributes and titles of Christ, which he wishes to have preached in the Church as a preface and introduction of that which he proposes to write of Christ in his whole Gospel, namely, that he is true God and true man, who has created all things, and has been given to man as Life and Light, although but a few of all those to whom he is revealed receive him. This is what our Gospel lesson contains and nothing more. In the same manner St. Paul also composes a preface and introduction to his Epistle to the Romans, Rom. 1, 1. Now follows the actual beginning of this Gospel:

C. Christ Was the Light of Which John Bore Witness

"There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John."

69. St. Mark and St. Luke also begin their gospels with John the Baptist, and they should begin with him; as Christ himself says: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence," Math. 11, 12. And St. Peter says that Jesus began from the baptism of John, by whom he was also called and ordained to be a minister, Acts 1, 22. And St. John the Baptist himself testifies, "I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven," John 1, 32, and he heard the Father's voice saying. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Math. 3, 17. Then Christ was made a teacher, and his public ministry began; then only began the Gospel of Christ. For no one except Christ himself was allowed to begin the exalted, blessed, comforting mission of the Word. And for his sake John must first come and prepare the people for his preaching, that they might receive the Life and the Light.

70. For, as we have heard, Christ is everywhere the Light which shines in the darkness and is not apprehended; so he was especially and bodily in his humanity present among the Jews, appeared to them; but he was not recognized by them. Therefore his forerunner, John, came for the sole purpose of preaching him, in order that he might be recognized and received. This passage therefore fittingly follows the former one. Since Christ, the shining Light, was not recognized, John came to open the eyes of men and to bear witness of the ever present, shining light, which afterwards was to be received, heard, and recognized itself without the witness of John.

71. It is my opinion that we have now passed through the most difficult and most glorious part of this Gospel; for what is said henceforth is easy, and is the same as that which the other Evangelists write of John and of Christ. Although, as I have said, this part is in itself not difficult, yet it has been purposely made so by natural and human interpretations. A passage naturally becomes difficult when a word is taken from its ordinary meaning and given a strange one. Who would not wish to know what a man

is, and would not imagine all manner of wonderful things, if he were told that a man is something different from what all the world thinks? This is what happened here to the clear, simple words of the Evangelist.

72. Still John uses a peculiar style, since he always, because of Cerinthus, directs the testimony of John the Baptist to the divinity of Christ, which is not done by the other Evangelists, who only refer to Christ, without especially emphasizing his divinity. But here he says, John came to bear witness of the Light, and to preach Christ as the Life, the Light, and as God, as we shall hear.
73. What, therefore, was said about John the Baptist in Advent, is also to be understood here, namely that, like as he came before Christ and directed the people to him, so the spoken word of the Gospel is simply to preach and point out Christ. It was ordained by God for this purpose alone, just as John was sent by God. We have also heard that John was a voice in the wilderness, signifying by his office the oral preaching of the Gospel. Since the darkness was of itself unable to apprehend this Light, although it was present, John must needs reveal it and bear witness of it. And even now the natural reason is not able of itself to apprehend it, although it is present in all the world: the oral word of the Gospel must reveal it and proclaim it.
74. We see now that through the Gospel this light is brought to us, not from a distance, nor do we need to go far to obtain it; it is very near us and shines in our hearts; nothing more is needed than that it be pointed out and preached. And he who now hears it preached, and believes, finds it in his heart; for as faith is only in the heart, so also this light is alone in faith. Therefore I say it is near at hand and within us, but of ourselves we cannot apprehend it; it must be preached and believed. This is also what St. Paul means when he says, referring to Deut. 30,11-14: "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down), or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach." Rom. 10, 6-8. Behold this is the light which shineth in darkness, and is not recognized until John and the Gospel come and reveal it. Then man is enlightened by it, and apprehends it; and yet it changes neither time, nor place, nor person, nor age, but only the heart.
75. Again, as John did not come of himself, but was sent by God, so neither the Gospel nor any sermon on this Light can come of itself or from human reason; but they must be sent by God. Therefore the Evangelist here sets aside all the doctrines of men; for what men teach will never show Christ, the Light, but will only obstruct it. But whatsoever points out Christ is surely sent by God, and has not been invented by man. For this reason the Evan-

gelist mentions the name and says: His name was John. In Hebrew John means grace or favour, to signify that this preaching and message was not sent on account of any merit of ours; but was sent purely out of God's grace and mercy, and brings to us also God's grace and mercy. Thus St. Paul says: "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" Rom. 10, 15.

76. From all this we learn that the Evangelist speaks of Christ in a manner that he may be recognized as God. For if he is the light which is everywhere present and shines in darkness, and it needs nothing more than that it be revealed through the Word, and recognized in the heart through faith, it must surely be God. No creature can to such a degree be so near in all places, and shine in all hearts. And yet the Light is God in a way as to be still man, and be preached in and by man. The words follow: "The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the Light, that all might believe through him."

77. From what has now been said, it is clear that the Gospel proclaims only this Light, the man Christ, and causes the darkness to apprehend it, yet not by reason or feeling, but by faith. For he says: "That all might believe through him." Again: "He came for a witness, that he might bear witness." The nature of bearing witness is that it speaks of that which others do not see, know, or feel; but they must believe him that bears testimony. So also the Gospel does not demand a decision and assent according to reason, but a faith which is above reason, for in no other way can this light be recognized.

78. It was said plainly enough above, in what way the light of reason is in conflict with and rages against this Light, to say nothing of its being adhered to or apprehended by it. For it is positively written: "The darkness apprehendeth the light not;" therefore reason with its light must be taken captive and blinded; as is said in Isaiah, 60,19: "The sun," that is, thy reason, "shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but Jehovah will be unto thee an everlasting light and thy God thy glory," that is, through the Gospel or Word of God, or through the witness of John, which demands faith, and makes a fool of reason. Consequently witness is borne of this Light through the Word, that reason may keep silent and follow this testimony; then it will apprehend the Light in faith, and its darkness will be illumined. For if reason were able to apprehend this Light of itself, or adhere to it, there would be no need of John or his testimony.

79. Therefore the aim of the Gospel is to be a witness for reason's sake, which is self-willed, blind and stubborn. The Gospel resists reason and leads it away from its own light and fancy to faith, through which it can apprehend this living and eternal Light. "He was not the Light, but came that he might bear witness of the Light."

80. Dearly beloved, why does he say this, and repeat the words that John was only a witness of the Light? O, what necessary repetition! First of all to show that this Light is not simply a man, but God himself ; for, as I have said, the Evangelist greatly desires to preach the divinity of Christ in all his words. If John, the great Saint, be not that Light, but only a witness of it, then this Light must be something far different from everything that is holy, whether it be man or angel. For if holiness could make such a light, it would have made one of John. But it is above holiness, and must therefore be above the angels, who are not more than holy.
81. In the second place, to resist wicked preachers of man, who do not bear witness of Christ, the Light, but of themselves. For it is true indeed, that all who preach the doctrines of men make man the light, lead men away from God to themselves, and set themselves up in the place of the true Light, as the pope and his followers have done. Therefore he is the Anti-christ, that is, he is against Christ, the true Light.
82. This gospel text allows of no other doctrine beside it; it desires only to testify of Christ and lead men to him, who is the Light. Therefore, O Lord God, these words, "He was not the Light," are truly worthy to be capitalized and to be well remembered against the men who set themselves up as the light and give to men doctrines and laws of their own fabrication. They pretend to enlighten men, but lead them with themselves into the depths of hell; for they do not teach faith, and are not willing to teach it; and no one teaches it except John, who is sent of God, and the holy Gospel. Truly much could be said on this point.
83. In short, he who does not preach the Gospel to you, reject and refuse to hear him. He, however, preaches the Gospel who teaches you to believe and trust in Christ, the eternal Light, and not to build on any of your own works. Therefore beware of everything told you that does not agree with the Gospel; do not put your trust in it, nor accept it as something external, as you regard eating and drinking, which are necessary for your body, and which you may use at your pleasure or at the pleasure of another; but by no means as something necessary to your salvation. For this purpose nothing is necessary or of use to you except this Light.
84. O, these abominable doctrines of men, which are now so prevalent and which have almost banished this Light! They all wish to be this light themselves, but not to be witnesses of it. They advocate themselves and teach their own fancies, but are silent about this Light, or teach it in a way as to preach themselves along with it. This is worse than to be entirely silent; for by such teaching they make Samaritans who partly worship God and partly worship idols, 2 Kings 17,33.

D. He Was the Light That Lighteth Everyone.

*“There was the true Light, which lighteth every man,
coming into the world.”*

85. Neither John nor any saint is the Light; but John and all evangelical preachers testify of the true Light. For the present enough has been said of this Light, what it is, how it is recognized by faith, and how it supports us eternally in life and death, so that no darkness can ever harm us. But what is remarkable is, that he says: “It lighteth every man, coming into the world.” If this be affirmed of the natural light it would be contradicted when he says that it is: “the true Light.” He had said before: “The darkness apprehends it not”; and all his words are directed toward the Light of grace. Then follow the words: “He was in the world, and the world knew him not,” and “His own received him not.” But he whom the true Light lighteth, is illumined by grace, and recognizes the Light.

86. Again, that he does not speak of the light of grace is evident when he says: “It lighteth every man, coming into the world.” This manifestly includes all men who are born into the world. St. Augustine says it means that no man is illumined except by this Light; it is the same as though we were to say of a teacher in a place where there is no other teacher: This teacher instructs all the city, that is, there is no other teacher in that city; he instructs all the pupils. By it is not said that he teaches all the people in the city, but simply that he is the only teacher in the city, and none are taught but by him. So here the Evangelist would have us know that John is not the Light, nor any man, nor any creature; but that there is only one Light that lighteth all men, and that no man comes into the world who can possibly be illumined by any other light.

87. And I cannot reject this interpretation; for St. Paul also speaks in like manner in Rom. 5, 18: “As through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men unto justification of life.” Although all men are not justified through Christ, he is, nevertheless, the only man through whom justification comes. So it is also here. Although all men are not illumined, nevertheless this is the only light through which all illumination comes. The Evangelist has used this manner of speech freely, and had no fear that some might take offense because he says “all men.” He thought he would anticipate all such offense, and explains himself before and afterwards, and says: “The darkness apprehended him not, and his own received him not.” These words are sufficient proof to prevent anyone from saying that the Evangelist meant to say that all men are illumined; but he did wish to say that Christ is the only Light that lighteth all men, and without him no man is lighted.

88. If this were said of the natural light of reason, it would have little significance, since it not only enlightens all men who come into the world, but also those who go out of the world, and even devils. For this light of reason remains in the dead, in devils, and in the condemned, yea, it becomes brighter, that they may be all the more tormented by it. But since only human beings who come into this world are mentioned, the Evangelist indicates that he is speaking of the Light of faith, which lightens and helps only in this life; for after death no one will be illumined by it. The illuminating must take place in this life through faith in the man Christ, yet by his divinity. After this life we shall clearly see his divinity without the humanity and without faith.

89. Therefore the Evangelist is careful to form his words so as not by any means to reject the man Christ, and yet so as to declare his divinity. For this reason it was necessary for him to say "all men," so as to preach only one light for all, and to warn us not to accept in this life the lights of men or any other lights. One man is not to lighten another, but this light alone is to lighten all men; and ministers are to be only forerunners and witnesses of this Light to men, that all may believe in this Light. Therefore, when he had said: "Which lighteth every man," he realized that he had said too much, and so he added: "coming into the world," so that he might make Christ the Light of this world. For in the world to come this light will cease and will be changed into eternal glory, as St. Paul says: "When he shall deliver up the kingdom to God," I Cor. 15,24; but now he rules through his humanity. When he delivers up the kingdom, he will also deliver up the Light; not as though there were two kinds of light, or as though we were to see something different from what we now see; but we shall see the same Light and the same God we now see in faith, but in a different manner. Now we see him in faith darkly, then we shall see him face to face. just as though I beheld a gilded picture through a coloured glass or veil, and afterwards looked at it without these. So also St. Paul says: "Now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face," 1 Cor. 13,12.

