The Identity of Theology

An Investigation of the Relation between Exegesis and Doctrine
in Luther's *De servo arbitrio*

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PREFACE

This is a slightly revised edition of a dissertation accepted by Asian Graduate School of Theology for the degree of Doctor of Theology. It is mainly an investigation of Luther's *De servo arbitrio,* a book that started to interest me when I was a student at the Free Faculty of Theology, Oslo, Norway, about fifteen years ago. When this Faculty granted me a scholarship in 1981, this work was therefore the main target of my studies. Almost ten years later, and now a member of the teaching staff at Kobe Lutheran Theological Seminary, Japan, I was given the possibility of continuing my theological education within the framework of Asian Graduate School of Theology. It was then a natural choice to return to my Luther studies and further pursue this subject, and the result of my endeavor is the present thesis.

I have worked on this project both at Kobe Lutheran Theological Seminary and at the School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, Norway, and faculty and other staff at these institutions have always been supportive and encouraging. I am particularly indebted to the library staff in Stavanger for its unwavering resolve to always find what I asked for, no matter how far-fetched it might seem.

I have over the years discussed my project with and got valuable reactions from a number of people. In the final stages, summaries were presented at the International Congress for Luther Research, St. Paul, Minnesota, in August 1993, and at a research seminary at the School of Mission and Theology, February 1994. The AGST evaluation committee has also offered valuable suggestions for the final revision. My earnest thanks for all constructive critique.

In addition, I would like to express my gratitude for the supportive attitude I have met from my employer, the Norwegian Missionary Society, and from my family.

Kobe, October 4, 1995
Knut Alfsvåg

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARG	*Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*
BhistTh	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
CR	*Corpus Reformatorum*
CWE	*Collected Works of Erasmus*
EvTh	*Evangelische Theologie*
FC	*Formula Concordiae*
FGLP	Forschungen zur Geschichte und Lehre des Protestantismus
FKDG	Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte
KuD	*Kerygma und Dogma*
LuJ	*Luther-Jahrbuch*
MPG	J. P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia graeco-latina*
MPL	J. P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia latina*
StTh	*Studia Theologica*
ThLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
ThZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
TRE	*Theologische Realenzyklopädie*
WA	Luther, *Werke*. Weimar 1883ff.
WAB	Luther, *Werke: Briefwechsel*
WADB	Luther, *Werke: Deutsche Bibel*
WATR	Luther, *Werke: Tischreden*
ZKG	*Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

How should we live with the Bible? How can we take its wisdom and insights seriously as a challenge to and guidance for our time without being unfaithful either toward the Bible or our time? These are questions that undoubtedly are important in the context of the secularized Western societies. One may argue, however, that they may be even more so within the religious pluralism of the Asian countries. What does it in this context mean to take the Bible seriously as a relevant guidebook for both life and faith? How does one in such a setting maintain one's integrity as a citizen without compromising the Biblical ideals? Not many would consider these questions as unimportant. Good answers are, however, not always easily obtained.[1]

In trying to cope with the actual situation one should, however, not underestimate the possible value of a historical perspective, and that is the reason I have chosen to embark on the following investigation of the biblical foundation of the theology of Martin Luther. This may seem to be a detour; there are after all great differences between 16th century Europe and what has been called the global village toward the end of the 20th. One important thing with Luther is, however, that he was not only influenced by the biblical teaching. That has been the case with many others both before and after Luther, even though it did not always make a difference to their contemporaries. Luther, in addition, managed to let this influence be felt in his time as probably no other single person has ever done. A fresh insight in how Luther tried to maintain the biblical integrity of life and thought should therefore offer insights that could be valuable even in a society as vastly different as ours.

It does not need extensive argument to prove that the reading of the Bible was an important element in the life of Martin Luther. To understand the Bible was the desire of his youth, and the scholarly interpretation of this book was his life work as a professor at the University of Wittenberg. Consequently, his works are almost without exception biblical exegesis: Sermons, lectures, expositions of the actual relevance of biblical passages, and Bible translation. Not all of the leaders of the church are famous for the attention they paid to the Bible, but some are, and Luther is certainly one of them.

To investigate how Luther worked with and looked upon the Bible has therefore been an important part of modern Luther research,[2] and scholars have quite unanimously emphasized the biblical orientation of his work.[3] This aspect, however, still tends to be neglected when the scholars focus on Luther's doctrine. Then one seems to have a rather indifferent attitude toward his exegesis, and is after all inclined to discuss his theology as if its exegetical foundation was arbitrary.[4] The modern investigations of Luther's theology may thus unintentionally perform a kind of Luther distillation, where his teaching to a certain extent is isolated and abstracted from its source, the Bible.[5] In this way, one loose the possibility to get a better understanding of how Luther worked with the Bible as an actual authority for life in church and society.

There may be many reasons why the scholars seem unable to pay full attention to Luther the exegete. Biblical exegesis has developed considerably since Luther's times, and his approach might therefore seem to be irrelevant.[6] In addition, modern Luther scholars, who usually do not look upon themselves primarily as biblical exegetes, may unconsciously project parts of their own self-understanding on the target of their investigations. This has always been a problem during the history of Luther research,[7] and there is no reason to think the present generation is different.

The situation can thus hardly be described as satisfactory.[8] It was undoubtedly as a biblical exegete Martin Luther changed the course of events in sixteenth century Europe and set the framework for Protestant theology and church life. The exegetical Luther should therefore get the scholars' attention irrespective of their view of the possible actual relevance of his exegesis.[9] If not, one will lose not only the possibility of an adequate understanding of the Reformation. As the inaugurator of the entire tradition of Protestant theology, Luther is still influential. Consequently, an adequate interpretation also of the present theological situation both in the West and in the two thirds' world is therefore in no small degree dependent on an adequate assessment of the main elements of Luther's work.

Both for historical and actual reasons, then, there seems to be much to gain from a more precise understading of the exegetical foundations of Luther's work, and the present investigation is intended as a contribution to this project.[10] One

might think of various procedures to reach this goal. To be able to follow Luther's way of thinking in some detail without the investigation growing to unmanageable proportions, I will, however, focus mainly on one of Luther's works,[11] and among those relevant in this context, I have decided to concentrate on *De servo arbitrio*. This work is chosen because here Luther does not only perform biblical interpretation; he also reflects on its method and importance. In view of Luther's high esteem of this book,[12] one is probably also justified in considering both its hermeneutical reflections and its exegetical discussions as representative for his way of thinking.[13] The investigation of his debate with Erasmus should therefore allow for important conclusions concerning Luther's view of the exegetical foundation of theology and thus, hopefully, give impulses that still are valuable.

De servo arbitrio has always been at the center of the debate concerning Luther's understanding of the Scripture. The investigation of the debate between Erasmus and Luther as a debate about enslaved will has, however, not been much interested in the exegetical aspects.[14] There are, then, important gaps to be filled also in this context.

The debate between Luther and Erasmus was a debate concerning timelessly important questions. It is, however, not a timeless debate, but a debate that is firmly imbedded in and clearly reflects its own historical context. To understand the combatants' perspectives, it is therefore necessary to pay due attention to the historical setting of the debate,[15] and this will be the first task of the present investigation (chapter two).[16] It is, however, also important is to give a preliminary presentation of what the two really has to say, and how they say it, as the appreciation of Erasmus' and Luther's arrangement of their material should be essential also for the analysis of it.[17] The findings of this chapter (chapter three) will therefore be important for the design of the subsequent investigation.

Both Erasmus and Luther include in their deliberations a discussion of method and authority in theology. Thereby they are particularly intent on defining and defending the position of the Scripture as the supreme judge of theological controversy. An investigation of this discussion will be the natural starting point for the analysis of the significance of the exegesis of *De servo*

arbitrio (chapter four). The inquiry will then analyze how this understanding of exegesis is applied and developed as the way of examining the main topics of *De servo arbitrio* (chapters five, six and seven). Hopefully, this will allow for a more precise understanding of the relation between exegesis and doctrine in Luther's thought.

Finally, I will try to relate the interpretation of *De servo arbitrio* to the wider context, both that of Luther's theology in a wider sense of the word, and to important aspects of the theological development after Luther. Is Luther's exegesis irrelevant, or is this merely scholarly superstition that should be replaced by a new evaluation of what we might learn from his work with the biblical material? The context does not allow for a detailed treatment of these questions. Even a short discussion might, however, suggest something about the modern relevance of Luther's work.

The literature to the controversy between Luther and Erasmus is immense, and it is sheer futility to try to discuss every aspect of it within the framework of a single monograph. I will, however, present important insights and interpretations from the ongoing debate, and, when necessary, indicate where and why my opinion differs from these.

CHAPTER TWO
THE DEBATE BETWEEN LUTHER AND ERASMUS IN ITS HISTORICAL CONTEXT

When Luther as a young professor in Wittenberg began his lifelong career as a teacher of biblical exegesis, Erasmus was already famous as a writer and church critic.[18] This fame was partly based on works like *Adagia*, *Enchiridion militis Christiani* and *Moriae enkomion* (The Praise of Folly), and partly on Erasmus' reputation as a learned editor of classical authors, both Christian and profane.[19] These works were Erasmus' realization of his own ideas concerning renewal of church and society. This renewal Erasmus wanted to obtain by replacing what he considered as the ignorance of Scholasticism with the study of the writings of the classical antiquity, the Church Fathers, and the New Testament in their original languages. Erasmus in this way as no other materialized the humanist ideal of *"ad fontes*"[20].[21]

Erasmus' program had Luther's heartfelt support,[22] and when he stood forth as a church critic himself, it seemed to many he was following in Erasmus' footsteps.[23] There is no doubt they had in common both a critical attitude toward many of the prevailing attitudes in church and society, and an earnest enthusiasm for the renewal of the study of the original languages of the Bible. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that the Greek New Testament Erasmus edited in 1516,[24] immediately was placed upon the study desk of the professor in Wittenberg.[25] When Luther in 1519 published his first scholarly work, the Commentary on Galatians,[26] Erasmus' work with New Testament was among his most important models.[27]

Luther was, however, very early aware that there were important differences between them.[28] In a letter to Georg Spalatin, dated October 19, 1516,[29] Luther criticizes Erasmus' lack of understanding of what righteousness, law[30] and original sin meant to Paul. Apparently Luther is about to grasp what became the theological foundation of his reformation, and he has already understood that the foundation of Erasmus' is another. He even dares to suggest that the famous Erasmus might benefit from studying more in depth the works of Augustine.[31] Spalatin transmitted the letter to Erasmus,[32] but there came no

answer.[33] Luther's view of Erasmus as a superficial theologian, also expressed in other letters at the time, never changed.[34]

Erasmus, on the other hand, favorably received the news of Luther's criticism of the indulgences, and he strongly opposed the Church's rash condemnation of Luther. To Erasmus, this condemnation was the work of obscurantists who wanted to attack the humanist renewal of *bonae litterae*.[35] At the same time he did not want to commit himself to Luther's cause, and as Luther sharpened his criticism, the reservations of Erasmus were strengthened.[36] Though in sympathy with the professor in Wittenberg, Erasmus could not but feel alienated by the intensity of Luther's attack, particularly as it turned out to be a general attack on ecclesiastical authority.[37]

One might, of course, interpret Erasmus' reserve toward both Luther and his opponents as a result of Erasmus' "tragic defect . . . : his inability to draw ultimate conclusions."[38] On the other hand one might argue that Erasmus position toward Luther still was firm and consistent.[39] He never accepted the Church's view that Luther was a heretic, and always hoped for an open debate between Catholics and Protestants, e.g., as late as at the Diet in Augsburg.[40] His own ideals of how such a debate should be conducted, he presented in numerous writings, mainly in *De libero arbitrio*.

The first personal contact between Luther and Erasmus was a letter from Luther to Erasmus dated March 28, 1519.[41] In this letter Luther tried to gain the support of Erasmus for his own cause. Open support he did not obtain, but Luther and Erasmus agreed to refrain from attacking each other publicly.[42] As the positions hardened, however, the position of Erasmus gradually became extremely unpleasant, and he came under attack from both sides.[43] From the conservatives he was assaulted as the founder of the new biblical scholarship that had given the Lutherans their arguments, while the Luther-followers saw in Erasmus the learned scholar who was too fearful to acknowledge the legitimacy of the movement of reform he had inspired.

It is not clear, however, what was the conclusive factor in Erasmus' decision to contribute to the debate himself.[44] Some of his old humanist friends continued to ask for Erasmus' help in opposing the Luther movement. The most famous of these friends was the English king Henry VIII, who had himself

written a book against Luther.[45] On the other hand, his position was attacked by one of the more militant of Luther's followers, Ulrich von Hutten.[46] Luther had since the unsuccessful attempt in 1519 not tried to engage Erasmus. In April 1524 Luther wrote to him again, stating that it apparently was beyond the strength of Erasmus to support the Luther movement openly. Luther repeated, however, his hope that they could avoid direct confrontation.[47]

In eventually making the decision of writing a book that was to challenge Luther directly, Erasmus tried to detach himself from the Reformation without rejecting it entirely. He did not touch Luther's church criticism, with which he to a certain extent agreed. He even did not treat central issues like the sacraments or the authority of the pope, as this would have forced him to side with either the conservatives or the reformers in a way that apparently did not appeal to him. Instead he chose the question of the liberty of the will, and published his *Diatribe de libero arbitrio* in September 1524.

Though important to both Erasmus and Luther,[48] the question of the will had so far not been a central issue in the controversies of the Reformation. From his extensive reading of the Church Fathers, however, Erasmus knew that it had been so before, and that Luther could have problems in relating his position to the traditional solutions. Erasmus thus seems to have considered the question of free will as well suited to demonstrate that Luther was neither entirely wrong nor absolutely infallible. By highlighting just this question, then, Erasmus wanted to prepare the ground a broad and open discussion of the methods and contents of theology.[49] In addition, he apparently considered the question of free will as a question where Luther's followers did not necessarily support their leader, and thus probably thought he could count on a certain amount of sympathy even from them.[50]

The direct target of Erasmus' attack is Luther's *Assertio omnium articulorum M. Lutheri per bullam Leonis X. novissinam damnatorum*, published in December 1520, where Luther defends his position against the papal condemnation.[51] Among the sentences condemned by the pope as heretical, is this quotation from Luther's theses at the dispute in Heidelberg in 1518: "Liberum arbitrium post peccatum res est de solo titulo, et dum facit, quod in se est, peccat mortaliter."[52] In his defence of this doctrine in 1520, Luther sharpens

his words: "Liberum arbitrium est figmentum in rebus seu titulus sine re."[53] According to Erasmus, it might be difficult to define exactly what is the realm of free will and what is the realm of grace.[54] However, Luther's determinism is decidedly one-sided and completely off the mark. To demonstrate the dangers of this untenable determinism and to show how he thinks this question should be handled, Erasmus writes his book, which to a large extent consists of a discussion of biblical passages relevant for the problem of determinism and free will.[55]

Luther was not at all impressed by Erasmus' book. On the contrary, he considered it so poorly written that an answer was hardly necessary at all, as they who were affected by such writings were beyond any hope of recovery.[56] In the end, however, he decided that it might be of some help to write a defence for the sake of the weak.[57]

Even if he did not consider it a particularly difficult task to refute the *Diatribe*, it came at a difficult time. During the autumn of 1524 Luther was primarily engaged in the debate with Karlstadt and the *Schwärmer*, and wrote his *Wider die himmlischen Propheten* against them (published December 1524 and January 1525).[58] At the same time, the peasants' revolt occurred. The uprising began in southern Germany in summer 1524, and spread until the spring of the next year. Luther agreed with many of the peasants' demands, but could not accept either their call for a revolt or the theological arguments for it. In two pamphlets he attacked the peasants' revolt, and afterwards, when the revolt was crushed, he defended his own attack.[59] One may agree or may not agree with Luther's attitude toward the peasants. It is, however, not difficult to understand that it was a period when it was not easy to find time and peace for writing something like *De servo arbitrio*.[60]

All this being settled, he married—to the utter surprise of both friend and foe. Then he finally sat down to write the answer to Erasmus. He worked with *De servo arbitrio* from September to November 1525, and the book was in print in December the same year.[61]

Apart from the compliments of Erasmus' choice of a theme for the debate, Luther has nothing positive to say of Erasmus' book at all. There is simply nothing left of Erasmus' honor as exegete, theologian and philosopher. Luther

defends and sharpens all his earlier statements of his complete distrust in free will, and of his faith in the all-governing, all-decisive power of God. To see a genius like Erasmus defending his cause so poorly, has only strengthened his own standpoint, Luther says.[62]

Erasmus was not happy with the relentless sharpness of Luther's answer, and wrote a lengthy defence of his own view, *Hyperaspistes* [shield-bearer] *Diatribae*, published 1526/27.[63] Luther allowed himself to ignore this book,[64] and Luther scholars have tended to do the same.[65] Defending and elaborating the main points of *De libero arbitrio*, it might, however, deepen our understanding of the theology of Erasmus in various ways.

The Erasmus-Luther debate no doubt was the debate between the two great spirits of a decisive time in the history of Europe. Both of them were influenced by and contributed decisively to the main intellectual movement of the day: The movement to renew life and church through the study of the classical literary sources from antiquity, mainly the Bible.[66] This may be part of the reason why the dispute was so bitter and uncompromising. To a very large extent the battle was fought on common ground. The background was the intellectual world of German humanism. The ideals of literary style and embellishment, the ideas of the methods and goals of intellectual achievement, these and more the combatants had in common. One might say, then, that what was at stake, was the question of who was going to be considered as the ultimate interpreter of the new era.[67] Erasmus feared that the force of Luther's polemics might destroy the new-born hope of developing a learned and scholarly Europe. Luther feared that Erasmus learned aloofness might turn the Reformation from a battle of life and death into a sophisticated *pro et contra*, making it nothing but a battle of learned footnotes.[68] If this was to be the conclusion, Luther seems to have felt that his work had been in vain.

This was the background and context that gave the debate its form and its contents. For a better understanding of the significance of the dispute, we must let the combatants talk for themselves and thus present their cause.

CHAPTER THREE
THE MAIN WORKS OF THE DEBATE. DISPOSITION AND CONTENTS

Erasmus considers the question of free will as a difficult one. This is the point of departure of his *De libero arbitrio* ΔΙΑΤΡΙΒΗ[69] *sive collatio*.[70] It has engaged the philosophers and theologians since antiquity, but according to Erasmus, no one has found the ultimate solution. Neither has the Church defined her doctrine on this point.[71] According to Erasmus, one should then be allowed to contribute to the discussion. One should, however, refrain from trying to give the definite answer.[72]

It is against this rule Luther has sinned, and it is therefore primarily this lack of moderation Erasmus sets out to correct.[73] Erasmus thus has to avoid the danger of merely stating a different view of free will with the same degree of certainty; he has to criticize Luther's position and at the same time leave the question open. For his own part, he is inclined to think that free will must have at least some power.[74] He is sure, however, that this question belongs to the questions God does not want us to penetrate too deeply into. We should therefore not move beyond Paul's own conclusion: "Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgements, and his paths beyond tracing out" (Rom 11:33).[75] Instead of stimulating doctrinal speculations, the Scripture teaches us to work on our own religious and moral improvement, Erasmus maintains. Thereby we should be aware that God's mercy admittedly is the condition for the achievements of the human will. To try to make this into a doctrine of enslaved will, however, is nothing but the consequence of an impious curiosity.[76]

To Erasmus, then, it is contrary both to Scripture and reason to try to establish a doctrine of enslaved will. In addition, it is unwise, as it might discourage man's attempt at moral improvement. It is therefore Erasmus' conclusion that even if Augustine, Wyclif[77] and Luther were right in stating that everything happens by necessity, one should refrain from propagating this paradox. Such teaching is not useful, as it can only dissuade people from struggling against their sinful nature, Erasmus says.[78]

Erasmus is thus clearly critical of Luther's doctrines. From a historical perspective, however, the most remarkable feature of his book is perhaps not that it is critical toward Luther, but that it amid its criticism still is quite positive. In the eyes of the Church, Luther was in 1525 a condemned heretic. Erasmus silently bypasses the official view of the Church and considers Luther as a theologian who admittedly is wrong in some respects, but nevertheless is worthy of a careful consideration.[79] Erasmus is not afraid of admitting that Luther might be a greater man than himself. The comparison of an elephant to a fly is Erasmus' own simile of the opponents.[80] These are words that perhaps should not be taken at face value. As an indirect reproach of the condemnation of Luther, however, they might still be quite significant. Erasmus consistently sticks to his criticism of assertive theology, and he protests both against Luther and against Luther's opponents. In this way Erasmus manages to demonstrate that his ideals of a theological debate are different both from Luther's and from those of his Roman antagonists.

Erasmus' goal in writing *De libero arbitrio* is thus to persuade his readers that one should not fight about free will—or any other question—in a pedantic way.[81] In conscious opposition to the assertive dogmatism **both** of Luther and the Church that condemned him, Erasmus wants to suggest the diatribe and moderate skepticism as the genre and method of a reasonable discussion of the question of free will. According to Erasmus, it is only such a civilized dispute that will let truth shine forth. He writes *De libero arbitrio* in the hope that it eventually will, like the spark from a collision of flintstones.[82]

The main part of *De libero arbitrio* is a discussion of about two hundred Scriptural passages, which Erasmus divides into the following four categories: Old Testament passages defending free will,[83] New Testament passages defending free will,[84] Scriptural passages apparently refuting free will,[85] and the passages used by Luther to disprove free will.[86] The Bible thus seems to be self-contradictory; and to Erasmus the way to overcome this apparent self-contradiction is the learned and moderate debate. Erasmus argues that many of these passages show that God has given to man the ability to choose. In addition, commandments and exhortations suppose an ability to make up one's mind and follow them, or else they are meaningless. Similarly, because the

Scripture speaks of reward, man must be able to do something to deserve that reward. Necessity is excluded; the Scripture tries to win man's willing consent, and does not present him as a mere tool in God's hand. One must therefore conclude that the passages apparently refuting free will cannot be interpreted literally.

Throughout his book, Erasmus presents and comments on important aspects from the debate between Augustine and Pelagius, and on some of its repercussions among the Scholastics, but not always with success. The field of Scholasticism and subtle dogmatic distinctions was not where Erasmus felt most at home.[87]

As for biblical stories seemingly refuting free will, e.g., the hardening of Pharaoh, Erasmus follows Origen, and says that even if the hardening was prompted by God, the guilt is Pharaoh's who did not repent.[88] To Erasmus, it is absurd to think that the righteous God has hardened a human heart. Accordingly, the Scripture must be interpreted to mean that God hardens those who reject his goodness and shows mercy toward those who repent.[89] Somehow the initiative rests with man. God's prescience is not the cause of man's actions.[90] When it is said that God loved Jacob and hated Esau, this cannot be interpreted literally.[91] The biblical expressions and metaphors about God's creative work in man should not be interpreted to exclude the human responsibility to repentance and obedience.[92]

Feeling his own cause strengthened in this way, Erasmus then embarks upon a refutation of the Scriptural passages Luther in *Assertio* quoted against free will.[93] This time quoting Jerome as his exegetical authority,[94] Erasmus doubts if Luther's interpretation of the biblical concept of "flesh" is correct. Erasmus maintains that it is unnecessarily biased to insist that man be flesh only. Man is also reason and many have striven for the good, even if they often have gone astray. To Luther, Jesus' saying in Jn 15:5: "Apart from me you can do nothing," shows that free will is nothing. Erasmus, however, contends that this is to attach too much importance to the word "nothing".[95]

In this way, Erasmus may be considered as emphasizing man's responsibility for improvement and salvation quite one-sidedly. One should be aware, however, that he does accentuate the mercy of God as well.[96] According,

e.g., to Erasmus' treatment of 1 Cor 15:10, God seems to be the origin of salvation. Erasmus quotes Paul's words: "By the grace of God I am what I am," and he underlines that this is the foundation.[97] The contribution of the human will is therefore dependent on God's help.[98] Erasmus quotes in Greek: "ἡ σὺν ἐμοί," i.e., the grace that is in me, and he maintains that it is only as endowed with this divine assistance that human will is not without effect.

The theology of *De libero arbitrio* might thus be described as an ellipse where free will is the one focal point and the mercy of God is the other.[99] As the argument constantly oscillates between the two, one might—as Luther indeed did—doubt whether it is quite consistent. There are expressions that seem to relate the work of God and man almost as Luther does. Erasmus is, however, always careful to emphasize that we must not let this lead us to the conclusion that man is nothing, and it is not difficult to find in *De libero arbitrio* passages that clearly indicate that eventually man has to take the initiative concerning his own salvation.

Concerning the interpretation of biblical metaphors and parables Erasmus maintains that one has to observe carefully the general intent of that particular passage.[100] For example regarding Mt 10:29 (the sparrows that do not fall to the earth without the Father) we in this way understand that here Jesus does not want to teach determinism, but God's care for his children.[101] To maintain an understanding of this loving care that does not exclude the importance and necessity of man's own contribution to his moral improvement, is the aim of Erasmus' discussion of free will in *De libero arbitrio*.

Erasmus concludes[102] that isolated Scriptural passages might lead to different standpoints. One has, however, to avoid the one-sidedness of some interpreters and try to seek a balanced conclusion.[103] In powerful, carefully written passages Erasmus highlights the contradictions of those who maintain that even the works of the saints are nothing but sin.[104] He repeats that commandments presuppose free will and the possibility of merits.[105] In addition, he particularly emphasizes that it makes God unrighteous and cruel when he punishes men for their lack of good deeds, if this finally is due to nothing but the fact that he has not worked these deeds in them.[106] To maintain both God's mercy and his righteousness, one must insist that man have some

sort of free will.[107] At the same time he underlines that grace alone is the beginning; only the rest is co-operation. He compares with the eye: In complete darkness it can see nothing, but when light (= grace) comes, the eye can decide for itself if and what to see.[108]

As the conclusion,[109] Erasmus warns those who think they find in this dialectical balancing some sort of ultimate truth, and repeats that he does not present his view as the final solution: "CONTULI, penes alios esto iudicium."[110] His goal is not to find the conclusion, but to stimulate the debate.

Erasmus' treatise is thus a well written and balanced study that comes close to the modern scholarly ideal of a fair presentation of the material without hasty conclusions. This is true at least if one does not expect too much in terms of logical consistency. Without always being precise in the details, Erasmus has a fairly good command of the problems he is discussing and of their background. He is definitely not without personal interest in the matter; both his strong dislike for Luther's view and his own trust in God's caring love for his children come clearly through. Still he is faithful toward his methodological ideals as he carefully avoids giving the definitive answer.

But there was one person who definitely was not impressed by this demonstration of learned dialectics, and that was the main target of its well-balanced criticism, the hothead himself Martin Luther. How did he shape his answer to this demonstration of style and erudition?

He shaped it as a thorough and explicit refutation of every single point in Erasmus' book. From Luther's point of view, Erasmus does not even try to solve the problem of free will; he just plays with it. Nevertheless, Erasmus' book touches several important subjects; and in order that none of them should escape him, Luther closely follows the arrangement of *De libero arbitrio*,[111] contradicting it on almost every possible occasion.[112] Allowing himself far more space in refuting Erasmus' views than Erasmus did in defending them, *De servo arbitrio*[113] is a book of about three times the size of *De libero arbitrio*.[114] Still it is quite easy to view the two books together, as they form a range of questions and answers in close dialogue.

For the present investigation, this is very important, as it confirms the observations in chapter one about the exegetical foundation of the debate. The

general framework of the debate is a very simple one. It is a discussion of biblical passages divided into two main groups: Passages apparently defending free will, and passages apparently refuting it.[115] This is Erasmus' arrangement, but Luther obviously accepts it as he allows his own answer to be shaped by exactly the same arrangement.[116] An appropriate evaluation of the debate between Erasmus and Luther, then, should clearly take into account that this is its point of departure and the way both the opponents structure their material.[117]

These exegetical treatises have an introduction where they discuss some important principles for an exegetical investigation. Erasmus states his doubt that true piety always is founded on definite conclusions, particularly regarding a question as difficult as that of free will. In addition, it is not unimportant that most of the approved teachers of the Church have ascribed at least some liberty to human will. Luther reacts strongly against all these presuppositions, and vehemently refutes them in his own introduction. True faith does not avoid definite statements. On the contrary, it delights in them.[118] Luther admits that there may be difficult questions in the Bible,[119] but there is nothing unclear in the Scripture as regards its main subject. As for the question of enslaved will, it definitely belongs to the realm of clear and necessary knowledge[120] that is to be propagated to every corner of the earth.[121] Without a proper understanding of the work of God one does not know God and cannot worship him.[122] Faith will know what is true, and in search of truth it will not go to human authorities, but searches God's own word.[123]

Whereas both Erasmus and Luther, then, seem to consider exegesis as a fundamental aspect of theological epistemology, there still are important differences in their view of the relevance of biblical exegesis. Erasmus defines the question of free will as belonging to the realm of civil questions where opinions are free. They may be more or less useful, but are not supposed to contain absolute truth. Accordingly, Erasmus maintains that the ideal of exegetical theology is that of inviting to an open discussion. From a rhetorical point of view *De libero arbitrio* thus is an example of the *genus deliberativum,* which is the genre for discussing what is honorable or useful.[124]

To Luther, however, this is to reduce theology to a play on words.[125] For him, the question of enslaved will belongs to the center of faith and theology in

a way that makes the question of usefulness quite irrelevant.[126] What is at stake is not the question of what is useful, but the question of what is **true.** The debate has, then, to Luther quite another *status* than it has to Erasmus. Luther's answer is conceived within the *genus iudiciale,* which, according to rhetorical tradition, treats the questions of necessity, truth and justice.[127] This immensely escalates the importance of the exegetical discussions.[128] According to Luther's understanding, these are not concerned with the useful or the possible, but with truth in an absolute sense of the word.[129]

Consequently, the combatants have obvious problems in communicating with each other. The reason is that they do not only hold different opinions; they disagree about the debate as such. For Erasmus, it is a debate about the usefulness of certain opinions about some biblical passages; for Luther, it is a debate about the center of Christian theology, a debate about eternal salvation and eternal condemnation. Thereby both of them are consistent enough to carry their own principles through to the last line. This is perhaps not an attitude that promotes dialogue. One might argue, however, that it still contributes to the importance and relevance of the debate. For both Erasmus and Luther, this is not only a debate about a theological question, it is a debate about exegetical, i.e., theological debate as such. Through their discussion of the biblical passages of free versus enslaved will, they will solve nothing less than the question of the identity of theology.[130] Which is the model that should generally be applied in theological and exegetical dispute? Is it the *genus deliberativum* of Erasmus or the *genus iudiciale* of Luther? Is theological, i.e., exegetical dispute primarily concerned with probability and usefulness, or with absolute truth? This is the fundamental question of this debate, which gives it a significance even beyond that of being one of the most important controversies of the Reformation.

Luther and Erasmus thus looked upon their controversy in markedly different ways. Traditionally, this difference has been interpreted as a difference between humanism and Reformation, and this view still has its followers.[131] It has, however, been challenged in modern research.[132] From a historical point of view, then, one should rather consider the debate between Erasmus and Luther as a debate within German humanism.[133] For both of them, rhetoric as advocated by the humanists was important as a guideline both for writing and

for exegesis and interpretation.[134] They differ, however, concerning the question of **how** the principles of rhetoric are to be employed. Whereas their exegetical tools are similar, they disagree about the relevance of exegesis.[135]

Both Luther and Erasmus, then, write for the same, theologically and literary interested general audience. The goal of both the opponents is to win the word-fight and to persuade the readers, and for both of them the presentation of the opponent's (lack of) moral and intellectual capacity is an important means to achieve this goal.[136] Luther's work is stocked with even more classical allusions and aphorisms than Erasmus',[137] and in powerful language and rhetorical force he is not at all inferior to his opponent. This is probably related to the fact that his quest for absoluteness gives him an argumentative and rhetorical advantage that he does not hesitate to make full use of. Over and again he mocks Erasmus *via media*, his careful weighing of evidence for and against and his arguing for a conclusion as far away from the extremes as possible, as inconsistent and illogical. Why do you discuss free will when you admit you do not know?[138] Why do you define free will as something that is able to lead man toward salvation, and still argue for the priority of the grace of God?[139] In this way, this is really a *"Wortkampf"*[140] in all meanings of the word: A fight about the power of the word fought through the power of the word. Thereby there might be reasons to suggest that the firmness of Luther's foundation after all lets him know and convey this power better than does his more cautious opponent.[141]

The reception of *De servo arbitrio* has always been somewhat ambivalent, and one might suggest that this be the story of the book that won the battle but lost the war.[142] In spite of its argumentative power and rhetorical force, Protestant theology has on the whole been reluctant toward at least parts of the argument of *De servo arbitrio*.[143] The great scholarly interest in this work might, however, be interpreted as revealing an awareness that it has something to say after all.[144]

This fascination of *De servo arbitrio*, rests, I think, to a large extent on its firmness. Here at last is a man who knows what is important and why it is, and dares to follow the consequences of this knowledge to the end. At the same time, this is not a narrow-minded book, and there is not a single trace of careful

conservatism in it. Luther is not afraid of delving into any problem that occurs to him, and he is not afraid of including any material in his argument. We therefore find, e.g., allusions both to his favorites among the classics, Quintilian[145] and Virgil,[146] and to peasants' wisdom of his own days.[147] But he never tries to save his argument by appealing to the authorities. From the first to the last page the argument in *De servo arbitrio* is based on the authentic experience of what a justified sinner reads in his Bible. Opening in this way for the originality of *De servo arbitrio*, one is lead to wonder whether its fascinating, unparalleled staunchness does not show that Luther somehow grasped a unity of method and purpose in theology that few, if any, have been able to revitalize.

The findings so far may be summed up like this. In *De servo arbitrio* Luther tries to solve the question of enslaved versus free will by insisting on the unconditional importance of biblical exegesis. Thereby this book is not primarily a discussion **about** the word of God, but it is a confession and a witness of its power. This confession Luther tries to establish as the methodological foundation of theology in conscious opposition to the different method of his opponent.

As already mentioned, Scripture is accepted by both opponents as the supreme judge of theological controversy. At the same time, there are obvious differences. To get a more precise knowledge of the opponents' understanding of the biblical foundation of theology must now be the immediate task of this investigation. By that the analysis will concentrate upon Luther's understanding of method and authority in theology in his introduction.[148] This will be followed by an investigation of the exegetical material divided according to the disposition of Erasmus and Luther. In this way, chapter four will treat the introduction, chapter five the scriptural passages Erasmus quotes to prove free will, and chapter six the passages he thinks might be interpreted to refute it. Finally, chapter seven discusses Erasmus' and Luther's understanding of the passages Luther in *Assertio* used to prove his refutation of free will, and the exegesis Luther adds in *De servo arbitrio* to further strengthen his standpoint. In this way, chapters five and six primarily present Luther's criticism of the exegesis of *De libero arbitrio* and the arguments he brings to support this

criticism, whereas his own view of enslaved will and its exegetical foundation above all are discussed in chapter seven.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE FOUNDATION OF THEOLOGY. THE CLARITY AND AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURE ACCORDING TO *DE SERVO ARBITRIO*

a) Skepticism, clarity and confession

Both Erasmus and Luther accept the Bible as the supreme judge in theological controversy. Still, their attitudes toward the Scripture are quite different.[149] The role and importance of the Scripture as the fundament of theology is therefore the first question that receives a detailed treatment in the debate between Erasmus and Luther.

According to Erasmus, the essentials of the Christian faith are quite simple. First of all, it will promote moral improvement.[150] In addition, the Scripture contains mysteries and riddles we should not and need not try to penetrate. They add nothing to our understanding of the basics, and if we try to enter too deeply into the secrets God has kept for himself, this can only lead to confusion and despair.[151] Accordingly, Erasmus wants to refrain from definite conclusions whenever the Scripture and the Church allow.[152] If we do enter this doubtful realm, however, we should keep an ample margin for doubt and debate as the only way to a partial and probable clarification of these difficult questions. He therefore criticizes Luther's strong inclination toward assertive conclusions as exaggerated and biased.

Luther immediately sets out to correct what he considers as severe errors.[153] A Christian will never guard his faith behind walls of ambiguity. On the contrary, he will delight in assertions and proclamations of his faith. If not, he is no Christian![154] Does not Paul require πληροφορία[155] of a Christian? Is not oral confession the foundation of salvation?[156] The attitude of skepticism is not Christian and should be kept away.[157] A firm confession is the basis of Christianity. Take it away, and you have taken away Christianity.[158]

Erasmus is particularly interested in demonstrating the impossibility of firm conclusions regarding free will. The question of *assertio*, then,

immediately leads to the center of the debate, and lets Luther expound without delay why assertion to him is a necessity in theology. To Luther assertion is closely related to confession, i.e., confession of faith in a strictly theological sense of the word.[159] This is the foundation of his argument, the basis on which he abounds in descriptions of the insufficiency of what he brands as the skepticism of Erasmus.[160]

Was Erasmus, then, really a skeptic, doubtful toward the question of religious truth? This question has received some interest among the scholars.[161] The answer, of course, depends on what is meant by the word "skeptic". If a skeptic is considered as a person who detaches himself from the quest for religious truth because he thinks it is meaningless, Erasmus is no skeptic.[162] His genuine interest in church life and his personal Christian piety is evident in much of his work including *De libero arbitrio*. This is, however, not what Luther means by calling Erasmus a skeptic. His intention is to compare what Erasmus says about assertions to what the New Testament, particularly Paul, says about the same question; and in that comparison, Erasmus undeniably emerges as a skeptic.[163] In Paul, there is absolutely no tendency to reserve a margin for doubt and discussion in matters of vital importance for Christian faith and confession, Luther argues. On the contrary, a firm confession is the way to salvation. A Christian should, according to Luther, not think differently, and if he does, he is a skeptic rather than a Christian.[164]

This immediately reveals important aspects of Luther's understanding of theology. The exegetical foundation of his way of thinking is obvious. His argument is from the outset based on what he can read in his Bible.[165] Here he has the adequate foundation for doctrinal judgement.[166] One might argue, however, that the passage referred above shows that the relation between exegesis and theology to Luther is even closer than what is suggested by the words foundation and superstructure. It is much more like one of identity. As far as I can see, Luther's ideal of theology as revealed in this passage, is what Peter describes in 1 Pet 4:11: If anyone speaks, he should speak **as the word of God**.[167] Luther's purpose in his own work as a minister and theologian, is no more and no less than this: To repeat the word of God in the Bible. Himself being a person upheld by the power of the word of God, he can do nothing but

reflecting and transmitting this power in his life and work.[168] Accordingly, there is no room for one's own judgment in essential matters. The only thing to do, and the only thing that matters, is to repeat the judgment of God as one can find it spelled out before one's eyes in the Bible.[169]

This is the reason Luther calls Erasmus a skeptic. As a Christian, he can do nothing but view the position of Erasmus within a biblical framework as long as the latter insists that his position be a theological one, i.e., a position that concerns essential questions of faith and life. The Holy Spirit is no skeptic, and he does not write in our hearts doubts and uncertain opinions, but the assertive foundation of faith and confession.[170] A Christian, then, has this attitude, and who has not, is not led by the Holy Spirit, but by his own skeptical spirit.

Is not this, however, a rather dangerous position that immediately is exposed to the danger of mixing one's own opinions with the teaching of the Bible?[171] Will not a position like Luther's always tend to end in the grave error of merely furnishing one's own attitude with the authority of God? Luther is not unaware of the problem,[172] and he is clear to point out that not every problem is to be treated the way he treats the skepticism of Erasmus. There are many useless and indifferent questions, where the attitude of a skeptic is not only preferable; it is simply required from a Christian.[173] If that is what Erasmus is thinking of, Luther has no objections. The words of Erasmus suggest, however, that the meaning is something different, as he seems to be including even the question of free will in his understanding of the non-essential.[174]

Luther has no problems accepting Erasmus' view that we do not know everything about God.[175] He contends, however, that we must distinguish between God and the Scripture of God, just as we distinguish between Creator and creation.[176] To say that the Scripture, then, is abstruse and obscure, is nothing but a doctrine created by impious sophists, or by Satan himself, so that nobody should read it.[177] Admittedly, many passages might be difficult to understand. The reason is, however, not the incomprehensibility of the contents, but the ignorance of the reader concerning grammar and vocabulary; and this philological insufficiency[178] does not impede an understanding of the subject matter of the Bible.[179] When the seal broke and Christ rose from the death,[180] the supreme mystery really was revealed: Incarnation, Trinity, atonement and the

eternal reign of Christ.[181] Therefore, the message is clear, even if passages are unclear.[182] This subject matter of the Scripture is the same in all passages.[183] Then it really does not matter that much if the description of it sometimes is unclear.[184] There still is an abundance of descriptions that are clear enough. These are not written to hide the mysteries, but in order that we should understand them, Luther says, and refers inter alia to Rom 15:4 and 2 Tim 3:16.[185]

This is to Luther the "primum principium"[186] of his theology, the foundation that proves everything else.[187] According to the philosophers, Luther argues, it is impossible to prove the "primum principium" itself. Due to Erasmus' inability to understand even the basics, however, he has to.[188] He therefore gives a quite elaborate proof also of this first principle.[189] This proof is nothing but biblical exegesis; it is a summary of some of the important biblical passages about the clarity and unambiguity of the word of God. If laws are to govern a people, they must be clear, Luther argues. This is the case with the law of God as well.[190] The word of God is called a light and a path.[191] When Christ and the apostles prove their teaching by referring to the Scriptures, does not this practice demonstrate the clarity of the Scripture?[192] Furthermore, Luther argues from the evidence of biblical clarity. What is unclear in the important biblical passages, like, e.g., "God created heaven and earth" or "The Word became man"?[193] And why should God give us the Scripture if it were ambiguous? Is there not enough of ambiguity beforehand?[194] Perhaps Erasmus would say that the Scripture is not totally unclear, only that some passages are. Luther's answer, however, would be that not a single part of it is unclear; it is all bright and clear like a lamp shining in a dark place.[195]

The event that removed all uncertainty concerning the message of the Bible, was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Consequently, the Scripture is an exposition of God's work in Jesus Christ.[196] The purpose of the Bible is to present a clear message about Christ as the risen Saviour. Questions that have nothing to do with this revelation are thus theologically uninteresting, and concerning such questions, Christians should always resort to a skeptical attitude.[197] In a theologically relevant question, however, the answer is clearly expressed and expounded in the Scripture, and a Christian will delight in a firm

and assertive conclusion as a confession of his faith in Jesus Christ as the risen Lord.

Clarity and confession are thus closely related notions within Luther's way of thinking. The goal and purpose of the biblical message is to awaken faith and confession[198] in those who read and listen. If a clear confession is absent where the message is expounded, something serious is wrong. To Luther, the Scripture is an actual, a present authority. It is not only a book on what took place in Israel long ago. It is a book that determines and judges the attitudes and actions of human beings here and now.[199] The confession of the authority of the Scripture is to Luther not a mere theological principle, discussed in a *prolegomenon* and then forgotten. It is the base of actual faith and present action.[200] If it is not, the confession of the faith in the authority of the Scripture (e.g., Erasmus') is an empty word.[201]

b) The significance of rhetoric

As was suggested by the presentation of the historical context of the debate between Luther and Erasmus, the renewal of classical rhetoric advocated by the German humanists was an important part of Luther's intellectual background. Can this help us toward a better understanding of Luther's view of the Scripture?

Rhetoric might be defined as a study of the rules of human communication for the purpose of giving guidelines for the speaker and writer who wants his message to be as impressive as possible. It is thus an accumulation of knowledge about how to persuade through speech.[202] As persuasive oratory naturally is stimulated in a society where there is a possibility for innovation and renewal, it is no wonder the Renaissance led to a revitalization of rhetoric.[203] In this revitalization, the ancient authors, primarily Cicero and Quintilian, were the main authorities. Luther undoubtedly was one of the authors of the time who most decidedly emphasized the power of the word to persuade and transform. The investigation of the relation of his theology to the teachings of rhetoric thus presents itself as a natural task.[204]

According to Quintilian, the essence of persuasion is that the orator should be able to present things absent with such extreme vividness that they seem actually to be before the very eyes of the audience.[205] By such illustration or evidence, the speaker seems not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene.[206] In this way, he can persuade his audience by stirring and controlling the emotions of his audience.[207] The condition is, however, that the speaker is dominated by the same emotion himself.[208]

This passage is on important points close to the description of *claritas Scripturae* in *De servo arbitrio*.[209] Both according to Quintilian and Luther, the vivid description brings the subject matter close at hand. The aim is not merely to give historical knowledge, but to transmit the actuality of the story, to exhibit its contents and paint it before the audience as something even more real and more important than "mere reality".[210] In this way, the emotion of the speaker is transmitted to his audience.[211] And the metaphor of the process for both authors is that of light, of illustration and illumination.[212] Illuminated by speech and literature, man might come to himself in a new way. Emotionally renewed by rhetorically transmitted reality, he is another being than he was before.[213] This is the goal of literature, and this is the goal of the Bible as well.[214]

Luther's understanding of the close relation between clarity and confession thus seems to be related to an appreciation of the rhetorical tradition about the persuasive power of the word.[215] Being well acquainted both with the literature and the literary theory of Roman antiquity,[216] Luther was very well aware of how literary texts have a capacity of transmitting reality and of renewing their readers in a radical sense of the word. He has then probably not seen the word of God as an exception to, but as a confirmation of this understanding of how literature has an inherent capacity of transforming and renewing people.[217] Clearly the Scripture is unique. This uniqueness, however, is a question of **what**, not of **how**.[218] The content of the Scripture, its message of Jesus Christ, is unique;[219] not the way it persuades and renews its readers through the clarity of its message.[220]

If Luther's criticism of the skepticism of Erasmus thus to a certain extent is based on an understanding of clarity and confession that resembles Quintilian's doctrine of illumination, it is based on an assumption that was

important to Erasmus as well.[221] His use of it is, however, characteristically different from Luther's.[222] In accordance with his understanding of justification as a constant process of mediation between human and divine,[223] Erasmus interpreted illumination to be a gradual and continuous process.[224] On the contrary, Luther understood it as a complete transformation;[225] through the divine illumination man is born anew.[226]

One might then argue that Luther's theology is philological and rhetorical in a far more radical sense of the word than is Erasmus'.[227] The insistence on moderation and mediation of the latter inevitably limits the power of the word.[228] His convictions are not put on trial; his carefully balanced methodology lets him interpret rhetorical persuasion as no more than allusion, modification and adjustment. In this way, Erasmus as a reader and scholar is limited by his own prejudice; he is not willing to be lead where has not beforehand made up his mind to go. The scope of theology and exegesis is thus according to Erasmus quite restricted. This Erasmus demonstrates by insisting that theological discourse is to be conducted according to *genus deliberativum*.

In comparison, Luther represents a radical openness, an unlimited willingness to be lead by the text, by the Scripture to where one did not want to go and did not intend to dwell.[229] The attitude of Luther as compared to Erasmus', is that of systematically putting one's own prejudices on trial to be renewed, transformed, guided by the text, by the Scripture, by Christ himself.[230] In this way, Luther represents a radical hermeneutical openness, an acceptance of the possibility of being persuaded, of being renewed to the bones through the meeting with the different, the unexpected, the unheard of.[231] Erasmus presents in *De libero arbitrio* a hermeneutic that avoids the invitation to openness and sticks to its skeptical prejudice, whereas Luther's unlimited openness represents a new possibility of conquering prejudice and accepting truth from outside.[232] A limited hermeneutics like that of *De libero arbitrio* will never proceed beyond revolving around itself, while an open one like Luther's might be led beyond horizons nobody knew.[233]

c) The spirit of understanding and the duality of clarity

According to Luther's grammatical and rhetorical hermeneutics, then, the goal of interpretation is to be led by the text, or, rather, by the presence of what the text transmits.[234] To be a Christian is to be led by the Scripture, i.e., by Christ,[235] and the fact that the Christian is led by the Scripture, is demonstrated by an affirmative confession. This seems to be the very essence of Luther's concept of understanding.

Luther emphasizes that to understand Scripture, one must have one's mind opened by Christ himself.[236] This is accomplished only through the living word of the Bible. If there is no such relation to the living Christ, one will not understand the Scripture. The biblical example of the latter phenomenon is that of the Jews, whose hearts are covered by a veil so they do not see the clarity and do not understand.[237] This does, however, not only pertain to the Jews. When a person does not see and accept the clear message of the Scripture, the reason is always that the human blindness is not (yet) conquered by the clarity of the Scripture.[238]

Luther's well-known distinction between the external and the internal clarity of the Scripture[239] is related to this concept of understanding. Luther maintains that to understand the word of God, one must have the Spirit of God, i.e., the *adfectus* of the speaker.[240] To have the Spirit of God is the condition for understanding the Scripture of God.[241] Without the Spirit, one will not believe in God and will not understand anything of his word even if one is able to quote it correctly.[242] Accordingly, the word of God must transmit the Spirit of God to its audience in order to be understood.[243] This verbally transmitted cognition of the heart is what Luther calls the internal clarity of the Scripture.

To understand the Scripture, to grasp what really is there—the clear message of the Bible—the veil of the heart must be taken away so that one can **see**.[244] The awareness of the rhetorical background gives a precise recognition of how this is accomplished. The purpose of the word of God in Luther's understanding is to determine life and faith of men by transmitting to them the *adfectus* of the heart of God, i.e., the Spirit of God.[245] Only then the word of God is a present, living authority governing the life and faith of men and women here and now. Where this is accomplished, there is understanding in the real

sense of the word. The listener is transformed by and is thereby able to grasp the living presence of the Spirit of God as conveyed by the words. Where this unity of clarity and confession is not achieved, the word of God—like any other word—falls apart in an apparently incoherent range of disparate statements, because the spirit of the speech is something alien.[246]

Understanding is thus not considered as only an intellectual process. On the contrary, understanding is a process that affects man as a totality. Understanding implies involvement; the person who understands is engaged in and engaged by the message.[247] To understand is to believe; not to understand is disbelief. Where there is understanding of the Bible in this sense of the word, there is internal clarity, i.e., the presence of the Spirit.

External clarity is the outward aspect of the work of the word: Its proclamation and exposition before the world. Thereby Luther's expectation is obviously that the wonder *might* happen that the veil is taken away and the blinded eyes are opened so that one can see.[248]

The concept of double clarity is thus the foundation of the exegetical work of Luther. The biblical scholar and experienced translator Martin Luther is quite aware of the problems related to biblical grammar and vocabulary.[249] It was his life work as a professor of biblical exegesis to try to penetrate philological obscurities.[250] As the biblical revelation always is transmitted in human words, this is a task of great theological significance. A biblical scholar should always try to shed new light upon the life and work of Jesus Christ by discovering the meaning of previously obscure biblical passages.[251]

It is important to be aware that according to Luther's way of thinking, the significance of this task is not diminished by the fact that there is no doubt concerning the subject matter both of the Scripture as a whole, and of every single passage. The message and spirit of the Scripture is one and the same; the same kingship of Christ, the same spiritual presence is conveyed and written into the heart of the reader by every passage. The purpose of exegesis, then, is not to discover this subject matter, the essence of the Bible. An exegete who does not know it and live it already, is a failure as an exegete![252] The purpose is to shed light on it from new perspectives so that it is kept alive within the Christian community and proclaimed to the unbelieving world.[253] To establish the

meaning of the biblical message, then, is not the end of exegesis.[254] On the contrary, understanding of, familiarity with, the state of being determined by the subject matter is the absolute precondition for sound exegesis.[255]

A rationalistic anthropology would then perhaps be satisfied by reading only one passage. Why bother about the others if the content anyhow is the same? Luther's biblical and rhetorical anthropology is, however, not rationalistic. Man does not necessarily grasp the truth by having it explained once. Probably he will not understand even after having it presented a thousand times. The only hope is then to expose him to the *ministerium verbi* many times and in many ways so the clear light of the Scripture might shine through the lid of his heart. This is the reason the exegete Luther cannot be satisfied as long as there are unclear passages, even if the subject matter is clearly exposed. Through the uncovering of the unclear passages, the same light comes through from a new perspective, through other words, similes and metaphors, and there is a new possibility of the darkened heart receiving illumination and understanding.

Having received the light of the word of God in this way, the Christian cannot but reflect it. In the same way as the clarity of the Scripture implies its actual presence as judge and authority, the understanding of the Christian implies his or her reflecting and conveying the illumination through word and deed. The presence of the Spirit cannot but make itself known.[256] This corresponds to the understanding of man as fundamentally determined by the rhetorically transmitted *adfectus*. Understanding is not only something intellectual. It comprises the entire personality and determines thought, word **and** deed. This rhetorically and missiologically oriented understanding of Christian existence corresponds to the saying of Jesus: The mouth speaks of the overflow of the heart.[257] Man necessarily will reveal his innermost mind through his way of living. How important, then, to have a firm foundation!

In Luther's understanding there is identity between the word of God and theology.[258] A Christian, a theologian should speak as the word of God. We can, however, now describe more precisely how Luther understands this identity. The rhetorically oriented distinction between *claritas externa* and *interna* implies that the word commits its character, its spirit, its *adfectus* to the reader

or listener, who is decisively influenced and determined by it both as regards faith and work.[259] The identity of theology and the word of God, then, is generated by the work of God in the Christian. Being exposed to the spirit of God in the word of God, he cannot—if there is understanding and communication at all—but reflect it and convey it in word and deed. This is the reason Luther criticizes the skepticism of Erasmus. As he is himself determined by the assertive spirit of the Bible, he has no choice; he has to confront such an attitude.

What, then, is the relation between the Scripture and other ecclesiastical authorities? How do we evaluate truth, and what is the epistemological foundation of Luther's understanding of truth? These are the next questions of the investigation.

d) The Scripture as judge—*claritas externa* as *ministerium verbi*

It is an important part of Erasmus' argument that Luther's doctrine of enslaved will is something *new*. With some minor exceptions the theological and exegetical authorities have maintained that man has free will, Erasmus says.[260]

Luther admits that one might be impressed by this argument; he was himself for a long time.[261] By the will of God, however, he attained another understanding.[262] Not all who seem to be holy are holy.[263] According to the judgement of love, Luther accepts their holiness, but not according to the judgement of faith.[264] The judgement of faith requires absolute certainty and therefore must be founded on a divine declaration.[265] Common opinion is not sufficient, because the truth is concealed. The church is hidden; the holy are unknown.[266]

How, then, are we to get certainty? How should we test the spirit?[267] Not by arguing with erudition, a holy life, intelligence or lack of intelligence, majority or minority.[268] Not by boasting of having the Spirit, which is the common misconception of the *Schwärmer* and the Romans.[269] Nevertheless, it is still possible. There are two ways of testing the spirit.[270] One is interior; it is a gift from the Holy Spirit to the Christian to enable him or her to judge all

things. This interior judgement is closely related to faith, and is the same as the interior clarity of the Scripture.[271] The interior judgement, however, does not benefit others. It belongs in the private,[272] and Luther does therefore not discuss it any further in this context.

Simultaneously, there is another, an external judgment, by which definite judgement is passed on spirits and doctrines for the sake of others.[273] This external judgement is particularly the responsibility of leaders and preachers of the word, by which they strengthen the weak and refute the opponents, and it corresponds to the external clarity of the Scripture.[274] Thus all spirits are to be tested by the judgement of the Scripture and in the presence of the church.[275] It is therefore above all necessary that one guards the doctrine of the clarity of the Scripture,[276] Luther says, and gives his long range of biblical examples of this clarity.[277]

This passage confirms the understanding of the distinction between interior and exterior clarity developed above. Interior clarity is the act of understanding that determines man in his totality. It is the presence of the Spirit that decides the quality of his life. As an entirely interior act, however, it belongs in the private. The inner experience cannot immediately be transferred to others, and it can definitely not be used to make decisions on behalf of others.[278]

This is, however, the task of Christian ministry, which is defined[279] as the external clarity of the Scripture. This definition, too, clearly shows the close relation between exegesis and life in Luther's thought. Not only is the act of understanding defined as the (interior) clarity of the **Scripture**; Christian ministry, too, is understood as the (exterior) clarity of the **Scripture**. To understand is to be determined in word and deed. To understand the Scripture is to live its message, to realize it and apply it in service for others and in judgement of the spirits. According to the interior clarity, the Scripture inscribes itself in the heart of man, determining his inner self, his *adfectus*. According to the exterior clarity, the Scripture inscribes itself in the acts of man,[280] revealing the guiding principle of his life to be no other than the Spirit of God.[281]

In this way, the presence of external clarity is the only and sufficient indication of the presence of the internal. If the exegete is illuminated by internal clarity, i.e., if he has the Spirit of the Scripture, this will be revealed in

a sound and natural exegesis. This exegesis will let the clear, original meaning of the words come through, without any obscuring additions or misinterpretations. On the contrary, if the exegete is alien to the spirit of the Bible, this will be revealed[282] through his inability to grasp the simple and accurate meaning of grammar and vocabulary in the Bible.[283]

Consequently, Luther develops his understanding of the exterior clarity as an exposition of the Scripture. As he maintains that the clarity of the Scripture by making itself known as clarity is the decisive element in the formation of man both concerning faith and life, this can be done in no other way. Biblical exegesis understood as total involvement is the source of life.

To impress itself upon the hearer or listener with irresistible clarity is a task particularly related to the ornate or metaphorical aspect of language.[284] Luther therefore focuses on the metaphors of the Scripture as a light when he tries to demonstrate and illuminate its clarity. He knows and he quotes a "dogmatical" statement like 2 Tim 3:16: The Scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, rebuking and correcting.[285] It is also an essential part of Luther's argument that the Bible really is clear as regards its dogmatical statements, and he can quote, e.g., Gen 1:1 and Jn 1:14 to demonstrate it.[286] To misunderstand these passages is impossible, and if somebody does, this only demonstrates the interpreter's lack of the Spirit, not the ambiguity of the Bible.

It is important, however, to be aware that this aspect of Luther's thought, which so often is developed as the essence of his doctrine of *claritas Scripturae*, is not its only aspect. In this context, he seems to be more interested in another perspective, as he abounds and rejoices in the biblical metaphors of light and illumination. In 2 Cor 3 and 4, Paul **gloriously** discusses the clarity of Moses and Christ, Luther says.[287] As a clear message, the Bible thus impresses itself on the reader and makes itself understood through the metaphorical descriptions of its own clarity. In this way, *claritas Scripturae* is not only a defence of the Bible's usefulness as a foundation of the dogma of the church. It is also an expression of Luther's admiration of the Bible as literature. Through the aptitude and impressiveness of its metaphors and similes, the Bible makes its message known as truth in the reader.

To Luther, *claritas Scripturae* is then not only a description of (or a metaphor of) contents. It is also a description of form, and even the form through which the Bible persuades and determines its reader: Its illuminating metaphors and similes, its "illustrations".[288]

Luther does not understand the Scripture as the only possible source of truth. When clarity is encountered, it should be appreciated no matter where it is. Concerning the illumination of man in a general sense of the word, any material might be valid.

The demand for clarity is, however, indispensable. The reason Luther can refer both to the law of God and to human laws in general as legitimate guidelines for human behavior, is that both are plain and clear. Only then they can be effectuated. Clarity, then, is something that is demanded by human understanding. Anything that is to impress and transform man, must have this rhetorical clarity. Truth must be able to make itself come true; i.e., it must impress itself on the human mind according to the rhetorical understanding of *illustratio* and *evidentia*.[289] In this way, truth will make itself known as clear truth.[290] If something is unclear, and this unclarity is real and not only due to the blindness of man, it is not truth, and should be dismissed. In this way one can know that if, e.g., the doctrine of free will somehow is unclear, it has nothing to do with Christianity.[291]

Because truth is clear, nobody can argue against it. This is generally true, and particularly important as regards Christian dogma.[292] The Scripture will make itself known as truth, as a lamp in darkness cannot but shine. The opponent's arguments will thus be refuted in a way that is commonly understandable. Refutation, however, is not persuasion, and the inability to resist does not imply that the adversaries necessarily will admit their fault or change their meaning. According to Mt 22:23ff., Jesus demonstrated the resurrection of the dead over against the opinion of the Sadducees. They had no argument against him; still, they did not change their mind.[293] According to Luther, the Scripture has many equivalent passages,[294] but the phenomenon is a modern one as well: Hus was burned even if he could demonstrate the invalidity of his opponents' arguments.[295]

One thus cannot compel people to believe in the truth. A man whose fundamental *adfectus* is not changed, will not give in to another opinion even if all his arguments are slain. The refutation of his arguments will only strengthen his stubbornness, as it adds prestige to the debate. One can, however, demonstrate that his arguments are invalid, and if he still talks, he speaks nothing but nonsense.[296]

This rhetorical and very, very practical anthropology Luther applies as his answer to the problem that puzzles Erasmus: Why do so many misunderstand if the Scripture is clear? The unanimous answer of the Bible, rhetoric, common experience and Luther is: It is not that easy. Man is not rational. He is not governed by argument. He is governed by emotions. As these emotions are the reflections of their respective origins, they might be named after this origin.[297] In a theological, i.e., an absolute perspective, the possible attitudes or *adfectus* are only two, that of God and that of Satan. Having the Spirit of God, man recognizes the truth of the light of the Scripture and acts accordingly. Having the spirit of Satan, man will not and cannot recognize even the clearest truth of the Bible, and cannot but use its spiritual and physical energy in trying to refute the evident. The result is the utter nonsense Luther discovers and describes in all opponents of clear truth including Erasmus of Rotterdam.[298]

The doctrine of free will is an example of a human attitude that disables its adherents from understanding anything about eternal salvation. It is therefore no surprise that the long range of Erasmus' authorities all have been blind. On the contrary, it corresponds exactly to what is described by the prophet in Isa 6:9: You hear and do not understand, you see and do not see. This demonstrates according to Luther the power of Satan over men.[299] In this battle, ingenuity and erudition do not help.[300] The Scripture is clear and defends truth in a way the opponents cannot resist. They who cannot see its clarity, but are blinded by it, demonstrate thus nothing but the power of Satan.[301]

In this way Luther combines an acceptance of the tradition of the church with a critical attitude toward actual doctrine. To him, evaluation of doctrine must necessarily be based on *claritas Scripturae externa* and is therefore nothing but *ministerium verbi divini*. If the words of a servant of Christ do not reflect *claritas Scripturae*, no Christian should listen to them. This does not

necessarily imply that Luther attacks the particular servant's status as a saved sinner. *Canone charitatis*[302] Luther accepts the saints. He will, however, not accept their judgment in doctrinal matters. Faith looks for firmness, and will therefore go no other place for its foundation than to the source of Christian clarity, the Bible.

This implies that the acceptance of ecclesiastical tradition is limited and qualified. The constant and significant characteristic of the church through the centuries is not the holiness of the saints, which according to *canon fidei* might have been or might not have been present. The continuity of the church rests solely in the constant presence of *claritas Scripturae*, which then becomes the guide of the evaluation of the former generations of Christians.

