Martin Luther’s First Psalm Lectures and the Canonical Shape of the Hebrew Psalter

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Abstract

This dissertation examines thirty-five psalms from Martin Luther’s first professional lecture series (Dictata super Psalterium) and compares them primarily with his most influential forerunner in the faith, Saint Augustine. Its central argument is that the second half of these lectures exhibits a noticeably different character than the first half because of the profound effect that the canonical shape of the Hebrew Psalter had on Luther’s journey from Ps 1 to Ps 150. This is substantiated not only by a comparison of Luther’s work on similar material from different places in the Psalter but also by his integration of the “faithful synagogue,” a phenomenon whose relationship to the final form of the Psalter comes about aggregately from the Asaphite corpus onward. The way that Luther uses (canonically) earlier psalms in his interpretations of later ones deserves a central place in hermeneutical discussions of the Dictata. Far from a systematic treatise or disputation, these lectures are the terrain of an Augustinian monk who grows increasingly dissatisfied with a perceived distance between the Christological exuberance of Augustine and the pastoral “ethos” of the Psalter. It would take Luther’s existential identification with the pulse waves of the sacred assembly throughout Books III–V to provide not only the spiritual relief he was seeking but also a realization of the profound capacity of the literal sense of Scripture to extend across all three advents of Christ as testimony.
Acknowledgments

At times I wonder what the following pages would look like were it not for the attentive involvement of my Doktorvater, Professor Christopher Seitz. His timely and insightful feedback kept my research at an optimum level, and I continue to welcome his influence on my thinking with great appreciation. A debt of gratitude is also owed to Pastor James Kellerman, whose expertise in Latin enriched my translations to a caliber beyond my competence. Lastly, this project would not have happened in the first place without my own “Katharina von Bora,” Kalia, who tirelessly supported her husband’s doctoral ambitions with patience and love. Luther once said that “There is no bond on earth so sweet…as that which occurs in a good marriage.” Kalia has shown me the truth in that. To her this work is dedicated.
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Chapter 1
Setting the Stage

“It is a strange irony that those examples of biblical interpretation in the past which have truly immersed themselves in a specific concrete historical context, such as Luther in Saxony, retain the greatest value as models for the future actualization of the biblical text in a completely different world.” -Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*, 88.

1.1 Introduction

Upon receiving his doctor of theology degree on October 19, 1512, the twenty-eight-year-old Martin Luther turned first to lecture on the one book of the Bible he undoubtedly knew better than any other: the Psalter. Whether it was a requirement for living in the bursae at the University of Erfurt, a remedy for spiritual *Anfechtungen* flaring up as early as 1505, or a part of the solemn rituals of the Augustinian monastery, Luther had already been reciting the psalms fervently for several years before his faculty appointment. By this stage in his life, he had them all memorized.¹

But given such an intense devotion to the Bible in general and to its Psalter in particular, a rather unexpected concession sounded forth among Luther’s opening remarks from the podium as the new incumbent of the Wittenberg *Lectura in Biblia*: “I confess frankly that even to the present day I do not understand many psalms,” he admitted, “and, unless the Lord enlightens me through your help, as I trust He will, I shall not be able to interpret them.”² He had heard the psalms read


² Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 10, *First Lectures on the Psalms I: Psalms 1–75*, ed. Hilton C. Oswald (St. Louis: Concordia, 1974), 8. Hereafter this volume will be cited as “LW 10:(page number).”
aloud along with the notes of Nicholas of Lyra (1270–1349) while eating meals back in Erfurt.

He spent years wearing out the pages of his first Bible as the only book permitted for a new monk other than the order’s rule. He had poured over Saint Augustine’s homilies on the psalms, consulted the latest textual resource from the French humanist Faber Stapulensis (*Quincuplex Psalterium*, 1509), and took scrupulous notes on summaries and superscriptions in preparation for his course. It is even possible that Luther’s mentor and now predecessor, Johann von Staupitz, picked Luther out of several aspiring Augustinian Hermits to be *Lectura in Biblia* because of his aptitude with the biblical text.\(^3\) But in all of this, Luther himself was not yet satisfied.

So it was that, week after week, expounding one psalm after the other in the order of their canonical presentation, Luther sought to provide an interpretation of the Psalter that was edifying for both student and teacher. The class commenced early in the morning on August 16, 1513, and carried on for just over two years until (probably) the fall of 1515.\(^4\) Luther’s methodology in the lecture hall was thoroughly traditional; students were given a copy of the Latin text of the Psalter with wide margins and ample space between the lines for inserting numerous glosses. Quanbeck captures the scene well:

> The lecturer *in biblia* first dictated the glosses to the text; these the student copied between the lines of his edition. In this way almost every word was paraphrased or explained, most frequently by a word or two, occasionally by longer phrases or whole sentences. In addition to the interlinear glosses, more extended comments on especially

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\(^3\) Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 86 and 126.

\(^4\) It would hardly be possible to say anything more definitive than the approximate chronology worked out by Vogelsang long ago: Christmas, 1513—Ps 30; Summer, 1514—Ps 50; Autumn, 1514—Ps 70; Winter, 1514—Ps 84; May, 1515—Ps 108; Easter, 1515—Ps 110; Autumn, 1515—Ps 125 (*Luthers Werke in Auswahl*, ed. Otto Clemen, vol. 5, *Der junge Luther*, ed. Erich Vogelsang [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1955], 40).
difficult or important words or phrases were inserted in the margins. Most of the material dictated by the lecturer was derived from standard helps and commentaries.\(^5\)

The glosses (*glossae*) were twofold in type, then, as some were written between the lines of the text and others were relegated to the margins. Conveying the *glossae*, however, was only the first of two primary responsibilities for Luther. Quanbeck continues:

When the lecturer had completed his glosses on the text, he proceeded to more detailed comments on especially interesting, important, or difficult passages—the so-called *scholia*. Here the lecturer had more freedom. He could choose the passages for extended exposition and could comment at almost any length, provided his supply of helps held out. For here too the aim was to acquaint the student with the contributions of the accepted commentators rather than attempt a personal and creative approach to the text.\(^6\)

In reproducing such material, the student was practically composing his own rich compendium of longstanding psalms commentary, for whether Luther was passing along the *glossae* or the *scholia*, he was expected to rely heavily upon the history of interpretation. The act of glossing a printed text with the exegesis of the past was stock-in-trade in Luther’s day,\(^7\) the massive *Glossa ordinaria* and *Glossa interlinearis* serving as prime examples of the time. Originality, it must be stressed, was not the objective: “the aim was rather an industrious reproduction of the accepted teachers of the Church.”\(^8\)

So how would Luther balance a reverence for the tradition in one hand along with a personal uncertainty about the psalms in the other? Unfortunately there is no way of knowing what was


\(^6\) Quanbeck, “New Method,” 61.

\(^7\) It is misleading for Bruns to say that “Luther produced for his students something like a modern, as opposed to medieval, text of the Bible—its modernity consisting in the white space around the text” (Gerald H. Bruns, “*Scriptura sui ipsius interpres*: Luther, Modernity, and the Foundations of Philosophical Hermeneutics,” in *Hermeneutics Ancient and Modern* [New Haven: Yale, 1992], 139–40). Luther’s way of proceeding here was standard medieval pedagogy.

\(^8\) Quanbeck, “New Method,” 61.
actually said in the lecture hall, as we have only Luther’s preparatory notes for the course, reluctantly revised for publication around 1515/16, in our possession. While some scholars initially doubted whether the material published in the Weimar Edition (“Weimarer Ausgabe;” hereafter WA) of *D. Martin Luthers Werke* as volumes III (1885) and IV (1886) any longer represented Luther’s “original” work from the time he was actually lecturing in 1513–1515 (Luther was known to leave some blank space at the end of each psalm for later revision or supplementation), several painstaking studies of the manuscripts have confirmed that WA III and IV should not be viewed as a drastically modified production of a slightly older Luther working around 1515/16: “with the exception of some parts of the scholia of Psalms 1 and 4 the WA text of these lectures is a reliable source for an understanding of Luther’s view at this time [i.e., from 1513–1515].” With this issue settled—the need to improve some textual misreadings notwithstanding—studies honoring the inestimable value of the material contained in WA III and IV, Luther’s so-called *Dictata super Psalterium*, increasingly emerged, with many of them

9 “The glosses are preserved in the only extant copy of the Psalter printed by Grunenberg and dated July 8, 1513, containing Luther’s interlinear and marginal notes in his own hand. This is the so-called Wolfenbüttel Psalter, preserved in the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, Lower Saxony. The scholia manuscript, also in Luther’s own hand, was most recently preserved in the Landesbibliothek in Dresden, but in the confusion of World War II the original was lost, and now only a photocopy of it remains” (*LW* 10:x).

10 Uuras Saarnivaara, *Luther Discovers the Gospel: New Light upon Luther’s Way from Medieval Catholicism to Evangelical Faith* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 60n124. See the previous page in Saarnivaara’s work for an overview of the key studies involved. It also appears that some leaves of the Dresdener Psalter, which contains the scholia, were incorporated into the manuscript at a later date. On this matter, which will not have any bearing on the present study, see Alister E. McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther’s Theological Breakthrough* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 75, and the literature cited there.

11 An updated edition of WA III and IV is underway in WA LV. While the full extent of scholia were published in 2000 as WA LV.2, the glossae, to my knowledge, initiated with the republication of the first thirty psalms split between WA LV.1.1 (1963) and WA LV.1.2 (1973), are not yet finished.

12 This designation derives from a letter written to Georg Spalatin in 1515, where Luther refers to the material as “mea dictata super Psalterium” (see *LW* 10:x). This brief letter, showing Luther’s frustration that he was “forced by an order” (by von Staupitz?) to publish this work, is translated in Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 48, *Letters I*, ed. and trans. Gottfried G. Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 18–19.
seeking earnestly to discover a seed or two (if not the whole fruit; see below) of Reformation theology.\textsuperscript{13} For the purposes of the present work, we now discuss those studies of a particularly hermeneutical concentration.

1.2 Status Quaestionis

Precipitated by the discovery of Luther’s \textit{Lectures on Romans} (1515–1516), a certain kind of “Luther renaissance” took place shortly after World War I that was largely fueled by the work of renowned church historian Karl Holl.\textsuperscript{14} While Holl wrote on a variety of topics, he once declared rather famously in opposition to those who would exclude Luther’s first psalm lectures from the category of “Lutheran” that “the whole later Luther is already present in the Lectures on the Psalms.”\textsuperscript{15} This claim was one of several factors contributing to a widespread reevaluation of the development of the young Luther, along with the inevitably corresponding search for Luther’s theological “breakthrough.” For several decades of the twentieth century, in fact, most scholars held that any so-called \textit{Turmerlebnis} (“tower experience”) must have occurred during the two-year period of Luther’s first psalm lectures. At times the arguments for this were

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{13}{For a helpful bibliography of some of the earliest studies of Luther’s first psalm lectures at the turn of the twentieth century, see Vogelsang, \textit{Der junge Luther}, 41. The first comprehensive treatment of the material is probably Vogelsang’s own \textit{Die Anfänge von Luthers Christologie nach der ersten Psalmenvorlesung}, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 15 (Berlin/Leipzig, 1929).}

\footnote{14}{Most scholars refer to a famous lecture of his addressing Luther’s place in the history of exegesis as most influential: Karl Holl, “Luthers Bedeutung für den Fortschritt der Auslegungskunst,” in \textit{Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte}, 3 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1948), I:544–82. On Holl’s place within such a “Luther renaissance,” see Kenneth Hagen, “Changes in the Understanding of Luther: The Development of the Young Luther,” \textit{Theological Studies} 29, no. 3 (Spring 1968): 472–96 (esp. 476–77). I am indebted to Hagen’s diligent work throughout this paragraph.}

astonishingly specific: Boehmer and Hirsch contended that it occurred when Luther was working on Ps 31; Vogelsang and Bornkamm spotted a breakthrough around Ps 71–72. This way of proceeding continued well into the 1980s.

One of the indisputable giants to emerge in the wake of this renewed attention to the early Luther, this time with an unparalleled focus on the origins of Luther’s hermeneutics, was Gerhard Ebeling. Ebeling sought to bring greater precision to Holl’s insistence, surprisingly overlooked in Holl’s day, that Luther’s early lectures are indeed exegetical documents. His lengthy essay in 1951 on “The Beginnings of Luther’s Hermeneutics” (as the title reads of the 1993 English translation) concluded that Luther’s definitive break from the Quadrimga (fourfold method) of the medieval era was in his joining of the literal-prophetic sense with the tropological sense.

The number of Luther scholars who have built upon this argument in various ways would be difficult to determine, but one of the first major efforts to call it into question will be a primary conversation partner for the present study. To this classic treatment we now turn.

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16 Hagen, “Understanding of Luther,” 484–86.

17 In 1989 Lee-Chen Tsai claimed an explicit breakthrough occurred for Luther at Ps 85 (“The Development of Luther’s Hermeneutics in His Commentaries on the Psalms” [PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1989], 167–68). Around the same time McGrath revisited the claim of Vogelsang and Bornkamm and thought it better to say that Pss 71 and 72 “prepared the way for that breakthrough when it finally came” (Theology of the Cross, 132).

18 Cf. Gerhard Ebeling, “Church History is the History of the Exposition of Scripture,” in The Word of God and Tradition: Historical Studies Interpreting the Divisions of Christianity, trans. S. H. Hooke (London: Collins, 1968), 11–31. See also Jaroslav Pelikan, Luther the Expositor: Introduction to the Reformer’s Exegetical Writings (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1955), who leans on the work of both Holl and Ebeling (among others) to reiterate that “it was as a Biblical theologian that Luther understood himself and wanted others, both his friends and his enemies, to understand him” (46).

Some forty-five years ago James Samuel Preus produced a hermeneutical study of the *Dictata super Psalterium* within the context of the medieval exegetical tradition.\(^{20}\) Drawing on one of the convictions of Ebeling, Preus operated with the governing perspective that a proper understanding of Reformation theology was inseparable from Luther’s unique appropriation of the OT text. It would be the notion of *promissio*, Preus contended, that could bring to light an insufficiently noted hermeneutical adjustment found already in Luther’s first psalm lectures. After charting the contours of OT interpretation from Augustine to Faber Stapulensis and organizing key observations around this motif of *promissio* (Part I), Preus first concluded that the medieval tradition “can be characterized as an authentic attempt to establish the *sensus literalis* of Scripture as its principal meaning.”\(^{21}\)

In order to demonstrate that *promissio* occupied a crucial role not only at such an early stage in Luther’s life but also *within the “Dictata” itself*, Preus proposed to set up “something of an abstraction” called the “medieval Luther” by assembling “a coherent grouping of hermeneutical ideas” by way of numerous references to Luther’s comments on the first eighty-four psalms.\(^{22}\) Such a “coherent grouping” largely involved issues deriving from the relationship between the two testaments: *signum*, *figura*, the spiritual elite, and, especially germane for Preus’ argument, promises of *temporalia* and *eternalia*. In short—and we will be recalling this point later—Preus


\(^{21}\) Preus, *From Shadow to Promise*, 3.

\(^{22}\) Preus, *From Shadow to Promise*, 154.
concluded that Luther’s remarks throughout the first eighty-four psalms sounded virtually indistinguishable from the medieval hermeneutical tradition.  

But striking changes were soon to come, and Preus would choose to illustrate the extent of such via the seven penitential psalms. “Because they belong to a single class of Psalms,” Preus reasoned, “Luther can be expected to approach them all in roughly the same fashion.” While the first four penitential psalms (Pss 6, 32, 38, and 51) reiterated Preus’ “medieval Luther,” the last three (Pss 102, 130, and 143) showed a remarkable shift in interpretive standpoint: “attention is focused on the people ‘ante adventum Christi,’” Preus observed, as “the psalmist’s own word, spoken out of his own circumstances, is the basis of the theological interpretation.” In sum, “Luther discovered that the Old Testament faith and religion were so much like his own that they could become exemplary for his own faith, and for the Church’s self-understanding.”

An interpretive shift of this kind would come to view Scripture in toto as fundamentally testimonia, making the role of promissio “the means by which the Old Testament exegesis becomes both theologically important and historically more credible.” While the medieval tradition largely operated with a dominant “hermeneutical divide” between letter and spirit, Luther would ground a distinction between law and promise within the OT itself. As this would also open up an avenue for admiring the faith of the OT believers in such promises, Preus further

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23 For example, the OT people and promises are spoken of as predominantly “carnal,” while the NT actually delivers grace and eternal salvation; the OT psalmist belongs to an elite group of prophets who foresee NT meaning within the divine word, while the rest of the people (in the synagogue) are essentially “in the dark.”

24 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 166 (emphasis added).

25 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 171.

26 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 166.

27 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 180.
argues that Luther makes a crucial “discovery of the faithful synagogue.”28 This last insight, Luther’s emphasis on a “faithful synagogue,” will be utilized in the present study (see below).

Reactions to Preus’ work came from a variety of fronts. Book reviews ranged from general agreement (Greschat,29 Vooght30) to minimal criticism (Ashby31) to substantial disagreement (Rupp,32 Bayer33), with a small group of articles seeking to modify particular details of his argumentation.34 To my knowledge only two large-scale studies of the Dictata since 1969 have offered more than a passing reference to Preus: Scott Hendrix’s Ecclesia in Via: Ecclesiological Developments in the Medieval Psalms Exegesis and the “Dictata Super Psalterium” (1513-1515) of Martin Luther (1974) and an Aberdeen dissertation by Lee-Chen Tsai on “The Development of Luther’s Hermeneutics in His Commentaries on the Psalms” (1989).

28 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 212. It will be important later to note here that Preus checked five psalm texts (89:40, 119:81, 119:123, 122:1, and 123:1) in nine medieval commentaries (Augustine, the Glossa Interlinearis and Ordinaria, Lombard, Hugo Cardinal, Lyra, Burgos, Doering, Faber, and Perez) for the phrase “faithful synagogue” and found none. He noted the earliest occurrence in the Dictata at WA IV 78, 34, a gloss for Ps 92:2.

29 Martin Greschat’s review is in Lutheran World 17, no. 3 (1970): 290.


32 Ernest Gordon Rupp’s review—and this one is scathing—is in Journal of Theological Studies 23, no. 1 (April 1972): 276–78.

33 Oswald Bayer’s review is in Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte 82, no. 3 (1971): 380–82. Bayer was in the process of publishing his own book on promissio in the early Luther at the time of the review, in which he concluded that Preus handled the Dictata anachronistically (see esp. 382). Bayer’s comprehensive study is Promissio: Geschichte der reformatorischen Wende in Luthers Theologie (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1971).

34 John J. Pilch thought it more accurate to speak of a kind of vacillation on Luther’s part throughout the Dictata (“Luther’s Hermeneutical ‘Shift,’” Harvard Theological Review 63, no. 3 [July 1970]: 447), and in this he is followed by C. Clifton Black II (“Unity and Diversity in Luther’s Biblical Exegesis: Psalm 51 as a Test-Case,” Scottish Journal of Theology 38, no. 3 [1985]: 331n and 341n11). Kenneth Hagen felt that Preus oversimplified any hermeneutical shift within the Dictata (A Theology of Testament in the Young Luther: The Lectures on Hebrews [Leiden: Brill, 1974], 61n170), as did John Goldingay (“Luther and the Bible,” Scottish Journal of Theology 35, no. 1 [1982]: 49n16). John R. Wilch claimed that Preus’ emphasis on the OT letter was driving in the wrong direction, as it were: “Christology…determined how Luther made use of the emphasis on grammar and history” (“Luther as Interpreter: Christ and the Old Testament,” Consensus 9, no. 3 [July 1983]: 9).
It does not take long for the reader of Hendrix’s work to encounter some weighty disagreements with Preus, especially in the realm of the faithful synagogue. Determined to provide an accurate portrayal of ecclesiology in medieval psalms commentaries (Part I) as an appropriate setting for a study of Luther’s ecclesiology in the Dictata (Part II), Hendrix notes in a discussion of the Asaphite psalms that term *synagoga fidelis* is at least as old as Cassiodorus and reappears in the commentaries of Lombard, Hugo, and Faber.\(^\text{35}\) “As a result,” he concludes, “it is more correct to say that Luther redeploy s the *synagoga fidelis* within the ranks of his comments on the Psalms; by no means does he discover or invent it.”\(^\text{36}\)

The exact nature of this “redeployment” Hendrix would address at some length, beginning with a key question about the nature of OT faith in the Dictata: does Luther offer “a positive appraisal of the synagogue in its Old Testament setting with its own valid promises of spiritual goods, its own insight into the spirit and its own faith? Or are we dealing here with the reflection of the church (‘faith of the spirit’) upon the Jewish people?”\(^\text{37}\) In the light of some *scholia* on Pss 90 and 102 regarding a “faith of the spirit” and “another faith” (respectively), Hendrix argues that Luther knowingly did the latter: “the faith and spiritual insight of the New Testament *fideles* have been reflected back on a part of the Old Testament people and applied to their perception of the spirit under the Old Testament promises of temporalia.”\(^\text{38}\) Luther’s usage of the “faithful


\(^{36}\) Hendrix, *Ecclesia in Via*, 272.


\(^{38}\) Hendrix, *Ecclesia in Via*, 264.
synagogue,” then, underwent a kind of NT infusion, one which, in Hendrix’s view, has “penetrated the retaining wall of the Old Testament letter.” 39

On this account Luther does not abandon the medieval “elitist” view after all, nor does he uphold OT faith as any sort of model for NT faith, nor does he accent the selfsame church across both testaments; the “simple, literal faith” of OT believers is simply that: “inferior” to NT faith. 40 Rather than a new emphasis on the letter of the OT, for which Preus contended repeatedly, Hendrix concludes that “[Luther] has taken over the synagoga fidelis of the medieval Psalms commentators and set it alongside the church in the parallel between the faithful soul and the faithful people.” 41 As a result, Luther’s definition of the faithful synagogue does not depart from the medieval tradition.

Yet it is also noteworthy that Hendrix granted at least two significant concessions throughout his engagement with Preus: Luther’s persistent analogy between what Hendrix sees as two distinct longings does indeed give Luther some “new insight into the unfulfilled nature of the life of the fideles,” 42 and that “Luther occasionally, and especially more toward the end of the “Dictata,” tended to interpret the Psalms literally in reference to the synagogue.” 43

Lingering qualifications such as these may have encouraged others, such as Lee-Chen Tsai, to enter into the debate. Tsai’s terminology in the introductory paragraph of his lengthy chapter on

39 Hendrix, Ecclesia in Via, 260.
40 Hendrix, Ecclesia in Via, 265. For more on these contrasts, see note 23.
41 Hendrix, Ecclesia in Via, 273.
42 Hendrix, Ecclesia in Via, 271.
43 Hendrix, Ecclesia in Via, 274n124 (emphasis added).
the *Dictata* makes it very clear that he sides with the position of Ebeling over Preus regarding Luther’s hermeneutical transformation: “it was an existential understanding of the tropological interpretation rather than the historical-theological approach that led Luther to discover the gospel.” ⁴⁴

Intriguingly, however, integrated within Tsai’s attempt to distance himself from the position of Preus are affirmations of critical aspects of Preus’ thesis. ⁴⁵ In fact, Tsai sees many and various “breakthroughs” throughout the *Dictata*, ⁴⁶ with at least one of these involving the faithful synagogue: “There was indeed a hermeneutical shift in Luther’s historical interpretation of the faithful synagogue. Luther gradually took the Old Testament words seriously in their own context. However,” Tsai adds, “this historical sense was basically future-oriented, or more concretely, is New-Testament oriented. The faithful synagogue was rather the New Testament people who were associated with the primitive church.” ⁴⁷ The “historical sense” is thus granted, but it is NT in character and, curiously, found only in certain types of psalms: “Luther gave the historical sense only to the communal lament…. As in the individual lament, the historical

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⁴⁴ Tsai, “Luther’s Hermeneutics,” 90.

⁴⁵ Consider the following remarks: “gradually the faithful synagogue came into the theatrical stage of the Old Testament and became the actors of the Psalms and that Christ became the object of their faith” (Tsai, “Luther’s Hermeneutics,” 123), and “The divide of the letter and the spirit lies in the Old Testament itself as well as in the New. The key to understanding the law as the spirit is the faith of the Old Testament people” (176).

⁴⁶ Luther makes “a breakthrough in understanding the work of God” at Ps 64:9 (Tsai, “Luther’s Hermeneutics,” 148n247), but “had not reached his complete breakthrough in the doctrine of justification” throughout the first seventy-two psalms (148). Ultimately, “Luther reached his evangelical breakthrough in his comments on Ps. 85 where he combined the tropological with the christological interpretation” (167–68).

⁴⁷ Tsai, “Luther’s Hermeneutics,” 186.
interpretation was absent.” 48 Ultimately, for Tsai, Luther’s “position towards the Old Testament” is best labeled as “neutral.” 49

This brief synopsis of the status quaestiones indicates a general consensus regarding the prominence of a “faithful synagogue” in the Dictata, while sharp disagreement remains as to the precise significance of such. What also seems to be increasingly recognized is that the latter portion of the “Dictata” exhibits a noticeably different character than the former. Preus made a bold move in this direction when positing a “medieval Luther” for the first eighty-four psalms, while Hendrix and Tsai, each in his own way, granted the basic point; one can even find it alluded to before any of these studies. 50 In what ways do these two features—Luther’s emphasis on a faithful synagogue and an apparently evolving Dictata—relate to one another? Is the emergence of a faithful synagogue completely sporadic, or is it to some extent traceable? And if the latter, how might one describe the factors involved in such a phenomenon?

While the studies rehearsed above have identified key aspects of Luther’s first psalm lectures, there has been an utter lack of attention paid to the very nature of the material upon which Luther is lecturing in the first place. It is the conviction of this thesis that a significant contribution to the discussion can be made by examining Luther’s emphasis on the faithful synagogue in relation to the canonical shape of the Hebrew Psalter. What is the basis for such a claim?

48 Tsai, “Luther’s Hermeneutics,” 186.
49 Tsai, “Luther’s Hermeneutics,” 172.
50 Jared Wicks, Man Yearning for Grace: Luther’s Early Spiritual Teaching (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968), 91 (“in later passages”) and 93 (“at least early in the Dictata”). Brecht perceives something going on here as well (Martin Luther, 135).
1.3 A New Approach

Studies of the Hebrew Psalter since the publication of Preus’ work in 1969 have shown a surge of interest in its canonical shape. Fresh questions, drawing especially on the pioneering career of Brevard Childs, were being asked about its five-book structure, the opening and concluding psalms, superscriptions, and subgroups as possible contributors to a meaningful editorial arrangement. While some of the finer details continue to be debated, the following four observations remain relatively uncontroversial and are most pertinent to the present work:

a) Books I–II: A degree of homogeneity exists in the first two books unlike any other pairing in the Psalter. Nearly every psalm is “Davidic” by superscription, the individual lament is prevalent, and Ps 72:20 recapitulates these features nicely by indicating that “the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.” A clear transition at the macro level seems unmistakable.

b) Book III: The place of David is noticeably diminished here, as Asaph, the sons of Korah, and communal psalms thicken. The flock of Israel now takes center stage, climaxing in the last psalm with a scathing protest of God’s utter rejection of the Davidic dynasty.

51 A seminal work is clearly his Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).


54 In addition to Wilson’s work (n52), see J. Clinton McCann, Jr., “Books I–III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter,” in The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter, ed. J. Clinton McCann, Jr. (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 93–107; Walter Brueggemann and Patrick D. Miller, “Psalms 73 as a Canonical Marker,” Journal for the Study of the...
c) Book IV: With Moses atop its opening Ps 90, some sort of “response” to Book III (and especially to Ps 89) may be intended. Here the focus is not toward the kingship of David but the kingship of Yahweh (Pss 93–100), bracketed with accounts of Israel’s past deliverances (Pss 90 and 105–106). The reappearance of David (e.g., in Pss 101 and 103) takes place in a new context.  

d) Book V: The concluding book is variegated, yet clearly ends on notes of praise (Pss 146–150). Psalm 119 holds a dominant presence both structurally and theologically.  

How might these modern observations expand our knowledge of a series of premodern psalm lectures? We know that Luther lectured sequentially, from Ps 1 to Ps 150, over a relatively uninterrupted two-year period (see above). While a variety of forces were undoubtedly at work on him during this time, and it is also the case that Luther had all of the psalms memorized (see above), lecturing sequentially meant facing head on the same meaningful arrangement that a canonical approach seeks to discern. “The pressure of having to prepare these lectures day after day...”


day kept Luther thinking and working,” Kittelson writes. Because of this, there exists at least the plausibility of some correspondence between what Luther is doing with the faithful synagogue and what we know about the literary structure of the Psalter.

The present study, therefore, reaffirms Luther’s emphasis on a faithful synagogue by placing it into an entirely different frame of reference from prior studies: the final form of the Hebrew Psalter. This introduces a fresh set of questions in the realm of the faithful synagogue’s relationship to the content of the Psalter, such as where the faithful synagogue “originates,” how Luther incorporates the faithful synagogue beyond its origination, what influence the faithful synagogue has on Luther’s subsequent exegesis, and so on. In this way the issue is not so much pinpointing some kind of existential “breakthrough” as it is charting Luther’s movements in relation to a moving Psalter. The main research question for this study, then, is the following: what is the relationship between Luther’s emphasis on a “faithful synagogue” and the canonical shape of the Hebrew Psalter?

1.4 Methodology

As suggested above, a much closer look at Luther’s movement through the Psalter is needed, yet any study of the Dictata benefits immensely when Luther is compared to previous interpreters of the psalms. While Luther was known to have consulted several medieval sources, the present study, with its specific focus on the canonical shape of the Psalter, must limit its scope to a comparison of Luther’s work with that of his most influential predecessor: Saint Augustine. This selection hardly needs justification, as all are in agreement that Augustine’s influence on Luther

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57 James M. Kittelson, *Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and His Career* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 89. This holds true even if Luther worked slightly ahead on the glossae for each psalm before completing its respective scholion, as some have suggested.
throughout the Dictata far surpasses that of any other. As Rupp notes, “The period between [1509] and the Lectures on the Psalms is a time of his intense preoccupation with Biblical study. It is also the period when St. Augustine most influenced his mind.” And it is not just Augustine in general, of course, but specifically his expositions of the psalms: “Luther quotes from many works of Augustine in the course of these Lectures, but his major source is the ‘Enarrationes in Psalmos Davidis’ and his quotations from this work exceed all his other quotations from other sources put together.” Throughout the entirety of the upcoming study, then, an analysis of Luther’s work on any given psalm will always take place only after first examining the work of Augustine on the same psalm as represented in his Expositions of the Books of Psalms. For additional clarity throughout chapter two, however, and because we think it prudent to include also the one who evidently coined the phrase “faithful synagogue” (see above), we add the work of Cassiodorus.

58 Rupp, Righteousness of God, 139. Cf. Quanbeck, “New Method,” 63, 67, and this comment: “No other teacher of the Church had as much influence on Luther’s spiritual and theological development, and there was no one whom Luther held in such high regard as an exegete” (80). In a chapter on “The History of Scripture in the Church,” Kenneth Hagen marveled at “how current Augustine is for the medievals on into the sixteenth century” (in The Bible in the Churches: How Various Christians Interpret the Scriptures [Milwaukee: Marquette University, 1998], 8).


60 The most recent translation of this material, found in Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, will be used (see the bibliography for information on individual volumes).

61 Cassiodorus, Explanation of the Psalms (see the bibliography for information on individual volumes).
Several features of interpreting psalms will remain in focus as the work of Augustine (and Cassiodorus) is compared with the work of Luther: 1) divergences in a psalm’s speaker, 2) the hermeneutical influence of a psalm’s superscription, 3) an association of the faith of the OT with the faith of the NT, 4) a general interest in the OT frame of reference (e.g., a “saved remnant”), 5) a split between the godly and the ungodly, and 6) relating any of the above to a “faithful synagogue.” When divergences between Augustine (and/or Cassiodorus) and Luther appear, the central concern will be exploring possible canonical “pressures” for such. This can involve, for example, the interpretation of (sequentially) later psalms through the lens of earlier ones. Constant consultation with Augustine (and Cassiodorus) will help determine whether or not Luther, when interpreting psalms via any of the characteristics listed above, was perhaps simply duplicating the work of a particular predecessor. This increases the reliability of any conclusions regarding how the literary shape of the Psalter can be related to Luther’s expositions.

1.5 Procedure

Because it is generally agreed that the Dictata takes on a different character in its latter half (see above), our first main chapter will pick up right where “the prayers of David, the son of Jesse” have dropped off: Book III. More specifically, chapter two will focus on Luther’s remarks throughout the Asaphite corpus with a view toward answering where and how the notion of a “faithful synagogue” originated. If it is true, for example, that Cassiodorus (and others) could speak of a “faithful synagogue” in conjunction with Asaph, how closely does Luther track Augustine and Cassiodorus throughout this material? In the first part of chapter two, we analyze the seven Asaphite psalms which seem to have had the greatest influence on Luther’s conceptualization of the faithful synagogue: Pss 73, 74, 77, 78, 80, 81, and 83. In the second part of the chapter, we enhance our findings by looking at how Luther rendered similar content
from earlier in the Psalter (i.e., corporate laments [Pss 44 and 60] and the Asaphite Ps 50) in order to gauge how the Asaphite context may have influenced his exegesis. The argument of this chapter is that Luther’s movement throughout the Asaphite corpus brings about not only the origins of the faithful synagogue (contra Preus) but also his own distinct usage of the term over and against Augustine and Cassiodorus (contra Hendrix), a usage whose full character and deployment remain somewhat veiled to those operating independently from a canonical frame of reference.

In chapter three we set out to answer how Luther’s distinct conceptualization of the faithful synagogue throughout the Asaphite corpus can be said to have influenced his upcoming work on the rest of Book III and throughout Book IV of the Psalter. By identifying where Luther considers the faithful synagogue to be the speaker of a psalm, or focuses on the coming of Christ’s incarnation, or emphasizes a split between the godly and the ungodly of the synagogue, or associates the faith of the OT with the faith of the NT, or discusses in a more general way the OT frame of reference (e.g., the “saved remnant”) precisely where Augustine does not, we will be able to determine whether or not it is at least plausible that the notion of a faithful synagogue as previously conceptualized by Luther in the Asaphite corpus has been carried forward, as it were, and become constitutive to some degree in his later expositions. In order to enhance such plausibility, we also make periodic checks, as in chapter two, with Luther’s work on similar material from earlier in the Psalter where it is thought suitable to do so (e.g., Pss 101 and 26 are both very similar Davidic “psalms of innocence”). The argument of this chapter is that, in relation to Augustine, Luther’s lectures on the rest of Book III and throughout Book IV show an increased preoccupation with the OT perspective because of the influence that the faithful synagogue had on him throughout the Asaphite corpus.
After establishing both the origination of the faithful synagogue from the Asaphite corpus (chapter two) and the influence of the faithful synagogue on Luther’s subsequent exegesis (chapter three), the fourth chapter is devoted to determining the most immediate hermeneutical implications of Luther’s increasing preoccupation with the OT perspective. The first part of this chapter examines Luther’s treatment of four psalms leading up to Ps 119 (Pss 107, 111, 112, and 115) in order to determine whether or not the kind of influence as demonstrated in the last chapter indeed continues beyond Book IV. The second part is devoted entirely to Ps 119, where we spend ample time tracking down whether or not Luther’s handling of the material there derives in any way from his attention to the faithful of the OT. In the third and final part of this chapter we present four of the clearest examples of Luther’s integration of the faithful synagogue beyond Ps 119 (at Pss 122, 123, 126, and 143) in order to complete a general picture of what takes place in the latter half of the Dictata. The aim of this chapter to demonstrate that Luther’s integration of the faithful synagogue throughout Book V has contributed to a reappraisal of the literal sense of Scripture.

In all three of these core chapters (i.e., chapters two, three, and four), we refrain from offering a series of “canonical reflections” until the very last section of each chapter’s conclusion in order to allow Luther’s work to speak for itself without forcing it into any sort of preconceived “canonical framework.” The fifth and final chapter will summarize our findings and indicate a few areas for future research.

It is our thesis that the second half of Martin Luther’s Dictata super Psalterium exhibits a noticeably different character than the first half because of the profound effect that the canonical shape of the Hebrew Psalter had on Luther’s journey from Ps 1 to Ps 150. This is substantiated not only by a comparison of Luther’s work on similar material from different places in the
Psalter (e.g., corporate laments, psalm titles, Torah adoration) but chiefly by his integration of the faithful synagogue, a phenomenon whose relationship to the final form of the Psalter comes about aggregately from the Asaphite corpus onward. Put simply, the way Luther uses (canonically) earlier psalms in his interpretations of later ones deserves a central place in hermeneutical discussions of the Dictata. Beyond simply identifying plausible canonical structures, one can actually see them “at work” in Luther’s movement through the Psalter as he searches for a proper appraisal of the literal sense of Scripture. When Childs spoke of the possibility of major interpreters being “models for the future actualization of the biblical text,” the upcoming study may shed some light on what he meant by that.

1.6 “Preface of Jesus Christ”

Before commencing an in-depth study of the latter half of the Dictata, a brief look at its preface will not only set forth Luther’s own description of his interpretive approach but also convey, albeit in an oversimplified way, a helpful sense of the initial “ambience” pervading “the earlier part” (see above) of these lectures. There are technically three prefaces to the Dictata: one for the glossae, one for the scholia, and one for a heading to the biblical text provided for Luther’s students. Here I will draw on all three of them interchangeably, though with a special focus on the last one.

Printed boldly at the top of each student’s Latin text of the Psalter was the headline, “Preface of Jesus Christ, Son of God and Our Lord, to the Psalter of David.”62 While espousing a Christological reading of the psalms was hardly a novel undertaking in Luther’s day, depicting the Psalter as proceeding directly from the mouth of Jesus was a notable radicalization: “Luther

62 LW 10:6 (WA LV.1.1 6, 1–3).
here takes the unprecedented step of having Christ himself step forward to identify himself, via his New Testament self-witness, as the subject-matter and speaker of the whole Psalter.” As both content and speaker, Christ is thus the true literal sense of each and every psalm; “Christ is the text,” as Ebeling was known to say.

In order to justify such a title, Luther begins by listing five scriptural passages in which Christ himself, on Luther’s ear, exhorts the very approach being advocated. Jesus has told us that he is the door (John 10:9), the key of David (Rev 3:7), the “roll of the book” (Ps 40:7), the beginning (John 8:25), and the “I” who speaks in Isaiah (Isa 52:6). A gloss is then added to ensure that no mistake is made about what he is getting at here: “If the Old Testament can be interpreted by human wisdom without the New Testament, I should say that the New Testament has been given to no purpose.” Luther then calls upon four “witnesses,” two prophets and two apostles, for further support of the Christological interpretations above; Moses (Exod 33:15, 14), Zechariah (9:1), Peter (Acts 3:24), and Paul (1 Cor 2:2) all vouch for Luther’s way of proceeding. On the basis of these nine total passages from Scripture, Luther establishes his overarching hermeneutical guideline for the Psalter: “Every prophecy and every prophet must be understood

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64 See his “Beginnings,” no. 3, 459.

65 LW 10:6n2 (WA LV.1.1 6, 26–28).
as referring to Christ the Lord, except where it is clear from plain words that someone else is spoken of.”

What immediately follows this assertion, however, is the first indicator of a probable dependence upon one or more of his predecessors, for when Luther continues by presenting an alternative way of interpreting the psalms, he betrays a kind of vacillation on his part when it comes to the term “historical”: “some explain very many psalms not prophetically but historically, following certain Hebrew rabbis who are falsifiers and inventors of Jewish vanities.” But this account of “historical” contrasts sharply with how he spoke of the same term in his preface to the glosses, where Luther insisted that “no allegory, tropology, or anagogy is valid, unless the same truth is expressly stated historically elsewhere. Otherwise Scripture would become a mockery.” From this it appears that Luther speaks of “historical” in a way that caters to two different but deeply traditional usages: 1) using “historicus” as synonymous with the sensus literalis (and thus as foundational for exegesis) and 2) using “historicus” for that which is carnal or Jewish.

Because of Luther’s pejorative remark against the “historical” sense of the rabbis along with his emphasis on the “prophetical,” many have posited a certain degree of affinity between Luther’s preface to the Dictata and Faber’s preface to his Quincuplex Psalterium. In Faber one can find the notion of a “double literal sense,” or a “carnal” literal sense in addition to a “spiritual” literal

67 LW 10:7. That Luther seems to implicate Nicholas of Lyra here is usually assumed.
68 LW 10:4.
69 For more on this, see Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 144, as well as Quanbeck, “New Method,” 73.
70 While this work underwent a second edition in 1513, it is agreed that Luther took notes on the first edition from 1509. A helpful overview can be found in Guy Bedouelle, Le Quincuplex Psalterium de Lefèvre d’Étapes: Un guide de lecture (Genève: Droz, 1979), 227.
sense. As Faber himself put it: “I came to believe that there is a twofold literal sense. The one is the distorted sense of those who have no open eyes and interpret divine things according to the flesh and in human categories. The proper sense is grasped by those who can see and receive insight.” One should note, however, that for Faber the true literal sense is the “spiritual,” while for Luther it is here called the “prophetical.”

In order to get a better hold on what exactly Luther means by “literal” (and hence “prophetical”) in his preface, we may lastly draw on his examples of how he would speak of Christ as the subject matter throughout Pss 1, 2, and 3. With reference to the “literal,” Luther includes the following statements among several carefully crafted sentences:

“Blessed is the man who walks not, etc.” (Ps. 1:1). Literally this means that the Lord Jesus made no concessions to the designs of the Jews and of the evil and adulterous age that existed in His time. … Ps. 2:1 says: “Why do the nations conspire, etc.” Literally this refers to the raging of the Jews and Gentiles against Christ during His suffering. … Ps 3:1 reads: “O Lord, how many are my foes.” This is literally Christ’s complaint concerning the Jews, His enemies.

For more on Faber’s “double literal sense,” and for Bedouelle’s argument that in one way or another the same is applicable to Luther as well, see Bedouelle, *Quincuplex Psalterium*, 229. Usually associated with Nicholas of Lyra, talk of a *duplex sensus literalis* was fairly widespread in the fifteenth century. See Karlfried Froehlich, “‘Always to Keep the Literal Sense in Holy Scripture Means to Kill One’s Soul’: The State of Biblical Hermeneutics at the Beginning of the Fifteenth Century,” in *Literary Uses of Typology: From the Late Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Earl Miner (Princeton: University Press, 1977), 20–48. Froehlich traces a relatively heightened interest in the *sensus literalis* at that time back to “Aquinas’ restatement of [its] fundamental role” (45). On the issue more generally, see the classic treatment of Brevard S. Childs, “The *Sensus Literalis* of Scripture: An Ancient and Modern Problem,” in *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie: Festschrift für Walther Zimmerli zum 70 Geburtstag*, ed. Donner Herbert, Robert Hanhart, and Rudolf Smend (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 80–93.

As rendered in Heiko Augustinus Oberman, “Jacobus Faber Stapulensis: Introduction to Commentary on the Psalms,” in *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought: Illustrated by Key Documents*, translations Paul L. Nyhus (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 298–99. Again Faber states: “It is impossible for us to believe this one to be the literal sense which they call the literal sense, that which makes David a historian rather than a prophet. Instead, let us call that the literal sense which is in accord with the Spirit and is pointed out by the Spirit. … Therefore the literal sense and the spiritual sense coincide” (300).

James G. Kiecker, “Luther’s Preface to His *First Lectures on the Psalms* (1513): The Historical Background to Luther’s Biblical Hermeneutic,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (Fall 1988). See the discussion of Ps 119 in chapter four for more on Luther’s usage of “literal” alongside “prophetic.”

_ALW_ 10:7. Allegorical and tropological interpretations are given as well.
These remarks are all spearheaded by the typically Augustinian way of explaining how such a “literal” Christology can then apply to the realm of the ecclesial: “Whatever is said literally concerning the Lord Jesus Christ as to His person must be understood allegorically of a help that is like Him and of the church conformed to Him in all things.”

To summarize: Luther’s interpretive approach as described in his preface to the *Dictata* can confidently be viewed not as new *per se* but as an intensified version of the Christological construals of his forerunners in the faith. Most Luther scholars seem to be in agreement on this basic point, as even a simple “headcount” of psalm summaries that explicitly mention Christ as well as the total number of psalms being spoken by Christ in the *Dictata* vis-à-vis medieval exegetes gives further confirmation of the fact. It is with these hermeneutical guidelines in front of him, perhaps even as the base notes for his very first lecture, that the young professor Luther, well informed of the tradition but not yet sure how best to use it, set out on a journey through the Psalter to see where it would take him.

