

Faith and Reason in the Reformations

Edited by Terence J. Kleven

LEXINGTON BOOKS
Lanham • Boulder • New York • London

Front cover: The picture of the manuscript on the front cover is from Gutenberg's first publication of Jerome's Latin Vulgate, AD 1455. The picture of the telescope is an illustration of James Gregory's telescope from AD 1638.

Published by Lexington Books
An imprint of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706
www.rowman.com

86-90 Paul Street, London EC2A 4NE

Copyright © 2022 by The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote passages in a review.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Kleven, Terence J, editor.
Title: Faith and reason in the reformations / edited by Terence J. Kleven.
Description: Lanham : Lexington Books, [2021] | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2021036024 (print) | LCCN 2021036025 (ebook) | ISBN 9781793606884 (cloth) | ISBN 9781793606891 (epub)
Subjects: LCSH: Faith and reason--Christianity--History. | Reformation.
Classification: LCC BT50 .F344 2021 (print) | LCC BT50 (ebook) | DDC 231/.04209--dc23
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021036024>
LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021036025>

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Contents

Acknowledgments	vii
Introduction	1
PART I: FIVE KEYNOTE ADDRESSES	21
Chapter One: Catholic Reflections on Reason and Faith after Five Hundred Years of Reform and Enlightenment <i>Douglas Kries</i>	23
Chapter Two: <i>Sola Fide</i> : What Is the Role of Reason after the Reformation? <i>Jennifer Hockenbery</i>	39
Chapter Three: The Grammar of Faith in <i>Twelfth Night</i> : Richard Hooker's Gift to Shakespeare <i>John Baxter</i>	57
Chapter Four: Reason and the Paradigms of the Nature-Grace Relationship <i>Al Wolters</i>	75
Chapter Five: An English Major's Theology? The Incarnation as Answer to the Question of the Relationship Between Faith and Reason <i>Christina Bieber Lake</i>	91
PART II: SEVEN STUDIES ON CORE TREATISES FROM THE MEDIEVAL TO MODERN PERIODS (IN HISTORICAL ORDER OF THE PRIMARY TEXT EXAMINED)	107
A. Medieval Alternatives	109

Chapter Two

Sola Fide: What Is the Role of Reason after the Reformation?

Jennifer Hockenbery

INTRODUCTION

On October 31 of 1517 in the town of Wittenberg, an Augustinian monk, pastor, and university professor named Martin Luther posted on the door of the Castle Church Ninety-Five Theses against the selling and buying of indulgences. Indulgences were contracts which promised leniency towards the sin of the buyer. A person could, also, buy an indulgence as a present for another person, a relative or loved one, perhaps an uncle who had already died and was likely in purgatory. The indulgence could take the place of a few years, a century, or a millennium of purgatory. If he had the money, a person could buy an indulgence that provided a full absolution that would save himself or his loved one from the fires of hell. An indulgence declared a parent could trust that a beloved child struck ill could run into the arms of Jesus without fear of judgment as she breathed her last breath. An indulgence claimed a criminal could believe that ultimate judgment of his crime would never come.

It is important to note that within a few years of Luther's posting of his Ninety-Five Theses, the Roman Catholic Church banned the sale of indulgences and condemned Johann Tetzel, the charismatic preacher of indulgences who was the target of Luther's theses. Yet, the event of the posting of the Ninety-Five Theses has been named as the start of the Reformation. Thus, it is that posting that we are remembering with this volume marking the Five-Hundredth Anniversary of the Reformation.

This volume brings academics together to discuss how this event shaped the role of reason and faith. This paper will explain Luther's understanding

of justification by faith and how this doctrine shaped his understanding of the use and abuse of reason in the academy and in the community. In particular, this paper will sketch how Luther's vision of the roles of faith and reason reformed the academy's understanding of philosophy, science, and political theory and how this vision might continue to transform contemporary discussions of philosophy, science, ethics, and ecclesiology.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Luther's Ninety-Five Theses are rationally argued, and Luther famously proclaimed at the Diet of Worms, "Unless I am convicted by the testimony of the Scriptures and plain reason, I cannot and I will not recant, anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe."¹ Yet, Luther is often portrayed as a fideist. He is often caricatured as someone who, in preaching the Pauline proclamation that Christians are justified by faith alone, spurned the use of reason entirely. However, Luther's position on faith and his position on reason are much more complex, interesting, and useful than this caricature suggests.

A careful reading of the Ninety-Five Theses reveals that Luther's initial disgust at the sale of indulgences was due to how irrational it would be to buy one. A sinner could simply put a coin in the coffer and avoid penance. As such, to buy an indulgence would be to deprive oneself, or one's loved one, of the opportunity to confess, to do acts of penance, to do acts of charity for the poor, and to be cleansed by the trials and tribulations of death, purgatory and hell. In other words, Luther, as a devout monk in the Roman Catholic Church believed that if God and the Church asked people to do certain rituals of penance and required years in purgatory these must be important rituals and punishments. One should not be able, nor even want, to avoid these in order to get into heaven more quickly. Indeed, the heavenly Father, a God of reason, would not cheat a sinner out of that which was for her own benefit. No human father would first require a child who had harmed his sister to sit in his room quietly and write a letter of apology only to suggest that twenty dollars would also cover the crime. A rational parent would not relinquish punishment of a child if the child could pay twenty dollars because the punishment of a just parent is made to teach the child and reform the child's behavior, not to raise money for the parent.