Biblical exegesis is thus to Luther not only the way to truth and light regarding the present situation; it is a necessary and central aspect of the approach to church history[303] as well.[304] The former theologians are primarily important as exegetes, and they are first and foremost to be evaluated as such. Their opinions have very little significance *per se*. What is important is if and how they can lead us to a deeper understanding of the Scripture. Very often they cannot, as they are themselves influenced by the darkness of this world rather than by Scriptural clarity. Sometimes, however, some of them can, and these are to be held in high esteem.[305]

Luther does not arrive at these conclusions through metaphysical speculations. On the contrary, his anthropology is practical and existential, and closely linked to his rhetorically oriented understanding of epistemology. Man is in his confrontation with truth fundamentally determined by his inner *adfectus*. Therefore, he will through this encounter necessarily reveal his inner self. If God, the creator of heaven and earth, through his word can transform this *adfectus* into being that of his own Spirit, man understands, and he or she is illuminated by the clarity of truth in such a way that it shines forth through word and deed. Then he can judge all spirits, and, through the *ministerium verbi*, even guide others and transmit to them the light of clarity. If the spirit of the heart is a different one, it is essentially that of Satan, the lord of darkness, and he or she will not understand and the speech will not be clear. It will, however, not be

recognized by others than those who themselves have the spirit of clarity and therefore can see.

A consequence of the reflections in this part of *De servo arbitrio* is that Luther's relation to traditional epistemological concepts becomes somewhat ambiguous. Clearly a concept like "objective truth" becomes problematic, as it overlooks the fundamentally affective determination of man.[306] This does, however, not lead Luther into subjectivity; the truth is one and given by God, and conveyed by and recognized through its clarity. They who have the Spirit of God will understand the truth of God,[307] which is the truth of man and the world as well. Nor does Luther withdraw to the quietness of inner spirituality; he insists that as the truth is one, it must be presented openly and in a commonly understandable way. Luther's epistemology, then, combines a very exclusive concept of cognition—the Spirit of God as precondition for understanding—with a radical openness of methodology.[308] Truth is one and it is clear, and must therefore manifest itself through open discourse. When this happens, it is a wonder accomplished by the Holy Spirit in the heart of man.

This happens through the *claritas externa*. Therefore, the *claritas externa* is **judge**. Through this judgement, the heart of man might be illuminated so that he can see and believe. The common witness of the church is that this has happened before. The goal of theology in its investigation and presentation of the biblical message is that it might happen again.

There is thus a combination of firmness and openness in Luther's argument that apparently is not always easy to grasp. There is absolutely no doubt what is the foundation and center of his argument. *Claritas Scripturae* is the message of Jesus Christ, the dead and risen one, the Saviour and Redeemer. This is the message of the Bible, which it presents with a vividness that makes it into a living reality for readers and listeners. At the same time, the scope and range of Luther's argument is virtually limitless. Describing the contents and form of the Bible, he simultaneously discusses and describes literature in general. Describing the biblical message as a revelation of truth, he simultaneously describes truth in general. Thereby the relevance of the message of Jesus Christ is put forth in an almost unparalleled, and strikingly forceful way. In Jesus Christ the revelation of God is limited to a certain time and a certain place in

history. This revelation is, however, if we are going to take it seriously as **the** revelation of God, to be interpreted as **the** truth about man and the world. It is **the** guide to meaning and existence in this world. As far as I can see, reflections like these are at the bottom of Luther's argument, thus giving it a quite original position within the history of theology.[309]

There can be no doubt that the theological foundation for this untroubled broadness of scope is to be found in Luther's faith in God. He who raised Christ from the dead and thereby made clear the meaning of the Bible, is no other than God who made everything in the beginning. The meaning of the Bible, then, is the meaning of the world. The clarity of the Scripture is the light of the world. As the source of clarity is one, clarity itself is one: The God-given meaning of the life and the world. And wherever there are truth and clarity, this is a reflection of this one God-given clarity, which shines from the empty grave of Christ as from no other place in the world.

It is therefore nothing but adequate that Luther gives the doctrines of rhetoric, which by no means is a specifically theological theory, such a central position within his theology. As a theory of (literary) clarity, its characteristics and effects, rhetoric is in itself a reflection of the clarity of truth. Thereby it seems as no other tool to be well suited to investigate and describe clarity as the path to truth, and to express the findings in a forceful and persuasive discourse.

This confirms the understanding of authority in theology developed above. Authority in theology is the Holy Scripture in its clarity and vividness as the manifestation of the light of Jesus Christ. Scripture brings Christ near as the living Lord in the church, and is thus the actual and living authority that nourishes and evaluates the present reality of life and faith in the church. Adhering to and expounding the external aspect of Scriptural clarity, a servant of Christ will thus be able to demonstrate clearly the futility and emptiness of its opponents.

The discussion of the foundation of theology in the introduction to *De servo arbitrio* is a comprehensive one. A long range of the questions of basis and method in theology are touched, and definitive answers are given. Very often, these answers implicitly or explicitly reveal the basics of an understanding of the relation between God and man as well. In this way, the introduction to *De*

servo arbitrio clearly anticipates what follows. It might be argued that what really matters, is all said; what follows, are comments and applications.[310]

This has, of course, certain implications also for the present investigation, which then cannot be expected to bring anything radically new beyond the material presented in this chapter. It will however, be of no small interest to examine how Luther applies the basics developed in this chapter to the various problems he encounters, and if and how he thereby repeats himself in different contexts. As such a repetition might be interpreted either as stubbornness or consistency, an evaluation of the relation between the introduction and main part of *De servo arbitrio* presents itself as an important question.

e) Summary.

A Christian should speak as the word of God. In this way, a Christian has an assertive confession of his faith and avoids skeptical detachment. The main content of the Bible is clear and lucid, and summons the reader and listener to adhere to its message through a strong and unambiguous confession.

Luther's emphasis on the close connection between clarity and confession, though basically founded on the biblical message itself, seems to be related to the Renaissance renewal of classical rhetoric. According to Quintilian, the orator should be able to present things absent with such a vividness that they seem to be before the eyes of the audience. This comes very close to Luther's understanding of *claritas Scripturae*, according to which the Scripture impresses its message on the reader through its clarity. According to Quintilian, ornate speech is important to achieve this goal, and even to Luther, *claritas Scripturae* comprises and is perhaps even primarily related to the metaphorical aspect of the biblical text.

This has some important consequences for our understanding of Luther's thought and its intellectual background, which for Luther, as well as for Erasmus, is that of German humanism. Luther's understanding of *claritas Scripturae* seems to be related to an understanding of *claritas literaturae*, and ultimately in his confidence in *claritas veritatis*. The theological foundation of

this faith in the universality of truth is the faith in God as Creator: The Father of Jesus Christ is the Lord of the universe. Methodologically this corresponds to his acceptance of a general theory like rhetoric as a part of the foundation of his theology.

Luther distinguishes between internal and external clarity. The internal clarity is the spirit of man's heart (*adfectus*) being in accordance with the external message, and is the condition of understanding. The lack of this inner clarity (=faith) is the reason Jews and disbelievers do not accept the message of Jesus Christ. The description of faith (=the presence of the Spirit in the believer) as *claritas **Scripturae** interna*, again points to the importance of the power of the word in Luther's thought. This aspect of clarity is, however, internal in the way that it is not immediately conveyable to others. The clarity of the biblical message is therefore transmitted through the external clarity, which is the Bible in its clarity as regards contents, grammar and vocabulary. To proclaim this aspect of clarity as the nourishment of faith and the judgment of disbelief and heresy, is the task of the *ministerium verbi divini*.

Being determined by an alien spirit, man will usually not accept the biblical message right away, even though it is presented with an unrefutable clarity. The external clarity is, however, man's only hope of being persuaded to accept truth, as it contains the possibility of leading man beyond his own limitation, illuminating him and conveying to him the Spirit of God as his new *adfectus*. Theology, then, is the task of presenting *claritas Scripturae externa* as **the** way to faith and salvation; it is basically nothing but biblical exegesis. The reason Luther writes *De servo arbitrio* is that he will demonstrate how a careful reading of the Bible relates the clarity of the biblical doctrine of predestination and enslaved will. To this exegesis, then, the investigation must now turn.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE EXEGESIS OF *DE SERVO ARBITRIO* I.
DOES THE SCRIPTURE TEACH FREE WILL?

a) The texts. The exegesis of Erasmus

Erasmus quotes and expounds a great number of biblical passages to show that the Bible does allow for a doctrine of free will. The following are the texts that Luther discusses.

"God made man from the beginning, and left him in the hand of his own counsel. He added his commandments and precepts. If you will observe the commandments and keep acceptable fidelity forever, they shall preserve you. He has set water and fire before you; stretch forth your hand for which you will. Before man is life and death, good and evil; that which he shall choose shall be given him." Sir 15:14-18.[311]

"The desire of sin shall be under you, and you shall have dominion over it." Gen 4:7.

"I have set before your face the way of life and death. Choose what is good! And if you keep God's commandments, you shall live and increase." Deut 30:15ff.

"If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land." Isa 1:19.

"If you will inquire, inquire, turn and come." Isa 21:12.

"Gather and come, turn to me, and you will be saved." Isa 45:20,22.

"If you return, I will restore you, and if you will separate what is precious from what is worthless, you shall be as my mouth." Jer 15:19.

"Return to me, says the Lord of Hosts, and I will return to you, says the Lord." Zech 1:3.[312]

"As I live, says the Lord, I desire not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn and live." Ezek 33:11.[313]

"The commandment I command you today, is not above you, neither is it far away. It is not in heaven, that you should say: 'Who can ascend for us in heaven and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But it is very close to

you, it is in your mouth and in your heart, in order that you should do it." Deut 30:11-14.[314]

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I would have gathered your children, and you would not!" Mt 23:27.[315]

"If you would enter into life, keep the commandments." Mt 19:17.[316]

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Lk 23:34.

"He gave them power to become children of God." Jn 1:12.

"Do you despise God's goodness, patience and forbearance? Do you not know that his kindness will lead you to repentance?" Rom 2:4.[317]

The quotation from Wisdom of Sirach is surprising, as this book does not belong in the Hebrew canon, but is only known from LXX and *Vulgata*. Erasmus is aware of the fact, but he does not consider it as particularly important.[318]

Erasmus quotes many passages, but his arguments are few and quite simple. His main argument is that the commandments and the conditional clauses as they are quoted above **presuppose** that man has a certain ability to carry out the actual commandment or condition. Accordingly, he is not only dependent on the saving work of God, but can contribute something himself.[319] Thereby Erasmus wants to save both the dignity of man and the dignity of God against the assault of Luther. If man is not somehow responsible for his own salvation, Erasmus argues, it would lead to the absurd consequence that God deplores the death of the sinner that he causes himself.[320] In the same way, the biblical doctrine of reward and merit presupposes active consent. If man cannot by himself to a certain extent obey the commandments, he cannot deserve eternal life.[321]

It is, however, only in the discussion based on Sir 15 where Erasmus more in detail expounds his anthropology. According to his exegesis, this passage teaches that Adam was created with an uncorrupted reason and an uncorrupted will. Thus equipped, he could both discern between good and evil, and, if he wanted, choose the good. Due to the fall, both will and reason are hurt in Eve.[322] In Adam reason[323] is obscured, but it is not extinct. Will,[324] however, is so depraved even in him that it by itself cannot improve, but must serve sin as it once chose. Due to the grace of God this lost liberty is restored. As to the

capacity of the restored will, opinions vary, Erasmus maintains. According to the Pelagians, it can reach eternal life without any further assistance.[325] According to the Orthodox, it can reach this goal supported by God's grace, which always aids the struggle of man.[326] Accordingly, the inclination to sin ("ad peccandum proclivitas") is by the grace of God not eliminated, but weakened, so that it can be overcome.[327] But also in those who lack the (particular) grace of God, reason and will have a certain power according to *lux nativa*, i.e., the natural cognition of God, Erasmus says.

In this way, Erasmus presents a number of opinions without really judging between them. He can accept different views,[328] even the view that human will cannot want to do good without *gratia pecularis*.[329] The opinion of Luther, however, that free will is an empty word, is impossible,[330] as the point of departure for Erasmus' deliberations is that there must be at least some sort of freedom for the human will. Even this modest objective, however, leads him into a complicated discussion of divine grace and human freedom. If both are somehow to be preserved, it is not easy to avoid the question of the relation between them. And concerning such a complex discussion, one might always raise the question if the solution really is clear and convincing. This is exactly what Luther does, and his answer is definitely negative.

b) The clarity of exegesis. Inference and simile

Luther's main arguments against the exegesis of Erasmus are as few and simple as Erasmus' arguments for it. First, Luther maintains that Erasmus' exegesis is never an exegesis of what the passage says. It is merely an exposition of what Erasmus **thinks** the particular passage **presupposes.** The commandments presuppose free will, Erasmus says;[331] but Luther never tires of reminding his opponent that exegesis that is to be taken seriously must relate what the text says, not what one thinks it says or thinks it should say.[332] Luther has a fixed expression to characterize this kind of exegesis. He calls it exegesis through inferences and similes. These are the aides of carnal reason;[333] they are the means by which it tries to cover its own inability to understand the Scripture.

The application of such dubious arguments is thus a clear indication that something serious is wrong.[334]

Luther's other main argument is that Erasmus constantly forgets that what he originally set out to do, was to prove nothing but a **limited** capacity for free will. Erasmus admits that free will cannot attain salvation entirely on its own. The implication, however, of his inferences and similes is always that it can.[335] If man can keep the commandments, then he can save himself; he does not need Christ and the Spirit.[336] This is, however, not the teaching of the Scripture, and it is not what Erasmus intended to prove, either.

Luther himself presents this as the essence of his argument. His refutation of Erasmus' Old Testament arguments for free will, he summarizes like this: Statements in imperative, subjunctive or optative can never describe what we **can** do, nor what we really **do**. They can only present what we **should do**.[337] Secondly, if Erasmus' inferences prove anything at all, then they do not only prove that free will has a limited capacity. They prove that it can do anything, even keep the commandments of God, without the assistance of the Spirit and the grace of God.[338] Erasmus concept of free will is thus nothing but a *contradictio manifestissima*.[339]

It is highly significant that Luther in a summary like this only applies exegetical concepts: The mood of the verbs, and the notions of inference and simile.[340] Luther's opinion is obviously that Erasmus puts something into the text that originally is not there. By losing contact with the simple and natural meaning of the words, he draws inferences that are untenable; and they show that they are by being contradictory even to the most elementary rules of grammar and vocabulary. Concerning similes, Luther does certainly not reject their presence in the Bible. His point is, however, that Erasmus **invents** similes; he gives the text a metaphorical quality where there is none. In this way he makes room for his own theological opinions. The consequence is that he confuses the natural meaning of the biblical text.

The foundation of Luther's argument is that to him, the simple and clear meaning[341] of the biblical text is[342] the truth. His fight for exegetical clarity is thus a fight against alien additions, which cannot but obscure the *claritas*. His discussion touches a number of subjects. In his summary, however, he mentions

none of these. Instead, he concentrates on exegetical concepts that highlight the shortcomings of Erasmus' work with the Scripture. The implication is obvious. To Luther, the clarity of the Scripture is all-important. The reader who trusts *claritas Scripturae* and fights *sequelae rationis*, will not go astray. A sound and philologically accurate biblical exegesis is to Luther the tree that cannot but produce good fruit.[343]

Repeatedly Luther in this way draws attention to the text in its simplicity over against the unclear complications of Erasmus' exegesis. Concerning Deut 30:11-14, Erasmus maintains that this passage says it is quite easy to keep the commandments.[344] Luther contends that if this is so, Christ and the Spirit are unnecessary; free will manages alone.[345] But this is not so. The words do not say anything about the quality or quantity of human power. They are nothing but a description of the distance between places.[346] Luther regrets that he has to explain something so obvious, but what can he do, he says, with those who look for darkness in such a clear light?[347] The real meaning of the passage from Deuteronomy is a quite simple one: The word of the law is close at hand. Accordingly, for those who do not keep it, there is no excuse.[348] This biblical passage does not teach some elaborate anthropological theory, as Erasmus presumes. Nothing prevents that the words keep their simple, natural meaning, as this fits both the context and the overall meaning of the biblical message. The commandments are close at hand; they are not difficult to know.

Luther's conclusion is clear: Erasmus lacks the *adfectus*, the spiritual congeniality that is necessary to write about serious matters. The teachers of rhetoric demand such congeniality from an advocate, and in theology it is even more necessary in order to obtain the required vigilance and prudence.[349] In this way Luther relates his criticism of Erasmus' exegesis to the distinction between external and internal clarity. According to Luther, Erasmus has no clear understanding of his subject; he expects to find something in the text that is not there. Thus, his exegesis naturally becomes forced and unclear. The reason is that he lacks the *adfectus* that is necessary to write about such matters.[350] He is thus never able to grasp the simple meaning of the words; he must always add something of his own.

The criticism of Erasmus thus confirms the understanding of Luther's concept of clarity as it was developed in chapter four. Only an interpreter whose *adfectus* has an adequate congeniality can present the subject matter with the sufficient clarity and *evidentia*, whereas the lack of such an *adfectus* is necessarily demonstrated by the inferiority of the interpretation.

One might again contend that Luther's argument does not do justice toward the inherent structure of Erasmus' own thought. More than giving a balanced and sensitive criticism, Luther merely smashes Erasmus concepts on the basis of his own. To a certain extent,[351] this criticism is valid. What it overlooks, however, is that Luther is after all not that interested in the opinions and thought structures of Erasmus. He is primarily concerned about something that is immensely more important, namely the truth about God and man. If Erasmus somehow can help him toward a better understanding of this truth, it is all good. If he cannot and perhaps only is an impediment on the way toward truth, he must be criticized so the truth can shine forth.

Thereby Luther's focal point is a rather pragmatic one, namely that of philology. That is, however, a focal point of a tremendous theological importance.[352] Because truth is only transmitted in human words, it is a matter of utmost importance that the power of the words is kept intact. They must be allowed to keep their clarity, which alone can enlighten man as regards the truth about his own situation.

Even more than in understanding his opponent, then, Luther is engaged in guarding the clarity of the key concepts. His main objection against Erasmus is that in the argument of *De libero arbitrio*, this clarity is helplessly lost. Therefore Luther repeatedly stresses the usual meaning of grammar and vocabulary over against what he considers as the forced exegesis of Erasmus.[353] Words and concepts have their own laws, which must be meticulously observed to let the words work with their own force.[354] To expose and defend these laws are Luther's zeal as a theologian and an exegete. Obviously, this is an example of how he understands *claritas Scripturae externa* to be the essence of *ministerium verbi divini.* To a Christian, then, there is nothing more important.

This indicates how Luther applies *claritas Scripturae* as the guideline of exegesis. The criterion of the interpreter's congeniality with the text is that the

words are allowed to keep their natural meaning,[355] and that they are interpreted according to the common rules for grammar and syntax.[356] His main goal is to fight the possible additions of inferences and similes, so that the clarity of the original and simple meaning of the words might shine forth unhindered. If the words, however, are not allowed to keep their natural meaning, it is a clear indication that the exegete governs the exegesis instead of the opposite, as his *adfectus* is a different one from that of the text.

This is Luther's basic view of the task of biblical exegesis. In order to defend this approach over against the different one of Erasmus he makes a number of distinctions and observations, and to these the investigation must now turn.

c) Clarity and canon

If the Bible is the supreme authority, one must of course ask: "What is the Bible?" In other words, the problem of canonicity becomes very important.[357] What is Luther's attitude to this question? Is there any relation between Luther's concept of clarity and his understanding of canon? His remarks about the canonicity of Wisdom of Sirach allow for a brief discussion of this question.

To find good proof texts for his view of free will, Erasmus even went beyond the limits of the Hebrew canon. The passage from the Wisdom of Sirach has a quite important place within his argument as a text that, according to Erasmus, clearly maintains a doctrine of free will. One might expect that Luther would reject this text both as uncanonical and heretical.[358] He accepts it, however, to avoid having to discuss canon in this context.[359] He is nevertheless quite critical toward it. One thing is that Erasmus' exegesis is unclear and self-contradictory. In this case, however, the Scriptural passage itself is ambiguous and can therefore not prove anything.[360] This does not hinder Luther in developing an exegesis of this passage that corresponds to other, and clearer passages, an exegesis to which I will return below. Luther does not, however, insist that his exegesis necessarily be correct. If my exegesis is clear, he says, you will understand that this passage does not teach free will.[361] If it is not clear,

this exegesis at least shows that this passage cannot be used as an argument **for** free will. It is perfectly possible to understand it as Luther does, and this understanding corresponds to the overall meaning of the Scripture.[362]

It is obviously no problem to Luther that the meaning of Sir 15 is unclear. Particular passages might be unclear without obscuring the message of the Bible. Moreover, the Wisdom of Sirach has a quite dubious position within the canon, and might as well be dismissed altogether. Nevertheless, Luther accepts it. The reason he does, is probably that he does not consider it essential to establish an exact list of which books belong to the biblical canon and which do not. He knows the message of the Bible as it is known from the central and undisputed books. The exact number of books used to express this message is, however, relatively unimportant.[363] His attitude toward Sir, then, seems to be: Well, if you want, let us read the Wisdom of Sirach as a canonical book and see what we get. It might be read otherwise, and that is perhaps better. Let us, however, put that aside for a while and tentatively accept its canonicity.

The interesting thing is, however, that the acceptance of the book as canonical immediately establishes the goal of the exegesis, which is to discover and expound the clarity of the actual passage. One would perhaps think that there was no such clarity. To Luther, Sir 15 has no immediate clear meaning. If the passage can be accepted as canonical, however, it must some way or another be able to relate the clear message of the Bible. Canon and clarity necessarily belong together. The essence of canon is to expound the message of Jesus Christ, and concerning this message there is no room for doubt or obscurity. As the message of Jesus Christ, canon is clear, and the task of the exegete is to discover, expound and thereby be transformed by this clarity.[364]

The point is not that the exegete should be able to bring his understanding of clarity into the passage in order to prove that it belongs to canon after all. On the contrary, the (tentative) acceptance of the passage as canonical tells the exegete what to look for in the text: The biblical message of Christ in its clarity and integrity. The concept of canon is therefore to Luther exegetically highly significant. A canonical passage, i.e., the word of God, necessarily carries a clear message, and if it does not, the reason may be one of two. The book that contains this passage should not have been accepted as canonical; or the

exegesis is unclear due to the interpreter's lack of understanding of grammar and/or vocabulary.

What is at stake both here and in Luther's famous discussions of the canonicity of James, Jude, Hebrews and Revelation,[365] is the canonicity of books, not of particular passages within books.[366] Luther's remarks are not "criticism of Scripture";[367] they are criticism of canon.[368] Luther does not distinguish "the word of God . . . from the canon"[369]; he discerns what is the word of God (=the canon). It is therefore not correct to say that the gospel "is given in the Holy Scripture *insofar as* both Old and New Testaments 'preach Christ' [Christum treiben]"[370], or that "Luther would not call any passage of the Bible the word of God".[371] A canonical book **necessarily** preaches Christ and is therefore the word of God; if not, it is not canonical.

Luther is not quite sure if he succeeds in his canonical exegesis of Sir 15. If this is clear, he says, you might accept my exegesis.[372] The implication is evident: If you don't think it is clear, it really doesn't matter much. There is an abundance of passages explaining these matters to the heart's content. If a canonical interpretation of Sir does not succeed, then, it does not prove the freedom of the will, as Erasmus suggests; it merely proves that this book is not canonical after all.

Canon is thus to Luther an exegetical concept more than it is a definition of the canonical books, at least as far as its treatment in *De servo arbitrio* is concerned.[373] The concept of canon says that this particular book is supposed to contain a clear and convincing message about Jesus Christ. Canon is *claritas Scripturae* as the guideline of actual exegesis. Canon is the Bible as it convinces its reader about the evident relevance of the message of Jesus Christ. Which books belong to the canon, however, will to a certain extent remain an open question.

Interpreting Luther's view of canon within a wider epistemological perspective, it indicates that to Luther, the question of fact[374] is always closely related to the question of meaning; it has no independent significance.[375] The foundation for this close relationship is Luther's emphasis on the impressiveness of truth. According to Luther, truth thrusts itself upon the reader with the illuminating force of a convincing discourse. There is thus no such thing as a

"mere fact" within his epistemology, just as there is no indifferent truth. Anything that does not have the illuminating force of irresistible clarity, is thus not true, or, as far as biblical books are concerned, not canonical.

In this way, truth is necessarily related to an audience; it is truth for somebody or something more than a mere description of somebody or something.[376] It implies the ability to convince, to make itself recognized as truth. If it cannot make itself known as truth, it should be dismissed; it is not truth, but something uninteresting that might as well be dispersed with.[377] This is the reason canon as the illuminating truth about God and man is more important to Luther than canon as a list of canonical books.

Even concerning canon, then, Luther's thinking is essentially shaped by his understanding of *claritas Scripturae.*

d) The word of God and the freedom of man

To Erasmus, human existence implies the ability to follow the commandments. When it is said in Sir 15 that "God left him [Adam] in the hand of his own counsel," this proves to Erasmus that God has given man freedom in this sense of the word. This is the reason Erasmus can use the commandments as descriptions of the abilities of man.

Luther attacks this understanding of freedom. Thereby Luther interprets the passage from Sir 15 in the light of Gen 1:26, which says that man is made the lord of the created world and governs the other creatures according to his own will.[378] By "adding his commandments," however, God took away a part of man's dominion, and decided that he should not be free.[379] The passage from Sir then teaches that man belongs to two kingdoms, Luther concludes. In one kingdom, i.e., in his dominion over against the inferior creatures, man governs by itself independent of God's commandments.[380] Here man is "left in the hand of his own counsel." The meaning is not that God is absent,[381] as such an idea would clearly contradict Luther's theology of creation. In this realm, however, man can decide according to his own judgment. He is independent of divine precepts and regulations.[382] In the other kingdom, however, man is not to govern

by himself; on the contrary, he should walk according to the commandments of God.[383] This is the meaning when Sir says, "He added his commandments and precepts."[384]

Luther's understanding is thus exactly the opposite of Erasmus'. To Luther, freedom and commandment exclude each other. When God gives his commandments, he takes away man's freedom.[385] Accordingly, man is free only where there are no commandments. He is free only when he can follow his own counsel without interference.[386]

The foundation of Luther's criticism of Erasmus' concept of freedom is thus his view of the power of the word, *in casu* the word of God as related in Gen 1 and Sir 15. Words define reality; the word of God to man in creation determines the essence of man's existence. Freedom thus presupposes the absence of any divine decree. Man is only free in his relation to God if there is no divine ruling that pertains to his situation. This is, however, according to *De servo arbitrio* the case regarding human development within a secular sphere.[387]

Related to the understanding of freedom is the understanding of the human will. Freedom implies to Erasmus the ability to follow the commandments. Accordingly, he understands human will as the capacity to choose.[388] The will of man **is** his freedom. Erasmus therefore must protest against Luther's doctrine that everything happens by necessity. Man must have some freedom also in his relation to God.

According to Luther, however, there is no such freedom. What defines man's relation to God is the word of God, not the will of man. Luther emphasizes the creative power of the word of God in a way that leads to the conclusion that our salvation depends on God's work alone.[389] What we do when God does not work in us, is then **necessarily** evil.[390] The reason is not that we are compelled to do what is evil. Necessity is not coercion; man performs his evil work willingly and consciously.[391] The main point is, however, that man cannot change his own will without a word from God. And even when it is confronted by divine instruction, it is not necessarily changed, but may be only strengthened in its original purpose.[392] The human will is thus enslaved indeed, as it cannot change itself even if its evil inclination is met with God's own

commandments.[393] This is the essence of Luther's view of necessity that so enraged Erasmus.[394]

A consequence of Erasmus' understanding of human will as the capacity to choose, is that he must distinguish between will and the act of willing. Before embarking on the project of willing anything, the human will must decide for itself what is desirable and what is not. Luther finds such a distinction utterly strange, as it is contrary both to a reasonable view of the determining powers of human existence, and to the common usage of speech.[395] According to Luther, it is again Erasmus' inability to see the essentials that leads him astray, and fools him to postulate something as unnatural as the existence of an absolute will detached from the act of willing. This is something that Luther's sense for sound language cannot at all accept.[396] It is much more natural, he argues, to understand human will simply as the act of willing. In the act of willing, however, man is never free. He is determined by the decision of his will, and this decision is rooted deep in his *adfectus*.[397] By quite naturally focusing on will as the act of willing in this way, Luther immediately can relate man in his activity to his rhetorically determined *adfectus*.

To understand freedom as the ability to choose implies that man has the capacity of changing his *adfectus* by himself. To Luther, however, this is essentially the same as lifting oneself by the head. For his own part, he understands freedom rather as the unrestricted evolvement of *adfectus*. This is only obtained, however, in the absence of any commandment, advice, guidance, etc. Freedom in the absolute sense of the word, therefore, belongs to God alone; he alone can determine others through his word without being determined himself.[398] In a more limited sense, however, it might be ascribed to man within the sphere where the word of God explicitly has given him dominion, i.e., where the commandment is absent. To speak about free will as regards eternal salvation, however, is to Luther utter nonsense, as it implies that the unrestricted evolvement of the human self somehow would end up by doing what is good in the absolute sense of the word. This is a notion that is so alien to Luther's thought that he simply cannot take it seriously.

That man cannot place himself in a position that would lead him to salvation, is underlined also in Luther's refutation of Erasmus' understanding of

Jn 1:12. To Erasmus, the expression "power to become children of God" implies free will. Luther, however, underlines that it does not describe what man is doing. It describes man as he becomes God's child; and in this becoming, man is passive.[399] Free will could not even know about faith in the name of Jesus Christ. Still less it could believe.[400] Reason will never accept the gospel. How, then, could it possibly believe it?[401]

To Luther, then, free will must, to be a valid way to salvation, be able—not only to receive—but to formulate the gospel of Jesus Christ independently of the revelation of it. If man shall save himself, he must know the way to salvation by himself. But he doesn't. There is not a single evidence to show that man has been able to realize what was the divine plan for salvation without being told about it. If the telling of the story of Jesus Christ, however, is the necessary precondition for faith in Jesus Christ, then the rhetorical experience of persuasion and renewal is reconfirmed as the relevant approach to a biblical understanding of faith and salvation. Man cannot do it; the preached gospel of Jesus Christ can. Both Scripture and experience confirm that as regards eternal salvation, human freedom can accomplish nothing but a series of mistakes. The only hope, then, is in the power of the word of God.

e) Indicative, imperative and conditional clauses. The distinction between law and gospel

Luther's insistence on *claritas Scripturae* leads him to a persistent search for what the text really says. This is quite evident in his incessant arguing against Erasmus' understanding that the biblical commandments and conditional clauses presuppose that they can be fulfilled. To Luther, a commandment or a conditional clause express a commandment or a condition and nothing more. They do not necessarily imply reality. You must read the text; you must distinguish between indicative and imperative, he demands of his opponent. It is only the indicative mood that tells us what exists. Imperative tells us what **should** be.[402] He admits that in Hebrew, future indicative[403] is often used instead of imperative, e.g., in the ten commandments. The meaning is, however, still to

express imperative; if not, the commandment is turned into a promise: You will not do wrong.[404] One might gather all the imperatives in the concordance; still, it would only tell us what man **should** do, not what he **can** do.[405]

Even regarding the New Testament passages, Luther does not accept Erasmus' argument that conditional clauses necessarily imply that they can be fulfilled. He also gives examples from everyday language that this is not always the case. One could say, "If you would compare yourself to David, you must make Psalms like his,"[406] and you may still be unable to do this. The implication is again that Erasmus' stressing of something as unnatural as a doctrine of free will, makes him unable to grasp even the most everyday observations of how language really works.[407] Luther's emphasis on *claritas,* however, makes such observations very fundamental to his approach.

To strengthen his argument, Erasmus contends that it would be ridiculous to say to a man whose right arm was tied that he should put out his hand on the right.[408] Luther, however, gives an example of something even more ridiculous: A man with both arms tied who does not know it, but declares that he can freely reach out to either side. If he then was asked to do so, would it not thereby be clear how invalid his declarations of liberty really were?[409] This is, however, exactly what the commandments of God are all about. They tell us what we should do. But we cannot. Perhaps, then, the commandments would make us understand that we cannot? At least that is the purpose of the biblical commandments. They will tell man what he cannot do; they will illuminate him so he might understand that he has no light in himself.[410] This illumination is, according to Luther's understanding of Paul, the **only** task of the law. The law is not supposed to be able to abolish sin as Erasmus presupposes. It should only help man toward an understanding of his real situation.[411]

According to the Diatribe, Luther says, man can do what he is asked to do, or at least he knows that he cannot.[412] There is, however, no such man. According to the Scripture, man is bound and captive; and due to the activity of Satan, he is in addition blind for the reality of his situation and thinks he is free.[413] Satan by all means wants to retain this blindness, because God always will deliver those who acknowledge their own misery. But Moses and all

lawgivers fight him. They prepare for salvation by conveying to man the proper understanding of himself.[414]

As was explained above, man is not free as far as the commandments of God are concerned. He is essentially determined by his relation to the two main powers of the universe, God and Satan.[415] The situation of man is essentially a condition of powerlessness and inability: He cannot do what the law demands. Being fundamentally determined by a relation to Satan, he is additionally characterized by blindness and ignorance concerning his own situation. He thinks he is free and interprets reality according to this belief, even if it has nothing to do with reality at all. This is something the very argument of Erasmus clearly confirms. The task of illumination, of revealing to the blind man the reality of his own situation, is here, as elsewhere in *De servo arbitrio*, the task of the Holy Scripture. In this connection, Luther particularly focuses on the role of the law. The law can teach man about himself as the necessary precondition for renewal. The law cannot, however, accomplish the renewal.[416]

Luther further develops his observations of the word of God when he criticizes Erasmus' inability to distinguish between law and gospel.[417] Many of the words Erasmus quotes to prove that man to a certain extent can do what the law demands, are not law at all, they are promises of God's salvation.[418] In this connection, too, Erasmus lacks the ability to see what the text really says. Particularly concerning Zech 1:3: "Return to me, says the Lord of Hosts, and I will return to you, says the Lord," Luther argues against Erasmus' confusing exegesis.[419] According to Erasmus, "return to me" describes the required struggle of the human will, the struggle which in the end will be met by grace.[420] Ironically Luther asks if the parallel "I will return to you" then describes God's struggle to return, that there might be some grace for him, too.[421] But "return!" interpreted as a word of the law, does not only demand an effort and a struggle of the free will, it demands a total renewal of the life.[422] To fulfil it, one must keep all the commandments. As a word of the gospel—"I will return to you"—it does not demand anything. It is a divine word of consolation and promise that gives the grace of God.[423]

Luther's criticism of Erasmus' understanding of Ezek 33:11 is quite similar. Luther particularly attacks Erasmus' interpretation that "he should turn

and live" implies that man by free will can turn and live.[424] Then he criticizes that Erasmus makes this word, which is a word of gospel and a promise of God, into a word of law.[425] It is as if it said: I will that the sinner shall turn from his sin and thereby live. That is, however, not what the text says. This is a promise, which says the same as Mt 11:28: "Come unto me, all you who labor, and I will give you rest," and Ex 20:6: "I show mercy to many thousands, to those who love me."[426] As such, this word from Ezekiel is not a proof of the free will; it is a counterevidence.[427]

Luther has two arguments to show that free will is excluded by this word. God does not in this word say that he wants the sinner to stop sinning; he promises that he will not let the sinner die, i.e., he takes away the punishment for sin.[428] This word will then only come to those who know their sin and despair about it.[429] In this way, the promise of the gospel presupposes that man is a sinner and that he cannot improve himself. If this is not the case, the word of the gospel is meaningless as a promise of salvation. If man does not understand that he is a sinner, punishment can not be taken away, and he cannot turn and live.

In addition, Luther has what might be called an economical argument. If God in his care for the sinner gives his promise of grace, then it must be necessary to do it just in this way. God does not promise the salvation of the sinner because he likes talkativeness. He promises salvation because it is not possible for man to be saved in any other way.[430] They who are afflicted and fear death have no other hope of salvation than the promise of God.[431] The meaning of the word "I desire not the death of the sinner" is to preach and present the mercy of God to these people.

Again it is clearly visible how the hinge of Luther's argument is to guard and express the power of the word by focusing on the exact meaning. Every word in the expression "I desire not the death of the sinner" must be allowed to keep its full force, its full value. The point of Luther's argument is that this grammatically is a description of the will of God. It does not say anything about a contribution from man. What God will, is that the **sinner** should not die. Accordingly, this word only pertains to those who despair of themselves, who

know they are sinners and deeply distrust free will. To these people, God promises salvation.

Because this is the word of **God**, it cannot be compared to or replaced by any other word. It can only keep its full force if it is recognized as unique. God does not fool around and utter empty words. When he says that **he** will and **he** can save man, then the only possible conclusion, the only interpretation that takes his words seriously, is to admit that salvation is nowhere else.

The common feature of law and gospel is that both of them transmit clarity and illumination; both of them describe and define reality. Apart from that, however, they work in entirely different ways. The law works in the negative: By demanding the impossible, it brings man to understand his hopeless situation before God. This is according to *De servo arbitrio* the **only** task of the law.[432] It cannot and shall not teach man how to live.

Over against this negative description and determination of man, the gospel works in the positive: Through the expression of the promises of God, these promises are a living reality for those who believe and understand. In this way, the gospel gives what it depicts. Again, the rhetorical aspect of Luther's theology, i.e., his high evaluation of the power of the word, is very clearly visible. Through the gospel, man lives by the promises of God. This is the very center of his theology.

As compared to the gospel, the law is powerless. It cannot give man a new *adfectus*; it can only transmit cognition.[433] The distinction between law and gospel is in Luther's understanding probably linked to how he evaluates the difference in rhetorical capacity between the imperative and the indicative. The illuminating description, which brings the distant near and impresses it on the heart of the reader and listener, thereby bringing him or her a new *adfectus*, must necessarily be in the indicative mood. A description, a story in imperative is unthinkable. Whereas indicative brings news from outside to man's inner self, and thereby the possibility of renewal, imperative lets man focus on himself: You shall do! In this way, man might learn to know himself, which is no little thing indeed. To know one's limitation is the precondition for renewal. Renewal itself, however, must come from outside, and the indicative mood is the only way of conveying it.

By blurring this distinction, Erasmus shows that he is unaware of the fact that renewal is absolutely necessary if man shall fulfil the commandments of God, i.e., do the work of God. Erasmus' understanding of the imperative as a way to the **fulfillment** of the law, implies according to Luther's criticism of it, that man as he is in himself can perform what essentially belongs to God. To Luther, this is utter nonsense. He does not doubt that man really can perform the deeds of the law as God demands. To do this, however, man must have the *adfectus* of God as it is transmitted by the overpowering word of the gospel.

f) Exhortation, merit and rhetoric

One of the reasons Erasmus attacked Luther, was that he felt the latter was uninterested in moral improvement.[434] Is that true? Does Luther's insistence on the importance of the word of God imply that ethics to him eventually is something uninteresting?

In his discussion of conditional clauses in New Testament, Luther accepts that it might be called ridiculous to put forth such conditional clauses if they never were meant for realization. They **are** meant for realization, but not by us. The conditional clauses, then, have a double significance: Both to show that free will is powerless, and to indicate what might be realized by another power, namely, the power of God.[435] Accordingly, the conditional clauses points to a doctrine of predestination, Luther says, and renders them like this: If God gave you the power to keep the commandments, you would enter into life.[436] If he worked in you with his Spirit, you would do what is good and inherit the kingdom. This understanding unites both aspects of the commandments. We can do nothing. If we, however, accomplish anything that is to be called good in the absolute, biblical sense of the word, this is nothing but God's work in us.[437]

Luther further develops this as he adds a discussion of the meaning of New Testament exhortations. Erasmus maintains that they presuppose free will. Thereby Luther contends that his opponent understands nothing, as he cannot even distinguish between the Old and the New Testament, and thinks that none

of them contains anything but rules of polite conduct.[438] Whereas the Old Testament, however, contains laws and warnings, New Testament preaches the gospel, which is a word that offers the Spirit and forgiveness of sins by grace and the mercy of God alone.[439] Then follow the exhortations, to stir up those who are justified that they may be dedicated and thus bear the fruits of justice and the Spirit: The works of love and the carrying of the cross.[440]

God works in man through his word. This is the fundamental doctrine of *De servo arbitrio*, and it has so far been developed in two ways. Through the word of the law, God condemns man and shows that he can do nothing of what the law demands. But to those whose hearts in this way are illuminated by the activity of the word, the gospel offers forgiveness and renewal. Thereby they receive the Spirit, which is the *claritas Scripturae interna*, as their new *adfectus*; they can now see and understand God in his word. To understand is, however, to live what you understand. A new *adfectus* necessarily implies a new life, a new activity. In the present passage, Luther explains how this comes true. The working tool is still nothing but the word of God, or, to be more precise, the exhortations in the New Testament. Through these, God **stirs up** (excitere) the spirits of the justified so that they may be **dedicated** (strenuus) in living the new life. In this way, God is not only the origin of the new life; he is its preserver as well.[441]

The affective aspect of these words is clearly visible. The new life is not dependent on a mere transmission of new knowledge. It is dependent on God's constant activity through his word, whereby he stirs the emotions of the justified, who in this way realize their renewal of *adfectus* as good works. The fundamental renewal accomplished through the gospel is the precondition for this daily renewal through the exhortations. But the gospel and the exhortations are alike as far as they both primarily address the emotional aspect of man as the place where God accomplishes his work. Thus the exhortations, too, are instruments for the working power of God in man. They do not imply free will; they do not imply anything but the fundamental biblical principle that God works through his word.

This emotional and affective aspect Luther misses in Erasmus' rational understanding of the Scripture. Accordingly, the Scripture as Erasmus

understands it, cannot convey the work of God; it can only convey the outward manners of politeness. It has no capacity of renewing man fundamentally. Erasmus' view of the Scripture, then, is rational not only as it is compared to a spiritual view. It is rational also as compared to an emotional or affective view.

The word of God renews the inner man and is thus the necessary precondition for good works. This reminds of the rhetorical understanding that a new *adfectus* necessarily must come from outside. Nobody can give himself a new fundament of life. If the new life is to be established and realized, it must come from outside, from God himself in his word; man can do nothing about it. If God himself supplies the fulfillment, the conditional clauses of the New Testament (the exhortations) will be fulfilled. If he will not, they can do nothing but show the weakness of man.

Luther's understanding of exhortations, then, means that his rhetorically interpreted doctrine of election is the foundation not only of theology in a limited sense of the word; it is the foundation of ethics as well. Good works are by Luther understood as a fruit of God's creative activity, whereby he accomplishes the renewal of man's *adfectus*, which cannot but result in good works. Erasmus' argument that predestination excludes ethics,[442] is turned upside down: It is only within the sphere of divine election that good works are accomplished.

At the same time, this rhetorical aspect also of the doctrine of predestination allows us to define the "how" of predestination as far as it is possible within the framework of Luther's thought. Also as he decides the eternal destiny of man through his predestining activity, God works through his word, which is the only means by which God realizes election to salvation over against individual men and women.

In addition, this refutes the argument that Luther's doctrine of predestination eventually nullifies his doctrine of the Scripture.[443] On the contrary, the two presuppose each other also in the way that it is the preached word that is the realization of predestination.[444] The fulfillment of predestination is the renewal of man's *adfectus* brought about by the word of God. At the same time, predestination is the precondition that the preached word comes true in this way;

predestination is the condition both for the acceptance of the gospel and the realization of the exhortations.

Why has God in this way committed himself to rhetoric and philology? Why does he work so exclusively through his word? In his subsequent discussion of merit, Luther also touches this question.

According to Erasmus, free will is presupposed also where the Bible speaks of merit. A reward presupposes active consent. Luther does not agree. Essentially, a promise of merit is a conditional clause: If you do this or that, you will have so and so. This does, however, not prove that you **can** do it. All the competitors run for the prize, and for all of them it is true that if they win, they will have the prize. But not all of them will actually receive it.[445]

Luther distinguishes between merit as a matter of worthiness and as a matter of consequence.[446] As far as worthiness is concerned, there is no merit. Free will can not do what is good, and does not deserve any reward.[447] Concerning consequence, however, nothing is without merit. Hell and punishment are necessary consequences for the godless, just as the kingdom of God is prepared for the pious. Worthiness, however, is utterly excluded. The pious do not perform good works for the sake of obtaining the kingdom through worthiness. They seek only the will of God and would do so even if there were neither hell nor heaven. In the same way, they do not deserve the kingdom through their works. On the contrary, the kingdom was prepared for them before the creation of the world (Mt 25:34) so that it could rather be said that the kingdom deserves the children. In this way, Scripture always speaks of merit as consequence.[448]

Any deed has its consequences. This is the key point in Luther's interpretation of merit. In this way he can combine the concept of merit with the fundamental understanding that good works are performed because they are good, not to achieve anything. Luther clearly realizes that merit understood as worthiness simply destroys the quality of good works. Good works, at least within Luther's thought, spontaneously springs forth from a good *adfectus*; they are not calculated means to obtain a merit. If merit is consequence, however, the deed corresponds to the merit. When the deed, then, is the gift of God, merit cannot be different.[449]

What is the relation, then, between good works and salvation? The doctrine of free will supposes that there somehow is a causal connection between the two; that man's decision to lead a good life is (part of) the foundation of his salvation. To Luther, too, there is a relation between good works and salvation, but it is not a causal one. Good works are **not** the foundation of salvation. The relation might rather be described as that of a common origin. God in his word is the working subject both of good works and of salvation. On the basis of this principle of common origin, the relation between good works and salvation might also be described as consequence, as the former leads to the latter. Good works contain as their necessary merit or consequence eternal salvation. This consequence is a relation within the creative activity of God; he works in man what has as its consequence eternal salvation. A deed has its consequences; the spoken word is not without its effect. It is nothing but natural, then, that the effect and consequence of the word and deed of the eternal God is eternal salvation, whereas the effect and consequence of human activity are nothing but death and punishment.

Why does the Scripture teach the doctrine of merit? For the same purpose, Luther says, as it brings law and exhortations, i.e., so that men might be instructed, moved, stirred and terrified.[450] By the doctrine of the consequence of sin, man might be illuminated as regards his own powerlessness, whereas the teaching of the consequence of good works shall stir up and comfort the pious.[451] Depending on the standpoint of the reader or listener, the biblical doctrine of merit might be either law or exhortation.

There is a strikingly affective aspect of Luther's expressions in this passage that brings to mind what was said above about the relationality of truth.[452] Truth is to Luther always expressed for the sake of something or somebody. The truth about man will not merely describe him; it will change him. Within the framework of Luther's rhetorical anthropology, to change man is to change his *adfectus*. Accordingly, his description of the possible effect of the biblical doctrine of merit is virtually soaked with rhetorical technical terms for affective renewal: *movere, excitere, illuminatio* (in its characteristic coordination with the necessary, but not sufficient *instructio*), *exhortatio*.

The question is, however, still not answered: Why rhetoric and philology? Or, to express it more as Luther does by formulating a possible objection from reason: Why will God do this only through words, which actually accomplish nothing? Why does God not only do what he wants to do without saying a word, which he undoubtedly can?[453] In reality, everything is dependent on the Spirit. The will can do nothing by the word alone. If the Spirit, which moves man's inner self, is absent, nothing happens. If the Spirit were present, however, the will could do without the word.[454] Why, then, this intense concentration on words, on verbal effect and activity, on verbal *instructio, illuminatio* and *exhortatio*, on *claritas* ***Scripturae***?

Because God has decided that this is the way he will do it. He could have done it otherwise, but he has decided not to. Luther gives one reason why this is so: God wants to have us as cooperators,[455] i.e., he wants us to reverberate loudly what he whispers in our hearts.[456] The ultimate reason, however, we do not know. And why should we? Should we inquire about the reason for God's will? We should revere and respect it, and subjugate the curiosity of reason.[457]

In this way, Luther gives an ultimate, theological foundation also of the relevance of rhetoric and philology. The reason why the rules of grammar and rhetoric apply also concerning the relation between God and man, is that God has decided that it should be so. He **has** committed himself to rhetoric. He was not obliged to do so, and we do not know why he did. The decision itself, however, is clear enough: The communication between God and man works according to the same rules as communication in general. This is the reason *claritas* ***Scripturae*** is the only valid means of theological cognition.[458]

The importance of this theological foundation of rhetoric is further deepened by the observation that God so did in order that we might be his cooperators. This seems to be a very important key to the anthropology of *De servo arbitrio*. Again Luther turns Erasmus' way of thinking upside down. The very center of the thought of *De libero arbitrio* is that Luther's doctrine of predestination and necessity ignores man as an independent being; what happens, is reduced to an inner activity in God. Admittedly, Luther focuses the all-important, omnipotent activity of God. This does not, however, in Luther's view exclude the existence of man as an independent being. Thereby Erasmus'

and Luther's view of independence is clearly very different. To Erasmus, independence is above all the liberty to choose, to make decisions.[459] To Luther, man is never independent in this way. He is not independent in human relations,[460] and definitely not in the way that he could make decisions contrary to the will of God. Instead, Luther's concept of independence focuses on activity and engagement. To be free is to be involved. To Luther, the activity of God in election is nothing but the liberation of man as an independent being. In this way man is engaged in and unfolds in the active participation in God's own work.

Thereby it should not be overlooked that it is this rhetorical understanding of persuasion that lets Luther unite the omnipotence of God and the independence of man in a consistent view of the relation of God and man.[461] According to rhetoric, the only possible source of persuasion and renewal is outside man. Salvation, then, is the work of the power of God through his word. This must, however, never obscure the fact that the goal of this renewal is to liberate man to an activity wherein he independently evolves his new *adfectus* as a cooperator of God.[462] The resonance God wants when he whispers in our hearts, is of course nothing but the *ministerium verbi divini* (=*claritas Scripturae externa*). This God-given *ministerium*, then, is our self-realization as independent human beings.

Erasmus maintains that our deeds are not ours if they are not performed by free will.[463] Luther contends that we do call "ours" also what we have only received and not made ourselves. Christ is ours, but we have not made him. In the same way, we have not made our eyes, hands or feet either. In reality, we have nothing that we have not received. This is a very clear confirmation that even if good works are the gift of God, they do not exclude the human self. Good works are God's as regards origin, but they are ours in so far as he gives them to us to perform. Luther finds this view verified by the fact that daily speech does not intend to say anything about origin by its use of possessive pronouns.[464]

To sum up the discussion of merit and exhortation: The conditional clauses and exhortations of the New Testament presuppose election, and are, as parts of the word of God, the means by which predestination is realized. By illuminating

and stirring the *adfectus* of man, the word of God in this way is the source of the new life. The biblical doctrine of predestination thus corresponds to the understanding of rhetoric that renewal must come from outside. The biblical concept of merit Luther understands as consequence. In the same way as sin necessarily leads to death and hell, good works as the result of God's work in man, necessarily lead to salvation. The purpose of the biblical teaching of merit, is to humble the sinners and stir the pious, whereby the biblical word works according to the rhetorical understanding of *illuminatio.*

The ultimate reason for the importance of language and rhetoric, is the decision of God. We don't know much about why. We know, however, that he has made it so that we by freely living out the new *adfectus* he gives us, might have the honor of being considered as cooperators of God.

g) Deus absconditus and the relevance of exegesis

Luther's understanding of the word of God, then, implies that predestination is the foundation both of salvation and of good works. Does not this, however, imply that God somehow also is the cause of perdition? This is Erasmus' argument, which he expresses in his discussion of the word from Ezekiel. This word, Erasmus maintains, must imply that man somehow is responsible for his own salvation, or else it leads to the absurd consequence that God deplores the death of the sinner that he causes himself.

Luther contends that the question of why somebody is touched by the law and accepts grace, while others are not touched and do not accept, is a question that is not discussed by Ezekiel in this passage. He talks about the preached and offered mercy, not about his hidden will, which nevertheless is a reality that we should fear, and by which God in fact decides who are to receive the offered mercy.[465] We should, however, not inquire about this will; we can do nothing but respect it with awe and reverence.[466] Discussing God as he is revealed and worshipped, then, is an entirely different thing from discussing him as not preached, not revealed, and not worshipped.[467] As God hides himself and does not want us to know him, he should be no concern of ours.[468] To express this

view, Luther uses the (skeptical) proverb *"quae supra nos, nihil ad nos."*[469] Luther founds this distinction exegetically by quoting 2 Thess 2:4, where it is said that Antichrist shall exalt himself over the preached and worshipped God.[470] Nobody can, however, exalt himself over the God who is not preached and not worshipped, i.e., God in his own nature and majesty, who has everything in his hand.[471]

We have, then, nothing to do with God in his own majesty and his own nature. Our concern should be God as he is dressed and brought forth in his word, which is his jewel and glory.[472] As regards God as he is thus proclaimed, he does not deplore the death he causes; he deplores the death he finds in the people. According to the proclamation of the word of God, God's concern is to conquer sin and death that we might be saved.[473] In this connection it is right to say that they who don't accept the word of salvation, carry the responsibility of their own damnation, Luther says. He thereby alludes to 1 Tim 2:4 (God wants all men to be saved)[474] and quotes Mt 23:37, where the Lord says to Jerusalem: "How often I would have gathered your children, and you would not!"[475]

Hidden in his majesty, however, God will neither deplore sin nor take it away, but works life, death and all in all, as he has not defined himself in his word, but is free above everything.[476] Thus God does much which he does not show in his word. But we are not to ask about it, Luther says, and adds: How could we? How could we possibly understand the incomprehensible? To us, it is enough to know that there is such a will. What goes beyond that, we are not even allowed to ask about, Luther says, and concludes by quoting Paul: "Who are you, to answer back to God?"[477]

If Luther by this discussion wanted to stop the inquiry after the hidden God, he did not succeed, as this passage probably is the most examined one and most criticized one in *De servo arbitrio*.[478] Is Luther's distinction between *Deus absconditus* and *Deus praedicatus*[479] tenable? And even if it is, did not Luther himself go to far in exploring *Deus absconditus*; did he not explain what he himself said was inexplicable? These are some of questions that have been asked regarding this passage.[480]

The point of departure of Luther's argument is the distinction between God himself and the word of God. The first time Luther employed this distinction in

De servo arbitrio,[481] he did it to underline that the focal point of theology is *claritas Scripturae*, not God himself. The intention of the present passage is, as far as I can understand, exactly the same.[482] God is more than his word. He is a mystery utterly beyond comprehension. Accordingly, no definite knowledge can be established by trying to penetrate this realm; nothing can be known for certain if one leaves the area of Scriptural exegesis as the foundation and limit of theological cognition.

The reason Luther distinguishes between *Deus absconditus* and *Deus praedicatus* like this, is that he finds this distinction in the Bible.[483] In this passage he refers to 2 Thess 2 as an exegetical proof of the distinction. In the introduction he quoted other passages, which also to a certain extent defines which questions belong to God alone and are not revealed in the Scripture. Rom 11:33 and Isa 40:13 are fundamental: "Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"[484] and "Who helped the Spirit of the Lord, and who was his counsellor?"[485] More precise, whoever, are Mark 13:32 and Acts 1:7: Nobody knows the date of the last day; and Jn 13:18 and 2 Tim 2:19: The Lord alone knows whom he has chosen.[486]

These are the fundamental aspects, then, of Luther's view of *Deus absconditus*: The Scripture is clear and distinct as to the fact that there are unknown depths in God, and even to a certain extent clarifies what God in this way has kept to himself. According to the quotations cited above,[487] God's hidden acts are related to the end of the world, and to the work of election. These are, however, mere examples; nobody has the complete list of God's secrets. As far as the unknown work of God is a part of the biblical revelation, then, i.e., the fact that there is such a realm of unknown divine activity to which belongs the mystery of election, it is an indispensable part of the Christian message.[488] If not, it is after all not God of the Bible that is proclaimed. Any speculation,[489] however, of what is going on within the sphere of utter divine majesty, beyond the limit he has defined for his own over against the curiosity of mankind, is to be utterly rejected.[490]

Even Luther's view of *Deus absconditus* is thus founded on God as he is preached, i.e., on the Bible.[491] According to his own word, God is almighty,[492] Creator and guardian of heaven and earth.[493] He is everywhere, governs

everything and decides everything[494] according to laws that we don't know and whose wisdom we cannot scrutinize. This is according to Luther what the Bible teaches. A Christian who takes the Bible seriously, must then accept the doctrine of *Deus absconditus*.

The view that Luther has a doctrine of the hiddenness of God that empties his doctrine of the Scripture, is therefore hardly tenable.[495] On the contrary, Luther considers the biblical teaching about *Deus absconditus* as something that **qualifies** the Scripture by telling about him who is its origin.[496] By emphasizing *Deus absconditus*, Scripture even more emphasizes the importance of *claritas Scripturae* as divine revelation.[497] One should therefore neither interpret the passages about *Deus absconditus* and predestination as attacks on revelation, nor elude their clarity by evasive interpretation. But one should according to Luther interpret these passages literally and thereby let them teach something about the significance of the divine revelation. To a Christian, the word of God is the supreme authority. The reason is that God who speaks, is the supreme power. To a Christian, the word of God is the source of cognition. The reason is that God is the origin of the universe. To a Christian, the word of God is the absolutely trustworthy guidance. The reason is that God is he who decides.[498]

There is, then, a very close relation between the doctrine of *Deus absconditus* and what was said above about the uniqueness of the word of God.[499] The ultimate reason the word of God is unique, is not that it from a formal point of view differs from other words. *Claritas Scripturae* is in this respect only an example of the universally valid *claritas veritatis*. The word of God is unique because God is unique, because he and no other is the origin and the governor of the world, because he and no other is the one who decides. The word of God, then, conveys reality in another sense than human words do. We do not know his inner essence or the depths of the mysteries of his decisions. We do not know how he is by itself; we do not know the naked God. We know him as far as he has dressed himself in words and appears before us. This is God as he is the object of our faith and worship.

That the word of God is unique, however, does not imply that *Deus absconditus* is an exclusively Christian doctrine. According to Luther, it is known and respected also among those who do not know and do not believe in

the revelation of the Bible. This is the reason Luther also can express his view by a common philosophical proverb like *"quae supra nos, nihil ad nos."*[500] The polemical point is obvious: Even Gentiles know God better then you do, Erasmus! In the introduction, Luther developed this point even further, quoting Virgil to show how common is the knowledge that God or destiny eventually decides.[501] Neither in this context, then, Luther considers the biblical doctrine as something specifically biblical; the hiddenness of God is as universal a doctrine as that of the clarity of truth.[502]

Some scholars have interpreted Luther's view of the predestining work of *Deus absconditus* as "deterministic tendencies" in his world view and considered it as influence from Ockhamism.[503] I am not sure, however, if labels like these really explain anything.[504] What is more important than the question of the genesis of Luther's concepts and ideas, is the way he worked with them within the framework of his own thought. To Luther, the hiddenness of God is universal and irrevocable. Man is confronted by God in every moment of his life, but is incapable of recognizing him on his own.[505] Thus there is room for faith,[506] i.e., faith that keeps strictly to God's revelation of himself in his word, which is the only guide to cognition. This is not a revelation that uncovers everything.[507] It does, however, uncover the innermost heart of God in such a way that the believer thereby is lead to liberation and commitment. Seeking God outside his word, however, will never lead man to anything but darkness and despair.

In his subsequent discussion of Mt 23:37, Luther very strongly emphasizes his warning against curiosity over against God's hidden will. Such an inquiry is particularly the work of evil men,[508] Luther says. In this context he therefore even more decidedly emphasizes the importance of revelation and incarnation over against the speculation in the majesty of God, who lives in an inaccessible light.[509]

Instead, one should focus on the incarnate God and the crucified Christ, "in whom are all treasures of wisdom and knowledge, though in a hidden manner" (Col 2:3). There you have what you need.[510] This incarnate God[511] comes to save, and he deplores the punishment of the sinners. It is he who speaks in Mt 23:37.[512] Many, however, take offense and do not believe. The reason is that

they are either not touched by, or hardened by the hidden will of God.[513] The great "why?" of this is none of our business. We can do nothing but respect the hidden wisdom of God.[514]

What is new in these deliberations over against the discussion of Ezekiel 33, is particularly the emphasis that the inquiry of the hidden will of God is something **evil**. It is clearly revealed to man what he should concentrate on. Man in his thoughtlessness, however, ignores this, and in his wickedness tries to explore what he should avoid.[515] Also Rom 9 and Isa 58[516] are quoted to show that man is not allowed to inquire into the hidden will of God.[517] To Luther, then, the negligence of revelation and incarnation, which necessarily is associated with the curious investigation of *Deus absconditus*, means that man will know better than God; he even wants to control him. But man cannot control God. As the person revealing himself and guiding man in the words of the Scripture, God is himself exalted above human judgement. As *Deus absconditus*, he qualifies the Bible as the word of God and will let man find him there in faith. If man inquires elsewhere, he will not find him. In the end, however, he will find that his inquiry was nothing but an attempt of avoiding God.

Luther distinguishes between *reverentia* and *adoratio*, which is the proper attitude toward *Deus absconditus*, and *requirito* (inquiry) and *cultus*, which is the proper attitude toward *Deus revelatus et praedicatus*.[518] The subject of worship and theology, then, is the definite content of the revelation as this is uncovered in the Bible. What is said about the incomprehensible activity of God defines the limit of revelation and thereby of human understanding. *Adoratio*, then, is the attitude toward the things that are not known, apart from the mere fact of their existence. *Cultus*, however, is the attitude toward the things that are known, because they are clearly expounded in the Bible as our way to salvation. Both attitudes are, according to Luther, necessary aspects of the Christian faith. Whereas *adoratio* reminds the Christian of whom he ultimately relates to as a Christian and a human being, *cultus* is the exultant recognition of God as he has made himself known through the life and work of Jesus Christ.[519]

The argumentative power of Luther's passage on *Deus absconditus* is of course based on the view that *Deus absconditus* and *Deus praedicatus* is the

same God.[520] We are, then, also in this connection reminded of the rhetorical aspect of Luther's theology: The spoken word ultimately reveals the inner essence of the speaker. He might for various reasons perhaps not reveal everything about himself; in fact, we never expect that he should. As for God in particular, he is not obliged to give an account before us of what he does and does not. In his word, however, he does eventually not hide himself. What he reveals there, is truth. Therefore, the revelation of the hidden God in the clarity of the Scripture is the only way of cognition for theology and the Christian church.

h) Summary

Erasmus argues that the biblical commandments presuppose that they can be fulfilled. Luther contends, however, that one must distinguish clearly between imperative and indicative, whereby only the latter defines what exists. The presuppositions of Erasmus are nothing but inferences without textual basis. In addition, Erasmus' argument implies that man can be saved by free will without the grace of God. Such strange and forced exegesis show that the interpreter lacks the Spirit of God, whereas the presence of the Spirit is revealed through an exegesis that carefully pays attention to what the text says and is interested in nothing else. To safeguard such an exegesis by showing the inconsistencies of Erasmus' is Luther's purpose in this part of *De servo arbitrio*.

