



Faith-Eroding Errors of Two Popular Theologies

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Outline

Introduction	Parallels in Neoorthodoxy and Radical Lutheranism
Working from Above	Lutheran Orthodoxy: Trustworthiness
Working from Below	Untrustworthy Theology
Reformed: Overarching “Sovereignty”	Conclusion
Radical Lutheranism: Overarching “Love”	

Introduction

Three Theologies

This article studies key aspects of two popular theologies: Reformed including Reformed Neoorthodoxy and Radical Lutheranism. It contrasts their method and conclusions with the method and conclusions of Luther and Lutheran Orthodoxy.

Reformed theology is typified by John Calvin, Reformed Neoorthodoxy by Karl Barth, and Radical Lutheranism by Gerhard O. Forde. While typifying them, of course none of those three men entirely represents their respective theology. Each of the theologies has many proponents who add extension or variations.

Radical Lutheranism takes its name from an article by Forde titled “Radical Lutheranism.”¹ The English word “radical” comes from Latin *radicalis* “of or having roots” from Latin *radix* “root”. Forde noted that *radix* means root and wrote of a theology that he purports gets to the root of Lutheran identity.

Reformed Theology including Reformed Neoorthodoxy

By its

- view of the sovereignty of God, and
- rational deductions from its idea of sovereignty,

Reformed theology dictates a limited incarnation of Christ, double predestination, and limited atonement. In addition, Reformed Neoorthodoxy dictates limited Scripture. These are dangerous to faith.

Radical Lutheranism

By its:

- view of the love of God,² and
- rational deductions from its idea of love,

Radical Lutheranism dictates an atonement that does not atone, that Christ has sins of his own, and that God's Word of the Law is untrustworthy. These are dangerous to faith.

Luther and Lutheran Orthodoxy

Because God is trustworthy, Luther and Lutheran Orthodoxy hold no preconceived or overarching idea about God that dictates what He can say or do. Saints can wait upon the Lord to hear his Word and after He says it, believe that He said it and what He said. Saints can believe it even if they cannot understand the how or why of it. Because the Word says Christ is fully incarnate, Christ propitiated God for the sins of the whole world by his active obedience and passive obedience under the Law, and God is not a man that He should lie, we believe vicarious satisfaction, unlimited atonement, and inspired Scripture.

Working from Above

The Reformed and the Radical Lutherans make the same mistake. Both begin by identifying a prime attribute of God and then use that attribute to determine all religious topics. Both are working from above and deduce from their single prime attribute what that must mean for everything else. Their notions about the prime attribute overarch everything. All other beliefs must fit under that arch.

Their notions about the prime attribute determine what is admissible in God's Word, about the person of Christ, and the work of Christ in atonement. Their overarching theologies are the gatekeepers of what God is allowed to say, who Christ is allowed to be, and what Christ is allowed to do. This rationality rules God, Scripture, Christ, and the atonement in a magisterial way.

Both overarching theologies undermine faith because they distort the person of Christ, the atoning work of Christ, and the Word of God. Faith has for its object the person of Christ, the atoning work of Christ, and the Word. To undermine these is to erode faith and raise the monster of uncertainty.

Working from Below

Luther and Lutheran Orthodoxy avoid this mistake. They work from below. Instead of determining in advance what is admissible about the person of Christ, they observe Christ as revealed in Scripture and take him for what He is, not what they already thought He must be. Instead of determining in advance what is admissible about the atonement, they observe what Scripture says Christ did. Jesus did atone for us. He did it by who He is, the way He lived, the way He died, and by rising again. About the person and work of Christ, Luther and Lutheran Orthodoxy have no preconceived notion before coming to Scripture. Instead, they wait upon the Lord to hear his Word. They give God's Word free reign to say whatever God says, even if rationally we cannot see why He says it or how it can be. Rationality of *why* and *how* do not overrule *that* God said and *what* He said.

