

Luther's Theology of the Word in the *Exposition of Psalms 1-25* at Coburg (1530)

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For Martin Luther, the Book of Psalms was a never-ending source of divine wisdom which he cherished during his entire life. As he believed the psalms to be texts inspired by the Holy Spirit, in Luther's understanding they contain the word of God and theological doctrine applicable to the life of every individual in any era. Luther returned to exposition of psalms throughout his life. In a later period such exposition can be found in the *Exposition of Psalms 1-25*, also known as the "*Coburg Psalms*,"¹⁾ which Luther wrote at Coburg fortress in 1530, the southern most watch point of the Duchy of Saxony, as he was unable to attend the diet at Augsburg due to imperial ban. For five months, from Easter until early October, Luther dedicated himself on this personal "Mount Sinai" to theological and exegetical work: the psalms and the prophets. Even though this exposition, in terms of its length, does not compare to Luther's extensive lectures, such as the first and second lecture on the psalms (*Dictata super Psalterium*, 1513-1516, and *Operationes in Psalmos*, 1519-1521), it still is an authentic theological work of the reformer. The work dates back to the time of the Diet of Augsburg and offers a valuable textual basis for a more detailed

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1) Loewenich, von Walter. Martin Luther. 1986, p. 324.

theological analysis, which has not until now been the subject of research. The analysis of Luther's theology will make it possible to compare Luther's theological thought revealed here with other expositions of the first psalms.

Short expositions of the first 25 psalms, entitled *Exposition of Psalms 1-25* were no mere spiritual exercises of the reformer. During his time at Coburg, Luther suffered from health complications (headaches). Additionally, Luther was going through spiritual struggles as he tried to comfort his close collaborator J. Jonas whose newborn son had died, and W. Link of Nuremberg whose daughter had passed away. He was also deeply troubled by the news of his own father's passing (June 5). According to the testimony of Luther's secretary, Veit Dietrich, who was staying with Luther at Coburg, Luther overcame the difficulties by praying the psalms.

He also became concerned about the church-political situation. It is, therefore, typical of this exposition to link the meaning of particular psalms with the events of his time:²⁾ the delivery of the reformational confession of faith at Augsburg on June 25,³⁾ the August Confutation of the Augsburg Confession and subsequent theological and political negotiations. Luther was also troubled by the news of Turkish invasions in 1530. Here, too, Luther found a wellspring of strength and comfort in the psalms (Ps 23:2, Ps 25:3). Dietrich Korsch portrays the situation as "theological tension within Reformation itself ... between the subjective authenticity of faith and the teaching office established by church regulations."⁴⁾

2) WA 31.1: 294.13-17. See for instance WA 31.1. 299.5-8 (Elector George and the Emperor). WA 31.1: 299.11-16 (Luther and Cardinal Cajetan). WA 31.1: 299.19-26 (John Hus). Cf. Ps.17.

3) WA 31.1: 289.29-34; WA 31.1: 309.32-24; WA 31.1: 311.28-33; WA 31.1: 373.14-16; WA 31.1: 368.21-22; WA 31.1: 354.19-20; WA 31.1: 355.32-33; WA 31.1: 374.16-17; WA 31.1: 378.16-18.

The parallels between the content of psalms and real-life examples serve as comparisons. Later expositions of psalms reveal that Luther did not yield to the tendency toward a radical contextualization of the psalms, but offered theologically rich – timeless – interpretations.

In the first section, this article will introduce the character of divine action in Trinitarian perspective based on the doctrine of Trinity as God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit speaking. The final part will focus on the word of God in relation to man and his spiritual life. It will offer a glance at the praxis of living out one's faith and following Christ in a communicative character based on the word of God. It can be assumed that this procedure will reveal Luther's theology also in the Coburg Psalms.

1. Father rules by righteousness

In the *Coburg Psalms* (Ps 2), as similarly to *Operationes*, Luther emphasizes the creative power of God's word. God "does everything by word."⁵⁾ When God speaks, things happen. And this is true despite the fact that God "creates all *ex nihilo*,"⁶⁾ as Luther adds when discussing Ps 9.

