

## The new book, *The Essential Forde*, is pseudo-Forde (7)

**Forde:** “Precisely the proper distinction between law and gospel **limits and humanizes the law.**”<sup>1</sup>

See Forde below on **1) Christian freedom**. It is down-to-earth freedom. It is freedom from the tyranny of an eternal moral order, freedom from self-oriented piety, freedom to be human, freedom to understand law as human and changeable, and freedom to wait and hope for the kingdom to come.

See Forde below on **2) Reason**. Does faith abolish the law? By no means; it establishes the law and reason as God’s good gifts through which he rules his left-hand kingdom. Christians live **under** the law, and reason is the means through which the Lord fosters justice, as Forde says.

In contrast, Forde’s *Lutheran Quarterly* editors Christians are free from “food laws” but not the moral law. In contrast, Paul, Luther, and Forde emphasize Christ is the end of the whole law. This is what is meant by saying that properly distinguishing law and gospel **limits and humanizes the law**.

Watching prepositions can help here: Whereas for Forde, Christians live **under** the law, for his editors, Christians live **above** the law, **outside** the law, and **beyond** the law. In their view the law is neither limited nor humanized by the gospel.

Back to Forde: “Precisely the proper distinction between law and gospel **limits and humanizes the law.**”

1. FREEDOM	
Forde’s LQ editors	Forde
<p>“<b>True freedom</b>, then, is not to build a wall that evil cannot breach, as the Pharisees gamely attempted, but it is ‘not to worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink’ (Matt 6:31)—which is <b>a new life lived entirely outside the law in any way</b>. Of, course the Pharisees could only take this as a frontal attack on all things good, and so the gospel itself is felt to be a curse. But for those who receive a preacher, there really is a new life lived <b>freely</b>—without the least protection <b>afforded by food laws</b> and with a <b>heart that no longer listens to its own voice.</b>”<sup>2</sup></p> <p>[What is unclear in this quote is whether or not Christ is the end of the moral law as well as the ritual or ceremonial law. In the next quote Christ ends the ceremonial law, but not the moral law.]</p>	<p>“Both the early and late Luther attacked the idea that Christ is the <b>end of the ritual law but not the whole law</b>. In both the early (1519) and later (1531-36) Galatians lectures he pounded away on this issue whenever he got a chance.<sup>13</sup> ...The presupposition for <b>true freedom</b>, for Luther, is that <b>Christ is the end of the law in its entirety.</b>”<sup>9</sup></p> <p>[The “whole law” here includes the moral law. See the next quote below.]</p> <p>“Theologically, both before and after the Reformation, the most common move toward domesticating freedom has been the attempt to qualify the Pauline claim that Christ is the end of the law to those of faith. ‘Reason,’ as Luther would put it, simply cannot entertain such an</p>

<sup>1</sup> Gerhard O. Forde, “Forensic Justification and the Law in Lutheran Theology,” *Justification by Faith. Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII*. Eds. H. George Anderson, T. Austin Murphy, and Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985) 300-301. Bolding added for emphasis here and below. Italics are in the original texts.

<sup>2</sup> Steven D. Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God. Hiddenness, Evil, and Predestination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018) 1:198.

<sup>9</sup> Forde, “Called to Freedom,” *The Preached Word, Gerhard O. Forde. Proclamation in Word and Sacrament*. Eds. Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 260. Internal footnote 13: For the 1519 Commentary see LW 27: 188, 223, 230, 248, 256-57, 264-65, 287, 358; For the 1521-36 Commentary, see LW 26:122, 130, 156-57, 180, 181, 202, 203, 330, 333, 446-47; LW 27:139, 161.

