The Psalms and Luther's Praise Inversion: Cultural Criticism as Doxology Detection

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As citizens of the modern age, the ways in which we live are deeply shaped by the labor saving conveniences and medical care which saturate our daily practice. We also think like moderns, meaning that we partake of the age of criticism, theologians included. If we are to recover a living relation to the Psalms, I will suggest, we will need to reflect on what it means to say that we are "modern theologians." This will mean asking how the rationality of the modern project relates to the rationality of faith. To ask this question is to ask about the place and function of criticism, which lies at the core of modern rationality. We must ask, What is criticism, theologically conceived? Unfolding this question will allow us to return to the Psalter with fresh eyes, as a forum in which we can learn to respond to our world anew and in a critical and ethically generative way, but without falling into the habit of modern rational criticism to dissolve Scripture and the Christian tradition of reading.

Put briefly, modernity (*Neuzeit*) is the period of Western history in which the old Christian apocalyptic understanding of human events and history as the movement of the two cities that God judges and rules was displaced with an idea of history as progress; progress out of superstition and irrationality and so into a world justified and oriented in the forum of naked, unbiased reason. "Our age," writes Kant in the manifesto of modern rationality, the *Critique of Pure Reason*,

> is the genuine age of **criticism**, to which everything must submit. **Religion** through its **holiness**, and **legislation** through its **majesty** commonly seek to exempt themselves from it. But in this way they excite a just suspicion against themselves, and cannot lay claim to that unfeigned respect that reason grants only to that which has been able to withstand its free and public examination.[1]

[1] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), A xi, 100–101.

Critical reason must "doubt everything" (Descartes) in order to free itself from the fetters of the past, sifting and discarding what it takes to be rubbish from what it takes to be valuable. History and tradition are in this new critical world not approached as something one expects to be changed by, but as an obstacle to be cleared away or a resource to be mined for usable building stones.

The effects of this modern criticism reshaping Christian thought were most obvious in the much debated rise of biblical criticism in the nineteenth century, which set out to discern in the Bible what is of enduring value. This critical relation was most influentially applied to Christian ethics in the twentieth century by Ernst Troeltsch in his *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, which sought to discern which moral truths could be distilled from a Christian tradition taken to be ripe for decontamination. In this paper I will work with the assumption that such attempts to rise high enough for reason to get an objective "God's eye view"[2] is not only suspiciously like the self-exalting quest of the builders of the tower of Babel, but renders the Psalms irrelevant today as a collection of texts marked in so many ways as historically particular and ethically ambiguous documents which pose very high hurdles to any project to locate or distill the "rationally verified" nuggets of truth it might contain.[3]

So much for the brief sketch of what I will not be doing. What I will attempt may well be similarly counterintuitive, in that I will assume that the modern account of critical rationality also had an effect on how we understand language in our everyday life. The distilling processes of Enlightenment rationality,[4] which reached their pinnacle in Anglophone

[2] "The free intellect will see as God might see, without a *here* and *now*, without hopes and fears, without the trammels of customary beliefs and traditional prejudices, calmly, dispassionately, in the sole and exclusive desire of knowledge—knowledge as impersonal, as purely contemplative, as it is possible for man to attain. Hence also the free intellect will value more the abstract and universal knowledge into which the accidents of private history do not enter, than the knowledge brought by the senses, and dependent, as such knowledge must be, upon an exclusive and personal point of view and a body whose sense-organs distort as much as they reveal." Bertrand Russell, *Prisons* (1911), uncompleted manuscript, in Andrew Brink, Margaret Moran and Richard A. Rempel (eds), *Contemplation and Action*, The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell, vol. 12 (London: Routledge, 1993), 106.

[3] My account of the role of criticism in defining modern rationality draws on Oswald Bayer, *A Contemporary in Dissent: Johann Georg Hamann as a Radical Enlightener*, trans. Roy Harrisville and Mark Mattes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), chs. 7–8. Originally published as *Zeitgenosse im Widerspruch: Johann Georg Hamann als Radikaler Aufklärer*, 1988.

[4] While affirming the problems inherent in the Enlightenment settlement, I would also want to affirm that there is a much deeper historical problematic to be explored

analytic philosophy, approach language as primarily a medium for communicating information and only secondarily affective states. It thus bequeathed modern Westerners a reified understanding of language. Here the observations of a contemporary anthropologist put us on the way to discovering a much more exiting understanding of the Psalter.

> Could we not...suggest that music and language, as separate symbolic registers, are the products of a movement of analytic *decomposition* of what was once an indivisible expressive totality, namely song?[5]

Based on his observations about the ways human communities use language, Tim Ingold is questioning the modern tendency to understand language as essentially concerned with "information" and "text" abstracted from their actual usage in human communities. Every word, he protests, is in reality "a compressed and compacted history"[6] of peoples' interactions with the material world and each other. Because the way in which we inflect words as we speak impacts how they are heard, we should consider the affective and tonal aspects of communication to be more intrinsic to communication than our modern accounts of language admit. "In short," concludes Ingold,

> whether I speak, swear, shout, cry or sing, I do so with feeling, but feeling—as the tactile metaphor implies—is a mode of active and responsive engagement in the world, it is not a passive, interior reaction of the organism to external disturbance.[7]

Because modern rationality presumes writing to be the paradigmatic form of communication, we speak as if tone of voice were essentially an irrelevant part of communication, if music was something we have the option to add if we want to embellish words, and that it has fallen to a special branch of writing to carry the expressive and aesthetic losses that come with this bargain—poetry.

This bargain obscures the ineradicably affective aspect of our relation to the world, the kaleidoscope of attractions and repulsions and ambivalences we feel to the things which cross into our sensory horizon. The

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that points to the changes of Christian theology that occurred during the colonial period, as Willie Jennings suggests, in which Christian theology had to learn to position itself as if human bodies were interchangeable units that were not deeply shaped by their embedding in place and social fabric. Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale, 2010).

[5] Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment* (London: Routledge, 2000), 408.

[6] Ibid., 409.