Erasmus uses an extra-canonical passage as an important proof of his view of free will. In discussing this passage, Luther shows that canon to him above all is an exegetical concept that sets *claritas Scripturae* as the guideline for the reading of the Bible. The reason is that Luther emphasizes the understanding of truth as illumination. The biblical message's capacity of renewal and restoration is both the foundation of exegesis and the criterion for the canonicity of the disputed books.

It follows from Luther's view of *adfectus* that man as a willing subject is never free; he is determined by his own choice. Luther therefore rejects Erasmus' understanding of free will as the ability to choose. To Luther, freedom

is the unrestricted evolvement of the human self. In a theological perspective, then, there is freedom only where man's *adfectus* is contradicted by no commandment.

The confusing exegesis of Erasmus cannot distinguish either between imperative and indicative or between law and gospel. The law will tell man that he cannot keep the commandments. This is the necessary precondition of renewal, which, however, can only be accomplished by the gospel. The transmission of a new *adfectus* is the work of the indicative mood, as this alone contains the capacity of defining reality.

This renewal of man through the activity of God is then also the possibility of the fulfillment of the commandments, which only can be brought about by the work of God in man. Luther understands predestination as God's work in man through his word, and this is the precondition both for salvation and good works. Merit, then, is understood as consequence, not as worthiness. Man eventually enters the kingdom as a reward for the good works God has done in and through him. Still they are the works of man. He is not their origin; he has received them as gifts. In everyday language, however, we use possessive pronouns quite freely even about the things we have only received; in this sense, the good works of man are his.

Luther will not accept as a valid objection Erasmus' argument that his understanding of predestination implies that God also is the cause of perdition. Admittedly, the Bible presents this as a part of the hidden work of God. It is not our business, however, to speculate about this part of the work of God. We should know about it and revere it, as it tells us something important of who God is and therefore also about the importance of his word. Concerning faith and worship, however, we should only fix our attention on God as he clothes himself in his word. As he is revealed to us, God's concern is to conquer sin and death that we might be saved. Thus, he gives us everything necessary for faith and life.

CHAPTER SIX
THE EXEGESIS OF *DE SERVO ARBITRIO* II.
DOES THE SCRIPTURE REFUTE FREE WILL?

a) The texts. The exegesis of Erasmus

Erasmus is sure that sound biblical exegesis will show that the Bible does not entirely exclude free will, and he has argued extensively to prove it. He is, however, aware that there are passages that seem to contradict his concept of free will,[521] and knows that he must be able to give a reasonable interpretation of these as well. The *scripturarum testimonia* he chooses as the most important, are the following:

"The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh," Ex 9:12, and "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh." Ex 4:21.[522]

"I loved Jacob, but I hated Esau." Mal 1:2-3.[523]

"Does the clay say to the potter: 'What are you making?'" Isa 45:9, and "Like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand." Jer 18:6.[524]

"When they [Jacob and Esau] were not yet born, and had done nothing, either good or bad, so that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of his call, it was said to her [Rebekah]: 'The elder will serve the younger,' as it is written: 'I loved Jacob, but I hated Esau.'" Rom 9:11-13.[525]

"God said to Moses: 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.' So, then, it depends not on him that will, nor on him that runs, but on God who shows mercy." Rom 9:15-16.[526]

"Has not the potter power over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel for honor, and one for disgrace? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the vessels of wrath made for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy, which he has prepared for glory?" Rom 9:21-23.[527]

Erasmus thus focuses particularly on three Old Testament motifs: The hardening of Pharaoh, the election of Jacob, and the clay and the potter. In

addition, he discusses how Paul interprets these motifs in Rom 9, a passage that necessarily is central in any discussion of the biblical view of free will.

The point of departure for Erasmus' exegesis is that it seems to be absurd that God should harden a human heart.[528] Concerning the hardening of Pharaoh, Erasmus follows Origen[529] and argues that God gave the occasion for the hardening. The guilt, however, rests with Pharaoh who did not repent.[530] God's leniency toward the sinner might lead some to repentance; others, however, will only be more steadfast in their debauchery. He shows mercy to those who accepts God's goodness, but those who neglect his goodness and only develop to the worse, are hardened.[531] That God is said to be the cause of the hardening, depends on the fact that we here have a *tropus*,[532] Origen and Erasmus maintain. According to this trope, he is said to be the cause, who really only has given the occasion.[533] It is as if the father says to his son: "I have spoiled you," when the meaning only is that the father by not punishing the faults of his son has given occasion for bad habits to develop. Erasmus gives other examples of this trope in the Bible, whereby he seems to indicate that all passages that seem to present God as the cause of evil should be interpreted like this.[534]

God used the corruption of Pharaoh to punish evil and to save his people. It is, however, important for Erasmus to underline that even if he in this way depicts God as the Lord of history, he will not exclude the freedom of human will.[535] This leads Erasmus into a discussion of God's prescience and predestination: Does the former imply the latter, as Paul seems to suggest?[536] Not necessarily, is Erasmus' answer, though one might contend that he not quite succeeds in demonstrating exegetically that this is the answer of Paul, too.[537] Through a complicated deliberation concerning necessity and freedom,[538] Erasmus does his best to satisfy all parts. God foresaw, e.g., the treachery of Judas, and because he foresaw it, he in a certain sense wanted it to happen. But this was not the cause of what happened, because Judas could have changed his will.[539]

Erasmus might not quite have succeeded in what he wanted to do in this chapter. At least, however, he succeeded in demonstrating that to reconcile the infallibility of divine prescience with the freedom of man, is not an easy thing to do.

Concerning Esau and Jacob, Erasmus contends that the election of Jacob as described in Gen 25:23 has nothing to do with salvation; it only pertains to the relation between the brothers.[540] Accordingly, also the hate of God in Mal 1:2 is only related to temporary evil. When the Bible talks of the love and hate of God, it usually means something different from human love or hate. God does not have such affects as we have them.[541] And here, too, there is a *tropologia*. Esau and Jacob are here not representatives of the Gentiles and the Jews in an absolute sense. God has not loved all Gentiles and hated all Jews, but he has elected some people of both groups.[542] The foundation of his exegesis, however, is the principle that the reason for God's love and hate, is the deeds and misdeeds of men, or else God is not just. As regards living men or women, he loves or hates according to what they do; as regards the yet unborn, he loves or hates because he knows what they will do.[543]

Regarding the clay and the potter, Erasmus is quite critical toward Paul's use of these passages.[544] The prophets reproach those who grumble against the Lord because they are not willing to submit. They do, however, not exclude free will, because repentance always demands the consent of man.[545] According to Erasmus, Paul somehow seems to forget this. One should, however, not only look at these passages in Paul, Erasmus says. Even Paul has exhortations that presuppose free will. One should therefore not make too much of the simile of the potter and the clay. Similes do not always fit entirely.[546] Admittedly, it is impossible to say to a chamber pot that it should cleanse itself. To a rational vessel, however, this might be said, because it can accommodate itself to the will of God.[547] Erasmus gives also other examples of similes that speak of man as a tool in God's hand. According to Erasmus, these are all to be understood as exhortations to humbleness and repentance; consequently, they presuppose free will rather than refute it.

Erasmus, then, summarizes his exegesis. Many passages in the Bible demand human activity; accordingly, they presuppose free will. Other passages speak of God doing everything. One must, then, try to find an exegesis that avoids giving an undue emphasis to either of the extremes, because the Holy Spirit does not contradict itself. One should not say that man does everything, because this gives no place for grace. On the other hand, to say that God does

everything, gives no place for merit, punishment and reward. A *via media*, then, is to be recommended as the exegetical solution.

To Erasmus, God's attitude to man is after all dependent on man's attitude toward God. Man must then somehow be responsible for his own salvation so that concepts like merit and guilt, punishment and reward retain their relevance also as regards the relation between God and man. One may or one may not agree that this erasmian theology is sound theology. The question Luther asks is, however, if Erasmus succeeded in demonstrating that it is a biblical theology. Luther did not think he did. How, then, does Luther criticize this part of Erasmus' exegesis, and how does he interpret these passages himself?

b) The authority and unity of the Scripture

The common point of departure for Luther and Erasmus is the principle that the Scripture is the supreme judge in theological matters. Theological debate is essentially a debate about exegesis.

Luther is, however, not satisfied with the way Erasmus implements this principle.[548] In this part of the book, Erasmus is heavily dependent on Jerome's presentation of the exegesis of Origen,[549] and Luther contends that Erasmus merely refers their opinions without testing it against the Scripture. In this way, Scripture is twisted according to human and impious measures.[550] This might be the case with any exegetical authority. It is, however, particularly the case with Jerome and Origen, who, according to Luther, are among the worst ecclesiastical authors.[551] Luther was definitely no admirer of Alexandrian allegorizing![552] No wonder, he remarks, that the Scripture seems to be ambiguous and obscure when it is handled in this way.[553]

Luther is particularly critical toward Erasmus' statement that Paul attaches too much importance to his Old Testament authorities,[554] a statement that Luther finds as typically Jerome-like. It is perhaps not as typical of Erasmus, who actually uses the expression only once, even if Luther criticizes him as if he had used it twice.[555] To Luther, however, an expression like this implies that Paul, when he states the fundamentals of the Christian faith, does nothing but distort

the divine Scriptures and deceive the Christians with his own opinions.[556] Paul is, however, not to be considered as a "ridiculus aut ineptus"[557] figure in a theological discussion; he is to be respected as the holy and elect instrument of God.[558]

Luther, then, understands the fundament of theology as *claritas **Scripturae*** in a radical sense of the word. Exegesis is to be confronted with the **Scripture**; it is not a debate of *pro et cons* concerning the writings of the exegetes.[559] Luther the exegete thus in a certain sense devalues the whole project of writing exegetical treatises, or at least of publishing them.[560] To a certain extent it might be helpful. Luther's own relation to Augustine's exegetical writings is a clear example that he thought it could. The fact that he published exegetical commentaries himself, shows that he hoped he had something to contribute, too.[561] No exegetical authority, however, is raised above the principle of being continuously tested by the scriptural material, and this is particularly the case with such dubious authorities as Jerome and Origen.

Exegetical writings might be helpful if they lead to the meaning of the text. This is for Luther the only *raison d'être* of any theological contribution or any theological debate. It might happen, however, that the whole process is turned upside down, and the Scripture is twisted to suit the opinion of the exegetical authorities. This is exactly what Luther suspects Erasmus of doing in his exegesis of the biblical passages of predestination, and is the reason he so severely criticizes Erasmus' dependence on Origen and Jerome.

The dependence on human authorities in the interpretation of the Scripture seems to Luther to correspond to the notion that the biblical authors themselves are but human and errant expositors of the divine revelation. As a principle of biblical exegesis, however, this is very different from Luther's own as it was developed in the discussion of canon.[562] According to Luther, the concept of canon implies that the same message, the same *claritas*, is exposed in every biblical passage. The notion of scriptural authority, then, implies that the Scripture is to be considered as a unity. The Bible is the instrument God uses to reveal himself to the world. And because this revelation always essentially is the same, the meaning of the different scriptural passages, too, is essentially the same. Therefore it is impossible for Luther to accept that the words of Paul

"magis pugnant"[563] than the words of the prophet. His concept of canon, and thereby of the authority and unity of the Scripture, simply will not allow for such twisting around with the unity and oneness of the biblical revelation.

This is also his answer to Erasmus when the latter contends that there seems to be a contradiction in the Scripture between passages demanding human activity and those ascribing everything to God. There is no such contradiction, Luther says. Again he refers to the distinction of imperative and indicative: Passages cannot contradict each other when they speak of different things.[564] The Scripture has one consistent message, and the task of the interpreter is to expound this message, not to invent contradictions.

Luther's understanding of *claritas Scripturae interna* implies that a congeniality with the message of the Scripture is a precondition of sound exegesis. The very exegesis of Erasmus, as well of that of his authorities Origen and Jerome, show that they lack this congeniality. According to Luther, such a lack of congeniality necessarily reveals itself in the actual exegesis. How, then, does Luther **prove** that the exegesis of Erasmus, Jerome and Origen is wrong?

c) Tropes and truth in biblical exegesis

When he discussed the biblical passages considered to prove free will, Erasmus evaded the clear meaning of the Scripture by using inferences. He postulated that the Scripture presupposes free will where it does not. Now he resorts to another technique, Luther says. He assumes the existence of tropes or figurative language where there is nothing of the kind. As he before has destroyed the meaning of imperative and subjunctive in the Bible, he now in this way destroys the meaning of the divine promises.[565] Why do you always use tropes and inferences, Luther asks. Does not the Scripture contain a single text that simply teaches free will? Do you always need such exegetical gambols?[566]

According to the Bible, God says "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh." Erasmus, however, interprets this to mean that the mercy of God, which leads somebody to repentance, will only make Pharaoh more steadfast in his debauchery, Luther says.[567] This Luther finds as a strange interpretation indeed. It is

based on a new and unprecedented grammar that mixes everything up. When God says "I will harden Pharaoh," Erasmus changes the persons and lets it mean "Pharaoh hardens himself through the mercy of God." According to this new grammar, then, the mercy of God does not mean his grace and forbearance, but that he inflicts evil and punishes,[568] as he did toward Pharaoh. Such a tropological interpretation may end up giving the fundamental biblical concepts a meaning exactly opposite to the original. According to this exegesis, God was merciful toward Israel when he carried them off to Babylon, because afflictions might lead to repentance. On the contrary, the coming of Christ means hardening, because his mercy leads some to harden themselves. Even hell might be interpreted as God's mercy, because it as a punishment of sinners is different from the mercy that gives occasion for hardening![569] It might be said, Luther admits, that good people will profit both from God's punishment and from his mercy; but to let mercy mean wrath and wrath mercy, is a totally perverted use of language.[570]

If not, Luther says, the Holy Spirit knew a little about rhetoric, it might have yielded to the elaborate interpretations of the *Diatribe*.[571] It does know, however, and Luther does not hesitate to give arguments for refuting what he considers as the forced and artificial exegesis of Erasmus.[572]

Luther does thereby not reject the existence of tropes, either in everyday language or in the Scripture.[573] The example of Erasmus that "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh" might mean "I will allow him to be hardened," is all valid and good. In everyday language, we use tropes like this. A father might say to his son: "I have spoiled you," when the meaning is that his leniency has given occasion for bad habits to develop.[574] But the question is not if such tropes are in general use.[575] The question is if it is appropriate to apply a tropological interpretation to the actual passage.[576] Thereby one must be **sure** that the tropological interpretation is appropriate.[577]

The *Diatribe,* however, does not bother about certainty. It prefers that the interpretation be uncertain, as it is not interested in a definite solution to the question of free will.[578] On the other hand, Luther is serious about the matter and must have an assured truth for the afflicted consciences.[579] It is therefore not enough to say that this might be a trope. If one cannot demonstrate that it

necessarily is a trope, it is not valid.[580] Luther even admits that Erasmus' interpretation of the hardening is "pulchre dicitur." But this does not prove that it is correct.[581]

The reason it is necessary to be so careful about the consideration of a possible *tropus*, is that tropological interpretation always is the instrument heretics use to make the Scripture fit their own opinion. It is an instrument well suited for the purpose; there is not an article of faith that cannot be done away with by an indiscriminate use of tropological interpretation. Therefore, unnecessary tropological interpretation must be avoided. As warnings, Luther quotes Origen, whose excessive use of tropological interpretation gave raise to the criticism of Porphyry[582], and the Arians, whose tropes were applied to refute the divinity of Christ. As an actual example he quotes the various figurative interpretations of the eucharistic words of Christ.[583] In fact, Luther observes, all heresies are based on the introduction of indiscriminate tropological interpretation and a corresponding negligence of the *simplicitas verborum*.[584]

Luther, then, is quite restrictive in his use of tropological interpretation. One should always stick to the simple and natural meaning of the words, which corresponds to the grammar and the daily speech as it is created by God.[585] One should not accept any inference or trope if not the context of the words or the absurdity of the literal meaning compels one to interpret figuratively.[586] Thereby Luther applies the criterion of absurdity of meaning in a very limited sense: A passage is absurd only if it contradicts an article of faith.[587]

He can, however, also express his demand of caution concerning tropological interpretation as a demand of historically sound exegesis. When discussing Rom 9, he contends that it is not enough to argue for the possibility of tropes. One must demonstrate that Paul intended to express himself figuratively in the actual case.[588] The intention of the author is thus important as an exegetical criterion.[589] Concerning the story of the hardening in Exodus, Erasmus is only interested in giving a new meaning to the expression "I will harden." Thereby he neglects the meaning of the story, and does not examine how his interpretation of this expression fits the text as a whole.[590] Here, Luther says, Erasmus does not reveal any great respect either toward the text or toward its author.[591]

Luther agrees with Erasmus that figurative speech does not always fit in all respects.[592] Then it is, however, even more important to pay heed to what is the point of the simile within the passage and interpret it accordingly.[593] This is really the only way to understand a simile. It is a pity, then, that Erasmus neglects it, and instead concentrates on isolated words.

Erasmus argues that the rejection of free will is the standpoint that is based on a forced exegesis. His opponents interpret "stretch out your hand where you will" to mean that grace will stretch out the hand where grace wants, he says.[594] Luther denies that he has ever said anything like that.[595] Instead, he has tried to interpret the words simply as they stand without any inferences or tropes. Then they are nothing but a demand that the hand be stretched out. It is an ordinary sentence in the imperative mood. Erasmus is the one who introduces inferences and tropes when he maintains that "stretch out your hand" means "you can stretch out your hand by your own will." No grammarian would ever accept anything like that![596]

It is obvious, then, that Luther here, too, above all aims at guarding the simple and natural meaning of the biblical expressions. To establish this meaning, everyday speech and sound grammatical analysis are the most important tools. There is nothing mystical or specifically theological about biblical grammar; a sensible philological analysis is to be employed throughout.

One might say that Luther is particularly cautious regarding the possibility of a tropological interpretation when the Bible is concerned. The reason is that heretics always use that kind of exegesis to find biblical support for their own opinions. But this does not tempt Luther to deny the existence of tropes and figurative language in the Bible altogether. As an experienced preacher and rhetor, he is clearly aware of the importance of figurative speech both in everyday language and in the Bible. Thereby the criteria he establishes to decide if there is figurative speech or not, are strictly grammatical and historical: *Circumstantia verborum* and *intentio authoris*.[597] By arguing like this, Luther argues within the framework of humanist rhetoric, even if he directs his argument toward Erasmus, the prince of the humanists.[598] To say that Erasmus interprets without paying due attention to the context and purpose of the passage

he is interpreting, was undoubtedly an argument well suited to shatter both Erasmus himself and his followers.

Admittedly, Luther also has a specifically theological criterion for the judgment of tropes: There is a trope if the text taken literally contradicts a dogma of the Christian faith.[599] This is a principle that follows from Luther's understanding of the unity of the Scripture. As the book of clarity and revelation, the Bible cannot contradict itself. Every part of it contains the same message of the victory of Christ. If a biblical passage taken literally, then, has nothing to contribute to our understanding of this message, or even seems to contradict it, it must be interpreted as a figurative expression of the same message.

In this way, everything is focused on the one and single purpose of the biblical message and the biblical texts: To illuminate man by bringing him the clear light of the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is, however, nothing specifically biblical or specifically theological about interpreting the single parts of a text or a whole book in the light of its overall message. It is the same general principle that is at work in the emphasis on *circumstantia verborum* and *intentio authoris*. What is specifically theological, then, is not the method of interpretation, but the message that is to be interpreted.

The emphasis of Luther's argument in this part of *De servo arbitrio* undoubtedly is to warn against an unfounded figurative interpretation of the Bible. This should, however, not overshadow the fact that Luther simply rejoiced in the metaphors and figures that he actually found there, and that they had a very important place within his theology.[600] Luther's warnings against undue figural interpretation have sometimes led the scholars to overemphasize the negative aspect of his attitude toward tropes. This might be the main point in this part of the book, and in his writings about the Lord's supper. It is, however, not the only thing he has to say about the subject.

The point of Luther's argument is his demand for certainty. Also as regards figures and tropes, he demands an assured exegesis for the afflicted consciences. The reason for his demand, and the reason why such a demand is meaningful within the context of Luther's exegesis, is his view of *claritas Scripturae*. He knows what the Bible says. Its figurative language, then, is

supposed to support and deepen this understanding, not to contradict it. In this perspective, the meaning of the tropes is as assured and certain as the *claritas* itself.

What, then, is the reason Erasmus found so many tropes in these passages, and how does Luther try to refute these arguments?

d) Scripture and reason

Luther emphasizes the importance of philological criteria in distinguishing between literal and figurative speech. In the end, his theological criteria, too, are to be given a philological foundation.

Erasmus, however, mainly focuses on another criterion, the criterion of absurdity. It is absurd, he argues, that God, who is just and good, should harden the heart of man to show his own power. Therefore one must interpret these passages as Origen does.[601] The literal interpretation of the actual passages is absurd and must be avoided.[602]

Luther is not impressed by this argument, but takes it seriously enough to refute it quite extensively, and the foundation of his argument is the theological criterion as I have just referred it. The literal interpretation might be absurd according to the standards of human reason. The important thing, however, is that it is not contrary to any article of faith. To the human reason, all the important biblical events might seem absurd. But this does definitely not mean that a literal interpretation is impossible![603] As I have just pointed out, an indiscriminate use of tropological interpretation is, according to Luther, a peculiarity that all heresies have in common. The reason is that they all judge the Scripture according to the standards of human reason in exactly the same way as Erasmus does.[604]

Why is the doctrine of enslaved will and predestination unacceptable for reason and common sense?[605] According to Luther, the motivation is that human reason above all wants to be independent; it wants to believe in its own liberty. Therefore it will not accept the existence of a God who decides. The existence of God *per se* is not the problem. The idea of human liberty is not necessarily

incompatible with the existence of a supreme being. Human reason has, however, certain demands to make of God before it can tolerate him. First, it demands that God do not in any way limit the liberty of man. Therefore, human reason tries to reduce the notion of God's free prescience to make room for its own freedom.[606] The second demand is that if God does anything that affects man in any way, then it should always be to the advantage of man. The existence of a Saviour, then, is not the problem, at least not if it leaves room for free will. That God, however, in addition also is a judge and condemns man, is utterly unacceptable and causes a vehement protest from human reason.[607] What reason wants to hear, is that everybody will be saved,[608] because reason only judges according to its own advantage.[609] There is, then, according to Luther, a certain affinity between the (heretical) use of tropological interpretation and the doctrine of *apokatastasis*.

By his arguing Erasmus does not achieve anything but to betray his true objectives: His arguments are exactly the same as those of Paul's ungodly opponents in Rom 9: How can God accuse us if his will is the working agent?[610] This has been the offense of reason through the centuries. God should, however, not be judged according to the standards of human reason. You cannot simply dismiss God as unjust if his deeds are different from those accepted by Roman law or the ethics of Aristotle, Luther argues. The creatures cannot judge their Creator. We cannot give orders and regulations for God's mercy and judgement, and to introduce tropological interpretation to justify such a project, is nothing but a theological disaster.[611]

Luther strengthens his argument by reemphasizing[612] his view that this is something human reason on the whole should be able to understand on its own.[613] If God is a true and living God, what he foresees must necessarily come true. If his prescience is falsified, he is a ridiculous God! Even the Gentiles have understood this, as their gods, too, reign according to an unchangeable fate.[614] To Luther, then, predestination is something that is necessarily associated not only with a biblical view of God, but also with a reasonable view of God.[615] If he is not a God who decides, then he is no God at all. This is so even according to a natural human understanding of God, even if reason, offended as it is by this view of God, does not like to admit it.[616]

The weakness of Erasmus' argument is further demonstrated by other built-in inconsistencies. Erasmus, too, admits that free will cannot do good without grace.[617] Due to the weakness of the human will, then, all deeds of all men are sinful. But if God, as Erasmus also maintains, condemns us according to our deeds, who can then be saved?[618] And how can we then explain the difference between those who are saved and those who are not? Either this difference must be caused by the different quality of the deeds of men. That is, however, impossible, because all men have the same, powerless will.[619] Or it must be caused by the election of God, whereby one has to accept exactly the absurdity Erasmus wants to avoid.[620] In this way, Erasmus' argument breaks down to a flat contradiction. As when he was discussing the passages allegedly proving free will, his argument proves nothing but his inability to take the problem seriously. It **is** impossible to maintain the prescience of God and the liberty of man simultaneously.[621]

The background of Erasmus' argument is that he tries to grasp the goodness of God according to the understanding of human reason.[622] The consequence of this approach, however, is that he, in his quest for God, simply neglects faith.[623] Consequently, he does not look for God the only place where he has promised to let us find him: In the Scripture.[624] The approach of faith, on the other hand, is quite different. Faith and Spirit unconditionally believe in the goodness of God; it believes it even if everybody perished.[625] This is the attitude Luther wants to propagate. This is the attitude that trusts God and does not try to judge him according to human standards.

Admittedly, Luther has a somewhat ambiguous view of reason in *De servo arbitrio*.[626] As a human activity, reason, too, is infected by the corruption of the human flesh. Reason, then, has to give the intellectual justification of the world-view of sinful man.[627] According to this world-view, man is the lord of his own destiny. He can himself make all important decisions both regarding his temporal and his eternal happiness. God's offer of salvation, too, is to be treated according to this faith in the power of man. He can on his own judge if God's proposal for the salvation of man is to his advantage or not. God has to wait patiently until his most prominent creature, man, decides if he will follow the

proposed way to salvation or not. This is the world-view of sinful man. This is what reason has to defend if challenged.

At the same time, reason knows, according to Luther, that this is all wrong. Somehow reason, then, must have built-in guidelines that protest against this view of God. Reason might not on his own know very much about God. It knows, however,—at least it ought to know—that if there is a God in any reasonable sense of the word, he cannot in any way be dependent on something as wobbly and rickety as the will of man.[628] The natural human world-view is thus encountered by facts an honest approach simply cannot overlook once they are presented. Sin and reason, then, are at war with each other, i.e., pure, uncontaminated reason, not reason as governed and exploited by sin itself. Reason in this sense of the word is not at all contrary to Scripture and revelation; it is an ally.[629]

This eulogy of reason does not mean that it can serve as a foundation of theology. This is impossible because of the ambiguity of reason as it presents itself in the human world. It is reasonable—and as such almost divine[630] —and at the same time apt to be dominated by something as unreasonable as sin. It can, however, fulfil the task it is given in Luther's argument in *De servo arbitrio*: To question Erasmus' use of the criterion of absurdity as an exegetical tool.

As should be clear from the preceding discussion, Luther has a twofold critique of this criterion. First, he questions its relevance. Scripture is not to be judged according to human reason. What God has revealed is to be accepted as truth, even if it seems to be absurd. Furthermore, he also questions the tenability of the criterion itself. Is it really absurd after all that God decides and not man? Must not reason itself, if properly guided, admit that what seemed to be an absurdity, after all is sheer reason, and what seemed to be reasonable, is the most absurd of all? The tenor of Luther's argument is thus that not all man call reason is reason; it might in reality be nothing but human vanity in disguise.

The foundation of theology, however, is—in this as in all other parts of *De servo arbitrio*—a sound exegesis of the Holy Scripture. This book is to be the judge also of what men call reason. Thus liberated, however, reason might be able to understand that what is commonly called absurd, is nothing but a human

tradition about the impossible and as such utterly unreliable as a guide to truth. What has been discussed in this paragraph, then, strongly emphasizes Luther's insistence on biblical exegesis as the basis of Christian existence. This book is to be the mentor also regarding the allegedly absurd. Committing oneself unreservedly to biblical exegesis, one might be led where one did not expect and did not want to go. Having been lead thus far, however, one might in the end realize that there was sense in the journey after all.

e) God and evil

Erasmus has, however, also another argument to prove the necessity of a tropological interpretation of the story of Pharaoh's hardening. Again following Origen, he remarks that God does not say about Pharaoh that he created him for this purpose (hardening); he says he raised him up.[631] If God had created him thus, however, he would not have been evil, as all he has created is good.[632] The implication of this distinction seems to be that there can be no direct relation between the sin and hardening of Pharaoh on the one hand, and the creative activity of God on the other. The responsibility, then, rests with the free will of Pharaoh, and this must be the guiding principle of the exegesis of this passage.

Erasmus has thus established a doctrine of far-reaching consequence. What God does, is always good. Evil, then, is solely the responsibility of the free will of man.

It is of course not difficult to feel sympathy with Erasmus when he emphasizes the goodness of God like this. When it is confronted with the reality of evil, however, his one-sided accentuation of this aspect necessarily leads to the problems discussed in the preceding section. According to Erasmus, God is in his goodness dependent on the consent of man to make his good intentions come true. The expenditures of such a view of God are quite serious, as the promises of God are reduced to mere expressions of his good intentions. He can no longer as the omnipotent Lord vouch for their fulfillment. Consequently, one can never be sure if God or evil in the end will be the victor. For a theology like Luther's, which focuses on the promises of God as the ultimate foundation, this

consequence is a disastrous one. How does he, then, answer this attack? How does he relate the fundamental principle of the power of the promises to the problem of the relation between God and evil?

Earlier in *De servo arbitrio*, Luther has developed his view of predestination as the work of (the hidden) God to safeguard the ultimate significance of the word of God.[633] Challenged anew by Erasmus' interpretation of the hardening of Pharaoh, he further states his view of God and evil.[634]

Erasmus' interpretation of God's evaluation of creation in Gen 1:31 implies that creation is good as far as God's work is concerned. Luther contends that this is said before the fall of man.[635] After the fall all are godless and evil.[636] Consequently, Pharaoh, too, was created evil. Luther explicitly rejects Erasmus' view that if God has created the godless, he is not godless.[637] Erasmus is right that God has not created sin. God does, however, not stop modelling and multiplying the nature sin has corrupted. It is as when an artist makes statues of corrupt wood; the result cannot be better than the raw material.[638] In this way, the artist God, though not ultimately responsible for the existence of sin, **has** created the bad and godless work.

Furthermore, if Gen 1:31 is to be interpreted as pertaining to the world after the fall of man, one must pay attention to the fact that it is God, not man who understands that everything is good. Many a work of God may seem to be evil to man even if it to God is good, Luther says, and gives as examples affliction, delusion and hell. Yes, even Christ and the Gospel are something bad to worldly eyes. That these things are good, is evident only to God and to those who can see with God's eyes, i.e., those who have the Spirit.[639]

This second point reminds of Luther's critique of Erasmus' view of absurdity. As God is different from man, his thoughts and acts are different, too. Consequently, neither God nor his word should be judged according to human standards. To believe is to receive the divine view of man and the world, not to impose human opinions on God. Therefore, not everything men call evil is evil. It might be instruments God uses to advance his work.

This objection cannot, however, do away with the problem of God and evil. Man might not always be able to understand what is good and what is not. It is, however, impossible to deny the reality of evil as a part of everyday life.

Luther's reflections so far have stated that even this irreducible, pure evil is incorporated in the creative activity of God, which cannot but apply itself to the human nature even if sin has corrupted it.[640] The question of hardening expresses the problem in its extreme form. How can God harden? How can he in this sense of the word be said to work evil in man? Does not this in the end imply a more direct relation between God and evil than that of an artist who has to use the material he gets?

Luther is aware of the problem, and expresses it himself.[641] He is, however, reluctant toward it, as we regarding these questions ought to be satisfied simply with the biblical teaching. Apparently we again are at the threshold of the work of *Deus absconditus* and perhaps ought to stay away. But to satisfy the human reason, he says, he will still follow the problem a bit further.[642] What follows, then, is not exegesis; it is not biblical teaching.[643] Luther does not attempt at something as contradictory as a doctrine of the unknown. He does give, however, some models and similes that suggest how one **might** think about these problems.[644]

The foundation of Luther's deliberations is that God is omnipotent and works all in all.[645] Satan and fallen man cannot do what pleases God. Still, God works in them. He is the ultimate working agent in all their deeds. Nevertheless, their deeds are bad, because they are performed by a corrupted nature.[646] Besides the simile of the artist and the bad tree, Luther adds two new similes to explain his point. It is, he says, as if a horseman rides a bad horse. The horseman is the same and rides in the same way as when he rides a good horse; the result, however, is totally different. Or it is like a good craftsman with a bad tool; a carpenter cannot perform well with a jagged axe.[647]

Given the omnipotence of God, he cannot but work in men like this. Due to the sin of man, however, the results can only be bad.[648] God cannot eliminate his own omnipotence.[649] To Luther, this would mean that God simply ceased to be God, which of course is absolutely meaningless.[650] There seems to be no way to avoid that God works in sinful men like this. It simply follows from the coexistence of the omnipotent God and the sinful world.

Then Luther applies this view of God and man in an attempt to explain hardening. The godless are turned away from God and do nothing but seek their

own wealth, wisdom and power. Driven by the omnipotence of God, man cannot but unfold himself according to this basic attitude. This attitude can never be changed by resisting it. Doomed as he is to develop according to his ungodly nature, sinful man can only understand resistance as a provocation that utterly fastens his own determination.[651] This is hardening.[652] This is exactly what happened to Pharaoh. God wanted through the words of Moses to withdraw the people of Israel from the tyranny of the Egyptian king. This naturally provoked Pharaoh, and his heart was hardened as his corrupt nature blazed and raged.[653]

When God, then, is said to harden and work evil, this does not mean that he creates evil.[654] Man is not something good or neutral that is compelled to evil by God. Man is corrupt. Nevertheless, he is caught and driven by the creative power of God. When the result, then, is evil, the creative power of God is still something good.[655]

In Luther's understanding, hardening thus to a certain extent is a struggle between God and God. The evil will of man can do nothing on its own; it is utterly dependent on the creative power of God. Hardening, then, occurs when God confronts this evil will of man, which he himself upholds, with the resistance this evil will contests.[656] As a result of this fight between God and God, man's inherent corruption is hardened and aggravated.

Luther does not insist that this be the only possible explanation.[657] What he does insist, is that he has given a probable model for the relation between God and evil, and a model that safeguards the biblical essentials much better does Erasmus'.[658] If this model of hardening is convincing, then, he has won the battle of the interpretation of the story of Pharaoh, and the tropes of Erasmus have proved to be nothing.[659]

There is, however, still one question left. Why does God not change the evil will of man when he upholds and moves it?[660] Why does God only confront Pharaoh with resistance from outside; why does he not also give the Spirit and change his heart? The answer to this question definitely belongs to the realm of *Deus absconditus*.[661] To this question, then, Luther does not even have a suggestion. Human flesh might be offended by it, he admits; the elect, however,

will stand firm.[662] God is God, and there is no rule or reason by which his will can be judged.[663]

God does not work evil. This is an unquestionable presupposition in the theology of Erasmus. Consequently, he has to avoid a literal interpretation of the passages of the Bible that seem to link God and evil to closely.

Luther agrees. God is not the cause of evil. The origin of sin and evil is an insoluble riddle. It stands firm, however, that this origin is not God.

Luther's theology of creation, however, gives him a model for the relation between God and evil that is quite different from Erasmus' model. As the Creator, God always works all in all. God is the working agent in anything that happens. He might then be considered as indirectly responsible also for evil, in the same way as a good craftsman can do much damage with a jagged axe.

This view of God and evil admittedly is a daring one, and Luther does not insist on the tenability of all its implications. God and the devil are brought so closely together that from the point of view of man, it might be impossible to distinguish between them.[664] Still, there can be no doubt that Luther distinguishes very clearly. Satan is no creator. If he is not upheld by the will of God, he can do nothing. On the other hand, God is absolutely not evil. Working incessantly through his creative power, however, he probably cannot but upheld and multiply the evil he finds in the world.

As far as I can see, there are two essential points in Luther's view of the relation between God and evil as it has been developed in this section. First, he retains his faith in the lordship of God also when confronted with the problem of evil. It **is** God who decides. It **is** God who works all in all. He is not the servant of the free will of man who patiently awaits man's decision in the battle between good and evil, as Erasmus seems to think. On the contrary, he is present as the acting power of all that happens. It might be considered as one of the important aspects of Luther's interpretation of the Bible that he in this way can make the omnipotence of God a fundamental element of his understanding of man and the world, and still maintain a distinction between God and evil.

Thereby, the essential point for him is to give a model for the relation between God and evil that does not contradict a literal interpretation of the relevant biblical passages.[665] Erasmus chose to treat these passages because he

found he had to give an interpretation that corresponded to his view of free will. Luther rejects these interpretations as mere evasions of the clarity of the words. Rather than obscuring this clarity with one's own dreams and additions, one should let oneself be exposed to and enlightened by this clarity. Thereby one should stick to the literal meaning of the passages and refrain from asking questions they do not answer. To silence the impertinent objections of reason, however, a certain amount of speculation might be allowed, provided it supports the biblical essentials instead of contradicting them.

Thus there can be no doubt that Luther also in this part of *De servo arbitrio* primarily will guard the ultimate significance of the word of God as the source of cognition, and point to this word as the guide to life and faith.[666] The main object of his deliberations is to refute the unfounded, tropological interpretation of Erasmus so the clarity of the word might work in its own power. Thus liberated, the word of God will inscribe in man's heart nothing but the power of God. The power of God—the power of the word. These are the guiding principles also of this part of *De servo arbitrio*.

The importance of the doctrine of *Deus absconditus* is that it defines both the limit and the relevance of theological cognition. Luther does allow himself to be engaged in a certain amount of theological speculation. The ultimate goal of this speculation, too, is to point to the word of God as the only source of renewal. What is important is what happens and what is said when the word is proclaimed, because that is where God is. Through the action of word then, man is renewed or kept prisoner to his own *adfectus*. He has no possibility of surveying his own situation and analyzing the important factors on his own. His only possibility rests in his ability to act and react; he must—figuratively speaking—be at home by himself and not out looking for hidden gods when opportunity knocks. A world view that attaches his attention to real life, is then of utmost importance, and that is where rhetoric has something decisive to contribute. According to rhetoric, life is speech, not speculation. If he is to be renewed by the power of the word, this must be the word-view of man as well.

f) Summary

To Erasmus, it is absurd that God should work evil and harden Pharaoh. Admittedly, some biblical passages seem to indicate he does. They must, however, be understood tropologically. In this way it can be maintained that the guilt ultimately rests with Pharaoh. God's attitude toward men is always founded on their good or bad deeds.

Luther contends that this implies that Erasmus twists the meaning of the Scripture according to his own liking. The words of the Scripture should judge our exegesis. Thereby one has to observe the unity of the Scripture and not play off one passage against the other. The interpretation of Erasmus, however, seems to be based on the opposite principle.

Luther is particularly negative as regards Erasmus' use of tropological exegesis. He does not reject the existence of tropes. When applying tropological interpretation to a certain passage, however, one must be sure that it is appropriate. The reason this is necessary, is that tropological interpretation always is the instrument the heretics use to try to give their doctrines a biblical foundation. One should only accept a tropological interpretation if the context demands it, or if the literal interpretation is against an article of faith.

According to Erasmus, the literal interpretation of these passages is absurd. Luther does not agree. Admittedly, it is contrary to carnal reason, which want to interpret everything to its own advantage. It is, however, not contrary to any article of faith and fits well with the context of the passages. Consequently, it is to be accepted. It is not even sure if it is absurd, after all. Reason, too, should be able to understand that if God is God, he is to govern man rather than the opposite. This is, however, something reason does not like to admit.

According to Erasmus, the hardening of Pharaoh must be his own responsibility, as God can do no evil. Luther agrees that God is not the origin of evil, whereas the ultimate solution of these riddles is beyond the scope of the biblical revelation. Based on biblical and rational principles, however, Luther tries to give a possible model: As the Creator, God has to uphold and multiply even the corrupted nature of fallen man. In this way, he is the working agent of all that happens, including evil. Though he is good himself, God is in this way

the reason of the hardening of Pharaoh, as the corrupted will of the latter is only provoked when God resists it. Over against the question of why God does not change the will of Pharaoh instead of only upholding it, however, Luther refrains even from a suggestion. This belongs to the realm of *Deus absconditus* in a way that does not even allow for a conjecture.

Luther's argument in this part of *De servo arbitrio* additionally confirms that his principal aim is to guard the power of God and the power of the word of God as the ultimate foundation of theology. As rhetoric suggests, man should avoid speculation and concentrate on the words and events of real life, because that is where God is.

CHAPTER SEVEN
THE EXEGESIS OF *DE SERVO ARBITRIO* III.
THE EXEGESIS OF LUTHER

a) The texts. The critique of Erasmus

Until now, the discussion of the present investigation has been based on Luther's refutation of the exegesis of the texts Erasmus chose. Toward the end of *De libero arbitrio*, however, Erasmus also pays attention to the texts **Luther** chose as the foundation of the argument of *Assertio omnium articulorum*, and he tries to establish a more adequate understanding of these texts. To this explicit critique of the exegesis of *Assertio*, and to Luther's defence of it, we must now turn. Finally, Luther in *De servo arbitrio* adds a discussion of important passages from Romans and the Gospel of John to clarify his position.

It is important to notice that the fight now for the first time moves to what might be described as Luther's home ground. So far, Luther has defended his view through an exegesis of texts Erasmus picked to suit his purposes. From now on, the battlefield is that of Luther's own choice.[667] It might be expected, then, that this would allow for more definite conclusions about the exegesis of Luther as well as about his view of enslaved will.[668]

This does not mean that the exegesis presented so far is not the "real" Luther. He seems to have felt at home everywhere in the Bible, and could base the defence of his theology on any passage. This is an important implication of his view of the clarity and unity of the Bible, and the discussion of *De servo arbitrio* so far seems to confirm that he was able to apply it consistently. Luther does not have to adjust his theology or modify his standpoints, even though the texts have been chosen by Erasmus.

A main objective of *De servo arbitrio* is to demonstrate the inadequacies of the exegesis of Erasmus. The consequence is that one in this book gets to know the exegesis of Luther very much from the negative side. One has to a large extent to base the conclusions concerning Luther's ideas on his refutation of an opponent. As the present investigation has chosen one of Luther's polemical writings as its main source, this could not be different. The polemics

against Erasmus are important also in the last part of *De servo arbitrio*. In addition, however, we have more of the unpolemic, positive exegesis of Luther here than in any other part of the book. For the understanding of the exegetical practice of Luther, then, the last part of *De servo arbitrio* is the most important.

The following texts from *Assertio* play an important role in *De servo arbitrio*:

"My Spirit shall not remain in man, because he is flesh." Gen 6:3.[669]

"The thought and reflection of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth," Gen 8:21, and "every thought of man's heart is always intent on evil." Gen 6:5.[670]

"She has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Isa 40:2.[671]

"All flesh is grass, and its glory is like the flower of the grass. The grass withers and the flower of the grass fades, because the spirit of the Lord blows upon it." Isa 40:6.[672]

"I know, Lord, that the way of man is not his own, and it is not for anybody to govern his stride." Jer 10:23.[673]

"Without me you can do nothing." Jn 15:5.[674]

The gist of Luther's argument in *Assertio* is that the biblical descriptions of human weakness exclude free will. Erasmus thinks that Luther in this way attaches too much importance to these passages. Erasmus' objection against the interpretation of Isa 40:6f. is representative: ". . . mihi videtur violentius trahi ad gratiam et liberum arbitrium."[675] On the whole Erasmus follows Jerome, who maintains that these descriptions of human feebleness do not exclude the existence of a spiritual self that can lead man toward good. It is very important to Erasmus that one should not let the concept of "flesh" characterize man in his totality.[676] Over against Luther's antithetical view of man as either good or bad, Erasmus represents the anthropological triad of flesh, soul and spirit, whereby he is mostly interested in the spiritual part.[677] This is the main part of man. It is called reason or ἡγεμονικόν, and through this man might seek and even perform what is honorable and good.[678] This has been proved by the philosophers more than once, Erasmus argues, and Luther should therefore not maintain such a pessimistic view of man. Admittedly, there are in man also

impulses in the negative direction. One should not, however, look only at these, but rather focus and stimulate man's inherent capacity for doing what is right and good.

This confirms and deepens the understanding of Erasmus' anthropology as it was presented above.[679] The main part of man is his spirit, his reason, which has retained the capacity to judge and choose even after the fall of man.[680] By a cultivation of this ἡγεμονικόν, man should be able to suppress the evil inclination from his own flesh and apply himself to what is right and good.[681] Admittedly, the Bible is very clear in its judgement of human weakness. To invalidate the goodness of man entirely, however, should not be the task of biblical exegesis.

b) The inconsistencies of Erasmus' exegesis

As usual, Luther is not impressed. His main objection is that Erasmus' exegesis is arbitrary. Regarding Erasmus' interpretation of Jer 10, Luther maintains that Erasmus does not give a single reason for his view of the text; he only insists that his interpretation is the correct one.[682] He can, however, only persuade if he can show how the context justifies just this interpretation.[683] If he cannot, Luther will still insist that the exegesis of *Assertio* is the interpretation that fits the overall context.

Discussing Jn 15:5, Erasmus maintains that the meaning is that without Christ, we cannot do anything perfectly. This does not, however, imply that what we do is absolutely nothing. Luther objects that Erasmus only argues that the text **could** be understood like this. He does not give any reason why this **should** be the correct interpretation. There is so little weight in Erasmus' argument that he is like one fighting a fire with dry straw.[684] He only mentions possible interpretations without evaluating them on the basis of the context. This is a very serious negligence, as the context according to Luther is the source of understanding.[685] There is rhetorical power in the way Erasmus presents his argument.[686] A consideration of contents, however, shows that what he says, in reality is nothing. Erasmus uses his rhetorical capacity to hide the subject matter

instead of exposing it, so that nobody should understand the futility of his argument.[687]

Luther thus describes the rhetoric of Erasmus rather negatively. He does not question his opponent's command of the art of writing. According to Luther, however, Erasmus does not use his skill as a writer to expose truth. On the contrary, he uses his eloquence to conceal truth, and this is why Luther considers it as a negative rhetoric.[688] The misuse of eloquence that Luther thus observes, does, however, not lead him to a general rejection of rhetoric. In this passage, too, Luther's understanding of truth is a rhetorical one. This is clearly visible also from what was just referred. The aim of exegesis is to persuade, and its means of persuasion are the same as its own way to truth, i.e., the observation of the setting and context of the actual passage.

On this background it might be adequate to interpret Luther's remarks on the rhetoric of Erasmus as irony. Erasmus perhaps thinks of himself as a great writer, and others might look at him the same way. In reality, however, he betrays the very heart of rhetoric, which is to search the truth without fright and fear, and to follow the truth once it is found.[689] He might know how to put words together effectively. The important thing is, however, that it is impossible to trust what he writes, because he is not guided by truth.

Luther observes that Erasmus declares his willingness to learn from and accept the biblical truth. He does, however, not trust that this is Erasmus' real attitude. According to Luther, this is something Erasmus says to conceal his stubbornness.[690] Heretics will never be taught by the Scripture; they will always try to find something that contradicts its clear message.[691] This is what Erasmus does indeed. To Luther, the exegesis of Erasmus is thus an obvious confirmation of the view that an exegete who is not governed by the *adfectus* of the Holy Spirit, never will understand what the Bible says.[692]

This is additionally confirmed by Erasmus' election of Jerome and Origen as his exegetical authorities. Give us the Scripture rather than the trifles of Jerome, Luther exclaims.[693] To Luther, the Scriptural interpretation of Origen and Jerome is the paradigm of bad exegesis.[694]

Erasmus' main argument against the exegesis of *Assertio* is his view of ἡγεμονικόν, according to which there is a spiritual part of man that is not

totally damaged by sin. In his reply, Luther extensively refutes this argument. Erasmus maintains that non-Christian heroes and philosophers like Socrates, guided by this better part of man, have sought and performed good deeds.[695] Luther objects, however, that we can never prove the goodness of any deed simply by observation. What we see, is only the outward aspect.[696] The hearts are unknown. If we, however, were to look at the deeds, Luther says, we must even then conclude that these heroes rather sought their own than the absolute good. The ancients themselves admit that they were basically concerned about their own honor, whereby they show that their deeds were not good.[697] What they did, might still be right and good in the eyes of the world. In God's eyes, however, it is nothing but blasphemy, as they through their "justice" sought their own honor and not God's. But the glory should be God's alone. The man who is righteous in his own eyes is therefore the greatest sinner of all, as he thinks of himself as he should think only of God.[698]

A further consequence of this argument of Erasmus is, according to Luther, that Christ is turned into a redeemer of only the lower parts of man. If the better part of man is all right, then it does not need Christ; it can fight Satan on its own. To Luther, such an artificial division of man is nothing but a meaningless contradiction.[699] To Luther, the idea of ἡγεμονικόν leads to the absurd conclusion that man is the lord both of God and Satan,[700] as man alone ultimately decides who will win the battle. Thus you can see, Luther argues, how dangerous it is when man tries to understand divine matters on his own without having the Spirit of God.[701]

Trying in this way to follow Luther's argument, one might wonder if not his basic view of Erasmus' exegesis as arbitrary needs further qualification. It is arbitrary in its relation to the Scripture. There is, according to Luther, no positive link between the text of the Scripture and Erasmus' interpretation of it. As an exegete, Erasmus so to say moves in a vacuum. Because Luther evaluates the relation to the Scripture as the only thing that matters in exegesis, he might be justified in describing Erasmus' interpretation as arbitrary. This does, however, not mean that there are not rhyme and consequence in it. The goal of Erasmus is always to preserve in one way or another his view that man is not totally bad. He incessantly looks for arguments to show that what man does,

somehow might be good, or at least not totally bad. In relation to this constancy of purpose, the exegesis of Erasmus is not arbitrary. His exegesis is thus consistent regarding purpose, but arbitrary in its relation to the Scripture.[702]

In exegesis, the relation to the text is a fundamental one. Because this basic relation is void in the exegesis of Erasmus, consistency of purpose cannot save it from leading to an endless range of contradictions. This is inevitable when one, like Erasmus, tries to speak about divine matters in a human way, i.e., tries to interpret the word of God without having the Spirit of God. In Luther's view, Erasmus' project thus has an inherent inconsistency that to a seeing eye is clearly revealed in the unending range of crude contradictions.

A technique Erasmus uses to justify his anthropology, is to focus more on the outward aspects than on the inner qualities. In this way he tries to prove the goodness of man without paying any attention to the obvious fact that what seems good, might be nothing but the cover of a clever, but evil heart. According to Luther, this shallowness is characteristic of Erasmus' way of thinking, and is revealed even by his style, i.e., by his rhetoric. Exactly as the good works he is describing, the rhetoric of Erasmus seems to be good, but is nothing. Therefore Erasmus, despite his obvious eloquence, lacks what rhetoric considers as the ultimate value, the power of persuasion. Outward cleverness cannot conceal the fact that where one expects to find the unshakable foundation, Erasmus has nothing. Therefore, his eloquence ultimately is nothing but a clanging cymbal:[703] It sounds, but accomplishes nothing.

Looking at the exegesis of Erasmus through the eyes of Luther like this, there is not much left of it. How does Luther, however, defend his own view of exegesis over against the misconceptions of Erasmus?

c) Biblical exegesis and the principle of complementarity

The foundation of Luther's counter-argument is here as always his insistence that sound exegesis is an interpretation of the letter of the text, not an explication of the dreams of the exegete. Thereby one has to pay due attention to the context and the circumstances. Luther expresses this as a general hermeneutical

rule: "Verba spectanda sunt . . . secundum materiam subiectam et ad intentionem loquentis."[704] According to this rule he wants to explore both human speech in general and the biblical scriptures in particular.

This ministry of the word of God is a ministry of life and glory,[705] but it is not necessarily easy. Because the natural human attitude is alien to the teachings of the Scripture, the ministry of the word implies repudiation and accusation of those who do not repent.[706] Through his word God in this way tries to draw the people to his light and grace. Mostly, however, the efforts of the ministry of the word are in vain. People will not listen to the accusations and guidance of the word of God. They are then, like Pharaoh, only made worse through the proclamation of the word.[707] It is thus impossible to teach heretics anything through the word of the Scripture.[708] This is repeatedly confirmed by the very example of Erasmus. People who lack the Spirit of God will always twist any passage according to their own liking.

One might see this as a hopeless perspective for a servant of the word. Luther's perspective, however, is not a pessimistic one. Admittedly, even the words of a prophet can accomplish nothing on their own. When God, however, teaches in the hearts of men what the prophet declares loudly, it is a different matter. Then God works through his word, and he can accomplish what is utterly impossible for man.[709] In the same way God taught the Corinthians inwardly as Paul taught them outwardly.[710]

This is obviously an application of Luther's distinction between the interior and exterior clarity of the Scripture. What the preacher and the servant of the word can and shall do, is to let the word sound in its outward clarity. To let the audience grasp the outward clarity, however, God must through the word give the inner clarity of the heart.

Luther applies his interpretation of the passage from 1 Cor as an answer to Erasmus' view of cooperation. You might say that God and man cooperate, Luther states. Through his creative power, God works in everybody, and thus everybody cooperates with the creative power of God through the very evolvement of one's own life. This is true both for the godless and for the pious, whereas only the latter cooperates with, or rather are driven by,[711] the Spirit of God.[712] In this way, the faith of the Corinthians was brought about through the

cooperation of God and Paul. Paul spoke as the Spirit taught him to speak, and the Corinthians received his words in faith as they were given the Spirit of the Lord in their hearts.[713]

Whereas Luther thus accepts the concept of cooperation, he fiercely criticizes Erasmus' view that this implies that the responsibility can be divided between God and man. They do not cooperate in such a way that each of them is responsible for a part of the task. One might speak of a division of labor. Still, both God and man have got an entire task to fulfil, and each of them fulfills his unique task completely. The task of the preacher is to preach. This is not a part of any other task; it is a complete and unique program for life and work, and to fulfil it is the assignment of the preacher. The work of God is to create faith in the heart of man, which is something only God can do, and the work of the preacher should not be interpreted in a way that implies that the preacher accomplishes a part of this task on God's behalf.[714]

Here Luther applies what might be called a principle of complementarity. According to this principle, an event can be described in different perspectives, and each of them is equally valid as a relevant description of the event in its totality.[715] The ship in the storm is at the same time navigated by the sailor and preserved by God. The word that creates faith is at the same time the sermon of the preacher and the work of God in the heart.[716]

This seems, according to Luther, to be a universally valid way of thinking.[717] The deeds of man might always be interpreted according to different perspectives.[718] They are at the same time man's evolvement as a free human being, and the creative power of God working in man. We have met this way of thinking before in *De servo arbitrio*.[719] In the passage just referred, however, Luther gives a more general explication of this principle.[720]

The background of Luther's principle of complementarity seems to be his high esteem of the power of the word. The aim of exegesis is to highlight the meaning of every phrase and passage of the text in a way that lets each aspect of it retain its full force. If words and texts are true, they are as multi-faceted as life itself, and should not be reduced to examples of a fixed and universal, but one-sided system.[721] One might object that such an interpretation will diminish the logical consistence of an argument,[722] even if I am not quite sure if this is a valid

objection.[723] Luther would certainly not have accepted it; his view of the unity of the Scripture and his use of the argument from context imply that he did not consider theology as logically inconsistent. He is, however, more concerned that the words retain their power and thereby their possibility to change man's *adfectus*, than he is with highlighting logical consistence.[724] Luther and rhetoric agree that man is basically not rational. It is nothing but a logical consequence, then, that rational discourse is not the ultimate stylistic ideal.

The immediate consequence of this principle of complementarity is that it disables every attempt at a defence of free will. When the question is what man can do on his own as compared to the work of God, the answer of the Bible is clear. As far as his relation is concerned, man can do nothing on his own.[725] Man can do nothing to be a creature before he is created, and he can do nothing to remain a creature once he is created. This is the work of God alone.[726] In the same way, man cannot renew himself to be a creature in the kingdom of the Spirit, and cannot do anything to remain in the kingdom once he has got there. This is all accomplished by the Spirit.[727]

This does, however, not mean that man does not do anything, or, as Luther puts it: God does not work in us without us.[728] Focusing thus on the work of man as he is upheld by God, one might say that man cooperates with God.[729] In this way God works through man, i.e., the works of man are the works of God.[730] Focusing, then, on man's relation to other creatures, these deeds might be described as the work of man.[731]

What does Luther achieve by this complementarity of thinking? First, he achieves that theology is secured as exegetical theology.[732] As mentioned above, this way of thinking lets him concentrate on the actual perspective of the actual passage. He is not so easily tempted to establish inferences and similes to smooth out the alleged differences between this passage and other passages. Furthermore, Luther through this complementarity manages to maintain the omnipotence of the prescience of God without losing the possibility of describing man as free in his evolvement of himself. God determines everything **and** man does what he wants. This is the way of speaking that is applied in the Bible, Luther argues. Accordingly, it should be the way of speaking of theology as well.

Luther does not understand the necessity of a complementarity of approaches as an argument for relativity.[733] Theology is in its application of this principle merely following the biblical example. Truth has something to say about man **in his relation** to other beings, of which the relations to God and to other human beings are the most important. Because the situation of man is to be interpreted differently as the focus shifts among these various relations, a complementarity of different approaches is necessary. Thereby theology has to keep strictly to these relations as they are spelled out in the Bible.

The necessity of a complementarity of approaches is further demonstrated by Erasmus' negligence of it. He tends to take man's relation with other human beings as the paradigm of man's relation to God. This approach, however, blurs the perception of either relation, and is the reason Erasmus eventually ends up understanding nothing.

Luther's argument even in this part of *De servo arbitrio*, then, confirms and deepens our understanding of his view of exegesis as it has been developed through this investigation. Luther's main objective is to keep to the clear meaning of the Scripture as it is revealed in its own words, even if this might lead him to other structures of thought than the usual and traditional. Thereby he repeatedly has to criticize the exegesis of Erasmus as the latter again and again merely states his own view of the problems without being able to expose the biblical teaching at all.

How does Luther in this connection develop his own exegesis? What is his own view of the biblical passages as the discussion has moved to those he prefers as the biblical foundation of a doctrine of enslaved will? In the passages discussed until now, Luther has presented and defended his view of the exegetical foundation of theology, and he has shown in detail how Erasmus' attempt of building a scriptural theology of free will leads to untenable contradictions and inconsistencies. In addition, he has been able to demonstrate that a doctrine of enslaved will does not lead to such incongruity between the method and contents of theology.

He has, however, still not shown that a doctrine of enslaved will is what the relevant scriptural passages actually teach. The principle of *claritas Scripturae* demands that sound theology is founded on the exegesis of definite biblical

passages; a mere deduction of doctrines from a central concept will not do. The deliberations of *De servo arbitrio* discussed so far thus to a certain extent lack their fundament; they lack the scriptural proof that enslaved will indeed is the basic doctrine of the most important anthropological passages in the Bible. Luther's exegesis of these passages is therefore crucial to the argument of *De servo arbitrio*.

d) Grass, flesh and Spirit—Luther on the biblical concepts

Erasmus is not satisfied that Gen 6:3, "My Spirit shall not remain in man, because he is flesh," is among the texts Luther quoted as a support of his rejection of free will in *Assertio*. According to Erasmus, this is a text about the mercy of God, not about his judgment.[734] "Flesh" stands for the human weakness, for man's inherent tendency to do what is wrong, and "Spirit" is the wrath of God. Gen 6:3 then says that God will not judge man in spite of his inclination to evil.[735]

Luther objects that "the Spirit of God" in the Bible never means wrath, and "flesh" never means "human weakness". On the contrary, "flesh" describes the human enmity toward God.[736] The work of the Spirit, then, is to judge this sinful attitude of the godless people. This is exactly what this verse says, Luther declares, and he insists that this is the only interpretation that fits the context. So great was the enmity between Spirit and flesh that they simply could not coexist, and God had to withdraw his Spirit. If people, then, were evil even when the Spirit dwelled among them, how would it then be when the Spirit was withdrawn?[737]

One might object that this is valid only for the people who lived at the time of Gen 6, Luther adds. According to the Bible, however, all human beings are flesh in this sense of the word, Luther says, and quotes Jn 3:6: "What is born by flesh, is flesh." Therefore one should never accept the exegesis of those who, like Origen and Jerome, deny that "flesh" in the Bible describes the godlessness of man.[738]

Luther admits that the meaning of the word "flesh" in the Bible may vary according to the context. If it is used alone, it denotes the corporeality of man.[739] If it is used in opposition to the Spirit as in Gen 6:3, however, it always denotes the godlessness of man. In this sense of the word, the flesh is good for nothing (Jn 6:63)[740] and will not submit to God (Rom 8:7). Gen 6:3 is then obviously a valid refutation of free will.[741]

This interpretation of Gen 6:3 is founded on two principles. 1) The key concepts are to be interpreted in accordance with their meaning in other important biblical passages. The message of the Bible is a consistent one, and this is reflected in a consistent use of the key concepts. In this way the meaning of the actual passage is immediately related to the overall message of the Bible. 2) The exegete has to pay due attention to the context of the particular passage. Luther has emphasized that each text is an expression of the general biblical message, which the interpreter ought to know before his reading of the particular text. The danger is of course that biblical exegesis then might end up being a dull repetition of what is already known. A sharp eye for the context, however, lets one see how each text is a unique expression of the biblical message. In this way the exegete can grasp how the message of the Bible is given a variety of distinctly different articulations according to the altering times and circumstances.

The exegesis of Gen 6:3 then clearly confirms the view of scriptural interpretation discussed in chapter 4d. The goal of exegesis is to show how the biblical message is given a unique explication in the actual passage. It is only in this way the reading of the Bible can effectively transform the *adfectus* of man. According to Luther, the problem of Erasmus' exegesis is that he fails to cope with either of these aspects. He does not relate his interpretation either to the context or to the general message, and that is the reason his exegesis necessarily fails.

The interpretation of "flesh" is a main problem also concerning Isa 40:6-7.[742] Here, too, Erasmus follows Jerome. "Flesh", then, is the weakness of man, and "Spirit" is the wrath of God. The wrath of God is thus directed toward man's weakness and delight in the material world. It is, however, not directed against the better part of man, Erasmus argues, and introduces his doctrine of

ἡγεμονικόν.[743] The main point of Luther's exegesis is to emphasize that "grass" and "flesh" in this passage describes man in his totality, not only his lesser parts.[744] Again he gets his main argument from the context. When the prophet explains himself, Luther says, he says "the people is grass" (v. 7). Thereby Isaiah clearly means the entire people including their wise, just, holy, etc., not only the worst parts of it. Then soul, body, reason and everything are contained including free will. The flower of the grass and the glory of the flesh stand for the best things in this world: The wisdom of the Greek and the justice of the Jews. In this way the prophet clearly states that there is nothing in man that is of any value when it is under the wrath of God.[745]

This interpretation, Luther adds, corresponds to other passages according to which the wrath of God is directed against the proud and the mighty.[746] Thus it is abundantly confirmed that the wrath of God is directed against all of man, and particularly against his better parts including free will. Erasmus' doctrine of ἡγεμονικόν is a mere dream, and it is completely refuted by Isa 40:6f.[747]

According to Gen 8:21 and 6:5, the thoughts of man are evil. Erasmus objects that even if most people are inclined to evil, this does not exclude free will entirely.[748] Luther again immediately arrests his opponent. The text does not speak about "most people", but about "all people", he says. This is clearly shown by the context. Gen 8:21 describes the situation of mankind after the flood, whereby God promises that even though all are evil, he will not send another flood. The point of the passage is simply lost if you will not let it be a description of **all** mankind, Luther argues.[749]

Luther then goes as far to quote the Hebrew text of Gen 6:5b to show that it characterizes the thoughts of man as entirely evil:

וְכָל-יֵצֶר מַחְשְׁבֹת לִבּוֹ רַק רַע כָּל-הַיּוֹם.