90. Behold, you now know of what the Evangelist speaks, when he says that Christ is the Light of men through his humanity, that is, in faith, by means of which his divinity is reflected as by a mirror, or is seen as in a glass or as the sun shines through bright clouds. But let us remember that the Light is attributed to his divinity, not to his humanity; and yet his humanity, which is the cloud or curtain before the Light, must not be thought lightly of.

91. This language is sufficiently plain and he who has faith understands very well what is the nature and character of this Light. It matters not if he who does not believe does not understand it. He is not to understand it, for it is better that he knew nothing of the Bible and did not study it, than

that he deceive himself and others with his erroneous light; for he imagines it to be the light of Scripture, which, however, cannot be apprehended without true faith. For this Light shines in the darkness, but is not apprehended by it.

92. This passage may also mean that the Evangelist has in mind the preaching of the Gospel and of faith in all the world, and so that this Light shines upon all men throughout the world, just as the sun shines upon all men. St. Paul says: "Be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven," Col. 1, 23. Christ himself says: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation," Mark 16,15. The Psalmist also says: "His going forth is from the end of the heavens, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof," Ps. 19, 6. How this is to be understood has been explained in the sermon on the Epistle for Christmas. Is. 9, 2.

93. By this easy and simple interpretation we can readily understand how this Light lighteth every man, coming into the world, so that neither Jews nor anyone else should dare to set up their own light anywhere. And this interpretation is well suited to the preceding passages. For even before John or the Gospel bore witness of the Light, it had shone in darkness and the darkness apprehended it not; but after it has been proclaimed and publicly witnessed to, it shines as far as the world extends, unto all men, although all men will not receive it; as follows:

IV. THE COMING OF CHRIST

*"He was in the world, and the world was made through,
him, and the world knew him not."*

94. All this is said of Christ as man and refers especially to the time after his baptism, when he began to give light according to John's testimony. He was ever in the world. But what place of the world knew it? Who received him? He was not even received by those with whom he was personally associated, as the following shows: "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not."

95. This also is said of his coming as a preacher, and not of his being born into the world. For his coming is his preaching and illumining. The Baptist says: "He it is who coming after me is preferred before me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose," Math. 3, 11; Luke 3, 16; Mark 1, 7; John 1, 27. On account of this coming John is also called his forerunner, as Gabriel said to his father Zacharias: "He shall go before his face

in the spirit and power of Elijah; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him," Luke 1, 17. For, as has been said, the Gospels begin with the baptism of Christ. Then he began to be the Light and to do that for which he came. Therefore it is said that he came into the world to his own people and his own received him not. If this were not said of his coming to give light by preaching, the Evangelist would not thus reprove them for not having received him.

96. Who could know that it was he, if he had not been revealed? Therefore it is their fault that they did not receive him; for he came and was revealed by John and by himself. Therefore John says, "That he should be made manifest to Israel, for this cause came I baptizing with water," John 1, 31. And he says himself, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive," John 5, 43. This is also evidently said of the coming of his preaching and of his revelation.

97. He calls the Jews his own people because they were chosen out of all the world to be his people, and he had been promised to them through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David. For to us heathens or Gentiles there was no promise of Christ. Therefore we are strangers and are not called "his own"; but through pure grace we have been adopted, and have thus become his people; though, alas, we also allow him to come daily through the Gospel and do not esteem him. Therefore we must also suffer that another, the Pope, comes in his place and is received by us. We must serve the bitter foe because we will not serve our God.

98. But we must not forget in this connection that the Evangelist refers twice to the divinity of Christ. First, when he says: "The world was made through him." Secondly, when he says: "He came unto his own." For it is the nature only of the true God to have his own people. The Jews were always God's own people as the Scriptures frequently declare. If then they are Christ's own people, he must certainly be that God to whom the Scriptures assign that people.

99. But the Evangelist commends to every thoughtful person for consideration, what a shame and disgrace it is that the world does not recognize its Creator, and that the Jewish people do not receive their God. In what stronger terms can you reprove the world than by saying that it does not know its Creator? What base wickedness and evil report follow from this fact alone! What good can there be where there is nothing but ignorance, darkness and blindness? What wickedness where there is no knowledge of God! O, woe! What a wicked and frightful thing the world is! The one who knew the world and duly pondered this, would fall the deeper into perdition. He could not be happy in this life, of which such evil things are written. "'But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be-

come children of God, even to them that believed on his name.”

100. We see now what kind of a Light that is of which the Evangelist has hitherto been speaking. It is Christ, the comforting light of grace, and not the light of nature or reason. For John is an Evangelist and not a Platonist. All who receive the light of nature and reason receive him according to that light; how could they receive him otherwise? Just as they receive the natural life from the divine life. However, that light and that life do not give them any power to become the children of God. Yea, they remain the enemies of this Light, do not know it, nor acknowledge it. Therefore there can be no reference in this Gospel to the light of nature, but only to Christ, that he may be acknowledged as true God.

101. From now on this Gospel is familiar to all, for it speaks of faith in Christ’s name, that it makes us God’s children. These are excellent words and powerfully refute the teachers of the law, who preach only good works. Good works never bring about a change of heart. Therefore, although the work righteous are ever changing and think they are improving their deeds, in their hearts they remain the same, and their works only become a mantle for their shame and hypocrisy.

102. But, as has often been said, faith changes the person and makes out of an enemy a child, so mysteriously that the external works, walk and conversation remain the same as before, when they are not by nature wicked deeds. Therefore faith brings with it the entire inheritance and highest good of righteousness and salvation, so that these need not be sought in works, as the false teachers of good works would have us believe. For he who is a child of God has already God’s inheritance through his Sonship. If then faith gives this Sonship, it is manifest that good works should be done freely, to the honour of God, since they already possess salvation and the inheritance from God through faith. This has been amply explained heretofore in the sermon on the second Epistle for this day. “Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

103. To explain himself, the Evangelist here tells us what faith does, and that everything is useless without it. Here he not only does not praise nature, light, reason, and whatever is not of faith, but forcibly overthrows each. This sonship is too great and noble to originate from nature or to be required by it.

104. John mentions four different kinds of Sonship: one of blood, another of the will of the flesh, a third of the will of man, the fourth of this will of God. It is evident that the Sonship of blood is the natural Sonship. With this lie refutes the Jews who boasted that they were of the blood of Abraham and the patriarchs, relying on the passages of Scripture in which God

promises the blessing and the inheritance of eternal salvation to the seed of Abraham. Therefore they claim to be the only true people and children of God. But here he says, there must be more than mere blood, else there is no Sonship of God. For Abraham and the patriarchs received the inheritance, not for blood's sake but for faith's sake, as Paul teaches in Heb. 11, 8. If mere blood-relationship were sufficient for this Sonship, then Judas, the betrayer, Caiaphas, Ananias, and all the wicked Jews who in times past were condemned in the wilderness, would have a proper right to this inheritance. For they were all of the blood of the patriarchs. Therefore it is said, they were born, "not of blood, but of God."

105. The other two relationships or Sonship, to wit, of the will of the flesh." and "of the will of man" I do not yet sufficiently understand myself. But I see very well that the Evangelist thereby wishes to reject everything which is of nature and which nature can accomplish, and that he would retain the birth by God alone. Therefore there is no danger in whatever manner we explain these two parts and variously attribute them to nature outside of grace. It is all the same. Some understand the sonship of the will of the flesh to come not of blood, but through the law of Moses. He commanded that the nearest kin to the wife of a deceased husband marry the widow, and raise a name and heir to the deceased one, that the name of his friend be not put out of Israel. To this interpretation belongs also the step-relationship, which comes of the will of the flesh, and not of blood-relationship.

106. But the Evangelist here calls by the name of flesh man, as he lives in the flesh, which is the common Scriptural designation. Therefore the meaning is: not as men have children outside of their own line of descent, which is carnal and human, and takes place in accordance with man's free will. But what is born in the line of ancestral blood, takes place without the free will, according to nature, whether a man wills it or not.

107. The third kind of Sonship mentioned is "of the will of man." This is taken to mean the Sonship of strangers, commonly called "adoption," as when a man chooses and adopts a strange child as his own. Though you were Abraham's or David's real child, or step-child, or you had been adopted, or you were a stranger, it would all be of no benefit to you unless you were born of God. Even Christ's own friends and relatives did not believe in him, as we are told, John 7, 5.

108. But those who wish may explain this relationship as follows: "Those born of blood" may mean all those who belong to the blood-relationship, whether it be a full or a step-relationship; "those born of the will of the flesh" may include all those who are not born of blood, or those who have been adopted into the relationship. But "those who are born of the will of man" are spiritual children of those who are the disciples or fol-

lowers of a teacher. Thus the Evangelist rejects everything that might be accomplished by blood, flesh, nature, reason, art, doctrine, law, free will, with all their powers, so that no one may presume to help another by means of his own doctrine, work, art, or free will, or be allowed to help any man upon earth to the kingdom of God; he is to reject everything, except the striving after the divine birth. I am also inclined to think that "man" in the Scriptures usually means a superior, who rules, leads, and teaches others. These are properly and before all others rejected, since no relationship is more stubborn, more insolently presumptuous, and confides more in itself than this, and does most strenuously oppose grace at all times, and persecutes the Lord of grace. In this respect let every one have his opinion, as long as he bears in mind that nothing avails which is not born of God. For if something else would have availed anything, the Evangelist would without doubt have put it side by side with the divine birth, especially as he looks for it so carefully, and would not have exalted only this divine birth.

109. The divine birth is therefore nothing else than faith. How can this be? It has been explained above how the light of grace opposes and blinds the light of reason. If now the Gospel comes and bears witness to the light of grace, that man must not live and do according to his fancy, but must reject, put away, and destroy the light of nature, if this man accepts and follows such testimony, gives up his own light and fancy, is willing to become a fool, allows himself to be led, taught and enlightened he will be entirely changed, that is, in his natural light. His old light is extinguished and a new light, to wit, faith is kindled. He follows this new light in life and in death, clings solely to the witness of John or the Gospel, even should he be compelled to abandon all he had and could do before.

Behold, he is now born again of God through the Gospel, in which he remains, and lets go his own light and fancy, as St. Paul says: "For in Christ Jesus I begat you through the Gospel," 1 Cor. 4, 15; again, "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures," Jas. 1, 18. Therefore St. Peter calls us "new born babes," 1 Pet. 2, 2. It is for this reason also that the Gospel is called the womb of God, in which we are conceived, carried and born as a woman conceives, carries and bears a child in her womb. Isaiah says: "Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, that have been borne by me from their birth, that have been carried from the womb," Is. 46, 3.

110. But this birth properly shows its power in times of temptation and death. There it becomes evident who is born again, and who is not. Then the old light, reason, struggles and wrestles and is loath to leave its fancies and desires, is unwilling to consider and resort to the Gospel, and let go its own light. But those who are born again, or are then being born

again, spend their lives in peace and obedience to the Gospel, confide in and cling to the witness of John, and let go, their light, life, property, honour, and all they have. Therefore they come to the eternal inheritance, as real children.

111. But when this light, reason and man's old conceit are dead, dark, and changed into a new light, then the life and all powers of man must be changed and be obedient to the new Light. For where the will goes reason follows, and love and pleasures follow the will. And so the whole man must be hid in the Gospel, become a new creature and put off the old Adam, as the serpent puts off its old skin. When the skin becomes old the serpent seeks a narrow crevice in the rock, crawls through it, sheds its old skin, and leaves it on the outside. Thus man must resort to the Gospel and to God's Word, confidently trusting their promises, which never fail. In this way he puts off the old Adam, sets aside his own light and conceit, his will, love, desire, speech, and his deeds, and becomes an entirely new man, who sees everything in a different manner than before, judges differently, thinks differently, wills differently, speaks and loves and desires differently, acts and conducts himself differently than he did before. He now understands whether all the conditions and works of men are right or wrong, as St. Paul says: "He that is spiritual judgeth all things, and he himself is judged of no man," 1 Cor. 2, 15.

