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Thomas K. Johnson

Law and Gospel

The Hermeneutical / Homiletical Key to Reformation Theology and Ethics

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The differences between the Lutheran and Reformed traditions in such matters as liturgy, architecture, and church polity have led some observers to think there must be substantial differences between the theology and ethics of their important figureheads – Martin Luther and John Calvin. This impression of substantial differences became more pronounced because of the unresolved debates at the Marburg Colloquy (1529). It is now common for people to think Luther and Calvin had very significantly different points of view on such diverse areas as the meaning of predestination, the relationship between the two natures of Christ, the extent of the atonement, and the nature of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. However, while there were some real theological differences between Calvin and Luther, which seem very large because of large differences in personality, culture, and literary style, there is also a truly massive degree of agreement in the realm of theology and ethics. This agreement is especially true concerning the questions that were always prominent in the Protestant tradition – the relationship between law and gospel. Indeed, the significant similarity between Luther and Calvin on this set of questions did much to establish patterns and standards for what came to be regarded as truly high quality teaching and writing on theology and ethics in the entire Protestant tradition. For this reason, it is wise to see the relationship between law and gospel as a hermeneutical/homiletical key to Reformation theology and ethics, both in the *historical sense* of being the key to understand the Reformation proclamation of the Christian message and in the *normative sense* of setting a pattern for those who wish to reappropriate the Reformation heritage for late modernity. The Reformation understanding of law and gospel provides a necessary key for understanding the biblical message, proclaiming the biblical message both in church and society, providing balanced and authentic pastoral care, and relating the classical evangelical faith to the questions of culture and politics.

Some Differences

To avoid misunderstanding, it is good to describe some of the real differences between Luther and Calvin. One of these differences is at the level of liter-

ary style and method. Calvin labored to achieve elegance of expression and an orderly arrangement of his teaching. With this in mind, just the Table of Contents of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* forms a worthy study in itself, giving a significant overview of how he thought the various themes in Christian proclamation should be connected to each other. Consistent with this desire, Calvin was very concerned not to be repetitive in his writing. In his commentaries, to avoid repetition, he will often refer the reader to one of his previous works if he believes he has already given a satisfactory exposition of a particular biblical text or theological theme. Also, Calvin had in mind a clear distinction between writing systematically about theology and ethics and writing biblical exegesis. He represented the Renaissance care for precision in dealing with historical texts, and he saw a real difference between giving an overview of how Christians should think about a topic and interpreting particular biblical texts that might contribute to such an overview of Christian teaching. Therefore, to appreciate Calvin's total perspective on a topic, one needs to turn to his *Institutes,* not primarily to his biblical commentaries.

In contrast, Luther did not keep this clear distinction between exegesis and theology. In his *Lectures on Galatians,* he often digresses from the text of Galatians to bring in many other biblical texts and generally tells his students all that he thinks they should know that is in any way connected to the themes mentioned in a biblical text. In a certain sense, his *Lectures on Galatians* are lectures on faith and life in light of the biblical book of Galatians, not merely an exegetical study in the Pauline book. Luther had a tremendously systematic, orderly, logical mind, but his desire to tell his students and readers all about the riches of the Christian gospel constantly breaks his orderly presentation. This gives Luther's book a somewhat repetitive character, though decidedly not a monotonous character. Luther's repetition is always filled with joy, life, and gratitude to such an extent that his repetitions are always lively and interesting.

Behind the difference in literary style between Luther and Calvin lies a difference in personality so great that it would be easy to mistake it for a difference in fundamental theology. Lewis Spitz summarized this difference very nicely:

> *Calvin and Luther were temperamentally quite different. The younger man was shy to the point of diffidence, precise and restrained, except for sudden flashes of anger. He was severe, but scrupulously just and truthful, self-contained and somewhat aloof. He had many acquaintances but few intimate friends. The older man was sociable to the point of volubility, free and open, warm and cordial with people of all stations of life. But in spite of their differences in personality, Calvin and Luther retained a mutual respect for*

each other that was rooted in their confessional agreement.[1]

Spitz describes a "confessional agreement" between Luther and Calvin that is deeper than the many disagreements. This is precisely what we find when looking at their respective views of the relationship between law and gospel – a profound level of agreement that is sometimes covered over by differences in terminology that are probably rooted in their different personalities and life experiences. A careful examination of key texts by Luther and Calvin shows a remarkable similarity on this central set of questions, and part of that agreement is *that* the relationship between law and gospel is central for evangelical theology and ethics. Luther's key text on this subject is his great *Lectures on Galatians* from 1535. Calvin's *Galatians Commentary* of 1548 can serve as a convenient point of comparison, but Calvin's commentary must be supplemented by sections of his *Institutes* to comprehend his entire perspective because of the differences in literary method already noted.

The Centrality of the Relationship between Law and Gospel

Most theologians recognize that Luther thought the relationship between law and gospel is central to the Christian proclamation. Indeed, for Luther, the ability to distinguish properly between law and gospel is what qualifies a theologian as a theologian:

> *Therefore whoever knows well how to distinguish the gospel from the law should give thanks to God and know that he is a real theologian. I admit that in the time of temptation I myself do not know how to do this as I should.*[2]

The real problem in Christian theology up to and including Luther's time was the failure to make this crucial distinction between law and gospel:

> *You will not find anything about this distinction between the law and the gospel in the books of the monks, the canonists, and the recent and ancient theologians. Augustine taught and expressed it to some extent. Jerome and others like him knew nothing at all about it. In other words, for many centuries there has been a remarkable silence about this in all the schools and churches. This situation has produced a very dangerous condition for consciences.*[3]

For Luther, the distinction between law and gospel was no mere theoretical abstraction; it was an existential reality of the highest import. It was the heart of the Christian faith and the Christian life; it was the key to keeping the gospel pure and to distinguishing authentic Christianity from distorted versions of the faith and from non-Christian religions. Therefore, "let every Christian learn diligently to distinguish between

the law and the gospel."[4] Without this distinction, people tend to either fall into despair, thinking they cannot earn God's favor on the basis of the law, or else they fall into false confidence, presuming they have earned God's favor by means of keeping the law. However, making the proper distinction is not a matter of memorizing the proper terms or using certain words; it is more like an art than a science or a technique. The real distinction has to be made in the midst of the ongoing experience of life. "Anyone who knows this art well would deserve to be called a theologian."[5]

Not all theologians and historians have recognized the centrality of the relationship between law and gospel in the thought of Calvin. This is probably because Calvin does not make so many sweeping statements about this being the key ability that qualifies a person as a theologian. Further, Calvin does not say a large amount on this theme in the table of contents of his *Institutes* or in the titles of his other books. Nevertheless, a clear distinction between law and gospel was something Calvin learned from Luther and the other first generation Reformers. This distinction became a normative part of the structure of his thought. The way this is seen in Calvin is by observing how he interprets the writings of the apostle Paul, which he saw as normative for all Christians. Calvin wrote: "[Paul] is continually employed in contrasting the righteousness of the law with the free acceptance which God is pleased to bestow."[6] Because Calvin does not like to repeat himself, just this statement would suffice to make the reader expect that Calvin saw the difference between the righteousness of the law and the free righteousness of the Gospel as truly central to Christian theology and ethics.