Although God himself is hidden from human sight, he allows man to know him as a Creator who gives everything by his grace. He "is righteous, makes righteous, rules in righteousness and bestows righteousness."⁷⁾ However, this

4) Dietrich Korsch, „Sic sum,“ Der Theologe Martin Luther auf der Veste Coburg 1530, p. 183. In: Dietrich Korsch, Leppin Volker, *Martin Luther – Biographie und Theologie*, 2010, 335 p.

5) WA 31.1: 267.4-5.

6) WA 31.1: 291.12-13; WA 31.1: 291.20.

righteousness is not a mere passive character of God, it is communicated in the realm of divine word.

Adam is the first one given the mandate to rule over the creation (Ps 8:8-9), but because of sin this role is passed on to the new Adam, Jesus Christ.⁸⁾ Similarly to *Operationes*, Luther does not take God's blessings to mean a physical "abundance of possessions." Although in specific instances blessings can be physical, Luther never finds this issue as central to his exegesis. Blessings are present in the life of one who lives by the power of the word of God in faith, love, teaching, delight, perseverance, and endurance. Blessings are related to finding and retaining eternal life.

Further, it needs to be said that when comparing the exposition of Psalm 1 with that in *Operationes*, Luther abandoned the notion of a "listening" and "communicating" creation.⁹⁾ This is confirmed in such exemplary verse as Psalm 19:1, when in both interpretations Luther understands "the firmament" as "ministers"¹⁰⁾ of the gospel in this world. The Creation doctrine draws on the communicative relation between man and the Creator, who speaks to man and calls him to gratitude for all he has been given by God. Luther's overall focus is on man *coram deo* rather than the whole of creation.

In Luther's Coburg interpretation of psalms we can see a shift in the hamartiological emphasis and his definition of the fundamental human sin, viewed through the prism of unbelief in God and his words: "The one who rejects the word rejects all, including God, whose word it is."¹¹⁾ Man without the word

7) WA 31.1: 290.19-22.

8) WA 31.1: 287.34-36.

9) WA 5: 34.3-11.

10) WA 31.1: 339.26. Cf. WA 5: 541.26-542.6. Here taken to mean those endowed with ecclesiastical office.

11) WA 31.1: 308.4-5. Cf. WA 31.1: 308.10.

is “corrupt in unbelief.”¹²⁾ Luther shifts this to the universal level, stating that “all fight against faith” and “we each want to be our own God”¹³⁾. Such deeply hostile attitude of man toward God underlies Luther’s understanding of original sin, which is, in Luther’s theological system, more serious than sinful deeds. In Luther’s commentary on Ps 25:11 a more detailed treatment of the original sin, *peccatum originis*, is found. It is *peccatum radicale et capital*¹⁴⁾, which cannot be escaped. The evil of sin and the evil of man is manifested specifically in this sin rather than in sinful deeds. The “evil” of sin consists in that the man of God becomes “a child of wrath, sin and death.”¹⁵⁾ Sin lays snares that lead to one’s damnation. Thus sin becomes an inescapable power for man: “Our heart is our own enemy and our greatest enemy.”¹⁶⁾ In the same way the perpetrators of the original sin become external danger for another sinner.

Coram deo sin is a trespass against the Law, therefore it remains true that “the whole world ... is guilty before God, for none is righteous and when [the world] has lost Christ, there is no salvation or grace, all is evil and damned.”¹⁷⁾ In *Operationes*, Luther discovers a reference to the etymological basis of the word man (*enosh*) as the one who “forgets.”¹⁸⁾ In the Coburg Psalms, however, Luther discusses man in terms of the Hebrew *enosh* only briefly, so that, unfortunately, he remains in the theoretical plain, without further developing the Hebrew meaning of the word theologically.

From what has been said, therefore, it follows that unbelief as “non-faith” is the basic characteristic of sin: “Without faith

12) WA 31.1: 294.9-11.

13) WA 31.1: 272.11-19; WA 31.1: 307.28-29.

14) WA 31.1: 379.16-17.

15) WA 31.1: 294.9-11.