112. He now sees clearly what great fools they are who pretend to become pious through their good works. He would not give one farthing for all the preachers, monks, popes, bishops, tonsures, cowls, incense, illuminations, burning of candles, singing, organs, prayers, with all their external performances; for he sees how all this is simple idolatry, and foolish dissimulation, just as the Jews prayed to Baal, Astaroth, and the calf in the wilderness, which they looked upon as precious things in the old light of stubborn, self-conceited reason.

113. From this it is evident that no blood, nor relationship, nor command, nor doctrine, nor reason, nor free will, nor good works, nor exemplary living, nor Carthusian orders, nor any religious orders, though they were angelic, are of any use or help to this Sonship of God; but they are only a hindrance. For where reason is not first renewed and in agreement with the new birth, it takes offence, becomes hardened and blinded, so that it will scarcely, if ever, be able to be righted; but thinks its doings and ways are right and proper, storming and raving against all who disregard and reject its doings. Therefore the old man remains the enemy of God and of grace, of Christ and of his light, beheads John and destroys his testimony, the Gospel, and sets up his own human doctrines. Thus the game goes on even now, in full splendour and power, in the doings of the pope and his clergy, who together know nothing of this divine birth. They prattle and speak nonsense in their doctrines and commandments of certain

good works, with which they hope to attain grace, though still clad in the old Adam.

114. But what is here said remains unchangeable: Not of blood, not of the will of the flesh nor of man, but of God, is this new birth. We must despair of our own will, works, and life, which have been poisoned by the false, stubborn, selfish light of reason; in all things listen to the voice and testimony of the Baptist; believe and obey it. Then the true Light, Christ will enlighten us, renew us, and give us power to become the sons of God. For this reason he came and was made man, as follows:

V. CHRIST'S INCARNATION

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the Only Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

115. By "flesh" we understand the whole man, body and soul, according to the Scriptures, which call man "flesh," as above, when it is said: "Not of the will of the flesh"; and in the Creed we say: "I believe in the resurrection of the body" (German: flesh), that is, of all men. Again Christ says: "Except those days had been shortened, there would be no flesh saved," that is, no man, Math. 24, 22. Again: "He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again," Ps. 78,39. Again: "Thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that to all whom thou hast given him, he should give eternal life," John 17, 2.

116. I speak of this the more fully because this passage has occasioned so much offence on the part of heretics at the time when there were learned and great bishops. Some, as Photinus and Appollinaris, taught that Christ was a man without a soul, and that the divine nature took the place of the soul in him. Manichaeus taught that Christ did not have true, natural flesh, but was only an apparition, passing through his mother, Mary, without assuming her flesh and blood, just as the sun shines through a glass, but does not assume its nature. In opposition to all these the Evangelist uses a comprehensive word, and says: "He became flesh," that is, a man like every other man, who has flesh and blood, body and soul.

117. Thus the Scriptures, one part after another, had to be tried and confirmed, until the time of the Antichrist, who suppressed them not in parts, but in their entirety. For it has been prophesied that at the time of Antichrist all heresy should be united into one parasitic whole and devour the world. This could not have happened at a better time than when the Pope set aside the whole Scriptures, and in their place set up his own law.

Therefore bishops are now no more heretics, nor can they become heretics; for they have no part of the book by which heretics are made, to wit, the Gospel. They have piled up all heresy within and among themselves.

118. In times past, heretics, however bad they were, still remained in the Scriptures, and left some parts intact. But what is left since this divine birth and faith are no more acknowledged and preached, and in their stead only human law and works? What matters it, whether Christ is God or not God, whether he was flesh or a mere apparition, whether he had a soul or not, whether he had come before or after his mother, or whether all error and heresy which have ever been, would prevail? We would have no more of him than all those heretics and do not need him. He seems to have become man in vain, and all things written about him seem to be to no purpose, because we have ourselves found a way by which we may by our own works come to the grace of God!
119. Therefore there is no difference between our bishops and all heretics that have ever lived, except this that we name Christ with our mouth and pen, for the sake of appearance. But among ourselves we speak of him, and are as little benefited by him, as though he were one with whom all heretics might play the fool. Thus St. Peter has prophesied and said: "These shall be false teachers among you, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them." (2 Peter 2, 1).
120. What does it profit, though Christ be not what the heretics make him, if he is no more to us than to them, and does no more for us? What does it profit to condemn the heretics, and know Christ aright, if we have no different faith in him than they had? I see no reason for the need of Christ, if I am able to attain grace by my works. It is not necessary for him to be God and man. In short all that is written about him is unnecessary; it would be sufficient to preach God alone, as the Jews believe, and then obtain his grace by means of my works. What more would I want? What more would I need?
121. Christ and the Scriptures are not necessary, as long as the doctrine of the pope and his schools exist. Therefore I have said that pope, bishops, and schools are not good enough to be heretics; but they surpass all heretics, and are the dregs of all heresies, errors, and idolatry from the beginning, because they entirely suppress Christ and the Word of God, and only retain their names for appearance's sake. This no idolater, no heretic, no Jew has ever done, not even the Turk with all his violent acts. And although the heathen were without the Scriptures and without Christ before his birth, yet they did not oppose him and the Scriptures, as these do. Therefore they were far better than the Papists.

122. Let us be wise in these times in which Anti-Christ is powerful, and let us cling to the Gospel, which does not teach us that reason is our light, as men teach us, but which presents Christ as indispensable to our salvation, and says: The Word, by which all things were made, is life, and the life is the light of men. Firmly believe that Christ is the Light of men, that without him all is darkness in man, so that he is unable to know what to do or how to act, to say nothing about being able to attain the grace of God by his own works, as the foolish schools with their idol, the Pope, teach and deceive all the world.

123. He came that he might become the Light of men, that is, that he might become known; he showed himself bodily and personally among men and was made man. He is the light on the candle-stick. The lost piece of money did not of itself and with light in hand go after and seek the lighted candle, but the candle with its light sought the piece of money and found it; it has swept the house of this whole world in every nook and corner with its broom; and it continues to seek, sweep and find even until the last day.

124. But that the Word and not the Father was made flesh, and that both are one complete, true God, is a great mystery. Yet faith apprehends it all, and it is proper that reason should not apprehend it; it happened and is written that reason should not apprehend it, but become altogether blind, dazzled and stupefied, changing from its old false light into the new light.

125. Yet this article is not opposed to the light of reason, which says that we must serve God, believe, and be pious, which accords with this article. But if reason is called on to say exactly who this God is, it is startled and says: "This is not God," and so makes a God according to its fancy. Therefore when it is informed that this Word is God and that the Father is the same God, it doubts, hesitates and imagines the article to be wrong and untrue, continues in its conceit and fancy, and thinks it knows better what God is and who he is than any one else.

126. Thus the Jews continue in their opinion, and do not doubt at all that God is to be believed and honoured; but who this God is, they explain according to their own fancy, claim to be masters themselves, and even make God a liar. See then, thus reason does to all of God's works and words, continues to cry that God's work and Word are to be honoured, but claims that it is its privilege and judgment to say what is God's work and Word. It would judge God in all his works and words, but is unwilling to be judged by him. What God is or is not, must be according to its caprice.

127. Consider whether God does not justly express his anger in the Scriptures against such immeasurable wickedness, whether he does not rightly prefer open sinners to such saints. What would you think more vexatious than such wicked presumptuous? I say this that we may recognize the delicious fruit to which the pope and his schools attribute so much, and which of itself and by its own exertions, without Christ, provides the grace of God. They are God's greatest enemies, and would annihilate him, in order that they might be God themselves, and succeed in making men believe that the grace of God is obtained as they prescribe. This surely is real darkness.

128. See, in this way reason must make idols, and cannot do otherwise; it knows very well how to talk of God's honour, but goes and bestows the same honour on him whom it fancies to be God. Such a one is certainly not God, but is reason's fancy and error, of which the prophets in various ways complained. Nor does it improve the matter, if any one were to say, as the Jews do: "Yes, I mean the God who has created the heavens and the earth; here I cannot be mistaken, and must be right." In Isaiah 48, 1 God himself answers: "Hear ye this, who swear by the name of Jehovah, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness." And Jeremiah 5, 2 says: "And though they say, as Jehovah liveth; surely they swear falsely."

129. How is this to be accounted for? It happens thus that he who does not accept God in the particular manner in which God has revealed himself, will profit nothing, if he afterwards accepts God in the manner which he has selected for himself. If Abraham had said that it was neither God nor God's work that commanded him to sacrifice his son Isaac, but would have followed his reason and have said he would not sacrifice his son, but would serve the God who made heaven and earth in some other way, what would it have profited him? He would have lied; for he would in that very thing have rejected the God who created the heavens and the earth, and would have devised another God, under the name of the God who had created the heavens and the earth, and would have despised the true God, who had given him the command.

130. Behold, thus they all lie who say, they mean the true God who created the heavens and the earth, and yet do not accept his work and Word, but exalt their own opinion above God and his Word. If we truly believed in the God who had created heaven and earth, they would also know that the same God is a creator of their imagination, makes, breaks and judges it as he pleases. But as they do not allow him to be a creator of themselves and their fancies even in a small degree, it cannot be true that they believe him to be the creator of all creation.

131. Perhaps you will say: What if I were deceived, and he were not God? I

answer: Do not worry, dear soul; a heart that does not trust in its own fancy God will not allow to be deceived; for it is not possible that he should not enter such a heart and dwell there. Mary says: "He hath filled the hungry with good things," Luke 1, 53. The Psalmist says: "He satisfieth the longing soul," Ps. 107, 9. But if any is deceived it is certain that he trusted in his own fancy, either secretly or openly. Therefore a hungry soul always stands in fear in those things that are uncertain, whether they be of God. But self conceited persons are immediately taken with them, thinking it sufficient if the things glitter and take their fancy. Again what is certain to be of God, the simple accept at once, but the arrogant persecute it.

132. Now there is no surer sign of a thing of God than that it is against or beyond our fancy. Likewise the arrogant think, there is no surer sign that a thing is not of God than that it is against their fancy. For they are makers and masters of God, and so make those things God and of God which accord with their fancy. Therefore all those who depend upon themselves must be deceived, and all those who are simpleminded, and not preoccupied with themselves, are safe; they are they who keep the true Sabbath. Where this fancy goes so far as to employ the Word of God in defense of its arrogance and to apply the Scriptures according to its own light, there is neither hope nor help. Such people think the Word of God on their side, and they must safeguard it. This is the last fall, and is the real mischief of Lucifer, of whom Solomon speaks: "A righteous man falleth seven times, and riseth up again; but the wicked are overthrown by calamity." Prov. 24,16.

133. Of this there is now enough; let us come back again to the Gospel. John says: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us;" that is, he lived among men upon earth, as other men do. Even though he was God, he became a citizen of Nazareth and Capernaum, and conducted himself as other men did. Thus St. Paul says: "Who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being man equality with a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross." Phil. 2, 6-8.

134. Now this "likeness" and "dwelling" of Christ must not be understood of his human nature, in which he has been made like unto men. But these words must be understood as referring to his external being and mode of living such as eating, drinking, sleeping, walking, working, resting, hearth and home, walking, and standing, and all human conduct and deportment, by which no one could recognize him as God, had he not been so proclaimed by John in the Gospel.