Reformed: Overarching Sovereignty

The Reformed begin with the sovereignty of God. God's sovereignty is his prime attribute. It is what makes God God. This, his sovereignty, is what theology must defend at all costs. It is the last bastion, the theological Alamo.

This generates horrible consequences about the person of Christ, the atonement, and Scripture. It results in limited incarnation, double predestination and limited atonement, and limited Scripture. In the name of the sovereign freedom of God, God becomes bound.

Limited Christ

Because the full incarnation of Christ would threaten God's sovereignty, Christ is not allowed to be fully incarnate. In full incarnation, such as is confessed by Luther and Lutheran Orthodoxy, his divine and human natures communicate in the unity of his one person. Because that communication of the human with the divine would undermine the freedom and sovereignty of God (so their rational minds think) it is inadmissible. Instead, while sometimes paying lip service to a limited communication of the two natures in Christ, they see him like two boards glued together.³ The glue insulates the divine and human natures from each other. This is Nestorianism.⁴

Double Predestination

Scripture teaches the predestination of the saved, but not a predestination of the lost. The saved are saved by God's will, but the lost are lost by their own will. That is only one predestination, and hence is sometimes referred to as single predestination.

Jesus teaches that the lost are lost because of their own will, not Gods. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" (Matthew 23:37). The words "you would not" show that their own will is the cause of them being lost.

But because the Reformed work from above in God's sovereignty, they cannot allow Christ's words "you would not" to stand for what they plainly say. That would threaten the sovereignty of God. In their view, those words would assign an eternal consequence to the will of sinful man

rather than to the will of God. Because that just cannot happen due to sovereignty, the Reformed conclude that the lost are lost by the will of God. They teach not only the predestination of the saved but also the predestination of the lost. In other words, double predestination.

Limited Atonement

The Reformed teach that Christ does not atone for the whole world. He died only for the elect. His atonement is limited to them. This raises the monster of uncertainty about your election.

If you were to work from below you could look at the cross, see the Only Begotten Son dying for you, and therefore believe that his blood takes away your sin. But working from above, the Reformed see him dying only for the elect. In their theology, you must work from above to penetrate the secret, previous, eternal decree about your salvation.

Christ, his cross, the Word, and the Sacraments cannot be taken as assurance. For assurance that Christ's atonement is "for you," their theology diminishes the Means of Grace in Word and Sacrament. It is not enough to cling to these means. The overarching Reformed theology requires you to work from above, from eternal election in the sovereignty of God.

Limited Scripture

This affects also what Reformed Neoorthodoxy teaches about Scripture. Scripture is limited. It is a witness to revelation, not revelation. It becomes revelation "when it makes its impact on us."⁵ As Robert D. Preus explains:

So when Barth calls Scripture the Word of God he does not mean that *Scripture* carries with it the power and authority of very God, nor does he mean that Scripture is true and unfailing like God. What then does he mean?

Barth means that the Bible *becomes* the Word of God. There is really "only one Word of God, and that is the eternal Word," Christ. "That the Bible is the Word of God cannot mean that with other attributes the Bible has the attribute of being the Word of God." That would violate "the freedom and sovereignty of God" (I, 2, 513). No, a miracle has to take place in which the Bible rises up and speaks to us as the Word of God (I, 2, 512). And so the Bible is the Word of God *for faith*. In an event which God Himself brings about the Bible becomes the Word of God *for us*. Barth says, "The Bible is God's Word so far as God lets it be His word, so far as God speaks through it" (I. 1, 123).⁶

This means that the Bible is a dead book, a mere "sign," a "human and temporal word," "conditioned" and "limited."⁷

Therefore, you cannot know that by going to Scripture you will hear the Word of God. Instead, because of sovereignty, you must hope that God will give you a miracle making the Bible rise up and become the Word. He might and He might not. He retains his freedom. Good luck.

Luther and Lutheran Orthodoxy teach that Scripture as the Word of God is living and powerful and that "that the Spirit of God is always present and operative when Scripture is read or preached or used."⁸ You do not have to wonder whether God in his arbitrary and capricious freedom and sovereignty will choose to give you revelation.