This trust in the reasonableness of God's justice is the foundation of Luther's argument against the sale of indulgences. Of course, soon in Luther's career he came to preach that many of the rituals of penance were invented by the church, not by God, and that Purgatory itself was an invention that had

no Scriptural referent. His reliance on Scripture and clear reason would bring him to those conclusions. The trust in God's reasonableness is, for Luther, in no way opposed to his understanding of the need for faith. Indeed, a careful reading of the Ninety-Five Theses demonstrates Luther's commitment to a reasonable God who demands reasonable things alongside his commitment to a loving God whose mercy defies human reason.

For Luther, God's justice is reasonable; God's mercy is beyond reason and can only be understood by faith. This is good news for Christians, because by reason, every person must admit that she deserves damnation for her sins against God and her neighbor. Luther's trust in the irrational love and mercy of God that can only be known by faith is clearly stated in the Ninety-Five Theses. He states that while penance might serve the Christian's spiritual health, no one can buy with money or earn through works one's *justification* or *salvation*. Christians are given salvation by Christ's sacrifice and not their own. Just as the parent does not profit from the child's punishment, neither does God. Just as the punishment of the parent is done out of love for the child—not so that the child might earn it—so is the love of God given first. To believe otherwise is to have faith in one's self, one's merit, and one's wealth, and not to have faith in God's love.

Luther explains his doctrine of justification by faith specifically in theses 32 and 33. "Those who believe that they can be certain of their salvation because they have indulgence letters will be eternally damned, together with their teachers." This is because "People must especially be on guard against those who say that the pope's pardons are that inestimable gift of God by which a person is reconciled to [God]."² No human being, not even the Pope, can give *justification*. It is not the Pope's heart that gives value to the person, but only *coram dei*. And to deny God's work is to sin grievously and damnable. But, Luther explains, tenderly and joyfully, God gives such pardon freely despite the sinner's lack of merit. Thesis 37 reads, "Any true Christian, whether living or dead, participates in all the blessings of Christ and the church; and this is granted him by God, even without indulgence letters."³ To think that one has the power to restore oneself by the buying of indulgences is irrational. To trust the paper given by the Pope rather than to trust the words of Scripture that proclaim that salvation is secured by faith in Christ, is bad faith. The buying of indulgences is neither rational nor faithful to Scripture, which is precisely why Luther is compelled to argue so forcefully against this practice. The sellers of indulgences deny the salvation God has promised, and they encourage doubt in the believer. As well as causing the Christian to doubt God's love, the sellers of indulgences encourage believers to place faith in human authority rather than in divine promises. They encourage people to trust what is untrustworthy, rather than trust the Word of God. In contrast,

Luther's evangelism for faith in the loving promises of the Word of God is the heart of the Reformation.

The event of Luther's Reformation breakthrough has been mythologized in popular culture as an illumination experienced during an acute existential anxiety attack or as a moment of scatological relief in a monastery bathroom.⁴ But Luther himself wrote in his *Preface* to his own *Latin Writings* that this insight came in 1515 while he was preparing a lecture for his class. He was reading the letters of Paul to the Romans because he was lecturing on *Romans* that semester. While preparing for class, he suddenly "saw the doors of Paradise fling open."⁵ This vision was not mystical but a product of careful attention in his study of *Romans* 1:16–17. There Paul writes, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written 'The one who is righteous will live by faith.'"⁶ Luther suddenly realized that God is the absolute value maker. God creates true value with God's loving gaze. Luther's realization is that Paul's view claims that the righteous person is the one loved by God, not that God loves the righteous person. Thus, a believer learns whom God loves not through empiricism and reason but through faith, for God does not love according to human logic or cultural codes but through divine grace. According to Scripture, God has chosen to value humans not because of their merit, but because God has chosen them. Thus, a human being has value, not because she bought an indulgence, nor because she behaved rightly, but because God chose in love to justify her, to bestow her with value.