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75 *LW* 10:7.

76 For example: “Luther clearly stands within a tradition, but gives greater emphasis to the Christological interpretation than his predecessors, and is more categorical in rejecting literal-historical exegesis” (Wicks, *Man Yearning*, 302n7); “This Christological exposition of the Psalms is not at all new. Luther was following the entire tradition. What is new, however, is the way in which he carried it through” (Lohse, *Luther’s Theology*, 53; cf. 51); “there was nothing really new in Luther’s exegesis at this stage except the strong emphasis of the christological interpretation and its close combination with the allegorical and the tropological interpretation” (Tsai, “Luther’s Hermeneutics,” 113); “Luther, on the other hand, interpreted the psalms with unprecedented consistency *literally* as referring to Christ, while in tradition often only the *sensus allegoricus* led to their christological application” (Ebeling, “New Hermeneutics,” 41).

77 Ebeling shows that Luther is roughly two to three times as “Christological,” as it were, on these tallies (“Luthers Psalterdruck,” 85nn52–53, quoted in Wicks, *Man Yearning*, 43).
Chapter 2
Luther and the Psalms of Asaph: The Origins of the “Faithful Synagogue”

2 Introduction

Any sequential interpretation of the psalms confronts an unmistakable transition at the end of Ps 72: “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended” (Ps 72:20 ESV). For Augustine, the prayers of David have ended because the promises in the OT were temporal and have therefore ceased to be relevant beyond signifying the eternal promises of the New. Cassiodorus held a similar view, stressing that the end of David’s transient prayers was necessary so that the Catholic Church could take up the task anew with “the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ.” For Faber, the transition meant that Christ is “now speaking in his members.”

How would Luther’s movement through the Asaphite corpus (Pss 73–83) compare with those of Augustine and Cassiodorus? If it is true, as Preus once argued and as this study is attempting to reaffirm, that Luther integrated the faithful synagogue throughout especially the second half of his Dictata, is there more that can be said about where and how such faithful synagogue emerged as prominent for Luther in relation to the Psalter’s final form? If the origins are to be located in

78 Augustine, Cassiodorus, and Faber all work from versions of the Vulgate that place this sentence in the superscription of Ps 73, followed by “A Psalm of Asaph.” For a modern argument that Ps 73 is “the pivot of the canonical structure of the Psalter,” see Walter Brueggemann, “Bounded by Obedience and Praise: The Psalms as Canon,” Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 50 (June 1991): 81.


80 Faber Stapulensis, Quincuplex Psalterium: Fac-similé de l’édition de 1513 (Genève: Droz, 1979): “nunc in membris loquentem” (106).
the Asaphite corpus, as the title of this chapter suggests, to what extent could one speak of this development being “pressured,” as it were, by canonical arrangement and superscripting?

What is envisioned as necessary to answer these questions is not so much a statistical plotting of Luther’s usage of the term “fidelis synagoga” throughout the Dictata—helpful though that may be—nor any kind of search for definitive “breakthrough” moments, but rather a much closer examination of Luther’s unique emphases vis-à-vis Augustine and Cassiodorus as he moves through a segment of the Psalter quite different from the densely Davidic material. This task will comprise the first half of the chapter. For the sake of concision we narrow our scope to the seven Asaphite psalms which seem to have had the greatest influence on Luther’s conceptualization of the faithful synagogue (Pss 73, 74, 77, 78, 80, 81, and 83), paying special attention to such matters as were specified in the methodological section of the Introduction to this study: divergences in a psalm’s speaker, the hermeneutical influence of a psalm’s superscription, and especially the relation of these features to the faithful synagogue.

The second half of this chapter will attempt to enhance the findings of the first by examining Luther’s interpretation of similar material appearing (canonically) before the Asaphite corpus in order to surmise what effect, if any, the new context in Book III may have had on his exegesis. In other words, if Luther happens to show some kind of divergence in relation to Augustine and/or Cassiodorus when interpreting, say, a corporate lament within the Asaphite corpus, to what extent is he simply following his approach to corporate laments prior to the Asaphite corpus (e.g., Pss 44 and 60)? Or when Luther encounters the same nations in Ps 83 that he treated in Ps 60, would he simply duplicate his earlier etymological understandings in the manner of Augustine or give them some fine-tuning in their new Asaphite context? And finally,
what is the significance of the first appearance of Asaph at Ps 50 in all of this, where Cassiodorus is said to have coined the phrase “faithful synagogue” in the first place?

It will be the purpose of this chapter to demonstrate that Luther’s movement throughout the Asaphite corpus brings about not only the origins of the faithful synagogue (contra Preus) but his own distinct usage of the term over and against Augustine and Cassiodorus (contra Hendrix), a usage whose full character and deployment remain somewhat veiled to those operating independently from a canonical frame of reference. As such, a concluding section will synthesize the results of our analysis, engage the works of Preus and Hendrix, and offer some “canonical reflections” regarding the emergence of the faithful synagogue within the final form of the Hebrew Psalter.

2.1 Luther in Relation to Augustine and Cassiodorus throughout the Asaphite Corpus

2.1.1 Psalm 73: Conversion or Strengthening Faith?

2.1.1.1 Augustine on Psalm 73

While Augustine offered no comment in his Enarrationes in Psalms regarding Asaph atop Ps 50 (the only occurrence of the name in a superscription outside of Pss 73–83), the significance of Asaph and his relation to the synagogue was a foremost concern in several of his expositions throughout the Asaphite corpus. After a brief discussion of the cessation of the prayers of David, Augustine introduces his hearers, whom he passionately admonishes as the “bowels of the Body of Christ,” to the speaker of Ps 73 in this way: “Whose voice is it that speaks in this psalm? Asaph’s. But what is Asaph? Those who have translated the Hebrew into Greek and the Greek into Latin for us interpret Asaph as ‘the synagogue.’ So it is to the voice of the synagogue that
we listen here.” Immediately Augustine feels the need to temper any misgivings among his listeners and explains how NT Christians are to appropriate this potentially uncomfortable fact:

When you hear the name, “synagogue,” do not immediately think of it as something detestable, the people that put the Lord to death. There was a synagogue that killed the Lord; no one doubts that. But remember also that it was from the synagogue that there came the rams, whose children we are. … When you hear the name, “synagogue,” think not of what it deserved, but of the children it brought to birth.

Focus not on the synagogue’s unbelief, Augustine urges, but recall that Paul, Andrew, and the other apostles necessarily sprung up from it as “sons of rams.” For those wanting to know more about the exact character of this OT remnant, Augustine describes them as “spiritual persons like the prophets, a few who understood about a heavenly kingdom that would last for all eternity.”

This last remark may be as clear an expression as any of what would eventually take hold as the pervasive medieval “elitist view” of the OT faithful, or the view whereby only a very limited group, essentially just prophets, were enlightened enough to understand OT oracles spoken to those of NT faith. We make no attempt here to improve upon the description helpfully laid out by Preus: “The essence of the elitist outlook is that since the prophet is really speaking not to his own people (except in ‘figures’) but to the Church, his contemporaries are in the dark as to the true import of his words.” We will have occasion to address this interpretive stance at various junctures throughout our study, but the point to underscore here is that this view is fresh in mind.

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83 EP 3:475.

for Augustine as he begins his expositions of the Asaphite corpus. We also note a kind of oscillation taking place between the singular figure Asaph, the synagogal group he represents, and, in the case of Ps 73, the first person speech throughout the psalm.

The conflict of the speaker described in the first few verses is, for Augustine, intending to depict a struggle with sin. Asaph was jealous, doubted God’s sovereignty, and was tempted to indulge in the prosperity of the wicked. He thus had several reasons for repentance, and it would be at verse ten (“Therefore shall my people come back here”) where Augustine saw this very thing taking place: “Already Asaph is coming back…. He is coming back to God; he is beginning to inquire and argue.” While modern treatments of the psalm might stress some sort of sapiential crux or theodicy, Augustine heralds Ps 73 as a penitential psalm.

This focus on the repentance of Asaph provides further insight into the so-called medieval “elitist view” mentioned above. Once Asaph enters the sanctuary (73:17) and undergoes a change in his reins (73:21), he is no longer “a beast in [God’s] presence” (73:22). To be a “beast,” then, is to live for nothing other than the temporal things of the OT; Asaph’s conversion indicates to Augustine that “[he] had already begun to be numbered among the children of God, and already belonged to the New Covenant.” While Augustine feels compelled toward the end of his homily to remind his listeners that this psalm is indeed the voice of the synagogue, the words of Asaph in Ps 73 serve most fittingly as a model for NT repentance.

85 EP 3:482.
86 One thinks of the common classification of Ps 73 as a “wisdom psalm” by Gunkel, Eissfeldt, Kuntz, Perdue, Whybray, Weeks, and others.
87 EP 3:489.
2.1.1.2 Cassiodorus on Psalm 73

Much like his exposition of Ps 50, which appears to be the first mentioning of the phrase “faithful synagogue of the Lord (fidelis domini synagoga)” among our primary interpreters, Cassiodorus similarly introduces Ps 73 by stressing that Asaph is a signifier of the synagogue and should not be regarded as the author of the psalm (“non auctor psalmi”). Rather, his name itself, “which is always full of mysteries for the Jews,” contains a message about the nature of the psalm. As he explains it, “Asaph himself speaks in this psalm as spokesman of the synagogue, the meaning of which his name embodies.”

Those familiar with the work of Cassiodorus on the psalms should not be surprised to hear strong Augustinian overtones throughout his expositions, and Ps 73 is no exception. Asaph struggles with being envious of the world’s prosperity, as we gathered from Augustine’s account above, and “so he condemns himself.” This kind of behavior is simply stock-in-trade for any righteous person, so “Asaph confesses that he too has been deceived by foolish reflections.” Cassiodorus does tend to keep in mind Asaph’s representation of the synagogue a bit more keenly than Augustine does (e.g., “Therefore my people will return here” [73:10] refers to the repentance of several persons and not just Asaph), but the dominance of the third person singular throughout his treatment clearly sets forth Asaph, the self-professed “beast” (73:22) in retrospect, as a clear model for NT conversion. Cassiodorus summarizes the main lesson of Ps 73 in this

88 See Scott H. Hendrix, Ecclesia in Via: Ecclesiological Developments in the Medieval Psalms Exegesis and the “Dictata super Psalterium” (1513-1515) of Martin Luther (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 119, along with the introduction to this chapter and the Introduction to this study. For a discussion of Ps 50, see the second part of this chapter.
89 Cassiodorus, 2:196–97.
90 Cassiodorus, 2:197.
91 Cassiodorus, 2:202.
way: “How marvelously this Asaph, whose name means ‘synagogue,’ both rejected his past errors and laid hold of the blessings of the faith to come! He pondered wisely, his choice was outstanding; … The formation of the Christian is completed by this advice.”

2.1.1.3 Luther on Psalm 73

Luther makes it clear in his exposition of Ps 73 that he is tracking Augustine and Cassiodorus quite closely; at one point (73:10), for example, he approvingly cites them together. But while Asaph was a model of NT repentance in the views of Augustine and Cassiodorus, for Luther, interestingly, “[Asaph] assumes the person of a debater (disputatoris).” That is, Asaph introduces an issue (Is God truly good to those upright in heart?), argues both sides, and “in the end he confirms the affirmative side of the issue and decides in favor of it.” While one might take Ps 73 as referring primarily to the rebellion of the Jews, “it is better,” Luther says, “to apply it generally to all (Sed melius generaliter de omnibus).”

Would this widening of the psalm’s horizon mean that Asaph’s struggle has nothing to do with repentance? No, Luther recognizes that the goodness of God toward an individual means, at its essence, that “He first is righteous to them through grace, as the preceding psalm states [Ps 72].” To enter the sanctuary is indeed to be converted, Luther admits, and it is even appropriate in some sense (see below) to call such conversion the “stated conclusion of the whole psalm.” But at the core of Asaph’s predicament, in Luther’s view, is not repentance per se but the providence of God in the life of the believer. Asaph wrestles with the ways of God, and this happens

92 Cassiodorus, 2:209.

93 Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 10, *First Lectures on the Psalms I: Psalms 1–75*, ed. Hilton C. Oswald (St. Louis: Concordia, 1974), 415. Hereafter this volume will be cited as “LW 10:(page number).”
precisely “so that faith may have a place.”\textsuperscript{94} If God were to operate according to a mechanical doctrine of retribution, Luther insists, there would be no place for faith and hope. In this way, the struggle depicted throughout Ps 73 has a much wider canonical significance than had been allowed by his predecessors: “It is worth having this psalm as a light for resolving many Scripture passages which seem to be contradictory.”\textsuperscript{95}

While Augustine offers several pages addressing the futility of (the Jewish) longing for things temporal, Luther offers several pages insisting that the tension and obscurity found in the experience of Asaph also take place daily in a life of faith when one tries to reconcile outward appearance and inward reality. So when Asaph claims that “Full days will be found in them” (73:10), for example, this means both that the days of the saints may appear to be empty in the eyes of the world while actually being in route to their full reward and, conversely, that the wicked may have a full day (life) but will certainly be left empty in the end. There is no appeal here via the trigger word “full” to the “fullness of time” Christology in Gal 4, a natural maneuver for both Augustine and Cassiodorus. Rather, we are offered numerous assertions that, when taken in isolation, can only be described as nonsensical: “The more one goes into the flesh, the more one withdraws from the flesh.”\textsuperscript{96} On this account one need not fear being a beast after all, for it does not mean longing for temporal things but participating in God’s ways of using the

\textsuperscript{94} LW 10:416.
\textsuperscript{95} LW 10:415.
\textsuperscript{96} LW 10:429. Luther also notes in a gloss toward the end of the psalm that an analogy exists between the temporal portion of Asaph (“my flesh has failed…” [73:26]) and that portion of the synagogue longing for temporal things (“those who are far from you will perish” [73:27]): “By not placing you as their portion but as something temporal, so they also will perish and so too will their portion. Therefore, because those ones will perish [and] so that I [Asaph] might not likewise perish, I have chosen you as my portion so that you might be my portion and the God of my heart” (WA III, 476, 30–33: “Non ponendo te partem suam, sed aliquid temporale: ideo peribunt sicut et pars eorum. Ergo quia isti peribunt, ego ne similiter peream, te partem elegi, ut sis pars mea et Deus cordis mei”).
weak things of the world to shame the strong (1 Cor 1:27): “he who acknowledges himself to be [a beast] is always with the Lord.”\textsuperscript{97}

To summarize: Augustine and Cassiodorus emphasize Asaph as a model of NT conversion, while Luther sees Asaph more as a believer living a life of faith amid inescapable tensions. While Luther may share the eschatological interpretation of Augustine and Cassiodorus regarding what it means to enter the sanctuary and to “discern the end” of the wicked (73:17), and while he will doubtless always agree with the danger of coveting things temporal (flesh failing in 73:26), the main force in his exposition is that the words of Asaph speak—here, today, right now—of the work of God hidden under contrary appearances for the sake of faith.

2.1.2 Psalm 74: A Synagogal Split

2.1.2.1 Augustine on Psalm 74

Faced now with the first appearance of “understanding of Asaph” (משכלוקליאסף), Augustine supplements his previous assertion—that the name Asaph indeed signifies the synagogue—with the directive that interpreting Ps 74 would include “investigat[ing] what it was that the synagogue was trying to understand.”\textsuperscript{98} Those who speak the words of the psalm are an enlightened group, then, none other than the saved remnant of Israel.

The exact nature of this understanding Augustine would introduce at some length, beginning with the apparently plain fact that the promises, the signs (sacramenta), and most of the commandments are simply not the same for each testament of Christian Scripture. Promises are redundant, after all, when one possesses the reality, and nothing but disasters—not unlike the

\textsuperscript{97} LW 10:430.
\textsuperscript{98} EP 4:13.
very ones depicted in Ps 74—are sure to arise when one confuses that which ought to be kept asunder: “In our psalm Asaph’s understanding mind bewails these disasters. In his lament his intelligence is evident: he discerns the difference between earthly and heavenly things, and between Old and New Testaments.” To ask why God was rejecting the synagogue (74:1) is to begin the (sometimes catastrophic) process of understanding the danger of longing for earthly things.

Yet the accusations lodged against God in Ps 74 were harsh enough to challenge Augustine’s account of referentiality on different fronts, perhaps nowhere clearer than in his frequent qualifications of what exactly it was that Asaph understood. Augustine’s text of verse eleven (“Why do you turn your hand away everlastingly, your right hand from your bosom?”), for example, could not in any way be said to contribute to Asaph’s “understanding,” because “[verse eleven] is the cry of a blind person, one who fails to understand.” In this sense, the enemy scoffing in verse eighteen could even refer to Asaph himself! Either way, however, to consign this statement to blindness would imply that another type of conversion was taking place in Asaph throughout the psalm, one which invited Augustine to associate Ps 74 with Ps 73: “In earlier days Asaph was that senseless people, but that was before there was any understanding

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99 *EP* 4:17. This is but the beginning of what seems to be an increasing focus on the individual man Asaph and his own understanding. The following series of questions, for example, is typical in Augustine: “What has Asaph to say? What does Asaph’s understanding make of all this? Does he gain nothing from the discipline imposed on him? Is his depraved mind not corrected? … Let us see how Asaph’s understanding is getting on now” (23).


for Asaph. The same change was described in the psalm that preceded this one.” \(^{102}\) Psalm 74, too, shows that “[Asaph] is a beast no longer.” \(^{103}\)

**2.1.2.2 Cassiodorus on Psalm 74**

One of the few places where Cassiodorus nuances Augustine’s approach to Ps 74 is right where we ended our discussion above, namely, the proper relationship between the psalm’s accusatory language, Asaph’s “understanding,” and the believing and unbelieving synagogue. While Augustine tended to include Asaph in the guilty overtones of the first verse (“Why have you rejected us…”), Cassiodorus detects in Asaph a deep concern for a wayward people: “Asaph is justly terrified, and asked why the Lord’s sanctuary should endure such impious plundering. He was afraid that because the ravaging of the temple had been permitted, the Jewish people too would be utterly extirpated.” \(^{104}\) While Augustine includes Asaph himself as a possible referent of “enemy” in verse eighteen, Cassiodorus sees any unbelieving Jew.

This subtle shift in focus from Asaph as a former unbeliever to Asaph as a spokesman on behalf of the synagogue would imply for Cassiodorus that Asaph performs primarily an intercessory role throughout Ps 74. As he explains:

> So Asaph, showing true understanding and *outstanding in holiness*, uttered this wonderful entreaty on the Jews’ behalf. But so that we should not think it merciless of the Godhead that his plea on their behalf when heard was not approved, he made additional reference to the faults and loss of hope of the Jews, so that they rightly incurred the vengeance owed them because there was no repentance commensurate with their many sins…. [Asaph calls them the enemy of verse ten, but] says this not to cause their…


\(^{103}\) *EP* 4:33. Augustine continues: “[Asaph] no longer clings to the earth, no longer demands the things promised under the Old Covenant. He has become your beggar, your pauper, he thirsts for your rivers…” (34).

\(^{104}\) Cassiodorus, 2:211.
destruction, for he judged them worthy of tears, but so that God might improve them through the blessing of confession.\textsuperscript{105}

In the end, for Cassiodorus, Ps 74 is a “most salutary arrangement” of intercession and confession in reciprocal movement. Both sides of the coin would be necessary for the sake of the faithful: “In fact the holy man [Asaph] begs for what he knew would be the outcome, that God might not betray the souls of the faithful lest the devil attains his ends.”\textsuperscript{106}

2.1.2.3 Luther on Psalm 74

Luther again broadcasts his familiarity with the positions of Augustine and Cassiodorus (in addition to that of Lyra) in his opening remarks to Ps 74. But rather than delimiting the destruction alluded to in the first verse to one specific incident (e.g., the final destruction of Jerusalem [Augustine, Cassiodorus] or the Babylonian captivity [Lyra]), Luther refers it to “the destruction of the treachery by which the ungodly Jewish interpreters corrupt Scripture.”\textsuperscript{107} To be sure, the two devastations mentioned above certainly prefigure this “spiritual devastation,” but having “no longer any prophet” (74:9) ultimately means having no understanding of the prophet(s), for, as Luther reminds his hearers, “all prophets of the Old Testament prophesied only to the time and day of Christ.”\textsuperscript{108}

While it is true that this motif of Jewish incomprehension would go on to pervade the rest of Luther’s exposition of Ps 74, he could not grasp the full force of the opening verse without a struggle deeply pertinent to our study. Because the speaker of the psalm protests against being

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{105} Cassiodorus, 2:216 (emphasis added).
\item \textsuperscript{106} Cassiodorus, 2:221.
\item \textsuperscript{107} \textit{LW} 10:431.
\item \textsuperscript{108} \textit{LW} 10:431.
\end{itemize}
“cast us off unto the end,” Luther concludes that “this must be understood in such a way that it does not refer to the whole synagogue, but only to the rejected part.” Fair enough, especially given the indispensable notion of a saved remnant. But can those rejected truly offer prayer to God in the way of Ps 74? Luther thinks not, because “the one who says ‘Thou hast cast us off’ shows that he himself has not been cast off, because one cast off cannot pray to God.” But if the first verse refers to the rejected part of the synagogue and is yet spoken by one(s) not rejected, are we back in the position of Cassiodorus, with a righteous Asaph performing intercession for the unrighteous? Perhaps, although Luther would speak of the matter in this way: “the saved remnant, as being a part of those [rejected] people, moved by compassion, attributes to itself what is happening and what was done by the others, therefore, as if it were happening to themselves (ideo tanquam sibipsis fieret).” One group intercedes for another group, and this way of proceeding is, in Luther’s judgment, simply adhering to the semantic implications of having Asaph in the superscription: “And the name of the prophet mentioned in the title shows sufficiently that this psalm is the voice of the synagogue, that is, Asaph; the synagogue.”

While Cassiodorus would certainly agree that Asaph represents the (faithful) synagogue, Luther speaks of this representation more collectively than his predecessors throughout Ps 74: “cast off the great majority,” “the greater part,” “the others have altogether rejected,” “angry with the rejected, merciful to the elect,” “the congregation of the faithful people,” “a holy people,” and so on. As a corollary of this, Luther would offer some of his tropological admonitions within the context of Matt 10:36 (“A man’s foes are those of his own household”) and Ps 38:11 (“My friends and my neighbors have drawn near and stood against me”). In fact, it is in Ps 74 where

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109 _LW_ 10:433.
110 _LW_ 10:434.
Luther explicitly mentions the “synagoga fidelis” for the first time since Ps 42 in the *Dictata*.\(^{111}\)

While the influence of Augustine and Cassiodorus still appears regularly (e.g., Asaph understood the coming incarnation), Luther heard two distinct groups from the cries of Ps 74:1 and continued throughout his exegesis to wrestle with what it really means to have an individual historical figure (Asaph) represent an entire people (synagogue) who are themselves sharply polarized (godly and ungodly).

To summarize: while Augustine was predominately concerned with the repentance of Asaph (much like he was at Ps 73), Cassiodorus would supplement this penitential understanding with overtones of Asaph’s intercession on behalf of the people he represents. Luther, by contrast, frames the discussion in terms of a split in the synagogue between the godly and the ungodly, with the godly group pleading on behalf of the ungodly group.

### 2.1.3 Psalm 77:\(^{112}\) Who Speaks this Psalm?

#### 2.1.3.1 Augustine on Psalm 77

Much like his introductory remarks for Pss 39 and 62, the first two places in the Psalter where the term “Idithun” (יְדוּתוּן) appears in the superscription, Augustine begins his sermon on Ps 77 with a brief definition of the term (“the leaper”) before explaining what it means now to have both Asaph and Idithun together in the same title: “‘Idithun’ is to be translated ‘one who leaps across them,’ and ‘Asaph’ means ‘a congregation.’ So the speaker here is a congregation that

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\(^{111}\) *LW* 10:452 [WA III 508, 12]. The reference to the same in Ps 42 (there as “persona synagoge fidelis petentis”) takes place at *LW* 10:196 [WA III 237, 23].

\(^{112}\) As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, we leave to the side here Pss 75 and 76 not because they show Luther in any way retracting his views above but simply in order to elucidate his clearest appraisals of Asaph, the synagogue, and its division between the godly and the ungodly throughout the Asaphite corpus. We will address some of the Asaphite psalms omitted from our discussion in the conclusion to this chapter.
leaps across something in order to reach the end, which is Jesus Christ.” True to his hermeneutical view of a superscription—that titles are to psalms what lintels are to houses—Augustine finds a way in nearly every verse of Ps 77 to admonish his hearers to “leap over” anything hindering the Christian life and its heavenward journey. Only in this way does one obtain the true (hidden) meaning of the psalm.

This last point probably needs underscoring. While Augustine acknowledges the presence of both Asaph and Idithun in the title, his focus is predominantly on the latter. Not Asaph but now Idithun, mentioned throughout in the third person singular as Asaph was in his work on Pss 73 and 74, is constantly referred to as the speaker of Ps 77, often in the manner of “our leaping psalmist” (e.g., 77:2, 3, 15). The following homiletical segue is typical: “Let us question Idithun himself; perhaps he will explain what he meant by it. I do not understand, Idithun, so I will listen to what you have to say.” In fact, Augustine mentions “Idithun” and the act of “leaping” more than thirty times throughout his homily, while Asaph and the congregation are, aside from the discussion of the title, referred to only once (77:15).

2.1.3.2 Cassiodorus on Psalm 77

It is interesting to find in Cassiodorus a clear preference for Asaph as the unvarying speaker of Ps 77, who is once again defined as the “faithful gathering (fideli congregatione).” While his introduction to the psalm is almost identical to that of Augustine (“we are to understand here the gathering which has leapt over the vices of this world with triumphant progress”),

\[113\] *EP* 4:73.
\[115\] Cassiodorus, 2:238.
Cassiodorus mentions “leaping” only three times throughout his verse-by-verse exposition and chooses instead to emphasize Asaph’s privileged insight into the NT: “Asaph foretold God’s mercy because He foresaw His coming.”\textsuperscript{116} The “mercy” questioned in verse nine, for example, gives rise to the coming incarnation (unlike Augustine, who stressed trust in God), and the “change” mentioned in verse eleven refers to Asaph’s conversion, for “[Asaph] felt taking place in him the change which he rejoiced was to be granted at some time to the Christian people.”\textsuperscript{117}

Yet even with the recurring presence of Asaph and the themes of conversion and Gentile ingathering, Cassiodorus would conclude matters evidently very much under the influence of having Idithun in the title. He conveniently summarizes his view of Ps 77 in this way:

Idithun, you are truly one who outstandingly leapt over human concerns. You have sung this psalm with wonderful instruction. When troubled by afflictions, you said that you gained no consolation. But then your reflexions are seen to have attained perfection of expressed judgment. Thirdly, you became aware of being now blessedly transformed, but you do not relax your attitude in your happy state. Since you proclaim that you are always intent on the great works of the Lord, you are seen to have made continual progress in an accession of wisdom. Fourth, you hymn Christ’s miracles with great rejoicing, and as you enumerate them in their diversity, you reveal to the Christian people the instruction by which they may be saved.\textsuperscript{118}

2.1.3.3 Luther on Psalm 77

It appears that Luther’s commentary on Ps 77 in the \textit{Dictata} stems from two different occasions.\textsuperscript{119} The earlier work exhibits the typical style of a running exposition, while the later exegesis is more supplementary in nature and is likely to have been written shortly after he

\begin{footnotes}
\item[116] Cassiodorus, 2:243.
\item[117] Cassiodorus, 2:244.
\item[118] Cassiodorus, 2:250.
\item[119] With this claim I follow the persuasive suggestions made by Oswald, editor of the volumes of the American Edition of \textit{Luther’s Works} containing the \textit{Dictata}. For his reasoning, see Martin Luther, \textit{Luther’s Works}, vol. 11, \textit{First Lectures on the Psalms II: Psalms 76–126}, ed. Hilton C. Oswald (St. Louis: Concordia, 1976), 11:10n1. Hereafter this volume will be cited as “\textit{LW} 11:(page number).”
\end{footnotes}
completed delivering the former. We examine both of them here with a view toward this proposed chronological order.

2.1.3.3.1 First Treatment

The first thing we hear from the young Luther in his initial treatment of Ps 77 is that the psalm is difficult ("obscurus"). Even so, he feels obligated to presume that “this psalm is the description of a man mediating in remorse. These are the characteristics and actions and reflections of those who are remorseful, as we shall see step by step.”\textsuperscript{120} Then follows some nine sections (“steps”) covering the first six and a half verses, with a tenth “step” apparently spanning the latter two-thirds of the psalm, or from verse six(c) until verse twenty. Each “step” is meant to depict a stage in the remorseful individual/group. “Jeduthun” is mentioned in two places (77:5, 20).

When commenting on verse seven, which is right after the tenth and final “step” of remorse commences, Luther allows for three different understandings of the words “Will God cast off forever…?” While the first two options focus on the remorseful individual, the unambiguous subject of the first six verses, Luther also expounds that “A third way would be to take it as the psalmist’s statement on behalf of his people about to perish eternally.”\textsuperscript{121} The psalmist, whom Luther here calls “faithful Asaph,” is “prophesying in the person of the faithful, that he should be mindful of the works of the Lord [77:11] and of His wonders, namely, the works of the faithful and the examples of the fathers.”\textsuperscript{122} Again we are reminded at verse fifteen (“Thou didst with Thy arm redeem Thy people”) that “here Asaph is the personal representative of the church,” a

\textsuperscript{120} LW 11:19.

\textsuperscript{121} LW 11:24.

\textsuperscript{122} LW 11:27.
church existing simultaneously as a work of the Lord but also always at risk of becoming like previous unfaithful generations: “But who will see to it that we, too, will not be unfeeling in the midst of God’s wonders, as they were?”

Luther concludes with the observation that “this psalm can be interpreted as first referring to the whole church and then to any individual man tropologically.”

There is a fair amount of diversity here in Luther’s first treatment of Ps 77. He begins with a relatively rigid template of remorsefulness, but then seems gradually to drift away from it throughout his handling of the second half of the psalm. There are overtones of repentance and intercession; individuality and the whole church; the past and the future; Asaph and Jeduthun. How would Luther choose to augment this variegated material?

2.1.3.3.2 Second Treatment

One quickly gathers from Luther’s supplementary work that what lies at the heart of the multivalency rehearsed above is the insistence on many different interpretations for “the works of the Lord.” There are works of creation, works of deliverance (e.g., the exodus), and works of redemption, of course, with each of these areas subject to further refraction by applying the fourfold method. It is in this context where Luther offers his celebrated remark about the relationship between tropology, anagogy, and allegory: “we have often said that the tropological is the primary sense of Scripture, and, when this has been expressed, the allegorical and the

\[123 \text{ LW 11:29.} \]
\[124 \text{ LW 11:37.}\]
analogical and particular applications of contingent events follow easily and of their own accord.”

So Cassiodorus’ emphasis on the conversion of the speaker of the psalm is but one of several possible options for capturing the force behind verse ten (“this change”). Again, the “power made known” in verse fourteen is not necessarily the earthly miracles of Jesus (Augustine) or his incarnation (Cassiodorus) but could also be God’s power made perfect in weakness, the selfsame burden encountered above throughout Ps 73. Most pertinent to our purposes, however, is that Luther also appraises what this psalm would encompass when placed into the mouth of the faithful synagogue: “So when this psalm is spoken in the person of the faithful synagogue (in persona fidelis synagoge) or the primitive church, the church confesses the words of the Lord Christ, by means of which He led it out of the spiritual Egypt, out of the rule of sin and world and devil.” While we will have more to say about this remark in the conclusion of our chapter, we simply note here the mentioning of the “primitive church” and “faithful synagogue” in the same breath and keep this in mind as we progress through the rest of the Asaphite corpus.

To summarize: while Augustine highlights the act of leaping (“Idithun”) over spiritual obstacles in the life of faith, and Cassiodorus nuances essentially only the presentation of this view (i.e., by portraying Asaph as the speaker more than Idithun), Luther strives to do justice to several factors throughout his two treatments of Ps 77: repentance, intercession, Asaph, the church, and, most importantly for our purposes, the (first person) speaker of Ps 77 as the faithful synagogue (or

\[LW\] 11:12. See WA III 335, 21–22 for a similar remark much earlier (at Ps 60).

\[LW\] 11:17. Similarly, Luther wrote in a gloss for the word “Asaph” in the title that “[Ps 77] is therefore the voice of the faithful people grounded in contrition” (WA III, 526, 34: “Est ergo vox populi fidelis in compunction constituti”).
“primitive church”). The word “leap,” so dominant in Augustine, appears only once in some twenty-eight pages of Luther’s *scholia*.

2.1.4 Psalm 78: Today’s Dividing Line

2.1.4.1 Augustine on Psalm 78

It is perhaps a bit ironic that one of the few positive evaluations Augustine gives the OT synagogue in his *Enarrationes* takes place in his introductory comments to Ps 78, a lengthy psalm (the second longest in the Psalter behind Ps 119) containing numerous rebukes of a people known for their unfaithfulness. Yet this positive evaluation would be pressured, as it were, by combining the psalm title (“Understanding for Asaph”) with the waywardness depicted throughout the psalm:

> Are we, then, to suppose that the title *Understanding for Asaph* means that Asaph himself understood it, or should we take it figuratively, to mean that the synagogue understood it…? It would seem that this can hardly be the case, for God rebukes this same people through a prophet…. All the same, even among that people there were some who did understand, because they had the faith that was later revealed to be concerned not with the letter of the law but with the grace of the Spirit. …. But was it the prophets alone who had such faith? Did the people not have it too? Surely they did: those who listened to the prophets were assisted by the same grace to understand what they heard.¹²⁷

Here alone throughout the Asaphite corpus does Augustine acknowledge the presence of OT believers in addition to the prophets. It remains to be seen if and how this would influence his exegesis of Ps 78.

A people rebuked alongside a people of understanding would seem to imply the kind of polarized synagogue envisioned by Luther for Ps 74. The two groups of people recurring throughout Augustine’s exegesis of Ps 78, however, are not the faithful and the unfaithful but those of the OT and those of the New: “These words hint at two peoples, one belonging to the

Old Testament, the other to the New.”\textsuperscript{128} “A new generation” \textsuperscript{(78:6)} refers to none other than the NT generation, the antithesis of that “\textit{crooked and troublesome set of people} they were, that generation \textit{[who] persisted in sinning against him}, that is, persisted in unbelief.”\textsuperscript{129} While Augustine often quotes or alludes to portions of 1 Cor 10:1–11 in order to insist that “these things happened for our instruction” \textsuperscript{(10:6)}, that which happened befell a distant, disobedient synagogue far inferior to the church: “He led them to his holy mountain. But how much better to be led into the Church! \textit{The mountain his own right hand had won}. But how much loftier than that mountain is the Church Christ won.”\textsuperscript{130}

\textbf{2.1.4.2 Cassiodorus on Psalm 78}

Cassiodorus also introduces Ps 78 by acknowledging a distinction within the synagogue itself between the faithful and unfaithful, a logical consequent of interpreting Asaph as representative of the faithful portion: “[Asaph] made it clear that the faithful synagogue can give voice here; for only the hearts of the faithful can rebuke the wicked.”\textsuperscript{131} From this, and in a way much more pronounced than in Augustine, Cassiodorus would include several reflections throughout his exegesis concerning what exactly it means to have two groups of Jews being admonished by the speaker of the psalm. “The repetition of generation,” for example, “has reference only to those who have stuck fast in their obstinacy, but there were those amongst the Jews who served the

\textsuperscript{128} EP 4:97.
\textsuperscript{129} EP 4:104.
\textsuperscript{130} EP 4:118.
\textsuperscript{131} Cassiodorus, 2:250.
Lord with pure hearts.”

Again, “It was not those who he says were slain that sought God, but the rest of the crowd entreated Him when an example was made of such men.”

Even so, Cassiodorus still follows the overarching contours of Augustine’s approach, especially in the realm of the division between the Old and New Testaments: “We have heard refers to the words of the prophets, and come to know is applied to the New Testament.”

“Another generation” (78:6) is the generation of Gentiles reborn of water and the Spirit, the “day” (78:14) signifies Jesus, the “clouds” (78:23) refer to the preachers of the gospel, the “sheep” and “flock” (78:52) refer to future Christians, and so on. While Jewish unfaithfulness is a history lesson for all of us à la 1 Cor 10, it essentially points away from itself and toward its rightful “supplanters,” the Gentiles: “while the history is being recounted, the grace of the New Testament is being made clear.”

2.1.4.3 Luther on Psalm 78

We begin with Luther’s lengthy assessment of verse nine. Leaning on the German humanist Johann Reuchlin (1455–1522) for a better grasp of the Hebrew, Luther contends that this difficult text gives the sense of “The sons of Ephraim, armed, shooting the bow…. While Augustine claimed that “[the psalmist] was figuratively using a part to signify the whole [generation],” and Cassiodorus links Ephraim to the challenging of Moses in Exod 19:8 and

\[^{132}\text{Cassiodorus, 2:255.}\]
\[^{133}\text{Cassiodorus, 2:263.}\]
\[^{134}\text{Cassiodorus, 2:252–53.}\]
\[^{135}\text{Cassiodorus, 2:274.}\]
\[^{136}\text{EP 4:99.}\]
32:1, Luther sees here an “indicat[ion] that even then the good and the evil were always mixed together. Therefore he refers to them by naming a part, because not all of Israel was like this (non omnis Israel talis fuit).”

In other words, Ephraim simply represented the unfaithful “part.”

Yet this reemerging division within Israel itself between the faithful and the unfaithful, a differentiation not at all unique to Luther but—we think it fair to say at this point—increasingly more pronounced in him than in his predecessors (see esp. Ps 74), would also extend its dividing line to the present day. Provoked initially by the reappearance of “the works of the Lord” (78:7), the multifaceted phrase so central in his supplemental treatment to the psalm directly preceding this one (see above), Luther is struck by “how great [Ps 78] is in its words, how directly it touches us.”

Those forgetting the works of the Lord, he insists, are not merely the Jews of some bygone time but are also the present-day heretics and, in truth, any prideful person of any time. These three groups (the Jews, the heretics, and the prideful) would be addressed simultaneously by the many examples of Israelite unfaithfulness throughout the psalm: “we will see how the whole psalm directs words to us, that is, Jews, heretics, and proud people, speaking from understanding to an understanding people. And the Jews at the time of Christ and the

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137 LW 11:40 (emphasis added). Luther would go on to speculate that Ephraim was used to depict the ungodly portion of Israel because they were known for their pride (e.g., they were preferred to Manasseh, born to Joseph, opposed to Gideon and Jephthah, symbolized by Jeroboam, and mentioned throughout Hos 5).

138 And as usual, this also carries another level of signification for Luther: “The prophet saw that the election of the tribe of Judah and the rejection of the tribe of Ephraim would signify the election of the Church and the rejection of the synagogue” (WA III, 559, 7–9: “Vidit enim prophetæ, quod election tribus lude et relictio tribus Ephraim significet electionem Ecclesie relictæ synagoga”).

139 LW 11:46.
apostles did this first. Then the heretics. Third, we wretched, most evil Christians.”\textsuperscript{140} In fact, with Rom 2:3 as his interlocutor (“Do you suppose, O man, that when you judge those who do such things [and yet do them yourself], you will escape the judgment of God?”), Luther was convinced that the latter two groups mentioned above “are [not only] like the Jews, yes, even worse.”\textsuperscript{141} He explains his reasoning in this way:

Accordingly, if spiritual things are a hundred times more important than temporal things, and if those who forgot temporal blessings and were not mindful of the Lord’s physical works were charged in that way, it follows that we Christians are a hundred times worse than they, since we so easily forget the spiritual works and wonders of Christ, and they are eternal and beyond calculation. If, then, God was justly angry with them, how much more will He be angry with us?\textsuperscript{142}

Luther would even assume the role of a debater in order to further this last point, anticipating possible objections from his hearers and refuting them one by one. The following is one of several similar examples:

He does not say ‘in their sight’ but ‘in the sight of their fathers.’ … So we, too, though we did not see Christ’s suffering and the wonders by which He led mankind out of the world into the church, we do see by experience that we are in the church. … Therefore, like them we, too, are deservedly rebuked because though we see that we are in a land flowing with milk and honey, we nevertheless forget the works of God….\textsuperscript{143}

For Luther there exists no “next generation” (78:6) without the “gross” and “amazing” faithlessness depicted throughout Ps 78. While Jewish incomprehension prevails throughout Augustine’s treatment, Luther at one point even says “enough of the Jews” in order to focus on

\textsuperscript{140} LW 11:44.

\textsuperscript{141} LW 11:49.

\textsuperscript{142} LW 11:44. Luther would later add this reflection: “Now go, O man, you who mock their unfaithfulness! Behold, the true manna, the Gospel of salvation is raining on you. But you, wretch, disdain it much more than they did and, full of nausea over it, you neglect it” (67).

\textsuperscript{143} LW 11:52–53.
those whom he repeatedly calls worse than any previous generation in history.\textsuperscript{144} Also noteworthy here is that when Luther explains testing God in the heart (78:18), he once again frames the discussion around expecting things to conform to one’s preferences instead of looking for God’s work hidden under the opposite appearance (see Luther on Ps 73 above). Yet in the end, God always spares the faithful: “God did not destroy all but left some of the people.”\textsuperscript{145} As David was once called from the sheepfolds (78:70), “so also Christ embraces the faithful synagog.”\textsuperscript{146}

To summarize: while Augustine offers a brief positive evaluation of the OT synagogue beyond merely the prophets included therein, he continues to operate within a sharp dichotomy between the Old and New Testaments. The division within the synagogue itself is a bit more recurrent in Cassiodorus, even though he again summarizes his work much like Augustine. Luther, on the other hand, intimately associates contemporary faithfulness and unfaithfulness with that of the ancient synagogue, perceiving an immediacy within Ps 78 that leaves no one untouched.

\textbf{2.1.5 Psalms 80 and 81:\textsuperscript{147} The Figure of Joseph}

We continue our investigation by amalgamating Pss 80 and 81 into the same section. This is done for two reasons: 1) Pss 80 and 81 both reference Joseph in order to designate the “flock” of Israel (80:1; 81:5), a subject most pertinent to our study, and 2) the figure of Joseph (and kindred topics; see below) is another area of slight divergence among our primary interpreters.

\textsuperscript{144} \textit{LW} 11:62. Further examples of worse faithlessness are found on pages 55–56 and 71–72.

\textsuperscript{145} \textit{LW} 11:71.

\textsuperscript{146} “Ita et Christum assumpsit de synagoga fidelī” (WA III, 559, 16–17).

\textsuperscript{147} Psalm 79 is omitted here for reasons mentioned in note 112 above.
2.1.5.1 Augustine on the Figure of Joseph in Psalms 80 and 81

Often found in Augustine when he encounters a biblical name is an exploration of its etymology. In the case of Joseph, Augustine seizes upon what he perceives to be a twofold indicator: the idea of “increase” and, as the Joseph narratives in Genesis make clear, the reality of being rejected by one’s own people while being accepted by outsiders. Christ fulfills both of these meanings, Augustine argues, because he both increases the church and, of course, is the cornerstone once rejected (Ps 118:22; cf. Matt 21:42). Quite simply, Joseph typifies Christ. This etymological account is repeated nearly verbatim in both Pss 80 and 81.

One further matter regarding Ps 80 is noteworthy here. Among several references to the flock of Israel throughout the psalm are two using vineyard imagery, likely meant to recall the presence of Joseph in the opening verse: “a vine out of Egypt” (80:8) and “tend your vineyard” (80:14). When Augustine discusses the vine’s fruitfulness in verse ten (“Its shade covered the mountains…”), he concludes that “this is a statement about its final perfect state, but the original vine was the Jewish people.” While he would certainly grant that both vines (i.e., the original Jewish and the final fulfillment) are indeed “selfsame,” this is asserted in the sense of John 4:22 (“salvation is from the Jews”). The “mountains” mentioned above in verse ten are the prophets, who are, in Augustine’s view, fittingly overshadowed by the NT church.

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148 Boulding (translator of the most recent version of Augustine’s *Expositions of the Psalms*) helpfully notes that “The Latin *vinea* can mean either vine or vineyard” (*EP* 4:145n14).