16) WA 31.1: 344.26. Cf. WA 31.1: 344.34-35.

17) WA 31.1: 307.24-27. Cf. WA 31.1: 312.38.

18) WA 5: 269.32-35.

all are sinners—great sinners.”¹⁹⁾ At the same time, there is a certain tension between Luther’s “unbelief in the word” and “unbelief in Christ.” However, as it remains true that just as God, so also Christ is accessible to man only in God’s word, this tension fades. The sin of unbelief in the Word of God in reality means that one starts to rely on his own *Werkgerechtigkeit*, the sin thus showing itself in the form of breaking God’s first commandment. Man’s sin thus effectively doubles itself.²⁰⁾ In contrast to one’s own righteousness is faith in God’s first commandment, connected with faith in God who helps the sinner because of his own kindness: “That is the first commandment, having a merciful God.”²¹⁾ This line of thought leads to a paradoxical state in which sin is maximized where there is no mention of it and man does not know it or negates it. On the other hand, sin ceases to exist exactly where it is maximized: “God loathes sinners, those sinners who do not want to be sinners. Even though we are all sinful, not all want to be sinners. Those who recognize themselves as sinners have God.”²²⁾ This corresponds to the interpretation of Ps 1:4 where Luther distinguishes between what seems to be great *coram hominibus*, that is *coram deo* “dust” and “nothing”, because they do not have the Spirit.²³⁾ Even though the term *theologiacrucis* does not appear in the *Exposition of Psalms 1-25*, it can be assumed that this essential form of piety, recognizing divine actions sub *contratio* had become a steady component of Luther’s theology.

To summarize, it can be concluded that in 1530 Luther’s

19) WA 31.1: 308.36.

20) WA 31.1: 272.33-273.2. Cf. WA 31.1: 277.11-12; WA 31.1: 279.12; WA 31.1: 279.33; WA 31.1: 280.7; WA 31.1: 288.20.

21) WA 31.1: 281.14.

22) WA 31.1: 377.27-29.

23) WA 31.1: 265.17-19.

main emphasis shifts to the preached word as *viva vox*—external word (*verbum externum*), which comes from the outside, from God, through the lips of the minister. In this case the original sin means that every person exists in a continuous struggle between faith and unbelief, negating the primacy of the word of God, either as a tendency towards false teaching, pride, self-righteousness, disrespect with regard to the word of God, mockery of the word, lack of interest in the word, boasting, or as teaching and spreading a false gospel, lies, etc.²⁴⁾ Luther's interpretation of Psalm 6 sees the consequence of this state before God in that it equates life without the word of God with a life without faith, hope, worship, salvation, and thus also without thanksgiving and praise. This state means that man becomes the object of God's wrath and meets God as a "harsh judge."²⁵⁾ For unbelief leads to despair, despair to blasphemy and mockery of God. And that is, in Luther's view, in existential or dogmatic sense, hell. Sin leads man to total destruction of himself. In contrast, Luther can state: Whoever has faith and hope dwells in heaven. In the present time, only in faith and hope, but in the *eschaton* for real.

2. The Son becomes present in the Word

In the *Coburg Psalms* Luther focuses on Christ and the office of His word. While f.E. *Operationes* included references to Christ in a broader scope of salvation history, from the creation until the last judgment and eternal reign, ten years later (1530) this broad scope is disappearing. Luther looks at the relevance of Jesus for his own contemporaries, thus reacting to the rejection of

24) WA 31.1: 286.21-22. Cf. Ps 12: WA 31.1: 303.34-15. WA 31.1: 308.32-33.

25) WA 31.1: 284.13-14.

evangelical reformation on the part of Rome and the “Schwärmers.” Rejection of Christ’s word is a rejection of Christ.²⁶⁾

God the Father introduces Jesus, born without sin as the King of the earth. His kingdom is a “dominion of order and righteousness.”²⁷⁾ As it is a spiritual kingdom, it is not limited by space and spans the entire territory of the earth. Christ’s reign is not to be understood as an analogy to earthly rule according to human understanding. After all, this does not even seem as plausible when considering the “historical” Jesus. It can only be understood “by faith and through the word.”²⁸⁾ God becomes present in the Word.

