



Sola Scriptura Unlocked

—The Scriptural Legacy of Sola Scriptura for the Lutheran Generations in a Constantly Changing Context over Time

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Abstract

The ongoing debate among contemporary Lutheran conservatives and liberals is whether Martin Luther's reform got the reformation once and for all or initiated an active process of continuing reformation. The debate is related to the understanding of Scripture based on Sola Scriptura. Lutheran conservatives, for instance, argue that the Bible is literally true and inerrant and that if certain passages forbid women from speaking in church, then that is divine law that must be followed no matter how changes the context. In this concept, Luther's reform got reformation once in Church history. Contrarily, the liberals, by adopting the historical-critical method, argue the Bible as a historical collection of documents in which different authors addressed specific audiences according to their contexts. They thus view Luther's reform as initiating a dynamic process of continuing reformation. The conservatives' view is hardly convincing as it overlooks contexts in interpreting the Biblical texts. The liberals also have certain shortcomings as suggests different interpretations of the Bible following the change of the context. The way between may be an interpretation of Scripture that can traverse all contexts, and this is not the literal approach of the conservatives nor the context-based approach of the liberals, but the Christological approach to Scripture. In my view, this Christological approach to Scripture is the treasured legacy of Luther's Sola Scriptura which this scholarly essay is dedicated to exploring.

Subject Areas

Philosophy, Theology

Keywords

Martin Luther, Medieval Catholicism, Tradition, Sola Scriptura, Literalism, Fundamentalism, Christocentric, Scriptural Legacy

1. Introduction

In *The Literalist and Fundamentalist Interpretation of the Bible: A Review*, Caleb O. Alu explains biblical literalism and fundamentalism. He argues that “the basic concept of biblical literalism is that the Bible means what it says”. [1] It is related to biblical fundamentalism which is a movement that had its roots in revivalism and came to dominance in North America in the early decades of the twentieth century. As Caleb Alu states, fundamentalists are evangelicals who “interpret the Bible literalistically,” with the focus most often on legalistic morality and eschatology. This is so because they use the prophetic model (This says the Lord) to assert that every single word of the Bible comes directly from God. This results in Fundamentalism holding to the letter of Scripture and can be to some extent pharisaic. This is indeed the view of the Lutheran conservatives as they suggest a literal interpretation of the Bible based on the Reformation tenet of Sola Scriptura that they struggle with an overly literal interpretation of Scripture as infallible. [2] This kind of interpretation, however, puts Christianity at risk as facing the ever-changing context and Scripture that forever remains at the center of the Christian faith and life. This is so because the biblical world and context are sharply distinct from ours, and that causes problems for the literal interpretation and application of the biblical texts with eyes blind to the changing world and context.

The necessity of exploring the Christological interpretation or the Christological approach to Scripture, therefore, is that it is the only interpretation of the Bible based on Luther’s Sola Scriptura principle which can traverse all contexts whenever and wherever without overlooking the scriptural texts like the liberals nor the contexts like the conservatives. To do this, it is wise to investigate the meaning of Sola Scriptura based on its birth context in medieval Catholicism. This investigation is my scholarly contribution to a contemporary theological debate between Lutheran conservatism and liberalism. I think that what we need to do as Lutherans in today’s world is to explore the treasured biblical legacy of Sola Scriptura in which an interpretation of the Bible that can traverse all contexts of human history is discovered. Based on this is the following question directing this article: What is the treasured and greatest scriptural legacy of Sola Scriptura for the Lutheran generations in an ever-changing context over time? This question remains unanswered until Sola Scriptura is unlocked through its birth context (*sitz im leben*) in medieval Catholicism.

2. The Birth Context of Sola Scriptura

Luther’s principle of Sola Scriptura is hardly understood without exploring its birth context, which is the Medieval Christianity. Without an understanding of his background and the ecclesiastical context in which he found himself, it is almost impossible to grasp Luther’s concept of the authority of Scripture which is above the authority of religious institutions and traditions. [3] The ecclesiastical landscape in the so-called period “Middle Ages” which was a long period

that lasted for a thousand years, from the 5th to 15th century, is the context that gave birth to Luther's Sola Scriptura. In a single picture, the Church of Christ within such a period of the Middle Ages crawled in darkness because the Scripture which the Psalmist asserts as a lamp for feet and a light for path was marginalized. [4] This resulted in the explosion of the Reformation which is viewed as ushering in a new era as does the sunny spring day after a severe cold winter. [5] Mathison gives a clear outline of the contextual background of medieval Christendom in which Luther's Sola Scriptura was birthed, the basis and starting point of such a context was the concept of Church Traditions.