1. FREEDOM	
Forde's LQ editors	Forde
<p>"Leviticus tells you to sacrifice a goat. So there. Why don't you sacrifice a goat? A fanatic cannot make the proper distinction between the law and the gospel and to identify where the law applies and where it comes to an end. A fanatic cannot make the distinction. Now Lutherans and Lutheran theology should know better. It should know there is a distinction between the law and the gospel and as Paul says very clearly it is not the law but faith which makes one righteous. We can go right to Romans 3:28. Right at the end of the chapter. I think it's verse 33 where he says: What then shall we say? Does this remove the law altogether? No, it establishes the law. It puts the law in its proper place. But the proper place for the law is not the means by which you are made righteous. This is a fanatic opinion. A fanatic opinion thinks that its judgment on homosexuality is going to be a righteous one that will make them righteous. And it will actually impart righteousness to another human being apart from the forgiveness of sins entirely. This is the way fanaticism operates, and it can't make a distinction between the law and the gospel any longer. <b>Anybody who spends any time discussing the distinction between law and gospel knows there is a distinction now between the law of the Decalogue, the law of the Ten Commandments that we're talking about here, and the so-called ceremonial law that identifies how it is that you do a sacrifice of a goat.</b> This is why we teach the Ten Commandments at the beginning of the Small Catechism. We don't teach the sacrifice of a goat. But you'll find both of these in the Old Testament. You have to make the proper distinction. Of course the issue of sexuality is an issue now of the Decalogue and the proper establishment of the law and the way we teach and preach that law."<sup>3</sup></p>	<p>idea, the conviction that in Christ the law comes to an end, that law is over and freedom begins. As we have seen, freedom as usually conceived needs law as the mediator of possibility. What shall we do if there is no law to tell us what to do? But is Paul then wrong in his claim? Theologians as usual, however, have found a way to have their cake and eat it, too. <b>They made a distinction in the content of the law – something Paul never did – between ceremonial or ritual laws on the one hand and moral law on the other. Then they proceeded to say that Christ was the end of ceremonial law but not the moral law.</b> Christ ended the necessity, that is, for sacrifice, circumcision, food and ritual regulations, etc., but not the demands of moral law (e.g., the Decalogue). Christ died, it seems, to save us from the liturgiologists! One might grant, of course, that this is no small accomplishment, but the price does seem a bit high!"<sup>10</sup></p> <p><b>"First</b> of all, if justification proceeds by way of negation, then the judgment is indeed universal and <b>all causes are relativized</b>. This flows from the <b>very nature of the gospel</b> and cannot be compromised....<b>Secondly</b>, for Luther's theology, it seems to me that the only way from such universal negation back to the concrete is <b>the way of freedom</b>....The Kingdom of God indeed comes by God's power alone, and thus one is turned back into the world for the time being to serve the neighbor....If we are to remain true to the gospel, we must realize that <b>there are no levers here</b>. If the movement is not one of <b>freedom</b>, all is lost. Moralists, social reformers, ideologues, revolutionaries, and even just plain zealous religious people may no doubt find this frustrating and maddening, but it is of the <b>very essence</b> of the matter. Whenever a cause is exempted from the negation, so as to exert a pressure which destroys this freedom, we come to a serious parting of the ways. <b>Thirdly</b>, I believe it can be argued that <b>justification by faith alone</b></p>

<sup>3</sup> Paulson at a Lutheran CORE meeting, Roseville Lutheran Church (11/18/2010). Transcript of the CD at 25:52.

<sup>10</sup> Forde, "Called to Freedom," *The Preached God*, 259.