On the other hand, quite typically for the entire emphasis of the *Coburg Psalms*, Christ’s spiritual reign is not to be understood in a spiritualist sense only, as though Christ’s reign was limited to the stirring of godly hearts. There are many points in this interpretation of psalms that emphasize that the reign of God and the man Jesus Christ is connected with the word: “the kingdom of Christ is in the word and in the spiritual realm.”²⁹⁾ Again, it is true here that Luther does not mean the “inner word of God the Holy Spirit in a man’s heart”, but *externum et vocale verbum*.³⁰⁾

Luther’s views at this time can be explained in the following way: To have God means to have his word and to have his word means to have God. This is realized in the person of Jesus Christ as the Word of God. Where there is Christ, the gospel is being preached. When one believes the gospel, one

26) He makes the same argument in the opening of his exposition of Psalm 5 (WA 31.1: 276.3-9).

27) WA 31.1: 290.1.

28) WA 31.1: 268.18-19. Cf. WA 5: 49.34-36 which states that man should not only find delight in faith and hope, but should also understand them. The same view is voiced in WA 5: 54.9-12.

29) WA 31.1: 285.8; WA 31.1: 334.29.

30) WA 31.1: 362.1.

joins the kingdom of Christ, as in Christ the statement is completely true: “*Natura verbi esse servare nos.*”³¹⁾ According to the gospel, there are three places God can surely be found: “In the Gospel, there are three faces: baptism, in which God makes himself known as present, then the visible word, and the sacrament of the altar.”³²⁾

3. The Holy Spirit is being added to the word

The fact cannot be overlooked that in his *Exposition to Psalms 1-25*, Luther makes less mention of the Holy Spirit than he had in *Operationes*. This can be explained by Luther's own commentary (Ps 19:7): “And this text about the preached word with Christ speaks against the hordes [of fanatics] who want to have the Holy Spirit without the word.”³³⁾ The same line of thought is upheld by Luther in Ps 19:11 with reference to Müntzer, who, when interpreting the psalm, “did much speculate, but only about the Spirit, against the external word.”³⁴⁾ As discussions of the Holy Spirit were misused on the part of the enthusiasts, Luther chooses to emphasize the Christocentric aspect of the teaching of righteousness together with the preached gospel of Christ's word. As has already been stated, Christ and his kingdom are overall, and that is why he can affect people without limitations of time and space. This is how he takes care

31) WA 31.1: 344.19.

32) WA 31.1: 372.31-33.

33) WA 31.1: 341.31-32.

34) WA 31.1: 343.33-34. To Müntzer, the measure of the Spirit was the presence of good fruit. See WA 31.1: 343, note 7., publ. J. Agrikola, Müntzer's interpretation of Ps 18 in Wittenberg in 1525. An explicit treatment of the understanding of *verbum internum* in the theology of Karlstadt and Müntzer can be found in Karl-Heinz Zur Mühlen, *Nos extra nos*, 1972, pp. 244-258.

of the believers. However, this applies in the same way to the work of the Holy Spirit? Is Luther deliberately steering clear of the subject of the Holy Spirit?

Luther's theological system, with its emphasis on the external word as the deciding criterion, can be seen from the abovementioned interpretation of Ps 19:2: "The heavens are telling the glory of God." Luther interprets word "glory" to mean "gospel" and "the firmament" as "ministers."³⁵⁾ It follows from this that "ministers preach the gospel of Jesus Christ" and according to the gospel the idea of "New prophets" is not valid; the Spirit addresses spiritual words directly to the heart of man. Still, we do not find in Luther's interpretations any diminishing of the importance of the Holy Spirit, but rather a specific form of seeking to understand the meaning of the text that agrees with the overall meaning of the Scripture in the sense: was *Christen treibet*. Thus, Luther is more interested in how "the Holy Spirit adds" and "adds grace to that,"³⁶⁾ when man listens to the word (Luther has in mind listening with our physical ears), than in reflecting on the work of the Spirit guiding the minds of the biblical authors (the inspiration of the Scripture is practically not mentioned at all in the *Coburg Psalms*). In his commentary on Ps 23, Luther makes a statement which points to his reference to the prophetic inspiration of king David through the Holy Spirit.³⁷⁾ The apparent tension which arises here with regard to restricting the work of the Spirit in new prophets versus old prophets is not discussed here by Luther.