This was radical, not so much for an Augustinian monk, for Luther remembered Johann von Staupitz saying similar things, but for a university professor who had been taught to use reason and knowledge of the law to find what has value. Luther says many times that his view of justification by faith is wholly in line with Augustine's. Luther says that the whole of justification by faith can be seen not only in Scripture, which is most authoritative, but also in *On the Spirit and the Letter* by Augustine.⁷ Importantly, the *Joint Declaration on Justification* signed by Pope John Paul II and many Lutheran bishops makes the same claim in 1999. But Luther, while claiming that his view is in line with catholic Christian teachings, acknowledges that it defies the reasoning of Aristotle and the Scholastics.⁸

In his reading, Luther understood this passage contradicted the ethics of Aristotle as taught by the Scholastics. According to Paul, a righteous person does not become righteous by doing righteous acts, as many of the Scholastics had interpreted Aristotle to be saying in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.⁹ Luther had lectured on Aristotle's ethics the year before and saw a marked difference between Aristotle's claim that justice is a state of character learned by practicing just activities and Paul's claim that righteousness is given by God

who robes the beloved in a love that can only be seen through faith, which is also a gift of God. Through faith, the believer sees her own value in the eyes of God, her whole self including her sins and her virtues covered over with the righteousness of God. Luther recognized that Aristotle was writing about political virtue, while Paul was preaching about ultimate value in the eyes of the value making God. Aristotle was explaining to legislators that citizens needed to practice justice in society. Paul was evangelizing in order that his listeners might trust God's promise that righteousness is a gift of God's love.

Yet, Luther's saw the difference between Paul and Aristotle not just as a difference in context but as a serious philosophical difference. In his *Lectures on Romans*, Luther explains that faith alone, not reason, can see the value of the righteous person because there is no intrinsic value to the righteous person for reason to see.¹⁰ According to Paul, and Luther, value is always relational. The object, person, or activity has no value in-itself, but only in the eyes of a value maker. Thus, the person cannot create her value by her actions, and a rational person cannot recognize her value by studying her achievements. Of course, political leaders and neighbors can place value on individuals according to their cultural standards, but it is their praise rather than the merit of the person that makes the person praiseworthy, for truly, most people who are so praised fall well short of the standards by which they are judged. This relational understanding of value is philosophically monumental in the history of ideas in the West and had major implications which affected the academic areas of philosophy, science, and political theory. It is to the philosophical implications that I now turn.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PHILOSOPHERS?

Luther was an academic, and he flourished in his role as professor. He was interested in philosophy, in ethics, in social and political theory and in natural science. While Luther's chief interest was evangelical, his evangelical interest had ramifications for philosophy, science, and social theory, and he was aware of this.

Luther pointedly talked to the philosophers of his own day as a fellow academic. It is not in the church, but in the classroom that Luther explained the problems with the philosophers in the academy of his own time. Luther told his students to be finished quickly with their philosophical studies. "For the philosophers so direct their gaze at the present things that they speculate only about what things are and what quality they have."¹¹ In doing so they do not understand much about these things. If they were honest, when they looked about themselves using their senses and their reason they would see only "a

sad creation" that is "groaning and in pain."¹² Luther insists that a philosopher who pretends to see and understand the goodness of creation with reason alone is a "mad man and maniac."¹³ Such a philosopher is a fool who "makes a gay science out of a sad creation."¹⁴ Later in 1536, in his *Disputation on the Human Person*, Luther says simply that by philosophy or reason "we know almost nothing about [the hu]man [person]."¹⁵

Importantly, Luther's point is not gnostic. He does not hold a Manichean view that Earth and Earth's creatures are products of the devil, nor does he suggest that knowledge is esoteric. Indeed, Luther, following Occam, often praises the project of empiricism as the only way to acquire data about the world. "[Reason] is the inventor and mentor of all the arts, medicines, laws,"¹⁶ explains Luther. But acquiring data to invent art, medicine, and political theory is different than making claims of having true knowledge about unobservable metaphysical structures and absolute values. "In spite of the fact that [reason] is of such majesty, it does not know itself a priori but only a posteriori."¹⁷ Luther insists that if one wants to know the value of creation one must "think about things in a different way."¹⁸ Luther suggests that one who looks with faith sees things differently than one who looks without faith. Only in faith can a believer see that creation was created and proclaimed to be good by God. Only in faith can a believer trust that he and his fellow human beings are righteous, justified, loved, and saved by God. Clear reason, if it is honestly used, shows humans their errors, their sins, their inability to obey Mosaic Law, their inability to know and understand natural law, and their failure to be excellent by current social standards. But contrary to reason, in faith, a believer sees her status as a beloved child of God. "Nor is there any hope that [the hu]man in this principal part can himself know what he is until he sees himself in his origin which is God Theology to be sure from the fullness of its wisdom defines [the hu]man as whole and perfect: Namely that [the hu]man is a creature of God,"¹⁹ explains Luther.

Importantly, Luther recognized that this claim is a theological and a philosophical claim. Indeed, Luther's argument that human nature cannot be understood through reason but only through faith is made philosophically in a pointed disputation against the Scholastic realists in 1517. It was those Scholastic realists, who strove to find truth of the final cause of things-in-themselves in the study of physics and biology, whom Luther called out in 1515 as the "maniacs who make a gay science out of a sad creation." The arguments against realism made by Luther in the *Disputation against Scholastic Theology* in 1517 and in the *Disputation on [the Hu]man [Person]* become important for the future of philosophy after Luther. While historians of ideas can ably claim that many of Luther's arguments against realism and scholasticism came directly from William of Occam and Gabriel Biel, both of whom he read as a law student at Erfurt, it was Luther's Reformation

theology that became the vehicle for these philosophical ideas to become mainstream in Continental philosophy.