[7] Ibid., 411.

reality that we constantly respond to the things and persons before us with attraction or repulsion, resistance or embrace, suggests that hope and fear are also woven into the most basic fabric of our everyday existence and moral deliberation. As Friedrich Nietzsche so influentially noted, this affective relationship to the world, our basic embedding in fear, faith and hope, drastically shapes the way our moral thinking proceeds (recovering, we could also say, an insight of Augustine, for whom love was the basic motor of perception). If we face a reality we fear, our moral deliberations will be strongly steered into the quest for moral reasons for justifying our interest in self-protective measures, whereas if we face the same situation in faith and hope, what we will rationally explain as a good act will take on remarkably different contours. In consigning the affective life of the human to the "private" or "anecdotal" realm rather than the realm of the universal and true, modern thought obscures these decisive considerations.

All this suggests that living out faith in the midst of our world cannot but conflict with many ways of living in the world without any hope to hear the Trinitarian God in and through it; responses to the world which experience it as uttering threats that must be controlled or proffering prizes that go to those who grab them will have a very different tenor from lives lived as a response to a creator God who uttered a world out of love and in which Godself has been deeply invested.[8] For theology in modernity, I will suggest, we need to learn once again to hear God as one whose speech, the speech that created this world, is saturated with affective engagement. This is to learn about God the poet, who through the very fabric of the world and human history speaks in a way that can be heard by humans and responded to with affectively engaged love.[9] In what follows I will explain why if we take these starting points seriously, a new critical relation to the world is opened up by the Psalter. Notice that I have used the term "Psalter," by which I indicate a performed text, reserving the term "Psalms" for the canonical collection of 150 Psalms. I will not be looking to see how the "information" conveyed in the "text" of the Psalms is relevant to Christians today, but to understand how "performing the Psalter" as part of worship in lived life can inform our understanding of what it means to live in the world today.[10] By following this line of reasoning I hope it will

[8] "How has God the Holy Spirit humbled himself, when he became a historian of the smallest, most despised, most insignificant events on earth, to reveal to humans in their own language, their own history, their own paths, the counsels, the mysteries and the ways of divinity?" Hamann, quoted in Bayer, op. cit. (note 3), 55.
[9] Bayer, op. cit. (note 3), 97-102.
[10] Though I will not be engaging it in this paper, Luther also develops an account of anti-doxology that more straightforwardly interprets the content of the Psalms.

become clear why I believe that theologians today can still be moderns, seeing the value of intellectual criticism in discovering truth. But I will also be indicating the value for modern theology of finding a way to let God's criticism shape and remake our processes of self-criticism, and the central role the Psalter can play in that mode of criticism.

Theologizing the Tradition

My main interlocutor in this paper will be Martin Luther and, more specifically, his readings of the Psalms. I want to suggest that because Luther's ethics is not one of prescription but of perception and affection, the way he reads the Psalms is especially revealing of his understanding of moral transformation. His approach, I will suggest, allows him to deepen and theologically enrich an inversion of perception that played an important role in the ethical thinking of the earlier theological tradition. Before outlining his own view, a few snapshots of how this theme worked in the tradition that preceded him will make his own contribution more evident.

Consider this passage from Gregory of Nazianzus's *Oration 14* in which he tries to show his believing audience why they should learn to see lepers differently. The inversion of perception depicted in this oration was historically important in overcoming the ancient sensibility that health care was only due those whose healing could be considered beneficial to the *polis*, and was integral to his building the institutions of care that were the direct precursors of our modern hospitals.

> There have been instances when people have allowed a murderer to live with them, have shared not only their roof but their table with an adulterer, have chosen a person guilty of sacrilege as their life's companion, have made solemn covenants with those who have wished them harm; but in this person's case [that of the leper] suffering, rather than any injury, is handed down as a criminal charge. So crime has become more profitable than sickness, and we accept inhumanity as

For instance, he reads Psalm 2:3 as a literal description of the "song of the godless" (30): "The devil will never cease to sing this verse through the mouths of rulers and kings, though impious doctors, yes even through your own conscience: 'Let us burst Their bonds asunder and cast Their cords from us." Martin Luther, "Psalm 2 (1532)," in *LW* 12, 18, [*WA* 40:139–312]. I will be citing the Luther in English from *Luther's Works,* American Edition, 55 vols, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955-1986), hereafter referred to as *LW*. In some cases I will also give the reference from the original source in the *Weimarer Ausgabe*, which will hereafter be referred to as *WA*.

> fit behavior for a free society, while we look down on compassion as something to be ashamed of.[11]

Later Augustine was to offer a phenomenologically richer and more theologically developed account of this inversion of perception that exhorts his hearers to seek an eschatological vision that sees not surfaces, but the heart.[12] It is relevant for our inqury that it is the insight of a Psalm that suggests this theme to him:

> ...now we believe, we do not see; to see what we believe will be recompense for this faith... in the psalm a certain lover says with a sigh, "One thing have I asked of the Lord; this I shall seek after" (Ps 27:4). ...What is it that he seeks after? He says, "That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." And suppose that you dwell in the house of the Lord; whence will be your joy there? "That I may gaze," he says, "on the delight of the Lord." My brothers... What do you desire, I ask you? Can it be seen with the eyes? Can it be touched? Is there some beauty which delights the eyes? Have not the martyrs been loved ardently? And when we commemorate them, do we not catch fire with love? What do we love in them, brothers? Their limbs mangled by wild beasts? What sight is fouler, if you should consult the eyes of the flesh? What is more beautiful if you should consult the eyes of the heart? How does a very handsome young man, but a thief, appear to you? How your eyes do stare in terror! Are the eyes of the flesh terrified? If you should consult them, there is nothing better structured than that body, nothing better arranged. The symmetry of the limbs and the loveliness of his complexion entice the eyes. And yet when you hear that he is a thief, you flee from the man because of your mind. On the other side you see a bent-over old man, leaning on a cane, scarcely able to move, ploughed all over with wrinkles. What do you see that delights the eyes? You hear that he is just; you love him, you embrace him.[13]

Elsewhere Augustine explains that because humans are made in the image of God, they are not only capable of this transposition of perception, which

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[11] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 14*, trans. Brian E. Daley S.J., in Brian E. Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus,* The Early Church Fathers (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 81.

