

Steven Paulson contradicts Gerhard Forde – 3

This paper juxtaposes excerpts from Steven Paulson and Gerhard Forde on the issues below, showing the contradictions between their theologies. These contradictions are important because, as Forde wrote (see p. 3), the gospel itself is at stake in the battle over the proper use of scripture.

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The problem

In 1993 Paulson wrote (in a footnote) that his theology aims to extend Forde's theology:

⁸This definition of dogma and the argument for **a new complex of ideas seeks to extend Gerhard O. Forde's thesis that theology is for proclamation** in his book of the same title: *Theology is for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).¹

That was 1993. In 1998 Paulson became Forde's successor at Luther Seminary. A student and friend of Forde's, he also became the main editor of Forde's papers.² In writing and speaking Paulson consistently has high praise for Forde. All things considered, it seems logical to conclude that Forde and Paulson are in basic theological agreement. Aren't they?

That's the problem. In spite of the many ties between them, there are contradictions between their theologies. Forde was **a post-liberal Lutheran**.³ Paulson praises **inerrancy**.⁴ To be sure, one can find sentences in Forde that are biblicistic, but such sentences must be seen in light of his defining stance: post-liberal Lutheranism, just as one may find sentences in Paulson that may seem like Forde, but such sentences must be seen in light of his defining stance on the inerrancy of scripture.⁵

¹ Steven D. Paulson, "From Scripture to Dogmatics," *Lutheran Quarterly* VII:2 (1993):

"When one begins with the assertion that the church's dogma and God's dogma are the same at the crucial points which are demanded by the church's work of proclamation (not interpretation), then a different complex of ideas arises over those assumed by the old process of moving from Scripture to dogma through interpretation: **instead of interpretation of Scripture there is proclamation**, for intersubjective dialog there is the preaching office, and the truth reached is preliminary only for sight not for faith. Dogmatics is not the test of provisional church dogmas which are distinguished from God's own, but is the employment of **God's own dogma** for the purpose of true proclamation.⁸

⁸This definition of dogma and the argument for **a new complex of ideas seeks to extend Gerhard O. Forde's thesis that theology is for proclamation** in his book of the same title: *Theology is for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

Its truth is pragmatic, that is, truth is assured when dogma is used in such a way that it forces or effects proclamation which drives to Christ." (164-65, footnote 169). Bolding added here and below for emphasis.

² See "*The Essential Forde* is Pseudo Forde, 1-9" at this website (crossalone.us) under "Forde."

³ Forde: "The '**post-liberal Lutheran**' is, of course, something of a shadowy, if not menacing, figure on the contemporary scene, perhaps not yet clearly defined, often a puzzle to both friend and foe, usually mistaken simply for **a hard-line conservative confessionalist or orthodoxist. But that is seriously to misread the situation.** It is a post-Enlightenment, post-liberal position. A post-liberal Lutheran is one who has been through the options spawned since the Reformation and realizes that they have all been used up. **Least of all does infallibilism or reactionary conservatism of any sort provide an answer.**" in "The Catholic Impasse," *Promoting Unity. Themes in Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue*. Eds. H. George Anderson and James R. Crumley Jr. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989) 67-77; here 72. Emphasis added here and below; italics in originals.

⁴ Paulson: "...[T]he ELCA lost track of the original source of Scripture, which is the **inerrancy in the letters** that come through an **inerrant Holy Spirit.**" "Scripture, Enthusiasm, and the ELCA," *LOGIA* XXII:1 (2013) 53.

⁵ For example, Forde writes: "He [Luther] believed ... **the Bible is God's Word**, not an anthology of human opinion about God" ("Luther and the *Usus Pauli*," *dialog* 32 [1993] 276), but this does not mean Forde believed Luther was an inerrantist. Another example: Paulson seems like Forde when he writes: "the clear and certain gospel, who is Jesus Christ *himself* and *alone*" ("Lutheran Assertions Regarding Scripture," *Lutheran Quarterly* XVII:4 [2003] 383), but this assertion does not mean that Paulson rejects **inerrancy as a necessary prior miracle.**

In his own articles and books Paulson includes occasional footnotes to Forde but most are merely honorific, not substantive. When one compares Forde and Paulson on specific issues, the conflicts and contradictions become more apparent. Consider the following:

For Forde the clarity of scripture is the proclamation of Christ and only this.
For Paulson the clarity of scripture is that scripture is plain, clear, perspicuous.⁶

For Forde the gospel limits and humanizes the law.
For Paulson biblical law is God's eternal plan.⁷

For Forde both the moral and ceremonial law end in Christ.
For Paulson, the ceremonial law ends in Christ, but not the moral law.⁸

For Forde the distinction between law and gospel necessarily leads to the two kingdoms.
For Paulson God's left-hand kingdom is vague, indeterminate.⁹

For Forde reason is the arbiter for the first use of law in God's left-hand kingdom.
For Paulson only the Bible, not reason, has a positive role in Christian life.¹⁰

The contradictions between Paulson and Forde are important for a proper understanding of Forde's theology and the direction he pointed for Lutherans for the twentieth-first century. He did not call for a return to inerrancy or even conservative biblicism. Most importantly, as Forde himself wrote, the gospel itself is at stake in the battle over the proper use of scripture:

"We are fighting for **the restoration of the gospel**. It must be made absolutely clear here that it is *not* dedication to historical-critical research, it is *not* dedication to science or any other human endeavor which decides the matter. It is purely and simply dedication to the gospel....It is not possible to hold both these methods [inerrancy vs law/gospel] today, **or to compromise between them without compromising and hence distorting the gospel**....I have been around colleges and universities now long enough to know how strong this faith [based on the inerrancy of scripture] is in the majority of cases. Usually it simply withers and dies, for when a child has drummed into him over and over again that if it can be shown that there are errors in scripture then his faith is groundless, he is doomed. When we allow someone to continue in this assumption, we are in fact only pushing him out on a limb and inviting someone to saw it off. By this method we produce nervous and timid Christians who can maintain their faith only by cutting themselves off from the world. As far as I can see, it is absolutely imperative that we operate today with **a method which enables us to face the world and to enter into a meaningful conversation with it**. In this, it seems to me, **the law-gospel method** offers much more fruitful possibilities without sacrificing any of the essentials of the faith."¹¹

⁶ See Contents on page 1 above, numbers 2, 7.

⁷ See Contents on page 1 above, numbers 14, 22.

⁸ See Contents on page 1 above, numbers 14, 15, 16, 17, 22.

⁹ See Contents on page 1 above, numbers 19, 21, 20.

¹⁰ See Contents on page 1 above, numbers 19, 20.

¹¹ Gerhard O. Forde, "Law and Gospel as the Methodological Principle of Theology," *Theological Perspectives: A Discussion of Contemporary Issues in Theology by Members of the Religion Department at Luther College* (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1964) 68.

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Paulson: Inerrant Book	Forde: Witness to Christ
<p>“...[T]he ELCA lost track of the original source of Scripture, which is the inerrancy in the letters that come through an inerrant Holy Spirit.”¹² [Is Paulson supporting inerrancy in order to win a hearing from a conservative audience? Or is he, in 2013, no longer in Forde’s shadow, finally free to voice his own stance on the authority of the Bible and publish it in <i>Logia</i>?]</p> <p>“People expecting such religious arguments will mainly see <i>nothing</i> in our Confessions about Scripture’s authority. As the <i>Large Catechism</i> (third commandment) says, this Word of God is the only holy relic we actually have in life.... Scripture is alone its own and final authority—not idle or dead, but effective and living. But how is it that a writing has such divine, original and final power?”¹³ [The phrase, “this Word of God is the one holy relic we actually have” is equated with the Bible. The term “holy relic” functions as a code word for inerrancy. If not, how is it different from inerrancy?]</p> <p>“The written word of Scripture is not obscure—as Erasmus had hoped it would be, full of possible interpretations over which one can exercise free choices. Instead, it is perspicuous—clear, plain, obvious, unmistakable—thus not hidden but revealed....It is not Scripture itself that is both hidden and revealed. In God there are many things hidden—as Scripture (and experience) says plainly, such as ‘Of that day no one knows but the Father’ (Mark 13:32). But Scripture itself is not God hidden in majesty; it is God revealed—plainly.”¹⁴ [There is no “clear,” “simple,” “plain,” understanding of historical materials, including scripture. To claim or even infer such is a trick of the Evil One. Thus it is a</p>	<p>“This is the source of what we might call the inner and outer aspects of Lutheranism’s crisis. The attempt to combine two incompatible views means that internally it has always had to battle its fundamental scepticism, its uncertainty about the basis for its faith. So in its practice it has resorted mostly to a dogmatic absolutism largely dependent on a view of scriptural inerrancy, which usually brought with it disguised moral absolutisms of various sorts as well.”²²</p> <p>“What are some of its [the verbal inspiration method] advantages and disadvantages? First of all, it has the obvious advantage of being exceedingly simply [<i>sic</i>] and readily understandable. It follows the lines of a simple logical syllogism: The Word of God is true, scripture is the Word of God, therefore scripture is true. It is the easiest and most convenient doctrine in the world with which to operate.”²³</p> <p>“[W]ith rare exceptions infallibility language is used positively only in a gospel context. It is used to assert that the promises of God in his Word are trustworthy and that they apply to the hearers of that Word....The question which naturally arises at this point is: What is the Word of God to which this kind of infallibility is ascribed? A formal legalistic biblicism is clearly not what Luther and early Lutherans had in mind. In the controversy with the peasants especially, and with other sectarians of the times as well, such biblicism was encountered and rejected. ‘Luther’s ultimate authority and standard was not the book of the Bible and the canon as such but that scripture which interpreted itself and also criticized itself from its own center, from Christ and from the</p>

¹² Paulson, “Scripture, Enthusiasm, and the ELCA,” *LOGIA* XXII:1 (2013) 53.
¹³ Paulson, “Lutheran Assertions Regarding Scripture,” *Lutheran Quarterly* VXII:4 (2003) 373-74.
¹⁴ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God. Hiddenness, Evil, and Predestination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018) 1:97-98.
²² Forde, “Radical Lutheranism,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 11:1 (Spring, 1987) 12-13.
²³ Forde, “Law and Gospel as the Methodological Principle of Theology,” *Theological Perspectives*, 55.

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Paulson: Inerrant Book	Forde: Witness to Christ
<p>kind of self-deception to think that only other people use hermeneutics, but we do not.]</p> <p>“<i>Sola scriptura</i> is precisely faith’s audacity in asserting that God has established a preaching office whose true proclamation assumes the authority of God’s own dogma which is sufficient for the task at hand and without error for faith.”¹⁵ [This amounts to saying that we Lutherans have something that is not hermeneutics; we have “God’s own dogma,” another code phrase for inerrancy.]</p> <p>“So Scripture is not perforated with God’s hiddenness and dark obscurity; it is clear from beginning to end—though God retains his hiddenness apart from Scripture.”¹⁶</p> <p>“Certainty does not rest on feeling certain. Certainty rests on the external word that has been uttered by a preacher. By ‘external word’ Luther means the text of Scripture, along with its miraculous bestowal or mediation from one person to another via the office of ministry. That office is the outward office of the Word that utters the two words of God in perfect clarity: first the Law that tells us exactly what to do and judges us; and then the gospel that tells us precisely what Christ thinks of us—apart from the law.”¹⁷ [By “external word” Luther meant the word that comes from outside of us, the preached word. Paulson’s comment shows he understands “clarity” as a transparency which</p>	<p>radically understood gospel.²⁷ For Luther, the authority of Scripture was Christ-centered and therefore gospel-centered. Scripture bears testimony to all the articles about Christ and is on that account to be so highly valued.²⁸ One who does not find Christ in the Scriptures engages in superfluous reading, even if he or she reads it carefully.²⁹ One should ‘refer the Bible to Christ...nothing but Christ should be proclaimed.’³⁰ Luther can even go so far as to say: ‘If adversaries use scripture against Christ, then we put Christ against the scriptures.’³¹ The Word of God therefore is ultimately Christ and the proclamation of the gospel.”²⁴</p> <p>“Paul and Matthew are at irreconcilable odds.”²⁵</p> <p>“On the ‘right,’ conservatives and reactionaries insist that we are safe only if everything is, so to speak, set in stone. We are protected from the erosions of time only by an inerrant scripture, infallible secondary discourse.”²⁶</p> <p>“The surrender of biblical inerrancy to various versions of “truth as encounter” and other existentialist ploys seemed to lack the bite of the older views of biblical authority. Perhaps it was that something of the offense was gone. Yet there was no way back. Older views of biblical inerrancy were not an offense, they were just intellectually offensive.”²⁷</p> <p>“The gospels had to be written to tell the truth about Jesus in the light of the cross and the</p>

¹⁵ Paulson, “From Scripture to Dogmatics,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 165.

¹⁶ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:100.

¹⁷ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019) 2:140.

²⁴ Forde, “Infallibility Language and the Early Lutheran Tradition,” *Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church. Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VI*. Eds. Paul C. Empie, T. Austin Murphy, and Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978) 120-37, here 129. Footnotes in the text as follows (Fn): Fn 27: P. Althaus, *Theology*, 336; Fn 28: WA 32:56, 21-27 *Sermons*, 1530; Fn 29: WA 51:4, 8. *Sermons* 1545; Fn 30: WA 16:113, 5-9. *Sermons on Exodus*. 1524-1527; Fn 31: WA 39/1:47, 19-20; LW 34:112. *Theses on Faith and Law*, 1535.

²⁵ Forde, “Justification and the World,” *Christian Dogmatics*. Eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 2:447.

²⁶ Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990) 85.

²⁷ Forde, “The One Acted Upon,” *dialog* 36:1 (Winter 1997) 57-58.