God Caught in the Tao

Sovereignty determines ahead of time what God is allowed to do and say. No matter what Scripture says, the lost must be lost because the sovereign God predestined them to be damned. Sovereignty is authoritative. By it we know whether something God might say could be true. We know what is possible before we hear what He says. Sovereignty, like the monism of the Tao in Taoism, is inexorable, even for God. In the name of God's freedom, God is bound. He loses his freedom. He must predestine all, even the lost to damnation. Were He not to do that, He would lose his deity.

Radical Lutherans: Overarching Love

The Radical Lutherans do the same thing. They just happen to do it from a different overarching presupposition.

Radical Lutherans begin with the love of God. God's love is his prime attribute. It is what makes God God. This, his love, is what theology must defend at all costs. It is the last bastion of our theological Alamo.

Of course, "God is love" (1 John 4:8) and love did motivate God to give his only begotten Son as Redeemer of the world (John 3:16). But God's love did not abolish his justice. In setting forth Christ as the propitiation by his blood thereby justifying us freely by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, God is "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:26) Radical Lutheranism distorts love into an abolition of God's justice.

Just as in Reformed theology, Radical Lutheranism's method of deduction generates horrible consequences about the atonement, Christ, and Scripture. It results in an atonement that does not atone, Christ as an original sinner, and the untrustworthiness of God's Word of the Law. In the name of the love of God, Christ does not lay down his life for his friends, theologians indict Christ as having his own sin, and God is not taken at his Word.

Atonement That Does Not Atonement

Because of its rational deductions from what it thinks is the love of God, Radical Lutheranism is thoroughly set against "the legal scheme." Christ does not fulfill the Law for us. He does not suffer on our behalf the Law's penalty of death for sin. He does not make vicarious satisfaction for us.⁹

The Scripture, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21) cannot mean that God imputed our sins to Christ so that He could impute Christ's righteousness to us. That would be too much of a "legal scheme." Imputation is too legal. The plain speech of Paul about Law and the imputation of sin is inadmissible to Radical Lutheranism. "For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law." (Romans 5:13) The work of Christ is not allowed to have anything to do with imputation because the Law imputes sin.

Instead, we are supposed to believe that because of love, God all along was willing to just up and forgive. He was willing to forgive before and without the incarnation of the Son of God; before his life of active obedience for us; and before his passive obedience of suffering the Law's

penalty of death for sin. The trouble was not that God would not forgive but that we would not believe. So, the cross, rather than working vicarious satisfaction to propitiate God, is a grand gesture to inspire us to believe. Then, when we believe, atonement happens.¹⁰

The lingo is Lutheranesque because it talks about Christ atoning by his cross, but what that means is not that the cross and tomb are where and when atonement happened. The cross atones only by an impact of faith. The where and when of atonement are in your heart when you believe. While this subjectivism might not make a Pietist of every Radical Lutheran, it is fertile soil for Pietism.

Reformed theology raises the monster of uncertainty by prompting one to question the eternal decree of God. Radical Lutheranism raises the monster of uncertainty by prompting one to question the quality of one's faith. Christ does not atone by objective vicarious satisfaction. Instead, Christ's cross might lead to atonement if its impact within you is faith. Hence, self-examination instead of looking outward to Christ and his work is pretty much inevitable. It is a death spiral for faith.

Christ's Own Original Sin

In the drive to reject the "legal scheme" of vicarious satisfaction, the overarching theology of love accuses Christ of committing his own original sin of unbelief in Gethsemane and on the cross.¹¹ This puts the last nail in the coffin lid of vicarious satisfaction. How could Christ atone for us by vicarious satisfaction when He is an original sinner himself? In the name of love and to just terminate the Law without it being fulfilled, it bears false witness against Christ.

Claiming to save us by simply terminating the Law without fulfilling it for us, Radical Lutheranism leaves us in our sins. It provides no more consolation than to say, "Not to worry, God is what we think love is. Love wins." Hurray!