[12] Ingold finds what Augustine is describing to be a crucial aspect of many types of human perception, the distinction, "between two kinds—or levels—of vision: on the one hand, the ordinary sight of pre-existing things that comes from moving around in the environment and detecting patterns in the ambient light reflected off its outer surfaces; on the other hand, the revelatory sight experience at those moments when the world opens up to the perceiver...," op. cit. (note 5), 278.

[13] Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 1–10, trans. John Rettig (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 91–92.

he calls the "illuminated mind," but this transposition is a constitutive of the process of sanctification.[14] Notice, however, that he follows Nazianzus in framing the inverting power of perception as proceeding by way of a mode of moral perception. He plays our attraction and repulsion to physical beauty against the sometimes very differently configured repulsion we might feel at moral ugliness or our attraction to developed virtues. Though Augustine generally presumes that human loves shape our perceptions of all things,[15] he does not fully articulate how the moral perception that can see beyond surface beauty or ugliness of individual humans relates to human perception of all aspects of creation. This wider theology of the inversion of perception we do find in Luther. His treatment of the gospel pericope of the man born blind is a classic text on this theme, and in it he takes care to position his understanding of human perception biblically and by reference to previous theological authorities.

> ...the reason why all this is said and what causes it, says Augustine, is the transgression of Adam, to whom the devil said, "Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" [Gen. 3:5]... he is trying to lead them to the form of God, so he says, "Your eyes will be opened," that is, they will become blind. Before their eyes were closed, but after the Fall they were opened. The consequence of this, as Origen, the wise and acute schoolmaster teaches, is that man has two kinds of eyes, his own eyes and God's eyes. But the fact is that both kinds of eyes, our inward eyes and outward eyes, are God's. Indeed, all our members and everything that is in us are instruments of God and nothing is ours if they are ruled by God. But they are ours when God forsakes us. This means that, as Christ says, we must pluck out the eye that scandalizes and offends us and throw it away [Matt. 5:29]. That's why it is that we would rather see what is fine and pretty and well formed rather than what is gold or silver, rather a young Jill or a young Jack than an old woman or an old Jack. And this is the mousetrap that dupes our minds, as

[14] Augustine, "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," in John Rotelle (ed.), *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees, Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis, the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 2002), III.20, 30.

[15] The *locus classicus* statement of this position comes from the *City of God* 19:24. "A people, we may say, is a gathered multitude of rational beings united by agreeing to share the things they love. There can be as many different kinds of people as there are different things for them to love. Whatever those things may be, there is no absurdity in calling it a people if it is a gathered multitude, not of beasts but of rational creatures, united by agreeing to share what they love. The better the things, the better the people, the worse the things, the worse their agreement to share them." Translation in Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan (eds), *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1999), 162. See also op. cit. (note 13), 20–21.

> is written of Adam in the book of Genesis. So our eyes have been opened, which really means that we have become totally blind, so that, as was said a moment ago, we consider the sham to be good and what is poor and misshapen to be evil. This the devil taught us, and it is his eyes that do it. But Christ came to teach these eyes to see and to take away the blindness, in order that we should not make this distinction between young and old, beautiful and ugly, and so on. Rather all are equal, wise man or simpleton, sage or fool, man or woman; it is enough that he is a man with our flesh and blood, a body common to all. For such perception one must have a fine, acute, and well-trained mind.[16]

Luther is serious when he says that such perception requires training, because we do not perceive what appears to God's eyes, that creation is more whole than broken, more "good" than "evil."

> But [God] rules in such a way that even physically we always see more of His grace and blessing of His wrath and punishment. For we find a hundred thousand healthy people for every ailing, blind, deaf, paralytic, or leprous person. And even if one member of the body has a defect, the entire person, still endowed with body and soul, shows forth nothing but God's goodness.[17]

The condition of our perceiving the world thus demands the reversal of the "opened eyes" that come with original sin, and here the Enlightenment philosophers were only continuing ancient and late-medieval quests for true perception. But unlike the modern approach to reaching this true perception, with its attempt to disembody communication to find its essence, for Luther the renewal of perception comes via a practice. This practice does not offer us God's "view" in the sense of allowing us to see all things from "above" but does allow us access to God's perception of the world while sensitizing us to an experience of divine activity that is accessible to everyone. For Luther the Lord's Supper is the primal liturgical form in which the goodness of all God's works can be learned, the point at which Jesus Christ's power to open eyes and ears (Mk 7:34–35) is promised to us. This claim is developed by way of a reference to the logic of Passover. As Israel was commanded to recall their divine liberation from temporal death, and to do so by giving the first of the fruit of their labor back to God, so in the Lord's Supper Christians

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[16] Martin Luther, "Sermon on the Man Born Blind, John 9:1–38 (17 March 1518)," in *LW* 51, 38–39 (*WA* 1:267–273).
[17] Martin Luther, "Sermons on the Gospel of St. John (1537)," in *LW* 24, 73–74 [*WA* 45:527].

> should contemplate, diligently regard, and consider what a glorious and beautiful work it is that Christ has delivered us from sin, death, and the devil. Here one should consider what our condition would be if these wonderful works had not been performed for us.[18]

The rescue of Israel and the church from the sinful blindness of human rebellion includes their being schooled to appreciate the magnitude of the divine involvement in ordering the church, society and all creation. The very accessibility and proximity of this divine care, however, tempts humans to complacency. Just as we tend to become jaded about God's grace in creation and political preservation, we also become blasé about the Lord's Supper:

> In short, we cannot sufficiently marvel at it and contemplate it in eternity. And yet, when we hear about it, we clods... yawn about it and say: "Oh, is this the first time you have ever seen a rotten apple drop from a tree?"[19]

It is not accidental that Luther illustrates his point using the metaphor of fruitfulness.[20] Doxological perception sees and praises God's provision and care for fertility and new life in all its forms, especially in the worship service. Its opposite, what I am calling anti-doxology, cannot see how worship has taken shape as people have joined a trans-temporal community of praise[21] for God's fecundity and material, experienced care and instead

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[18] Martin Luther, "Psalm 111," in *LW* 13, 373.