VI. THE REVELATION OF CHRIST'S GLORY

135. He says further: "We behold his glory," that is, his divinity through his miracles and teachings. The word "glory" we have heard before in the Epistle, where it was said of Christ, that Christ is the "brightness of the Father's glory," which means his divinity. Our word "glory" comes from the Latin "gloria." The corresponding word in Hebrew is "Cabod" and the Greek word is "Doxa." Thus we speak of a ruler or a great man having achieved an accomplishment with great glory, and that everything passed off gloriously, when it has passed off well, successfully, and bravely. Glory does not only mean a great repute, or far-famed honour, but it means also the things which give occasion for the fame, such as costly houses, vessels, clothes, servants, and the like, as Christ says of Solomon: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these," Math. 6, 28-29. In the book of Esther we read: "King Ahasuerus made a great feast showed the riches of his glorious kingdom," 1, 3-4. Thus we say: This is a glorious thing, a glorious manner, a glorious deed, "gloriosa res". This is also what the Evangelist means when he says: "We have seen his glory," to wit, his glorious being and deeds, which are not an insignificant, common glory, but the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.

136. Here he expresses who the Word is, of whom he and Moses have been speaking, namely, the only begotten Son of God, who has all the glory of the Father. He calls him the only begotten, so as to distinguish him from all the children of God, who are not natural children as this one is. With these words is shown his true divinity; for if he were not God, he could not in preference to others be called the only begotten Son, which is to say that he and no other is the Son of God. This can not be said of angels and pious men. For not one of them is the Son of God, but are all brethren and creatures of a like creation, children elected by grace, and not children born out of God's nature.

137. But the expression, "We beheld his glory", does not refer only to bodily sight; for the Jews also saw his glory, but did not regard it as the glory of the only begotten Son of God: it refers to the sight of the faithful, who believe it in their hearts. Unbelievers, who beheld only the worldly glory, did not notice this divine glory. Nor can these two tolerate each other. He that would be glorious before the world for God's sake, will be glorious before God. "Full of Grace and Truth."

138. These two words are commonly used together in the Scriptures. "Grace" means that whatsoever Christ does is ever pleasing and right. Furthermore, in man there is only disfavor and guile; all that he does is

displeasing to God. In fact, he is fundamentally untrue and puts on a vain show, as the Psalmist says: "All men are liars", 116, 11. And again: "Surely every man at his best estate is altogether vanity." Ps. 39, 5.

139. This passage is opposed to the presumptuous Papists and Pelagians, who find something outside of Christ, which they claim is good and true; and yet in Christ alone is grace and truth. It is indeed true, as has been said above, that there are some things outside of Christ which are true and pleasing, as the natural light, which teaches that three and two are five, that God should be honoured, and the like. But this light never accomplishes its end; for as soon as reason is to act, and make use of its light, and exercise it, it confuses everything, calls that which is good bad, and that which is bad good; calls that the honour of God which is his dishonour, and vice versa. Therefore man is only a liar and vain, and unable to make use of this natural light except against God, as we have already said.

140. It is unnecessary to look for the armor in this Gospel; it is all armor and the chief part, upon which is founded the article of faith that Christ is true God and true man, and that without Grace, nature, free will, and works are nothing but deception, sin, error and heresy in spite of Papists and Pelagians.

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<https://sermons.martinluther.us/sermons11.html>

APPENDIX B

THE DISPUTATION CONCERNING MAN

The Theses Disputation of the Rev. Sir Dr. Martin Luther Concerning Man, in the Year 1536 (Translated by Lewis W. Spitz)

A *disputation* like this one was one way of having a thoughtful discussion and dialog concerning a critical topic in mediaeval universities such as the University of Wittenberg. The online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP) explains that this type of teaching by disputation is essentially an academic form of philosophical dialog (the sort of teaching that Plato did in dialogues such as his *Republic*). It's also significant that this disputation form "comes into the classroom as an outgrowth of the *lectio*, the careful reading and commentary on authoritative texts" such as Holy Scripture in the first place, but also academic texts such as the writings of Aristotle.

As the SEP explains in detail, disputation "is centered around a systematic rather than a textual question, and the supporting and opposing arguments are supplied by students". By the way, what Luther called *theses* are what we in philosophy today refer to as *propositions*, statements of fact to be judged as either True or False. Each proposition is an open invitation to say either, "This is true" or "This is false". Then the dialog begins ...

1. Philosophy or human wisdom defines man as an animal having reason, sensation, and body.
Luther is starting with Aristotle's definition of man as *zoon logon echon*, an animal type of being characterized by *logos*.
2. It is not necessary at this time to debate whether man is properly or improperly called an animal.
3. But this must be known, that this definition describes man only as a mortal and in relation to this life.
4. And it is certainly true that reason is the most important and the highest in rank among all things and, in comparison with other things of this life, the best and something divine.
5. It is the inventor and mentor of all the arts, medicines, laws, and of whatever wisdom, power, virtue, and glory men possess in this life.
6. By virtue of this fact it ought to be named the essential difference by which man is distinguished from the animals and other things.
7. Holy Scripture also makes it lord over the earth, birds, fish, and cattle, saying, "Have dominion" [Gen. 1:28].

That is, Aristotle's minimum definition of the human being agrees with Scripture.

8. That is, that it is a sun and a kind of god appointed to administer these

things in this life.

→Genesis 1:26–2:3

9. Nor did God after the fall of Adam take away this majesty of reason, but rather confirmed it.

Moving beyond Aristotle, we are able, on the basis of God's revelation, to consider the impact of the Insurgency in Eden on our human being or our *human nature*. Our nature remains human, Luther will argue, but it is fatally perverted by Adam and Eve's rebellion. Among other things, our efforts to know ourselves—to *gnothi sauton*, as Aristotle and the Greeks put it — are fatally flawed and wholly inadequate. To put this another way: Luther is teaching how and why Scripture is indispensable for us to understand ourselves as human beings.

10. In spite of the fact that it is of such majesty, it does not know itself a priori, but only a posteriori.

In other words, we do not and cannot know our own nature, *human nature*, innately or automatically. It's just the opposite: We can know what it means to be a human being only *after the fact*. After the fact of the Incarnation, that is. Only in the Person of Christ do we learn who and what we really, truly are as human beings.

11. Therefore, if philosophy or reason itself is compared with theology, it will appear that we know almost nothing about man,

Luther is talking about what Paul refers to as the *hollow and deceptive* kind of philosophy. It's hollow and deceptive because it *depends on the basic principles of this world*. By contrast, the apostle recommends the kind of philosophy that depends *on Christ* (Colossians 2:8-10). In an important sense Christianity is the true *philos sophos* or *philosophy* because it is the befriending and loving of Christ, who is Himself the *sophos* of God in Person (1 Corinthians 1:22-25). So, Luther's theology of the human being is also a Christological philosophical anthropology.

12. Inasmuch as we seem scarcely to perceive his material cause sufficiently.

13. For philosophy does not know the efficient cause for certain, nor likewise the final cause,

14. Because it posits no other final cause than the peace of this life, and does not know that the efficient cause is God the creator.

15. Indeed, concerning the formal cause which they call soul, there is not and never will be agreement among the philosophers.

16. For so far as Aristotle defines it as the first driving force of the body which has the power to live, he too wished to deceive readers and hearers.¹

→Colossians 1:1–24

17. Nor is there any hope that man in this principal part can himself know

what he is until he sees himself in his origin which is God.

18. And what is deplorable is that he does not have full and unerring control over either his counsel or thought but is subject to error and deception therein.
19. But as this life is, such is the definition and knowledge of man, that is, fragmentary, fleeting, and exceedingly material.
20. Theology to be sure from the fullness of its wisdom defines man as whole and perfect: **This is a *substantial* contribution to ethics and bioethics ... It is available only through God's revelation to us human beings. Think here of the *theology of the cross*!**
21. Namely, that **man is a creature of God consisting of body and a living soul, made in the beginning after the image of God, without sin, so that he should procreate and rule over the created things, and never die,**
22. **But after the fall of Adam, certainly, he was subject to the power of the devil, sin and death, a twofold evil for his powers, unconquerable and eternal.**
23. **He can be freed and given eternal life only through the Son of God, Jesus Christ (if he believes in him).**

→ Ecclesiastes 12

24. Since these things stand firm and that most beautiful and most excellent of all creatures, which reason is even after sin, remains under the power of the devil, it must still be concluded.
25. That the whole man and every man, whether he be king, lord, servant, wise, just, and richly endowed with the good things of this life, nevertheless is and remains guilty of sin and death, under the power of Satan.
26. Therefore those who say that natural things have remained untainted after the fall philosophize impiously in opposition to theology.
27. The same is true of those who say that a man "in doing what is in him"² is able to merit the grace of God and life;
28. So also, of those who introduce Aristotle (who knows nothing of theological man) to witness that reason aspires to the best things;
29. Also, those who say that the light of God's countenance is in man, as an imprint on us, that is, free will which forms the precept right and the will good;
30. In like manner, that it rests with man to choose good and evil, or life and death, etc.
31. All such neither understand what man is nor do they know what they are talking about. **This is a *philosophical* critique that shows that a love of wisdom not grounded in Christ cannot provide the knowledge of our human being that we as human beings need.**

→ Ephesians 2

32. Paul in Romans 3[:28], "We hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works," briefly sums up the definition of man, saying, "Man is justified by faith."

→ Psalm 8 (with Hebrews 2:5–9)

Note: Since this thesis is definitional, as Oswald Bayer says, we would do well to translate it as "**The human being is human in that he is justified by faith.**" As Bayer explains,

The human being is human *insofar* as he is justified by faith.....Justifying faith for Luther is not something *about* a human being, no qualitative element, which comes only secondarily, as that which is accidental to the substance. *Hominem justificari fide* (a human being is justified by faith) is, instead, a *fundamental* anthropological thesis.¹

In other words, while modern science teaches us to think of ourselves as *homo sapiens*, which is a Latin term labelling us as the "wise man" species, the Scriptures teach us that we are in reality *hominem justificare fide*, which is Latin for human creatures who are "justified by faith." Professor Bayer is saying that Luther, beginning with Aristotle's definition of us as language beings (*zoon logon echon* in Greek) and interpreting this discovery on the basis of the Scriptures alone, says that we were created as language beings in order to be brought to faith through the words of the Word Himself. It's as the apostle Paul writes, "Faith comes by what is heard, and what is heard comes through the enduring word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

33. Certainly, whoever says that a man must be justified says that he is a transgressor and unjust and thus asserts that he is guilty before God, but must be saved by grace.
34. And he takes man in general, that is, universally, so that he consigned the whole world, or whatever is called man, to sin [Rom. 11:32].
35. Therefore, man in this life is the simple material of God for the form of his future life.
36. Just as the whole creation which is now subject to vanity [Rom. 8:20] is for God the material for its future glorious form.
37. And as earth and heaven were in the beginning for the form completed after six days, that is, its material,
38. So is man in this life for his future form, when the image of God has been remolded and perfected. **The image of God is the Trinity's imprint on our very being, our human kind of being. The starting point for our understanding this is not Genesis by itself, but Jesus Himself, for exam-**

¹ Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 155-56.

ple, in Colossians 1:5.

39. Meanwhile, man lives in sins and daily is either justified or becomes more polluted.
40. Hence, Paul does not even deign to call that realm of reason world, but rather calls it the form of the world [Gal. 4:3].

→Romans 8:18–39

*The Disputation Fragment
Against [Theses] 13 and 14*

Those who know God also know their own efficient cause. But the Gentiles have known God. Therefore, the Gentiles have also known their own efficient cause.

By logical consequence, therefore, it is mistakenly asserted in the thirteenth and fourteenth argument that human reason and philosophy do not know the efficient cause of man.

I prove the minor premise: The Gentiles knew God, but they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him [Rom. 1:21].

Objection: They have indeed known God, but not as creator.

Explanation. Yes, to know God is indeed something else than to know that he is the creator of all things. For the most excellent knowledge of God is to know that he has created all things.

Against 7

Christ has been appointed lord over earth, birds, fish, and cattle, therefore it is not reason.

I prove the antecedent premise from Psalm 8[:6–8], “Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands, thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also over the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths [of the sea].”