The emphasis on the *verbum externum* was already clearly

35) WA 31.1: 339.27.

36) WA 31.1: 264.26-27. Cf. WA 31.1: 269.9-10.

37) WA 31.1: 353.21-23. One cannot claim that Luther refrains from speaking about the Holy Spirit because of the Schwärmer. When looking at his later disputes, for instance, with the Antinomians, it is obvious that the article concerning the Holy Spirit still played an important role.

articulated in *Operationes*, as seen in Luther's commentary on Ps 2:11. The preached word—as the word of the cross—served a two-fold purpose in bringing into question the sinner's (self-)righteousness and in working for the salvation of those who believe the word (1 Cor 1:21). Ten years later, in 1530, this aspect of the external form of the message becomes the alpha and omega of Luther's theological thought. Christ “exercises his power solely through ‘the mouth, speech, and words.’”³⁸⁾ All the while it remains true that the minister's own abilities are irrelevant and remain in the background. Within the context of Ps 8:3 Luther interprets the phrase “little children” once again as meaning “ministers of God's word.” Thus, he is voicing the idea that their power and the power of their office does not dwell with them alone, but rather in the power of the word that they preach. For this reason, that they alone are weak, the power of the word becomes more obvious (1 Cor 1:27).³⁹⁾ It is not the words of the holy man that bring a blessing, but rather that holy words are a blessing to man. Whereas in *Operationes* taught that “all that God says through man, whether learned or not, even without the use of Scripture, as he spoke through the apostles and still speaks through those who belong to him”⁴⁰⁾ is the word of God. This line of thought has been abandoned by Luther in his *Exposition of Psalms 1-25* written at Coburg. Luther does say that only people led by the Holy Spirit can interpret Scripture. This Spirit, however, comes to them through Scripture alone.

Luther expands the aspect of the poetic ability of man: “It

38) WA 31.1: 285.26-27. Therefore it is possible to call the gospel “God's power”, in the same vein as Paul did, which is an argument that already appeared in *Operationes*(WA 5: 537.21).

39) WA 31.1: 286.9-10; WA 31.1: 331.16-19. In spite of this, Luther expects ministers to be “pious”(fromm) WA 31.1: 303.29-30.

40) WA 5: 379.8-10.

is a great grace when man delights in listening to the word [of God], writes poems about it, speaks [*schwetzet*] and sings about it.”⁴¹⁾ This is a broad understanding of the word of God: “meditation”, “preaching”, “writing”, “reading.”⁴²⁾ As can be seen, all these verbs relate to the “outward” manner of dealing with the word. We can even say that the essence of evangelical spirituality is being formed here. Such man is a “pious man”.⁴³⁾ The words of Ps 19 offer Luther a chance to underline that the message of the gospel is not limited by space, time or language (“the gospel needs to be preached in German, Saxon, Bavarian, Swabian, etc.”).⁴⁴⁾

The decisive factor is that preaching should be truly based on God’s word, for only then can the preacher say with peace of mind: “Thus says the Lord!”⁴⁵⁾ To avoid any misunderstanding, Luther’s attitude should not be understood as operating *ex opera operato*. Luther continues to stress that preaching needs to be followed by prayer as another way of “external” manipulation of the word: “*Orare est secundum opus post praedicationem.*”⁴⁶⁾ What the prayer does is refer to the will of God and leave room for the Holy Spirit to act as and when he pleases, where word has been preached. For “prayer causes our preaching to have effect.”⁴⁷⁾ The Holy Spirit is added to the word in a way that reminds one of the statement made by J. Hilburg that “the Spirit and the word are effective only when they are connected like two poles in the electric circuit. An electric circuit is only closed when both connecting cords are present. This is something Luther continually emphasized,

41) WA 31.1: 264.19-21.

