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### Luther and "Social Ethics"

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**Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri**

**Luther and “Social Ethics”**

Submitted to:

Department of Graduate Studies

In completion of the Seminar Paper requirement for the Masters of Sacred Theology

By

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# Luther and “Social Ethics”

## Beginning

The relationship between individuals, society, and society’s institutions (e.g. family, government, business, and church) was not always plagued by the difficulty and confusion of sin. In the beginning, there was no such confusion: Everything God made was “good.”<sup>1</sup> He walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden;<sup>2</sup> they lived daily in His presence. Without labor and toil, Adam and Eve did the “work” God assigned for them.<sup>3</sup> The couple lived with each other and the world-at-large in harmony and order; conflict, turmoil, and strife were unknown.<sup>4</sup> Only since the fall has difficulty, confusion, and pain entered the realm of social interaction.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Genesis 1:31; “After God has finished His works, He speaks after the custom of one who has become tired, as if He wanted to say: “Behold, I have prepared all things in the best way. The heaven I have prepared as a roof; the earth is the flooring; the animals -- with all the appointments of the earth, the sea, and the air -- are the possession and wealth; seeds, roots, and herbs are the food. Moreover, he himself, the lord of these, man, has been created. He is to have knowledge of God; and with the utmost freedom from fear, with justice and wisdom, he is to make use of the creatures as he wishes, according to his will. Nothing is lacking. All things have been created in greatest abundance for physical life.” Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis 1-5* 1535 in *Luther's Works*, vol. 1, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 73. *Text der Genesisvorlesung in D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 42. Band, (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus, 1911), 55.

<sup>2</sup>Genesis 3:8

<sup>3</sup>Genesis 2:15-20; literally, the passage says: “And the LORD God . . . put the man in the garden to work it and care for/guard it.” Regarding “work” [עבד]: “When used in reference to things it is usually followed by an accusative of the thing upon which the labor is expended, e.g. ‘to till a field (Gen. 2:5 and elsewhere) . . .’” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. II, ed. R. Laird Harris, Chicago: Moody Press, 1980, 639. Regarding “care for/guard” [שמר]: “The basic idea is ‘to exercise great care over. . . This involves keeping or tending things such as a garden.” Ibid, 939.

<sup>4</sup>Genesis 2:25; This is a reality which modern people find difficult to imagine. Humanity knows “good and evil.” The existence of a reality with *only* “good” is beyond human experience.

<sup>5</sup>Genesis 3:7

Confusion in human life began with the Serpent twisting God's Word: "Did God really say. . ."<sup>6</sup> and "You will *not* surely die."<sup>7</sup> In a mere few words, the *idea* of "evil," that which was opposed to God and destructive of "good" was grasped and approved of by human minds; the result was an awareness of shame -- that which is truly evil in the person's thoughts, words, and deeds: ". . . they realized they were naked. . ."<sup>8</sup> and "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they *hid* from the Lord God. . ."<sup>9</sup> Turning away from God's Word and presence resulted in self-justification and blame of the other: "The woman *you* put here with me -- *she* gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."<sup>10</sup> (Notice who is given the blame -- God and Eve.) It resulted in the world created for Adam and Eve turning on them with pain, toil, and labor:<sup>11</sup> "I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing. . ."<sup>12</sup> and ". . . through painful toil you will eat of it [the cursed ground] all the days of your life."<sup>13</sup> And sin spread even to the

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<sup>6</sup>Genesis 3:1 NIV [emphasis added]

<sup>7</sup>Genesis 3:4 NIV [emphasis added]

<sup>8</sup>Genesis 3:7 NIV

<sup>9</sup>Genesis 3:8 NIV

<sup>10</sup>Genesis 3:12 NIV [emphasis added]; "[Adam] does not say: 'Lord, I have sinned; forgive me my debt; be merciful'; but he passes on the guilt to the woman. It is the nature of sin not to permit the soul to flee back to God but rather to force it into a flight away from God." Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis 1-5*, 177. Martin Luther, *Text der Genesisvorlesung*, 132-3.

<sup>11</sup>Romans 8:18-28

<sup>12</sup>Genesis 3:16 NIV

<sup>13</sup>Genesis 3:17 NIV

second generation, where brother kills brother in a jealous rage.<sup>14</sup>

Sin compounds sin<sup>15</sup> – sinful individuals deal with other sinful individuals in all walks of life.<sup>16</sup> As the population of the world increases, it is no surprise that the confusion spawned by sin increases as well. Today, after centuries of sin and centuries of sinners, the confusing and toilsome issues with which individuals, governments, businesses, families, and churches have grappled seem to have compounded into even more intricate problems.<sup>17</sup>

No matter how much sin-created chaos and confusion bedevils the world, its inhabitants, and their institutions, God, from the beginning, had other plans. Not long after Adam and Eve turned from God's Word, hid from God's presence in their shame, and laid blame for their sin on each other and God, God spoke a curse which is also a promise. God spoke the curse to the Serpent but the sinners hear only the Promise.

... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.<sup>18</sup>

Martin Luther comments:

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<sup>14</sup>Genesis 4; Cain and Abel; "All these good things have, for the most part, been lost through sin; and we, who have kept hardly a shadow of that realm, are today like a corpse of that first human being. Or shall we not say that he has lost everything who became mortal after being immortal, a sinner after being righteous, a condemned man after being welcome and well-pleasing? For now man is mortal and a sinner." Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis 1-5*, 73. Martin Luther, *Text der Genesisvorlesung*, 57.

<sup>15</sup>"The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 5:20-21 NIV [emphasis added] "For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies." Romans 7:5 NIV [emphasis added]

<sup>16</sup>Romans 2

<sup>17</sup>Even the casual reader perusing the popular papers and magazines becomes aware of the plethora of challenges facing the modern world: crime, drugs, violence, corruption, family disruption and dysfunction, apathy, government inability to deal with problems and issues, business "down-sizing," "right-sizing," "corporate raiding," and "hostile take-overs," and inter-church and intra-church conflicts, etc.

<sup>18</sup>Genesis 3:15b NIV

... this, too, ought to be noted here: that these words are not spoken by God for the devil's sake. God does not regard him worthy of His condemnation, but it is enough that his own conscience condemns Satan. These words are spoken for the sake of Adam and Eve that they may hear this judgment by the realization that God is the enemy of that being which inflicted so severe a wound on man. Here grace and mercy begin to shine forth from the midst of wrath and which sin and disobedience aroused. Here in the midst of most serious threats the Father reveals His heart: this is not a father who is so angry that would turn out his son because of his sin, but one who points to a deliverance, indeed one who promised victory against the enemy that deceived and conquered human nature [ . . . *sed ostendentis salutem, imo victoriam promittentis contra eum Hostem, qui humanam naturam decepit et vicit.*].<sup>19</sup>

God's promise is none other than His Son, Jesus, the Christ:

Accordingly, we now find Adam and Eve restored, not indeed to the life which they had lost but to the hope of that life. Through this hope they escaped, not the first fruits of death, but its tithes; that is, although their flesh must die for the time being, nevertheless because of the promised Son of God, who would crush the head of the devil, they hope for the resurrection of the flesh and eternal life after the temporal death of the flesh, just as we do [ . . . *post mortem temporalem carnis sperant resurrectionem carnis et aeternam vitam sicus nos quoque*].<sup>20</sup>

This future hope has a present reality. It has impact on the way Christians live their lives, relate to others and the institutions in which they live and work. Hope and faith produce concrete results in human existence; they are not ethereal and ideal. The writer of Hebrews reminds his readers: "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis 1-5*, 189. Martin Luther, *Text der Genesisvorlesung*, 141.

<sup>20</sup>[emphasis added] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis 1-5*, 197-8. Martin Luther, *Text der Genesisvorlesung*, 147.

<sup>21</sup>Hebrews 11:1 NIV; "In Heb. 11:1 faith is defined as 'the assurance of things hoped for [*expectatio rerum sperantarum*].' If someone wants a distinction anyway, we say that the object of hope is properly a future event, while faith deals with both future and present things and receives in the present the forgiveness of sins that the promise offers [ . . . *et accipere in praesentia remissionem peccatorum exhibitam in promissione*]." (Ap IV: Tappert 155.312) *Apology of the Augsburg Confession in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 155; (BKS 220.312) *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 220.



The *reality* of the future promise informs the Christian life through a myriad of situations<sup>22</sup>. This is seen in the lives of the Old Testament prophets, who lived “by faith.”<sup>23</sup> Abei, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the people of Israel, and Rahab, all did what God gave to them to do, not by their “own reason and strength,”<sup>24</sup> but “by faith alone.”<sup>25</sup> The writer of Hebrews adds:

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreigners.<sup>26</sup>

Even in the most desperate situations, hope and faith, result in a confidence and certainty even beyond what is seen and experienced.<sup>27</sup> This too, affects the way Christians live. St. Paul lived an example of this:

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take [my thorn in my flesh] away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect

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<sup>22</sup>“Eschatology in the future-present tense pulls no punches. . . [it] rests on the truthfulness of Jesus’ promise about the future. . . Having said this about the future, eschatology in the future-present tense moves to make equally bold affirmations about the present and about what this promised future means for living every day in hope.” [italics added]. Thomas G. Long, “The Life to Come: Preaching with Hope,” in *Concordia Journal* 4, vol. 22, (October 1996): 363.

<sup>23</sup>Hebrews 11:4-40

<sup>24</sup>(SC, The Creed, 3rd Article: Tappert 345.6) *The Small Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 345; (BKS 511-12.6) *Der Kleine Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 511-12.

<sup>25</sup>“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith -- and this not from yourselves, it the gift of God -- not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Ephesians 2:8-10 NIV

<sup>26</sup>Hebrews 11:32-34 NIV

<sup>27</sup>Hebrews 11:35-40

in weakness.” That is why, for Christ’s sake,<sup>28</sup> I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.<sup>29</sup>

It is within this Scriptural framework that the Christian encounters the world. Each Christian has “prepared-in-advance”<sup>30</sup> good works which flow out God-given faith -- these “good works” are best summarized with the formula: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”<sup>31</sup> The “self-giving love” is never “self” motivated and achieves nothing for the one “loving” -- it is an expression of faith.<sup>32</sup>

But in our confused, sin-ridden world, the way this love is expressed, the way Christians live in their world, is not always clear to the sinner-saint. The question which is repeated often in discussions about the consistent confession of faith in the modern age is “how?” *How* does an individual live with Christian responsibility within his/her family and business? *How* does the Christian deal with the encroachment of violence and adultery into the sanctity of the family? *How* does the Christian work in a business world in which the mutual service of employer and employee is no longer a prime business consideration? *How*

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<sup>28</sup>This implies that Paul’s motivation for suffering of “hardships and persecutions” was not motivated out of a selfish desire to express piety and Godliness, rather these sufferings were the *results* of his ministry about Christ.

<sup>29</sup>2 Corinthians 12:8-10 -

<sup>30</sup>Ephesians 2:10

<sup>31</sup>Matthew 10:27 NIV

<sup>32</sup>Galatians 5:6b; “John’s words, ‘we love because He first loved us,’ (1 John 4:19) were written after God had revealed His love in Christ’s cross, but Jesus came to restore us to the pattern of living which had been ours in Eden. Human creatures love in the first instance because God created them that way. After the fall into sin we love because God has come in the flesh to re-create us and recall us to that pattern.” Robert Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel Today*, revised ed., (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995), 35.

does an individual live with Christian responsibility as a citizen or as a national leader? *How* does the Christian deal with violence, drugs, overcrowding in the schools, poverty, welfare, aging populations, and social unrest? *How* does an individual Christian or the congregation of the faithful interact with the family, business, and government? This “how” does not even begin to address the desirability and degree of interaction. Is it possible that the Christian individual can interact with, cooperate with, or be a part of the primary institutions of human life?