Against 22

None of the things which God commands men are impossible. But that men should free themselves from the power of the devil, likewise that they should not commit sin and should beware of eternal death, are things commanded of men by God. Therefore, that men should free themselves from the power of the devil, likewise that they should not commit sin and should beware of death are not impossible.

I prove the major premise: Everyone who demands the doing of impossible things is unjust. But God is not unjust. Therefore, God does not demand the doing of impossible things.

I prove the minor premise: What else does the decalogue want of them than that they should learn to obey God and to resist sin? Ezekiel 18[:30–32], “Be converted, and repent for all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions by which you have transgressed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God; so return, and live.”

Another against the same

Genesis 4[:7]: God said to Cain, “You must master sin.” Therefore, we are able to resist and to rule over sin and to free ourselves from it.

Explanation: From the “ought” to the “able” is not a valid consequence.

Another

I ask whether you concede to the good and correct human will the faculty of doing those things which the reason of man dictates?

It will be answered: Insofar as the devil impedes, so far the will is not able to conform to reason.

But the devil holds us oppressed, subjected to him, and wholly captive, as your propositions, that is, 24 and 25, assert. Therefore, our captive will is absolutely not able to conform to right reason and by consequence we do not have free will in civil matters, as your propositions concede, namely, 5, 7, and 8. Therefore, man necessarily sins and is undeservedly condemned on account of trespasses, since he must perpetrate these things out of necessity.

Another

To commit murder does not lie in our free will. To commit murder is a public matter. Therefore, civil affairs do not lie in our free will. I prove the major premise: Because the devil is the father of deceit and murder [John 8:44]. Therefore, we are not the cause.

Dr. M. Luther: Demonstrate that philosophy must be separated from theology.

Philosophers and Aristotle are not able to understand or to define what the theological man is, but by the grace of God we are able to do it, because we have the Bible.

Argument [Against 24]

If reason is of the devil, no one does good. But we ought to do good. Therefore, all reason is not under the power of the devil.

Response: We are not debating about the pious man. All good things which are over and above the divine gift are subject to the devil.

Another Against 23

Certain men are liberated without faith. Therefore not all are liberated

through Christ, because young children are saved without faith.

Response: God in like manner can pour faith into infants and others.

A papistic dream: The souls of the damned are in hell. Those of infants not baptized dwell in the middle, and they feel neither joy nor sorrow, so that they are a sort of quiet body lying asleep. We speak thus: Because the Scripture does not tell us, what He does must be left to the divine goodness and power. To send his faith whither he wills is in the hand of God. We shall leave off all those questions, yes, we shall rather study carefully those things which God has revealed to us in his Word. Meanwhile, we shall obey his commandments and refer other things to God who keeps them hidden. I care nothing for that place of the infants which they imagine is in the middle between those who rejoice and those who sorrow.

Against 11

There are four causes through which all things are known. But philosophy teaches these causes to us. Therefore, it has perfect knowledge about man. Cicero in his Laws says that man was made by none other than by God.

Response: We say that philosophy knows nothing at all about man. Aristotle assumes a *primum mobile* or mover. Hence he concludes that all things are done by the prime mover with inner cooperation, and so he dreams that the prime mover acts like a nursemaid who rocks the cradle of a child, yet admires herself. Thus Aristotle condemns us. In short, philosophers know nothing about God the creator and man made of a lump of earth.

Augustine says that he found all things in the Platonic books except this one thing, that the Word was made flesh. But Hermes Trismegistus composed that book of Plato and pilfered it all from the Gospel of John. That book reached Augustine and he was deceived by its persuasion.

Another [Against 35]

Those who have been received into grace, they are in possession of His counsel. But we, etc.

Response: All things remain under vanity. Man does not have his own household under control as he truly should have. And God preserves a prince by a kind of inspiration so that he rightly administrates and deliberates.

The words of the law say, "You ought." They do not say, "You are able to." From the "ought" to the "able" is not a valid consequence.

Another Against 4

The wisdom of the flesh is death. Reason is the wisdom of the flesh, therefore it is death, because all wisdom rises up out of reason as from a fountain.

Response: The wisdom of the flesh is death, that is, with respect to justification. If there were no reason, the will would be like that of cattle, just as we see that we are drawn to righteousness and joy, etc. Right reason is the prin-

cial part of man and is rightly called the essential difference, because it distinguishes man from beasts.

Another

Those who say that God is all in all know their own efficient cause. But many heathen have said this. Therefore, they have known the efficient cause of man.

Response: Paul says that they are inexcusable, since they have this divine knowledge [Rom. 1:20]. However, they still remain blind. They have felt their way toward God, they have seen his works, and yet they have not known him; they have not believed theological but human reason.

Another [Against 24]

Reason joined together with will can produce the most beautiful virtues. Therefore, reason is not altogether under the devil, because the devil hates such virtues.

Response: The devil rules even in the best virtues. Philosophy is the practical wisdom of the flesh which is hostile to God. This is the praise of philosophy. Theological man is outside the realm of the devil. Civic man has virtues to be sure, but he is not free from the devil.

Martin Luther, (1999, c1960). *Vol. 34: Luther's Works, vol. 34 : Career of the Reformer IV* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.).

APPENDIX C

Synonyms for “God’s Word” in Psalm 119

Many significant words occur in Psalm 119.^a Eight Hebrew words, synonyms for God’s Word, each recur 19-25 times, appearing in almost every one of the psalm’s 176 verses. In this chart, these Torah synonyms are listed by their frequency of use.

torah

In NASB: *law*

In Psalm 119 there are **25** occurrences of the Hebrew, “torah” (vv. 1, 18, 29, 34, 44, 51, 53, 55, 61, 70, 72, 77, 85, 92, 97, 109, 113, 126, 136, 142, 150, 153, 163, 165, and 174). NASB consistently translates it as “law” in Psalm 119, but in Proverbs, etc., it is often translated “instruction” or “teachings.”

Meaning

Torah is the dominant, controlling, overarching concept. As insight into God’s revelation, highlights **the Word’s wholeness, its teaching and direction for life, the word as living revelation**. The verb generally means to throw, but in the *hiphil* it means to teach. God gives His Law and teachings in order to give direction to the lives of those He loves. The psalmist notes that the torah is full of “wonderful things.” It is a crucial part of the “faithful way.”

The psalmist’s response

The psalmist feels “burning **indignation**” toward those who forsake the torah. In contrast to the wicked, who forsake, forget, and break the Torah, the psalmist desires to **walk** in God’s law, **keep** it, and **observe** it. He has confidence because he has not forgotten or forsaken it. In fact, **he meditates on it, delights in it, loves it, and beholds wonderful things from it**. The psalmist values the torah more than silver or gold.

The personal blessings

These attitudes toward *torah* lead to walking with a **blameless** life, freed from the consequences of following the false, wicked way. This life is **full of wonder and delight**, especially in the revelation of God’s compassion (v. 77). He knows that he would have “perished in his affliction” if not for the law being his delight (v. 92). Loving the law brings **great peace**, knowing that he will be kept from stumbling (v. 165).

^a “Your” is one of the most frequent and significant words of the Psalm (cf. “Your salvation, ...loving-kindness, ...mercies, ...compassion, ...favor; Your faithfulness, ...righteousness; Your hands, ...mouth, ...face; Your name, You Yourself, Him”). That which is God’s brings “blessing” and the one who is God’s receives “blessing.” The psalmist refers to himself as “Your servant.” The psalm frequently parallels God Himself or one of His personal qualities related to salvation. The word “way” has 11 occurrences; “ways” 7 occurrences. The Hebrew, “*derek*” refers to overall path of life. God’s ways are “blameless,” “established,” “pure,” and “faithful;” they are also “sought,” and “regarded.” “My ways” (4) or “his way” (1) is compared or contrasted with “Your ways” (2) or “His ways” (1). The “false way” (3) or “evil way” (1) is something that the psalmist prays to be kept from. There are “wonderful things from Your law, v. 18; “meditate on Your wonders,” v. 27, “Your testimonies are wonderful,” v. 127.

dabar

In NASB: *word, words, (answer)*

Psalm 119 uses the Hebrew, “dabar” 24 times. NASB translates it as “word” or “words” in vv. 9, 16, 17, 25, 28, 42 (cf. also “answer”), 43, 49, 57, 65, 74, 81, 89, 101, 105, 107, 114, 130, 139, 147, 160, 161, and 169. The translation “answer,” in v. 42, concerns the psalmist’s response, not God’s Word. Since the NASB also translates the Hebrew word *imrah* by word, words, these must be distinguished.

Meaning

Dabar is the common, general word for speaking or a thing said. As insight into God’s revelation, *dabar* highlights *the act of personal speaking* (while, *imrah*, from the verb *amar*, to speak, focuses on the thing said).

The psalmist’s response

The psalmist **keeps**, and promises to keep, what God speaks; he **does not forget** it. What God speaks becomes the basis for his confidence: he rises early and **cries out** for help; then he **trusts** in what God has spoken and **waits** for its promises, asking God to remember what He has said. He **believes** that what God has spoken has been “settled in heaven;” it is everlasting truth (v. 89, 160). The psalmist does not stand in awe of the power of princes who persecute, but he **stands in awe** of God’s spoken words (v. 161).

The personal blessings

Keeping that which God speaks leads to **a life that is pure** (v. 9). God’s speaking **revives his soul** that was cleaving to the dust (v. 25) and **strengthens his soul** that is full of grief (v. 28). Trusting God’s speech (*dabar*) **equips him with an answer** (*dabar*) to reproach (v. 42). The promises expressed in God’s speech give the psalmist **hope** (v. 49). The psalmist has the experience of looking back on his life and discovering that **God has dealt well** with him, just as He has said He would (“according to His word,” v. 65). He has the confidence that others who fear God will be encouraged by how he has waited for what God has promised (v. 74). The word **provides light** to illumine the paths he walks (v. 105, 130).

edah

In NASB: *testimonies, testimony*

In Psalm 119 there are 24 occurrences of the Hebrew, “edah” and “edot.” NASB translates as “testimonies” in vv. 2, 14, 22, 24, 31, 36, 46, 59, 79, 88, 95, 99, 111, 119, 125, 129, 138, 144, 146, 152, 157, 167, and 168; “testimony” in v. 86. It is paired with “statutes” in Deuteronomy (4:45; 6:17, 20).

Meaning

Edah, as insight into God’s revelation, highlights **the Word’s soundness, its dependable and clear witness to what is true, the underlying evidence in sup-**

port of its warnings and promises. With *choq* and *imrah*, it focuses on the written Word.

The psalmist's response

The psalmist “**rejoices** in their way,” “**observes**” them, “**meditates**” on them, “**speaks of them**” before kings, “**turns his feet**” to them, “**delights**” in them, “**considers**” them, “**diligently keeps**” them from the soul, and “**loves**” them “**exceedingly**.” Those who fear God are equated with those who know them (v. 79). As God’s servant, understanding is required in order to know them (v. 125).

The personal blessings

Responding to God’s *edah* makes him “blessed.” He is **confident that reproach and contempt will be taken away** from him and that he **will not be ashamed** before kings when he speaks of them. **People turn to him** because they fear God in knowing His testimonies. He is **protected** from enemies who diligently seek to destroy him. They are associated with the removal of the wicked from the earth (v. 119).

mishpatim

In NASB: *ordinances, judgments, judgment, justice, manner*

In Psalm 119 there are **23** occurrences of the Hebrew, “*mishpat*.” NASB translates as ordinances, 16x (vv. 13, 20, 30, 39, 43, 52, 62, 91, 102, 106, 108, 156, 160, 164, 175); judgments, 4x (vv. 7, 75, 120, 137); judgment, 1x (v. 84); justice, 1x (v. 121); manner, 1x (v. 132).