42) WA 31.1: 292.32-33.

43) WA 31.1: 264.25.

44) WA 31.1: 340.24-25.

45) WA 51: 517.5-16.

46) WA 31.1: 363.7.

47) WA 31.1: 276.13-14; WA 31.1: 345.4-8.

especially later, during his fight against the Schwärmers.”⁴⁸⁾

It is necessary to deal in greater detail with the question of the place where the preaching should take place in the process of salvation. While in *Operationes* the content of the preaching alternated between “law”, “gospel” and “grace,” ten years later this distinction is replaced by the pair: “law” and “gospel.” A more articulated distinction between the functions of the law and the gospel is another important characteristic of Luther's later period.⁴⁹⁾ This could be expressed in the following manner: what seemed as “*Doppelwerk* of the gospel” in *Operationes*, is transformed here into “*Doppelwerk* of the word” (as law and gospel).

Of the law, Luther speaks in the following manner: God does not judge according to appearance, but considers the “motives of one's heart” (*affectiones*) and “thoughts” (*cogitationes*). As a “harsh judge”, he knows the thoughts man harbors in his heart and the tendencies he leans toward.⁵⁰⁾ His judgment consists of two aspects: “to save the innocent” and “to destroy the guilty ones.”⁵¹⁾ Such statements faithfully capture the weight Luther attributes to God's judgment and are more than a part of Luther's idiolect. They have an inseparable share in his theological thought. Law is an instrument of God's judgment in that it convicts man of sin. The guilt, as *reatus*, should be understood as part of the divine judgment. The Law of Moses is unchanging (*ohne Wandel*), by which Luther means that some of its parts correspond to the natural law and thus remain valid

48) Johannes Hilburg, *Luther und das Wort Gottes in seiner Exegese und Theologie*, 1948, p. 111.

49) WA 31.1: 353.18-20. In his suffering, Christ brought “the end of law and the beginning of the gospel”, which marks a clear-cut distinction between the functions of the law and the gospel.

50) WA 31.1: 284.4-6. WA 31.1: 302.30-33.

51) WA 31.1: 284.13-14; WA 31.1: 323.19-23.

without change. In his Coburg exposition, Luther is concerned primarily with the effect of law (towards salvation). *Ohne Wandel* refers to the fact that law cannot make people perfect, nor does it comfort man's soul, but rather oppresses it.⁵²⁾ In 1530, Luther expresses his unswerving conviction that the law and its observance is not the path to righteousness. The true church teaches that people "are justified without deeds, through faith in Christ."⁵³⁾ The gospel is the message that "we are saved and reconciled through Christ's blood alone." This message turns the glory of this world into *nihilum*⁵⁴⁾, but that is not the main role of the gospel. The gospel is a creative word, giving life where there was no life. "We live by promise alone that God finds delight in us and that he has given us his beloved Son for our reconciliation."⁵⁵⁾

In the Coburg exposition, the subject of "reconciliation" is present along with thoughts on the connection between Christ's suffering and human sin. Without further clarification, Luther states: "Christ suffered for our sins and because of our sins."⁵⁶⁾ In another place, where Luther claims: Through his suffering, Christ has "earned" salvation and in his resurrection he "paid back" the debt,⁵⁷⁾ it can be asserted that Christ's death appears as the bearing of the "punishment" reserved for "guilty sinners." The weight of Christ's suffering is portrayed fairly dramatically. Christ's deep humiliation, so that he gave up all honor in the eyes of this world, to be trampled as a worm,⁵⁸⁾

52) WA 31.1: 342.6-9. See as well WA 31.1: 342.2-5.

53) WA 31.1: 277.9.

54) WA 31.1: 339.31-340.1. Luther bases his claim on the argument that the glory of the world is sin, evil, and shame and we cannot speak of human effort and deeds before God.

55) WA 31.1: 277.11-12.

56) WA 31.1: 354.32-33.

57) WA 31.1: 313.26-27.