2.1. The Rise of Tradition in Early Christianity and Its Subsequent Development

In the aftermath of first-century Christianity, the biggest challenge that the Church affronted was heresy. Thus, the contribution of the church fathers from this period onward is not surprising, as they were apologists defending the Apostolic teaching against the heretics. Such a context evoked the concept of tradition in Early Christianity. Facing the various heresies that widely spread, it was important to give an interpretation of the written Scripture which must have been properly in accord with the Apostolic belief and proclamation, and this is what is called "Tradition". In the following quote, Pelikan gives an example of how tradition functioned as an apology of the church fathers against the heresies.

What the Christian tradition had done was to take over the Jewish Scriptures as its own... some of the passages were contained only in the Christian Old Testament. So assured were Christian theologians in their possession of the Scriptures that they could accuse the Jews not merely of misunderstanding and misinterpreting them, but even of falsifying scriptural texts. When they were aware of differences between the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Septuagint, they capitalized on these to prove their accusation that the Jews had taken away many Scripture passages from the translations carried out by the seventy elders. Of special importance was the Septuagint translation of the virgin in Isaiah 7:14 which had been adopted by the New Testament and was canonized by early Christian writers. [6]

In the second to the fifth century, such tradition remained an apology of the church fathers in their combat against the false teachers of the church. But, as time developed, it was also highlighted as part of the tradition, the baptismal assent of the catechumens which refers to these three things: the limit or determination of faith; the exposition of faith, and the rule of faith (Regula Fidei). [7] The tradition so far is marked by two things, first, it is not viewed as having the same level of authority as the Scripture; second, it is done in the church and by the church to ensure its apostolicity on the ground of the apostolicity of the church. Toward the end of the fifth century, however, a new phase of tradition appeared which was labeled as Tradition II to differentiate it from the first

phase, Tradition I. The hallmark of this tradition II is that it was viewed as having the same level of authority as Scripture or even above the authority of Scripture. According to Keith Mathison, such a Tradition II was a two-source concept of Scripture—one that allows for an extra-scriptural revelation as authoritative as Scripture itself. Mathison argues that this two-source position, or “Tradition II,” is possibly indicated in the writings of both Basil and Augustine, and it is certain that this understanding of tradition would have been foreign to the earliest church fathers.

Tradition I and Tradition II evolved during the Middle Ages, but Tradition II came to its ultimate point from the High Middle Ages onwards. But before looking at this, let us see how Oberman clearly distinguishes between Traditions I and II. On Tradition I, Oberman explains:

Tradition. In the first case, the sole authority of Holy Scripture is upheld as the canon, or standard, of revealed truth in such a way that Scripture is not contrasted with Tradition. Scripture, it is argued, can be understood only within the Church and has been understood within the Church by the great doctors specifically committed to the task of interpretation of Scripture and especially endowed with the gift of understanding this unique source of truth. The history of obedient interpretation is the Tradition of the Church. [8]

And on Tradition II, he continues explaining:

In the second case, Tradition is a wider concept. It is argued that the Apostles did not commit everything to writing, usually on the grounds that the scriptural authors reported what Christ said and did during His lifetime but not what Christ taught His disciples in the period between the resurrection and the ascension. During these forty days, oral Tradition originated which is to be regarded as a complement to scripture, handed down to the Church of later times as a second source of revelation.

And at the end, Oberman summarizes that:

In the first case, Tradition was seen as the instrumental vehicle of Scripture which brings the contents of Holy Scripture to life in a constant dialogue between the doctors of Scripture and the Church. In the second case, Tradition was seen as the authoritative vehicle of divine truth, embedded in Scripture but overflowing in an extra-scriptural apostolic tradition handed down through episcopal succession.