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<p style="color: red;">Bible texts allegedly have. Also evident is his view (“the two words of God in perfect clarity”) that Biblical law is divine, revealed, and clear.]</p> <p>Commenting on Luther’s question: “Take Christ out of the Scriptures and what will you find left in them?” (LW 33:25), Paulson writes: “If you take Christ out of Scripture and create a world of possibility around your free will, there is nothing left of the book.”¹⁸ [Take Christ out of scripture and what is left? A great deal of law, but, as Forde writes: “The work of theology is not for making inferences from the law, but for a proclamation that is all about Christ.”¹⁹ See also Oberman in the adjoining column.]</p> <p>“The promises of Scripture are neither an unspoken idea in God’s hidden mind nor something that originates in one’s own inner hopes. They are made in the form of Scripture’s written word. That text is none other than God going public in the most apparent and unmistakable way. The written word of Scripture is not obscure—as Erasmus had hoped it would be, full of possible interpretations over which one can exercise free choices. Instead, it is perspicuous—clear, plain, obvious, unmistakable—thus not hidden but revealed. [For Paulson God’s promises are true because of the prior miracle of the written word. What then did the church do for its first three hundred years before the canon was fixed?]</p> <p>“The ‘letter’ of scripture does not primarily refer to a ‘spiritual’ meaning behind the text but is an inseparable embodiment of spiritual activity that remakes the human anew – calls forth trust</p>	<p>resurrection. They had to be written to preserve the delicate dialectic between continuity and discontinuity. We may indeed argue as to the relative success each of the Gospels achieves in this sensitive enterprise, but it is essential for proclamation today to understand this if one is going to preach significantly on the Gospels. On the one hand, the life and teachings are of no significance apart from the death and resurrection. Indeed, they had to be transformed in the light of the cross and resurrection. This fact is usually the most difficult, especially for the literalists among us. We must reckon with the fact that the words and teachings of the earthly Jesus in all probability could not have been handed on as he gave them even if those very words had been preserved. The death and resurrection had intervened and it would be untrue to what God was doing to hand on anything about Jesus apart from that fact.”²⁸</p> <p>Luther: “Take Christ out of the Scriptures and what will you find left in them?”²⁹</p> <p>Heiko Oberman: “Luther started from a different and, in fact, contradictory principle, which was to be ignored in the Protestant longing for a ‘paper pope’: ‘God and the Scriptures are two different things, as different as Creator and creature’ [LW 33:25]. This historically innovative principle forms the surprising basis of his response to Erasmus, in which we can also find a new and crucial point of departure for present-day theology. It is this principle that distinguishes Luther from the biblicism of both his own and later eras.”³⁰</p>

¹⁸ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:98.

¹⁹ Forde, “Postscript to the Captivation of the Will,” *Lutheran Quarterly* XIX:1 (2005) 78. Gerhard Forde, *The Captivation of the Will. Luther vs. Erasmus on Freedom and Bondage*. Ed. Steven Paulson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 79. Forde, “Luther and Erasmus,” *The Essential Forde*, 124.

²⁸ Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation*, 84-85.

²⁹ LW 33:26.

³⁰ Heiko Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982) 221.

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<p>in God.”²⁰ [If the “letter” of scripture is “an inseparable embodiment of spiritual activity,” then the Holy Spirit is encapsulated in the text. This is a euphemism for inerrancy.]</p> <p>“[T]he Word who is Jesus Christ, who became incarnate to dwell among us, is not some <i>abstract</i> word above the concrete, specific, written words of Scripture.”²¹ [Here the written words of scripture are identical to Christ the Word. This is another way to convey inerrancy without using the term inerrancy.]</p>	<p>Oberman: “<i>The Bondage of the Will</i> of year 1525 is directed against the most important representatives of the Renaissance north of the Alps—but not only against them and their followers then and now. It is aimed equally at the fundamentalists, who have taken up the cause of the Reformation and promoted it under the motto of <i>sola scriptura.</i>”³¹</p> <p>Joseph Burgess: “He [Jesus] is ‘the way, the truth, and the life’ (John 14:6) Thus the ‘center,’ the truth, is a historical person of a particular time and place. No information about him, even within the New Testament, is in itself the ‘center,’ for he is not the equivalent of information about him. No ideas or combinations of ideas about him, even within the New Testament, determine who he is, for he is the ‘truth’ who determines what all other truth is.”³²</p> <p>“Recapturing the distinction and proper correlation between primary and secondary discourse, and with it, the idea of a systematic theology that is for proclamation promises help not only in ecumenical conversation but also in the church’s conversation with the contemporary world. The defensive strategy of theology in the modern world has resulted not in saving but rather in eroding the faith. The conservative and reactionary right has correctly seen that. But its attempt to avert erosion by insistence on setting the secondary discourse in stone is only postponement of eventual disaster. It is time to take a different tack. What the church has to offer the modern world is not</p>

²⁰ Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 6-7.

²¹ Paulson, “Scripture, Enthusiasm, and the ELCA,” *Logia*, 53.

³¹ Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, 225.

³² Joseph A. Burgess, “Confessional *Propria* in Relation to New Testament Texts,” *Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics*. Eds John Reumann, Samuel H. Nafzger, and Harold H. Ditmanson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979) 256.

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	<p>ancient history but the present tense unconditional proclamation.³³</p> <p>“For Luther the gospel was something so special that in the final analysis it could not really be contained in books at all, but something which had to be proclaimed by the living voice (cf. WA 12:259, Sermons on I Peter). ‘And it, the gospel, really is not what you find in the books and what is contained in the letters, but rather a spoken declaration and living Word--- a voice which resounds, is publicly proclaimed and everywhere heard....Therefore if one would ask what the gospel is, the sophists of the higher schools would answer: it is a book which teaches a good thing. They do not know what it is because they do not understand it. Gospel means good message.’ Luther could even go so far as to say that it was a great deterioration and limitation of the Spirit that books had to be written about the gospel because it is something which by its very nature must be preached.”³⁴</p>

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2. The clarity of scripture	
Paulson: clarity = Bible is plain, clear	Forde: clarity = Christ
<p>“Scripture is clear. Scripture interprets itself, and all of this happens not in the realm of ideas, but <i>for you</i> in the living word of proclamation with both offices: law and gospel. The proclamation of this written text of God’s dealings with his people, proclaimed to actual sinners in the present so that, as Christ says to his preachers, “he who hears you hears me,” is the way that a <i>writing</i> has such divine, original and final</p>	<p>“One who does not find Christ in the Scriptures engages in superfluous reading, even if he or she reads it carefully.²⁹ One should ‘refer the Bible to Christ...nothing but Christ should be proclaimed.’³⁰ Luther can even go so far as to say: ‘If adversaries use scripture against Christ, then we put Christ against the scriptures.’³¹ The Word of God therefore is ultimately Christ and the proclamation of the gospel.”³⁹</p>

³³ Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation*, 8.
³⁴ Forde, “Law and Gospel as the Methodological Principle of Theology,” *Theological Perspectives*, 63.
³⁹ Forde, “Infallibility Language and the Early Lutheran Tradition,” *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VI*, 129. Footnotes (Fn) in the text as follows): Fn 29: WA 51:4, 8. *Sermons* 1545; Fn 30: WA 16:113, 5-9. *Sermons on Exodus*. 1524-1527; Fn 31: WA 39/1:47, 19-20; LW 34:112. *Theses on Faith and Law*, 1535.

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<p>power.”³⁵ [“[T]he living word of proclamation” is equal to “proclamation of this written text.”]</p> <p>“Scripture is clear and God’s revelation is the most certain word, not the uncertain absoluteness of God’s being.”³⁶</p> <p>“At this point a person could fruitfully consider Luther’s two kinds of clarity (external and internal) as he discusses them in <i>Bondage of the Will</i>. And one could also take up the Orthodox Lutherans who distinguished ‘obscurity in the object contemplated and that which lies in the subject contemplating it.’ As Quenstedt put it, ‘The words of the Testament are in themselves very perspicuous, but are variously interpreted; because many neglecting the literal and proper sense, studiously seek a foreign one...because of the perverseness or imbecility of men. The obscurity which lies in the subject must not be transferred to the object’[!]”³⁷</p> <p>“When Luther says the external ‘pertains to the ministry of the word,’ he is referring to the preaching office, or public fountain. He makes it doubly clear that Scripture’s written words are ‘brought forth into the clearest light and proclaimed to the whole word (<i>sic</i>).”³⁸ [It is not “Scripture’s written words” that are brought forth into clearest light, but Christ himself.]</p>	<p>“[W]e do not possess absolute, unchangeable laws. If the law no longer takes care of the world, it can and must be changed. As even Luther put it, we must write our own decalogue to fit the times.”⁴⁰ [A biblical law may be clear in one generation but not clear in another.]</p> <p>“The insistence that scripture interprets itself is simply the hermeneutical correlate of justification by faith alone.”⁴¹ [Scripture interprets itself means what Forde writes above: “[T]he Word of God therefore is ultimately Christ and the proclamation of the gospel.”]</p> <p>Luther: “Take Christ out of the Scriptures and what will you find left in them?”⁴² [Not eternal law which can then be used as a basis for a third use of the law.]</p> <p>Luther: “All the genuine sacred books agree on this, that all of them preach Christ and deal with Him. That is the true test, by which to judge all books, when we see whether they deal with Christ or not, since all the Scriptures show us Christ (Romans 3) and St. Paul will know nothing but Christ (I Corinthians 2). What does not teach Christ is not apostolic, even though St. Peter or Paul taught it; again, what preaches Christ would be apostolic, even though Judas, Annas, Pilate and Herod did it.”⁴³</p> <p>Inge Lønning: “Everything in the universe of Luther’s Reformation stands or falls with the thesis of the clarity of Holy Scripture. That Christian theology is substantially bound to the</p>

³⁵ Paulson, “Lutheran Assertions Regarding Scripture,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 383.

³⁶ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 2:318.

³⁷ Paulson, “Lutheran Assertions Regarding Scripture,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 385.

³⁸ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:99.

⁴⁰ Forde, “*Lex semper accusat?* Nineteenth-Century Roots of Our Current Dilemma,” *dialog* 9/4 (1970) 274. See also “*Lex semper accusat?*” *A More Radical Gospel*, 49, and “*Lex semper accusat?*” *The Essential Forde*, 193.

⁴¹ Forde, “Authority in the Church,” *A More Radical Gospel*, 66. See also Forde, “*Sui ipsius interpres* [scripture interprets itself] is simply the hermeneutical correlate of justification by faith alone.” “*Scriptura sacra sui ipsius interpres*: Reflections on the Question of Scripture and Tradition,” *A More Radical Gospel*, 72.

⁴² LW 33:26.

⁴³ LW 35: 396.

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	<p>task of interpretation of Scripture, that is, that it grows out of the struggle to resolve this task and leads into the struggle concerning the constantly renewed resolution of this same task, all this can only be understood when the clarity thesis is presupposed. The same is true of the unprecedented theological concentration on the understanding of the central message of Scripture and the remarkable calmness with regard to the question of the limit of the canon of Scripture. The function of the thesis of the clarity of Scripture, however, is only properly recognized when the essential content has been somewhat correctly determined. For Luther it is not a question, as is later the case with Orthodox dogmatists, of the quality of transparency (<i>perspicuitas</i>), which statements of Scripture should in a specific way have. Rather, the expression <i>claritas scripturae</i> should be understood quite unambiguously from the contrast between light and darkness and the imagery associated with these two concepts. In the controversy with Erasmus, the alternative is worked out with special sharpness. Either one starts, like Erasmus, from the point that Scripture is dark and must be clarified by means of an authoritative interpretation in order to attain the necessary clearness or, conversely—like Luther— one starts from the illuminating power of the message of Scripture and the necessity of clarifying all human agencies of interpretation. There are, of course, according to Luther’s view of Scripture, signs which are obscure. It is decisive, however, that all the key teachings of Scripture (<i>res scripturae</i>) lie in bright daylight. This has been so since Christ’s resurrection: the incarnation, the doctrine of the Trinity, the atonement, the Lordship of Christ, all these have become accessible through the fact that Holy Scripture henceforth is presented as the pure proclamation of Christ and only as this.⁴⁴</p>

⁴⁴ Inge Lønning, “No Other Gospel: Luther’s Concept of the ‘Middle of Scripture’ in Its Significance for Ecumenical Communion and Christian Confessions Today,” in *Luther’s Ecumenical Significance*. Eds. Peter Manns and Harding Meyer (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 233-34.

3. The obscurity and disunity of scripture	
Paulson: Obscurity is only in us.	Forde: There are conflicts within scripture.
<p>“At this point a person could fruitfully consider Luther’s two kinds of clarity (external and internal) as he discusses them in <i>Bondage of the Will</i>. And one could also take up the Orthodox Lutherans who distinguished ‘obscurity in the object contemplated and that which lies in the subject contemplating it.’ As Quenstedt put it, ‘The words of the Testament are in themselves very perspicuous, but are variously interpreted; because many neglecting the literal and proper sense, studiously seek a foreign one...because of the perverseness or imbecility of men. The obscurity which lies in the subject must not be transferred to the object’ [!]”⁴⁵ [Paulson affirms seventeenth century Lutheran orthodoxy’s view of the clarity of scripture as its perspicuity. Moreover, he omits, or does not see, how Luther also rejects biblicism in <i>The Bondage of the Will</i>. See quotes by Lønning and Oberman.]</p> <p>“The preacher’s creativity in proclamation is not in identifying schools of thought in Scripture or adjudicating conflicts of interpretation, but in re-discovering the unity of Scripture and by resisting the human tendency to obscure. It is our universal, human resistance to eschatological clarity, even <i>within</i> Scripture’s pages, that requires creative use of historical knowledge of Bible and church, the preacher’s personal insight, and social awareness so that others may hear God’s own Word when preachers preach. Once the clear and united message of Scripture is uttered, the preacher is forced to rely on the promise of the Holy Spirit to divide the Word properly into law and gospel in the conscience of believers.”⁴⁶ [This seems to mean: Just preach</p>	<p>“Paul and Matthew are at irreconcilable odds.”⁴⁷</p> <p>“Scripture is not a book that can be dealt with by tallying up numbers of passages.”⁴⁸</p> <p>“The scriptures do indeed contain statements which appear universalist. But like the ‘I desire not the death of the sinner’ discussed above they are misused if taken as abstract general statements or ideas about God. If one interprets scripture in that fashion, one will then have to find some way to cope with other statements as well that seem to indicate different ideas about God—the possibility, for instance, of being cast into the ‘outer darkness’ where there is ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ The point is that ideas afford no real comfort when one’s ultimate destiny is at stake. Searching for a ‘general consensus’ in scripture or counting passages for or against an idea is no protection for the ‘conscience.’ One is not saved by a scriptural consensus. The smallest hint or just one passage is enough to shatter confidence and to raise the specter of being lost.”⁴⁹</p> <p>“For over two hundred years now it [the verbal inspiration of scripture] has demonstrated its inability to cope with truths established by scientific and historical research. In the face of the mounting knowledge of the world, the verbal inspiration method has had no constructive counsel to give, but can only advise one to retreat from the world and refuse to face those things which one finds uncomfortable. One does not need to go outside the Bible itself to show the inability of this method to cope with the facts. Clearly the belief that there are no</p>

⁴⁵ Paulson, “Lutheran Assertions Regarding Scripture,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 385.

⁴⁶ Paulson, “From Scripture to Dogmatics,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 167.

⁴⁷ Forde, “Justification and This World,” *Christian Dogmatics*. Eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 2:447.

⁴⁸ Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972) 22.

⁴⁹ Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation*, 34.