He translates correctly as follows: All the ideas (יֵצֶר) and thoughts (מַחְשְׁבֹת) of his heart are only evil (רַק רַע) all days.[750] Thereby Luther emphasizes that the Hebrew text supports his interpretation even more strongly than the Latin text does. *Vulgata* says that "cogitatio cordis humani *intenta* est ad malum," whereas the Hebrew original simply states that it <u>is</u> evil, and further strengthens this point by its repetitive use of כָּל (all). According to this text, man does nothing but evil all his life. He is like the bad tree in Mt 7:7 that can only produce bad fruit.

Erasmus' view that this text only speaks of an inclination to evil, an inclination that man eventually can control, is thus completely refuted.[751]

The discussion then centers on Isa 40:2: She has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. According to *Assertio,* what Israel thus has received is the grace of God, which was given where there was nothing but sin. If it had been given on the basis of works that were not sin, Isaiah is wrong when he calls it grace.[752]

The interpretation of Jerome and Erasmus is quite different. They maintain that this sentence speaks of God's punishment of the sins of Israel. The reason, at least as far as Erasmus is concerned, is that he cannot accept the idea that what man does before salvation is all evil. Somehow there must be room for the notion that man by doing what is good has to prepare himself for salvation. Grace is then not given to man for his evil deeds, but for his good. What is given for sins, then, can be nothing but punishment.[753] In his exegesis of this passage, then, Erasmus presents exactly the view Luther refuted both in *Assertio* and in the Heidelberg disputation.[754]

Again Luther turns to the context to find support for his interpretation. Isa 40 is altogether a text about the forgiveness of sins. This time he is also in the fortunate situation that his view of the actual passage is confirmed by the most important of all authorities as far as Old Testament exegesis is concerned, namely the New Testament.[755] The text itself, however, is clear enough. The headline of the chapter immediately tells that now comes a word of consolation: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God." According to Luther, the following words, which *Vulgata* renders literally as "speak to the heart of Jerusalem" is a Hebrew way of expressing caring and loving speech.[756] How, Luther asks, could a word in this context be a word about punishment?

Jerome and Erasmus might argue that *Vulgata* says that the evil of Israel was brought to an end: *"Completa est malitia eius"* (v. 2). This is, however, a wrong rendering of the Hebrew text, which speaks of צְבָאָהּ , *militia* (fight, warfare).[757] Luther corrects this, and interprets it as describing Israel's life under the law as a warfare, which, by the grace of God, will end and be replaced by a warfare under the Spirit.[758] This is, however, not accomplished through their merits, but in spite of their failure as servants of the law. Isaiah says that this

failure is forgiven only because of the favor of God. This is the meaning also of the sentence "she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins," Luther argues. Israel had only sin, but she received grace. Thereby the sin is forgiven, the law is abolished, and it is possible to serve Christ in freedom.[759]

The combatants eventually come to speak of the verse that is Luther's main argument against free will, the saying of Jesus in Jn 15:5: Without me you can do nothing. It is the main Scriptural passage of Luther's argument already in *Assertio*.[760] Erasmus is quite correct, then, when he describes this as Luther's Achilles. It is, however, not a convincing one, Erasmus argues, as the word "nothing" may not always mean simply "nothing". It can in fact mean "something", as when a person, who has not achieved his goal, is said to have obtained nothing, even though he has achieved something and has made some progress. In this way, we can achieve "something" even without Christ, Erasmus says.[761]

In his answer, Luther shows the problems both of the presuppositions and the consequences of Erasmus's exegesis. It presupposes an anthropology that dreams of man as living in no man's land where both God and devil are nothing but far away spectators of the decisions of the human will.[762] And it implies that even the godless, who according to Luther are governed by Satan, to a certain extent could produce the fruit of life, i.e., that the enemies of Christ should work **for** Christ.[763] His main arguments, however, are exegetical, and attacks the shallowness of Erasmus's work with the text. As usual, Luther does not doubt the value of Erasmus' philological observations as such. "Nothing" might mean "something" in certain situations. The problem is, however, if that is the meaning **here**, and according to Luther, Erasmus has done absolutely nothing to prove such a conclusion.[764]

The burden of proof lies with the interpretation that argues that the meaning of the words differs from the usual and natural, Luther maintains. Concerning Jn 15:5, then, this burden is on Erasmus, and the lack of proof in his argument lets the exegesis of Luther stand unconquered. "Nothing" means "nothing" until something different is **proved**, and it is not necessary to say anything more.[765]

Luther does, however, go a bit further and gives additional arguments that his interpretation is adequate. By now, it should come as no surprise that he draws his arguments from two different sources: The text's relation to the **overall biblical message**, and its relation to the **particular context**. It is abundantly clear from many biblical passages, Luther says, that Satan is a mighty ruler, and under his command, man cannot direct his will toward anything good. Yes, even if Satan were absent, he continues, the burden of sin would keep man from what is good.[766] The interpretation that man can do nothing without Christ, is thus completely in accordance with the biblical message.

This interpretation is additionally confirmed by the near context.[767] In v. 6 Christ continues: "He who does not remain in me, will be thrown out like a branch and withers. And they collect him and throw him in the fire, and he burns." Unfortunately, Erasmus has simply neglected these words, which are Christ's explanation of his own parable. There is, however, no doubt as regards the meaning of the explanation, Luther maintains. A withering branch only develops to the worse until it ends on the fire. Without Christ man withers, i.e., he is governed by the devil and inevitably develops to the worse.[768] The context thus strongly confirms that "nothing" here keeps its natural and essential meaning.[769] Without Christ, man is nothing more than a withering branch waiting for the fire.

There are important reasons to consider what has now been referred, as the main part of *De servo arbitrio*. Erasmus attacked Luther's view of enslaved will by attacking the exegesis of article 36 of *Assertio*.[770] Now Luther has defended it. Even if both opponents still have more to say, the **debate** is completed. At least Luther seems to have felt like that, as he ends his refutation of *De libero arbitrio* with the discussion of Jn 15:5. There is still about one quarter left of Erasmus' book, but Luther simply ignores it. He seems to have felt that he by eventually defending his interpretation of Jn 15:5, had said what was to be said. Besides, Luther adds, Erasmus merely repeats himself; he brings nothing that is not refuted in *De servo arbitrio* already.[771] Luther, then, obviously felt that his book was long enough.[772]

This is another indication of Luther's view of the importance of exegesis. It has been obvious from the beginning that *De servo arbitrio* is a book about the exegesis of biblical passages related to the problem of enslaved will. Luther's conclusion of his refutation of Erasmus seems, however, to suggest not only that the exegesis of these passages is important for a theological discussion of enslaved will, but that there is nothing to say about this question apart from this exegesis. I tried in chapter four to show that to Luther, the ideal of theology was to speak as the word of God.[773] His defence of *Assertio* shows how he thought this ideal should be accomplished. The task of theology is to make clear what is the meaning of the actual biblical passage, and relate it to the overall biblical message. When the theologian in this way has confessed the biblical revelation over against actual heresy, there is nothing more to be said. **The task of theology is completed.** There is no need for a further harping on the results of the exegesis, a probing and sifting of what is acceptable and what is not. Theology **is** exegesis, and does not need to mend the results. When the exegete and theologian has reached a clear understanding of the text, his task is fulfilled and he may lay down his pen. He has spoken like the word of God, and there is nothing that should be added.[774]

Man is flesh and he is grass; the thoughts of his heart are evil, and apart from Christ he can accomplish nothing. This anthropology of Luther has from Erasmus on often been criticized as "pessimistic". One may or may not agree concerning this criticism. As far as I can see, however, the question is if it is relevant at all. Luther has no anthropology of his own to be criticized or lauded by opponents or adherents. He is a mere expositor of the view of man as the Bible presents it. One may criticize this view of man as bad exegesis as Erasmus did, or one may criticize the teaching of the Bible itself, as others have done. But an evaluation of the anthropology of Luther as an independent entity simply falls short of grasping the basics. It overlooks what to Luther was, not only essential, but everything: The biblical foundation and content of his thinking. Thus, it gives him a far too independent role in the development of his own theology. As a theologian and expositor of the Bible, Luther was a soldier under command, and this must be the point of departure for any evaluation that wants to be taken seriously.[775]

Luther always relates the interpretation of a given text to two different sets of coordinates. One is the immediate context of the text itself; the other is the larger context of the biblical message of Jesus Christ. This gives Luther a keen eye both for constancy and variation in the biblical language.[776] His exegesis is governed by the fundamental philological assumption that a word has a basic and natural meaning that is to guide the interpretation every time this word is encountered. One of his objections against the exegesis of Erasmus is that the latter fails to observe this consistency of the Bible.[777] Luther seems to consider this consistency as a general characteristic of language and a precondition of the truthfulness of cognition.[778] If not the words are allowed to have a constant meaning irrespective of the interpreter's appreciation of this meaning, exegesis will inevitably end up being determined more by the exegete than by the text.

Luther is, however, aware how the context both in the wider and more narrow sense of the word may influence and even change the meaning of a certain concept. It is then of utmost importance both that the interpreter notices the change, and that he can state the reasons why the concept has to be interpreted differently. In his criticism of the arbitrariness of Erasmus' tropological interpretation of the hardening of Pharaoh, Luther stated the criteria for such a shift in meaning. It can only be accepted that a word has a different meaning if it is proved that such a shift is intended by the author (the immediate context), or demanded by the doctrinal message of the Bible (the larger context).[779] Whereas this principle is applied consistently throughout *De servo arbitrio*, the present chapter gives some particularly valuable examples of how Luther implements it both to establish the actual meaning of the text, and to refute what he considers as the fumbles of his opponent.

As could be expected, Luther's "home ground exegesis" does not differ substantially from the preceding parts of *De servo arbitrio*, even if certain aspects of his thinking here definitely are more easily discernible. One might notice, however, that this part of his book contains no reference to *Deus absconditus* and the hidden, predestining work of God. The meaning is obviously not that *Deus absconditus* and predestination do not belong to the doctrine of the "real" Luther. Why and how predestination and *Deus absconditus* are related to other aspects of Luther's thought, has been shown earlier

in this investigation.[780] When discussing the essentials of enslaved will, however, Luther exclusively concentrates on the biblical descriptions of man. The implication is obvious. Luther simply lives as he teaches. The concept of *Deus absconditus* is important as the background and framework for the biblical revelation, and gives this revelation its ultimate importance and authority. It is, however, **never** to be investigated for its own sake. What man needs to know, is the definitive truth about himself, not about God. This truth about man is to be found in the biblical descriptions of man. In accordance with his own understanding of theology, these descriptions and nothing else are the anthropology of Luther.

The refutation of Erasmus is brought to an end. His errors are amply demonstrated, and the consistency and relevance of Luther's alternative approach have been demonstrated as well: The clear message of the Bible is that man has no free will. Luther must, however, have felt the need for a further positive explication of this view of enslaved will, and he gives it in the form we now should expect: A short presentation of central passages from Paul's letter to the Romans[781], and from the Gospel of John.

e) Wrath, law and grace—the exegesis of Rom

The point of departure for Luther's exegesis of Romans in *De servo arbitrio* is Rom 1:18: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all impiety and injustice of men who hold back the truth of God in injustice."[782] What he aims at, is to maintain that Paul here places all men under the wrath of God. He has several arguments to support this view, and the first of them he draws from the very expressions of this verse, which he interprets as Hebraisms. "All impiety and injustice of men" then means the same as "the impiety of all men". Accordingly, the relative clause is to be interpreted as an apposition to, and not as a qualifying limitation to "all men". The meaning is not that the wrath of God is revealed only against those who hold back the truth of God, but that all suppress the truth, and therefore is under the wrath of God.[783]

This argument would, however, be of no value if it was not supported by the context, Luther says. Thereby he particularly focuses on v. 16,[784] according to which the gospel is necessary for salvation both for Jews and Greeks, i.e., for **all** people. Everybody needs the power of God to be saved from his wrath; there is absolutely no exception. The Jews and Greeks are the best among peoples, and do not lack the achievements of free will. Nevertheless, they are altogether placed under the wrath of God.[785]

The very point of Paul's reasoning, then, is that what is best among men, i.e., law, justice and wisdom, is impious and unjust. Paul maintains a strict dichotomy. Salvation belongs exclusively to those who believe the gospel, the wrath to all others irrespective of their possible virtues. To dissolve this dichotomy is to spoil the power of the words of the Bible. As has been repeatedly shown in this investigation, this was to Luther probably the worst possible crime.[786]

Luther, then, turns to experience to confirm his exegesis.[787] Never has any man independent of the gospel understood that the work of the Incarnate is the way to justice and salvation.[788] There must have been people among the Greeks and the Jews who have tried to make use of the possibilities of free will. Why is it then, that all of them are not only ignorant of the way to salvation, but move in the opposite direction and even fight it? Free will, then, is the archenemy of salvation, Luther concludes.[789]

As a final support of his view of Rom 1:18, Luther examines Rom 3:9, which he considers particularly important as Paul's own summary of this part of Romans.[790] Here Paul says that he has accused both Jews and Greeks that all of them are under the power of sin.[791] It is impossible, Luther maintains, to invent any interpretation that can do away with the clarity of these words. Paul's words will simply not allow for any exception.[792]

Paul did, however, base his argument on biblical exegesis himself. Is this a tenable exegesis, or does Paul attach too much importance to certain passages from the Old Testament? He does not, Luther says, and quotes as Paul from Ps 14: "Sed omnes declinaverunt."[793] There is, then, no difference between the teaching of Paul and that of the Old Testament. Before God, all are judged as unjust; there is not anyone who seeks God.[794] The meaning is not only that free

will does not succeed in doing good. There is not even a motion in the direction of God, Luther argues.[795] When Paul, then, repeatedly underlines that *all* men are wicked in *all* they do he is completely in accordance with the Old Testament. Founded as it is on such a firm ground, no distinction or evasion can escape the power of the all-inclusiveness of his argument.[796]

Luther further strengthens this view with a discussion of Paul's understanding of the law based on Rom 3:20: "No flesh is justified before him through the works of the law."[797] Again Luther underlines that man can never show anything better than the works of the law. If these are nothing but "flesh", then, how can there be anything that is not flesh?[798]

Somebody has tried to evade this argument by contending that Paul here only speaks about the Old Testament laws of religious ceremonies.[799] This is a view that Luther traces back to Jerome.[800] The meaning of grace, however, is not to liberate from ceremonial laws only, as this is the easiest part of the law. It liberates from all the works of the law. In fact, Paul never singles out the ceremonial laws as something particular as Jerome and his followers do. Paul always regards the law as an entity, and Luther quotes Gal 3:10 to prove it.[801] Contrary to the opinion of these interpreters, then, Paul has never said that it is wrong to keep the ceremonial laws. The works of law including the ceremonies might be right and good. The problem is, however, that they are worthless as means of salvation.[802] The law can bring nothing but *cognitio peccati.*[803] This is, however, important enough, as man is always apt to consider his own sin as justice and despises the justice of God in the gospel.[804]

This very clearly demonstrates how Luther quite one-sidedly applies exegetical tools to the clarification of a theological problem. He has now left the discussion of *De libero arbitrio* and is free to shape his discussion as he wants to. Still, his book contains nothing but exegesis of relevant biblical passages. The main difference over against the preceding parts of *De servo arbitrio* is that Luther here allows himself to cover a much longer passage, something that lets him even more strongly emphasize the importance of a clear understanding of the context. Rom 1:18 is to be considered as a sort of headline of what follows. This sets the framework for the following exegesis, and gives the observations of exegetical details their relevance.

Luther's exegetical toolbox evidently contained a variety of instruments. In the passage I have just referred, he applies semantical analysis based on observations of the Hebrew (and Greek) original, contextual analysis, and investigates the relation of a New Testament text to its Old Testament basis. He does not, however, limit himself only to what might be called intratextual arguments, but appeals to experience, as well. The view that Rom 1:18ff. excludes a positive evaluation of free will in a salvific context is supported by the fact that free will on his own never has understood what was God's plan for salvation. Experience clearly shows that the revelation of the Bible has always been the precondition for such an understanding, Luther argues. Biblical exegesis is thus not to be performed in a cultural vacuum. On the contrary, human experience and common sense are valid as means of cognition, and may then be applied as exegetical arguments, too.

As far as I can see, the background of Luther's acceptance of the exegetical relevance of extratextual argument is his view of the actuality of the biblical text. What the Bible wants to teach us about, is not primarily the opinions of prophets and apostles who lived long ago. It primarily wants to teach us about our own lives, and to guide us as regards our relation to God and to our neighbor. This is exactly the same field as common experience has something to say about. As a gift of the good Creator, true and valid experience will then confirm[805] sound exegesis and secure its relevance as a guidance for ordinary men and women.[806]

Where Luther most clearly differs from modern exegesis, is probably in his view of the unity of the Bible. It is very important for him to show that Paul has not attached too much importance to his quotations from the Old Testament. On the contrary, the apostle is in complete accordance with the Old Testament as regards his teaching about the state of fallen man. Even if a modern reader might not follow, e.g., Ernst Käsemann's view of the multiplicity of theologies in the Bible,[807] he would probably rather side with Erasmus' "magis pugnant" than with Luther at this point. To Luther, however, the unity is essential. As an exegete, he presumes that the word of God does not contradict itself. This does not mean that he merely reads a theological doctrine into the text rather then reading the text itself. As has been repeatedly demonstrated through this

investigation, he has a sharp eye for context and circumstances. He does, however, not interpret difference in nuances between texts as a difference of doctrine. To Luther, this would imply that the exegete looked upon the author of the actual passage as a writer who is adding of his own more than he is transmitting the word of God. It is Luther's conviction that a man with such a view of the Bible can accomplish nothing in the field of biblical exegesis.[808]

This discussion of wrath and law according to Rom 1:18-3:20 is followed by a discussion of Rom 3:21ff., where Luther's argument is closely parallel to that of the preceding passage. Here, too, Luther particularly underlines the antithetical structure of Paul's argument, which here is expressed as the distinction between grace and deed.[809] The justice of God is given according to grace and faith, and has nothing to do with deed and free will.[810] Here, too, Luther has a semantic discussion of a central concept. "The glory of God" (v. 23) may have two meanings, he says, one active and one passive. The active, which means the glory God has, is common in Latin, whereas the passive, which means the glory we have in God, is common in Hebrew.[811] Concerning Rom 3:23, Luther prefers the passive meaning. Glory in God, however, solely belongs to those who trust the grace of God, and this is something free will cannot do.[812] This argument, too, Luther further supports by appealing to experience: *Et hoc probat etiam experientia*.[813] No performer of free will[814] has ever been **sure** that his deeds please God.[815] This lack of trust, however, is nothing but disbelief, and surely angers God.[816] And here, too, Luther discusses Paul's exegetical proof, the story of Abraham. The patriarch was not justified according to his moral justice (Rom 4:2), but according to faith (v. 3).[817]

If one maintains that the words of Paul *magis pugnant* than the words of the Old Testament, one might maintain something similar about the relation between Paul and Luther. Luther would, however, certainly not accept such a criticism. He is surprised himself, he says, how Paul repeatedly emphasizes the universal relevance of his distinctions, and incessantly uses words like "all", "nobody", "never", "without".[818] All has gone astray, no one is just, all are sinners, we are justified without works, etc. It is impossible to find clearer expressions, and Luther wonders how so many in spite of these words have come to hold the opposite view: Some has not gone astray; somebody is just,

etc.[819] Considering the impressive list of evidence he has now gathered, Luther declares that his enemies are beaten. They will, however, not admit it, as such an admission is a gift of the Holy Spirit alone.[820] Adding a discussion of the distinction between Spirit and flesh in Rom 8, Luther concludes his discussion of Romans.

Man is flesh under the wrath of God. This might be called the essence of Luther's exegesis of Romans in *De servo arbitrio*. At the same time, this is his view of enslaved will. Luther's view of theology is that it should speak as the word of God. The investigation of his exegesis of Romans shows that this understanding of theology implies that the explication of the essentials of enslaved will is to be given as an exclusive concentration on the biblical descriptions of man. In this way, the word of God is the teaching of the church.[821]

One might object that even if this principle is tenable as regards a doctrinal writing like Romans, it might be more difficult to apply it, e.g., to gospel exegesis. With this in mind, let us now turn to Luther's presentation of the Gospel of John in *De servo arbitrio*.

f) Christ and free will—the exegesis of Jn

Luther finds in the Gospel of John exactly the same sort of antithetical argumentation as he finds in Romans.[822] From the outset, Jn emphasizes that the world did not know Christ (1:5), and that flesh and blood cannot help anybody into the kingdom of Christ (1:12). It is impossible to exclude anybody from these descriptions,[823] which Luther ironically calls a eulogy of free will.[824]

Luther pays great attention to Nicodemus, whom he considers as an example of the best contributions of free will.[825] But even if he accepts the truthfulness of Christ, praises his deeds and seeks his counsel, he does not know anything of Christ's teaching of salvation through the rebirth in water and Spirit. In fact, nobody does, and that is the reason we turn to the futile discussions of a rest of power in man.[826]

Jn 6:44 is of course important in Luther's argument: "Nobody comes to me unless my Father draws him."[827] But his exegesis of Jn is mainly directed against Erasmus' view that the better part of man is excluded from the biblical condemnations of flesh and sin.[828] According to Luther, the Bible always views man as an entity. When the Baptist in Jn 3:36 declares that the wrath of God rests upon those who are disobedient to the Son, does he thereby only condemn the lower parts of man, Luther asks. In this context, Jn 16:8-9 is particularly important: "The Spirit shall convince the world about sin, because it does not believe in me."[829] According to this verse, Luther says, they sin who do not believe. This sin, however, is a sin of will and reason, and not of the lower parts of man.[830]

Luther interprets Erasmus' distinctions between better and lesser parts of man as an exegetical maneuver to avoid the inclusiveness of the biblical antitheses.[831] Luther is, however, decidedly to opposed to such an exegesis. The essence of the teaching of the apostles and the Scripture is to show that Christ is **necessary**.[832] If you accept this antithetical teaching, you must admit that free will is opposed to Christ and governed by error, lie, death and Satan, Luther argues.[833] If you do not accept it, however, you paralyse the Scripture, and in fact invalidate both Christ and the Scripture.[834]

It has been repeatedly underlined throughout this investigation how the main objective of Luther's exegesis is that the words of the Scripture retain their **power**. Thereby the exclusiveness of the message of Christ obviously is an important aspect of this power. It is the unanimous witness of prophets and apostles that Christ is the **only** way to salvation. This is the reason the proclamation of Christ necessarily is performed through antitheses. The uniqueness of Christ corresponds to the uniqueness of the book of Christ, the Bible, as a means of bringing man a new *adfectus*. A faithful rendering of the biblical antitheses is thus of ultimate importance, as they are the biblical way of proclaiming the uniqueness without which the message simply is lost. Luther's own metaphor is that without an adequate interpretation of its antitheses, the Scripture is paralysed. One may read it and discuss it, but its power of renewing *adfectus*, i.e., of creating faith, is gone. The anthropology of Erasmus is an

example of an exegesis that destroys the antithetical force of the Scripture, and therefore is deadly dangerous.

One might again ask the question of "magis pugnant." Is Luther's insistence on the exclusive character of the biblical antitheses an adequate interpretation of the biblical message? Or has his incessant quest for the rhetorically powerful led him to attach too much importance to these passages? Such a question is of course more easily asked than answered, and a fair treatment would undoubtedly overburden the framework of the present investigation. It should, however, not be difficult to guess what would have been Luther's own reply to such a question, as he has given it repeatedly throughout *De servo arbitrio*. He would simply read a biblical passage like, e.g., Jn 3:36: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him." Then he would ask if this is an absolute antithesis between faith and wrath or if it is not. And when the question is asked this way, it is perhaps not so difficult to answer it after all.

This presentation of Luther's exegesis of Jn, then, clearly confirms the findings of the investigation of his interpretation of Romans. The doctrine of enslaved will is to be given as a presentation of the biblical descriptions of man. Thereby Luther is aware that the language of Jn is different from that of Paul, and makes use of the fact that he now is interpreting a historical, not a doctrinal writing.[835] Reading Luther, one gets a clear impression that Paul and Jn are not mere repetitions of each other. As the main antitheses, however, are the same, the teaching is basically identical. Left to himself, i.e., within the realm of free will, man is under the wrath of God. His only hope of renewal is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

g) The impossibility of free will and the justice of God

Somewhat surprised, Luther has to conclude that Erasmus has written a whole book against his view of enslaved will without even touching the passages he himself would consider as the essential: Rom 7:14ff. and Gal 5:16ff. To Luther, these passages say that even within the holy, the power of evil is so great they

hardly do anything good. Perhaps he ought not be so surprised after all. Erasmus has written his book as an attack of the exegesis of *Assertio*, and these passages are not among those treated there. It is, however, important to notice that to Luther the doctrine that original sin remains after baptism is an important aspect of his view of enslaved will,[836] even if it does not play any great role in *De servo arbitrio*.[837] Apparently he does not consider his book as an exhaustive presentation of the Scriptural forces against free will.

Luther is not blind for Erasmus' great achievements as a scholar, and praises his erudition and eloquence.[838] As for himself, he has no other qualification than being a Christian.[839] This is, however, essential, as the main problem of Erasmus is that he, in spite of his great learning, still has not received from God the adequate understanding of the actual question.[840] As has been demonstrated above, it is of ultimate importance to Luther that theological insight in the end is something only God can give.[841] As such an insight is demonstrated by a clear confession, the very conclusion of Erasmus' book[842] is a proof he is still far from the goal, Luther says. His own book he concludes with the exegetically founded assurance that is characteristic of *De servo arbitrio*: "Ego vero hoc libro NON CONTULI, SED ASSERUI ET ASSERO, ac penes nullum volo esse iudicium, sed omnes suadeo, ut praestent obsequium."[843] Driven by the clarity of the Scripture, Luther can give no margin for doubt and debate. Speaking as he is on the basis of the authority of the Scripture, he can and must demand obedience, or the demonstration that his exegesis after all is unfounded.

Luther is aware that his book above all will meet criticism concerning its doctrine of election and predestination.[844] He is, however, not in the position that he can recant. In his final remarks he does not repeat his views about the foundation and relevance of this doctrine. Instead, he gives some practical advice of how to live with it. It should not be difficult, he argues, to admit that we cannot penetrate the wisdom of God. Human reason will not understand how God can be just when he sees how the ungodly flourish in this world. Faith, however, understands that this problem is solved through God's eternal judgement of the ungodly. In the same way, we will understand even the problem of predestination when we finally receive the light of the glory of

God.[845] Until then, the important thing is to know and confess that God is merciful toward those he saves.[846] In this way, even this distinction between *lumen naturae, lumen gratiae* and *lumen gloriae*[847] above all will guard against an improper preoccupation with *Deus absconditus*.

As the conclusion of *De servo arbitrio*, Luther summarizes his argument in five points. Here he brings together five of the main notions of this book: God, Satan, original sin,[848] experience and the work of Christ. If the prescience of God is to be taken seriously, we must admit that his predestination never fails. Satan guards his prisoners and original sin makes trouble even for those who are guided by the Spirit. The Jews, who sought justice, did not attain it, but the Gentiles, who sought nothing but injustice, did. Christ has redeemed people with his blood, because all would perish without him.[849] Each of these arguments is alone enough to fight free will. Taken together, they strongly and eloquently support what Luther has maintained throughout *De servo arbitrio*. The justice of man rests nowhere else than in the word of God, and if it is to be his, it must be forced upon him in spite of his own resistance. This is the work of God through Christ and in his word.

I have argued that *De servo arbitrio* is not primarily a book about God and predestination. It is, as the name indicates, primarily a book about man and enslaved will. What Luther finds in the Scripture, is not a doctrine about God. He has in *De servo arbitrio* explicitly rejected that there is such a doctrine in the Scripture.[850] What he finds, is a doctrine about man in his relation to God. In this relation, God is the one who decides. This has consequences for man's view of God that might seem to be difficult. Luther's discussion of *lumen naturae, lumen gratiae* and *lumen gloriae* is one indication of this difficulty; Erasmus' book about free will is another.

The tenor of Luther's argument in *De servo arbitrio* is, however, that this view of the relation between God and man is one of hope. It is no use trying to forget the mighty opponents of a man striving for salvation. He is a prisoner both of Satan and his own flesh, and confronted with the fact that nobody so far has attained salvation by their own power. This is the situation as the Bible depicts it and experience confirms it, and as a faithful adherent both of Scripture and experience, Luther has no escape. In this situation, the message of

redemption and predestination to salvation is not a message of despair, but one of hope and immense joy.

In a world where sin and Satan reign, it is not easy to live by a message of hope and joy. To keep it, man must constantly receive it anew from the source as the very foundation of life and work. This is the reason exegesis and confession to Luther belong together as the basic reality of the life of a Christian. From its first to its last page, *De servo arbitrio* is nothing but an exposition of this basic reality. To have one's life from the word of God and to teach and live as this word, was the ideal of Luther as a Christian and as a theologian.

He knew how easily this treasure was lost. He knew that if he as a *minister verbi divini* was not constantly on alert to expose and defend the exact meaning of the word of God, he might go wrong, as might they he should guide. He does not, however, seem to have felt this as a burden, but more as a joy. The reason is of course that he knew that in the end, it was not he who carried the word, but the word of God that carried him. And because he lived from this experience and witnessed about it when opportunity was given him, *De servo arbitrio* is more a confession of faith than it is a theological treatise. *Assertio* is the frame and key word of this book, from the "delectari assertionibus"[851] in the introduction to the "ASSERUI ET ASSERO"[852] in the conclusion. Determined be the word of God, one can do nothing but confess the faith in the word of God. This is the reason Luther wrote *De servo arbitrio*.

h) Summary

Commenting finally on Luther's exegesis in *Assertio*, Erasmus contends that Luther attached too much importance to the passages he quoted. Admittedly, man is weak, but the better part of man is not completely unable to strive for the good.

Luther objects that Erasmus does not demonstrate that this is what these passages say. This lack of argument Erasmus tries to hide by rhetoric, but this will not succeed, as there is no serious quest for truth in Erasmus' discourse. Contrary to what Erasmus thinks, Christ is the Saviour of all of man, not only

of his lesser parts. When he proves this exegetically, Luther pays attention both to the context of the particular passage, and to its relation to the overall message of the Bible. Thus he emphasizes that the biblical message is a consistent one.

The basic principle that the Spirit of God is a necessary precondition for an understanding of the word God, Luther interprets as cooperation between God and the preacher. This does, however, not imply a division of responsibility between God and man, as both have a complete and unique task to fulfil. Luther in this way seems to think according to a principle of complementarity. This is a way of thinking that lets him highlight the meaning of every phrase and passage of the text in a way that lets each aspect of it retain its full force. Man is free in his dominion over other creatures. He is, however, not free in his relation to God, even though he might be said to cooperate with God when God works in him.

Commenting on the biblical passages, Luther underlines that "flesh" describes man in his enmity toward God. Both the Old and the New Testament (Paul) describe man as evil. Thereby it is important for Luther to maintain that there is no difference between the anthropology of the Old Testament and the anthropology of Paul.

Luther presents Jn 15:5 as his main argument against free will. Erasmus' refutation is completely unrelated to the context, and therefore rejected by Luther.

Thus having rebutted Erasmus' protest against the Achilles of *Assertio*, Luther ignores the rest of *De libero arbitrio*. This again seems to suggest something of the importance of exegesis to Luther. Theology consists of exegesis, and when he has refuted the opponents' treatment of the main Scriptural passages and exposed that their clear message is that of enslaved will, there is nothing more to be said. Accordingly, Luther has no theology or anthropology of his own. He wants to be nothing but an interpreter of the Scripture, and should be criticized or lauded as such.

In his exegesis of Rom and Jn, Luther emphasizes the antithetical structure of these books. Man is flesh and under the wrath of God, and the law brings salvation to nobody. In an emphatically exclusive way, both presents Christ as the only way to salvation.

This part of *De servo arbitrio* is the only part where the combatants treat Scriptural passages that Luther chose. Accordingly, the exegetical foundation for Luther's view of enslaved will and for an understanding of the theology that corresponds to this anthropology, is therefore to be found in this part of the book. In addition, it might be significant that this part of the book contains no discussion of *Deus absconditus*. This corresponds to Luther's opinion that the hidden God is never to be investigated for its own sake. The Bible is primarily a book about man in his relation to God, not about God himself.

Luther declares his respect for Erasmus as a scholar, but he is not trustworthy as a theologian, as he lacks the *assertio* of the Christian faith. He summarizes the biblical views of God, Satan, man and Christ, and declares that each of them powerfully refutes the doctrine of free will. In this way, the Bible gives man salvation, and is the source of joy and hope for the Christian. To defend and confess this faith Luther has written *De servo arbitrio*.

CHAPTER EIGHT
LUTHER'S EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY

According to Luther, the identity of theology is that a Christian shall speak as the word of God. This a Christian can do, because he has the Spirit of the Bible as his own basic *adfectus*. Consequently, he will be able both to give a faithful and accurate interpretation of the words of the Bible, and to guard this interpretation against false teaching.

In *De servo arbitrio*, Luther applies this theological methodology on three different sets of problems. In fighting Erasmus' view that the biblical commandments presuppose that they can be fulfilled, he insists that in interpreting these texts, one must carefully observe what is expressed in the indicative mood, and what is said in imperative. In fighting Erasmus' view that it is absurd to maintain that God hardens, he contends that this alleged absurdity is exactly what the actual passages assert. Consequently, one has to accept it, as the context gives no indication that a more conservative view is intended. Finally, in fighting Erasmus' tendency to moderate the biblical descriptions of human weakness, Luther maintains that these descriptions actually aim at emphasizing the difference between ideal and reality in human existence. To subdue the significance of these passages is thus to misinterpret them.

No matter what is the problem, then, Luther is convinced that one can solve it by insisting on the ultimate theological relevance of grammatical and semantic analysis.[853] It is probably no exaggeration to say that this is the **one** supposition that gives *De servo arbitrio* its substance and integrity. The reason is that Luther through this assumption arrives at his only criterion for theological evaluation. According to this criterion, the presence of the Spirit in the believer is to be judged according to the accuracy of his exegesis and nothing else. If he as an interpreter of the Bible meticulously observes the common rules of grammar and semantics, he speaks as the word of God, and his exegesis is tenable and his doctrine sound. If not, he is to be rejected as a false teacher who leads his audience astray.

Luther thus invariably explains and attacks Erasmus' misconceptions as poor exegesis. Erasmus does not pay careful attention to the mood of the verbs; he introduces a tropological interpretation without discussing if it is adequate or

not, and he does not notice the antithetical structure of the Bible. In short: Erasmus' exegesis is wrong and his doctrine false, because he does not interpret according to the basic rules of human communication.

In the exegetical discussions in *De servo arbitrio*, Luther repeatedly emphasizes the argument from context. More than once he admits that Erasmus' semantic analysis is valid; the disputed word **might** have the meaning Erasmus suggests.[854] The problem is, however, that Erasmus, because he ignores the contextual analysis, never is able to demonstrate that this also is the meaning in the actual passage. Arguing against Erasmus' exegesis in this way, Luther underlines that sound exegesis will pay due attention both to the immediate context of the passage, and to the overall unity of the biblical message. As a competent orator, the Holy Spirit does not contradict itself any more than a qualified human speaker does. Accordingly, an authentic interpretation of the biblical message must respect its unity and integrity.

The investigation has so far demonstrated how biblical exegesis is both the form and the content of Luther's theology, and it has shown in some detail how this concept shapes his answer to Erasmus. Admittedly, the source material has so far been quite restricted, as the investigation has been primarily concerned with only one of Luther's writings. Undoubtedly, this writing is an important one. It has, however, been argued that *De servo arbitrio* to a certain extent is unique within Luther's literary work. The important question in this context is if this is true as far as Luther's understanding of the exegetical foundation of theology is concerned, or if *De servo arbitrio* in this respect is consistent with Luther's other writings. An exhaustive examination of this question is not possible within the framework of the present investigation. Even a short discussion might, however, suggest something about how the conclusions from the investigation of *De servo arbitrio* pertain to Luther's thought in general.[855]

In 1545, volume one of Luther's collected works in Latin was printed in Wittenberg.[856] Luther was asked to write a preface, which he did after some hesitation.[857] This preface is Luther's most detailed testimony concerning the years when the unknown University professor in Wittenberg was transformed to the leader of a reform movement. It has therefore for a long time been a central document for the investigation of Luther's theological development

during this period.[858] In this preface, Luther warns the reader against the works he wrote from 1517 to 1519,[859] as he at this time had not yet fully grasped the consequences of the new understanding of justification. One might of course ask, as the scholars indeed have, if a presentation of these events written almost thirty years later, is accurate in all respects.[860] What is important in our context, however, is to see how Luther in retrospect understood and presented his own theological development. When he looked back and summed up his turbulent life, what did he consider as decisive? Where did he find the essentials?

There can be no doubt that Luther in 1545 considers biblical exegesis to be **the** decisive component of his theological development.[861] What had particularly occupied him, was, according to the preface, the interpretation of the expression "in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed" from Rom 1:17.[862] He had been told, he says, that "righteousness of God" here meant God's punishing righteousness. Observing the context of the passage, however, he was, by the mercy of God, led to another understanding. According to this new interpretation of Rom 1:17, which he in 1545 presents as the fundament of his theological work, "righteousness of God" here is the righteousness that God gives to the sinner, and which the sinner receives through faith.[863] This discovery opened the Scripture to him, he declares. Repeating the Bible from memory, he at once found many passages that taught him exactly the same lesson: The work of God is the work he performs in us; the power of God is the power he gives us; the wisdom of God is the wisdom through which he makes us wise, etc.[864] From then on he could, even in retrospect, consider himself as fit to adequately present the basics of the biblical message, even if many of the consequences still were unclear to him.[865]

There are many interesting observations to be made from this passage. For one thing, Luther's criticism of the theology he had been thought was, according to this preface, not primarily a criticism of its doctrinal incorrectness. Luther does not attack traditional theology because it teaches that God is righteous when he condemns the sinner, and the reason is obvious: This is a doctrine with which Luther agrees completely. He attacks traditional theology because it, at least as Luther understands it, teaches that this is the meaning also in Rom 1:17. Luther's evangelical discovery is thus not a discovery that the doctrines of

traditional theology are wrong; it is primarily a discovery that its exegesis is wrong. It might thus seem that according to the preface from 1545, exegetical accuracy is more important to Luther than dogmatical correctness.

The passage also makes it clear why this is so. The reason Luther comes to consider the traditional interpretation of Rom 1:17 as a theological disaster, is that it destroys the possibility of this passage to renew its reader.[866] The point of Rom 1:17 as Luther came to understand it, is not to tell that God is righteous in himself, but to tell that the gospel transmits this righteousness to the believer, and, by telling it, to realize it. This was exactly what happened to Luther when he eventually understood Rom 1:17. I almost felt as I was born again, Luther says, and continues: It was like entering into the Paradise through open gates.[867]

In this way it becomes clear that Luther's fundamental theological breakthrough was nothing but a discovery and a personal experience of the affective power of the word of God. At least this was what seemed essential when he many years later looked back at the formative years. He realized, and he experienced, that what the Scripture ultimately aims at when it tells about God's righteousness, is to convey this righteousness to the reader. In the same way, the Scripture transmits the work of God, the power of God, the wisdom of God, the might of God, his salvation and his glory.[868] By doing so, the Scripture transforms his reader; by reading the Bible, one is renewed to the likeness of the image of God.

We are here obviously very close to Luther's description of *claritas Scripturae* in *De servo arbitrio*, according to which the Scripture impresses its message on the reader, transforms him and determines faith and work. In *De servo arbitrio* Luther pointed to his high evaluation of the Scripture's capacity to transform its readers affectively and effectively as the foundation of his rejection of the exegesis of Erasmus. In his preface from 1545 he points to the same factor as the foundation of his entire work. According to the Luther of 1545, it is this understanding of the word of God that gives his own literary work its character and significance. Luther recommends his readers to read better books than his. If they would not, however, they should at least focus on what he had written on the gospel as it transmits God's righteousness, as this is the essence of his work.

In his own eyes, this was Luther's decisive discovery. He is, however, cautious to point out that it did not come to him by chance. On the contrary, the method that led to renewal was nothing but a careful observation of the context.[869] In this way, Luther discovers that Paul himself explains the meaning of "the righteousness of God" by the quotation he brings from Hab 2:4: "The righteous shall live by faith." Thus the context brought to Luther the elements he needed to bring out the meaning of the expression. Through faith the believer receives his righteousness, i.e., the righteousness that God gives him. He thus discovered that the biblical text was self-explanatory. It was capable of revealing its own meaning if only he had the patience to listen to what it said, and it is this clarity that brings faith to the listener.

Thus, Luther from his rediscovery of the gospel did not only gain a new appreciation of the Bible's capacity for affective renewal. He was also confirmed in his emphasis on exegetical accuracy. To grasp the gospel and to be transformed, one has to pay careful attention to what is said and how it is said. Then one will have an open Bible, through which one will enter into the blessings of Paradise.

The debate on how this discovery is related to what Luther actually wrote in the years from 1513 to 1519, will probably continue.[870] What is beyond doubt, however, is that Luther is right in pointing to his emphasis on exegetical accuracy as the decisive factor of his theological development during those years. This emphasis is well documented also in the earlier texts. One example is Luther's well-known 95 theses on indulgence, which he posted at the Castle Church in Wittenberg October 31, 1517. The driving force behind the theses is Luther's observation of the stunning discrepancy between the New Testament teaching on penitence and the practice of the church. In presenting his case, Luther does not hesitate to indicate where he has his foundation. The theses thus start by an exegetical observation that is the point of departure for all that follows: When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said "Repent" (Mt 4:17), he wanted the whole life of the faithful to be repentance.[871] What the church does, is supposed to support this repentance, not to dispense from it.

Before Luther stood up as a critic of indulgences, however, he had a growing awareness that the problem was not only that bad habits had developed

within the church. The problem was that the church was dominated by a theology that did not take the Bible seriously. In his early lectures one can follow the development of Luther's criticism of the theology he had been taught at the University, a criticism that culminates in the *Disputatio Heidelbergae habita* from April 1518.[872] Here Luther for the first time summarizes and presents his new understanding of sin, righteousness and justification for an audience outside the University of Wittenberg. The provocative statement of this *disputatio* is Luther's assertion that even works that seem to be good, probably are mortal sins.[873] Luther does, however, not say this primarily to provoke his audience, but to actualize Paul's teaching that the law can never bring salvation. According to Luther, it follows from Romans that the law prevents more than promotes salvation.[874] In keeping strictly to Paul's teaching, one can then not avoid the conclusion that the works of the law, though good, still are mortal sins: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under curse" (Gal 3:10).[875]

Luther was aware that this was a heavy blast against Scholasticism, and that was what he intended it to be. He afterwards declared, however, and we have no reason to doubt he was honest in doing so, that he did not expect his criticism of either indulgences or Scholasticism to bring him in conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities.[876] What he wanted to do, was to open a debate by pointing to discrepancies between the biblical teaching and the life of the church as he knew it, and he is probably right in maintaining that this should not be controversial. The answer of the Church, however, was to question Luther's right to question ecclesiastical tradition, at least as far as this tradition had been confirmed by the Church, irrespective of the exegetical foundation of Luther's argument. Luther's conflict with the Church thus very soon changed from being a debate on various aspects of the Church's life and theology to be a conflict that centered on the question of authority. Luther had intended to invite to a debate on the application of biblical exegesis and found he had provoked a debate on its relevance. In this conflict Luther's position was to guard the supremacy of the Scripture with a growing sense that what was at stake, was nothing less than the identity of the church itself.

Luther's first confrontation with the ecclesiastical authorities took place during the Diet in Augsburg in October 1518. Luther was summoned to Augsburg to meet the papal legate, Cardinal Thomas de Vio Cajetan, a Dominican and a scholar of Thomist conviction.[877] The meeting with Cajetan disappointed Luther; he found his high-ranking opponent unclear and his argument weak.[878] Cajetan did, however, give Luther a reason he should retract his criticism of indulgences. He should, according to Cajetan, do so because it contradicted the papal bull *Unigenitus* from 1343.[879]

Luther doubted that this was the case.[880] The important thing to Luther was, however, that the bull lacked power of persuasion because it misused the Scripture.[881] To Luther's surprise, Cajetan answered by emphasizing the authority of the pope, which, according to Cajetan, was above both council and Scripture.[882] To hear the authority of the pope presented in this way, was obviously something Luther had not expected.[883] He did not hesitate in rejecting Cajetan's view, however, replying that as Peter had been wrong, the pope could be wrong, too.[884] Paul puts everything including the angels under the word of God, and the pope should be no exception.[885]

Both concerning rank and conviction, Cajetan's and Luther's positions were very different, and one should probably not be surprised to learn that they did not get on good terms with each other. What to Luther was decisive, however, in his negative view of Cajetan, was not that the papal legate ordered him to retract, but that he was not willing to discuss the exegetical argument.[886] When Luther understood that this was the case, he left his opponent, as there was no reason to continue the debate.[887]

In Augsburg, Luther was still willing to accept the authority of both pope and council, and he goes out of his way to mediate between *Unigenitus* and his own standpoint. What he was not willing to do, however, was to give way concerning his principal view that theological discussion basically should be a discussion of the interpretation of the Scripture. In addition, he insists that the guideline of that discussion should be the natural meaning of the actual passages, whereas the papal decrees very often misuse and obscure them.[888] Luther is conservative toward the ecclesiastical authorities, and has no wish to abolish papacy. To reconcile his exegetical theology with the traditional view of pope

or council as guarantors of truth was, however, no easy thing to do. When in the end he had to choose, he was not in doubt concerning the answer.

The person who forced Luther to take this decisive step, was John Eck, professor in theology at the University of Ingolstadt in Bavaria. When he met Luther and Karlstadt at the Leipzig debate in July 1519, he was aware that the weak point in Luther's theology was the unsolved conflict between exegetical and hierarchical authority.[889] Eck quoted scriptural[890] and patristic evidence to show that the pope reigned according to divine right. In addition, he referred to the Council of Constance that had condemned as heretical Hus' view that the authority of the pope was merely human.[891] Luther rejected Eck's exegesis and pointed to the fact that the Greek Church never had been under the pope; still it was no doubt that it was a legitimate Christian church. What was more important, however, was that Luther admitted that an exegetical foundation of theology in fact led to the conclusion that among the doctrines of Hus condemned at Constance, there were doctrines that were sound and orthodox, and he confessed his own allegiance to this view.[892] The Leipzig debate thus brought the conclusion Eck had aimed at: Luther's exegetical theology implied a dissolution of the authority of both pope and council.[893]

Eck thus considered himself as the victor in Leipzig; and from his own perspective, he was certainly justified in doing so. He had succeeded in highlighting what he had justly considered as a self-contradiction in Luther's theological fundament. Thus he had been able to elicit the concession that Luther's exegetical theology was not compatible with the Church's official view on ecclesiastical authority. On the other hand, Luther seems to have felt the outcome of the Leipzig debate as a liberation. Having publicly rejected the idea that the ecclesiastical authority always was right both concerning the pope and the council, he finally was free to build a purely exegetical theology.

In less then a year and a half from the Leipzig debate, then, Luther had written and published the works that laid a consistent and solid foundation for the reformation: *Von den guten Werken*,[894] *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation*,[895] *De captivitate babylonica ecclesiae praeludium*,[896] and *De libertate christiana*.[897] Gone are the attempts to mediate between exegetical theology and papal decrees. Now he feels free to criticize even central parts of the tradition

of the church through an exegetical argument. This is particularly the case in *De captivitate*, where he rejects the Church's doctrine of the seven sacraments. A sacrament is, according to Luther, a divine promise accompanied by a sign.[898] There is, however, no divine commandment concerning the laying on of hands. Consequently, confirmation and ordination should not be considered as sacraments.[899] Neither is there any promise of any particular grace connected with marriage,[900] and extreme unction is not ordained by Christ.[901] The reason Luther distinguishes strictly between these and the sacraments of Eucharist, baptism and confession, is thus the way of speaking in the New Testament. Luther's point is not that it is wrong to perform the rites of confirmation, ordination, and extreme unction. They are, however, nothing but human traditions, and should not be considered as anything more than that, because they are not prescribed anywhere in the Bible. Faith will rest on divine promises, not on ecclesiastical traditions; therefore it is necessary to keep this distinction.[902]

One can thus in Luther's development easily discern a transformation of his view of theological authority. The emphasis on exegetical accuracy as the most important guideline for theology is present from the outset. Originally, Luther did not understand this exclusively, and thought of his view as a variant of, not a rejection of, the view of the hierarchy. Only when he learned that his model of harmonious coexistence was a mere dream, he was forced to maintain the exclusiveness of biblical authority. God, not man, shall rule in the church. One is probably justified in considering *De servo arbitrio* as the book where Luther gives the most elaborate presentation and defence of this view. It is, however, this view of theological authority that is the basis of all his writings at least from 1520.[903]

By this time, Luther was no longer a rebellious monk in conflict with the Roman Church. He was the inaugurator of a broad reform movement whose main idea was to use biblical authority to abolish misuse in church and society. Luther was, however, not always satisfied with the way his fight for the Bible was implemented by his followers, and from 1522 on, he had to expound and defend his position also in relation to people who agreed that the Bible was the only reliable source of truth.[904] The first opponents from this camp came from among his colleagues in Wittenberg, who in Luther's absence after the Diet in

Worms abolished Catholic mass and introduced an evangelical liturgy of the Eucharist. Invoking the commandment in Ex 20:4, they also started removing altar pieces from the churches.[905]

When Luther returned, his first measure was to restore the traditional worship service almost without changes, and in the famous Invocavit sermons from March 1522[906] he explained why. He did not criticize the reforms as such.[907] By proceeding too rapidly, however, the reformers had jeopardized the Christian liberty and had not acted in love toward the weaker brethren.[908] The essential thing is to let the word of God work.[909] When the word has changed the attitudes of the listeners, then is the time for outward changes. If one does not observe this order, one will merely replace an old slavery with a new one, and nothing has improved.[910]

Two questions became essential in the debates between the Lutheran and what has been called the radical reformation:[911] The interpretation of Ex 20:4 and the question of the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. According to Luther, the main point in Ex 20:3-5 is to prohibit idolatry.[912] Images as such are not the problem; the worship of images is. The reason Luther arrives at this conclusion, is that the practice of erecting stones and altars is not criticized in the Old Testament as long as it is not associated with idolatry.[913] In addition, the New Testament abolishment of the law[914] pertains to the prohibition of images in the same way as it pertains to the the Sabbath.[915] The commandments about Sabbath and images, then, pertain to the Jews only, and even for them, there are exceptions if only the faith of the heart is pure and clean.[916]

The opponents' argument was founded on the supposition that Luther's reluctance toward the destruction of images represented a weakening of the authority of the Scripture. According to Luther, this is not the case, and the argument he uses to prove it, is exactly the same as he employed in *De servo arbitrio* less than a year later: The argument from context. Both the context of Ex 20 and the larger context of the Old and the New Testaments lead to the conclusion that a literal observance of Ex 20:4 might[917] fall short of grasping the point. In addition, Luther's view of the unity of the Scripture leads him to emphasize that Christians should never apply the commandments of the Old Testament without carefully considering what the New Testament teaches about

the Law. The Christians are not Jews; they should not behave as if the revelation at Mount Sinai was for them.[918]

The issue that became increasingly important in the debates within the reform movement during the 1520s, was, however, the question of the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Following Luther's criticism of transubstantiation in *De captivitate babylonica*, various representatives of the reform movement had gone one step further and denied that Jesus Christ was bodily present in the elements of the Eucharist. One should therefore not worship the elements, but consider the commemoration of the atonement as the essential part of the Lord's Supper.[919] Originally, Luther, too, was in doubt concerning this question.[920] In 1524, however, his doubts had disappeared. The reason is quite simple. The text of the Lord's Supper is plain and unambiguous; therefore, a reinterpretation is impossible.[921] When Jesus says "this is my body," it means that the bread is his body, nothing more and nothing less.[922]

The exegetical argument Andreas Karlstadt used to support his view that Jesus was only spiritually present at the Lord's Supper, was that Jesus in saying these words should have pointed to his own body, not to the bread at the table. This is, according to Karlstadt, proved by the fact that τοῦτο in τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου cannot mean bread, as ἄρτος is masculine and τοῦτο (like σῶμα) is neuter.[923]

Luther rejects this argument, and demonstrates that both German and Greek use the neuter gender of the demonstrative pronoun in such cases irrespective of the gender of the noun.[924] In addition, the context shows clearly that Jesus says this about the bread, not about his body.[925] A grammatical and syntactic analysis thus shows that there can be no uncertainty concerning the meaning.[926] One therefore has to admit that Jesus here teaches the doctrine of his real, bodily presence at the Lord's Supper.

Huldreich Zwingli founded his rejection of the real presence on his understanding of Jn 6:26-65, where he interprets what Jesus says about eating his body and drinking his blood as pertaining to faith. The meaning is thus, according to Zwingli, that the believer through his faith eats and drinks spiritually. Compared with this spiritual eating, the outward meal of the Lord's Supper is relatively unimportant.[927]

In his book *Vom Abendmahl Christi, Bekenntnis*, published in February 1528,[928] Luther agrees that Jesus in Jn 6 talks about eating and drinking spiritually. The obvious conclusion to Luther is, however, that Jn 6 then has nothing to do with the Eucharist.[929] To gain a firm footing for the understanding of the Eucharist, one must therefore go to the words of the institution and interpret them as a clear and sound text.[930] One can then not avoid the conclusion that the words of Jesus imply his bodily presence at the Eucharist.

Luther is obviously right in insisting that any interpretation of the Lord's Supper that is to be taken seriously, must have a consistent view of the words of the institution. Is he, however, also right in insisting they have to be interpreted literally? Zwingli did not think he was. He understood "is" in "this is my body" as "significat".[931] The bread that is given to the partakers in the Lord's Supper is thus a symbol of the body of Christ that was nailed to the cross. In this way the Eucharist is to Zwingli a commemoration of the atonement, where they who believe proclaim the validity of salvation in Christ. Consequently, he rejects Luther's opinion that it is a sacrament that gives forgiveness of sins.[932]

Luther refuses to accept this interpretation for two reasons, one liguistic and one contextual. According to him, "est" can never mean "significat" in any language. In other words, Luther rejects the possibility of a symbolic interpretation of tropes.[933] When Christ is called the true vine, the meaning is thus not that he is a symbol of the vine; he **is** a vine, but of another kind than a natural vine.[934] In addition, Luther repeats his view that a tropological interpretation can only be accepted when the context forces one to accept it.[935] Christ is not a vine as one can see it in a vineyard; here one **must** accept that he is a vine in another sense of the word. Concerning the Lord's Supper, however, nothing suggests a tropological interpretation. It then refers to the body of Christ and nothing else.[936]

The contextual argument is very similar to Luther's argument against Erasmus' misuse of tropological interpretation in *De libero arbitrio*.[937] The linguistic argument, however, is new, both within Luther's work and within the history of theology, and one is probably justified in seeing this is an example of how his insistance of the exegetical foundation of theology sometimes led him to discoveries in uncharted waters.

Zwingli argued that a present body always is a visible body; consequently, Christ is not bodily present in the Lord's Supper.[938] This Luther rejects right away. A body might be visible, but it does not have to.[939] Neither is it necessary that it is present in the same way as a body usually is present.[940] The body of Christ that is present in the Lord's Supper is thus the same body that was given for us, even if the shape is different.[941]

Luther accepts that such a philosophical discussion of the modes of presence is no proof of Christ's real presence in the Lord's Supper. It is, however, a proof of the worthlessness of the opponents' arguments. At the same time it gives an idea of a possible way in which God lets the words of Christ come true.[942] As in *De servo arbitrio*, Luther is not afraid of giving secondary, somewhat speculative reasons for his view. He is, however, very clear concerning the principle that these speculations are not the foundation of his argument.[943] This foundation he finds nowhere else than in the word of God as it is written in the Bible. Zwingli is right in maintaining that our words cannot produce the body of Christ. What God says, however, comes true, and when Christ teaches us to say "this is my body," the fulfillment is his responsibility.[944]

These summaries of Luther's debates with his opponents within the reform movement clearly show the exclusiveness of the exegetical orientation of Luther's argument.[945] He does not attack his opponents' view of the Lord's Supper because he finds a realistic interpretation more sophisticated or more attractive than a spiritualistic. He attacks it because it is founded on poor exegesis. He does not defend the doctrine of the real presence because he thinks he understands how this is accomplished; he does not replace the doctrine of transubstantiation with a more plausible view.[946] He defends it because this is what the Bible says.[947] According to Jesus, the bread is his body and the wine is his blood. He does not say why, and he does not say how. Why should we bother, then?

There is thus no shift in Luther's basic supposition even if his opponents now, like himself, accepts the Bible as the foundation of theology. As against Erasmus, Luther emphasizes that a mere approval of the principle of biblical authority does not suffice. One has to prove through a sound and consistent exegesis that the Bible **really** is what determines one's theology. Here Luther

has strong objections against both Karlstadt, Zwingli and others. He thinks he can prove that the theological positions of these opponents are not consistent with either the words or the contexts of the actual passages. Accordingly, he cannot accept them as theological authorities.

To Luther, Christian doctrine is what he in this way finds to be the clear and lucid message of the Bible. He thus lets the words keep their power to renew and to transform also when they lead beyond the realm of the rationally intelligible. Let the word do it! was his slogan. Let the word bring Christ's body and blood in bread and wine,[948] and let faith dine and be strengthened!

As a young University professor, Luther discovered that the Bible has this capacity of renewing its readers when they read it carefully and consistently. This discovery became the foundation of Luther's work, and he remained faithful to it until his death.[949] Because this discovery was the outcome of a carefully reasoned exegetical methodology, there was no room for speculation in his work with the Bible. Armed with the supposition that the Bible speaks a natural human language, he demanded of himself—and of his opponents—that everything that claimed theological credibility should be founded on a natural and unconstrained reading of definite and relevant biblical passages. He probably considered this as a simple demand. Invariably, however, he found that his opponents did not honor it.[950] This was the reason—the only reason—he discarded their opinions.[951]

Luther's view of theology is thus utterly simple and straightforward. The linguistic universe that is created by biblical language is the world within which a theologian will live. Therefore, he must know his Bible and he must know how to use it. If he does, he will continually discover new depths in the word of God and feed his audience with what he discovers. According to Luther, this is what sound theology should do.

CHAPTER NINE
THE IDENTITY OF THEOLOGY

To Luther, the identity of theology was to speak as the word of God. Sound theology to him therefore consisted in nothing but a careful reading of both text and context of the Bible. This book he considered as a clear and congruous whole, and he found that theology could be a consistent and vigorous discipline only if it let this source alone be its immediate authority. This was the way he tried to go himself; this was the way he tried to share with others.

To a certain extent he succeeded; he indeed got followers. His idea that theology for its doctrines and arguments always has to go to the Bible first and only in a second step will consider what he called human traditions, caught on and became the banner of Protestantism. It was, after Luther, never again possible to refer to ecclesiastical traditions as authorities in the way it had been done before, at least not outside the Catholic Church. In this respect, Luther's view of theology as biblical exegesis had a profound and lasting impact on Christians far beyond the realm of the Lutheran Church.

Luther's exegetical theology was founded on a world view according to which the world was created and structured by the word of God. Seeking to know about himself and his place in the world, man could then look for no better guidance than the Bible, as this book was the revelation of the Creator of both man and the world. Reading the Bible in this way, Luther found that it gave freedom for a rich and many-sided development of both the individual and the society.[952] There was, however, no room for an understanding of either the world or man as independent entities. Both man and the world got life and existence from God's hand, and there was apart from the word of God no reliable source for an understanding of the basic structures of this world.

One may ask, however, if not the five centuries that divide us from Luther have brought the dissolution, or at least a considerable weakening, of this way of thinking. This is probably due to the fact that the enormous growth in scientific knowledge and technological manipulation of the world has given credibility to the idea that man, in order to understand both the world around him and the world within him, is dependent on no other source than himself. According to what one may describe as the modern world view, man's own

experience seems to be sufficient as the structuring principle of a world view, and there is therefore no reason to look elsewhere.