The fact that Calvin saw the distinction between law and gospel as truly central to authentic faith can be seen in his statements on Christian liberty. Calvin commented on the actions of the apostle Peter described in Galatians chapter 2:[7]

> *Peter had withdrawn himself from the Gentiles in order to drive them from the communion of the Church, unless they would relinquish the liberty of the gospel and submit to the yoke of the law.[8] To bind the consciences of godly men by an obligation to keep the law, and to bury in silence the doctrine of liberty, was to purchase unity at an exorbitant price.[9]*

Commenting on Abraham's faith, Calvin explained:

> *For faith, – so far as it embraces the undeserved goodness of God, Christ with all his benefits, the testimony of our adoption which is contained in the gospel, – is universally contrasted with the law, with the merit of works, and with human excellence.[10]*

Calvin sounds a lot like Luther when he summarizes:

We see then that the smallest part of justification cannot be attributed to the law without renouncing Christ and his grace.[11]

The Gospel

Very clearly the relationship between law and gospel was a central, really the central, question in theology and ethics for both Luther and Calvin. To understand this more fully, we need to see what each meant under the term "gospel."

According to Luther, justification by faith alone is the key to the Christian message. By faith (which especially means *trust* in the promise which is the gospel) a person is united with Christ and received by Christ so that Christ's righteousness becomes his/her own and the believer is declared righteous by God. While the legal status of being justified, according to Luther, is an enduring, stable situation in relation to God, a person's faith is always dynamic. This means that the believer may only be aware of his/her status of justification to the extent that the believer trusts in the promise of the gospel. Luther offered many short summaries of the gospel, of which a couple will suffice:

If it is true faith, it is a sure trust and firm acceptance in the heart. It takes hold of Christ in such a way that Christ is the object of faith, or rather not the object of faith but, so to speak, the one who is present in the faith itself.[12]

But the work of Christ, properly speaking, is this: to embrace the one whom the law has made a sinner and pronounced guilty, and to absolve him from his sins if he believes the gospel. "For Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified" (Rom. 10:4); He is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).[13]

Calvin's gospel is recognizably the same gospel as that proclaimed by Luther, though Calvin used somewhat different language. Salvation is accomplished solely by the work of Christ; salvation is received solely by faith. Commenting on Galatians 2:15 and 16 ("We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ."), Calvin observed:

Since the Jews themselves, with all their advantages, were forced to betake themselves to the faith of Christ, how much more necessary was it that the Gentiles should look for salvation through faith? Paul's meaning therefore is: "We . . . have found no method of obtaining salvation, but by believing in Christ: why, then, should we prescribe another method to the Gentiles?"[14]

Calvin continues, "We must seek justification by the faith of Christ, because we cannot be justified by works."[15]

Obviously there is much about the gospel as preached by both Luther and Calvin that is worthy of a detailed study. These short summaries suffice

to show that both Luther and Calvin understood the gospel by means of a contrast to the law as a means of attaining a proper relationship with God. To believe in the gospel is the direct opposite of seeking to achieve a proper relationship with God by means of following the law or any other form of human "works."

Faith and Works

Students of Calvin know that he described the third and primary use of God's law as that of giving guidance to the life and works that follow from faith in the gospel. This was one of Calvin's ways of saying that real faith leads to a distinct type of life. Luther may have suffered more misunderstandings than did Calvin on this topic; therefore, it will be valuable to see the similarities in their ways of describing the type of "works," meaning style and type of life, which follows from true Christian faith.

From the early days of the Reformation movement, Luther was sometimes misunderstood to be saying that if people do not need to earn their eternal salvation by doing good works or following the moral law, then people are free from all moral restraint – really free to do whatever they might want. This antinomian misunderstanding of Luther's teaching threatened to contribute to the widespread social chaos of the time, which was not at all what Luther desired. As early as 1520 in his treatise *The Freedom of the Christian,* Luther clearly rejected any antinomianism with his ear-catching ironic thesis that, in addition to being a perfectly free lord of all, each Christian is also a perfectly dutiful servant of all. Luther claimed that true faith in Christ moves people to love and serve others within the context of the everyday social structures, without any rejection of the moral law. Faith leads to good works, and if real faith is present, good works can be expected to follow. Luther used very careful words to articulate his convictions:

> *Therefore we, too, say that faith without works is worthless and useless. The papists and the fanatics take this to mean that faith without works does not justify, or that if faith does not have works, it is of no avail, no matter how true it is. That is false. But faith without works – that is, a fantastic idea and mere vanity and a dream of the heart – is a false faith and does not justify.*[16]

Luther interpreted the papists, meaning the official representatives of the Roman Catholic Church of his time, to be saying that works were necessary in order to be justified, and that this doctrine was the central religious and ethical problem of "the papists." Luther also thought that the "fanatics," his term for parts of the Anabaptist movement, followed the papists at this most important point – a claim that has not

always received significant attention from later scholars. Luther responded that good works would always follow any justification that is authentic, but such good works do not contribute to one's justification.

In addition to holding a different view of the relation between faith and works, Luther also claimed to teach a different view of what constitutes an appropriate Christian "good work." Previously, he had done works that were explicitly *religious* in nature; he had entered a monastery, fasted, gone on pilgrimages, spent long hours in confessing sins, and physically denied himself.[17] But after coming to the Reformation version of his faith, he taught that good works were practiced primarily in the everyday world:

> *For such great blindness used to prevail in the world that we supposed that the works which men had invented not only without but against the commandment of God were much better than those which a magistrate, the head of a household, a teacher, a child, a servant, etc., did in accordance with God's command.*[18]

The good works that should follow from and be the result of justification by faith are those commanded by God in the Word within the everyday created orders:

> *Surely we should have learned from the Word of God that the religious orders of the papists, which alone they call holy, are wicked, since there exists no commandment of God or testimony in Sacred Scripture about them; and, on the other hand, that other ways of life, which do have the word and commandment of God, are holy and divinely instituted. . . , on the basis of the Word of God we pronounce the sure conviction that the way of life of a servant, which is extremely vile in the sight of the world, is far more acceptable to God than all the orders of monks. For God approves, commends, and adorns the status of servants with his Word, but not that of the monks.*[19]

In summary, for Luther, works do not in any way contribute to our justification before God. We are justified by faith alone, meaning nothing we do contributes to our justification. But real justifying faith necessarily leads to works of obedience to God's command found in the Word of God. Real good works follow from faith and are guided by God's command.