Within the framework of Holy Scripture, Luther and the Confessions provide theological criteria and practical guidance in these matters. Even in the chaos of the Twentieth Century social setting,<sup>33</sup> Luther’s Scripturally informed approach to “The Two Realms” and the “vocation of father” help provide a “social ethic” which, although they do not and cannot alleviate sin, they help sinner-saints navigate easier through a very confusing world.

### A Question of Ethics

The question “how” looks, by its nature, for an answer of “ethics.” An argument can be made that ethics is unneeded and invalid for theology, especially Lutheran theology.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>It is true that 20th Century America and Western Europe are *different* than 16<sup>th</sup> Century Central Europe, however, if one were to compare the extent, nature, and impact of social unrest of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, one may find that there is greater similarity than may be obvious at first look. Differences of century and culture do not change God, nor human sin and need for God’s forgiveness, nor the God-created structures of human life through which He “generally comes to meet human needs behind His chosen ‘masks,’ that is, other people who care for those in need.” Robert Kolb, “God Calling, ‘Take Care of My People’: Luther’s Concept of Vocation in the Augsburg Confession and Its Apology”, in *Concordia Journal* 1, vol. 8, (January 1982): 5.

<sup>34</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes: “A Christian ethic will have to begin by asking whether and to what extent it is possible at all to treat the ‘ethical’ and the ‘Christian’ as a theme, for that is not by any means so self-evident as one might assume from the confidence with which this repeatedly has been and is being done.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer,

Such an argument would make valid points and raise valid concerns; the argument would begin: what ethics attempts to do is already handled by the careful pastoral theologian as he separates the Law from the Gospel and relates them to the lives of his congregation. Natural Law<sup>35</sup> revealed in the heart and in the Ten Commandments tells what God requires. As sinners, humans can in no way achieve it; the Gospel of Christ Jesus, born, crucified, and risen, applies the forgiveness He won for us on the cross to human lives, creates faith in that forgiveness, gives the certainty of eternal life, regenerates the sinful mind, and motivates spontaneous obedience to the Law.<sup>36</sup> What else is needed? In fact, ethics as a study could be seen as dangerous to the centrality of the Gospel as the motivation for life. Potentially, with ethic's focus on behavior, it could indeed replace the Gospel with the Law or just as

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*Ethics*, trans. Neville Horton Smith (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1955), 263.

<sup>35</sup>Romans 2:12-16. "We for our part maintain that God requires the righteousness of reason. Because of God's command, honorable works commanded in the Decalogue should be performed. . . For God wants this civil discipline to restrain the unspiritual, and to preserve it he has given laws, learning, teaching, governments, and penalties [*vult enim Deus coerceri carnalis illa civili disciplina, et ad hanc conservandam dedit legis litteras, doctrinam, magistratus, poenas*]. To some extent, reason can produce this righteousness by its own strength, though it is often overwhelmed by its natural weakness and by the devil, who drives it to open crimes."(Ap. IV: Tappert 110.22) *Apology of the Augsburg Confession in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 110; (BKS 164.22) *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 164.

<sup>36</sup>*After [postquam] we have been justified and regenerated by faith, therefore, we begin to fear and love God, to pray and expect help from him, to thank and praise him, and to submit to him in our afflictions. Then we also begin to love our neighbor because our hearts have spiritual and holy impulses [Incipimus et diligere proximos, quia corda habent spirituales et sanctus motus].*" [emphasis added] (Ap. IV: Tappert 124.125) *Apology of the Augsburg Confession in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 124; (BKS 185.125) *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 185. Additionally in the *Formula of Concord*: "5. Fruits of the Spirit, however, are those works which the Spirit of God, who dwells in the believers, works through the regenerated, and which the regenerated perform *in so far as they are reborn and do them spontaneously as if they knew of no command, threat, or reward [wirket durch die wiedergeborenen sind, als wann sie von keinem Gebot, Trauen oder Belohnung wüßten]*. In this sense the children of God live in the law and walk according to the law of God." [emphasis added](FC Ep VI: Tappert 480-1.6) *Formula of Concord: Part I: Epitome in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 480; (BKS 794.6) *Konkordienformel: Summarischer Begriff der streitigen Artikel [Epitome] in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 794.

bad mix the Law and Gospel.<sup>37</sup>

Sadly, ethics as a discipline *could* find its starting point and motivation more in the Law than in the Gospel. Ethics asks the question “how” and expects an answer of action. Ethics addresses the issues of “doing” and “love.”<sup>38</sup> It *could* easily slip into mere moralism of the human life desiring to live by corporately agreed-upon ideals of living or the moralism of the human life attempting to live at God’s high standard of Law only with one’s own effort. In the place of the Law’s radical attack upon sin and the Gospel’s radical cure, ethics *could* seek to provide a casuistry oriented approach to Christian life which would leave the Christian at the level of the Pharisee deluded in his own self-righteous attempts to “fulfill all righteousness” or despairing in the “torments of conscience.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>“In fact, we do not love at all unless our hearts are sure that the forgiveness of sins has been granted to us. If our opponents require us to trust in our own love for the forgiveness of sins and justification, they completely abolish the Gospel of the free forgiveness of sins. For men can neither render nor understand this love unless they believe that the forgiveness of sins is received freely [*eum tamen dilectionem illam neque praestent neque intelligant, nisi credant gratis accipi remissionem peccatorum*].” (Ap IV: Tappert 123.110) *Apology of the Augsburg Confession in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 123; (BKS 183.110) *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 183.

<sup>38</sup>Bonhoeffer, following Jesus’ commands, sees “doing” and “loving” as the essential components of true “ethical” behavior. “It is evident that the only appropriate conduct of men before God is the doing of His will.” (*Ethics*, 43) “Without . . . ‘love’ everything falls apart and everything is unacceptable, but in this love everything is united and everything is pleasing to God.” (*Ethics*, 49) In both the case of “doing” and “knowing”, Bonhoeffer does not leave the chance that a reader may define these words in any self-oriented works: “When the Bible calls for action it does not refer a man to his own powers but to Jesus Christ Himself. ‘Without me ye can do nothing’ (John 15.5). . . There is really *no* action without Jesus Christ.” [emphasis added] (*Ethics*, 43) “[The answer as to what love is] is this: ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:16). . . That is to say *not* a human attitude, a conviction or a deed, but God *Himself* is love. . . No one knows what love is except in the self-revelation of God.” [emphasis added] (*Ethics*, 50) See Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, pp. 43-54.

<sup>39</sup>On the dangers of casuistry, Bonhoeffer writes: “. . . one of the great naivetés. . . of the moralists. . . [is that] they start out from the fiction that at every moment of his life man has to make a final and infinite choice, the fiction that every moment of live involves a conscious decision between good and evil. They seem to imagine that every human action has had a clearly-lettered notice attached to it by some divine police authority, a notice which reads either ‘permitted’ or ‘forbidden’. . . Their presumptuous misjudgement of this creaturely existence [of everything having its time (Eccl. 3) including eating, drinking and sleeping, etc.] leads either to the most mendacious hypocrisy or else to madness. It turns the moralist into a dangerous tormentor, tyrant and clown. . .” Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 125.

If understood as a replacement for the dialectic of Law and Gospel or as replacement for Christian life based on the freedom of the Gospel, ethics would have little use or validity. Such an ethics *would* be dangerous to faith and the Church. Ethics which abstractly attempts to provide an exhaustive list of “do’s” and “don’ts” for every situation of life falls far short of any help to the human dilemma of sin. Ethics which is focused only on the Natural Law and revealed commandments is no help to the Christian<sup>40</sup>, it would leave humanity only in despair or pride as it struggles to with the seemingly unanswerable perplexity and turmoil with which sin accosts life and society<sup>41</sup>.

There is, however, another way to see ethics -- not merely as Law, but as the concrete application of Law *and* Gospel, justification *and* sanctification, to the problems of human interaction with other humans as well as human interaction with equally sinful and flawed human institutions. This is a pastoral approach which seeks to apply the totality of

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<sup>40</sup> For God wants this civil discipline to restrain the unspiritual, and to preserve it he has given laws, learning, teaching, governments, and penalties. To some extent, reason can produce this righteousness by its own strength, though it is often overwhelmed by its natural weakness and by the devil, who drives it to open crimes [*Et potest hanc institiam utcumque ratio suis viribus efficere, quamquam saepe vincitur imbecillitate naturali et impellente diabolo ad manifesta flagita.*] (Ap IV: Tappert 110.22) *Apology of the Augsburg Confession in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 110; (BKS 164.22) *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 164. "It is false, too, that by its own strength reason can love God *above* all things and keep his law, truly fear him, truly believe that he hears prayer, willingly obey him in death and in his other visitations, and not covet. But reason can produce civil works [. . . *etsi civilia opera efficere ratio potest.*]" [emphasis added] (Ap IV: Tappert 111.27) *Apology of the Augsburg Confession in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 111; (BKS 165.27) *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 165.

"That is to say, I do not succeed in keeping the Law of Nature very well, and the moment anyone tells me I am not keeping it, there starts up in my mind a string of excuses as long as your arm. The question at the moment is not whether they are good excuses. The point is that they are one more proof of how deeply, whether we like it or not, we believe in the Law of Nature. If we do not believe in decent behaviour, why should we be so anxious to make excuses for not having behaved decently?" C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1980), 20.

<sup>41</sup>Romans 3:21-26.

the Christian faith to the ethical dilemmas and questions which plague our society and people. Such an approach would neither ignore the Law as *God's* Law and make it a series of humanly agreed upon ideal standards,<sup>42</sup> nor would it ignore the Gospel as the *only* true mover of "love," "good works," "and the fruit of faith" in sinful and imperfect people and situations. Nor would it seek to make "ethics" an absolute answer to *all* problems everywhere. Such an ethics would only address Law and Gospel to one concrete situation at a time and not create over-arching schema which would handle each and every circumstance, falling once again into Law.

In his book, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, Paul Althaus gives a view of such a justification based approach to ethics:

Justification by faith determines Christian ethics because, for the Christian, justification is both the presupposition and the source of ethical life.<sup>43</sup>

Everything the Christian does presupposes that he is justified. Justification determines the Christian ethos because it governs the Christian's understanding of what the Christian life is. It does this two ways: negatively, by what it rules out [. . . neither the Christian ethos nor human activity can ever be construed as a way of attaining God's approval or winning salvation. . .], and positively, by what it affirms [. . . Just as God. . . accepts me as righteous and looks upon me with favor even though I am and remain a sinner, so God also accepts and approves my works].<sup>44</sup>

It should be no surprise that *this* view of the foundation of ethics is based on Althaus' extrapolation from Luther's own writings. Althaus writes:

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<sup>42</sup>" . . . it is dangerous to describe a man who tries very hard to keep the moral law as a 'man of high ideals,' because this might lead you to think that moral perfection was a private taste of his own and that the rest of us were not called on to share it. . . It lead you to become a prig and to think you were rather a special person who deserved to be congratulated on his 'idealism.'" Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 70.

