Phil Anderas

Renovatio

Martin Luther's Augustinian Theology of Sin, Grace and Holiness



Academic Studies 57

V&R



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ISBN Print: 9783525593776 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647593777

Refo500 Academic Studies

Edited by
Herman J. Selderhuis

In Co-operation with
Christopher B. Brown (Boston), Günter Frank (Bretten),
Bruce Gordon (New Haven), Barbara Mahlmann-Bauer (Bern),
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Volume 57

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ISBN Print: 9783525593776 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647593777

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ISBN Print: 9783525593776 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647593777

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek:
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the
Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data available
online: http://dnb.de.

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Typesetting: 3w+p, Rimpar
Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage | www.vandenhoeck-ruprecht-verlage.com

ISSN 2197-0165
ISBN 978-3-647-59377-7

© 2019, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525593776 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647593777

Acknowledgments

"What do you have that you did not receive?" It's a joy to acknowledge the gifts I've received from God's hand through the people without whom this book would not exist.

To begin, my teachers. Ashley Woodiwiss, David Lauber, Mark Husbands, and Dan Treier introduced me to the life of the mind. Warren Smith led me with skill and passion into the strange and beautiful world of patristic theology. Reinhard Hütter taught me not just to read Thomas well, but to love the truth. To our mutual surprise, David Steinmetz became my Doktorgroßvater and served as a reader for my Marquette dissertation; he is dearly missed. Michel Barnes taught me how to read historical texts in large part by teaching me just how little I know. Above all, I thank Mickey Mattox for his learned teaching, wise counsel, and warm friendship. Not just a Doktorvater but a real Mensch, a lifelong friend, and – if I may say – a stout Augustinian-Lutheran *in ecclesia romana*.

Chris Ganski and David Luy midwifed the birth of this book. In a time of real confusion, they taught me to treasure the gospel and to regard Reformation theology with a critical but real affection within the breadth and depth of the catholic church. For their friendship and continued partnership in the work of the gospel – in Chris' case, a daily, rich reality here in the missionary trenches of Milwaukee – I am deeply grateful. Also, many thanks to Master David for writing the preface to this book. Prov. 18:24; 2 Sam. 23:8–12 via 2 Tim. 2:8.

Much of this book was written *in profundis*, spiritual and ecclesiastical. It would not have seen the light of day – nor, for that matter, would I–if not for the love and friendship of many extraodinary people. In addition to Chris, David, and Mickey, mention must be made of Bruce & Ruthie Howard, Pepe, Sherryl, Lars, Chuck, and Corrine (Poole) Anderås, Günther H. "Bud" Knödler, Nick Kavelaris, Ben Roberts, Ben Sharpe, Nathan Dickerson, John Ellison, Jan & Michelle Anderson, Jon Morgan, Jason Gehrke, Tim Soots, Les Martin, Andrew Whitaker, Lance O'Donnell, Ben Verhulst, Alex Lau, Dan Turner, Greg Edlund, Michael Casey, Brett Crull and yes, Steve Lake. (One is tempted, like Luther in the 1539 preface to his works, to thank *meine Papisten und die Teufel* as well – "They

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have beaten, oppressed, and distressed me so much; that is to say, they've made a fairly good theologian of me" – but we'll save that for the pub: or the pulpit.) As I began to write, Mary Clare wrote countless love notes and painted beautiful paintings for the art gallery in my study. Of her masterpieces, the one that stands out is the colored-pencil sketch of our family, smiles all around, finished dissertation in hand, and the risen Jesus standing in our midst, which graced my writing desk in Oconomowoc from midway through chapter 2 and which now adorns my office in Milwaukee. I'm sorry it didn't work out with the publisher for you to produce a cover for this book. As for Elisha & Betty, they know very little about this book or about darkness – except, of course, when it comes to formulating ingenious and daringly Lutheran ways to defeat the devil (cf. Oberman: 1988) – but quite a bit about joy and light. Thank you, kids.

Last in order but first in honor by far is my best friend and bride Lisa, who shouldered more of the burden of this book than I fully understand. She has been with me in the weakest and darkest moments of my life, a faithful partner in gladness and in sorrow, in sowing with tears and in reaping with joy. "An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels." I have. And I've learned *per experientiam* that Solomon, who acquired many wives but never seems to have found an excellent one, was in this judgment a very wise man indeed.

Phil
Holy Week '19

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The Sacrifice

I offer this book to the God of Jacob, who saved me from death:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

He sent from on high, he took me;
he drew me out of many waters.
He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me,
for they were too mighty for me.
They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
but YHWH was my support.
He brought me out into a broad place:
He rescued me,
because he delighted in me.

Psalm 18

When the situation is hopeless and all plans and efforts are in vain, then be courageous and beware of giving up! For God calls all things from the dead and from nothing. When no resource or hope at all is left, then at last God's help begins.

Luther on Gen. 25:23, late 1539

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Foreward

It is the mark of an engaging research proposal when the thesis set forward appears implausible on first glance, but seems obvious in retrospect. The book before us bears this mark. If there is one thing many modern theologians know about Martin Luther, it is that he neglected – perhaps even denied – the need and possibility for the Christian to progress in a life characterized by personal holiness. The origins of this reading stretch to the 16th century. Luther's soteriology was often denounced by his opponents as tantamount to permissive libertinism. Even among Protestant theologians who admire Luther in other respects, Luther's view of holiness is often presented in semi-tragic terms. The hero of the reformation was apparently so pervasively transfixed by the forensic doctrine of justification by faith that he couldn't quite muster any genuine concern for the ongoing and necessary work of the Holy Spirit to realign sinners in actual righteousness. Such a characterization is usually intended as a criticism, but, strangely enough, modern Lutheran theologians have only occasionally questioned its accuracy. A significant number have even doubled-down! Luther was *right* to be hesitant – even suspicious – about the notion of progressive Christian holiness. His reticence in this area should therefore be lauded as a virtue of his theology – a Lutheran distinctive worthy of celebration. The campaign to defend Luther on these grounds has been influential. Its anemic account of sanctification is often set forth in popular literature as the "Lutheran view."