Indeed, the historian of ideas might wonder if it was Luther's ghost who woke Kant from his dogmatic slumber. Luther's theology sheds a different light on the skepticism of Hume which sounded impiously agnostic to many Scottish Calvinists. But to a German Lutheran, like Kant, who had been taught from his cradle that reason must be humble in the face of faith, Hume's skepticism must have sounded familiar. Of course causation cannot be known empirically, of course God's love cannot be known by reason alone, of course the basic unobservable substance of the things in the universe cannot be logically deduced from the phenomena. Most importantly, of course reason alone cannot help human beings make substantial progress. Kant's trust in the Enlightenment project faltered because he read Hume through Lutheran eyes. Indeed, the three Lutherans Kant, Hamann, and Herder who denounced the proud use of reason in the Enlightenment as naïve were followed by the many Lutheran philosophers who dominated European philosophy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries after Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* had prevailed. These post-Enlightenment Lutheran philosophers, such as Fichte, Shelling, Hegel, Feuerbach, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche were baptized as Lutherans, often by their own fathers who were Lutheran pastors; they were taught to read German using Luther's Bible in schools which were set up by princes eager to obey Luther's command to promote universal literacy; they were confirmed in the Lutheran church and educated in Lutheran seminaries. Outside of the German states, the Danish Lutheran Kierkegaard explored the quandary of doing philosophy when faith is considered higher than reason. And outside of the Lutheran church, Luther's works were noted and quoted extensively by thinkers, such as Schleiermacher, Heidegger, and William James, who believed that philosophy must trespass beyond the boundary of the rational.

Luther's legacy is broad and vast; a single path of philosophy did not emerge in the wake of the theology of justification by faith.²⁰ Rather, there emerged a myriad of ways to search for meaning. However, there are a few parameters set by Luther's theological-philosophical claims. Values are considered products of relationship. Objective reason is considered an oxymoron; reason is used as a tool rather than viewed as an objective light. Philosophy is not considered a logical discipline geared toward finding true premises, but rather a way of looking for wisdom that must either limit itself to academic skepticism or allow tools other than discursive reason to be used in the pursuit of meaning rather than truth. These parameters for philosophy led to phenomenology, existentialism, post-modernism, and contemporary post-ontological structuralism. Philosophy, after the proclamation of justification by faith,

flourished and continues to thrive in creative ways as philosophers seek meaning rather than true premises.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE NATURAL SCIENCES?

Luther's philosophical disputations with the Scholastic realists also had implications for the scientists in his time. The debate between the Scholastic realists and the Occamite nominalists is referenced in the section above, but it has particular consequences in the natural sciences. Briefly, against the Scholastic realists, the nominalists made a claim that the vocation of natural science is to create models and equations that attempt to account for the phenomena in the most parsimonious way. In other words, nominalism asserts that reason cannot get to truth about unobservables, such as substance, value, or teleological cause, in the sciences. The scientist cannot uncover the divine plan or the inner workings of the mind of God. Rather the vocation of the scientist is to create useful models that help people farm, build, and heal the sick. This work of the scientist requires empiricism and reason. As such, in the sciences, reason has a very important role. Reason's role is not to climb a ladder out of the cave and into the mind of God, but rather to establish hypotheses, theses, theories, and mathematical rules by which humans categorize and predict data. Luther's view is that science, when limited in its vocation to the nominalist project, is helpful to society and pleasant for the scientifically minded.

Perhaps the best example of the immediate fruit of this view is shown in the preface to Copernicus's *Heavenly Revolutions* (1543 C.E.) which was printed and distributed by Andreas Osiander with the support of Luther. Osiander, a devout Lutheran with a keen interest in science, assures the reader that Copernicus's treaty is valuable for science and is no threat to faith. Osiander insists that "it is the duty of an astronomer to compose the history of of the celestial motions through careful and expert study."²¹ The scientist's vocation is to make models, maps, hypotheses, and predictions based on his observations. But Osiander is also clear in this preface that the astronomer "cannot in any way attain to the true causes" but can only make suppositions based on the observation and calculation. Osiander presents Copernicus's work as fine and important work and worthy of study. He explains, "Therefore alongside the ancient hypotheses, which are no more probable, let us permit these new hypotheses also to become known, especially since they are admirable as well as simple and bring with them a huge treasure of very skillful observations."²² With his Lutheran humility towards reason's ability to discover truth, and with his nominalist understanding of the vocation of science, Osiander

printed and distributed Copernicus's hypothesis. This publication was years before Galileo was born, who only later in 1610 C.E. would publish his *The Starry Messenger*, which would present his discoveries as he looked through a telescope and give empirical evidence that elevated Copernicus's hypothesis above Ptolemy's in terms of empirical adequacy. And it was a century before Isaac Newton created his account of the theory of gravity that could explain why objects on the earth did not fly off as the planet hurtled through space. Osiander's claim in 1543 that Copernicus's theory deserved study could only be made by a person willing to consider a new hypothesis in science and see how far it could go. Osiander explains his view of good science, "For the hypotheses need not be true nor even probable. On the contrary, if they provide a calculus consistent with the observations, that alone is enough."²³ Werner Heisenberg would paraphrase the same sentiment with his famous, "Shut up and calculate," a command that summarizes the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics. That Copenhagen's research was done by Danes who had been immersed in Lutheran culture since the Reformation should not be ignored. One could argue that Danish science owes all to Occam, but I would argue that it also owes no small debt to Lutheran theology.