<sup>43</sup>Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 3.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

The activity of the Christian whose ethos is based on justification can never be understood in terms of achieving salvation; it can only be understood in terms of gratitude to God for the salvation freely given before we do anything. No one can ever attain a good conscience before God through his works. On the contrary, good works can be done only by the man who has a good conscience because God has freely forgiven his sin. A good conscience is not the product but the source of the Christian ethos.<sup>45</sup>

And he continues:

... there is the ethical meaning: God is pleased with all those works which he has himself commanded and which are therefore right in his sight, whereas he is not pleased with all those works which men choose for themselves. Second, Luther makes a metaethical distinction: as a result of justification God is -- paradoxically -- pleased with the works he himself commanded, even though the works actually done are full of impurity.<sup>46</sup>

This is seen clearly in the way Luther connects faith and works ("love" and "doing" according to God's command) in the Catechisms. In his explanation of the Ten Commandments and The Table of Duties, he restates God's commandments and gives Scriptural "admonishment [*ermahnen*]"<sup>47</sup> for humans in their "various estates and conditions [*Ampts und Diensts*]"<sup>48</sup> as they serve one another, but the fulfillment of this service presupposes Christ, justification and faith.<sup>49</sup> For without God-given faith, humans, serving

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>47</sup>(SC, Table of Duties: Tappert 345.1) *The Small Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 345; (BKS 523.1) *Der Kleine Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 523.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>"We should fear love and trust in God above all things." (SC, 10 Comm., 1st: Tappert 342.2) *The Small Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 342; (BKS 507.2) *Der Kleine Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 507; "The purpose of this commandment, therefore, is to require true faith and confidence of the heart [*es fodert rechten Glauben und Zuversicht des Herzens*], and these fly straight to the one true God and cling to him alone [*und an ihm alleine hange . . .*]." (LC, 10 Comm., 1st: Tappert 365.4) *The Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 365; (BKS



in their vocations, would never truly “fear his wrath,” “obey his commandments,” nor “love him, trust in him, and cheerfully do what he has commanded [*Er verheißet aber Gnade und alles Guts allein, die solche Gebot halten, darumb sollen wir ihn auch lieben und vertrauen und gerne tun nach seinen Geboten*].”<sup>50</sup>

Norman Lund summarizes the first three chief parts of the Catechism:

Luther explains that in the first part [The Ten Commandments] God reveals what is required of us, in the second [The Creed] what He has provided for us. In the third part [The Lord’s Prayer] God commands that we pray continually, *for obedience to keep the first, and for faith to believe the second*.<sup>51</sup>

The other chief parts, Holy Baptism, Confession, and the Sacrament of the Altar, are God’s means to deliver the benefits of Christ Jesus’ work on the cross and to answer the prayer of the faithful.<sup>52</sup>

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560.4) *Der Große Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 560.

<sup>50</sup>(SC, 10 Comm., Conc.: Tappert 344.22) *The Small Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 344; (BKS 510.22) *Der Kleine Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 510.

<sup>51</sup>*Encyclopedia of Biblical and Christian Ethics*, ed. R.K. Harrison, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), 242. [emphasis added]

<sup>52</sup>“Further we believe that in this Christian church we have the forgiveness of sin, which is granted through the holy sacraments and absolution as well as through all the comforting words of the entire Gospel. Toward forgiveness is directed everything that is to be preached concerning the sacraments and, in short, the entire Gospel and all the duties of Christianity [*Darumb gehöret hieher, was von den Sakramenten zu predigen ist, und Summa das ganze Evangelion und alle Ampter die Christenheit*].” (LC, Creed, 3rd Article: Tappert 417.54) *The Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 417; (BKS 658.54) *Der Große Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 658; “Therefore the Ten Commandments do not by themselves make us Christians, for God’s wrath and displeasure still remain on us because we cannot fulfill his demands. But the Creed brings pure grace and makes us upright and pleasing to God. Through this knowledge we come to love and delight in all the commandments of God [*Denn durch diese Erkenntnis kriegen wir Lust und Liebe zu allen Gepoten Gottes . . .*] because we see that God gives himself completely to us, with all his gifts and his power, to help us keep the Ten Commandments: the Father gives us all creation, Christ all his works, the Holy Spirit all his gifts.” (LC, Creed, 3rd Article: Tappert 420.68-69) *The Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 420; (BKS 661.68-69) *Der Große Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der*

Only in this faith-built life of sin forgiven, freed conscience, and God present in Christ Jesus in Word and Sacrament, and faith motivated prayer does Luther offer admonition and exhortation to “love” and “do,” and then only in the concrete needs and situations of life to which he ministers God’s Word.<sup>53</sup>

Luther’s approach to exhortation is not unique. He follows the example of St. Paul who built his exhortation upon the certainty of faith. This is clearly seen in Paul’s “urging,”<sup>54</sup> “beseeching,”<sup>55</sup> “appeal,”<sup>56</sup> “imploring,”<sup>57</sup> “encouragement”<sup>58</sup> in the last five chapters of the book of Romans. Lenski translates Romans 12:1:

I *admonish* you, therefore, brethren, through the compassion of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God -- this is your reasonable cultus.<sup>59</sup>

He explains:

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*Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 661.

<sup>53</sup>“This much is certain: anyone who knows the Ten Commandments perfectly knows the entire Scriptures. In all affairs and circumstances he can counsel, help, comfort, judge, and make decisions in both spiritual and temporal matters [*raten, helfen, trösten, urteilen richten beide geistliche und weltlich Wesen*]. He is qualified to sit in judgment upon all doctrines, estates, persons, laws, and everything else in the world.” (LC, Preface: Tappert 361.17) *The Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 361; (BKS 552.17) *Der Große Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 552.

<sup>54</sup>NIV, NAB, NAS

<sup>55</sup>KJV, NKJV

<sup>56</sup>RSV, NRSV

<sup>57</sup>NEB, REB

<sup>58</sup>GW

<sup>59</sup>Richard C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1936), 745. [emphasis added]. The New International Version translates this verse: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God -- this is your spiritual act of worship.” Romans 12:1 NIV.

The search for a close connection of thought to explain the use of οὖν finds nothing in the preceding paragraph. . . Οὖν reaches back much farther. The phrase about God's compassion removes all vagueness by fixing our attention on all that Paul has said about the mercy of God as the source of our justification.<sup>60</sup>

In the following chapters and verses, Paul gives exhortation or "ethical" encouragement in the "loving" and "doing" of the Christian life based entirely in "righteousness before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith."<sup>61</sup> Chapters Twelve through Sixteen apply the "love formed by faith"<sup>62</sup> in the concrete areas of interpersonal relationships, relation to the authorities, the weak in faith and the strong in faith bearing with one another. But with each application, the little word οὖν reminds the reader of what comes before; there is no room for self-righteousness: ". . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:23-24 NIV)" "What a wretched man I am!" St. Paul writes, "Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 7:24-25)"

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> (AC, Article IV: Tappert 30.1-2) *The Augsburg Confession in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959),30; (BKS 56.1-2) *Die Augsburgische Konfession in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 56.

<sup>62</sup>Not "faith formed by love" of classic Roman Catholic theology but the "love" of which Melancthon speaks in the *Apology*. "We say, too, that love should follow faith, as Paul also says, 'In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love' (Gal. 5:6) . . . This faith is no idle [*otiosa*] knowledge, nor can it exist with mortal sin; but it is a work of the Holy Spirit that frees us from death, comforting and quickening terrified minds [*quo eriguntur et vivificantur perterrefactae mentes*]. And since this faith alone receives the forgiveness of sins, renders us acceptable to God, and brings the Holy Spirit, it should be called 'grace that makes us acceptable to God' rather than love, which is the effect resulting from it." (Ap, Article IV: Tappert 123.111-116) *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 123; (BKS 183.111-116) *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 183.

In this sense, there is an “ethical” dimension to Luther’s writings.

As I have said, therefore, Paul is describing the whole of the Christian life [*totam vitam Christianem*] in this passage: inwardly it is faith toward God, and outwardly it is love toward one’s neighbor. Thus a man is a Christian in a total sense: inwardly through faith in the sight of God, who does not need our works; outwardly in the sight of men, who do not derive any benefit from faith but do derive benefit from works or from love.<sup>63</sup>

The doctrine of justification impacts what humanity “does” as it confronts the sin, terrors, and conflict in the world and in human life; to some degree, it answers the question, “How?” In this context, Luther brings the reality of Law and Gospel, sanctification and justification, the incarnation and the Sacraments to bear on the issues which plagued the Christian people of his country. To each situation he applied the Law to which he applied the salve of the Gospel. And when he talked about “doing” and “loving,” it was in the context of “*faith expressing itself in love*”<sup>64</sup> and not humanly engineered “love” and “deed” which shows up in spurious “good works.”<sup>65</sup> It is in this context that it might be legitimately

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<sup>63</sup>Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians – 1535*, in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 27, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 30. Martin Luther, *In epistolam S. Pauli ad Galatas Commentarius 1531 (1535)*, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 40. Band, Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus, 1911), 37.

<sup>64</sup>Galatians 5:6 NIV. [emphasis added] “. . . St. Paul does not speak here about what *faith is or does* by its own work . . . , nor does he speak about what *love is or does*; rather, he briefly summarizes what an *entire* Christian life should be, namely, faith *and* love [*sondern fasset kurtz zu samen was ein ganz Christlich leben sein solls, Nemlich glaube und liebe*]: faith in God which apprehends Christ and receives forgiveness of sins apart from all works, and after that love toward the neighbor, which as the fruit of faith proves that faith is true and not lazy or false, but active and living.” [emphasis added] Martin Luther, *The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests*, 1533, in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 38, ed. Martin E. Lehmann, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 184. Luther Martin, *Von der Winkelmesse und Pfaffenweihe 1523*, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 38. Band, (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus, 1912), 37; “. . . in a brief summary he [Paul] draws a conclusion about the Christian life saying: ‘In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love,’ that is, a faith that is neither imaginary nor hypocritical but true and living]. This is what arouses and motivates good works through love [*id est, fides neque Hypercritica, Sed vera et vivax. Ea est, quae exercet et urget bona opera per Charitatem.*” Martin Luther, *Galatians*, 30. Martin Luther, *ad Galatas*, 37.

<sup>65</sup>“At whatever time God’s Word is taught, preached, heard, read, or pondered, there the person, the day, and the work are sanctified by it, not on account of the external work but on account of the Word which makes us all saints. Accordingly, I constantly repeat that all our life and work must be guided by God’s Word if they are to be God-pleasing or holy [*Derhalben sage ich allezeit, daß alle anser Leben und Werke in dem Wort Gottes gehen müssen,*

said that Luther had an approach to “social ethics.”<sup>66</sup>

Within this theological context, Luther offers us his instruction on society: “The Two Realms” and the “fatherly vocations.”

## The Questions In Historical Context

Luther’s instruction is not delivered in a vacuum. He is acutely aware that the questions of “how” to which he brings Scriptural answers are more than abstract theological or philosophical discourses. The questions are asked by real people with real problems which create a very real need for faithful guidance through a world which is corrupted by sin, confounded with confusion, and complicated by change.

No longer is Luther’s world one in which an essentially rural people work as serfs for a local lord whose income is based primarily on land and agriculture. Instead, it has become a world in which the economy is based on money, income, capital, banks, and liquid assets; people have moved from the country to town and have given up farming to take up trades;<sup>67</sup> increasingly, loyalties became less “local and regional” and more “national” or “territorial;” monarchs and city magistrates consolidated power, demanded taxes, raised

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*sollen sie Gott gefällig oder heilig heißen*]. Where that happens the commandment is in force and is fulfilled.” (LC, 10 Comm., 3rd Comm.: Tappert 377.92) *The Small Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 377; (BKS 583.92) *Der Kleine Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 583.

<sup>66</sup>The term *social ethics* refers to the area of moral questions, problems, and issues that arise from man’s relation to social structures, as well as the principles and applications that are developed in response to them. Social structures are those systems and organizations that humans form in order to respond to the natural world, the spiritual world, and other social structures. These include family, tribe, business and trade, school, and government.” *Encyclopedia of Biblical and Christian Ethics*, ed. R.K. Harrison, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992, 391.

<sup>67</sup>Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 190-199.

armies, and begin the creation of "nation-states" and independent cities which were "politically unified and administratively organized."<sup>68</sup>

No longer is the Roman Catholic Church able to maintain the myth of a unified Christendom administered by the papal office in both religious and secular matters.<sup>69</sup> Dispute between the church and secular rulers about the authority and influence which each could exert over the other,<sup>70</sup> contention between the pope and church councils about who should have authority and influence within the church,<sup>71</sup> discontent "within the scholastic traditions" and "spiritual traditions" with the theology and life of the church,<sup>72</sup> lays the firm

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 182.

<sup>69</sup>Ozment describes: "Europe was a factious family of nation-states, not a harmonious *corpus Christianum*." Ibid., 180.