God Not Trustworthy in the Law

Love as an overarching theology foreordains that God could not have meant what He said. He said in the Law, "the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23) He said that a kinsman can redeem his indebted and enslaved relatives by paying their debt and performing their obligations for them under the Law. (Leviticus 25:23-28) In the same way that the overarching Reformed theology of sovereignty just won't let Christ work an unlimited atonement, the overarching Radical Lutheran theology of love just won't let our kinsman Christ work a vicarious atonement for us. It won't let Christ our Brother actively obey the Law for us and pay on our behalf the wages of sin. Love just won't let God be trustworthy when He speaks his Law.

When Radical Lutherans talk about Law and Gospel, the effect of the overarching theology of love is to simply terminate the Law without it being fulfilled. While doing this in the name of the Gospel, what is left is another gospel besides the one the apostles preached.

God Caught in the Tao

Love determines ahead of time what God is allowed to do and say. No matter what Scripture says, Christ cannot obey the Law for us. He cannot suffer the penalty of sin for us. Love is authoritative. By it we know whether something God might say could be true before we hear

what He says.

Love is inexorable, even for God. God cannot hate anything, not even sin. He cannot condemn sin in his own body on the cross. Though Peter says that Christ “Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree,” (1 Peter 2:24), by the constraint of love and reason over the top of Scripture we know that cannot be true. It cannot be true because love shows that is “too juridical,” “too forensic,” too much a part of “the legal scheme” or the “the legal framework.” Instead, God must declare everything forgiven without any fulfillment of the Law, not even by our Substitute, lest He look not as nice as we are.

Parallels in Neoorthodoxy and Radical Lutheranism

Scripture Inspiring, Not Inspired

As we have seen, in Neoorthodoxy, Scripture is not revelation. It is not the inspired Word of God in the sense that, there it is, the Word. The continued use of the phrase, “the inspiration of Scripture,” is an equivocation in which the Neoorthodox employ a second meaning. The second meaning is that Scripture is inspiring, not inspired.¹²

Robert D. Preus wrote about parallels between Neoorthodoxy’s idea of inspiration and Radical Lutheranism’s idea. In 1955 his doctoral dissertation was *The Inspiration of Scripture: A Study in the Theology of the Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmaticians*.¹³ In following years he published a series of three articles in *Concordia Theological Monthly* that together are referred to as *Preus on Scripture*. Two of these are “The Word of God in the theology of Karl Barth,”¹⁴ and “The Word of God in the Theology of Lutheran Orthodoxy.”¹⁵ According to Preus, Gerhard O. Forde’s doctrine of Scripture is similar to Karl Barth’s.

Preus had in mind his St. Louis seminary colleagues who interpreted the historical elements of the gospels as myths, as did Rudolf Bultmann, or held to the neoorthodoxy of Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, which ignored the gospel’s historical elements. For them, the Bible is not the word of God but becomes the Word of God, a view which [Preus] opposed in the theology of Gerhard Forde, then a new professor at Luther Seminary.¹⁶

The difference is that the Radical Lutherans are more extreme than the Neoorthodox.

Then Preus zeros in on Gerhard Forde, who he says is even more explicit in his rejection of the inspiration of Scripture. . . .

Forde’s claim that biblical inspiration was an unproven assumption was historically false and parallels his theory that the Bible’s inspiration consisted in its ability to create faith . . . Forde’s functional view that the Bible is inspired insofar as it inspires faith had already been proposed by neoorthodox theologians as an alternative to the classical view that the Bible is the inspired word of God.¹⁷

The Cross Inspiring, Not Atoning

In parallel with that view of Scripture is Radical Lutheranism’s view of the atonement. Christ does not work atonement there and then on the cross. The cross is atonement only in the sense

that its message inspires faith to believe in the forgiveness of sins. Scripture becomes revelation when one believes and the cross becomes atonement when one believes.