3. The obscurity and disunity of scripture	
Paulson: Obscurity is only in us.	Forde: There are conflicts within scripture.
<p>the text. Conflicts within scripture will be sorted out in the eschaton.]</p> <p>“The written word of Scripture is not obscure—as Erasmus had hoped it would be, full of possible interpretations over which one can exercise free choices. Instead, it is perspicuous—clear, plain, obvious, unmistakable—thus not hidden but revealed. That is why Luther condemned Erasmus’s personal brand of ‘poisonous philosophy’ (borrowed from the Scholastics and the devil) that separates Christian doctrines into categories of the obscure and the plain, or the hidden and revealed.”²⁴</p>	<p>mistakes of any sort in scripture simply is not true. The many discrepancies <i>within</i> the Bible itself – where the Bible disagrees with itself – demonstrate this fact.”⁵⁰</p>

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4. Historical criticism	
Paulson: Not useful	Forde: Useful and important
<p>“As Gerhard Forde liked to say, theology is for preaching, not understanding, and especially not for self-understanding.”⁵¹ [This gives the inaccurate impression that Forde’s theology is against understanding; nothing could be further from the truth.]</p> <p>“The present preoccupation with moral casuistry as a way of determining the Bible’s authority, perhaps especially in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, namely ‘What does the Bible demand or allow on this particular issue?’, is a system of this sickness in the church, not the cause. One step beneath this symptom lies a deeper, ‘systemic’ theological problem, the preoccupation with <i>method</i>, just as was once the case with the church’s development of rules concerning proper allegorical method. Today when we realize that the historical-critical method did not deliver an independent means of</p>	<p>“Conservative Christology seeks to trace explicit ‘proof’ for the ‘divinity’ of Jesus directly back to the teaching of an inerrant scripture. There is direct continuity between the Christology of Jesus thus uncovered and their own. Today such a Christology can maintain itself only by ignoring the development of careful historical investigation of the Scripture and the problematics that gave rise to that historical work.”⁵⁵</p> <p>“A definite discontinuity appears between the Jesus who preached and the Jesus who was preached in the New Testament. That is quite clear even without critical historical study. The discontinuity is most obvious in the Synoptic Gospels, but as we shall see, it is also evident in the writings of St. Paul, the earliest and most prolific New Testament author. Historical criticism of the Gospels, particularly form</p>

⁵⁰ Forde, “Law and Gospel as the Methodological Principle of Theology,” *Theological Perspectives*, 56.
⁵¹ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:ix. Footnote 1: Gerhard O. Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).
⁵⁵ Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation* 68.

4. Historical criticism	
Paulson: Not useful	Forde: Useful and important
<p>rising above denomination and private opinion, we occupy ourselves with fights between old critical and new cultural-linguistic versions of establishing some meaning or authority from Scripture....Scripture is one and alone, Scripture is clear, Scripture interprets itself....The proclamation of this written text...is the way that a writing has such divine, original and final power.⁵² [In other words, we don't need historical criticism because we have something that is not hermeneutics.]</p> <p>"[T]he words we use come first from Scripture's text, and so the question of how to move from Scripture to proclamation is precisely what preachers are concerned about. Forde has offered a basic help to us in his description of 'doing the text' to the hearer in a type of repetition of the original effect of the words that came to be written down, the words of Christ first and foremost, but also of the apostles who bear witness to him."⁵³</p> <p>"When one begins with the assertion that the church's dogma and God's dogma are the same at the crucial points which are demanded by the church's work of proclamation (not interpretation), then a different complex of ideas arises over those assumed by the old process of moving from Scripture to dogma through interpretation: instead of interpretation of Scripture there is proclamation, for intersubjective dialog there is the preaching office, and the truth reached is preliminary only for sight not for faith."⁵⁴ [Note "instead of interpretation there is proclamation."]</p>	<p>criticism, did not invent the discontinuity; it has served only to make this discontinuity inescapable for systematic theology."⁵⁶</p> <p>"So the question comes back to us again: Who do you say that I am? Why bother to speak of Jesus to others? In other words, when we turn to speak to others, we have to make the move from the implicit claim of Jesus' own preaching to explicit confession and proclamation of him. There is, then, on the formal level, a necessary discontinuity between Jesus' own preaching and our preaching of him. We are called upon to make explicit what was implicit in him. We cannot simply repeat his words as though they were ours. Christology is our problem, not his."⁵⁷</p> <p>"From this perspective one might well ask why there is so much religious fury directed at historical criticism. Will we be ashamed of the one we find thereby? To be sure, the historical critical method is not theologically neutral; ambiguity surrounds its usage. It is highly questionable when used to establish continuity with 'the real Jesus' who is supposed no longer to be an offense or a threat. But resistance to the method can also be due to the stake we have in the titles that similarly protect from that offense. The controversy is about titles: 'Who do you say that I am?' The inclination of both sides in the debate is to seek titles that will protect them from the 'me and my words.' Being a theologian of the cross is the only way to escape both errors and to use the historical critical method properly. Historical critical investigation uncovers a discontinuity that prevents every move but the drive to proclamation. The Scriptures cannot be</p>

⁵² Paulson, "Lutheran Assertions Regarding Scripture," *Lutheran Quarterly*, 383.

⁵³ Mattes and Paulson, "Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim," *The Preached God*, 6-7.

⁵⁴ Paulson, "From Scripture to Dogmatics," *Lutheran Quarterly*, 164-65.

⁵⁶ Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation*, 70.

⁵⁷ Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation*, 64-65.

4. Historical criticism	
Paulson: Not useful	Forde: Useful and important
	<p>used a protection from the word of the cross and its circumstances.⁵⁸</p> <p>“Systematic theology as secondary discourse is problematic in that it consists of abstractions that can neither be avoided nor removed.”⁵⁹</p> <p>“In preparing to do the text, the proclaimer should inquire not only about what the text meant (exegesis). There must be such inquiry, indeed. It is an indispensable step toward the proclamation. There can be no detour around it, and the result of such inquiry should no doubt find its way into the sermon. But exegesis is mostly presupposition for proclamation, not proclamation itself.”⁶⁰</p> <p>Burgess: “Thus does historical scholarship have any role to play in discerning the ‘center’ [of the New Testament]? Much in every way. For historical scholarship helps us to keep <i>Sachkritik</i> [content criticism] honest. It forces us to take the text seriously. As such it is a deadly weapon against any ‘infallible’ tradition which tries to impose itself upon the text.”⁶¹</p>

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5. The Holy Spirit	
Paulson	Forde
<p>“...[T]he ELCA lost track of the original source of Scripture, which is the inerrancy in the letters that come through an inerrant Holy Spirit.”⁶²</p> <p>[The Holy Spirit here effects the prior miracle of making scripture inerrant. Because scripture is the inerrant Word of God, therefore its message about Christ is trustworthy.]</p>	<p>“The Spirit is precisely the Holy Spirit of God, the Author of the scriptures who uses them as his two-edged sword. The Spirit comes in and through the letter, in and through the concrete history culminating in the cross and resurrection, in and through the proclamation of it to kill and make alive.”⁶⁴ [The Holy Spirit uses scripture and</p>

⁵⁸ Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation*, 68.

⁵⁹ Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation*, 100.

⁶⁰ Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation*, 155-56.

⁶¹ Burgess, “Confessional *Propria* in Relation to New Testament Texts,” *Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics*, 256.

⁶² Paulson, “Scripture, Enthusiasm, and the ELCA,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 53.

⁶⁴ Forde, *Justification by Faith: A Matter of Death and Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982) 15.

5. The Holy Spirit

Paulson	Forde
<p>“The breakthrough by distinguishing law and gospel does not happen in the realm of doctrine or ideas or theology, it happens only when these words are given by a preacher to you in faith itself. Thus, Scripture is united, clear and alone your authority by interpreting you when it engenders your conscience via the declaration of the absolution of sin. Scripture alone authorizes this Word from God to you, and in this way is the sole ‘source and norm’ of the oral proclamation. God uses the two preaching offices to kill and make alive so that we have no other God than this man Jesus Christ, otherwise there is no way out, no <i>exegue</i>. But Scripture does in fact yield preaching from time to time that creates actual faith in Christ alone who forgives our sins <i>gratis</i>, and therefore authorizes its own authority. When that happens we have reached the origin, fountain, source, goal, <i>telos</i>, end, nadir, and zenith of authority in the original author who is the Holy Spirit, or to put it more accurately, we have <i>been</i> reached.”⁶³</p>	<p>works through scripture, but the human theory of inerrancy is not even indirectly implied.]</p> <p>“The preface to <i>The Book of Concord</i> speaks of the ‘Word of God’ as being ‘pure, infallible, and unalterable.’¹⁸ There is some debate among Lutherans as well as among Reformation scholars, however, as to whether Luther and the early Lutherans consistently attributed formal infallibility to the Holy Scriptures as such. The majority are inclined to view that they did not.¹⁹ Luther’s writings abound, of course, with references to the inspiration of Holy Scriptures and to the authorship, words, phrases, thoughts, and sometimes even linguistic irregularities being the work of the Holy Spirit.²⁰ However, what one is to infer from that as far as formal infallibility is concerned, especially in light of passages which seem to indicate otherwise, is a debatable question. In any case for our purposes here I think it is correct to say that early Lutheran theology refrained, especially because of its battle with ‘left wing’ factions in the Reformation, from using scriptural infallibility as a formalistic principle in the derivation of Christian dogma or ethical practice.²¹ That was a development which occurred in later Lutheranism. For the most part infallibility language seemed to be applied to the Word of God in its function as gospel in order to back up the trustworthiness of the promises of God.”⁶⁵</p> <p>The verbal inspiration method “follows the line of a simple logical syllogism: ‘The Word of God is true, scripture is the Word of God, therefore scripture is true....[On its disadvantages:] For when all is said and done, the <i>a priori</i> belief that this is the way it <i>must be</i> in order for the scripture to be the Word of God is nowhere established in scripture itself, and it is a human construction; it is a human idea about what the term ‘Word of God’ must mean. In other words,</p>

⁶³ Paulson, “Lutheran Assertions Regarding Scripture,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 382.

⁶⁵ Forde, “Infallibility Language and the Early Lutheran Tradition,” *Lutheran and Catholics in Dialogue VI*, 127-28.

5. The Holy Spirit

Paulson	Forde
	<p>if I say that there can't be any errors in scripture if it is to be the Word of God, I am in effect saying that I know to begin with what the Word of God must be, and unless scripture meets my idea it cannot be accepted....I am in effect saying to God that unless he provides me with the kind of guarantee which I expect and want, I cannot believe. Then I am dictating to God the conditions under which I will believe. It is dangerous because it might just be that God has not <i>in fact</i> provided us with that kind of guarantee."⁶⁶</p> <p>"We have not said much about the Holy Spirit in this treatise. Actually the Spirit bears very little talking about. The point is to speak <i>in</i> the Spirit. That has been the whole burden of this book. It is really an essay on the work of the Spirit. Nowadays some seem to think that one can measure a given theology's enthusiasm for the third person of the Trinity by the amount of talk there is about the Spirit. But talk about the Spirit does not impart the Spirit any more than talk about piety imparts piety. One speaks <i>in</i> the Spirit and imparts the Spirit when one speaks the unconditional gospel of Jesus Christ, when one is not afraid to declare the Word that slays and makes alive. Then one wields 'the sword of the Spirit.' There is no point in talk about the Spirit that does not recognize the move to speak in the Spirit. Faith comes by hearing the gospel, not by describing it."⁶⁷</p>

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6. Inspiration

Paulson	Forde
<p>"Perhaps much confusion could be averted concerning the doctrine of inspiration if we would say the Bible becomes God's Word in the work of the Spirit, rather than saying that it is</p>	<p>"Inspiration in this view [law/gospel] method refers to the entire activity of the Spirit by which he dwells in the Church and attends the proclamation of the Word. In the older theory,</p>

⁶⁶ Forde, "Law and Gospel as the Methodological Principle of Theology," *Theological Perspectives*, 55-56.

⁶⁷ Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation*, 138.

6. Inspiration	
Paulson	Forde
<p>God's Word, if by 'is' we mean some inert, ahistorical and unproclaimed ideal."⁶⁸ [A false alternative? Lutherans who reject mantic inspiration do not thereby regard God's Word as "some inert, ahistorical and unproclaimed ideal." Moreover, all Christians say the Bible becomes God's Word in the work of the Spirit, even those who reject mantic inspiration.]</p>	<p>inspiration is too static and finally too anemic. It seems to assume that the Spirit can convince of the truth only through a book without errors. The Spirit has a much more powerful means than this at his disposal, namely the 'two-edged sword of the Word' through which he creates faith. The question, therefore of whether or not there may be human errors of one sort or another in scripture is of no particular importance. Just as the pastor on Sunday morning may make errors of one sort or another in preaching and still preach the Word so also with scripture. And the fact that I use my intellect and common sense in recognizing these errors does not mean that I am placing myself above or over God's Word. I can only say that apparently God has used quite human means in transmitting his Word to us. I could wish, I suppose that he would have used some other means, but apparently he has not seen fit to do so. God's Word comes 'in, with and under' the human words. As St. Paul says, 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that we may know that the transcendent glory belongs to God and not to us.'"⁶⁹</p> <p>[Everett R. Kalin has shown that decisions made in the early church about which letters and gospels to include or exclude in the canon were based on whether they were trustworthy or orthodox, not whether they were inspired.</p> <p>In the first centuries all baptized Christians were understood to be inspired as was Old Testament "scripture" used to proclaim Jesus as Lord. In addition, as Kalin reports, the early church fathers referred to writings outside of the New Testament as "inspired" when they proclaimed Christ as Lord.]⁷⁰</p>

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⁶⁸ Paulson, "From Scripture to Dogmatics," *Lutheran Quarterly*, 168.

⁶⁹ Forde, "Law and Gospel as the Methodological Principle of Theology," *Theological Perspectives*, 65.

⁷⁰ Everett R. Kalin, "The Inspired Community: A Glance at Canon History," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 42 (1971) 341-49.