<sup>70</sup>"[1] One strictly subordinated secular to ecclesiastical power . . . [2] A second . . . subordinated ecclesiastical to secular power and treated the church as a department of state. [3] The third saw church and state as parallel powers and attempted to acknowledge the autonomy of each within its respective sphere." Ibid., 178. "Within the political traditions kings attempted to reduce the church to purely sacramental functions and make it a compliant agent of the state . . ." Ibid., 180. ". . . the church waned as a significant international political power, and lay administrators, who put the state and the monarch above the church universal and the pope, progressively replaced the clergy in royal bureaucracies." Ibid., 182

<sup>71</sup>Ozment writes: "The conciliar movement posed many of the same issues of authority *within* the medieval church that the emergent nation-states of Europe had earlier posed without . . . [1] The first called for a complete subordination of a council to the pope . . . [2] The second possible relationship between pope and council envisioned a genuine sharing of authority, but with the pope clearly holding the upper hand . . . [3] The third relationship between pope and council also envisioned a sharing of power, but with the council, not the pope, dominant . . . [4] Finally, there was the theory that the pope should be subject absolutely to a general council of the church representing the body of the faithful, the immediate source of power." [emphasis added] Ibid., 178-9.

<sup>72</sup>"Within the *scholastic* traditions the church . . . confronted new and unorthodox theological teachings inspired by the pagan Aristotle. Within the *spiritual* traditions the church found itself opposing a seemingly endless variety of heterodox movements inspired by the ideal of apostolic poverty and convinced that personal morality or experience, not tradition or office, gave spiritual authority . . . The critical temper of Augustinianism and Ockhamism, popular religious movements like the Lollards and Hussites, and royal pamphleteers who demanded national control of churches continued into the sixteenth century humanism and Protestantism." [emphasis added] Ibid., 180.

foundation for religious revolution and reformation.<sup>73</sup> And no longer can “papal excommunication and interdict . . . be effective ways to implement the church’s will . . .” to change the circumstances.<sup>74</sup> In fact, instead of creating the desired theological and social unity, “the use of crusade and Inquisition against heterodox piety created permanent religious divisions within and between regions.”<sup>75</sup>

What once might have been confined only as a local conflict quickly becomes a regional and continental controversy which involves more than the churchmen, scholastics and clergy; laymen of all stations become involved, formulate opinions, and take sides as the friction increases; growing literacy and the printing press<sup>76</sup> mean that neither the social conflict nor the theological dissatisfaction can be kept quiet.<sup>77</sup>

Traditional roles of authority have changed or are challenged. The claims and authority of the Roman Church and the pope are no longer universally assumed. The authority of the Holy Roman Emperor is no longer a given. Even the mutual responsibility of a ruler toward the ruled and the ruled toward the ruler is in question. People’s stations in society and the obligations toward others which those stations possess are called into question. What was once understood to be “truth” is now not so certain.

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<sup>73</sup>“What the Reformation did have in common with late medieval reform movements was the conviction that traditional church authority and piety no longer served the religious needs of large numbers of people and had become psychologically and financially oppressive.” Ibid., 222.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 199-201.

<sup>77</sup>“Luther . . . was fond of describing the Reformation as the work of God’s Word. However true that may have been, it was certainly the deed of the printed word. As Luther also recognized, the printing press made it possible for a little mouse like Wittenberg to roar like a lion across the length and breath of Europe.” Ibid., 199.

People of all stations of life request answers for troubling issues which they confront daily. These are questions which ask the “how” and “how much” of social interaction.

*How* does a Christian live in peace with others in society?<sup>78</sup> *How* does the Christian citizen regard the authority of the prince/magistrate and the bishop/pastor?<sup>79</sup> *How* does a Christian prince/magistrate exercise his duties in his care for his people, even in the context of rebellion?<sup>80</sup> *How*, if at all, is the Christian prince/magistrate to be involved in churchly affairs. *How* is the authority of the prince/magistrate different from the authority of

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<sup>78</sup>See Martin Luther, *A Sincere Admonition by Martin Luther to All Christians to Guard Against Insurrection and Rebellion*, 1522, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 45, ed. Walther Brandt, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 57-74. *Eyn trew vormanung Martini Luther tzu allen Christen. Sich tzu vorhuten fur affruhr unnd Emporing*; in *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 8. Band, (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus, 1889), 670-687; Martin Luther, *Admonition to Peace. A Reply to the Twelve Articles of the Peasants in Swabia*, 1525, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 46, ed. Robert Schultz, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 17-55. *Ermanunge zum fride auff die zwelff artikel der Bawrwtschaft ynn Schwaben 1525*, in *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 18. Band, (Weimar: Herman Böhlhaus, 1908) 291-334; Martin Luther, *Dr. Martin Luther's Warning to His dear German People*, 1531, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 47, ed. Franklin Sherman, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 11-55. *Warnunge D. Martini Luther. An seine lieben Deudschen*, in *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 30. Band, 3. Abteil, (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus, 1910), 267-320.

<sup>79</sup>See *Ibid.*; Martin Luther, *Temporal Authority: To What Extent it Should be Obeyed*, 1523, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 45, ed. Walther Brandt (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 81-129. *Von welltilicher uberkeytt, wie weyt man yhr gehorsam Schuldig sey*, in *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 11. Band, (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus, 1900), 245-280.

<sup>80</sup>See Martin Luther, *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants*, 1525, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 46, ed. Robert Schultz, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 49-55. *Widder die reubischen und moerdischen rotten der andern bawren 1525*, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 18. Band, (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus, 1908), 357-361; Martin Luther, *An Open Letter on the Harsh Book Against the Peasants*, 1525, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 46, ed. Robert Schultz, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 63-85. *Eyn Sendebrief von dem harten buchlin widder die bauren 1525*, 18. Band, (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus, 1908) 384-401); Martin Luther, *A Sermon on Keeping Children in School*, 1533, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 46, ed. Robert Schultz, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 213-258. *Eine Predigt, dass man Kinder zur Schulen halten solle* in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 30. Band, 2. Abteil, (Weimar: Herman Böhlhaus, 1909) 517-588; Martin Luther, *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved*, 1526, vol. 46, ed. Robert Schultz, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 93-136. *Ob kriegsleute auch ynn seligem siande seyn kuenden*, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 19. Band, (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus, 1897), 623-662.



bishop/pastor?<sup>81</sup> How does a Christian bishop/pastor exercise his duties in care for the members of the Church?<sup>82</sup> How do the princes/magistrates and pastors/bishops exercise their proper authority in their proper realms and how, if at all, do these realms overlap?<sup>83</sup> Luther's pastoral advice draws deeply from Holy Scripture to find answers established firmly in the reality of Law and Gospel, sanctification and justification, the incarnation and the Sacraments.<sup>84</sup>

### Pastoral Advice: "The Two Realms"

Luther's primary concern for social interaction is the *distinction* between Law and Gospel, God's *purposes* and realms of *application* for each. He does not create a social program or new "canon law."<sup>85</sup> To do so would be to *confuse* not *distinguish*.<sup>86</sup> Rather, his

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<sup>81</sup> See Martin Luther, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate*, 1520, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 44, ed. James Atkinson, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 123-217. *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation von des christlichen Standes Besserung*, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 6. Band, (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus, 1888) 404-469.

<sup>82</sup> See Martin Luther, *Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors in Electoral Saxony*, 1528, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 40, ed. Conrad Bergendoff, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), 269-320. *Unterricht der Visitatoren an die Pfarhern ym Kurfurstenthum zu Sachssen 1528*, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 26. Band, (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus, 1909), 195-240.

<sup>83</sup> See each of the previous Luther volumes.

<sup>84</sup> "... let me say once and for all that by the grace of God I have most diligently traced out all these articles through the Scriptures, have examined them again and again in the light thereof [*alle diese artickel habe auff vleyssigst bedacht durch die schrift und widder her durch off mals gezogen*], and have wanted to defend all of them as certainly as I have now defended the sacrament of the altar." Martin Luther, *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*, 1528, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 37, ed. Robert Fischer, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), 360. Martin Luther, *Von abendmal Christi, Bekendnis 1528*, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 26. Band, (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus, 1909), 500.

<sup>85</sup> Robert Kolb writes: "Luther grew up with the belief that God's wrath could be appeased best by sacred works [vocation of priest or monk or nun, going on a pilgrimage, venerating relics of the saints, fasting, or praying the rosary] . . . [Later] Luther believed that many of the sacred works prescribed by the medieval church were not at all the essence of godliness, but instead were purely and simply ungodly . . . most of the sacred activities to which the church was directing medieval Christians were not commanded in Scriptures; they were the commandments of men, frequently serving to reinforce the Christian's dependance not only on his own works but also on the hierarchy of the

goal is to “advise,” “teach,” “instruct” Christian people and their consciences in the Christian fulfillment of their individual vocations. His goal is pastoral not political.<sup>87</sup> This is seen clearly, for instance, in a series of documents in which Luther deals with the problems and controversy of open rebellion and the legitimate need to maintain peace and order in society.<sup>88</sup>

1. “There are two kingdoms, one the kingdom of God, the other the kingdom of the world. . . [*Eyns ist Gottis reich, das ander ist der welt reich*]”<sup>89</sup>

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church . . . these sacred works devised by human beings searching for their own righteousness in their own activities diverted God’s people from the responsibilities which God created them to perform in delivering His love to others. . . . God had so structured human life that He made individual human beings not only to stand in relationship to Him in vertical dependence but also to associate with other human beings in horizontal interdependence.” Robert Kolb, “God Calling, ‘Take Care of My People’: Luther’s Concept of Vocation in the Augsburg Confession and Its Apology”, in *Concordia Journal* 1, vol. 8, (January 1982): 4-5.

<sup>86</sup> . . . Luther’s distinction between the two kingdoms is a real distinction. Because the distinction is real, Luther rejects the theocratic state and the notion that *Christian* magistrates are *essential* to the proper functioning of the political order. Reason and natural law provide adequate norms for a well-run state. There is no need for a divine political polity revealed in the Bible, a polity which can only be interpreted correctly by true believers. The state has its own dignity and authority. It is an independent sphere of God’s government, and Christians may serve it with a good conscience.” David Steinmetz, *Luther in Context*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 124.

<sup>87</sup> “A historian reading Luther’s discussion of the two kingdoms for the first time might be tempted to remark that it all sounds more like pastoral advice than like political philosophy. And, of course pastoral advice is exactly what it is. . . . Luther is advising the Christians on the nature and character of Christian existence.” *Ibid*.

<sup>88</sup> See Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation 1521-1532*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 172-193.

<sup>89</sup> Luther, *An Open Letter*, 69. Luther, *Eyn Sendebreff*, 389.

2. One is the realm<sup>90</sup> of God's *mercy and forgiveness of sin* in Christ Jesus.<sup>91</sup>
3. The other is the realm of God's *restraint* upon the effects of sinful people behaving sinfully toward other sinful people and work toward good order in society.<sup>92</sup>
4. The minister of the Gospel of Christ is concerned only with the "*forgiveness of sins*" administered through the Gospel Word of Christ Jesus *not* with the legal, civil *constraint* of sinful behavior.<sup>93</sup> Law is used to convict the conscience of the presence of sin and need for forgiveness. The church nor

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<sup>90</sup>“Luther used the term ‘kingdom’ for two different kinds of power. He referred to the kingdoms of God and Satan, locked in struggle against each other. He also referred to God’s two ‘kingdoms’ or ‘governments,’ which He established within His structure for human living. Contemporary scholars are tending to call this latter set of kingdoms, both belonging to God, the two ‘realms’ or ‘modes of governing.’ We dare never forget that these two realms are distinct but that both belong to God. Historically, some Lutherans have tried to separate them and ‘free’ the horizontal realm from God’s control. He exercises His lordship differently in the horizontal realm, but He is also Caesar’s lord, Citibank’s lord, and CBS’s lord.” Robert Kolb, “Christian Civic Responsibility in an Age of Judgment”, in *Concordia Journal* 1, vol. 19, (January 1993): 19.