Meaning

Mishpat is an Old Testament conception very near to the New Testament concept of agape. *Mishpat*, as insight into God’s revelation, highlights **the decisions of leaders in their work to encourage justice in the community**. The case laws of Israel came from this need for love; the judges made their decisions as encouragements toward love. These **encouragements toward love** are righteous (vv. 7, 75, 137) and good (v. 39); they align closely with God’s lovingkindness, mercy, grace, and truth (cf. parallels in vv. 132, 149, 156, 160).

The psalmist's response

The psalmist is **grateful** for *mishpatim* (vv. 7, 62). He **longs to be encouraged and longs to give encouragement** to others. Knowing his need and having chosen to live for love, **he keeps this encouragement before his face** (v. 30). He **waits** for them (to have an impact; v. 43). He **longs to have his enemies held up to this standard** of love (cf. “execute judgment,” v. 84). The psalmist recognizes that all that exists “stands” on the basis of this encouragement to

love (v. 91). He **does not “turn aside”** from it, because he recognizes it as a personal teaching from God (v. 102, 108). He stands in **fear** of God because of these encouragements (v. 120); he desires God to treat him by this standard (v. 132). The standard of love is worthy of praise seven times a day (vv. 164, 175).

The personal blessings

Meditating on the *mishpatim* **takes away his dread of reproach** and oppression (v. 39, 84, 121); when he remembers them he is **comforted** (v. 52). The encouragements toward love include the **disciplines of affliction** (v. 75). They cause all things to “stand” (v. 91). They **revive his soul** (vv. 149, 156).

mitsvah

In NASB: *commandments, commandment*

In Psalm 119 there are 21 occurrences of the Hebrew, “*mitzvah*.” NASB translates as “commandments” (vv. 6, 10, 19, 21, 32, 35, 47, 48, 60, 66, 73, 86, 98, 115, 127, 131, 143, 151, 166, and 172); “commandment” (v. 96).

Meaning

Mitsvah, as insight into God’s revelation, highlights **the right to give specific direction and to encourage a response; it directs**. (“The word emphasizes the straight authority of what is said; not merely the power to convince or persuade, but the right to give orders” (Kidner, 418). The commands are **faithful** (v. 86) and **true** (v. 151). They are **beyond limitation** (“exceedingly broad, v. 96). Together, all of the commands give a clear picture of **righteousness** (v. 172).

The psalmist’s response

The psalmist **looks on** what God commands (v. 6). More than this, knowing they are hidden (to the natural man), he **seeks** them with all his heart (v. 10, 19) and **runs to** them (v. 32), **hastens toward** them (v. 60), and **pants for them with longing** (v. 131). He **delights in the path** laid out by God’s commands (v. 35), **loves** them (47, 48, 127), and wants to **sing** of them (v. 172). He **believes** they are relevant to his deeper needs (v. 66) and as a creature fashioned by God he **desires to understand** them (v. 73). He has come to appreciate that they are beyond limit, “exceedingly broad” (v. 98). The psalmist does them out of a hope for salvation (v. 166).

The personal blessings

The one who is open to God’s *mitsvah*, to what God commands, will **not be ashamed** when he understands them (v. 6). He will be **kept from wandering**

(v. 10). They help him **cope with being a stranger** to the earth (v. 19) and with being troubled and anguished (v. 143). They **enlarge his heart** (v. 32). They **prompt a desire for wisdom** that will **address deeper needs** (v. 66). They make him **wiser** than his enemies (v. 98). They **bring God near** (v. 151). They bring **hope** for salvation (v. 166).

choq

In NASB: *statutes*

Psalm 119 uses the Hebrew, “*choq*” **21** times. NASB consistently translates as “statutes” (vv. 5, 8, 12, 23, 26, 33, 48, 54, 64, 68, 71, 80, 83, 112, 117, 118, 124, 135, 145, 155, and 171. NIV translates *choq* as “decrees”.

Meaning

Choq derives from the practice of scratching, engraving, or writing—to engrave laws on slabs of stone or metal and set them up in public. Choq, as insight into God’s revelation, highlights **the public, permanent, and binding—the practical application to everyday life**. With *edah* and *imrah*, it focuses on the written Word.

The psalmist’s response

The psalmist commits to **keeping** them (vv. 5, 8, 33, 112, 117, 145). He **wants God to teach** him the statutes and their “way” (vv. 12, 26, 33, 64, 71, 124, 135, and 171), recognizing them as an expression of God’s lovingkindness (vv. 124, 135). He **meditates** on them (v. 23, 48). The psalmist **loves** them (v. 48) and wants to **sing** of them at the public assemblies (v. 54). He prays to be blameless in them (v. 80). He **does not forget** them, even in trial (v. 83). They are worthy of **praise** (v. 171).

The personal blessings

The *choq* of God teach the psalmist about **God’s lovingkindness** (v. 64) and **goodness** (v. 68). The psalmist came to **appreciate afflictions** as the disciplines that encouraged him to learn God’s statutes (v. 71). They make him **blameless**, guarding him from public shame (v. 80). They **help the psalmist understand God’s rejection** and unwillingness to save those who deceitfully wander from them (they are “useless” and “wicked” vv. 118, 155).

piqqudim

In NASB: *precepts*

Psalm 119 uses the Hebrew “*piqqudim*” **21** times (4, 15, 27, 40, 45, 56, 63, 69,

78, 87, 93, 94, 100, 104, 110, 128, 134, 141, 159, 168, and 173). The only OT occurrences outside Psalm 119 are also in the Psalms (19:8, 103:18, and 111:7).

Meaning

Piqqudim comes from a verb (*poqed*) that means to attend to closely for the purpose of taking appropriate actions. It is used of overseers and commanders. So *piqqudim*, as insight into God's revelation, highlights **the detailed, thorough instructions of a caring overseer**. These caring instructions are "right, rejoicing the heart" (Psalm 19:8) and are, paralleled with "truth and justice," "sure" (Psalm 111:7).

The psalmist's response

The psalmist recognizes these caring instructions as ordained to be **kept diligently** (vv. 4, 63) and **observed** (vv. 56, 69), not forgotten (v. 141). The psalmist **meditates** on them, **desires to understand** them, **longs** for them, **seeks** them, and **loves** them (v. 15, 27, 40, 45, 78, 159). He finds true **companionship** only with those who seek God and keep His caring instructions (v. 63). Arrogant liars may reject the caring instructions of God, but the psalmist finds protection from them in the caring instruction of God (vv. 69, 78, 87). He **esteems** them (hating the false way; v. 128).

The personal blessings

The *piqqudim*, precepts, allow him to "walk at **liberty**" (v. 45). They give him **true companions** (v. 63). They **revive** him and save him (vv. 93, 94). They **give him understanding**, helping him to hate the false way (vv. 100, 104, 128) and avoid the snares of the wicked (v. 110, 141). They give him **confidence**, because he knows **God will revive** those who love them and choose them (vv. 159, 173).

imrah

In NASB: *word, words*

In Psalm 119 there are 19 occurrences of the Hebrew, "*imrah*" (cf. *amar*, to say). NASB consistently translates as word, or words (vv. 11, 38, 41, 50, 58, 67, 76, 82, 103, 116, 123, 133, 140, 148, 154, 158, 162, 170, 172). Most occurrences are here in Psalm 119. Since *dabar* is also translated as word, words by NASB, the two must be distinguished.

Meaning

Imrah, as insight into God's revelation, highlights **the things that He says, the promises** (the close synonym *dabar* focuses on the speaking). The psalmist sees these words as "sweeter than honey" (v. 103). It is a "righteous word" (v.

123) and “very pure” (v. 140) . With *edah* and *choq*, it focuses on the written Word.

The psalmist’s response

The psalmist **treasures** what God says (v. 11) and **rejoices** over it as over great spoil (v. 162). He **seeks the favor** that he learns from what God says. Having experienced His discipline, he **keeps** what God says (v. 67). He **longs** for the salvation that comes from God’s righteous sayings (v. 123). He **loves** the pure word. He **anticipates** the times when he can **meditate** on it (v. 148). He **loathes** the treacherous, who do not keep what God says (v. 158). He **desires to sing praises** over the righteousness of what God says (v. 172).

The personal blessings

Because of the psalmist’s attitude toward what God says, he is **kept from sin** (vv. 11, 67) and the dominion of iniquity (v. 133). He is **made reverent** (v. 38), encouraged that God will save him in lovingkindness (v. 41), **revived and comforted in affliction** (vv. 50, 67, 82, 154). He **comes to expect God to treat him with favor and grace** (v. 58). What God says gives the psalmist the **hope** that sustains life (v. 116) and brings **salvation** (v. 123, 170).

Source: BcResources.net

APPENDIX D

George Orwell: 1984 excerpts from the Appendix¹

Note: Orwell's 1984 is a fictional story about how Socialism (that is, Marxism) in England in the 20th century had begun to regulate and greatly reduced language to force its ideology on people. In his story he shows how by diminishing or reducing language—which we discovered in our second chapter concerning hermeneutics other than Luther's hermeneutic of Scripture alone is the hallmark of the historical-critical method, for example—the government or society could accomplish two things. First, they could confine people's thinking by greatly reducing the words they could use. Second, they could disable people from understanding, much less arguing against what the government and society were doing to them by redefining even the words of the texts on which non-Marxists built their lives.

Think of the inhumane things that are done to real people in real life by manipulating the divine gift of language. Think of the analogy between what Orwell's communists were doing to people and what hermeneutics of Neoplatonism, papal authority, and postmodern semiotics concerning the Scriptures.

THE PRINCIPLES OF NEWSPEAK

Newspeak was the official language of Oceania and had been devised to meet the ideological needs of Ingsoc, or English Socialism. In the year 1984 there was not as yet anyone who used Newspeak as his sole means of communication, either in speech or writing. The leading articles in the *Times* were written in it, but this was a *tour de force* which could only be carried out by a specialist. It was expected that Newspeak would have finally superseded Oldspeak (or Standard English, as we should call it) by about the year 2050. Meanwhile it gained ground steadily, all Party members tending to use Newspeak words and grammatical constructions more and more in their everyday speech. The version in use in 1984, and embodied in the Ninth and Tenth Editions of the Newspeak Dictionary, was a provisional one, and contained many superfluous words and archaic formations which were due to be suppressed later. It is with the final, perfected version, as embodied in the Eleventh Edition of the Dictionary, that we are concerned here.

The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible. It was intended that when New-

¹ George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Harcourt, 2002), 374-365.

speaking had been adopted once and for all and Oldspeak forgotten, a heretical thought—that is, a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc—should be literally unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words. Its vocabulary was so constructed as to give exact and often very subtle expression to every meaning that a Party member could properly wish to express, while excluding all other meanings and also the possibility of arriving at them by indirect methods. This was done partly by the invention of new words, but chiefly by eliminating undesirable words and by stripping such words as remained of unorthodox meanings, and so far as possible of all secondary meanings whatever. To give a single example. The word *free* still existed in Newspeak, but it could only be used in such statements as ‘This dog is free from lice’ or ‘This field is free from weeds’. It could not be used in its old sense of ‘politically free’ or ‘intellectually free’ since political and intellectual freedom no longer existed even as concepts, and were therefore of necessity nameless. Quite apart from the suppression of definitely heretical words, reduction of vocabulary was regarded as an end in itself, and no word that could be dispensed with was allowed to survive. Newspeak was designed not to extend but to *diminish* the range of thought, and this purpose was indirectly assisted by cutting the choice of words down to a minimum.

Newspeak was founded on the English language as we now know it, though many Newspeak sentences, even when not containing newly-created words, would be barely intelligible to an English-speaker of our own day. Newspeak words were divided into three distinct classes, known as the A vocabulary, the B vocabulary (also called compound words), and the C vocabulary. It will be simpler to discuss each class separately, but the grammatical peculiarities of the language can be dealt with in the section devoted to the A vocabulary, since the same rules held good for all three categories.

