

FOREWORD

The appearance of the English translation of Martin Luther's disputations on four of six sets of theses drawn up to refute the appearance of what he dubbed "antinomian" theology marks the inauguration of a new series of academic works from Lutheran Press. Entitled the *Cygnus Series*, these works will contain both translations of works from Luther and his adherents heretofore not available in English, as well as academic treatments of theological topics arising from those works and others. The production of both sources and literature addressing the seminal decades of Lutheran thought is undertaken with the hope that theological discussions both inside and outside of the Lutheran church today can benefit from an exploration of lesser-known aspects of the Reformer's work.

The work at hand is a translation of the Latin text of the theses and disputations as contained in various volumes of the *Weimarer Ausgabe* of 1883-1966 (theses: WA 39.1:342-358; first disputation: WA 39.1:360-417; second: WA 39.1:419-485; fifth: WA 39.1:489-584; sixth: WA 39.2:124-144). Obviously then, it is not a critical edition, containing countless footnotes and endless digressions as to the logic behind the inclusion of the reading of one manuscript to the exclusion of another. It also, however, is not a popular treatment, rendered into English that is as smooth as possible, so that Luther becomes easily digestible by the modern mind. The title of this book is a direct quote from Luther's response in the 34th argument of the first disputation (WA 39.1:413.17, see page 128): "Only the Decalogue is eternal;" it casts light on the eschatological validity of the moral law frequently emphasized by Luther in the disputations at hand.

It should also be remembered that the theses and disputations are two different types of literature. In that the goal of theses drawn up for academic

disputations was to render specific ideas in as brief and succinct a form as possible, their brevity and succinctness easily translates into modern languages. The disputations themselves, however, are another matter. They remain as awkward as many such disputations probably were, with all participating in the event in a language not their native tongue, with statements not prepared for publication, as much as simply recorded by industrious listeners. Their length becomes daunting, single sentences going on for paragraphs at a time, bringing to mind what the author E. B. White reportedly wrote apologetically to an acquaintance: "I did not have the time to write you a short letter; so I wrote you a long one instead."

Why the Antinomian disputations? Why now? Whether it is the disappearance of the last generation of native-German speaking Americans, a residual post-World War II anti-German bias, or simply neglect, the theology of Luther that made its way out of the 16th century seems to have devolved, at least in the United States, into simple caricature. If known at all, Lutheran theology seems simply to be that which bolsters or buttresses contemporary theological concepts, ideas and trends. Even among those who still champion aspects of his thought, the entire Luther seems to have been jettisoned for the simple Luther, or the discernable Luther. Luther's *Small Catechism*, for example, continues to be a staple of confirmation instruction, but its simple and profound text frequently is either buried by appended synodical explanations, or altered in structure to reflect contemporary theological concerns. By bringing an unknown work of Luther to light, once again the reader is forced to consider the greater question of his theology in toto.

Why include the Latin text? A renaissance of the study of classical languages, buoyed by truly amazing computer and web-driven resources and home-school idealism has created the need for Latin texts to study. Especially for anyone who would wish to transfer an interest in studying Latin, to an interest in studying Protestant theology, a Latin text along with English translation from the Reformation period will afford the opportunity to hone an understanding of theological vocabulary and sentence structure. What is more, the printing of a Latin text from Luther's day is a reminder of both a time when universities all over Europe spoke one language, allowing for free movement of scholars from country to country, and free intellectual exchange between those scholars, but also a reminder that the language of the day was that, not of papal Rome, but imperial Rome, of the beginning of the end of

the Empire which eventually would fall as an idea not to an army, but to the thirst for intellectual interchange in vernacular languages.

Thanks here must first be given to Roland Ziegler, who in his lectures in systematic theology at Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, Indiana has brought the Antinomian disputations once again to light. Even greater thanks are due the Rev. Dr. Holger Sonntag, who gratefully and efficiently undertook to translate these texts from Latin, into his adopted language, English. The use of a native-German speaker to do this work was of no disadvantage, as Luther's Latin often reflects Luther's German both in vocabulary and structure. Thanks are also due the J.B. Metzler Verlag und Verlag Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger Weimar of Stuttgart, Germany, for granting us the right to include the Latin text with this edition, and our contact in the publishing house's licensing department, Frau Andrea Rupp, who has been extremely helpful and patient. Extreme gratitude must be expressed to the Confessional Lutheran Education Foundation which underwrote the entire project with a generous grant. Many thanks are also due Scott Krieger, copy editor and layout manager of Lutheran Press, without whose tireless efforts this project would not have been possible. Mark Stirdivant's work on the Translator's Preface was also greatly appreciated.