For Luther, Scripture tells the truth about God's relationship with creation. This truth needs to be believed by faith alone. This view separates Luther's views from that of a humanist like Erasmus who is unsure that theology is anything more than a hypothesis. For Luther, theology and science are different types of study and the use of reason in each is different. Theology informed by Scripture can tell the faithful believer the truth of God's love, even if reason denies faith's plausibility on this count. In contrast, science makes models that describe how things work. Scientific theories should be evaluated, not on whether or not they are true, but on whether or not they adequately explain the empirical phenomena. While theological interpretations must be evaluated through the lens of Christ's loving gaze, in science, only empirical data should be considered. In the *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther explains that there is little point in trying to compare the theology of creation with the natural science of the origins of the earth, and he laughs at those who try to do so. Science is always changing, but the truth of God's love is eternal. Science changes its story and creates new models in order to explain the empirical data as new data is acquired. And science, in order to fulfil its vocation, should be free to create the simplest and most reasonable explanation of the data while leaving the door open for new data and new theories. In contrast, Scripture tells theological truths and theologians should not worry if the scientists have a theory they cannot reconcile with a verse in Scripture.

This view is freeing for science. On one hand, Roman Catholic astronomers in Luther's day also used Copernicus's mathematical model because the

model was simpler; the model was considered pragmatic but not true. On the other hand it is important to remember the reaction of Roman Catholic scholastic realists when Galileo, Kepler, and Newton later found new empirical data and created new theories of physics that demonstrated that the geocentric model of the universe and Aristotle's understanding of motion, causation, and heaviness were no longer adequate. The problem with Galileo's research was that it began to demonstrate that Copernicus's model was not just more pragmatic, it was more empirically adequate. In Galileo's view, this meant it was possibly more accurate. It was this assertion of the truth of the model that was upsetting to the Scholastic realists. Lutherans and those who did not expect to find truth in science but only newer and more pragmatic models might have been perplexed at times, but they did not have the same theological condemnation of these findings and their finders as the Roman Catholic church and the Inquisition did. When Galileo's telescope showed moons orbiting Jupiter, the Ptolemaic model broke apart. When Newton came up with a theory of gravity to explain why entities do not fall off the earth, Aristotle's theory of heaviness lost empirical adequacy. Since most Lutherans had not spent time making the physics of Aristotle cohere with *Genesis*, *Joshua*, or the *Psalms*, the death blow to Aristotle's physics was an unsettling scientific revolution but not a theological problem. Nominalism can explain the problem with the description that the sun stood still in Joshua 10:12-14.

This is not to say that contemporary theoretical physics is itself a Lutheran physics. While Bohr and Heisenberg did grow up in Lutheran homes with Lutheran parents and did their work in Lutheran nations, this is not to say they had a Lutheran approach to science. In fact, science, according to Luther, is secular. The faith of the scientist is irrelevant as she should only be considering empirical phenomena and creating with reason the best empirically adequate solution. Thus, the secularization of science is part of the gift of Luther's theology to the history of ideas.

Indeed, secularization might aid contemporary Christian scientific conversations. Luther insisted that science must be studied in the universities and must be free to find the most empirically adequate answer because science is needed to create new medicines and farming techniques. Taking a cue from Luther's view of reason, contemporary thinkers must consider seriously listening to scientists' theories and plans of action. For example, Christians have good reason to listen to those who have a plan to help calm the stormy waters of the Caribbean and clean the air over our cities. Yes, the believer is saved by God's redeeming love, but she is called to help her neighbor at every turn and in every way. She must use reason to think creatively of new ways to help her neighbor. So, there is a Reformation argument for sticking to the Paris Accord. One does not need to put a sign in one's yard that says "Science is Real," one can simply say that the model of human-made climate change

is the most empirically adequate model available. Using this model, reason provides certain rules that will not save or justify, but appear to give a path to helping those who are most affected by hurricanes, rising sea levels, and climate chaos—people as Pope Francis reminds us, who are often the poorest among us and whom we are commanded to serve.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR POLITICAL THEORY AND ETHICS?