150 *EP* 4:146. Asaph is spoken of as a collection of NT believers: “Asaph did not recognize Christ while he was present on earth working miracles; but once he had died, and then risen and ascended into heaven, Asaph acknowledged him and was pierced with sorrow, and spoke this whole testimony concerning him that we now read in this psalm” (143).
2.1.5.2 Cassiodorus on the Figure of Joseph in Psalms 80 and 81

Interestingly, Cassiodorus deviates not only from Augustine but also from his own earlier convictions about the name of Joseph meaning “increase” (77:16; 78:68) when, in the case of Ps 80, he contends instead for the idea of being “without reproach,” evidently drawn from Gen 30:23 (Rachel: “God has taken away my reproach” [ESV]). He writes: “We must interpret Joseph as the faithful people, who are led into the Lord’s pens like sheep gathering to pasture. The very name Joseph means ‘without reproach,’ which is certainly apt for the devoted people.”\textsuperscript{151} This variance may be due to the fact that, for Cassiodorus, the first part of Ps 80 addresses the faithfulness of God’s people longing for the coming of Christ (e.g., “show forth,” “how long”), while the second part of the psalm describes Asaph’s vision—or as the title has it, “testimony”—of the church spreading (vineyard growing) throughout the world: “All the splendid achievements in holy Church are appropriately incorporated in this imagery.”\textsuperscript{152} Cassiodorus would return to the meaning of “increase” for Joseph at Ps 81:5, in that case recalling Exod 1:12 (“the more [the people of Joseph] were oppressed, the more they multiplied…” [ESV]) before reminding his hearers of the rich baptismal typology throughout the exodus account.

2.1.5.3 Luther on the Figure of Joseph in Psalms 80 and 81

Initially it is somewhat unclear just how closely Luther adheres to the views of Augustine and Cassiodorus when he considers the figure of Joseph in Pss 80 and 81. On the one hand, he is certainly well versed in the standard typological view of Joseph as a type of the church,\textsuperscript{153} and

\textsuperscript{151} Cassiodorus, 2:284–85 (emphasis added).

\textsuperscript{152} Cassiodorus, 2:292.

\textsuperscript{153} A gloss on the first verse (“you who lead Joseph like a flock”), for example, reads: “

\textit{Joseph, or the Church, the faithful people, the part for the whole}” (WA III, 604, 9–10: “

\textit{Ecclesiam, Joseph, populum fidelem, pars pro toto}”).
often explains this by including the idea of the remnant of Israel in his discussion (e.g., “Christ and the apostles and the remnant of Israel,” “the remnant of Israel, or the early church,” and so on). On the other hand, however, Luther seems more than Augustine and Cassiodorus to incorporate the modest, afflicted character of the remnant into his typological comparisons with the contemporary church. For example, just as the remnant of old was persecuted, “So also the church is being abandoned in its latest devastation by the Turk or Antichrist, so that the remnant of the elect will scarcely be saved. Therefore it is for these that the psalmist prays and prophesies.”154 The immediacy encountered above with Ps 78 comes to mind, as Luther speaks of the church here not so much as triumphantly overshadowing all things OT—though there is a sense in which he grants that to be a proper hearing of verse ten (“They did not keep God’s covenant…”)—but existing under the selfsame persecution from of old as she presses forward through time.

If it can be said, for example, “that the apostles and their successors are surrounded and crowded by a multitude of the faithful, …. So also [can it be said that] the patriarchs were crowded and covered by many sons in the synagog.”155 Conversely, if it can be said that the OT faithful went from prosperity (Luther cites the “sand of the sea” from Isa 10:22) to oppression, so also can it be said that the present-day church, having once “conquered” the entire world with the preaching of the gospel (so Augustine), must necessarily also succumb to the persecution of the “wild boar” of verse thirteen (so far as Luther could tell in his own day, this was expressed most clearly by the Turk).

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154 LW 11:100.
155 LW 11:98.
At one place, in fact, Luther seems to broaden the scope of reference beyond even the common OT/NT frame of reference by including a third era: the second coming of Christ. Fully aware of the OT prefiguring the NT, Luther also entertains the idea of the NT era prefiguring the final era inaugurated by the second coming of Christ: “[the OT faithful] were a figure of the true people to come. \textit{And the church is also a shadow of the church to come, just as the letter was the shadow of faith, for faith is a mystery and a shadow of the vision which is to come.”}^{156} While admittedly cryptic—and perhaps even “embryonic” in the sense that I find no remark like it before this point in the \textit{Dictata}—Luther seems to be thinking through how far one can speak of a consistency across three different eras (OT, NT, final consummation) all brought into existence by one unchanging Word. This kind of contemplation, we note here by way of anticipation, will prove essential in some of Luther’s more momentous reflections on the similarities (“\textit{simul}”) between the faith of the OT believers and the faith of the NT believers.\textsuperscript{157} Luther’s gloss for the final verse of Ps 80 also corresponds quite closely with this kind of analogous thinking, where, after noticing the third appearance of the phrase “let your face shine, that we may be saved” (80:3, 7, 19), he writes: “Now returning here a third time, he expresses the threefold appearance of God: first in the assumption of flesh literally; second in spirit and faith; third in clear vision, and so on.”\textsuperscript{158}

\footnote{\textit{LW} 11:98.}

\footnote{For further discussion on the contours of this hermeneutical inclination, see chapter four, and especially the discussion at Ps 112 where this quote from Luther regarding the three different eras will be revisited.}

\footnote{“Iam tercio hoc repentens trinam exprimit apparitionem Dei: primam in carne assumpta ad literam: secundam in spiritu et fide: terciam in clara visione etc.” (WA III, 606, 9–10). In the following chapter we will see a nearly identical explanation coming from Luther for the second verse of Ps 102 (“Do not hide your face from me”). See the discussion there for more on this “threefold advent” schema and for an engagement with the work of Preus, who relies heavily upon Luther’s exposition of Ps 102 for his argument about \textit{promissio}.}
To summarize: Augustine sees a twofold significance in the etymology of the name Joseph (“increase” and the idea of being rejected by one’s own people while being accepted by foreigners) and concludes that the figure of Joseph is a most fitting type of Christ. While Cassiodorus would depart from Augustine for the meaning of Joseph in Ps 80 (“without reproach”), he would return to Augustine’s understanding of Joseph for Ps 81. Luther insists that whatever is said to be signified by Joseph (he himself chose to elaborate on the motifs of being insignificant and persecuted) must necessarily correspond with the present-day church.

2.1.6 Psalm 83: Israel among the Nations

2.1.6.1 Augustine on Israel among the Nations in Psalm 83

Closely related to our preceding analysis about the figure of Joseph is how our primary interpreters handled the depiction of Israel among a host of encroaching nations in Ps 83. For Augustine these nations are “Christ’s enemies under the names of various Gentile races,” all in servitude of their leader, the devil (“Assyria”). But because Israel long ago defeated these nations historically as recounted in Judg 4–5, Christians are to be assured that God will once again defeat them spiritually in the final consummation.

This eschatological rendering of the psalm is further developed when Augustine turns to the second and more imprecatory half of the psalm, where he reiterates often that God’s patience in judging the world is in order to bring some to repentance (cf. 2 Tim 2:24–26). We focus here on his comments on verse sixteen (“Cover their faces with shame; then they will seek your name”): “For the present these [converts before the final judgment] are identified with the rest, and form

159 I use the term “nations” here loosely, as the psalm also includes names not of nations per se but of adversarial individuals (e.g., Sisera), tribes (e.g., Ishmaelites), and so on.

part of the host of enemies in their ill-will and envy towards the people of God. All these make their din and hold their heads high at the present time wherever they can."\(^{161}\) Some openly prideful and rebellious individuals will, by God’s grace, turn and be converted before the final judgment. In the meantime the psalmist prays, in Augustine’s words, that “they be so ruined as to survive for ever.”\(^{162}\)

### 2.1.6.2 Cassiodorus on Israel among the Nations in Psalm 83

As Asaph has already offered many prophecies in his psalms about the Lord’s first coming, so the time is now appropriate, Cassiodorus reasons, for Asaph to address the Lord’s second coming.\(^{163}\) Here Cassiodorus would track Augustine almost verbatim: everything in the psalm is applicable to the time of the antichrist, each nation is a specific enemy and contains a correspondent meaning (e.g., Edom means “bloody,” Moab means “from the father,” Gabel means “empty valley,” etc.), Assyria signifies the devil, the sanctuary is the Christian people, and so on. As regards “those who are to believe through the Lord’s gift” in verse sixteen, Cassiodorus envisions a kind of conversion in which rebellious sinners finally run out of support for their wickedness.\(^{164}\)

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\(^{161}\) *EP* 4:183–84.

\(^{162}\) *EP* 4:184.

\(^{163}\) Cassiodorus 2:307. In the same place he reminds his hearers that “[Asaph] is not the author of the poem (non est auctor ipse carminis), but appears to be appositely inserted into headings because of the meaning of his name and the powers of the psalms.”

\(^{164}\) Cassiodorus, 2:312.
2.1.6.3 Luther on Israel among the Nations in Psalm 83

When Luther arrives at the list of nations in Ps 83, he first notes that he has already dealt with the meaning of some of the names, such as Moab, Edom, and Philistia, in his exposition of Ps 60. The meanings of the remaining names unique to Ps 83 are then drawn almost entirely from Augustine: the Edomites are violent, the Philistines seek carnal pleasures, those from Tyre are those in love with wealth, and so on. Two minor exceptions are the cases of Gebal (“unknown”) and Assyria, the latter being a reference in Luther’s view not to the devil (Augustine) but to Rome.

Some of these seemingly settled etymological explanations are, however, given a slightly different context in Luther’s treatment. Before discussing each name’s interpretation, he first summarizes the whole lot in the following way: “there is no doubt that the deeds of these people which they performed against the holy people in the past signified what the Jews later did against Christ and His people.” At first glance this is perhaps the mere penultimate step in Augustine’s typological view of Israel’s conquest as a prefigurement of the final judgment. But the extent of Luther’s distinctiveness becomes transparent when he discusses the Hagrites:

All these names fit only those who are counted among the people of God but are not deservedly so. As they were then, so many of our people are now too. For the heretics and those cut off are not properly denoted by these names, but, as I have said, only those who are mixed with, and in the midst and number of, the true people, having the name and shape and appearance of God’s people and yet denying its strength and truth.

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165 For an analysis of the relationship between these two expositions, see the discussion in the second part of this chapter.

166 LW 11:123.

167 LW 11:124 (emphasis added). Another mention of the split within the synagogue itself comes from a gloss for the two final verses of the psalm (beginning “Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever…” [esv]): “He speaks concerning the whole people, in whom some recognize this truth and blush well, others [do so] badly” (WA III, 627, 32–33: “Loquitur enim super totum populum, in quo aliqui bene, alii male erubescunt et cognoscunt”).
In addition to the perceived immediacy of the text for Luther and his contemporaries (“so many of our people are now too”), a feature of the psalms encountered now several times throughout the Asaphite corpus, we are also told not to expect a clear demarcation between the godly and the ungodly on the basis of some manifest iniquity from which, as Augustine and Cassiodorus earnestly hope, at least some would turn before the final judgment. No, the “nations” of Ps 83 are actually quite indistinguishable from “God’s true people,” a nomenclature Luther would go on to use with increasing frequency in this section of his commentary while assimilating the “true remnant” of his own day into the designation.

In fact, the nations not only appear similar to “God’s true people” but can also, in Luther’s judgment, seem to be the exact opposite of what their names actually denote: “And bear in mind, all these names fit them before God (coram Deo), for before the world the opposite seems to be the case.” This claim is encapsulated by an extensive four-columned chart including the name of the nation, how they appear in the eyes of the world, and how they actually exist before God. For example, “[column 1:] they do not seem to be [column 2:] Philistines, [column 3:] but those who rise through sobriety, [column 4:] but before God and in spirit they are not so.” Again, “[column 1:] they do not seem to be [column 2:] Moab, [column 3:] but of God, [column 4:] but before God and in spirit they are not so.”

In this account Assyria is no longer delimited to signifying Rome but can also connote “‘directing, blessed,’ or ‘happy and moving forward, being successful’” because of the prosperity of the ungodly, the exact opposite of merely equating it with the antichrist (so Augustine and Cassiodorus).

168 LW 11:125.
169 LW 11:128.
To summarize: Augustine and Cassiodorus interpret the nations surrounding Israel in Ps 83 as a prefigurement of the enemies surrounding Christ in the final judgment, while both church fathers are emphatic about the possibility of repentance for the ungodly prior to that event. While Luther adheres to the basic contours of this understanding (especially to the meaning of particular names and their spiritual signification), he also considers the nations as able to appear in the exact opposite fashion as the meanings of their names suggest. Luther also continues to sense in the text an immediate actualization, a modus operandi he develops further in the case of Ps 83 by frequently extending “God’s true people” to his present-day hearers.

2.1.7 Summary of 2.1

Our comparison of Luther’s movement through several Asaphite psalms with the same from two of his influential predecessors has revealed a variety of divergences taking place in the young Wittenberg professor. In the case of Ps 73, Luther did not follow Augustine and Cassiodorus in portraying Asaph as a model for repentance but rather saw in Asaph the struggle to live a life of faith amid God’s working under opposite appearances. In the case of Ps 74, Luther again forgoes the motif of Asaph’s repentance (Augustine) as well as an emphasis on his individual/prophetic intercession (Cassiodorus) in order to draw attention to a split in the synagogue between a godly group and an ungodly group, with the former interceding for the latter. Luther’s two treatments of Ps 77 showed a significant downplaying of the speaker of the psalm as one “leaping” over spiritual obstacles (Augustine) in order to entertain the implications of having the psalm spoken by the “faithful synagogue.” Psalm 78 was not just depicting a sharp dichotomy between the two testaments (Augustine) but was encompassing contemporary faithfulness and the lack thereof in the same way it did for the synagogue of old. Luther would then see in the figure of Joseph in Pss 80 and 81 a portrait of the remnant of Israel, insisting not only on Joseph as a type of Christ but also on the necessity of his present-day church to
correspond with the remnant of old (e.g., persecuted, insignificant, etc.). Finally, and in the same vein, Luther would not only interpret the nations surrounding Israel in Ps 83 as a prefigurement of the final judgment—nonnegotiable though that may be—but would also contend that the nations can appear in the exact opposite manner as the meanings of their names imply, again emphasizing an immediacy in the text of the psalm by extending the reality of “God’s true people” to his contemporaries.

2.2 Similar Material before the Asaphite Corpus

The first part of this chapter demonstrated how Luther’s interpretations of several Asaphite psalms differed from those of Augustine and Cassiodorus, especially with respect to a psalm’s speaker, the hermeneutical influence of particular superscriptions, and the relation of these features to the notion of a “faithful synagogue.” In the second part of this chapter we attempt to amplify our findings by showing that some of these divergences are not only unique to Luther vis-à-vis Augustine and Cassiodorus but are also, in a sense, unique to Luther qua Luther. By this we mean that our discussion above can now be extended to illuminate the significance of these variations taking place in the Asaphite corpus as opposed to earlier in the final form of the Hebrew Psalter. This significance can be assessed, we believe, from at least two perspectives: 1) by examining how an earlier Asaphite psalm—Ps 50, where Cassiodorus evidently coined the phrase “faithful synagogue”—was understood and 2) by examining how similar psalmic material appearing both in the Asaphite corpus as well as earlier in the Psalter (e.g., corporate laments) is nuanced differently by Luther when found in an Asaphite context. If Cassiodorus coined the phrase “faithful synagogue” when interpreting Ps 50, should not the origins of the faithful synagogue be sought for there in Luther as well? Conversely, if the Asaphite context is not the first place where corporate laments appear in the Psalter, to what extent is Luther simply
interpreting corporate laments with Asaph in the title in the same way that he interpreted earlier corporate laments without Asaph in the title?

2.2.1 Asaph before the Asaphite Corpus: Psalm 50

2.2.1.1 Cassiodorus on Psalm 50

In his prefatory material, where Cassiodorus introduces Asaph as a son of Barachel (1 Chr 6:39) and notes that he was one of four musicians appointed to play psalmody for the Lord, we receive the first of what will eventually be several reminders that Asaph heads Ps 50 (and Pss 73–83) not for the sake of indicating authorship but, like many other superscriptions in the Psalter, in order to “tell us something through his name.” He explains what he means in this way: “The sense of this name, which is always full of mysteries for the Jews, points to the synagogue, which speaks in this psalm. But here we must understand it as the faithful synagogue of the Lord, which both believed that Christ would come and embraced His coming with exultant anticipation.”

We are soon told that this faithful synagogue, which prophesies both the first and second comings of the Lord, speaks the first and third parts of the psalm, while Christ speaks the middle portion.

An emphasis on the coming of the Lord remains vibrant throughout Cassiodorus’ work on this Asaphite psalm; talk of summoning the earth (50:1) and shining forth from Zion (50:2) refer to the first coming, while the “mighty tempest” (50:3), judgment (50:4), and gathering (50:5) refer to the second. This focus on the Lord’s coming appears quite similar to what we saw above in such places as Pss 74, 77, and, perhaps most applicably, Ps 83, where Cassiodorus not only emphasizes the coming of the Lord but even thought that it was “high time” for Asaph to move

\[\text{\textsuperscript{170}}\text{We think it prudent to pass over Augustine here, as Cassiodorus not only follows the general thrust of Augustine’s approach but also, as mentioned above, does so by implementing the terminology “faithful synagogue.”}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{171}}\text{Cassiodorus, 1:479.}\]
on from prophesying the first coming in order to start preaching the second. To coin here the phrase “faithful synagogue,” then, is undertaken by Cassiodorus not so much to explain something about its character as it is to point away from itself, as it were, to that in which the faithful are said to be believing: the very coming of the Lord. His concluding admonition is a fitting summary of his stance throughout Ps 50: “Listen to the synagogue as she proclaims the Lord’s incarnation and the future Judgment.”

For those wanting to be absolved of any unbelief in this coming of the Lord, Cassiodorus directs them, interestingly, to the posture found in the subsequent Ps 51.

2.2.1.2 Luther on Psalm 50

Many similarities to Cassiodorus’ approach appear when we glance back at Luther’s treatment of Ps 50. First, the overall advent schema is followed nearly verbatim: Asaph, who is mentioned only once in the gloss (not at all in the scholia) and simply described as “one of the principle singers instituted by David in 1 Chr 15,” speaks of both the first and second comings of the Lord while yielding the middles verses to the voice of Christ. In this way, God’s summoning the earth (50:1) refers to the first coming; out of Zion (50:2) goes the gospel/church; temporal sacrifices are rebuked because they will give way to “living sacrifices” embodied by Christians (citing Rom 12:1); the judgment in verse six speaks of the second coming; and so on. Luther even emulates Cassiodorus’ directive when explaining verse fourteen (“the sacrifice of praise…”) by admonishing his listeners to confide in the subsequent psalm for further

172 Cassiodorus, 1:492.
173 WA III 277, 22–23 and 31–32, respectively. The text for the first reference is “Tit. Psalmus Asaph, qui fuit unus de principibus cantorum a David institutus 1 Paralip. 15.”
elucidation of Ps 50’s “profound theology”: “this kind of theology is found in the entire following psalm, almost verse by verse.”

While following Cassiodorus closely, there is no mention of a “faithful synagogue,” a saved remnant, or even the figure of Asaph save the rudimentary remark mentioned above from the gloss. It seems, rather, plainly taken for granted in Luther’s view that there was, of course, a branch of Israel in existence at the time of the psalm’s first utterance and that one may, quite reasonably in this case, leave to the side any in-depth description of its character while still doing justice to an interpretation of Ps 50.

To summarize: Cassiodorus does indeed use the phrase “faithful synagogue” to denote the speaker of two sections of Ps 50, although the focus throughout his work is predominately on the coming of the Lord. In this sense, one wonders whether or not it would have changed much (if any) of the overall force of his exposition were he just to have used the language of “remnant” throughout. Luther follows the approach of Cassiodorus very closely when it comes to the coming of the Lord, yet even less so when integrating the language of “faithful synagogue,” remnant, or even Asaph.

2.2.2 Corporate Laments before the Asaphite Corpus: Psalms 44 and 60

Another way of sharpening the profile of what is taking place in Luther throughout the Asaphite corpus, particularly in the cases of Pss 74, 80, and 83, is to compare how he treated earlier corporate laments lacking Asaph in their titles. While there are several phrases and verses throughout the first two books of the Psalter expressing lamentation of the communal sort (e.g.,

\[174 \text{ LW 10:234.}\]
17:11; 66:10–12), none lodge an attack as relentless as do Pss 44 and 60.\(^{175}\) We examine these two psalms below.

### 2.2.2.1 Psalm 44

#### 2.2.2.1.1 Augustine on Psalm 44

The first task for Augustine, unsurprisingly, is to explain the superscription “sons of Korah,” a title he had already treated at some length upon his first encounter with it just two psalms earlier. Here at Ps 44, then, he need only reiterate that “sons of Korah” denotes a “psalm sung for the children of [Christ’s] passion,” and, in light of this, “we should be prepared to hear the voice of martyrs in this psalm.”\(^{176}\) Yet because we have the words “for understanding” again, we are also reminded to seek the deeper purposes of the psalm, much like what was illustrated in the opening cry of Ps 22, Augustine says, where it is obvious that no sin could be attributable to Christ (cf. the LXX “sins” for the MT “groanings”).

The communal lament in Ps 44, then, bespeaks the “deeper purpose” of longing for things eternal; being refused a hearing (e.g., “Why are you sleeping?” [44:24]) is being refused in the pursuit of temporal things. This same purpose is served, Augustine insists, when one is persecuted for confessing Christ. The apostle Paul quoted verse twenty-two (“For your sake we are done to death all day long, reckoned as sheep for the slaughter”) in Rom 8:36, after all, in order to keep Christians focused on heavenly concerns. But in all this talk of rejection, Augustine reminds us that God is still very much with the believer, as only those who mourn can

\(^{175}\) While Gunkel spoke of Ps 60 more as a divine oracle framed by communal lament, he identified Ps 44 as the first in his list of “Communal Complaint Songs” before including four from the Asaphite corpus alone: 74, 79, 80, and 83. See Hermann Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, trans. James D. Nogalski (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 82–98.

\(^{176}\) *EP* 2:265.
be comforted, and the like. Quite simply, he concludes, “God does not forsake you, even when it looks like that.”

2.2.2.1.2 Luther on Psalm 44

Beginning with the bold statement that “Everything in this psalm is easy,” Luther explains at the outset that God’s turning away in verse ten (“Thou hast turned away…”), for example, is really just a turning away of such things as “grace and virtues from the soul” and not at all a turning away of God in toto. On this front, the importance of humility and discipline for the (persecuted) Christian is rehearsed much like it was in Augustine’s account, as God only chastens and reproves those whom God loves (cf. Rev 3:19). When confronting the bulk of the seemingly harsh accusations against God, Luther urges that one must always seek the spiritual understanding: “In this psalm all the words that express evil should be taken in a relative sense,” or, in other words, “the things that are in the spirit.”

To be cast off (44:9), then, is really to be received; to be put to shame (44:15) is really to be honored, and so on. Somewhat humorously, it would only be the phrase “heard with our ears” (44:1) that would give Luther reason for an extended pause: “Can anyone hear without ears? And without his own ears? Was the prophet afraid that the people might be thought to have heard with nostrils or eyes…?”

To summarize: while Augustine tended to stress the futility of seeking temporal things more than Luther did, both Augustine and Luther saw the central purpose of Ps 44 as cultivating a humble

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177 EP 2:266.

178 Thus Luther follows his understanding of the presence of “eruditio” in the psalm’s title: “that is, spiritual information for spiritual wisdom regarding spiritual matters” (WA III 244, 21–22: “Eruditio, i.e. spiritualis information ad sapientiam spiritualen de spiritualibus rebus”). Luther also mentions repeatedly that the “new law” gives spiritual things (see, for example, WA III 244, 24–25 and 245, 32–33).

179 LW 10:205.
concentration on spiritual things amid the struggles of persecution and loneliness in the Christian life. Both were quick to remind their hearers that God never really abandons anyone in Christ.

2.2.2.2 Psalm 60

2.2.2.2.1 Augustine on Psalm 60

Another example of a vociferous communal lament before the Asaphite corpus, this time found under a lengthy militaristic superscription, is Ps 60. Augustine struggled with how to reconcile a title boasting of Davidic victory with a text sounding clear notes of rejection. Could David possibly be speaking this? Augustine answers: “Clearly the speakers here must be the people to whom [David] did all this. Those who had been bad were smitten and repulsed, but then they were given new life….” Because the speakers of the psalm are examples of those changed for the better, we do well as ones once afar off, he reasons, to heed their testimony: “our earthly nature has received the death-blow, our old selves have been burned away, humankind changed for the better, and light bestowed on those who had been in darkness.”

To divide Shechem (60:6) is to divide the believers from the unbelievers, as Gilead, Manasseh, and Ephraim (denoting “heap of witness,” “forgotten,” and “fruitfulness,” respectively) designate groups within the church, while Moab, Edom, and the Allophyli (denoting “bad deeds,” “earthly,” and “foreign stock,” respectively) symbolize the apostate. As was the case in Ps 44,

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180 Augustine’s rendition of the title, as translated by Boulding, is the following: “Unto the end, for those who will be changed into an inscribed title, into teaching, for David himself, when he burnt Mesopotamia of Syria, and the Syrians of Zobah, and Joab turned round and smote Edom, twelve thousand men, in the Valley of the Salt-pits” (EP 3:179).


183 I.e., Philistia.
persecution not only keeps believers “on their toes” but also furthers the mission of the church, while any sense of abandonment is, again, only applicable to the realm of appearance.

2.2.2.2.2 Luther on Psalm 60

Aside from following Lyra’s translation of the superscription, which incorporates the word “testimony” as opposed to “song” or “psalm” (i.e., “Ad victoriam super rose testimonium suave canticum David ad docendum”), Luther hears in the title of Ps 60 ecclesial notes very similar to those described by Augustine: “this psalm is a testimony concerning a future rose, that is, a prophecy and sign of the church, for the psalm speaks about it and in its person.” The meanings of the proper names throughout the psalm are, without exception, all drawn directly from Augustine: Gilead is a “heap” (of testimony), Manasseh is “forgetfulness,” and so on. Luther would clarify that those tribes who represent the church (Manasseh, Ephraim, Gilead, and Judah) “are not different groups of people, but by these names characteristics of those who are in the church are expressed.” The other group of names (Moab, Edom, and Philistia), of course, represents the unbelief spanning across both testaments, a reality “surely in direct opposition” to the former group as sheep is to goat. In this sense Luther would see much tropological potential in the depiction of Moab as a “washbasin,” which for him represented anything afflictive that God could use instrumentally for the sake of conforming the church to the image of Christ (cf. Rom 8:29).

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184 *LW* 10:280. See also Luther’s gloss on the title for a similar description: WA III 335, 12.
185 *LW* 10:281.
186 A typical description of Moab would include such things as “temptations and sufferings, that is, the pot of Moab, until we are well cooked. Then we are poured out of the pot into vessels of gold and silver, and offered as a dish to a seated God, Christ, together with His saints in heaven” (*LW* 10:287). Luther would go on to include a chart of tropological interpretations at the conclusion of his exposition where various virtues and works correspond to various names in the psalm.
In addition to the familiar reminder that the psalm addresses spiritual things and is a lament delivered essentially at the temporal level, Luther suspects that some of the force behind the language of the psalm stems from the limited understanding of those outside of the prophetic guild: “What was clear to the prophets was hidden to the people under the type of earthly goods or evils. For the people understood everything bad and good in a physical sense, while the prophets understood it in a spiritual sense, especially when they spoke the Word of God concerning them.”

To summarize: Augustine saw the speakers of Ps 60 as those who were once defeated by David and are now symbolic of one’s life before and after conversion. While Luther tended to stress the salutary nature of suffering for the sake of faith a bit more than Augustine did, both understood the list of names as indicative of believers and unbelievers and both mentioned more than anything else the importance of focusing on spiritual things.

2.2.3 The Nations before the Asaphite Corpus: Revisiting Psalm 83 in Light of Psalm 60

There is one final observation which belongs under the category of the possible influence of the Asaphite corpus and conveniently requires only comparing our discussion of Ps 60 with that of Ps 83. We noted above in Luther’s interpretation of Ps 83 that he referenced Ps 60 as a place where he had already dealt with several of the proper names reappearing in Ps 83. There are, to be precise, only three nations that appear in both psalms, namely, Moab, Edom, and Philistia, or those very nations understood by both Augustine and Luther in their interpretations of Ps 60 as denoting unbelievers.

Yet we also saw above that one of Luther’s unexpected accentuations in Ps 83 was his insistence that God’s adversaries are not, as they tended to be in the views of Augustine and Cassiodorus, openly manifest sinners but are, in fact, deeply mixed in with and quite indistinguishable from “God’s true people.” We also noted that Luther would go on to claim that the entire list of God’s adversaries in Ps 83 can actually appear in the exact opposite fashion as their names indicate, and we then offered some examples of this taken from a chart Luther had constructed to illustrate his point.

The question arises: why would Luther in his commentary on Ps 83, when confronting the exact same nations he encountered in Ps 60, take an additional step beyond all of the copiously copied meanings from Augustine and now claim that they can also appear in the exact opposite fashion of what their names actually mean? We think that there is a possible explanation for this based on Luther’s movement throughout the Asaphite corpus as outlined in the first part of this chapter, and we offer this explanation in the conclusion to this chapter below.

2.2.4 Summary of 2.2

We have now seen a few examples of how Luther handled similar psalmic material outside of (and canonically earlier than) the Asaphite corpus, along with a brief comparison, where applicable, of such examples with the treatments of Augustine or Cassiodorus in order to enhance the overall portrayal. While Cassiodorus evidently coined the phrase “faithful synagogue” in his interpretation of Ps 50, his main focus was on that in which the synagogue was believing: the coming of the Lord. Luther follows the approach of Cassiodorus quite closely in this emphasis on the Lord’s coming, yet neglects to use the language of “faithful synagogue,” remnant, or even Asaph aside from an introductory remark. While Augustine may have discussed the futility of pursuing temporal things more than Luther did in the case of Ps 44, and
while Luther may have discussed the beneficial aspects of suffering for the sake of faith more than Augustine did in the case of Ps 66, both Augustine and Luther heard the following notes sound strongly in both psalms: 1) God never actually abandons anyone in Christ and 2) persecution in the life of the Christian is profitable for one’s spirituality. While Augustine may have understood the speakers of Ps 66 to be those once defeated by David, both Augustine and Luther interpreted the list of names as symbolic of believers and unbelievers. Finally, we noted that Luther in Ps 83 added an additional element to the three names he had already encountered in Ps 66 (Edom, Moab, and Philistia): they are also attributable even to those appearing in the exact opposite fashion of what the meanings of the names convey.

## 2.3 Conclusion

Our task in this chapter has been to determine where and how the notion of a faithful synagogue emerged as prominent for Luther in relation to the final form of the Hebrew Psalter. We are now in a position, based on our observations above, to conclude that it is Luther’s movement throughout the Asaphite corpus that brings about not only the prominence of the faithful synagogue but also a distinct conceptualization of it in relation to Augustine and Cassiodorus. We defend this claim by reflecting on two interrelated issues: the figure of Asaph and the function of canonical context.

### 2.3.1 Who (or What) is Asaph?

Because of the far-reaching hermeneutical implications accorded to psalm titles in premodern interpretation, the presence of Asaph in the superscription was not subject to the kind of

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188 As noted briefly above, Augustine often spoke of psalm titles as lintels to houses, while Jerome likened them to entrances into individual rooms (psalms) in a mansion (Psalter). A good example of the discernible influence of a
dismissal often found in modern historical-critical approaches. \(^{189}\) But neither was it a straightforward matter as to how exactly Asaph, if indeed taken to signify the synagogue, was to relate to the content of the psalm, whether it be explained in terms of individual representation, corporate signification (maneuvering through first and third person speech), or having a subsidiary status to other words or phrases thought to hold pride of place (e.g., “unto the end”). \(^{190}\) Talk of rejection, as we saw in Ps 74, or the addition of “Idithun” to the title of Ps 77 would also complicate matters, inviting recourse to the notions of intercession and even “leaping.” “Understanding” seemed to heighten the temporal/eternal dichotomy.

For Luther, it was not the presence of Asaph as such but the act of combining Asaph as “synagogue” with the content of particular psalms that would produce a kind of combustion unparalleled in Augustine and Cassiodorus. It seemed to evoke, for example, an emphasis on a split between the godly and the ungodly in Ps 74, a split that in Luther’s judgment continues to the present day (see also Ps 78 and “Ephraim” there). It also seemed to conjure up some secondary thoughts on Ps 77, where Luther initially frames the discussion in terms of individual remorse but ends up contemplating the psalm’s first person speech as dispatched by a faithful group. Psalms 80–81 and 83 would not by their content threaten the flow of this understanding, as Luther continued to discuss the godly remnant of his own day as existing necessarily among

superscription emerges when one compares Augustine’s interpretations of Pss 14 and 53, where very similar content is given considerably different hearings because of their respective titles.

\(^{189}\) I note some examples of this indifference in the case of Ps 127 in my “Contexts for Hearing: Reevaluating the Superscription of Psalm 127,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 37, no. 2 (December 2012): 190–91.

\(^{190}\) For a learned overview of the phrase “unto the end” in Greek patristic commentary on the psalms, see Paul M. Blowers, “Making Ends Meet: Variable Uses of the Psalm Title *Unto the End* (εἰς τὸ τέλος) in Greek Patristic Commentators on the Psalter,” in *Studia Patristica: Papers Presented at the Fifteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2007*, vol. 44, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 163–75.
the ungodly (“Israel among the Nations”). Just two psalms after Luther completed his treatment of the Asaphite corpus, he glanced back and had this to say in retrospect:

Asaph, in turn [i.e., in relation to David and the sons of Korah], talks mostly about the separation of the wicked from the fellowship of the godly, about the destruction of the ungodly and of the synagog, as is clear from his psalms. And this is perhaps what the significance of the names calls for. … Asaph means ‘gathering,’ the people separated and gathered from those who remain and are not gathered.\(^{191}\)

Why not summarize the Asaphite corpus in terms of the Lord’s first and second comings, as did Cassiodorus?\(^{192}\) Instead, with an emphasis on those gathered and those not gathered, it would only be a short (tropological) step for Luther to associate present-day believers with the believers of old, or with the “faithful synagogue.” For when Luther associates contemporary unbelievers with the unbelieving synagogue (as he did repeatedly throughout Ps 78), with whom other than with the faithful synagogue is contemporary faith to be associated?\(^{193}\)

This is not to suggest that conceptualizing parts of the Asaphite corpus primarily in terms of godly and ungodly gatherings would be a foreign concept to Augustine and Cassiodorus, but it is rather to infer that their gravitation toward the “elite” Asaph, the Asaph of revered repentance or privileged prophecy, severely smothered and tended to restrict the range of hermeneutical implications subsisting throughout the final form of the corpus. The less rigid deployment of a single referent (Asaph) would allow for certain referential extensions in Luther, extensions cultivated by a group of psalms already rich with flock imagery (e.g., 77:20, 78:52, 80:1),

\(^{191}\) LW 11:152 (emphasis added).

\(^{192}\) Cassiodorus 2:307. He writes: “Asaph, who has already made many prophecies in earlier psalms about the Lord’s incarnation, is now in the first section [of Ps 83] to speak of His second coming.”

\(^{193}\) While Luther does not relate contemporary sin to the behavior of the unfaithful synagogue in Ps 74, this is exactly what happens in Ps 78. We also note that the “association” mentioned here between the faithful of both testaments will continue to mature as we progress through the Dictata.
whether in terms of rejection (Ps 74), unfaithfulness throughout history (Ps 78),\(^{194}\) or prayer for a renewed shepherding (Ps 80). One does not need to rely upon locating the exact phrase “\textit{fidelis synagoga}” in order to see that this is indeed the case. It is very much to Preus’ credit that attention was called forth to the prominence of the faithful synagogue in especially the later portion of Luther’s \textit{Dictata}, but his reliance upon finding the exact phrase—the first of which occurred for him at Ps 92(!)\(^{195}\)—limited his ability to see the significance of the sacred assembly blossoming in relation to the final arrangement of the Hebrew Psalter.

This raises a related issue: the extent to which Luther’s conceptuality of (and identification with) the faithful synagogue develops as he moves \textit{from psalm to psalm}. If Hendrix is right to point out that the phrase itself tends to be a moving target in the medieval tradition,\(^{196}\) one ought to be hesitant to offer up a finalized definition of Luther’s understanding of the faithful synagogue too prematurely.\(^{197}\) While it may be true that Luther depicts the Asaph of Ps 73 as wrestling with issues of faith congenial to NT idiom (especially à la 1 Cor 1), when Luther moves to the opening verse of Ps 74 and concludes that the faithful group is pleading on behalf of the unfaithful group, this sort of nuance (and others like it, such as God’s working on the faithful through the opposite appearance, as noted in Ps 83) must factor into any conclusion

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\(^{194}\) Luyten reminds us that these examples of Israelite unfaithfulness are not offered up in some narrowly historicistic fashion either, as Ps 78 is “the only one in which the invocation of history is pictured as the giving up of \textit{mašal} and \textit{ḥīdōt}, ‘parable’ and ‘enigmas’ (v. 2), as a cryptic lesson concerning the future” (J. Luyten, “David and the Psalms,” in \textit{The Psalms: Prayers of Humanity, Prayers of Israel, Prayers of the Church: A Tribute to Jos Luyten} [Leuven: Abdij Keizerberg, 1990], 64). Cf. Ps 107:43 and Hos 14:10.

\(^{195}\) Preus, \textit{From Shadow to Promise}, 216n12. All of the material in this chapter, therefore, Preus relegates as belonging to the category of the “medieval Luther.”

\(^{196}\) Hendrix points out in his discussion of the medieval psalms literature that even if two interpreters define the faithful synagogue in a generally similar way, “The emphasis can vary, however, within this general definition” (\textit{Ecclesia in Via}, 125).

\(^{197}\) We recall, for example, Luther’s somewhat offhanded usage of the term to denote the remnant of Israel all the way back at Ps 42 (\textit{LW} 10:196).
on the issue. Again, these observations are not intended to suggest that Luther is at every
psalm having yet another “breakthrough” moment of some sort; he is still very much saturated
with Augustinian intuitions throughout every psalm analyzed in this chapter. Nor is it to suggest
that this so-called conceptualization is in any way a uniform matter; Ps 77, as we saw, showed
some recalibration across Luther’s two treatments, while some psalms within the Asaphite
corpus (e.g., Pss 75 and 82) were transmitted in rather conventional ways (more on these below).
Rather, we simply argue the necessity of appraising Luther’s variations collectively in order to
gain any kind of sure purchase on his own understanding of the matter of the faithful synagogue.
This is what we mean by “distinct conceptualization” above.

2.3.2 Canonical Reflections
Thus far we have limited our concluding thoughts to the significance of Asaph among the
Asaphite corpus. We now broaden our scope to include the first two books of the Hebrew
Psalter.

Luther clearly had the option in the case of Ps 50 to follow Cassiodorus by using the phrase
“faithful synagogue” to denote the remnant of Israel, and yet, as we saw above, he does not
pursue it and barely mentions Asaph. Is this because Luther does not sense in the content of a

198 Admittedly, it is not always clear (and at times simply impossible) to know when Luther has in mind only the
pre-incarnation remnant of Israel, regardless of whether or not he uses the term “faithful synagogue.” What is clear,
however, is that as early as Ps 74 Luther operates at all parts of the spectrum: a focus on the OT people only (“so the
people of the synagog were then holy by faith in the coming incarnation” \[LW 10:452]\), a focus on both the OT
remnant alongside the NT group (“the primitive church is the ‘scepter,’ namely, sprung up from the synagog as from
a root” \[LW: 10:436]\), or just the NT setting (“[Asaph] sees the future treachery of the Jews…” \[LW 10:452]\). Our
analysis of Ps 74, therefore, is at odds with two claims of Preus: that the “‘remnant’ idea” itself was first introduced
at Ps 89 and that the term “[‘remnant’] first designates a genuinely Old Testament remnant in [Ps 119]” (\textit{From
Shadow to Promise}, 216n12 and 215n11, respectively). See the related discussion in the next chapter addressing
“Preus on Luther at Psalm 89.”

199 Hendrix rightfully faulted Preus for his failure to find the phrase in the medieval tradition (\textit{Ecclesia in Via},
279n), but Hendrix overlooks the uniqueness of Luther’s own movement through the Asaphite corpus.
psalm pulsating with God’s righteous pronouncements against the wicked any “pressure,” as it were, to reflect on any kind of bifurcation within the synagogue itself? That is to say, it is simply given that there will be a final judgment, and Luther finds Cassiodorus’ eschatologically charged reading suitable enough for the task. How much human gilding, after all, is possible on phrases such as “The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge!” (50:6)? A similar question applies to Pss 75 and 82, where, again, the heavily oracular nature does not present the kind of intricacies that other Asaphite psalms would for Luther, essential though these psalms are in order to augment, in my judgment, the severity of the unfaithfulness addressed throughout the corpus from the very beginning (so Ps 73:27: “you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you” [ESV]).

From a different perspective, Luther’s handling of earlier corporate laments without Asaph in the superscription (Pss 44 and 60) did not show much variation from Augustine and Cassiodorus or a struggle with the nature of the synagogue. The addition of Asaph to the title of a corporate

200 Mitchell summarizes Ps 50 in this way: “Command to ingather Israel to judgment. God pronounces sentence. The righteous will be delivered in the day of hostility, the wicked torn to pieces” (David C. Mitchell, The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms [Sheffield: Academic Press, 1997], 106).

201 Luther spends much effort at Ps 75 expounding the “cup of pure wine, full of mixture” (75:8), which for him signifies Scripture, “mixed” with letter and spirit. Those “drinking” according to the letter receive judgment, which, Luther recalls, Asaph had already addressed at Ps 50:16: “But to the sinner God said: ‘Why dost thou declare statutes?’” See LW 10:458–64 (here 463). Regarding the bulk of Ps 82, Luther first follows Augustine’s sensitivity to anthropomorphisms (“God has stood...” [82:1]) by insisting that they must always refer to “Christ in His blessed humanity” (LW 11:110). He then contemplates the various senses in which “You are gods” (82:6) can apply to the Jews.

202 Luther summarizes Ps 75 with the following description: “Christ warns the synagogue not to incur judgment and condemnation through its haughty rebellion for the present and for all time...” (WA III, 510, 6–7: “Monet Christus Synagogam, ne per suam superbam rebellionem incurrat iudicium et damnationem pro praesenti et simul omnes...”). Psalm 82 receives this notation: “Concerning the incarnate God, standing amid the prelates of the synagogue and confuting them” (WA III, 618, 31: “De Deo incarnato stante in medio prelatorum Synagogae et eos arguente”). For modern summaries of these psalms, see Mitchell, Message of the Psalter, who labels Ps 75 as “Praise. Divine oracle. God’s judgment is near” (106), and Psalm 82 as “The first result of divine intervention in response to the remembering rite is the judgment of the tutelary deities of the nations” (107).
lament, however, would conjure up certain adjustments in Luther’s handling of that type of
psalm, as we saw above. Simply put, then, it would take the Asaphite corpus to pressure Luther
to conceptualize further the character of the faithful synagogue. I choose the word “origins” for
the title of this chapter quite deliberately in order to emphasize the distinctiveness of what
happens there as opposed to earlier in the Dictata.\textsuperscript{203} Preus once spoke of the origins of the
faithful synagogue as being born of a “hermeneutical situation.”\textsuperscript{204} That “situation” has been
brokered \textit{in the very nature the Asaphite corpus does its work}, superscriptions and all, so long as
the dynamics of this canonical achievement are not evacuated by “\textit{a certain kind of christological
excessiveness.”}\textsuperscript{205}

Finally, as indicated earlier, we offer a suggestion as to why Luther entertained an additional
understanding to the nations in Ps 83. We noted for both Pss 60 and 83 that Luther leaned
directly on Augustine for the etymologies of the names involved, and that in Ps 83 he
supplemented these meanings by claiming that they can also be understood in the exact opposite
manner of what their names imply. Was this nuance generated by Luther’s lengthy discourse on
the work of God hidden underneath the opposite appearance at Ps 73? While it is certainly to be
granted that various dualisms pervade the whole \textit{Dictata} (often presented as ultimately resolved

\begin{footnotes}
\item[203] Interestingly, Cassiodorus spoke of the meaningfulness of repeating Asaph within the corpus when commenting
on the last psalm therein: “this Asaph has been purposefully introduced into eleven psalms earlier, so that the
adamantine hearts of the Jews might be beaten and softened by frequent mentions of the synagogue” (Cassiodorus
2:312).
\item[204] Preus, \textit{From Shadow to Promise}, 215. The full quote is this: “For Luther, the hermeneutical situation is now
ripe for the ‘faithful synagogue’ to be born. This same kind of thinking leads Luther to introduce the notion of a
‘remnant.’”
\item[205] Christopher R. Seitz, “Psalm 34: Redaction, Inner-Biblical Exegesis and the Longer Psalm Superscriptions—
‘Mistake’ Making and Theological Significance,” in \textit{The Bible as Christian Scripture: The Work of Brevard S.
\end{footnotes}
in the person of Christ), and that Luther stresses the hiddenness of faith in a variety of ways, the reality of God working through not just hiddenness but the downright opposite for the sake of faith is nowhere else discussed at such length in the Dictata as at Ps 73. We think it fair to surmise, therefore, that this may have contributed to the added breadth of his remarks at Ps 83.