Calvin's doctrine of the relation between faith and works is remarkably similar to Luther's doctrine. Though some historians may have misperceived Calvin to be a stern legalist, in his time a large problem he faced was that the French speaking Reformation movement was perceived to be antinomian in a manner that contributed to social chaos and wanton vice in society. This was similar to the problem faced by Luther and results from saying that good works and following the moral law do not contribute to our salvation.

From the "Prefatory Address to King Francis" at the beginning of Calvin's *Institutes*, it is clear that Calvin clarified his doctrine of the relation of faith to good works partly in relation to the pastoral needs of his people and partly as an apologetic response to the attacks on the Reformation movement.

While discussing Galatians 5:6 ("The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself in love."), Calvin defended his teaching:

> *It is not our doctrine that the faith which justifies is alone; we maintain that it is invariably accompanied by good works; only we contend that faith alone is sufficient for justification.*[20]

Moving from Luther to Calvin, there is a very small development in the terminology used to describe proper good works. Whereas Luther talks about loving service within the created orders of society and everyday life in obedience to the command of God in Scripture, Calvin usually talks about obedience to the law of God as the standard for good works. But this transition is really only a very small change in terminology, not any substantial development in content. Like Luther, Calvin continually describes good works as love for other people within the framework of everyday life. About good works Calvin writes:

> *But we must inquire into the reason why all the precepts of the law are included under love. The law consists of two tables, the first of which instructs us concerning the worship of God and the duties of piety, and the second instructs us concerning the love of neighbor; for it is ridiculous to make a part of the same with whole. . . . Piety to God, I acknowledge, ranks higher than love of the brethren; and therefore the observance of the first table is more valuable in the sight of God than the observance of the second. But as God himself is invisible, so piety is a thing hidden from the eyes of man. . . .God therefore chooses to make trial of our love to himself by that love of our brother, which he enjoins us to cultivate.*[21]

In light of later debates, it may be worth noting that Calvin used the term "law" to describe the function of Holy Scripture in guiding the life of gratitude and good works, whereas Luther used the term "commandment" to describe this function of Scripture in relation to good works. This tiny difference in terminology is based on a foundational agreement – real faith leads to good works that are practiced in the middle of everyday life in obedience to the commands or law of God found in Scripture.

The Gospel and the Old Testament

Throughout Christian history, a recurring issue of great importance has been the relationship between the Old and New Testaments in the Chris-

tian Bible. Some, such as the group that probably disturbed the churches in Galatia, minimize any transition from the Old to the New Testament. Others, such as Marcion in the second century or radical dispensationalism in the twentieth century, minimize or deny any continuity between the two testaments, believing the Old Testament only has to do with law, while the New Testament only has to do with gospel. In contrast to such extremes, in spite of some little differences, Luther and Calvin agreed on the fundamental issue of seeing both law and gospel in both the Old and the New Testaments. Neither of the Reformers obliterates all distinctions between the two Testaments, while they agree in seeing very substantial continuity between the Testaments.

Luther loved to speak of Moses as being the one who speaks of the righteousness by law:

> *Moses does not reveal the Son of God; he discloses the law, sin, the conscience, death, the wrath and judgment of God, and hell. . . . Therefore only the gospel reveals the Son of God. Oh, if only one could distinguish carefully here and not look for the law in the gospel but keep it as separate from the law as heaven is distant from earth.*[22]

A little later, speaking as if representing the apostle Paul, Luther writes, "You have not heard me teach the righteousness of the law or of works; for this belongs to Moses, not to me."[23]

If this were all Luther had to say, one might imagine that he saw an absolute antithesis between the two Testaments. However, just a few pages later, with no sense of self-contradiction, Luther describes the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) whose lives are presented in the books of Moses, saying, "the patriarchs and all the Old Testament saints were free in their conscience and were justified by faith, not by circumcision or the law."[24] It is true, according to Luther, that "Moses, the minister of the law, has the ministry of law, which he [the apostle Paul] calls a ministry of sin, wrath, death, and damnation,"[25] yet the books of Moses also bear a real and significant witness to the gospel of justification by faith alone.

The gospel which one finds in the Old Testament, Luther claims, is also a gospel about Jesus Christ. The faith expressed by the patriarchs was a faith that looked to the future acts of God on their behalf, for their salvation. "The sound of the promise to Abraham brings Christ; and when he has been grasped by faith, then the Holy Spirit is granted on Christ's behalf."[26]

Though the promises related to the gospel were initially and specially given to Abraham, these promises were also available widely to whoever believed. In discussing the exact sense in which the Roman centurion Cornelius (Acts 9) was righteous *before* he heard the Gospel as proclaimed by Peter, Luther claimed:

Cornelius was a righteous and holy man in accordance with the Old Testament on account of his faith in the coming Christ, just as all the patriarchs, prophets, and devout kings were righteous, having received the Holy Spirit secretly on account of their faith in the coming Christ.[27]

The main contrast between the gospel of the Old Testament and the gospel of the New Testament is that "the faith of the patriarchs was attached to the Christ who was to come, just as ours is attached to the One who has already come."[28] Indeed, the book of Genesis, which Luther loved deeply, was primarily a book about the gospel:

In Jewish fashion Paul usually calls the first book of Moses "law." Even though it has no law except that which deals with circumcision, but chiefly teaches faith and testifies that the patriarchs were pleasing to God on account of their faith, still the Jews called Genesis together with the other books of Moses "law" because of that one law of circumcision.[29]

Just as Luther claims there is much gospel in the Old Testament, so also he finds law in the New Testament, even though the New Testament is preeminently gospel:

The gospel, however, is a proclamation about Christ: that he forgives sins, grants grace, justifies, and saves sinners. Although there are commandments in the gospel, they are not the gospel; they are expositions of the law and appendices to the gospel.[30]

Calvin's distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament was very similar to Luther's. At the very beginning of his Galatians commentary, he complains that the problem with the Judaizers, the false apostles who were disturbing the Galatian congregations, was that they removed the distinction between the two Testaments, which is the distinction between law and gospel. "It is no small evil to quench the light of the gospel, to lay a snare for consciences, and to remove the distinction between the Old and the New Testament."[31]

As did Luther, Calvin regarded the Old Testament as being largely a book of law, whereas the New Testament is largely a book of gospel:

That office which was peculiar to Moses consisted in laying down a rule of life and ceremonies to be observed in the worship of God, and in afterwards adding promises and threatenings. Many promises, no doubt, relating to the free mercy of God and of Christ, are to be found in his writings; and these promises belong to faith. But this is to be viewed as accidental.[32]

It is worth noticing that though Calvin agrees with Luther that Moses is primarily a writer of law, Calvin's statements about Moses tend to be more positive than statements about Moses

by Luther. Calvin genuinely loved Moses, including the Law of Moses, so that he wrote a multi-volume study on the last four books of the Pentateuch. Luther chose to write more on the book of Genesis than on the other Mosaic books, probably because he saw Genesis as containing more gospel.