While Luther is rarely mentioned in philosophy or science textbooks, he is regularly indexed in works on political theory. There, however, his influence has multiple interpretations. There are some that praise his proclamation of the freedom of the Christian and his two kingdom's theory for beginning the secularization and liberalization of Western politics, while others decry these same proclamations as creating the philosophical foundations of capitalism. Other texts focus on his works written during the peasants' revolt and blame Luther for providing fodder for tyrants and dictators, while still others take these same texts as the foundation for the social democratic policies of public schools, social welfare networks, and socialized health care that are trademarks of the Lutheran.²⁴ How can one author's works be foundational for both capitalism and socialism and both democracy and tyranny? The answer is that Luther's view of justification by faith required Luther to adopt a position of humility towards political theory's ability to create a just city. Reason, in its proper domain, is aware of its limitations in creating utopia and is content simply to help the citizen serve his neighbor. Therefore, Luther does not give one simple path, but writes *occasionally* according to the situation, using reason to the best of his ability while acknowledging its limitations.

This view of the role of reason in Christian ethics and political theory is first explained by Luther in his 1520 pamphlet *Freedom of a Christian*, a work dedicated to Pope Leo and written for the average Christian reader about Christian ethics. There, Luther explains the ethical ramifications of his Reformation thesis that justification is by faith alone. Because justification is not won through heredity, wealth, or works but only through Christ, all Christians are essentially equal. Luther claims that the Christian, through faith is a lord (*Herr*) who has authority as a free citizen and master who answers to no one. Luther claims that the Christian, through faith, is simultaneously a servant (*Knecht*) who is bound to serve her neighbor absolutely. Both the freedom and the bondage of the Christian are grounded in faith of Christ's love. All people have equal authority and freedom in Christ. All people have equal obligation to serve their neighbors by Christ's command. This statement of radical equality led some readers immediately to consider

revolutionary ideas of democracy and economic equality. But Luther was quick to remind both the peasants and the nobility that his is a theological claim not a political one. Because one already is free in Christ, one would falsely expect political revolution to create more freedom. Because one is bound to serve one's neighbor in love, one would falsely reason that love and service are found in violence and anarchy. For Luther, faith reveals one's freedom while reason is a tool that should be used to serve one's neighbor not one's self. The freedom and equality of the Christian is given by Christ. That's a theological truth. Determining how to best to serve one's neighbor requires using reason as a tool with humility.

This is an important proclamation by Luther, and he makes it often. Faith tells the believer who she is, and reason helps her decide how to act. Certainly, Scripture can help a reader know the commandments and understand the examples Christ gives in teaching, healing, feeding, and befriending the child, the sick, the poor, and the outcast. But Luther is clear that the Christian must use reason to figure out how to build the schools to teach the children, how to fund the doctors who treat the sick, and how to organize the community chest to feed the poor and welcome the outcast. Luther is clear in saying that reason is the greatest attribute which God gave to humans in regard to creating civic laws that best serve one's neighbors. Luther uses reason when he gives advice to the peasants telling them not to violently oppose their leaders because respect for political authority leads to peace and stability. Luther uses reason when he tells the Christian nobility that they ought to use their wealth and station to serve the citizenry. He explains that they ought to establish public schools for boys and girls, establish a system by which all can see a doctor regardless of economic status, and establish a town treasury so that no one ever has to beg.

Of course, importantly, Luther also believed he was being rational when he told the princes to put down rebellions violently. He reasoned against the peasant revolution by highlighting the threat and danger of anarchy and the importance of reestablishing peace. It was evident to some in his own day, and is widely acknowledged in history's hindsight, that his reason was tinged with the bias of his own political world view. Reason always is. And Luther was aware of this. The heart of Luther's social and political ethics reminds leaders and citizens that no matter what they do (or do not do), they will not create a new Jerusalem or a more perfect union. Reason is too much a whore to economic self-interest, pride, and cultural bias to see clearly enough to build a utopia.

Yet, by faith, Luther insisted, each Christian is called to serve her neighbor in every way at every moment with every resource, using reason as best she can while humbly admitting her lack of clear sight. Luther's advice to princes and peasants is still used to advocate for public education and for social

welfare systems as well as for the death penalty and acquiescence to state power. While Christians on all sides of political debates use Luther at times and disparage his writings at others, the main Lutheran point is to remember that all of Luther's political advice is secondary to his theological claim that faith, not politics, is what justifies.

What does this say to Christian citizens today? First, Luther clearly states that political leaders must use reason to the best of their ability to serve their citizens. He notes that the Turks in his day, who were not Christian, used reason in a way that helped people in their territory flourish better than those Christians who served the Roman Empire. Thus, Luther is clear that reason, even without faith, can rule a society pragmatically. This is the heart of what has become known as his two kingdom's theory. One should pick one's political agenda based on its usefulness to one's neighbor and society as a whole. But Luther is clear, that for those who have faith in Christ, they must recognize that it is Christ, and not their reason that gives ultimate value. The rational citizen cannot save America. The rational citizen cannot make America blessed. The rational Christian citizen has one commandment, to provide for her community, to use reason to create social structure that will help others flourish and thrive. Specifically, Luther gives rational arguments for the establishment of schools, hospitals, and welfare systems in order to prevent begging, stealing, prostitution, and usury. But ultimately, his is, at best, practical advice for how to run a flourishing state not a salvific commandment for how to justify a nation. Christians today have to use practical reason to decide how to best serve their neighbors in the occasions that arise.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CHURCH?