This has led to the dissolution of rhetoric as an important element in the foundation of European culture. Even the age of Enlightenment can hardly be said to have disproved the validity of the assumption that man is an emotional and irrational creature whose inmost parts are influenced more by an impressive story than by a scientific truth. In a time that was too busy boasting the newly discovered rational capacities of man, there were, however, few who took it seriously, and in the nineteenth century the word "rhetorical" was usually considered as an invective.[953]

The dissolution of rhetoric did not make the reading of the Bible obsolete; it did, however, definitely influence it. Whereas Luther and his followers read the Bible to be transformed by its teaching on the meaning of the world and of life, the modern reader seems to be looking primarily for a confirmation of his own experience.[954] As with any other text that claims to bring more than mere information, the assessment of the significance of the Bible seems to be dependent on a process of mediation between the text and the experience of the reader where the latter element is at least as important as the former.[955] The Bible thus no longer constitutes reality; it is supposed to confirm it. In this intellectual climate it is no longer possible to retain Luther's view that the only authority of theology is the simple meaning of the biblical text.[956]

The dualism that is expressed in the modern dichotomy between historical exegesis and systematic theology[957] should probably be considered as one of the most important consequences of this development.[958] This dualism seems to imply that the task of biblical exegesis is no longer commonly understood to be to uncover and transmit God's revelation,[959] but rather to investigate the background and "original" meaning of the biblical texts as historical sources.[960] The mediation between these texts in their strangeness as relics from a different time and a modern world view is then considered to be the task of systematic theology. To fulfil this task, it has to be adequately informed both concerning biblical history and contemporary world views, and has to design a meaningful way to relate them.[961] Luther's view that an adequately equipped reader immediately could grasp the meaning of the Bible,[962] is gone, and with it the idea

of the unity between (historical) interpretation and (actual) application that was the foundation of Luther's exegesis.[963]

Confronted with the fact that the hermeneutics of the modern historical and critical investigation of the Bible seems to have made theology in the traditional sense of the word impossible, the theologians have considered different strategies. Some have taken the modern development for granted and tried to find a new fundament for Christian theology.[964] Others have rejected it, making a doctrine of biblical inerrancy essential in their approach.[965] A third group has welcomed the development, considering the liberation of the Christian from the formal authority of the Bible as a manifestation of the idea of justification by faith.[966] One of the problems of the latter attitude is, however, that as the great advocate of this idea, Luther is made a guarantor of a development that represents the rejection of the very fundamentals of his own approach. This view of Luther, which probably should be considered as one of the more remarkable anomalies of modern theology, is certainly founded more on respect for Luther's authority than on a sound evaluation of the significant aspects of his approach.[967]

There is of course much to be said on each of these strategies. One may argue, however, that they seem to have at least one important common element. For all of them, it seems that theology is no longer structured by the clarity of the Bible, but by the theologians' ideas of the Bible.[968] These ideas might be quite different, ranging from an unshakable faith in the complete trustworthiness of all information contained in the Bible to an almost total rejection of the biblical authors as reliable witnesses. Naturally, such different views of the Bible result in quite different theologies. Still, there seems to be one point on which everybody agrees: One cannot build theology only on what one reads in the Bible; one is also dependent on ideas of the Bible that are relatively independent of what one reads in it.[969] Luther's attitude, which was to open the Bible to see what it said, seems unthinkable. It appears to be the inescapable axiom of modernity that the Bible as it is cannot give theology the solution of its fundamental problems. Man cannot for his salvation be dependent on a source which it is utterly beyond his capacity to specify and define.[970]

My point is here not to say that the modern view of the Bible is wrong.[971] I have the considerably more modest objective of stating that it is different from Luther's.[972] Even this modest objective should, however, not be considered irrelevant. For one thing, it should be sufficiently clear by now that modern Luther research has suffered substantially from an ignorance of just this difference. Because one has seen in Luther a reasonable man who still is worth considerable attention, one has had obvious problems in coming to terms with the fact that he founded his work on principles that modern theology considers as naive. An apprehension of this difference should then allow for an understanding of the fundamentals of Luther's theology that is significantly more precise than former approaches, and it is primarily as a contribution to this project I have undertaken the present investigation.

How should we live with the Bible toward the end of the 20th century? This question was the starting point of the present investigation. A definite answer has not been given. The clarification of the differences between Reformation and modernity should, however, have contributed in making the alternatives clearer. The advocates of the idea of a simultaneous adherence to the principles of Reformation and modernity seem to have given themselves a difficult, perhaps even an impossible case to defend. At least as far as clarity and consistence is concerned, one should probably rather consider them as irreconcilable. One may then accept that theology as Luther understood it is impossible in our time. Or one may not,[973] and have then probably nothing to do but to hope for a renewal of the view that the starting-point for a meaningful life with the Bible is the conviction that the Bible possesses the capacity of transmitting its own meaning adequately to its readers.[974]

Notes

1. For a collection of interesting attempts at an answer, see Bong Rin Ro and Ruth Eshenaur (eds.), *The Bible & Theology in Asian Contexts* (Seoul, 1991).

2. Fundamental is still Karl Holl, "Luthers Bedeutung für den Fortschritt der Auslegungskunst," in Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, vol. I (Tübingen, 1923) 544-582. See further Walther von Loewenich, *Luther und das johanneische Christentum* (Munich, 1935); Gerhard Ebeling, *Evangelische Evangelienauslegung*, FGLP 10,1 (Tübingen, 1942); Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther und das Alte Testament* (Tübingen,1948); Gerhard Ebeling, "Die Anfänge von Luthers Hermeneutik," *Lutherstudien* vol. 1 (Tübingen, 1971), 1-68 (=*ZThK* 48 [1951]: 172-230); Walther von Loewenich, *Luther als Ausleger der Synoptiker* (Munich, 1954); Rudolf Hermann, *Von der Klarheit der Heiligen Schrift: Untersuchungen und Erörterungen über Luthers Lehre von der Schrift in De servo arbitrio* (Berlin, 1958); Jaroslav Pelikan, *Luther the Expositor* (St. Louis, 1959); Gerhard Krause, *Studien zu Luthers Auslegung der kleinen Propheten*, BhistTh 33 (Tübingen, 1962); Friedrich Beißer, *Claritas scriptura bei Martin Luther*, FKDG 18 (Göttingen, 1966); Ernst Wolf, "Über 'Klarheit der Heiligen Schrift' nach Luthers 'De servo arbitrio'", *ThLZ 92* (1967): 721-730; John Goldingay, "Luther and the Bible," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 35 (1982): 33-58; Siegfried Raeder, "Luther als Ausleger und Übersetzer der Heiligen Schrift," in Helmer Junghans, ed., *Martin Luther von 1526 bis 1546: Festgabe zu seinem 500. Geburtstag* (Berlin, 1983), vol. 1, 253-278, vol. 2, 800-811; Rudolf Ficker, "Ut Simplicissime Tractaretis Scripturas: Martin Luther as Interpreter of Scripture," *Bangalore Theological Forum* 15 (1983): 175-96; Klaas Runia, "The Hermeneutics of the Reformers," *Calvin Theological Journal* 19 (1984): 121-52; Martin Brecht, "Zu Luthers Schriftverständnis," in Karl Kertelge, ed., *Die Autorität der Schrift im ökumenichen Gespräch* (Frankfurt a. M., 1985), 9-29; Bernhard Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift I. Martin Luther: Die wiederentdeckten Grundlagen* (Göttingen, 1990); Armin Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit: Luthers Schriftverständnis und Schriftauslegung in seinen drei großen Lehrstreitigkeiten der Jahre 1521-28* (Europäische Hochschulschriften XXIII, 487, Frankfurt a. M., 1993).

3. See, e.g., Regin Prenter, "Luther als Theologe," in Leif Grane and Berhard Lohse, eds., *Luther und die Theologie der Gegenwart: Referate und Berichte des Fünften Internationalen Kongress für Lutherforschung*, (Göttingen, 1980), 112-24, here p. 115: "Er hat keine Institutio wie Calvin, keine Loci wie Melanchton und Johann Gerhard, kein Systema wie die orthodoxen Lutheraner des 17. Jahrhunderts und keine Kirchliche Dogmatik wie Karl Barth verfaßt." Loewenich, *Luther als Ausleger der Synoptiker*, 7, emphasizes even more: "Er [Luther] hat es sein ganzes Leben lang nicht für nötig befunden, eine Dogmatikvorlesung zu halten." Runia, "The Hermeneutics of the Reformers," 124, takes this as the point of departure in his presentation of Luther: "Anyone who wants to understand Luther must see him first of all as biblical theologian. So he understood himself and so he wanted others to understand him."

4. This seems to be the case, e.g., in the much used book by Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Luther*, transl. by Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia, 1978, cf. the original German edition *Die Theologie Martin Luthers* [Gütersloh, 1962]). On p. 3 he writes:

"All Luther's theological thinking presupposes the authority of Scripture. His theology is nothing more than an attempt to interpret the Scripture. Its form is basically exegesis." The form of Althaus' presentation of Luther's theology is, however, systematic and conceptual, and Luther's exegesis almost disappears.

5. See, e.g., Ebeling, "Die Anfänge von Luthers Hermeneutik," 1, who moves from the observation that "die Methode der theologischen Arbeit Luthers war die Exegese" to the conclusion that "die Frage nach Luthers Theologie zur Frage nach der Methode seiner Schriftauslegung werden muß." If Luther worked as an exegete, however, the obvious conclusion is that the investigation of Luther's theology should be performed as an analysis of the *contents* of his interpretation of the Scripture.

Helmer Junghans, "The Center of the Theology of Martin Luther," in Junghans, *Martin Luther in Two Centuries* (St. Paul, 1992, transl. by Gerald S. Krispin), 29-44 (also in G. Krispin and J. D. Vieker, eds., *And Every Tongue Confess: Essays in Honor of Norman Nagel* [Dearborn, 1990], 179-94), p. 32 thus rightly—quoting Althaus as his example—warns against approaching Luther's theology "too abstractly and describing it too statically."

6. Emphasizing the irrelevance of Luther's exegesis is Otto Kuss, "Über die Klarheit der Schrift: Historische und hermeneutische Überlegungen zu der Kontroverse des Erasmus und des Luther über den freien oder versklavten Willen," in Josef Ernst (ed.), *Schriftauslegung: Beiträge zur Hermeneutik des Neuen Testamentes und im Neuen Testament* (Munich, Paderborn, Vienna, 1972), 89-149. Rudolf Hermann, *Gesammelte und nachgelassene Werke I: Luthers Theologie* (Göttingen, 1967), 23, is more cautious: "Gewiß ist seine [Luther's] Schriftauslegung . . . im tiefsten Grunde wahr. . . . Aber seine *Auslegunsweise* können wir weithin nicht mitmachen." He does not seem to have reflected, however, on the tenability of this distinction between (defensible) result and (indefensible) method. The conclusion of Karl Gerhard Steck, *Lehre und Kirche bei Luther*, FGLP 10, vol. 27 (Munich, 1963), 225-26, is more consistent: "Nur an einem Punkt scheint 'Luthers Erbe' hier für uns nahezu unrealisierbar zu sein, leider genau an den Punkt, der ihm selbst am wesentlichen war: bei seinem 'principium' von der Evidenz der heiligen Schrift."

For a criticism of "alle . . . Versuche . . . , Luther unabhängig von seiner Schriftauslegung zu verstehen und ihn so für die Gegenwart relevant zu machen," see Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit*, 247-48.

7. For a good collection of examples of how the understanding of Luther has been conditioned by the self-understanding of his interpreters, see Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther im Spiegel der deutschen Geistesgeschichte. Mit ausgewählten Texten von Lessing bis zur Gegenwart* (Göttingen, 1970).

8. Bernhard Lohse, "Zur Struktur von Luthers Theologie," in Lohse, *Evangelium in der Geschichte: Studien zu Luther und der Reformation* (Göttingen, 1988), 237-249, maintains that "die methodologischen Grundfragen . . . einer Darstellung von Luthers Theologie . . . bis heute kaum irgendwo reflektiert worden sind" (ibid., 238). The consequence is that "die systematisch angelegten Darstellungen von

Luthers Theologie eigentlich alle in hohem Maße von der jeweiligen theologischen Ausgangsposition des Verfassers geprägt sind" (p. 240). As examples, Lohse mentions the works by Theodosius Harnack, Karl Holl, Werner Elert, Paul Althaus, Friedrich Gogarten and Hans Joachim Iwand (pp. 240-41). How this methodological ignorance might be related to a negligence of the exegetical Luther is demonstrated by John R. Loeschen, *Wrestling with Luther* (St. Louis, 1976), 28, who on the basis of a contrast between "theology" and "mere exegesis" is led to deplore "gaping hole" that "Luther wrote no systematic theology." According to Loeschen, this promptly "forces the student to develop his *own* model for organizing and interpreting Luther" (ibid.).

9. The remark by Wilfried Joest, *Ontologie der Person bei Luther* (Göttingen, 1967), 41, is valid also concerning Luther and the Bible: "Was war Luther *selbst* zentral wichtig? . . . Diese Frage muß ja gestellt werden können, ohne von vornherein überlagert zu werden durch die andere Frage: Worin ist Luther für *uns* wichtig . . .?"

10. The necessity of a rediscovery of Luther as a biblical theologian is underlined also by Pelikan, *Luther the Expositor*, 45-46.

11. For some reflections on the use of "einem zu exemplarischer Entfaltung taugenden, konkreten Ansatzpunkt" in the research on Luther's theology, see Albrecht Beutel, *In dem Anfang war das Wort: Studien zu Luthers Sprachverständnis*, Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie 27 (Tübingen, 1991), 2-3. Cf. also his warning against abstract paraphrases of Luther's theology, ibid., 439.

12. "Nullum enim agnosco meum iustum labrum, nisi forte de Servo arbitrio et Catechismum," *WAB* 8,99,8-9 (1537).

13. According, e.g., to Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther* (vol. II): *Ordnung und Abgrenzung der Reformation* (Stuttgart, 1986; English edition: *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation*, transl. by James L. Schaaf [Minneapolis, 1990]), 231, "ist De servo arbitrio ein Konzentrat der Theologie Luthers." For a further discussion of the representativeness of *De servo arbitrio*, see pp. 126ff. below.

14. Two extensive surveys of the debate both document this one-sidedness: Klaus Schwarzwäller, *Sibboleth: Die Interprätation von Luthers Schrift De servo arbitrio seit Theodosius Harnack* (München, 1969), and Wolfgang Behnk, *Contra Liberum Arbitrium Pro Gratia Dei: Willenslehre und Christuszeugnis bei Luther und ihre Interpretation durch die neuere Lutherforschung. Eine systematisch-theologie-geschichtliche Untersuchung* (Frankfurt a.M., 1982), 19-133. Some of the main works are: Hans Joachim Iwand, "Die Grundlegende Bedeutung der Lehre vom unfreien Willen für den Glauben," in Iwand, *Um den rechten Glauben: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Theologische Bücherei 9 (Munich, 1959, original edition 1930); Martin Doerne, "Gottes Ehre am gebundenen Willen: Evangelische Grundlagen und teologische Spitzensätze in De servo arbitrio," *LuJ* 20 (1938), 45-92; Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Der Einfluß der Anfechtungserfahrung auf den Prädestinationsbegriff Luthers," *KuD* 3 (1957): 109-139; Hellmut Bandt, *Luthers Lehre vom verborgenen Gott: Eine Untersuchung zu dem offenbarungsgeschichtlichen Ansatz seiner Theologie,* Theologische

Arbeiten 18 (Berlin, 1958); Gerhard Rost, *Der Prädestinationsgedanke in der Theologie Martin Luthers* (Berlin, 1966); Harry J. McSorley, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen nach seiner Hauptschrift De Servo Arbitrio im Lichte der biblischen und kirchlichen Tradition*, Beiträge zur ökumenischen Theologie 1, (Munich, 1967) (English edition: *Luther: Right or Wrong? An Ecumenical-Theological Study of Luther's Major Work, The Bondage of the Will*, New York and Minneapolis 1969); Klaus Schwarzwäller, *Theologia crucis: Luthers Lehre von Prädestination nach De servo arbitrio 1525*, FGLP 10, vol. XXXIX (Munich, 1970); Fredrik Brosché, *Luther on Predestination: The Antinomy and the Unity Between Love and Wrath in Luther's Concept of God*, (Uppsala, 1978); Georges Chantraine, *Erasme et Luther: libre et serf arbitre* (Paris, 1981); Behnk, *Contra Liberum Arbitrium*. None of these works consider the exegetical aspects of the controversy as particularly important. As an evaluation both of the controversy between Luther and Erasmus and of the scholarly investigation of it, the remarks by H. Østergaard-Nielsen, *Scriptura Sacra et Viva Vox: Eine Lutherstudie* (Munich, 1957), 19-20, thus still seem relevant: "In der Schrift 'De servo arbitrio' . . . wird der Frage nach der Autorität der Schrift ein derartiger Vorrang eingeräumt, daß nicht ohne Berechtigung angenommen werden darf, es bestehe ein enger Zusammenhang zwischen dieser Frage und der Frage nach der Freiheit des Willens. Möglicherweise ist der Grund dafür, daß die protestantische Theologie so große Mühe gehabt hat, Luther in seiner Behauptung vom unfreien Willen zu verstehen und zu folgen, einfach der, daß bereits seine Auffassung über die Autorität der Schrift unverstanden geblieben ist." See also the observation by Martin Brecht, "Moral und Gnade — Der Vermittlungsversuch des Erasmus und Luthers Widerspruch," in Otto Hermann Pesch, ed., *Humanismus und Reformation — Martin Luther und Erasmus in den Konflikten ihrer Zeit* (München, 1985) 71-90, here p. 78: "Anders als wir und vor allem die Dogmatiker sich das heute vorstellen, boten weder Luther noch Erasmus eine systematische Abhandlung, sondern legten einzelne Bibelstellen aus." This is suggested also by Manfred Hoffmann, "Erasmus im Streit mit Luther," in Pesch, *Humanismus und Reformation*, 91-118, here p. 92: "Bei ihrer Deutung des Wortes Gottes ist demnach einzusetzen, bei Luther wie bei Erasmus."

15. Even Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit,* which is an investigation that both concerning approach and conclusions to some extent parallels my own, demonstrates that a negligence of the historical context easily leads to the kind of abstract, concept-oriented Luther research I referred to above.

16. There are several books that deal with the context, background and contents of the debate. See, e.g., Karl Zickendraht, *Der Streit zwischen Luther und Erasmus über die Willensfreiheit* (Leipzig, 1909); Chantraine, *Erasme et Luther*, and the introduction to *De servo arbitrio* in WA 18,551-599. A good overview is also to be found in Brecht, *Ordnung und Abgrenzung der Reformation,* 210-234. An interesting work in Japanese is Haruo Kaneko, *Shūkyōkaikaku no seishin: Rutā to Erasumusu no taiketsu* [The Spirit of the Reformation: The Confrontation between Luther and Erasmus] (Tokyo, 1977). Useful summaries of the debate are also to be found in, e.g., Yoshikazu Miura, "Rutā ni okeru jiyūishi no mondai" [The Problem of Free Will according to Luther], *Shingaku Kikan* (Tokyo, 1959): 24-37; Daniel Preus,

"Luther and Erasmus: Scholastic Humanism and the Reformation," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 46 (1982): 219-230.

17. It is one of the oddities of modern Luther research that scholars who on the supposition that Luther was no systematic thinker fail to consider the specific arrangement of his works, are surprised when they cannot find any. One then arrives at a view like Heinrich Bornkamm's, according to whom "zerfällt die Hauptschlacht [between Luther and Erasmus] in zahllose Einzelgefechte um Bibelstellen, über die man leicht die Übersicht verliert", and it contains "vielfache Wiederholungen" (*Martin Luther in der Mitte seines Lebens* [Göttingen, 1979], 390). Schwarzwäller, *Theologia crucis*, 17, and Kaneko, *Shūkyōkaikaku*, 51, have a similar view. An important exception to this view of *De servo arbitrio* is Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift*, 119. Paying due attention to arrangement is also Günter Bader, *Assertio: Drei fortlaufende Lektüren zu Skepsis, Narrheit und Sünde bei Erasmus und Luther* (Tübingen, 1985).

18. The most important editions of Erasmus's works are the following: *Opera omnia*, ed. Jean LeClerc, 10 vols. (Leiden, 1703-6); *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami,* ed. P. S. Allen, H. M. Allen and H. W. Garrod, 12 vols. (Oxford, 1906-58); *Ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. W. Welzig, 8 vols. (Darmstadt, 1967-80, the Latin originals and German translations); *Opera omnia Des. Erasmi Roterodami* (Amsterdam, 1969-); and *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto, 1974ff., English translations of both works and correspondence, referred to as CWE).

19. See Erika Rummel, *Erasmus as Translator of the Classics* (Toronto, 1985). Among the admirers of Erasmus' *Adagia* was Martin Luther. See Reinhard Schwarz, "Beobachtungen zu Luthers Bekanntschaft mit antiken Dichtern und Geschichtsscreibern," *LuJ* 54 (1987): 7-22, here p. 11.

20. See John William Aldridge, *The Hermeneutic of Erasmus* (Richmond, 1966), 9-26.

21. Concerning the life and work of Erasmus, see, e.g., Johan Huizinga, *Erasmus and the age of reformation*, (Princeton, 1984; originally published 1924); Roland H. Bainton, *Erasmus. Reformer zwischen den Fronten* (Göttingen, 1969), or the English original, *Erasmus of Christendom* (New York, 1966); Cornelis Augustijn, *Erasmus von Rotterdam: Leben - Werk - Wirkung* (Munich, 1986; English edition *Erasmus: His Life, Works and Influence* [Toronto, 1991]). Concerning the theology of Erasmus, see Ernst-Wilhelm Kohls, *Die Theologie des Erasmus*, 2 vols. (Basel, 1966); Manfred Hoffmann, *Erkenntnis und Verwirklichung der wahren Theologie nach Erasmus von Rotterdam* (Tübingen, 1972); Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology*, Erasmus Studies 2 (Toronto, 1977); Friedhelm Krüger, *Humanistische Evangelienauslegung: Desiderius Erasmus von Rotterdam als Ausleger der Evangelien in seinen Paraphrasen* (Tübingen, 1986).

22. There is a growing consensus in Luther scholarship that the German humanism was a very important part of Luther's intellectual background. See, e.g., Helmer Junghans, *Der junge Luther und die Humanisten* (Göttingen, 1985), and his

shorter presentations "Luther als Bibelhumanist," *Luther* 53 (1982): 1-9; "Die Beziehungen des jungen Luther zu den Humanisten: Martin Luther aus Eisleben, ein Bibelhumanist neben Desiderius Erasmus von Rotterdam," in Pesch, *Humanismus und Reformation*, 33-50, and "Luther's Development from Biblical Humanist to Reformer," in Junghans, *Martin Luther in two Centuries,* 1-14 (transl. by Katharina Gustavs). Luther always described the humanist revival of language studies as the forerunner of the Reformation, e.g., WA 15,37,11ff. (*An die Ratherren aller Städte deutsches Lands, daß sie christliche Schulen aufrichten und halten sollen,* 1524); WAB 3,50,23-25.

23. See Cornelis Augustijn, "Humanisten auf dem Scheideweg zwischen Luther und Erasmus," in Pesch, *Humanismus und Reformation,* 119-34, here pp. 125-27.

24. For an evaluation of this important work, see Jerry H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ: New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance* (Princeton, 1983), 112ff.

25. On Luther's use of Erasmus' Greek NT, see Aldridge, *The Hermeneutic of Erasmus*, 120-126. Luther's admiration of the philological work of Erasmus never faded. For instance has Heinz Bluhm, *Luther as Translator of Paul: Studies in Romans and Galatians* (New York, 1984), demonstrated that Luther even in his German New Testament translation usually followed Erasmus' new Latin translation.

26. WA 2,443-618.

27. See Cornelis Augustijn, "Erasmus von Rotterdam im Galaterbrief-kommentar Luthers von 1519," *LuJ* 49 (1982): 115-32.

28. The differences between Erasmus and the young Luther are explored by Ernst-Wilhelm Kohls, *Luther oder Erasmus: Luthers Theologie in der Auseinandersetzung mit Erasmus*, 2 vols., (Basel, 1972 and 1978). The most detailed presentation of the "Vorgeschichte" of the free will controversy, is still Zickendraht, *Der Streit zwischen Erasmus und Luther*, 3-25.

29. WAB 1,70-71. For a discussion of this letter, see Kohls, *Luther oder Erasmus* I, 25ff.

30. Erasmus maintained the view that Paul's criticism of the law pertained only to the ceremonial law. In his later years, however, Erasmus seem to have adopted a more "Lutheran" position. See John B. Payne, "The Significance of Lutheranizing Changes in Erasmus' Interpretation of Paul's Letters of the Romans and the Galatians in his *Annotationes* (1527) and *Paraphrases* (1532)," in Olivier Fatio and Pierre Frankel, *Histoire de l'exégèse au XVIe siècle* (Geneva, 1978), 312-330, here p. 317.

31. Luther is doubtless right that there were important differences between Erasmus and the anti-Pelagian Augustine. In other respects, however, Erasmus, too, built on Augustine. See Kohls, *Luther oder Erasmus* I, 37-42, and Chantraine, *Erasme et Luther*, 84-87.

32. Kohls, *Luther oder Erasmus* I, 50-55.

33. Ibid.; Huizinga, *Erasmus*, 139; Bainton, *Erasmus*, 146-47.

34. See his letter to Johan Lang, March 1, 1517, where Luther comments on Erasmus like this: "Humana praevalent in eo plus quam divina" (WAB 1,90,19). In a letter dated May 1522, Luther for the first time criticized Erasmus' doctrine of predestination, WAB 2,544,7-11. See further Hoffmann, *Erkenntnis und Verwirklichung*, 13, and Brecht, *Ordnung und Abgrenzung der Reformation*, 212.

35. See his letter to Frederick the Wise of April 1519 (CWE 6,295-299), and to Pope Leo X of 13 September 1520 (CWE 8,49-52). Erasmus strongly criticized the papal bull. See his *Axiomata pro Causa Lutheri* of November 1520, *Erasmi opuscula*, ed. W. K. Ferguson (The Hague, 1933), 336-337.

36. See Heinz Holeczek, "Die Haltung des Erasmus zu Luther nach dem Scheitern seiner Vermittlungspolitik 1520/21," *ARG* (1973): 85-112.

37. According to James D. Tracy, "Two Erasmuses, Two Luthers: Erasmus' Strategy in Defence of *De libero arbitrio*," *ARG* 78 (1987): 37-60, here p. 39, Erasmus was always positive to what he considered as the evangelical kernel in Luther's teaching, and only wanted to criticize the "auxiliary paradoxes" and "immense exaggerations".

38. Huizinga, *Erasmus*, 147.

39. According to Tracy, "Two Erasmuses, Two Luthers," Erasmus was quite consistent in his criticism of Luther, but somewhat more ambiguous as regards his own position.

40. See Bainton, *Erasmus*, 248.

41. WAB 1,361-363; Chantraine, *Erasme et Luther*, 9.

42. Bornkamm, *Martin Luther*, 301.

43. Hoffmann, *Erkenntnis und Verwirklichung*, 14.

44. Erasmus first contribution to the Luther debate was not *De libero arbitrio*. In March 1524 he published *Inquisitio de fide* (Opera omnia I, 728-32), the main point of which was to demonstrate that the doctrines of the Lutherans do not differ from those of the Apostolic and Nicene Creeds.

45. *Assertio septem sacramentorum adversus Martinum Lutherum* (London, 1521). For an investigation (and rejection) of the assumption that this book was in fact written by Erasmus, see Gottfried G. Krodel, "Luther, Erasmus and Henry VIII," *ARG* 53 (1962): 60-78. It has been suggested that Henry VIII proposed to Erasmus the subject of the liberty of the will; see Bainton, *Erasmus*, 169, and Kaneko, *Shukyokaikaku*, 46. This seems, however, not to be the case. See Bernhard Lohse, "Marginalien

zum Streit zwischen Luther und Erasmus," in *Evangelium in der Geschichte*, 118-37 (= *Luther* [1975]: 5-24), here pp. 130-31.

46. *Expostulatio,* March 1523. On the controversy between Hutten and Erasmus, see, e.g., Bainton, *Erasmus*, 165-169; Bornkamm, *Martin Luther*, 305-309; Brecht, *Ordnung und Abgrenzung*, 213-214.

47. WAB 3,270-271, and Erasmus' answer, ibid., 285. At this time, the first draft of *De libero arbitrio* was already written. See further Bornkamm, *Martin Luther*, 310; Brecht, *Ordnung und Abgrenzung*, 215-216.

48. Cf. Luther's compliment in the conclusion of *De servo arbitrio*: "Unus tu et solus cardinem rerum vidisti," WA 18,786,30. According to Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform: Erasmus' Civil Dispute with Luther*, Harvard Historical Monographs 71 (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 83, Luther's remark is sarcastic. In view of the importance he attached to these questions, however, this hardly seems probable; see Kohls, *Luther oder Erasmus*, I, 28.

49. That Erasmus did not so much want to write against Luther as to engage him in a sound and learned dispute, has particularly been emphasized by Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform*, 35ff. She is undoubtedly right that Erasmus was more favorable toward Luther than were the Church authorities. She has to admit, however, that if Erasmus had such an intention, nobody—possibly with the exception of Melanchton—understood it.

50. Augustijn, "Humanisten auf dem Scheideweg," has shown, however, that the debate between Erasmus and Luther in 1524-26 on the hole did not influence the humanist's attitudes to the two, as the decisions generally were made already. Concerning the attitude of Melanchton, see Zickendraht, *Der Streit zwischen Erasmus und Luther*, 53-54 and 176-77; Wilhelm Maurer, "Melanchtons Anteil im Streit zwischen Luther und Erasmus," *ARG* (1958): 89-115, and Payne, "The Significance of Lutheranizing Changes," 326-329.

51. WA 7,94-151, cf. Luther's own German translation "*Grund und Ursach aller Artikel D. Martin Luthers*," WA 7,308-457. On the understanding of enslaved will in *Assertio*, see Behnk, *Contra Liberum Arbitrium*, 176-78. According to Maurer, "Melanchtons Anteil," another target of Erasmus' attack is Melanchton's *Loci Communes*, which Maurer interprets as being written as a counter-part to Erasmus' own *Ratio seu methodus*.

52. "Free will exists after the sin of man only in name, and as long as it does what it is able to do, it sins mortally." WA 7,142,23, see also WA 1,354,5. The translations are on the whole my own, even if I have freely made use of other's suggestions, particularly those of *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, 54 vols. (St. Louis, 1955ff).

53. "Free will is nothing but imagination; it is an empty name." WA 7,146,5.

54. The necessity of not coming to hastily to a definite conclusion, is thus repeatedly underlined in *De libero arbitrio*, see, e.g., Ia8. (The letters and numbers refer to the edition of *De libero arbitrio* in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 4, 1-195. For a concordance table between this edition and LeClerc's, see Chantraine, *Erasme et Luther*.)

55. Luther's doctrine of enslaved will was attacked also by many other representatives of the Roman Church; see McSorley, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen*, 259.

56. WA 18,601,18ff.

57. WA 18,602,4ff.

58. WA 18,62-214. On this book, see chapter eight below.

59. *Ermahnung zum Frieden auf die zwölf Artikel der Bauernschaft in Schwaben*, WA 18,291-334; *Wider die räuberischen und mörderischen Rotten der Bauern*, WA 18,357-361; *Ein Sendbrief von den harten Büchlein wider die Bauern*, WA 18,384-401.

60. Martin Brecht, "Moral und Gnade — der Vermittlungsversuch des Erasmus und Luthers Widerspruch," pp. 74 and 80, suggests, however, that the real reason Luther was slow in responding, was that *De libero arbitrio* bored and frustrated him. Luther indicates that this was the reason, WA 18,600,18; 601,31-32.

61. The text of *De servo arbitrio* is found in WA 18,600-787, or in *Luthers Werke in Auswahl*, ed. Otto Clemen (Berlin, several editions), vol. 3, 94-293. For an English translation, see *Luther's Works*, vol. 33 (Philadelphia, 1972, transl. by Philip S. Watson and Benjamin Drewery). I only give the references to WA, as these references are found in Clemen's and Watson's editions as well. For a concordance table between WA, Clemen and the German translation of *De servo arbitrio* in Martin Luther, *Ausgewählte Werke*, Ergänzungsreihe, vol. 1 (Munich, 1954), see Schwarzwäller, *Theologia crucis*, 213-16.

62. WA 18,602,23-25.

63. *Opera omnia* X, 1249-1536. The first part of *Hyperaspistes* (pp. 1249-1336) is printed in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 4, 197-675. For a summary, see Zickendraht, *Der Streit zwischen Erasmus und Luther*, 158-62 and 166-75.

64. He did consider the possibility of a subsequent refutation, but did not write anything beyond letters; see Wilhelm Maurer, "Offenbarung und Skepsis: Ein Thema aus dem Streit zwischen Luther und Erasmus," in Maurer, *Kirche und Geschichte: Gesammelte Aufsätze,* Göttingen 1970, 366-402, here pp. 395-401, and C. Augustijn, "Erasmus und seine Theologie: hatte Luther recht?" in Jean-Pierre Massaut, ed., *Colloque Érasmien de Liège* (Paris, 1987), 49-68. In 1533 he commented on Erasmus' ideas about Church unity; see Heinrich Bornkamm, "Erasmus und Luther," *LuJ* 25

(Weimar, 1958): 3-22, here p. 20.

65. See Chantraine, *Erasme et Luther*, pp. XVIII-XX. Arguing for the importance of *Hyperaspistes* is, however, McSorley, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen*, 28, and for *Hyperaspistes* I Cornelis Augustijn, "Hyperaspistes I: la doctrine d'Érasme et de Luther sur la 'claritas Scripturae'," in Marcel Bataillon and others, eds., *Colloquia Erasmiana Turonensia*, vol. 2 (Toronto, 1972), 737-48.

66. On Erasmus and Luther (and Melanchton) as the significant characters within the history of German humanism and German rhetoric see Helmut Schanze, "Problems and Trends in the History of German Rhetoric to 1500," in James J. Murphy, ed., *Renaissance Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric*, (Berkeley, 1983), 105-26, here pp. 118-22.

67. "The debate between Erasmus and Luther began a warfare between free will and predestination which reverberated for two hundred years in European religious thought . . . : Philippists vs. Gnesio-Lutherans in Germany, Remonstrants vs. Counter-Remonstrants in The Netherlands, Jesuits vs. Jansenists in France" (James D. Tracy, "Humanism and the Reformation," in Steven Ozment, *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research* [St. Louis, 1982], 33-58, here p. 33-34.) Considering the importance of *De servo arbitrio* within the modern ecumenical debate about Luther, one might say that it still reverberates. On the modern Roman-Catholic attempt at an reevaluation of the free will controversy, see Behnk, *Contra Liberum Arbitrium*, 99-115.

68. In this respect, a modern scholar like Charles Trinkaus gives Luther right. See his "Erasmus, Augustine and the Nominalists," *ARG* (1976): 5-32 (=Trinkaus, *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism* [Ann Arbor, 1983], 274-301), here p. 7: "Erasmus sticks to his position that his quarrel with Luther, as well as Luther's with the apologists of the Church and much of history of the free will controversy, boiled down to a quarrel over words."

69. Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform*, 6ff., argues that Erasmus by choosing this title employs the classical genre of the diatribe. This is a rhetorical philosophical dialogue associated with the Socratic method of eliciting an independent judgement.

70. On the meaning of *collatio*, see Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform*, 43ff, and Günter Bader, *Assertio*, 43-59. The original meaning, which still is preserved in its English derivation "confer", is discussion or comparison. Erasmus thus describes *De libero arbitrio* as a discussion or comparison of biblical passages. According to Bader, Erasmus thereby understands *collatio* both as "skeptische Gesprächsführung" and as "Inbegriff skeptischer Exegese".

71. This was in fact not quite correct. But the declaration of the anti-Pelagian council of Orange in 529 had been forgotten since the tenth century. See McSorley, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen*, 121.

72. *De libero arbitrio* Ia3-4.

73. Moderation is a key word to Erasmus, the background of which seems to be the skepticism of Cicero, which he advocated against the assertive dogmatism of Stoicism. According to this doctrine, definite judgement is to be suspended in favor of an emphasis on the probable. Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform*, argues that Erasmus chose the question of free will in order to demonstrate moderate skepticism as a theological method. She has to admit, however, that the problem of free will in itself also was important to Erasmus (p. 27). Maurer, "Offenbarung und Skepsis," 377, maintains the priority of the methodological questions in *De libero arbitrio* even more one-sidedly; whereas Ernst-Wilhelm Kohls, "Die theologische Position und der Traditionszusammenhang des Erasmus mit dem Mittelalter in 'De libero arbitrio'," in Karlmann Beyschlag and others, eds., *Humanitas — Christianitas: Walther v. Loewenich zum 65. Geburtstag* (Witten, 1968), 32-46, maintains that the doctrine of free will in *De libero arbitrio* "ist fest eingefügt in den Gesamtzusammenhang der Theologie des Erasmus" (p. 35).

Emphasizing moderation as the strategy of *De libero arbitrio* is also John F. Tinkler, "Erasmus' Conversation with Luther," *ARG* 82 (1991): 59-81.

74. "Arbitror esse aliquam liberi arbitrii vim," *De libero arbitrio* Ia5.

75. *De libero arbitrio* Ia7. My translations of quotations from the Bible are translations of the Bible text as Erasmus and Luther quote it. That is usually *Vulgata*, even if the combatants sometimes quote quite freely, and allow themselves to abridge the quotations to let the point be more easily understandable.

76. *De libero arbitrio* Ia8. For a careful presentation of the epistemology of Erasmus in his debate with Luther, see Dietrich Kerlen, *Assertio: Die Entwicklung von Luthers theologischem Anspruch und der Streit mit Erasmus von Rotterdam*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für europäische Geschichte Mainz 78 (Wiesbaden, 1976), 227-283.

77. In *Assertio*, Luther referred explicitly to both Augustine and Wyclif. According to Luther, Wyclif and his doctrine of predestination was wrongly condemned at the Council in Constance; see WA 7,146,7; 147,32. On Luther's view of the Council in Constance, see further p. 132 below.

78. *De libero arbitrio* Ia10.

79. This is underlined by Boyle, *Rhetoric*, 33-39. Erasmus' friend Thomas More was in doubt if such a Ciceronian approach to an heretic was appropriate. See R. R. McCutcheon, "The *Responsio Ad Lutherum*: Thomas More's Inchoate Dialogue With Heresy," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 22 (1991): 77-90. David V. N. Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents: Catholic Controversialists 1518-1525* (Minneapolis, 1991), raises the question if not all Luther's Catholic opponents after 1521 by using the press to submit his case to public opinion in fact undermined the authority of the Church.

80. *De libero arbitrio* Ia2. Concerning the background and relevance of this simile, see Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform*, 1ff. Depreciation of oneself to secure the goodwill of the readers, is a standing rhetorical figure (*captatio benevolentiae*). See, e.g., Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria*, Loeb Classical Library, vols. 124-27, with an English translation by H. E. Butler, 4.1.9.

81. ". . . non contendere superstitiosius," *De libero arbitrio* Ib10. The use of "superstitiose" in the meaning pedantic goes back to Quintilian.

82. Ibid. The origin of this simile seems to have been John Colet. See Daniel T. Lochman, "Colet and Erasmus: The *Disputatiuncula* and the Controversy of Letter and Spirit," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 20 (1989): 77-87, here p. 79.

83. *De libero arbitrio* IIa. Mainly the following: Sir 15:14-18; Gen 4:6-7; Deut 30:15-19; Isa 21:12; Jer 15:19; Ezek 18:21; Deut 30:11-14; Jer 18:8,10.

84. *De libero arbitrio* IIb. No passage is treated extensively, but among those mentioned are the following: Mt 23:37; Mt 5:12; the parables in Mt 25; Rom 2:2,4; 1 Cor 9:24-25; Jas 1:13-15; 1 Cor 14:32; 2 Tim 3:16.

85. *De libero arbitrio* IIIa and c. Main passages: Ex 9:12,16; 33:19; Mal 1:2-3; Rom 9:11ff.; Isa 63:17; Isa 45:9; Jer 18:6; Isa 10:15.

86. *De libero arbitrio* IIIb.

87. According to McSorley, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen*, 270-71, Erasmus did not really understand the doctrine of Pelagius, and therefore could not properly evaluate the Church's fight against Semi-Pelagianism. Both McSorley and Wataru Takahashi, "Rinri to shūkyō to no kankei — Augusuchinuzu, Rutā, Erasumusu no baai" [The Relation between Ethics and Religion according to Augustine, Luther and Erasmus], *Katorikku kenkyū* [Catholic Studies] 26,2 (1987): 27-49, here pp. 29-32, maintain that Luther represents the Catholic doctrine of grace better than Erasmus.

88. "Ut fateatur occasionem indurationis datam a deo, culpam tamen in Pharaonem reiciat." *De libero arbitrio* IIIa2. On Erasmus' relation to Origen, see Krüger, *Humanistische Evangelienauslegung*, 51-59, and André Godin, *Érasme lecteur d'Origène*, Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance CXC (Geneva, 1982).

89. Ibid.

90. *De libero arbitrio* IIIa5.

91. *De libero arbitrio* IIIa11.

92. *De libero arbitrio* IIIa16-17.

93. *De libero arbitrio* IIb. The main passages are Gen 6:3,5; 8:21; Isa 40:2,6-8; Jer 10:23; Prov 16:1; 21:1; Jn 15:5.

94. Jerome was among Erasmus' favorite writers, and he edited the works of Jerome in 9 volumes, which were printed in 1516. On Erasmus' relation to Jerome, see Aldridge, *The Hermeneutic of Erasmus*, 91-92, and Joseph C. Coppens, "Le portrait de Saint Jerome d'apres Érasme," in Bataillon, *Colloquia Erasmiana Turonensia*, vol. II, 821-828. Erasmus' dependence on the exegesis of Jerome was among the things Luther criticized in his first letter concerning Erasmus, see note 29 above. Apart from Origen and Jerome, Erasmus' most important exegetical authority in *De libero arbitrio* was his friend, the English humanist John Fisher, bishop of Rochester, whose *Assertiones Lutheranae Confutatio* was printed in 1523; see Behnk, *Contra Liberum Arbitrium*, 182-83, and Zickendraht, *Der Streit zwischen Erasmus und Luther*, 42-45.

95. *De libero arbitrio* IIIb8.

96. E.g., *De libero arbitrio* IIIc, where he i.a. quotes Jn 3:27; Mt 10:20,29; Jn 6:44; 2 Cor 3:5. Not willing to give these statements too much weight are, however, McSorley, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen*, 264, and Behnk, *Contra Liberum Arbitrium*, 187-88, who both speak of a Semi-Pelagian leaning in Erasmus' theology.

97. *De libero arbitrio* IIIc12.

98. "Agnoscis humanam voluntatem simul adnitentem auxilio divino," ibid.

99. "Es ist Erasmus zeitlebens in allen seinen theologischen Schriften darum gegangen, einerseits die Gnade als ein freies Angebot der Souveränitet Gottes zu bezeugen und andererseits die hohe verantwortung des Menschen diesem Angebot gegenüber zu beschreiben." Kohls, *Luther oder Erasmus* II, 9. According to Kohls, "Die theologische Position des Erasmus," 43-45, this brings Erasmus quite close to the view of Thomas Aquinas.

According to Trinkaus' investigation of *Hyperaspistes*, "Erasmus, Augustine and the Nominalists," 10-11, and Hoffmann, "Erasmus im Streit mit Luther," 113, Erasmus thinks of justification as a tripartite process, where the human will plays an important part in the middle portion. The model has a rhetorical foundation, and is, according to Erasmus, the way of thinking that is represented by the Greek fathers. The question is, however, if not this is to ascribe too much systematic coherence to Erasmus' thought.

100. *De libero arbitrio* IIIc9.

101. *De libero arbitrio* IIIc10.

102. *De libero arbitrio* IV.

103. *De libero arbitrio* IV1.

104. *De libero arbitrio* IV3.

105. Ibid.

106. *De libero arbitrio* IV4-5. Erasmus develops this as an explicit criticism of Luther's doctrine of absolute necessity, ibid. IV12, which to Erasmus is an attempt to magnify one side of God's being by distorting another; it is like a man who provides an extremely meager breakfast in order to make the dinner seem more splendid, ibid. IV14.

107. *De libero arbitrio* IV7.

108. *De libero arbitrio* IV9.

109. *De libero arbitrio* IV17.

110. "I have done my part; it is for others to judge." Thereby Erasmus shows that his methodological ideal is that of Socrates. He does not want to give the answer himself; he wants to help their readers to find it.

111. Cf. WA 18,661,26. This is common in Luther's polemical writings. According to Bader, *Assertio*, 133, it "zeugt von der Ruhe eines Selbstbewußtseins, das gar nicht in der Gefahr ist, sich durch den Text eines anderen Selbstbewußtseins zu verliehren."

112. He did not follow it to the end, though. See page 109 below, and WATR 4,5069.

113. The expression "servum arbitrium" comes from Augustine; see McSorley, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen*, pp. 17 and 91-93. Luther used it for the first time (as a quotation from Augustine) in the Lecture on Romans; see WA 56,385,17.

114. This unbalance was, however, more than regained through Erasmus lengthy *Hyperaspistes*.

115. Passages apparently defending free will are treated in WA 18,666,12-699,23, which corresponds to *De libero arbitrio* II. Passages apparently refuting free will (*De libero arbitrio* III) are treated WA 18,699,24-756,22, to which Luther adds a discussion of important passages of Romans and Jn to strengthen his point; WA 18,756,23-783,39.

116. "Keinen einzigen Augenblick verläßt Luther in jener, seiner leidenschaftlichsten Kampfschrift, die Rolle des Exegeten, der nur die eine Aufgabe hat, die Schrift recht auszulegen." Prenter, "Luther als Theologe," 118.

117. When one comprehends that *De servo arbitrio* is structured as an exegetical treatise it should come as no surprise that the scholars who neglect its relevance as exegesis never understands its arrangement, cf. note 17 above.

118. WA 18,603,1-605,34.

119. WA 18,606,22.

120. WA 18,614,27-620,37.

121. WA 18,628,28-629,4; quotation i.a. from Mt 28:19.

122. WA 18,614,12.

123. WA 18,639,13-661,28.

124. Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* 3.8. Concerning the importance of *utile* in the theology of Erasmus, see Kerlen, *Assertio*, 239; concerning the summary of Erasmus' understanding of theology, ibid., 244: "Die Hauptaufgabe der Theologen richtet sich primär nicht auf die Erforschung der Wahrheit, sondern auf die Erforschung der Nützlichkeit der Wahrheit."

125. Or to a question of business interests, WA 18,625,6-25.

126. In WA 18,614,2-4, Luther defines "status causae huius" as "necessarium . . . nosse." For his critique of Erasmian utilitarianism, see WA 18,630,19ff.

127. Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* 3.9. Concerning this distinction, see Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform*, 14-15, 58ff., and Hoffmann, "Erasmus im Streit mit Luther," 107. The origin of the genus-doctrine is the rhetoric of Aristotle. See George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (London, 1980), 72.

128. Østergaard-Nielsen, *Scriptura sacra*, 120-21, and Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift*, pp. 9 and 17, are therefore right when they protest against the view (of Oberman, Pesch and others) that Luther's insistence on *sola Scriptura* was a matter of course among his contemporaries.

129. This is not to say that Luther could not use the other *genera*. According to Ulrich Nembach, *Predigt des Evangeliums: Luther als Prediger, Pädagoge und Rhetor* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1972), 124, he in his sermons, whose main task is not the defence of truth, but its application, basically followed *genus deliberativum*.

130. See Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform*, who p. 4 defines the central question of the debate like this: "How is truth itself to be decided?"

131. See, e.g., Cornelis Augustijn, "Humanisten auf den Scheideweg," 119-134, who argues that Luther did not belong to the humanist movement. He has, however, quite one-sidedly based his understanding of this movement on Erasmus' *Enchiridion*; ibid., 123, note 12. In the same way, the conclusion of Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Christening Pagan Mysteries: Erasmus in Pursuit of Wisdom*, Erasmus Studies 5 (Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1981), 82, that "Luther was not by conviction a humanist" seems to be founded on her conviction that humanism is the same as the humanist theology of Erasmus. Another, but not particularly convincing example is Genshichi Aizawa, *Shūkyōkaikaku to hyūmanizumu* [Reformation and Humanism] (Sendai, 1978), who still maintains Ernst Troeltsch' view of the

Reformation as a reaction against humanism's promotion of human liberation. See, e.g., his concluding remarks to *De servo arbitrio*, ibid. 166-170.

132. The reason for this shift seems to be that historians recently have sought the characteristics of Renaissance humanism not so much in a homogeneous religious and philosophical outlook as in a common interest in the renewal of philological studies. When the focus thus shifts from doctrine to method, Luther and the Reformation are naturally included. The pluralism of the Renaissance has been repeatedly underlined since Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought* (New York, 1961). See further the works of Lewis W. Spitz, e.g., "Humanismus/Humanismusforschung," *TRE* 15, 639-661, here p. 656; "Luther and Humanism," in Marilyn J. Harran, ed., *Luther and Learning* (Selinsgrove, 1985), 69-94, "Luther, Humanism and the Word," in Eric W. Gritsch, ed., *Encounters with Luther*, vol. III (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 1986), 239-62, and the conclusion in his "The Course of German Humanism," in Heiko A. Oberman and Thomas A. Brady, eds., *Itinerarium Italicum: The Profile of the Italian Renaissance in the Mirror of its European Transformations,* (Leiden, 1975), 371-436, here p. 435: "The commonplace notion of a sharp break between Renaissance and Reformation . . . has proved to be a *fable convenue*." Joachim Dyck, "The First German Treatise on Homiletics: Erasmus Sarcer's *Pastorale* and Classical Rhetoric," in Murphy, *Renaissance Eloquence,* 221-38, here p. 224, thus speaks of "Luther's humanism". Leif Grane, "Luther und der Deutsche Humanismus," in Peter Manns, ed., *Martin Luther: Reformator und Vater im Glauben* (Stuttgart, 1985), 106-17, also demonstrates the interrelatedness between humanism and Reformation.

Concerning specifically the question of free will and determinism, Charles Trinkaus, "The Problem of Free Will in the Renaissance and the Reformation," in Trinkaus, *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism*, 263-273 (=*Journal of the History of Ideas* 10 [1949]: 51-62), rejects the idea that Renaissance and Reformation were in radical opposition to each other.

133. For a discussion both of Luther's humanism and of how it differed from Erasmus', see B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther* (Oxford, 1962), 138-67. That the debate between Erasmus and Luther should be considered as a debate within German humanism is a main point in Jan Lindhardt, *Martin Luther: Erkendelse og formidling i renæssancen* (Valby, 1983), [English edition, *Martin Luther: Knowledge and mediation in the Renaissance*, Texts and studies in religion, vol. 29 (New York, 1986)]. Brecht, *Ordnung und Abgrenzung der Reformation*, 231, agrees: "De servo arbitrio war nicht gedacht als pauschale Absage an den Humanismus und wurde von den gebildeten Zeitgenossen auch nicht so verstanden." The question, then, seems rather to be if it in an historical perspective is at all meaningful to speak of humanism **and** Reformation as if they were distinct and independent entities.

134. Luther was as a writer always heavily dependent on rhetorical traditions. See Birgit Stolt, *Studien zur Luthers Freiheitstraktat mit besonderer Rücksicht auf das Verhältnis der lateinischen und der deutschen Fassung zu einander und die Stilmittel*

der Rhetorik, Stockholmer germanistischer Forschungen 6 (Stockholm, 1969), and "Docere, delectare und movere bei Luther. Analysiert anhand der Predigt, daß man Kinder zur Schule halten solle," in Birgit Stolt, *Wortkampf: Frühneuhochdeutsche Beispiele zur rhetorischen Praxis*. Stockholmer Germanistischer Forschungen 13 (Frankfurt, 1977), 31-77. Cf. also Herbert Wolf, *Martin Luther: Eine Einführung in germanistische Luther-Studien* (Stuttgart, 1980), 93-101.

135. Unfortunately, this part of Luther's intellectual background has mostly been neglected by the scholars investigating his view of the Bible. This is the case also concerning the most recent contribution, i.e., Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit*.

136. Many scholars have contended that Luther in his heated criticism did not understand Erasmus. This criticism overlooks the importance of this rhetorical setting of the debate, and of scholarly debate in the sixteenth century in general. Tracy, "Two Erasmuses, Two Luthers," is undoubtedly right when he p. 45 says that most scholars—Boyle being the only exception—have overlooked this conscious rhetorical craft of *De servo arbitrio*. Luther does not aim at an objective presentation of Erasmus' merits and faults as a theologian; he wants as impressively as possible to highlight his inadequacies as a spiritual leader.

137. Boyle, *Christening Pagan Mysteries*, 81.

138. WA 18,614,27ff.

139. In his criticism of Erasmus' definition of free will, Luther has many followers; see, e.g., McSorley, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen*, 263-66, and Bader, *Assertio*, 170-72. Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, "Erasmus and the 'Modern' Question: Was He Semi-Pelagian," *ARG* (1984): 59-77, argues that this criticism overlooks the character of Erasmus' remarks, which are not meant as a definition, but as a mere "conversational opener" (p. 64). Her argument has, however, not convinced a scholar like J. D. Tracy; see "Two Erasmuses, Two Luthers," 42.

140. See Stolt, *Wortkampf*. Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform*, underlines that Luther thought of *De servo arbitrio* as a lawsuit, and in chapter 3 of her book, "The Plaintiff at the Bar," she shows in detail its juridical rhetoric.

141. See, e.g., the remarks about the argumentative power of Luther over against Erasmus' in Huizinga, *Erasmus*, 163-64., and in Tinkler, "Erasmus' Conversation with Luther," 77. Augustijn, *Erasmus von Rotterdam*, 123, has a similar conclusion: "Seine [Luther's] volle Identifikation mit dem Thema und seine Sicherheit in der Sache, die er verteidigt, machen sein Buch beeindruckend."

142. See Maurer, "Offenbarung und Skepsis," 368: "Man . . . hat ihn [Luther], wenn auch durch seine religiöse Überlegenheit [*sic*] als den augenblicklichen Sieger, dennoch in Blick auf die künftige Geschichte als den Verliehrer bezeichnet. Denn wo hätte sich die lutherische Gottes- und Willenslehre, von einzelnen Anregungen abgesehen . . . , in der Theologie und praktischen Verkündigung der Kirche wirklich durchzusetzen vermocht?"

143. This is also true concerning Lutheran theology; see, e.g., on the relation between Luther and the Formula of Concord McSorley, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen*, 331-334; Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 104 and 146, Klaus Schwarzwäller, "Vom Lehren der Prädestination zur Lehre der Prädestination: FC XI im Lichte der Prädestinationsaussagen Luthers," in Wenzel Lohff and Lewis W. Spitz, ed., *Widerspruch, Dialog und Einigung: Studien zur Konkordienformel* (Stuttgart, 1977), 249-73, and Bengt Hägglund, "Die Rezeption Luthers in der Konkordienformel," in *Luther und die Bekenntnisschriften* (Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg 2, Erlangen 1981), 107-120, particularly pp. 117-19 (on predestination). The difference between Luther and later Lutheran theology is also emphasized by Lennart Pinomaa, "Unfreier Wille und Prädestination bei Luther," *ThZ* 13 (1957): 339-49.

Discussing the doctrines of predestination by Melanchton and Calvin as compared to Luther's, Pannenberg, "Der Einfluß der Anfechtungserfahrung," 131-34, finds both dependence and difference. On Luther and Calvin, see further, e.g., B. A. Gerrish, "'To the Unknown God': Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God," *Journal of Religion* 53 (1973): 263-92, and cf. note 519 below.

Pannenberg, "Der Einfluß der Anfechtungserfahrung," 138, maintains that Luther later, particularly in his Lecture on Genesis, modified his standpoints from *De servo arbitrio*. For a discussion of this question, see McSorley, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen*, 327-330.

144. On the modern relevance of Luther's (and Calvin's) doctrine of the hiddenness of God, see Gerrish, "To the Unknown God," 289-292.

145. WA 18,614,34. Quintilian was an important authority on rhetoric for the German humanists including Luther. See, e.g., Luther's evaluation of Quintilian in WAB 1,563,10 ("I prefer him to all authors!"). Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* is therefore an important part of the background of Luther's view of language and literature. For an introduction to Quintilian's life and work, see George A. Kennedy's biography *Quintilian* (New York, 1969), and the same author's *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World* (Princeton, 1972), 487-514. Emphasizing Luther's admiration for Quintilian is Nembach, *Predigt des Evangeliums*, 130-35, who also comments on the actual passage from *De servo arbitrio* pp. 133-34 and 164.

146. WA 18,618,2ff. See Schwarz, "Beobachtungen."

147. WA 18,618,11.

148. WA 18,603,1-666,12.

149. For a discussion of Erasmus' view of the Scripture, see Kohls, *Die Theologie des Erasmus* I, 126-143; Hoffmann, *Erkenntnis und Verwirklichung*, 73-88; Krüger, *Humanistische Evangelienauslegung*, 47-59; and Peter Walter, *Theologie aus dem Geist der Rhetorik: Zur Schriftauslegung des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, Tübinger Studien zur Theologie und Philosophie 1 (Mainz, 1991).

150. *De libero arbitrio* Ia8. Cf. the summary of Erasmus' view by Gerhard Ebeling, "Luthers Kampf gegen die Moralisierung des Christlichen," *Lutherstudien* vol. 3 (Tübingen, 1985), 44-73, here p. 65.

151. *De libero arbitrio* Ia7. As mentioned by Eberhard Jüngel, "Quae supra nos, nihil ad nos: Eine Kurzformel der Lehre vom vorborgenen Gott — im Anschluß an Luther interpretiert," in Jüngel, *Entsprechungen: Gott — Wahrheit — Mensch. Theologische Erörterungen* (Munich, 1980), 202-251 (=*EvTh* 32 [1972]: 197-237), here p. 219, Erasmus could to a certain extent find support for his warning against a curious theology in Melanchton's statement "mysteria divinitatis rectius adoraverimus quam vestigaverimus" (*Loci communes*, 1521, in R. Stupperich, ed., *Melanchtons Werke in Auswahl* vol. II/1 [1978], 20,9).

152. *De libero arbitrio* IIa3-4. According to H. Popkin, *The History of Skepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Assen, 1960), 7, Erasmus' adherence to the doctrines of the Church was a result of his skepticism, whereas Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform*, 21, argues that Erasmus merely prefers to emphasize the importance of probability until the relevant institution, the Church, has reached its final conclusion. According to such an interpretation, Erasmus follows a traditional Catholic view of the doctrinal authority of the institutional Church: Scripture decides, but according to the judgement of the Church.

153. WA 18,603,1-620,37.

154. "Non est enim hoc Christiani pectoris, non delectari assertionibus, imo delectari assertionibus debet, aut Christianus non erit." WA 18,603,11.

155. This Greek word, which Luther quotes in the original (WA 18,603,23), means full assurance, certainty. Paul uses it Col 2:2; 1 Thess 1:5; see also Heb 6:11; 10:22. It is characteristic that whereas Erasmus insists on the doctrinal authority of the institutional Church, Luther argues from the Bible as the only ecclesiastical authority.

156. WA 18,603,25. Luther quotes and alludes to Rom 10:9: "If you confess with your mouth . . . and believe in your heart . . . , you will be saved"; Mt 10:32: "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven"; 1 Pet 3:15.

157. WA 18,603,22.

158. "Tolle assertiones, et Christianismum tulisti." WA 18,603,28. Kerlen, *Assertio*, 299, objects that Luther here overlooks the fact that he at this point basically agrees with Erasmus, as both of them maintain *assertio* in the essentials and skepticism in the non-essentials. Kerlen is aware, however (p. 248), that the concept of *assertio* has almost no significance within the theology of Erasmus, and his conclusion p. 300 seems therefore better founded: "Angesichts dieser echten Differenzen verblaßt die Feststellung, Luther und Erasmus seien sich doch formal einig."

159. "Für Luther bedeutet die assertio zugleich den Akt des Bekennens, ja den Akt des Glaubens selbst" (Otto Hermann Pesch, "Humanismus und Reformation — ein herausforderndes Erbe," in Pesch, *Humanismus und Reformation*, 135-69, here p. 157). See further R. Hermann, *Klarheit der Heiligen Schrift*, 11-17, and cf. WA 18,603,25-31.

160. E.g., WA 18,604,22. Kerlen, *Assertio*, has carefully worked out the background and contents of Luther's understanding of *assertio,* which, according to Kerlen, leads him to gravely misunderstand Erasmus, ibid., 296. He is aware of the biblical foundation of Luther's view (e.g., ibid., 284, where he speaks of Luther's understanding of the assertive quality of the word of God). He is, however, unable to take it seriously, and his critical remarks, therefore, do not seem to be irrefutable.

161. See the survey of the debate by McSorley, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen*, 260-62.

162. This is underlined by Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform*, 17ff., where she emphasizes that the Ciceronian skepticism of Erasmus is methodological rather than absolute. This form of skepticism will suspend judgement to avoid the pitfalls of a shallow dogmatism, but is not necessarily negative to firm conclusions as such. Maurer, "Offenbarung und Skepsis," 376, judges differently: ". . . er bleibt Skeptiker, indem er gehorsam ist." For a careful and balanced discussion of the skepticism of Erasmus in a historical perspective, see Bader, *Assertio*, 1-63.

163. Whereas Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform*, 97-98, undoubtedly is right when she argues that a Luther's critique of Erasmus has decisively influenced the somewhat negative view of the latter in Reformation research, she is not to be followed when she p. 94 suggests that Luther is "deliberately falsifying". The scholarly work with Erasmus should of course be based on Erasmus himself rather than on Luther's view of him. We should still, however, be able to see that Luther had a carefully reasoned foundation for his criticism. See, e.g., the presentation of Luther's critique of Erasmus in Ebeling, "Luthers Kampf gegen die Moralisierung des Christlichen," 66-70.

164. For a similar evaluation of Erasmus, see Kohls, *Luther oder Erasmus* I, 162f.

165. Cf. Ficker, "Ut simplicissime tractaretis Scripturas," 176: Luther "was a biblical theologian in the sense that he always developed his theological thought in strict relation to the Bible as norm."

166. Over against Erasmus' willingness to submit to ecclesiastical authorities, Luther asks, "Non satis est submisisse sensum scripturis?" (WA 18,604,36).

167. Luther does not quote this passage in *De servo arbitrio*. He does, however, in "*Von weltlichter Oberkeit*" (1523), and interprets it as follows: "Die Kirche gepeutt [orders] nichts, sie wisse denn gewiß, das Gottis wort sey" (WA 11,262,34).

168. Cf. Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, "The Chimera and the Spirit: Luther's Grammar of the Will," in *Conference Volume from the Martin Luther Quincentennial Conference Michigan 1983* (Detroit, 1985), 17-31, here p. 26: "Luther's interpretive task was a literal imitation of the truth, in which mimesis he merely observed, recorded and transmitted meaning." Kohls, *Erasmus oder Luther*, I, p. XIII, thus rightly observes: "Luthers Grundlage ist das von ihm neu erfahrene Gottesverhältnis auf Grund der gottgeschenkten Selbsttätigkeit der Bibel und der Sakramente Taufe und Abendmahl." See further Ernst-Wilhelm Kohls, "Luthers Aussagen über die Mitte, Klarheit und Selbsttätigkeit der Heiligen Schrift," in *LuJ* 40 (1973), 46-75. For a discussion of Luther's view of the "Identität von Gottes Wort . . . und Verkündigung der Kirche," see also Steck, *Lehre und Kirche bei Luther*, 53-62.

169. According to Ebeling, "Die Anfänge von Luthers Hermeneutik," 2, this is (part of) the reason Luther's exegesis now seems suspect: "Luther war nicht der Meinung, als Exeget nur eine theologische Teildisziplin zu vertreten, die der Ergänzung etwa durch systematisch-theologische Kollegs bedürfte. . . . Von modernen Maßstäben her geurteilt, veranlaßt das zu Zweifeln an der Sauberkeit seiner exegetischen Methode." See also Werner Führer, *Das Wort Gottes in Luthers Theologie* (Göttingen, 1984), 105: "Luthers Theologie ist Schriftauslegung — eine Schriftauslegung, die nicht durch eine 'Dogmatik' ergänzt werden müßte, sondern die bereits alles enthält, was er als Theologe zu sagen hat." On the other hand, McSorley, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen*, 278, maintains that "es wäre sehr weit von der Wirklichkeit entfernt zu glauben, er schreibe nur als biblischer Theologe." McSorley is of course right in so far as Luther was not isolated "von der Tradition, in der er wissenschaftlich aufgewachsen war" (ibid.). As far as Luther's self-understanding is concerned, however, the "nur als biblischer Theologe" seems to be the adequate description.