1. FREEDOM	
Forde's LQ editors	Forde
<p>"<b>Christian freedom</b> comes from God's necessity."<sup>4</sup></p> <p>"It complicates things for us on earth, especially those of us who are <b>trying hard (sometimes)</b> to live according to <b>God's divine plan as revealed in the law.</b>"<sup>5</sup></p> <p>"But for Luther, the difference between being an ass ridden by Satan or Christ is between <b>two freedoms</b>—one a peasant freedom for the law alone, and the other by Christ's forgiveness. In that case, one will either be a servile ass or a royal ass—one with <b>the law in front of it waiting to be done</b>; the other with <b>the law behind it that is already done.</b>"<sup>6</sup></p> <p>"The reason Paul can be trusted in his judgment about marriage in 1 Corinthians 7 is because of the Lord's mercy—which is a matter of necessary, infallible, truthful speaking apart from the law—instead of his own truthfulness as measured by the law. Therefore, Paul's opinion on marriage is not a command, but the fruit of faith. Here the Christian is <b>operating above the law, freely</b>, on the basis of God's absolute necessity – which is the predestination of mercy already given to Paul."<sup>7</sup></p> <p>"Yet for Luther, at least, freedom was the highest goal, and so his teaching made of freedom what Forde calls "an offensive' doctrine. It is untamed. It identifies a historical limit to the law in Christ himself (and alone)....We will one day be free. But this is not only waiting for what will come, it is a hope based in a belief in creation right now. That is, humans are precisely created for the kind of</p>	<p>itself and <b>the freedom it creates</b>, drives to utter concreteness in praxis. Luther's view of the concrete vocation of the Christian proposes just such concreteness. If the negation is complete, one is in the first instance <b>set free from the tyranny of all universalisms and absolutisms</b> and placed back in time to become <b>a truly historical being</b>, to wait and hope for the coming of the promised Kingdom."<sup>11</sup></p> <p>"First of all, Luther's understanding of <b>freedom</b> through the gospel of Jesus Christ in fact gives us an entirely new world, the world of the neighbor. It is a sheer gift. It is what Luther called the world of the 'outer man.' <b>The world of the neighbor, the 'outer world' or the left-hand rule of God</b>, is never just completely 'there' like the physical, empirical world. It is a world given back to faith....For every possibility that one might turn inward on one's own projects is excluded by the fact that Christ is the end of the law. All the space in the 'inner world,' the conscience, is occupied by Christ. <b>There is no room for a self that wants to feed only on its own self.</b> One is turned inside out. The law cannot get in there anymore. It can only be turned back to the world where it belongs, to be used to do what it is supposed to: take care of people and not tyrannize them."<sup>12</sup></p>

<sup>4</sup> Paulson, *Luther's Outlaw God*, 1:174.

<sup>5</sup> Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson, "Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim," *The Preached God*, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Paulson, *Luther's Outlaw God*, 1:189.

<sup>7</sup> Paulson, *Luther's Outlaw God. Hidden in the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019) 2:367.

<sup>11</sup> Forde, "The Viability of Luther Today: A North American Perspective," *Word & World* 7:1 (1987) 29.

<sup>12</sup> Forde, "Called to Freedom," *The Preached God*, 367-68.

1. FREEDOM	
Forde's LQ editors	Forde
freedom that <b>lives outside the law</b> and is utterly free of sin." <sup>8</sup>	

2. REASON	
Forde's LQ editors	Forde
<p>[Because of the editors' presupposition that the Christian has access to eternal law in the Bible and nature, "reason" has only a minor role in Christian life. Moral questions are solved by "God's law."]</p> <p>"Reason in humans is supposed to elevate them above animals by <b>making their desires into something divine</b>—higher and spiritual—rather than merely instinctual and lowly."<sup>13</sup></p> <p>"Rather the Father wanted to take away the sins of sinners and would not be stopped by anyone or anything, including his own, <b>most holy law</b>."<sup>14</sup></p> <p>"But at this new thing, or in this new kingdom, the law had played itself out. The law had nothing more to say or do. It was now, eternally, in a state of quiescence—quiet, dumb....The law still has much to say to the old Adam or Eve, including the baptized Christian who is <b>not yet perfectly fulfilling the law</b> as Christ promised we would—that is, to the extent that he or she is not a Christian."<sup>15</sup></p>	<p>"Do we then by this faith abolish the law? Does justification by faith alone spell the end to the human quest for justice? <b>By no means! We establish the law!</b> But if justification proceeds by way of negation it demands a <i>distinction</i> for the time being between what can be seen as <b>God's two ways</b> of fostering justice: <b>the way of the law and the way of the gospel</b>....First, the distinction is necessary because of the nature of the gospel as unconditional gift and freedom. If there can be no direct and positive synthesis between justification and justice, then there must be a <b>distinction</b>. Any view which holds to the eschatological nature of the Christian faith will have to make some such <b>distinction</b>....Christ is indeed the end of the law to those who have faith, but the end of the law is <b>not as such its abolishment, but precisely at the same time its establishment</b>. Where there is no end to the law it becomes an insatiable tyrant. We must take steps to curtail it, to water it down, to make it manageable by casuistry and what not. Its proper use is something of a riddle. Is it a way of salvation, an absolute standard for meting out 'justice,' a useful guide? Can it be changed, contextualized, revised? It is not established. As with all tyrants we resent it and plot its demise. Where the law has its end in Christ for faith, however, <b>the law is established. The believer returns to the world under the law</b> to serve the neighbor....Law is to be used for political purposes, i.e., for taking care of people here on earth in as good, loving, and just manner as can be managed. <b>Reason, i.e., critical investigation</b></p>