In the light of this prevailing assessment, it will surely strain the credulity of many readers to consider the possibility that the main thesis of this book might be true. Anderas insists that Luther subscribes to a robust account of the believer's progressive renewal by the Holy Spirit. This doctrine of holiness is not an anomaly or a momentary lapse drawn from one or two fragments within the ocean of Luther's corpus. Neither can it be marginalized as a "pre-reformation" stratum of Luther's theology that would later evaporate. On the contrary, Luther affirms the sober necessity – and liberating possibility – of Christian holiness consistently until the very end of his life.

In doing so, Luther's account of holiness remains far more typically Augustinian in its content than recent scholarship has acknowledged. According to the received

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view, Luther maintains fragments of Augustine's theology of grace, but fundamentally transforms the conceptual architecture within which those fragments are embedded. For example, whereas Augustine had emphasized the infusion of a Godward principle inclining the Christian gradually over time to a purer love of God and neighbor, Luther is typically presented as a more thoroughgoing forensicist who is therefore preoccupied with the sinner's status *rather than* her condition. Anderas's account suggests that rigid dichotomies of this sort are not helpful. Without going so far as to claim that Luther simply repeats Augustine without modification of any kind, he insists (in effect) that far more of the architecture attending Augustine's mature understanding of sin and grace remains intact than recent scholarship has been wont to recognize. Imputation does indeed play an essential role in Luther's soteriology for Anderas, but not at the expense of a concomitant affirmation that incremental renewal in righteousness is utterly necessary.

The amount of textual evidence Anderas marshals in defense of his claim is overwhelming. Text after text reveals to the reader a Luther strikingly different than the usual portrait. By the end of the book, the preponderance of evidence may lead some readers to wonder how the predominant interpretation ever gained traction in the first place. Even here Anderas provides important helps, excavating key sources from the history of modern Luther scholarship in order to document the origins of the received view.

Renovatio makes an important contribution in several respects. It recovers an aspect of Luther's soteriology which would probably have seemed obvious to Lutheran theologians from earlier generations, but which modern Lutheran theologians have too often forgotten. Here we encounter a Luther equipped with an expanded theological palette; a pastor of souls who can exhort, warn and frighten the proud or slothful every bit as deftly as he can console the contrite and downtrodden. Aside from its substantive contribution to the guild of Luther studies, this book also bears important implications for Lutheran (and Protestant) self-understanding and for perceptions of Luther on the part of Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians. Modern Protestants have too frequently sought to justify their existence by clinging to a rhetoric of fundamental difference, and Roman Catholic or Orthodox theologians have too frequently taken them at their word! Anderas's "catholic Luther" presents us with a far more accurate picture. Important confessional differences still remain, of course, but Anderas helps us to see that they are differences inhabiting an architecture that is largely shared. In this sense, Luther can function, as Cardinal Willebrands once suggested, as a *doctor communis* for the divided churches (see Posset: 2018, 30). Indeed, the Luther depicted in these pages provides salutary resources for sinners from every confession who find themselves constantly in need of renovation by the Holy Spirit.

David Luy Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

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The Gist of this Book

τὸ γὰρ ἀδύνατον τοῦ νόμου, ἐν ᾧ ἠσθένει διὰ τῆς σαρκός, ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν πέμψας ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ σαρκί, ἵνα τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου πληρωθῇ ἐν ἡμῖν τοῖς μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα.

Paul the Apostle

… gratia saluatoris Christi crucifixi et dono spiritus eius …
… nec de verbis, cum res constet, controuersia facienda.

Augustine

Augustinus nihil acriter de fide scribit, nisi cum contra Pelagianos scribit:
sie haben Augustinum auffgeweckt und zum manne gemacht.

Martin Luther

Schwerwiegende Worte, die ganz nach Augustin hinüberklingen!
Man darf sich auch nicht von Luthers »augustinischer« Redeweise
in die Irre führen lassen.

Rudolf Hermann and Leif Grane

An obvious joke is only a successful joke;
it is only the unsuccessful clowns who comfort themselves with being subtle.

G.K. Chesterton

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ISBN Print: 9783525593776 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647593777

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ISBN Print: 9783525593776 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647593777

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ISBN Print: 9783525593776 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647593777

Introduction: "Luther on holiness? That will be a short book"

Deep into his 1525 reply to Erasmus on the great themes of Reformation theology – sin and grace, bondage and freedom, law and gospel, justification by faith, etc.[1] – Martin Luther took up a challenge which many assume didn't quite strike at the heart of the matter. For Erasmus had asked Luther this:

> If the whole man, even when born again through faith, is nothing but "flesh," where is the "spirit" that is born of the Spirit? Where is the child of God? Where is the new creature?[2]

– and isn't the very asking of the question all a Lutheran needs to prove how little this moralizing humanist grasped the saving power of the gospel? By the time Eramus wrote his *Diatribe,* the charge is already old hat: Luther's theology militates against piety, virtue, good works, holiness. But this misses the main point of the Reformation, cheapens grace by making discipleship costly, and cuts the nerve of evangelical freedom. For the gospel leaves the forgiven sinner just that: a sinner, "flesh" in St Paul's terms, in the Reformer's *peccator totaliter et totus simul iustus.* And this principled disregard for the cultivation of morals and the eradication of vice is the gospel's special virtue, the paradoxical proprium that sets it apart from every scheme of moral betterment, ascetic ascent, and metaphysical advance that Adam's sons have ever devised, from Babel to Rome, Plato to Pelagius, Eckhart to Oprah – or Jordan Peterson.[3] The law only makes matters worse; but where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more. Once justified, the righteous sinner has nowhere to go, for there is nowhere he *needs* to go. The way of the pilgrim is over; Christ is the end of the law for everyone who believes.

1 "My good Erasmus! … You, and you alone, have seen the hinge on which all turns, and aimed for the jugular." WA 18.786.21, 30, cf. Packer, 319.