7. Scripture interprets itself	
Paulson: Means the Bible is clear, plain	Forde: Means justification by faith alone
<p>“And one could also take up the Orthodox Lutherans who distinguished ‘obscurity in the object contemplated and that which lies in the subject contemplating it.’ As Quenstedt put it, ‘The words of the Testament are in themselves very perspicuous, but are variously interpreted; because many neglecting the literal and proper sense, studiously seek a foreign one...because of the perverseness or imbecility of men. The obscurity which lies in the subject must not be transferred to the object’[!]”⁷¹</p> <p>“Scripture is one and alone, Scripture is clear, Scripture interprets itself, and all of this happens not in the realm of ideas, but <i>for you</i> in the living word of proclamation with both offices: law and gospel. The proclamation of this written text of God’s dealings with his people, proclaimed to actual sinners in the present so that, as Christ says to his preachers, “he who hears you hears me,” is the way that a writing has such divine, original and final power.”⁷²</p> <p>“The written word of Scripture is not obscure—as Erasmus had hoped it would be, full of possible interpretations over which one can exercise free choices. Instead it is perspicuous—clear, plain, obvious, unmistakable—thus not hidden but revealed....But Scripture itself is not God hidden in majesty; it is God revealed—plainly.”⁷³</p>	<p>“This principle [scripture interprets itself] can and has been interpreted in a rather simplistic sense, to wit, that the obscure passages are to be interpreted by the clearer ones. But that is rather the argument that goes with quite another principle, that of the perspicuity of scripture. Is this not more a principle of the Reformed?”⁷⁴</p> <p>“The insistence that scripture interprets itself is simply the hermeneutical correlate of justification by faith alone.”⁷⁵</p> <p>“<i>Sui ipsius interpres</i> [scripture interprets itself] is simply the hermeneutical correlate of justification by faith alone. In this light, formal claims made for extra-scriptural authority structures and/or formal declarations about biblical authority (inerrancy, infallibility, etc.) are constructs which in one way or another are simply a reflex of the needs of the subjective <i>sensus proprius</i> [proper sense].”⁷⁶</p> <p>Oswald Bayer: “For when I read and hear Scripture, then I note that these stories talk about me; they tell <i>my story</i>. I appear in them long before I obey them. In this way the text precedes me and this text addresses me. In that I myself am addressed, I am freed at the time to listen, even if it means to listen critically, with all my powers, with my body and soul and all my thinking ability. One is not kept from interpreting just because he is being interpreted at the same time.”⁷⁷</p>

⁷¹ Paulson, “Lutheran Assertions Regarding Scripture,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 385.
⁷² Paulson, “Lutheran Assertions Regarding Scripture,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 383.
⁷³ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:97-98.
⁷⁴ Forde, “Authority in the Church,” *A More Radical Gospel*, 65.
⁷⁵ Forde, “Authority in the Church,” *A More Radical Gospel*, 66.
⁷⁶ Forde, “*Scriptura sacra sui ipsius interpres*: Reflections on the Question of Scripture and Tradition,” *A More Radical Gospel*, 72. Paulson has changed Forde’s text (as printed in *The Radical Gospel*) at this point by adding a sentence that breaks the logic of Forde’s argument. See Forde’s original, uncorrupted text which is printed above.
⁷⁷ Oswald Bayer, “What Makes the Bible Become Holy Scripture?” *Martin Luther’s Theology. A Contemporary Interpretation*. Tr. Thomas A. Trapp (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 69.

8. Letter and Spirit	
Paulson: Means inerrancy	Forde: Means law/gospel
<p>“The ‘letter’ of scripture does not primarily refer to a ‘spiritual’ meaning behind the text but is an inseparable embodiment of spiritual activity that remakes the human anew – calls forth trust in God.”⁷⁸ [If the “letter” of scripture is “an inseparable embodiment of spiritual activity,” then the Holy Spirit is encapsulated in the text. This is a euphemism for inerrancy.]</p>	<p>“[Luther] took the 2 Cor. 3:6 passage to mean just what it says: ‘The letter <i>kills</i>, but the spirit <i>gives life</i>.’ What the passage describes is an <i>action</i>—not a more or less esoteric method of interpretation. The letter, the written code, kills and <i>through it</i> the spirit gives life. It is not <i>dead</i> because it belongs to the sensible world. Rather, it is <i>deadly</i>, it kills. If the letter has the power to kill, it can by no means be taken lightly, nor can it be circumvented or shunted aside by interpretation. The letter, the whole long history of God’s struggle with his people culminating in the cross, spells in the first instance but one thing for the Old Adam. It spells death. The hermeneutic itself is shaped by the death-life language. It takes the shape of the cross: the letter kills the old, and through it, when one at last meets the end of one’s sinful ways, the spirit, the life-giving word is given. The scriptures do not provide a mere ‘jumping-off place’ for flights of allegorical and exegetical fancy; they rather cut off such flight. ‘Spirit’ is not some secret inner ‘level of meaning’ that one reaches by intellectual or mystical exercise. The Spirit is precisely the Holy Spirit of God, the Author of the scriptures who uses them as his two-edged sword. The Spirit comes in and through the letter, in and through the concrete history culminating in the cross and resurrection, in and through the proclamation of it to kill and make alive.</p> <p>“It is that fundamental understanding of the scriptures and use of the language which stands behind the Reformation. It is not just a matter of certain formulas, not even <i>sola fide</i>! It can readily be seen that the very use of language itself is shaped by the metaphor of death and life, not by the legal metaphor. The distinction between law and gospel in proper communication of the word is simply a further application of this</p>

⁷⁸ Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 6-7.

8. Letter and Spirit	
Paulson: Means inerrancy	Forde: Means law/gospel
	<p>language. The fact that the letter kills but the Spirit gives life, Luther says explicitly, can be said in other words: The law kills, but the grace of God gives life.¹¹⁷ The letter-spirit problem, so vexing in the tradition, issues in the law-gospel dialectic fundamental to preaching and communicating the word. Not just what the word <i>means</i> is important but what the word <i>does</i>. And what does it do? It kills and makes alive. That is what lies behind the law-gospel language, not merely the legal metaphor, but the theology of the cross.”⁷⁹ [The proper distinction between law and gospel derives from the cross itself, not from an inerrant scripture.]</p>

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9. God preached and unpreached	
Paulson: Apply law and gospel directly today	Forde: “Can’t infer God’s will from the law.”
<p>“The second volume [<i>Luther’s Outlaw God</i>] will address this greatest of all theological dialectics, unpreached and preached God, and show how Luther employed it prolifically in his exegetical theology. This allowed him to avoid abstract questions by attending to the details of Scripture’s text as they show God’s two words of law and gospel at work, and then apply them directly to people in need.”⁸⁰ [What is included here in “abstract questions”? The idea that one can “apply” law and gospel from a text “directly to people in need” today reflects a view of the Bible as inerrant and the law as eternal.]</p>	<p>“The only way to overcome the problem of the hiddeness of God not preached is by God preached. But that will not happen by attempting to infer God’s will from the law.”⁸¹</p> <p>“The work of theology is not for making inferences from the law, but for a proclamation that is all about Christ.”⁸²</p> <p>“What are we to do about God not preached? Nothing. We are to leave the not-preached God alone and pay attention to the God clothed and displayed in the Word.”⁸³</p>

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⁷⁹ Forde, *Justification by Faith: A Matter of Death and Life*, 15-16. Internal footnote 11: LW 39:183.
⁸⁰ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:245.
⁸¹ Forde, “Postscript to the Captivation of the Will,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 78; Forde, *The Captivation of the Will*. “Luther vs. Erasmus on Freedom and Bondage,” 79.
⁸² Forde, “Postscript to *The Captivation of the Will*,” 78.
⁸³ Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation*, 27.

10. Evil	
Paulson	Forde
<p>“Evil is not found in the cosmos, as Manichaeans think, but only in human hearts.”⁸⁴</p> <p>“The person is the source of evil, not its unwitting victim.”⁸⁵</p> <p>“Law is ultimately a mirror rather than a fence, and what it reveals is that evil is not in stones, it is in the human heart....Evil begins in the heart with putting the law where God alone belongs and ever after finds itself unable and unwilling to distinguish evil and law.”⁸⁶</p> <p>“In fact, God is not the source of evil, but he truly is the one who pushes evil forward as with a shove, until it solidifies or petrifies in the human heart. Scripture calls this terrible divine act ‘hardening the heart.’ Yet, things are even more deplorable than that, since once God has done this, he creates a new heart—wherever and whenever it pleases him.”⁸⁷</p> <p>“God uses evil tools by pushing them forward---like the hardened heart of Pharaoh—but this is not, as with Spinoza, to fill the law with perfection. Of course, when God uses evil it is terribly frightening. There is no assurance that when God grasps this tool that he operates according to the necessity of rational law....Evil always dreams that it is co-equal in relation to God, but it is not. If you insist upon knowing evil’s origin, we can state clearly that evil originates in the heart of Satan and in sinful human will, as Jesus’ wisdom talk about eating showed. But all these truths about evil culminate in offense at the gospel. In particular, evil rebels against God’s choice to speak to one and not another: Jacob I loved, Esau I hated.” Evil, for example, hates that God let his people in Egypt go while hardening</p>	<p>“For Luther most attempts to ‘solve’ the problem of evil are theologically suspect because they involve the same kind of illegitimate attempts to penetrate God’s ‘mask’ that we have already seen....The real question is whether we have any warrant to affirm life and to believe in the face of evil and tragedy that the good God is in fact in ultimate control, whether we can confess our trust in ‘the Father Almighty.’ The question is really whether anything that happens here is strong enough to enable us to look evil in the face and still say, ‘I believe.’ ... Luther’s conviction was that such a thing happened in the cross and resurrection of Christ. There something was accomplished: the will of God was revealed in such a way as to enable us to say, ‘I believe in God the Father Almighty,’ which means, “I trust God with the government of the world.’ Of course this is not a solution to the problem of evil in the sense that it explains where it came from or how it started or how exactly it is related to God’s omnipotence. Luther has no better answers to those questions than anyone else: the problem of evil remains for him a deep mystery. But by making the distinction between God hidden and revealed he points out better how it might actually be handled. Apart from his revelation in Christ, God is hidden. We have, ultimately, no means for penetrating that hiddenness.”⁸⁹</p> <p>“But if sin enters historically and is not necessary, then we need to confess both that creation is good and that we are bound by cords we will not break. Since sin is such power it is there before us. We did not create it but were captivated by it, seduced by it, at our very origin. It precedes us,</p>

⁸⁴ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:194.

⁸⁵ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:195.

⁸⁶ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:197.

⁸⁷ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:198.

⁸⁹ Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 29-30.

10. Evil	
Paulson	Forde
Pharaoh's heart. God preaches in a certain time and place to one and not another." ⁸⁸	and as such is the work of the divine adversary Satan. " ⁹⁰

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11. Faith and certainty	
Paulson: The written word	Forde: The proclaimed promises
<p>"Moreover, faith's full assurance originates not from within but from outside, in Scripture's written word...."⁹¹ [In the adjoining column, Forde shows how inerrancy functions as a prior miracle: "The doctrine of scripture is first established and then everything else follows."]</p> <p>"God is not bestowing uncertain things or parts but giving David the most certain things of all. Scripture is clear and God's revelation is the most certain word, not the uncertain absoluteness of God's being."⁹² [Certainty is dependent on the inerrant written word.]</p> <p>"Faith is absolute assurance because it depends upon God's most public revelation in the form of a preached promise...."⁹³ [Here the certainty of the promise properly depends on the "preached promise."]</p> <p>"Certainty resides in the external word that has been uttered verbally by a preacher. By 'external word' Luther means the text of Scripture, along with its miraculous bestowal or mediation from one person to another via the office of ministry. That office is the outward office of the Word that utters the two words of God in perfect clarity: first the Law that tells us exactly what to do and judges us; and then the gospel that tells us precisely what Christ thinks of us—apart from</p>	<p>Forde on verbal inerrancy: "Faith, in the confines of this method, consists of the knowledge of, assent to, and trust in the truths set down in Holy Scripture. This is the traditional three-fold definition of faith found in the Orthodox fathers. Faith is <i>notitia</i>, knowledge; <i>assensus</i>, assent; <i>fiducia</i>, trust. This means that one first gains knowledge of the things which pertain to salvation, i.e., one learns the truths; secondly, one is persuaded to assent to them intellectually; and ultimately one may learn to trust in them. How does this come about? It comes about finally of course through the work of the Holy Spirit. But one should notice that first one is persuaded intellectually to accept the truth of everything in scripture, and one may be aided in this by such things as the proofs from prophecy and from miracle, the antiquity of scripture, etc., and then only <i>afterwards</i> is one led to trust in them. In other words, the doctrine of scripture is first established, and then everything else follows. When one has finally learned to trust the doctrines thus established the method reaches its goal."⁹⁷</p> <p>"Faith, then, arises out of the hearing of the gospel proclamation when the law has destroyed all confidence in self. The only possible basis for</p>

⁸⁸ Paulson, *Luther's Outlaw God*, 1:220-21.

⁹⁰ Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation*, 53.

⁹¹ Paulson, *Luther's Outlaw God*, 1:111.

⁹² Paulson, *Luther's Outlaw God*, 2:318.

⁹³ Paulson, *Luther's Outlaw God*, 1:97.

⁹⁷ Forde, "Law and Gospel as the Methodological Principle of Theology," *Theological Perspectives*, 54-55.

11. Faith and certainty	
Paulson: The written word	Forde: The proclaimed promises
<p>the law.”⁹⁴ [In the first sentence certainty is tied to the external (preached) word, but in the second sentence the external word is the text of scripture.]</p> <p>“Precisely how anti-hidden, or clear, is Scripture? It is wholly and doubly so—not as an object of Scholastic inquiry, but as the external word of the preaching office used by the Holy Spirit to make <i>faith</i> rather than normal legal ‘understanding’ or reason. Consequently, Luther’s first step in describing a promise rather than a law is to reject theology’s hiddenness of Scripture and say that if there is going to be full assurance and certainty in faith, it necessarily comes from something other than an inner human power. It is given from the outside by a preacher authorized by the clear word of Scripture to give a promise, which the Spirit uses to make <i>faith</i> the highest degree of certainty—<i>full assurance</i>.”⁹⁵</p> <p>“Faith is not assenting to a proposition but clinging to a promise. Clinging is possible because the promise is present, but clinging is also necessary because the promise is not yet seen. The promise of forgiveness is present as preached but future as seen. It is hidden so that the imaginary free will cannot grasp the thing, but only faith does. Grasping faith is thus not a choice that enacts potential....Only faith can grasp God’s promise, because it precisely is not faith’s act but is the sole act of God....When a promise comes, the only question remaining is whether God lies or not. Just so, faith is exercised not by the will commanding (or being commanded by) reason or feeling. ‘The faith of life is exercised by death.’ (LW 33:62) Not only does faith do no work, it is actually killed.”⁹⁶</p>	<p>faith is the hearing of the gospel. Faith can ask for no surer basis than this.”⁹⁸</p> <p>“We are saved by faith alone, and faith comes from hearing. To be saved in this sense is truly to be rescued from the net of necessity and law by a spontaneous joy in God. Everything is now raised to a different plane, an absolutely new future opens up. Faith is being grasped by that promise, by that future.”⁹⁹</p>

⁹⁴ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 2:140.