<sup>91</sup>“God’s kingdom is a kingdom of *grace and mercy [gnaden und barmhertzigkeit]*, not of wrath and punishment. In it there is only forgiveness, consideration for one another, love service, the doing of good, peace, joy, etc.” Ibid. “God has established two kinds of government among men. The one is spiritual; it has no sword, but it has the word, by means of which men are to become good and righteous [*sollen from und gerecht werden*], so that with this righteousness they may attain eternal life.” Luther, *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved*, 99. *Ob kriegsleute auch ynn seligen stande seyn kuenden*, 629.

<sup>92</sup>“... the kingdom of the world is a kingdom of wrath and severity. In it there is only punishment, repression, judgment, and condemnation *to restrain the wicked and protect the good*. For this reason it has the sword, and Scripture calls a prince or lord ‘God’s wrath,’ or ‘God’s rod.’ (Isaiah 14 [:5-6]).” [emphasis added] Luther, *An Open Letter*, 69-70. *Eyn Sendbrieff*, 389; “The other kind is worldly government, which works through the sword so that those who do not want to be good and righteous to eternal life may be *forced* to become good and righteous in the *eyes of the world [fuer die Welt]*[re: civil righteousness, ‘temporal righteousness’]. . . And although God will not reward this kind of righteousness with eternal life, nonetheless, he still wishes peace to be maintained among men and rewards them with temporal blessings [*zeitlichem gute*].” [emphasis added] Luther, *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved*, 99-100. *Ob kriegsleute*, 629.

<sup>93</sup>“It is not fitting that I, an evangelist, should judge or make decisions in such matters [civil matters of mutual obligation between peasant and prince] [*Denn myr alls eyn Euangelisten nicht gepurt hyrynnen urteylen und richten*]. I am to instruct and teach men’s consciences in things that concern divine and Christian matters . . .” Luther, *Admonition to Peace*, 39-40. *Ermanunge zum fride*, 327; “[God] administers this righteousness through the word, which he has committed to the preachers [*wilchs er den predigern befohlen hat*].” Luther, *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved*, 99. *Ob kriegsleute*, 629.

its ministers are agents of coercion and force.

5. The secular ruler, however, is God's servant who is given the duty to maintain peace and avoid chaos in society even through the use of force and coercion, if necessary.<sup>94</sup> The Christian ruler and his agents are fulfilling the their duties of love even when forced to use violent means.<sup>95</sup>
6. After a time of social conflict, when order and peace are restored, the Christian ruler shows his proper Christian love by showing mercy.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>... a prince and lord must remember that according to Romans 13[:4] he is God's *minister* and the servant of his wrath [*Gottes amptman und seyns zorns diener*] and the sword has been given him to use against such people [as the 'faithless, perjured, disobedient, rebellious murderers, robbers, and blasphemers']. [emphasis added] Luther, *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes*, 52-53. *Widder die reubischen*, 360; "[God] administers this righteousness through the sword . . . He gives rulers much more property, honor, and power than he gives to others so that they may serve him by administering this temporal righteousness [*Denn dariemb gibt er der oeberkeit so viel guts, ehre und gewalt, das sie es mit recht fuer andern besitzen das sie yhm dienen, solche weltliche gerechtickeit zu handhaben*]." Luther, *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved*, 99-100. *Ob kriegsleute*, 629; "Overlords . . . are appointed to be persons who exist for the sake of the community [*sie sol eine gemeine person*], and not for themselves alone." Luther, *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved*, 126. *Obs kriegsleute*, 652.

<sup>95</sup>... when I think of a soldier fulfilling his office by punishing the wicked, killing the wicked, and creating so an un-Christian work completely contrary to Christian love. *But* when I think of how it *protects the good, keeps and preserves* wife and child, house and farm, property, and honor and peace, then I see how *precious* and *godly* this work is . . ." Luther, *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved*, 96. *Obs kriegsleute*, 626.

<sup>96</sup>"I was writing only for rulers who might wish to deal in a Christian or otherwise honest way with their people, to instruct their consciences concerning this matter so the effect that they to take immediate action against the bands of rebels both innocent and guilty. . . . Afterward, however, if they won, they were to show grace, not only to those whom they considered innocent, but to the guilty as well." Luther, *An Open Letter*, 83-84. *Eyn Sendebrieff*, 400.

7. Subjects are to be loyal servants to their rulers,<sup>97</sup> not rebel,<sup>98</sup> and be careful not to confuse their spiritual freedom with bodily freedom.<sup>99</sup>
8. Rulers hear and respond to the needs of their subjects for the sake of Christian love and good order.<sup>100</sup>
9. Since the Christian minister deals with Christian consciences as a whole, he gives pastoral advice to both the Christian ruler and the Christian subject alike – this is not confusion of Law and Gospel but rather the fulfilment of his divine call to “teach . . . consciences in things that concern divine and Christian matters . . .”<sup>101</sup> This is not a matter of using force, coercion, or manipulation, only the proclamation of God’s Word.
10. The confusion of these two realms of God and the confusion of the duties of

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<sup>97</sup>“ . . . they have sworn to be true and faithful, submissive and obedient to their rulers [*das sie yhrer oberkeyt trew und milde geschworen haben*], as Christ commands when he says, ‘Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s’ [Luke 20:25]. And Romans 13[:1] says ‘Let every person be subject to the governing authorities.’” Luther, *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes*, 49-50. *Widder die reubischen*, 357; “Just as he performs all other works of love [*werke der liebe*] which he himself does not need [*der er nichts bedarft*] . . . so he serves the governing authority not because he needs it but for the sake of others [*nicht das er yhr beduerfte, sondern die andern*], that they may be protected and that the wicked may not become worse. He loses nothing by this; such service in no way harms him, yet it is of great benefit to the world.” Luther, *Temporal Authority*, 94. *Von weltlicher uberkeyt*, 253-4.

<sup>98</sup>“ . . . anyone who can be proved to be a seditious person is an outlaw before God and the emperor . . . For rebellion is not just simple murder and bloodshed; it makes widows and orphans, and turns everything upside down, like the worst disaster.” Luther, *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants*, 50. *Widder die reubischen und moerdisschen rotten der andern bawren*, 358

<sup>99</sup>This is to be a confusion of Law and Gospel. “For baptism does not make men free in body and property, but in soul [*Denn die tauffe macht nicht leyb und gut frey, sondern die seelen*]; and the gospel does not make goods common, except in the case of those who, of their own free will, do what the apostles and disciples did in Acts 4[:32-37]. They did not demand . . . that the goods of others – of Pilate and Herod – should be common, but only their own goods.” Ibid., 51. *Widder die reubischen*, 359.

<sup>100</sup>“ . . . as temporal rulers you do nothing but cheat and rob the people so that you may lead a life of luxury and extravagance. The poor people cannot bear it any longer.” Luther, *Admonition to Peace*, 19. *Ermanunge zum fride*, 293; “Do not start a fight with them, for you do not know how it will end. Try kindness first . . . You will lose nothing by kindness . . .” Ibid., 22. *Ermanunge*, 297.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 39-40. *Ermanunge*, 327.

the ministers/servants in these two realms is tantamount to the confusion of Law and Gospel.<sup>102</sup>

The Confessors follow Luther's lead; *The Augsburg Confession*, *The Apology*, *The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, *The Small Catechism*, *The Large Catechism* agree: the earthly and spiritual governments are both God's great gift and need to be distinguished in order to maintain the distinction between Law and Gospel.<sup>103</sup> Through the saints, whether they are in temporal or sacred vocations, God does His great works.<sup>104</sup> Each realm of God's rule has its proper work. The earthly realm protects life and property and

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<sup>102</sup>“Now he who would confuse these two kingdoms. . . would put wrath into God's kingdom and mercy into the world's kingdom.” Luther, *An Open Letter*, 70. *Eyn Sendebriefff*, 389.

<sup>103</sup>(AC Article XXVIII: Tappert 81.4) *The Augsburg Confession* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 81; (BKS 120.4) *Augsburgische Konfession* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 120. (AC Article XXVIII: Tappert 83.12) *The Augsburg Confession* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 83; (BKS 122.12) *Augsburgische Konfession* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 122. (Ap Article XII: Tappert 210.176) *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 210; (BKS 290.176) *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 290. (Ap Article XVI: Tappert 222.2) *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 222; (BKS 307-8.2) *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 307-8. (Tr: Tappert 325.31) *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 325; (BKS 480.31) *Tractatus de potestate papae* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 480. (SC, Lord's Prayer, 4<sup>th</sup> Petition: Tappert 347.14) *Small Catechism* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 347; (BKS 514.14) *Kleiner Katechismus* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 514. (LC, Creed, 1<sup>st</sup> Article: Tappert 412.15) *Large Catechism* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 412; (BKS 648.15) *Großer Katechismus* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 648. (LC, Lord's Prayer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Petition: Tappert 427.55) *Large Catechism* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 427; (BKS 674.55) *Großer Katechismus* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 674.

<sup>104</sup>(Ap Article XXI: Tappert 234.36) *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 234; (BKS 324.36) *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 324.

brings order to the world.<sup>105</sup> Through the church, God daily brings the merits of Christ, redemption, forgiveness, righteousness, and administers the means of grace.<sup>106</sup> Through the church, God daily sanctifies as He removes the Old Adam.<sup>107</sup> If the bishop/pastor “possesses temporal authority and the sword, [he] possess[es] it not . . . by divine right . . . but by human . . . right.”<sup>108</sup> If bishops/pastors “are negligent in the performance of such duties, the princes are obliged . . . to administer justice to their subjects for the sake of peace and prevent discord and great disorder in their lands.”<sup>109</sup>

In the *Augsburg Confession*, Melanchthon comments on the damage engendered by confusion about the responsibilities and powers of bishops and secular rulers:

Out of this careless confusion [*unordentlichen Gemenge*] many serious wars,

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<sup>105</sup>(AC, Article XXVIII: Tappert 82.11) *Apology of the Augsburg Confession in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 82; (BKS 122.11) *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 122.

<sup>106</sup>(Ap, Article VII/VIII: Tappert 170.13) *Apology of the Augsburg Confession in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 170; (BKS 236.13) *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 236. (LC, Lord’s Prayer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Petition: Tappert 426.51) *Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 426; (BKS 673.51) *Großer Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 673.

<sup>107</sup>(Ap, Article VII/VIII: Tappert 171.18) *Apology of the Augsburg Confession in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 171; (BKS 237.18) *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 237. (Ap, Article XXVII: Tappert 273.27) *Apology of the Augsburg Confession in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 273; (BKS 386.27) *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 386. (LC, Baptism: Tappert 444.64) *Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 444; (BKS 704.64) *Großer Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 704.

<sup>108</sup>(AC, Article XXVIII: Tappert 83.19) *The Augsburg Confession in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 83; (BKS 123.19) *Die Augsburgische Konfession in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 123.

<sup>109</sup>(AC, Article XXVIII: Tappert 85.29) *The Augsburg Confession in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 85; (BKS 125.29) *Die Augsburgische Konfession in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 125.

tumults, and uprisings have resulted because the bishops, under pretext of the power given them by Christ, have not only introduced new forms of worship and burdened consciences with reserved cases and violent uses of the ban, but have also presumed to set up and depose kings and emperors according to their pleasure.<sup>110</sup>

In this sinful, chaotic world, *confusion* of Law and Gospel and *confusion* of the two realms only adds to the trouble which people face. *Distinction* helps good order abound in “temporal” realm and the Gospel flourish in the “spiritual.”

### **Pastoral Advice: “Vocation”**

Luther has another concern regarding social interaction; it, too, is related to the distinction between Law and Gospel and the “Two Realms.” He is concerned 1) that *Christian* people have the correct *motivation* for the good work of service to their neighbor, and 2) that they believe that God’s “call” to faith in the forgiveness of sins does not remove them from their temporal “call,” their vocation, and duties. Luther summarizes: “All things are free to you with God through faith; but with men you are servant of everyman through love [*und bist aller dinge frey bey Gott durch den glauben, aber bey den menschen bistu ydermans diener durch die Liebe*].”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup>(AC, Article XXVIII: Tappert 81.1-2) *The Augsburg Confession* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 81; (BKS 120.1-2) *Die Augsburgische Konfession* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 120.