2 WA 18.744.30–1, cf. Packer, 254.

3 HADOT, P. (1995), 102: "In all philosophical schools, the goal pursued in [spiritual] exercises is self-realization and improvement. All schools agree that man, before his philosophical conversion, is in a state of unhappy disquiet … All schools also agree that man can be delivered from this state. He can accede to genuine life, improve himself, transform himself, and attain a state of perfection."

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No one has to scale Jacob's ladder to climb up to the heights, for the Son of God climbed down it himself and met us here in the depths. By faith in this Christ, the believer has already reached his destination, already tasted the powers of the age to come, already passed out of death and judgment into eschatological righteousness and life.

In short: Erasmus' question is flawed, as modern theologians like to say, by a "category mistake." The gospel of grace is *sui generis*; so therefore is Luther's evangelical theology;[4] and as for the clever Dutchman, he is to be pitied indeed.

If, then, there isn't real space in Lutheran theology for new creation, regeneration, renovation, sanctification, virtue – in a word: holiness – that's only because there isn't need for them. Now, a locus on good works might smuggle its way back into the Lutheran Confessions, Orthodoxy, or Pietism; and misplaced regard for holiness will always afflict the Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and the Reformed. But Luther didn't trouble himself trying to fit together something as pedestrian as sanctification with the volcanic *Rechtfertigungslehre* of genuine Reformation theology. "Be a sinner and sin boldly but believe and rejoice in Christ more boldly still!" That's the real Luther, uncut, unapologetic, bold. No offhand remark, the *pecca fortiter* possesses the force of an axiom in evangelical ethics,[5] for it embodies the pith of Luther's insights into the boisterous freedom of the Christian "without the law and above the law."[6]

This "Lutheran" – and at the same time oddly "Erasmian" – interpretation of Luther as theologian of justification *sans* holiness makes for real ecumenical convergence. *Simul iustus et peccator*, after all: this is the Luther known in the churches; this is the Luther assumed in much historical and most dogmatic theology (Hauschild: 2001). On the one side, Catholics, Calvinists, Pietists, Wesleyans and Anglicans gang up to censure this lawless Luther for abandoning the pursuit of holiness.[7] Others, many but not all Lutheran,[8] more or less hail this

4 "Luther's approach to sanctification is unlike any other, *sui generis*." So KOLB, R./ARAND (2008), 125, who acknowledge their dependence on FORDE, G. (2004) and behind him, JOEST, W. (1968/1951).

5 Luther to Melanchthon, 1 August 1521, #424, WA Br 2.372.82–93. The best interpretation of the *pecca fortiter* remains that of BONHOEFFER, D. (1995b[1937]), 52.

6 WA Tr 1.204.30–205.3, LW 54.78 (#469, spring 1533).

7 See, e. g., John Wesley (*Sermon* 107.1.5.): "Many who have spoken and written admirably well concerning justification, had no clear conception, nay, were totally ignorant, of the doctrine of sanctification. Who has wrote more ably than Martin Luther on justification by faith alone? And who was more ignorant of the doctrine of sanctification, or more confused in his conceptions of it?" In the same vein is *Catholicity: A Study in the Conflict of Traditions in the West*, a widely-influential official report written in 1947 by Anglican luminaries the likes of Gregory Dix, T.S. Eliot, Austin Farrer, and Michael Ramsey. Recent examples by Roman Catholics include HERDT, J. (2008), cp. 6: "Saved Hypocrites"; GREGORY, B. (2012), 207: according to the magisterial Reformers – Luther of course prominent among them – "… even after baptism human beings apart from God could do nothing but sin and could contribute nothing to their

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liberating Luther as God's chosen instrument for the abolition of legalism from an all-too-religious church.[9] But regardless of whether he plays villain or hero, heretic or saint, in your ecclesiastical history, most agree with McGrath's judgments in a major Oxford encyclopedia about Luther's "aversion to the language of renewal and spiritual growth," his "suspicion of the concern for personal holiness," and his "reluctance to employ any form of terminology that suggested a 'growth in holiness' or 'being made righteous'" (McGrath: 1996, 480f; cf. *idem:* 2005, 233).[10] To his great credit or his everlasting shame, holiness wasn't Luther's forte. On this point at least, Erasmus hit the target.

own salvation … This was simply a corollary to and the very point of justification by faith *alone* and salvation by grace *alone*." Accordingly, Luther et alia reject any decisive role for virtue in discipleship: "They denied the free, rational exercise of the virtues in pursuit of the good any place in disciplining the passions and redirecting untutored human desires"; RIST, J. (2014), cp. 7: "The rise and fall of lopsided Augustinianism," esp. 173–87; REX, R. (2017), e. g. 20: by spring 1518, Luther was "offering Christians salvation on the cheapest terms ever. From one point of view, the doctrine of justification by faith alone was simply the proclamation of a universal, plenary indulgence, available at absolutely no cost or effort … [T]he moral hazard was undeniable."

8 HUNSINGER, G. (2000), 295–300, is instructive for two reasons: first, he praises Barth for retrieving Luther's radical simul, a move that positions Barth to correct the backsliding of both the Lutheran and Reformed traditions into the soteriological gradualism of medieval theology; second, he identitifes this less-than-truly-Reformational gradualism with Augustine: Calvin e. g., though at times advancing aspects of Luther's bolder theology, "tended to revert back to an Augustinian gradualism which depicted sanctification (or 'regeneration') as an existential process" (p. 299). At the popular level, ZAHL, P. (2007), 51–4, an Anglican, and TCHIVIDJIAN, T. (2013), esp. 224f, a Presbyeterian, come to mind as non-Lutheran champions of the "modern Lutheran" Luther. Rev. 2:20–23.

9 Or even as the bearer of the eternal gospel: St John's vision of "an angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth" (Rev. 14:6) figured in hagiographic representations of Luther as early as 1522. See KOLB, R. (1999), 10, 29f, 124f. As I put pen to paper, the radical Lutheran *de l'heure* is one Nadia Bolz-Weber, who planted an ELCA congregration that incorporates the simul into its very name and who could not be better cast to personify the antinomian-gnostic convergence YEAGO, D. (1993) described twenty-five years ago. For a brief introduction to her works see BENNE, R. (2018).