2.2. Tradition II in the High Middle Ages (1000-1250 CE) and the Origin of the Papal Infallibility (1150-1350 CE)

What Oberman argues here gives us an indication that Tradition I gives importance to the doctors of Scripture in the Church while Tradition II to the Roman Pontiffs as visible heads of the church guaranteeing the handing down of the extra-scriptural Apostolic tradition. It is thus clear that the accentuation of Tradi-

tion II resulted in papal infallibility in medieval Catholicism. This is so as such Tradition II (the extra-scriptural apostolic tradition)—which is now in the hand of the Pontiffs—is viewed as the same level of authority as the written Scripture, and then it must mean that the written Scripture and the Roman Pontiffs are now on the same level of authority, and as such, both are infallible. The First Vatican Council in 1870 gave a detailed formulation of the doctrine of papal infallibility:

We teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex-cathedra*, that is, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the Universal Church, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith or morals: and that therefore such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irrefragable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church. [9]

It is evident from what is stated here that the papal infallibility is on the basis of the supreme Apostolic authority stemming from Peter, which means that the authority of the Roman Pontiffs is parallel with the authority of the Scripture. Thence, as Oberman stated, Tradition II—on which laid the papal infallibility—was also the Word of Christ orally transmitted by the Apostles but left unwritten in the Scripture.

By talking about the authority of the Roman Pontiffs, it is crucial to talk about the church itself, particularly its institutionality. As previously stated, the supreme Apostolic authority of the pontiffs is derived from Peter. This is related to the Catholic Church doctrines on the Petrine Foundation of the Church and the Apostolic Succession where the Apostle Peter is viewed as the Vicar of Christ on earth whose authority from Christ has been transmitted to the succeeding pontiffs in the history of the Catholic Church. The doctrine of the Petrine Foundation of the Church and the Apostolic Succession rendered the medieval Catholic Church a hierarchical institution with the popes as its head. When we are referring to medieval Catholicism, there is, on one hand, the authority of Scripture and its Apostolic interpretations (Tradition I), and on the other hand, the authority of the Church as an institution under the governance of the popes (Tradition II). According to Tierney, it has already been debated since the 13th century that if there is a contradiction between those two authorities, which one should be followed? Tierney asserts that in view of Scripture which is recording the divine truth once and for all and the living voice of the Church, in case of conflict, a man ought to follow the teaching of Scripture or the teaching of the Church? [10]

The *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture Alone) was raised within this context as Luther's response. This is so because the case is that in the late medieval period, the conflict between Scripture and the Church occurred in the area of salvation and justification. The Church under the authority of the pontiff taught that salvation is

gained by good works and the purchasing of the indulgence letters, but according to Scripture, it is freely offered in Christ through faith alone. In the first stage of his life, Luther was not aware of this conflict, but he was totally dependent on the teaching of the Church to find a response to his conscience which unstoppably tormented him due to his sins. But as he never found such a response in the teaching of the Church, he jumped to the teaching of Scripture and there he found a response when he taught the Epistle of Romans and found in chapter 1 verse 17 about justification by faith alone. Since then, the young Luther was aware of the dichotomy between the teaching of the Church and that of the Scripture and began to realize the decay of Medieval Catholicism. Luther lived his new experience with the teaching of the Scripture, wrote and also preached about it, and the people hearing him felt hearing a new voice and new message, the true Gospel. In Worm, Luther was requested to recant his books regarding his new teachings, but he defended the proposition that Scripture is the supreme authority (*Sola Scriptura*):

Since then Your Majesty and Your Lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. [11]

3. The Heart of *Sola Scriptura* on the Basis of Its Birth Context

3.1. *Sola Ecclesia Romanus Versus Sola Scriptura*

It is perceived here that the specific context of *Sola Scriptura* is the question of salvation and justification. As stated above, it began with Luther's personal experience as he was in deep yearning for God's salvation for the sake of his sin. When the young Luther was struck by thunder on the road to Erfurt, he thought that it was a sign of God's anger because of his sin, and God's call to him into a monastery. [12] Prior to his discovery of justification by faith alone, Luther's life was marked by the torment of his conscience which rendered him passionately seeking all the possible means of the salvation of God in the Catholic Church of his day. [13] Deming affirms that:

Luther gave himself over wholeheartedly to seeking salvation by the standard methods of the Roman Catholic faith. He fasted, sometimes for three days in a row. Later, he wrote that during this period of time, he nearly killed himself with endless vigils, prayers, and work. According to the Catholic doctrine, ..., sinners confessed their sins to priests who, as representatives of Christ, administered God's power of forgiveness. Luther drove himself crazy confessing his sins. He confessed daily, sometimes for as long as six hours at a time. Luther tried to find salvation in the most approved later medieval fashion by the strictest asceticism. [14]

Luther's entire effort to gain God's salvation in this way, however, was in vain, and his conscience continued accusing him of breaking God's laws. He even felt angry with God for having established a system for forgiveness of sins in the Church, like the sacrament of Penance, which did not work for him. [15] He then continued struggling until he found in Scripture justification by faith alone. But, before viewing this, I glance shortly at the doctrine of salvation according to medieval scholastic soteriology.

When studying medieval soteriology, the first thing that can be surely affirmed is that the nature of Christ's saving act on the cross was never defined in theological discourse. [16] On the basis of Luther's experience, medieval soteriology was grounded on those three things, the sacrament of penance, performing good works, and the purchase of the indulgence letters. Foremost, the doctrine of papal infallibility extends to the issue of salvation, because when the Roman pontiff spoke from *Ex Cathedra* on the virtue of his apostolic authority, it must have been accepted as true and trustable. When thus Pope Urban II in 1095 CE decreed indulgence as a remission of sins, it was believed true indeed, [17] that, if any man purchases letters of indulgence, his soul may rest secure with respect to his salvation. [18] Besides, good work was also believed a means of salvation in medieval soteriology. This might have a background in earlier scholastic theology but in the medieval socioeconomic context, the phrase *fides caritate formata* (faith formed by love) prompted human beings to get merit for salvation through good deeds and charitable activity. [19] This relates to what James Ginther states as the cooperative component of salvation in medieval soteriology, meaning one must work out for one's own salvation, including the act of asceticism in monastic life to control the body so that the mind focuses on God. [20] A sacramental salvation system was also a remarkable hallmark of medieval soteriology according to which the church was viewed as established by God as the sole dispenser of the salvific medicine of divine saving grace to humanity plagued by sin. [21]

This is a summary of the doctrine of salvation in medieval Catholicism which rendered the Catholic Church to be considered as the only means of God's salvation in the late Middle Ages. This resulted in the principle of *Sola Ecclesia Romana*—meaning only the Church of Rome has the means for granting and issuing salvation. [22] Yet, for Luther, this did not work, and instead of the Church of Rome, it was the Scripture that saved him when he taught the Epistle of Romans and found in 1:17 the true nature of the Gospel that: “to be set right with God is—to live at peace with him not by virtue of one's own righteousness, but by the sovereign grace of God in Christ reconciling his world to himself—to be justified by faith.” [23] Thus, for Luther, *Sola Ecclesia Romanus* in medieval Catholicism was replaced by *Sola Scriptura* whose heart is the living Christ as the center of God's salvation and justification for the sinners. Such a medieval soteriological context was the birth context (*sitz im leben*) of Luther's *Sola Scriptura*, this is also the reason for its Christocentricity because Christ and his saving ac-

tivity are the only means of God's salvation (Christological Soteriology). As the Christocentric understanding of Scripture, Sola Scriptura is now becoming a new lens through which Luther viewed the Church of Rome and drove him to criticize the foundation of medieval Catholicism, the Petrine Foundation of the Church. I proceed to this.

3.2. Sola Scriptura: Christocentric Interpretation of Scripture

By Sola Scriptura, Luther rejected the religious institution of medieval Catholicism starting from the Petrine Foundation of the Church according to medieval scholastic theology. Instead of the Petrine Foundation, Luther accentuated the Christic Foundation of the Church. By this, he attacked the reference in Scripture where the Petrine Foundation of the Church in Catholic theology is grounded, Matthew 16: 18, stating: "You are Peter and upon this rock, I will build my Church". [24] Instead of seeing the verse 18 in Matthew 16, Luther sees the verse 16 which points to Christ as the Living Son of God. He thus challenged John Eck in the Leipzig debate on the papal succession and said that the Church was not founded upon Peter, "for no man can lay other Foundation than that was laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3: 11). In his Christic Foundation of the Church then Luther audaciously claimed that to deny Christ as a head and Foundation of the Church is a departure from Christ. [25] This also is related to his denial of the famous assertion of Cyprian of Carthage about *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (no salvation outside the Church), but Luther argued that salvation might exist outside the Church, but not outside Christ. [26] It is worth noting that what Luther had in mind here is the Church as a hierarchical institution like medieval Catholicism, that is, the religious institution, but not the Church as the eschatological people of God which is the communion of believers in which the Word of God is purely preached and the sacrament is rightly administered according to the Scripture. [27] This latter is Luther's definition of the Church.