Importantly, Luther's same understanding of faith and reason that made him forego a political ethics of perfection, also made him forego an ecclesiological hope of purity. While this volume is mostly focused on what a Reformation view of reason and faith says to the academy, a church-going academic might wonder what Luther's understanding of reason offers the church, not just the Lutheran church or even the Protestant churches, but the Christian Church body that is bound by and in Christ.

Just as individuals, actions, objects, and political states are not justified in themselves, neither is the church. No church can be perfected by obedience to the Law. The church is justified by the love of Christ. The church is compelled to serve by the love of Christ. With justification by faith and the corresponding freedom of the Christian, Luther allowed Lutheran clergy to marry. His argument was that priests are no more holy than the laity; there is nothing

more holy about performing a sacrament than there is in changing a child's diaper. Such a statement was revolutionary and, to some, blasphemous. But Luther stood firm, what makes things holy is God's value-making gaze. God's chooses what and who is holy, not because of an action or person's inherent nature but because of God's outpouring love. Thus, Luther did not say marriage is holy in and of itself. Luther's point is the opposite. Marriage is not pure and holy in itself, but only because God calls it so in *Genesis* and again at the wedding in Cana. Indeed, it is precisely because marriage is messy that it is where, Luther says, partners find a school-house for faith. In the same way, the church can be a school-house for faith. Christians ought to attend and serve in churches, not because the Church is rationally determined as holy, but because God says that people should gather in God's name. The Christian need not be sure he is in a righteous church, for no church is righteous in and of itself but only in Christ. Indeed, the church, in and of itself, is messy, which allows it to be a place where the parishioner has the opportunity to serve and grow in love.

This seems simple, yet five hundred years after the Reformation the church is terribly divided. What divides it? Why is there not one holy catholic and apostolic church as Christians claim when they recite the ancient Nicene Creed? Often the answer is because churchgoers use reason to judge who and what is holy. Some churches will not accept those who allow women to be pastors or those who perform gay marriages. Some churches refuse to reconcile with another because of debate concerning a piece of liturgy between the offering and the Eucharist or because of debate concerning who lays hands on whom during ordination. It is a false sense that reason defines perfect practice, as if perfect ecclesiastic practice justifies a church.

In contrast, a trust in the justification by faith can be a unifying force if the Christian church admits that no church is made holy by its laws or ordinances, by its hymns or who it accepts in the pews or in the pulpit. A belief in the justification by faith alone declares that the church is holy only by the love of Christ. As such, the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation is not a call for continued reformation or reconciliation but for *recognition* of the unity of the body of Christ. Having recognized this unity by faith, churches would be free to discuss ecclesiological differences rationally according to the rules of political theory outlined by Luther. Churchgoers ought to use reason to make churches a place where love of neighbor flourishes, knowing that the church's ultimate righteousness is not the reward for loving action but the foundation of it. This would require an acceptance that righteousness comes from God alone and that humans are all, as Luther wrote as his last words, but beggars.

CONCLUSION

"That humans are but beggars" is a Lutheran place to end. Luther's humility about the role of reason is philosophically prior to his theological hope that faith reveals the love of God. Thus, justification by faith does not reduce the role of reason in human endeavors but elevates it. Because human beings can know God's love and their value in God's gaze by faith, they are free (and bound) to use reason as best they can to make philosophical and scientific hypotheses as well as ethical, political, and ecclesiological codes of conduct that serve their neighbors. We are but beggars, but hopeful beggars who are bound to serve each other even as we are promised the full glory of God's love.

NOTES

1. There is debate over these famous lines of Luther, which are recorded differently in early and later versions of the transcripts of the 1521 Imperial Diet of Worms. Roland Bainton notes that the earliest printed versions did include the final sentence, "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise." For the quote and the commentary, see Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand, A life of Martin Luther* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), 144.

2. Martin Luther, "95 Theses 1517," in *Luther's Works*, Jaroslav Pelican and Helmut T. Lehmann, gen. eds. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 31:28.

3. *Ibid.*

4. William James's account of Luther as the quintessential example of the sick soul might come to mind, as well as Erik Erickson's account of Luther in *Young Man Luther*. But both of these accounts are far more charitable to Luther as a genuinely religious man than popular culture has made Luther to be. This was noted especially by Gary Simpson in his lecture "Luther Sites and Insights: A Geo-Political Theology Travelogue at Luther Seminary," at the Midwest Meeting of American Academy of Religion, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, April, 2015.

5. Martin Luther, "Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings 1545," in *Luther's Works*, Lewis W. Spitz, Sr., ed. and trans. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), 34: 336-337.