<sup>111</sup>Martin Luther, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 7*, 1523, in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 28, ed. Hilton C. Oswald, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), 47. *Das siebend Capitel S. Pauli an den Chorinthern*, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 12. Band, (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1891), 133. “With respect to brothers, sisters, and neighbors in general he commands nothing higher than to love them.” (LC, Ten Commandments, The Fourth Commandment: Tappert 379.105) *Large Catechism* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 379; (BKS 587.105) *Großer Katechismus* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 587. See, also, the section, “A Question of Ethics,” page 7-17.



Good works of service do not merit salvation – humans are not *bound* to do works commanded by the Law to *earn* salvation.<sup>112</sup> “But this purchase . . . does not affect the relations men have with one another . . . These relations are all left intact, and God wants them maintained.”<sup>113</sup>

Luther makes a distinction between the freedom existing in your relation to God and the freedom in your relation to your neighbor.

In the former this freedom is present, in the latter it is not, and for this reason: God gives you this freedom only in the things that are *yours*, not in what is your *neighbor's*. There differentiate between what is yours and what is your neighbor's. . . In sum: We owe nobody anything but to love (Rom. 13:8) and to serve our neighbor through love [*wyr sind niemand nichts Schuldig denn lieben, und durch die liebe dem nehisten dienen*]. Where *love* is present, there it is accomplished that no eating, drinking, clothing, or living, in a particular way endangers the conscience or is a sin before God, except when it is *detrimental* to one's neighbor.<sup>114</sup>

The bishop/pastor, the rulers, the subjects each have their *Christian* duties of love and service to each other.<sup>115</sup> This good work is mutual – done for one another. This good work is more than God pleasing: it is the way God delivers all that is good to all people. To avoid the duties, responsibilities, challenges, trials, and occasional suffering of human

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<sup>112</sup>“By this [‘You were bought with a price’] he means Christ, who with His own blood bought us and set us free [*erkaufft und frey gemacht*] from all sin and law . . .” Ibid., 45. *Zu den Chorinthern*, 131; “The effect of this purchase is spiritual and takes place in our conscience. Therefore before God no law any longer binds or imprisons us [*keyn gesetz mehr bindet noch fehet*]. We are all free from all things.” Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid.; “Whatever outwardly remains of relationships or freedom is neither sin nor virtue but only outward tranquility or trouble, joy or suffering, as is all other bodily good and ill, in both of which we can live free without sin.” Ibid.

<sup>114</sup>[emphasis added] Ibid. *Zu den Chorinthern*, 132.

<sup>115</sup>“As far as we can determine Luther does not use *Beruf* [*vocatio*, vocation, call] to the work of a non-Christian. All have station (*Stand*) and office; but *Beruf* is the Christian's earthly or spiritual work, not vocation in any other sense.” Gustav Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl A. Rasmussen, (Evansville: Ballast Press, 1994), 2.

vocation is to avoid God Himself.<sup>116</sup> If anyone wonders what duties and good works God has for him do, all he has to do is look into the Ten Commandments:

Here, then, we have the Ten Commandments, a summary of divine teaching on what we are to do to make our whole life pleasing to God. They are the true fountain of from which all good works must flow. Apart from these Ten Commandments no deed, no conduct can be good or pleasing to God [*außer den zehen Geboten kein Werk wesen gut und Gott gefällig kann sein*], no matter how great or precious it may be in the eyes of the world.<sup>117</sup>

In his explanation of the Ten Commandments, Luther elaborates on the good works and duties of human vocation; notice how the explanations have a negative parts (what good works are not) and positive parts (what good works are):

4. “We should fear and love God, and so we should not [-] despise our parents and superiors, nor provoke them to anger, [+] but honor, serve, obey love, and esteem them.
5. We should fear and love God, and so [-] we should not endanger our neighbor’s life, nor cause him any harm, [+] but help and befriend him in every necessity of life.
6. . . . and so we should [+] lead a chaste and pure life in word and deed, each one loving and honoring his wife or her husband. [The negative part is unexpressed; most certainly it entails unchastity, impurity in word and deed and not loving or honoring a spouse.]
7. . . . and so we should [-] not rob our neighbor of his money or property, nor bring them into our possession by dishonest trade or by dealing in shoddy wares, [+] but help him to improve and protect his income.
8. . . . and so we should [-] not tell lies about our neighbor, nor betray, slander,

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<sup>116</sup>“It is God alone . . . from whom we receive all that is good and by whom we are delivered from evil . . . Although much that is good comes to us from men, we receive it all *from God* through his command and ordinance [*Denn ob uns gleich sonst viel Guts von Menschen widerfähret, so heißet es doch alles von Gut empfangen*]. Our parents and all authorities -- in short, all people placed in the position of neighbors have received the command to do us all kinds of good. So we receive our blessings not from them, but from God *through* them.” [emphasis added] (LC, Ten Commandments, 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment: Tappert 368.24-26) *Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 368; (BKS 565.24-262) *Großer Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 565.

<sup>117</sup>(LC, Ten Commandments, Conclusion: Tappert 407.311) *Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 407; (BKS 639.311) *Großer Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 637.

or defame him, [+] but should apologize for him, speak well of him, and interpret charitably all that he does.

9. . . . and so we should [-] not seek by craftiness to gain possession of our neighbor's inheritance or home, nor to obtain them under pretext of legal right, [+] but be of service and help him so that he may keep what is his.
10. . . . and so we should [-] abduct, estrange, or entice away our neighbor's wife, servants, or cattle, [+] encourage them to remain and discharge *their* duty to him.<sup>118</sup>

Not every human action is a good work. Certainly, those actions which are done by *unbelievers*,<sup>119</sup> or are *against* God's commandments, or facilitate an *avoidance* of the duties, joys, and the trials of human vocation are *not* good works and are, in fact, evil works.

Luther's primary example (but not his only example) of this *avoidance* is monasticism.<sup>120</sup> In *Judgment of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows*, he observes:

It appears that the vow of poverty has been devised by Satan to provide a pretext for freeing the religious from the responsibility of helping [to relieve] the poverty of others and from the works of mercy and love expected of them . . . For the vow keeps them closed up in their monasteries so that they cannot help anyone at all. It keeps them absolutely free from the necessity of working with their hands with the consequence that they allow themselves to be served by others. Under this

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<sup>118</sup>(SC, Ten Commandments: Tappert 343-4.8-20) *Small Catechism* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 343; (BKS 508-510.8-20) *Kleiner Katechismus* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 508-10.

<sup>119</sup>“We agree that this [‘how and why the works of *believers* are pleasing and acceptable to God, even though they are still impure and imperfect in this flesh of ours’] is so for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ through faith because the person is acceptable to God. For works which belong to the maintenance of outward discipline and which unbelievers and the unconverted are also able and required to perform, are indeed praiseworthy in the sight of the world [*obwohl vor der Welt dieselbtgen löblich, darzu auch von Gott in dieser Welt mit zeitlichen Gütern belohnet werden*], and even God will reward them with temporal blessings in this world, but since they do not flow from true faith, they are sinful (that is, spattered with sins in the sight of God) . . .” (Formula of Concord, SD, Article IV, Good Works: Tappert 552.8) *The Formula of Concord* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 552; (BKS 940.8) *Konkordienformel* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 940.

<sup>120</sup>“Is there any position or occupation which not *Beruf*, not *Stand* in the true sense? In *De votis monasticis*, Luther shows monastic vows to be contrary to faith, to freedom, to God's command and love, and to reason. A monastic vow is accordingly a vow to do evil. It must be broken, even as vow to steal, to lie, or to murder.” Wingren, 2.

arrangement the common people turn aside from helping those who are really poor – married couples, widows, orphans, and beggars – to pour their substance on these self-styled poor, who in fact are wealthy . . .”<sup>121</sup>

In Article XXVII of the *Augsburg Confession*, Melancthon writes:

It was claimed that monastic vows were equal to Baptism, and that by monastic life one could earn forgiveness of sin and justification before God. What is more, they added that monastic life not only earned righteousness and godliness, but also that by means of this life both the precepts and the counsels included in the Gospel were kept, and so monastic vows were praised more highly than Baptism. They also claimed that more merit could be obtained by monastic life than by all other states of life instituted by God – whether the office of pastor and preacher, or ruler, prince, lord, or the like, all of whom serve in their appointed calling according to God’s Word and command with invented spirituality [*die alles nach Gottes Gebot, Wort und Befehl ihrem Beruf ohn erdichte Geistlichkeit dienen*].<sup>122</sup>

Gustav Wingren summarizes Luther’s teaching about Christian vocations:

So vocation belongs to this world, not to heaven; it is directed toward one’s neighbor, not toward God. This is an important preliminary characteristic. In his vocation one is not reaching up to God, but rather bends oneself down toward the world. When one does that, God’s creative work is carried on. God’s work of love takes form on earth, and is carried on. God’s work of love takes form on earth, that which is external witnesses to God’s love.<sup>123</sup>

### **Pastoral Advice: “The Four Estates”**

Luther’s understanding of the *distinction* between the “two realms” is not the only

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<sup>121</sup>Martin Luther, *The Judgment of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows*, in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 44, ed. James Atkinson, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 361. *De votis monasticis Martini Lutheri iudicium 1521* in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 8. Band, (Weimar: Heinrich Böhlhaus, 1989), 644. A good summary of this document is found in Brecht, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation*, 23-5.

<sup>122</sup>(AC, Article XXVII, Monastic Vows: Tappert 72-73.11-13) *The Augsburg Confession in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 72-73; (BKS 111-12.11-13) *Augsburgische Konfession in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 111-12.

<sup>123</sup>Wingren, 10.

way he speaks about social interaction. In *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*,<sup>124</sup> he introduces teaching about the "three estates." This is not a denial nor an alternative to the "two realms."<sup>125</sup>

Rather, it looks at the *interaction* of individuals in their society in a *different* way. Three estates (church, politics, and family/marriage) are established on earth by God. They are His means to do works of love in society. Through these estates he gives the world the First Article gifts of creation, provision, and protection.<sup>126</sup> Although God wishes that these works be done, they are not means of grace; doing them has no inherent merit.

Unlike the "two realms" doctrine, Luther makes no attempt to distinguish any of the "three estates" from another.<sup>127</sup> Rather, he emphasizes many points of comparison and commonality. The possessor of each estate has common duties of service. It might be said that the "three estates" cut across or link the "two realms," whereas the "two realms" need to be distinguished, the "three estates" emphasize the commonalities between the individuals who, as a result of their vocation, function more or less exclusively in one of the two realms

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<sup>124</sup>Luther, *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*, 151-372. *Von abendmal Christi, Bekenntnis*, 261-509.

<sup>125</sup>"We should not incorrectly oppose this 'three-estates' doctrine,' which Luther also employed later, to the 'two-kingdoms doctrine,' as if here he were repudiating the distinction between the spiritual and the temporal office. The point of view is different in each case. The three estates correspond to the ordinances established by God . . . in the spheres of activity of church, politics, and family, which Luther here did not further differentiate." Brecht, 321.

<sup>126</sup>(SC, Creed, 1<sup>st</sup> Article: Tappert 344.2) *Small Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 344; (BKS 512.2) *Kleiner Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 512.

<sup>127</sup>"Both governments [realms] are expressions of God's love. In his vocation man does works which effect the well-being of others; for so God has made all offices. Through this work in man's offices, God's creative work goes forward, and that creative work is love, a profusion of good gifts. . . . God gives his gifts through earthly vocations, toward men's life on earth (food through farmers, fishermen, and hunters; external peace through princes, judges, and orderly power; knowledge and education through teachers and parents, etc., etc.). Through the preacher's vocation, God gives the forgiveness of sins. Thus love comes from God, flowing down to human beings on earth through all vocations, through both spiritual and earthly governments." Wingren, 28.

of God's rule.