It is therefore evident that Luther's Sola Scriptura is an Apostolic interpretation of Scripture in the context of the medieval Church, and as such it is in line with Tradition I in the previous Oberman's elucidation of Traditions. Since Sola Scriptura is the apostolic interpretation of Scripture, the question is its apostolicity, in what sense can it be stated that Sola Scriptura is apostolic? The answer to such a question is relative to the Christic Foundation of the Church mentioned above because instead of the Petrine Foundation which is papocentric, Christic Foundation is Christocentric, and this Christocentrism is its Apostolicity. It means that Sola Scriptura is apostolic because it is Christocentric. This also implies that the hallmark of the apostolic interpretation of Scripture is not that such interpretation is literal in the sense of legalism, but it is Christocentric. [28] This does not mean that Luther did not talk about a literal understanding of Scripture, but for him, as Giovanni Tortoriello notes, the literal sense of Scripture is always Christocentric and Gospel-centric. [29]

Related to this, Schmidt argues that based on its Christocentrism, Sola Scriptura has Solus Christus (Christ Alone) as its bedrock. [30] Luther himself highlights the Scripture as the cradle of Christ, and thus Huijgen argues that “without Solus Christus, Sola Scriptura is unthinkable” [31] as Luther said: “Take Christ out of Scriptures and what more will find in them”. [32] Jesus Christ is the heart, center, and essence of Scripture, and such Christ-centeredness determines Scripture’s normative authority for the Church. The authority of Scripture is the authority of Christ which firmly stands against the authority of religious institutions. It is thus evident when Luther and other reformers accused medieval Catholicism—the Church as an institution headed by the popes—of “having completely broken with the Gospel and even more radically with the teaching of Christ and the apostles”. [33] On Romans 10: 4, Luther says that this passage indicates “that all Scripture finds its meaning in Christ.” It is similar to John 5: 39 says Scriptures bearing witness to Christ, and Luke 24: 27 about Christ’s Christocentric interpretation of the Scriptures.

4. The Scriptural Legacy of Sola Scriptura for the Lutheran Generations in an Ever-Changing Context

As stated in the introduction, according to the biblical literalism of Caleb Alu, fundamentalists “interpret the Bible literalistically with the focus most often on legalistic morality.” The Christological approach to Scripture grounded on the Christocentric feature of Sola Scriptura, however, is a severe critique of such legalistic morality, which is the view of theonomy as a means of salvation. [34] Because of this, Luther’s Sola Scriptura is not the understanding of Scripture as infallible in every aspect of human life and a lens of Christian moral ethics with respect to salvation. But the purpose of the Scripture is to point solely to Christ as God’s salvation for humanity and to build a personal relationship and active communication between the living God and humans grounded on the living Christ and his salvation. This is so because for Luther, in Scripture the believers meet the living Christ in person. [35] Sola Scriptura thus is strictly against legalism which evokes literal conformity with the biblical laws for salvation and spiritual growth, but it understands Scripture as Christ-centered as God’s salvation and justification for the sinners, as Luther said: “that all the Scriptures point to Christ alone”, he confirms this in his other writing: “All of Holy Scripture, from beginning to end, points solely to Christ as our Source of grace and truth.” [36] According to Spivey, the legalist interpretation of Scripture was forged by Luther’s co-reformer, Calvin, in his textual approach to Scripture. [37]