206 This characteristic is often noted in studies of the Dictata. See Marc Lienhard, Luther: Witness to Jesus Christ: Stages and Themes of the Reformer’s Christology, trans. Edwin H. Robertson (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982), 43, as well as Jared Wicks, Man Yearning for Grace: Luther’s Early Spiritual Teaching (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968, 41–94). Gerhard Ebeling famously construed Luther’s dualistic thinking by means of existential theology, which encompasses “two opposing modes of man’s situation before God” (“The New Hermeneutics and the Early Luther,” Theology Today 21, no. 1 [April 1964]: 43; see also his “The Beginnings of Luther’s Hermeneutics,” Lutheran Quarterly 7, no. 2 [Summer 1993]: 129–58; no. 3 [Autumn 1993]: 315–38; no. 4 [Winter 1993]: 451–68 [esp. no. 1, 140–50]). An extensive treatment of the issue with a reaction to Ebeling can be found in Steven E. Ozment, Homo Spiritualis: A Comparative Study of the Anthropology of Johannes Tauler, Jean Gerson and Martin Luther (1509–16) in the Context of Their Theological Thought (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 87–138. For specific examples of the motif throughout the first seventy-five psalms, see LW 10:105, 123, 148, 175, 180–81, 190, 192, 238, 243, 250, 278, 318, 383, and 405. Luther himself, of course, would be a man of famous contrasts throughout his life (e.g., saint and sinner, kingdom of the left/right, law and gospel, and so on).

207 We also recall that Luther had already integrated aspects of this understanding at Pss 77 (second treatment) and 78 as well. To state the matter “canonically,” one must “enter into the sanctuary” (Ps 73:17) for the kind of profound faith necessary to remain in the faithful flock.
Chapter 3
The Integration of the Faithful Synagogue, Part I: Psalms 84–106

3 Introduction

At this point in our investigation it is entirely possible that the origination of the faithful synagogue as demonstrated in the previous chapter is a kind of self-contained phenomenon within the Dictata, emerging simply because of a few subtle variations in Luther throughout the Asaphite corpus without having any bearing whatsoever on his exegesis of subsequent psalms. In this chapter we will see that this is not the case. Here, then, we set out to answer how Luther’s distinct conceptualization of the faithful synagogue throughout the Asaphite corpus can be said to have influenced his upcoming work on the rest of Book III and throughout Book IV of the Psalter.

What exactly does one look for as evidence of such an “influence” taking place on Luther? We suggest, given the specific scope of this study, that a reasonable method—and in large measure we have already been doing this—is to identify not only where Luther 1) considers the faithful synagogue to be the speaker of a psalm, or 2) focuses on the coming of Christ’s incarnation, or 3) emphasizes a split between the godly and the ungodly of the synagogue, or 4) associates the faith of the OT with the faith of the NT, or 5) discusses in a more general way the OT frame of reference (e.g., the “saved remnant”), but to identify any number of such occurrences precisely where Augustine does not. This is to suggest, for example, that if Augustine puts forward the

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208 As Cassiodorus was included in the last chapter primarily for his apparent coinage of the phrase “faithful synagogue,” and as our investigation will increasingly engage the works of Preus and Hendrix, in this chapter we must limit our primary source texts to those of Luther and Augustine.
NT church as the speaker of a psalm where Luther places it into the mouth of the faithful synagogue, or if Augustine refers the psalm’s text to the second coming of Christ where Luther relates it to the first, or if Augustine sees a split between the OT and the NT where Luther would rather envision a split between the faithful and the unfaithful of the synagogue, and so on, then it is at least plausible that the notion of a faithful synagogue as previously conceptualized by Luther in the Asaphite corpus has been carried forward, as it were, and become constitutive to some degree in his later expositions. In order to enhance such plausibility, we will also be making periodic checks, as in the previous chapter, with Luther’s work on similar material from earlier in the Psalter where it is thought suitable to do so (e.g., Ps 101 and Ps 26 are both very similar Davidic “psalms of innocence”).

The first part of this chapter analyzes Luther’s work on the rest of Book III (Pss 84–89). Here Luther reenters the terrain of “the sons of Korah,” a title first appearing in Pss 42–49 (except for Ps 43, perhaps originally combined with Ps 42) and now reappearing throughout Pss 84–88 (save the Davidic Ps 86). Although Luther would at first emulate Augustine’s unwavering interpretation of “Korah” as denoting “baldness,” we will see below how Luther offers a different kind of pronouncement on the Korahite psalms upon revisiting the corpus for a second time. We bring the first part of the chapter to a close after an engagement with Preus’ account of Luther’s remarks at Ps 89.

The second part of this chapter is devoted to Luther’s movement throughout Book IV (Pss 90–106), where one will see some intriguing nuances in how he handles the transition to Moses (Ps 90) vis-à-vis Ps 89, the role of the synagogue in the enthronement psalms (Pss 93–99), and the reemergence of David in Ps 101. The work of Preus comes to the fore for a second evaluation at
Ps 102, while Luther’s descriptions of OT faith for Ps 105 presents an opportunity to weigh in on an exchange between Preus and Hendrix.

It will be the aim of this chapter to demonstrate that, in relation to Augustine, Luther’s lectures on the rest of Book III and throughout Book IV show an increased preoccupation with the OT perspective because of the influence that the faithful synagogue had on him throughout the Asaphite corpus. The conclusion to this chapter will address both aspects of that argument—Luther’s attentiveness to the OT perspective as such and the influence of the faithful synagogue—with an individual section for each claim.

3.1 The Faithful Synagogue throughout the Rest of Book III: Psalms 84–89

3.1.1 Psalm 85: Mercy and Truth in One Person

3.1.1.1 Augustine on Psalm 85

Relying on an interpretation said to be deeply rooted in “early commentators,” Augustine perpetuates the longstanding view that the word “Korah” denotes baldness (from the root קָרַח) and invites association with the mocking of the baldness of Elisha (2 Kgs 2:23–24), himself a type of the One who would also be mocked at Calvary.209 “Sons of Korah,” then, are none other than the children of Christ crucified. Augustine is consistent on this throughout both Korahite corpuses.

Psalm 85 lends itself nicely to an account of affairs found in several of Augustine’s expositions (Ps 22 is an instinctual example for him), namely, that “[the prophet] expresses himself in the past tense” and yet “speaks of future events as though they were already past, because with God what to us is future is already accomplished.” To have captivity reversed (85:2) is to have sins forgiven in Christ, to have God’s anger desist (85:5) is to be given new life in the resurrection, to speak of truth springing up from the ground (85:11) is to speak of the incarnation, and so on. All of this, by way of reminder, is privileged information for the psalmist; Augustine reiterates at verse eight (“I will listen to what the Lord God speaks within me”) that “God was speaking to him within, in a hidden way, and the world was raising its din for him outside.”

It is not the case, of course, that Augustine sees no usefulness for NT believers to take up the words of the psalm as their own. When he approaches his version of verse eight (“Show us, Lord, your mercy”), for example, and concludes that the psalmist yearns for Christ, he admonishes Christians to do the same: “Let us echo it: Grant us your Christ. Yes, it is true that he has given his Christ to us already, yet let us go on saying to him, Grant us your Christ.”

Even so, his approach to verse ten (“Mercy and truth have run to meet each other”), a special point of focus for our section on Ps 85, is fairly characteristic: “Truth is in our land, the land personified by the Jewish nation. Mercy is in the lands of the Gentiles.” Interestingly, Augustine does not belabor the OT/NT dichotomy on this occasion but rather spends his time

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211 EP 4:212.
discussing justice and peace in a straightforwardly anthropological kind of way: “You want to attain peace, then? Practice justice.”

3.1.1.2 Luther on Psalm 85

Rather than recapitulate the tradition’s baldness motif for Korah as noted above with Augustine, Luther at Ps 85 reflects on the Korahite psalms as a whole and, as he did with Asaph in the conclusion to the previous chapter, senses that a certain degree of correspondence exists across the content appearing under the name “sons of Korah.” At the beginning of his scholia for Ps 85 he offers the following observation:

The Sons of Korah have the prophetic spirit almost always for Christ’s incarnation rather than for His Passion. Thus any one prophet seems to have the Spirit more for one matter than for another. Hence the sons of Korah rarely speak about the Passion, but almost always speak with joy about Christ’s incarnation and His marriage with the church, so that also their psalms are joyful and full of mirth. … The sons of Korah are many, denoting the new people of faith who were born spiritually of water and the Holy Spirit (John 3:5), as Christ was born of the Virgin. This is the mystical incarnation of Christ, that He is born in them spiritually, indeed, that they are born of Him. Therefore every one of their psalms echoes this twofold birth, namely, of Christ the Head and of the church, His body.

So whether it be a longing to enter into the house of God (Pss 42 and 84), the city of God (Pss 46, 48, and 87), or a kind of royal marriage that was, in a theocratic manner of speaking, with God (Ps 45), the “sons of Korah” spoke of both the first coming and the spiritual coming, or of Christ’s incarnation and an individual’s rebirth. The prefigurement of Korah is “twofold.”

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215 Martin Luther, Luther’s Works, vol. 11, First Lectures on the Psalms II: Psalms 76–126, ed. Hilton C. Oswald (St. Louis: Concordia, 1976), 152. Hereafter this volume will be cited as “LW 11:(page number).” We note here that the first “sons of Korah” psalm in the second Korahite corpus, Ps 84 (not included in our study), expresses a deep longing to be in the house/courts of the Lord (“How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!” [Ps 84:1 ESV]).
We gain clarity on how this takes shape exegetically when we examine especially the second half of Luther’s work on Ps 85, a psalm said to pivot entirely around the incarnation: “In the first [part] the psalmist gives thanks for the blessing of the coming incarnation; in the second he prays for it to come, and in the third he foretells that it will come.”216 With the exception of positing several different meanings for “land” in the psalm’s opening phrase, Luther moves through the first few verses in a way reminiscent of Augustine: the psalmist speaks of spiritual forgiveness (85:1–3) and the wrath for those turning away at the time of Christ (85:4). But when we arrive at verse seven (“Show us Thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us Thy salvation”), we are told that this supplication addresses not the second coming (Augustine) but “the first advent and first showing of the Lord Christ,” and instead of Augustine’s “hidden” prophet of the following verse (“I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me…”), Luther notes that “[the psalmist] speaks in the person of the faithful people.”217

The significance of these subtle shifts surfaces when we reach our point of focus mentioned above: “Mercy and truth have met each other; righteousness and peace have kissed” (85:10). Of the four different meanings that Luther entertains for the word “truth,” the one that he felt “fits better to the theme” is “the faithful setting forth of what was promised….” He continues: “Thus Christ is the Truth, because He showed forth the promise made to the fathers concerning Him, so that God might be true in His promises, since the salvation which He promised has been given.” That Luther here leans on Lyra in order to concur that “mercy and truth” have met in the person

216 LW 11:164. Luther’s overall summary for the psalm reads “Concerning the gracious incarnation of God in the blessed land of the Virgin Mary” (WA IV 1, 4: “De gratiosa incarnatione Dei in benedicta terra virgine Maria”).

217 LW 11:159 (emphasis added). Luther also hears this dynamic implied within the very verse itself: “Since he had said ‘in me’ above, he is speaking in the person of the people or as a part of the people” (161). Again, in a different way, Luther further adds that “though these words are applied to the prophet himself, hearing these words of the psalm, yet they are marvelous and more fitting if they are applied to the whole people of Christ” (160).
of Christ is certainly one aspect to his remarks, but he would choose to proceed not by connecting the OT with the NT in some kind of “interlinked chain” (Cassiodorus) but by elaborating on the selfsame reliability of the promises of God to the people of both testaments on the basis of the “faithful people” receiving the “first advent.”\textsuperscript{218} This logic is not by any means revolutionary, but it depicts in Luther a preference to speak at length here not of anthropology (Augustine) or of the two natures of Christ or of other conceivable allegorical alternatives but of the notion of “promise,” a word that recurs nearly thirty times for various purposes throughout his explanation of just this one verse. This reality of divine reliability, of course, continues to the present day: “God threatened evil to the unbelieving Jews and [allegorically] this has now become truth, because He has fulfilled it also in all who imitate them, such as heretics and others. But to the [OT?] believers and those who fear Him He promised good, and this has likewise now become a fact in Christ.”\textsuperscript{219}

With this in place, it was perhaps natural for Luther to conclude his treatment of Ps 85 by locating tropology within the twofold significance of the Korahite corpus (i.e., the first coming and the spiritual coming), a discussion that also happens to incorporate verse ten:

\begin{quote}
For whatever is said about the first coming into the flesh is understood at the same time (\textit{simul}) with regard to the spiritual coming. In fact, the coming into the flesh is determined and comes into being because of that spiritual coming. Otherwise it would have done no good. Hence also these words “mercy and truth” cannot be affirmed of Christ except because of His second advent, and for that reason it is chiefly intended.\textsuperscript{220}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{218} \textit{LW} 11:165.
\item \textsuperscript{219} \textit{LW} 11:167. Luther’s gloss to this verse is very similar, where “truth” is described as “the fulfillment of the promise” (WA IV 2, 20: “impletio promissi”).
\item \textsuperscript{220} \textit{LW} 11:174. For an extended treatment on Luther’s “advent” schematization, see the discussion below at Ps 102. Recall also a related remark from Luther at Ps 80 in the previous chapter.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Again, this is not a paradigm unprecedented in the tradition—Preus ably demonstrates how this remark is still very much at home with earlier medieval accounts of tropology within a fourfold conceptualization—"Luther is not yet working with the ‘promise-advent’ scheme programmatically sketched in Ps. [114]:1. The theological reasoning in Psalm [85] is entirely different" (James Samuel Preus, From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther [Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969], 237n25). One wonders, however—and at this point in our investigation it is still too early to know—if the preceding quote above (beginning “God threatened…”) can be said to contain a nascent form of what Preus has in mind. Either way, while it may be true that this quote is indispensable for the complex issue of Luther’s account of the tropological sense throughout the Dictata, it is going entirely too far to suggest, as Tsai does, that Luther at Ps 85 exhibits “new theology” or undergoes some kind of an “evangelical breakthrough” (Lee-Chen A. Tsai, “The Development of Luther’s Hermeneutics in his Commentaries on the Psalms” [PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1989], 133n187 and 167, respectively).

but the point is that Luther continues to operate with the twofold advent schema of “Korah” fresh in mind throughout Ps 85, a feature on which we will continue to expound throughout this chapter.

To summarize: after reiterating the meaning of Korah as “bald” (cf. Elisha in 2 Kgs 2:24–25), Augustine describes “mercy and truth” as pertaining to worldly affairs. For Luther, who chose to describe the Korahite collection in terms of a twofold significance (the first advent of Christ and the spiritual advent in the believer), “mercy and truth” presented an opportunity to emphasize the reliability of God’s promises on the basis of the “faithful people” receiving the “first advent.”

3.1.2 Psalm 87: Shall a Man Say?

3.1.2.1 Augustine on Psalm 87

Here we must devote all of our attention to verse five, whose textual and semantic intricacies allow for several sensible solutions. For the sake of the ensuing discussion we begin by noting that the MT has the following: “And of Zion it will be said, ‘This one and that one (יְשׁוּבֵי אִישׁ) was born in her,’ for the Most High himself will establish her” (87:5 [my translation]). Augustine’s Latin translation of the Septuagint, however, read this: “‘Zion, my mother,’ a man will say, he
who was made man in her, and the Most High himself established her.” One can immediately see various kinds of christological refractions coming into view. For example, does the one born in Zion also speak of Zion? Is the same individual referred to by both occurrences of (יִשָּׂרָאֵל)? Should one speak of Zion as “mother”? If so, in what sense?

Characteristically, and this time exacerbated by the Lord’s mindfulness of “Rahab” and “Babylon” among those listed within the holy city’s foundations, Augustine begins his interpretation by sounding forth a “great mystery.” The answer, he says, lies in verse five above. This is how he navigates through the intricate text:

“Zion, my mother,” a man will say. So it is a man who says, “Zion, my mother,” and through him all these peoples gain entry. … What man? He who was made man in her. He was made man in her, and he himself founded her. How could he have both been made in her, and founded her himself? She must have been founded already for him to be made man in her. Understand it in this way, if you can: “Zion, my mother,” he will say, but it is a man who says this; he was made man in her, but he himself established her not as man but as the Most High. He founded the city in which he was to be born, just as he created the mother from whom he was to be born.  

This account of how the One “by whom all things were made” (Nicene Creed; cf. John 1:3) was himself “made” might be what one would expect from Augustine, given the text as it stood in front of him. When we turn to Luther we are conveniently provided with several other options, both textual and hermeneutical, from the history of interpretation.

### 3.1.2.2 Luther on Psalm 87

Luther first engages the position of Lyra, who sees in the verse a reference to John the Baptist, a man, he reasons, having been sent by God in order to speak to Zion. Next we are presented with Augustine’s explanation, essentially as outlined above, which Luther grants as “an excellent interpretation.” Cassiodorus, however, explains things “less satisfactorily;” Luther did not want
to divide up the verse by having the first “man” spoken by the synagogue along with the second “man” spoken by the church. Paul of Burgos accentuates the sheer magnitude of the mystery at hand when he questions whether a mere man could even say such a thing to Zion (i.e., “Shall a man say to Zion?”), while Hugo of Saint-Cher associates Zion with the Virgin Mary and perceives in the verse a proper confession of the two natures of Christ.\(^{223}\)

Taking into account the textual differences involved, Luther renders his verdict on the interpretations mentioned thus far: “According to our version [the Vulgate], the best among them all is Lyra. According to the Septuagint, Augustine is best.”\(^{224}\) But this would not be the end of the matter. After consulting furthermore the versions found in Faber’s *Quincuplex Psalterium* to gain a better sense of the Hebrew, Luther finally states his own view of verse five in this way:

> But putting aside these things, I will also express my opinion according to our version [the Vulgate]. The prophet, wishing to express the Lord’s advent, thought about this beforehand: “Behold, God has now spoken to His people for a long time as God, not as One who has been made Man. But will it also come to pass that He who has thus far always spoken as God will also speak as Man? Therefore let Him who always speaks in divinity now appear as Man and speak in humanity. Therefore, ‘will a Man speak to Zion,’ that is, will He who always spoke in an alien person set forth speech and talk to Zion herself in His own human person?”\(^{225}\)

Noteworthy here is that Luther does not dive headlong into the NT context before first addressing the text from the perspective of the psalmist (“prophet”), who “wish[es] to express the Lord’s advent.” To be sure, Luther would go on to parse out the inner workings of the verse according to a rich *in Novo receptum* frame of reference, as did many of his predecessors, but he

\(^{223}\) *LW* 11:179–80.

\(^{224}\) *LW* 11:180.

\(^{225}\) *LW* 11:182 (emphasis added).
begins with that which is to be believed: the promised advent. In fact, in a marginal addition,

Luther also includes this important reflection:

Or, it can be put thus, that the word of the prophet is said to the whole people, of which one part denies, but the other affirms, and so, according to our version, he is saying to the unbelieving, “Shall a Man say?” As if to say: “According to you it will not be so, because you will not believe.” So Hab. 1:5 says: “Behold, I am doing a work in your days which no man will believe when it shall be told.” Hence, according to the Hebrew, he is saying to the unbelieving, “A Man will speak to Zion,” but they will not believe this.  

To the unbeliever the prophet poses a condemnatory question: “Shall a Man say?” That is, on Luther’s ear, “According to you it will not be so, because you will not believe.” But to the believer, the question indicates “the greatness of the matter” (cf. Paul of Burgos above), Luther notes a few lines earlier, in that it plainly “seems unbelievable.” With a verse from the opening chapter of Habakkuk as an intertextual lens (“no man will believe when it shall be told”), Luther considers how the same words can resound among both the faithful and the unfaithful of the psalmist’s hearers, envisioning again the same split already encountered several times throughout the previous chapter.

To summarize: Augustine sees in his version of verse five a depiction of the One who both was made man in and founded the city of Jerusalem as the Most High. Luther notes that this is “an excellent interpretation,” yet begins his own account of the matter with the OT setting (“a prophet…the Lord’s advent”) and thinks through how the same text (“Shall a Man say?”) can be applied to both the faithful and the unfaithful of the synagogue.

226 LW 11:179 (emphasis added).
3.1.3 Psalm 89: Divine Rejection

Psalm 89 marks not only the close of Book III (Pss 73–89) but a climactic moment in the final form of the Hebrew Psalter: the accusation that God has rejected his covenant with David. Nearly every account of the shape and shaping of the Psalter relies heavily on this psalm, while even those inclined to isolate it from its canonical context can easily recognize the magnitude of what is at stake. Psalm 89 is also a text that Preus uses at some length to describe Luther’s understanding of promissio, and so we include a separate section addressing those remarks of his that overlap with the purposes of our study. It also so happens that Luther ventures into a brief discussion of the relationship between Ps 89 and Ps 44 near the end of his scholia, and so that too will constitute a separate section. Finally, because of the psalm’s overall length and the fact that it was clearly the second part of the psalm’s twofold structure moving from praise to accusation that exerted more difficulty on the interpreter than the first (thus Luther: “This psalm is easy except from this verse [38] on”), we narrow our focus to the harsh words directed against God about the rejection of the Davidic dynasty (89:38–52).

3.1.3.1 Augustine on Psalm 89

It was shown in the last chapter how Augustine tended to handle a psalmist’s cry of rejection. Psalms 44, 60, and 74, for example, stirred in him a concern over the danger of longing for temporal things, while Ps 78 was an opportunity to distinguish between the people of the OT from the people of the NT. We were also given repeated assurance that, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, God never actually forsakes anyone.

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227 See the section “A New Approach” in the Introduction and the studies referenced there.

Augustine’s treatment of Ps 89 follows much of this line of reasoning, though it would now come to expression within the context of the Davidic promises. It does not take long for Augustine to state quite plainly that the Davidic line came to an end for an even greater purpose: “To make sure that we would not be so misled God cancelled them as far as David personally was concerned, so that when you see promises which must of necessity find fulfillment somewhere not finding it in David, you are forced to look for someone else in whom they have demonstrably been fulfilled.” Examples from the OT in addition to David then follow (e.g., Solomon), all rehearsed for the purpose of pointing to the greater fulfillment in Christ. While some would argue that God’s dealings in the OT exhibited a blatant disregard for his promises, Augustine “maintain[s] that he brought all this about precisely to establish his promises.” Characteristically, there is also in Augustine’s exegesis the reminder that affliction and persecution in the life of a Christian, evoked this time by his explanation of the “deferment” of the promised seed (“the Anointed was not taken right away, only put off”), are salutary for one’s sanctification.

### 3.1.3.2 Luther on Psalm 89

Like his approach to the perplexing fifth verse of Ps 87 (see above), Luther begins his reflection on the harsh turning point of Ps 89 (“But now you have cast off and rejected…”) with a brief review of the history of interpretation:

> Some apply it to Christ personally, as is shown in the gloss. Lyra applies it to David personally and to his literal kingdom. Third, blessed Augustine and Cassiodorus refer it to the destruction of Jerusalem. Fourth, it can be understood as referring to the

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229 EP 4:295. Again, “consider what happened to [David], in order that the good things of the promise might be hoped for yet more eagerly in someone else, and in that other be realized” (296). We are also informed by Augustine that David himself realized this.

persecution of the church under martyrdom. Fifth, it may also refer to the destruction of
the church because of the scandals of wicked Christians.  

With these options in mind, Luther considers the more jarring verses of Ps 89 in a variety of
ways. Verse thirty-eight (“But Thou hast rejected and despised; Thou hast been angry with Thy
Anointed”), for example, describes the prophet foreseeing the rejection of Christ, which, we are
reminded, persists to the present day as “only a small minority has accepted Him.”  
Verse thirty-nine (“Thou hast renounced the covenant of Thy servant”) invites contemplation over
how a covenant can be rejected in the first place, where Luther reasons, much like Augustine would,
that it has now been “transferred” over to the Gentiles. A few lines later we encounter an
explanation of how one can and should relate a rejection of God’s people to the rejection of
Christ:

Thus “Thou hast rejected him,” that is, His people, some of the Jews in a good sense,
some in a bad sense. These things came to the latter for destruction, to the former for
salvation. Faith makes the difference. Therefore this should be explained as applying to
both at the same time (de utroque debet exponi simul). Hence the apostle in Rom. 8:36
cites Ps. 44:22, which, however, speaks of the evils of the Jews, just as Isaiah does …

The psalm’s notes of rejection, we are told, can apply to Christ, to the godly synagogue (“the
evils of the faithful”), and to the ungodly synagogue all at the same time.  

The split so often pointed out in previous psalms is still fresh in mind for Luther, as “the prophet’s word,” to cite

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231 LW 11:189.
232 LW 11:189.
233 LW 11:190 (emphasis added).
234 Later on Luther would add a few more thoughts on how the rejection of the ungodly synagogue corresponds to
the rejection of Christ during his explanation of the first half of verse forty-four (“Thou hast destroyed him from
purification…”): “you must note that as they dealt with Christ in the flesh, so it was to happen also to them. For as
they defiled, destroyed, and killed Christ as man, it was already prefigured in that very fact that the whole body of
the synagog was also to be defiled, destroyed, and killed after the flesh…” (LW 11:191). In the case of the godly
synagogue, of course, Luther envisions the prophet praying “that they be punished for their good” (192).
another clear instance, “is directed to his entire people, among whom some are evil, some good.” Consequently, Luther is at liberty to assign particular verses as coming from the lips of the faithful group (e.g., 89:44, 50).

It is here, at last, in Luther’s treatment of the last few verses of Ps 89 where one finds a reiteration (contra Preus; see below) of the notion of a saved “remnant.” The prophet, says Luther, also “prays that the remnant of Israel be saved…” Similar terms are then used to expound on God’s renouncing of the covenant “of Thy servant” (89:50):

“...You overthrew His covenant (pactum) with You, namely, by the majority of the people through their unbelief, and by us through nonhelp in persecutions.” Thus with the same words he describes and laments the destruction of the whole people. Of whom one part (namely, the remnant) according to the flesh and in public was only destroyed and rejected, while the other part (namely, the reprobate) was rejected and destroyed according to the spirit and inwardly, indeed, these were finally destroyed and rejected in both ways.

Because this last quote was used at key junctures in the work of Preus on the motif of promissio in the Dictata, we address Luther’s remnant discussion via an engagement with Preus’ study in the next section below.

3.1.3.3 Preus on Luther’s Interpretation of Psalm 89

There are two chapters in Preus’ From Shadow to Promise that incorporate Luther’s remarks on Ps 89: “The New Hermeneutical Divide” and “The Faithful Synagogue.” In the first, where Preus sets out to show that eventually a “hermeneutical divide” transpires in the Dictata not so

235 LW 11:193.

236 For the second half of verse forty-four (“Thou hast cast his throne to the ground...”), Luther remarks that “the whole psalm, as I have said, is the voice of the faithful people concerning the synagog and the kingdom of David and Christ, bewailing the destruction of the synagog and of their own afflictions” (LW 11:192 [emphasis added]). At verse fifty Luther notes that “Here the faithful people pray for themselves...” (193).

237 LW 11:193 (emphasis added). I have purposefully emphasized what Preus has in his quoting of the same text for the sake of the ensuing discussion (see From Shadow to Promise, 215).
much between the two testaments but within the OT itself, he turns to Luther at Ps 89 for what
appears to be a twofold purpose: to illustrate the traditional and to project the unanticipated.

First he explains:

Early in the Dictata, when Luther mentions the “eternal testament” or the “eternal
law” of God, he gives no indication that he conceives of these as having been a living
reality in the old Israel, except to prophets and such spiritual elite as were able to
penetrate to the real meaning of Israel’s religion. Any reference to something “eternal”
triggers in Luther’s mind thoughts of Christ, the Church, and New Testament faith. A
good example of this response to the text is Luther’s handling of Psalm [89], … the
words wherein God makes great promises to David are pressed by the interpretation into
promises made to Christ. 238

But then Preus notes astutely in a gloss for the same psalm that “at one point, however, the
testament made with Moses is contrasted with ‘my [God’s] testament,’ identified as the promises
made in the prophets, which will be fulfilled.” 239 While Luther does not here specify the
recipients of such promises—“whether to the Old Testament people, to a few ‘special persons,’
or, as most of the material of the Psalm, to Christ”—the point for Preus is to signal the potential
for some new developments when the OT itself is said to contain both a temporal covenant and
an eternal promise right alongside one another. At Ps 89, Luther would not yet venture into this
potentiality: “In the exegesis of Psalm [89], Luther does not go further into the possibilities latent
in the fact that the Old Testament is not only the book of the old, past, broken, and forgotten
covenant, but also the place in which irrevocable promises were made. He does not ask whether,
among the Old Testament people themselves, this duality was understood.” 240

238 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 201.
239 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 202.
240 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 203.
Leaving to the side the complex issue of what exactly the word “promissio” entails for Luther at various points in the Dictata (the next task for Preus in his chapter), this description of affairs at face value seems persuasive enough. “The kingdom of David and Christ” is a typical way of speaking for Luther at Ps 89, and Preus’ effort to locate the emergence of the motif of promissio within it is erudite and helpful so far as it goes.

Preus would return to the same material from Luther for a second time in his chapter on “The Faithful Synagogue,” a term that for him, as we noted in the previous chapter, designates a group of Israelites said to have been born of a “hermeneutical situation.”241 “This same kind of thinking,” Preus notes in the very next sentence, “leads Luther to introduce the notion of a ‘remnant.’”242 We are then provided with what was our last quote of the preceding section (beginning “You overthrew…”) to demonstrate the fact that Luther is now specifying groups of Israelites by using such phrases as the “major part of the people” and “the remnant,” the latter of which, Preus reminds us, while noteworthy as such, is still being deployed in a sense that includes the NT faithful. As to when exactly the term would begin to encompass only the OT faithful, in Preus’ view, “[‘remnant’] first designates a genuinely Old Testament remnant in [Ps 119].”243

We have already seen in our study of the Dictata in relation to the final form of the Hebrew Psalter, however, that Luther, at least as early as Ps 74, was right at home in using the same kind of expressions throughout the Asaphite corpus; “the saved remnant” (74:1), “the rejected part”

241 For an assessment of this claim, see the conclusion of the previous chapter.
242 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 215 (emphasis added). He makes the same claim again on the following page: “the introduction of the ‘remnant’ idea” (216n12).
243 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 215n11.
(74:1), “angry with the rejected, merciful to the elect” (74:1), “cast off the great majority” (74:2), “the others have altogether rejected” (74:2), “the congregation of the faithful people” (74:2), “the good and the evil were always mixed” (78:9), “not all of Israel was like this” (78:9), “a remnant was saved” (78:38), “the remnant of Israel” (80:1 [x3]), and “the remnant of the elect” (80:10) were just some of the examples noted. Nor can it be objected, in the light of these occurrences, that Luther thus far in the Dictata has not yet operated with what Preus calls “a genuinely Old Testament remnant” in mind. While it is difficult (and at times simply impossible) to know when Luther is conceptualizing only the pre-incarnation remnant of Israel—regardless of whether and where the terms “remnant” and/or “faithful synagogue” appear—it cannot be far from his mind throughout the psalms we have encountered thus far when he frequently also employs such phrases as “the people of the synagog were then holy by faith in the coming incarnation” (74:3), “on behalf of [the psalmist’s] people” (77:7), “the holy people in the past” (83:8), “the Jewish people had prophets and the word of promise” (83:8), and “the Jewish people before His advent” (85:13). To claim that the word “[‘remnant’] first designates a genuinely Old Testament remnant in [Ps 119],” as Preus does, is misleading at best as it draws a plain dividing line on a terrain that is not nearly as straightforward as he would have us believe.244

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244 It is unclear on what basis Preus makes this claim. He notes that, at Ps 119, Luther comments: “‘again, the faithful synagogue calls for Christ, and waits for the gospel of grace’” (From Shadow to Promise, 216). While it may be true that a phrase such as “waits for the gospel” is fresh idiom at that point in the Dictata, it by no means eclipses the much earlier statements from Luther about the synagogue’s “faith in the coming incarnation,” to repeat one of the several examples given above. At times the terms “faithful synagogue” and “remnant” may indeed connote “a genuinely Old Testament remnant,” while at other times Luther may be thinking of what he elsewhere refers to as “the primitive church.” Conversely, Luther may have “a genuinely Old Testament remnant” in mind without having used either “faithful synagogue” or “remnant” in his exegesis. Again, as we saw in the conclusion of the previous chapter and as is becoming increasingly clear also in this chapter, a proper sensitivity to the terminological complexity throughout the Dictata is crucial.
3.1.3.4 Luther on Psalm 44 in Relation to Psalm 89

There remains one last feature in Luther’s comments on Ps 89 to probe before concluding the first part of this chapter, and that is the multiple references that Luther makes to Ps 44 in his discussion of verse fifty (“Remember, O Lord, how your servants are mocked…”). We recall the inclusion of a brief synopsis of Luther’s treatment of Ps 44 in the second part of the previous chapter in order to gain a purchase on how Luther handled communal laments prior to the Asaphite corpus. There we noted a very “Augustinian” admonition to seek the spiritual understanding (in that place Luther called it the “relative sense”) of the text amid the struggles of the Christian life, such that being cast off (44:9) is really being received, being put to shame (44:15) is really being honored, and so on.

With this in mind, it is intriguing to follow carefully how Luther speaks of Ps 44 in relation to what he has already had to say about Ps 89 above. Near the end of his exposition he infers that “since the prophet’s word is directed to his entire people, among whom some are evil, some good, it is therefore similar in thought to Ps. 44. Hence it is also explained according to the fourth mode concerning the holy people; indeed, by putting the third and fourth mode together into one, as Ps. 44 did.” At first glance it is not entirely clear what Luther means by “the third and fourth mode” until it is remembered that Luther began his work on Ps 89 with a numbered list of views from the history of interpretation: “… Third, blessed Augustine and Cassiodorus refer it to the destruction of Jerusalem. Fourth, it can be understood as referring to the persecution of the church under martyrdom.” When Luther refers to “the third and fourth

245 *LW* 11:193.

246 *LW* 11:193 (emphasis added). The full passage is quoted above at the beginning of the section entitled “Luther on Psalm 89.” Luther would elaborate on the relationship between the two psalms in this way: “Thou hast rejected
mode,” then, he is indicating that Ps 89 can refer to “the destruction of Jerusalem” and to “the persecution of the church under martyrdom” at the same time (hence “the third and fourth mode together”).

While it is true that Luther mentions both the destruction of the Jews and the persecution of the church in his explanation of Ps 44, the remnant discussion is not nearly as pronounced there as it is throughout his exposition of Ps 89. Of the two occurrences of the word “remnant” (reliquiae) in his glossae for Ps 44 (it does not appear at all in the scholia), the first is mentioned in conjunction with the NT apostles and the second is used very plainly to describe the opening verse (“…our fathers have told us…” [44:1]). In Ps 89, by contrast, Luther integrates the remnant of Israel in a variety of ways and ultimately concludes that the psalmist is “pray[ing] that the remnant of Israel be saved” (see above). Does Luther’s association of Ps 89 with Ps 44 bring about a kind of reconceptualization of his offhanded references to the remnant at Ps 44? And if so, is this a fine-tuning facilitated by having moved through Book III and especially the Asaphite corpus, with the origins of the faithful synagogue found therein? Admittedly this is saying much more than these brief remarks allow, but these are the kinds of questions that will continue to animate our study.

To summarize: Augustine interprets Ps 89 within the framework of temporal promises coming to an end for the sake of eternal promises. Luther, by contrast, concludes that Ps 89 can be heard as

(so that we do not think of that carnal glory, as Ps. 44:9 says: “But now Thou hast cast us off and put us to shame”) and despised: Thou hast been angry with Thy Anointed (and in Ps. 44:9: “and Thou, O God, wilt not go out with our armies”)."


248 WA III 244, 19 and 35–36, respectively.
a prayer for the remnant of Israel. While Preus may have identified some potential implications from Luther’s comments on Ps 89 for his argument about promissio, he is incorrect to say that Luther “introduces” the idea of a remnant at Ps 89 and misleading (at best) to say that the word “remnant” does not mean “a genuinely Old Testament remnant” until Ps 119. Finally, Luther associates Ps 89 with Ps 44 and speaks of the latter as similar to the former because they both incorporate the notion of a “remnant.”

3.1.4 Summary of 3.1

Our comparison of Augustine and Luther throughout the rest of Book III has generated several observations pertinent to our study. In the case of Ps 85, Luther chooses to describe Korah not in terms of “baldness” (Augustine) but in terms of the whole corpus testifying to a twofold prefigurement: the first advent of Christ and the spiritual advent in the believer. Luther also sees in the phrase “mercy and truth” (85:10) an opportunity to focus on the reliability of God’s promises made to the “faithful people” before the “first advent.” For Ps 87 Luther gives his approval to Augustine’s interpretation of the fifth verse, yet begins his own account from the perspective of its OT setting and contemplates how the same phrase (“Shall a Man say?”) can apply to both the faithful and the unfaithful of the synagogue. Finally, while Luther resonates to a considerable extent with Augustine’s approach to the promises dealt with in Ps 89, Luther concludes that the psalm can also be heard as a prayer for the remnant of Israel, a group he had already integrated at various points earlier in the Dictata (contra Preus). Luther also associates Ps 89 with Ps 44 and considers how both address the remnant of Israel.
3.2  The Faithful Synagogue throughout Book IV: Psalms 90–106

3.2.1  Psalm 90: Moses, Man of God

3.2.1.1  Augustine on Psalm 90

It is not often that Augustine scrutinizes issues of authorship in relation to psalm titles, but we see precisely this in his introductory remarks for the only appearance of Moses in a superscription in the Psalter: “It is by no means to be supposed that this psalm was written by Moses personally, for it is not marked by any of the literary characteristics which are found in the songs he wrote; but the name of so deserving a servant of God was attached to it as an indication of its significance.”249 The exact nature of this “significance” unfolds gradually throughout Augustine’s exposition of Ps 90, and so we will return to this point at the end of our analysis here.

The first several verses of the psalm, with their stark contrast between the transience of human life and the eternality of God, are fairly un-mysterious for Augustine. He admonishes his fleeting hearers to take refuge in the immutability of God, and simply reminds them at verse nine (“For all our days have failed, and we too have failed under your anger”) that mortality is the punishment for sin. As the latter part of the psalm transitions into cries of affliction, so also does Augustine find the opportunity to transition from a human/divine antithesis into an OT/NT antithesis. After conducting a series of allegorical exercises in order to proclaim that the “seventy years” (90:10) represents the OT, Augustine casts verse twelve (“Turn back, O Lord; how long? Be open to your servants’ entreaty!”) into the light of the NT: “This is the voice of

the [Christian] people who under the world’s persecution are suffering much ill-treatment, or, at least, the words are uttered on their behalf. 250 In sum, because Augustine sees in Ps 90 “clear distinctions…between the old life and the new,” his overarching position on the psalm is perhaps best summarized, as indicated earlier, by his concluding thought on the “significance” of Moses’ appearance in the superscription: “so that [those who] search the scriptures may discern by means of the contrasts that the law of God given through the ministry of Moses undoubtedly contained, though in a veiled form, something of what this psalm sets forth. … But for any who make the Passover to Christ the veil will be lifted.” 251

3.2.1.2  Luther on Psalm 90

Interestingly, Luther holds fast to the authorship of Moses for the psalm and describes what is taking place in this way: “Moses is properly speaking of his own people. He foresaw them about to be turned away into the most serious humiliation, as all now see openly. And what is worse, they will go from that into eternal ruin.” 252 After all, Luther reasons, “for whom would a lawgiver pray rather than for his own people?” 253

While such a pronouncement on unbelief could, aside from the issue of authorship, feasibly be right at home in Augustine’s thinking, it becomes increasingly evident that for Luther, Ps 90 has to do not with rejection qua rejection but very much with the kind of rejection that was decried in Ps 89. For example, after referencing Augustine on more than one occasion throughout the

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252 LW 11:197. There is also a marginal comment to the same effect: “But since Moses saw that many of them would turn away, he therefore petitions and prophesies in such a way as if it has already happened” (WA IV 52, 25–26: “Sed quia vidit Moses multos avertendos, ideo petit et ita quasi factum sit prophetat”).
253 LW 11:195.
first few verses of the psalm, Luther explains verse seven ("For in wrath we have fainted away, and we are troubled in Thy indignation") not by a reflection on sin and its cause of human mortality (Augustine) but with his recent formulation of a twofold rejection for the unfaithful synagogue: “they were crushed by a twofold destruction, while the saints were crushed only by a single destruction.” This construal, we recall, was how Luther explained what was taking place in Ps 89, especially in the case of verse thirty-nine (“Thou hast renounced the covenant of Thy servant…”): “These things came to the latter for destruction, to the former for salvation. Faith makes the difference. Therefore this should be explained as applying to both at the same time.”

Again, in the eleventh verse of Ps 90 (“Who knows the power of Thy anger, and for Thy fear can number Thy wrath?”) we are reminded not of Asaph as a model of repentance (Augustine) but of the faithful remnant found throughout the preceding psalm:

*Like the preceding [psalm] this can be said in a more spiritual way about the synagog, upon which came gentleness and it was corrected. But few, and these alone, knew the power of wrath which came upon them, but they still do not know. Hence he says, “Who has known?” that is, almost no one, except only the saved remnant, understood and foresaw this wrath that was to come and that they are bearing now.*

The same “saved remnant” that was just discussed at some length above for Ps 89 is reincorporated by Luther as the appropriate referent for the series of questions asked in Ps 90. One also wonders if Luther’s attentiveness to the relationship between Ps 90 and Ps 89 also explains, at least in part, why he passes over the opportunity to duplicate Augustine’s allegorical interpretation of the “seventy” and “eighty” years in verse ten (i.e., an OT/NT dichotomy) for a

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254 *LW* 11:200.

255 *LW* 11:190 (quoted above more fully in our discussion of Ps 89).

256 *LW* 11:205 (emphasis added).
more down-to-earth meaning: “by these things he wanted to show that the wrath of God is this brevity of life for all, and should therefore be shunned and another sought, namely, in Christ.”

When we reach Luther’s work on the last few verses of the psalm, there appears one more expression that should be quite familiar to us by now, associated this time not so much with Ps 89 as with the psalms leading up to Ps 89. At verse thirteen (“Return, O Lord; how long? And be entreated in favor of Thy servants”), where Augustine had rendered “the voice of the [Christian] people who under the world’s persecution are suffering much ill-treatment” (see above), Luther puts forward the view that “This was done through His gracious incarnation and coming, whether physical or spiritual, which still takes place.” This “incarnation and coming,” we recall, describes perfectly the twofold prefigurement that Luther had discerned as recurring throughout the Korahite corpus. The request of Moses for the Lord to return in Ps 90, then, in this case seemingly receives its interpretive content from a group of psalms through which Luther had recently journeyed (Pss 84–85; 87–88).

To summarize: Augustine renders much of Ps 90 within the antithetical frameworks of human/divine and OT/NT, with the latter antithesis eventually dominating. Luther utilizes some of the human/divine antithesis for his own exposition (the first half of Ps 90 is, of course, rich in this), yet interprets at least three verses with striking correspondence to how he handled some decisive verses of earlier psalms in close proximity to Ps 90, especially those of Ps 89.