As for problems and errors in text and translation I alone take responsibility. Doubtless there are many. But every effort has been made to make this edition as palatable to the modern student and reader as possible.

Paul Strawn
Minneapolis
Editor, Lutheran Press

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Luther's Theses and Disputations against the Antinomians: Some Historical Observations on the Antinomian Controversy during Luther's Life⁽ⁱ⁾

At the beginning of 1537, as Luther was at the meeting of the Smalcald League, Lutheran theologian Johann Agricola (1494-1566), attending a different meeting of Lutheran princes, preached a sermon in which he taught that God's wrath over sin was revealed, not through the law, but through the gospel, that is, the crucified Christ. This surprising⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ sermon—known by Luther from hearsay—in addition to three of Agricola's sermons published in July, led Luther to suspect Agricola as the author of certain theses that had circulated secretly and anonymously in Wittenberg, theses in which the author voiced his opposition to preaching the law to Christians in general.⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾

⁽ⁱ⁾ This summary follows basically Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, vol. 3: *The Preservation of the Church, 1532-1546*, tr. J.L. Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 156-171, cf. also the introduction to the theses against the Antinomians by Heinrich Hermelink in WA 39.1:334-336 and M. Bertram's introduction to his translation of Luther's 1539 open letter *Against the Antinomians*, AE 47:101-106.

⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ This sermon is surprising in light of the fact that Agricola had signed, in December 1536, the *Smalcald Articles* (cf. R. Kolb and T. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 327 n. 173). He had done so despite SA III.2:4: "The foremost office or power of the law is that it reveals inherited sin and its fruits," cf. III.4 on the office of the gospel.

⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ Cf. Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 3:156: "The basic content of Agricola's views, insofar as it is reflected in his writings, always remained the same. He believed the law's demands belonged in the past; a believer is converted, justified, and instructed through the proclamation of the gospel of Christ. The continuing divine demand of the law – or even of ecclesiastical regulations – was no longer of interest in this context." In Brecht's view, "[Agricola] ... never fully

In September of that same year, Agricola became irritated by the fact that Luther had withdrawn his imprimatur from one of Agricola's books. In a letter to Luther, Agricola defended his teachings as truly apostolic and in agreement with Luther: The preaching of the death of Christ as judgment works contrition; Christ's resurrection is the forgiveness of sin; the law provides civil order. On September 30, Luther responded with a sermon on law and gospel. His sermon on John 1:17 on October 6 addressed the same topic: the law is necessary for the knowledge of sin; without knowledge of sin through the law, Christ is meaningless; Christ not only forgives, he also helps man to begin to fulfill the law in love which will be perfectly accomplished in the life of the world to come. By the end of October, even though Luther stopped the printing of a collection of Agricola's gospel summaries in which the latter had excluded the law from justification in his peculiar way, the two reached a kind of understanding.

In November, however, strife erupted again. Agricola wrote a letter to Luther in which he criticized him for teaching two manners of justification: one through the law and faith; the other through the gospel alone. Agricola asked Luther to say which way was the true way. Luther confronted Agricola concerning the antinomian theses the latter had published anonymously. Agricola tried to deny his authorship, but then claimed these theses to be his secret. Luther threatened to publish the theses with his condemnation and to have them examined in public disputation. With the assistance of an irenic Melancthon—with whom Agricola had clashed about the proper relationship between faith, law, and repentance in 1527⁽ⁱ⁾—he sought to dissuade

understood [Luther]. The difference ... had to do with the center of Luther's theology and piety, the situation of man before God in judgment and grace" (*Martin Luther*, 3:170).