Robert D. Preus wrote about this in his essay, “Perennial Problems in the Doctrine of Justification.”¹⁸

In his essay . . . Preus lists five ways in which the doctrine of justification is threatened, of which, “The second assault against the article of justification by faith is to separate God’s act of justifying the sinner through faith from its basis in Christ’s atonement.” . . . “There can be no imputation of Christ’s righteousness with which I can stand before God, if Christ did not by His atonement acquire such righteousness.” . . . For Preus, “The *propter Christum* is exclusive in that it is the *only* basis for God’s verdict of justification.”¹⁹

As Francis Pieper says:

We do not believe in Christ to our justification and salvation unless we believe in Him as the One who was crucified for the expiation of our sins (1 Corinthians 2:2) . . . and in our stead fulfilled the Law (Galatians 4:4-5), shed his precious blood (1 Peter 1:18), gave His life into death (Matthew 10:28; Romans 5:10).²⁰

“Preus saw the atonement as Christ placing himself under the Law.”²¹ “God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law.” (Galatians 4:4-5)

Radical Lutheranism just won’t have it because of their antipathy to the Law. To rid God’s Law of being an authentic divine Word, they deny that Scripture altogether is revelation until it inspires faith, as if faith can exist without the other of the two elements of repentance, contrition. (*Augsburg Confession*, “Of Repentance,” XII) To rid God’s Law of being an authentic divine Word, they deny that the obedience of Christ and his resurrection justified the world until they inspire faith. That eliminates any operation of the Holy Spirit using the Law and leaves only the reductionist “Gospel.” This they assert as if faith needs nothing in the blood of Christ to believe, as if faith were created by magic and floats in presumption without a ground in objective reality.

Subjective and Objective

Neoorthodoxy and Radical Lutheranism are sunk in subjectivism. Scripture is not revelation until a believer has subjective faith. The blood of Christ does not propitiate God until a believer has subjective faith.

All this is refuted over and again in Scripture. One plain verse says, “He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” (1 John 2:2) “Our” refers to believers. Christ is the propitiation for the sins not only of us who believe. He is the propitiation for the whole world. The whole world is a mixture of both believers and unbelievers. The propitiation for the whole world is not dependent on faith. Christ’s propitiation is objective. Then, when the apostles and pastors preach the “word of reconciliation,” which is an announcement of Christ’s propitiation of the whole world, and a sinner sees and believes that it is “for me,” subjective justification is joined to objective justification by faith.

Lutheran Orthodoxy: Trustworthiness

By the grace of God, Reformed theology and Radical Lutheranism are not the only alternatives.

The First Commandment: What Is a God?

The First Commandment says, “You shall have no other gods.” To have other gods is idolatry.

In the *Large Catechism*, Luther explains this commandment.

What does it mean to have a god? Or, what is God? Answer: A god means that from which we are to expect all good and in which we are to take refuge in all distress. So, to have a God is nothing other than trusting and believing Him with the heart.”

People trust idols, but idols are not trustworthy. Those two together – that people trust them, but they are not trustworthy – are what makes them idols. What makes God true and not an idol is that He is trustworthy. Trust safely trusts. Faith is founded in the faithfulness of God.

Scripture’s Authority

So, the error of the Reformed and the Radical Lutherans is that they begin with a true and important attribute of God, either sovereignty or love, and by *rational deduction from there* determine everything else.

This is two errors, not one. The first error is beginning with sovereignty or love instead of trustworthiness. The second error is determining everything else by rational deduction from there instead of from Scripture.

Their method is to work from above. They set sovereignty or love on high, and then work down from there by deduction. Deduction dictates what God is allowed to say. Their prime attribute of God becomes the hermeneutic driving all their exegesis of the texts of Scripture.

The trustworthiness and faithfulness of God reveal a different method. Because God is trustworthy when He speaks, the next step after recognizing trustworthiness is not to work from above. It is to work from below, waiting to hear what He says. We do not foreordain from sovereignty or love what God must say in Scripture or what He must do in Christ. Working from below, we wait to hear what God says. We wait to see what Christ does. Because God is trustworthy, we trust him for what He says after He says it, not for what we project in advance from sovereignty or love He must say. Because God is trustworthy, we trust him for what He does as He does it, not for what we project from sovereignty or love He must do.