In the *Large Catechism*, 1529, in his explanation of the Fourth Commandment,<sup>128</sup> Luther takes much the same approach. Luther instructs how Christian individuals have a common duty. This duty has ramifications both the "temporal realm" and the "spiritual."

Throughout his explanation, Luther emphasizes how through the God-established estates, God gives the means which produce good order and deliver His First Article gifts: "food, clothing, house and home, family and property," provision for life, protection and preservation.<sup>129</sup>

All the authority which God has given is derived from the God-given office of parent. The authority by which a father and mother act for the benefit and on the behalf of their children comes from God.<sup>130</sup> For that reason "all estates are beneath" them [*allen*

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<sup>128</sup>(LC, Ten Commandments, 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Tappert 379.102-389.178) *Large Catechism* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 379-389; (BKS 586.103-610.-178) *Kleiner Katechismus* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 586-610.

<sup>129</sup>(SC, Creed, 1<sup>st</sup> Article: Tappert 345.2) *Small Catechism* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 345; (BKS 510.2) *Kleiner Katechismus* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 510.

<sup>130</sup>... let us carefully note, first, how highly God honors and glorifies the married life, sanctioning and protecting it by his commandment. He sanctioned it above the fourth commandment, 'You shall honor father and mother'... Significantly he established it as the first of all institutions, and created man and woman differently (as is evident) not for lewdness but to be true to each other, be fruitful, beget children, and support and bring them up to the glory of God. [*Darümb will er ihn auch von uns geehret, gehalten und geführet haben als einen göttlichen, seligen Stand, weil er ihn erstlich vor allen andern eingesetzt hat und darümb unterschiedlich Mann und Weib geschaffen (wie fur Augen) nicht zur Buberei, sondern daß sie sich zusammen halten, fruchtbar seien, Kinder zeugen, nähren und aufziehen zu Gottes Ehren.*] (LC, Ten Commandments, The Sixth Commandment: Tappert 393.206-7) *Large Catechism* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 393; (BKS 612.206-7) *Großer Katechismus* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 612. "God has therefore richly blessed this estate above all other and, in addition, has supplied and endowed it with everything in the world in order that this estate might be provided for richly and adequately. Married life is no matter for jest or idle curiosity, but it is a glorious institution and an object of God's serious concern. For it is of the highest importance to him that persons be brought up to serve the world, promote knowledge of God, godly living, and all virtues, and fight against wickedness and the devil. [*Denn es liegt ihm alle Macht daran, daß man Leute ziehe, die der Welt dienen und helfen zu Gottes Erkenntnis, seligem Leben und allen Tugenden, wider die Bösheit und den Teufel zu streiten.*] (LC, Ten Commandments, The Sixth Commandment:

*Ständen, die unter ihm sind*].<sup>131</sup> Parents give their children all the gifts which Luther lists in the *Small Catechism*'s explanation of the First Article of the Creed. Through the parent's bodies life is given. Through their labor, food, clothing, house and home, and good order are provided. Through parental cooperation, children are given education. Through the parents' love and strength, children are preserved from danger and evil. It is for this reason which children honor their parents. This honor is more than love.

. . . but also deference, humility, and modesty. . . It requires us to address them affectionately and reverently, but above all to show by our actions, both of heart and of body, that we respect them very highly and next to God we give them the very highest place.<sup>132</sup>

Children who honor their parents are God's means to provide not only love, honor and affection, but also many of the First Article gifts which their parents gave them. Luther declares that the cause for family disintegration lies is the breaking of the Fourth Commandment. Parents either do not teach it, or else, the children refuse to follow it. It is natural that parents who teach this commandment and children who follow it would lived more blessed lives in "happiness, love, kindness, and harmony [*Freud, Liebe, Freundschaft*

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Tappert 393.208) *Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 393; (BKS 612.208) *Großer Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 612.

<sup>131</sup>(LC, Ten Commandments, 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Tappert 379.105) *Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 379; (BKS 587.105) *Großer Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 587. Also, "out of the authority of parents all other authority is derived and depeoped." (LC, Ten Commandments, 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Tappert 384.141) *Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 384. "Denn aus der Eltern oberkeit fleußet und breitet sich aus alle andere." (BKS 596.141) *Großer Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 596.

<sup>132</sup>(LC, Ten Commandments, 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Tappert 379.106-7). *Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 379; (BKS 587.106-7) *Großer Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 587.

und Eintracht].”<sup>133</sup>

From this “office” or “estate” of father and mother all authority on earth is derived.

Luther divides these authorities into four categories.

Thus we have three kinds of father represented in the commandment: fathers by blood [*des Gebluts*], fathers of household [*Hause*], and fathers of the nation [*Land*]. Besides these, there are also spiritual fathers [*geistliche Väter*].<sup>134</sup>

In the same way that “fathers by blood” administer parental authority over their household, the other fathers administer their authority in appropriate “offices” or “call.” All these “fathers” are God’s means to bring His first Article Gifts to the people whom they would view as their “children.”

In the good order which “fathers” provide, the “children” receive honest employment, food, nurture, education, and protection. These “children” should then give back the proper honor which is due to parents. They should work hard in the service of their master as God’s means of support to him. They should serve the rulers of their nation, as needed, with obedience to the laws of the land, with taxes or in labor; this effort supports not only the ruler but also helps to maintain God’s desired good order.

When the Fourth Commandment is broken in relation to these other estates, it is more than the family which is disrupted: it is society as a whole. Those who follow the

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<sup>133</sup>(LC, Ten Commandments, 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Tappert 382.121) *Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 382; (BKS 591.121) *Großer Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 591.

<sup>134</sup>(LC, Ten Commandments, 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Tappert 387.158) *Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 387; (BKS 601.158) *Großer Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 601.



commandment, “the godly and the obedient, however, are blessed. They live long in peace and quietness [*in guter Ruge leben*].”<sup>135</sup> This, too, is a natural outcome.

The “spiritual father” “govern[s] and guide[s] . . . by the Word of God.” Through his “fatherly office”<sup>136</sup> God Himself gives the gifts of both the Second Article and the Third Article of the Creeds. The “three estates” do not operate just in the temporal realm but also in the spiritual. This is true for more than just the “spiritual fathers.” In the same way the other “fathers” receive First Article gifts through their “children,” so too are the “spiritual fathers” to receive such gifts from God through the means of God’s people.<sup>137</sup>

Not only do biological parents have the duty to provide the First Article gifts, but they also provide the structure and environment for their children to learn about the redemption of Jesus, the work of the Holy Spirit, how that impacts their lives as Christian people, as well the external duties and work of love of Christians, children, citizens, parents, authorities of all sorts.<sup>138</sup> Luther writes:

Therefore let everybody know that it is his chief duty, on pain of losing

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<sup>135</sup>(LC, Ten Commandments, 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Tappert 384.137) *Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 384; (BKS 595.137) *Großer Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 595.

<sup>136</sup>(LC, Ten Commandments, 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Tappert 387.158) *Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 387; (BKS 601.158) *Großer Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 601.

<sup>137</sup>(LC, Ten Commandments, 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Tappert 384.161-5) *Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 384; (BKS 602.161-5) *Großer Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 602.

<sup>138</sup>The heading for the Table of Duties in the *Small Catechism* reads: “Table of Duties consisting of certain passages of the Scriptures, selected for various estates and conditions of men, by which they may be admonished to do their respective duties.” (SC, Table of Duties: Tappert 354.1) *Small Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 354; (BKS 523.1) *Kleier Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 523.

divine grace, to bring up his children in the fear and knowledge of God. . . <sup>139</sup>

Provision of *structure* and *environment* for Christian catechesis is a part of the pastoral call, but catechesis is the *duty* of the biological parents. It is not just the “spiritual father’s” *job*, left to him to do alone. <sup>140</sup>

However, Luther mentions that if a “father by blood” is not capable to exercise his parental duties he can ask one of the other authorities to take his place in that matter. <sup>141</sup>

Luther writes:

Out of the authority of parents all other authority is derived and developed. Where a father is unable by himself to bring up his child, he calls upon a schoolmaster to teach him; if he is too weak, he enlists the help of his friends and neighbors; if he passes away, he confers and delegates his authority and responsibility to others appointed for the purpose. . . Thus all who are called masters stand in the place of parents and derive from them their power and authority to govern. In the Scriptures they are all called fathers and ought to have fatherly hearts toward their people. <sup>142</sup>

A question arises in relation to this delegation of parental authority to other authorities: Is this delegation of authority related to Luther’s appeal to his prince to “call and ordain . . . several competent persons” to fulfill the church’s need for “the [re-established]

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<sup>139</sup>(LC, Ten Commandments, 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Tappert 389.174) *Large Catechism* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 389; (BKS 604.174) *Großer Katechismus* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 604.

<sup>140</sup>Each section of the Small Catechism begins: “. . . in the plain form in which the *head* of the family shall teach it to his household.” [emphasis added]

<sup>141</sup>(LC, Ten Commandments, 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Tappert 384.141) *Large Catechism* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 384; (BKS 596.141) *Großer Katechismus* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 596.

<sup>142</sup>*Ibid.*

practice of visitation” in the absence of “the true episcopal office”?<sup>143</sup>

Several of Luther’s comments have some bearing on this question. In his *Large Catechism* explanation of the Fourth Commandment, Luther comments that because parents do not “heed” God’s instructions, and because they “act as if God gave us children for our pleasure and amusement” and servants “to put them to work like cows,” not bothering to “provide material support for their children, servants, subjects. . .” and “bring them up to the praise and honor God,” “it would be well to *preach* to parents on the nature of their office, how they should treat those committed to their authority.”<sup>144</sup> When Luther speaks of “parents,” he is not speaking narrowly about “parents of blood” alone, rather, all kinds of authorities. In the next sentence, he writes about the nature of these “parents:” “God does not want to have knaves or tyrants in this office and responsibility nor does he assign them this honor (that is, *power and authority to govern*) merely to receive homage.”<sup>145</sup> This

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<sup>143</sup>In the absence of “true” bishops dedicated to visitation to the churches in the spirit of the true Gospel, Luther writes, “Preferring to follow what is a certain and to be guided by love’s office (which is a common obligation of Christians), we respectfully appealed to the illustrious and noble prince and lord . . . that out of Christian love (since he is not obligated to do as a temporal sovereign) and by God’s will for the benefit of the gospel and the welfare of the wretched Christians in his territory, His Electoral grace might call and ordain to this office several competent persons.” Martin Luther, *Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors*, in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 40, ed. Conrad Bergendoff, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), 271. “. . . *Da haben wir des gewissen wollen spielen und zur liebe ampt (welchs allen Christen gemein und gepoten) uns gehalten und demuetiglich mit bitten angelangt den durchleuchtigsten hochgebornen Fuersten und herren . . . aus Christlicher Liebe (denn sie nach weltlicher oeberkeit nicht schuldig sind und umb Gotts willen dem Evangelio zu gut und den elenden Christen ynn S.K.J.S landen zu nutz und heil gnediglich wolten etliche tuechtige personen zu solchem ampt foddern und ordenen.*” *Unterricht der Visatorm an die Pfarhern ym Kurfurstenthum zu Sachssen 1528* in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 26. Band, (Weimar: Heinrich Böhlhaus, 1909), 197.

<sup>144</sup>[emphasis added] (LC, Ten Commandments, 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Tappert 388.167-174) *Large Catechism* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 388; (BKS 603.167-174) *Großer Katechismus* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 603.

<sup>145</sup>[emphasis added] (LC, Ten Commandments, 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Tappert 388.168) *Large Catechism* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 388; (BKS 603.168) *Großer Katechismus* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 603.

appears to refer to all who hold “power and authority to govern” not just “parents of blood.” Luther’s point is simple: one of the duties of the “spiritual father” is to “preach” about the nature of the authorities “office,” so they may faithfully carry them out.”<sup>146</sup> The nature of the preaching appears to be much the same as the previously mentioned “advice” or “instruction to Christian consciences.”