[19] Ibid., 373.

[20] "He [God] wills to speak, then, namely, when we, almost despairing, decide that He will keep silence forever. But what or in what manner will He speak? Here we must observe the Hebrew way of expression. For when Scripture says that God speaks, it understands a word related to a real thing or action [*verbum reale*], not just a sound, as ours is. For God does not have a mouth or a tongue, since He is a Spirit, though scripture speaks of the mouth and tongue of God: "He spoke, and it came to be" (Ps. 33:9). And when He speaks, the mountains tremble, kingdoms are scattered, then indeed the whole earth is moved. This is a language different from ours. When the sun rises, when the sun sets, God speaks. When the fruit is grown in size, when human beings are born, God speaks. Accordingly the words of God are not empty air, but things very great and wonderful, which we see with our eyes and feel with our hands. For when, according to Moses (Genesis 1), the Lord said "Let there be a sun, let there be a moon, let the earth bring forth trees," etc., as soon as He said it, it was done. No one heard this voice, but we see the works and the things themselves before our eyes, and we touch them with our hands." Martin Luther, "Psalm 2," in *LW* 12, 32.

[21] "David calls his psalms the psalms of Israel. He does not want to ascribe them to himself alone and claim the sole glory for them. Israel is to confirm them and judge and acclaim them as its own. For it is essential that the congregation of God,

can only see in the icon of that fecundity, fruit, blemishes and the banality of the "fact" which does not convey any "meaning."

It is not too farfetched to assume that this basic move recurs in the Christian tradition because it is present in Scripture, and the apostle Paul (who so influenced Luther) seems especially attracted to it. Take for instance Paul's response and rebuke to the "strong" ones' who are seeking personal advantage, and who he patiently teaches to be more solicitous toward the conscience of the other in 1 Corinthians 10:31: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God." This recommendation contradicts the Corinthian slogan recounted in the previous verse, "If I partake with thankfulness, why should I be denounced because of that for which I give thanks?" In 1 Corinthians 10:30 the emphasis is on my thanks, and by implication its efficacy in justifying behavior, while the focus of 1 Corinthians 10:31 is on the glory of God. It may well be possible to give thanks while giving offense to others, but it is impossible to glorify God while doing so. Giving glory to God is therefore presented as the antithesis to idol worship, which the apostle makes explicit in 1 Corinthians 12:3: "Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says 'Let Jesus be cursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit."[22]

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or God's people, accept and ratify a word or a song; for the Spirit of God is to dwell in this people, and He wants to be honoured and must be honoured in His people. In that light we Christians speak of *our* psalmists. St. Ambrose composed many hymns of the church. They are called church hymns because the church accepted them and sings them just as though the church had written them and as though they were the church's songs. Therefore it is not customary to say, "Thus sings Ambrose, Gregory, Prudentius, Sedulius," but "Thus sings the Christian church." For these are now the songs of the church which Ambrose, Sedulius, etc., sing with the church and the church with them. When they die, the church survives them and keeps on singing their songs. In that sense David wishes to call his psalms the psalms of Israel, that is, the psalms of the church, which has the same Spirit who inspired them in David and which will continue to sing them also after David's death. He sensed in his spirit that his psalms would endure on and on, as long as Israel or God's people would endure, that is, until the end of time. And that is what has happened hitherto and will happen. Therefore they are to be called the psalms of Israel." Martin Luther, "Treatise on the Last Words of David, (1543)," in *LW* 15, 274–75. For a more fully developed theological account of the place of the Psalms in the communion of saints, see Bernd Wannenwetsch, "Conversing with the Saints as they Converse with Scripture: In Conversation with Brian Brock's Singing the Ethos of God," in *European Journal of Theology*, 18:2 (2009), 125–36.

[22] In Romans the parameters of the 1 Corinthians antithesis is clarified by reference to another set of theological terms. Whereas here Paul speaks of "craving evil" in its connection with idolatry and its opposite of giving God glory, in Romans 14:23

Giving glory to God or worshipping idols are not modes of action immediately perceptible from their surface but are types that can assume a wide variety of forms. This logic explains why, for Paul, both eating and not eating can be instances of either glorifying God or idol worship. This looks like an endlessly perplexing hall of moral mirrors, but in it Paul offers the Corinthians a very clear criterion for judgment: while they need to understand the importance of resisting evil desires they must distinguish this willed, active resistance from the exit provided by God's faithfulness as coalescing in the eucharistic encounter. Paul's interest is to turn the Corinthians' attention away from the quest to protect their freedom and reputation to the quite different quest to hope and love in such a way that the world is known differently.

It is this Pauline move which Luther is apparently picking up and joining with his own doxological hermeneutic. Consider how he turns the prose passage in 1 Corinthians 15:55 ("Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?") into a hymn of praise. When we read this verse as a promise that we not only believe but can live within,

> Then we will really begin to glory joyfully and defiantly and say and sing "O death, where is thy sting? O Hell, where is thy victory?". ... [Christ] sings this song of defiance against death and hell uninterruptedly: "Dear death, once upon a time you crucified and buried me too... But where are you now? I defy you to pursue me further"...Now we who believe in Him share in this when the hour comes in which we see and feel how death and hell are entirely swallowed up and exterminated. At present, however, we await the hour, assured that this will surely come to pass and that we can already defiantly rely on Christ by Faith over against sin, death, and hell.[23]

Characteristically, Luther ends his lecture/sermon series on 1 Corinthians 15 with a reading of Paul as breaking into song, and as he does so breaks into song himself.[24]

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he uses the terms "doubt" and "sin" in contrast to their opposite "faith": "But those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." Both formulations of this antithesis are enriched if we note the ways Paul is deploying what are usually considered quite distinct conceptual packages to explicate his enduring theological and pastoral point, that glorifying God is the opposite of idol worship.

[23] Martin Luther, "Commentary on 1 Corinthians 15 (1533)," in *LW* 28, 207.