The A vocabulary. The A vocabulary consisted of the words needed for the business of everyday life—for such things as eating, drinking, working, putting on one’s clothes, going up and down stairs, riding in vehicles, gardening, cooking, and the like. It was composed almost entirely of words that we already possess words like *hit*, *run*, *dog*, *tree*, *sugar*, *house*, *field*—but in comparison with the present-day English vocabulary their number was extremely small, while their meanings were far more rigidly defined. All ambiguities and shades of meaning had been purged out of them. So far as it could be achieved, a Newspeak word of this class was simply a staccato sound expressing *one* clearly understood concept. It would have been quite impossible to use the A vocabulary for literary purposes or for political or philosophical discussion. It was intended only to express simple, purposive thoughts, usually involving concrete objects or physical actions.

The grammar of Newspeak had two outstanding peculiarities. The first of these was an almost complete interchangeability between different parts of speech.

Any word in the language (in principle this applied even to very abstract words such as *if* or *when*) could be used either as verb, noun, adjective, or adverb. Between the verb and the noun form, when they were of the same root, there was never any variation, this rule of itself involving the destruction of many archaic forms. The word *thought*, for example, did not exist in Newspeak. Its place was taken by *think*, which did duty for both noun and verb. No etymological principle was followed here: in some cases it was the original noun that was chosen for retention, in other cases the verb. Even where a noun and verb of kindred meaning were not etymologically connected, one or other of them was frequently suppressed. There was, for example, no such word as *cut*, its meaning being sufficiently covered by the noun-verb *knife*. Adjectives were formed by adding the suffix *-ful* to the noun-verb, and adverbs by adding *-wise*. Thus for example, *speedful* meant 'rapid' and *speedwise* meant 'quickly'. Certain of our present-day adjectives, such as *good*, *strong*, *big*, *black*, *soft*, were retained, but their total number was very small. There was little need for them, since almost any adjectival meaning could be arrived at by adding *-ful* to a noun-verb. None of the now-existing adverbs was retained, except for a very few already ending in *-wise*: the *-wise* termination was invariable. The word *well*, for example, was replaced by *goodwise*.

In addition, any word—this again applied in principle to every word in the language—could be negated by adding the affix *un-*, or could be strengthened by the affix *plus-*, or, for still greater emphasis, *doubleplus*. Thus, for example, *uncold* meant 'warm',

while *pluscold* and *doublepluscold* meant, respectively, 'very cold' and 'superlatively cold'. It was also possible, as in present-day English, to modify the meaning of almost any word by prepositional affixes such as *ante-*, *post-*, *up-*, *down-*, etc. By such methods it was found possible to bring about an enormous diminution of vocabulary. Given, for instance, the word *good*, there was no need for such a word as *bad*, since the required meaning was equally well—indeed, better—expressed by *ungood*. All that was necessary, in any case where two words formed a natural pair of opposites, was to decide which of them to suppress. *Dark*, for example, could be replaced by *unlight*, or *light* by *undark*, according to preference.

The second distinguishing mark of Newspeak grammar was its regularity. Subject to a few exceptions which are mentioned below all inflexions followed the same rules. Thus, in all verbs the preterite and the past participle were the same and ended in *-ed*. The preterite of *steal* was *stealed*, the preterite of *think* was *thinked*, and so on throughout the language, all such forms as *swam*, *gave*, *brought*, *spoke*, *taken*, etc., being abolished. All plurals were made by adding *-s* or *-es* as the case might be. The plurals of *man*, *ox*, *life*, were *mans*, *oxes*, *lifes*. Comparison of adjectives was invariably made by adding *-er*, *-est* (*good*,

gooder, goodest), irregular forms and the *more, most* formation being suppressed.

The only classes of words that were still allowed to inflect irregularly were the pronouns, the relatives, the demonstrative adjectives, and the auxiliary verbs. All of these followed their ancient usage, except that *whom* had been scrapped as unnecessary, and the *shall, should* tenses had been dropped, all their uses being covered by *will* and *would*. There were also certain irregularities in word-formation arising out of the need for rapid and easy speech. A word which was difficult to utter, or was liable to be incorrectly heard, was held to be *ipso facto* a bad word: occasionally therefore, for the sake of euphony, extra letters were inserted into a word or an archaic formation was retained. But this need made itself felt chiefly in connexion with the B vocabulary. *Why* so great an importance was attached to ease of pronunciation will be made clear later in this essay.

The B vocabulary. The B vocabulary consisted of words which had been deliberately constructed for political purposes: words, that is to say, which not only had in every case a political implication, but were intended to impose a desirable mental attitude upon the person using them. Without a full understanding of the principles of Ingsoc it was difficult to use these words correctly. In some cases they could be translated into Oldspeak, or even into words taken from the A vocabulary, but this usually demanded a long paraphrase and always involved the loss of certain overtones. The B words were a sort of verbal shorthand, often packing whole ranges of ideas into a few syllables, and at the same time more accurate and forcible than ordinary language.

The B words were in all cases compound words⁽²⁾. They consisted of two or more words, or portions of words, welded together in an easily pronounceable form. The resulting amalgam was always a noun-verb, and inflected according to the ordinary rules. To take a single example: the word *goodthink*, meaning, very roughly, 'orthodoxy', or, if one chose to regard it as a verb, 'to think in an orthodox manner'. This inflected as follows: noun-verb, *goodthink*; past tense and past participle, *goodthinked*; present participle, *goodthinking*; adjective, *goodthinkful*; adverb, *goodthinkwise*; verbal noun, *goodthinker*.

The B words were not constructed on any etymological plan. The words of which they were made up could be any parts of speech, and could be placed in any order and mutilated in any way which made them easy to pronounce while indicating their derivation. In the word *crimethink* (thoughtcrime), for instance, the *think* came second, whereas in *thinkpol* (Thought Police) it came first, and in the latter word *police* had lost its second syllable. Because of the great difficulty in securing euphony, irregular formations were commoner in the B vocabulary than in the A vocabulary. For example, the adjective forms of

Minitrue, *Minipax*, and *Miniluv* were, respectively, *Minitruthful*, *Minipeaceful*, and *Minilovely*, simply because *-trueful*, *-paxful*, and *-loveful* were slightly awkward to pronounce. In principle, however, all B words could inflect, and all inflected in exactly the same way.

Some of the B words had highly subtilized meanings, barely intelligible to anyone who had not mastered the language as a whole. Consider, for example, such a typical sentence from a *Times* leading article as *Oldthinkers unbellyfeel Ingsoc*. The shortest rendering that one could make of this in Oldspeak would be: 'Those whose ideas were formed before the Revolution cannot have a full emotional understanding of the principles of English Socialism.' But this is not an adequate translation. To begin with, in order to grasp the full meaning of the Newspeak sentence quoted above, one would have to have a clear idea of what is meant by *Ingsoc*. And in addition, only a person thoroughly grounded in Ingsoc could appreciate the full force of the word *bellyfeel*, which implied a blind, enthusiastic acceptance difficult to imagine today; or of the word *oldthink*, which was inextricably mixed up with the idea of wickedness and decadence. But the special function of certain Newspeak words, of which *oldthink* was one, was not so much to express meanings as to destroy them. These words, necessarily few in number, had had their meanings extended until they contained within themselves whole batteries of words which, as they were sufficiently covered by a single comprehensive term, could now be scrapped and forgotten. The greatest difficulty facing the compilers of the Newspeak Dictionary was not to invent new words, but, having invented them, to make sure what they meant: to make sure, that is to say, what ranges of words they cancelled by their existence.

As we have already seen in the case of the word *free*, words which had once borne a heretical meaning were sometimes retained for the sake of convenience, but only with the undesirable meanings purged out of them. Countless other words such as *honour*, *justice*, *morality*, *internationalism*, *democracy*, *science*, and *religion* had simply ceased to exist. A few blanket words covered them, and, in covering them, abolished them. All words grouping themselves round the concepts of liberty and equality, for instance, were contained in the single word *crimethink*, while all words grouping themselves round the concepts of objectivity and rationalism were contained in the single word *oldthink*. Greater precision would have been dangerous. What was required in a Party member was an outlook similar to that of the ancient Hebrew who knew, without knowing much else, that all nations other than his own worshipped 'false gods'. He did not need to know that these gods were called Baal, Osiris, Moloch, Ashtaroth, and the like: probably the less he knew about them the better for his orthodoxy. He knew Jehovah and the commandments of Jehovah: he knew, therefore, that all gods with other names or other attributes were false gods. In somewhat the same way, the party member knew what constituted

right conduct, and in exceedingly vague, generalized terms he knew what kinds of departure from it were possible. His sexual life, for example, was entirely regulated by the two Newspeak words *sexcrime* (sexual immorality) and *goodsex* (chastity). *Sexcrime* covered all sexual misdeeds whatever. It covered fornication, adultery, homosexuality, and other perversions, and, in addition, normal intercourse practised for its own sake. There was no need to enumerate them separately, since they were all equally culpable, and, in principle, all punishable by death. In the C vocabulary, which consisted of scientific and technical words, it might be necessary to give specialized names to certain sexual aberrations, but the ordinary citizen had no need of them. He knew what was meant by *goodsex*—that is to say, normal intercourse between man and wife, for the sole purpose of begetting children, and without physical pleasure on the part of the woman: all else was *sexcrime*. In Newspeak it was seldom possible to follow a heretical thought further than the perception that it was heretical: beyond that point the necessary words were nonexistent.

No word in the B vocabulary was ideologically neutral. A great many were euphemisms. Such words, for instance, as *joycamp* (forced-labour camp) or *Minipax* (Ministry of Peace, i.e. Ministry of War) meant almost the exact opposite of what they appeared to mean. Some words, on the other hand, displayed a frank and contemptuous understanding of the real nature of Oceanic society. An example was *prolefeed*, meaning the rubbishy entertainment and spurious news which the Party handed out to the masses. Other words, again, were ambivalent, having the connotation 'good' when applied to the Party and 'bad' when applied to its enemies. But in addition there were great numbers of words which at first sight appeared to be mere abbreviations and which derived their ideological colour not from their meaning, but from their structure.

So far as it could be contrived, everything that had or might have political significance of any kind was fitted into the B vocabulary. The name of every organization, or body of people, or doctrine, or country, or institution, or public building, was invariably cut down into the familiar shape; that is, a single easily pronounced word with the smallest number of syllables that would preserve the original derivation. In the Ministry of Truth, for example, the Records Department, in which Winston Smith worked, was called *Recdep*, the Fiction Department was called *Ficdep*, the Teleprogrammes Department was called *Teledep*, and so on. This was not done solely with the object of saving time. Even in the early decades of the twentieth century, telescoped words and phrases had been one of the characteristic features of political language; and it had been noticed that the tendency to use abbreviations of this kind was most marked in totalitarian countries and totalitarian organizations. Examples were such words as *Nazi*, *Gestapo*, *Comintern*, *Inprecorr*, *Agitprop*. In the beginning the practice had been adopted as it were instinctively, but in Newspeak it was used with a conscious purpose. It was perceived that in thus abbreviat-

ing a name one narrowed and subtly altered its meaning, by cutting out most of the associations that would otherwise cling to it. The words *Communist International*, for instance, call up a composite picture of universal human brotherhood, red flags, barricades, Karl Marx, and the Paris Commune. The word *Comintern*, on the other hand, suggests merely a tightly-knit organization and a well-defined body of doctrine. It refers to something almost as easily recognized, and as limited in purpose, as a chair or a table. *Comintern* is a word that can be uttered almost without taking thought, whereas *Communist International* is a phrase over which one is obliged to linger at least momentarily. In the same way, the associations called up by a word like *Minitrue* are fewer and more controllable than those called up by *Ministry of Truth*. This accounted not only for the habit of abbreviating whenever possible, but also for the almost exaggerated care that was taken to make every word easily pronounceable.