For Calvin, the way of salvation was the same under the old covenant as under the new, justification by faith alone:

> *Abraham was justified by believing, because, when he received from God a promise of fatherly kindness, he embraced it as certain. Faith, therefore, has a relation and a respect to such a divine promise as may enable men to place their trust and confidence in God.*[33]

Calvin addressed the question of why Moses had to add the law so many years later if the gospel had already been given to Abraham. His answer is one that would have pleased Luther – to show people their sin and need for the gospel. Interpreting Galatians 3:19 ("What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come."), Calvin commented:

> *He means that the law was published in order to make known transgressions, and in this way to compel men to acknowledge their guilt. . . . This is the true preparation for Christ.*[34]

Like Luther, Calvin heard the gospel being preached throughout the Old Testament, making the difference between the two Testaments one of degree and place in the history of redemption:

> *The doctrine of faith, in short, is attested by Moses and all the prophets: but, as faith was not then clearly manifested, so the time of faith [Galatians 3:23] is an appellation here given, not in an absolute, but in a comparative sense, to the time of the New Testament.*[35]

Indeed, the elaborate ceremonies of the Old Testament Law itself spoke of Christ and served as a schoolmaster to lead to the coming Christ:

> *Beyond all doubt, ceremonies accomplished their object, not merely by alarming and humbling the conscience, but by exciting them to the faith of the coming Redeemer. . . . The law, in short, was nothing else than an immense variety of exercises, in which the worshippers were led by the hand to Christ.*[36]

Luther and Calvin agree very significantly in seeing continuity with development from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Old Testament believers looked forward to the redemption in Christ, whereas New Testament believers look back in history to the redemptive work of Christ, but all believers are justified by faith alone in the promise of the gospel of Christ. In addition, while the New Testament is preeminently a book of gospel, that gospel is

properly understood only in relation to the moral law that is contained in both Testaments.

Whether in the time of the Old Testament or the time of the New Testament, Luther and Calvin saw the biblical message as always having two distinct but inseparable dimensions: command and promise, law and gospel. This is the continuous structure of the biblical divine-human encounter, because it is based on the divine and human natures.

Reason and the Moral Law

"Reason cannot think correctly about God; only faith can do so."[37] Frequent statements such as this have given Luther the reputation for being opposed to the life of the mind and the serious use of reason. Some have viewed him as being almost an irrational romantic. In contrast, Calvin is sometimes presented as being a cold, unfeeling rationalist, working out an entire system of thought on the philosophical basis of immutable divine decrees. Neither of these interpretations of the Reformers is accurate because they assume no differentiation in terms of the object to which reason must be applied. Both Reformers saw reason as properly pertaining to the realm of the law, and when reason is used within the realm of law, it is seen as a tremendous gift of God. But when reason seeks to exceed its proper bounds, going into the realm of gospel, reason can easily become an enemy of faith.

According to Luther, the primary problem with human reason is that it continuously proclaims that people can be justified by works of obedience to the law, which is a complete rejection of the gospel:

> *Human reason and wisdom do not understand this doctrine [the gospel]. Therefore they always teach the opposite: "If you want to live to God, you must observe the law; for it is written (Matthew 19:17) 'If you would enter life, keep the commandments.'"*[38]

> *Let reason be far away, that enemy of faith, which, in the temptations of sin and death, relies not on the righteousness of faith or Christian righteousness, of which it is completely ignorant, but on its own righteousness or, at most, on the righteousness of the law. As soon as reason and the law are joined, faith immediately loses its virginity. For nothing is more hostile to faith than the law and reason.*[39]

To understand these statements correctly, one must remember that for Luther, faith is never the construction of an abstract system of religious propositions, though Luther clearly accepted the classical Christian creedal statements, such as the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. Faith is primarily personal reliance on the gospel. The problem is that in experience, especially in the experience of assaults on the soul (*Anfechtungen* in German), our frequent temptations to doubt God's favor and grace, believers are always prone to

move from trusting in the gospel to trusting in works of obedience to the law, and fallen, sinful reason supports this tendency. Reason, in this precise sense and in this frequently recurring situation, moves people to confuse law and gospel, so that believers either fall into the despair of doubting their ability to please God or fall into the false confidence that says they can please God on their own and do not need the gospel to become acceptable to God:

> *When it comes to experience, you will find the gospel a rare guest but the law a constant guest in your conscience, which is habituated to the law and the sense of sin; reason too supports this sense.*[40]

The problem with reason is that it continually confuses law and gospel because it is the reason of proud, unbelieving people; even among believers, reason never completely overcomes this tendency to think we do not need the gospel because we can do whatever God demands in the law. **However**, it does not follow in any sense at all that Luther thought people should be unreasonable or irrational. The proper solution is to employ reason to its fullest in its proper realm – the realm of everyday, practical affairs. It is important to notice that Luther likes to speak of reason as being applied in the realm of the "orders" – the realm where the civil use of the law applies. In discussing a popular proverb of his day, "God does not require of any man that he do more than he really can," Luther's method of relating reason to practical, everyday affairs is clear:

> *This is actually a good statement, but in its proper place, that is, in political, domestic, and natural affairs. For example, if I, who exist in the realm of reason, rule a family, build a house, or carry on a government office, and I do as much as I can or what lies within me, I am excused.*[41]

It is because of this distinct understanding of the proper realm of reason that Luther can speak so highly of Greek political philosophy and Roman law, even though he also speaks of reason and philosophy in very negative terms. Reason can, of itself, know nothing about the gospel and tends to confuse law and gospel; nevertheless, reason can know much about law and the application of the moral law and practical wisdom in everyday life. In this realm, reason is to be treasured. The knowledge of the moral law possessed by reason is the result of God's revelation through creation. However, because of sin and unbelief, this reasonable knowledge of the moral law will often need to be corrected and supplemented by the command of God in the Scriptures; nevertheless, reason can know the law. By the good use of reason, civil righteousness is possible for many people who do not know the gospel:

> *The sophists, as well as anyone else who does not grasp the doctrine of justification, do not know of any other righteousness than civil righteousness or the righteousness of the law, which are known in some measure even to the heathen.*[42]

Calvin's doctrine of the proper use of reason is so similar to Luther's that one might be tempted to think that nothing needs to be added to Luther's doctrine, but close analysis will discover a very subtle shift of emphasis. For this topic, one must turn to Calvin's *Institutes,* since the subject is rarely mentioned in his studies on Galatians. After a lengthy celebration of the ability of human reason in the natural realm, all of which is the result of God's general grace and general revelation, Calvin turns to the topic of what reason can know of God:

> *We must now analyze what human reason can discern with regard to God's Kingdom and to spiritual insight. This spiritual insight consists chiefly in three things: (1) knowing God; (2) knowing his fatherly favor in our behalf, in which our salvation consists; (3) knowing how to frame our life according to the rule of his law. In the two first points – and especially in the second – the greatest geniuses are blinder than moles!*[43]

Calvin sometimes distinguishes between knowing what God is like in and of himself (no. 1 in this quotation) from knowing how God relates to man in the gospel (no. 2 in this quotation). Though reason may not always be completely wrong in terms of understanding God's Being, statements on this topic by philosophers "always show a certain giddy imagination."[44] Of course, unaided reason is completely wrong, blinder than a mole, in regard to understanding God's fatherly care and the gospel. To properly trust in the gospel and God's fatherly care, the gospel, Scripture, and the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit are needed.

Though unaided reason is worthless in the realm of the gospel, Calvin was careful to articulate the great value of reason in area no. 3, that of "how to frame our life according to the rule of his law." This is the realm of the civil or public use of God's moral law, sometimes called the natural moral law – the realm of civil righteousness. Calvin returned to this theme:

> *There remains the third aspect of spiritual insight, that of knowing the rule for the right conduct of life. This we correctly call the "knowledge of the works of righteousness." The human mind sometimes seems more acute in this than in higher things. For the apostle testifies: "When Gentiles, who do not have the law, do the works of the law, they are a law to themselves . . . and show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their thoughts accuse them among themselves or excuse them before God's judgment" [Rom. 2:14–15]. If Gentiles by nature have law righ teous-*

ness engraved upon their minds, we surely cannot say they are utterly blind as to the conduct of life. There is nothing more common than for a man to be sufficiently instructed in a right standard of conduct by natural law.[45]

Calvin's claim is that reason can often know right and wrong based on the natural (God-given) moral law, and that this knowledge often provides sufficient knowledge for people to know how to organize their lives in a responsible manner. Calvin would never suggest that this knowledge equips people to earn God's favor. Even though people often know the good and may do the good well enough to attain a type of civil righteousness, they are still sinful; the natural knowledge of right and wrong received by reason renders people that much more blameworthy before God for their sin.

Calvin is also careful to qualify what reason knows about the moral law, so that no one mistakenly thinks the written moral law is unnecessary. Sin has a deep effect on our knowing process. We do not always know what we should be able to know by reason based on the natural moral law. This renders the written moral law extremely important:

Now that inward law [the natural moral law], which we have above described as written, even engraved, upon the hearts of all, in a sense asserts the very same things that are to be learned from the two Tables [the Ten Commandments]. For our conscience does not allow us to sleep a perpetual insensible sleep without being an inner witness and monitor of what we owe to God, without holding before us the difference between good and evil and thus accusing us when we fail in our duty. But man is so shrouded in the darkness of errors that he hardly begins to grasp through this natural law what worship is acceptable to God. . . . Accordingly (because it is necessary both for our dullness and for our arrogance), the Lord has provided us with a written law to give us clearer witness of what was too obscure in the natural law, shake off our listlessness, and strike more vigorously our mind and memory.[46]

There may be a slight difference between how Luther and Calvin understand the influence of sin on our ability to perceive the natural moral law. Calvin emphasizes the way in which the content of our knowledge is darkened, while Luther emphasizes the way in which people tend to use this knowledge to imagine they can earn God's favor. But Luther and Calvin agree that there is knowledge of God's natural moral law available to reason that allows people to know right and wrong and order their lives together. Therefore, reason must be used to order our lives in society. They also agree that unaided reason cannot know how to relate properly to God. Moreover, they agree that the biblical revelation of the moral law is truly needed to know more fully what kinds of good works should flow from true faith.

The Proper Uses of the Law

It is common to hear the claim that a great difference between Luther and Calvin is to be found in their doctrines of the proper uses of the moral law. What the evidence indicates is that there is a difference in terminology, literary style, and personality driven reactions concerning the uses of the moral law, but there are substantial similarities between Luther and Calvin on this subject. Calvin may have taken Luther's basic doctrine and lightly refined the terminology in a way that Calvin saw as compatible with Luther's intentions, though Luther might have been mildly dissatisfied with some aspects of this development.

The background for the discussion lies in the apprehension that the moral law is not to be used to earn God's favor. Then, what are the proper uses or functions of God's law? Luther spoke of two proper uses of the law, the civic and the theological, with the theological use being ultimately primary. While discussing Galatians 3:19 ("What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come."), Luther claimed:

> *Here one must know that there is a double use of the law. One is the civic use. God has ordained civic laws, indeed all laws, to restrain transgressions. Therefore, every law was given to hinder sins. Does this mean that when the law restrains sins, it justifies? Not at all. When I refrain from killing or from committing adultery or from stealing, or when I abstain from other sins, I do not do this voluntarily or from the love of virtue but because I am afraid of the sword and of the executioner. This prevents me, as the ropes or chains prevent a lion or a bear from ravaging something that comes along. . . . Thus the first understanding and use of the law is to restrain the wicked. For the devil reigns in the whole world and drives men to all sorts of shameful deeds. This is why God has ordained magistrates, parents, teachers, laws, shackles, and all civic ordinances, so that, if they cannot do any more, they will at least bind the hands of the devil and keep him from raging at will. . . . This civic restrain is extremely necessary and was instituted by God, both for the sake of public peace and for the sake of preserving everything, but especially to prevent the course of the gospel from being hindered by the tumults and seditions of wild men.*[47]

As important as the civic use of the law is, to hinder societal chaos and make a mere, external, civic righteousness possible, it is not the most important use of the law. The ultimate use of the law is to show us our sin and need for the gospel:

> *The other use of the law is the theological or spiritual one, which serves to increase transgressions. This is the primary purpose of the law of Moses, that through*

it sin might grow and be multiplied, especially in the conscience. Therefore the true function and the chief and proper use of the law is to reveal to man his sin, blindness, misery, wickedness, ignorance, hate, and contempt of God, death, hell, judgment, and the well deserved wrath of God.[48]

Hence this use of the law is extremely beneficial and very necessary. For if someone is not a murderer, adulterer, or thief, and abstains from external sins, . . . he develops the presumption of righteousness and relies on his good works. God cannot soften and humble this man or make him acknowledge his misery and damnation any other way than by the law.[49]

At this point in his discussion, Luther waxes eloquent for many pages about the value and use of the law of God, but his point is already clear – there are two distinct uses of the law that must be clearly distinguished. In one usage, the law restrains sin to make civic life possible, whether the law in this use comes directly from God or indirectly through human laws, civic authorities, or other civilizing influences. The law's other usage leads a person to despair and prepares him or her for hearing the gospel. Because of its close relation to the gospel, the condemning or theological use of the law is primary.