⁹⁵ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:100.

⁹⁶ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:181-83.

⁹⁸ Forde, “Law and Gospel as the Methodological Principle of Theology,” *Theological Perspectives*, 63.

⁹⁹ Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation*, 141.

12. Canon questions	
Paulson	Forde
<p>“People expecting such religious arguments will mainly see <i>nothing</i> in our Confessions about Scripture’s authority. As the <i>Large Catechism</i> (third commandment) says, this Word of God is the only holy relic we actually have in life... Scripture is alone its own and final authority—not idle or dead, but effective and living. But how is it that a writing has such divine, original and final power?”¹⁰⁰ [Scripture here = “this Word of God.” In contrast, see Forde in the adjoining column for whom “the Word of God” is not “the book of the Bible and the canon as such,” but rather Christ and the proclamation of the gospel.]</p> <p>“Scripture interprets itself, and all of this happens not in the realm of ideas, but <i>for you</i> in the living word of proclamation with both offices: law and gospel. The proclamation of this written text of God’s dealings with his people, proclaimed to actual sinners in the present so that, as Christ says to his preachers, ‘he who hears you hears me,’ is the way that a writing has such divine, original and final power.”¹⁰¹ [Here the canon is presumed fixed and its contents alone have “divine, original, and final power.” This view of the canon obscures the centuries long process of the formation of the canon. It also obscures Luther’s critical principle: “If the opponents use scripture against Christ, then we use Christ against scripture” (WA. DB 39: 1, 47).]</p>	<p>“What is the Word of God to which this kind of infallibility is ascribed? A formal legalistic biblicism is clearly not what Luther and early Lutherans had in mind. In the controversy with the peasants especially, and with other sectarians of the times as well, such biblicism was encountered and rejected. ‘Luther’s ultimate authority and standard was not the book of the Bible and the canon as such but that scripture which interpreted itself and also criticized itself from its own center, from Christ and from the radically understood gospel.’²⁷ ...One should ‘refer the Bible to Christ...nothing but Christ should be proclaimed.’³⁰ Luther can even go so far as to say: ‘If adversaries use scripture against Christ, then we put Christ against the scriptures.’³¹ The Word of God therefore is ultimately Christ and the proclamation of the gospel.”¹⁰²</p> <p>Lønning: “...the extraordinary fact from the point of view of theological history, that Lutheranism has not made a dogmatic determination concerning the biblical canon. The silence of the Lutheran confession in this respect is indeed in itself ambiguous. From its Reformation roots, however, this should best be interpreted, perhaps, by means of the common, though somewhat contradictory term of an open canon. To the extent that this expression signifies more than the revisability of the limits of the canon, it necessarily points to the impossibility of a strict, formally understood scriptural principle.”¹⁰³</p> <p>Burgess: “The letter of 1 Clement, written A.D. 95-96, the letters of Ignatius, written about A.D. 110, are not included in the New Testament</p>

¹⁰⁰ Paulson, “Lutheran Assertions Regarding Scripture,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 273-74.

¹⁰¹ Paulson, “Lutheran Assertions Regarding Scripture,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 383.

¹⁰² Forde, “Infallibility Language and the Early Lutheran Tradition,” *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VI*, 129. Internal footnote 27: P. Althaus, *Theology*, 336.

¹⁰³ Inge Lønning, “No Other Gospel: Luther’s Concept of the ‘Middle of Scripture’ in Its Significance for Ecumenical Communion and Christian Confessions Today,” *Luther’s Ecumenical Significance*, 232.

12. Canon questions	
Paulson	Forde
	<p>canon, but 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, written during the same period, are included. First Clement and the Didache were, after all, in some early lists and collections. What if the lost letter to the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16) were found? Would we include it in the canon and if so, how would we decide?"¹⁰⁴</p>

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13. The law and gospel method	
Paulson: Not a human method	Forde: Is a human method
<p>"Law and gospel is thus not a method of preaching or interpretation, but the way that God authors you as unmistakable sinner in yourself; then outside yourself, in Christ, God authors you as pure saint."¹⁰⁵ [If "law and gospel" is not a "not a method of preaching or interpretation," then it is a way of saying we Lutherans have something that is not hermeneutics. It is a euphemism for inerrancy.]</p> <p>"Forde points out that our hermeneutics – unlike all contemporary approaches to hermeneutics – must enable us to be rendered passive before God. Are we being exegeted by the Scriptures – do we allow them to scrutinize our lives and give us God's promise? The authority of Scripture lies in its power to find, expose, and establish the being of its hearer."¹⁰⁶ [Forde does not propose a non-hermeneutical approach to scripture. He affirms the importance of historical criticism.]</p> <p>"When one begins with the assertion that the church's dogmas and God's dogma are the same at the crucial points which are demanded by the church's work of proclamation (not interpretation), then a different complex of ideas</p>	<p>Forde on the advantages of the law-gospel method over the verbal inspiration method:</p> <p>"First, God's Word is not confused with the words of men, and through the law and the gospel men are placed under its authority more surely than they are in the verbal inspiration method. God's Word is seen as a living Word and men are called to a living faith. Second, this method is not embarrassed by human advancements in science, history or other disciplines. This method recognizes that the Biblical writers were men of a particular time, limited by the knowledge of their time. It is concerned only to maintain that we share the same basic faith as those ancients did regardless of a difference in worldly-views and thought forms. Thirdly, this method can allow the biblical exegete the freedom he needs in using whatever method is practical in getting at the meaning of the text."¹⁰⁹</p> <p>"Precisely, the proper distinction between law and gospel limits and humanizes the law."¹¹⁰</p>

¹⁰⁴ Joseph A. Burgess, "Lutheran Interpretation of Scripture," *The Bible in the Churches. How Various Christians Interpret the Scriptures*. Ed. Kenneth Hagen (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998) 107.

¹⁰⁵ Paulson, "Lutheran Assertions Regarding Scripture," *Lutheran Quarterly*, 279-80.

¹⁰⁶ Mattes and Paulson, "Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim, *The Preached God*, 25.

¹⁰⁹ Forde, "Law and Gospel as the Methodological Principle of Theology," *Theological Perspectives*, 66.

¹¹⁰ Forde, "Forensic Justification and the Law in Lutheran Theology," *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII*, 301.

13. The law and gospel method	
Paulson: Not a human method	Forde: Is a human method
<p>arises over those assumed by the old process of moving from Scripture to dogmas through interpretation: instead of interpretation of Scripture there is proclamation, for intersubjective dialog there is the preaching office, and the truth reached is preliminary only for sight not for faith....”¹⁰⁷ [There is no proclamation without interpretation. Even a translation is an interpretation.]</p> <p>“The preacher’s creativity in proclamation is not in identifying schools of thought in Scripture or adjudicating conflicts of interpretation, but in re-discovering the unity of Scripture and by resisting the human tendency to obscure. It is our universal, human resistance to eschatological clarity, even <i>within</i> Scripture’s pages, that requires creative use of historical knowledge of Bible and church, the preacher’s personal insight, and social awareness so that others may hear God’s own Word when preachers preach. Once the clear and united message of Scripture is uttered, the preacher is forced to rely on the promise of the Holy Spirit to divide the Word properly into law and gospel in the conscience of believers.”¹⁰⁸</p>	<p>“The Word of God impinges on us as law and as gospel. This means first that it takes up residence in human discourse in the form of propositions, i.e. as literal word, in the form of law, subject to the canons of human discourse. But the ultimate purpose of the letter or law is not to call attention to itself, but to point to another who is its end and <i>telos</i>. That is to say that the important question (<i>a la</i> Ebeling) is not merely what the words signify, perhaps infallibly, but what they do and how they do it. The important question for Luther, is how the words are used. Indeed, one must say that the purpose of the letter, the law, is to ‘destroy all confidence in the flesh,’ all attempts to base faith on human forms of legitimation. The law kills the ‘old Adam’ according to the flesh so that the new person may be raised in the Spirit. The gospel heard through the power of the Spirit is precisely that word of liberation from God which frees from the tyranny of the law, i.e. from dependence on ‘the flesh’ and its forms of legitimation (which bind us to the tyranny of the law). The gospel is therefore the true and ultimate Word of God which authorizes itself and stands above all human forms of legitimation.”¹¹¹</p> <p>“Every interpretation [of scripture] is, in fact, a covert if not an overt soteriology.”¹¹²</p>

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14. The nature of Law	
Paulson: Divine eternal law	Forde: A functional sense of law
<p>“The law is not just operating in the mode of a ‘function’ when it accuses, but in accusing it is revealing both its essence and existence for us and for itself.”¹¹³</p>	<p>“Throughout this <i>locus</i> ‘law’ is to be taken in a functional rather than a material sense. ‘The law’ in this sense is demand, that voice which ‘accuses,’ as the reformers put it, arising from</p>

¹⁰⁷ Paulson, “From Scripture to Dogmatics,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 164-65.
¹⁰⁸ Paulson, “From Scripture to Dogmatics,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 167.
¹¹¹ Forde, “Infallibility Language and The Early Lutheran Tradition,” *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VI*, 135-36.
¹¹² Forde, “Law and Gospel in Luther’s Hermeneutic,” *Interpretation* 37 (1983) 243.
¹¹³ Paulson, “Forde Lives!” *The Essential Forde*, 24.

14. The nature of Law	
Paulson: Divine eternal law	Forde: A functional sense of law
<p>“God giving his heart in Jesus Christ is not a simple matter. It complicates things for us on earth, especially those of us who are trying hard (sometimes) to live according to God’s divine plan as revealed in his law.”¹¹⁴</p> <p>“So <i>Anfechtung</i> is something assured in the lives of believers because everything in the world, especially God’s own law, conflicts with this promise.”¹¹⁵</p> <p>“If God shows himself in his law, what else is he withholding? What is this partial revelation, and what remains beyond our grasp? The answer to both of these questions is always the same: God’s divine eternal law presently accuses—but one day it will exonerate.”¹¹⁶ [In this view the Bible gives us access to divine, eternal law.]</p> <p>“Predestination showed Luther exactly what his faith was in, and how frightening it was to find God, the outlaw, operating outside the plan of his own holy law.”¹¹⁷</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, most holy law.”¹¹⁸</p> <p>“It is the strength of a law to reveal a general truth: You shall not kill. As Immanuel Kant especially noticed, this is true precisely when it is universal—applying it in every place and time as a duty, regardless of one’s circumstance—even against one’s desires....Luther noticed a crack in this general rule of law in that kings are occasionally ordered to kill in Scripture—in direct opposition to the law. Yet cracks can be accommodated, since general rules are always</p>	<p>anywhere and everywhere, insisting that we do our duty and fulfill our being. Anything which does that exercises the function or ‘office’ of the law. Law is not a specifiable set of propositions, but is one way communication functions when we are alienated, estranged, and bound.”¹²¹</p> <p>“This is what it means to say that whereas the kingdom to come is a kingdom of grace the kingdom of this world is a kingdom of law.... Law belongs to earth, not to heaven. It is natural, not supernatural....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.”¹²²</p> <p>“Does one appeal to ‘conscience’ in preaching? No doubt, as Luther often said, one would preach in vain if there were no conscience. But one must preach, perhaps we can say, as though conscience were the empty house of Jesus’ parable, now occupied by seven more demons. One must not preach in such fashion as to solidify their tenure in the house. One assumes indeed that people live and suffer ‘under the law,’ but that what they are suffering from is the misuse of the law, the assumption that law, in conjunction with conscience, <i>is</i> the way. Many today like to say that we do not need, therefore, to preach ‘the law,’ but only the gospel. That is a mistake. The ‘law’ that must be preached is the absolute offense of the unconditional gospel, the ‘letter’ which kills, so the spirit can make new</p>

¹¹⁴ Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 10.

¹¹⁵ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 2:25.

¹¹⁶ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 2:187.

¹¹⁷ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:167.

¹¹⁸ Paulson, “Forde Lives!” *The Essential Forde*, 30.

¹²¹ Forde, “Justification,” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:400.

¹²² Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 111.

14. The nature of Law	
Paulson: Divine eternal law	Forde: A functional sense of law
<p>able to accommodate exceptions.”¹¹⁹ [If “the law” has old cracks, how about new cracks? In every generation how do we know when and how to accommodate exceptions?]</p> <p>“[T]he law was never given to empower anyone. Just the opposite, law in its proper sense disempowers, incapacitates, encumbers, exhausts, and enfeebles. This is what Paul means by calling the gospel <i>foolishness</i>: “For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor 1:25).”¹²⁰ [1 Cor 1:25 is not about the law but about the Greeks and their understanding of wisdom, and Paul’s understanding of the foolishness of all our thinking.]</p>	<p>– the kind of law which destroys the illusions about law as the way and thus drives the demons from the house.”¹²³</p> <p>“God’s eschatological kingdom is humanity’s tomorrow. The law must function first and foremost to cut off every other possibility. Only thus will we be reborn into the world God creates. The ‘letter,’ the story of God’s struggle with his people, our story under the law, must work to end every attempt to escape, every form of self-justification according to our schemes and projects, in order to place us before the God of time to wait and to hope. The killing function of the law makes us historical beings. It cuts off every form of escape: metaphysical, religious, or psychological. That is its chief ‘use.’ Only when that happens, will other uses open up as well, for only when the law kills in that fashion will we receive this world back as a gift. Only when we cease to use law as an escape for the self will we begin to see what law is for here as well. The possibility of a <i>Christian</i> life opens up.”¹²⁴</p>

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15. Law: Supernatural or natural?	
Paulson: Supernatural	Forde: Natural
<p>“It complicates things for us on earth, especially those of us who are trying hard (sometimes) to live according to God’s divine plan as revealed in the law.”¹²⁵ [God’s divine plan = supernatural law]</p> <p>“So <i>Anfechtung</i> is something assured in the lives of believers because everything in the world,</p>	<p>“For faith in the end of the law leads to the view that its purpose is to take care of this world, not to prepare for the next. That means that we do not possess absolute, unchangeable laws. If the law no longer takes care of this world, it can and</p>

¹¹⁹ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 2:69.

¹²⁰ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:160.

¹²³ Forde, “Justification,” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:424.

¹²⁴ Forde, “Justification,” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:420.

¹²⁵ Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 10.