257 LW 11:203.

258 LW 11:206. Luther summarizes Ps 90 as “A lament of the condition and misery of humankind and a petition for the advent of Christ” (WA IV 50, 2: “Deploratio conditionis et miseriae humanae et petitio adventus Christi”).
3.2.2 Psalms 93–99: The Lord Reigns, Let the Faithful Synagogue Say

We now follow Luther’s entry into a corpus of praise with a distinct concentration on the Lord’s kingship over all things, a group of psalms often designated in modern scholarship as the “enthronement psalms.” In addition to similar phraseology and thematic motifs (e.g., “The LORD reigns” [93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1]), these psalms also correspond with one another in their near total lack of superscriptions in the MT. “Can it be any coincidence,” Seitz asks, “that these are the psalms in which the kingship of God is proclaimed, extolled, and boldly stated, apparently without need of human agency of the sort familiar elsewhere in the superscriptions of the Psalter?” Leaning on Preus’ assertion about Luther’s approach to the penitential psalms, we think it safe to assume that “Luther can be expected to approach [also all of the enthronement psalms] in roughly the same fashion.” As such, it seems both justifiable and sagacious to continue our investigation by combining Pss 93–99 into a single section for our purposes, paying

259 As the scope of this study necessitates an examination of only those psalms making the strongest contributions to our overall thesis about Luther and the effects of his sequential interpretations, here we must omit Pss 91–92 from detailed analysis. This is not to suggest, as mentioned previously, that Luther at these places is in any way retracting what our investigation has uncovered thus far; Luther summarizes Ps 91 as “an exhortation to right faith” amid the perplexing ways of God (LW 11: 208; cf. WA IV 61, 32–33 and his treatment of Ps 73) and even places Ps 92 into the mouth of the faithful synagogue (WA IV 78, 34–35: “in persona populi fidelis synagoge”). Rather, we continue on with Pss 93–99 simply in order to elucidate Luther’s clearest appraisals of the features listed above in the introduction to this chapter.

260 While the lists vary somewhat among commentators, most would agree that at least Pss 93 and 95–99 belong in this category. Psalm 94 is sometimes excluded, yet its focus on the Lord as sovereign judge is quite consonant with the corpus as a whole.

261 Psalm 98 includes the meager “a psalm” before its content. Wilson relied on these features especially to argue for the “purposeful editorial arrangement” behind all of Book IV (Gerald H. Wilson, Editing of the Hebrew Psalter [Chico, CA: Scholars, 1985], 215). For a structural approach to the same area, see David M. Howard, Jr., The Structure of Psalms 93-100 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997).


263 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 166.
close attention, as usual, to Luther’s deployment of the faithful synagogue and kindred issues after a brief look at Augustine first.

3.2.2.1 Augustine on Psalms 93–99

Unlike the MT, Augustine’s Latin translation of the Septuagint included a superscription for every psalm under consideration here:

Psalm 93 – A song of praise, for David himself, for the day before the Sabbath, on which the earth was established.
Psalm 94 – A psalm for David himself, on the fourth day of the week.
Psalm 95 – A song of praise, for David himself.
Psalm 96 – When the house was being built after the captivity.
Psalm 97 – For David himself, when his land was restored.
Psalm 98 – A psalm for David himself.
Psalm 99 – A psalm for David himself.

As we have already seen on a number of occasions now, these titles, especially when their content is mysterious or otherwise out of the norm (e.g., “Idithun” at Ps 77), can have a considerable influence on Augustine’s interpretation. They are “like notice[s] over a threshold,” he says in one place, telling us “what we are to look for inside.”\(^\text{264}\) Among the psalms listed above, Ps 96 offers another clear example of Augustine’s sustained attention to their hermeneutical import, as he associates nearly every verse of the psalm vigorously with “the house being built,” or, in his view, the Christian church spreading throughout the world.

Even so, unsurprisingly, it does not take the reader long to observe some very familiar allegorical maneuvers from Augustine throughout these enthronement psalms. References to “rivers” (e.g., 93:3), “heavens” (e.g., 96:11), or to anything “lifting up the voice” (e.g., 93:3–4), for example,

\(^{264}\) \textit{EP} 4:360.
generally refer to the apostles and to their apostolic activities (e.g., preaching), without denying the possibility that in some instances the terms can also include all Christians (e.g., “rivers” in 98:8 or “heavens” in 97:6). Similarly, “mountains” can convey the proud (97:5) or strong Christians (98:7), depending on the psalm’s overall thrust. Talk of the Lord donning something (e.g., “He has girded himself” [93:1]) typically bespeaks the incarnation, while bowing down (e.g., 95:6), worshiping (e.g., 95:6), and the mention of sacrifices (96:8) generally suggest the confession of sins. Words such as “light” (e.g., 97:4–5) and “new” (e.g., 96:1; 98:1), of course, cannot but signify Christ and the new life found in him, while coming into God’s presence (e.g., 95:1) or “courts” (e.g., 96:8) has everything to do with living a Christian life of faith. In this way, God takes his throne (93:2) when God indwells in the believer. As usual, pairs of words exhibiting any degree of dualism are often placed into a Jew/Gentile framework; the Lord is clothed in “beauty and strength” (93:1) because those who receive him (Gentiles) find beauty, while those who reject him (Jews) receive a show of strength. In the same vein, “nations” refers to none other than the Gentiles (e.g., 96:3, 10; 98:2), who rejoice after having heard the Lord’s “judgments” of salvation for all people (e.g., 97:8). God coming to judge (e.g., 96:13) is predominantly understood eschatologically, albeit inaugurated with the preaching of the apostles. We also receive strong reminders, especially in Augustine’s treatment of Ps 94, that God’s decrees are always just and salutary for the Christian. In this sense, “clouds and thick darkness” (97:2) can also refer to the obscure ways of God in the life of a believer. And finally, at times Augustine can be completely unpredictable, as in his rendition of the “trumpets” in Ps 98:6: “Ductile trumpets are trumpets made of bronze, hammered out thin and long. If hammering is
needed, is must represent whipping; you, then, will be ductile trumpets, drawn out into a long shape for the praise of God, if you improve when you suffer tribulations.\textsuperscript{265}

Admittedly, these laconic observations hardly do justice to over a hundred pages of Augustine’s exegesis. But at this point, and with these eschatological, ecclesiological, and christological samplings in mind for the sake of reinforcing Augustine’s operational “aura,” we reserve further engagement with Augustine until those places where Luther nuances the former’s approach in line with the interests of our investigation. To those instances we now turn.

\subsection*{3.2.2.2 Luther on Psalms 93–99}

Again, to be clear at the outset, there is no shortage of allegorical duplications in Luther via Augustine throughout Pss 93–99. The floods lifting up their voice (93:3), to cite the first of many possible examples, is still a reference to the apostles in Luther’s view. Even so, at several places one finds some intriguing reconsiderations.

We first note that Luther is continuing to operate with the “twofold destruction” motif in Pss 93–99, a motif certainly not absent in Augustine \textit{per se} yet, as we have seen in the first part of this chapter, something Luther articulates quite distinctly in his discussion of the “single destruction,” to use his language at Ps 90, of the remnant of Israel crying out in Ps 89 (see above). For the opening verse of Ps 94, where Luther references the fifth verse of the same psalm (“Thy people they have brought low”), he writes that “[God] could not save the faithful people in any other way than by oppressing in vengeance those who lead His people astray and destroy them. But

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{265} \textit{EP} 4:462.
He oppresses them either in kindness or in severity.\textsuperscript{266} One’s faith, of course, depends on whether God is afflicting “either in kindness or in severity.” This notion resurfaces in the next psalm: “[God] does not do this in order to cast off, but to change for the better and to receive more fully. But the unwise, who were afraid of being cast off in this, were cast off for the worse. … However, He did not cast off His people, namely, those who were afraid of being cast off.”\textsuperscript{267}

In this way, the “mountains” of Ps 97:5 may very well be a representation of the proud for both Augustine and Luther, but the latter further specifies that it means “most of the synagogue.”\textsuperscript{268}

It is at the second verse of Ps 95 (“Let us come into His presence…”) where Luther clearly widens the range of applicability over and against Augustine’s treatment of the same text when he claims that “This is explained, in the first place, concerning His advent, both the first and the second.”\textsuperscript{269} In Augustine’s view, coming into the presence of the Lord takes place when a Christian behaves in a God-pleasing way: “One and the same man or woman, while standing in the same spot, may approach God by loving him, or withdraw from him by loving iniquity.”\textsuperscript{270}

For Luther, coming into the presence of the Lord includes a longing for the incarnation.

Something very similar happens at Ps 98, although this time we are offered more of Luther’s thinking on the matter. In his discussion of verse three (“All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God”), we are first told that “the psalmist is speaking here in the person or on

\textsuperscript{266} LW 11:243.
\textsuperscript{267} LW 11:257.
\textsuperscript{268} Hence Luther’s gloss: “Mountains, that is the proud of this world and the powers of the age, and most of the synagogue” (WA IV 114, 11–12: “Montes i. e. superbi huius mundi et potestates seculi, maxime synagoge”).
\textsuperscript{269} LW 11:252 (emphasis added).
\textsuperscript{270} EP 4:410. A few lines later he states this even more succinctly: “we move away from God by being unlike him, we also approach him by likeness to him.”
behalf of the person of the future people at the time of Christ.” But when Luther reaches the next verse (“Make a joyful noise, etc.”), he considers the implications of the text were it related to both advents of the Lord, as he did above for Ps 95: “Or it may be the voice of the prophet exhorting the people then present to faith and hope in the coming incarnation and advent of Christ, as if to say: ‘Celebrate all your festivals and sing praise, since, behold, He will come to you, the Son of God is promised you for salvation.”271 For Augustine, both of these verses mean that one should “rejoice, and speak of what makes you happy, if you can. But if you cannot find words for it, shout for joy.”272

What seems to be a reemerging corollary of Luther’s consideration of the pre-incarnation perspective is his recurrent reflection on the faith of the pre-incarnation people. Even when this is undertaken in order to highlight a contrast between the two “faiths” involved according to dispensation (i.e., what we will eventually be referring to as the distinction between the fides revelanda and the fides revelata),273 it is significant for our purposes, nonetheless, that the association is increasingly made.274 For the eleventh verse of Ps 97 (“Light has risen to the righteous and joy to the upright in heart”), for example, Luther leans on Galatians to assert the following:

271 LW 11:272. Luther’s summary notation for Ps 98 is “An invitation to give thanks for the incarnation of the son of God and advent of Christ” (WA IV 117, 21–22: “Invitatio ad graciaurum actionem pro incarnatione filii dei et Christi adventu”).

272 EP 4:461. Augustine’s earlier account of shouting for joy, at Ps 95:2, was very similar: “What is shouting for joy? When we cannot express our joy in words, and yet we want to use our voices to give proof of what we have conceived within but cannot articulate, that is shouting for joy” (411).

273 For more on these terms see the next chapter, and especially the discussion at Ps 112.

274 This is also to imply, by way of projection, that soon even some of Luther’s seeming contrasts will not always be as perspicuous as the following examples given here. See the discussion of Ps 105 below.
The ancient righteous were righteous by faith in our faith, for they believed and put their hope in the faith that was to come, as Gal. 3:23 says: “We were kept under restraint toward that faith that was to be revealed.” … Therefore to those who are righteous by an unformed faith (ex fide informi), that is, by faith in faith, light has arisen, that is, the faith that is now. But others who were only wise after the flesh and were not upright in heart, since they were not looking forward to the future faith, became blind and fell.  

Rather than referring the “light” to “the faith that is now,” as Luther does here, Augustine views the “light” mentioned in verse eleven as “A certain light that does not rise for the unjust, different from the light that dawns on good and bad alike.” And if one were to ask Augustine about receiving it, he would reply in this way: “Do you want to perceive it? Be straightforward of heart. What does it mean, to make your heart straight? Do not be a person of twisted heart in relation to God, resisting his will.”

Another example of Luther relating pre-incarnation faith to post-incarnation faith takes place in the following psalm (98), this time in his discussion of the third verse (“All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God”):

[The psalmist] speaks of the future as of an established fact, for he is much more devout and holy than we. Who believes and awaits the coming glory and punishment so surely as this psalmist and all the prophets believed and hoped for these times of ours? We, too, must think as if we were already in heaven or in hell and were lying in the grave, as they believed, as if they were already in our time, having forgotten their own and present times, always reaching out for what was ahead and still to come.

Although Luther at this place mentions only “this psalmist and all the prophets” and not the faithful synagogue or remnant of Israel, a marginal comment for the same psalm does just that, this time associating the future-orientated faith of the Israelites with the future-orientated faith of the present day: “Or this word can be directed to the people of the synagogue, in order to praise

275 LW 11:269.
277 LW 11:271.
the Lord for the future benefit, concerning which he has prophesied, just as we praise him for eternal glory, which we will receive in the future.”

For Augustine, as we saw above, verse three is simply an exhortation to shout for joy.

Perhaps the best way to summarize the two points being made in the last few paragraphs—that Luther in his work on the enthronement psalms seems to be referring to the incarnation more than Augustine and that, consequently, Luther also tends to reflect on pre-carnation faith in relation to post-incarnation faith—comes to the fore in his brief remarks on the last psalm of the group under examination, Ps 99. Luther introduces his interpretation by contending at the opening verse (“The Lord reigns…”) that “The whole aim of the psalm is to exhort people to exalt Christ, of whom it knew that He would be despised because of His having assumed humanity. For if these words were said about God not incarnate, what need is there of saying them?” The whole point of the psalm, for Luther, revolves around the first advent of Christ. For Augustine, the opening verse of Ps 99 refers to Christ post-resurrection: “Our Lord Jesus Christ has begun his reign, because preaching about him began after he had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven.” And just as we have already seen from Luther earlier in the enthronement psalms, so also here does his conviction about the incarnation give rise to another reflection on the relationship between the faith of those before the incarnation and the faith of

278 “Vel potest hoc verbum ad populum synagogue dirigi, ut dominum laudet pro futuro beneficio, quod supra prophetavit, sicut nos laudamus eum pro eterna gloria, quam futuram accipiemus” (WA IV 118, 33–35).


280 LW 11:277.

those afterward, evoked this time by the mentioning of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel later in the same psalm (99:6):

Therefore you cannot put either Samuel or any prophet on a par with [God], since they are counted not only among those who called on Him, but also among those who now call on Him, that is, they are regarded as the faithful at the time of Christ, for they then called on the same One on whom these now call. As the latter now call on Him, though He is a Man, so the former called on Him then, and He heard them, just as He now hears us or those who now call on Him.\footnote{LW 11:278 (emphasis added).}

All of the faithful throughout both testaments, Luther says here, regardless of proximity to the “earthly Jesus” are to be “regarded as the faithful at the time of Christ.” For Augustine, the OT figures mentioned in Ps 99 serve as compelling examples to reinforce the point “that any of us who are making progress in Christ must not look to be exempt from chastisement.”\footnote{EP 4:481.}

To summarize: Augustine sees in Pss 93–99 a variety of familiar eschatological, ecclesiological, and christological overtones in the light of a his zealous \textit{in Novo receptum} approach. While many traces of this can be identified in Luther, the young Wittenberg professor not only continues to incorporate the twofold destruction motif for the ungodly (along with a “single destruction” motif for the godly) but refers to the incarnation more than Augustine and, consequently, tends to reflect more on pre-incarnation faith in relation to post-incarnation faith.

\textbf{3.2.3 Psalm 101: The Reemergence of David}

\textbf{3.2.3.1 Augustine on Psalm 101}

In what may be a rare exception to his regular practice, Augustine not only overlooks the superscription (“A psalm for David himself”) but prefers to have the first verse assume the position of “threshold” for Ps 101: “The statement in its first verse is a key to what we must look
for throughout the whole of it: *I will sing to you of your mercy and judgment, O Lord.*” The phrase “mercy and judgment,” it turns out, is what most captivates Augustine’s attention and would govern much of his interpretation: “if we take them to refer to two distinct periods of time, we may regard the present time as that of mercy and the future as the occasion for judgment.”

With this frame of reference in place, Ps 101, with all of its first-person declarations of blamelessness, sounds quite naturally on Augustine’s ear as coming either from the person of Christ (e.g., “My eyes were on the faithful of the land, that they might sit down with me”) or, clearly dominant in the case of this psalm, those who make up Christ’s body (e.g., phrases such as “I was wont to walk about in the innocence of my heart in the middle of my house” [101:2], “I did not set before my eyes anything dishonorable” [101:3], and “When someone of ill-will deviated from me, I would refuse to know him” [101:4]). In this way Augustine could portray nearly every verse of Ps 101 as coming from the mouth of *Christians on the day of judgment because of their righteousness in Christ,* a depiction strengthened by his Latin version of the Septuagint text, which renders most of the Hebrew imperfects into the past tense (“I did not…”). Throughout his homily Augustine thus warns against complacency, encourages the disapproval of bad behavior, and admonishes above all else the pursuit of Christ’s interests as one’s present morality is to be carried out in light of a future judgment. Augustine’s concluding paragraph well summarizes our analysis here: “while the time for mercy is still with us, let [the wicked] hearken to [Christ]. He shouts to them in every place…. Observe for yourselves that he


285 As Boulding notes, “The verbs in verses 2-8 of the psalm should be understood as a declaration of intent with regard to the future: ‘I will walk … I will not set before my eyes…..’ But the LXX, and Augustine’s Latin version which derived from it, translated them into Greek and Latin imperfects, thus referring the actions to the past” (*EP* 5:34n6).
is not silent, and that he is sparing us because he is dispensing mercy. But beware: judgment is coming.”

3.2.3.2 Luther on Psalm 101

Far from being content with bypassing the psalm’s Davidic superscription, we discover in Luther’s reflection on the fifth verse (“I did not eat with the proud eye and the insatiable heart”) that he has a serious objection to raise against Lyra’s handling of the matter:

Here at last it is clearly evident that this psalm is only speaking in the person of Him who is God, or rather, of the church, which has the spirit of the Bridegroom. … Hence David could not say, ‘I did not eat with an insatiable heart,’ or, as the Hebrew says, ‘the proud in eye and lofty in heart, with him I could not be.’ For who would always reveal to David what sort of people they were in their heart? Therefore Lyra badly twists this psalm in referring it to David.

Well aware of the sinfulness of the man David (cf. Ps 51), Luther cannot allow the psalm’s overtones of perfection to apply to anyone other than one “speaking in the person of Him who is God, or rather, of the church.” But is this all that Luther would have to say about the speaker of Ps 101?

As we saw above with Augustine, the opening verse of Ps 101 (“Of mercy and judgment I will sing to Thee, O Lord”) would also occupy a good deal of Luther’s initial attention. But instead of framing his entire exposition in terms of a present era of mercy and a future era of judgment (so Augustine), Luther thought it more fitting to state at the outset that both mercy and judgment are very much a present reality in the life of the saints, and for them alone: “in this life both, namely, mercy and judgment, are present only in the saints. In hell there will be only judgment,

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286 EP 5:44.

287 LW 11:290. Luther’s summary for Psalm 101 is “The praise of Christ reciting the purpose of his life to the Father” (WA IV 127, 24: “Laus Christi ad patrem institutum vitae suae recitantis”).
in heaven only mercy, but here *both at the same time.* Knowledge of the self should provoke thoughts of judgment, Luther reasons, while knowledge of God should lead to songs of mercy. (One wonders if “mercy and judgment” could just as well be substituted with “gospel and law” here.) Luther could then fairly easily backtrack—initiated by recalling Rom 3:19 (“whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law”)—in order to consider the correspondence between the present mercy/judgment schema with that of the faithful of long ago:

For, as stated in Rom. 3:19, [the psalmist] is speaking to those who were under the Law, he is speaking first concerning the Jews. Therefore it is mercy in their souls, and judgment in their flesh. Similarly mercy is sung of in the spiritual people who have come to faith, and judgment in the unbelieving people. Thus through mercy and judgment in a tropological sense *one part of the Jewish people was made mercy, while the other part which did not want mercy, fell into judgment and destruction. And this is described throughout the psalm.*

With *this* framework in place, Luther says, Ps 101 can then be extended to include all heretics and evil Christians, as the same mercy/judgment schema spans across both testaments. It would be the psalmist’s assertion of future understanding in the next verse (“I will sing, and I will understand in the unspotted way when Thou wilt come to me”) that would provide Luther with an opportunity to elaborate on his rendition thus far, explaining that “[I will understand] is the first part of the people of mercy. For while the dejected unbeliever weeps, the faithful people sing in the unspotted way. But the former wails in the defiled way. Why? ‘Because I will understand, he will not. I will sing understandingly (that is, in the spirit).’”

Until this point it may be that Luther is still operating with most of his focus on the NT perspective of affairs (e.g., “in the spirit,” and so on). But if the psalm should apply first to the

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288 *LW* 11:284 (emphasis added here and in the preceding citation).

289 *LW* 11:285. Later Luther makes it clear, in case it is not already obvious, that “faith is the unspotted way on which they walk and become worthy to sit with Him and serve Him” (291).
OT situation, à la his recourse to Rom 3:19 above, then it would not be long before Luther adds the faithful synagogue as a possible speaker of Ps 101 as well: “And He speaks in the person of His body, the church [or of the faithful people of the synagog].” And if the faithful synagogue can also be the speaker, it is also not long before Luther again introduces the advent question by his refusal to delimit the psalm into an either/or situation: “But it does not matter whether this be understood of the first advent literally or of the spiritual advent.” Given the phraseology of this last comment, one could wonder if Luther is here expositing a psalm with “sons of Korah” in its superscription (i.e., the “twofold birth” encountered repeatedly above: the first advent of Christ in the flesh and the spiritual advent of Christ in the believer).

Before summarizing this section and proceeding on to the next psalm, it may be advantageous at this point to remind ourselves once again of how Luther interpreted very similar material (i.e., another Davidic “psalm of innocence”) from much earlier in the Psalter to set into greater relief what was just observed here for Ps 101. For this, we look back briefly at Ps 26 before moving on to Ps 102.

3.2.3.3 Luther on Psalm 26

Luther summarizes Ps 26, with all of its first person statements of innocence, in the following way: “A prayer of Christ to the Father, asking to be marked off and separated from Jews who are literal-minded and vain, who are tenaciously incorrigible in adopting an empty, literal understanding.” It is a psalm of understanding things spiritual, Luther says; the first person singular throughout is the voice of Christ, who was delighted with the Father’s truth (26:3) and

290 LW 11:288. The bracketed portion is a marginal addition.
291 “ORATIO CHRISTI AD PATREM petens discerni et segregari a literalibus vanisque Iudaeis in suo vanitatis et literae sensu pertinaciter incorrigibilibus” (WA LV.1.2 230, 1–4).
was not a coward ("ignavus" [26:4]) with spiritual things ("spiritualia"). Yet we are patently reminded how not only Christ but also all of his body may be included here as well: “Christ speaks not only for himself, but also for all those belonging to him. Allegorically, however, it is a prayer of the church against heretics, and tropologically it is a prayer of the soul seeking to be separated from the suggestions and temptations of the flesh, the world, or the devil.” In sum, there is no talk here of any “advents,” the incarnation, or much less of a “faithful synagogue.”

To summarize: Augustine frames his exposition of Ps 101 around an era of mercy (present) and an era of judgment (future), where most of the psalm depicts the kinds of (past tense) statements spoken by Christians on the last day. Luther views “mercy and judgment” (101:1) as a present reality for (only) the saints and retrojects this schema onto the faithful of the OT as well when he argues that the psalm could be spoken by the faithful synagogue in anticipation of Christ’s first advent. For a very similar Davidic “psalm of innocence” earlier in the Psalter (Ps 26), Luther showed none of this.

3.2.4 Psalm 102: The Threefold Advent

It may not launch into the kind of onslaught against God that Ps 89 does (see the discussion above), but Ps 102 happens to evoke in Luther a far-reaching comment that for our purposes will take an additional section to unpack properly. After our initial, customary comparison of Augustine and Luther, we again revisit the work of Preus, who incorporates Luther’s treatment of Ps 102 into several places of his argumentation about promissio. We also note here that the overall length of Ps 102 compels us to narrow our scope to only those parts of the psalm where

292 “loquitur Christus non tantum pro se, Sed etiam omnibus suis. Allegorice autem Est petitio Ecclesie contra hereticos, et tropologice Est petito anime petentis separari a carnis vel mundi vel diaboli suggestionibus et tentationibus” (WA LV.1.2 230, 16–19).
the divergences are most pronounced between Augustine and Luther. In this case, those areas are the superscription, verses 1–4, and verses 19–20.

3.2.4.1 Augustine on Psalm 102

Augustine’s association of Christ with the “poor one” of Ps 102’s superscription, which in the LXX reads “The prayer of the poor one, when he grieves and pours out before the Lord his prayer,”293 would become the traditional interpretation of the title throughout the medieval period.294 Those familiar with NT idiom about Christ becoming poor so that believers may become rich are not so easily convinced that Augustine is really having the struggle he impersonates over reconciling the perfect richness of Christ with the poverty of the “poor one.” After a bit of rhetorical suspense we are finally told that, like the one-flesh union of marriage depicted in Genesis, so also Christ and his members “will be two in one voice as well, and in that one voice we shall have no cause for surprise if we hear our own voice saying, The bread I ate was ashes, and my drink I would dilute with weeping.”295 Again, “One voice only, then, because only one flesh. Let us listen; and, more than that, let us hear ourselves in these words. If we perceive ourselves to be outside them, let us do our best to be within.”296 Not so much the hermeneutical schema itself as the explicitness of Augustine’s modus operandi is noteworthy here. And so he once again goes to work with this in mind.

293 Augustine does not state the Latin title as it stood in front of him, so I offer here a translation of the LXX on which his Latin version was based.

294 I lean on Preus’ careful work for this claim: “A probe of the tradition shows that following Augustine, most medieval exegetes had identified the ‘pauper’ of Psalm [102] as Christ, speaking together with his members” (From Shadow to Promise, 170n16). Preus notes that the traditional medieval summary of the psalm was “Oratio pauperis cum anxius fuerit,” which Luther perpetuated with his first glance at Ps 102 (see the ensuing discussion).

295 EP 5:47.

As mentioned, a detailed examination of Augustine’s two-part homily for the almost thirty verses of Ps 102 is not possible here, but it will be important for our analysis of Luther to note that Augustine interprets “do not turn your face away,” one of the psalm’s opening phrases, in the following way: “When did God ever turn his face away from his Son, the Father from Christ? But because of the poverty of his members he begs, Do not turn your face away from me.”

Only a few lines later Augustine reaches another point of focus when he emphasizes that the word “days” in verse three (“For my days have dwindled like smoke, and my bones have been roasted as in a frying pan”) is intended to stir up the notion of “light,” which is then taken to be an indication of life. “Smoke,” on the contrary, signifies pride, which indicates transience.

Finally, at verse four (“My heart is stricken and dried up like grass, because I forgot to eat my bread”), Augustine admonishes his hearers to “Think of Adam, from whom sprang the human race.” Because Adam forgot the original command in the garden of Eden “to eat his bread,” so should we never forget to partake of the true bread from heaven (citing John 6). Finally, we also note that Augustine spends most of his effort at verses nineteen and twenty (“The Lord looked out from heaven to the earth to hear the groans of those in fetters, and free the children of the slain”) explaining how confession and absolution is the ultimate kind of liberation.

3.2.4.2 Luther on Psalm 102

Our first task here is relatively uncomplicated, and that is simply to point out that Luther continues to operate with a split between the godly and the ungodly in a manner quite different
than Augustine. Instead of charting the allegorical linkage from “days” to “light” to “life” (Augustine), Luther explains verse three (“For my days have vanished like smoke”) from the perspective of the psalm’s speaker and his relation to the godly and ungodly groups of the psalm’s hearers:

“And since I, the speaker, am the whole people, it is necessary that in some at least this is true, ‘my days have vanished like smoke,’ namely, in those who are dead, who have not had Your day, which I, as another remaining part, sigh for.” *And my bones have grown dry like fuel for the fire.* Again he is speaking for a part of the people, namely, for those who are dead.301

The same thing happens when Luther reaches the next verse (“I am smitten as grass, and my heart is withered, because I forgot to eat my bread”). Instead of a reflection on the withering of all humanity since Adam (Augustine), Luther senses that the text pertains to the withering of the ungodly: “Until now he is speaking in the person of his part, which savors the flesh; … These things [i.e., withering, etc.] will not befall him, but those of whom the people here speaking are a part.”302 In other words, to put the matter colloquially, it is less “here’s a verse spoken by Christ, and now here’s one spoken by his body” (Augustine) but more “here’s how a verse applies to the faithful, and now how it applies to the unfaithful.” This may have something to do with why Luther at verse nineteen (“Because He has looked forth from His high sanctuary”) does not follow Augustine’s lead about confession and absolution as the ultimate kind of liberation but contends instead that everything encompassed by this verse is a result of the incarnation: “these things have come by benefit of the incarnation of God, and for this fact the people who will be created will always praise the Lord.” Again, “this is unique and is prophesied as yet to

301 *LW* 11:297 (italicization original for scriptural reference).
302 *LW* 11:297.
come, so that there may be material for praise and confession.”  

In short, it can be said that Luther views the whole psalm as a prayer of the faithful seeking the coming grace in Christ.  

But the question is, which advent?  

When Luther expounds on the phrase “turn not Thy face away from me” (102:2), his parsing of the word “face” takes on the form of a comprehensive statement of clarification about how the advent of Christ is essentially “threefold”: 

For the face of Christ is threefold.  
First, in His first advent, when the Son of God, who is the face of the Father, became incarnate. And thus the meaning is [taken] from the person of the human nature in the elect. “Do not delay coming into the flesh. Show us Thy face, and we shall be saved” (Ps. 80:2, 3, 7, 19). Second, in the spiritual advent, without which the first advent is of no avail. And so it means to know His face through faith, in which are all good things. … Therefore we must pray above all: “Turn not Thy face away from me,” as if to say, “I do not have anything good except this that is Yours, therefore I am among those people like ‘a pelican of the wilderness’ (v. 7), for I have no part in anything that is theirs.”  
Third, in the second and last advent where His face will be in full view. And so the church now prays this psalm for the latter two advents. 

Here one sees not only what Luther referred to earlier as the “twofold birth” prefigured by the Korahite corpus (i.e., psalms speaking of both the first advent of Christ and the spiritual advent in the believer) but also a mentioning of the eschatological “second and last advent” in the same context. Because this last quote would prove integral to Preus’ argument and be used at various points throughout his work (much like particular remarks from Luther for Ps 89; see above), we address Luther’s “threefold advent” insight via an engagement with Preus in the next section below. 

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303 LW 11:314.  
304 LW 11:298.  
305 LW 11:295–96 (emphasis added). It is interesting that Luther references Ps 80 by way of casual paraphrase in order to support his description of the first advent, as he there refers only the last of these verses (Ps 80:19) to the first advent (see the brief mentioning of this verse in our discussion of Ps 80 in the previous chapter, as well as the engagement with Preus below). The WA references only “Ps. 80.4.8.20” (see IV 147, 13), although the editors of the American Edition have added verse two in their adaptation for the versification of the MT (“Ps. 80:2, 3, 7, 19”).
3.2.4.3 Preus on Luther’s Interpretation of Psalm 102

There are two places where Preus draws on Luther’s interpretation of Ps 102 for his argument about promissio. The first is in a kind of preparatory chapter analyzing Luther’s treatment of the seven penitential psalms (7, 32, 38, 51, 102, 129, and 143), a class of psalms used by Preus “as a series of check-points” in order to project a hermeneutical change in Luther’s thinking. While the first four penitential psalms reiterated what Preus describes as the “medieval Luther,” Ps 102 marks “the first time [that] the literal sense of the text conforms to the historical order of things: attention is focused on the people ‘ante adventum Christi.’” Why? Because Preus discovers that a later gloss on the psalm’s superscription, which at first read “a prayer of the pauper when he was anxious…” (Preus’ translation), now adds “the people before the advent of Christ.” This adjustment, for Preus, strikes at the very heart of theological reflection: “the psalmist’s own word, spoken out of his own circumstances, is the basis of the theological interpretation. He prays out of longing for the coming of Christ, who in three analogous situations is not yet present in the desired way.” This threefold arrangement, which Preus refers to as “a structural schema of multiple exegesis,” is also a decisive break with the fourfold method:

The traditional schema was built on the providential character of literal historical events as signa, whose res were, successively, Christ-Church (allegorical), grace-merit (tropological), and the visio dei (anagogical). Luther’s schema is built on the three

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306 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 166. In the same place Preus explains his reasoning in this way: “Because they belong to a single class of Psalms—those that are read and interpreted in the context of preparation for confession—Luther can be expected to approach them all in roughly the same fashion.”

307 For more on this description, see the Introduction to our study.

308 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 170–71 (emphasis original).

309 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 171 (emphasis added).
comings of Christ: in flesh, in the soul, and eschatologically. The common goal (and therefore single res) of the exegesis is the coming of Christ.\textsuperscript{310}

Preus invokes Luther’s interpretation of Ps 102 for a second time in a subsequent chapter on “The Sense and Structure of Scripture.” Here Preus, chiefly on the basis of Luther’s lengthy exposition of Ps 119, argues for both the central role of promissio and for Scripture as fundamentally testimonia in Luther’s thinking.\textsuperscript{311} Once these two hermeneutical features are established, Preus indicates the correlative need for “a comprehensive hermeneutical schema…which better harmonizes with and serves the idea that Scripture is testimonia.”\textsuperscript{312} And conveniently, as noted above, Preus has already found one: “In Luther’s interpretation of the penitential Psalms, however, another hermeneutical schema is at work which is more promising; a schema structured around the notion of Christ’s ‘three advents’ (Psalm [102]).”\textsuperscript{313} It would then be the task for Preus to draw on more material from the Dictata—all later psalms, canonically—to show how this schema, which he eventually labels the “promise-advent structure,” would be inseparably linked with the notion of promissio.

One quickly notes from a brief look at these two chapters in Preus’ work that Luther’s perception of the face of Christ as “threefold” has deep theological significance. For example, Preus rightly concludes from Luther’s positing of such a structure the following corollary: “the promise-advent scheme needs textual support for some kind of Christological interpretation within the Old Testament itself, since the interpreter has now placed himself (and the Old Testament

\textsuperscript{310} Preus, \textit{From Shadow to Promise}, 174–75.
\textsuperscript{311} We will have opportunity to address this and other features of Ps 119 in the following chapter.
\textsuperscript{312} Preus, \textit{From Shadow to Promise}, 191–92.
\textsuperscript{313} Preus, \textit{From Shadow to Promise}, 192.
speaker) solidly within the pre-advent situation, under the promise of the future Christ, who has not yet come with his Spirit and grace.\textsuperscript{314} In this schema, Christ is not so much the subject but the object of exegesis; prophets are more preachers than seers. With these points I am in essential agreement.

We must stress, however, based on our investigation of the Dictata hitherto that the threefold schema is not something somehow “borrowed” from the penitential psalms (Preus: “In Luther’s interpretation of the penitential Psalms, however, another hermeneutical schema is at work…”) out of a pressing need to accommodate certain (isolated) interpretations when and where Luther sees fit. No, it is much more the case that this “schema,” if it is indeed to be called that, has been clearly developing and even “at work” for many psalms now, as we have seen Luther thinking through all three aspects of the threefold “face of Christ” quite clearly since at least Ps 80 (“first in the assumption of flesh literally; second in spirit and faith; third in clear vision…”),\textsuperscript{315} continuing throughout such areas as the Korahite corpus (i.e., the “twofold birth” of the first advent of Christ and the spiritual advent in the believer),\textsuperscript{316} Ps 90 (e.g., “incarnation and coming, whether physical or spiritual”), the enthronement psalms (e.g., Luther at Ps 95:2: “His advent,

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\textsuperscript{314} Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 196.

\textsuperscript{315} From WA III 606, 9–10, quoted more fully in the previous chapter at Ps 80. Preus notes that to the best of his knowledge, “the eschatological advent is always called the ‘second’ advent by Luther, even where the ‘three-advent’ scheme appears” (From Shadow to Promise, 195). One exception he notes is at Ps 85:13, where Luther refers to the spiritual advent as the “second” (195n46). From our discussion of Pss 80–81 in the previous chapter, however, we must add another exception: this very gloss for Ps 80:19 (“second in spirit and faith”). See the discussion at Ps 80 for this gloss in relation to another remark from Luther that seemingly teases out the implications of a threefold ecclesiological schema: the church of the OT being a shadow of the church of the NT, itself a shadow of the church of the final consummation.

\textsuperscript{316} That Luther’s statement at Ps 85:13 (“whatever is said about the first coming into the flesh is understood at the same time with regard to the spiritual coming”) can still be assimilated comfortably into the fourfold method (see Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 237, and the discussion above) does not negate the potential contribution of the Korahite corpus to Luther’s emerging conceptualization of a comprehensive advent schema throughout his sequential reading of the psalms.
both the first and the second”), and even in the previous psalm (e.g., Luther at Ps 101:2: “it does not matter whether this be understood of the first advent literally or of the spiritual advent”).

What one observes in Luther’s threefold remark at Ps 102, therefore, is not some sort of “breakthrough” but the mere articulation of the underlying infrastructure that has been “at work” amid many of our observations about Luther’s movement throughout the Psalter thus far.\(^{317}\)

Like Augustine’s *totus Christus* explanation above, incidentally, it is not so much Luther’s threefold advent schema *as such* but the explicit articulation of his recurring modus operandi that is noteworthy here. Perhaps one could even infer at this point in our study that for Luther again at Ps 102 to suggest hearing the whole psalm as “a prayer of the faithful people imploring for the advent of Christ” is an indication that this appeal is becoming somewhat natural for him by now.\(^{318}\)

To summarize: for Ps 102, Augustine reiterates his *totus Christus* schema, discusses “do not turn your face away” (102:2) in terms of the Father/Son relationship, and relates the mortality of Adam with the ultimate liberation of confession and absolution. Luther, on the other hand, articulates his threefold advent schema (i.e., the first advent of Christ in the flesh, the spiritual advent of Christ in the believer, and the second advent of Christ at the last day), continues to implement a split between the godly and the ungodly, centers his discussion of verse nineteen (“Because He has looked forth from His high sanctuary”) around the incarnation, and would later add “the people before the advent of Christ” to the superscription of Ps 102. While Preus rightly

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\(^{317}\) This is also *contra* Wicks, who suggested in a review of Preus that “Luther noted the three-advent scheme in Bernard and simply tried it out as a variant form of Psalm interpretation” (Jared Wicks, review of Preus, *From Shadow to Promise*, Theological Studies 30, no. 4 [December 1969]: 716).

\(^{318}\) “Et est oratio populi fidelis adventum Christi postulantis…” (WA IV 414, 18–19).
discerns the theological implications of Luther’s threefold advent schema, he overlooks the emerging conceptualization of such a hermeneutic throughout Luther’s sequential interpretations.

3.2.5 Psalm 105: The Eternal Covenant

Our last psalm for this chapter, Ps 105, not only reiterates the (threefold) admonition of Ps 102 to seek God’s face (105:4) but also contains a threefold reference to the covenant made with Abraham: “He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant” (Ps 105:8–10 ESV). Because Preus’ portrayal of Luther’s interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant was a point of contention for Hendrix, we include here a brief look at their exchange after our initial comparison of Augustine and Luther regarding especially those two points mentioned above: seeking God’s face and the Abrahamic covenant.

3.2.5.1 Augustine on Psalm 105

After a few preliminary remarks about how praise ought to precede petition (the opening phrase of the psalm is “Confess to the Lord, and call upon his name”), Augustine asks himself what it might mean to “seek [God’s] face always” (105:4). While in essence the Lord’s face is simply the presence of God, Augustine elaborates further and eventually settles on this description for seeking God’s face:

> May we think, perhaps, that even when we do see him face to face, as he is, we shall still need to search for him, and search unendingly, because he is unendingly lovable? … When we love another, even when we can see that person, we never tire of the presence of the beloved, but want him or her to be present always. This is what the psalm conveys by the words, *Seek his face always*: let not the finding of the beloved put an end to the
love-inspired search; but as love grows, so let the search for one already found become more intense.\textsuperscript{319}

The psalm’s recounting of the election of Israel ("covenant of Abraham") would occupy much more of Augustine’s attention. Not surprisingly, we are first reminded of the Christian’s inclusion into the Abrahamic covenant à la the Apostle Paul’s words in Gal 3:29: “you are the descendants of Abraham, his heirs according to the promise.” Canaan signifies heaven, of course, and the “thousand generations” (105:8) means the generations of all times. Yet Augustine confronts what he calls “a difficulty” when the psalm boasts of “an eternal covenant” (105:10): “This might seem to suggest that the covenant means the Old Covenant. But then how could it be eternal, when that earthly inheritance cannot possibly last for ever? The Old Covenant is called old precisely because it has been superseded by the New.” With some assistance from Jeremiah’s “new covenant” oracle (Jer 31:31–32), Augustine cannot but conclude that the “eternal covenant” referred to in Ps 105 should be heard “as the covenant of faith which the apostle commends, proposing Abraham to us for our imitation and refuting those who make the works of the law their boast.”\textsuperscript{320} That the NT also mentions Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (cf. Matt 8:11) only strengthens Augustine’s conviction that, in the end, the “eternal covenant” is the covenant of faith in Christ.

### 3.2.5.2 Luther on Psalm 105

Luther’s interpretations of the first few verses of the psalm, where one is exhorted repeatedly to praise and sing to the Lord, are fairly foreseeable: to “make known his deeds among the peoples” (105:1) is to spread the gospel, to “sing to him and sing praises to him” (105:2) is to be taken

\textsuperscript{319} EP 5:186.

\textsuperscript{320} EP 5:188.
both literally and spiritually, and so on.\textsuperscript{321} And exactly like Augustine, Luther also leans on Ps 34 in order to enhance the overtones of verse three (“…let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice”): “‘My soul will rejoice in the Lord,’ not in itself nor in those who are of the world.”\textsuperscript{322} Yet when Luther reaches the fourth verse (Vulg.: “Seek the Lord and be strengthened, seek his face always”),\textsuperscript{323} we encounter something divergent from Augustine but familiar, we think it fair to say by now, to us: “Tropologically, [his face] is knowledge and faith in the divinity of Christ.” Or, to put it in the language of earlier descriptions, it is precisely what Luther has been calling the “spiritual advent.” He then adds that “Literally, however, it is the appearance of his body, indeed his bodily presence in his first advent and in his second advent as far as the appearance of the flesh is concerned.”\textsuperscript{324} As seen in our analyses of Pss 80, 85 (in part), and 102, here again one gleans the essentials of the threefold advent schema.

While Luther’s first order of business when discussing the Abrahamic verses of Ps 105 matches that of Augustine—to make it absolutely clear that the Apostle Paul identifies the “offspring of Abraham” with Christians—he would proceed to furnish his text of verses eight through ten with the following running notations (and here we attempt to replicate the layout of his glossae):

\begin{center}
He remembered by delivering just as he promised his covenant forever, in which he promised the future grace of Christ: the word of future faith, that he had commanded he established to be undertaken in place of the commandment that he who believes will be saved. For a blessing of faith was promised to him [i.e., Abraham] for all nations: in a thousand generations, in all generations of this age. Which word of faith he deposited in Gen. 22 [with Abraham, and in Gen 26 with Isaac] … And confirmed it that word of faith
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{321} WA IV 192, 7 and 9, respectively.

\textsuperscript{322} “‘In Domino laudabitur anima mea’, non in seipsa neque in iis que sunt mundi” (WA IV 192, 12–13).

\textsuperscript{323} “Quaerite dominum et confirmamini, quaerite faciem eius semper” (Ps 105:4).