170. "Spiritus sanctus non est Skepticus, nec dubia aut opiniones in cordibus nostris scripsit, sed assertiones ipsa vita et omnia experientia certiores et firmiores," WA 18,605,32-34.

171. According to Erasmus, this was the main mistake of Luther's theology; see Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform*, 98, and Augustijn, "Hyperaspistes I," 743. A modern scholar who maintains an analogous view is D. Kerlen, see *Assertio,* 153, and his concluding remarks ibid. 370-373, where he explains Luther's "Anspruch" from "einem Geflecht von Sach-, Person- und Umweltfaktoren". A similar criticism of Luther's theology is expressed also by Karl Barth; see Steck, *Lehre und Kirche bei Luther*, 60.

172. In *Assertio omnium articulorum*, Luther discusses the problem of subjectivity in the interpretation of the Bible, cf. WA 7,96,10-101,8. See further Steck, *Lehre und Kirche bei Luther*, 61.

173. WA 18,603,17; 604,22-25. Luther does not in this context explain what he means by "inutiles et neutres dogmates", but in the background is obviously his criticism of the Catholic Church demanding obedience in minor matters of ritual and conduct.

174. WA 18,603,21.

175. "In Deo esse multa abscondita," WA 18,606,12.

176. WA 18,606,11. See the discussion of Rom 11:33 and Isa 40:13, WA 18,607,18ff. The significance of the distinction between God and the Scripture of God in Luther's thought should not be questioned. When Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit,* 61, describes it as the "Fundamentalunterscheidung" in *De servo arbitrio*, however, I am not sure if this description corresponds to Luther's way of thinking.

177. "Sed esse in scriptura quaedam abstrusa et non omnia exposita, invulgatum est quidem per impios Sophistas . . . . Talibus autem larvis Satanas absterruit a legendis literis Sacris." WA 18,606,16-20.

178. The reason might also be that the passage belongs to a book that perhaps should not have been accepted as canonical. See chapter 5c below.

179. ". . . esse multa loca in scripturis obscura et abstrusa, non ob maiestatem rerum, sed ob ignorantiam vocabulorum et grammaticae, sed quae nihil impediant scientiam omnium rerum in scripturis." WA 18,606,22-24. On Luther's relation to the traditional view of the *loci obscuri*, see Krause, *Luthers Auslegung der kleinen Propheten*, 260-69. According to the conclusion p. 268 Luther represents with a new exclusivity the view that "die Bibel an sich keine dunklen und unklaren Stellen enthalte, wenn man nur ihre Ursprachen wirklich beherrschte."

180. According to R. Hermann, *Klarheit der Heiligen Schrift*, 22, Luther elsewhere understands the breaking of the seal allegorically as "der Durchbruch des Evangeliums durch die Gesetzlichkeit." R. Hermann has not demonstrated, however, that this is the meaning in this context. See further the criticism of his interpretation by Beißer, *Claritas Scripturae*, 133.

181. WA 18,606,25-28.

182. "Res igitur in scripturis contentae omnes sunt proditae, licet qaedam loca adhuc verbis incognitis obscura sint," WA 18,606,30. Accordingly, the Bible explains itself, and "der Ausleger . . . entsprict seiner Aufgabe darin, daß er der Selbstauslegung der Schrift ungehindert Raum gibt" (Beutel, *In dem Anfang war das Wort*, 247).

183. On Luther's view of the "Eindeutigkeit der Bibel", see Holl, "Luthers Bedeutung," 551.

184. "Iam nihil refert, si res sit in luce, an aliquid eius signum sit in tenebris." WA 18,606,35.

185. Rom 15:4: "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us." 2 Tim 3:16: "All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching." WA 18,607,6.

186. Concerning the "Anknüpfung im Widerspruch" toward "den herrschenden Wissenschaftbegriff" that is implied in Luther's expression "primum principium", see Oswald Bayer, "Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio: Eine Besinnung auf Luthers Theologieverständnis," *LuJ* 55 (1988): 7-59 (=Oswald Bayer, *Theologie* [Handbuch Systematischer Theologie vol. 1, Gütersloh, 1994], 55-106), here pp. 57-58, and Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit*, 132-34.

187. Obviously considering *claritas Scripturae* as an insufficient foundation for a book like *De servo arbitrio*, Schwarzwäller, *Theologia crucis*, 47-49, replaces it with the doctrine of justification. He might find support among Luther scholars for such a procedure; hardly, however, in *De servo arbitrio*.

188. WA 18,653,33-35.

189. WA 18,654,1-659,33. According to Zickendraht, *Der Streit zwischen Erasmus und Luther*, 77, Luther's proof of his first principle "fällt . . . recht schwach aus." The premise of this criticism is probably that he expects something from this proof that Luther does not intend to give. Luther does not intend to prove the Bible's eternal perfection; he wants to show that the Bible is the lucid and consistent foundation for a Christian confession.

190. Deut 17:8ff.; WA 18,654,1-20. R. Hermann, *Klarheit der Heiligen Schrift*, 51-52, criticizes that Luther thus turns the Bible into a doctrinal law code, and suggests that the preacher's honest will to serve the Church could be a better criterion in a doctrinal controversy. He seems to be aware, however, that he in this respect is Luther's critic more than his interpreter: "Von einer claritas exterior der Bibel wäre, schon nach dem Ausgeführten, besser nicht zu reden" (ibid., 52). According to the criticism of R. Hermann in Bader, *Assertio*, 160, "das heißt nicht weniger, als den Versuch, der duplex obscuritas zu entkommen, bereits im Ansatz zunichte zu machen."

191. Ps 19:9; Ps 119 passim; 1 Cor 3 and 4; 2Pet 2:19 etc.; WA 18,654,21-655,10.

192. WA 18,655,11-18.

193. WA 18,655,19-25.

194. WA 18,655,25-27.

195. "Nullam eius partem volo obscuram dici; stat ibi, quod ex Petro [2 Pet 1:19] retulimus, Lampadem lucentem nobis esse verbum Dei in loco calignoso." WA 18,656,15-17. It thus seems not to be quite to the point to conclude that to Luther "the *res*, not the *verba* of the Bible is inspired" (Miikka Ruokanen, "Does Luther have a Theory of Biblical Inspiration," in Tuomo Mannermaa and others, eds., *Thesaurus Lutheri: Auf der Suche nach neuen Paradigmen der Luther Forschung* (Helsinki, 1987), 259-78 [=*Modern Theology* 4 (1986): 1-16], here p. 272. Better Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit*, 237f.

196. This Christological qualification of *claritas Scripturae* is heavily emphasized by Führer, *Das Wort Gottes in Luthers Theologie*, 109-115. He seems to be distorting the picture, however, when he p. 111 maintains that "'claritas scripturae' bei Luther ein christologisches Prädikat ist," and finds "die Klarheit der Schrift nicht in ihr selbst, sondern außerhalb ihrer." The question is if theology in this way does not lose its concrete exegetical foundation and again is reduced to a play with abstract concepts.

197. It is a main point in Luther's argument, however, that the Bible, not the interpreter, decides which questions are important.

198. Thereby Luther is not thinking of confession in a broad and unqualified sense; his words are obviously a rendering of the Trinitarian and Christological dogma of the old Church.

199. Cf. Ficker, "Ut simplicissime tractaretis Scripturas," 191: "The texts always are 'contemporary' in their message and claim, and the texts are still fresh and new." As indicated by Beutel, *In dem Anfang war das Wort*, 242, Luther's well known emphasis on the oral character of the gospel seems to be closely related to its actuality. Beutel unnecessarily obscures the point, however, when he p. 243 lets go of his usual reservation against theological abstractions and suggests that "die exklusive Autorität der *Schrift* beruht gerade auf der *Mündlichkeit* des Evangeliums." On this aspect, see further note 281 below.

200. Luther thus understands theology as closely related to Christian existence, whereas it to Erasmus is the learned debate among theologians. See Kerlen, *Assertio*, 298.

201. "Es genügt . . . nach Luther nicht, diese Wahrheit Gottes sozusagen pietätvoll zu verehren, ohne sie dabei wirklich in ihrer buchstäblichen Bedeutung ernst zu nehmen. . . . Luther hat ein unabdingbares Interesse daran, daß Gottes Wahrheit *Geltung* hat." Beißer, *Claritas Scripturae*, 99.

202. On rhetoric as persuasion, see Walter Jens, "Rhetorik," in W. Kohlschmidt and W. Mohr, ed., *Reallexicon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte* (Berlin and New York, 1971), vol. 3, 432-56, here p. 433: "Das Ziel der Rhetorik . . . ist Psychagogie"; and Jørgen Fafner, *Retorik. Klassisk og moderne* [Rhetoric. Classical and modern] (Copenhagen, 1982) 32-46. The origin of the definition of rhetoric as "Psychagogie" is Plato *Phaidros* 261a. In *De servo arbitrio*, Luther defines it as "benedicendi peritia" (WA 18,614,36), and even enumerates its five classical disciplines (inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, pronunciatio; ibid.).

203. Some scholars interpret the importance of rhetoric to the Renaissance to be even greater. According to Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Humanism and Philosophy," in M. Mooney, ed., *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources* (New York, 1979), 91, "the humanistic movement . . . arose in the field of grammatical and rhetorical studies." (Quoted after John Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric," in Albert A. Rabil,

Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms and Legacy (Philadelphia, 1988), vol. 2, 171-235, here p. 175.)

204. On this problem, see Heinz Otto Burger, *Renaissance—Humanismus—Reformation: deutsche Literatur im europäischen Kontext* (Frankfurter Beiträge zur Germanistik 7, Zurich, 1969), 422-24; Sandra Mosher Anderson, *Words and Word in Theological Perspective: Martin Luther's View on Literature and Figurative Speech* (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1973); Klaus Dockhorn, "Luthers Glaubensbegriff und die Rhetorik," *Linguistica Biblica* (1973): 19-39, and "*Rhetorica movet.* Protestantischer Humanismus und karolingische Renaissance," in Helmut Schanze, ed., *Rhetorik: Beiträge zu ihrer Geschichte in Deutschland vom 16.-20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), 17-42; Lindhardt, *Martin Luther: Erkendelse og formidling i renæssancen*; Junghans, *Der junge Luther*, pp. 213-19; Erik Kyndal, "Luther — som renæssancehumanist?" [Luther—as Renaissance Humanist?], Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift 46 (1983): 225-245; Knut Alfsvåg, "Language and Reality: Luther's Relation to Classical Rhetoric in *Rationis Latomianae confutatio* (1521)," *StTh* 41 (1987): 85-126.

205. ". . . per quas imagines rerum absentium ita repraesentantur animo, ut eas cernere oculis ac praesentes habere videamur." Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* 6.2.29. See Dockhorn, "Rhetorica movet," 27, and Anderson, *Words and Word*, 290.

206. ". . . illustratio et evidentia . . . , quae non tamen dicere videtur quam ostendere." Ibid., 6.2.32.

207. "Has quisquis bene conceperit, is erit in adfectibus potentissimus." Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* 6.2.30. As man, according to rhetoric, is basically determined by his *adfectus*, the stirring of the emotions is the key to persuasion. This is the basic assumption of Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* 6.2. Scholars of Renaissance rhetoric have tended to overlook this view of rhetoric as emotional renewal. An important improvement is, however, Debora K. Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric: The Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance* (Princeton, 1988), who concludes p. 48: "The grand style dominates Renaissance sacred rhetorics because it alone can transform will and heart." According to Nembach, *Predigt des Evangeliums*, 147-52, Luther applied Quintilian's view of *adfectus* in his sermons.

208. Dockhorn, "Rhetorica movet," 27.

209. Dockhorn, "Luthers Glaubensbegriff," 30-31, and "Rhetorica movet," 28-29, discusses other passages from Luther's works from a similar point of view. See, however, the critique of Dockhorn by Junghans, *Der junge Luther*, 215. The close relation between Quintilian and Luther in this respect is emphasized also by Tinkler, "Erasmus' Conversation with Luther," 68.

210. Luther: "Ipsa vita et omnia experientia certiores et firmiores," WA 18,605,34. Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift*, 19, is therefore right when he maintains that Luther thereby describes the Bible as "ein aktiv ausstrahlendes Licht". That the

clarity of the Scripture **shines** into the heart of the listeners is also mentioned by Reinhold Weier, *Das Theologieverständnis Martin Luthers* (Paderborn, 1976), 32.

211. That Luther's understanding of emotion is an important aspect of his theology, has long been well known. See Holl, "Luthers Bedeutung," 556; Günther Metzger, *Gelebter Glaube: Die Formierung reformatorischen Denkens in Luthers erster Psalmenvorlesung, dargestellt am Begriff des Affekts* (FDGK 14, Göttingen, 1964), and Weier, *Das Theologieverständnis Martin Luthers*, 45-47. The scholars have, however, tended to overlook that Luther in this respect is quite closely related to humanist rhetoric. An exception is Anderson, *Words and Word*, 202-207 and 285-291.

212. Luther: "Res scriptura esse omnes in luce positas clarissima," WA 18,606,32.

213. One should therefore not, as Dieter Gutzen, "'Es liegt alles am wort' — Überlegungen zu Luthers Rhetorik," in Gert Ueding, ed., *Rhetorik zwischen den Wissenschaften*, Rhetorik-Forschungen vol. 1 (Tübingen, 1991), 229-35, here p. 235, distinguish between a rhetorical and outward understanding of the Bible on one hand, and "das Ergriffensein von einer lebendigen Glaubenserfahrung" on the other, as the point is that this "Ergriffensein" is rhetorically transmitted.

214. I do thereby not suggest (as Dockhorn, "Luthers Glaubensbegriff," 30f., does) that Luther's exposition of "claritas" in *De servo arbitrio* is **based on** Quintilian's understanding of "illuminatio". Luther's view obviously has other sources as well, mainly the Bible, where the light-metaphor is fundamental. Given the fact, however, that Luther undoubtedly knew the writings of Quintilian and held them in high esteem, a certain affinity is undisputable, even if the exact nature of Luther's relation to Quintilian, and to humanist rhetoricians, needs further investigation. See further Dyck, "The First German Treatise," 235 (on Luther). The doctrine of *vivificatio* as a rhetorical *ars movendi affectus* is also touched by Lewis W. Spitz, in "Humanism and the Protestant Reformation," in Rabil, *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. 3, 380-411, here p 394, and in "Luther, Humanism and the Word," 248.

215. According to Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform*, 51; and same, "Stoic Luther: Paradoxical Sin and Necessity," *ARG* (1982): 69-93, here p. 83, the background of Luther's thought is not rhetoric, but the stoic theory of kataleptic impression (cf. Luther's own description WA 18,603,23: "ipsis Stoicis bis pertinaciores assertores"). She thus concludes that ". . . the 'clarity of Scripture' is not an appeal to the rhetorical canon of clarity but to the epistemological norm of manifestness" (*Rhetoric and Reform*, 51). In view of the interrelatedness of ideas in Renaissance humanism, however, such a clear-cut distinction sounds rather forced. See, e.g., William J. Bouwsma, "The Two Faces of Humanism: Stoicism and Augustinianism in Renaissance Thought," in Oberman and Brady, *Itinerarium Italicum*, 3-60.

216. See Schwarz, Beobachtungen.

217. "The divine Word may be unique in the degree of its efficacy; but the kind of efficacy it has as well as the manner of its operation are those of ordinary language" (Richard Waswo, *Language and Meaning in the Renaissance* [Princeton, 1988], 240, referring Luther's position). According to Scott H. Hendrix, "The Authority of Scripture at Work: Exegesis of the Psalms," in Eric W. Gritsch (ed.), *Encounters with Luther*, vol. II (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 1982), 144-64, "Luther approached Scripture as we would approach a great work of art" (ibid., 147).

218. This is underlined also by Beutel, *In dem Anfang war das Wort*, 247.

219. It is therefore not correct to say that "Luthers Fidesbegriff basiert auf dem Fidesbegriff von Rhetorik und Humanismus" (Burger, *Renaissance—Humanismus—Reformation*, 423). Better Junghans, *Der junge Luther*, 218: ". . . die antike Rhetorik, von den Humanisten neu belebt, verhilft ihm zum Verständnis des biblischen Sprachausdruckes." Junghans therefore (ibid., 216) speaks of "ein Vorrang des Exegetischen vor dem Rhetorischen".

220. Boyle has even another argument that Luther's theology is not rhetorical: It is assertive rather than persuasive (*Rhetoric and Reform*, 90). She has, however, neither related this view to the recent literature on the rhetoric of Luther nor to his rhetorically founded view of persuasion; it therefore seems quite unfounded. To prove her view, she quotes (ibid., 88) WA 18,662,20-21: "In docendo enim simplicitas et proprietas dialectica requiritur non autem ampullae et figurae rhetoricae persuasionis." This does, however, hardly prove anything more than that Luther was familiar with the rhetorical distinction between *docere* and *movere.*

Boyle is aware of the classical rhetorical structure of *De servo arbitrio*, but considers it as something "remarkable among Luther's writings" (ibid.). In view of the investigations of Stolt referred to above, this is a remarkable conclusion indeed.

221. See Boyle, *Erasmus on Language and Method*, 23, 73, 82-83. Also according to Waswo, *Language and Meaning*, 226, Erasmus had come to understand that "the meaning of the text is the emotion that it effects in the reader." This view is, however, rarely expressed in his theoretical reflections, ibid., 216.

222. This is particularly true concerning Quintilian's view of emotions, which Erasmus, according to Tinkler, "Erasmus' Conversation with Luther," 67, never understood.

223. To this important aspect of Erasmus' theology, see note 99 above, and further Hoffmann, "Erasmus im Streit mit Luther," p. 113, and same, "Faith and Piety in Erasmus' Thought," *Sixteenth Century Journal* (1989): 241-58, particularly 246ff. Gerhard B. Winkler, "Das Psalmenargument des Erasmus im Streit um den freien Willen," in Fatio and Frankel, *Histoire de l'exégèse au XVIe siècle*, 95-118, has worked out how Erasmus applied *misericordia Dei* as the central category of mediation. The critique of Luther's lack of mediation is a main point in *Hyperaspistes* II; cf. Zickendraht, *Der Streit zwischen Erasmus und Luther*, 169.

224. See Boyle, "Stoic Luther," 83, and Waswo, *Language and Meaning*, 241: "Erasmus made mediating discourse central to his theology; Luther made the creating Word more central to his."

225. It is then perhaps appropriate to label this understanding "Stoic" and "kataleptic", as Boyle does (see note 215 above). That it still is verbally transmitted, and therefore basically rhetorical, should, however, not be disputed.

226. Chantraine, *Erasme et Luther*, 275, interprets the divergence between Luther and Erasmus differently: "Pour Erasme, l'exegèse est commandée par le rapport entre *mysterium* et *affectus*", whereas "pour Luther, l'exegèse est commandée par le rapport entre Parole et foi." Chantraine thus undoubtedly indicates important concepts; the problem is, however, if this is relevant as a **comparison** between the two.

227. Cf. Tinkler, "Erasmus' Conversation with Luther," 66: "Luther arguably pushed the humanists' theoretical ideal to a conclusion that humanists were regularly unwilling to pursue."

228. To use the terminology of Waswo: Erasmus considers words as semantically cosmetic, not as semantically constitutive. According to Krüger, *Humanistische Evangelienauslegung*, the word has to Erasmus "Verweisfunktion" (p. 26) and "Mehrschichtigkeit" (p. 57); it suggests more than it defines. Krüger interprets this on the background of Erasmus' "Wirklichkeitsverständnis," which he p. 37 describes as "neuplatonisch-origenistisch." For a similar view, see Hoffmann, *Erkenntnis und Verwirklichung*, 6-10, 49.

229. Cf. Leopold von Ranke's view that Luther "von der Sache zur Methode vorangeschritten sei, während die Wissenschaft in der Regel den umgekehrten Weg einschlage." (Ernst-Wilhelm Kohls, "Kann ein Autor besser verstanden werden, als er sich selbst verstand?" in Kohls, *Luther oder Erasmus* II, 196-214 [=*Basler Theologische Zeitschrift* 28 (1972): 125-143], here p. 197.)

230. Ficker, "Ut simplicissime tractaretis Scripturas," 184-85, describes Luther's view of understanding as an affinity between author and interpreter that leads "to a transformation and re-orientation of the interpreter."

231. Waswo, *Language and Meaning*, 239, renders Luther's position like this: By hearing the word, we are "moved to follow it we know not where."

232. From the point of view of rhetorical persuasion, then, Erasmus skeptical epistemology is much more problematic than Luther's insistence on *assertio*.

233. Schanze, "German Rhetoric to 1500," 120, maintains that Luther thus transcends the categories of rhetoric and establishes a "*rhetorica contra rhetores*". This might be true if rhetoric is the same as the teachings of Cicero and Quintilian. If rhetoric, however, is understood as the investigation of persuasion through linguistic communication, Luther's theology undoubtedly is profoundly rhetorical.

234. Luther apprehends "the historical experience recorded in its [the Bible's] words as emotionally efficacious in the present of the believer." Waswo, *Language and Meaning*, 238.

235. That Christ, according to Luther, speaks through the biblical witnesses, is underlined by Steck, *Lehre und Kirche bei Luther*, 67.

236. WA 18,607,4; the words alludes to Lk 24:5: "Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." That the understanding of the Bible according to Luther is a gift, is underlined by Holl, "Der Bedeutung," 555.

237. WA 18,607,12; 2 Cor 3:15 (not chapter 4, as Luther says).

238. WA 18,607,10.

239. "Duplex et claritas scripturae, sicut et duplex obscuritas, Una externa in verbi ministerio posita, altera in cordis cognitione sita." WA 18,609,4-5.

240. Cf. Anderson, *Words and Word*, 206: "Scripture cannot be understood unless one feels it, unless one is personally affected by it."

241. According to Fritz Hahn, "Luthers Auslegungsgrundsätze und ihre theologischen Voraussetzungen," *Zeitschift für systematische Theologie* 12 (1934/35): 165-218, particularly pp. 166-68, Luther's view of understanding as "Konformität der Affekte" is to be found already in *Dictata super Psalterium*. It is here dependent on the Psalm exegesis of the French humanist Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, whose *Quincuplex Psalterium* was printed in 1509. Lefèvre underlined that the literal meaning of the Bible is the prophetic meaning that is intended by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, only they who have the Spirit, will understand.

242. "Si de interna claritate dixeris, nullus homo unum iota in scripturis videt, nisi qui spiritum Dei habet, omnes habent obscuratum cor, ita, ut si etiam dicant et norint proferre omnia scripturae, nihil tamen horum sentiant aut vere cognoscant, neque credunt Deum, nec sese esse creaturas Dei . . . . Spiritus enim requiretur ad totam scripturam et ad quamlibet eius partem intelligendam." WA 18,609,6-11.

243. This identification of faith and understanding is not accepted by Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit*, 236: "Zugleich ist Luther sich dessen bewußt, daß ein herzlicher Glaube an die verstandenen Schriftinhalte nicht schon durch das Verstehen der klaren Wörter allein zustandekommt." According to Buchholz, "jeder sprachfähige Mensch als solcher, d.h. unabhängig von seinem persönlichen Glauben oder Unglauben, [ist] grundsätzlich zum Lesen, Verstehen und Auslegen der Schrift ermächtigt" (p. 233-34), whereas "der Glaube . . . an das in der Schrift mit klaren Wörtern Gesagte ist pneumatologisch begründet" (p. 236). As far as I can see, however, this is to introduce complications that have no relation to Luther's thought.

244. Luther's view is that if there is no understanding, the deficiency is on the part of the reader or listener, not on the part of the Bible. The opposite opinion is

represented by Beißer, *Claritas Scripturae*, 81: "Wenn sie [the Scripture] versäumt, 'Christus' zu lehren, ist sie unbrauchbar geworden." Better ibid., 120: "An sich ist die Schrift klar, aber nicht alle sind in der Lage, sie auch recht zu hören."

245. Waswo, *Language and Meaning*, uses the term "affective semantics" to describe the position of both Erasmus (229) and Luther (241).

246. It is therefore wrong to speak of the possibility of "eine lediglich philologische Untersuchung" (Beißer, *Claritas Scripturae*, 62) of the Bible as far as Luther is concerned. Exegesis is either congenial or unsuccessful. Better Beißer, "Luthers Schriftverständnis," in Manns, *Reformator und Vater im Glauben*, 25-37 (="Wort Gottes und Heilige Schrift bei Luther," in *Schrift und Auslegung*, Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie e.V. Ratzeburg 10 [Erlangen, 1987], 15-29), here p. 35: "Wer . . . diese Texte [the Bible] behandeln will, abgesehen davon, daß sie Gott bezeugen wollen, der wird ihnen von vornherein nicht gerecht."

Erasmus, too, could underline the importance of the presence of the Spirit in this connection (Hoffmann, "Faith and Piety in Erasmus's Thought," 249). But there is a characteristic difference. To Erasmus, the presence of the Spirit is a condition for and understanding of the **spiritual** (allegorical) meaning of the Scripture; for Luther, it is a condition for an understanding of the **historical** meaning.

247. Inge Lønning, "'No Other Gospel': Luther's Concept of the 'Middle of Scripture' in Its Significance of Ecumenical Communion and Christian Confession Today," in Peter Manns and Harding Meyer, eds., *Luther's Ecumenical Significance: An Interconfessional Consultation* (Philadelphia, 1984), 229-45, is thus right when he pp. 232-33 maintains that Luther's view of the clarity of Scripture implies that authority of Scripture and understanding of Scripture are closely connected. On understanding as involvement, see further Ficker, "Ut simplicissime tractaretis Scripturas," 185.

248. Hence the evangelistic and missiological zeal in Luther's vehement refutation of the Erasmian "non ea prostituere promiscuis auribus," WA 18,620,38-633,23.

249. ". . . esse multa loca in scripturis obscura et abstrusa, non ob maiestatem rerum, sed ob ignorantiam vocabulorum et grammaticae." WA 18,606,22-23. On the importance of grammatical analysis to Luther, see Holl, "Luthers Bedeutung," 552; and Saarinen, "The Word of God in Luther's Theology," *Lutheran Quarterly* 4 (1990): 31-44, here pp. 38-41.

250. To Luther, this task is interminable. Cf. the remarks by H. G. Haile, "Luther as Renaissance Writer," in Gerhart Hoffmeister, ed., *The Renaissance and Reformation in Germany* (New York, 1977), 141-56, here p. 152: "Luther's exegesis . . . does not aim at finality. On the contrary, the typical interpretation begins and ends with a statement that it is tentative, that it may be replaced tomorrow by a better one based on increased experience and understanding."

251. That it is possible to work with Luther's view on the Scripture and still not understand anything, is demonstrated by Oskar Johannes Mehl, "Erasmus contra Luther," *LuJ* (1962): 52-64, who p. 64 uses "die alljährlich überall erscheinende Kommentare, Meditationen, Bibelhilfen, Predigtentwürfe etc." as an argument **against** Luther's understanding of clarity! In *Hyperaspistes* I (1308B-1309B), Erasmus has a similar argument.

252. This does not mean that the exegete would not meet doubt and *Anfechtungen*. It does mean, however, that from an epistemological point of view, the conviction that the Christian dogma is clearly expressed in the Bible, is a precondition for sound exegesis. *Fides qua creditur* is thus both an exegetical prerequisite (Otto Hof, "Luthers exegetischer Grundsatz von der Analogia fidei," in Hof, *Schriftauslegung und Rechtvertigungslehre: Aufsätze zur Theologie Luthers* [Karlsruhe, 1982], 109-26, here p. 112) and a precondition for an adequate translation of the Bible (Beutel, *In dem Anfang war das Wort*, 272-76).

253. Steck, *Lehre und Kirche bei Luther*, 161: "Luther sieht die Einheit der Schrift immer in einer doppelten Weise an, als Voraussetzung jedes rechten Schriftverständnisses überhaupt *und* als immer neu gestellte Aufgabe. Dabei spielt die Einheit der Schrift als Voraussetzung in den Aussagen Luthers eine stärkere Rolle, während man die Einheit der Schrift als Aufgabe und Ziel mehr unausgesprochen aus dem Vollzug der exegetischen Arbeit . . . herausfühlen muß."

254. Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift*, 137-38, expresses it like this: The work of the theologians does not serve the *clarificatio scripturae,* but the *clarificatio humanae verbae et cogitationum*, i.e., the words of faith and preaching, and cf. his criticism of the differing views of R. Hermann and F. Beißer.

255. That this makes Luther very different from "die moderne historisch-kritische Methode" is emphasized by Ulrich Duchrow, "Die Klarheit der Schrift und die Vernunft," *KuD* 15 (1969): 1-17, here pp. 9-10. On "Übereinstimmung in Erlebnisbereich" as the ideal of Luther's exegesis and Bible translation, see further Gutzen, "'Es liegt alles am wort'," 230-33.

256. Luther scholars have been discussing the question of which is the most important, external (e.g., Beißer and Klug) or internal (e.g., R. Hermann and E. Wolf) clarity. I am, however, not sure if the question is adequate. Luther understands interior and exterior clarity as the two different ways of describing the work of the Scripture, and to him, the main point rather seems to be that you never have one without the other: You will never understand the word of God without proclaiming it to others, and you will never preach the word of God without understanding it. The relation is precisely described by Bader, *Assertio*, 160: ". . . die äußere Klarheit ebenso die innere ernährt, wie die innere sich gern auszusprechen vermag." See also Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift*, 88.

257. Mt 12:34.

258. See p. 21 above.

259. See Bengt Hägglund, "Luther som bibeltolkare" [Luther as Interpreter of the Bible], in Bo Johnson and René Kieffer, eds., *Text och tolkning: Uppsatser om bibeltolkningens problem* (Religio 20, Lund, 1985), 108-119, particularly pp. 118-119.

260. *De libero arbitrio* Ib2.

261. WA 18,641,3.

262. "Haec omnia suo, non mea libero arbitrio gesta." WA 18,641,16.

263. WA 18,641,27.

264. "Santos eos dico et habeo, Ecclesiam Dei eos voco et sentio, canone charitatis, non canone fidei." WA 18,651,34-652,1.

265. "Fides vero nullum vocat sanctum nisi divino iudicio declaratum, Quia fidei est, non falli." WA 18,652,6.

266. "Abscondita est ecclesia, latent sancti." WA 18,652,23. The roles are turned around; here Luther seems to be the skeptic!

267. WA 18,652,24.

268. WA 18,652,31-653,1.

269. WA 18,653,2-12.

270. WA 18,653,13.

271. WA 18,653,14-19. Luther quotes 2 Cor 2:15: The spiritual man makes judgements about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgement.

272. "Sed hoc iudicium nulli alteri prodest." WA 18,653,20.

273. "Ideo altero est iudicium externum, quo non modo pro nobis ipsis, sed et pro aliis et propter aliorum salutem, certissime iudicamus spiritus et dogmata omnium." WA 18,653,22-24. Boyle, who overlooks the epistemological relevance of rhetoric to Luther, overlooks the importance of *claritas externa* as well, thereby making Luther into a *Schwärmer* (e.g., *Rhetoric and Reform*, 130-31). She is perfectly right in criticizing the arbitrariness of such an epistemology (ibid.). Her criticism has, however, nothing to do with Luther. This inattention concerning the importance of *claritas externa* is perhaps the reason she, in spite of her awareness of the importance of rhetoric, is never able to take the exegetical foundation of Luther's theology into account.

274. "Hoc iudicium est publici ministerii in verbo et officii externi et maxime pertinet ad duces et praecones verbi; Quo utimur, dum infirmos in fide roboramus et adversios confutamus. Hoc supra vocavimus externae scripturae sanctae claritatem."

WA 18,653,24-27.

275. "Scriptura iudice omnes spiritus in facie Ecclesiae esse probandos." WA 18,653,28.

276. "Nam id oportet apud Christianos esse imprimis ratum atque firmissimum, Scripturas sanctas esse lucem spiritualem, ipso sole longe clariorem, praesertim in iis quae pertinent ad salutem vel necessitatem." WA 18,653,28-31.

277. WA 18,654,1-659,33.

278. This is again an implicit criticism of the hermeneutics and the practice of the *Schwärmer*.

279. Cf. note 274.

280. *In casu:* Duces et praecones verbi.

281. Beißer is therefore right when he emphasizes that "äußere Klarheit . . . ereignet sich dort, wo das Wort verkündigt wird" (Beißer, *Claritas Scripturae*, 82), and that "Luthers Vorstellung von der Heiligen Schrift am gesprochenen Wort orientiert ist" (ibid., 83). He seems, however, to be confusing his readers when he maintains that this implies that "äußerliches Wort ist also für Luther . . . nicht etwa der Buchstabe der Schrift," so that "die Botschaft nicht lediglich festliegt, sondern vor allem innerhalb einer lebendigen Beziehung an mich ergeht" (ibid.). What is written in the Bible is after all more important to Luther than Beißer here suggests (cf., e.g., WA 15,49,14-15 [*An die Ratherren*, 1524). Better are Beißer, "Luthers Schriftverständnis," 27; Steck, *Lehre und Kirche bei Luther*, 126-27; Bengt Hägglund, "Martin Luther über die Sprache," *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 26 (1984): 1-12, here pp. 7-8; Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit,* 65-69; and Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift*, 53: "Es wäre . . . irreführend, 'allein' das mündliche Wort zu sagen in Antithetik zum schriftlichen Wort. . . . Sondern die Schrift erscheint . . . als eine bestimmte Form des Wortes, die anderen Formen gegenüber Nachteile, aber auch große Vorteile hat."

282. This is overlooked by Holl, "Luthers Bedeutung," 558, in his otherwise adequate description of the relation between "grammatisches Einsehen" and "innerliches Erfassen".

283. Luther has a standing expression for such misunderstandings; he calls them "sequelae [rationis] et similitudines," (rational) inferences and similes. See p. 42 below.

284. "Ornatum est, quod perspicuo et probabili plus est . . . . Itaque ἐνάργειαν, . . . quia plus est evidentia vel, ut alii dicunt, repraesentatio quam perspicuitas, et illud patet, hoc se qaudammodo ostendit, inter ornamenta ponamus," Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* 8.3.61. "Praeclare vero ad inferendam rebus lucem repertae sunt similitudines," ibid., 8.3.72. According to Anderson, *Words and Word*, 204,

"'Christian joy . . . , in Luther's view, leads the poet to burst forth in images and figurative speech." On Luther's understanding of the connection between *adfectus* and *ornatus*, see further , "Language and Reality," 99ff., and Robert Goeser, "Luther: Word of God, Language, and Art," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 18 (1991): 6-11.

285. WA 18,655,28. On Luther's view of inspiration, see further Miikka Ruokanen, *Doctrina Divinitus Inspirata: Martin Luther's Postition in the Ecumenical Problem of Biblical Inspiration* (Helsinki, 1985), or his own summary "Does Luther have a Theory of Biblical Inspiration."

286. See note 193 above.

287. "2.Corin.3. et 4. ubi de claritate tum Mosi quam Christi gloriose diputat," WA 18,655,2. He is thinking, i.a., of a passage like 2 Cor 4:4: The god of this age has blinded the mind of the unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

288. The hermeneutics of the (Lutheran) Orthodoxy, focusing on the Bible as an unemotional description of truth, is in this respect decidedly different from its Church father. This difference is, however, not always correctly interpreted, as we tend to look at Luther through the glasses of the Orthodoxy. For an example of such a view, see E. F. Klug, *From Luther to Chemnitz: On Scripture and the Word* (Grand Rapids, 1971), 90-102, for a critique of it, see Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift*, 19, and Lønning, "No Other Gospel," 234-35: "For Luther it is not a question, as later the case with Orthodox dogmatists, of the quality of transparency (*perspicuitas*), which statements of Scripture should in a specific way have. Rather, the expression *claritas scripturae* should be understood quite unambiguously from the contrast between light and darkness and the imagery associated with these two concepts."

289. "For it is the very qualities of the impression as kataleptic, that is evident and forceful, or distinct and sudden, that define Stoically the criterion of truth. *Fides* assumes a singular status (*sola*) in Luther's thought precisely because it is given as such in the very qualities of the experience which establishes the criterion of truth." Boyle, "Stoic Luther," 75.

290. Steck, *Lehre und Kirche bei Luther*, 145, therefore speaks of the "Einheitscharakter seiner [Luther's] Lehrauffassung und Lehrbildung" as "Wahrheitskriterium." He could have said the same also in his chapter on "die Evidenz der Lehre." See also Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift*, 200: "Zur Wahrheit einer Aussage hört auch die äußere Form der Sprache, ihre schlichte Schönheit und klare Kraft."

291. WA 18,656,21-23. In this way, Erasmus' indifference as regards the exact role of free will, in reality is an argument against him.

292. WA 18,656,28. Luther refers to Christ's promise in Lk 21:15: I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to contradict or resist.

293. WA 18,657,1-4.

294. WA 18,657,4-20.

295. WA 18,657,21-28. Cf. p. 132 below.

296. WA 18,656,35-40.

297. Cf. the idea of the innermost *adfectus* of the Christian as *claritas Scripturae interna.*

298. One might perhaps add: Including himself. He was clearly aware that the right understanding of the Bible is not given once and for all, but has to be constantly renewed by careful and constant reading. This is underlined by Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift*, 73-78.

Accordring to Bayer, "Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio: Eine Besinnung auf Luthers Theologieverständnis," Luther can also describe inner clarity as *oratio* and external clarity as *meditatio*, whereas *tentatio* is the fight against the (internal and external) enemies of the word.

299. WA 18,658,17-27.

300. WA 18,659,2-18.

301. WA 18,659,18-33.

302. See note 264 above.

303. It might be considered a sort of an anachronism to speak of church history in the modern sense of the word in the sixteenth century, as the modern, critical approach to history is one of the off-springs of the Enlightenment. The attitude toward and argument about the past, was, however, a very important part of the Renaissance and the Reformation, even if it did not develop history as a particular subject.

304. This apparently is the background of Gerhard Ebeling's famous view of "Kirchengeschichte als Geschichte de Schriftauslegung".

305. According to Leif Grane, *Modus loquendi theologicus: Luthers Kampf um die Erneuerung der Theologie (1515-1518)*, Acta Theologica Danica XII (Leiden, 1975), this was the foundation of Luther's high evaluation of Augustine. One can therefore considerably substantiate the view that "Luther rejette Origène pour Augustin" (Chantraine, *Erasme et Luther*, 86). The point is that Luther usually finds that Augustine is a sound exegete, whereas he concerning Origen comes to the opposite conclusion.

306. This is underlined by Anderson, *Words and Word*, 272-76, who emphasizes that the sixteenth century generally fostered an attitude where "objective truth seemed less important than the effect produced on the audience" (ibid., 272).

For a presentation of investigations of how this influences Luther's theology,

see Joest, *Ontologie der Person bei Luther*, 28-36, where he presents contributions by R. and E. Seeberg, Gogarten and Ebeling. The (Kant-inspired) "religious transcendentalism" in the Luther-interpretation of R. Seeberg Joest presents like this: "Die Realität des Objektes bestimme sich für Luther von der Art her, wie der Mensch es erfaßt und sich zu ihm stellt. Es bestehe eine Korrespondenz zwischen unserem Hinblick auf das Begegnende und der Wirklichkeit, die dieses für uns gewinnt" (ibid., 29). In his own careful and balanced analysis, however, Joest warns against exaggerations in either direction. Luther is certainly opposed to Aristotelian metaphysics of being, but the opposite view, that "die Heilswirklichkeit überhaupt nur je im Ereignis der Begegnung von Wort und Glauben entsteht" (ibid., 362), does not correspond to Luther's way of thinking either. According to Joest, Luther's way out of the dilemma is to focus not so much on "eine Worthaftigkeit der Heilswirklichkeit als solche" as on "die im Wort sich zusprechende Selbstgegenwart Gottes . . . in dem Menschen Jesus Christus und *seinem* Mit-sein in den Tiefen unseres Dasein bis hin zum Kreuz" (ibid., 394).

Joest has thus certainly given a valuable contribution to the understanding on the relation between actuality and objectivity in Luther's thought. One cannot help wondering, however, if he would not have come easier to his conclusion by focusing on the affective presence of Christ in the believer as a key concept in Luther's thought.

307. Buchholz' clear-cut distinction between faith and understanding leads him (*Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit*, p. 232) to a rejection of the pneumatological aspect of cognition: "Die kognitive Dimension [in Luthers Schriftverständnis] ist . . . weder christologisch noch pneumatologisch, sondern allein schöpfungstheologisch begründet." He is well aware, however, that "die Hl.Schrift kann . . . kein einziges obscuratum cor erneuern" without the Spirit (p. 82). One should therefore not consider pneumatology and theology of creation as exclusive alternatives in this context.

308. Theology after Luther has tended to either emphasize the exclusivity as *theologia regenitorum*, or the objective openness as *theologia irregenitorum*, which in their one-sidedness both seem to overlook important aspects.

309. Liberal theology has always tended to focus on the broadness of scope, conservative theology on the firmness of the foundation. As both aspects are represented by Luther, both schools can with a certain right consider Luther as their spiritual heir. What is unique in Luther is, however, the untroubled combination of both aspects.

310. This is how Luther understands it. Cf. WA 18,638,12: "Haec dixi de capitibus praefationis tuae, quae et ipsa ferme totam causam complectuntur magis pene quam sequens corpus libelli."

311. "Deus ab initio constituit hominem et reliquit illum in manu consilii sui. Adiecit mandata et praecepta sua: Si volueris mandata conservare, conservabunt te, et in perpetuum fidem placitam servare. Apposuit tibi aquam et ignem, ad quod volueris, porrige manam tuam. Ante hominem vita et mors, bonum et malum, quod placuerit, dabitur illi." *De libero arbitrio* IIa1, WA 18,666,13-18. Both Origen and Augustine discuss this passage in relation to free will; see the remarks in *De libero arbitrio* ibid.

312. These passages are all quoted in *De libero arbitrio* IIa14. Luther treats them WA 18,676,4-682,15.

313. "Vivo ego, dicit Dominus, Nolo mortem peccatoris, sed magis, ut convertatur et vivat." *De libero arbitrio* IIa15; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18,682,17.

314. "Mandatum hoc quod praecipio tibi hodie, non supra te est, neque procul positum, nec in coelo situm, ut possis dicere: Quis nostrum valet in coelum ascendere, ut deferat illud ad nos, ut audiamus et opere compleamus? Sed iuxta est valde sermo, in ore tuo et in corde tuo, ut facias illum." *De libero arbitrio* IIa17; WA 18,686,27-31.

315. "Ierusalem, Ierusalem, quoties volui congregare filios tuos et noluisti." *De libero arbitrio* IIb1; WA 18,688,34-689,1.

316. "Si vis ad vitam ingredi, serva mandata." *De libero arbitrio* Iib2; WA 18,690,31.

317. These passages are quoted by *De libero arbitrio* IIb2-3. Luther treats them WA 18,696,12-699,23. The passages quoted *De libero arbitrio* IIb4-8 are ignored by Luther.

318. *De libero arbitrio* IIa1.

319. *De libero arbitrio* IIa14 *et passim*. On Erasmus' view of the law as a *lex spiritus*, which the Christians are supposed to fulfil, see Kohls, *Die Theologie des Erasmus* I, 143-152.

320. Here Ezek 33:11 is particularly important; *De libero arbitrio* IIa15.

321. *De libero arbitrio* IIb2. On this aspect, see further Takahashi, "Rinri to shūkyō to no kankei."

322. *De libero arbitrio* IIa2.

323. In Erasmus' terminology: νοῦς, *mens, intellectus,* λόγος, *vis animi, qua iudicamus*.

324. "Voluntas, qua eligimus aut refugimus."

325. This is not a good description of Pelagianism, and Luther does not hesitate to let Erasmus know it, WA 18,668,14.

326. "Secundum orthodoxos sic posset ope divinae gratiae semper adiuvantis conatum hominis perseverare in recto statu." *De libero arbitrio* ibid.

327. *De libero arbitrio* IIa3.

328. "Er wird nur da schroff abweisend, wo ihm eine ausschließende theologische Behauptung entgegentritt; er kann alle theologische Möglichkeiten einheitlich Zusammenfassen, die sich für andere Möglichkeiten offen halten." Maurer,

"Offenbarung und Skepsis," 376.

329. *De libero arbitrio* IIa12. On Erasmus' view of the grace of God, cf. p. 12 above. Rereading Paul as a part of his work with *Hyperaspistes*, Erasmus seems to have been additionally impressed with the theological relevance of such a view, and came to understand that (the anti-Pelagian) Augustine does not allow for a salvific significance of *gratia naturalis*. See Tracy, "Two Erasmuses, Two Luthers," 54.

330. Ibid. This criticism was silently bypassed in *Hyperaspistes*, the reasons probably being those quoted above. He repeated and sharpened, however, the criticism of Luther's understanding of *necessitas* (cf. below). See Tracy, "Two Erasmuses, Two Luthers," 54f.

331. On Luther's view of this "praesumptio", for which he considers Jerome as particularly responsible, see Herbert Olsson, *Schöpfung, Vernunft und Gesetz in Luthers Theologie*, Studia Doctrinae Christianae Upsaliensia 10 (Uppsala, 1971), 32.

332. WA 18,677,21-36 *et passim*.

333. "Auxilia rationis carnalis, nempe sequelae et similitudines." WA 18,688,29.

334. Because Luther insists that truth is clear, Erasmus' inconsistencies and self-contradictions as such demonstrates that Erasmus is wrong. To show how Luther thus confirms servum arbitrium from Erasmus' own argument "etiam si nulla esset scriptura" (WA 18,719,22) is the main point in Bader, *Assertio*, 129-94. According to Bader, the gist of Luther's argument is that "allein Eindringen in die natura verborum fördert das servum arbitrium zutage" (ibid., 153). This is correct in so far as Luther undoubtedly considered the doctrine of *liberum arbitrium* as irrational (cf. p. 51 below). It is not correct, however, in so far as he also considered *servum arbitrium* as a confession of faith in Christ. Bader is therefore wrong when he assumes that "die Worte des Erasmus übernehmen . . . eine Rolle, die an Wichtigkeit der Schrift nicht nachsteht" (ibid., 135).

335. WA 18,614,21-26; 671,19-28 *et passim*.

336. WA 18,676,11.

337. "Diatribe . . . nihil nisi verba imperativa aut coniunctiva aut optativa adducere queat, quibus significatur, non quid possimus aut faciamus . . . , sed quid debeamus et quid exigatur a nobis, quo nostra nobis impotentia innotescat et peccati cognitio praestetur." WA 18,688,11-17.

338. "Aut si quid probant per additas sequelas et similitudines ratione humana inventas, hoc probant, liberi scilicet arbitrii non esse tantum conatum aut studium aliquod modiculum, sed totam vim et potestam liberrimam facienda omnia sine gratia Dei, sine spiritu sancto." WA 18,688,17-20

339. WA 18,688,26.

340. That theology to Luther basically is a philologically sound interpretation of the Scripture, is particularly emphasized by Siegfried Raeder in his investigations of Luther's Psalm exegesis. See his *Das Hebräische bei Luther untersucht bis zum Ende der 1. Psalmenvorlesung*, BhistTh 31 (Tübingen, 1961); *Grammatica Theologica: Studien zu Luthers Operationes in Psalmos*, BhistTh 51 (Tübingen, 1977), and the conclusion in "Luther als Ausleger und Übersetzer," 259-60: "Luther will seine Theologie . . . in gründlicher Arbeit aus dem Text gewinnen. Deshalb zeichnen sich die 'Dictata super Psalterium' durch eine für damalige Verhältnisse ungewöhnliche philologische Sorgfalt aus."

341. Cf. the remarks about "die Evidenz der Sprache" in Hägglund, "Luther über die Sprache," 2-4, and on Luther's view on *simplicitas* in Ebeling, *Evangelische Evangelienauslegung*, 413-17. Also Bader, *Assertio*, 163-69, demonstrates how Luther "seine Exegese aus der Evidenz des gemeinen Sprachgebrauchs betreibt" (ibid., 163). According to Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform*, 88, Luther's insistence on the importance of *simplicitas* is a proof of the anti-rhetorical structure of his theology. To emphasize *simplicitas* over against a forced and arbitrary exegesis, can, however, hardly be called anti-rhetorical. In "The Chimera and the Spirit," 24, she maintains that Luther's external criterion for truth was "grammar, defined as the common usage of speech," and concludes (ibid.) that "Luther's theological reform was necessarily grammatical," and "his strategy . . . essentially semantic," a view that seems to be more in accordance with reality.

342. The point is not that the words of the Bible describe or point to the truth; they are the truth. This is the reason there is in Luther's theology nothing behind or beyond grammar and semantics.

343. According to Tinkler, "Erasmus' Conversation with Luther," 76, "grammar has [to Luther] the force of a kind of science, providing clear certainty."

344. *De libero arbitrio* IIa17.

345. WA 18,686,32-687,11.

346. "Nostra grammtica istis vocabilis non qualitatem aut quantitatem virium humanarum, sed distantiam locorum significat." WA 18,687,23.

347. WA 18,687,29-30.

348. WA 18,687,37-688,10.

349. "Ideo Rhetores exigunt affectum in actore caussarum, multo magis Theologia talem exigit ut vigilem, acrem, intentum, prudentem et strenuum reddat." WA 18,669,4-6.

350. WA 18,669,4-6. On Luther's view of the coldness of Erasmus' theological writing, see further Anderson, *Words and Word*, 207. He explicitly excludes, however, e.g., *Moriae enkomion* from this criticism.

351. But only to a certain extent; Luther clearly had more than just a superficial understanding of Erasmus' theology.

352. Being fully aware of the importance of questions related to grammar and philology in the controversy between Luther and Erasmus, Boyle, "The Chimera and the Spirit," 27, argues that this reduces the relevance of the controversy, as it implies that "the church divided historically not over an eternal truth of faith but a disputed question of logic," i.e., the question of the reality of the possible. She thereby overlooks, however, that the question "whether or not the will which only acquired its freedom by the intervention of grace could legitimately be termed 'free'," which implies the question if grammar is "auxiliary to or constitutive of theology" (ibid.), is a question of far-reaching doctrinal significance.

353. E.g., WA 18,687,23-30.

354. Accordingly, Luther's description of Erasmus as "vocabulorum innovator" (WA 18,637,26) is not intended as a compliment.

355. Cf. his critique of Erasmus' description of *liberum arbitrium* as "vis modiculus," WA 18,635,27-638,3. Luther renders this as "vis inefficax" (636,10), which to him is an "oppositus in adiecto" (636,12). The point is thus not that it is "ein durch die Sache nicht gedecktes Wort" (so Beutel, *In dem Anfang war das Wort*, 199, on this passage), but that it is self-contradictory. See further Bader, *Assertio*, 172-76, and Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit*, 92-99.

356. It is therefore not correct to say that "es gibt hier keine garantierenden Instanzen" (Beißer, *Claritas Scripturae*, 82), as a sound exegesis of the text **necessarily** will grasp the point. Beißer's view seems to be related to his interpretation of *claritas Scripturae* as pertaining to the sermon rather than to the Bible. See, however, the critique of this view, note 281 above.

357. Because of the work of Erasmus, there was in the beginning of the sixteenth century a new awareness of the canon history. On the canon question in the Reformation, see Inge Lønning, *Kanon im kanon: Zum dogmatischen Grundlagenproblem des neutestamentlichen Kanons,* FGLP 10, XLIII (Oslo/Munich, 1972), 50-115, 160-213.

358. He rejects, e.g., the use of 2 Macc 12 as prooftext for the doctrine of purgatory. See Hans Volz, "Luthers Stellung zu den Apokryphen des Alten Testaments," *LuJ* 26 (1959): 93-108, here p. 96.

359. WA 18,666,20.

360. "Scriptura hoc loco obscura est et ambigua, ideo nihil certi probat." WA 18,666,25.

361. "Si igitur haec clara satis sunt, . . . " WA 18,672,20-23.

362. WA 18,672,23-27.

363. Cf. Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift*, 45: "Es bleibt für Luther ein bißchen in der Schwebe, wo die Genaue Grense zwischen dazugehörigen und auszuscheidenden Schriften verläuft."

364. Ebeling, *Evangelische Evangelienauslegung*, 403: "Das einzige legitime exegetische Anliegen ist vielmehr dies, zu sehen, 'wie die schrifft allenthalben uberein stymmet,'" quotation from WA 24,17,10 (*Über das erste Buch Mose. Predigten* [1527]).

365. Concerning the Hebrew canon, Luther had similar doubts about the Book of Esther. See Bornkamm, *Luther und das Alte Testament*, 159.

366. Contrary to the view of, e.g., Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, 81.

367. Ibid., neither are they "biblische Sachkritik" as understood by Beutel, *In dem Anfang war das Wort*, 251-52. As demonstrated by Terry C. Thomas, "Luther's Canon: Christ Against Scripture," *Word & World* 8 (1988): 141-49, criticism of the Bible in Luther's sense of the word has to do with the distinction between law and gospel.

368. This is underlined by Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift*, 46-47; and by Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit*, 72. The observation of Goldingay, "Luther and the Bible," 43, that "Luther does not seek formally to re-open the question of the canon," is correct, but misleading, as he overlooks that Luther did not consider the question of canon as formally decided.

369. Althaus, ibid., 85.

370. ibid., 35, italics are mine.

371. Ruokanen, "Does Luther have a Theory of Biblical Inspiration," 275.

372. "Si igitur haec clara satis sunt, . . ." WA 18,672,20-23. Cf. the conclusion in the discussion of Luther's *Vorrhede* to the New Testament (WADB 6,2-11) in Lønning, *Kanon im Kanon*, 86-87: "Mit dem Evangelium als Predigt Christi verstanden ist ein Maßstab gegeben, nicht um eine Klassifizierung der neutestamentlichen Schriften zu fixieren, sondern um den Umgang des Lesers mit den Schriften zu regulieren. Der Maßstab ist absolut. Wie sich die Resultate gestalten werden, läßt sich keineswegs im voraus festlegen." The conclusion concerning Luther's critique of Revelation (WADB 7,406-421) is quite similar: "Dabei bleibt . . . das Kriterium Luthers konstant: es geht zuletzt allein um die (verständliche!) Christuspredigt; daß die nicht zu vernehmen ist, ist das einzig ausschlaggebende Argument. Konstant bleibt

dabei auch der Vorbehalt: wer sie doch vernehmen kann, dem stehe es frei, das Buch demgemäß zu schätzen" (Lønning, ibid., 107).

373. The quotations from the debate about die *Vorrheden*, however, suggest that Luther here is quite consistent.

374. In this case: The question if a book belongs in the biblical canon or not.

375. This is not to say that facticity is unimportant; Luther is not Bultmann. But his main interest is more to highlight the actual meaning of a fact than to investigate the fact as such. That Luther neglects facticity, has particularly been maintained by Friedrich Gogarten. For a criticism of his interpretation, see Joest, *Ontologie der Person bei Luther*, 356-58.

376. "Luther never interprets [the Bible] except that he is consciously interpreting for someone" (Haile, "Luther as Renaissance Writer," 153). On this aspect, see further Hans-Christian Daniel, "Luthers Ansatz der claritas Scripturae in den Schriften Assertio omnium articulorum und Grund und Ursach aller Artikel," in Mannermaa, *Thesaurus Lutheri*, 279-290, here pp. 282-283.

377. Cf. the discussion of "objective truth", p. 36 above, and see further Ficker, "Ut simplicissime tractaretis Scripturas," 192.

378. WA 18,671,28-39. As a canonical passage, Sir 15 has to be interpreted according to the principle *sacra Scriptura sui ipsius interpres*.

379. WA 18,672,2-4.

380. "Igitur ab hoc loco: Si volueris, incipit qaestio de libero arbitrio, ut per Ecclesiasticum intelligamus hominem in duo regna distribui. Uno, quo fertur suo arbitrio et consilio, absque praeceptis et mandatis Dei, puta in rebus sese inferioribus." WA 18,672,7-10.

381. "Non quod Deus illum sic deserat, ut non in omnibus cooperetur." WA 18,672,11.

382. "Sed quod usum rerum illi liberum pro arbitrio concesserit nec ullis legibus aut praescriptis inhibuerit." WA 18,672,12.

383. "Altero vero regno non reliquitur in manu consilii sui, sed arbitrio et consilio Dei fertur et ducitur." WA 18,672,17. For a discussion of these realms that tries to relate them through the concept of *cooperatio*, see Joest, *Ontologie der Person bei Luther*, 310-320. As an essay in systematic theology, Joest's discussion is interesting. I am not sure, however, if his abstract conceptual dialectics really correspond to Luther's way of thinking.

384. On Luther's exegesis of Sir 15 see further Rost, *Der Prädestinationsgedanke*, 63-65.

385. WA 18,672,2-4.

386. WA 18,672,7-10.

387. This view of human liberty Luther later developed in *Disputatio de homine*, WA 39 I,175-180.

388. Takahashi, "Rinri to shūkyō to no kankei," 46, shows that even a Catholic scholar who is quite critical toward Erasmus, still shares his basic assumption that a moral evaluation of man presupposes that he is able to choose between good and evil.

389. "Extra vires et consilia nostra in solius opere Dei pendere salutam nostram." WA 18,634,17. Loeschen, *Wrestling with Luther*, 148, underlines that "Luther must see the powers of God and man in this mutually exclusive way because he defines power, like everything else, as an *act*."

390. "Dum Deus opere suo in nobis non adest, omnia esse mala quae facimus, et nos necessario operari quae nihil ad salutem valent." WA 18,634,19. This view of necessity Luther for the first time maintained in the Lecture on Romans (WA 56,385,16) and in *Quaestio de viribus et voluntate hominis sine gratia disputata* (1516, WA 1,147,12).

391. "Necessario vero dico, non coacte, sed ut illi dicunt, necessitate immutabilitatis, non coactionis, hoc est, homo cum vacat spiritu Dei, non quidem violentia, velut raptus obtorto collo, nolens facit malum, quemadmodum fur aut latro nolens ad poenam ducitur, sed sponte et libenti voluntati facit." WA 18,634,21-25.

392. ". . . potius irritetur magis ad volendum, dum ei resistetur." WA 18,634,31. This view of the human will is present already in the Lecture on Romans, WA 56,200,14.

393. WA 18,634,32. In the same way will those who are governed by the Spirit of God, necessarily and spontaneously do what is good and right. WA 18,634,37-635,7.

394. In *Assertio* Luther expressed it like this: "Quia nulli est in manu sua quippiam cogitare mali aut boni, sed omnia . . . de necessitate eveniunt" (WA 7,146,6-8). According to Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, "Luther's Rider-gods: From the Steppe to the Tower," *Journal of Religious History* 13 (1984): 260-82, Luther's "necessitated spiritual dualism", of which his simile of human will as a beast ridden by God or Satan (WA 18,635,17-22) is the most striking expression, is dependent on Iranian Zurvanism as transmitted through the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which was published by Lefèvre d'Étaples in 1513 and 1522. This seems to be a good example of scholarship dominated more by creativity than by soberness. For more sensible discussions of the question, see Alfred Adam, "Die Herkunft des Lutherwortes vom menschlichen Willen als Reittier Gottes," in *LuJ* 29 (1962), 25-34; McSorley, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen*, 309-13.

395. In his rejection of Luther's view of the freedom of human will as "nothing", Erasmus followed the Scholastic tradition of applying reality to the possible. According to Boyle, "The Chimera and the Spirit," Luther is here reflecting Nominalist criticism of this tradition, particularly Ockham's view that it was contrary to the natural use of language, a position that also was represented by Lorenzo Valla.

396. WA 18,669,20ff. On this aspect of Luther's concept of will, see further Hans Joachim Iwand, "Studien zum Problem des unfreien Willens," in Iwand, *Um den rechten Glauben*, 31-61, here pp. 54-58; Knud Eiler Løgstrup, "Wille, Wahl und Freiheit," in Erich Dinkler, ed., *Zeit und Geschichte. Dankesgabe an Rudolf Bultmann zum 80. Geburtstag* (Tübingen, 1964), 517-530; and Bader, *Assertio*, 176-79.

397. "Für Luther ist . . . der Wille eine innere, die ganze willensrichtung bestimmende Tendenz, den ganzen Menschen in seiner affektiven Bestimmtheit." Bengt Hägglund, "Die Frage der Willensfreieht in der Auseinandersetzung zwischen Erasmus und Luther," in *Freiheit aus der Wahrheit: Erbe und Auftrag der Lutherischen Reformation* (Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie e.V. Ratzeburg 8, Erlangen, 1986), 44-58, here p. 51.

398. WA 18,636,28.

399. WA 18,697,21-698,3.

400. "Caeterum hoc velle, hoc credere in nomine eius, sicut liberum arbitrium nunquam novit, nec cogitavit de eo antea, ita multo minus potest suis viribus." WA 18,698,3-5.

401. WA 18,698,5-9, quotation from 1 Cor 1:23.

402. WA 18,677,28; 678,34.

403. Modern Hebrew grammar would rather say imperfect indicative, which together with the negation לא is used to express an absolute prohibition.

404. WA 18,676,19-27. Luther is right that this is a possible interpretation of these sentences if they are isolated from the context.

405. WA 18,677,21-24.

406. WA 18,691,16. He in this way also mentions Virgil and Cicero as examples of the unattainable. This use of Virgil, Cicero and David definitely suggests something of the stylistic and rhetorical ideals of Luther.

407. Even intelligent people, Luther says, may in this way be so blind they cannot se what a simpleton will understand. WA 18,692,14.

408. WA 18,679,14.

409. WA 18,679,15-19.

410. "Quare legis verba dicuntur, non ut vim voluntatis affirment, sed ut caecam rationem illuminent, quo videat, quam nulla sit sua lux et nulla voluntatis virtus." WA 18,677,7-9. Luther does not easily abandon his fundamental metaphor of light and illumination.

411. "Cognitio peccati (ait Paulus) per legem, non ait, abolitio aut vitatio peccati. Tota ratio et virtus legi est in sola cognitione." WA 18,677,9-10.

412. "Diatribe nobis perpetuo fingit talem, qui vel possit, quod preacipitur, vel saltem cognoscat sese non posse." WA 18,679,20.

413. "At talis homo nusquam est . . . . Scriptura vero talem proponit hominem, qui non modo sit ligatus, miser, captus, aeger, mortuus, Sed qui addit, operante Satana principe suo, hanc miseriam caecitatis miseriis suis, ut se liberum, beatum, solutum, potentem, sanum, vivem esse credat." WA 18,679,21-26.