In Newspeak, euphony outweighed every consideration other than exactitude of meaning. Regularity of grammar was always sacrificed to it when it seemed necessary. And rightly so, since what was required, above all for political purposes, was short clipped words of unmistakable meaning which could be uttered rapidly and which roused the minimum of echoes in the speaker's mind. The words of the B vocabulary even gained in force from the fact that nearly all of them were very much alike. Almost invariably these words—*goodthink*, *Minipax*, *prolefeed*, *sexcrime*, *joycamp*, *Ingsoc*, *bellyfeel*, *thinkpol*, and countless others—were words of two or three syllables, with the stress distributed equally between the first syllable and the last. The use of them encouraged a gabbling style of speech, at once staccato and monotonous. And this was exactly what was aimed at. The intention was to make speech, and especially speech on any subject not ideologically neutral, as nearly as possible independent of consciousness. For the purposes of everyday life it was no doubt necessary, or sometimes necessary, to reflect before speaking, but a Party member called upon to make a political or ethical judgement should be able to spray forth the correct opinions as automatically as a machine gun spraying forth bullets. His training fitted him to do this, the language gave him an almost foolproof instrument, and the texture of the words, with their harsh sound and a certain wilful ugliness which was in accord with the spirit of Ingsoc, assisted the process still further.

So did the fact of having very few words to choose from. Relative to our own, the Newspeak vocabulary was tiny, and new ways of reducing it were constantly being devised. Newspeak, indeed, differed from most all other languages in that its vocabulary grew smaller instead of larger every year. Each reduction was a gain, since the smaller the area of choice, the smaller the temptation to take thought. Ultimately it was hoped to make articulate speech issue from the larynx without involving the higher brain centres at all. This aim

was frankly admitted in the Newspeak word *duckspeak*, meaning 'to quack like a duck'. Like various other words in the B vocabulary, *duckspeak* was ambivalent in meaning. Provided that the opinions which were quacked out were orthodox ones, it implied nothing but praise, and when the *Times* referred to one of the orators of the Party as a *doubleplusgood duckspeaker* it was paying a warm and valued compliment.

The C vocabulary. The C vocabulary was supplementary to the others and consisted entirely of scientific and technical terms. These resembled the scientific terms in use today, and were constructed from the same roots, but the usual care was taken to define them rigidly and strip them of undesirable meanings. They followed the same grammatical rules as the words in the other two vocabularies. Very few of the C words had any currency either in everyday speech or in political speech. Any scientific worker or technician could find all the words he needed in the list devoted to his own speciality, but he seldom had more than a smattering of the words occurring in the other lists. Only a very few words were common to all lists, and there was no vocabulary expressing the function of Science as a habit of mind, or a method of thought, irrespective of its particular branches. There was, indeed, no word for 'Science', any meaning that it could possibly bear being already sufficiently covered by the word *Ingsoc*.

From the foregoing account it will be seen that in Newspeak the expression of unorthodox opinions, above a very low level, was well-nigh impossible. It was of course possible to utter heresies of a very crude kind, a species of blasphemy. It would have been possible, for example, to say *Big Brother is ungood*. But this statement, which to an orthodox ear merely conveyed a self-evident absurdity, could not have been sustained by reasoned argument, because the necessary words were not available. Ideas inimical to Ingsoc could only be entertained in a vague wordless form, and could only be named in very broad terms which lumped together and condemned whole groups of heresies without defining them in doing so. One could, in fact, only use Newspeak for unorthodox purposes by illegitimately translating some of the words back into Oldspeak. For example, *All mans are equal* was a possible Newspeak sentence, but only in the same sense in which *All men are redhaired* is a possible Oldspeak sentence. It did not contain a grammatical error, but it expressed a palpable untruth—i.e. that all men are of equal size, weight, or strength. The concept of political equality no longer existed, and this secondary meaning had accordingly been purged out of the word *equal*. In 1984, when Oldspeak was still the normal means of communication, the danger theoretically existed that in using Newspeak words one might remember their original meanings. In practice it was not difficult for any person well grounded in *doublethink* to avoid doing this, but within a couple of generations even the possibility of such a lapse would have vanished. A person growing up with Newspeak as his sole

language would no more know that *equal* had once had the secondary meaning of 'politically equal', or that *free* had once meant 'intellectually free', than for instance, a person who had never heard of chess would be aware of the secondary meanings attaching to *queen* and *rook*. There would be many crimes and errors which it would be beyond his power to commit, simply because they were nameless and therefore unimaginable. And it was to be foreseen that with the passage of time the distinguishing characteristics of Newspeak would become more and more pronounced—its words growing fewer and fewer, their meanings more and more rigid, and the chance of putting them to improper uses always diminishing.

When Oldspeak had been once and for all superseded, the last link with the past would have been severed. History had already been rewritten, but fragments of the literature of the past survived here and there, imperfectly censored, and so long as one retained one's knowledge of Oldspeak it was possible to read them. In the future such fragments, even if they chanced to survive, would be unintelligible and untranslatable. It was impossible to translate any passage of Oldspeak into Newspeak unless it either referred to some technical process or some very simple everyday action, or was already orthodox (*good-thinkful* would be the Newspeak expression) in tendency. In practice this meant that no book written before approximately 1960 could be translated as a whole. Pre-revolutionary literature could only be subjected to ideological translation—that is, alteration in sense as well as language. Take for example the well-known passage from the Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of those ends, it is the right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government...

It would have been quite impossible to render this into Newspeak while keeping to the sense of the original. The nearest one could come to doing so would be to swallow the whole passage up in the single word *crimethink*. A full translation could only be an ideological translation, whereby Jefferson's words would be changed into a panegyric on absolute government.

A good deal of the literature of the past was, indeed, already being transformed in this way. Considerations of prestige made it desirable to preserve the memory of certain historical figures, while at the same time bringing their achievements into line with the philosophy of Ingsoc. Various writers, such as Shakespeare, Milton, Swift, Byron, Dickens, and some others were therefore

in process of translation: when the task had been completed, their original writings, with all else that survived of the literature of the past, would be destroyed. These translations were a slow and difficult business, and it was not expected that they would be finished before the first or second decade of the twenty-first century. There were also large quantities of merely utilitarian literature—indispensable technical manuals, and the like—that had to be treated in the same way. It was chiefly in order to allow time for the preliminary work of translation that the final adoption of Newspeak had been fixed for so late a date as 2050.

APPENDIX E

The Faith that Comes by Hearing the Word of Christ: A Lutheran Existential Definition

Passion is the key. In the section of *Fear and Trembling* headed Problem III, Kierkegaard as John the Silent comes to realize, “The conclusions of passion are the only trustworthy ones, i.e., the only convincing ones.” In the Epilogue he concludes, “Faith is the highest passion in a human being. There are perhaps many in every generation who do not even come to it, but nobody goes further.”

Defining faith as passion is hard for us moderns to understand. On the one hand, we have long cultivated a misunderstanding of passion (*pathos* in Greek). On the other hand, we may be operating on the assumption that faith is fundamentally an intellectual matter, something to be handled rationally in a comprehensive system of some sort. It is also noteworthy that Hebrews 11, the Faith Chapter of the New Testament, uses emotion words such as “being sure” to define faith, while Luther uses emotion words in his Small Catechism such as “fear,” “love” and “trust” to explain our motivation for obeying the Ten Commandments.

To overcome our misunderstanding of *pathos*, we can cleanse our palate by approaching theology and biblical anthropology phenomenologically. Phenomenology, as I learned it first from my professor, Andrew Tallon, recognizes that human consciousness is a *triune consciousness*, a union of emotion, intellect, and will as an operational synthesis.

“Operational synthesis” reminds us that there are, so to speak, not three consciousnesses taking turns, but one consciousness. Our consciousness is a triunity. In its operation the three aspects of consciousness interact. It is just as we teach in Catechism: you can have a wrongly educated conscience or a properly educated conscience. For example, our moods and emotions are immediate experiences, but our short-term emotions and long-term moods can be trained, educated, or re-formed by God via His Word (Psalm 51:10-19).

Then there is the first principle of phenomenology: Every emotion we have, every thinking we do, and everything we will, is always about something. We call this inherent “aboutness” *intentionality*.

The core doctrine in phenomenology is the teaching that every act of consciousness that we perform, every experience that we have is *intentional*: it is essentially consciousness *of*, or an experience *of* something or other (Robert Sokolowski)

Professor Tallon taught me to give particular attention to emotion (“affect” or “affection” in the literature) as a distinct “person” in triadic consciousness to

respond to the overbearing philosophical attention given to intellect (“cognition” in the literature). His *Head and Heart: Affection, Cognition, Volition as Triune Consciousness* sparked my interest because of his argument that establishing emotional intentionality (verifying the aboutness of our emotional feelings and moods) was necessary for understanding the vertical or spiritual aspect of human beings.

We should define ourselves by the highest and deepest horizon, not by our lowest or shallowest... to recognize the role of affection in triune consciousness is absolutely essential for moving toward that horizon (Andrew Tallon)

(For more, see my book on the long-term mood of what Kierkegaard calls “anxiety,” *Wednesday’s Child: From Heidegger to Affective Neuroscience, a Field Theory of Angst*.)

This is where Kierkegaard’s understanding of faith comes in. It is an *existential* understanding, an understanding gained from firsthand experience of our human consciousness; not an idea or speculative theory about our mind. That is, not an ideology. “Faith is the highest passion in a human being.” Phenomenology can then help to bracket off distractions, theories, and preoccupations that keep us from paying attention to the phenomenon of human consciousness as it really is—that is, both as we experience it in our human being and as Scripture depicts head and heart—paying attention to the built-in intentionality of each of the irreducible three parts of our trinitarian consciousness. Passion (*pathos* in Greek) is in the emotional aspect (or *affection*) of human consciousness.

This is an insight, as I explain to classes and reading groups such as our weekly Lutheran Philosopher Readers Fellowship, that Kierkegaard learned from Martin Luther. *Fear and Trembling* is an *existential* contemplation (that is, very attentive to human consciousness as we actually experience it, complete with powerful emotions) because it reflects Luther’s lectures on Genesis. For example, in the fourth volume of the American edition of Luther’s Works you will find this from Luther:

8. Abraham said: God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son. So they went both of them together.

At this point there is surely profound emotion, and there is powerful *pathos*. Moses did not want to pass this over... All this could not be overcome without great sorrow and grief. For the saints are not blocks of wood and devoid of feeling; but they are human beings, and the emotions and affections implanted in human nature are present in them to a higher degree than they are in others.

Luther's Hermeneutic is not only for theological schools and theological students. It is a book for you, a listener, a reader, perhaps also a preacher and teacher of the Bible, the Word of God. It is a book for you if you have given up on listening to the Bible. This book is about how to read and listen to The Book of Books, the written Scriptures, the words of God in which the Word of God who became flesh speaks to us TODAY, as to His people in the past, IN HIS WORD, the means by which He recreates our sinful human hearts and minds in real time.

The Lutheran School of Theology in Kimuka, Kenya warmly invites you to read this accessible book by our own Professor of Theology, Dr. Gregory Schulz, who writes just as he teaches, with a pastor's heart and a philosopher's mind. Then, please recommend it to others.

Luther's Hermeneutic will do your heart good and it will strengthen your mind, not because it is about Luther but because it is about the incarnate Word forming us human beings who are in essence language beings. It will encourage you greatly in your daily life as you learn from the Scriptures that language is a divine gift from God.

From the book: "Our period in God's creation, the beginning of the twenty-first century, is a period in which language is generally viewed as a body of fictions. The postmodern semiotics view of language is a global presupposition, from the disintegrating of Western culture to the curricula of many of our institutions of higher learning in Africa and, it seems, everywhere. To paraphrase the twentieth-century Lutheran martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the concept of the divine gift of language is homeless, and you will find it only in Christ and Christ's churches and schools."



I rejoice in the Way revealed by Your decrees
as much as in all riches.

I will meditate on Your precepts
and think about Your ways.

I will delight in Your statutes;
I will not forget Your Word.

Psalm 119:14-16, *Beth*

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