[24] See also, Martin Luther, "Exposition of Psalm 127, for the Christians at Riga in Livonia," in *LW* 45, 317.

> St. Paul appropriately concludes with a song which he sings: "Thanks and praise be to God, who gave us such a victory!" We can join in that song and in that way always celebrate Easter... but we must keep this in our heart in firm faith and confirm ourselves in this and always be engrossed in such a message of thanks and sing of this victory in Christ.[25]

Our core question is now squarely in view: Why does Luther keep returning to this picture of sung praise as an essential constituent of the divine inversion of human perception?

Hamartiology reconsidered: Nothingness, chthonic forces and anti-doxology

It is one of the little ironies of the *Church Dogmatics* that in his doctrine of creation Karl Barth emphasized the spectral non-existence of evil,[26] while in his unfinished ethics of reconciliation he returned to the theme to call evil an alienation of created powers.[27] Having gone out of his way to affirm evil as nothingness, in continuity with the Western tradition, Barth later felt the need to deploy the biblical concept of the "chthonic forces" (Gal 4:3) to describe the processes of humans coming to be dominated by the powers of creation, via their own alienation, rather than having dominion over them (Gen 1:28). Ensuing debates about the apparent conceptual tensions in his treatment suggest that his account of the matter would benefit from further elaboration.

This is where Luther's competing account of anti-doxology is conceptually illuminating. In his writings on the Psalms, Luther often describes wickedness as non-conforming Psalm performance, a departure from the Augustinian hamartiology of deprivation. For Luther, sin is made up of concrete but aberrant responses to God's gifts, consisting in filled-out and

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[25] *LW* 28, 213, cf. 110–11.

[26] Karl Barth, "God and Nothingness," in *Church and Dogmatics*, vol. III, 3, §50 at **www.foundationrt.org/outlines/Barth_Dogmatics_Volume_III.pdf**

[27] "In the sudden or gradual movement with which man breaks free from God, he revolutionizes the natural forces that are coordinated with him and subordinated to him, first those that slumber and then awaken in himself, then the spirits of the earth that are first concealed in the surrounding cosmos but are then discovered and unleashed by his keen-sightedness and skill...Nevertheless...He finds that he himself is subject to their law, which he has foreseen, and to their power, which he has released." Karl Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV,4 Lecture Fragments*, eds G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), 228.

personified anti-doxology. He draws on the words of his favorite Psalm to argue that the action and speech of the saints genuinely magnify the Lord: "The right hand of the Lord does valiantly; 16 the right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly" (Ps. 118:15-16). "Singing" thus names the cast of all speaking that properly marks the Christian ethos. "Under 'singing'," says Luther,

> I include not only making melody or shouting but also every sermon or public confession by which God's work, counsel, grace, help, comfort, victory, and salvation are glorified before the world. ... As verse fourteen [of Psalm 118] puts it: "The Lord is my Strength and my Song; He has become my Salvation." God wants to be praised, glorified, honored, and confessed by us in His works and wonders. Faith does this, for faith cannot be silent but must say and teach what it believes and knows about God, to the glory of God and the instruction of man, as Ps. 116:10 says: "I believed, therefore have I spoken."[28]

Those caught up in God's work are being taught to praise God's working in all things, while faith in human works is always detectable as anti-doxology. By using the term "anti-doxology" I mean to grasp Luther's core point that because all action springs from some hope and faith, all speech and action are always expressions of praise and expectation of what can be counted on from some power. Luther sees the Psalter as a primer in which Christian faith is taught to praise, in so doing exposing anti-doxologies and the ways they obscure the living presence of God's tangible and accessible saving activity.

Because every doxology expresses faith in some specific salvation, a doxological social critique directs our attention to the places where humans set up and praise self-protective, self-reliant and self-imposed limits. The task of the moral theologian includes the task of describing the false lords to which praise is given and which so deeply shape the parameters of our moral deliberation. Praise analysis, here paralleling the approach of the Frankfurt philosophical school, comes into its own in the face of emergent social rifts which expose the shape of the loves and fears that motivate our current societies. It meets these upheavals not in faith in Kant's account of the power of self-criticism to overcome the illusions that cause our problems, but by reflecting on the false and denuding hopes and fears which govern our lives and which are exposed by the in-breaking of the God of overflowing bounty.

[28] Martin Luther, "Psalm 118," in *LW* 14, 81.

Learning to praise: Psalm 118

A closer look at Luther's treatment of Psalm 118 will display how he understands Christian performance of the Psalter to break into and reveal sinful and blinding anti-doxologies.[29]

> 15. Shouts of joy and victory resound[30] in the tents of the righteous:
> "The right hand of the LORD does valiantly;
> 16. the right hand of the LORD is exalted;
> the right hand of the LORD does valiantly."
> 17. I shall not die, but I shall live,
> and recount the deeds of the LORD.
> 18. The LORD has punished me severely,
> but he did not give me over to death.

These verses, suggests Luther, put us in the position of praising either ourselves or God: there is no middle position between the two. The claim rests on what we might call a proto-Wittgensteinian idea of the "happy performance," in which our understanding of the function of words begins not with metaphysical realities (such as atoms, ideal forms, or transcendentals), nor subjective states of consciousness (hunches, sensation, mental representations), but with beings in relationship, beings who share basic forms of life (*Lebensformen*).[31] In congruence with Wittgenstein and Ingold, I am reading Luther as deploying an account of language and its relation to what exists that is much more imbedded in human living (as a social and affective activity) and human naming (as activity that takes place in a material creation). By allowing such relationships to inform what we expect words to do, we move beyond the modern assumption that words can be distilled for their (one) "meaning"; they "mean" and "refer" in the context of communicative relationships. The meanings of words are thus defined in their

[29] This section develops my treatment in *Singing the Ethos of God: On the Place of Christian Ethics in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 172–79.