10 The new *Oxford Encyclopedia of Martin Luther* (2017) found no room in its three big volumes for entries on regeneration, sanctification, renewal, holiness, virtue, or even good works. To be fair, these themes are touched on in e. g. entries by WIERSMA, H. on grace, MALCOLM, L. on the Holy Spirit, VAINIO, O.-P. on justification, and RAUNIO, A. on love. Still, the lacunae *de sanctificatione* are suggestive.

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ISBN Print: 9783525593776 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647593777

The Catch

The trouble with this "Lutheran" and "Erasmian" interpretation of Luther's indifference or even enmity toward holiness is that none other than Martin Luther himself was revolted by it. Here is his reply to Erasmus in *On Bound Choice:*

> I myself would be glad of information as to when I ever taught what you thus freely and publicly lay to my charge. Who would be so crazy as to say that he that is born of the Spirit is nothing but flesh (*nihil nisi carnem esse*)? Manifestly, I myself separate "flesh" and "spirit" as things opposed to each other, and I say, with the divine oracle, that the man that is not born again through faith is flesh. But one that is born again I no longer call flesh, except in respect of the relics of the flesh which oppose the firstfruits of the Spirit that he has received. I do not think that you meant to fabricate this charge with a view to raising prejudice against me; otherwise, what could you accuse me of that would be more wicked? Either you understand nothing of my position, or else you find yourself unequal to matters of such magnitutde.[11]

In this book, I argue that much of twentieth-century Luther research has misunderstood Luther along just these "Erasmian" lines. He wasn't so "crazy" as to say that those reborn of the Spirit are nothing but flesh. "I am fleshly," "wholly flesh," "a sinner entirely," the "simul" and the like are vital but rhetorically-charged phrases in need of careful interpretation. Whatever they may mean – and determining their real meaning lies at the heart of my argument – by Luther's own testimony they do *not* mean that the regenerate Christian is "nothing but flesh." Indeed: to take his paradoxes to mean that the baptized saint is a total sinner and the spiritual man nothing but flesh is to take Luther not just for an erroneous but for an evil teacher in the church. "What could you accuse me of that would be more wicked?" If true, Luther would be one of the false teachers who "twist" Paul's writings to their own destruction by lawlessness cloaked as free grace (2 Pet. 3:15–17; cf. Jude 4).[12] That's how Erasmus, Tetzel, Eck, Fisher, Cochlaeus and others interpreted Luther as a man and as a theologian in the sixteenth century, and how Heinrich Denifle read him in the early twentieth. But Luther will have nothing of it. Erasmus, not Luther, is the anemic theologian of holiness: "What rebirth, renewal, regeneration, and the whole business of the

11 WA 18.745.4–12, cf. Packer, 254f.

12 Cf. Luther's 1535 comments on Gal. 2:20, WA 40/1.286.27—287.16 [Dr], LW 26.169: "When the free forgiveness of sins is preached, those who are malicious soon slander this preaching, as in Rom. 3:8: 'Why not do evil that good may come?' … Or they say, 'If grace is superabundant, then let us be abundant in sin, so that we may be justified and grace may be superabundant.' These are the spiteful and arrogant men who willfully distort Scripture and the sayings of the Holy Spirit, as they distorted Paul during the lifetime of the apostles, 'to their own destruction,' as 2 Peter 3:16 says."

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Spirit are, he does not see at all."[13] And to be bleary-eyed here is nothing to joke about. Wrangling in 1539 with Agricola – a man who might qualify as the first "radical Lutheran" in history – Luther declares that the Christian "should either have the Holy Spirit and lead a new life, or know that he has no Christ."[14]

No Holy Spirit, no renewal, no Christ: what happened to *pecca fortiter?* Is this a flash in the pan? Or a failure of nerve? Neither, in fact. In his sermons of the 1530s and 40s, Luther increasingly urged the inseparability of redemption by Christ's blood and renewal through the work of the Holy Spirit, the latter manifested in lively faith, deep repentance, and concrete acts of obedience and love. For example, taking up 1 Thess. 4:1–7 in March 1539, Luther proclaimed:

> Know what Christ ought to mean for you, who has set you free from death. He is called the Savior, who has set his people free from sins for righteousness. Therefore, Christians should not remain in sins but be intent on living in chastity and holiness (*heiligkeit*), with kindness toward the neighbor … Christ did not come to set you free so that you could cheat and steal. If you do, this preaching that Christ died for sinners, etc. does not help you … Christ died for those who let their sins be forgiven, cease committing them, and then become daily more perfect. Otherwise this sweet preaching is a vain, lost word, since those who hear it say, "Indeed! He is a comforting preacher," just so he doesn't add: "If you are in sins, you will be damned."[15]

Yes, you read that right. The redeemed must repent and become intent on holiness. Failing this, the gospel is no use to them. In the end they will be damned, for Christ only died for the sins of those who seek daily increases in perfection. It would seem the old *Prediger* is full of surprises! He certainly wasn't pulling any punches.

In 1544, preaching Matt. 3:13–17, Luther reiterated the same doctrine in relation to holy baptism:

> When we preach, baptize, pray, the Son is there among us, the Father speaks, the Holy Spirit hovers. There we learn to fear our Lord God. Why do you want to lie? Do you not believe that Christ is with you, that the Holy Spirit, the Father is present? "No, but because of him who so richly graces me and always forgives sins." If you believed this, you wouldn't commit so many sins as otherwise. But where does this license for sin come from? It's because we don't believe that these things happen every day, that the Trinity is present. These people who do not acknowledge their baptism are not Christians. They forget baptism and wallow in sin like pigs. There are few who rightly value their baptism and keep in mind that God is present. Therefore learn your holy baptism and your glorious name [i. e., *den Christlichen namen*] in your own person! We have been clothed with sheer grace and mercy, with freedom from sins and an evil conscience – precious garments indeed. Do not lie down in filth wearing such a gar-

13 WA 18.693.8–9, cf. Packer, 180.
14 WA 50.600.11–12, LW 41.115.
15 WA 47.671.16–72.23 [A], cf. LW 58.21–22.

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> ment! If you can protect your fine silk and velvet garments, can you not do the same for your heavenly garment? If you do otherwise, know that you have lost all grace and mercy.[16]

Die Antinomer are *die Sawtheologen:* this, as students of Luther's 1515 lectures on Rom. 4:7 are well aware, is deep irony indeed.