⁽ⁱ⁾ See AE 40:266, 275 with note 10, and Timothy Wengert, *Law and Gospel: Philip Melancthon's Debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over Poenitentia* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker; Carlisle, U.K.: Paternoster, 1997). Interestingly, a variation of the theme of faith and repentance had resurfaced in Wittenberg in 1536 in the so-called Cordatus Controversy (cf. Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 3:148-152, and Wengert, *Law and Gospel*, 206-210). It involved, on the one hand, C. Cruciger lecturing on First Timothy based on notes by Melancthon and, on the other hand, C. Cordatus, a pastor attending his class. Cordatus objected to Cruciger's assertion "that, in addition to the work of Christ, human repentance was also necessary in justification;" later he also demanded that Melancthon retract his 1535 Loci edition which he saw too closely aligned with Erasmus' position (cf. Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 3:148, 150). Luther formulated a first response in the 1536 "Disputation Concerning Justification" (AE 34:151ff.), a key argument of Luther being that the distinction between initial justification

Luther from publishing the theses, again denying authorship, but stating that he was ready to submit to Luther. However, the printer was already at work, and in December of 1537 the theses appeared in print.

Luther prefaced his edition with the announcement of the threatened disputation. He then listed the 18 theses by Agricola (and possibly his followers) which had been secretly put into circulation. Distinctions between certain pure and impure statements by Luther—which also might have come from Agricola—follow. Eight more theses, conclusions Luther probably drew from Agricola’s view of the law as had appeared in print, bring the preface to a close.

Having thus outlined the position of the Antinomians, Luther proceeded with two sets of theses. The first set of theses was the basis for the first public disputation against the Antinomians in Wittenberg on December 18. The second set of theses was the basis for a second public disputation which was held on January 12, 1538. This second disputation ended with a reconciliation between Luther and Agricola.⁽ⁱ⁾ While Agricola had not been present at the first disputation, he was at the second, after his wife, whom Luther held in high regard, had spoken to Luther in favor of her husband.

by faith and final salvation by works is not valid (justification as forgiveness is “of perpetual duration,” AE 34:164, 190-191); and that “necessity” does not necessarily imply causality (good works and other things are necessary for salvation, but they are not its meritorious cause: “works are necessary in order to prove that we are righteous,” AE 34:165f.), since this would mean a return to the Scholastic teachings on the meritorious nature of repentance (AE 34:172-174, 192-193). A second, final response of Luther’s regarding the Cordatus Controversy is preserved in the graduation disputation for Peter Palladius and Tilemann from June 1, 1537. Luther here tackles the concept of necessity in a way similar to the 1536 disputation on justification; he, in fact, advises against using the misleading term “necessity” in this context at all (cf. WA 39.1:202.8-203.4, 209.11-210.25, 214.1-216.2, 224.16-226.17). Had Luther’s students heeded this good advice of their teacher, the Majoristic Controversy between Melancthonians and Gnesio-Lutherans in the 1550s might have been avoided (cf. FC IV). While thus the Cordatus Controversy helped to reassert the anti-synergistic side of the Lutheran teaching on justification, the Antinomian Controversy which followed brought its anti-antinomian side into broad daylight. Agricola apparently thought his specific stance—the elimination of any theological use of the law (he retained the political use)—to be the clearest response to any and all forms of synergism. In fact, he sought to defend himself by alleging that he was not attacking Luther but Cruciger and Rörer (cf. Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 3:162).

⁽ⁱ⁾ See Luther’s conciliatory remarks after argument 15 in the second disputation (p. 204).

The third and fourth sets of Luther's theses appeared in print in early January of 1538—before the reconciliation between Luther and Agricola. They were therefore not debated publicly. Agricola was allowed to preach and teach again, reigniting the controversy, as Agricola continued to espouse his own views of the law.

By that summer, Luther, angered by Agricola—more specifically, by a rumor according to which Agricola was just waiting for Luther to die so as to have the freedom to teach as he saw fit⁽ⁱ⁾—put the Antinomians in same class as Müntzer, the Sacramentarians, and the Anabaptists. Agricola denied the rumor as pure denunciation. In August, Luther sought to settle the matter once and for all by writing the fifth set of theses against the Antinomians. They became the basis for the doctoral disputation of Cyriacus Gerich which took place on September 6, 1538.