[30] I take this phrase from the NIV translation, as it captures the ring of Luther's German better than the more literal NRSV. Luther translates: 15 Man singt mit Freuden vom Sieg in den Hütten der Gerechten: "Die Rechte des HERRN behält den Sieg; 16 die Rechte des HERRN ist erhöht; die Rechte des HERRN behält den Sieg!"17 Ich werde nicht sterben, sondern leben und des HERRN Werke verkündigen.18 Der HERR züchtigt mich wohl; aber er gibt mich dem Tode nicht.

[31] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968), 225–26. For an excellent discussion of this idea and its implications, see Fergus Kerr, *Theology After Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), especially 69–76, and Oswald Bayer, *Promissio: Geschichte der reformatorischen Wende in Luthers Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1971).

usage by communities. When I speak, it is to take up words as packets of this communal meaning in order to reformulate my various relationships with some end in mind. So understood, the Psalms' meaning is not reducible to conceptual "content," though they do refer to reality. Their main role is in calling forth performances which cohere with them, and so function as condensed versions of the relationships out of which they were composed. As such they are language constellations oriented by a formed dialogue and, if taken up, lead back into that same dialogue.[32] The Psalm verses under discussion can thus be understood as conveying to us the relationship with God, out of which they were born, as they guide us into a similar relationship.

These verses, says Luther, train us to rely on God. Those who rely on human power perform them "unhappily"; that is, in ways which do not seek to discover the form of communal life which they demand, instead, cosmetically pasting them onto lives driven by the fear of loss or the desire to possess. When such people take up the words "the right hand of the LORD is exalted," the connotative force of their words and works yields the meaning, "The right hand of man does valiantly; the right hand of princes is exalted."[33] Elsewhere Luther is explicit that two types of false singing are possible. One is a singing which is built on the exchange mentality. These singers "will not praise him unless he does good to them." The more dangerous mis-singing, however, is the anti-song just paraphrased, the praise of self masquerading as divine praise.[34]

By defining wickedness as non-conforming Psalm performance Luther has set up an important critical principle. Because he understands sin as concrete but aberrant responses to God's gifts it is not merely a deprivation of the good, but an enacted and so personified anti-doxology. A theological judgment that a Psalm has been inverted in any specific performance rests on a complex semantic judgment on Luther's account. This insight was deeply to mark modern philosophy. "Luther said that theology is the grammar of the word 'God'," Wittgenstein famously wrote, continuing,

> I interpret this to mean that an investigation of the word would be a grammatical one. For example, people might dispute about how many arms God had, and someone might enter the dispute by denying that one could talk about arms of God. This would throw light on the use of the word. What is ridiculous or blasphemous also shows the grammar of the word."[35]

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[32] Wittgenstein, ibid., 503–04.
[33] Martin Luther, "Psalm 118," in *LW* 14, 81.
[34] Martin Luther, "The Magnificat," in *LW* 21, 307–308.
[35] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1930-1932*, ed. Desmond Lee (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 32. Elsewhere: "Grammar tells what kind of object anything is (Theology as grammar)," Wittgenstein, op. cit. (note 31), 373.

Wittgenstein has picked up Luther's suggestion that Scripture reveals the grammar of the divine life, making theology a communal discussion about the proper interpretation of Scripture. Thus understood, the words of the Psalms do not force communal agreement automatically, by recitation, but offer access to and sustain a communal life of faith that is shaped by them.[36] Asking what it means to perform the Psalter well will bring into view the interrelation of a certain mode of articulateness and the formation of the Christian ethos. Faith in human works produces and is produced by anti-doxology: those caught up in God's work are made into those who are being taught to praise God in all things.

For praise to be congruent with the words sung we must define the content that is praised with the phrase "right hand of the Lord," Luther continues. Christ Himself is supremely this "right hand" because, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone" (Ps 118:22).[37] This rejection by the world of God's mighty work of redemption is most visible at the point when God's conflict with death is at its final extreme: on the cross.

> When the world hears, then, that its highest gifts are disapproved by the Gospel and that only this King is commended, it is not only offended, but even prepares

[36] Meaning is not in our internal state, but in our communal interactions, explains Wittgenstein. "Does it make sense to ask 'How do you know that you believe?' — and is the answer; 'I know it by introspection'?" "In *some* cases it will be possible to say some such thing, in most not. "It makes sense to ask: 'Do I really love her, or am I only pretending to myself?' and the process of introspection is the calling up of memories; of imagined possible situations, and of the feeling that one would have if..." Wittgenstein, op. cit. (note 31), 587. The influence of this train of reasoning has continued to circulate both ways, as this highly influential passage from George Lindbeck's *The Nature of Christian Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 64, illustrates: "For a Christian, "God is Three and One," or "Christ is Lord" are true only as parts of a total pattern of speaking, thinking, feeling, and acting. They are false when their use in any given instance is inconsistent with what the pattern as a whole affirms of God's being and will. The crusader's battle cry "*Christus est Dominus*" for example, is false when used to authorize cleaving the skull of the infidel (even though the same words in other contexts may be a true utterance). When thus employed, it contradicts the Christian understanding of Lordship as embodying, for example, suffering servanthood."

[37] Martin Luther, "Psalm 118," in *LW* 14, 83. Some New Testament scholars concur in showing how various textual clues indicate that the writers of the New Testament understood this passage to speak of Jesus (cf. Acts 4:11). One of the most obvious is that the idiomatic Greek construction of verse 51 of the Magnificat (Lk 1: "He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts") is clearly indebted to the Hebrew formulation of Ps 118:15. See John Nolland, *Word Biblical Commentary, Luke 1:9-20*, vol. 35a (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 71.

> weapons and strives with all its might to vindicate its own gifts against this affront. This is the occasion for the bitterest conflicts; thus the world and this King attack each other with hostile hearts.[38]

The good and bad performance of these Psalm verses is ultimately defined by reference to the conflict of the cross, where the deep grammar of God's redemption of humans is exposed. When Christians say that the right hand of the Lord is exalted, concludes Luther, they can only mean that Christ is exalted, in whom their own merits and eternal reward are found. The linkage of praise and perception inversion begins to emerge as Luther interprets the psalmist's use of the language of "the Lord's right hand" Christologically. Drawing on 1 Corinthians. 15:55–57 and Isaiah 9:4 he concludes that God's power is first Christ, and it is from the bounty of Christ's merits and rewards that benefit flows to those who participate in His life.[39]

Reading Luther with Wittgenstein suggests that in Christian theology and practice the meaning of verses 15–18 of Psalm 118 falls to pieces if severed from their glad performance as songs of Christ's victory. At the same time, the inter-human referent of the happy performance is firmly set within the vertically oriented experience of the divine deliverance they describe. Luther correctly observes that the psalmists explain the genesis of their praise as the experience of rescue.[40] The basis of their hope in what

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[38] Martin Luther, "Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 1-4," in *LW* 22, 62.