Consider one last sermon: the 7 June 1545 exposition of 1 John 4:16–21. Six weeks before he decided he'd had enough of Wittenberg's avaricious burghers and promiscuous youth and wrote Katie to pack up their things and prepare to move[17] – "Just away, out of this Sodom! … I would rather eat the bread of a beggar than torture and upset my poor old age and final days with the filth at Wittenberg"[18] – Luther did his unambiguous best to admonish his sinful sheep about the great danger they were in if they kept on sinning boldly while claiming to believe more boldly still:

> Not all are Christians who boast faith. Christ has shed his blood. *Sola fide*, without works, we are justified. "I believe this." Ja, that's hellfire! You've learned the words you've heard the way mockingbirds learn to repeat things. Where are the fruits showing that you believe? You remain in sins; you're a usurer and more. Surely Christ did not die and shed his blood for the sins that you are intent on committing continually, but so that he might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8) …
>
> Let each one think: "I became a believer, washed in baptism with the blood of God's Son, so that my sins might be dead. I will not be disobedient and I will declare this with my deeds." Otherwise, give up the boast of being a believer. You know that you are a disobedient son, an adulterer; do not boast about faith and the blood of Christ. You're the devil's, the way you are going, etc. Ja, you're putting your own self to shame and Christ himself, you who *say* you believe, and you're bringing the name of the LORD into shame and yourself to eternal damnation. Love follows true faith … If you will reform yourself, good; if not, then in truth I cannot tolerate it, for you are acting contrary to the Word. Thus there must always be rebuking, ja, not one daily sin is to be endured.[19]

Not one daily sin. Christ's blood avails nothing for usurers, adulterers, unruly children. Hard-hearted continuance in concrete sins shows that some sinful "believers" belong to the devil, not Christ, and forebodes their eternal perdition. This, despite the fact that they're well-catechized gnesio-Lutherans in their "faith": *solus Christus, sola fide*, etc. – hellfire!

What are we to make of this? What's become of the joyful freedom of the Christian man? Has the senescent Luther degenerated into a curmudgeon – a pious Walter Matthau, an old man grumpy about "the way the girls were wearing

16 WA 49.315.8–21 [A], cf. LW 58.77–8.
17 HAILE, H. (1980), 316–18; BRECHT, M. (1993), 262–4.
18 WA Br 11.149.1—150.34 (#4139).
19 WA 49.783.21–784.16 [A], 786.13–15 [A], cf. LW 58.237–8, 240.

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their blouses cut so low and twirling their skirts at the dances" (Haile: 1980, 317)? Has he lost confidence in the power of the gospel? Pressured under mounting waves of popular lawlessness, nascent capitalism, greedy noblemen, and theological antinomianism, has the *miles emeritus* effectively admitted that the exuberant evangelical faith of his youth was unrealistic and altered his theology? Kierkegaard, enraged by the complacency of his age, claimed that if Luther had lived to see the decadence of nineteenth-century Denmark he would have preached the reverse of the doctrines he fought for in sixteenth-century Saxony. Did the exasperated Reformer beat him to the punch in the 1540s?

The Argument

Exhausted and disillusioned as he may have been, in this book I argue that the practical admonitions and dire threats issued in these late sermons cohere tightly with Luther's deepest theological convictions about the gospel – not just the law – and about the nature, necessity, source, means, course, and ends of evangelical holiness.

First, I argue that the mature Luther taught a robust doctrine of progressive renewal in holiness through the "gift" of the Holy Spirit. He alternately names this reality sanctification, "justification" (*Gerechtmachung*), the healing, renewal, or restoration of nature, the new creation, the firstfruits of the Spirit, deification, and so forth. But since the words Luther uses to describe the reality of this gift vary freely, it's more useful to attend to its dogmatic substance: the restoration of vitiated nature in the saints to its original perfections by the renewing operations of the Holy Spirit.[20] Hence the title of this book: *renovatio*. For Luther, this Spirit-given renewal of life in Christ is inchoate to be sure, but nonetheless real. Holiness begins in baptism and advances in fits and starts over the course of a Christian life. Perfection in holiness, or complete restoration to life with God in Christ by the Spirit, is never attained this side of the coming glory. Nonetheless, despite its imperfections *in hac vita*, renewal is real.

20 In his lecture on Gen. 4:7, Luther suggests that his ubiquitous juxtaposition of "words" and "things" is rooted in a maxim of Hilary's (*trin.* 2.5) cited frequently in Peter Lombard's *Sent.*, and he asserts that this insight fits well with a similar one by the philosopher, an allusion to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* 3.1–2 that should not be peremptorily dismissed as a "Melanchthonian" redaction. WA 42.195.3–9, LW 1.263. Cf. WA 18.728.15–16, Packer, 231, WA Tr 3.491.14–17, #3654b, 25 Dec. 1537 (LW 54.249): both Andreas Osiander, the main personality under discussion, and the sophists "sweat over the grammar and the words (*verbis*), not over the realities (*rebus*), while they ought to make the words subject to realities and not the realities to words. When I set out from the realities (*rebus*), the words (*verba*) are various." And they are!

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If I were to stop here, the presentation of Luther's theology of holiness would be incomplete to the point of obscuring it entirely. For his doctrine of renewal by the Spirit's "gift" cannot be rightly grasped apart from its intimate correlation to the "grace" which is in Jesus Christ on the one hand and the "sin" that remains in the saints on the other. When it comes to calibrating these three realities, Luther scholars (and theologians of all stripes) tend to err in opposite directions. Some so emphasize holiness – or deification – that the reality of sin in the saints is obscured, and with it the far greater reality of justification by the blood of the Lamb. Others, by exaggerating this enduring sinfulness, encourage the saints to continue in sin that grace may abound. Scripture and confession steer a middle course between these imbalances. So did Luther. In Part I, on the basis of four signal works from the 1530s and 40s, I exposit the old doctor's creedal dogmatics of sin from Adam, grace in Christ, and renewal by the Spirit's gift. This I take to be the first major contribution of the book.