In late September Agricola drafted a measured retraction, which was reworked by Melanchthon to be a real retraction. Agricola, however, refused to give Melanchthon's version to Luther and, instead, asked Luther to write a retraction for him. This Luther did, albeit perhaps only mockingly.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ Not surprisingly, Agricola felt unfairly treated, perhaps because Luther had dealt with the matter publicly, informing Agricola's arch-opponent in Eisleben, Dr. Caspar Güttel, in 1539 of the matter in an open letter, *Against the Antinomians*.⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ Despite (or because of) the harsh condemnation this letter contained, Agricola managed to rally the professors at Wittenberg University around him and they elected him dean of the college of liberal arts. This election Luther vehemently opposed; it therefore fell through.

As the controversy wore on into the latter part of 1539, Agricola appealed in August to the president of the university, and later even to the elector, demanding an impartial investigation of the matter. However, when the elector finally initiated this investigation, Agricola, who was to remain in Wittenberg until the matter was decided, fled the city (August 1540). He

⁽ⁱ⁾ See AE 47:109-110 with note 7.

⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ See AE 47:108-109: "Master John [Agricola of] Eisleben wishes to withdraw what he taught or wrote against the law or the Ten Commandments and to stand with us here in Wittenberg, as the *Confession* and the *Apology* did before the emperor at Augsburg; and if he should later depart from this or teach otherwise, it will be worthless and will stand condemned."

⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ AE 47:107ff.

became court preacher to Elector Joachim II of Brandenburg (1505-1571) in Berlin, who had begun the (Lutheran) reformation of his realm in 1539.⁽ⁱ⁾ Luther used the doctoral disputation of Joachim Mörlin on September 10, 1540 to deal with Antinomianism one more time. For this purpose he drew up the sixth set of theses against the Antinomians on which the fourth public disputation was based.

It was not until December of 1541 that Agricola sent a printed recantation to Wittenberg to settle the matter, which by that time had brought disunity between Electoral Saxony and Brandenburg. In his *Confession and Affirmation of God's Law*, Agricola essentially followed a proposal worked up by Melanchthon. While the Wittenberg theologians, including Luther, accepted this recantation, Luther continued to be suspicious of Agricola until his death in 1546, which, after the latter's actions, is not surprising.

On Luther's Disputations

Throughout his life Luther participated in numerous disputations, especially in the beginning and at the end of his career as a professor of theology.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ Of the early disputations—besides his 1517 *Disputation for Making Known the Power of Indulgences* (“95 Theses”)—his *Disputation against the Scholastic Theology* (1517) and his *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518) are among the most famous.⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ The latter two disputations are remarkable in that Luther uses the classic scholastic form of teaching and examination, the disputation (*quaestio disputata*), to challenge the synthesis of philosophy and theology worked out in scholasticism.

Between 1522 and 1533 disputations became rarer and rarer at Wittenberg University. Probably this was the result of the humanist and enthusiast opposition to scholastic practices, although there may have been a number

⁽ⁱ⁾ One of the early Lutheran preachers in Brandenburg was, interestingly, Conrad Cordatus who, in 1540, became the first Lutheran superintendent in Stendal, a city located northwest of Berlin in Brandenburg, which till 1518 had been a member of the Hanseatic League, cf. F. W. Bautz, “Cordatus (Hertz), Konrad,” *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, (Nordhausen: T. Bautz, 1990), 1:1125f.

⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ See “Introduction,” WA 39.2:IXff., by Heinrich Hermelink; furthermore Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 3:127-129.

⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ See AE 31 for all three disputations.

of causes. Luther also simply might not have had the time during those years that proved quite decisive for the reformation of the church. Whatever the reasons might have been, beginning in 1533, but especially after 1535, the scholastic practice of disputation was revived, not only on occasion of the graduation of theological students, but also to treat theological questions under dispute—*quaestiones disputatae*—in a thorough manner.⁽ⁱ⁾

In Luther's day, especially after 1521, there were basically two types of academic disputations. The one was the weekly trial disputation on theses drafted by the theological professors. These disputations were also known as circular disputations in which a number of respondents would, one after another as in a circle, defend the theses against a number of opponents who were to challenge the theses. Often students would be those defending the theses while the professors present would be the opponents. The other type of disputation was the graduate disputation in which the graduate (master's, licentiate, or doctoral degree) defended the theses against a number of opponents. There also might have been trial disputations in which only the professor defended his theses against his opposing students.