God is what He says He is even when that does not square with what we thought He should be. “I am who I am.” (Exodus 3:14)

Trustworthiness does not foreordain what God is allowed to say. Instead, it waits to see what God says and then believes it. “I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope.” (Psalm 130:5) Lutherans believe God even when they cannot explain or rationalize what He says. Even when we cannot see *why* He says it, we can see *that* He says it. Even when we cannot see *how* it is so or *how* it works, we see *what* He says. We do not let problems of how or why prevent us from accepting what He says.

Vicarious Satisfaction

Working from below, Lutheran Orthodoxy confesses both the active obedience and the passive obedience of Christ as working our atonement.

The obedience not only of one nature, but of the entire person [of Christ], is a complete satisfaction and atonement for the human race. By this obedience God's eternal, unchangeable righteousness, revealed in the Law, has been satisfied. So our righteousness benefits us before God and is revealed in the Gospel. Faith relies on this before God, which God credits to faith, as it is written in Romans 5:19:

For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

The righteous shall live by his faith. (Habakkuk 2:4 [see also Romans 1:17])

Neither Christ's divine nor human nature by itself is credited to us for righteousness, but only the obedience of the person who is at the same time God and man. And faith thus values Christ's person because it was made under the Law [Galatians 4:4] for us and bore our sins, and, in His going to the Father, He offered to His heavenly Father for us poor sinners His entire, complete obedience. This extends from His holy birth even unto death. In this way, He has covered all our disobedience, which dwells in our nature, and its thoughts, words, and works. So disobedience is not charged against us for condemnation. It is pardoned and forgiven out of pure grace alone, for Christ's sake.²²

In this way, God is taken at his Word. He is taken at his Word of the Law and He is taken at his Word of the Gospel. He said both words. He is trustworthy in both words. This is the faith that does not dictate to God what his sovereignty or love must do. It is the faith that trusts the trustworthy God, taking him at both of his Words against appearances and rationality.

Untrustworthy Theology

Civilly honest men show flashes of honor to their word that are remnants of the image of God in sinners. This registers in some of our common sayings, such as: "His word is his bond;" "You can take his word to the bank;" and "He promised; he will do or die trying." In civil matters, we take such men at their word.

And yet, "All men are liars." (Psalm 116:11) But "God is not a man that He should lie." (Numbers 23:19) God is true whether anyone believes him or not. "Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar." (Romans 3:3-4)

Refusing To Take God at His Word

Radical Lutherans refuse to take God at his word. God says both Law and Gospel. The Radical Lutherans deduce from love that He could not really have meant the Law. Therefore, no matter

what God says He is doing in Christ, no matter what God does do in Christ, they characterize it their way because by love they know better than whatever God might say.

They seize upon expressions in Luther when he speaks of God doing an “alien work” in the Law as confirmation that He never meant it. Thus, our salvation does not need Christ to actively obey the Law for us. We do not need Christ to humble himself to the death of the cross for us as the penalty of our sin. Our salvation just needs us to have “faith” that “love wins” as a generic amnesty.

Because of this working from above, this deduction from a glittering generality of love, things Jesus says do not matter. He says, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” (John 15:13) Things the apostles say do not matter. Paul says, “God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” (Galatians 4:4-5) This was not necessary to atone for our sin. It was necessary only so that we would be inspired to believe that the Law just terminates.

This refuses God as God because it does not trust God for what He says. It treats God as not having been trustworthy when He spoke the Law. The Law never needed to be fulfilled, not by us, and not by our Kinsman Redeemer for us. We only needed to hear the rhetorical question, “Has God indeed said” and become “free.”

Existential Dread

For all the good that does, it is as if the terror that the Gospel relieves is a generic existentialism. The dread is merely systemic to being human. Generic absolution without Christ’s vicarious satisfaction answers the need of a merely existential anxiety. That makes the medicine as weak as the disease.