[39] "Whoever will, let him apply these three points to the threefold work of Christ, in that He redeems us from the Law, from sin, and from death. This threefold redemption is enumerated in Is. 9:4 and in 1 Cor. 15:55. ...the important thing is to realize that these words are wholly spiritual and must be heard, sun, and understood by faith. He who gapes at these words open-mouthed and uses his reason and natural eyes will take offense and will consider only the opposite in the righteous and holy." Martin Luther, "Psalm 118," in *LW* 14, 83, cf. 81–84 [*WA* 31:140-149]. This was a remarkably stable hermeneutic key to the Psalms for Luther, which he articulated in his earliest lectures on the Psalms in 1513–1515. "The right hand is Christ, the Son of God, as Ps. 118:16 says: 'The right hand of the Lord has made strength,' for the Son of God is the strength, power, and wisdom of God, 1 Cor. 1:24, 30. Second, the right hand of God is the grace of faithfulness or work of God. Thus blessed Augustine correctly says by way of explanation that the right hand means God's propitiation and favor, according to Ps. 45:4: 'Thy right hand shall conduct Thee wonderfully.' The left hand, however, is God's rule or freely given grace, which is common to all. Third, the right hand is the awarding of glory in the future, as Matt. 25:33-34 says, 'He will place these on His right hand and those on His left, and then He will say, etc.' Therefore the right hand is, first, Christ; second, it is the merit of Christians, and third, it is their reward." Martin Luther, "Psalm Seventeen," in *LW* 10, 111.

[40] Luther writes, "Ps. 51:13, 14, 15: 'I will teach transgressors Thy ways...My tongue will sing aloud of Thy righteousness...And my mouth will show forth Thy praise.'

will happen in the future is therefore the experiences of rescue that lie behind them and their perception of events that are already in view, and is not, as in modern rationality, an extrapolation from what has happened in the past to predict what will happen in the future.[41] This is why Luther reads 1 Peter 2:9 neither as prescription nor command, but a description of conversion as the experience of rescue from death: "That you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." This description of the experience of God is also an invitation, "For God does these wonders which are prefigured in the Red Sea to anyone."[42]

It is thus not accidental that the form of the Psalms, poetry, is related to their content, praise. The poetic form (with its inherent linkage with music) expresses an immediacy before God via the text which is at root not critical and so is destroyed by critical distance. This is similar to the understanding of poetry for which Paul Ricoeur is well known. "My deepest conviction is that poetic language alone restores to us that participation-in or belonging-to an order of things which precedes our capacity to oppose ourselves to things taken as objects opposed to a subject."[43] The point may also be illustrated by asking why at the end of his life Bonhoeffer wrote poetry. It is only in the last stages of his imprisonment, when death was immanent, that Bonhoeffer took up the form. Eberhard Bethge, rightly I think, suggests that only poetry could achieve the combination of intimacy and decorum demanded by this relationship and the terrible demands being placed on it.[44] Luther's suggestion is that God, who created in love and spoke the beautiful order that is the material creation, has provided humans with poems which make intimate speaking with him possible in the dark and confined places as well as the green pastures of this life.

In Ps. 40, 'He brought me out of the pit, etc.' (v.2), is followed by 'I have proclaimed Thy righteousness' (v.9), and again, 'Thou hast made Thy wonderful works many, O Lord, my God.' Ps. 66:16: 'Come and see, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what great things He has done for my soul.' Ps. 46:8: 'Come and behold the works of the Lord, what wonders He has done.' Ps. 118:17: 'I shall not die but live and tell all His wonderful works.' Ps. 107:2: 'Let the redeemed of the Lord now say, etc.' Ps. 9:1, 4: 'I will tell of all Thy wonderful works...For Thou hast maintained my judgment and my cause.'" Martin Luther, "Psalm Seventeen," in *LW* 10, 36–37.

[41] Tim Ingold, "Dreaming of Dragons: On the Imagination of Real Life," in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 19 (2013), 734–52.

[42] Martin Luther, "Psalm Seventeen," in *LW* 10, 37.

[43] Paul Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," in Lewis S. Mudge (ed.), *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 101.

[44] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison,* enlarged edition, ed. Eberhard Bethge (London: SCM Press, 1971), 386.

The architectonic role Luther gives to the metaphor of "singing" thus complexifies and resituates the believer's critical relation to Scripture in establishing a theologically construed critical relation to language itself. If God is a speaking God, then we are always in the midst of learning from God what our grammar is about. Language is not simply "there," but we are learning what it means and thus what it is by listening in the form of prayer. Language is the place that the God who created by speaking has given in order to use it to claim us. In prayer and praise we take up God's words to expose our language and lives to divine remaking. Thus prayer is the dialogical relation with God in which the regeneration of human life originates and is sustained.[45]

Because the theological location of prayer and praise is before God with the community of prayer, a togetherness is created through a multifaceted practice which we can describe (as Luther himself does not explicitly do) as the redemptive process. In Luther's final analysis, these verses' main function is to give access to an eschatologically open and therefore dynamic state of walking with God. Luther calls this state of openness the "art of forgetting the self." "We must keep learning this lesson as long as we live, even as all the saints before us, with us, and after us must do." To such a song of faith, "What can the devil do when he finds a soul so naked that it can respond neither to sin nor to holiness?"[46] Using one of Luther's other metaphorical constructions, we might say that in praise the "devil's eye" in us is displaced by the eyes of Christ, effecting the conversion of perception.