15. Law: Supernatural or natural?	
Paulson: Supernatural	Forde: Natural
<p>especially God’s own law, conflicts with this promise.”¹²⁶</p> <p>“If God shows himself in his law, what else is he withholding? What is this partial revelation, and what remains beyond our grasp? The answer to both of these questions is always the same: God’s divine eternal law presently accuses—but one day it will exonerate.”¹²⁷</p> <p>“Predestination showed Luther exactly what his faith was in, and how frightening it was to find God, the outlaw, operating outside the plan of his own holy law.”¹²⁸</p> <p>“It is the strength of a law to reveal a general truth: You shall not kill. As Immanuel Kant especially noticed, this is true precisely when it is universal—applying it in every place and time as a duty, regardless of one’s circumstance—even against one’s desires....Luther noticed a crack in this general rule of law in that kings are occasionally ordered to kill in Scripture—in direct opposition to the law. Yet cracks can be accommodated, since general rules are always able to accommodate exceptions.”¹²⁹ [If law is eternal, yet there are cracks, how do we know when and how to accommodate exceptions?]</p> <p>“In Luther’s day a dispute arose when the clever preacher John Agricola proposed that the way to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ was to leave out the preaching of the law entirely....Wouldn’t that be nice for a preacher? No more need to accuse</p>	<p>must be changed. As even Luther put it,¹³¹ we must write our own decalogue to fit the times.¹³²</p> <p>“The line between this world and the next is drawn by God’s grace. This establishes the world as a place under the law in which man can live, work, and hope.... 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 free for it...This is what it means to say that whereas the kingdom to come is a kingdom of grace the kingdom of this world is a kingdom of law.... Law belongs to earth, not to heaven. It is natural, not supernatural....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.¹³³</p> <p>“... For a proper eschatology, law belongs strictly to this age. It is to rule over the “flesh” and the affairs of this age. Christ and the gospel promise of the new age are to rule in the conscience....”¹³⁴</p> <p>“At the same time, a theology seduced by nomism (all too often the case in the church) is ill equipped to do battle with antinomianism. Since</p>

¹²⁶ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 2:25.

¹²⁷ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 2:187.

¹²⁸ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:167.

¹²⁹ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 2:69.

¹³¹ Martin Luther on the law as human and changing: “Indeed, we would make new decalogues, as Paul does in all the epistles, and Peter, but above all Christ in the gospel” (*LW* 34:112). “This text makes it clear that even the Ten Commandments do not pertain to us” (*LW* 35:165). “The Gentiles are not obligated to obey Moses. Moses is the *Sachsenspiegel* for the Jews” (*LW* 35:167).

¹³² Forde, “*Lex semper accusat?* Nineteenth-Century Roots of Our Current Dilemma,” *dialog* 274; *A More Radical Gospel*, 49; *The Essential Forde*, 193.

¹³³ Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 110-11.

¹³⁴ Forde, “Luther and the *Usus Pauli*,” *dialog* 32:4 (1993) 277-78.

15. Law: Supernatural or natural?	
Paulson: Supernatural	Forde: Natural
<p>anyone or bother with the law even when it is plainly in the Scripture to be preached....They [ELCA pro-gay supporters] believe they are the messengers and purveyors of a new and higher law than had ever existed before in church and world—even laws given by God himself. Furthermore, this new and higher form of law comes in the person of the Holy Spirit who gives them new spirit-led revelations that are not in Scripture but are supposed to be part of God’s hidden plan.....Fanatics think that the Holy Spirit has given them a new word not found in Scripture that approves of homosexual acts....They know, even though they have no word from God to stand on.¹³⁰ [In this view the Bible gives us divine law, an eternal moral order, by which we judge morality today: “the law is there plainly in the Scripture to be preached.” What happens when one comes across texts on slavery, usury, divorce?]</p>	<p>it has already compromised the eschatological gospel, it can fight only from the position of law and charge its opponents with the ‘terrible heresy’ of being anti-law. Thus, the term ‘antinomian.’ One gets the impression that whereas other heresies are relatively mild, being antinomian is about the worst thing one could be! At any rate, to defend itself, nomism appeals to already given anti-gospel sentiments, compounding the confusion. So the general victory of nomism over antinomianism in the church is hardly cause for celebration. Nothing is solved. No insight into the nature of the problem is gained. The war of words is only inflated and the issues obscured.”¹³⁵</p>

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16. Ceremonial and moral law = the law	
Paulson: The ceremonial law ends in Christ but not the moral law	Forde: Both the ceremonial and moral law end in Christ
<p>On food laws: “The law of handwashing, for example, cannot keep a person pure from external evil, rather it pollutes from inside. More precisely, such a law is the occasion for evil that is not outside trying to get in but is inside trying to get out. Evil is not in a thing that threatens to puncture a person’s defensive wall but is what the heart itself produces and spreads abroad like a disease. The person is the source of evil, not its unwitting victim....But Jesus leapt over all these fears of evil that invade, pollute, and defile one’s inner purity. He used the law not as a fence protecting the victim but rather as a bright light to reveal the real source of evil. What comes</p>	<p>“Unable to rhyme Matt. 5:17-18 with Rom. 10:4, the dogmatic tradition has experienced nothing but trouble over the law....Paul and Matthew are at irreconcilable odds....[T]he tradition for the most part had to indulge in what was strictly forbidden by both Matthew and Paul: tampering with the content of the law to arrive at a compromise. The result was the idea that in Christ the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament were abrogated (thus throwing a sop to Paul’s claim that Christ was the ‘end’ of the law) while the ‘moral’ law was not (thus supposedly satisfying Matthew’s claim that not one iota or dot would pass away until ‘the end’). But that is</p>

¹³⁰ Steven D. Paulson, “Against the holy blasphemers,” *Network News* (December 2009) 5-6.

¹³⁵ Forde, “Fake Theology: Reflections on Antinomians Past and Present,” *dialog* 22 (1983) 246-51.

16. Ceremonial and moral law = the law	
Paulson: The ceremonial law ends in Christ but not the moral law	Forde: Both the ceremonial and moral law end in Christ
<p>inside (from the outside) goes through the stomach and is defecated—bypassing the real problem in life, which is not the stomach. The result of this wisdom-law from Christ is double. First, all foods were thereby declared clean, and immediately the present liturgy (so carefully developed by leaders) was discarded as something pleasing to God.”¹³⁶</p> <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. 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. This is why we teach the Ten</p>	<p>patent nonsense which only confuses the issue further and completely obscures the eschatology involved. Neither Testament makes that kind of distinction between ceremonial and moral law. Indeed, it seems that in most instances, ruptures of the ceremonial law are more serious than those of the moral law. Furthermore, the tradition was left with the problem of deciding just what was moral and what was ceremonial. Are the first three commandments, for instance, moral or ceremonial? ...Who is to decide? The outcome of such confusion was, in general, that natural law became the arbiter....Natural law became the structural backbone of the theological system, displacing eschatology.”¹³⁸</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 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. 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. 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,</p>

¹³⁶ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:195-96.

¹³⁸ Forde, “Justification and This World,” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:447.

16. Ceremonial and moral law = the law	
Paulson: The ceremonial law ends in Christ but not the moral law	Forde: Both the ceremonial and moral law end in Christ
<p>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."¹³⁷</p>	<p>of course, that this is no small accomplishment, but the price does seem a bit high!"¹³⁹</p>

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17. A third use of the law	
Paulson: Yes and no	Forde: No
<p>"It complicates things for us on earth, especially those of us who are trying hard (sometimes) to live according to God's divine plan as revealed in the law."¹⁴⁰ [To live according to God's divine plan as revealed in the law = third use of the law.]</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 operating above the law, freely, on the basis of God's absolute necessity – which is the predestination of mercy already given to Paul."¹⁴¹ ["operates above the law" is implicitly an antinomian position.]</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</p>	<p>"From the eschatological perspective the legitimate concerns badly expressed in the idea of a third use of the law can be sorted out. First, one who has been grasped by the eschatological vision looks on law differently from one who has not. But that is not to say that one sees a 'third' use. What one sees is precisely the difference between law and gospel, so that law can be established in its first two uses this side of the eschaton....Second, one grasped by the eschatological vision will recognize the continuing need for the law. But this too does not mean a third use. Rather, just because of 'rebirth' in faith, one will see how much one is a sinner and will be until the end. One will see that one is not yet a 'Christian.' One will see precisely that one has no particular advantages over those who are not yet reborn. One will see one's solidarity with the rest of the human race and wait in hope until the end, leaving the heroics and pretensions to spiritual athletes."¹⁴⁶</p> <p>"Formula of Concord (Article VI) vacillates on the</p>

¹³⁷ Paulson at a Lutheran CORE meeting, Roseville Lutheran Church (11/18/2010). Transcript of the CD at 25:52.
¹³⁹ Forde, "Called to Freedom," Presidential Address to the International Congress for Luther Research, 1993, *The Preached God*, 254-69, here 259.
¹⁴⁰ Mattes and Paulson, "Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim," *The Preached God*, 10.
¹⁴¹ Paulson, *Luther's Outlaw God*, 2:367.
¹⁴⁶ Forde, "Justification and This World," *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:449-50.

17. A third use of the law	
Paulson: Yes and no	Forde: No
<p>law in Christ himself (and alone).¹⁴²[Contrast with the real Forde: “Only when we cease to use law as an escape for the self will we begin to see what law is for here as well. The possibility of a Christian life opens up.”¹⁴³]</p> <p>“Luther’s Christian freedom then means the human is not being freed from hating the law into loving it, or from being accused by the law into being blessed by it. The Christian is being freed, necessarily, from the law altogether.”¹⁴⁴</p> <p>“Forde’s is neither a ‘pro-nomian’ nor an antinomian stance for giving shape to a Christian life as if grace were meant to perfect human nature. Instead, grace allows humans to be liberated from their curved-in life so they can in fact live as God intended them to live – honoring and loving him above all things and serving their neighbors and creation.”¹⁴⁵ [To the contrary, Forde states that the Christian lives under the law, as he states in the adjoining column. The gospel limits and humanizes the law. As Forde writes, we do not have access to eternal law. Common reason is the proper tool for decision-making in God’s left-hand kingdom.]</p>	<p>issue. On the one hand, it speaks of a third use of the law to be applied to the regenerate, but then it goes on to say it is necessary because regeneration is incomplete in this life. It is an attempt to have it both ways and thus threatens only to obscure the issue.”¹⁴⁷</p> <p>“When the end is given we no longer <i>need</i> to be antinomians. This, it seems to me was Luther’s point in all his writings on the matter. Because the end is given we can enter gladly into life under law for the time being, to care for the world, for others, and do battle with sin and the devil.”¹⁴⁸</p> <p>“All of this raises the inevitable question about whether there is not a more ‘positive’ use of the law in Lutheran theology. Here it should be remembered that Lutherans do speak of the ‘civil use’ of the law, the so-called first use. But that use, too, it should be noted, was a use restricted to ‘this age.’ In its civil use the law restrains evil and establishes order for the care of human society. God uses the law in this sense to hold the world in readiness for the gospel and keep it from collapsing into the chaos which threatens it. Under the civil use of law it is quite possible to speak of the goodness and ‘civil righteousness’ of human activity even though it does not reach beyond this age. If this use of the law is overextended, however, if one begins to take the law into one’s own hands in order to bring in one’s own version of the kingdom, tyranny results and resistance must be mounted. Precisely the proper distinction between law and gospel limits and humanizes the law. The purpose of the law in its civil use is to take care of</p>

¹⁴² Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 28.
¹⁴³ Forde, “Justification,” *Christian Dogmatics* 2:420.
¹⁴⁴ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:73.
¹⁴⁵ Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 23.
¹⁴⁷ Forde, “Justification and This World,” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:460, fn.3.
¹⁴⁸ Forde, “Fake Theology: Reflections on Antinomianism Past and Present,” *dialog*, 251.

17. A third use of the law	
Paulson: Yes and no	Forde: No
	<p>the world and of human beings, not to tyrannize them.”¹⁴⁹</p> <p>“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. Reason, i.e., critical investigation using the best available wisdom and analysis of the concrete human situation in given instances, is to be the arbiter in the political use of the law.¹⁵⁰</p>

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18. Freedom	
Paulson	Forde
<p>“True freedom, 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 a new life lived entirely outside the law in any way. 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 freely—without the least protection afforded by food laws and with a heart that no longer listens to its own voice.”¹⁵¹ [Ceremonial law ends in Christ but not the moral law.]</p> <p>“Christian freedom comes from God’s necessity.”¹⁵²</p> <p>“It complicates things for us on earth, especially those of us who are trying hard (sometimes) to</p>	<p>“Both the early and late Luther attacked the idea that Christ is the end of the ritual law but not the whole law. In both the early (1519) and later (1531-36) Galatians lectures he pounded away on this issue whenever he got a chance.¹³ ...The presupposition for true freedom, for Luther, is that Christ is the end of the law in its entirety.”¹⁵⁷ [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 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</p>

¹⁴⁹ Gerhard O. Forde, “Forensic Justification and the Law in Lutheran Theology,” *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue* VII, 300-301. See also *Where God Meets Man*, 110-12.

¹⁵⁰ Forde, “The Viability of Luther Today: A North American Perspective,” *Word & World*, 27.

¹⁵¹ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:198.

¹⁵² Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:174.

¹⁵⁷ Forde, “Called to Freedom,” *The Preached God*, 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.

18. Freedom	
Paulson	Forde
<p>live according to God’s divine plan as revealed in the law.”¹⁵³</p> <p>“But for Luther, the difference between being an ass ridden by Satan or Christ is between two freedoms—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 the law in front of it waiting to be done; the other with the law behind it that is already done.”¹⁵⁴ [Where are Luther’s two kingdoms?]</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 operating above the law, freely, on the basis of God’s absolute necessity – which is the predestination of mercy already given to Paul.”¹⁵⁵ [Here the Christian is said to operate “above the law.” Contrast this with Forde: The Christian lives under the law which has been limited and humanized by the gospel.]</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 freedom that lives outside the law and is utterly free of sin.”¹⁵⁶</p>	<p>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. 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. 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!”¹⁵⁸</p> <p>“First of all, if justification proceeds by way of negation, then the judgment is indeed universal and all causes are relativized. This flows from the very nature of the gospel and cannot be compromised....Secondly, for Luther’s theology, it seems to me that the only way from such universal negation back to the concrete is the way of freedom....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 there are no levers here. If the movement is not one of freedom, 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 very essence 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. Thirdly, I believe it can be argued that justification by faith alone itself and the freedom it creates, drives to utter</p>

¹⁵³ Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 10.

¹⁵⁴ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:189.

¹⁵⁵ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*. 2:367.

¹⁵⁶ Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 28.

¹⁵⁸ Forde, “Called to Freedom,” *A More Radical Gospel*, 259.