In *Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors*, Luther writes regarding this pastoral “preaching”:

The preachers, accordingly, should faithfully remind the authorities to maintain peace, justice, and security for their subjects, to defend the poor, the widow, and the orphan, and not to look at them as chattel. . . [*Daneben sollen auch die Prediger die Obrigkeit treulich erynnern, yhre unterthanen ym frid, recht und schutz zu halten, Die armut, witwen un weisen zeverteydingen Und nicht wie das vihe halten . . .*]<sup>147</sup>

These so-far unanswered questions arise:

1. Are these “parents” to whom the “spiritual father” is to preach “Christian authorities” only or “all authorities,” Christian, non-Christian, Lutheran, non-Lutheran? If they are Christian, are they only the members of local congregations or is there a general “preaching,” “instructing,” “teaching,” to all Christian authorities regardless of their congregation or confession? Is the nature of the “preaching” primarily “First Article,” focusing on what God has given us in common, the gifts of nature, reason, and natural law, or does

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<sup>146</sup>Consultation of the *Concordance to the Book of Concord*, checking the instances in the *Small and Large Catechisms* of the vocable “preach,” and comparing them to the *Bekennnisschriften* use of the word “*predigen*,” shows that “preach/*predigen*” is used only in the context of the proclamation by the *prediger*/preacher, “spiritual fathers.” *Concordance to the Book of Concord*, ed. Kenneth Larson, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1989), 408.

<sup>147</sup>Luther, *Instructions for the Visitors*, 284. *Unterricht der Visatorm*, 209.

it also include the “Second and Third Article” as well?

2. Do other God-given authorities “step-in” without being asked, even if the texture of family and society are crumbling?
3. When, if ever, does the civil realm “step-in” to bring order to disorder in the society, the family, and the work place? When, if ever, does the church “step into” civil affairs which have more to do with the temporal realm than the spiritual realm?

In his instruction about the “two realms,” “vocation,” and “the estates,” Luther gives troubled Christians a place to *begin* as they endeavor to answer *these* difficult questions.

## Conclusion

### Criteria

Luther’s writing suggests four general pastoral/theological criteria for social interaction:

1. Law and Gospel need to be *distinguished* in all areas of human life,<sup>148</sup> especially *between* the realm of government (ie. civil authority or “temporal realm” which uses Law and force to maintain order and peace for the

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<sup>148</sup>Melanchthon echoes Luther: “Inasmuch as the power of the church or of bishops bestows eternal gifts and is used and exercised only through the office of preaching, it does not interfere at all with government or temporal authority [*die Polizei und das weltliche Regiment*]. Temporal authority is concerned with matters altogether different from the Gospel. Temporal power does not protect the soul, but with the sword and physical penalties it protects body and goods from the power of others.” (AC, Article XXVIII, “The Power of Bishops”: Tappert 82.10-11) *Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 82; (BKS 122.10-11) *Augsburgische Konfession in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 120.

common welfare of both Christians and non-Christians) and the realm of church (ie. spiritual authority or “spiritual realm” which proclaims the Gospel of sins forgiven).<sup>149</sup>

2. Good works of service to one’s “neighbor,” commanded by God, motivated by the Gospel, are to be *embraced* not *avoided*, even as the Christian faces difficulty and trouble which sin bring to his vocations; God’s “call” to faith in the forgiveness of sins does not abrogate the Christian individual’s “call” to “love” as he carries out his God-given vocations.<sup>150</sup>
3. All who hold authority and responsibility in the realms of human life have a *common* authority and responsibility derived from God-given parental authority and responsibility. In the case of incapacity or inability of one authority holder, this authority is *delegated* to or assumed by another. All who are under authority have a common duty to obey and honor that authority in the same way a child obeys and honors parents. Denial of, resistance to, or rebellion against *legitimate* authority destroys the very means by which God wishes to deliver life and protection to people and is denial of, resistance to, and rebellion against God-given vocations and God

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<sup>149</sup>See pages 1-5, 7-17, 21-27 for full discussion of this criterion.

<sup>150</sup>See pages 6, 27-31 for full discussion of this criterion. Also, “. . . you are to do your neighbor no harm, injury, or violence, nor in any way molest him, either his person, his wife, his property, his honor or rights . . . On the contrary, you should do good to all men, help them and promote their interests, however and whenever you can, purely out of love to God and in order to please him, in the confidence that he will abundantly reward you for all you do” (LC, Ten Commandments, Conclusion: Tappert 410.328) *Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 410; (BKS 644.328) *Großer Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 644.

Himself.<sup>151</sup>

4. Christian people in all “realms,” “vocations,” and “estates” need teaching, admonition, and encouragement to fulfill what God has designed for them to do as He has laid out in Holy Scripture; reason alone, corrupted by sin, is unable, to reliably teach the human mind.<sup>152</sup>

## Tensions

Underlying these criteria is an inherent and perhaps unresolvable *tension* between the first criterion’s necessary Law/Gospel *distinction* between the civil and spiritual realms and the *common, delegated* nature of authority of both realms as highlighted in the third criterion; distinctions and commonalities do not always easily walk hand-in-hand with each other; they separate and bind at the same time. The Christian individual, living in both realms at the same time but called primarily to serve in one, may not always be able to distinguish in which realm he operates in a particular situation;<sup>153</sup> this tension lies behind

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<sup>151</sup>See pages 31-41 for full discussion of this criterion.

<sup>152</sup>See pages 7-17, 41 for full discussion of this criterion. Also, “It is useful and necessary always to teach, admonish, and remind [*furzuhalten, vermahnen und erinnern*] young people of all this [the First Commandment and all the others which flow out of it] so that they may be brought up, not only with blows and compulsion, like cattle, but in the fear and reverence of God [*Gottes Furcht und Ehre*] (LC, Ten Commandments, Conclusion: Tappert 410.330) *Large Catechism* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 410; (BKS 644.330) *Großer Katechismus* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 640. ” Also, “The Creed properly follows, setting forth all we must expect and receive from God; in brief, it teaches us to know him perfectly. It is given in order to help us do what the Ten Commandments require of us. For: . . . they are set on so high a plane that all human ability is far too feeble and weak to keep them. Therefore it is as necessary to learn this part as the other so that we may know where and how to obtain strength for this task.” (LC, The Creed, Introduction: Tappert 411.1-2) *Large Catechism* in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 411; (BKS 646.1-2) *Großer Katechismus* in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 646.

<sup>153</sup>An example of this is a pastor, concerned with physical well-being of parishioners, who finds himself called upon to act as an *ad hoc* advocate with hospitals, governments, utility companies, etc. Another example is the Christian who works as a government social worker who, because of government cutbacks, wonders how her church can better serve the homeless and other street people in her community. A third example entails the confusion surrounding the role of the pastor in an American wedding service – is he serving in his capacity as the called and

many of the modern debates about the nature and relationship of church and state. It may be, as Leif Grane suggests, that this tension may be lessened by the Christian's embrace of his particular call [third criterion]:

Both kingdoms are God's work, God's weapons in the battle against the devil and sin. Therefore there is a close connection between them. This connection, however is destroyed if they are mixed together . . .

The place where the two kingdoms are held together is the calling. If the kingdoms are mixed together, the consequence which inevitably follows is that the calling is disregarded. If one – for example, the pope – attempts to make the law applicable in the spiritual kingdom, it means that works are turned upwards toward God instead of being directed toward one's neighbor in service of one's calling. Thus, one shows contempt for the works demanded by one's earthly existence. If, on the other hand, one attempts, as did the rebellious peasants, to forsake obedience, claiming the right to do so on the basis of Christian freedom, the consequence is the same. The calling and its task are disregarded. The right distinction between the spiritual and the secular is maintained precisely in the person's calling. For the love which the Christian receives from God through the gospel expresses itself nowhere other than in the works demanded by earthly existence. Thus, keeping the two kingdoms distinct from each other is the prerequisite for maintaining the right connection between them.<sup>154</sup>

In regard to Luther's own apparent "violation" of the distinction between the two realms in his many letters to the rulers of German lands on issues of faith and resulting Christian duty, as well as in his request for the Elector of Saxony to serve as "emergency bishop," Grane comments:

When Luther appeals to the authorities in matters concerning the faith, it is not on the basis of their duty as governing authority, but on the basis of the obligation of

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ordained minister of the Gospel of St. XYZ or as a government functionary? A fourth example is the church member, concerned about the moral dilemmas of American society, called upon by local organizers of the "Christian Coalition" to distribute politically slanted voting-record leaflets in the narthex of the church and to organize a meeting in the fellowship hall for the favored candidate to speak to St. XYZ's concerned members.

<sup>154</sup>Leif Grane, *The Augsburg Confession: A Commentary*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 174. The chart in Appendix I illustrates both the distinction between the Two Realms and Leif Grane's point raised in the quote.



a *Christian* lord. He does not ask for the exercise of office, but for the performance of a service of love. Before long, however, other ideas were to encroach upon this perspective. In the elector's instructions to the visitors of 1527, it is stated that the elector is responsible for the spiritual as well as the temporal well-being of his subjects. There is no indication that it is not the elector who is in charge of the proceedings. In his preface to the articles of visitation of 1528, Luther undeniably speaks a different language. He emphasizes that this is an emergency situation. In reality the bishops ought to be doing the visiting, but because of their desertion, the church must help itself. Consequently the elector is asked to help as a Christian brother.<sup>155</sup>

For Luther, it appears, that there is a distinction between an *office* of authority and the *office holder*. The office holder is the same as any other Christian with the same divine command to "love" in and through his call. Instruction and Christian admonition to the *individual* regarding faith and Christian duty does not, in itself, violate the distinction between Law and Gospel.<sup>156</sup>

### **Caveat**

Along with the criteria and tension, Luther's writing raises an important *caveat*; criteria such as these cannot be used as the basis for a legalistic casuistry which attempts to codify the Christian life into a series of "dos" and don'ts." Instead, the criteria are applied to concrete situations, not as abstract legalism, but as pastoral advice to help trouble consciences. Along with the advice, teaching, and admonition, as much as it is needed, the pastor points people to the Gospel of Christ Jesus as the only true comfort and help for the human dilemma; without Christ, no amount of encouragement to "love" or "do good" or no amount of instruction regarding the God-given duties of Christian vocation could keep

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<sup>155</sup>Ibid., 176.

<sup>156</sup>See pages 39-40.

human hearts from crying out, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death."<sup>157</sup> Jesus Christ and Him crucified is the only answer.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>157</sup>Romans 7:24 NIV. "Therefore the Ten Commandments do not by themselves make us Christians, for God's wrath and displeasure still remain on us [*bleibt . . . immer über uns*] because we cannot fulfill his demands. But the Creed brings pure grace and makes us upright and pleasing to God. Through this knowledge we come to love and delight in all the commandments of God because we see that God give himself to us, with all his gifts and his power, to help us keep the Ten Commandments: the Father gives us all creation, Christ all his works, the Holy Spirit all his gifts." (LC, The Creed, 3<sup>rd</sup> Article: Tappert 420.68-69) *Large Catechism in The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 420; (BKS 661.68-69) *Großer Katechismus in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 661.

<sup>158</sup>"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." 1 Corinthians 2:2 NIV.

Appendix I

Triune God

"Left Hand Rule"

"Right Hand Rule"

Who Rules:	God (Creator) 1 <sup>st</sup> Article	God (Redeemer/Sanctifier) 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Articles
What Means:	Civil Rulers through Civil Law – Reason and Natural	Christ through Gospel in Church
What Ends:	Civil Righteousness Peace in Civil Realm Good Order, General Welfare (Creates conditions for Gospel proclamation)	Justification and Sanctification
Who's In It?:	Sinners: Both Christians (in so far as they are sinners) and non-Christians	

Left and Right Hand Kingdom  
Distinguished (Law and Gospel)  
● Not Equated  
● Not Separated



Left and Right Hand Kingdoms  
Intersect in the Christian Individual  
Who is in both Kingdoms  
Simultaneously

Results:	Civil Righteousness	Fruit
	(For a Christian the fruit of the right hand kingdom motivates/informs/strengthens life in the left)	Fruit (Impact all Parts of Life)

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