6. *Romans 1:16-17. The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments*, New Revised Standard Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989).

7. Luther, "Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings 1545," *Luther's Works*, 34: 336-337. For more on Luther's insight into Augustine's *Spirit and Letter*, see Jennifer Hockenbery Dragseth, "Spirit and Letter, Gospel and Law: Augustine and Luther in Conversation," *Seminary Ridge Review*, 18, no. 2 (Spring 2016), 16-34. For the text of *On the Spirit and the Letter* see *The Spirit and the Letter in Augustine Later Works*, John Burnaby, ed. and trans. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955) 6(iv) 198.

8. See Martin Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation 1518," in *Luther's Works*, Harold Grimm ed. and trans. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House and Muhlenberg Press, 1957) 31: 39–74. Here Luther explains that a person "who wishes to philosophize by using Aristotle without danger to his soul must first become thoroughly foolish in Christ." (31: 41)

9. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W. D. Ross, revised with an Introduction and Notes by Lesley Brown, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), II, I, 1103a27–1103b3. First published in 1980. See classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachean2.ii.html. "Again, of all the things that come to us by nature we first acquire the potentiality and later exhibit the activity. . . . For all the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g., men become builders by building . . . ; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts."

Luther explains that he was taught to understand that this passage meant that we are justified by doing just acts, but that Paul says that "human works which are done over and over" cannot "lead to that end." (See Luther, "Proof of Thesis 2" in "Heidelberg Disputation 1518," 31: 43.) Importantly at the end of the Heidelberg Disputation Luther explains that the interpreters of Aristotle, not Aristotle, are to blame. He writes "These theses were discussed and debated by me to show, first, that everywhere the Sophists of all the schools have deviated from Aristotle's opinion and have clearly introduced their dreams into the works of Aristotle whom they do not understand." Although he says that even when one should hold to his meaning as strongly as possible . . . "nevertheless one gains no aid whatsoever from it, either for theology and sacred letters or even for natural philosophy." (Luther, "A statement concerning the Heidelberg Disputation made by Luther . . ." in "Heidelberg Disputation 1518," 31: 70.)

10. See for example 2 Corinthians 3:4–6 "Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us: our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Corinthians 3:4–6 NRSV). Luther says, "When reason hears this, it is immediately offended and says: 'Then are good works nothing? Have I toiled and borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat for nothing?'" (Luther, "Lectures on Galatians 1535," in *Luther's Works*, Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. and trans. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963) 26: 231). Luther continues saying that trying to become righteous drives "to the point of insanity many men who tried with all their might to become completely righteous in a formal sense but could not accomplish it. And innumerable persons even among the authors of this wicked dogma were driven into despair at the hour of death, which is what would have happened to me if Christ had not looked at me in mercy and liberated me from this error." (Ibid., 231.)

11. Martin Luther, "Lectures on Romans 1515," in *Luther's Works*, Hilton C. Oswald, ed., Walter G. Tillmanns and Jacob A. O. Preus, trans. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), 25: 360–362.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Luther, "Disputations on [the Hu]man 1526" *Luther's Works*, Lewis W. Spitz ed. and trans. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House and Muhlenberg Press, 1960), 34: 137.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Luther, "Lectures on Romans 1515," *Luther's Works*, 25: 360–362.

19. Luther, "Disputation on [the Hu]man 1526," *Luther's Works*, 34: 138.

20. For a full discussion of Luther's impact on Continental philosophy see *The Devil's Whore: Reason and Philosophy in the Lutheran Tradition*, Jennifer Hockenbery Dragseth, ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011).

21. Nicholas Copernicus, *Preface to De Revolutionibus (On the Revolutions)*, 1543 C.E. trans. and commentary by Edward Rosen (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978). <http://www.webexhibits.org/calendars/year-text-Copernicus.html>

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. For a detailed analysis on Lutheran theology's effect on the Nordic welfare state see Robert H. Nelson, *Lutheranism and the Nordic Spirit of Social Democracy* (Aarhus: Universitetsforlag, 2017).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W. D. Ross, revised with an Introduction and Notes by Lesley Brown, Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Copernicus, Nicholas. *Preface to De Revolutionibus (On the Revolutions)*, 1543 C.E. translation and commentary by Edward Rosen. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978. <http://www.webexhibits.org/calendars/year-text-Copernicus.html>
- Hockenbery Dragseth, Jennifer. "Spirit and Letter, Gospel and Law: Augustine and Luther in Conversation." *Seminary Ridge Review* 18, no. 2 (Spring 2016), 16–34.
- , ed. *The Devil's Whore: Reason and Philosophy in the Lutheran Tradition*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011.
- The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments*, New Revised Standard Version. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works*, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963.
- Nelson, Robert H. *Lutheranism and the Nordic Spirit of Social Democracy*. Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2017.
- Simpson, Gary. "Luther Sites and Insights: A Geo-Political Theology Travelogue." Paper presented at the Midwest Meeting of American Academy or Religion. Luther Seminary. St. Paul, April 2015.