Calvin spoke about three uses of the law, but he did not discuss all three uses in the context of his studies in Galatians because he did not think the apostle Paul discussed all three proper uses of the law in that text. In discussing the same biblical text, Galatians 3:19, Calvin mentioned one of his few understated criticisms of Luther:

For many, I find, have fallen into the mistake of acknowledging no other advantage belonging to the law, but what is expressed here. Paul himself elsewhere speaks of the precepts of the law as profitable for doctrine and exhortations (2 Timothy 3:16). The definition here given of the use of the law [in Galatians 3:19] is not complete, and those who refuse to make any other acknowledgment in favor of the law do wrong.[50]

Calvin agrees with Luther that the Pauline book of Galatians teaches the two proper uses of the law taught by Luther. Calvin also insists that Paul and the rest of the Bible teach a third use of the law. Calvin's whole theory merits explanation.

Calvin's first use of the law is what he calls the "primitive" function of the law; it is equivalent to Luther's theological or condemning use of the law:

But to make the whole matter clearer, let us survey briefly the function and use of what is called the "moral law." Now, so far as I understand it, it consists of three parts.

The first part is this: while it shows God's righteousness, that is the righteousness alone acceptable to God, it

warns, informs, convicts, and lastly condemns, every man of his own unrighteousness. For man, blinded and drunk with self-love, must be compelled to know and to confess his own feebleness and impurity.[51]

Calvin goes on to compare the law in this function with a mirror; just as a mirror shows one the spots on his face, so also the law point out his sins. In this function, the law has different results with believers and unbelievers. Unbelievers are terrified, but believers flee to God's mercy to find the perfect righteousness of Christ. Calvin and Luther used somewhat different language to describe this use of the law that may reflect differences in life experience and personality. Luther seems to have gone through a two-step process. First, dropping into despair and terror, he then turns away from the law as a means of salvation and turns to the gospel. With the continuing assaults on his soul, the law in this use seems to have repeatedly driven Luther close to despair of God's mercy. Luther's language about the moral law sometimes contains echoes of this despair and terror. Calvin seems to have gone through a one-step process, of immediately turning from the law to the gospel, without an intermediate step of deep despair, so that Calvin's language about the moral law does not usually contain such echoes of despair and terror.

Calvin's second use of the law is equivalent to Luther's first use – the civic or political use:

The second function of the law is this: at least by fear of punishment to restrain certain men who are untouched by any care for what is just and right unless compelled by hearing the dire threats in the law. But they are restrained not because their inner mind is stirred or affected, but because, being bridled, so to speak, they keep their hands from outward activity, and hold inside the depravity that otherwise they would wantonly have indulged.[52]

The differences here between Luther and Calvin are small but worth mentioning. Luther understood the moral law in its civic use as largely mediated through societal orders, whether the state, the family, the school, or the church. Calvin seemed to conceive of the civil use of the law as being largely unmediated, coming in the direct encounter of every individual with God. Of course, Calvin thought the civil magistrate had the job of maintaining order in society and preventing societal chaos, which he thought to be about the worst of evils. Nevertheless, when he turned his mind to his second use of the law, he first thought of each person's direct encounter with God.

Calvin's third use of the law, which he considered its primary use, has evoked some discussion. He claimed:

The third and principal use, which pertains more closely to the proper use of the law, finds its place among believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already lives and reigns. For even though they

have the law written and engraved upon their hearts by the finger of God (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 10:16), that is, have been so moved and quickened through the directing of the Spirit that they long to obey God, they still profit by the law in two ways.[53]

Calvin goes on to say that the two ways in which the law helps believers are by teaching what the will of God is, which believers desire to do, and also by providing exhortations that rouse believers to continued obedience. Though Calvin does not use this terminology, this could be called "Use 3A" and "Use 3B" of the moral law. Concerning "Use 3A," Calvin claims the law "is the best instrument for them to learn more thoroughly each day the nature of the Lord's will to which they aspire, and to confirm them in the understanding of it."[54] He uses vivid language to describe "Use 3B" or the second benefit of the moral law for believers: "by frequent meditation upon it to be aroused to obedience, be strengthened in it, and be drawn back from the slippery path of transgression."[55]

Lest he be accused of thinking the inner desires of the believer are entirely negative, he explains:

For the law is not now acting toward us as a rigorous enforcement officer who is not satisfied unless the requirements are met. But in this perfection to which it exhorts us, the law points out the goal toward which throughout life we are to strive.[56]

For Calvin, the law can be a constant friend and companion of the Christian in a way Luther might not have imagined. Calvin knew, like Luther, that the law always accuses believers, but for Calvin, this accusation is in light of a deep and continuing assurance of God's fatherly care, so all the threats and harshness can be removed from the believer's experience of the accusations of the law. Like Luther, Calvin fully affirmed the principle of *simul justus et peccator,* that the believer is simultaneously justified and sinful; therefore, the believer needs the law of God as a guide to life. But the new obedience to the law should be an expression of gratitude for the gospel without any hint of an attempt to use the moral law as a tool for self-justification.

Was Calvin's gentle criticism of Luther correct, if one assumes the validity of Calvin's three-fold use of the law? The answer is "probably not," because Luther's view of the proper uses of the law is closer to Calvin's than Calvin may have recognized, even though Luther did not use the terminology of a "third use of the law." One key reason for this claim is that the content communicated by Calvin's "Use 3B" of the law, that believers "be drawn back from the slippery path of transgression," would be included in Luther's civic use of the law, that of restraining sin. Luther and Calvin both thought the sin of believers needs to be restrained. The small difference in terminology only relates to whether this is the first or third use of the law.

Then there is the question of knowing the will of God, to which believers should aspire. Calvin called this third use of the law "primary" in a way that Luther did not. But for Calvin this use of the moral law was "primary" in an ideal sense that would only obtain if the people of God were all walking by faith and merely questioning what they should do. In practice, Calvin seems to make the theological or condemning use of the law more important. This is seen from the very outline of his *Institutes*, because the long discussion of the Decalogue is included in the section analyzing the human predicament, prior to his discussion of the gospel of Christ. Calvin is clearly using the law in its theological use of showing sin in a preeminent manner in his most important book. If Calvin had only emphasized the "third" use of the law, then he would have discussed the law at length after his discussion of Christology and justification by faith. In practice, Calvin's use of the law is very close to following Luther's recommendations about which use of the law is most important.