The true Gospel is much more powerful medicine. It heals a punishing lethal disease. The dread is not existential. The terror is from God’s Law. The dread is of God’s wrath.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.” (Romans 1:18) “Because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed. “ (Romans 2:5) “For those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury “ (Romans 2:8) “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Matthew 3:7)

Where is the medicine for wrath? It is in the blood of Christ. “Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.” (Romans 5:9) “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” (John 3:25) Radical Lutheranism purports to console sinners saying that the Law and wrath never were real, but Paul says, “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.” (Ephesians 5:6)

Conclusion

Christ has made vicarious satisfaction for your sin under the Law to God. Trust the Gospel, not

the Gospel reductionism of Radical Lutheran theology. Look to the blood of Christ, not to your faith. Trust God's Word in Law, Gospel, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. This is what it means to have faith "in Christ."

¹ Gerhard O. Forde, "Radical Lutheranism," *Lutheran Quarterly*, 1:1 (Spring 1987), 1-16.

² "God is love." (1 John 4:8) "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) God's love for the world *did* motivate God to redeem sinners. But love is not God. In other words, while God is love, that is not the whole truth about God. God also is wise, good, trustworthy, patient, loving, just, merciful, etc. God's love did not abolish his justice. In setting forth Christ as the propitiation by his blood thereby justifying us freely by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, God is "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:26) The atonement does not abolish the justice of God but upholds it, even as it upholds the patience, love, and mercy of God, the critique in this essay of Radical Lutheranism is not meant to suggest that God is not love or that love did not motivate God to redeem us. Instead, the critique is about what Radical Lutheranism has made of love. It has altered the nature of love as being unjust, contrary to plain Scripture that in the redemption, yes, God justifies sinners, but He also is just while he justifies.

³ Paul Timothy McCain, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 492, SD VIII.9.

⁴ Epitome of the Formula of Concord, VIII.18.

⁵ Robert D. Preus, "The Word of God in the Theology of Karl Barth," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 31:2 (1960), 105-115, 111.

⁶ Preus, "The Word of God in the Theology of Karl Barth," 113-114.

⁷ Preus, "The Word of God in the Theology of Karl Barth," 111-112.

⁸ Preus, "The Word of God in the Theology of Karl Barth," 112.

⁹ Gerhard Forde, "Caught in the Act: Reflections on the Work of Christ," in *A More Radical Gospel: Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism*, ed. Mark Mattes and Steven Paulson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 85-97.

¹⁰ The relation of this to *Intuitu Fidei* (election in view of faith) is left for development at another time.

¹¹ Steven D. Paulson, *Lutheran Theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 104-105.

¹² David P. Scaer, "Justification in the Theology of Robert D. Preus," *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 86:1 (2022), 43-56, 47 n. 24, citing Paul J. Achtemeier, *Inspiration and Authority: Nature and Function of Christian Scripture*, rev. ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1999)

¹³ Robert D. Preus, *The Inspiration of Scripture: A Study of the Theology of the Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmaticians*, (Edinburgh, UK: Oliver and Boyd, 1955).

¹⁴ Robert D. Preus, "The Word of God in the Theology of Karl Barth." *Concordia Theological Monthly* 31:2 (February 1960): 105-115.

¹⁵ Robert D. Preus, "The Word of God in the Theology of Lutheran Orthodoxy." *Concordia Theological Monthly* 33, no. 8 (August 1962): 469-483

¹⁶ Scaer, "Justification in the Theology of Robert D. Preus," 47.

¹⁷ Scaer, "Justification in the Theology of Robert D. Preus," 50.

¹⁸ Robert D. Preus, "Perennial Problems in the Doctrine of Justification," *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 45:3 (July 1981).

¹⁹ Scaer, "Justification in the Theology of Robert D. Preus," 51.

²⁰ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol.2 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), 426.

²¹ Scaer, "Justification in the Theology of Robert D. Preus," 52.

²² Paul Timothy McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 545.