Second, I contend that Luther's Reformation theology of sin, grace, and holiness is rooted in his early (mid-1510s) and sound interpretation of a handful of books that Augustine wrote in the late 410s and 20s against Julian of Eclanum. I refer to the definitively orthodox theologian whom Luther discovered in these late anti-"Pelagian" works by the device, "the 420s Augustine," in subtle but significant contrast to the earlier and by comparison relatively underdeveloped "410s Augustine" who wrote against Pelagius and Caelestius. Against the scholarly mainstream, which tends to assume the "410s Augustine" as the standard by which to assess the adequacy of Luther's interpretation, I argue that the young Luther read the old Augustine's works *contra Iulianum* quite well, and appropriated them fairly in the formation of his own dogmatics. This is the heart of my historical-theological or genetic argument; if it fails, all the blood and vigor that might otherwise pulsate through the rest of the book will be drained. For in my judgment, Luther's evangelical theology of holiness is only intelligible in light of its roots in Augustine's catholic theology of grace.

Here's the rub: in the mature and older Luther's works, for the most part these roots (as with all strong roots *in ordine naturae*) are hid beneath the surface. By contrast, in the 1510s the Augustinian roots of Luther's theology lie open to view in the form of explicit quotations from the newly produced 1506 Amerbach edition of Augustine's works (on which see Visser: 2001, 13–27). Come to think of it, if I extend this image it may prove fruitful for explaining what was going on in Luther's dogmatics, exegesis, and spiritual teaching *c.* 1514–16.

Imagine an uprooted tree transplanted from a nursery and in process of being replanted in new soil. The tree is Augustine's mature theology of sin and grace; the material nursery is the new edition of his works; the rather rich soil is composed of Luther's own spiritual life as a struggling monastic disciple of Jesus and as a fledgling pastor and teacher in the church. Brother Martin's bitter

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Anfechtungen dug a deep hole in his soul. The Psalter, Staupitz, Scripture, and Tauler – perhaps in that order – provided life-giving streams for the sapling. But the theology of the "420s Augustine" that Luther read out of Amerbach's eighth volume is the tree planted in his afflicted soul. Since the fragile plant is still being set in the soil in the 1510s, its roots are exposed: and for this reason, the 1515–16 Romans lectures are an indispensable resource for understanding not just the young, but the mature Luther's theology. For later on, when the sapling has grown up into a sturdy "Lutheran" oak, its Augustinian roots are for the most part hidden from the eye. A surprisingly great number of readers, who apparently don't know much about trees, have inferred from their inability to see any roots that Luther's Reformation theology stands all on its own. Not so: the sturdiness, strength, and vigor of the old oak lies in the depth and extent of its subterranean roots.

This spade-work is the task of Part II. Then, having confirmed the permanent impact of Luther's readings in Augustine upon his mature "Augustinian" theology of grace and holiness at the start of Part III, I attend to a handful of key developments that mark Luther's theology from 1518 on. In this panoramic account of the discontinuities-in–continuity that characterize Luther's theology over time, I show how he carries forward Augustine's central insights in a fresh, creative, and "evangelical" way. This, too, is a primarily "historical" endeavor, which assumes the argument about the mature Luther's dogmatics in Part I with an eye to making sound judgments about how the old doctor's theology draws on, departs from, and advances the positions he arrived at in the mid 1510s under the tutelage of the "420s Augustine."

In sum, I argue that mainstream Luther scholarship (and Lutheran theology) is quite wrong to think that the church's great doctor of justification downplayed, denied, derided, or just plain ignored holiness. From the first inklings of his "Augustinian turn" *c.* 1514 to his death in 1546, Luther held and taught a robust theology of renewal in holiness; from 1518–21, Luther carefully calibrated this gift of renovation in holiness to the sober reality of residual sin in the saints on the one hand and the astonishing gospel of free, sufficient, and all-conquering grace in Jesus Christ on the other. As it stands in the works that embody his most considered judgments, this deeply creedal, *iustitia Christi*-centered theology of holiness is Augustinian and *evangelisch* in equal parts. As such, it commands the admiration and regard of those catholic and evangelical theologians who read the Bible, worship, preach, and confess in the tradition of the church's great doctor of grace.

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Regarding some foes and friends

Before reading the scholarship, I was aware of the "problem" of holiness in Luther's theology mainly by hearsay. (I first learned of the *pecca fortiter* as a freshman at Wheaton College, when my coxswain used it to justify his plans for that Friday evening.) Then I read Gerhard Forde. But a quick glance at the footnotes shows the extent of Forde's dependence on Wilfried Joest's *Gesetz und Freiheit: Das Problem des tertius usus legis bei Luther und die neutestamentliche Parainese* (1951). He even copies out Joest's diagrams of the Christian oscillating, tennis-ball-like, between total sinfulness, total righteousness, and back again.[21] Through a few pointers from Michael Root and David Yeago, I read Joest, and much about modern Lutheran theology began to make sense. Though any given paragraph in Joest's book may shift effortlessly from WA 56 to WA 39/1 and back again, I attend mainly to his interpretation of a few passages in the *Disputations against the Antinomians* which set the tone for the "total simul" and its ascendancy in the interpretation of Luther's theology of holiness, or lack thereof. In the presentation of Luther's mature dogmatics, Joest is my main opponent; but the reader is advised that in challenging Joest, I'm challenging Forde too.