By interpreting the Bible via the Sola Scriptura principle, the Lutheran literalists adopt the Calvinist textual approach and appeal to the literal conformity with the unchanged written rules in a time-to-time changing context. The problem of this textual approach to Sola Scriptura, however, is the attempt to put in Luther’s mouth what he did not say about the Scripture, the literal conformity

with the written rules to receive the grace of God. Martin Luther did not understand Scripture this way, but his understanding of Scripture is in the context of Christological soteriology alone, that is, salvation in Christ. This means that the greatest legacy of Luther's Sola Scriptura for the Lutheran generations living in changing contexts over time is not the biblical literalism nor fundamentalism, but the Christocentric understanding of Scripture, meaning, Christ as present in every biblical passage. This is indeed the Christological approach to Scripture which suggests Christ being present in every text of the Scripture, even those containing God's laws, He is still present as the one who has already fulfilled those laws. The task of the theologians and preachers then is to discover Christ in every biblical passage and to do this, it is necessary to adopt, not the Calvinist/literalist textual approach, but Luther's Christic approach, that is, Christ in the text rather than the text by itself. Any text of the Scripture is meaningful only in the condition that it points to Christ, as quoted before, Luther said to Erasmus: "Take Christ out of Scriptures and what more will find in them"; that is, "without Christ, the Bible would be empty, with Him, it is the door to heaven". [38]

Luther is rich in asserting the entire Bible as pointing to Christ in his division of the Scripture into two: Law and Gospel. As Markus Wriedt notes "By law, Luther understands all statements of Scripture that uncover the sin of humans and accuse them, in contrast, the gospel includes all statements that promise comfort, redemption, and the grace of God." [39] Not only the gospel, however, points to Christ, but also the Law, because still according to Luther, essentially, Christ's salvation cannot be understood without the law, the lasting importance of the law lies in its exposing humanity's sinful nature (Wriedt, p. 107). Because by law, the reference is always the Old Testament, Sidney Greidanus perceives some shortcomings in Luther's Christological approach to Scripture, affirms: Besides our praise of Luther's method, we also need to consider some shortcomings. First, Luther's Christological method may lead to reading Christ back into the Old Testament text... Luther's concentration on preaching Christ may lead to a slighting of other fundamental revelations in the Old Testament: What about God's good creation, human stewardship of God's earth, redemptive history, the coming Kingdom of God in the Old Testament, the value of God's law for Christian living? [40]

If this is what is called shortcomings in Luther's Christological approach to Scripture, it is quite disputable. Smith reports Vanhoozer opining that biblical stories, commands, songs, promises, prophecies, and didactic discourse mediate God's communicative action in different ways, but they all share the Church North Star: Jesus Christ [41]. This is indeed the principle of Luther's Sola Scriptura which sees Christ in every corner of the Scriptural texts, as he himself once declared: "The whole Scripture is about Christ alone everywhere." Only the living Christ makes the Scripture never outmoded regardless of how changing the context is and how advanced are the human technologies and intellectualities.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, Sola Scriptura is far from a literal understanding of the Scripture. Martin Luther did not understand the Bible legalistically, but spiritually, that is, Christ-centered. This is so because the birth context of Sola Scriptura is the area of salvation in Medieval Catholicism as Luther struggled with his sin and strongly yearned for God's salvation. He found salvation, but not in what the church of his day believed as a means of salvation which was outside Christ; but for Luther, it is in Jesus Christ alone that God's salvation for the sinners is found according to the Scriptural testimony. Regarding this, the heart of his Sola Scriptura principle is Christ as the center of God's salvation and justification for sinners according to the Scripture. Based on this, the scriptural legacy that Luther left for the Lutheran generations in a changing context via Sola Scriptura is undoubtedly the Christological interpretation and understanding of the Scripture, meaning, the Christocentric approach to the Scripture. As stated above, Luther is often accused of being an antinomian disregarding Biblical laws for Christian ethics and good works since he did not understand the Bible legalistically. This accusation, however, has no foundation because Luther is far from rejecting good works. [42] He also was not an antinomian because he wrote *Against the Antinomians* in 1539 to oppose his former student Johan Agricola. [43] What Luther stated in this book was codified in the Formula of Concord (1577) in which the threefold usage of law is described: revealing sin, establishing general moral decency in society, and providing a rule of holy life for the regenerate. [44] In the next article, I will explain these usages of the laws and the concept of law-gospel dialectic in Luther's theology.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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