Luther praised such disputations highly. Not only did he see them as an ideal means to "humble the proud;" he saw their dynamic give and take especially well suited to train the students, based on what they had heard in the lectures, to defend the rediscovered truth of the doctrine of the gospel and to defend thereby the church of Christ. Luther, as he observed in his prefaces to the disputations against the Antinomians, remembered well the time under the papacy when the light of the evangelical doctrine was totally extinguished. This is why he enjoined the students to be attentive participants in such disputations to school their minds in the defense of the doctrine of the gospel against the enemies of Christ. The church militant is militant orthodoxy, or it is not at all.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

⁽ⁱ⁾ The years between 1533 and 1535 represent an important time, since here the break of the Lutheran reformation with Rome began to take on institutional forms: The systematic and regular practice of ordination of candidates for the holy ministry began; and the first theological doctors were again created. Both activities took place without the hitherto mandatory involvement of the (Catholic) bishops and the papacy. Cf. Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 3:124-127.

⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ As E. Wolf points out, Luther's view of disputations as a training ground for the positive and polemical teaching of the faith (cf. *SD Rule and Norm*, 14: pasturing the sheep and warding off wolves—"Lehre und Wehre" is the enduring summary of this way of teaching

It is perhaps not surprising that the practice of disputation again fell into disuse after Luther's death, since this aspect of Luther's academia was disliked by the irenic Melancthon. The anti-Philippist backlash, to be sure, reinstated the disputation as an integral part of the theological education at Wittenberg; yet it could not restore the disputation to the high regard it enjoyed during the last decade or so of Luther's life.

Applying this to the disputations at hand, we see that Luther not only drew up the theses for the disputations and presided at the disputations. In most of the cases, he was, even in the two graduation disputations, also the main respondent to the mostly anonymous opponents who, for the purpose of study and intellectual exercise (Agricola attended only the second public disputation, there were thus usually no "real" opponents), raised objections against individual theses, often in the form of syllogisms.

On Syllogisms

One of the forms of logical argumentation employed by the opponents in the disputations against the Antinomians is the syllogism or a syllogism-like figure.⁽ⁱ⁾ Syllogisms go back to the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) who described them mainly in his *Prior Analytics*. This writing of the Philosopher was not known first hand in the medieval West until about the middle of the 12th century, when all of Aristotle's writings became available. At first, medieval commentators and logicians sought to preserve Aristotle's

theology) is quite in line with contemporary reforms of this old scholastic teaching method in theology and jurisprudence at Wittenberg University. Its point was no longer "dialectic showmanship," but its (original) educational purpose: "on the one hand, a lively appropriation of what the students had heard in the lectures and, on the other hand, ... defending one's point of view in controversy." Id., "Zur wissenschaftsgeschichtlichen Bedeutung der Disputationen an der Wittenberger Universität im 16. Jahrhundert," *Peregrinatio*, vol. 2: *Studien zur reformatorischen Theologie, zum Kirchenrecht und zur Sozialethik* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1965), 38-51 (here 48).

⁽ⁱ⁾ Cf. the overview offered by Henrik Lagerlund, "Medieval Theories of the Syllogism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2004 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2004/entries/medieval-syllogism/>>. Obviously, a full discussion of syllogisms cannot and need not be provided here. Those interested in syllogisms are directed to this and other works on (medieval) logic, where the grammatical and logical presuppositions, details, and implications of this once important method of truth-finding are discussed along with its pitfalls.

syllogisms. Later on, however, especially nominalist William of Ockham (c. 1288-1348) and his Paris student, Jean Buridan (c. 1300 - c. 1358), developed the syllogism further.⁽ⁱ⁾ Interestingly, Jodocus Trutvetter (c. 1460-1519), one of Luther’s teachers in Aristotelian philosophy at Erfurt University,⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ was one of the leading logicians of the late Middle Ages and, as a student of Buridan’s work, was especially well versed in syllogisms.

What is a syllogism? A syllogism consists of two premises—the first called the major premise, the second called the minor premise—and a conclusion drawn from these premises. By means of these three subject-predicate propositions,⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ three terms are connected, typically symbolized by ‘A,’ ‘B,’ and ‘C.’ ‘A’ and ‘C’ being the so-called “extremities” that are to be connected by way of conclusion; ‘B’ being the so-called “middle term” which does the connecting because it appears in both premises.