414. WA 18,679,26-36.

415. Pinomaa, "Unfreier Wille und Prädestination bei Luther," 346-47, maintains that a main difference between Erasmus and Luther is that whereas the former considers the dualism between God and man to be fundamental, Luther sees everything in light of the difference between God and Satan. According to Pinomaa, later Lutheran theology in this respect tends to follow Erasmus rather than Luther. The significance of Satan in Luther's theology is emphasized by the important monograph by Hans-Martin Barth, *Der Teufel und Jesus Christus in der Theologie Martin Luthers*, FKDG 19 (Göttingen, 1967). On this subject, see also Carter Lindberg, "Mask of God and Prince of Lies: Luther's Theology of the Demonic," in Alan M. Olson, *Disguises of the Demonic* (New York, 1975), 87-103.

416. The law thus inevitably produces its opposite. Cf. Bader, *Assertio*, 166: "Gesetzessätze sind solche Sätze, die ihren Gegenteil nicht nur jederzeit außer sich haben, sondern sie auch von innen heraus produzieren." "Undialektisch verba propria" are only "die Sätze des Evangeliums" (ibid., 169).

417. Luther often expressed his view that this distinction is fundamental, e.g. WA 39 I,552,13 (*Dritte Disputation gegen die Antinomer* [1538]): "Haec [law and gospel] qui bene novit distinguere, bonus est theologus." See further Gerhard Ebeling, "Das rechte Unterscheiden," *ZThK* 85 (1988): 219-258 (=Joachim Heubach, ed., *Die Kunst des Unterscheidens*, Veröffentlichngen der Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg e. V. 14 (Erlangen, 1990), 19-58).

418. WA 18,680,23-28. E.g.: "If you will inquire, inquire, turn and come," Isa 21:12; "assemble yourselves and come, turn to me and be saved," Isa 45:20,22; "if you return, I will restore you, and if you will separate what is precious from what is worthless, you shall be as my mouth," Jer 15:19. An exegesis of these passages that corresponds to Erasmus' understanding Luther criticized as Pelagian already in "*Disputatio contra scholasticam theologiam*" (1517, WA 1,225,22-26).

419. On the understanding of Zech 1:3, see Iwand, "Studien zum Problem des unfreien Willens," 45-51.

420. "Non solum indicativum infert, sed etiam conatum liberi arbitrii et gratiam conanti paratam contendit probare." WA 18,681,35-38.

421. WA 18,682,2-3.

422. ". . . sed totius vitae requirit mutationem." WA 18,682,13.

423. "Usu Evangelico est vox consolationis et promissionis divinae, qua nihil a nobis exigitur, sed nobis offertur gratia Dei." WA 18,682,15.

424. WA 18,682,26-37.

425. According to Rost, *Der Prädestinationsgedanke*, 115-16, this argument reveals that Luther understanding of the gospel has changed since the Lecture on Romans. There he maintained that God's promises of salvation pertained only to the elect; here he emphasizes their value as promises. Cf. Rost's conclusion, ibid., 117: "Im Gegensatz zur Römerbriefvorlesung läßt Luther in 'De servo arbitrio' das Wort des Evangeliums nicht mehr durch den Gedanken der Prädestination eingeschränkt werden." This leads according to Pannenberg, "Der Einfluß der Anfechtungserfahrung," 125-26, also to a shift of emphasis in the understanding of faith. Whereas Luther in the Lecture on Romans emphasizes "die allgemeine Struktur des Glaubens an das, was unsichtbar ist," he in *De servo arbitrio* understands faith as "immer . . . an Gottes Verheißungen, am deus incarnatus hängende Glaube."

426. WA 18,683,1-33.

427. WA 18,684,15. Defending the exegesis of Erasmus is Zickendraht, *Der Streit zwischen Erasmus und Luther*, 95-96.

428. WA 18,683,33-684,5.

429. "Ita verbum gratiae non venit nisi ad eos, qui peccatum senties affliguntur et tentantur desperatione." WA 18,684,6.

430. WA 18,684,22-24.

431. WA 18,684,27-29.

432. Cf., however, chapter 5f below.

433. "Tota ratio et virtus legi est in sola cognitione." WA 18,677,10. As always in Luther's thought, this cognition certainly has an affective aspect. It has, however, not the capacity of affective renewal.

434. This criticism has often been repeated, both from Roman-Catholic and Protestant scholars, see Behnk, *Contra Liberum Arbitrium*, 60-70. Representative is, e.g., Takahashi, "Shinri to shūkyō to no kankei", who maintains that Luther is only

interested in the religious aspect of human existence, and not in the ethical. As the subsequent discussion will show, however, there is to Luther a close relation between the two.

435. WA 18,691,17-26. Cf. Joest, *Ontologie der Person bei Luther*, 307-308: "So ist das Ziel der Gesetzesforderung . . . von *Gott* im Menschen erfüllt zu werden."

436. "Videtur illa verba, praesertim coniunctiva, propter praedestinationem Dei quoque sic poni, ut incognitam nobis, et illam involvere, ac si hoc velint dicere: Si vis, si volueris, hoc est, si talis apud Deum fueris, ut voluntate hac te dignetur servandi praecepta, servaberis." WA 18,691,29-33. This aspect is lacking in almost the entire literature on Luther and predestination. It is positively wrong when Takahashi, "Rinri to shūkyō to no kankei," 46, maintains that Luther did not reflect upon the relation between ethics and predestination.

437. WA 18,691,33-39. Ebeling, "Luthers Kampf gegen die Moralisierung des Christlichen," 70-71, thus maintains that Luther represents "eine Art kopernikanischer Wende im Verständnis des Ethischen" that consists in "die Verankerung [der Ethik] in dem vorausgegangenen Handeln Gottes."

438. "Diatribe . . . nihil inter vetus et novum testamentum discernere novit; utrobique enim nihil fere nisi leges et praecepta videt, quibus formentur homines ad bonos mores." WA 18,693,6-8.

439. "Nam in novo testamento praedicatur Euangelion, quod est aliud nihil, quam sermo, quo offertur spiritus et gratia in remessionem peccatorum per Christum crucifixum pro nobis impetratam, idque totum gratis solaque misericordia Dei patris." WA 18,692,20-23. Luther here uses Old and New Testament as theological concepts rather then names of collections of biblical books. His point is not that the Old Testament does not contain gospel and that the New Testament does not contain law, but that the gift of the gospel is basically brought about by the **new** testament, i.e., the saving work of Jesus Christ.

440. "Deinde exhortationes sequuntur, quae iam iustificatos et misericordiam consecutos excitent, ut strenui sint in fructibus donatae iustitiae et spiritus charitatemque exerceant bonis operibus fortiterque ferant crucem et omnes alias tribulationes mundi." WA 18,693,1-4.

441. Luther's understanding of how God works in man through his word is investigated in detail by Joest, *Ontologie der Person bei Luther*, 274-310. He does, however, not consider the emotional aspect of this process.

442. *De libero arbitrio* Ia10. The argument is repeated by one of Erasmus' modern interpreters (Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform*, 112) when she asks if Luther does not have any compassion "for the weakness and stupidity of mortals."

443. See note 480 for a listing of some representatives of such a view.

444. It is a main point in Pannenberg, "Der Einfluß der Anfechtungserfahrung," that Luther emphasizes Christ as "praesens promissio et praedestinatio" (ibid., 128, quotation from WA 43,461,13 [Lecture on Genesis]) rather than predestination as God's eternal decree, and that this understanding of predestination escalates the importance of the proclamation of the gospel: "Fällt . . . die ewige Entscheidung über meine Erwählung oder Verwerfung in dem Augenblick, da Christus mir verkündigt wird, dann . . . ist der Augenblick, da das Evangelium gehört wird, erfüllt durch den Ewigkeitsernst der Entscheidung über Heil und Verdammnis" (ibid., 129). Pannenberg has, however, not investigated how this way of thinking is related the rhetorical evaluation of the word.

445. WA 18,693,19-28, allusion to 1 Cor 9:24.

446. "In merito vel mercede agitur vel de dignitate vel de sequela." WA 18,693,38.

447. WA 18,693,39-694,5.

448. WA 18,694,5-39. That Luther understands merit as consequence, is underlined also by Olsson, *Schöpfung, Vernunft und Gesetz in Luthers Theologie*, 427-34.

449. Luther thus has a consistent view of merit. When Brecht, "Moral und Gnade," 84, and *Ordnung und Abgrenzung der Reformation*, 227, concludes: "Der Lohngedanke des Neuen Testaments erwies sich für seie Theologie als sperrig," this seems to be rather unfounded. In the same way, Bainton, *Erasmus*, 182, argues that Luther had great problems with the passages about merit, and Hoffmann, "Erasmus im Streit mit Luther," 110-11 maintains that ethical improvement is more important to Erasmus that to Luther. As a well founded criticism of such scholars, see Iwand, "Bedeutung der Lehre vom unfreien Willen," 29: "Es ist nicht richtig, wenn man meint, vom Standpunkt des unfreien Willens aus fielen die Verdienste einfach fort. Fort fällt nur das Moment der Dignität im Verdienst." On Luther's understanding of merit, see further Hermann, *Luthers Theologie*, 151-52. A valuable presentation of Luther's view of the relation between justification and sanctification is also to be found in Toru Ingu, "Onchō to jiyūishi no ittchi ni tsuite: 'Doreiishiron' kenkyū [About the Unity of Grace and Free Will: A study of *De servo arbitrio*], *Rut*ā *Kenky*ū [Luther Studies], vol. 2, (Tokyo, 1986) 9-34, see particularly pp. 19 and 27.

450. ". . . ut erudiantur, moveantur, excitentur, terreantur homines." WA 18,695,2. This sounds as a variation and application of the rhetorical triad *docere, delectare et movere*.

451. "Proinde, sicut verba legis sunt vice instructionis et illuminationis ad docendum quid debeamus, tum quid non possimus, ita verba mercedis, dum significant quid futurum sit, sunt vice exhortationis et comminationis, quibus pii excitantur, consolatur et eriguuntur ad pergendum, perseverandum et vincendum in bonis faciendis et malis ferendis." Then follows examples from 1 Cor 15:58 and Gen 15:1. WA

18,695,6-14.

452. See p. 49.

453. "Quod is his Ratio nasum ruget et dicat: Cur ista velit Deus per verba fieri, cum talibus verbis nihil efficiatur, neque voluntas in utram partem sese vertere possit; cur non tacito verbo facit, cum possit omnia sine verbo facere?" WA 18,695,22-25.

454. "Et voluntas per sese nec plus valet aut facit verbo audito, si desit spiritus intus movens, nec minus valeret aut faceret verbo tacito, si assit spiritus, cum totum pendeat in virtute et opere spiritus sancti?" WA 18,695,25-28.

455. This is underlined by Martin Seils, "Luthers Auffassung vom Menschen als Mitarbeiter Gottes," in Hans Seidel and Karl-Heinrich Bieritz, eds., *Das Lebendige Wort: Festgabe für Gottfried Voigt* (Berlin, 1982), 126-38, here p. 136.

456. "Sic placitum est Deo, ut non sine verbo, sed per verbum tribuat spiritum, ut nos habeat suos cooperatores, dum foris sonamus, quod intus ipse solus spirat, ubi voluerit, quae tamen absque verbo facere posset, sed non vult." WA 18,695,28-31.

457. "Iam qui sumus nos, ut voluntatis divinae caussam quaeramus? Satis est nosse, quod Deus ita velit, et hanc voluntatem revereri, diligere et adorare decet, coercita rationis temeritate." WA 18,695,31-33.

458. The ultimate foundation for Luther's trust in Scripture and language is his theology of creation. This is underlined by Oddvar Johan Jensen, "Deus absconditus und Deus revelatus im Lichte der Christologie Luthers," in Heubach, ed., *Die Kunst des Unterscheidens*, 59-72, here p. 65, and by Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit*, 63-64; on Buchholz cf., however, note 496 below.

459. This is what is expressed by the key concept *liberum arbitrium*.

460. Because Luther understands will as the act of willing, the human will is always determined by its object. See p. 51 above.

461. This is, however, exactly what is done by Pannenberg, "Der Einfluß der Anfechtungserfahrung," 130, when he maintains that Luther represented a new way of attacking the impossible dilemma between free will or absolute determinism without paying attention to the fact that Luther did this as a biblical exegete. In spite of many valuable observations, he is then still unable to grasp the strategy of the argument in *De servo arbitrio*.

462. To speak of free will as God's cooperator, as Scholastic soteriology did in various ways, is to Luther synergism. To speak of man cooperating with God through his new *adfectus*, however, is something different.

463. *De libero arbitrio* IIb2, the Scriptural passage referred to is Matt 7:20.

464. WA 18,696,21-30, quotation from 1 Cor 4:7.

465. "Cur alii lege tanguntur, alii non tanguntur, ut illi suscipiant et hi contemnant gratiam oblatam, alia quaestio est, nec hoc loco tractatur ab Ezechiele, qui de praedicata et oblata misericordia Dei loquitur, non de occulta illa et metuenda voluntate Dei ordinantes suo consilio, quos et quales praedicatae et oblatae misericordiae capaces et participes esse velit." WA 18,684,32-37. "Occulta et metuenda voluntas" is an expression which is not easy to translate into English. The suggestion of *Luther's Works*, 33,139, "hidden and awful will", however, does not sound good. The meaning is not that the hidden will of God is loathsome, but that it should be feared.

466. "Quae voluntas non requirenda, sed cum reverentia adoranda est, ut secretum longe reverendissimum divinae soli sibi reservatum ac nobis prohibitum." WA 18,684,37-39.

467. "Aliter de Deo vel voluntate nobis praedicata, revelata, culta, Et aliter de Deo non praedicato, non revelato, non oblato, non culto disputandum est." WA 18,685,4-5.

468. "Quatenus igitur Deus sese abscondit et ignorari a nobis vult, nihil ad nos." WA 18,685,5-6.

469. WA 18,685,7. Luther knew this proverb from Erasmus' *Adagia* (Erasmus, *Ausgewählte Schriften* vol. 7, 414). Erasmus did not use it in *De libero arbitrio*, but in the introduction to *De servo arbitrio*, Luther used it to characterize the skeptical attitude of Erasmus (WA 18,605,20). Here Luther uses it to describe the proper attitude toward the hidden God. The background and interpretation of the proverb has been investigated by Jüngel, "Quae supra nos, nihil ad nos." According to Jüngel, the reason Luther could use the proverb in different ways was that it had been used both to describe Socrates' criticism of the study of astronomy as worthless (which corresponds to Erasmus' critique of the lack of usefulness of Luther's theology), and of and his "Hinwendung von der (scheinbar unmittelbaren) Anschauung des Seins im Seienden zur Anschauung der Wahrheit des Seienden im Wort" (ibid., 221).

470. Luther has a similar exegesis of this passage in "*Ad librum eximii Magistri nostri Ambrosii Catharini*" (1521, WA 7,741,18), where he applies it on the pope.

471. ". . . sed supra Deum non cultum nec praedicatum, ut est in sua natura et maiestate, nihil potest extolli, sed omnia sunt sub potenti manu eius." WA 18,685,7-14. Because everything is "sub manu eius," Luther often criticizes the tendency to ascribe to the devil, or to oneself, the responsibility for trials and afflictions. See H.-M. Barth, *Der Teufel und Jesus Christus*, 163; Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 61-67.

472. "Sed quatenus indutus et proditus est verbo suo, quo nobis obtulit, cum eo agimus, guod est decor et gloria eius." WA 18,685,16-17. Cf. the statement by

Jüngel, "Quae supra nos, nihil ad nos," 231: "Nur indem der Mensch sich dem offenbaren Gott zuwendet, verehrt er den verborgenen Gott. Das Geheimnis des verborgenen Gottes respektiert der Mensch also, indem er es sich nichts angehen läßt." This is emphasized also by H.-M. Barth, *Der Teufel und Jesus Christus*. Quoting (p. 204) Althaus' definition of faith as "the art of comprehending God in his opposite" (*Theology of Luther*, 32), he continues: "Diese Überzeugung Luthers erklärt die Leidenschaftlichkeit, mit der er im Namen Jesu Christi die 'speculatio' über den verborgenen Gott verbietet" (ibid., 205).

473. WA 18,685,18-21.

474. WA 18,686,4-8. Luther thus understands 1 Tim 2:4 as pertaining to *Deus revelatus*. Later he seems to have interpreted it as relating God's will to help mankind in a general sense. He always avoided the possibility, however, that 1 Tim 2:4 expresses universal and eternal salvation. See Rost, *Die Prädestinationsgedanke*, 107-108; Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 109-115.

475. On Luther's interpretation of Mt 23:37 and 1 Tim 2:4, see also Jensen, "Deus absconditus und Deus revelatus," 67-68. Concerning Mt 23:37, cf. also p. 68 below.

476. According to Pannenberg, "Der Einfluß der Anfechtungserfahrung," 130, Luther's new understanding of predestination implies that "Erwählung und Verwerfung gehen nicht auf denselben Ursprung zurück." Even if salvation, then, is "ein freies Geschenk Gottes, so ist es andererseits menschliche Schuld, nicht an diesem Geschenk Gottes festzuhalten." As far as *De servo arbitrio* is concerned, however, Pannenberg can only come to this conclusion through a systematic omission of the passages about *Deus absconditus*. This, then, seems to be an aspect of Luther's theology that Pannenberg is not able to integrate in his interpretation.

477. Rom 9:20; WA 18,685,21-686,3; 686,12.

478. Hellmut Bandt, *Lehre vom verborgenen Gott*, 84, speaks in this context of a lack of proportions in Luther scholarship, as Luther's few remarks about eternal election as the work of the hidden God too "stark in den Mittelpunkt des Interesses gerückt worden sind." For summaries of the debate, see Bandt, ibid., 9-18; Rost, "Der Prädestinationsgedanke," 14-49; Gerrish, "To the Unknown God," 266-68; Jun Matsuura, "Zur Unterscheidung von Deus revelatus und Deus absconditus in 'De servo arbitrio'," in Gerhard Hammer and Karl-Heinz zur Mühlen, eds., *Lutheriana: Zum 500. Geburtstag Martin Luthers von den Mitarbeitern der Weimarer Ausgabe* (Cologne and Vienna, 1984), 67-86, here pp. 71-72. For a summary of the discussion of Luther's understanding of the problem of God's hiddenness, see Olsson, *Schöpfung, Vernunft und Gesetz in Luthers Theologie*, 7-17.

479. I prefer to use the Latin *Deus absconditus/revelatus* instead of the English equivalents hidden God/proclaimed God, as the English more than the Latin may suggest that there are two different gods, one hidden and one proclaimed. The

Latin expressions are perhaps better translated like this: "God as hidden" and "God as proclaimed".

480. See, e.g., Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/1, 608-10; II/2, 70-71, (Zurich, 1946); Doerne, "Gottes Ehre," 73-79; Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, 277-80; McSorley, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen*, 314-25; Georg Kraus, *Vorherbestimmung: Traditionelle Prädestinationslehre im Licht gegenwärtiger Theologie* (Freiburg, Basel, Vienna, 1977), 127-57. For a presentation and evaluation of K. Barth's critique, see Gerrish, "To the Unknown God," 287; Behnk, *Contra liberum arbitrium*, 128-31, and Erik Kyndal, "Refleksjoner over temaet 'Deus absconditus' — til forholdet mellem Luther og Barth" [Reflections on 'Deus absconditus'—to the Relation between Luther and Barth], *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift* 50 (1987): 272-288. To a certain extent defending Luther against his critics, though not without questions himself, is Bandt, *Lehre vom verborgenen Gott*, pp. 116, 122, 155-57, 171-173. Discussing the validity of the so-called "Spitzensätze" is also Behnk, *Contra Liberum Arbitrium*, 322-368. Criticizing the critics are Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 120, and Prenter, "Luther als Theologe."

481. WA 18,606,11; see p. 22 above.

482. So also Prenter, "Luther als Theologe," 117.

483. As underlined by Prenter, "Luther als Theologe," 116, the distinction between God's hiddenness and revelation has thus nothing to do with the distinction between clear and unclear Scriptural passages. "Die Stellen in der Schrift, die von der Verborgenheit Gottes zeugen, sind eben nicht dunkel, wie Erasmus fälschlich meinte" (ibid.).

484. Luther might as well have quoted what follows: "How unsearchable his judgements, and his paths beyond tracing out." Erasmus does, however, but only to prove that the **Scripture** is unsearchable.

485. WA 18,606,5-7.

486. WA 18,606,12-16. That Luther thus wrestles with the question of *Deus absconditus* not as a philosopher with religious interests, but as an exegete trying to interpret specific biblical passages, is usually overlooked by his interpreters. See, however, Prenter, "Luther als Theologe," 115: "Luther hat in *De servo arbitrio* nicht die Absicht, eine systematische Gotteslehre zu entfalten, sondern er will gewisse Aussagen der Heiligen Schrift gegen Mißdeutung schützen." Similar positions are also maintained by Pinomaa, "Unfreier Wille und Prädestination by Luther," 348, by H.-M. Barth, *Der Teufel und Jesus Christus*, 185, and by Jüngel, "Quae supra nos, nihil ad nos," 228. Matsuura, "Zur Unterscheidung von Deus revelatus und Deus absconditus," 72, quotes with approval the first part of Prenter's statement, but overlooks and neglects the second half.

487. Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 143, is thus right when he refutes the view of Schwarzwäller and others, that predestination is an extension or extrapolation

from the doctrine of justification. Brosché's own position, that justification is an effect of predestination, seems, however, equally dubious. One comes probably closer to Luther's position by acknowledging that his standpoints concerning both justification and predestination are primarily based on the relevant passages from the Bible. On the exegetical foundation of Luther's view of predestination, see further Bandt, *Lehre vom verborgenen Gott*, 142-43, Rost, *Der Prädestinationsgedanke*, 76-85, and Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 87. Doerne, "Gottes Ehre am gebundenen Willen," 70, accepts that "Luthers Prädestinationsglauben . . . nicht . . . inhaltlich über die Gedanken von Röm. 9 hinausginge." On the assumption of "ein Unterschied zwischen Schriftwort und christlicher Lehre" (ibid., 73), however, he still feels free to criticize it. Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, 276, accepts the scriptural substance of Luther's statements about predestination, but comes p. 278 still to the conclusion that he in his "doctrine of the hidden God . . . certainly goes beyond Scripture both in its form and in its content."

488. See particularly the passage WA 18,620,38-633,23, where Luther vehemently refutes Erasmus' idea that even if the doctrine of predestination were found in the Scripture, it should not be proclaimed.

489. According to Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, such speculation implies that the understanding of predestination is transformed from the general and legitimate level, which Brosché calls *notitia*, to a concrete, existential and illegitimate level, which Brosché calls *usus*.

490. In so far as Luther thus refers to the fact of the work of *Deus absconditus* as presented in the Bible and rejects speculation of the reasons for God's hidden will, the criticism referred to above (note 480) should not be accepted. Luther does, however, not necessarily condemn every attempt at conjecture within this realm; see chapter 6g below.

491. Luther's discussion is based on the following equations: *Deus praedicatus = verbum Dei*; *Deus absconditus = Deus ipse*. WA 18,685,26.

492. Luther explicitly underlined the biblical foundation of his view of God's omnipotence. See WA 18,718,30, and cf. Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 55-58.

493. Some scholars (Bandt, Iwand and Schwarzwäller) emphasize the Christological foundation of Luther's doctrine of predestination to the extent that this relation between predestination and creation, and thereby also the relation between predestination and ethics (cf. chapter 5f), tends to get lost. For a critique of such soteriological limitation, see Gerrish, "To the Unknown God," 287-88; Albrecht Peters, "Verborgener Gott — dreieiniger Gott: Beobachtungen und Überlegungen zum Gottesverständnis Martin Luthers," in Manns, ed., *Reformator und Vater im Glauben*, 74-105, here p. 88, and Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 132. Overemphasizing in another direction is, however, Alfred Adam, "Der Begriff 'Deus absconditus' bei Luther nach Herkunft und Bedeutung," *Lutherjahrbuch* 30 (1963): 97-106, here p. 97: "Bei Luther ist der Begriff des Deus absconditus das Zeugnis von der Einheit des Seins."

494. On the relation between omnipresence and predestination in Luther's thought, see Horst Beintker, "Luthers Gotteserfahrung und Gottesanschauung," in Helmer Junghans, ed., *Leben und Werk Martin Luthers von 1526 bis 1546* (Göttingen, 1983) vol. I, 39-62, vol. II, 732-46, here vol. I, p. 53: "Luther war von der Allgegenwart Gottes in jedem Augenblick durchdrungen, und darin wurzelt auch der Prädestinationsgedanke." This is emphasized also by Rost, *Der Prädestinationsgedanke*, 67-76.

495. Cf. note 479 above. Pesch, *Humanismus und Reformation,* 161, lets the concept of *Deus absconditus* reduce the relevance of the biblical revelation in a way that leads even to a plurality of religions. He seems to be aware, however, that such an interpretation has nothing to do with Luther.

496. Luther presumes "daß in allem, was die Schrift über Gott den Schöpfer seinen Geschöpfen zu sagen hat, etwas Unerforschliches mitgesagt wird, etwas Geheimnisvolles, das die großen Offenbarungswahrheiten . . . als göttliche Mysterien qualifiziert" (Prenter, "Luther als Theologe," 117). In a similar way, Jüngel, "Quae supra nos, nihil ad nos," 223, maintains that "'Gott selbst' der notwendige Grenzbegriff ist, ohne den die Menschwerdung Gottes nicht als Selbstbestimmung Gottes gedacht werden konnte, sondern als göttliches Geschick mißverstanden werden müßte."

Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit*, is therefore wrong when he p. 237 argues that according to Luther, the authority of the word of God is not founded in the theology of creation, but exclusively in the pneumatology. As was the case concerning his exclusion of pneumatology from the cognitive aspect of the word of God (see note 307 above), this reveals a zeal for conceptual systematizing that was not Luther's. Buchholz seems, however, to be aware of it himself: "Der kognitive und der autoritative Aspekt der Bibel . . . bilden in der einen Schrift Gottes eine unauflösliche Einheit, die Luthers gesamte Schriftauslegung bestimmt" (ibid., p. 239).

497. Jüngel, "Quae supra nos, nihil ad nos," 229: "Die viel strapazierte Unterscheidung [between *Deus revelatus* and *Deus absconditus*] soll nicht die Undefinierbarkeit Gottes, sondern die Definitivität der Offenbarung Gottes zur Geltung bringen." This is underlined also by Jensen, "Deus absconditus und Deus revelatus," 65.

498. Cf. Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 93: "Divine foreknowledge makes God's word and promise of salvation firm and secure. He who doubts that God preordains and comprehends all things will eventually find it difficult to believe in His promises and put his trust in them." Luther also expresses the firmness of the promises through the notion of God's immutability; see WA 18,618,19-619,21, and cf. Brosché, ibid., 106-108; Loeschen, *Wrestling with Luther*, 89-90.

499. P. 56.

500. WA 18,685,7. Cf. note 469 above.

501. WA 18,617,24-618,18; cf. WA 18,626,27. Concerning the sources of these quotations, see Schwarz, "Beobachtungen," 16-17.

502. On Luther's understanding of the natural perception of predestination, see Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 85-87.

503. The first representative of this view was Albrecht Ritschl, and it still has its followers. According, e.g., to Beintker, "Luthers Gotteserfahrung," 52, there is a connection between "die Begründung des Allmachtsgedanken . . . aus der Vernunft und allgemein deterministische Tendenzen in Luthers Weltschau," a connection he interprets as an influence from "ockhamistische Kategorien". Trying to maintain a more balanced view also of the integration of "Ockhamist" elements, but in the end interpreting Luther more as a philosopher than an exegete is A. Adam, "'Deus absconditus' bei Luther." On the other hand, Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 76-85, presents Biel's doctrine of predestination without deducing Luther's from it. Pannenberg, "Der Einfluß der Anfectungserfahrung," 112-16, compares Biel's and Luther's views of predestination and concludes (ibid., 112): "Die naheliegende Vermutung, Luthers Prädestinationsanfechtungen hätten es mit der nominalistischen Prädestinationslehre zu tun gehabt, ist nicht haltbar." He still maintains, however, that Luther in *De servo arbitrio* "steht in allzu bedenklicher Nahe" to the "deterministische Prädestinationsgedanke, der . . . schließlich in seinen Folgen Inkaranation und Erlösungstat Christi überhaupt überflüssig macht" (ibid., 129). Pannenberg can therefore not see Luther's rejection of the choice between synergism and determinism (cf. note 461 above) as accomplished before the Lecture on Genesis (ibid., 136-39). The question is, however, if it is not rather Pannenberg's exclusion of the biblical background of Luther's concept of *Deus absconditus* from his field of vision that lets him interpret Luther's understanding of destiny, necessity and immutability in *De servo arbitrio* as expressing "[eine] allgemeine Kausalbeziehung zwischen Gott und Geschöpf" (ibid., 114).

504. Cf. the warning in Grane, *Modus loquendi theologicus*, 12, against the view that "genetische Untersuchungen könnten irgendetwas *Entscheidendes* erklären."

505. According to a number of Luther scholars, Luther speaks of the hiddenness of God in two different connections: The hiddenness of God outside his revelation, and the hiddenness of God in his revelation. Discussing the relation between these two perspective are Bandt, *Lehre vom verborgenen Gott*, 125-33; Gerrish, "To the Unknown God," 268, and Karl-Heinz zur Mühlen, "Gotteslehre und Schriftverständnis in Martin Luthers Schrift 'De servo arbitrio'," in *Der eine Gott der beiden Testamente*, Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie 2 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1987), 210-25, who concludes: "Aus seiner [God's] absoluten Verborgenheit wurde seine präzise Verborgenheit in Jesus Christus, weil in ihm der dem Zugriff menschlicher Vernunft verborgene Gott für den Glauben offenbar worden ist" (ibid., 221). Emphasizing the unity of Luther's understanding of *Deus absconditus* is, however, Hanns Rückert, "Luthers Anschauung von der Verborgenheit Gottes," in Rückert, *Vorträge und Aufsätze zur historischen Theologie* (Tübingen, 1972), 96-107.

506. "Ut ergo fidei locus sit, opus est, ut omnia quae creduntur, abscondantur" (WA 18,633,7). This idea is present already in the Lecture on Romans, WA 56,182,18.

507. Olsson, *Schöpfung, Vernunft und Gesetz in Luthers Theologie*, 11, thus underlines that "Gottes Wille nicht nur für die natürliche Vernunft sondern auch für den Glauben verborgen ist." According to Rückert, "Luthers Anschauung von der Verborgenheit Gottes," 105, the insoluble rest of God's hiddenness is the doctrine of predestination to damnation.

508. ". . . in illa maxime petant perversi homines." WA 18,690,21.

509. WA 18,689,18-22, quotation from 1 Tim 6:16.

510. WA 18,689,23-25.

511. Or: God as incarnate.

512. WA 18,689,25-28.32. In a sermon from 1520, Luther (contrary to the opinion of Augustine) underlines that Christ says this in his human nature (WA 9,529,14; see Loewenich, *Luther als Ausleger der Synoptiker*, 114). He repeats this interpretation also in his *Kirchenpostille* (WA 10 I,1,278,20). On Luther's understanding of the relation between *communicatio idiomatum* and *claritas Scripturae*, see further Beutel, *In dem Anfang war das Wort*, 322-30.

513. "Deus incarnatus . . . offerat omnibus omnia, quae sunt ad salutem necessaria, licet plurimos offendat, qui secreta illa voluntate maiestatis vel relicti aut indurati non suscipiunt . . . . Huius itidem Dei incarnati est flere, deplorare, gemere super perditione impiorum, cum voluntas maiestatis ex proposito aliquos relinquat et reprobet, ut pereant," WA 18,689,26-690,1. According to Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 100, this is Luther's most explicit expression of the idea of "a special decree of reprobation."

514. "Nec nobis quaerendum, cur ita facit, sed reverendus Deus, qui talia et possit et velit." WA 18,690,1. Pinomaa, "Unfreier Wille und Prädestination bei Luther," 345, thus renders Luther's position like this: "Wir sollen auf die ewige Gnade achtgeben, die im Evangelium ergeht, aber nur bis an die Abgründe, wo die Prädestination einsetzt: dort sollen wir haltmachen und jedes weitere Vordringen abbrechen."

515. "Temeritatem humanam, quae perpetuae perversitate, relicitis necesariis, illam [secretam voluntatem maiestatis] semper impetit et tentat, esse avocandam et retrahendam, ne occupet sese scrutandis illis secretis maiestatis." WA 18,689,19-21.

516. Rom 9:19-20: "What does God complain of?" (Answer: Nothing, because he works it himself.) "Who can resist his will? Who are you, man, to contend with God?" Isa 58:2: "Yet the seek me daily and wants to know my ways, as if they where a people who did justice. They demand of me righteous judgements, and want to be near God." WA 18,690,9-19. Luther's understanding seems to be that to seek a nearness to God which implies a desire to control him, is to inquire into God's hidden

mysteries.

517. ". . . non licere hominibus scrutari voluntatem maiestatis." WA 18,690,20.

518. WA 18,684,37-685,4.

519. We here probably touches one of the main differences between the doctrines of predestination of Luther and Calvin. Whereas the doctrine of predestination to Luther is the limit of revelation and the end of theology (Bandt, *Lehre vom verborgenen Gott*, 138: "eine Art Grenzperspektive"), it is to Calvin its center (Kraus, *Vorherbestimmung*, 157, calls it a "Schwerpunkt" in Calvin's "imponierendes Lehrsystem"). According to Pannenberg, "Der Einfluß der Anfechtungserfahrung," 132, this difference follows from Calvin's "Verständnis der Schrift, das nicht streng an Jesus Christus als der Mitte der Schrift orientiert ist." One should therefore not, as Augustijn, *Erasmus von Rotterdam*, 130, does, say that "die äußerst scharfe Standortbestimmung Luthers . . . von Calvin übernommen wurde." The expressions might be similar; the contexts, however, are different.

520. For a criticism of the view that Luther in this connection betrays a dualistic view of God, see Bandt, *Lehre vom verborgenen Gott*, 157-160. Also Pannenberg, "Der Einfluß der Anfechtungserfahrung," 128, emphasizes "die Überwindung der Erwählungszweifel durch den Glauben an die Einheit des ewigen Gottes mit Jesus Christus." On the recognition of this unity, cf. note 639 below.

521. ". . . scripturarum testimonia, quae videntur prorsus tollere liberum arbitrium." *De libero arbitrio* IIIa1.

522. "Induravit Dominus cor Pharaonis; Ego indurabo cor Pharaonis." *De libero arbitrio* IIIa1, WA 18,700,1; 702,10.

523. "Iacob dilexi, Esau autem odio habui." *De libero arbitrio* IIIa1, WA 18,700,2.

524. "Numquid dicet lutum figulo suo: Quid facis?" And: "Ecce, sicut lutum in manu figuli, ita vos in mana mea." *De libero arbitrio* IIIa13, WA 18,727,3-4.

525. "Cum enim nondum nati essent aut aliquid boni egissent aut mali, ut secundum electionem propositum dei maneret, non ex operibus, sed ex vocante dictum est ei, quia maior serviet minori, sicut scriptum est: Iacob dilexi, Esau autem odio habui." *De libero arbitrio* IIIa1, WA 18,700,3.

526. *De libero arbitrio* IIIa1, WA 18,714,38.

527. "An non habet potestatem figulus luti ex eadem massa facere aliud quidem vas in honorem, aliud vero in contumeliam? Quod si deus volens ostendere iram et notam facere potentiam suam sustinit in multa patientia vasa irae apta ad interitum, ut ostenderet divitias gloriae suae in vasa misericordiae, quae praeparavit in

gloriam." *De libero arbitrio* IIIa13, WA 18,727,6.

528. "Absurdum videtur, ut deus, qui non solum iustus est, verum etiam bonus, indurasse dicatur cor hominis." *De libero arbitrio* IIIa2.

529. Erasmus in this part of *De libero arbitrio* quite closely follows Origen's περὶ ἀρχῶν. See Zickendraht, *Der Streit zwischen Erasmus und Luther*, 39-42.

530. ". . . fateatur occasionem indurationis datam a deo, culpam tamen in Pharaonem reiciat, qui sua malitia factus sit obstinatior per haec, per quae debebat ad paenitentiam adduci." *De libero arbitrio* ibid.

531. "Miseretur ergo eorum, qui dei bonitatem agnoscentes resipiscunt. Indurantur autem, qui dilati ad paenitentiam neglecta dei bonitate proficiunt ad deteriora." *De libero arbitrio* ibid. It is characteristic how Erasmus avoids the pauline "induravitque dominus" and prefers the passive "indurantur," and how he strives to relate the divine "miseretur" to some kind of human activity ("agnoscentes resipiscunt").

532. *Tropus* is here—as by Quintilian and Melanchton—understood as *mutatio significationis*. See Risto Saarinen, "Metapher und biblische Redefiguren als Elemente der Sprachphilosophie Luthers," in *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 30 (Berlin, 1988): 18-39, here p. 19.

533. "Tropum autem, quo dicitur fecisse, qui dedit occasionem, probat [Origen] primum ex consuetudine sermonis popularis." *De libero arbitrio* ibid.

534. E.g., Isa 63:17: "O Lord, why does you make us err from thy ways and harden our heart, so that we don't fear you." *De libero arbitrio* IIIa3.

535. "Nec tamen ideo vis fit nostrae voluntati." *De libero arbitrio* IIIa4.

536. Rom 9:19: "Who can resist his will?" *De libero arbitrio* IIIa6.

537. According to Erasmus, ibid., Paul in Rom 9 considers this as a question that cannot be given a definitive answer. It might be doubted however, if this is an interpretation which really takes the argument of Rom 9 seriously, and Erasmus afterwards seems to have abandoned it himself. See note 329 above, and Payne, "The Significance of Lutheranizing Changes," 323-325.

538. *De libero arbitrio* IIIa6-10.

539. "Praesciebat deus et, quod praesciebat, aloquo modo volebat fore, ut Iudas proderet dominum. Itaque si spectes dei prescientiam infallibilem et voluntatem immutabilem, necessario eventurum est, ut Iudas prodat dominum, et tamen Iudas poterat mutare voluntatem suam aut certe poterat non suscipere voluntatem impiam." *De libero arbitrio* IIIa9. It is quite evident that Erasmus has problems here. On one hand, God's "voluntas" is "infallibilis" and "immutabilis," on the other hand, "Iudas poterat mutare voluntatem suam."

540. De libero arbitrio IIIa11.

541. Ibid.

542. *De libero arbitrio* IIIa12.

543. "Quoniam autem deus, quos odit aut diligit, ex iustis causis odit aut diligit . . . . Nondum natos odit, quia certo praescit illos gesturos odio digna; natos odit quia comittunt odio digna." *De libero arbitrio* ibid.

544. "Haec testimonia magis pugnant apud Paulum, quam apud prophetas." *De libero arbitrio* IIIa13.

545. Ibid.

546. "Similitudines . . . non quadrent per omnia." *De libero arbitrio* IIIa14.

547. "Alioqui quid stultius, quam si quis dicat matulae samiae: Si teipsam expurgaris, eris vas utile et honorificum? Verum hoc recte dicitur testae rationali, quae monita potest sese accommodare ad voluntatem domini." *De libero arbitrio* ibid.

548. See the biting sarcasm WA 18,715,11-15, according to which Erasmus, trying to interpret Rom 9, just puts his hands over his eyes in the hope his readers will do the same.

549. Cf. note 529.

550. "Diatribe ipsum [Jerome] sine iudicio arripit nec glosa saltem aliqua dignatur mitigare, sed velut certissimo oraculo scripturas divinas et iudicat et temperat. Sic impia hominum dicta pro regulis et mensuris divinae scripturae accipimus." WA 18,723,11-14.

551. "Quis nos certos facit, Hieronymum et Origenem recte interpretari? Denique pactum nostrum est, non authoritate alicuis doctoris, sed solius scripturae nos velle confligere. Quos igitur Origenes, Quos Hieronymus Diatribe nobis oblita pacti obiict, cum inter Ecclesiasticos scriptores nulli fere sint, qui ineptius et absurdius divinas literas tractarint, quam Origenes et Hieronymus." WA 18,703,23-28. On Luther's and Erasmus' attitudes to Jerome and Origen, see further Kohls, *Luther oder Erasmus* I, 30-37.

552. See Ebeling, *Evangelische Evangelienauslegung*, 287-89, and Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit*, 108: "Bedenkt man, 'wie sehr Erasmus in der sich von Origenes herleitenden Traditionskette steht' [Krüger, *Humanistische Evangelien-auslegung*, 56], so erscheint Luthers Auseinandersetzung mit Erasmus . . . zugleich als eine Auseinandersetzung mit Origenes."

553. WA 18,723,14-15. Luther's critique of Origen seems to be confirmed by modern scholarship. See, e.g., Hans Freiherr von Campenhausen, *Die Entstehung der christlichen Bibel*, Tübingen 1968, 360: The words of the Bibel "sind stets der

Ausgangspunkt, aber kaum jemals die wahre Quelle seiner [sc. Origen's] scheinbar exegetischen Erkenntnisse." On Jerome's dependence on Origen, see Pierre Nautin, "Hieronymus," in *TRE* 15, (Berlin and New York, 1986), 304-15, here p. 311.

554. "Haec testimonia magis pugnant apud Paulum, quam apud prophetas." *De libero arbitrio* IIIa13.

555. WA 18,723,4 to Gen 25:23, and WA 18,727,4 to Isa 45:9 and Jer 18:6. Only the latter is correct. See also WA 18,725,18.

556. "Ea pugnare apud Paulum, quae locis suis non pugnant; hoc est tantum dicere: Paulus cum fundamenta dogmatis Christiani iacit, nihil facit nisi quod depravat scripturas divinas et ludit animas fidelium sententia suo cerebro efficta et scripturis violenter intrusa." WA 18,723,4-7.

557. WA 18,732,1.

558. WA 18,723,8.

559. Pelikan, *Luther the Expositor*, 115, is thus right in describing Luther's exegetical method as a "method of paying more attention to an analysis of the [scriptural] sentence than to a compilation of other people's opinions." Kohls, *Luther oder Erasmus* II, 33, underlines it even stronger: "Im biblischen Christentum kommt es nicht auf eine Theologie an (und sei es die 'wahrste' Theologie), zu der man zu gelangen hat, sondern allein auf die hl. Schrift und das darin bezeugte Gottesverhältnis." Representing the opposite opinion is, however, Hermann, *Klarheit der Heiligen Schrift*, 67, when he exclaims: "Wie könnten wir ohne Luthers Schriftauslegung auskommen!"

560. At the same time, it seems, also the modern critique of the allegedly one-sided Paulinism in Luther's exegesis is devalued: Luther never suggested that he could present the biblical message in its fullness. On the question, see Loewenich, *Luther als Ausleger der Synoptiker*, 8-12; Bernhard Lohse, *Lutherdeutung heute* (Göttingen, 1968), 19-32; Kraus, *Vorherbestimmung*, 131-33.

561. He did, however, certainly not foresee, and would probably have strongly condemned, the widespread modern practice of writing systematic theological treatises with a normative perspective as Luther studies. As far as I can see, this combining of the historical question (what was Luther's theology?) with the actual question (what is true theology?) leads to a distortion that is a close relative of the Aristotelian bent of Scholasticism.

562. Chapter 5c.

563. Thereby Luther—and Erasmus—is not thinking of a mere difference in rhetorical power between the two passages, but a doctrinal difference.

564. WA 18,732,15-29.

565. "Hic igitur Diatribe invenit novam artem eludendi manifestissimos locos, nempe quod tropum velit inesse verbis simplicissimis et clarissimis, ut quemadmodum superius pro libero arbitrio agens omnia verba imperativa et coniunctiva legis per sequelas adiectas et similitudines affictas elusit, ita nunc contra nos actura, omnia verba promissionis et affirmationis divinae per tropum repertum torquet." WA 18,700,12-17.

566. WA 18,700,26-28.

567. *De libero arbitrio* IIIa2, WA 18,703,14-17.

568. WA 18,703,30-36.

569. WA 18,704,1-13.

570. "Esto sane, quod boni cum lenitate tum severitate Dei meliores fiant, tamen cum simul de bonis et malis loquimur, facient isti tropi ex misericordia Dei iram et ex ira misericordiam, penitus perverso loquendi usu." WA 18,704,13-16. On Luther's criticism of Erasmus use of tropological interpretation, see further Rost, *Der Prädestinationsgedanke*, 78-79.

571. "Nisi vero spiritus sanctus rhetoricae aliquantulum gnarus esset, periculum erat, ne tanta simulati contemptus arte fractus prorsus de caussa desperaret et palmam libero arbitrio concedet ante tubam." WA 18,700,4-7.

572. Luther can even describe Erasmus' argument as rhetorical in a decidedly negative sense of the word, WA 18,721,19-25; 723,28. In this context, rhetori is turned into a means of concealing the incompetence of the writer. See WA 18,726,23-24: "Sed est forte et hic Rhetoricum schema, quod docet sensum obscurare, si qua periculum instat, ne capiaris verbo."

573. On Luther's understanding of *tropus* and *figura*, see Krause, *Luthers Auslegung der kleinen Propheten*, 190-197, 206-209; Hartmut Hilgenfeld, *Mittelalterlich-traditionelle Elemente in Luthers Abendmahlsschriften*, Studien zur Dogmengeschichte und systematischen Theologie 29 (Zurich, 1971), 150-73; Alfsvåg, "Language and Reality," 98-106; and Saarinen, "Metapher und biblische Redefiguren als Elemente der Sprachphilosophie Luthers." Saarinen seems, however, to be off the point when he (ibid., p. 36) maintains that Luther understands language as basically metaphorical. For a criticism of such a view, see Graham White, "Luther's Views on Language," *Literature and Theology* 3 (1989): 188-218, here pp. 200-201.

574. WA 18,702,11-13.

575. "Non quaeritur, an tropus ille sit in usu." WA 18,702,13.

576. "Sed hoc quaeritur, an tutum ac certum sit, recte hoc loco usurpare." WA 18,702,15. "Usurpare" does not have the same negative connotation in Latin as in modern English; the basic meaning is "apply".

577. See further Krause, *Luthers Auslegung der kleinen Propheten*, 200.

578. WA 18,702,1-4.

579. "Nobis autem, quibus res agitur seria et qui certissimam veritatem pro stabiliendis conscientiis quaerimus, longe aliter agendum est." WA 18,702,5-7.

580. WA 18,702,7-9.

581. WA 18,703,14-17.

582. A part of the criticism of Porphyry was that the figurative and allegorical exegesis of Origen was arbitrary.

583. Cf. chapter eight.

584. WA 18,700,35-701,13. For an overview of Luther's discussions of and use of figural interpretation, see Anderson, *Words and Word*, 317-33, and Martin Brecht, "Zur Typologie in Luthers Schriftauslegung," in Heinrich Kraft, ed., *Schrift und Schriftauslegung*, Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg 10, Erlangen 1987, 55-68.

585. ". . . ubique inhaerendum est simplici puraeque et naturali significationi verborum, quam grammatica et usus loquendi habet, quem Deus creavit in hominibus," WA 18,700,33-35. Commenting on this passage is Ficker, "Ut simplicissime tractaretis Scripturas," 189-90.

586. Peter Meinhold, *Luthers Sprachphilosophie* (Berlin, 1958), 34: "Die Allegorese ist abzulehnen, weil sie eine Mißachtung der circumstantia verborum darstellt." For a presentation of Erasmus' more liberal view, see Kohls, *Die Theologie des Erasmus* I, 132.

587. "Sic potius sentiamus, neque sequelam neque tropum in ullo loco scripturae esse admittendum, nisi id cogat circumstantia verborum evidens et absurditas rei manifestae in aliqui fidei articulum peccans." WA 18,700,31. On the Creed as exegetical criterion, see further Hof, "Luthers exegetischer Grundsatz von der Analogia fidei," 113-25.

588. "Hoc quaeritur, . . . an Paulus velit eo [the trope] uti. Non de alieno lectoris usu, sed de ipsius authoris Pauli usu quaeritur." WA 18,702,15-17.

589. One might perhaps maintain that to argue on the basis of the intention of the author, is an example of an argument *ex circumstantia verborum*. Holl, "Luthers Bedeutung," 554, sees this as one of the important achievements of Luther's exegesis: "Weil er selbst [Luther] ein Dichter war, har er etwas bemerkt, was alle die Schulmeister, die vor ihm über die Sache geschrieben hatten, nicht gesehen haben: daß man nämlich bei der Frage nach dem Recht der allegorischen Erklärung von dem Schriftsteller und seiner Absicht ausgehen muß."

590. "Sic Diatribe hoc loco, nihil morata, quid agat Moses aut quorsum tendat eius oratio, voculam hanc: Ego indurabo (qua offenditur) e textu rapit fingitque pro libidine, interim nihil cogitans, quomodo sit rursus inserenda et coaptanda, ut quadret corpori textus." WA 18,713,7-11.

591. ". . . nullo respectu habito vel circumstantiarum vel sequentium et praecedentium vel intentionis aut caussae authoris." WA 18,713,5-7.

592. "Sine controversia verum est, similitudinem non semper et per omnia quadrare." WA 18,728,10-11.

593. "In hoc tamen errat et peccat Diatribe, quod neglecta caussa similitudinis, quae maxime spectanda est, vocabule contentiose captat. Ex caussis enim dicendi intelligentia petenda est, ait Hilarius, non ex vocabulis solis. Ita similitudinis efficatia pendet ex caussa similitudinis." WA 18,728,14-17.

594. *De libero arbitrio* IIIa17; WA 18,700,18-19. The quotation is from Sir 15:16. Erasmus does not say that Luther interprets thus, but Luther understands it as an attack of himself. In *Hyperaspistes*, however, Erasmus corrects this, and says that the interpretation comes from Karlstadt, who presented it in his debate with Eck in Leipzig 1519 (quoted in WA 18,621).

595. WA 18,701,14-19; 732,13-14.

596. WA 18,701,19-30.

597. Holl, "Luthers Bedeutung," 555: "Mitt herrlicher Klarheit hat er [Luther] es schon im Jahr 1519 ausgesprochen, daß da, wo aus dem Zusammenhang sich die Bildlichkeit der Redeweise ergibt, dieser bildliche Sinn nicht etwa als ein 'uneigentlicher' nebem dem buchstäblichen, sondern als **der eigentliche und einzige, weil vom Schriftsteller allein beabsichtigte**, anzusehen ist." This is underlined also by Bornkamm, *Luther und das Alte Testament*, 78, Krause, *Luthers Auslegung der kleinen Propheten*, 202, Anderson, *Words and Word*, 321, and Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit*, 48.

598. According to modern scholarship, he had good reasons to do so. See Hägglund, "Luther über die Sprache," 6: "Bei der Deutung des Textes war man [Erasmus and Reuchlin] nicht zum äußeren Text gebunden, sondern konnte ihn frei nach der vier Auslegungsweisen benutzen, während für Luther dagegen der einzige sensus literalis est." Krüger, *Humanistische Evangelienauslegung*, 59, maintains that Erasmus never came to understand that in a given context, the figural meaning may in fact be the literal.

599. According to Gerrish, *Grace and Reason*, 148-49, Luther thus makes his own experience of justification regulative for his exegesis. This is, however, not what Luther says; he in this context explicitly refers to the articles of faith, not to experience; cf. note 587 above.

600. See p. 32 above.

601. Quoniam autem absurdum videtur, ut deus, qui non solum iustus est, verum etiam bonus, indurasse dicatur cor hominis, ut per illius malitiam suam illustraret potentiam, Origenes libro περὶ ἀρχῶν tertio sic explicat. *De libero arbitrio* IIIa2; WA 18,707,12-15.

602. Luther sums it up like this: "Absurditas itaque una est principalium causarum, ne verba Mosi et Pauli simpliciter accipiantur." WA 18,707,19-21.

603. "Sed ea absurditas in quem peccat articulum fidei? aut quis illa offenditur? Ratio humana offenditur, quae cum in omnibus verbis et operibus Die caeca, surda, stulta, impia et sacrilega est, hoc loco adducitur iudex verborum et operum Dei. Eodem argumento negabis omnes articulos fidei, quod longe absurdissimum sit et, ut Paulus ait, Stultitia gentibus et scandalum Iudaeis [1 Cor 1:23], Deus esse hominem, virginis filium, crucifixum, sedentem in dextra patris. Absurdum est (inquam) talia credere." WA 18,707,21-27.

604. A well-known, modern example of the same phenomenon is the theology of *Entmythologisierung* of Rudolf Bultmann, as he maintains that the modern, reasonable word-view necessitates a new (=tropological) interpretation.

605. "Scilicet hoc offendit quam maxime sensum illum communem seu rationem naturalem, quod Deus mera voluntate sua hominem deserat, induret, damnet," WA 18,719,4-5.

606. "An non est scrutari temere, conari, ut liberrima praescientia Dei conveniat cum nostra libertate? parati, praescientia Dei derogare, nisi nobis libertatem permiserit," WA 18,718,8-10. On the understanding of God's prescience in *De servo arbitrio*, see further WA 18,614,27-28; 615,12-14; and cf. Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 92-94.

607. "Vide igitur nequitiam cordis humani: Deum cum indignos sine meritis salvat, imo cum multis demeritis iustificat impios, non accusat iniquitatis . . . . At cum immeritos damnat, quia incomodum sibi est, hoc iniquum, hoc intolerabile est, hic expostulatur, hic murumuratur, hic blasphematur." WA 18,730,22-28.

608. "Comprehenderet vero tunc, quando sic de Deo diceretur: Neminem indurat, neminem damnat, sed omnibus miseretur, omnes salvos facit, ut destructo inferno positoque metu mortis nulla poena formidaretur futura." WA 18,708,4-8.

609. "Vides ergo Diatriben cum suis in hac causa non iudicare secundum aequitatem, sed secumdum affectum comodi sui." WA 18,730,28-30.

610. "Nusquam se apertius prodit Diatribe quam hoc loco. Audis enim hic aliis quidem verbis, sed eodem sensu dici, quod Paulus dicere facit impios: Quid queritur? Voluntati eius quis resistet?" WA 18,729,11-13. This was, according to Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 116-121, always Luther's answer to the argument

that predestination implied an untenable contradiction in the understanding of God.

611. WA 18,729,13-730,15.

612. Cf. note 501 above.

613. On Luther's view of the natural perception of God, see Rost, *Der Prädestinationsgedanke*, 55-61. Underestimating Luther's view of the rational perception of God is Schwarzwäller, *Theologia Crucis*, 192; cf. the critique of Schwarzwäller by Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 53.

614. "An talem oportere esse Deum vivum et verum, qui libertate sua necessitatem imponat nobis, ipsa ratio naturalis cogitur confiteri, videlicet quod ridiculus ille Deus fuerit aut idolum verius, qui incerto praevideat futura aut fallatur eventis, cum et gentiles Diis suis fatum dederit ineluctabile." WA 18,718,15-19. See also WA 18,706,15-16.

615. Luther admits, however, that Aristotle's concept of God is different and by and large corresponds to that of Erasmus; WA 18,706,22-23, and cf. Aristotle *Metaphysics*, XII.7. On Luther's critique of the concept of God of Aristotle and Erasmus (*Deus otiosus*), see Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 58-61.

616. WA 18,719,4-7.

617. WA 18,705,21. This refers to Erasmus' deliberations in *De libero arbitrio* IIa12, where he describes as "probabilis" the view that man cannot do anything good without *gratia peculiaris*. Cf. p. 43 above.

618. WA 18,730,16-22.

619. WA 18,706,8-11.

620. WA 18,707,32.

621. "Difficilem quidem esse quaestionem fateor imo impossibilem, si simul voles statuere et praescientiam Dei et libertatem hominis." WA 18,717,25-27.

622. Luther thus saw Erasmus in line with Aristotle (and Thomas Aquinas). See Ernst-Wilhelm Kohls, "Luthers Verhältnis zu Aristoteles, Thomas und Erasmus," *Theologische Zeitschrift* (Basel, 1975): 289-301.

623. "Ratio . . . Deum . . . seclusa fide palpare et videre et comprehendere vult, quomodo sit bonus et non crudelis." WA 18,708,3-4.

624. WA 18,718,6-7.

625. "Sed fides et spiritus aliter iudicant, qui Deum bonum credunt, etiam si omnes homines perderet," WA 18,708,7-8. Confronted with the reality of predestination, it is thus only in faith one can retain a consistent understanding of God's goodness. See Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 204-205.

626. For a presentation and discussion of both the negative and the affirmative aspects of Luther's view of reason, see Bernhard Lohse, *Ratio und fides: Eine Untersuchung über die ratio in der Theologie Luthers*, FKDG 8 (Göttingen, 1957), 59-73.

627. Cf. Lohse, *Ratio und fides*, 71: "So sieht die ratio letztlich nur das, was sie sehen will, was dem Ichwillen des Menschen dient."

628. Lohse, *Ratio und fides*, 65, expresses it like this: "Die ratio erfaßt nicht, was Gott ist; gleichwohl erfaßt sie zuverlässig, was Gott nicht ist."

629. "Atque ipsamet ratio naturalis, quae necessitate illa offenditur et tanta molitur ad eam tollendam, cogitur eam concaedere, proprio suo iudicio convicta, etiam si nulla esset scriptura. Omnes enim homines inveniunt hanc sententiam in cordibus suis scriptam et agnoscunt eam ac probant (licet inviti), cum audiunt eam tractari." WA 18,719,20-24.

630. "Et sane verum est, quod ratio . . . divinum quiddam sit." *De homine* (1536), WA 39 I,175,10.

631. "Annotat et illud Origenes, quod ait Dominus: In hoc ipsum excitavi te, non: In hoc ipsum feci te." *De libero arbitrio* IIIa3; WA 18,707,17; 708,20. The quotation is from Ex 9:16 and Rom 9:17, and Origen treats it in *Comm. in ep. ad Rom.* VII.16 (MPG 14,1146).

632. Erasmus alludes to Gen 1:31.

633. See chapter 5g.

634. Luther discusses the question of God and evil at some length already in the Lecture on Romans, WA 56,179-184 (to Rom 1:24). He here explicitly rejects the idea that guilt presupposes free will (WA 56,182,9). For a comparison of Luther's understanding of the induration of Pharaoh in *De servo arbitrio* to his exegesis of the same passages in the Lecture on Romans (WA 57,401-404) and in the Sermons on Exodus (WA 16,140-148), see Walther von Loewenich, "Pharaos Verstockung," in Loewenich, *Von Augustin zu Luther* (Witten, 1959), 161-79.

635. WA 18,708,20-23.

636. Luther quotes Eph 2:3: "We were all the children of wrath." WA 18,708,24.

637. WA 18,708,25-30.

638. "Licet enim Deus peccatum non faciat, tamen naturam peccato, subracto spiritu, vitiatam non cessat formare et multiplicare, tanquam si faber ex ligno corrupto statuas faciat. Ita qualis est natura, talis fiunt homines, Deo creante et formante illos ex natura tali." WA 18,708,31-34.

639. WA 18,708,34-709,3. Cf. the comment by J. Samuel Preus, "Luther as Theologian," in Grane and Lohse, *Luther und die Theologie der Gegenwart*, 129-33, here pp. 131-32: "I know of no other theologian who has stated it more clearly than Luther: that there is an actual contradiction between man's best judgement, . . . and the actions of God. . . . Unlike Erasmus, Luther does not believe that the theologian can *show* that God is good. Thus, if he wishes to face and account for reality . . . from faith—the theologian has to renounce theodicy." On this aspect of Luther's thought, see also Lohse, *Ratio und fides*, 63, and Olsson, *Schöpfung, Vernunft und Gesetz in Luthers Theologie*, 11.

640. On Luther's understanding of the relation between creation and "Allwirksamkeit", see further Hermann, *Luthers Theologie*, 155-57.

641. "Quaeritur fortassis, quo modo Deus mala in nobis dicatur operari, ut indurare, tradere desideriis, seducere et similia?" WA 18,709,5-6.

642. "Oportuit sane verbis Dei contentos esse et simpliciter credere, quod dicunt, cum sit opera Dei prorsus inenarrabilia [Rom 11:33]; tamen in obsequium Rationis, id est stultitiae humanae libet ineptier et stultescere et balbutiendo tentare, si qua possimus eam movere." WA 18,709,6-9.

643. This is underlined by Rost, *Der Prädestinationsgedanke*, 121-22, and by Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift*, 129. It does, however, intend to guard the exegesis. See Prenter, "Luther als Theologe," 117, on this problem: "Der Dialektiker wird nicht um der Dialektik willen auf den Plan geführt, sondern ausschließlich, um die wahre Deutung einzelner klarer Aussagen der Schrift zu sichern." Luther's own reservation toward this argument is overlooked in the discussion of the encounter with *Deus absconditus* as "Urlebnis" in Werner Elert, *Morphologie des Luthertums*, vol. 1, *Theologie und Weltanschauung des Luthertums hauptsächlich im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1965, original edition 1931), 15-25. The reason is probably that Elert's unfounded methodological supposition is that the main subject of *De servo arbitrio* "unter der *Oberfläche* der exegetischen Kontroversen" is "das Verständnis seines [Luther's] Grauens vor Gott" (ibid., 18, italics mine). For a criticism of Elert's approach, see Lohse, "Zur Struktur von Luthers Theologie," 241.

644. Older Luther scholarship (Ritschl) saw in these reflections a regrettable regress to Scholasticism. For a presentation and discussion of this view, see Bandt, *Lehre vom verborgenen Gott*, 119-125.

645. "Primum, etiam Ratio et Diatribe concedit, Deum omnia in omnibus operari [1 Cor 12:6] ac sine ipso nihil fieri nec efficax esse. Est enim omnipotens, pertinetque id ad omnipotentiam suam, ut Paulus ait ad Ephesios [Eph 1:19]." WA 18,709,10-12. I am not sure if Loewenich is right when he suggests that Luther in this connection thinks of God as a primum movens or a primum causa ("Pharaos Verstockung," 175); the background is rather Luther's theology of creation. This is well expressed by Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 70, in his interpretation of this passage: "The vision of the close, incessantly active God of the Bible . . . is the great

source of inspiration and the driving force of his [Luther's] attempt at analysis."

646. WA 18,709,12-24.

647. WA 18,709,24-33.

648. "Haec rata et certa sunt, si credimus omnipotentem esse Deum, Deinde impium esse creaturam Dei, aversam vero relictamque sibi sine spiritu Dei non posse velle aut facere bonum. Omnipotentia Dei facit, ut impius non possit motum et actionem Dei evadere, sed necessario illi subiectus paret. Corruptio vero seu avsersio sui a Deo facit, ut bene moveri et rapi non possit." WA 18,710,1-6.

649. WA 18,710,6.

650. "Cur Deus non cesset ab ipsu motu omnipotentiae, quo voluntas impiorum movetur, ut pergat mala esse et peior fieri? Respondetur, hoc est optare, ut Deus propter impios desinat esse Deus, dum eius virtutem et actionem optas cessare, scilicet ut desinat esse bonus, ne illi fiant peiores." WA 18,712,20-24. This passage implies that to Luther, to be God is to be good. See Olsson, *Schöpfung, Vernunft und Gesetz in Luthers Theologie*, 16.