18. Freedom	
Paulson	Forde
	<p>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 set free from the tyranny of all universalisms and absolutisms and placed back in time to become a truly historical being, to wait and hope for the coming of the promised Kingdom.”¹⁵⁹</p> <p>“First of all, Luther’s understanding of freedom 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.’ The world of the neighbor, the ‘outer world’ or the left-hand rule of God, 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. There is no room for a self that wants to feed only on its own self. 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.”¹⁶⁰</p>

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19. Reason	
Paulson: No positive role	Forde: The arbiter in God’s left-hand kingdom
<p>“Reason in humans is supposed to elevate them above animals by making their desires into something divine—higher and spiritual—rather than merely instinctual and lowly.”¹⁶¹ [What’s said here about reason is a straw man. For reason’s proper role, see Forde in the adjoining column.]</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? By no means! We establish the law! But if justification proceeds by way of negation it demands a <i>distinction</i> for the time being between what can be seen as God’s two ways of fostering justice: the way of the law and the way of the gospel....First, the distinction</p>

¹⁵⁹ Forde, “The Viability of Luther Today: A North American Perspective,” *Word & World*, 29.

¹⁶⁰ Forde, “Called to Freedom,” *A More Radical Gospel*, 367-68.

¹⁶¹ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 2:196.

19. Reason

Paulson: No positive role	Forde: The arbiter in God’s left-hand kingdom
<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 not yet perfectly fulfilling the law as Christ promised we would—that is, to the extent that he or she is not a Christian.”¹⁶²</p>	<p>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 distinction. Any view which holds to the eschatological nature of the Christian faith will have to make some such distinction....Christ is indeed the end of the law to those who have faith, but the end of the law is not as such its abolishment, but precisely at the same time its establishment. 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, the law is established. The believer returns to the world under the law 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. Reason, i.e., critical investigation using the best available wisdom and analysis of the concrete human situation in given instances, is to be the arbiter in the political use of the law.”¹⁶³</p> <p>“The line between this world and the next is drawn by God’s grace. This establishes the world as a place under the law in which man can live, work, and hope. 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 free for it....This is what it means to say that whereas the kingdom to come is a</p>

¹⁶² Paulson, “Forde Lives!” *The Essential Forde*, 31.

¹⁶³ Forde, “The Viability of Luther Today: A North American Perspective,” *Word & World*, 26-27.

19. Reason	
Paulson: No positive role	Forde: The arbiter in God's left-hand kingdom
	<p>kingdom of grace the kingdom of this world is a kingdom of law....Law belongs to earth, not to heaven. It is natural, not supernatural....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 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. 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."¹⁶⁴</p> <p>"The eschatological vision makes it clear that the secular is our sacred task. It tears the mask from our pretensions and bids us become human beings. 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 absolutely no exceptions. Not even those who undertake revolutions for the sake of so-called 'Christian principles' 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 Luther categorically refused to allow Christ to become a club with which to beat anyone (a 'New Law' as he called it), 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. You don't need Christ, or even the</p>

¹⁶⁴ Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 110-11.

19. Reason	
Paulson: No positive role	Forde: The arbiter in God’s left-hand kingdom
	Bible, necessarily, to tell you what to do in social matters. You have a reason, use it!” ¹⁶⁵

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20. Two Kingdoms	
Paulson: One kingdom?	Forde: Two kingdoms
<p>“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 freedom that lives outside the law and is utterly free of sin. They are meant, then, to do ‘what they want.’”¹⁶⁶</p> <p>[The claim that Christian life now means living outside the law implies antinomianism.]</p>	<p>“The only way to combat the devil, in Luther’s view, the only way to put down and conquer within us that pull either to give in to the world or to desert it, is through the faith and hope inspired by the promise of that world ‘to come.’ When hope is created in the future that God has in store, we begin to see this world as God’s creation. We see this world as the place where we must fight the battle. We see for the first time the monstrous tyranny of the devil and with our eyes wide open and our hearts full of hope we enter the battle. We see that besides the world to come God also has another world—this world—where we are desperately needed. We see that it is time to get to work for ‘the night is far spent....’</p> <p>God’s two kingdoms</p> <p>Luther called this the doctrine of the two kingdoms. The idea is that God has two kingdoms, not just one, and that if one is to get the business of living in this world right, one must note carefully both how they are to be distinguished and how they are to be related....</p> <p>Luther considered a careful distinction between the world to come (God’s kingdom of grace) and this world (God’s creation or kingdom under law) essential to faith. Without the kind of distinctions we have been outlining above, Reformation faith—indeed faith in the gospel as such—simply collapses. If God’s kingdom does not come by</p>

¹⁶⁵ Forde, “The Revolt and the Wedding: An Essay on Social Ethics in the Perspective of Luther’s Theology,” *The Reformation and the Revolution* (Sioux Falls, South Dakota: Augustana College Press, 1970) 85-86.

¹⁶⁶ Mattes and Paulson: “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 28.

20. Two Kingdoms	
Paulson: One kingdom?	Forde: Two kingdoms
	<p>grace alone then all is under the tyranny of law. At the same time the relationship between the two kingdoms must be noted carefully. The kingdom to come does not separate men from this world or teach them to despise it, it rather opens up the world to them as the place in which to express the joy and hope of their faith. It is faith alone that enables us to see the world as <i>God's</i> other kingdom....Faith gives back to us the world we lost through sin."¹⁶⁷</p> <p>“[The two kingdoms doctrine’s] great contribution to the problem of social ethics is exactly to strip men of their mythologies. For the very fact that it insists that whatever other Kingdom there is, the eschatological one comes solely and absolutely by God’s power alone means that the only real task for men is to repent, to turn around and take care of this world as best they know how – without myth, but with reason, love and justice; to be pragmatic: to solve problems concretely.</p> <p>“The eschatological vision makes it clear that the secular is our sacred task. It tears the mask from our pretensions and bids us become human beings. 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 absolutely no exceptions. Not even those who undertake revolutions for the sake of so-called ‘Christian principles’ 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 Luther categorically refused to allow Christ to become a club with which to beat anyone (a ‘New Law’ as he called it), 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</p>

¹⁶⁷ Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 100-102.

20. Two Kingdoms	
Paulson: One kingdom?	Forde: Two kingdoms
	<p>radically. You don't need Christ, or even the Bible, necessarily, to tell you what to do in social matters. You have a reason, use it!¹⁶⁸</p> <p>"Does justification by faith alone spell the end to the human quest for justice? By no means! We establish the law! But if justification proceeds by way of negation it demands a distinction for the time being between what can be seen as God's two ways of fostering justice: the way of the law and the way of the gospel....Here the controversial and variously interpreted 'Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms' comes into view."¹⁶⁹</p> <p>"Precisely because the declaration is unconditional we are turned around to go into the world of the neighbor to carry out our calling as Christians. The works of the Christian are to be done in the world, but not as conditions for salvation. The persistent and nagging debate about the two kingdoms among Lutherans arises mostly out of reluctance to be radical enough. Precisely because the gospel gives the Kingdom of God unconditionally to faith, this world opens up and is given back as the place to serve the other....To the degree that the theological use of law comes to an end in Christ, to that degree a political use of the law for others becomes a possibility."¹⁷⁰</p>

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21. Totally sinful and totally justified at the same time	
Paulson	Forde
<p>"The hidden life of Christians means the struggle of faith that is precisely not the struggle to fulfill the law and reach the final goal of God's absolute self. Faith's struggle is against its own feeling of sin—which is a 'true feeling and thing' versus the absolution of it, which is also true—simul iustus</p>	<p>"We can best attack the problem by asking whether in Luther ... it is possible to discover any distinctive ideas about sanctification or Christian growth. The simul, it is to be recalled, was posited precisely to counter the idea that justification is to be synthesized with ideas of</p>

¹⁶⁸ Forde, "The Revolt and the Wedding" *The Reformation and the Revolution*, 85-86.

¹⁶⁹ Forde, "The Viability of Luther Today. A North American Perspective," *Word & World*, 26.

¹⁷⁰ Forde, "Radical Lutheranism," *Lutheran Quarterly*, 16-17.

21. Totally sinful and totally justified at the same time	
Paulson	Forde
<p>et peccator. Christians are alive in Christ and dead in their own selves. Baptism buries sin, but then a hand of the old zombie pokes out, and a person wonders if the promise meant anything.”¹⁷¹ [What is dealt with here is not the “hidden” life of the Christian but the “internal” life, particularly emotions and feelings. Reflecting on feelings is a matter of psychology, not theology. To focus on feelings is characteristic of Lutheran pietism, but not Forde.]</p> <p>“It is frightening enough to realize that God is not interested in just talking about the world, but is already going about radically changing it.”¹⁷² [This claim that God is radically changing the world is anti-two kingdom talk and foreign to Forde.]</p> <p>“Forde is absolutely convinced of the effectual power of this word – and it alone – to radically transform the world, including sexual practices.”¹⁷³ [Again, to claim that the Word of God, and it alone, radically transforms the world, including sexual practices is anti-two kingdoms and foreign to Forde.]</p> <p>“The Christian is being freed, necessarily, from the law altogether.”¹⁷⁴ [The phrase “is being freed” implies the Christian is partly sinner and partly righteous, rather than totally sinful and totally righteous. To say the Christian is being freed “from the law altogether” overlooks the proper political use of law in God’s left-hand kingdom.]</p> <p>“[T]he law was never given to empower anyone. Just the opposite, law in its proper sense disempowers, incapacitates, encumbers,</p>	<p>progress according to law. The justifying act unmasks and exposes all our pretense about becoming virtuous persons, by the very fact that it is an unconditional divine imputation to be received only by faith. To be justified by God’s act means to become a sinner at the same time. The totality of justification unmasks the totality of being a sinner. Thus the <i>simul iustus et peccator</i> as total states would seem to militate against any talk of progress in sanctification.... There are many utterances of Luther’s which reject all ideas of progress. Sanctification must simply be included in justification because the latter is a total state. Sanctification is simply to believe the divine imputation and with it the totus peccator”¹⁷⁶</p> <p>“Faith, however, born of the imputation of total righteousness, begets the beginnings of honesty as well. Such faith sees the truth of the human condition, the reality and totality of human sin, and has no need to indulge in fictions.”¹⁷⁷</p> <p>“If you lose your ‘virtue,’ what will protect you then? Luther’s advice in such situations was: ‘Be a sinner and sin boldly, but believe even more boldly.’ The point is not to go out and find some sins to commit. The point is rather not to be deceived by the glitter of ideals, of sanctity and piety, by the quest for the Holy Grail. Christ and Christ alone has dealt with sin and saves sinners.”¹⁷⁸</p> <p>“Thus Luther, when he was struggling with both the existential and the systematic aspects of the problem came to the conclusion that all the schemes of movement from sin to righteousness, all thinking exclusively in terms of that legal or</p>

¹⁷¹ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 2:302.

¹⁷² Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 7.

¹⁷³ Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 25.

¹⁷⁴ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:73.

¹⁷⁶ Forde, “Christian Life,” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:430-31.

¹⁷⁷ Forde, “Christian Life,” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:434.

¹⁷⁸ Forde, “Christian Life,” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:438

21. Totally sinful and totally justified at the same time	
Paulson	Forde
<p>exhausts, and enfeebles. This is what Paul means by calling the gospel <i>foolishness</i>: “For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor 1:25).”¹⁷⁵ [1 Cor 1:25 is not about the law but about the Greeks and their understanding of wisdom, and Paul’s understanding of the foolishness of all our thinking.]</p>	<p>moral metaphor, had to be abandoned if grace and justification are to have any reality at all. In the place of all such schemes, in the place of the conditional thinking that always traps us, we must put the absolute simultaneity of sin and righteousness. When God acts upon us with his grace, with his justifying deed, his pronouncement, we become <i>simul iustus et peccator</i>, simultaneously righteous and sinner....Grace is the divine pronouncement itself, the morning star, the flash of lightning exploding in our darkness which reveals all truth <i>simultaneously</i>, the truth about God and the truth about us.¹⁷⁹</p> <p>“‘For if justification is by the law, Christ died to no avail (Gal 2:21).’ When the divine judge speaks his unconditional word, all the world must simply be silent and listen!</p> <p>If we can begin to wrap our minds around that perhaps we can be grasped by the radicality, the audaciousness, the explosiveness of the confessional point. When God imputes righteousness he makes us sinners at the same time. He makes it quite plain that we do not have righteousness in ourselves and never will. By declaring us righteous unilaterally, unconditionally for Christ’s sake, he at the same time unmasks sin and unfaith. By forgiving sin, sin is revealed and attacked at the root in its <i>totality</i>; our unfaith, rebellion, and blindness, our unwillingness to move out of the legal prison, our refusal of life. God’s justification, you see, is fully as opposed to human righteousness and pretense as it is to human unrighteousness. It cuts both ways, both at the ungodly and the super-godly. The battle is not against sin merely as ‘moral’ fault but against sin as ‘spiritual’ fault, against our supposed ‘intrinsic righteousness,’ pretense and hypocrisy, our supposed movement and progress, our substitution of fiction for truth.</p>

¹⁷⁵ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 1:160.

¹⁷⁹ Forde, *Justification by Faith: A Matter of Death and Life*, 29.

21. Totally sinful and totally justified at the same time	
Paulson	Forde
	<p>The totality of the justifying act reveals the totality of sin.¹⁸⁰</p> <p>“The person is ‘transported’ to use a modern idiom, taken away from sin when the radical nature of the justifying act sets the totally just (<i>totus iustus</i>) over against the complete sinner (<i>totus peccator</i>)....”¹⁸¹</p>

* * * * *

22. The gospel limits and humanizes the law	
Paulson: No	Forde: Yes
<p>“Our culture tends to idolize sex – exploit it and not receive it as a gift to be enjoyed and given within divinely established limits.”¹⁸² [“Divinely established limits” = eternal law. This also implies the error of claiming that while the ceremonial law ends in Christ, the moral law does not.]</p> <p>“Indeed, the law ‘hounds’ us until we are in Christ. If the law were endless, one would inevitably believe that one must fashion an end of it for one’s self. Nevertheless, a Christian may affirm that the Mosaic law is still useful – it may agree with ‘natural law,’ for instance. In other words, the gospel permits one to become more natural, to be fully human, living by faith and not driven by a quest for security or self-legitimization.”¹⁸³ [Is the Mosaic law God’s divine plan? -- “those of us who are trying hard (sometimes) to live according to God’s divine plan as revealed in his law” (p.10) -- or human law, as implied here? What is “natural law,” and who determines when “Mosaic law” agrees with “natural law”?]</p> <p>“Forde’s is neither a ‘pro-nomian’ nor an antinomian stance for giving shape to a Christian life as if grace were meant to perfect human</p>	<p>“There is little chance, too, then, of really arriving at a positive attitude to law. For it is the supernatural pretension of law, its unbreakable absoluteness that makes it unbearable and drives man in his endless quest to be rid of it. When it has an end, however, a real end, one can see its positive use. In view of the end in Christ we can see that the law is intended for this world and that a new kind of goodness is possible, a goodness in and for this world, a ‘civil righteousness.’ Faith in the end of the law establishes the law in its proper use.</p> <p>To say this is not, it must be insisted, to defend the status quo or to fall into the old trap of unqualified obedience to the state. That kind of thinking arises only when one has not grasped what faith in the end of the law means — both on the part of its proponents and its critics. For faith in the end of the law leads to the view that its purpose is to take care of this world, not to prepare for the next. That means that we do not possess absolute, unchangeable laws. If the law no longer takes care of this world, it can and must be changed. As even Luther put it, we must write our own decalogue to fit the times. Furthermore, whenever anyone, be he</p>

¹⁸⁰ Forde, *Justification by Faith: A Matter of Death and Life*, 31.