A simple syllogism would be:

Every animal is mortal.
Every man is an animal.
Therefore, every man is mortal.

“Mortal” and “man” would be the extremities (A, C), “mortal” being in the major premise, “man” in the minor. “Animal” is the middle term (B) connecting both for the conclusion (A, C).

Obviously, not every syllogism posited by the opponents in the disputations against the Antinomians—mostly friendly, that is, non-antinomian individuals—is a valid one according to the received rules of logic. What is interesting, though, is that Luther only rarely bothered to correct the syllogisms as such. He rather discussed the truth of the definition of terms

⁽ⁱ⁾ Buridan’s teachings on syllogisms are contained in Treatise Five of his *Summulae de Dialectica*, tr. and intr. G. Klima (New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2001), 303ff. G. Klima, in his introduction (XXVIII), states: “The historical influence of Buridan’s work on late medieval and early modern thought can hardly be overestimated.” Buridan’s *Summulae* represent a commentary and nominalist rewriting of the realist Peter of Spain’s *Summulae Logicales* (XXXI).

⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, vol. 1: *His Road to Reformation, 1483-1521*, tr. J. L. Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 34-35 gives some biographical information on Trutvetter.

⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ In the sentence “Luther is a man,” “Luther” is the subject and “is a man” is the predicate.

employed in the premises and conclusions.⁽ⁱ⁾

In other words, the basic question Luther pointed his students to was: Are the terms employed in the disputations defined in a biblical way or are worldly definitions introduced into theology? Indeed, one can say that from the beginning of his labors as reformer of the church, it was Luther's struggle to purge theology of philosophical definitions of God, man, righteousness, sin, etc. Sin, after all, does not only affect the body; it affects the soul as well, and chiefly so. Philosophy and its definitions, while having a limited usefulness for this-worldly orientation, ultimately fail in relation to God for two reasons. They fail because, on the one hand, man's reason is deeply corrupted by sin and because, on the other hand, the law written in man's heart expresses itself in legalism due to his sinful condition.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ Sin and the law legalistically perverted let the gospel appear as the greatest foolishness of the world. In God's kingdom of grace, in church and theology, it is therefore necessary "to speak new languages."⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾

This view also affected Luther's view of the syllogism which he expressed

(i) A concrete example is found in the fifteenth argument of the First Disputation, see pp. 78 below.

(ii) Cf., on the one hand, Luther's anti-scholastic, and anti-philosophical, definition of sin in SA III.1 (cf. Ap. II, 7-8; SC II, 6) drawn from Scripture alone and, on the other hand, Melancthon's observation concerning the sinner's ingrained *impia opinio de operibus* and *opinio legis* in Ap. IV, 206, 265. The sinner thus underestimates the power of sin and overestimates his own powers.

(iii) "Cum ascendimus coelum, coram Deo loquendum nobis est novis linguis, ... Cum in terris sumus, loquendum nobis est nostris linguis," [When we ascend into heaven, before God we are to speak a new language ... While we are on earth, we are to speak our language.], WA 39.1:231.14-16, 232.7-9, cf. 39.2:94.17-26; 96.23ff. This new language means that words take on new meanings in relation to God. This is why the catechism's simple question, "What does this mean?" has far-reaching consequences and is by no means child's play: It enables those catechized to distinguish the spirits (1 John 4) by telling heretics and true teachers apart: the former, while using all the right words, speak the old language of the world; the latter speak the new language of heaven—"heresy is in the meaning, not in the words," as Luther notes (WA 39.2:96.23). The new spiritual language, which is used in God's kingdom of the right (it is not suited for his kingdom of the left), is given in the biblical word of God; it is not the product of self-referential enthusiasm of Christians (cf. AE 34:112-113, esp. nos. 53, 58-61). God's word is studied by a grammar derived from God's word itself; it is not subjected to philosophical logic and definitions, cf., e.g., AE 38:247: "we say that man is God, and we witness to this by the word of God without a syllogism, apart from philosophy; philosophy has nothing to do with our grammar."

as early as in his 1518 *Disputation against the Scholastic Theology* as follows (AE 31:12):

45. To state that a theologian who is not a logician is a monstrous heretic—this is a monstrous and heretical statement. This in opposition to common opinion.
46. In vain does one fashion a logic of faith, a substitution brought about without regard for limit and measure. This in opposition to the new dialecticians.
47. No syllogistic form is valid when applied to divine terms. This in opposition to the Cardinal.
48. Nevertheless it does not for that reason follow that the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity contradicts syllogistic forms. This in opposition to the same new dialecticians and to the Cardinal.
49. If a syllogistic form of reasoning holds in divine matters, then the doctrine of the Trinity is demonstrable and not the object of faith.