Regarding the Luther/Augustine problem, my main nemeses are Rudolf Hermann (1930) and Leif Grane (1975), and behind them both, Heinrich Denifle (1904–6, esp. I/2.438–519). In the introduction to Part II, I argue that Hermann's *Lutherdeutung* is a mirror image of the ferociously anti-Lutheran interpretation produced by Denifle, whose *Luther und Luthertum* began to upset neatly arranged German applecarts in 1904. Denifle argued that Luther misunderstood Augustine and wrongly appropriated the Catholic father to his own devious ends, vainly claiming *heilige Augustinus* as patron for the self-serving theology of invincible concupiscence and forensic justification which he built around the "simul" in order to excuse his need for sex. Hermann agreed about Luther's mistaken reading of Augustine, but championed the new evangelical theology which the Reformer's auspicious misunderstanding of Augustine gave rise to. Grane's *Modus loquendi*, a good book in many respects, picked up where Hermann left off. In chapters 3 and 4, I argue the reverse: Luther read Augustine – that is, the "420s Augustine" – well, and appropriated him with real insight and skill. Against Hermann and Grane's inflated assertions of evangelical novelty, and against Denifle's aspersions of uncatholic heresy, I argue for a deeply Augustinian and in this sense "catholic Luther," newly evangelical in some major respects to be sure, but substantially and permanently traditional as well.

In this vein, and as a segue toward my comrades-in-arms, it is fitting to mention Oswald Bayer. *Promissio* has stood the test of time; forty-plus years after

21 FORDE, G. (1984), 432, 435, 437; cf. KOLB, R./ARAND (2008), 123–6 – but better at 127–8.

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its publication, it remains a brilliant and richly rewarding work (Bayer: 1971). However, its argument is flawed in some key respects. True, the *promissio/fides* nexus was hugely important for the genesis of Reformation theology. But it didn't signal as clean a break from the Catholic past, especially in its Augustinian and "mystical" streams, as Bayer has contended for.

As for my friends: an essay by Yeago on renewal and the "simul" helped awaken me from my dogmatic slumbers, and brought Joest to my attention (Yeago: 2004). Similarly, Root's lecture on "The Deconstruction of Twentieth-Century Lutheranism" led me to Hermann (Root: 2008, esp. 7–8). I gladly acknowledge their work and hope this book advances insights gleaned from them to their satisfaction. In terms of the substance of Luther's teaching about sin, grace, justification, and holiness, for my money Julius Köstlin has yet to be surpassed (1897, esp. II/4). Of the innumerable articles and books in more recent Luther scholarship on pertinent dogmatic, spiritual, and philosophical themes, I've found the work of Gyllenkrok (1952), Prenter (1958),[22] Watson (1958), Schloenbach (1963), Iserloh (1969), Wicks (1992), Meilaender (1984; 1991; 1998; 2005; 2006), Peura (1990; 1994a; 1997), Wöhle (1998), Dieter (2001), Leppin (2002; 2006), Hütter (2004), Saarinen (2007; 2011), and Vainio (2008) especially useful. In regards to Luther's engagement with Augustine, Hamel (1934–5) is more a friend than a foe – though he is influenced somewhat by Hermann. Despite a few significant differences in method and interpretation, my argument for the depth of Luther's "Augustinianism" in the doctrines of sin, grace, and justification finds an ally in J.-L. Pereira (2013). As for Augustine himself, I've profited most from Wetzel (1992), Rist (1994),[23] and P.-M. Hombert (1996) – Dodaro (2004b) and Byers (2013) are also quite good – not to mention the invaluable instruction of Prof. M.-R. Barnes in his seminars at Marquette. If the argument of this book against my worthy opponents is at all compelling, it is in large part because of such learned friends as these.

And now: to business.

22 Note well that Prenter's argument in this paper marks a fundamental shift away from positions held in his earlier work (as a student of Hermann), *Spiritus Creator*.

23 RIST, J. (2014), 173–87, however, is gravely flawed because Rist's not-Augustinian "Luther" is the Luther of Denifle, Hermann, Joest, and Grane that I am arguing did not exist. For example: "While Luther agrees with Augustine that salvation is entirely God's gift, Augustine associates the coming of that gift with a simultaneous informing of the moral character … sanctification goes hand in hand with justification" (citing *sp. litt.*) By contrast: "Luther teaches that we are slaves to God and sin at the same time – *simul iustus et peccator* – because righteousness has thus far merely been imputed to us so that our justification can begin. We remain wholly sinners …" (177). Again: "When justified, we are both sinful and justified. Whereas Augustine holds that in the process of salvation we are simultaneously improved (though still sinners), Luther denies any essential improvement" (182). In fact, Rist's description of Augustine's not-"Lutheran" position in this sentence is the position of Martin Luther.

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Part I:
Luther's mature dogmatics of sin, grace & holiness (1535–44)

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1. First things: creation, fall, and *promissio* in the *Lectures on Genesis* 1–3

Werner Elert – for some, "der Lutheranissimus" of twentieth-century theologians (so Becker: 2013, 93) – characteristically begins his *Morphologie des Luthertums* with a chapter on the primal experience of God's wrath, then proceeds to an exposition of the gospel relentlessly focused on forensic justification (Elert, 1962/1931–2). In a similar vein, Bayer stresses the definition of theology that Luther supplied in his 1532 lecture on Psalm 51: "The proper subject of theology is man guilty of sin and condemned, and God the Justifier and Savior of man the sinner." Luther adds, with typical aplomb: "Whatever is asked or discussed in theology outside this subject, is error and poison."[1] Stark claims, these. Is it best to concede from the outset the marginal significance of holiness for Martin Luther's theology?

Not at all. To see why, the best place to start is the old doctor's masterpiece, the *Lectures on Genesis* (1535–45). Unlike modern Lutheranism, Luther knew that he could not begin with the wrath of God against the sinner for the simple reason that the Bible begins with the creation of mankind in the image of God, with God's glad blessing upon Adam and Eve, and with his pronouncement of their real goodness in his sight.[2] As a theology that takes its point of departure from the primal experience of God's wrath can only really terminate in the removal of that wrath through judicial acquittal, so a theology that begins with God's joy in his creation of creatures able to share his divine life cannot arrive at any real com-

1 WA 40/2.328.17–20, LW 12.311. BAYER, O. (2008), chapter 2: "The Topic of Theology: The Sinning Human Being and the Justifying God." In the *Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, two of the chapters begin with this same line from the lecture on Ps. 51: Steven Paulson's on "Luther's Doctrine of God" (187) and L'ubomír Batka's on "Luther's Teaching on Sin and Evil" (233).