\textsuperscript{324} WA IV 192, 33 and 35, respectively: “Tropologia est agnitio et fides divinitas Christi.” “Litera[liter] autem corporis eius facies, immo presentia corporalis in adventu primo et secundo secundum faciem carnis sue.”
promised to Jacob [and] to the sons of Jacob for a precept, because they were held to believe in Christ: and Israel the people [born] of Israel in an eternal covenant, that is, because from the word of faith promised and finally fulfilled and shown, if they would preserve it in place of the precept, they would have eternal life. For faith is the eternal covenant, that is, eternal things, because it gives eternal goods, Hebrews 11, not temporal goods as the covenant of the law. 325

For the sake of the ensuing discussion with Preus and Hendrix, we also provide the three marginal comments attached to these glossae above. For the phrase “word of future faith,” Luther adds that it is “a word of future things, that is, an argument and sign and covenant.” 326 For the sentence “And confirmed it...for a precept,” Luther notes that “In the book of Exodus [God] did this, when he taught the people to wait for the promise of their fathers.” 327 And finally, at the close of the passage comes this addendum: “But it is clear from the Apostle [Paul] to the Galatians, that he is not speaking here about the covenant of the law of Moses, but of the new testament of law and faith, which he promised would be in the faith of Abraham; for the sake of remembering such promise [God] made all the acts of kindness to the people under the law, until he could fulfill the promise in the advent of Christ.” 328

Taking into consideration both the glossae and the marginal additions from Luther for Ps 105:8–10, the key question for Preus and Hendrix, to pose it as the latter does, is the following: “do

325 “Memore fuit exhibendo sicut promisit in saeculum testament sui, in quo promisit gratiam Christi futuram: verbi fidei future, quod mandavit suscipiendum pro mandato posuit, ut qui crediderit, salvus erit. Benedictio fidei enim promissa est ei in omnes gentes: in mille generations, in omnes generationes huius seculi. Quod verbum fidei dispositis Gen. 22. ... Et statuit illud illud verbum fidei promissum Iacob filiis Iacob in praeceptum, quia credere in Christum tenetur: et Israel populo ex Israel in testamentum aeternum, i. e. quod ex verbo fidei promisso et tandem impleto et exhibito, si ipsum serverent pro precepto, haberent vitam aeternam. Fides enim est eternum testamentum, i. e. eternorum, quia dat eternal bona, Hebr. XI, non temporalia sicut testamentum legis” (WA IV 193, 10–22).

326 “Et fides verbum est rerum futurarum, i. e. argumentum et signum et testamentum” (WA IV 193, 31–32).

327 “In libro Exodi hoc fecit, cum populum doceret expectare promissum patribus eorum” (WA IV 193, 33–34).

328 “Manifestum autem est ex Apostolo ad Galatas, quod hic non loquitur de testament legis Mosi, sed de testamento nove legis et fidei, quod promisit futurum in fide Abraham, propter cujus promissi memoriam omnia beneficia populo sub lege fecit, donec promissum impletur in adventu Christi” (WA IV 193, 34–37).
these statements constitute a positive appraisal of the synagogue in its Old Testament setting with its own valid promises of spiritual goods, its own insight into the spirit and its own faith? Or are we dealing here with the reflection of the church (“faith of the spirit”) upon the Jewish people?329 Our first answer comes from Preus.

3.2.5.3 Preus on Luther’s Interpretation of Psalm 105

Concerned as he is with the theme of promissio, Preus detects the emergence of “a second Old Testament promise” becoming increasingly foundational for Luther’s exegesis in the latter part of the Dictata, and, after examining the glossae quoted above for Ps 105, states forthrightly that “the promise of an ‘eternal testament’ is becoming more prominent, and is being opposed to the ‘temporal’ covenant of the law.”330 Because Luther notes that the “eternal covenant” has everything to do with Christ, the believers of the OT, accordingly, “were held to believe in Christ.” While Preus admits some ambiguity in Luther’s notations above, he nonetheless maintains that here at Ps 105 “is emerging an idea of great consequence: the faith of the Old Testament fathers, resting on only the word of promise, is at the theological heart of the Old Testament. And equally important, this kind of faith is not only still valid, but will become normative.” In other words, there would no longer be a “hermeneutical divide” between the faith of the OT and the faith of the NT but rather “a deep theological divide among the Old Testament words themselves, between its earthly, temporal provisions and the eternal covenant of faith made with Abraham and those who shared his faith and who longed for the future that God had

330 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 206 and 207, respectively.
promised.”331 The answer from Preus to the question at the end of the previous section, then, is most certainly the former scenario: Luther offers a positive evaluation of those within the OT synagogue who hold fast to the (“eternal”) promise made to Abraham. In response to this view and for a very different answer, we turn to Hendrix.

3.2.5.4 Hendrix on Luther’s Interpretation of Psalm 105

After accurately representing Preus’ view and having a look of his own at the passage at hand (along with others like it deployed by Preus from later in the Dictata), Hendrix argues that “the admitted ambiguity is in fact too great to find in such passages a ‘proper’ Old Testament promise and faith.”332 Concerning Luther’s glossae for Ps 105, and in rebuttal to Preus’ claim about “the eternal covenant of faith made with Abraham and those who shared his faith” (see above), Hendrix would offer his own account of the matter in this way:

According to Luther, however, in the marginal gloss to these same verses of Psalm [105] quoted above, the eternal testament of faith is precisely the “testament of a new law and faith” which was promised in the faith of Abraham. The fact that this covenant was made with Abraham in no way diminishes its fundamental New Testament content. The logical consequences for the faith of the Old Testament fideles and the Old Testament promises is that the faith and the spiritual insight of the New Testament fideles have been reflected back on a part of the Old Testament people and applied to their perception of the spirit under the Old Testament promises of temporalia.333

In other words, Luther starts with the NT church and retrojects their “faith and spiritual insight” back onto the OT believers. There is thus for Hendrix “no evidence of a new hermeneutical

331 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 208. Preus sees the earliest elements of what he calls a “‘proper’ Old Testament promise” surfacing at Ps 90 (205).
332 Hendrix, Ecclesia in Via, 263.
333 Hendrix, Ecclesia in Via, 264.
divide. The *litera/spiritus* divide applied to the Old Testament people remains that between the New Testament and the Old.”

Hendrix would return to Luther’s work on Ps 105 not long thereafter to include one more point: “Further, in his interpretation of this Psalm [105], Luther is substantially dependent upon Augustine, … who himself sees the testament referred to in verses 8-11 as the New Testament, a ‘testament of faith,’ where the faith of Abraham is exemplary.” In sum, Hendrix contends that Preus is misrepresenting Luther’s understanding of the faith of the faithful synagogue:

> The promise to the fathers is not purely Old Testament, but rather filled with New Testament content—the coming Christ. And the faithful in the synagogue do not have a blind faith in these promises of unspecified future and eternal goods [so Preus], but they have insight into the coming Christ under the letter, which, to be sure, is still inferior to open faith in Christ after his arrival.

### 3.2.5.5 Evaluation and Summary

We wish to make it clear at the outset that it is not our intention at this point in our investigation to offer some sort of definitive answer to the question raised above about Luther’s appraisal of the synagogue’s faith. The arguments rehearsed above are all-encompassing and cannot be addressed in detail here. Rather, we present this exchange between Preus and Hendrix simply in order to illustrate the implications of and to submit a reason for the complexity existing in the very nature of the case at Ps 105. This is to suggest, for our purposes, that one may also quite profitably ask a prior question: why all the ambiguity in the first place?

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335 Hendrix, *Ecclesia in Via*, 265n91.
While both Augustine and Luther clearly state that the “eternal covenant” (105:10) is a covenant of faith, in Luther one also finds a keen interest in what this “eternal covenant” must have implied for the people of the OT: “[God] did this when he taught the people to wait for the promise of their fathers;” “for the sake of remembering such promise [God] made all the acts of kindness to the people under the law, until he could fulfill the promise in the advent of Christ;” “they were held to believe in Christ.” Furthermore, Luther does not include such reflections on OT faith in order to place them in strong “opposition…to ‘new-testament’ or Christian faith as the word of present or fulfilled things,” as Preus importantly observes. In other words, we merely point out here that it is precisely Luther’s increasing preoccupation with the faith of the synagogue that has created such ambiguity for a clear appraisal of the synagogue’s faith in the first place. It may very well be, in the end, that Preus has overstated Luther’s description of the “eternal covenant” in his notations for Ps 105. But even if this is the case, Hendrix’s contention that Luther is “substantially dependent” upon Augustine must be only very carefully asserted in light of Luther’s ongoing attentiveness to the faith of the synagogue. We will have opportunity to revisit this discussion in a more substantive manner in the next chapter.

To summarize: where Augustine interprets the imperative to seek God’s face as an admonition to be in God’s presence, Luther reproduces the elements of his threefold advent schema. While both Augustine and Luther hold that the “eternal covenant” is a covenant of faith, Luther adds several remarks pertaining to the faith of the synagogue that lie at the heart of the ambiguity debated between Preus and Hendrix.

337 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 208 (emphasis original).
3.2.6  Summary of 3.2

Instead of rendering Ps 90 predominantly within the antithetical frameworks of human/divine and OT/NT (Augustine), Luther interprets several verses of Ps 90 in accordance with his understanding of earlier psalms, especially that of Ps 89 (e.g., the saved remnant). In the case of Pss 93–99, Luther not only refers to the incarnation more than Augustine but also reflects on pre-incarnation faith in relation to post-incarnation faith. Instead of framing Ps 101 around an era of mercy and an era of judgment (Augustine), Luther views “mercy and judgment” (101:1) as a present reality for the saints of both testaments based on a consideration of the psalm as spoken by the faithful synagogue in anticipation of Christ’s first advent (a hearing quite unlike his earlier treatment of a similar Davidic “psalm of innocence” [Ps 26]). At Ps 102 Luther articulates his threefold advent schema (i.e., the first advent of Christ in the flesh, the spiritual advent of Christ in the believer, and the second advent of Christ at the last day), continues to implement a split between the godly and the ungodly, centers his discussion of verse nineteen (“Because He has looked forth from His high sanctuary”) around the incarnation, and adds “the people before the advent of Christ” to the superscription. Finally, for Ps 105, Luther not only repeats the elements of the threefold advent schema but includes several imprecise comments pertaining to the faith of the OT synagogue.

3.3  Conclusion

Our task in this chapter has been to determine whether or not the origination of the faithful synagogue as demonstrated in the previous chapter was a kind of isolated phenomenon within the *Dictata*, emerging simply because of a few subtle variations in Luther without having any bearing on his exegesis of subsequent psalms. Based on our research above, we can now conclude that, in relation to Augustine, Luther’s lectures on the rest of Book III and throughout
Book IV show an increased preoccupation with the OT perspective because of the influence that the faithful synagogue had on him throughout the Asaphite corpus. The first part of this argument, regarding Luther’s attention to the OT as such, an assertion most readily discernible, we think, from the chapter’s numerous summary statements, is defended in the first part of this chapter’s conclusion by a brief recapitulation of the primary evidence. The second part of the argument above, regarding the faithful synagogue’s influence on Luther, is discussed in a second section via “canonical reflections.”

3.3.1 Luther’s Old Testament Focus in Relation to Augustine

Unlike Augustine’s account of “mercy and truth” (Ps 85:10) as signifying a Jewish/Gentile duality, Luther emphasizes the reliability of God’s promises on the basis of the promised incarnation of Christ (i.e., “mercy and truth have met” in a person). While Augustine hears Ps 87:5 (“Shall a man say?”) as a depiction of the all-creating Word being made flesh, Luther begins with a consideration of the pre-incarnation perspective before applying the psalm to both the faithful and the unfaithful of the synagogue. Where Augustine places both Pss 89 and 90 into a sharp OT/NT antithesis (e.g., temporal promises come to an end for the sake of eternal ones), Luther further elaborates on his notion of Israel’s saved remnant for both psalms and relates Ps 90 to the first advent of Christ. Luther also refers to the incarnation more than Augustine throughout the enthronement psalms (Pss 93–99), leading the former, quite naturally, to include occasional parallels between the faith of the OT and the faith of the NT. Unlike Augustine’s eschatologically charged reading of Ps 101, Luther again considers the faithful synagogue as the speaker of the psalm by directing its words to Christ’s first advent. Similarly, for Ps 102, Luther not only supplements the psalm’s traditional summary with “the people before the advent of Christ” but also crystalizes his threefold advent schema where Augustine discusses the presence of God in a more general way. And finally, unlike Augustine’s repeated assertions of NT
supersession throughout Ps 105, Luther reincorporates his threefold advent schema and expresses a distinct interest in the nature of OT faith. In sum, therefore, Luther exhibits an increased preoccupation with the OT perspective when compared with Augustine, and we turn now to consider how this may have transpired.

3.3.2 Canonical Reflections

In his first encounter with the Korahite psalms (Pss 42–49; the untitled Ps 43 was perhaps originally combined with Ps 42), Luther perpetuates the deeply traditional “baldness” motif for Korah à la Augustine.338 When we reach Ps 85, however, it was not an *a priori* motif but a consideration of the similarities across the Korahite psalms that would lead Luther to summarize the corpus in terms of the Lord’s coming, either physically in the incarnation or spiritually in the believer (thus a “twofold birth”).339 Gone is any mention of the baldness motif when Luther revisits Korah in Pss 84–85 and 87–88, and instead we see regular parallels between the Lord’s first coming and the Lord’s spiritual coming. Our first question is: why would Luther (*contra* Augustine) choose to take recourse in the incarnation as the point of departure for asserting God’s reliability at Ps 85, or to apply the same text to both the faithful and the unfaithful of the synagogue at Ps 87?

When Luther reaches Ps 89 we are offered variegated statements about the remnant of Israel crying out for salvation, a concern unparalleled in both Augustine and in Luther’s own

338 See, for example, *LW* 10:194, where Luther follows Augustine’s account of Korah as denoting “baldness” nearly verbatim when commenting on the initial Korahite psalm (Ps 42).

treatments of earlier corporate laments (e.g., Ps 44). It is this same remnant, Luther explicitly
tells us, that cries out in Ps 90 for the first advent and continues to speak at several places
throughout Pss 93–99. While Augustine strove mightily, as we saw, to view each of the
enthronement psalms through the lens of their respective superscriptions, Luther, on the contrary,
followed the MT and simply repeated the fact that each enthronement psalm was indeed “sine
titulo,” unfettering him, as it were, to press forward with his regular integration of the faithful
synagogue without hindrance or diversion. Thus Luther would not be under any constraints to
hear Ps 93, for example, in conjunction with a “threshold” (to use Augustine’s term) indicating
“the day before the Sabbath, on which the earth was established,” or to hear Ps 96 in light of “the
house being built after the captivity,” as Augustine would. Nor would David be fresh on the
mind (repeated atop Pss 93–99 in the LXX), as Luther rather revolves around the faithful living
under the sovereign reign of God. It is far from astonishing, then, that at this point Luther also
makes periodic associations of OT faith with NT faith (and some controversial ones at that by the
time he reaches Ps 105!) and reconfigures the Lord’s coming in terms of the Korahite “twofold
birth” (e.g., at Ps 95: “let us come into his presence…”). Our next question, then, is: why would
Luther (again, contra Augustine) assign several psalms to the faithful synagogue (including Ps

\[\text{3.40} \quad \text{One also notes here an increase in the notion of a “twofold destruction” for the unfaithful and a “single}
\text{destruction” for the faithful.}\

\[\text{3.41} \quad \text{As briefly mentioned earlier in the chapter, Luther also contends for Ps 92 as spoken by the faithful synagogue}
(\text{WA IV 78, 34}). \text{He assumes a similar posture for Ps 106 (see LW 11:345: “[the psalmist] prays here that Christ’s}
coming be not delayed because of the sins of the fathers”).}\

\[\text{3.42} \quad \text{One notes this at the following places in WA IV: 85, 4; 88, 23; 98, 37; 106, 24; 113, 37; 117, 23; 123, 22.}
\text{Again, Luther does not entertain the plausibility of the faithful synagogue speaking, say, Ps 47, a very similar psalm}
\text{from earlier in the Psalter wholly devoted to the Lord’s reign over all the earth (see WA III 267–68). Consider also}
\text{this perceptive comment from Luther when making his way through the enthronement corpus: “If you love greatness}
in a king and lord, something the Jews always and especially hope for, behold, here is the Lord of heaven and earth,
not now a David or a Solomon, who were little kings” (LW 11:254).}\


101, unlike his earlier approach to the very similar Ps 26), several “comings” to the first advent, and several verses to both the godly and the ungodly of the synagogue?

By the time Luther arrives at Ps 102, and perhaps in an effort to accommodate for the particular construals featured throughout this chapter (e.g., the faithful synagogue as speaker, an increased attention to the incarnation, etc.), Luther elucidates the threefold advent schema when commenting on the phrase “hide not your face” (Ps 102:2). Yet this is certainly not the first time, of course, that Luther has encountered a psalmist pleading for the face of God in the Psalter. A brief overview of Luther’s handling of that petition before Ps 102 (as in, for example, 11:7; 13:1; 17:15; 27:8, 9; 30:7; 31:16; 44:3, 24; 67:1; and 69:17)\(^3\) shows nothing reminiscent of the threefold advent schema until Ps 80\(^4\) or until after he was well into his journey through the Asaphite corpus. Our last question, then, is this: why would Luther (once again, contra Augustine) be pressured to delineate a threefold advent conceptuality within a discussion of seeking God’s face, a phrase he has encountered numerous times throughout the Psalter only to handle in more customary ways?\(^5\)

\(^3\) In terms of the Vulgate, not only the Latin “facies” but also “vultus” and “conspectus” come into play here.

\(^4\) At Ps 80, we recall, God’s face was said to be seen first in the incarnation, second in faith, and third in clear vision (see the discussion above for Ps 102, as well as that for Ps 80 in the previous chapter). Some four psalms earlier, at Ps 76, Luther writes in a gloss for the first word of the psalm (“known” [“notus”]) that God is known firstly by spiritual worship, secondly by the incarnation, and thirdly, most properly, by faith in the preaching of the apostles (see WA III 519, 29–31: “Primo per spiritualem cultum, secundo per incarnationem, tercio propiissime, quia ibi incepit predicari notitia Deitatis in Christo et nomen maiestatis eis per Apostolos in fide”). Is Luther making several passes at formulating what will eventually be the threefold advent schema presented most comprehensively at Ps 102? As stated, talk of “advents” in the *Dictata* is virtually absent before the Asaphite corpus.

\(^5\) Typical explanations from Luther for seeking/beholding God’s face before Ps 80 include with the eyes of faith (i.e., usually in recognition of Jesus’ divinity), in the resurrection, via clear vision at the last day, or obtaining general clemency or consolation from being heard by God.
We propose that a persuasive answer for all three of the questions posed above is precisely the second part of our concluding argument for this chapter, namely, that Luther’s distinct conceptualization of the faithful synagogue throughout the Asaphite corpus has influenced his subsequent work on the rest of Book III and throughout Book IV of the Psalter.
Chapter 4
The Integration of the Faithful Synagogue, Part II: Psalms 107–150

4 Introduction

Having established both the origination of the faithful synagogue from the Asaphite corpus (chapter two) and the influence of the faithful synagogue on Luther’s subsequent exegesis (chapter three), one may rightfully be wondering about how far we can speak of the precise implications, hermeneutical or otherwise, of such a phenomenon. That is, even if the faithful synagogue continues to play a significant role in Luther’s thinking throughout Book V, to what extent would it affect his basic approach to the interpretation of Scripture as outlined in his “Preface” and as he himself exhibited earlier in the Dictata? In this fourth chapter, then, we set out to determine the most immediate hermeneutical implications of Luther’s increasing preoccupation with the OT perspective. The qualifier “hermeneutical” is an attempt to confine ourselves to the specific scope of this study, concerned as it is with the Dictata in relation to the final form of the Psalter and relying as it has been on such first-order psalm features as speaker, superscription, referent, and so on in pursuit of its research question. We carry forward the methodology of the last chapter, therefore, yet with a view this time toward answering how Luther’s integration of the faithful synagogue relates to the fundamental task of interpreting Scripture.

346 This is not to suggest that we will be gradually moving away from the discussion between Preus and Hendrix as instigated at Ps 105. We remain in close contact with both scholars throughout this chapter—indeed, we now enter terrain that has been worked over from several different angles by earlier studies of the Dictata—but we simply point out that it is not possible to claim mastery over every implication of Luther’s preoccupation with the OT text and people throughout the Dictata, be they ecclesiological, eschatological, sacramental, etc.
To this end, the first part of this chapter examines Luther’s treatment of four psalms leading up to Ps 119 (Pss 107, 111, 112, and 115) in order to determine whether or not the kind of influence as demonstrated in the last chapter indeed continues beyond Ps 105. In this context we also take advantage of the first of two prime opportunities to revisit the discussion between Preus and Hendrix more substantively, as Luther proposes some strong associations between the faith of the OT with the faith of the NT at Ps 112.

Apart from a brief introductory look at the adoration of the Torah in Ps 19, the second part of this chapter is devoted entirely to Ps 119. At one point Preus labels Luther’s work there as “utterly unprecedented” (rightfully, in our view), so we spend some time tracking down whether or not Luther’s handling of the material derives in any way from his special attention to the OT faithful. As Luther’s profound hermeneutical insights at Ps 119 have evoked much discussion, we conclude this part with our second substantive engagement with Preus and Hendrix before offering our own evaluation and argumentation.

In the third and final part of this chapter we present four of the clearest examples of Luther’s integration of the faithful synagogue beyond Ps 119 (Pss 122, 123, 126, 143) in order to complete the general picture of what takes place in the Dictata. The psalm lectures analyzed here not only show Luther’s attention to the faithful synagogue but also some striking correspondences one to the other, revealing, in our view, how Luther would use (canonically) later psalms to build on the interpretations of earlier ones.

It is the aim of this chapter to demonstrate that Luther’s integration of the faithful synagogue throughout Book V has contributed to a reappraisal of the literal sense of Scripture. The conclusion to this chapter will defend such an argument primarily on the basis of Luther’s interpretation of Ps 119 and his subsequent exegesis.
4.1 The Faithful Synagogue Leading up to Psalm 119: Psalms 107, 111, 112, and 115

4.1.1 Psalm 107: The Redeemed of the Lord

4.1.1.1 Augustine on Psalm 107

In yet another psalm recounting Israelite deliverance and admonishing faithfulness because of it through the performance of various activities (e.g., praise, extol, thank), it seems quite natural, one would think, that any “plain-sense” account of the “redeemed of the Lord” alluded to throughout Ps 107 (107:2, 8, 15, 21, 31, 32) should (also) incorporate those faithful Israelites before the advent of Christ in the flesh. But Augustine is hesitant to do so:

It may look as though the redeemed people referred to are the people of Israel redeemed from the land of Egypt…. However, let us investigate whether it really is the people freed from Egypt by the Lord who speak here. In fact it is not. Who are they, then? Those whom he redeemed from the hands of their enemies. It is still possible for someone to argue that it does mean the Israelites redeemed from the hands of their Egyptian foes. But now let them be unmistakably identified, the people on whose account the psalm wishes the following verses to be sung. From different regions he gathered them into a single flock. Well, I suppose this could just mean different regions in Egypt, for even in a single province there can be many regions. Let the psalm make its point plainly, then: From east to west, from the north and from the sea. This makes it clear to us that the redeemed people are to be found all over the world. 347

Seeing that the redeemed are found all over the globe, Augustine cannot but conclude that “It is the baptized who are invited by the psalm to speak.” 348 The repeated scenes of Israelite wandering, thirsting, and fainting, then, are best understood as temptations and afflictions throughout the Christian life, and this should be quite familiar to us by now. In this way Augustine sees verse eight (“Let them confess to the Lord his merciful works…”) as a kind of


directive for Christian evangelism: “You who are now set on the way, you who are now directed
toward the city you must find, you who have experienced these mercies, tell those who have not.
You, finally, who have been freed from your hunger and thirst, speak about it, for he has
satisfied the empty soul, and filled the hungry soul with good things.”

4.1.1.2 Luther on Psalm 107

Vis-à-vis Pss 105 and 106, Luther sees a kind of newness within Ps 107 and describes it in the
following way: “As in the two preceding psalms of the old people [i.e., Pss 105 and 106], the
first of the righteous, the second of the wicked: so this third one is of the new people, that is,
Christian.” While this introductory remark may appear to place his upcoming commentary
on a course fully blazed by Augustine—and in large measure it is fair to say that Luther tracks him
very closely throughout Ps 107—we think it significant that Luther summarizes the psalm as
“Divine praise concerning Christ and the people redeemed by him and of the synagogue
converting to Christ, prophetically foretold.” Here there is no hesitation, as there was above
in Augustine’s account, to include under the umbrella of “Christian” also those converts of the
(OT) synagogue, even if the focus in this case may be predominately future-oriented
(“synagogue converting to Christ…”). In addition, when Luther reaches verse eight (“Let them
thank the Lord for His mercy…”), he seems concerned to protect something very important
about the mercies of the Lord in a way that departs notably from how Augustine handles the
same verse:

350 WA IV 205, 26–27: “Sicut duo psalmi precedentes de populo veteri, primus de iustis, secundus de malis: ita iste
tercius de populo novo, i. e. Christianis est.”
351 WA IV 205, 18–19: “Laus divina de Christo et populo redempto per eum atque synagoga convertenda ad
Christum prophetice praenuncians” (emphasis added).
the mercies in themselves always acknowledge the Lord, even though he who has mercy
does not acknowledge the Lord, yet another, who sees him having mercy, acknowledges
the Lord in these mercies. And so, whether the mercies of the Lord are in thankful or the
unthankful, they themselves acknowledge the Lord. ... And so the mercies cannot be
deprived of their acknowledgement, even though those who have obtained mercies at
some time do not acknowledge the Lord. All things work together for good to the elect
(Rom. 8:28). ... All things work together for ill to the ungodly.352

The Lord’s mercies, in other words, are confirmed whether bestowed upon the godly or the
ungodly; Luther insists that both groups bear witness to the fact. Yet this bifurcated thinking
again raises the sort of question posed repeatedly at the conclusion of the previous chapter: why
does Luther parse out the “mercies of the Lord” (107:8) according to their reception (or lack
thereof) by the faithful and unfaithful when the entire psalm, as he made quite clear in his
summary notation, is said to be recounting acts done unto a new people, or unto those who are
said to be “redeemed of the Lord”? 

To summarize: while Augustine is reluctant to refer to any OT Israelites throughout his
exposition of Ps 107, Luther not only includes the synagogue converting to Christ in his
summary for the psalm but also speaks of how God’s mercies are confirmed whether
appropriated by the godly or rejected by the ungodly.

4.1.2 Psalm 111: The Company of the Upright

4.1.2.1 Augustine on Psalm 111

In addition to the “redeemed of the Lord” in Ps 107 above, it will soon become clear that the
psalms examined in the first part of this chapter contain scattered references to the assembly or
congregation of faithful Israelites, such as “congregation of the people” (107:32), “company of

352 Martin Luther, Luther’s Works, vol. 11, First Lectures on the Psalms II: Psalms 76–126, ed. Hilton C. Oswald
(St. Louis: Concordia, 1976), 349. Hereafter this volume will be cited as “LW 11:(page number).”
Much as we would expect, Augustine reasons that the “assembly of the upright” in Ps 111:1 “must be the people who are to sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. No wicked person finds a place among them….” While it is true that at one point he mentions the inevitable fact that the present church must bear with sheep dressed in wolves’ clothing, the emphasis of Augustine’s interpretation, to use his own language, is clearly on “the future when all the just are gathered into one flock.”

By the time he reaches verse seven (“The works of his hands are truth and judgment”), which will be another point of focus for our discussion of Luther below, Augustine similarly treats the text from the perspective of the future when he tells “those who are subjected to judgment here below [to] hold fast to the truth of the Lord’s promise. The martyrs are judged here, but they are conducted to another tribunal where they will judge not only the officials who judged them but even the angels [cf. 1 Cor. 6:3] against whom they had to struggle while they were apparently facing their human judges.”

Again, while it is true that Augustine mentions in passing a “judgment” for the martyrs here on earth, the focus is predominantly on the eschaton when those same martyrs will judge “even the angels.”

4.1.2.2 Luther on Psalm 111

It was noted above that the reference to the faithful in Ps 111 reads “company of the upright, [and] in the congregation” (111:1). Luther sees great significance in the fact that, unlike

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353 The latter two have further significance in the case of Pss 111 and 112, a pair of psalms often regarded by modern scholars as being deeply related both literarily and theologically. For an insightful analysis of the interrelationship between Pss 111 and 112 from the standpoint of the inadequacy of form-criticism to discern it as such, see Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, “Form Criticism, Wisdom, and Psalms 111-112,” in Changing the Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 65–84.


“company,” the word “congregation” has no additional modifier: “there is no spiritual assembly except of the truly righteous, while there can be a bodily assembly without the truly righteous, or, at any rate, the spiritual assembly stands with the bodily, and the truly righteous can assemble with those not truly righteous. Therefore he adds ‘of the righteous’ to the ‘assembly’ and not to the ‘congregation.’” The heretics, we are told, would love to have the prepositional phrase “of the upright” attached to their faction, but only the word “congregation,” Luther says, serves to denote both the godly and the ungodly grouped together. This point remains central for Luther, as he focuses nearly all of his energy for just the first verse on the fact that a mixture of godly and ungodly individuals exists necessarily within the church (e.g., “the good to be among the evil,” “the evil are mixed in,” “these two must be there at the same time,” and so on).

Luther would find further support for this way of proceeding at verse seven, which in the version in front of him read “The words of His hands are truth and judgment.” Here Luther describes “judgment” in terms highly reminiscent of his earlier twofold punishment scheme found at Pss 89 and 90, among others:

it is called “judgment,” because this truth is not indiscriminately for some Jews, but not for all; rather, it is distinctly only for the believers. Of old in a figure, and still today, God blessed in a mixed way, to the worthy and the unworthy. Again, in a mixed way He struck the worthy and the unworthy, as also to the present day He makes His sun rise on the good and the evil without judgment (Matt. 5:45) and makes no distinction among them. But not so with grace. Here it becomes judgment that the majority of the Jews and Gentiles fall, because they do not believe. Therefore most truly the “judgment” is the building of the church, where so many are set apart and so few are taken up.

At the same place where Augustine considers judging even the angels, Luther focuses on the way that God both blesses and strikes “the worthy and the unworthy” alike and reminds us that those

\[356\] LW 11:372.

\[357\] LW 11:381 (emphasis added).
receiving only one “judgment,” as it were, are indeed only “few” when compared to the “majority” of those who will eventually perish (cf. Luther on Ps 89).

To summarize: Augustine places the “company of the upright” into an eschatological context and emphasizes the privileges of believers on the last day (e.g., judging the twelve tribes of Israel). Luther, by contrast, not only continues to operate with a sharp dichotomy between the godly and the ungodly but also reiterates a singular punishment (“judgment”) for the godly alongside a twofold punishment for the ungodly.

4.1.3 Psalm 112: The Generation of the Upright

Psalm 112 marks our first major opportunity, signaled earlier near the end of the previous chapter at Ps 105, to revisit the disagreement between Preus and Hendrix that was placed on hold regarding Luther’s portrayal of the faith of the faithful synagogue. At that initial overview of the debate we simply outlined the discussion and argued the point that Luther’s intriguing comments about the “eternal covenant” surfaced in the first place because of his increasing preoccupation with the OT perspective. After our usual comparison of Augustine with Luther, we reevaluate the Preus/Hendrix exchange anew by taking into consideration also their explanations of Luther’s interpretation of Ps 112 before joining the conversation more substantively.

4.1.3.1 Augustine on Psalm 112

Augustine places “the generation of straightforward people” (112:2) in contradistinction to an earlier psalmist who, as we saw in a previous chapter, admitted his envy for the prosperity of the wicked:

This is obviously a blessing on the deeds of those to whom the God of Israel is good, those of straightforward hearts. … It is quite different from the attitude of those whose feet slip, those whose steps slide out of control as they envy sinners, seeing the peace that wrongdoers enjoy. … But the man [vir] in our present psalm, the one who fears the Lord
and through his conversion to rectitude of heart is being shaped for God’s holy temple, neither seeks the approval of other people nor covets earthly riches.\(^ {358}\)

It is precisely the conversion of Asaph, Augustine contends here (as he inaugurated back in his explanation of Ps 73), that best explains the kind of “straightforwardness” mentioned in the second verse of Ps 112. The generation of the straightforward are those who are converted much in the manner of what one finds in the NT, and when the same “straightforward” reappear in verse four (“A light has arisen in the darkness for those of straightforward hearts”), Augustine merely restates his earlier conviction: “[the upright] remember that they were once darkness but now light in the Lord [cf. Eph 5:8].”\(^ {359}\)

### 4.1.3.2 Luther on Psalm 112

It is perhaps noteworthy for the ensuing discussion to point out that Luther introduces Ps 112 as “speaking prophetically about Christ and the Christians.”\(^ {360}\) While this assertion may appear to sit quite comfortably within the kind of interpretive framework laid out by Augustine above, we soon find Luther, after his own encounter with “the generation of the upright,” setting off on a lengthy and rather momentous comment about the relationship between the faith of the faithful synagogue, the faith of the NT era, and the life that is to come. As this digression is another passage that is used at key junctures in the works of Preus and Hendrix, I quote here at some length:

> These “upright” are called the faithful first in the synagog, such as the apostles and disciples. Although they did not yet have the revealed faith (*fidem revelatam*) which directs to God through Christ without intermediary, *they did not have the bare letter, but*

\(^{358}\) *EP* 5:293.  
\(^{360}\) *LW* 11:385.
the letter hiding the things of the spirit, because they looked with a simple literal faith (simplici fide literali) for the promises of God. …

Therefore it is true at the same time (simul) that they were upright and nevertheless not yet enlightened, at the same time (simul) upright and still in darkness, at the same time (simul) upright and not yet righteous with the perfect righteousness of faith. Just as we, too, are now upright in what we have, and nevertheless in darkness with respect to what we do not yet have. For as we direct our heart to the future glory and thus are upright, so they directed their heart toward grace and thus were upright. Yes, we, too, as long as we sigh from strength to strength, strive from the imperfect to the perfect, are upright, and nevertheless what we seek has not yet come into being for us. Just as it has not yet appeared to us what we shall be (1 John 3:2), so also it did not yet appear to them what they were to become. Hence it is evident that they are called “upright” because in their heart they were directed to look for future and invisible things, not satisfied with present and earthly things, even though they then did this in a physical way, while the “wicked” are those who neglect this direction and turn themselves to present things and remain in them because they are unbelievers, expecting nothing from the future.

“Upright” and “righteous” appear to differ greatly. “Righteous” is the one who has faith or had faith in faith (fidem fidei), while “upright” is the one who according to this faith directs his heart to what he acknowledges by faith. Thus those people became wicked (pravi) and were turned into a crooked bow (Ps. 78:57) because they had faith concerning the future grace and promise of God and yet in many cases were unbelieving concerning it. But when the promise came in Christ and they were to receive a different faith (aliam fidem), according to which they might direct their heart toward the future glory…

Thus it is said of Job that he was “simple and upright” (Job 1:1). “Upright” because he was aimed and directed in his heart toward the future grace and glory which by faith he knew in the spirit were to come, but “simple” because he did not at the same time involve himself in earthly things but by uprightness kept himself pure in faith in what was to come.  

Probably at least three things call for immediate attention: 1) Luther’s example of “the faithful first in the synagog” are “the apostles and disciples;” 2) Luther sees a profound relationship between the longing of the OT faithful and the longing of the NT faithful, where both groups are said to exist simultaneously (“simul”) “in the dark,” as it were, to matters of future glory, yet all the while (“at the same time”) in full possession of “the things of the spirit;” 3) Luther states that upon the advent of Christ in the flesh, those “faithful first in the synagog” were to receive “a

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361 LW 11:385–86 (emphasis added).
different faith” (*aliam fidem*). For an explanation of the theological significance of what Luther is saying here, we turn first to Preus.

### 4.1.3.3 Preus on Luther’s Interpretation of Psalm 112

The question Preus poses after taking note of the passage above provides the best entry point into the heart of the eventual disagreement lodged against him by Hendrix: “exactly what sort of Old Testament ‘letter’ can it be,” Preus wonders, “that is not altogether ‘naked’ but ‘hides’ spiritual things?”

For Preus the answer can only be found in the notion of *promise*, a solution that is confirmed quite definitively for him by Luther’s description of the OT faithful in the very next part of the sentence referred to above: “with simple literal faith (*simplici fide literalī*) they were waiting for the promises of God.” But if the notion of promise is indeed taking center stage here, Preus senses the emergence of a profound association taking place in Luther’s mind between the faith of the OT and the faith of NT and explains the significance in this way:

> Now, the questions arises, were these faithful Israelites—*without grace or Spirit* (the hallmarks of the Christian people)—somehow more than mere figures and signs of Christians? Were they more than merely *sub lege* and carnal? By all means! Their existence under promise, caught, as it were, between the “already” and the “not yet,” is replete with theological significance for Christians. For the word that describes the existence of both peoples is “simul.” The tension of old and new, present and future, grips them as it does Christians.

In conjunction with his understanding of Luther’s interpretation of Ps 105 as rehearsed in the previous chapter, where the OT faithful are directed toward the eternal promise made long ago to Abraham (105:8–10), Preus sees here in Luther’s exposition of Ps 112 a recognition of the selfsame longing between the faithful of both testaments, one which generates deep theological

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363 Preus, *From Shadow to Promise*, 209 (emphasis added).
significance for the present church as both groups of believers are called to stake everything on
the promises of God. “Now the way is open,” Preus declares with the last sentence of his chapter
on “The New Hermeneutical Divide,” “for a surprising turn of exegetical events: the Old
Testament community (“the faithful synagogue”) and the Old Testament faith (hope, trust,
expectation) will be enhanced to the point of becoming a model and example for the self-
understanding of the Christian community, and the Christian believer.”364

4.1.3.4 Hendrix on Luther’s Interpretation of Psalm 112

The major force of Hendrix’s disagreement with Preus as described in the previous chapter at Ps
105 is very much related to Hendrix’s divergence from Preus here again at Ps 112. Speaking to
Preus’ understanding of Luther’s interpretation of Ps 112, he had this to say:

Preus puts the emphasis in this passage upon the promises of God as hiding spiritual
things and upon the “faithful Israelites without grace or the Spirit.” These spiritual things,
however, are the heavenly things in Christ hiding under the Old Testament letter, and the
primary example of the faithful Israelites (which Preus fails to mention and omits from
his citation of the text) are the apostles and disciples. It is also clear that the “simple,
literal faith” is still inferior to revealed New Testament faith, although it was good as far
as it went. Indeed, later in the same scholion, Luther emphasizes that this faith is still not
even to avoid becoming depraved (pravi), but must be changed into “another faith”
when the promise of Christ will have been fulfilled—the implication being, of course,
that the fideles in the synagogue, such as the apostles and the disciples, made just such a
switch.365

In Hendrix’s view, Preus has obscured Luther’s reflection on “the generation of the upright” both
by omitting Luther’s primary examples of “the faithful first in the synagogue” (i.e., “the apostles
and disciples”) and by failing to grasp that Luther’s “simple, literal faith” of the OT faithful
should, according to Hendrix, be taken as expressing an “inferior [faith] to revealed New

364 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 209 (emphasis original).
365 Scott H. Hendrix, Ecclesia in Via: Ecclesiological Developments in the Medieval Psalms Exegesis and the
“Dictata super Psalterium” (1513-1515) of Martin Luther (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 265 (emphasis added).
Testament faith.” In this way, Luther’s mentioning of “another faith” is best taken as a superior faith into which believers after the advent of Christ in the flesh, again such as the apostles and disciples, are to make a “switch” (Hendrix). For the sake of added clarity on this inferiority being claimed and to ensure an accurate representation of Hendrix’s position on this pivotal remark from Luther at Ps 112, we include here one further citation even as it was already given in the last chapter for our discussion of Ps 105:

> The promise to the fathers is not purely Old Testament, but rather filled with New Testament content—the coming Christ. And the faithful in the synagogue do not have a blind faith in these promises of unspecified future and eternal goods [so Preus], but they have insight into the coming Christ under the letter, which, to be sure, is still inferior to open faith in Christ after his arrival.\(^{366}\)

### 4.1.3.5 Evaluation and Summary

As was the case with Ps 105, we intend so far as possible to confine our evaluation of the arguments provided above from the standpoint of what we have seen from Luther up to Ps 112. Large-scale conclusions about the Dictata will come in due course. So, to return to the question posed by Preus, “exactly what sort of Old Testament ‘letter’ can it be that is not altogether ‘naked’ but ‘hides’ spiritual things?”

Hendrix has rightfully pointed out that Preus failed to note Luther’s example of “the faithful first in the synagog” as “the apostles and disciples,” but Hendrix goes too far when asserting that Luther in his comment above envisions OT believers as having an “inferior” faith to NT believers. While Luther indeed refers to “those people [who] became wicked (pravi) and were turned into a crooked bow (Ps. 78:57),” this does nothing (as Hendrix supposes it does) in the way of implying some kind of “second-class” or deficient faith at work among those guilty of apostasy. Rather, those who “become wicked (pravi)” are included here yet again, in our view,

\(^{366}\) Hendrix, Ecclesia in Via, 265 (emphasis added).
as another intimation to the faithful, much like the numerous other places already encountered throughout our study (e.g., Luther at Ps 78: “enough of the Jews,” take heed ourselves!), about the dangers of falling away, existing as the faithful do necessarily as few across both testaments (cf. Luther at Ps 80). Indeed, the “faith concerning the future grace and promise of God” said to have been once held by those who went their own way also occurs precisely in the context of Luther’s intuitive “simul” discussion, and therefore such a faith in “future grace” cannot but apply de facto to the present church as well. Whether one has “faith or faith in faith (fidem fidei),” Luther says, one is equally “righteous.”

Nor does this objection to Hendrix’s insistence on the inferiority of OT faith disregard the crucial distinction he has helpfully elucidated (and one that Preus has apparently overlooked; more on this later) between the fides revelanda of the OT and the fides revelata of the NT, a conceptual reality clearly operating in Luther’s mind both here (“different faith”) and, as we shall see, in his upcoming exegesis. But the transition, or in Hendrix’s language the “switch,” from the fides revelanda into the fides revelata at the advent of Christ does not imply the superiority of one fides over the other any more than heads is superior to tails. What we see in Luther’s comment on “the generation of the upright” at Ps 112—and, so far as we can tell, throughout our investigation hitherto—is but the clearest manifestation thus far of his contemplation of the inherent relationship between the faith of both testaments (cf. Luther already at Ps 80), whose correspondences exist much more in

367 “Faith in faith,” we recall, has been a typical way for Luther to refer to those trusting in the promises of Christ before his first advent (cf. Luther at Ps 97, where he calls it “an unformed faith [ex fide informi], that is, by faith in faith...” [LW 11:269]). Note also how Luther includes the righteous (again, those who have “faith or faith in faith”) in his summary notation for Ps 112: “A commendation of Christ and his people, which is the generation of the righteous” (WA IV 247, 10: “Commendatio Christi et populi sui, qui est generatio rectorum”).

368 We noted there the intriguing remark from Luther about the correspondences across three different eras (OT, NT, final consummation) brought into existence by one abiding Word: “[the OT faithful] were a figure of the true people to come. And the church is also a shadow of the church to come, just as the letter was the shadow of faith, for faith is a mystery and a shadow of the vision which is to come” (LW 11:98 [emphasis added]). Psalm 80 is also
the realm of ontology (i.e., a sensus literalis extending across a two-testament canon) than in the realm of economy (i.e., the development of a thing into something “better” with the march of time).\textsuperscript{369}

In this respect, Preus’ account of Luther’s comment at Ps 112 strikes much closer to the mark, yet he fails to grasp how Luther’s hermeneutical conceptualizations have been emerging all along. It is thus not the case, as Preus seems to imply with the last sentence of his chapter (starting “Now the way is open…”), that Luther would somehow first need to consider the relationship between OT faith and NT faith before it would then be possible to enhance “the Old Testament community (“the faithful synagogue”) and the Old Testament faith (hope, trust, expectation)…” (see the full quote above). Rather, based on our investigation of the Dictata in relation to the canonical shape of the Psalter, the situation is practically the reverse: Luther’s unique conceptualization of the faithful synagogue (chapter two) has influenced his subsequent exegesis (chapter three) and continues to give rise to further associations between the faithful of both testaments, not at all unlike what he has clearly already been doing since such places as Ps...
Ps 97 and 98 (relating pre-incarnation faith to post-incarnation faith), and even amid his frequent articulations of the threefold advent schema (cf. esp. Ps 102). The notion of *promissio* may indeed be playing a pivotal role at this point in the *Dictata* as Preus suggests, yet it is but a corollary of earlier forces at work on Luther throughout his sequential movement across a meaningful arrangement of psalms within the final form of the Hebrew Psalter.

To summarize: while Augustine explains the “straightforwardness” of Ps 112:2 in terms of NT conversion (just as Asaph converted in Ps 73), Luther accounts for “the generation of the upright” by associating the faith of the faithful synagogue with the faith of the NT era in relation to the life that is to come. While Hendrix’s claim that OT faith is “inferior” to NT faith misrepresents Luther’s remarks, Preus fails to grasp what is pressuring Luther’s hermeneutical adjustments in the first place: a sequential journey through the Psalter.