The “logic of faith” that scholasticism no doubt aimed for was missed again and again because logic took on a life of its own to the detriment of faith.⁽ⁱ⁾ The same is restated some 20 years later in 1539, in thesis 14 of his *Disputation on the Passage: “The Word Was Made Flesh”* (AE 38:240):

14. But wherever either the syllogistic form or philosophical reason encroaches [upon theology], this saying of Paul, “Let the woman be silent in church” [I Cor. 14:34], and that other passage, “Listen to him” [Matt. 17:5], must be applied to it.

In the course of this disputation on the incarnation of the Son of God, the methodological truth expressed in this thesis is applied time and again.

In summary, while the syllogistic forms of argumentation did obviously not disappear from the University of Wittenberg and even its seminary, Luther made it very clear—directly in some disputations, indirectly in others—that a formal mastery of rules of deduction and of generic definitions

⁽ⁱ⁾ Cf. the essay by Denis R. Janz, “Syllogism or Paradox: Aquinas and Luther on Theological Method,” *Theological Studies* 59 (1998): 3–21, where he argues that also for Thomas philosophy remained an auxiliary discipline, which is why he considered paradox, not syllogism, to be the better form to express the mysteries of the Christian faith centered in the cross. One wonders, though, what the methodological implications of the teaching of faith formed by love (S. Th. II/II, quest. 4, art. 3) vs. that of love formed by faith (AE 27:29) might be. In other words, what does the disagreement in the doctrine of justification between Luther and Aquinas mean for their respective theological method?

of terms was not a sufficient qualification for theologians yet. Philosophy, including logic, had to be employed in a way that was in agreement with Holy Scripture.

A Textual and Theological Problem

The text of the last paragraph of the Second Disputation (see page 226 below) is contained only in two manuscripts (out of seven) in this place, while a third manuscript offers it under argument 27 (see WA 39.1:485). W. Elert, *Das christliche Ethos* (Tübingen: Furche, 1949), 388 with note 3, calls this passage “a plump forgery ... copied almost verbatim from Melanchthon’s middle Loci.” A “third use” of the law in Luther is therefore out of the question, according to Elert. Elert hereby corrects his earlier view (see *Die Morphologie des Luthertums* (Munich: Beck, 1932), II:27, where he not only references Luther’s “Freedom of a Christian,” but also quotes from his 1522 New Year’s sermon on Gal. 3:23ff.⁽ⁱ⁾ Elert later asserted that this sermon offers a threefold division “under a totally different aspect” and is thus not pertinent.

Regardless of whether this sermon actually teaches a “third use” (it explicitly speaks of two—political and theological—uses among the unregenerate, but then speaks also of those who keep the law by God’s grace inwardly and outwardly, for whom their formerly fierce tutor has become a “kind friend and companion”),⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ in his second disputation Luther—in argument 21—also speaks of an softened, “exhortation-like” use of the law aiming at the justified that is to be distinguished from its theological, accusatory use meant for the impenitent. This corresponds quite well to what Luther says in argument 15, against Agricola, concerning Christ whose example shows how the law is to be fulfilled in obedience by us.

Perhaps, therefore, the last lines of this disputation were not uttered by Luther at the time (and the use of Gal. 3:24 is different here than in, say, argument six of this disputation), but they do not appear to say more, or something else, than what Luther said in this disputation.

⁽ⁱ⁾ *Das christliche Ethos* (Tübingen: Furche, 1949), 388 with note 3. See *Die Morphologie des Luthertums* (Munich: Beck, 1932), II:27. Cf. *The Complete Sermons of Dr. Martin Luther*, ed. J. N. Lenker (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 3.2:273, 281.

⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ Cf. *Complete Sermons*, 3.2:271f., 281.