651. WA 18,710,8-22. Luther develops this point also WA 18,634,25ff.

652. "Haec ipsa irritatio impiorum, cum Deus illis contrarium dicit aut facit, quam vellent, est ipsorum induratio et ingravatio. Nam cum per sese sint aversi ipsa naturae corruptione, tum multo magis avertuntur et peiores fiunt, dum ipsorum aversioni resistitur aut detrahitur." WA 18,710,22-25.

653. "Sic Pharaoni impio erepturus tyrannidem irritavit eum et magis induravit et aggravit cor eius, dum illum per verbum Mosi velut regnum ablaturi et populum suae tyrannidi subtracturi invasit, et intus spiritum non dedit, sed ipsius impiam corruptionem permisit Satana regnante succensere, intumescere, furere et procadere cum securitate quadam et contemptu." WA 18,710,25-30.

654. "Non igitur quispiam cogitet, Deum, cum dicitur indurare aut malum in nobis operari (indurare enim est malum facere), sic facere, quasi de novo in nobis malum creet." WA 18,710,31-33.

655. WA 18,710,35-711,19. Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 70, argues that the goodness of God sets the framework for all his work in a way that confirms that even the end of hardening ultimately is something good, e.g., to demonstrate the power of God. I am not quite sure, however, if he succeeds in demonstrating that this is a point of view that corresponds to Luther's way of thinking.

656. "Quare induratio Pharaonis per Deum sic impletur, quod foris obiicit maliciae eius, quod ille odit naturaliter, tum intus non cessat movere omnipotente motu malam (ut invenit) voluntatem." WA 18,711,33-35.

657. Loewenich, "Pharaos Verstockung," 178, thus seems to be right in considering it "als Hilfsvorstellungen, die nicht letzte Gültigkeit beanspruchen können."

658. According to Loewenich, "Pharaos Verstockung," 177, the difference between Luther's and Erasmus' solutions is after all not substantial. Quite apart from the question of the validity of such a conclusion, however, he thereby fails to pay due attention to his own observation that Luther's own evaluation of his achievement in refuting Erasmus is that "der Wortlaut der Schrift ist ohne Tropen gewahrt" (ibid., 176).

659. WA 18,712,1-3.

660. "At cur non simul mutat voluntas malas, quas movet?" WA 18,712,24.

661. "Hoc pertinet ad secreta maiestatis, ubi incomprehensibilia sunt iudicia eius." WA 18,712,25.

662. WA 18,712,28-29 (Jn 6:66).

663. WA 18,712,32-39.

664. This consequence Luther considered as a condition for a true recognition of God; cf. the famous quotation from WA 31 I,249,25 (*Der 117. Psalm ausgelegt*, 1517): "Got kan nicht Got sein, er mus zuvor ein Teufel werden." On this passage, see Anderson, *Words and Word*, 260, and H.-M. Barth, *Der Teufel und Jesus Christus*, 164. It is a main point both for Anderson and H.-M. Barth that according to Luther, only "der Glaube als Erkenntnis Gottes und des Teufels durchschaut die Masken, unter denen ihm sowohl Gott wie auch der Teufel begegnet" (H.-M. Barth, ibid., 203).

665. As far as I can see, this point has been overlooked by the entire *De servo arbitrio* scholarship.

666. Bandt, *Lehre vom verborgenen Gott*, 122: "Das Interesse, das ihn dabei leitet, ist durchaus kein metaphysisches, sondern ein eminent theologisches: die Gewißheit der göttlichen Zusage, die Wahrhaftigkeit seiner Verheißung stünden für auf dem Spiel, wenn er diese Erkenntnis von einer letzten Macht und Herrschaft Gottes über Sünder, Tod und Teufel nicht gesichert wüßte."

667. This difference between the two parts of *De servo arbitrio* is observed also by Bader, *Assertio*, 133. It follows from Bader's perspective, however, that he considers the first part as the important one.

668. This is underlined also by Doerne, "Gottes Ehre am gebundenen Willen," 46, and by Schwarzwäller, *Theologia crucis,* 46.

669. "Non permanebit spiritus meus in homine, quia caro est." WA 18,733,23; WA 7,143,34 (*Assertio*); *De libero arbitrio* IIIb1.

670. WA 18,736,6-8; see WA 7,143,19 and *De libero arbitrio* IIIb2.

671. "Suscepit duplicia de manu Domini pro omnibus peccatis suis." WA 18,736,34; see WA 7,144,5 and *De libero arbitrio* IIIb3.

672. WA 18,739,23-25. See WA 7,144,15 and *De libero arbitrio* IIIb4.

673. "Scio Domine, quoniam non est hominis via eius, nec ullius est, ut ambulet et dirigat gressus suos." WA 18,745,20-21, see WA 7,144,27 and *De libero arbitrio* IIIb5. As observed by Bornkamm, *Luther und das Alte Testament*, 61: "Die Schriftstellen, die Luther in seinem Kampf gegen den freien Willen . . . ins Feld führte, entstammen überwiegend dem Alten Testament."

674. "Sine me nihil potestis facere." WA 18,748,11; see WA 7,142,32 and *De libero arbitrio* IIIb8.

675. ". . . to me, this seems to be applied too violently on grace and free will." *De libero arbitrio* IIIb4.

676. Later Erasmus seems to have modified this view; see Payne, "The Significance of Lutheranizing Changes," 315. According to Payne, this and other "Lutheranizing Changes" are probably due to Erasmus "desire to mediate theological differences between Catholics and Protestants in the early 1530s" (ibid., 326).

677. "Nec tamen omnis affectus hominis est caro, sed est, qui dicitur anima, est qui dicitur spiritus." *De libero arbitrio*, ibid. It is interesting to note that Erasmus, too, can use the concept of *affectus* to describe man. When he interprets it by means of the distinction between flesh, soul and spirit, however, it takes on a meaning quite different from what we have seen in Quintilian and Luther.

678. ". . . spiritus, quo nitimur ad honesta, quam partem animi rationem vocant aut ἡγεμονικόν, id est principalem." The most famous description of the ἡγεμονικόν is probably that of Plato in *Phaidros* 246a-247e. Concerning Platonic elements in Erasmus' anthropology, see Krüger, *Humanistische Evangelienauslegung*, 40-43. According to Kaneko, *Shūkyōkaikaku no seishin*, 18, Erasmus was influenced by the Italian Renaissance Platonists through John Colet.

679. P. 41.

680. Cf. Erasmus' understanding of justification as a process of mediation, note 223 above.

681. Concerning the importance of this anthropology within the thinking of Erasmus, see Augustijn, *Erasmus von Rotterdam*, 49-51.

682. "Hic iterum Diatribe cum fiducia glosam affert, prout visum est, tanquam scriptura sit sub iure suo plenissimo . . . . Sat est: Erasmus dicit, ergo sic est." WA 18,745,23-26.

683. "Doceat igitur ex ipsius sermonis serie hanc glosam, et credemus." WA 18,745,27.

684. WA 18,749,23-28.

685. ". . . nihil cogitans de ipso textu, de sequentibus et praecedentibus, unde petenda est intelligentia." WA 18,748,26.

686. WA 18,748,24, see also 601,8-17.

687. "Rhetorica tua fisus, quasi nemo sit, qui hanc transitionem et dissimulationem tam callidam sit observaturus." WA 18,741,11-13, cf. WA 18,629,14, and note 687, 572, 572 above. According to Luther, Erasmus is particularly weak concerning *inventio*, WA 18,614,41-615,11.

688. Luther's view of the rhetoric of Erasmus thus comes quite close to the modern view of "mere rhetoric", the origin of which is Plato's dialogue *Gorgias*. A distinction between "Theologie der Tatsachen" and "Theologie der Rhetorik" (A. F. C. Vilmar) does, however, not correspond to Luther's way of thinking, as he undoubtedly considers rhetoric as a means to expose the "Tatsachen", cf. WA 18,614,33-615,6. For a presentation of this distinction in Vilmar's use of it, see Ernst-Wilhelm Kohls, "Grenzen und Problematik der neueren Hermeneutik," in Kohls, *Luther oder Erasmus* II, 215-234.

689. Luther repeatedly states that he considers Erasmus as more eloquent than himself. This is partly to be understood as the common rhetorical figure of *captatio benevolentiae*, and partly as an indirect depreciation of Erasmus as a writer who perhaps understands *verba,* but definitely not *res.* See WA 18,755,10f.: "Licet [Luther] non Rhetor, firmiori tamen Rhetorica quam tu." Eventually the rhetoric of Luther is the better one, because he knows truth.

690. WA 18,741,16-18.

691. WA 18,741,20-30.

692. Recently Boyle, *Erasmus on Language and Method*, has tried to show the New Testament foundation of the theology of Erasmus, particularly as it is related to his view of Christ as *sermo* (or *oratio*) *Dei*. Even her analysis, shows, however, that the reader to Erasmus has a relative independence that makes his position markedly different from Luther's (see particularly p. 56: The text and the human spirit as the two traces of the Logos in the world; and p. 63: Theology as mediation between faith and intellect).

According to Tinkler, "Erasmus' Conversation with Luther," 63, there is a close connection between Erasmus' use of *sermo* and his view of theology as moderate conversation.

693. WA 18,734,2-4; see also 737,1-2.

694. "Verum Hieronymus et suus Origenes istis nugis repleverunt orbem et authores fuerunt pestilentis huius exempli, ne simplicitati scripturarum studeretur." WA 18,735,1-3. According to Kaneko, *Shūkyōkaikaku no seishin*, 19, Erasmus' choice of Origen and Jerome as exegetical authorities is partly due to the fact that the represent a Platonist anthropology similar to Erasmus' own.

695. *De libero arbitrio* IIIb4.

696. "Quid vero in his omnibus nisi speciem externam operum monstrare poteris?" WA 18,742,34-35.

697. WA 18,742,35-743,4. Luther alludes to the Peripatetic doctrine of the passions, see Tracy, "Two Erasmuses, Two Luthers," 43.

698. "Sed ut sit hoc honestum apud homines, apud Deum tamen nihil est inhonestius, imo impiissimum et summum acrilegium, nempe quod non pro gloria Dei egerunt nec ut Deum glorificaverunt, sed impiissima rapina Deo gloriam rapientes et sibi attribuentes nunquam magis inhonesti et turpes fuerunt, quam dum in summis suis virtutibus fulserunt." WA 18,743,4-8. Takahashi, "Rinri to shūkyō to no kankei," 36-37, objects that Luther here is too negative concerning the **moral** capacity of the human will, even if he might be correct concerning its **religious** capacity. Takahashi overlooks, however, that Luther in this context is not interested in—and does not deny—the relative goodness of the works of man *coram hominibus.* His concern is to destroy human proudness to make room for a goodness that is something more than saving one's country from invasion. On this passage, see also Olsson, *Schöpfung, Vernunft und Gesetz in Luthers Theologie*, 35.

699. WA 18,744,3-18. On Luther's relation to the idea that man is composed of body, soul and spirit, see Joest, *Ontologie der Person bei Luther*, 164-73, and Olsson, *Schöpfung, Vernunft und Gesetz in Luthers Theologie*, 489-94. According to Lindhardt, *Martin Luther*, 17-48, Luther is in this respect more representative for the Renaissance than Erasmus.

700. "Ita fiet per dogma istud de principali parte hominis, ut homo supra Christum et diabolum extollatur, hoc est, fiet Deus Deorum et Dominus dominantium." WA 18,744,18-20.

701. "Hoc dico, ut iterum videas, quanti periculi res sit, sacra ac divina tentare sine spiritu Dei temeritate rationis humanae." WA 18,744,24-25.

702. Kerlen, *Assertio*, speaks of in this context of "das conatorische Prinzip" in the theology of Erasmus (pp. 277-78), and maintains pp. 367-68 that Luther in his criticism of this principle really has come to understand the "Grund-Antrieb" of Erasmus' view of free will.

703. Or, to use a more modern metaphor: An idling car.

704. WA 18,751,18-19.

705. WA 18,751,32.

706. "Spiritus meus [i.e., Dei], qui est in Noe et aliis viris sanctis, arguit illos impios per verbum praedicationis et vitam piorum (Iudicare enim inter homines est officio verbi inter eos agere, arguere, increpare, obsecrare oportune importune) . . ." WA 18,735,11-14, see 2 Tim 4:2.

707. The quotation above continues like this: ". . . sed frustra; illi enim carne excaecati et indurati eo fiunt peiores, sicut fit, quoties verbum Dei in mundum venit, ut peiores fiant, quo magis erudiantur." WA 18,735,14-16.

708. "Nihil haeretici scripturis possunt doceri." WA 18,741,20.

709. "Nos autem docemus ex ipsa serie [Jer 10:23], Prophetam cum videret sese frustra docere impios tanta instantia, simul intelligit, verbum suum nihil valere, nisi Deus intus doceat, atque ideo non esse in manu hominis audire et bonum velle," WA 18,745,28-31.

710. ". . . dum foris praedicat ipse [Paulus] et intus docet Deus," WA 18,753,26. The biblical allusion is to 1 Cor 3:6.

711. See Rom 8:14.

712. WA 18,753,28-35.

713. "Scimus et nos, quod Paulus cooperatur Deo in docendis Corinthiis, dum foris praedicat ipse et intus docet Deus, etiam in diverso opere. Similiter et Deo cooperatur, cum loquitur in spiritu Dei, idque in eodem opere." WA 18,753,25-27.

714. Erasmus maintains that even if God preserves the ship, the sailor brings it into the port. Thus is cannot be said that the latter does nothing, *De libero arbitrio* IIIc1. Luther, however, contends that only God preserves and only the sailor navigates, WA 18,753,14-20.

715. Boyle, "Stoic Luther," 88ff., speaks in this connection of a binary perspectival system by Luther, and she considers it to be Stoic in inspiration. Her examples of Luther's application of this way of thinking is "simul iustus et peccator," and his insistence both on the absolute necessity of divine providence, and on human freedom. Each of these realities belongs to different aspects of theological cognition. Rost, *Der Prädestinationsgedanke*, 172, uses "Begriff der Komplementarität" to describe Luther's understanding of God's wrath and love.

716. This is the reason Luther can find no contradiction in the Scripture between passages demanding human activity and passages that ascribe everything to God. According to Luther, passages cannot contradict each other when they speak of different things. Cf. p. 77 above.

717. This is underlined by Michael Plathow, "Das cooperatio-Verständnis M. Luthers im Gnaden- und Schöpfungsbereich," in *Luther* 56 (1985): 28-46, here p. 41:

"Nicht um einen kontradiktorischen Gegensatz von Gottes Allmachtswirken und dem Mit- und Eigenwirken der Glaubenden auf der logischen Ebene geht es dabei Luther, sondern um die Einheit des Mitwirkenden Inwirkens der Glaubenden in Gottes Wirken als komplementäre Aspekte."

718. In his discussion of Luther's understanding of theology, Loeschen, *Wrestling with Luther*, 19-24, uses the expressions *coram deo* and *coram hominibus* to identify these perspectives, and underlines p. 20 that both of them are legitimate. He is, however, unaware that Luther essentially understands these distinctions as exegetical tools, and his further reflections can therefore take him quite far away from Luther.

719. Cf. Luther's view that man is free in his dominion over other creatures as it was developed in chapter 5d.

720. The main investigation of Luther's understanding of cooperation is Martin Seils, *Der Gedanke vom Zusammenwirken Gottes und des Menschen in Luthers Theologie*, BFChrTh 50 (Gütersloh, 1962); cf. his own summary "Luthers Auffassung vom Menschen als Mitarbeiter Gottes," in Seidel and Bieritz, eds., *Das Lebendige Wort*, 126-38. He does, however, not discuss the relation between Luther's "binary perspectival system" and his understanding of cooperation. For a criticism of Seil's approach, see Schwarzwäller, *Sibboleth*, 85-87.

721. This was an important aspect of Luther's rhetorically founded criticism of Scholasticism (Alfsvåg, "Language and reality," 97). The exegetical foundation of theology thus makes the construction of an all-embracing system impossible. See Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift*, 139.

722. This seems to be the view of Erasmus, who always argues from what he considers as the (untenable) consequences of Luther's statements.

723. It does not seem to be bad logic to argue that God preserves and the sailor navigates; it is merely an interpretation that focus on the meaning of the words. In the same way, there does not seem to be any logical inconsistency in Luther's view that man is both totally dependent on God **and** lives as he wants to.

724. Cf. the discussion of the relation between *claritas* and *perspicuitas,* note 288 above.

725. For a presentation of the discussion of the question if this implies that Luther is a determinist or not, see McSorley, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen*, 242-244; Kraus, *Vorherbestimmung*, 143-45.

726. "Sicut homo, antequam creatur, ut sit homo, nihil facit aut conatur, quo fiat creatura, Deinde factus et creatus nihil facit aut conatur, quo perseveret creatura, Sed utrunque fit sola voluntate omnipotentis virtutis et bonitatis Dei nos sine nobis creantis et conservantis," WA 18,754,1-4.

727. "Sic deinceps dicimus: Homo antequam renovatur in novam creaturam regni spiritus, nihil facit, nihil conatur, quo paretur ad eam renovationem et regnum; Deinde recreatus, nihil facit, nihil conatur, quo perseveret in eo regno, Sed utrunque facit solus spiritus in nobis, nos sine nobis recreans et conservans recreatos . . ." (follows quotation from Jas 1:18), WA 18,754,8-12. McSorley, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen*, 284, maintains that Luther thus combines a biblical and tenable view of *servum arbitrium* based on the fact that man is a sinner, with an untenable view of *servum arbitrium* based on the fact that man is a creature. His desire to interpret Luther in light of ecclesiastical tradition thus seems to have led him to accept in Luther what he thinks has its parallels in Roman-Catholic doctrine, and reject what has not. For a presentation of his project, see Behnk, *Contra Liberum Arbitrium*, 106-109; for a criticism of its "ecumenical" methodology, see Schwarzwäller, *Sibboleth*, 99-104.

728. ". . . sed non operatur in nobis sine nobis." WA 18,754,4-5.

729. "Sed non operatur sine nobis, ut quos in hoc ipsum recreavit et conservat, ut operatur in nobis et nos ei cooperamur." WA 18,754,14-15.

730. WA 18,754,15-16. Cf. p. 63 above.

731. Apart from the example of the sailor, Luther does not give any examples of this perspective in this context. See, however, WA 18,615,33, which says that everything happens by necessity "si Dei voluntatem spectes." The implication is obviously that if you disregard this aspect, which might be perfectly acceptable under certain circumstances, you will not see necessity, but man's free evolvement. The complementarity of perspectives thus lets Luther apply the category of necessity without being a determinist.

732. Cf. Plathow, "Das cooperatio-Verständnis M. Luthers," 37: "Bei den Aussagen zu . . . Mitwirken des Geschöpfes geht es . . . um Gewißheitsaussagen, die Luther aus der Interpretation biblischer Texte gewinnt und in der Bibel bezeugt weiß. Es geht also nicht um Erwägungen und Reflexionen, die Schöpfer und Geschöpf als causa prima und causa secunda in ein allgemein einsichtiges ontologisches System der naturlichen Vernunft einordnen, wie es die thomistisch-molinistischen Auseinander-setzungen beherrschte, den Streit um Bajus und den Jansenismus, aber auch die altprotestantische Orthodoxie."

733. Luther is indeed very far from the view that different and mutual exclusive views of a certain passage may all be valuable and important. His view of complementarity does not exclude, but presupposes and emphasizes his basic assumption that there is only one truth.

734. "Quae verba non severitatem dei, sed clementiam sonant." *De libero arbitrio* IIIb1.

735. Ibid. As mentioned above, the origin of this exegesis is Jerome, see MPL 23,997. Part of his argument is that the work of the Spirit here is described by the verb דין, to judge. Erasmus, who did not know Hebrew, just gives the conclusion.

736. WA 18,734,5-14. Luther alludes to 1 Cor 3:3 and 5:7.

737. WA 18,734,15-735,22. Luther's translation and exegesis shows that he is aware of the meaning of the Hebrew text, though his interpretation is quite different from that of Jerome.

738. WA 18,735,22-31.

739. WA 18,735,34-36. Luther's examples are Gen 2:24, Jn 1:14 and 6:55.

740. WA 18,735,31-33. Luther repeats this distinction WA 18,743,27-744,2.

741. WA 18,736,2-5.

742. "All flesh is grass, and its glory is like the flower of the grass. The grass withers and the flower of the grass fades, because the spirit of the Lord blows upon it."

743. *De libero arbitrio* IIIb4.

744. Concerning this passage, Luther does not dispute the interpretation of "Spirit" as the wrath of God, probably because the Spirit here **expresses** the wrath of God.

745. WA 18,740,3-31.

746. WA 18,740,10-11. Luther is thinking of Magnificat, Lk 1:51ff.

747. Erasmus did, however, not agree. For a presentation of how he defended his anthropology in *Hyperaspistes* II*,* see Tracy, "Two Erasmuses, Two Luthers," 46ff.

748. *De libero arbitrio* IIIb2.

749. WA 18,736,6-17.

750. ". . . omne figmentum cogitationum cordis eius tantum malum cunctis diebus." WA 18,736,22-23. Luther quotes in transcription.

751. WA 18,736,24-33.

752. WA 7,144,5-10.

753. *De libero arbitrio* IIIb3.

754. Generally speaking, the ideal of *De libero arbitrio* seems to be the *via media*, whereby Erasmus tries to avoid the extremes both of Luther and his most radical opponents. Luther's view is that this is a hopeless project, and Erasmus incessantly betrays that in his heart, he sides with Luther's strongest opponents. At least as far as this passage is concerned, Luther seems to be right.

755. WA 18,737,4-6. Thereby Luther is particularly thinking of how quotations from Isa 40 are used to characterize the work of John the Baptist.

756. WA 18,737,10-16. This is how the English translations renders this phrase: "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem" (AV); "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem" (RSV and NIV).

757. The Hebrew word is of the same root as Lord **Sebaoth**.

758. WA 18,737,17-35. Luther quotes a number of passages that describes the life of a Christian as a warfare: 2 Tim 2:3,5; 4:7; 1 Tim 6:12; 1 Cor 9:24; Eph 6:13ff.; 1 Thess 5:8.

759. WA 18,737,35-738,29. Concerning this passage, modern exegesis will give Jerome and Erasmus right that what Israel has received from the Lord's hand, after all was punishment for sins. The opinions may vary, however, if this change of God's attitude was preceded or not by any change of Israel's.

760. WA 7,142,31-38.

761. *De libero arbitrio* IIIb8.

762. WA 18,750,5-9.

763. WA 18,749,9-11.

764. WA 18,749,24; 750,21.

765. "Nihil hoc loco non solum posse, sed debere accipi non pro modico, sed pro eo, quod vocabulum natura significat, faciemus autem hoc ultra illud invictum argumentum, quo iam vicimus, scilicet esse vocabula naturali significationis usu servanda, nisi contrarium fuerit demonstrantum, quod Diatribe neque fecit, neque potest facere." WA 18,750,27-31.

766. WA 18,750,31-37.

767. "Deinde ipsa sermonis consequentia idem extorquet, . . ." WA 18,750,38.

768. WA 18,750,39-751,10.

769. "Stat igitur, Nihil hoc loco, proprie debere, accipi, ut natura fert vocabuli." WA 18,751,11.

770. That this is the main purpose of *De libero arbitrio* is somewhat obscured by the fact that Erasmus puts a lengthy discussion of other biblical passages before his refutation of *Assertio*.

771. WA 18,755,21-37. McSorley, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen*, 267, contends that this results in a misinterpretation of Erasmus.

772. "Hic finem ponemus defendendis nostris a Diatribe confutatis, ne liber crescat in immodicum." WA 18,755,18.

773. P. 21 above. It is therefore wrong when, e.g., Aizawa, *Shūkyōkaikaku to hyumanizumu*, 152, maintains the center of Luther's doctrine of enslaved will is his concept of God. Luther does not work with abstract concepts in the way such a statement indicates. Aizawa's conclusion is, however, not surprising, as he consistently excludes the exegetical aspect of *De servo arbitrio* from his field of vision.

774. Generally speaking, theology has for at least 200 years had a different view. According to this view, exegesis might be the underpinning of theology. The task of theology is, however, only completed through a systematic sifting of the results of (historical) exegesis. On this difference, see further chapter nine.

775. "Veritate victus et disputatione provocatus ac compulsus, sic sensi et scripsi." WA 18,756,8.

776. Discussing Luther's view of the unity of the Scripture, Steck, *Lehre und Kirche bei Luther*, 160-61, thus remarks: "Die geschichtlich zu begreifende Mannigfaltigkeit der Bibel gefährdet [according to Luther] deren Einheit nicht. Ja, er kann irh sehr viel gerechter werden, als die Exegese vor ihm. Er entdeckt sie gleichsam, indem sie ihm zufällt, während er nach der sachlichen Einheit des biblischen Zeugnisses fragt und sucht."

777. WA 18,750,27-31.

778. A critical presentation of this aspect of Luther's view of language is Karl Löwith, "Die Sprache als Vermittler von Mensch und Welt," in W. Schneemelcher, ed., *Das Problem der Sprache in Theologie und Kirche: Referate von Evangelischen Theologentag* (Berlin, 1959), 36-54, here pp. 52ff. Cf. my critique of Löwith in "Language and Reality," 121, note 158.

779. See chapter 6c above.

780. Chapters 5g and 6e.

781. It is important to notice that in this context he does not deal with Rom 9-11.

782. "Revelatur (inquit) ira Dei de coelo super omnem impietatem et inuistitiam hominum, qui veritatem Dei in iustitia Dei detinent." WA 18,757,12-13.

783. WA 18,757,21-35.

784. "Sed frivola et vana sint haec, nisi ipsi disputatio Pauli ea cogat et evincat. Paulo enim ante dixerat: Euangelium virtus Dei est in salutem omni credenti, Iudaeo primum et Graeco." WA 18,757,35-37.

785. WA 18,757,38-758,13.

786. "Aloqui disputatio Pauli nihil valet. Si autem valet, nullum relinquit medium partitio sua," WA 18,758,17-18. According to Lohse, "Erasmus von

Rotterdam: eine Alternative zur Reformation?" in Pesch, *Humanismus und Reformation*, 63-64, it is one of the main characteristics of the theology of Erasmus that this dichotomy is lost.

787. "Consentit cum hoc conclusione res ipsa et experientia." WA 18,758,37.

788. Luther also uses this argument WA 18,698,3-5.

789. WA 18,758,37-759,18.

790. "Sed ipsummet Paulum sui interpretem audiamus." WA 18,760,17.

791. "Causati enim sumus, Iudaeos et Graecos omnes sub peccato esse." WA 18,760,19.

792. WA 18,760,20-23.

793. WA 18,761,13.

794. WA 18,761,18.

795. WA 18,762,15-26.

796. WA 18,762,27-763,31.

797. "Ex operibus legis non iustificatur ulla caro coram illo." WA 18,763,32-33.

798. WA 18,763,33-764,12.

799. This was the view of Erasmus, and the target of Luther's criticism already in the letter referred to in note 29 above.

800. WA 18,764,15-22.

801. All who do the works of the law, i.e., everything written in the book of the law, are under a curse. WA 18,765,5-11.

802. WA 18,764,22-34.

803. WA 18,766,8.

804. WA 18,766,8-19.

805. It goes without saying that the experience of sinful man to Luther never can be an independent or primary source of cognition. As an exegetical argument among other arguments, however, it is not unimportant.

806. One might ask if experience to Luther confirms that Paul (or, generally speaking, the Bible) is right, or if it confirms that Luther's interpretation of Paul is right. I would argue that this distinction to Luther is an irrelevant one, and the reason

is just this view of the actuality of Scriptural authority. Luther is not primarily interested in what Paul meant, but in what his writings mean as the word of God today, and it is this actual meaning of the Bible he tries to bring forth in his exegesis.

807. "Begründet der neutestamentliche Kanon die Einheit der Kirche?" *EvTh* 11 (1951/52): 12-21 (=same, *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen*, vol. 1, [Göttingen, 1960], 214-23). Käsemann's answer is no. Rather then the unity of the church, the biblical canon gives grounds for the multiplicity of denominations.

808. To understand Luther's view of the unity of the Bible, it is important to keep in mind that to him, this is as much a doctrine of the exegetical subject, the reader, as it is of the exegetical object. The unity of the Scripture is not something the reader is supposed to prove from different texts, but an expectation which is the precondition for sound exegesis as much as it is the result of it. As the work of the Spirit, the Scripture brings a clear and coherent message. A reader who do not have the *adfectus* of the same Spirit, however, will never grasp it.

809. "Per contentionem procedit et gratiam adversus opera iactat," WA 18,771,19-20.

810. "Sine lege iustitia Dei manifestatur." WA 18,767,19-768,9.

811. This distinction is closely related to Luther's description of his evangelical breakthrough. See WA 54,179-187, particularly pp. 185-86, and cf. p. 127 below.

812. WA 18,768,36-769,11.

813. WA 18,769,12.

814. Luther's expression is "liberi arbitrii Conator" (WA 18,769,13), which probably sounds as strange in Latin as it does in English.

815. Luther is probably inter alia thinking of his own experiences in the monastery.

816. WA 18,769,13-23.

817. WA 18,771,34-772,35.

818. According to Boyle, "Stoic Luther," Luther's tendency to focus on the biblical dichotomies is due to his epistemological demand for absolute certainty, and is thus "classically Stoic" (ibid., 74). She even contends that Luther through this Stoicism "promoted . . . the Hellenization of dogma" (ibid., 92). Whereas it is not difficult to agree with her that Luther's relation to Renaissance Stoicism needs further investigation, she in this respect tends to make things too complicated. The great promoter of antithetical thinking within the Church is undoubtedly Paul, who in this respect is a much more important vehicle for Stoic dualism than is Luther (ibid., 83). If one, as Boyle does, accept the fact of influence from Stoicism already in the New

Testament, it is a mere contradiction to speak of a recognition or renewal of its doctrines as an Hellenization of an allegedly pure and genuine Christianity.

819. WA 18,773,31-774,12.

820. WA 18,774,13-16.

821. Accepting the exegetical foundation for this part of *De servo arbitrio* is also a Roman-Catholic scholar like McSorley: "Dieser Abschnitt [WA 18,756-783] . . . enthält wenig, was ein katholischer Theologe nicht akzeptieren könnte" (*Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen*, 325).

822. WA 18,776,21; 779,11; 782,28. On works and grace in Luther's understanding of Jn, see Loewenich, *Luther und das johanneische Christentum*, 24-26.

823. WA 18,776,4-777,20.

824. WA 18,776,20.

825. "Nicodmus scilicet vir est, in quo nihil queas desiderare, quod liberum arbitrium valeat." WA 18,778,17-18.

826. WA 18,778,18-779,10.

827. WA 18,781,29-30.

828. See p. 95 above.

829. WA 18,782,12-13.

830. WA 18,782,13-20.

831. "Hoc exemplo, ut liberum arbitrium subsistat, quicquid in scripturis in homines impios dicitur, per synecdochen torqueas ad partem hominis brutalem, ut salva sit pars rationalis et vere humana." WA 18,780,35-38 (to Jn 3:36).

832. WA 18,779,21-23.

833. WA 18,779,28-30.

834. "Si non concedis eas per contetionem loqui, iam scripturas enervas, ut nihil efficiant nec Christum necessarium probent, ac sic, dum liberum arbitrium statuis, Christum evacuas et totam scripturam pessundas." WA 18,779,30-32. On the role of antitheses and contradictions in Luther's thought, see further Anderson, *Words and Word*, 262-63.

835. For instance by using Nicodemus as an example of the attitude of free will.

836. Referring to his own fight with human weakness in the monastery, Luther adds that he do not even want free will. He definitely prefers to rely on the mercy of God. WA 18,783,17-39.

837. He returns to it, however, in the final summary.

838. WA 18,786,24.37-39. To this Luther adds his appreciation of Erasmus' choice of subject for the debate.

839. Luther's own words are in fact even more cautious: "Ego vero nihil habeo et sum, nisi quod Christianum esse me prope glorier." WA 18,786,25 (prope = almost).

840. "Huic nostrae cuassae ut par esses, nondum voluit nec dedit Deus." WA 18,786,40.

841. Luther prays that this insight be given to Erasmus as well: "Dominus vero, cuius est haec caussa, illuminet te et faciat vasculum in honorem et gloriam." WA 18,787,13-14.

842. "CONTULI, penes alios esto iudicium." *De libero arbitrio* IV17.

843. "I have in this book NOT CONFERRED, BUT HAVE ASSERTED AND DO ASSERT, and I am unwilling to submit the matter to anyone's judgment, but counsel everyone to yield assent." WA 18,787,11-13.

844. "Si autem id movet, quod difficile sit clementiam et aequitatem Dei tueri, ut qui damnet immeritos," WA 18,784,1-2. The history of the interpretation of *De servo arbitrio* shows that Luther is quite right; this question has "moved" quite a number of its readers.

845. This was Luther's position already in the Lecture on Romans, WA 56,182,17.

846. WA 18,784,2-785,38.

847. To the terminology, see WA 18,785,26ff.

848. Original sin is, however, not a main concept in *De servo arbitrio*.

849. WA 18,786,4-20.

850. WA 18,606,11.

851. WA 18,603,11.

852. WA 18,787,12.

853. Cf. the summary of Luther's view of the Scripture in Priscilla Hayden-Roy, "Hermeneutica gloria vs. hermeneutica crucis: Sebastian Franck and Martin Luther on the Clarity of Scripture," *ARG* 81 (1990): 50-68, here p. 66: "Scripture is

clear because its object, Christ, has been revealed, and because it follows the rules of conventional language."

854. E.g., pp. 78, 96 above.

855. One of the limitations of the subsequent discussion is that the focus will still mainly be on Luther's polemical writings. The Eucharist controversy is treated most extensively; the reason is that this controversy, like that on free will, highlights the underlying exegetical principles.

856. *Tomus primus omnium operum*, Wittenberg 1545.

857. The preface is found in WA 54,179-187.

858. As underlined by Rolf Schäfer, "Zur Datierung von Luthers reformatorischer Erkenntnis," *ZThK* 66 (1969): 151-70 [=Bernhard Lohse, ed., *Der Durchbruch der reformatorischen Erkenntnis bei Luther: Neuere Untersuchungen*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für europäische Geschichte Mainz (Stuttgart, 1988), 134-153], the purpose of the preface is to give the background of the writings in *Tomus primus*. It is thus not Luther's autobiography, even if the scholars often have treated it as if it were. The most important contributions to this debate are collected in Bernhard Lohse, ed., *Der Durchbruch der reformatorischen Erkenntnis bei Luther*, Wege der Forschung (Darmstadt, 1968), and Lohse, *Der Durchbruch der reformatorischen Erkenntnis bei Luther: Neuere Untersuchungen*.

859. Luther's writings from before 1517 were not included in *Tomus primus*. These writings, which mainly consist of the manuscripts of Luther's lectures, were not published during the sixteenth century.

860. Schäfer, ibid., 162-64, defends the accuracy.

861. For a similar interpretation of the 1545 preface, see Runia, "The Hermeneutics of the Reformers," 124-25.

862. "Miro certe ardore captus fueram cognoscendi Pauli in epistola ad Rom . . . : Iusitia Dei revelatur in illo," WA 54,185,15-17.

863. WA 54,186,3-8.

864. WA 54,186,9-13.

865. Concerning the objection that Luther only discovered what had always been known, cf. Bernhard Lohse, "Von Luther bis zum Konkordienbuch," in Carl Andresen, ed., *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte* vol. 2 (Göttingen, 1988), 1-164, here p. 21: "Tatsächlich kann Luthers Deutung [of Rom 1:17] nicht als grundsätzlich neu betrachtet werden. Freilich ist doch in der systematischen Theologie vor Luther dieser exegetischen Bedeutung von Röm 1,17 kaum Rechnung getragen worden."

866. That this is the task of the Scripture was underlined by Luther already in *Dictata*, cf. WA 3,397,9-17. See further Ebeling, "Die Anfänge von Luthers Hermeneutik," 3.

867. "Hic me prorsus renatum esse sensi, et apertis portis in ipsam paradisum intrasse" (WA 54,186,8).

868. Luther's expressions are opus, virtus, sapientia, fortitudo, salus, gloria Dei (WA 54,186,13).

869. "Donec miserente Deo meditabundus dies et noctes connexionem verborum attenderem," WA 54,186,3.

870. For a summary of the debate with what seems as a reasonable conclusion, see Lohse, "Von Luther bis zum Konkordienbuch," 17-21.

871. "Dominus et magister noster Iesus Christus dicendo 'Penitentiam agite &c.' omnem vitam fidelium penitentiam esse voluit," WA 1,233,10. Cf. Luther's account of how this understanding of repentance was based on his study of the word "μετάνοια," WA 1,525,24-526,9.

872. WA 1,353-374.

873. WA 1,356,16.

874. WA 1,355,30-356,2. Luther refers to Rom 3:21; 5:20; 7:9; 8:2.

875. "Apostolus Gala. 3. Qui sunt ex operibus Legis, sub maledicto sunt." WA 1,356,27.

876. Ecclesiastical authorities criticized the practice of indulgences before and independent of Luther. See Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents*, 18.

877. Cajetan's theology and his discussion with Luther is presented in Gerhard Hennig, *Cajetan und Luther: Ein historischer Beitrag zur Begegnung von Thomismus und Reformation*, Arbeiten zur Theologie II,7 (Stuttgart, 1966). For Luther's own account of the meeting with Cajetan, see *Acta Augustana*, WA 2,6-26.

878. WA 2,17,24.

879. The bull is printed in Henricus Denzinger and Adolfus Schönmetzer, eds., *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Freiburg, 1976), 301 (nos. 1025-27). This bull was the foundation of the Church's teaching on indulgences.

880. WA 2,11,12.

881. ". . . verum non habuisse eam [the bull] apud me satis authoritatis, cum aliis multis tum ea maxima causa, quod scripturis sanctis abutitur et verba . . . audacius torquet in alienum sensum, quem suo loco non habent, immo contrarium habent." WA 2,8,4-8.

882. WA 2,8,10-11. This view of the authority of the pope Cajetan had presented already in 1511 (Hennig, *Cajetan und Luther*, 13-29). When he from Luther demands submission under the pope, it has thus nothing to do with "Hilflosigkeit oder stumpfer Rechthaberei;" his demand is founded on a carefully reasoned ecclesiology (ibid., 69). The case that Luther's 95 theses violated papal authority was also raised by other early critics of Luther; see Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents*, 26-30. Part of the reason this turned out the be the central issue in Luther's conflict with the Church was, according to Bagchi, ibid., 43-44, that this was the only point where Luther in 1518 could possibly be accused of being a heretic.

883. In the same way, to meet an opponent that applied the authority of the Scripture against the pope was obviously something Cajetan did not expect.

884. WA 2,10,12-14, reference to Gal 2:14. On the importance of this passage in Luther's critique of papal authority, see Inge Lønning, "Paulus und Petrus: Gal 2,11ff als kontroverstheologisches Fundamentalproblem," *StTh* 24 (1970): 1-69, here pp. 15-29.

885. WA 2,11,3, reference to Gal 1:8. "Aus der Frage des Ablasses ist also im Handumdrehen die Frage der kirchliche Autorität geworden" (Hennig, *Cajetan und Luther*, 68).

886. To Cajetan, it was just as decisive that Luther would not unconditionally accept papal authority.

887. ". . . cum viderem, eum esse firmatum in proposito, nec vellet audire scripturas, ego quoque firmassem propositum non revocandi, abii sine spe redeundi," WA 2,16,25-27.

888. WA 2,18,18-21. The importance of this principle is clearly recognized by Hennig, *Cajetan und Luther*, 72: "Damit richtet Luther gegenüber der Papalautorität eine Instanz auf, die ihr übergeordnet und mit der sie — um sich selbst nicht den Boden unter den Füßen zu entziehen — nicht in Konflikt kommen sollte: das Wort."

889. For the minutes from the debate, see WA 2,254-383; for Luther's summary, see WAB 1,420-24. The arguments concerning the question of the primacy of the pope are presented in Kurt-Victor Selge, "Die Leipziger Disputation zwischen Luther und Eck," *ZKG* 86 (1975): 26-40.

890. Mt 16:18 and Jn 21:25.

891. Concerning the "errores Iohannis Hus" that was condemned at Constance, see Denzinger and Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 322-25 (nos. 1201-1230).

892. WAB 1,422,58-77.

893. In Leipzig, Luther tried to avoid the conclusion that the Council of Constance actually was wrong, and merely stated that a Council might err. This

distinction was, however, untenable. See Selge, "Die Leipziger Disputation," 36-37.

894. WA 6,202-276.

895. WA 6,404-469.

896. WA 6,497-573.

897. WA 7,49-73.

898. WA 6,568,13.

899. On confirmation: WA 6,549,20-550,20; on ordination: WA 6,560,20-22.

900. WA 6,550,27.

901. WA 6,568,12.

902. WA 6,550,10.

903. In defending his teachings against the condemnation of the pope in *Assertio omnium articulorum*, Luther in the introduction in unambiguous words states the exegetical foundation of theology: "Sint ergo Christianorum prima principia non nisi verba divina, omnium autem hominum verba conclusiones eductae et rursus illuc reducendae et probandae." This was what the Fathers did, "quo exemplo utique docent, verba divina esse apertiora et certiora omnium hominum" (WA 7,98,4-12). For a discussion of Luther's view of the Scripture in *Assertio*, see Beutel, *In dem Anfang war das Wort*, 244-46. The same attitude also determines Luther's famous answer in Worms, WA 7,834,21, cf. ibid., 838,4-7.

904. This did not put and end to his debate with Rome, and Luther's probably most profound analyses of Scholasticism are to be found in his late Christological disputations. For a discussion of these works, see Reijo Työrinoja, "Proprietas verbi: Luther's Conception of Philosophical and Theological Language in the Disputation Verbum caro factum est, 1539," in Heikki Kirjavainen, ed., *Faith, Will, and Grammar: Some Themes of Intensional Logic and Semantics in Medieval and Reformation Thought*, Publications of Luther-Agricola-Society B 15 (Helsinki, 1986), 141-78; Työrinoja, "Nova vocabula et nova lingua: Luther's Conception of Doctrinal Formulas," in Mannermaa, *Thesaurus Lutheri*, 222-36; and White, "Luther's View of Language." Both come to a similar conclusion: Because one cannot legitimately apply *forma syllogistica* in theology, one must "in verbo manere et loqui" (Työrinoja, "Proprietas verbi," 169-70).

905. For a presentation of the development in Wittenberg when Luther was at Wartburg, see, e.g., Brecht, *Ordnung und Abgrenzung der Reformation*, 34-53.

906. WA 10 III,1-64.

907. WA 10 III,9,9.

908. WA 10 III,11,10-11.

909. WA 10 III,18,9.

910. The argument that one should not make rules and laws of the Gospel Luther later repeated against the revolting peasants, WA 18,326,14-15.

911. Concerning the terminology, see Adolf Laube, "Radicalism as a Research Problem in the History of Early Reformation," in Hans J. Hillerbrand, *Radical Tendencies in the Reformation: Divergent Perspectives*, Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies IX (Kirksville, 1988), 9-24. For a discussion of Karlstadt, who was the leader of the oppositon in Wittenberg, in this context, see Sigrid Looß, "Radical Views of the Early Andreas Karlstadt (1520-1525)," in Hillerbrand, ibid., 43-53.

912. Luther's most important treatment of this question is in *Wider die himmlischen Propheten, von den Bildern und Sakrament*, printed in January 1525 (WA 18,62-214).

913. WA 18,70,1-36.

914. 1 Tim 1:9 and Gal 5:3 (WA 18,76,4-13; 77,28-31).

915. Concering the Sabbath, Luther refers to Col 2:16-17 and Gal 4:10-11 (WA 18,77,10-17).

916. WA 18,79,8-24. On the foundation for Luther's positive evaluation of images, which is closely related to his view of the persuasive power of figural speech, see Anderson, *Words and Word*, 295-302.

917. Luther does, however, not say that a literal observance necessarily is wrong; he is aware that there are situations when images should be removed. What he protests against, is Karlstadt's view that it is a sin to let them be even if they are not worshipped. See WA 18,74,21-75,4.

918. A good summary of his view of a Christian interpretation of the Old Testament Luther gives in his introduction to *Über das erste Buch Mose* from 1527, WA 24,1-16.

919. This view of the Lord's Supper was presented in a letter by the Dutch Humanist Hendricxz Hoen from 1522, published by Zwingli in 1525, see CR 91,512-518. Karlstadt may or may not be directly dependent on Hoen; it is, however, no doubt that Zwingli was (CR 92,738,3-739,1 [*Amica exegesis*, 1527]). Luther knew (and rejected) Hoen's opinion as early as 1523.

920. WA 15,394,12-15 (*Ein Brief an die Christen in Straßburg wider den Schwärmergeist*, 1524).

921. Ibid., 394,19-20: "Aber ich byn gefangen, kan nicht eraus, der text ist zu gewaltig da und will sich mit worten nit lassen aus dem synn reyssen." As maintained

by Hilgenfeld, *Mittelalterlich-traditionelle Elemente*, 10-11, the exegetical foundation of Luther's doctrine of the Eucharist is usually neglected by the scholars. Exceptions are, however, Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Nattverd og messe: En studie i Luthers teologi* (Oslo, 1957) (=*Abendmahl und Messe: Die Kritik Luthers am Messopfer* [Berlin and Hamburg, 1969]), 32-42, and Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit*, 181ff. See also Susi Hausamman, "Realpräsenz in Luthers Abendmahlslehre," in Luise Abramowski and J. F. Gerhard Goeters, eds., *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie der Reformation: Festschrift für Ernst Bizer* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969), 157-73, particularly p. 166.

Luther's discussions of the Eucharist are related to five different versions of the words of institution: Mt 26:26-29; Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:16-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26 and *Canon missae* (quoted in Hilgenfeld, *Mittelalterlich-traditionelle Elemente*, 17). Hilgenfeld examines Luther's relation to the different versions, ibid., 13-41, and his understanding of the clarity of the words of the Eucharist, ibid., 174-82.

922. For a presentation of the arguments both of Luther and his opponents in the Eucharist controversy, see David C. Steinmetz, "Scripture and the Lord's Supper in Luther's Theology," *Interpretation* 37 (1983): 253-65.

923. *Dialogus oder ein gesprechbüchlin von dem grewlichen unnd abgöttischen mißbrauch, des hochwirdigen sacraments Jesu Christi* (1524), Bl.b 4, quoted in WA 18,153.

924. WA 18,154,12-155,7.

925. ". . . zwingt die art und natürliche folge der wort, das er von dem brot sage, das er ynn die hand nam . . ." WA 18,159,13.

926. "Wo die heilige schrifft ettwas gründet zu gleuben, da soll man nicht weichen von den worten, wie sie lautten, noch von der ordnunge, wie sie da stehet, Es zwinge denn eyn ausgedruckter artickel des glaubens, die wort anders zu deutten odder zu ordenen." WA 18,147,23-26.

927. See his letter to Matthäus Alber, dated 16 November 1524, CR 90,335-354. Zwingli published this letter in 1525 as the beginning of his debate with Luther. Zwingli was in his understanding of Jn 6 probably dependent on Erasmus. See Stefan Niklaus Bosshard, *Zwingli-Erasmus-Cajetan: Die Eucharistie als Zeichen der Einheit* (Wiesbaden, 1978), 48f.

928. WA 26,261-509. In addition to discussing Zwingli, Luther in this book also discusses the interpretations of the Eucharist of John Oecolampad, John Wyclif and others. See also *Daß diese Wort Christi "Das ist mein Leib" noch fest stehen, wider die Schwärmgeister* (1527), WA 23,64-283. The debate with Zwingli resembles the debate with Erasmus in so far as Zwingli considers it as "eine gelehrte Disputation," whereas Luthers sees it as "verflochten in den Kampf zwischen Christus und dem Teufel." See Gäbler, "Luthers Beziehungen zu den Schweizern und Oberdeutschen von 1526 bis 1530/31," in Junghans, *Leben und Werk Martin Luthers*, vol. I, 480-496, here p. 487.

929. WA 23,169,9-170,9. This view of Jn 6 was fundamental to Luther already in *De captivitate Babylonica*, see WA 6,499,22-500,11; 502,7-17.

930. To Luther, it is an indication the spiritualistic view of the Lord's Supper is untenable that its adherents disagree concerning the interpretation of the text, as, e.g., Zwingli rejects Karlstadt's understanding of τοῦτο. As was the case with Erasmus, their inherent inconsistencies show that they differ from the evidence of truth. See WA 26,262,26-263,5.

931. CR 90,801,19-28 (*De vera et falsa religione Commentarius*, 1525). On the background of Zwingli's symbolic interpretation, see Hanns Rückert, "Das Eindringen der Tropus-Lehre in die schweizerische Lehre vom Abendmahl," in Rückert, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 146-64 (=*ARG* 37 [1940]: 199-221).

932. Ibid., 759,18-21.

933. Cf. Hilgenfeld, *Mittelalterlich-traditionelle Elemente*, 71: "Nach Luther bezeichnet ein <est> stets das Wesen einer Sache."

934. WA 26,275,33-276,24. Because Luther in his insistence on unambiguity thus defends the identity of meaning and word, he considers a metaphorical word as a new word. For a presentation and a criticism of this aspect of Luther's view of language, see Waswo, *Language and Meaning*, 245-49; for its relation to Luther's understanding of *claritas Scripturae*, see Hilgenfeld, *Mittelalterlich-traditionelle Elemente*, 177-78. Anderson, *Words and Word*, 366-67, quotes support for Luther's view from Horace, Aristotle and Quintilian.

935. WA 26,278,34-279,7. On Luther's arguments for the rejection of a tropological interpretation of the words of institution in relation to the tradition, see Hilgenfeld, *Mittelalterlich-traditionelle Elemente*, 64-66.

936. WA 26,279,14-280,3. The bread of the Lord's Supper is thus both bread and the body of Christ; it is "bodybread" (WA 26,445,11). This way of speaking is found in all languages, Luther asserts: "Wo zwey unterschiedliche wesen ynn ein wesen komen, da fasset sie auch solche zwey wesen in einerley rede" (WA 26,443,14-16). Whereas the point of "tropus odder Metaphora" is "gleichnis" (WA 26,273,22-24), the point of this way of speaking (synecdoche) is "die einickeit beider wesens" (WA 26,443,16). As underlined by Anderson, *Words and Word*, 362-63, Luther in this way sharply distinguishes between trope and synecdoche. An example of the former is "Christ is the true vine," whereas the most important example of the latter always is the incarnation: God is man and man is God (WA 26,443,17-19). According to Hilgenfeld, *Mittelalterlich-traditionelle Elemente*, 418, synecdoche was not discussed in relation to the Eucharist before Luther.

937. Luther even maintained there was a connection between the exegesis of Erasmus and a spiritualistic view of the Eucharist (WA 18,701,8-10). On Zwingli and Oecolampad as dependent on Erasmus concerning the Eucharist, see Augustijn, *Erasmus von Rotterdam*, 134.

938. As underlined by Ulrich Gäbler, "Luthers Beziehungen zu den Schweizern und Oberdeutschen," 482, "eine unsichtbare Leiblichkeit ist für Zwingli schlechterdings Unsinn." To Luther, however, "Unsinn" in this sense of the word is nothing but arbitrary prejudice.

939. WA 26,280,22-281,35.

940. An example of a different sort of presence is when Christ went through closed doors (Jn 20:19), WA 26,327,33-329,26.

941. ". . . nicht ynn der selbigen gestalt oder weise, sondern ynn dem selbigen wesen und natur." WA 26,299,19.

942. WA 26,331,18-31.

943. This is underlined by Anderson, *Words and Word*, 351.

944. WA 26,282,10-285,24.

945. Cf. Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit*, 229: "Luthers Lehrstreit 'wider die Schwarmgeister' erweist sich als ein Streit um die Hl.Schrift und darin wesentlich als ein Streit um die Geltung der natürlichen Sprache." For a brief presentation of how Luther in *Von Abendmahl Christi* argues solely from "the common sense of a grammarian," see also Hayden-Roy, "Hermeneutica gloria vs. hermeneutica crucis," 65-66.

946. The doctrine of consubstantiation is not Luther's, but originated in the 1550's. See Lohse, "Von Luther bis zum Konkordienbuch," 58.

947. Cf. Waswo, *Language and Meaning*, 242: "The real body and blood of Christ are present in the equally real bread and wine of the Lord's Supper . . . simply because the words of institution say they are."

948. Cf. in this connection Luther's emphasis on the word as "machtwort" (WA 26,283,4). See further Hilgenfeld, *Mittelalterlich-traditionelle Elemente*, 129-33.

949. One of the most striking evidences of Luther's respect for the Bible is what he wrote only a couple of days before he died: "Nobody will understand Virgil in *Bucolica* and *Georgica* if he has not been shepherd or farmer for five years. I think nobody understands Cicero's Letters if he has not been engaged in public administration for forty years in an excellent state. And nobody shall he think he has learned to know the holy writers sufficiently if he has not governed churches for hundred years together with prophets. How great is the miracle of John the Baptist, of Christ, of the apostles. Do not interfere with the divine *Aeneid*, but bow down and honor the footprints. We are beggars; that is true" (WA 48,241). See Oswald Bayer, "Vom Wunderwerk, Gottes Wort recht zu verstehen: Luthers Letzter Zettel," *KuD* 37 (1991): 258-279.

950. Cf. Goldingay, "Luther and the Bible," 35: "At the crucial points his opponents seemed to refuse to interpret Scripture in what he saw as the straightforward way."

951. There is in Luther's writings a conspicuous lack of interest in the possible philosophical premises of his opponents' divergent opinions. To Luther, it seems to suffice to be aware that their exegesis reveals that their spirit is not that of the Bible; any further investigation concerning their ideological whereabouts does not seem to interest him. He does not reject Zwingli because the latter is a Platonist; he rejects him because he falsely interprets the biblical passages of the Eucharist.

952. Cf. his understanding of Gen 1:28 in, e.g., *De homine*.

953. One is thus certainly justified in concluding that "the demise of rhetoric" is due to the fact that "rhetoric did not meet the criteria promulgated by scientific rationalism" (David S. Cunningham, "Theology as Rhetoric," *Theological Studies* 52 [1991]: 407-430, here p. 416). On the dissolution of rhetoric, see further Jens, "Rhetorik," 442-44.

954. Cf. the evaluation of the modern project in Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven and London, 1974), 5: "The direction of interpretation now became the reverse of earlier days. Do the stories and whatever concepts may be drawn from them describe what we apprehend as the real world?" This necessarily leads to a much higher evaluation of the reader than what was the case in earlier hermeneutics.

955. For a theological defence of the anti-rhetorical view "daß der moderne Historiker sich gezwungen sieht, auch die Quellen der Vergangenheit in das Licht der der neuen Selbstverständlichkeiten zu rücken, . . . so, daß er den Tatsachengehalt des Bezeugten an diesen neuen Selbstverständlichkeiten prüft," see Gerhard Ebeling, "Die Bedeutung der historisch-kritischen Methode für die protestantische Theologie und Kirche," in Ebeling, *Wort und Glaube* (Tübingen, 1960), 1-49 (= *ZThK* 47 [1950]: 1-46), here p. 34.

956. According to Han Chul-Ha, "A Critical Evaluation of Western Theology: Towards a Reappraisal of the Biblical Faith," in Ro and Eshenaur (eds.), *The Bible & Theology in Asian Contexts,* 31-48, ". . . liberal modern theological formulations . . . adopt a wrong methodology from the start by not taking seriously the literal teaching of the Scripture" (p. 35). The foundation of this modern view of the Bible was laid by Baruch Spinoza, Richard Simon and the English Deists during the seventeenth century. The integration of a critical hermeneutics in a theology that tried to retain a positive attitude toward faith and church, was, however, mainly the work of Johann Salomo Semler (1725-91). Thus furnishing Protestantism with a theology that seemed to get the best from two worlds, he gave the framework within which theology still works. For an overview of the critical exegesis of the seventeenth century see Klaus Scholder, *Ursprünge und Probleme der Bibelkritik im 17. Jahrhundert*, FGLP 10,34 (Munich, 1966); for a presentation of Semler's work, see Werner Georg Kümmel, *Das Neue*

Testament: Geschichte der Erforschung seiner Probleme (Munich, 1970), 73-81; and Gottfried Hornig, *Die Anfänge der historisch-kritischen Theologie: Johann Salomo Semlers Schriftverständnis und seine Stellung zu Luther*, Forschungen zur Systematischen Theologie und Religionsphilosophie 8 (Göttingen, 1961).

957. Friedrich Beißer, "Irrwege und Wege der historisch-kritischen Bibelwissenschaft," *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 15 [1973]: 192-214, speaks of "der unaufgehobene Widerspruch zwischen . . . exegetischen und dogmatischen Disziplinen" (p. 192).

958. Beißer, ibid., 203, speaks of "eine grundsätzliche Zweigleisigkeit" already by Semler. The originator of systematic theology as an independent theological discipline, is, however, Semler's pupil Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), whose *Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums* (1811) has had a profound influence on the modern understanding of the disciplines of theology. On the importance of experience and "Gegenwartsbezug" in Schleiermacher's theology, see, e.g., Gottfried Hornig, "Lehre und Bekenntnis im Protestantismus," in Carl Andresen, ed., *Handbuch der Dogmen und Theologiegeschichte* vol. 3 (Göttingen, 1988), 71-220, here pp. 153-55. Also Colin E. Gunton, "Using and Being Used: Scripture and Systematic Theology," *Theology Today* 47 (1990): 248-59, here p. 252, underlines that theology to Schleiermacher and his successors always has to prove its relevance.

Concerning the English-speaking Protestant community, one may argue that an answer to the modern challenge that resembles Schleiermacher's, is represented by the Wesleyan tradition. See, e.g., Donald W. Dayton, "The Use of Scripture in the Wesleyan Tradition," in Robert K. Johnston, ed., *The Use of the Bible in Theology: Evangelical Options* (Atlanta, 1985), 121-36.

959. Cf. Beißer, "Irrwege und Wege der historisch-kritischen Bibelwissenschaft," 201: "Sie [the Bible] ist nicht als solche heilige Gottesoffenbarung, sondern sie ist nur *indirekter* Ausdruck seiner ewigen Wahrheit. Deshalb *muß* zwischen Buch und Wahrheit ein grundsätzlicher Unterschied bestehen" (on Semler). The investigation of "was damals eigentlich vor sich ging" is then "auf anderer Ebene, als die persönliche Erfahrung der Wahrheit," (ibid., 202).

960. Cf. Brevard S. Childs, "The Sensus Literalis of Scripture: An Ancient and Modern Problem," in Herbert Donner, Robert Hanhart and Rudolf Smend (eds.), *Beiträge zur Alttestamentlichen Theologie: Festschrift für Walter Zimmerli zum 70. Geburtstag* (Göttingen, 1977), 80-93, here p. 89: "The task of the exegesis lay in working out the true historical reference since revelation no longer consisted in the words, but exclusively in the subject matter to which the words referred. . . . Therefore, the aim of the interpreter was to reconstruct the original occasion of historical reference on the basis of which the truth of the biblical text could be determined." Gunton, "Using and Being Used:", 249, thus speaks of "a technocratic view of texts . . . in which they are couched as freely disposable artifacts."

961. For a defence of this dichotomy from a modern exegete's point of view, see, e.g., Edvin Larsson, "Notwendigkeit und Grenze der historisch-kritischen

Methode," in Kraft, *Schrift und Auslegung*, 113-27, here pp. 116 and 124. According to Childs, "The Sensus Literalis of Scripture," 91, this project has resulted "in a vain effort to move the historically conditioned text of the Bible from its reconstructed original, historical setting into a relationship to the modern world."

962. Luther did not say that everybody understands the Bible; Erasmus, e.g., did not. He did say, however, that when one understands, this understanding is dependent on nothing but the text itself.

963. Childs, "The Sensus Literalis of Scripture," 91, speaks of "an almost insurmountable gap . . . between the historical sense of the text . . . and . . . its present relevance." This is a main point also in Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, and in Goldingay, "Luther and the Bible," 56-58. See also the observations quoted in note 169 above.

964. Cf., e.g., the diagnosis and suggested treatment in Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Die Krise des Schriftprinzips," in same, *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Göttingen, 1967), 11-21.

965. Cf., e.g., the contributions in Norman L. Geisler, ed., *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids, 1979).

966. As a representative of this attitude, see, e.g., Gerhard Ebeling, "Die Bedeutung der historisch-kritischen Methode."

967. On the attempts to present Luther as an advocate of the modern, critical attitude to the Bible, see Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift*, 16-18; 45-46.

968. "The Bible and Theology in Asia Today: Declaration of the Sixth Asia Theological Association Theological Consultation," in Ro and Eshenaur, *The Bible & Theology*, 3-20, is therefore undoubtedly right when it p. declares that the modern tendency to understand the Bible "from purely a subjective, relativising perspective" is incompatible with (Luther's) idea that "the Bible speaks with unique clarity."

969. Cf., e.g., the criticism of the deductive, logical and rational character of modern fundamentalism in Gerhard Maier, *Biblische Hermeneutik* (Wuppertal, 1990), 326.

970. An impulse in the opposite direction is, however, represented, e.g., by Gunton, "Using and Being Used," 248, when he suggests that the important question is not how we read the Bible, but how the Bible reads us.

971. One may contend, however, that it seems to be founded on an uncritical evaluation of the achievements of the Enlightenment.

972. This difference is emphasized also by Buchholz, *Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit*, 241-46. He concludes as follows: "Luthers Schriftverständnis und Schriftauslegung wird demnach nicht nur von historisch-kritischer Schriftauslegung

verneint, sondern impliziert selbst ebenfalls eine radikale Verneinung alles dessen, was historisch-kritische Schriftauslegung wesentlich ausmacht. Dies nicht wahrhaben zu wollen, wäre Selbsbetrug" (ibid., 245-46).

973. As an example of the fact that it is still possible to take Luther's attitude seriously, at least as an ideal, cf. "The Bible and Theology in Asia Today," p. 8: "The Bible, not theologians, is to speak in our theology."

974. Cf. the conclusion by Friedrich Beißer, "Kurze Notiz zur Bedeutung Luthers für die gegenwärtige evangelische systematische Theologie," in Peter Manns, ed., *Zur Lage der Lutherforschung heute* (Wiesbaden, 1982), 71-78, here p. 78: "Die entscheidenden Absichten Luthers werden in der gegenwärtigen evangelisch sich nennenden systematischen Theologie nicht mehr aufgenommen. Zwischen Luther und ihr besteht vielmehr weithin ein scharfer Gegensatz. Mit einer solchen Feststellung is noch nicht entschieden, auf welcher Seite das bessere Recht legt. Dies wäre eigens zu prüfen. Wir haben dazu — gerade im Sinne Luthers — vor allem zurückzufragen nach dem Zeugnis der Bibel.

Auf jeden Fall aber muß dieser Abstand zu Luther uns erregen. Auf jeden Fall verdient sein Wort gehört zu werden."

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