<sup>8</sup> Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson, "Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim," *The Preached God*, 28.

<sup>13</sup> Paulson, *Luther's Outlaw God*, 2:196.

<sup>14</sup> Paulson, "Forde Lives!" *The Essential Forde*. Gerhard O. Forde. *Distinguishing Law and Gospel*, Eds. Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019) 30.

<sup>15</sup> Paulson, "Forde Lives!" *The Essential Forde*. Gerhard O. Forde. *Distinguishing Law and Gospel*, 31.

2. REASON	
Forde's LQ editors	Forde
	<p>using the best available wisdom and analysis of the concrete human situation in given instances, <b>is to be the arbiter in the political use of the law.</b>"<sup>16</sup></p> <p>"The line between this world and the next is drawn by God's grace. This establishes <b>the world as a place under the law in which man can live, work, and hope.</b> It should establish a sphere in which law can be seen as a good rather than a bad thing....Hope in the world to come creates the faith and patience to live in this world; it gives this world back to us by relieving us of the burden of our restless quests. Freedom from the world makes us <b>free for it</b>....This is what it means to say that whereas the kingdom to come is a kingdom of grace <b>the kingdom of this world is a kingdom of law....Law belongs to earth, not to heaven. It is natural, not supernatural</b>....That is why Luther did not speak of law as something static and unchangeable. Laws will and must change in their form as the times demand. Luther, for instance, refused to grant eternal status even to the laws of Moses. They are strictly 'natural,' he said, not unlike the common law of any nation. Men on this earth simply don't have access to eternal laws. But men do have <b>the gift of reason and the accumulated wisdom of the ages as well as the Bible. Here is the task for man's reason and created gifts.</b> Once cured of religious and mythological ambitions, they can be put to work as they ought: taking care of men. For in the final analysis, all man's vocations are to be enlisted in the battle against the devil."<sup>17</sup></p> <p>"The eschatological vision makes it clear that <b>the secular is our sacred task.</b> It tears the mask from our pretensions and <b>bids us become human beings.</b> That, I think, is the real significance of Luther's resistance to the Peasant's Revolt, whatever we may think of his final action. He saw quite clearly that if one is to apply this principle, then there could be <b>absolutely no exceptions.</b></p>

<sup>16</sup> Forde, "The Viability of Luther Today: A North American Perspective," *Word & World*, 26-27.

<sup>17</sup> Forde, *Where God Meets Man* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972) 110-11. Emphasis added.

2. REASON	
Forde's <i>LQ</i> editors	Forde
	<p>Not even those who undertake revolutions for the sake of <b>so-called 'Christian principles'</b> can be excepted. Nobody, Prince, Peasant, Preacher, President or what have you, carries out a revolution or a political program in the name of Christ. That is so first of all because <b>Luther categorically refused to allow Christ to become a club with which to beat anyone (a 'New Law' as he called it)</b>, and secondly because revolutions and political programs can be carried through only in the name of humanity without appeal to either myth or religion. Luther means that quite radically. <b>You don't need Christ, or even the Bible, necessarily, to tell you what to do in social matters. You have reason, use it!"</b><sup>18</sup></p>

---

<sup>18</sup> Forde, "The Revolt and the Wedding: An Essay on Social Ethics in the Perspective of Luther's Theology," in *The Reformation and the Revolution* (Sioux Falls, South Dakota: Augustana College Press, 1970) 85-86.