At the same time, Luther's notion of the "Command of God" found in Scripture as the norm for the Christian life is remarkably close to Calvin's "Use 3A" of the law, showing how Christians should live in faith and in gratitude for the gospel. The main problem with most of the works Luther had done as a monk was that they were intended to deserve or earn God's favor. However, there was also a second problem that Luther perceived; namely, the works he had been doing were the wrong works. True good works had to be done in obedience to God's word in the Scriptures and flow from faith in the gospel, not as a substitute for faith in the gospel. It is hard to see a large difference between this teaching of Luther and Calvin's "Use 3A."

It is true that Luther made many negative statements about the law. In the "Preface" to his study on Galatians, he claimed:

> *The highest act and wisdom of Christians is not to know the law, to ignore works and all active righteousness, just as outside the people of God the highest wisdom is to know and study the law, works and active righteousness.*[57]

Nevertheless, Luther also said believers are to obey the moral law, even after their justification:

> *When outward duties must be performed, then, whether you are a preacher, a magistrate, a husband, a teacher, a pupil, etc., this is not time to listen to the gospel. You must listen to the law and follow your vocation.*[58]

> *But the works of the law must be performed either before justification or after justification.*[59]

It is important to notice that Luther thinks the works of the law must be performed even after justification. This sounds similar to Calvin. Additionally,

Luther says the works of obedience to the moral law do not only follow justification in a chronological manner; works of obedience to the law are the spiritual fruit of justification by faith:

> *Anyone who wants to exert himself toward righteousness must first expert himself in listening to the gospel. Now when he has heard and accepted this, let him joyfully give thanks to God, and then let him exert himself in good works that are commanded in the law; thus the law and works will follow hearing with faith. Then he will be able to walk safely in the light that is Christ; to be certain about choosing and doing works that are not hypocritical but truly good, pleasing to God, and commanded by him; and to reject all the mummery of self-chosen works.*[60]

In another context, after contrasting the righteousness of the law with the righteousness of faith, Luther declares:

> *When he [Christ] has been grasped by faith, then the Holy Spirit is granted on Christ's account. Then God and neighbor are loved, good works are performed, and the cross is borne. This is really keeping the law; otherwise the law remains permanently unkept. . . . Hence it is impossible for us to keep the law without the promise.*[61]

A little later Luther elaborated this conviction:

> *Therefore Moses, together with Paul, necessarily drives us to Christ, through whom we become doers of the law and are accounted guilty of no transgression. How? First, through the forgiveness of sins and the imputation of righteousness, on account of faith in Christ; secondly, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, who creates a new life and new impulses in us, so that we may keep the law also in a formal sense.*[62]

Neither Luther nor Calvin thought it possible for believers to keep the law completely – what was then called keeping the law in a "material" sense, but Luther taught that law-keeping by believers had at least three important purposes:

> *Then what is the purpose of keeping it [the law] if it does not justify? The final cause of the obedience of the law by the righteous is not righteousness in the sight of God, which is received by faith alone, but the peace of the world, gratitude toward God, and a good example by which others are invited to believe the gospel.*[63]

Like Calvin, Luther taught that keeping the moral law of God was the proper expression of gratitude for the gift and promise of the gospel. There were small differences in terminology regarding the proper uses of the law, with differences of personality and personal history behind those differences in terminology, but the massive level of agreement between Luther and Calvin

set a direction for responsible Protestant discussions of the use of God's law.

Comments

Luther and Calvin thought that the relationship between law and gospel was central for evangelical theology and ethics for several reasons. The first is that they saw this relation as central *in* the Bible, in *both* the Old and New Testaments; in other words, the biblical exegete or interpreter has not properly examined the Scriptures if this relation between law and gospel has not been perceived *in* the entire Bible. This consideration must not be forgotten in responsible evangelical hermeneutics. Following directly from this, the ability to clearly distinguish and relate law and gospel was regarded as central to recognizing a person as a true evangelical theologian – something to be remembered while interviewing people for positions of leadership in evangelical churches. This ability is what enables a person to apply the biblical message to human experience in a balanced manner that flows from a central structure of the biblical proclamation.

Closely related to these considerations is the apprehension by the Reformers, not always clearly stated, that the relationship between law and gospel addresses one of the deepest existential dynamics inside human beings. People will always do something with the moral law, whether falling into despair because of a thorough inability to keep the moral law, or falling into false confidence because of supposed earned righteousness, or turning to the gospel for forgiveness and justification. People also have a strong tendency to believe some gospel, whether the Gospel of Christ, the "gospel" of their own self-righteousness, or the "gospel" of some other messiah. Believing a gospel is hard to avoid. This existential relation to law and gospel is constant and dynamic; it continues throughout a lifetime. For this reason, it will be wise for evangelical pastors to address these issues continually in preaching and pastoral care. In sermons, Bible studies, and pastoral counseling, evangelical Christians should see law (in its multiple uses) and gospel as truly central to the application of the biblical message and central to the divine-human encounter.[64]

There have been recurring weaknesses in the evangelical tradition that can be addressed by means of the Reformation teaching on law and gospel. One of these weaknesses has been the tendency to forget the connection between the moral law and God's general revelation through creation.[65] Forgetting this connection has caused some evangelicals to miss the way in which people who do not yet believe the gospel will already be encountering God's law in both its theological and civic uses. This will influence our approach to social ethics, culture, and missions. In social ethics, believers with a Reformation theology will work on the assumption that all people have already encountered God's

moral law through creation; therefore, moral claims that are rooted in the Bible will clarify and strengthen moral knowledge that people should, in principle, already know, even though this knowledge may be darkened or suppressed. In missions, Reformation based Christians can expect that people will have questions and anxieties arising from their encounter with the moral law in its theological use; for this reason, there is a correlation or question/answer relation between the gospel and human experience.[66] In relation to culture, each of the uses of the moral law, as well as the gospel, implies a distinct relationship of believers and the biblical message to culture. With these things in mind, it is wise to think of Christianity as having a four-part relation or four distinct relationships to culture.[67]

Another weakness sometimes observed in the evangelical tradition has been a tendency to miss the way that moral law relates to reason and the way the gospel relates to reason. The gospel way is very different. The claim that "we are justified in Christ" is purely a statement of faith in the promises of the gospel, whereas the claim that "murder is wrong" is closely tied to reason as well as to faith. This should lead to far more differentiation in our discussions of faith and reason. This differentiation should have a significant influence on how we discuss the proper ways of integrating evangelical theology and ethics with learning in the various academic fields.

A further weakness in the evangelical tradition has been a tendency to forget the civic use of the moral law, which can be observed in Pietism, Methodism, Revivalism, and Fundamentalism. This has made it more difficult for evangelicals to develop responsible social ethics that do not either sound like an attempt to flee the world under the influence of an ethics of holy community, or else sound like an attempt to take over the world in an ethics of theocratic domination. There is a distinct and proper relation of the moral law, given by God, to human experience, reason, and society, which we must learn to use in our civic ethics. This will enable us to talk and act as responsible citizens contributing to the public good, while being clear and open about our Christian faith, without following the fight or flight relation to society seen in both the ethics of a holy community and the ethics of domination.[68] We can learn to proclaim the moral law in its civil or political use.