Luther understands this art of forgetting the self through an active and verbal relation to Scripture, God and other humans to be the way that we embrace Christ's victory, won by God's right hand. Luther says of Psalm 118:17,

> We should recognize this verse as a masterpiece. How mightily the psalmist banishes death out of sight! He will know nothing of dying and sin. At the same time he visualizes life most vividly and will hear of nothing but life. But whoever will not see death, lives forever, as Christ says: "If anyone keeps My Word, he will never see death" (John 8:51). He so immerses himself in life that death is swallowed up by life (1 Cor. 15:55) and disappears completely, because he clings with a firm faith to the right hand of God. Thus all the saints have sung this verse and will continue to sing it to the end.[47]

[45] Gerhard Sauter, "Reden von Gott im Gebet," in Gerhard Caspar (ed.), *Gott nennen: Phänomenologische Zugänge* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Alber Verlag, 1981), 219–42.
[46] Martin Luther, "Psalm 118," in *LW* 14, 85.
[47] Ibid., 87.

Singing about God's power is thus the proper creaturely response to the experience of God's salvation and so the salvation itself—the earthly form of eternal life. This means that in order to perform the Psalter at all we must begin with the acknowledgement that we are unprepared to pray. Faith must flee to Christ's prayer and allow Christ to pray through it as it clings to God as God has given Godself in the content of the church's prayers. We can and must prepare to pray by learning how to begin, but this beginning is not with method, but with this particular performative clinging.[48] We learn the grammar of life with God by taking these poems on our lips before God; we learn this language by using it.[49]

Attending to Luther's exegesis of the Psalms reveals that for him, faith is the central category of the Christian life, the famous *sola fide*, which orients hope, love and all human action. Because faith is trust in God's Word and promise, its constituent component is the acknowledgement of Christ as Lord, the axiomatic statement of Christian praise, and the one which alone allows non-Jews access to the Psalms. Summarizing the tight set of conceptual connections just outlined Luther offers an equation: "Faith in [God's] promise is nothing other than prayer."[50] The conversation that is prayer envelops the whole of the Christian's living (including their moral deliberation), rendering it a response of appreciation for God's action. Faith is the effect of God's Word and promise entering the heart, making it firm and certain and directing it by remaking human perception. This certainty and perception is understood in highly active terms;

> it bursts into action... impels him to compose beautiful and sweet psalms and to sing lovely and joyous songs, both to praise and to thank God in his happiness and to serve his fellowmen by stimulating and teaching them.[51]

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[48] "We use the psalms of David and the writings of the prophets in this way as examples, even though we are not David or the prophets, but because we have the same blessings in common with them — the same Word, Spirit, faith, and blessedness — and because we sustain the same dangers and afflictions on account of God's Word. So we rightly take over their voices and their language for ourselves, praising and singing just as they praised and sang." Martin Luther, "Lectures on the Song of Solomon (1530–1531)," in *LW* 15, 192.

[49] This point is wonderfully and simply put in Luther's explanation to his barber about how to pray. Martin Luther, "A Simple Way to Pray," in *LW* 43, 193–211.

[50] Oswald Bayer, "Luther as an Interpreter of Holy Scripture," in Donald K. McKim (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 77.

[51] Martin Luther, "Treatise on the Last Words of David," in *LW* 15, 272–73.

The behavior that springs from this confession cannot be a fixed aptitude or *habitus*, but because it is grounded in a conversation will always be a "spirit that falls and rises."[52] We might say, in summary, that the much maligned *sola fide* means "let all your thinking and action be infiltrated by the truth that the crucified and resurrected Christ is still at work and still the Lord of all creation."

Conclusion

Without suggesting that the Psalter is somehow superior to the rest of Scripture, we do well to notice its centrality in the faith and performed worship for Christians through the ages,[53] and that it was explicitly written in a form designed to be performed in the believing community.[54] I have suggested that learning to understand it as the "Psalter" rather than simply "the Book of Psalms" gives us fresh insight into a biblical tradition that is unique within the biblical canon in being wholly devoted to teaching us what it means for faith to be conversational. I have further suggested that by asking what it means for moderns to perform the Psalms the methodological location of (modern) Christian ethics is decisively shifted. Rather than being another discipline under the master discipline of hermeneutics or fundamental theology, it is redefined as reflection on the activity of praise and our life's coherence with it by way of an interrogation of the phenomenon of human perception. Performing the Psalter with the community of saints channels faith into a life of exploration of the divine bounty, so critically exposing our concrete enmeshments in a world praising its own glory and fighting for what it sees as scarce resources to be secured by human efforts.

If we take praise as the condition of all human action that responds to the world as coming from the hand of a good Creator and Redeemer, hope and trust analysis offers Christian theology an analytical tool with broad reach in both revealing the affective layers of experience that drive the way we put our ethical questions, and helping us critically to engage with

[52] Martin Luther, "Lectures on Isaiah Chapters 1–39," in *LW* 16, 321. Luther makes this comment as he examines Hezekiah's prayer to discover what it reveals about prayer in all times and places.

[53] See William Holladay, *The Psalms Through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), and Rowland Prothero, *The Psalms in Human Life* (London: John Murray, 1909).

[54] Günter Bader, *Psalterium affectum palestra: Prolegomena zu einer Theologie des Psalters* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, Paul Siebeck, 1996).

the question of how they might be more appropriately formulated. To end with a few examples, rather than asking in medicine about how to serve consumers of healthcare or protect ourselves from being bankrupted by healthcare costs (whether individually or collectively), we might ask what might be entailed in creating the conditions for healing. Instead of discussions in agricultural ethics and policy aimed at "ensuring our food supply," we might ask what it means, concretely, to receive our daily bread. In business ethics the question about how to manage "human resources" or "risk" or to protect ourselves against financial shocks might be resituated by investigating what it could mean to understand our work out of a desire to receive and hand on God's care for people and creation. These few examples indicate the power of the critical reformulation of the very questions we ask in ethical discourse that praise analysis offers to modern theology.

Singing the Songs of the Lord in Foreign Lands: Psalms in Contemporary Lutheran Interpretation

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