### 4.1.4 Psalm 115: God’s Mercy across Three Advents

#### 4.1.4.1 Augustine on Psalm 115

We can be brief here, as our discussion of Ps 115 revolves primarily around just its opening verse. The text as it stood in front of Augustine read thus: “Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name give the glory on account of your mercy and truth, lest the pagans ask, Where is their God?” Intriguingly, rather than utilizing the superscription as the dominant hermeneutical guide for his interpretation, Augustine indicates that his view of the first verse is actually influenced by the preceding psalm, or, in terms of the Vulgate, by the first half of Ps 113. In fact, in a more

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370 See note 368.

general reflection on the matter, Augustine also interestingly adds that “For those who diligently study them, it may be obvious that all the psalms are so interconnected that there is always continuity between a psalm and the one that follows it.”\(^{372}\) As to how this assertion would affect his interpretation of the first verse of Ps 115, the following words are all that is needed to make it clear that the presence of God for Augustine is to be found precisely in his works:

> We worship a God who is invisible. He cannot be seen by any bodily eye but is known only to very clean hearts, and few of us have those. This might seem to give pagans an excuse to ask, *Where is their God?* since, unlike us, they can show us their gods, visible to our eyes. This is why the foregoing psalm warned us in advance that the presence of our God is to be discerned in his works…\(^{373}\)

### 4.1.4.2 Luther on Psalm 115

For Luther the matter of God’s mercy spoken of in Ps 115 (“Not to us, O Lord, not to us…”) is not so monolithic. If, on the one hand, such mercy is being considered by the faithful and seeking synagogue, then one should have in mind the first advent of Christ: “The coming of Christ into the flesh was given out of the pure mercy of the promising God, and was neither bestowed by the merits of human nature nor denied by demerits.” However, Luther once again refrains from pinpointing God’s mercy down to a single advent of Christ and rather extends the verse to other advents as well: “So also the spiritual advent is by grace and will be by glory, because it is not on the basis of our merits but of the pure promise of a merciful God.”\(^{374}\) As usual, Luther admonishes those who have already experienced the spiritual advent of Christ to prepare for the future advent of his second coming: “Thus He promised for the future advent

\(^{372}\)EP 5:312.

\(^{373}\)EP 5:312. Again, a few lines later, “We cannot display our God before your eyes, you pagans, though you ought to perceive him through his works….”

\(^{374}\)LW 11:396. Luther would also relate the third verse (“But our God is in heaven…”) to the spiritual advent (398).
‘that we should lead righteous, sober, and godly lives in this present world, looking for the
teaching of the Lord” (Titus 2:12-13).” One gets the sense here that Luther is becoming quite adept at
 parsing psalm verses according to his threefold advent schema. To conclude our brief discussion
of Ps 115 with another succinct statement from Luther demonstrating this, just as “the Law was
the figure and preparation of the people for receiving Christ,” so also “the whole time of grace is
the preparation for the future glory and the second advent.”375

To summarize: where Augustine explains that God’s mercy is to be found in God’s works,
Luther applies God’s mercy to the advent of Christ in the flesh for the faithful synagogue, to the
spiritual advent for the individual, and to the second coming of Christ for all believers (i.e., a
threefold advent hermeneutical schema).

4.1.5 Summary of 4.1

Our comparison of Augustine with Luther at four psalms throughout the beginning of Book V
has generated several results pertinent to our study. In the case of Ps 107, Luther shows no
hesitancy, unlike Augustine, to begin his interpretation of “the redeemed of the Lord” by
including those of the synagogue converted to Christ and, furthermore, explains how God’s
mercies are confirmed whether appropriated by the godly or rejected by the ungodly. In the case
of Ps 111, Luther does not place the “company of the upright” into an eschatological context
(Augustine) but continues to operate with a sharp dichotomy between the godly and the ungodly,
reiterating a singular punishment (“judgment”) motif for the godly along with a twofold
punishment motif for the ungodly. Rather than explaining the “straightforwardness” of Ps 112:2
in terms of NT conversion (Augustine), Luther expounds on “the generation of the upright” by

375 LW 11:397.
associating the faith of the faithful synagogue with the faith of NT believers in relation to the life that is to come. In this context we also contributed to the debate between Preus and Hendrix that was initiated at Ps 105 in the previous chapter. Finally, for Ps 115, Luther does not delimit God’s mercy to his works (Augustine) but extends God’s mercy to all three advents of Christ (i.e., the first advent of Christ in the flesh, the spiritual advent of Christ in the soul, and the second advent of Christ at the last day).

4.2 Psalm 119

What I find fascinating about earlier studies of the Dictata is not only the general recognition of a climactic moment taking place for Luther at Ps 119 but that from strikingly different perspectives. Preus called the psalm “a convenient focal point” for grasping Luther’s understanding of the “prophetic sense” of Scripture. Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 177. Wicks held that Ps 119 “marked a clear climax” for Luther’s view of sanctification at the time. Jared Wicks, Man Yearning for Grace: Luther’s Early Spiritual Teaching (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968), 89. Ebeling sensed that the kinds of statements Luther makes about “testimonies” at Ps 119 could turn “the entire Catholic sacramental system…upside down.” Gerhard Ebeling, “The Beginnings of Luther’s Hermeneutics,” Lutheran Quarterly 7, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 129–58; no. 3 (Autumn 1993): 315–38; no. 4 (Winter 1993): 451–68 (here no. 3, 318). Ebeling qualifies this statement a few lines later: “I would not maintain that Luther had consciously formulated these thoughts in contrast to the prevailing doctrine of the sacraments. But viewed objectively, they stand in the sharpest antithesis to it” (319). Ebeling also relied heavily on Luther’s comments at Ps 119 to develop an existential explanation of Luther’s hermeneutic at this time in his life (see esp. 325–26).
in order to support one of the arguments of Hendrix. What has given rise to such a phenomenon?

Here we undertake Luther’s work on this longest of the psalms with a special focus on how he accounts for both the speaker and the nature of the Torah synonyms throughout the psalm, especially “testimonies” (העדים). Concerned as this study is with Luther’s sequential movement through the Psalter, we prepare for our analysis of Ps 119 by first taking a brief look at another oft-labeled “Torah” psalm from earlier in the Psalter—Ps 19, invariably unaccounted for in previous studies of the Dictata when discussing Ps 119—in order to assess how Luther has already handled adoration of the Torah before the origination and increasing influence of the faithful synagogue (see chapters two and three). This initial overview of Augustine and Luther on Ps 19 will, once again, underscore any variation in Luther’s subsequent reflection on the adoration of the Torah at Ps 119. We then turn to the secondary literature on this climatic exposition from Luther in order to grasp the status quaestionis of the material under examination before offering our own synopsis of the matter from the perspective of Luther’s movement through the Psalter. This second part of chapter four, then, is primarily concerned with the following question: what is the hermeneutical significance of incorporating the faithful synagogue into an interpretation of Ps 119? To set the stage for an eventual answer, we turn first to Ps 19 (we can focus on just verses 7–9) in order to gain a purchase on how Luther spoke of previous adoration of the Torah as compared with Augustine.

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379 Lee-Chen A. Tsai, “The Development of Luther’s Hermeneutics in His Commentaries on the Psalms” (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1989), 185–86. That is, Tsai was seeking to demonstrate “the close relation between the faithful people and the faithful soul in Luther’s hermeneutics” (186). See the discussion below.
4.2.1 Psalm 19:7–9

4.2.1.1 Augustine on Psalm 19:7–9

While the superscription broadcasts Ps 19 as a Davidic psalm (which in many cases would indicate to Augustine that it is really spoken by “great David’s greater Son”), Augustine assures us that it is a psalm sung about the Lord and not by the Lord. When the psalmist begins to admire “the Lord’s law” (19:7a), then, Augustine considers such admiration the very same thing as delighting in the Lord himself: “the Lord’s law is the Lord himself, for he came to bring the law to its fullness, not to dismantle it; and he is himself the undefiled law, because he committed no sin, nor was deceit found on his lips.” This “law” is also trustworthy (19:7b), Augustine elaborates, because only the Son knows the Father. But not every synonym for Torah in Ps 19:7–9 would be equated with the Lord himself. For the second half of verse eight (“The Lord’s commandment shines brightly, giving light to the eyes”), for example, Augustine explains that “[The Lord’s commandment] shines because it is not obscured by the veil of carnal observances, but illumines the vision of the innermost heart.” So it is not only the Lord himself but also his accompanying spiritual illumination that comes into view here, and this would nuance Augustine’s description of the kind of “fear” mentioned in the very next verse (“The fear of the Lord is pure…”). Rather than a fear of punishment or judgment, “this fear is pure,” he says, “and it is the fear of the Church: the more ardently she loves her Bridegroom, the more fearful she is of offending him.” This incorporation of love into his explanation of Torah adoration is, as we will see below, a central motif in how Augustine handles Ps 119 (recall love as the

380 EP 1:200 (emphasis added).
381 EP 1:201. We agree with the editorial suggestion here, that by “carnal observances” Augustine is referring to “the rituals of the Old Law” (n12).
382 EP 1:201.
fulfillment of the law in Rom 10:4), but we turn next to Luther when lecturing on the same verses.

**4.2.1.2 Luther on Psalm 19:7–9**

We have only Luther’s shorthand *glossae* for Ps 19 in our possession, but they are sufficient to reveal his thinking on the topics addressed above by Augustine. With the exception of three rather inconsequential marginal notations, reproduced below is the full extent of the material we have from Luther in the *Dictata* for Ps 19:7–9 (again we attempt to replicate the layout of the *glossae* so far as possible):

> The law of the Lord not that of Moses is immaculate And this is so, because converting the souls not only the hands as the law of Moses: the testimony of the Lord is faithful fulfilling perfectly what it has promised, or because it even governs the spirit offering wisdom, which no other law does to the simple the humble. The judgments of the Lord are right because they make right directly, comprehensively delighting hearts, but the law of Moses crucifies hearts, because it increases the awareness of sin: the precept of the Lord is clear is formed in itself illuminating effectively eyes spiritual, but the law was veiling them by its figures, as is obvious in the case with Moses. The fear of the Lord is holy because it sanctifies, not only punishes enduring forever being eternal: the judgments of the Lord boundaries decreed in the Gospel are true not shadows of the truth righteous in themselves that is they are not figures of the future law as was the law of Moses, which are not Righteous except in sign, because they signified only the Righteousness of the Gospel.  

No less than five times for the three verses of Ps 19 dealt with in the above passage is the law of Moses mentioned in order to set into greater relief “the law of the Lord,” which, as was made clear, is able to convert the soul, to delight the heart, and to illuminate the eyes with spiritual insight. Unlike the law of Moses, then, which exists merely as a figure and actually “crucifies

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383 WA LV.1.2 162, 7–11 and 164, 1–8: “*Lex domini non sic Mosi immaculate Et hoc sic, quia convertens animas non tantum manus sicut lex Mosi: testimonium domini fidele implens perfecte, quod promisit, vel quia spiritum etiam regit sapiuntiam praeestans quod non facit lex alia parvulis humilibus. Iusticiae domini rectae quia rectificant directe, compendiose laetificantes corda lex autem Mosi crucifigit corda, quia auget conscientiam peccati: praeceptum domini lucidum in se formatur illuminans effective oculos spirituals, lex autem figuris velabat potius, ut patet in Mose. Timor domini sanctus quia sanctificat, non tantum punit permanens in saeculum saeculi inernum: iudicia domini diffinitiones in Evangeliio decreta vera non umbratica iustificata in semetipsa i. e. non sunt figura future legis Sicut lex Mosi, que non sunt lusta nisi in signo, quia signabant tantum Iustician Euangeli."
hearts,” the gospel is that which is “not figures” and bespeaks truth (19:9). In fact, Luther would choose to summarize all of Ps 19 in terms of this very contrast between the old law and the new: “Concerning the preachers of the new law, each generation of Christ: and the condition and difference of the new law from the old.”

To summarize: both Augustine and Luther emphasize sharp contrasts between “the law of the Lord” and “the law of Moses” when interpreting the adoration of the Torah as found in Ps 19:7–9.

4.2.2 Psalm 119

4.2.2.1 Augustine on Psalm 119

4.2.2.1.1 Speaker

Taking a moment to reflect on the multitude of first person phrases throughout Ps 119, Augustine surmises that “They seem to be spoken by a single individual, but in fact it is the members of Christ who speak, the members who belong to one head and form one body.”

Characteristically, Augustine would elaborate on this construal via marriage imagery: “the prophet, who is foretelling Christ, distributed his prophetic words in such a way that at one moment they come from the head, who is our Savior, and at another from his body, which is the Church. But the psalmist makes the two speak as one, foreseeing the great sacrament of unity, of which scripture says, They will be two in one flesh.” Thus Augustine is able to maneuver also through Ps 119 with his totus Christus hermeneutic firmly in place, an approach articulated most

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384 WA LV.1.2 158, 9–11: “DE PREDICATORIBUS NOVE legis, de Christi utraque generatione: et conditione differentiaque novae legis a veteri.”

385 EP 5:368.

clearly amid his interpretation of verse sixty-four (“I share with all those who fear you and keep your commandments”): “Most surely Jesus himself is speaking in this prophecy. But he says certain things in the person of his members, in the unity of his body, as though in the voice of a single human being diffused throughout the whole world and continually growing as the ages roll on; and other things he says in his own voice, as our head.”

4.2.2.1.2 Torah

If the speaker of Ps 119 varies between Christ and his body, the church, how would Augustine interpret the many synonyms used for Torah throughout the psalm? Approaching an answer first in terms of content, Augustine generally relates the Torah synonyms to one or more of the following areas (and I include here mostly just scriptural references so as to avoid cumbersomeness): the Scriptures (119:2), God’s words (119:162–63), works of creation (119:129), eternal life (119:111–12), Christ (119:14), faith (119:3, 27–29 [à la Rom 3:27], 33 [à la Gal 4:26]), civic loyalty (119:161), righteous deeds (119:20), just judgment (119:121), the obscure ways of God (119:13 [à la Rom 11:33]), natural law (119:119), charity (119:75–78, 96–97, 116–17), truth (119:151), eras of mercy and judgment (119:149–51), and to various virtues such as discipline (119:65–66), humility (119:67–72), or wisdom (119:103–04, 145–46).

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388 For example, “By the way of God’s testimonies we must understand Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (EP 5:365).

389 At verse ninety-seven (“How I love your law, O Lord!”) Augustine argues that “This is the faith that works through charity; for by seeking, asking, and knocking it receives the good Spirit, through whom love itself is poured out in our hearts. All those, whoever they may be, who are moved by the Spirit of God are sons and daughters of God, and they are welcomed into the kingdom of heaven…. But Israel according to the flesh is no son but a servant, who cannot remain in the house permanently, and is expelled” (EP 5:443–44).

390 Noteworthy here is that Augustine remarks on the significance of the word “mercy” preceding the word “judgment,” recalling for his listeners that this verse is much like his governing perspective for Ps 101 (i.e., an era of mercy preceding an era of judgment; see the previous chapter at Ps 101).
In terms of purpose, Augustine explains many of the Torah synonyms as bringing about proof of God’s love (119:14), God’s initiative of grace (119:10), a drive to the era of grace (119:119), and, perhaps most comprehensively, the gifts of the spirit, most especially love (119:34, 44, 45–48, 101–02, 130–33, among others). An apt summary of Augustine’s view of the theological significance of the adoration of the Torah throughout Ps 119 can be encapsulated, we think, by the intersection of two decisive Pauline verses: “Love is the fulfilling of the Law” (Rom 13:10 ESV) and “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom 10:4 ESV; cf. Augustine on the phrase “unto the end” in numerous LXX superscriptions). In other words, to state the matter generally, love the Lord’s law in Christ and you will have fulfilled it in Christ.

Yet Augustine shows a noticeable interest in one particular synonym of Torah, not mentioned above purposefully in order to account for it in greater detail here. Because the Hebrew עֵדוּת (typically translated as “testimonies”) was rendered into the LXX as µαρτύρια, Augustine senses something quite profound taking place within the semantics of this particular synonym and explains what he perceives as such:

This word “testimonies” is martyria in Greek, and the Greek word has passed into our language. People who were humiliated and subjected to various torments on account of their witness to Christ, and fought for the truth even to death, we call “martyrs,” using the Greek word even though we could just as well call them “witnesses” in our own tongue. Since you are more accustomed to the former word, and rather fond of it, let us take the present verse in this sense: Take from me the insults and contempt I suffer for having ardently sought your martyrdoms.392

391 “The Israelites, however, did not understand the grace that lay hidden in the Old Covenant; it was as though a veil came between it and their minds, just as when they were not strong enough to look at the face of Moses. Accordingly they put their efforts into obeying God’s commands with a view to an earthly and material reward; but they did not carry them out because what they were setting their hearts on was not the commandments but something extraneous” (EP 5:470).

With over twenty occurrences of μαρτύρια in the LXX translation of Ps 119 (or roughly one-eighth of the psalm, as it were), Augustine has an opportunity to reiterate his empathy for the reality of Christian martyrdom with each occurrence of the term, and he indeed does just that quite consistently throughout the entire psalm.393

To summarize: Augustine views the speaker of Ps 119 as fluctuating between Christ and his body, the church, and he interprets a vast number of the Torah synonyms under the umbrella of Christ as the end of the law (Rom 10:4) and love as the fulfillment of the law (Rom 13:10).

4.2.2.2 Luther on Psalm 119

4.2.2.2.1 Speaker

While Augustine wavers between Christ and the church as the two (though “one flesh”) possible speakers of Ps 119, it does not take long for one to notice an even wider vacillation taking place on the part of Luther when addressing the same issue. This stems not only from what we have encountered repeatedly throughout our study, that is, Luther’s inclusion of the faithful synagogue into his exegesis, but from such an inclusion accompanied this time with a variety of added nuance. For example, throughout his more than one hundred pages of scholia for Ps 119, Luther refers to the speaker(s) of the psalm with the following assortment of phrases (and again we include only scriptural references at this point): “the psalmist” (119:1), “the prophet” (119:1), “the early church is speaking” (119:20), “the prophet in the person of the early church” (119:20), “the faithful people” (119:25), “[the psalmist/prophet] prays for the early people of the church” (119:37), “the prophet and the people of the old law” (119:76), “the faithful synagogue” (119:81), “the people of Israel” (119:83), “the prophet…speaking in the person of such faithful people”

393 See, for example, EP 5:380–81, 405, 441, 451–52, and 491.
(119:84), “the remnant of Israel” (119:116), “the person of the faithful synagogue” (119:123), “the person of the church” (119:123), “the person of our spirit” (119:123), “the person of the early church” (119:163), and “the faithful people concerning Christ’s first advent” (119:169). How does one account for these interweaving descriptions reverberating in Luther’s mind? While we will address the hermeneutical implications of this phenomenon later, one should not overlook the fact that Luther’s variegated phraseology here, introduced above as “an even wider vacillation” when compared to Augustine, must be qualified in one very important way: Christ does not speak a single verse.

Once again, then, to rehearse just the most immediate corollary of this kind of approach before proceeding on to the next section, Luther’s consideration of the faithful synagogue as a possible speaker of Ps 119 paves the way for several additional articulations of his threefold advent schema. For example, in what may be the clearest statement regarding this particular hermeneutical construal in his scholia, Luther explains verse seventy-six (“O let Thy mercy be for my comfort, according to Thy Word”) by pronouncing a “general rule” about the matter:

This can also be understood as referring to Christ’s coming into the flesh. And so it is the prayer of the prophet and the people of the old law that what he had prophesied a little earlier should come. Indeed, let this be the general rule, that wherever any verse is explained or can be explained concerning Christ’s coming into the flesh, it should at the same time be explained concerning His coming through grace and in the future glory, according to which His coming is threefold.394

Again, Luther demonstrates the “general rule” even more succinctly at verse one hundred and twenty-three (“My eyes have fainted after Thy salvation and for the Word of Thy righteousness”): “Understand this with regard to a threefold salvation: First, from the person of the faithful synagogue who prays for the revelation of Christ and His Gospel…. Second, in the

394 LW 11:468.
person of the church calling for the true meaning of the Scriptures against the heretics. Third, in
the person of our spirit…“395 While there is much more that can be adduced here as indicative
of such a “general rule” at work,396 we simply note in this section dealing with the psalm’s
speaker that Luther again incorporates the faithful synagogue into the list of possible speakers for
Ps 119 and that this consideration is regularly accompanied with a corresponding (and now quite
familiar) threefold advent hermeneutical schema. We turn next to the question of how Luther’s
distinct understanding of the psalm’s speaker(s) relates to his understanding of the Torah
synonyms throughout the psalm. While there is a wealth of material that could be analyzed here,
we limit ourselves preliminarily to the law of Moses and to the nature of the “testimonies.”

4.2.2.2.2 Torah

4.2.2.2.2.1 Law of Moses

As our preparatory task for Ps 119 included a brief glance at Luther’s notations for the adoration
of the Torah at Ps 19, where he had much to say about the law of Moses, we begin our
examination of Luther’s commentary on the Torah synonyms throughout Ps 119 with his explicit
appraisals of the Mosaic law. We noted above the kinds of pejorative remarks that Luther
lodged against the law at Ps 19, such as the jarring declaration that “the law of Moses crucifies
hearts.” What is immediately apparent in Luther’s commentary on Ps 119, however—and what I
do not find adequately treated in previous studies of the Dictata—is that Luther would now offer
several qualifying statements when revisiting the same law of Moses in a new context. Before
he even finishes his interpretation of the first verse of Ps 119 (“Blessed are those whose way is

395 LW 11:497. Luther relatedly says at verse nineteen (“…do not hide Thy commandments from me”) that “The
primary literal understanding is about a sigh for grace and the church that is to come” (427).

396 See WA IV 298, 6–8, for example, and especially WA IV 305, 31–36.
blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord”), for example, Luther adds to his introductory material the recognition that the law of Moses is not as inferior as we—or as his own glosses at Ps 19!—make it out to be:

But here we must note first of all that the law of Moses is not evil or defiled in itself, but because the scribes who did not understand and teach it with the spirit make it defiled. For the law of Moses has both, the signifying letter and the spirit signified by the letter. And all who have taken it as signifying and as a figure of things to come are and were truly blessed.\(^{397}\)

Luther then quotes Gal 3:23 (“We were confined under the Law, shut up unto that faith which was to be revealed”) to describe those who have grasped the law appropriately (i.e., “as a figure of things to come”), just as he did earlier when explaining that “the righteous” and “upright in heart” at Ps 97 were those who lived “by faith in our faith” because “they believed and put their hope in the faith that was to come.”\(^{398}\) A good example of someone once living “by faith in our faith,” Luther points out, is the very speaker of Ps 119 (this time referred to simply as “the prophet”), who was fully aware of the true import of the law of Moses: “Therefore the prophet looks with spiritual eyes at the law of Moses and sees hidden and enclosed in it the law of faith, the Gospel of grace, and the invisible things promised, like the kernel under the shell or the treasure under the ground….”\(^{399}\) Both of these positive statements about the law of Moses occur in Luther’s discussion of just the first verse, and there are several other examples like them, such as the following: “Therefore this is the wretchedness of the Jews, that they search neither the

\(^{397}\) LW 11:415.

\(^{398}\) LW 11:269. It was at Ps 97:11 where Luther labeled such a faith as “unformed (informi).” See the previous chapter (“Psalms 93–99”) for more on this designation and for an engagement with the secondary literature addressing it.

\(^{399}\) LW 11:414.
testimonies of Moses nor those of Christ, because they do not know that they are wonderful."

Because a further number of closely related comments stem directly from Luther’s reflection on “testimonies,” we treat that material in a separate section below.

4.2.2.2.2  Testimonies

It was noted above that for Augustine, whom Luther is still tracking closely throughout his work on Ps 119, the word “testimonies” (Greek μαρτυρία) signifies Christian martyrdom. While it is certainly true that one can find undertones of martyrdom in Luther as well, his repeated clashing with the Hebrew עֵדוּת (“testimonies”) rather evokes some of the most unprecedented statements in all of the Dictata in relation to the exegetical tradition that preceded him. We will now work through several of these pivotal interpretations, concomitantly supplying the material necessary to facilitate our evaluation of Preus and Hendrix below.

When Luther reaches the fourteenth verse of the psalm (“I have delighted in the way of Thy testimonies, as in all riches”), he offers the first of what will be several far-reaching comments about the precise nature of the testimonies being praised by the speaker of the psalm. By way of introduction, none of these upcoming remarks show a reflection on martyrdom (so Augustine):

They, in turn, are called “testimonies,” because they testify concerning future goods. They are not exhibitions of things present, but testimonies of things to come, and therefore they cause faith to be the substance of things to come, not of things that appear

LW 11:500 (emphasis added).

This is not to imply that one cannot find a single unfavorable remark from Luther concerning the law of Moses throughout his lectures on Ps 119 (see LW 11:419–20 and 439), but the point to emphasize here is the dwindling of such and, furthermore, to propose that an adjusted hermeneutical frame of reference is a contributing factor. See the ensuing discussion.


(Heb. 11:1). Thus the grace of God did not yet appear to the ancients, but it was prophesied. And to us it does not yet appear what we shall be (1 John 3:2), but we have the testimonies about them. Or the words of the old law are called ‘testimonies’ spiritually understood, which testify to nothing but only the Christ who was to come, as the words of the new law testify the coming glory.  

A future orientation (“they testify concerning future goods”) and a similitude with “the new law,” Luther says, are just two of the features at stake when it comes to a proper understanding of the term “testimonies,” and this list will be enhanced as we proceed. To draw from the questions of Preus after his encounter with the passage above from Luther, “Does this mean that the aim and goal of spiritual exegesis is to conform all the Old Testament words to explicit (literal) testimonia of the future? Does it suggest that for Luther the normative-literal sense of Scripture is promise and petitio, and therefore fundamentally different from the medieval tradition?” When we take a look at Luther’s commentary only ten verses later (119:24: “For Thy testimonies are my meditation, and Thy statues my counsel”), it seems to answer both of Preus’ questions in the affirmative:

But now let us learn this, that Holy Scripture is “testimonies,” first to the Jews concerning the coming Christ. … From this, you, O man, should most diligently preserve for yourself this noteworthy fact, that wherever it may be, you never understand a passage of Scripture to the end, and you do not comprehend all the truth it conceals; though you may perhaps understand some things, perhaps many things there, know that it is always there for you as a testimony of truth still to be revealed to you or at least of truth that can be revealed. Therefore it is called a “testimony,” because it testifies and prophesies concerning future things. But every Scripture passage is of infinite understanding. Therefore, no matter how much you understand, do not be proud, do not fight against another, do not withstand, because they are testimonies, and perhaps he will see what you do not see, and what is to him statute or utterance is still testimony to you. Therefore it is always a matter of making progress in the understanding of Scripture.

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404 LW 11:421 (emphasis added).

405 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 184.

406 LW 11:433 (emphasis added). Preus observes that “Luther’s exegesis of this passage is utterly unprecedented in the tradition…” (From Shadow to Promise, 185n21).
In both of the above passages, then, Luther makes it explicitly clear that the testimonies in question testify concerning the future (“future goods,” “things to come,” “future things”), but in this second excerpt we learn more about the implications that this future orientation has for the nature and function of Scripture. Rather than an OT serving merely as testimonies alongside a NT serving as something fundamentally different, we have here the blanket statement from Luther that “Holy Scripture [in toto!] is ‘testimonies.’” What is letter for one may be spirit for another, Luther says, as “it is always a matter of making progress in the understanding of Scripture.”

How is one to explain what is taking place? A good place to start, we think, is with Luther’s own introductory words for the psalm, where he states forthrightly at the beginning of his scholia for Ps 119 that the kind of approach that one will see from him throughout the psalm (and this is true especially regarding the testimonies) has everything to do with the prophetic sense of Scripture:

I have not yet seen this psalm expounded by anyone in a prophetic sense, nor is there anyone who has kept the sequence and order of exposition in it without doing violence to and twisting the verses and words. I think this comes about because they did not seek first the prophetic, that is, the literal sense, which is the foundation of the rest, the master and light, the author and fountain and origin…

407 This point is expounded at an astonishing length a few lines after the passage cited: “It is always a progressing from act to act, from virtue to virtue, as here it is from understanding to understanding, from faith to faith, from glory to glory, from knowledge to knowledge. This is the true contemplative life. And thus the first step is always the spirit, and the later step is the letter. … Therefore do not rest on the second or third step, but take also this one for yourself, from the letter to the spirit. And so the preceding lack of knowledge is always the letter of the following knowledge, which becomes spirit. And this again is the letter for what follows, etc. This is what being ‘testimonies’ means” (LW 11:433–34; emphasis added).

408 LW 11:414 (emphasis added). Note also the very similar introductory gloss: “In the prophetic and literal sense this psalm is a petition for the advent of Christ and a commendation of the church of Christ, in the moral and doctrinal sense it is a petition for the spiritual advent of Christ by grace and a commendation of his grace” (WA IV 281, 35–37: “In sensu prophetico et literali psalmus iste est petitio adventus Christi et commendatio Ecclesie Christi, in morali autem et doctrinali est petitio adventus Christi spiritualis per gratiam et commendatio grate eius”). This notation is also cited in Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 177–78.
With these two sentences we are provided with a strikingly different explanation of the prophetic sense from what Luther described earlier in his “Preface of Jesus Christ, Son of God and Our Lord, to the Psalter of David.” It was there, we recall, where Luther insisted that “Every prophecy and every prophet must be understood as referring to Christ the Lord.” In other words, as Preus puts it concisely, “The subject matter of the exegesis is not the Old Testament text and people, but the Christian church ‘in Christ.’” Here at Ps 119, however, Luther equates the “prophetic [sense]” with the “literal sense,” thereby shifting the focus to the pre-incarnation perspective, or to “the Old Testament text and people,” in Preus’ words.

We are now deep enough into the material from Luther at Ps 119 to commence an evaluation of the secondary literature that has addressed these profound remarks at some length, and we do so with a view especially toward the nature and function of these recurring testimonies. We begin once again with Preus.

4.2.2.3 Preus on Luther’s Interpretation of Psalm 119

As mentioned in the introduction to the second part of this chapter, Preus called Ps 119 “a convenient focal point” for grasping Luther’s understanding of the prophetic sense of Scripture. How, then, would Preus eventually characterize Luther’s understanding of the prophetic sense of Scripture, and in what way would it relate to Luther’s view of testimonies as initiated above?

Focusing almost exclusively on Luther’s exposition of Ps 119 throughout his chapter on “The Senses and Structure of Scripture,” Preus explains the growing divergence between Luther’s

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409 LW 10:7. For more on Luther’s “Preface,” see the Introduction to this study.

410 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 177.
description of the prophetic sense in his “Preface” with that in his commentary on Ps 119 as having everything to do with promissio:

What is happening is that the prophetic—and therefore the proper theological—interpretation of the text has been given a qualitative turn toward a literal (in the ordinary sense of the word), historical interpretation. Luther has in fact reached a point where he can no longer oppose prophetic and historical interpretation as he did in his preface. And where this change occurs, promissio appears as the means by which the Old Testament exegesis becomes both theologically important and historically more credible. When the prophet turns to address his own contemporaries, his word becomes a word of promise.411

Taking the OT text and people more seriously goes hand in hand with honoring the function of promissio, Preus argues, and this directly affects what Luther means when he speaks of the prophetic sense of Scripture. The sensus propheticus, in other words, has been redefined. The OT text per se is theologically significant.

In what way does this shift in Luther’s understanding of the prophetic sense relate to Luther’s understanding of “testimony”? “Now,” Preus continues, “quite unexpectedly, Luther can refer to ‘testimonia’ as a criterion for understanding all the words of the Old Testament.”412 In fact, based on Luther’s unambiguous statement found in his commentary for verse twenty-four (see the second block quote in the “Testimonies” section), where he stated forthrightly that “Holy Scripture is ‘testimonies,’” the matter of how the prophetic sense is interwoven with testimony can be summarized even more inclusively: “Testimonia—promise—has thus become the

411 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 180. Preus rightfully opposes the view of Ebeling on this front, who used Luther’s explanation of the prophetic sense at Ps 119 (quoted above, beginning “I have not yet seen...”) to argue that Luther merely reconfigured the traditional fourfold schema such that Christ was now “the principle sense of Scripture.” Preus writes in response: “Ebeling was viewing Christ as the first, or literal, sense, whereas in fact here, and in many of the later Psalms, Luther no longer treats the Psalm text in such a way that Christ and the Church are the ‘text’” (From Shadow to Promise, 181). Ebeling’s argument can be found in his “Beginnings” (see esp. no. 3, 459–60).

412 Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 184 (first emphasis added, second original).
normative meaning of the whole Bible.”\textsuperscript{413} Where Augustine promoted love as the goal of all scriptural interpretation, Luther is moving toward faith in the testimony (or promise) as fundamental for understanding the two testaments of Christian Scripture.

Perhaps most pertinent to our purposes is that Preus would also offer a brief yet revealing word about how this transition came about for Luther, a realm in which we have been particularly invested. After asserting that “testimonia, eloquia, and promissa or promissiones are all practically synonymous,” Preus claims that “the contents of this Psalm move Luther to make the sweeping assertion that all of Scripture, in its fundamental nature, is testimonia…”\textsuperscript{414} It is necessary to set aside our response to this remark for just a short while until after we have examined Hendrix’s reaction to these arguments from Preus.

\textbf{4.2.2.4 Hendrix on Luther’s Interpretation of Psalm 119}

It was mentioned above in a previous section that, unlike Luther’s condemnatory depictions of the law of Moses at Ps 19:7–9, one is able to find several favorable qualifications for the same law when the time comes around for Luther to comment on Ps 119. The first example given above of such a qualification included Luther’s recourse to Gal 3:23 (“We were confined under the Law, shut up unto that faith which was to be revealed”) in order to describe also the faith of those who indeed believed in the law of Moses appropriately; they were, as the Galatians text has it, “shut up unto that faith which was to be revealed.” It is precisely this “faith which is to be revealed,” we recall from our discussion of Ps 112, that Hendrix regularly refers to as the \textit{fides revelanda} of the OT, or that \textit{fides} which is to be contrasted with the \textit{fides revelata} of the NT.

\textsuperscript{413} Preus, \textit{From Shadow to Promise}, 188.

\textsuperscript{414} Preus, \textit{From Shadow to Promise}, 184 (emphasis added).
Luther’s citation of this particular verse from Galatians again at Ps 119 (recall Luther doing the same at, say, Ps 97:11, where “the righteous” and “upright in heart” were said to have had “faith in our faith”), along with a few supporting remarks from Luther later in the psalm, are largely responsible for setting Hendrix off on a renewed explanation of the relationship between the fides revelanda of the OT and the fides revelata of the NT, this time within the context of “testimony.”

For Hendrix, Preus has exaggerated the case when he claims that Luther upholds the faithful of the OT as some kind of model for Christian faith. Revisiting Luther’s pivotal remark at Ps 119:14 (quoted above, beginning “They, in turn, are called ‘testimonies’…”) from an ecclesiological perspective, Hendrix argues not for a redefinition of the prophetic sense (as Preus did) but rather that “Luther has transferred the future-oriented aspect of the fides revelanda of the Old Testament faithful to the true fideles in the church.” In other words, Luther has taken the future orientation of the fides revelanda (i.e., the future orientation of the OT faithful) and applied it to the fides revelata of the NT. This transferal, in Hendrix’s judgment, is what allows Luther to speak of both groups of fideles under the same umbrella of testimony in the first place: “The future-oriented stance of the faithful synagogue leads Luther to add a future dimension to the faith of the true fideles and to depict this church of the true fideles as a testimonium.”

Again, and perhaps even more clearly representative of his position on the issue, “By taking the

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415 These occur at verse one hundred forty-six (“I cried to Thee: save me that I may keep Thy commandments”): “Therefore here, too, we must always cry for salvation. For also these people who cry here were not without salvation and light and grace. But they did not yet have what was to come and what was promised, to which they were held as that which was to be held, sought, and desired. They were held shut up in the faith that was to be revealed. Thus we are all in the midst of the grace that is already possessed and that which is to be had…” (LW 11:511). Cf. the very similar remarks from Luther at Ps 98 in the previous chapter (“Psalms 93–99”).


fides futurorum and the testimonium-character of the faithful synagogue seriously and applying it to the populus fidelis of the church, Luther arrives at his all-important understanding of the testimonium-relationship between the two states of the church.”418 It cannot be overemphasized that this transferal of the future orientation from one fides to the other is only possible, of course, if the fideles of each dispensation are kept distinct. Hendrix further explains:

In the process, [Luther] does not lay the accent upon the one church of both testaments, the ecclesia ab Abel, where there was only one faith in two different states. The faithful of the Old Testament remain distinct from the true fideles in the church of the New Testament dispensation. This distinction is what allows Luther to add the future orientation of the fides revelanda to the fides revelata. On the other hand (against Preus), this fides revelanda is not an independent faith worked out in the context of the Old Testament itself with its own valid promises.419

The fides revelata of the NT, as a superior faith in Hendrix’s view (see above at Ps 112), is a “perfected”420 form of the fides revelanda and can hardly benefit by anything that the fides revelanda has to offer except for its future orientation,421 which is precisely what Luther, according to this view, urges NT Christians to emulate as they reflect on the “future-oriented stance of the faithful synagogue” (above). Only once this transferal takes place can it then be asserted, as Luther does repeatedly throughout Ps 119, that both groups of fideles exist essentially by testimonium.

418 Hendrix, Ecclesia in Via, 282.
419 Hendrix, Ecclesia in Via, 271.
420 “The fides revelanda is only temporary and insufficient and must be perfected by the fides revelata after Christ comes in the flesh” (Hendrix, Ecclesia in Via, 269–70).
421 “Nevertheless, the primary feature of the fides revelanda—its future orientation—retains validity even for the fideles of the church with their fides revelata” (Hendrix, Ecclesia in Via, 270).
4.2.2.5 Evaluation and Argument

Hendrix has helpfully identified a crucial distinction at work in Luther’s _Dictata_, one that has evidently gone unaccounted for in the work of Preus: the _fides revelanda_ of the OT and the _fides revelata_ of the NT. This distinction came to the fore quite explicitly among Luther’s exegesis of such texts as Ps 97 (“another faith”) and Ps 112 (“simple, literal faith”), and it can be spotted again at various places throughout his commentary on Ps 119 as well, such as at verse seventeen (“Give bountifully to Thy servant, enliven me, and I will keep Thy words”), where Luther describes the OT faithful being “led over into another faith.”422 This “another faith (_alam fidem_)” is what Hendrix is appropriately referring to as the _fides revelata_, or the unveiled faith of the NT. The differentiation and relationship between the _fides revelanda_ and the _fides revelata_ can become quickly misconstrued, however, when they are placed into an inappropriate frame of reference. As we saw above with Hendrix’s language of “inferiority” at Ps 112, for example, so also here he continues to speak of the _fides revelanda_ as “insufficient” and in need of “perfection” _from the perspective of the more “advanced” fides revelata_.423 To our knowledge, however, whenever Luther associates the _fides revelanda_ with the _fides revelata_ throughout his commentary on Ps 119, he does not do so in order to make the point that one _fides_ is better than the other but rather to highlight the oneness (_simul_) that inheres in the longing of each. Thus, to revisit a text used in the course of Hendrix’s own argumentation (see note 415), Luther states that those possessing the _fides revelanda_ “were not without salvation and light and grace. But they did not yet have what was to come and what was promised, to which they were held as that which was to be had, sought, and desired. … Thus we are all in the midst of the grace that is

422 _LW_ 11:424.
423 See note 369.
already possessed and that which is to be had….\textsuperscript{424} The point here is sameness, not superiority. Such is also the takeaway from Luther, we think, at verses twenty-eight ("My soul has slumbered through heaviness"),\textsuperscript{425} thirty-four ("Give me understanding, and I will search Thy law, and I will keep it with my whole heart"),\textsuperscript{426} one hundred twenty-four ("Deal with Thy servant according to Thy mercy, and teach me Thy statutes"),\textsuperscript{427} and one hundred seventy-four ("I have longed for Thy salvation, O Lord, and Thy law is my meditation"),\textsuperscript{428} among others presented below. The \textit{fides revelata} of the NT does not subsist via \textit{testimonium} because it somehow "expropriates" for reapplication the future orientation belonging chiefly to the \textit{fides revelanda} of the OT (so Hendrix). The \textit{fides revelata} is that faith which lives and moves and has its being in the selfsame testimonies (or promises) of God because it, too, remains grasped all the same by the future orientation of both testaments of sacred Scripture, comprised as it is of "testimonies" \textit{in toto} (see Luther above for Ps 119:24 and the ensuing discussion). No matter the \textit{fides}, then, there is "always a matter of making progress" in God’s testimonies \textit{as such}, and this

\textsuperscript{424} \textit{LW} 11:511 (emphasis added; quoted more fully in note 415).

\textsuperscript{425} "This happens to all who are progressing on the way and seeking and awaiting perfection, as it happened to those who under the Law awaited the revelation of the Spirit.\ldots\ In this interval nothing is more effective than the Word of God, which strengthens on the present level and stimulates toward the coming one. It helps to put up with the letter and causes us to seek the spirit" (\textit{LW} 11:437).

\textsuperscript{426} "God often commands that He be worshiped and that His law be kept with the whole heart, even though that law could not grant this, because it was the letter. And yet He commanded it, so that people might long for Christ and pray for its fulfillment. \textit{Just as even now} He commands that He be loved perfectly, even though this cannot be done in this life, in order to compel us to long for the future life, in which we will fulfill all of this" (\textit{LW} 11:441 [emphasis added]).

\textsuperscript{427} "[God] promised them Christ, the truth forever to the church, grace and help for good to our spirit. Nevertheless, He wants to be reminded and asked with regard to the things promised" (\textit{LW} 11:497).

\textsuperscript{428} "But as they longed for Christ in the flesh, so we now long for Him in spirit" (\textit{LW} 11:533).
takes place without need of mechanically reaching back into the letter of yesterday in order to project whatever is deemed desirable for the spirit of today.\textsuperscript{429}

On this score, Preus’ account is much more accurate. Luther’s recalibration of the relationship between the literal and prophetic senses at the beginning of his \textit{scholia} for Ps 119 is indeed a revealing gesture and would impact how he would go on to speak about testimonies (i.e., that they testify to future things, and so on). Yet Preus’ attempt to explain how this came about for Luther in the first place, that “the contents of this Psalm move [him] to make the sweeping assertion that all of Scripture, in its fundamental nature, is \textit{testimonia},” is an understatement at best. There is much more than the content of the psalm at work here, essential though that most certainly is for what is taking place in Luther’s thinking. As demonstrated above, Luther had already dealt with similar content earlier in his movement through the Psalter (Ps 19:7–9) and handled it in ways corresponding quite closely to Augustine’s treatment. Nor can it simply be claimed, as Wicks does in a related fashion, that “It was Luther’s Old Testament text that gave him a future reference,”\textsuperscript{430} or, as Tsai does, that “It is the content of this psalm that made Luther change the speaker.”\textsuperscript{431} Psalm 19 is just as “OT” as Ps 119 is, as it were, yet Luther reflects on Torah adoration in noticeably different ways (contra Wicks). Furthermore, it can hardly be expected that one would approach an interpretation of Ps 119, with its well over one hundred first person verbs embedded throughout its highly pedagogical (acrostic) structure,

\textsuperscript{429} I suspect that Hendrix himself may be taking a step closer in the right direction when, at one point, he feels the need to qualify his earlier disagreements with Preus’ “model-for-Christian-faith” language by conceding that “the future orientation of the faithful synagogue,” albeit only one aspect of Luther’s developing ecclesiology, can indeed serve as “a model for the future orientation of the \textit{fideles} in the church” (Hendrix, \textit{Ecclesia in Via}, 278).

\textsuperscript{430} Wicks, \textit{Man Yearning}, 83.

\textsuperscript{431} Lee-Chen A. Tsai, “The Development of Luther’s Hermeneutics in His Commentaries on the Psalms” (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1989), 183.
predominantly from the perspective of a group of faithful Israelites (*contra* Tsai). Rather, what is emerging in our view as causative for generating some of the most profound and unprecedented insights in all of the *Dictata*—and, it may be added, what previous studies operating apart from the perspective of the final form of the Psalter have failed to grasp—is *Luther’s sustained consideration of the faithful synagogue as a speaker of Ps 119*. Such a claim, we believe, is intrinsic to and can account for what are perhaps the three most distinguishing features of Luther’s exegesis of Ps 119: 1) his positive evaluations of the law of Moses, 2) faith’s future orientation, and 3) Scripture as testimony. We conclude our investigation of Ps 119 with a brief word about each of these deeply interrelated areas.