2 KÖSTLIN, J. (1897) saw this point clearly: "Luther's discussions of Law and Gospel rest upon the doctrines of God, of the nature and destiny of man, of the general and original relation between the Creator and the creature, especially man, as objective premises" (217). YEAGO, D. (1993) agrees; cf. BONHOEFFER, D. (1995a[1943]), 142 f, on the concept of "the natural," which by the early 1940s (he laments) "no longer had a place in Protestant thought but was entirely abandoned to Catholic ethics."

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pletion without passing through the proximate end of pardon to the final goal of restoration to life in communion with God. Elert has no theology of holiness, because he has no theology of creation. Luther has such a theology, for as a biblical theologian the canonical drama of creation, redemption, and restoration shapes his vision decisively.[3] This is why, in his lecture on Gen. 1:26, Luther declares that the *imago dei* lost through Adam's sin is restored through the gospel.[4] It is also why, in a disputation against the radical Lutheran theology of John Agricola, Luther teaches that the Old Testament saints looked to the promised Messiah who would "restore" everything that had been lost in Adam.[5] For in the New Testament, the promised Christ is given in order that he might "restore the corrupt nature to its integrity," that the "disease" infecting Adam's nature may be "healed."[6]

But doesn't this mean that Luther himself, as theologian of creation's renewal in Christ, indulges in subject matters outside the bounds of genuine theology? One might ameliorate his famous *dictum* on the subject of theology by appeal to his penchant for exaggeration. But better to leave its force intact through a twofold explanation, for attention here will position us to grasp more generally the character of Luther's theology.

The next sentence after the rejection of anything outside the theology of sin and justification as error and poison reads as follows: "All Scripture points to this, that God commends his kindness to us and in his Son restores to righteousness and life the nature that has fallen into sin and condemnation."[7] He then explains that the "life" in question is not the mere biological existence of man as animal; rather "the issue here is the future and eternal life; the God who justifies, repairs, and makes alive; and man, who fell from righteousness and life into sin and eternal death."[8] The kindness of God doesn't stop at pardoning man's guilt through the atonement that is in Christ crucified; God restores, repairs, and gives life to the nature that fell in Adam through his incarnate and risen Son. Luther adds: "Whoever follows this aim in reading the Holy Scriptures will read holy things fruitfully."[9] Thus it is only through violence to the text that renewal is excluded from what Luther considers true theology. In fact, in his comments on the next verse of the Psalm, he goes so far as to claim that the "grace" (*gratia*) that

3 His insistence on this point is a real strength of ASENDORF, U. (1998), e. g., 11, 13, 19, 69–73.
4 WA 42.48.11, LW 1.64.
5 WA 39/1.403.28–404.2, ATD, 66.
6 WA 39/1.386.8–11, ATD, 53. Cf. GREGORY, B. (2012), 207, who wrongly – but tellingly – asserts that for the Reformers, "[t]here was no positive remnant of the *imago Dei* in the human will, no 'there' onto which God's grace could be grafted, but only a bottomless cauldron gushing forth sin."
7 WA 40/2.328.20–2, LW 12.311.
8 WA 40/2.328.26–8, LW 12.311.
9 WA 40/2.328.28–9, LW 12.311.

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ISBN Print: 9783525593776 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647593777

brings peace with God through Christ and the "conferring (*donatio*) of the Holy Spirit with his gifts (*donis*)" together comprise "the two parts of justification."[10] Here is the creedal dogmatics of grace and gift, of reconciliation with God in Christ and renewal by the Spirit, that Luther considers vital to reading the holy things of Scripture fruitfully.

In the second place, we can strengthen Bayer's hand by incorporating his emphasis on man the sinner and the justifying God within this overarching theology of grace and gift, of creation redeemed and restored. Keep in mind that Luther is lecturing on Ps. 51: David's plea for mercy after a grievous fall. This is a pastoral setting, and Luther the pastor (*Seelsorger*) rightly aims to bring consolation to the penitent, the bruised reed and faintly burning wick of Isa. 42:3.[11] In this specific situation, when the pastor discerns that the sinner's heart is broken and therefore pronounces the gospel of absolution, the proper subject of true theology *is* the reality of sin and the yet greater reality of grace and righteousness in Christ. But as this very lecture shows, for Luther – if not for some Lutherans – the absolution isn't the only word the pastor-theologian speaks. Judgment and justification, vital as they are, are not the only truths he is called to teach in the church of the Holy Trinity.

The 1535 lectures on Gen. 1–3 are uniquely suited to demonstrate this claim, for the first pages of Scripture themselves summon Luther as exegete to present the whole scope of the Holy Trinity's works in creation, redemption, and restoration. The bulk of this book explores how God brings about the renewal of the redeemed into real holiness of life through the gospel. But to grasp this evangelical restoration in the fullness with which Luther presents it, we must first attend to what Adam and Eve lost by their rebellion. In this chapter, then, I set forth Luther's teaching regarding (1) the "natural" holiness, glory, and joy of the image-bearers in Eden, as God first gave it to them to enjoy; (2) the trial of their love at the Tree; (3) their temptation and fall; (4) their undoing by sin and death and, in them, the undoing of us all; (5) but best of all, their redemption through the Seed promised to Eve, Jesus Christ the Serpent Crusher, who restores all they forfeited through his forgiving "grace" and life-giving "gift."

10 WA 40/2.357.35–7, 358.19–26, 357.35, LW 12.331.

11 On Luther as pastor, see WENGERT, T. (2009), 1: "Martin Luther was, more than anything else, pastor and preacher for his Wittenberg flock." This applies far beyond specifically "pastoral" acts like preaching in the parish or *Seelsorge*, 13: "No matter what else Luther was doing, he was always at the same time Wittenberg's pastor." Cf. POSSET, F. (2011), 9: "The historical Luther is the pastoral Luther." ASENDORF (1998), 79, notes "the thoroughly *seelsorgerlichen* character" of the *Lectures on Genesis* in particular.

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ISBN Print: 9783525593776 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647593777