Therefore, I believe it will be wise to see the relation between law and gospel as a hermeneutical/homiletical key in a two-fold sense. On the one hand, in a historical sense, this is the key to the Reformers' hermeneutics and homiletics (and all of their practical theology), so that we must understand what they said on this topic if we wish to understand the Reformation and its effects. On the other hand, we should see the relation between law and gospel as a hermeneutical/homiletical key if we wish to stand in the evangelical

and Reformation tradition to interpret, apply, and proclaim the biblical message in late modernity. This distinction will give a substantial and unified structure to our hermeneutics, theology, ethics, practical theology, and homiletics.

Annotation
Anmerkungen

[1] Lewis W. Spitz, *The Renaissance and Reformation Movements,* 2 volumes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), vol. 2, *The Reformation,* p. 412.

[2] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. and trans. Jaroslav Pelikan, assoc. ed. Walter A. Hansen, *vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians*, 1535 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), p. 115.

[3] Luther 313.

[4] Luther 120.

[5] Luther 342.

[6] John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle, (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1854. Reprinted Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1979), p. 67. In the quotations from the Pringle translation of Calvin, the English spelling and punctuation have been freely modernized.

[7] The biblical text Calvin is considering is Galatians 2:11–16. In the New International Version it reads: " 11When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. 12Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. 13The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. 14When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, „You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs? 15"We who are Jews by birth and not ‚Gentile sinners' 16know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified."

[8] Calvin 63.

[9] Calvin 64.

[10] Calvin 85.

[11] Calvin 151.

[12] Luther, Galatians, 1535, p. 129.

[13] Luther 143.

[14] Calvin, Galatians, p. 66.

[15] Calvin 67.

[16] Luther, Galatians, 1535, p. 155.

[17] This is what later scholars often call "extramundane asceticism" in contrast with the "intramundane asceticism" taught by Luther and Calvin. Luther and Calvin taught that believers should practice a serious religious self denial, but that real self-denial, "taking up one's cross," should occur in the everyday realm.

[18] Luther, Galatians, 1535, p. 212.

[19] Luther 213. Luther is thinking about the New Testament commands to servants in which the apostles exhorted the slaves and servants in the early church to serve their masters respectfully and sincerely before God. According to Luther, the fact of these commands indicates that being a servant is a proper way of serving God.

[20] Calvin, Galatians, p. 152.

[21] Calvin 159–160.

[22] Luther, Galatians, 1535, p. 72.

[23] Luther 73.

[24] Luther 85. With the term "free in their conscience," Luther seems to mean aware of a status of full acceptance before God.

[25] Luther 147.

[26] Luther 255.

[27] Luther 210.

[28] Luther 239.

[29] Luther 433.

[30] Luther 150.

[31] Calvin, Galatians, pp. 14, 15.

[32] Calvin 99.

[33] Calvin 84.

[34] Calvin 100.

[35] Calvin 107.

[36] Calvin 109.

[37] Luther, Galatians, 1535, p. 238.

[38] Luther 156.

[39] Luther 113.

[40] Luther 117.

[41] Luther 173, 174. Emphasis added.

[42] Luther 261.

[43] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, e*d. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), II,ii,18.

[44] Calvin II,ii,18.

[45] Calvin II, ii, 22.

[46] Calvin II,viii,1.

[47] Luther, Galatians, 1535, 308–309.

[48] Luther 309.

[49] Luther 310.

[50] Calvin, Galatians 99–100.

[51] Calvin, *Institutes* II,vii,6.

[52] *Institutes* II,vii,10.

[53] *Institutes*, II, vi,12.

[54] *Institutes,* II, vi,12.

[55] *Institutes,* II, vi,12.

[56] *Institutes,* II, vi,13.

[57] Luther, Galatians, 1535, p. 6.

[58] Luther 117.

[59] Luther 123.

[60] Luther 214–215.

[61] Luther 255.

[62] Luther 260.

[63] Luther 273. The term "final cause" was a way of talking about purpose that was inspired by the terminology of Aristotle.

[64] The second question and answer of The Heidelberg Catechism (1563) clearly used this framework for explaining the Reformation faith. After the wonderful first question and answer about Christian comfort, the learner is asked, "How many things must you know that you may live and die in the blessedness of this comfort?" The answer makes use of the clear Reformation distinction between law and gospel, emphasizing the theological (convicting of sin) and third use, defining the type of works that are suitable in response to God's grace proclaimed and made effective by the Gospel. That answer says, "Three. First, the greatness of my sin and wretchedness. Second, how I am freed from all my sins and their wretched consequences. Third, what gratitude I owe to God for such redemption." These answers set a precedent and direction for the understanding and application of the biblical message; unfortunately, the "civil use" of the moral law gets little mention here. Quotation from the 400th anniversary edition, United Church Press, 1962.

[65] Unfortunately, Karl Barth did much to promote this problem by his rejection of general revelation.

[66] It is proper to use the term "correlation" in Reformation based theology without necessarily intending everything that Paul Tillich meant by that term.

[67] I have explained this further in "Christ and Culture," MBS Text 79. See www.bucer.eu.

[68] I have addressed these topics in my *Natural Law Ethics: An Evangelical Proposal* (Bonn: VKW, 2005) and in "Biblical Principles in the Public Square," MBS Text 108, available at www.bucer.eu. This also forms the background for my *Human Rights: A Christian Primer* (World Evangelical Alliance, 2008).

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The Author
Über den Autor

Thomas K. Johnson received his Ph.D. in ethics from the University of Iowa (1987) after being a research scholar at Eberhard Karls Universität (Tübingen). He has an ACPE from Missouri Baptist Hospital (St. Louis, 1981), a Master of Divinity (*Magna Cum Laude*) from Covenant Theological Seminary (St. Louis, 1981), and a BA (*Cum Laude*) from Hope College (Michigan, 1977). He is a pastor of the Presbyterian Church in America. Since 1994 he has served the International Institute for Christian Studies and is now IICS Professor of Theology, Philosophy, and Public Policy. He was a visiting professor at the European Humanities University in Minsk, Belarus, 1994–1996. (UHU is a dissident, anti-Communist university, forced into exile by the Belarusian dictator in 2004.) Since 1996 he and his wife have lived in Prague, where he taught philosophy at Anglo-American University (4 years) and at Charles University (8 ½ years). He is MBS Professor of Apologetics and Ethics (2003) and Vice President for Research (2007). His wife, Leslie P. Johnson, is director of the Christian International School of Prague.

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