First, to return to a point that was made above (again, not mentioned by either Preus or Hendrix), Luther can be seen counterbalancing the way he treated the law of Moses at Ps 19:7–9 (e.g., “the law of Moses crucifies hearts”) by making several positive qualifications for the same law throughout his work on Ps 119 (“not evil or defiled in itself,” “wonderful,” encloses “invisible things promised,” and so on). This happens, in our view, not only because of the psalm’s repeated adoration of the Torah, to be sure, but also from considering such an adoration from the perspective of the OT faithful. Luther meditates, to use the psalm’s language, on an Israel that loves God’s law and was indeed blessed by it: “All who have taken it as signifying and as a figure of things to come are and were truly blessed.”  

Whether the “new law” or the “old law,” Luther says, “in both…is delight.” One of the first implications of considering seriously the faithful synagogue as a speaker of Ps 119, then, has to do with a certain softening of Luther’s

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432 *LW* 11:415 (emphasis added).

earlier (and Augustine’s characteristic) hostility toward the law of Moses, a point that leads
directly into and gains momentum from our second area of focus: faith’s future orientation.

That Luther in fact emphasizes faith in future things throughout his exposition of Ps 119 is
hardly a point of contention; “testimonies,” we are told again and again, testify to future
goods.  But from where does such a stress on futurity come? This also, in our view, originates
from Luther’s consideration of the only viable posture for the faithful synagogue—relying on the
testimonies of God—and his reflection on what that implies necessarily for NT faith: “Thus the
grace of God did not yet appear to the ancients, but it was prophesied. And to us it does not yet
appear what we shall be (1 John 3:2), but we have the testimonies about them.” The faithful
of the NT live with a view toward the future because they, too, live under the selfsame
testimonies as the faithful of the OT. Luther’s consideration of the faithful synagogue’s future
orientation continues to inform his exegesis in Ps 119 in various ways, such as at verse twenty-
eight (“My soul has slumbered through heaviness”), when he ponders the afflictions that faith
undergoes as it progresses toward the future: “This happens to all who are progressing on the
way and seeking and awaiting perfection, as it happened to those who under the Law awaited the
revelation of the Spirit….” In another instance, Luther’s consideration of the faithful
synagogue’s future orientation comes into view with respect to the synagogue’s impassioned
longing as expressed at verse one hundred forty-five (“I cried with my whole heart: Hear me, O

434 Here Wicks is more accurate when he says that “The regular occurrence of testimonium in Ps [119] gave Luther
ample opportunity to expand and deepen this aspect of his idea of faith” (Man Yearning, 78). Cf. WA IV 284, 20–

21.

435 LW 11:421.

436 LW 11:437 (emphasis added). Thus Luther refers to the law as “a disposition and schoolmaster (pedagogus)
unto Christ” (LW 11:424).
Lord”): “How great is this ardor,” Luther admires, “which forces her not only to call but to cry and to cry with the whole heart!” In fact, he would add, “let us imitate spiritually…that extremely impassioned synagog. She will easily teach you what the ardors and emotions in the words of [these verses] are.” The longing of the faithful synagogue informs the longing of NT faith not by way of expropriation and reapplication (Hendrix) but because both fides exist under God’s abiding testimonies. As was the case above, this second implication of considering the faithful synagogue as a speaker of Ps 119—faith’s future orientation—is inseparable from our third and final distinguishing mark of Luther’s exegesis, or that to which Preus has rightfully given the label “utterly unprecedented”: Luther’s claim that Scripture consists entirely of testimonies.

It is necessary to resupply with fresh emphasis the most pertinent text in order to defend this third and final implication of Luther’s sustained consideration of the faithful synagogue as a speaker of Ps 119. Just three sentences will suffice for our purposes:

But now let us learn this, that Holy Scripture is “testimonies,” first to the Jews concerning the coming Christ. For the Law and the Prophets bore witness to the righteousness of God in Christ, according to Rom. 3:21. From this, you, O man, should most diligently preserve for yourself this noteworthy fact, that wherever it may be, you never understand a passage of Scripture to the end, and you do not comprehend all the truth it conceals….

“From this,” Luther says, as in, “from the fact that Holy Scripture is ‘testimonies’ first to the Jews concerning the coming Christ” are we then able to conclude that we, ourselves, will “never understand a passage of Scripture to the end” or “comprehend all the truth it conceals.” Our

437 LW 11:509.
438 LW 11:510 (emphasis added).
439 LW 11:433 (emphasis added).
inability to grasp full comprehension of Scripture, in other words, is based upon the fact that Scripture is testimony “first to the Jews.” It should not surprise us, then, that it is in this same context where Luther sets in motion what will eventually materialize as a kind of thesis statement for his interpretation of Ps 119, or that understanding Scripture has everything to do with making progress (proficio):440 “For what sufficed [the faithful synagogue] for understanding then is now the letter to us. For, as I said above, the letter is now with us in a more subtle form than it was formerly. And this is because of progress.”441 Yet this buzzword of “progress” (or what Luther in the very next psalm would call “the progressing church”) should not to be heard in the post-Enlightenment sense of economic developmentalism but as pertaining to the inexhaustibility of Scripture’s sense-making language.442 Of the many passages demonstrating this, consider only the following: “He who does not understand the Scripture in a relative way or does not work toward the future, namely, that he always knows that there is something left over for him to understand and do and faithfully to await and desire finally to understand and do, he certainly does not let the Scripture be the testimonies of the Lord.”443 Or again, “since we are always on the way and not yet at the goal, we should always be and deem ourselves to be as dead, ignorant, erring, and evil with respect to these things which we do not

440 This point should be incontestable. See Luther discuss “progress” at LW 11:433–34, 440–41, 447, 456, 466, 468–69, 471, 475–77, 481, 497–99, 511, 516, and 532.
441 LW 11:497.
442 Though writing with the church fathers in view, Gerald Bray’s insightful comment made in an essay discussing the central role of ontology in earlier biblical interpretation can apply here as well: “We forget it now, but it was not until about 1800 that people began to think of modern civilization as superior to that of the ancients and stopped looking up to them as models to imitate. The Fathers’ deference to the past is perhaps the thing about their writings which is most alien to the modern mind, and which creates a barrier to our acceptance of them which is all the harder to surmount in that it so often goes unrecognized” (Gerald Bray, “The Church Fathers and Biblical Theology,” in Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation, ed. Craig Bartholomew et al. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004], 31).
443 LW 11:434. This is also quoted in Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 185.
yet have, and thus pray for them.” In sum, and Luther makes this point repeatedly, “to make progress is nothing else than *always to begin.*

In this way, the very words of the faithful synagogue—those of Ps 119—remain profoundly meaningful also for the church (those with the *fides revelata*!), which is why one often finds Luther placing the verses of Ps 119 right into her mouth, such as verse forty-nine: “Therefore the church, placed in tribulation, reminds Him of His promise, saying: ‘Remember Thy Word, in which Thou hast given me hope.’” The same goes for verse seventy-nine: “Here the church has need to pray: ‘Let those who fear You (lest they be turned away from there) and those who know the testimonies (that is, the promises of things to come) be turned to me.’” No matter the dispensation of the believer in question, “[God] wants to be reminded and asked with regard to the things promised,” and it is the same unchanging word that is to be used: “the beginners pray in one way and those who are progressing in another, *though saying the same words.*”

And yet they are not simple words only, Luther clarifies, “since in the words by faith there are

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444 *LW* 11:447.
445 *LW* 11:477 (emphasis added). “That which is the goal in the present moment is the starting point in the next moment” (496). Or to observe the same idea with a different focus: “we must always cry and never think that we have attained, so that we may keep the commandments of God, and we must forget that we might ever have kept them before” (511). The psalmist well emulates the approach being advocated for here because he, too, according to Luther, prays for an understanding that he already has (498).
446 *LW* 11:453.
447 *LW* 11:470.
448 *LW* 11:497.
449 *LW* 11:469 (emphasis added).
hidden things that do not appear, having the words by faith, [one has] everything, though hidden.\textsuperscript{450}

In our view, the kinds of remarks recounted above derive from Luther’s reflection on faithful Israel’s devotion to the Lord’s testimonies, time and time again. It is our argument, therefore, that Luther’s sustained consideration of the faithful synagogue as a speaker of Ps 119 not only pressures him to offer several positive qualifications for the law of Moses and to emphasize faith’s future orientation, but also even contributes to his climactic assertion that all of Scripture, at its essence, is testimony.

4.2.3 Summary of 4.2

We began the second part of this chapter by taking an introductory look at Ps 19:7–9. Concerning the adoration of the Torah found there, both Augustine and Luther carry out much of their exegesis within an antithetical framework contrasting “the law of Moses” with “the law of the Lord.” With this observation in place, we commenced our study of Ps 119. Instead of moving strictly between Christ and the church as the only possible speakers of Ps 119 (Augustine), Luther regularly considers the faithful synagogue as well. As Augustine would turn to Romans in order to explain the theological significance of Torah adoration (i.e., it exists at a kind of nexus between love as the fulfillment of the law [Rom 13:10] and Christ as the end of the love [Rom 10:4]), Luther integrates several positive qualifications for the law of Moses and bypasses an opportunity to endorse Augustine’s extensive defense of how “testimonies” (Greek \(\mu\alpha\rho\tau\omicron\alpha\) refer to martyrdom. Luther rather asserts that “testimonies” testify to future things, and he would eventually conclude that all of Scripture consists of such. While Hendrix identifies

\textsuperscript{450} LW 11:512.
a crucial distinction at work in Luther’s *Dictata* (i.e., between the *fides revelanda* of the OT and the *fides revelata* of the NT), he mishandles such a distinction when placing it onto an overly economic spectrum. While Preus has a better grasp of what is taking place hermeneutically, he fails in his attempt to account for how these remarks from Luther have emerged in the first place. It is our argument that Luther’s sustained consideration of the faithful synagogue as a speaker of Ps 119 pressures him, as it were, to offer several positive qualifications for the law of Moses, to emphasize faith’s future orientation, and to make even his climactic assertion that all of Scripture is testimony.

4.3 The Faithful Synagogue beyond Psalm 119: Psalms 122, 123, 126, and 143

No matter the exact extent to which it is granted that Luther’s interpretation of Ps 119 has been affected by his integration of the faithful synagogue into his exegesis—and our analysis above should at least refute its denial outright—the thesis of this study would be severely crippled if the faithful synagogue (and kindred concerns) were suddenly to disappear entirely from Luther’s lectures after Ps 119. In the last part of this fourth chapter, then, we attempt to round off the general picture of Luther’s integration of the faithful synagogue by tracking his concluding work throughout the rest of Book V. It cannot be expected, however, that we are in a position to undertake a detailed comparison of Augustine and Luther for each of the thirty-one remaining psalms of the Hebrew Psalter. Our credibility for offering some comprehensive conclusions about the *Dictata* in the final chapter can be accomplished, we believe, by a much more modest procedure, and that is simply to provide a representative spread of the clearest examples of
Luther’s integration of the faithful synagogue beyond Ps 119. Our last group of psalms for analysis, then, are Pss 122, 123, 126, and 143. 451

4.3.1 Psalm 122: Standing in the Synagogue

4.3.1.1 Augustine on Psalm 122

Augustine frames his homily for this third psalm of the Psalms of Ascent collection around the notions of pure and impure love. While the latter kind of love pursues only earthly things, the former kind, pure love, “raises the soul to heavenly thoughts and kindles in it a longing for eternal realities.” 452 This sort of definition for pure love sits comfortably with the motif of “ascending” as superscripted to each of the fifteen psalms across the Psalms of Ascent corpus (in Augustine’s version, “Songs of Steps”), and it is precisely this relationship between love and the idea of ascending that permeates Augustine’s interpretation of Ps 122. We focus here especially on his remarks concerning Jerusalem (122:2, 3, 6).

One quickly gets the impression that Augustine is most concerned with invalidating any definition of Jerusalem that intimates an earthly locality. This is clear at the outset: “The psalmist is someone who wants to ascend. And whither would he want to ascend if not to heaven? … In heaven is the eternal Jerusalem, where dwell the angels, our fellow-citizens.” 453 Determined to keep this point in the foreground, Augustine reiterates his defense of the heavenly Jerusalem in various ways, such as at verse three (“The Jerusalem that is being built like a city”):

451 As before, this is not to imply that every psalm omitted from the third part of this chapter shows no resemblance with any of the primary observations raised throughout our study. To offer just one brief example, the very next psalm (120) shows Luther incorporating the idea of “progress” at several places (see WA IV 392, 37–39, as well as LW 11:535 and 537). We may also mention here that only Luther’s shorthand glossae are extant for each psalm after Ps 126 (this also happens to be the case with Ps 123 below).


“When David said that, brothers and sisters, the city was already complete; it was not still under construction. The psalm must therefore be speaking of some other city which is being built even now.” Yet how would Augustine handle the immediately preceding verse (“Our feet were standing in the forecourts of Jerusalem”), which seems to imply that dwelling in Jerusalem is also in some sense a present reality? He explains: “Think of yourself as you will be when you get there. ...keep your future destiny before your eyes as though you were standing there and already rejoicing with the angels in joy that can never be taken away from you.” In sum, the following exhortatory remark from Augustine encapsulates the main force of his sermon quite well: “Let any notion of the earthly Jerusalem be banished from the mind of one who is in love, who is afire, who longs to reach that Jerusalem which is our mother, which the apostle calls our everlasting home in heaven (2 Cor 5:1).”

4.3.1.2 Luther on Psalm 122

Already at the first verse (“I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the house of the Lord”) one can see Luther exhibiting a very different hermeneutical conceptuality for Ps 122, and it builds unmistakably on his earlier exegesis regarding the faithful synagogue: “wherever faith presents itself to us, it rejoices at its first appearance, as the faithful synagog does here, that entrance into the church has been promised to it (Quod promissus sit ei introitus in Ecclesiam). Nor would it rejoice, if it did not believe, hope, and love these promises as being true.” Faith as such rests on the surety of God’s promises, no matter the dispensation. But

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455 EP 6:15.
457 LW 11:539.
does this “entrance into the church” imply that those already in the church (i.e., those of *fides revelata*) lie necessarily outside of any possible *uniformity* with the synagogue? Rather than polemicizing against those arguing for an earthly Jerusalem (Augustine), Luther answers such a question by explaining verse two (“Our feet were standing in your courts, O Jerusalem”) in terms of a profound relationship between the present church and the OT text and people:

And he who first spoke in the singular, ‘I rejoiced,’ now speaks in the plural, ‘our feet were standing, etc.’ From this it is clear that he is speaking in the person of the synagogue. Not only that, however, but, as has often been said, *everyone going forward ought to feel and speak thus, as if he were in the synagogue.* For as long as we have not accepted the promises, we have not entered Jerusalem, but we stand and wait for the entrance.\(^{458}\)

In a kind of self-commentary on his work leading up to Ps 122 (“as has often been said”), Luther discerns that both church and faithful synagogue partake of the selfsame stance toward the promises of God. Wishing to extend this interpretation into the realm of what it would then mean to “enter into Jerusalem,” Luther reverts back momentarily to a verse from the previous psalm (the eighth verse of Ps 121: “The Lord will preserve your coming in and your going out”) in order to connect faith in God’s promises with entrance into the holy city, and it sounds quite like his talk about “progress” throughout Ps 119:

> We are always coming in, and where we have come in, we go out to that which we have not yet entered, from brightness to brightness, from strength to strength. But they who think they have already apprehended do not stand in the courts, but sit in the middle of Jerusalem, which is impossible. For it has not yet been built, and if for some, it has not yet been built for me or for you (that is, we have not yet arrived at the end), but it is still constantly being built. As for you, therefore, do not presume that you have arrived.\(^{459}\)

Only a heretic would claim to be sitting “in the middle of Jerusalem”—or to have achieved full apprehension of Scripture—“which is impossible,” Luther says. One should always be “coming

\(^{458}\) *LW* 11:539 (emphasis added). In a gloss for the same verse, Luther calls the synagogue the “atrium” of the church (WA IV 398, 15).

\(^{459}\) *LW* 11:539–40.
in and going out” of Scripture’s inexhaustible discourse. Those actually residing in Jerusalem,
Luther adds a few lines later, “are there through standing and progressing, not through sitting and
possessing.”

Such a dual emphasis on the faithful synagogue and the notion of “progress” functioned well in
conjunction with the claim throughout Ps 119 that all of Scripture is testimony, and that is
exactly what Luther reasserts again in this context for “the tribes of the Lord” of verse four
(“Thither did the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord; the testimony of Israel, to praise the name
of the Lord”). These tribes exist in their very nature as a testimony, Luther argues, just as the
present church does as well:

For they are not Jews who are Jews outwardly, but they who are Jews inwardly (Rom.
2:28-29). Now, however, the testimony is hidden in which the things promised are
possessed but not yet set forth (nondum exhibite). … And he very fittingly says “the
testimony of Israel,” because the church militant is not yet what the church triumphant
will be, but it is a sign, a figure, a hidden and altogether faithful testimony of itself. … So
the church is now being made ready because it is being built as a city. And it is indeed
not yet a city, but a part and testimony that it will become a city. So, indeed, it is not yet
Israel, but a reliable sign that it will be Israel, because it is being prepared for the vision
of God and sees Him in part, namely, by faith. … the church is a testimony and not
something realized, because it does not show itself to be such as are the things promised
in it and concerning it but only gives testimony. For its goods are future…. Therefore not
all Israelites are the tribes of the Lord, but only those who are a testimony. These are the
true Israel and thus go up, not the Israel which is the appearance, but the Israel which is a
testimony.

Both Israel and the church possess what is not yet set forth (nondum exhibite), and only those
trusting in the promises of God, or only those living as a “faithful testimony of itself,” in
Luther’s words, are traveling en route to a future “setting forth” of that which was promised.

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460  LW 11:540.

461  LW 11:543 (emphasis added). The fides distinction emphasized by Hendrix comes to the foreground in Luther’s
exegesis of the second half of the verse under discussion here (“To praise Thy name”): “For [the fathers] did not
have the faith that was revealed (fidem revelatam), but they believed the faith that was to be revealed (fidem
revelandam) in the name of Jesus Christ” (544).
To summarize: while Augustine focuses on loving (or ascending to) the heavenly Jerusalem throughout Ps 122, Luther again places the psalm into the mouth of the faithful synagogue and continues to contemplate its implications, this time via the psalm’s longing for Jerusalem: to be “in your courts” is to stand with the synagogue, to “go out and come in” (from Ps 121) is to make ongoing progress in understanding Scripture, and to be in the faithful synagogue or the church is to testify to a future reality.

4.3.2 Psalm 123: Eyes on the Lord

4.3.2.1 Augustine on Psalm 123

Here we need only rehearse briefly how Augustine tends to handle a psalm’s speaker, as Luther addresses this realm in more than one way even amid his quite limited glossae. Although an individual psalmist, the speaker of Ps 123 in Augustine’s view is a representative of the entire church: “Let the single psalmist make the ascent; but let him sing from the heart of each one of you like a single person. Indeed, let each of you be this one person. Each one prays the psalm individually, but because you are all one in Christ, it is the voice of a single person that is heard in the psalm.” Augustine would reiterate this kind of understanding at verse two (“Even as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters, and as the eyes of a maid are on the hands of her mistress, so are our eyes on the Lord our God, until he take pity on us”), this time nuanced in terms of Christ’s relationship with his church: “Thus the people are a servant and the Church is a maid. When you hear the name of Christ, lift your eyes to the hands of your master; but when you hear him called the power and the wisdom of God, lift your eyes to the hands of your mistress, because you are both a servant, being his people, and also a maid, being the

Augustine’s articulation of the “one flesh” union between Christ and church, therefore, continues to account for the psalm’s speaker.

### 4.3.2.2 Luther on Psalm 123

For Luther, quite frankly, Ps 123 “is yet again a petition for the advent of Christ in the flesh.”\(^{464}\) With this pre-incarnation perspective in place, he refers verse two (“…our eyes are on the Lord our God…”) not to the church (Augustine) but “first [to] the people of the faithful synagogue.”\(^{465}\) So instead of fluctuating between Christ and the church as possible speakers, Luther prefers rather to speak in terms of Scripture’s ability to extend across multiple advents of Christ, notwithstanding his preference this time for the second one: “Nevertheless, because every Scripture that speaks of the advent of Christ in the flesh can be—in fact, rather ought to be—understood best about the spiritual advent of the same through grace.”\(^{466}\) This marks yet another indication, then, that Luther is thinking through the implications of his threefold advent schema (i.e., Christ in the flesh, Christ in the soul, and Christ at the last day) well beyond its initial developments.\(^{467}\)

To summarize: while Augustine accounts of the speaker of Ps 123 by means of Christ and his church within his well-established *totus Christus* hermeneutic, Luther considers also the faithful synagogue and, as a corollary, extends the psalm’s language to multiple advents of Christ.

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\(^{463}\) *EP* 6:34.

\(^{464}\) *WA* IV 407, 32: “Est autem iterum peticio adventus Christi in carnem.”

\(^{465}\) *WA* IV 407, 29: “fidelis populi synagoge primum.”

\(^{466}\) *WA* IV 407, 32–34: “Veruntamen, quia omnis Scriptura, que de adventu Christi in carnem loquitur, potest optime, immo debet intelligi de adventu eiusdem spirituali per gratiam.”

\(^{467}\) See the previous two chapters, especially the discussions at Pss 80 and 102.
4.3.3 Psalm 126: Turn Again our Captivity

4.3.3.1 Augustine on Psalm 126

The restoration of Zion figures prominently in what is the seventh of the Psalms of Ascent (Ps 126), and after reminding his hearers that these psalms are for people who are ascending to the heavenly Jerusalem, Augustine feels the need to reconcile his emphasis on an “eternal Zion” with the “captive Zion” of the psalm’s opening verse (“When the Lord turned Zion’s captivity around, we became like people comforted”): “But how can it be the eternal Zion if it was also Zion the captive? It is eternal in the angels, but it was captive in men and women; … The first humans were citizens of Jerusalem, but when sold under sin they became exiles. From their stock our whole race was propagated, and thus a captive Zion filled the whole earth.” This type of approach to the “captivity” throughout the psalm remains a favorite for Augustine, seen quite clearly from his treatment of verses two and three (“Then they will say among the nations,
The Lord has dealt magnificently with them! Indeed, the Lord has dealt magnificently with us, and how happy we are!”): “Are not people running toward the Church in every land? Throughout the world our ransom-price is effective and all reply, ‘Amen.’ It is true, then, that citizens of Jerusalem are saying this among the nations: citizens of Jerusalem captive still, but on their way home, exiles sighing for their homeland.” In sum, the present church is in a captivity of sorts while she lives on earth, yet the faithful in her midst are certainly “on their way home.”

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469 EP 6:76.
4.3.3.2  Luther on Psalm 126

Rather than harmonizing an eternal Zion with a captive Zion (Augustine), Luther clarifies the “captivity of Zion” of the first verse (“When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, we became like men comforted”) by glossing the word “Zion” with “the people of faithful Israel.” While it is true that Luther also understands “the captivity of Zion” as a prophecy of the church’s martyrdom in his scholia, his close attention to the OT perspective reappears at other places throughout his interpretation of Ps 126 as well. For example, where Augustine envisions unbelievers running toward the church at the phrase “say among the Gentiles” (126:2), Luther begins his treatment of the same text from the standpoint of the remnant of Israel: “Hence he rightly says, ‘Then they shall say among the Gentiles’ (v. 2), as if to say: ‘The offended Jews will not say this, but among the Gentiles there will be a remnant of Israel proclaiming this very thing.’” Not surprisingly, this kind of thinking would give rise to yet another rendition of Luther’s threefold advent schema, this time posited for the first half of verse four (“O Lord, turn again our captivity”): “But as this is explained concerning Christ’s first advent into the church, so it is explained concerning His spiritual advent into the soul, to which is given saving joy when its captivity is brought back through grace and it becomes like one comforted and full of joy and praising.” The OT text need not be quickly allegorized into an exclusively NT frame of

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470 WA IV 411, 1: “populi Israel fidelis.”
472 LW 11:551 (emphasis added).
473 LW 11:551.
reference, Luther implies. While remaining closely acquainted with Augustine’s work, Luther goes his own way.

To summarize: Augustine’s homily on Ps 126 includes several explanations of how an eternal Zion can at the same time be described as a captive Zion. Luther, on the other hand, considers the faithful remnant of Israel in various ways throughout his work on the same psalm and, as a direct result, rearticulates features of his threefold advent hermeneutical conceptuality.

4.3.4 Psalm 143: Penitential Progress

Our final psalm for analysis takes us well out of the Psalms of Ascent corpus (Pss 120–134) and places us not far from the five concluding hallelujah psalms of the Hebrew Psalter (Pss 146–150). Here again we can accomplish our purposes by focusing predominantly on the proposed speaker for the psalm.

4.3.4.1 Augustine on Psalm 143

As with many of his homilies on penitential psalms, Augustine begins his treatment of Ps 143 by acknowledging the persecutions of the earthly David before quickly reminding his hearers that they are rather to be on the lookout for the prefigured sufferings of a future David: “Let us rather look for our Lord and savior Jesus Christ in this psalm. The psalm is a prophecy, and in it he foretells himself.” More specifically, of course, Christ speaks in Ps 143 about his crucifixion: “Christ is going to preach to us in this psalm about his passion. Now let us listen to it.”

474 See LW 11:552, for example, when the time comes for Luther to discuss the obscure phrase, “As a stream in the south” (Ps 126:4).
the same time, however, Augustine continues to account for the body of the Christ (the church) in ways that should be quite familiar to us by now. The opening verse (“Hear my prayer, O Lord, let your ears be open to my petition”), for example, is a petition that Augustine urges all in attendance to emulate: “let everyone say this who together with us constitutes the whole Christ.”

Our final psalm for analysis, then, shows Augustine once again working firmly within his totus Christus hermeneutic.

4.3.4.2 Luther on Psalm 143

Without overlooking the Davidic superscription, Luther not only considers the faithful synagogue as a speaker of Ps 143 but also uses the psalm to elaborate on some of his earlier interpretations in fresh ways. First, concerning the psalm’s speaker, Luther infers that “This psalm in spirit and the prophetic sense is the voice of the people of the faithful synagogue, now almost extinct spiritually…seeking on this account anxiously the advent of Christ in the flesh.”

Albeit a penitential psalm—one easily transferable, in Augustine’s view, to the passion of Christ—Ps 143 is also well equipped, in Luther’s view, to serve as a petition for the incarnation of Christ.

Two further aspects of Luther’s work merit special attention here as they not only bring to mind how he handled earlier psalms but also may even derive in some ways from his understanding of the psalm’s speaker as described above. First, after noting that the MT for verse one states “in

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478 WA IV 443, 18–21: “Iste psalmus in spiritu et prophetico sensu est vox populi fidelis synagogue, iam pene extincti spiritualiter…petentis ob hoc anxie Christi adventum in carnem.” In the same vein, Luther would gloss “your face” of verse seven (“hide not your face”) with the general “presence and your advent (presentiam et adventum tuum),” presumably to allow for multiple advents of Christ (WA IV 444, 15–16). Part of the first citation is also quoted in Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 172.
your faith” and after indicating the fact that this takes place apart from any personal merit (just as Augustine did at the same place), Luther goes on to add the gloss that this “faith” also means “by the faithfulness of your promise, by which you promised mercy to the penitent and those who ask.” Such an emphasis on promise can also be found in Luther’s notations for the glossae, where he further explains that at stake is a “faithful fulfillment of the promise” and “promised truth.”

This kind of talk about the central role of “promise” recalls much of Luther’s language at Ps 119, expressed there mostly in conjunction with “testimony” (see the discussion above). Secondly, when Luther reaches the phrase “lead me” (143:10), he chooses to clarify it with the same word used over and over again at Ps 119: “progress.” The act of being led, in other words, has everything to do with making progress, undoubtedly implying that it is only by progressing in the very ways that Luther has been insisting upon—making progress in the understanding of Scripture (see above)—that one can be led to “the land of the living.”

To summarize: while Augustine continues his totus Christus hermeneutic for Ps 143, Luther integrates the faithful synagogue as the psalm’s speaker and interprets particular phrases in ways strikingly similar to his earlier exegesis at Ps 119.

479 WA IV 443, 8–9: “per fidelitatem promissi tui, quo misericordiam promisisti penitentibus et petentibus.” That is to say, this remark about promise is in addition to and immediately preceding the phrase “not by my merit” (“non in merito meo”), or exactly how Augustine renders the verse (see EP 6:348–49). Luther does not disagree with Augustine’s view, in other words, yet chooses to stress the motif of promise over and above it.

480 WA IV 443, 30 and 31, respectively: “fideli promissionis impletione” and “veritatem promissam.”

481 WA IV 445, 8: “proficientem.” The root word throughout Ps 119 is proficio.

482 WA IV 445, 9: “in terram viventium.”
4.3.5 Summary of 4.3

In the case of Ps 122, Luther bypasses an opportunity to perpetuate Augustine’s focus on loving (or ascending to) the heavenly Jerusalem and instead places the psalm into the mouth of the faithful synagogue for a fresh reading of what it means to long for Jerusalem: to be “in your courts” is to stand with the synagogue, to “go out and come in” (from Ps 121) is to make ongoing progress in understanding Scripture, and to be in the faithful synagogue or the church is to testify to a future reality. Luther treats the speaker of Ps 123 in a similar fashion, and on this basis extends the psalm’s language to multiple advents of Christ. While Augustine includes several explanations of how an eternal Zion can also be described as a captive Zion throughout his homily on Ps 126, Luther is mindful of the faithful remnant in various ways and reiterates features of his threefold advent schema. Finally, where Augustine continues his totus Christus approach for Ps 143, Luther again considers the faithful synagogue as the psalm’s speaker and interprets certain phrases in ways closely corresponding to some of his earlier exegesis, particularly that of Ps 119.

4.4 Conclusion

Our task in this chapter has been to determine the most immediate hermeneutical implications of Luther’s increasing preoccupation with the OT perspective. Based on our research above, we are now in a position to conclude that Luther’s integration of the faithful synagogue throughout Book V has contributed to a reappraisal of the literal sense of Scripture. This argument is based upon all three parts of the chapter, but our defense consists primarily of expounding on the latter two: Luther’s interpretation of Ps 119 and his subsequent exegesis. As such, the first section of this chapter’s conclusion will revisit Luther’s approach to Ps 119 with a view toward the sensus
literalis, while the second section will keep the same view in place yet discuss Luther’s work beyond Ps 119 via a series of “canonical reflections.”

4.4.1 Psalm 119 and the Literal Sense

Luther makes it explicitly clear throughout his work on Ps 119 that Scripture both testifies to future things (“Holy Scripture is ‘testimonies’”) and is inexhaustible (“always a matter of making progress”). What do these statements imply about Scripture’s literal sense?

Whether or not one is willing to grant, as we argued for above, that these characteristics of Scripture were pressured by Luther’s sustained consideration of the faithful synagogue as a speaker of the psalm, his integration of the faithful synagogue into his exegesis as such entails that Luther reflects on an Israel that meditates on inexhaustible testimonies. It belongs to the very fabric of Scripture as “testimony,” in other words, that its literal sense (as Luther is using the term at Ps 119) cannot be exhausted; to claim otherwise, as we saw, is to be a heretic. In this way, Luther not only reflects on a faithful synagogue living by virtue of the testimonies of Scripture but also infers that these selfsame testimonies, as inexhaustible Scripture, somehow continue to speak meaningfully to the church today in their literal sense (“saying the same words;” “to make progress is nothing else than always to begin”).

Luther is thus able to flow freely between different speakers of the psalm—at one moment it is “the prophet in the person of the early church” and in the next it is “a prayer of the faithful people concerning Christ’s first advent”—because such a range of applicability also somehow inheres in the capacity of the psalm’s literal sense, extending as it does across all three advents of Christ. Explanations by way of “projection” and “retrojection” (Hendrix) are thus collapsed, and while Preus may be

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483 In this vein, Luther frequently asserts the old/new simultaneity of man who is always in need of a new hearing of God’s unchanging word. Examples of this throughout Ps 119 are legion.
right to stress a change in the prophetic sense, we think it better to speak of a reappraisal of the literal. As noted, Luther equates the two: “seek first the prophetic, that is, the literal sense, which is the foundation of the rest, the master and light, the author and fountain and origin….” From where does Scripture’s inexhaustibility originate if it is not from that which is deemed to be “the author and fountain and origin…”? It is our contention, therefore, that a proper appraisal of the literal sense of Scripture was indeed at stake throughout Ps 119, and Luther’s integration of the faithful synagogue was its impetus.

4.4.2 Canonical Reflections

After completing his work on Ps 119, Luther moves directly into the Psalms of Ascent corpus and encounters an “ascent” motif recurring in both psalm and superscript. Already at Ps 122 we hear Luther making the pronouncement that “everyone going forward ought to feel and speak thus, as if he were in the synagog.” Why? “For as long as we have not accepted the promises, we have not entered Jerusalem.” Entry into Jerusalem is thus tied up with God’s promises (or testimonies), and to believe in God’s testimonies is none other than to stand with the faithful synagogue. Jerusalem ascent, in other words, has everything to do with the interpretation of Scripture. Luther would have ample opportunity to refract this understanding through the variegated ways the ascent material drives its main point home, as it were, amid such features as what it means to be “in the courts” (122:2) to how one “goes out and comes in” (121:8) to who

484 See his chapter entitled “The Senses and Structure of Scripture” (From Shadow to Promise, 176–99) and the discussion above at Ps 119.

485 Perhaps a prior question may be raised here as well: why was Luther so insistent on a “prophetic” interpretation of Ps 119 in the first place? “I have not yet seen this psalm expounded by anyone in a prophetic sense….” Luther declares boldly, and problems have arisen in the history of its interpretation when previous interpreters “did not seek first the prophetic, that is, the literal sense” (LW 11:414). Is this desire to equate the “prophetic” and “literal” senses also being pressured to some extent by a prior preoccupation with the faithful synagogue?
really goes up as a tribe of Israel (122:4). This interrelationship between the motif of ascent and making progress in understanding Scripture continues in Luther’s lectures well beyond of the Psalms of Ascent, as seen at Ps 143 regarding what it means to be led (again, the idea of movement) to do God’s will (143:10). Whether interpreting Scripture or being interpreted by Scripture, Luther shows a sustained interest in the inexhaustibility of its sense-making language not only at Ps 119 but also throughout his subsequent exegesis. We think it fair to conclude, then, that the types of construals from Luther beyond Ps 119 serve as further confirmation of the argument above that Luther’s integration of the faithful synagogue throughout Book V has contributed to a reappraisal of the literal sense of Scripture.

484 I have tried to account for the Solomonic superscription of Ps 127 in a way that associates it with the promise of a Davidic king from elsewhere in the canon. See my “Contexts for Hearing: Reevaluating the Superscription of Psalm 127,” Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 37:2 (December 2012): 185–99.

487 Another brief illustration of this from a psalm not included in our study appears at the last verse of Ps 140 (“…the righteous will dwell with your presence”), where Luther explains the “righteous” as “those who are progressing” (WA IV 438, 11: “recti i. e. proficientes”).
Chapter 5
Conclusion

A larger concern of this thesis has been to determine why the second half of Luther’s first professional lectures series (*Dictata super Psalterium*) exhibits a noticeably different character than the first. In order to make an original contribution that builds on previous inquiry, this study has taken a key observation from James Samuel Preus—Luther’s emphasis on a “faithful synagogue”—and placed it into an entirely new frame of reference: the present literary shape of the Hebrew Psalter. This proposition evoked a fresh set of questions, such as where the faithful synagogue originated, how the faithful synagogue influenced Luther’s subsequent exegesis, and to what extent a consideration of the faithful synagogue may have affected Luther’s understanding of the literal sense of Scripture. We are now in a position to summarize our findings and to present an answer to the research question posed in the Introduction to our study: what is the relationship between Luther’s emphasis on the “faithful synagogue” and the canonical shape of the Hebrew Psalter?

Our first major task was to examine Luther’s movement through the Asaphite corpus (Pss 73–83) in relation to both Augustine and Cassiodorus (chapter two). By paying close attention to such matters as a psalm’s speaker and hearers throughout seven formative Asaphite psalms (73, 74, 77, 78, 80, 81, and 83), we determined that Luther achieved a distinct conceptualization of the faithful synagogue over against his predecessors in part because of how he associated psalm superscription with psalm content for distinct hearings (e.g., a split between the godly and ungodly at Ps 74, an individual remorse coming from a faithful group at Ps 77, the remnant of
“Israel among the nations” at Pss 80–81 and 83). In retrospect Luther would conclude that the significance of “Asaph” indicates “the separation of the wicked from the fellowship of the godly…the people separated and gathered from those who remain and are not gathered” (see at Ps 85). The “elite” Asaph of revered repentance or privileged prophecy as seen in the approaches of Augustine and Cassiodorus, in other words, tended to restrict the range of reference taking place in Luther’s attentiveness to faithful and unfaithful Israelites. The latter part of this chapter confirmed Luther’s exclusion of the faithful synagogue for his expositions of an earlier Asaphite psalm (50) and earlier corporate laments (Pss 44 and 60), thereby justifying our use of the title “origins of the faithful synagogue” in order to emphasize the uniqueness of what happens throughout the Asaphite corpus as opposed to earlier in the Dictata.

In chapter three we examined Luther’s work on the rest of Book III and throughout Book IV in order to determine if the findings of chapter two would “endure” beyond their origination. Whether it was a focus on promise (Ps 85), the pre-incarnation perspective (Ps 87), a faithful/unfaithful bifurcation (Ps 87), the saved remnant (Pss 89 and 90), the first advent (Ps 90), the incarnation (Pss 93–99), the faithful synagogue as a speaker (Ps 101), a threefold advent hermeneutical schema (Ps 102), or a marked interest in the nature of OT faith (Ps 105), Luther’s lectures on the rest of Book III and throughout Book IV show an increased preoccupation with the OT frame of reference. Luther adjusts how he first handled the Korahite superscription, parallels the Lord’s advents with increasing frequency, and carries forward both the remnant and faithful synagogue into later psalms (esp. from Ps 89 to Ps 90 and into Pss 93–99). At Ps 102 Luther enunciates his underlying threefold advent schema when commenting on the phrase “hide not your face” (Ps 102:2), a petition he had already encountered numerous times throughout the Psalter only to handle in different ways before (the Asaphite) Ps 80. In short, Luther’s distinct
conceptualization of the faithful synagogue from the Asaphite corpus influenced his subsequent exegesis throughout Books III and IV of the Psalter.

Our fourth chapter sought to determine the most immediate hermeneutical implications of Luther’s increasing preoccupation with the OT perspective. After examining his treatment of four psalms leading up to Ps 119 (Pss 107, 111, 112, and 115) in order to confirm that the type of influence demonstrated in chapter three indeed persists beyond Ps 105, the second part was devoted entirely to Ps 119. Because of Luther’s integration of the faithful synagogue at this point, he not only reflects on an Israel that meditates on inexhaustible testimonies but also infers that these selfsame testimonies, as inexhaustible Scripture, somehow continue to speak meaningfully to the church today. A proper appraisal of the literal sense of Scripture was the issue at stake throughout Ps 119, in our view, and Luther’s integration of the faithful synagogue was its impetus. The last part of the chapter examined Pss 122, 123, 126, and 143 in order to confirm Luther’s integration of the faithful synagogue beyond Ps 119. Luther moves directly into the Psalms of Ascent and associates Jerusalem ascent with the interpretation of Scripture, an interrelationship that would continue well beyond the ascent corpus (Ps 143). As Luther displays an interest in the inexhaustibility of Scripture’s sense-making language not only at Ps 119 but also in his subsequent exegesis, we concluded that Luther’s integration of the faithful synagogue throughout Book V contributed to a reappraisal of the literal sense of Scripture.

After examining some thirty-five psalms from especially the second half of Luther’s first professional lecture series and comparing them primarily with his most influential forerunner in the faith, Saint Augustine, it is our thesis that the second half of Martin Luther’s Dictata super Psalterium exhibits a noticeably different character than the first half because of the profound effect that the canonical shape of the Hebrew Psalter had on Luther’s journey from Ps 1 to Ps
This is substantiated not only by a comparison of Luther’s work on similar material from different places in the Psalter but chiefly by his integration of the faithful synagogue, a phenomenon whose relationship to the final form of the Psalter comes about aggregately from the Asaphite corpus onward. Put simply, the way Luther uses earlier psalms in his interpretations of later ones deserves a central place in hermeneutical discussions of Luther’s first psalm lectures. Far from a systematic treatise or disputation, the *Dictata* is much more the landscape of an Augustinian monk who grows increasingly dissatisfied with a perceived distance between the Christological exuberance of Augustine and the pastoral “ethos” of the Psalter.

While deploying a *totus Christus* hermeneutic may yield some congenial results for individual laments with David in the superscription—precisely the type of psalm dominating the first two Books of the Psalter—it would take Luther’s existential identification with the pulse waves of the sacred assembly throughout Books III–V to provide not only the spiritual relief he was seeking but also a realization of the profound capacity of the literal sense of Scripture to extend across all three advents of Christ as testimony.

Perhaps it needs to be made clear that such a claim about Luther’s movement through the Psalter is not an attempt to propose any kind of “key” for unlocking Reformation theology; indeed, it is hoped that the never-ending *Turmerlebnis* (“tower experience”) debates of the twentieth century (not to mention the sheer terminological complexity of Luther’s extraordinarily dialectical mind!) have put an end to such an enterprise. Here Preus got into some trouble when suggestively announcing “the emerging theology of promise” (see Introduction). Nor are we implying that Luther suddenly abandons every Augustinian way of thinking about scriptural interpretation; as noted periodically in our study, Luther is very much saturated with Augustine throughout the whole *Dictata*, especially at those psalms with the most glaring *in Novo receptum* (e.g., Pss 2 and 110). Our thesis is rather a probe into how far one may speak of the effects of
sequential interpretation, and in the case of Luther’s first psalm lectures, we believe it penetrated all the way down to the *sensus literalis*.

It is quite correct, then, to view Ps 119 as a climactic moment in the *Dictata*. This is the case not only because of Luther’s exegesis there vis-à-vis the tradition but also for the pivotal questions it immediately raises beyond the scope of this study. For example, what is the relationship between “progress” in understanding Scripture and Luther’s developing view of the old/new man *coram Deo*? Does Luther’s reflection on the literal sense of Scripture as essentially *testimonium* imply that the “new man” is not so much making steps on a scale of sanctification—most scholars identify some sort of “progressive sanctification” in his ensuing Romans lectures—as much as returning to faith in the testimonies of God? More pointedly, in what way does the celebrated *simul iustus et peccator* derive from a literal sense of Scripture that beckons one, as we heard at Ps 119, “always to begin”?488

In a recent study on the young Luther, Berndt Hamm marveled that “at the numerous places [in the *Dictata*] where Luther’s exegesis uses the terms *fides, fidelis*, and *credere*, the Psalm text itself hardly ever supplies them.”489 Nor is it the case, Hamm noticed, that the presence of such terms can be explained by a sophisticated “Paulinism” at work in Luther, which makes for a

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488 See chapter four. Psalm 119, of course, would later serve as the base text for Luther’s infamous “three rules” for the study of theology: *oratio, meditatio, and tentatio* (or *Anfechtung*). See Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 34, *Career of the Reformer IV*, ed. Lewis W. Spitz and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1960), 285–88. McGrath would tie the threads together in this way: “In order for the Christian to progress in his spiritual life, he must continually be forced back to the foot of the cross, to begin it all over again (*semper a novo incipere*)—and this takes place through the continued experience of *Anfechtung*” (Alister E. McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther’s Theological Breakthrough* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985], 171).

489 Berndt Hamm, *The Early Luther: Stages in a Reformation Reorientation*, trans. Martin J. Lohrmann (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 82n64. Hamm argues that a “Reformation reorientation” was already set in motion by Luther’s *Anfechtung* as a student in both Erfurt and Wittenberg (1505–11) and sees the *Dictata* as a kind of “theological harvest” of such (45).
rather unparalleled focus on “faith” over against the tradition: “we can already observe a
significant break (and maybe the most important change) from the medieval view of faith in
Luther’s first series of lectures on the Psalms.”490 It is hoped that this study of Luther’s journey
through the Hebrew Psalter and corresponding attention to the faithful synagogue can shed some
light on one of the pressures involved in making just such a break.

490 Hamm, Early Luther, 82.
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