¹⁸¹ Forde, *Justification by Faith: A Matter of Death and Life*, 54.

¹⁸² Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 25.

¹⁸³ Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 25.

22. The gospel limits and humanizes the law

Paulson: No	Forde: Yes
<p>nature. Instead, grace allows humans to be liberated from their curved-in life so they can in fact live as God intended them to live – honoring and loving him above all things and serving their neighbors and creation.”¹⁸⁴ [What is not clearly elucidated here is Forde on law/gospel, namely that the gospel limits and humanizes the law and that common reason is the arbiter in God’s left-hand kingdom.]</p> <p>“The moral life is primarily the business of the ‘old age’ – civil righteousness. Sanctification is not our ascent to God, but God’s descent as new being to us – rearranging us to become spontaneously a neighbor to those in need.”¹⁸⁵ [“Spontaneity” properly understood means the Christian is free from moral absolutes, free from the claim that God’s law is an eternal moral order. The Christian is free to change the law. The Christian is free to use common reason and the best available wisdom. Forde: “Reason ... is to be the arbiter in the political use of the law.”¹⁸⁶]</p> <p>“The law still has much to say to the old Adam or Eve, including the baptized Christian who is not yet perfectly fulfilling the law as Christ promised we would—that is, to the extent that he or she is not a Christian.”¹⁸⁷ [In this statement the Christian is described <i>partim/partim</i> (partly righteous and partly sinful) rather than <i>totus/totus</i>. It incorrectly implies that Christians can and should make progress in fulfilling the law.]</p> <p>“Christ’s kingdom is not ruled or organized by the law but by the gospel. That is, the Christian life is now free from sin and the sting of death (and so Satan’s sermons that try to improve us and promise us glory) because it is free from the law,</p>	<p>reactionary or revolutionary, sets up law or a system by which he thinks to bring in the messianic age, that is precisely the misuse of law against which Christians must protest. That is why, I would think, not even revolution is entirely out of the question for the Christian if that appears the only way to bring about necessary changes. But it must be a revolution for the proper use of the law, for taking care of this world, in the name of purely natural and civil righteousness and not in the name of supernatural pretension. That is to say, it must be a positive revolution and not a revolution of negation.</p> <p>It is too much (or perhaps too little?) to say, I think, that respect for law must be the political religion of the nation. That seems to imply that law is an absolute before which we must all unquestionably bow. It would be better to say that care for the proper use of the law must be our constant and never-ending concern in this world. For we are not called merely to be law-abiding, but to take care of this world, and law must be tailored to assist in that task.”¹⁹³</p> <p>“Covert antinomianism, seen in this light, comes in many different forms. Early in Christian history some tried to accommodate to law by altering the law’s content, arguing that while ceremonial law came to an end with Christ, the moral law did not....Nervousness about the effectiveness of the gospel in the confessional generation of Protestantism resulted in the positing of an added function of the law: a ‘third use’ by the ‘reborn Christian.’ The gospel does make a difference, supposedly, but only such as to add to the function of the law. But the function is really a watering-down and blunting</p>

¹⁸⁴ Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 23.

¹⁸⁵ Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 25.

¹⁸⁶ Forde, “Fake Theology: Reflections on Antinomianism Past and Present,” *dialog*, 249.

¹⁸⁷ Paulson, “Forde Lives!” *The Essential Forde*, 31.

¹⁹³ Forde, “*Lex semper accusat?* Nineteenth-Century Roots of Our Current Dilemma,” *dialog*, 274. See also “*Lex semper accusat?*” *A More Radical Gospel*, 49, and “*Lex semper accusat?*” *The Essential Forde*, 193.

22. The gospel limits and humanizes the law	
Paulson: No	Forde: Yes
<p>thus fulfilling the law without the law as the work and gift of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸⁸ [God’s two kingdoms are here confused. Rather, Christian life now is free from an eternal moral law in God’s left-hand kingdom. Forde: “Precisely the proper distinction between law and gospel limits and humanizes the law.”¹⁸⁹ Moreover, the Christian in this life is always totally sinful and totally justified.]</p> <p>“Instead, one begins trusting that God is providing a new freedom that already starts peeking out in this world.”¹⁹⁰ [Freedom can only “peek out” in this world because Christians are beholden to “God’s law” and “divinely established limits.” In contrast, Forde: “To the degree that the theological use of law comes to an end in Christ, to that degree a political use of the law for others becomes a possibility.”¹⁹¹</p> <p>Forde: “If the law is eternal, there is no distinction between this age and the next, there is no way to speak of the goodness of our actions in and for this age; everything is judged by the moral absolute.”¹⁹²]</p>	<p>of the impact of the law. Instead of ordering and attacking, law is supposed to become a rather gentle and innocuous ‘guide.’ More recent biblical exegetes do something of the same sort when they try to comfort us with the information that to the ancient Israelite law was really not so bad but as part of Torah a blessing.</p> <p>In ethics we seem readily to take to contextualizing, or rather easily modifying, law to accommodate our preferences. No doubt laws do need to be changed to fit the times. But it would seem that they should be changed to attack sin in the new forms it takes, not to accommodate it. Under the guise of concern for ethics, morality, and justice, law is watered down and blunted to accommodate our fancies. When there is no end in sight that is the only way we can make peace with law.</p> <p>But once again, this is fake theology. If overt antinomianism is impossible, covert antinomianism is even more so. It will not work. The law just changes its tack and becomes, if anything, worse. Is there any comfort in the idea that the ceremonial law ends, but not the moral? And what, finally, is the difference between them? Are the first three commandments ceremonial or moral? Does the law attack any less just because theologians say it is a friendly guide? Or does that only make matters worse? Is the idea that Torah was a blessing to ancient Israel of any comfort to a twentieth-century gentile? Have we really escaped from anything by all the contextualizing and interpreting and relativizing? Or have we succeeded only in bringing the voice of despair closer?”¹⁹⁴</p>

¹⁸⁸ Paulson, “Forde Lives!” *The Essential Forde*, 32.
¹⁸⁹ Forde, “Forensic Justification and the Law in Lutheran Theology,” *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII*, 301.
¹⁹⁰ Mattes and Paulson: “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 8.
¹⁹¹ Forde, “Radical Lutheranism,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 16-17.
¹⁹² Forde, “*Lex semper accusat?*” *The Essential Forde*, 192.
¹⁹⁴ Forde, “Fake Theology: Reflections on Antinomianism Past and Present,” *dialog*, 249.

22. The gospel limits and humanizes the law	
Paulson: No	Forde: Yes
	<p>“The gospel, precisely because it is unconditional defeats the devil in both righteous and unrighteous, establishes the end, and thus opens up the possibility for the proper use of the law, a political use, for the time being. This political use of the law, opened to view and established by the gospel of justification by faith alone is, I believe, one of the most significant and at the same time neglected aspects of Luther’s theology in confronting the quest for justice....</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Reason, i.e., critical investigation using the best available wisdom and analysis of the concrete human situation in given instances, is to be the arbiter in the political use of the law.”¹⁹⁵</p>

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23. Homosexuality	
Paulson: Divine moral law	Forde: Harmful to individuals and society
<p>“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. 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.”¹⁹⁶ [Any attempt to counter antinomianism by bringing back “revealed” or “natural” law, even “evangelical counsels,” to</p>	<p>“Some in the church like to argue that since the church has changed its mind on matters like divorce or ordination of women it seems consequent that it could change its stance on sexual behavior as well. But in questions of the civil use of law it is not legitimate to argue that one example of change justifies another. Each case has to be argued individually.</p> <p>“The second thing that needs to be said is that the fundamental concern of the civil use of the law is for the care of the social order. The purpose of laws regulating sexual behavior is to foster healthy, joyous, and socially fruitful relationships and to guard against the social destruction that results from aberrant sexual behavior. The struggle to establish an order within which sexual behavior can be beneficial to society has been a long and arduous one....When</p>

¹⁹⁵ Forde, “The Viability of Luther Today. A North American Perspective,” *Word & World*, 27.

¹⁹⁶ Paulson at a Lutheran CORE meeting, Roseville Lutheran (11/18/2010). Transcript of the CD at 25:52.

23. Homosexuality

Paulson: Divine moral law	Forde: Harmful to individuals and society
<p style="color: red;">settle ethical issues, contradicts the gospel (Galatians 5:1)]</p> <p>“Our culture tends to idolize sex – exploit it and not receive it as a gift to be enjoyed and given within divinely established limits.”¹⁹⁷ [“Divinely established limits” = divine law.]</p> <p>“God giving his heart in Jesus Christ is not a simple matter. It complicates things for us on earth, especially those of us who are trying hard (sometimes) to live according to God’s divine plan as revealed in the law.”¹⁹⁸ [Divine law is here the standard which governs faith and life today.]</p> <p>“By ‘external word’ Luther means the text of Scripture, along with its miraculous bestowal or mediation from one person to another via the office of ministry. That office is the outward office of the Word that utters the two words of God in perfect clarity: first the Law that tells us exactly what to do and judges us; and then the gospel that tells us precisely what Christ thinks of us—apart from the law.”¹⁹⁹ [Here “the Law that tells us exactly what to do” is God’s divine law.]</p> <p>“Forde is absolutely convinced of the effectual power of this word – and it alone – to radically transform the world, including sexual practices.”²⁰⁰ [This is more than a distortion of Forde; it’s a falsification of Forde. It sets up the false expectation of visible transformation in the Christian life. It is anti-two kingdoms and does not take evil in this world seriously.]</p>	<p>there are no controls on or boundaries to sexual activity, sex dominates both religion and social life. Sex is then a means of exercising power and establishing dominance. Advocates for relaxing the traditional Judeo-Christian stand against homosexual behavior often like to argue that such behavior was common and accepted in ancient societies. But a moment’s reflection ought to be sufficient to reveal that such arguments can hardly be advantageous to their cause. Ancients, it seems, were simply not concerned about gender. Boys, women, slaves, could all equally be objects of desire. What was important was to dominate, to penetrate rather than be penetrated. Such considerations ought in any case to be sufficient to waken us to the realization that the civil order itself hangs in the balance in this discussion. It is really not sufficient just to lay claim to a little compassion or to muse a bit about ‘what harm does it do?’ What is being harmed is the very social order itself. And that is the concern of the civil use of the law.</p> <p>“If genital sexual relations between people of the same gender are to be approved and/or blessed, the only way that could be done would be to bring them within something akin (at least) to the estate of marriage. Can this be done in terms consonant with our understanding of the uses of the law? The thesis of this paper is that it cannot.”²⁰¹</p>

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¹⁹⁷ Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 25.

¹⁹⁸ Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 10.

¹⁹⁹ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 2:140.

²⁰⁰ Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 25.

²⁰¹ Forde, “Law and Sexual Behavior,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 9:1 (1995) 8-9, 12; *The Essential Forde*, 155-56, 159.

24. The hiddenness of the Christian life

Paulson	Forde
<p>“Forde is absolutely convinced of the effectual power of this word – and it alone – to radically transform the world, including sexual practices.”²⁰² [This is a falsification of Forde. See comment in previous quote.]</p> <p>“The hidden life of Christians means the struggle of faith that is precisely not the struggle to fulfill the law and reach the final goal of God’s absolute self. Faith’s struggle is against its own feeling of sin—which is a ‘true feeling and thing’ versus the absolution of it, which is also true—<i>simul iustus et peccator</i>. Christians are alive in Christ and dead in their own selves. Baptism buries sin, but then a hand of the old zombie pokes out, and a person wonders if the promise meant anything.”²⁰³ [What is dealt with here is not the “hidden” life but the “internal” life of Christians, particularly emotions and feelings. Reflecting on feelings is a matter of psychology, not theology. To focus on feelings is characteristic of Lutheran pietism, but not Forde.]</p>	<p>“The teachings of Jesus and the injunctions in the Epistles must be viewed in the same light. They are posed from the eschatological perspective. They have to do with what one who is slain and made alive by the eschatological word does and is to do. One cannot expect that such teachings will be generally understood or approved by the children ‘of this age.’ That is not because Christians are so much the paragons of virtue that the world scoffs at their strictness and rigor – that Christians try to be perfect examples of that virtue which the world generally approves but does not want to be ‘too serious’ about. It is rather because the Christian life will be hidden from this world and inexplicable to it. Sometimes – perhaps most of the time – the Christian life will appear to follow quite ordinary, unspectacular courses, no doubt too ordinary for the world. But sometimes it will appear to go quite contrary to what the world would deem wise, prudent, or even ethical. Why should costly ointment be wasted on Jesus? Would it not be better to sell it and give it to the poor? Should not Jesus’ disciples fast like everyone else? Why should one prefer the company of whores and sinners to polite society? Why should a Christian participate in an assassination plot [Bonhoeffer]? The Christian life is tuned to the eschatological vision, not to the virtues and heroics of this world.</p> <p>It has become something of a platitude among religious people that the Sermon on the Mount sets forth the sort of ideal life the world might aspire to and admire. On the contrary, the Sermon on the Mount is one of the most antireligious documents ever written, because of its eschatological perspective....The religious and the virtuous are not on the list and in all likelihood would not wish to be. Indeed, the attempt to break the hiddenness is precisely the dangerous thing....The goodness or</p>

²⁰² Mattes and Paulson, “Introduction: Taking the Risk to Proclaim,” *The Preached God*, 25.

²⁰³ Paulson, *Luther’s Outlaw God*, 2:302.

24. The hiddenness of the Christian life	
Paulson	Forde
	<p>Christianness of one's life should be hidden even from oneself."²⁰⁴</p> <p>"To begin with, to state the obvious, if we are justified <i>sola fide</i> (and here the <i>sola</i> is most important) any attempt so to describe or prescribe what is necessary for Christian existence and the object with which such existence has to do as to make it accessible or given other than to faith alone is a mistake."²⁰⁵</p>

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²⁰⁴ Forde, "Justification and Sanctification," *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:440-401.

²⁰⁵ Forde, "Justification by Faith Alone: The Article by which the Church Stands or Falls?" *dialog* 27 (1988) 264.