58) WA 31.1: 355.29-34.

signifies the greatest suffering, rejection, mockery, celebration and triumph of his enemies.⁵⁹⁾ Nowhere in Luther's words is it indicated that Christ's death is of significance in relation to the "calming of God's wrath." In the foreground stands the substitutionary nature of his death. It is not possible to fit all of Luther's statements into a single theory of salvation. Main emphasis of Luther's claims is directed toward the subject of righteousness. God is, therefore, the "God of righteousness," because it is by his grace that he "justifies in sin and comforts in suffering."⁶⁰⁾ With regard to the terminology, the term "salvation" is absent. It can, however, be said that the gospel is an instrument of salvation in the sense that it has the power to "comfort" and bring joy. "It perfects people and comforts them, ridding the heart of sad thoughts, and it is true and certain."⁶¹⁾

In agreement with what has been said so far concerning faith and unbelief, it is understandable that faith gains crucial importance in the process of justification. In the same way as his interpretation of the first commandment in the *Small Catechism*, Luther explains what faith means: "to believe God by having trust, faith and hope in Him."⁶²⁾ Trust, which attributes everything to God on the basis of the message of the gospel concerning God's merciful affection for sinful people as shown and realized in Jesus Christ, shifts the whole weight of the saving action to God. There is only one medicine against the original sin, to live *sub gratia*,⁶³⁾ for sin remains in man even after baptism, even though man believes. The difference

59) WA 31.1: 356.19-20.

60) WA 31.1: 272.29-30. Cf. WA 31.1: 273.2-4.

61) WA 31.1: 342.9-12.

62) WA 31.1: 274.20-21. The legal and theological justice is also mentioned in WA 31.1: 347.22-30. Cf. WA 31.1: 290.8: „Iustitia autem est credere.

63) WA 31.1: 379.24-25.

is that sin remains but “is no longer master over us.” A believing man rules over it, but in reality this means an everyday struggle for the rest of one’s life. Even the weakness of faith does not call into question its existence, and thus even small faith is sufficient for salvation. Small faith is not inferior to “unswerving” faith, as though it were deficient with regard to God’s “crediting” Christ’s righteousness to us. The point of imputative aspect of justification is to maximize divine action and minimize man’s share. It is understandable that with regard to fanatics Luther attempts to define the essence of justification in a way that would be understood quite the opposite way: not by claiming righteousness as one’s own or as having been completed.

4. The believer teaches correctly

In the *Exposition of Psalms 1-25* we can notice two lines of emphasis on the typical attitudes toward the word of God in the psalms. In Luther’s view, the word of God is not only being preached in the psalms, but it is also being taught and expressed as both “message” and “doctrine.” This connection between preaching and doctrine (*doctrina*) is closer in the Coburg exposition than f.E. in *Operationes*. What the two have in common is the gospel.⁶⁴ Pure doctrine (*pura doctrina*), in Luther’s view, is like pure gospel, meaning “without falsehood” (*kein falsch*) and “without hypocrisy” (*heucheley*), “without contamination by human tradition” (*nullis traditioni bus hominum contaminatum*).⁶⁵ Good doctrine, as Luther says, is like evergreen leaves because it offers counsel, teaching and

64) WA 31.1: 285.10-11.

65) WA 31.1: 342. 32-343.2.

consolation for everyone⁶⁶⁾, in which once again the similarity between “doctrine” and the “message” of the gospel becomes evident. Luther does not offer a specific example of a “pure” doctrine. At first sight, it is a category that is hard to grasp. The criterion of whether or not the content is pure, correct and good, is the efficacy toward the good and for the benefit of man. Although Luther does not specifically make this claim, the analogy with the work of the gospel applies here in that merely formal reference to the letter is not sufficient. With doctrine, too, the goal is the salvation of man. The analogy cannot be made, however, with regard to the status of the two as the word of God is fundamentally superior to doctrine. Doctrine is thus aimed toward man, not God.

For a better understanding of Luther's thought a comparison with what Luther perceives as the opposite, i.e. false doctrine, can be helpful. Sects do not remain in the position of a “student” (and listener to the word of God), and thus do not remain in the “service” and in “office”, by which Luther means the office of the true word (*officio recti verbi*).⁶⁷⁾ Sectarianism and division is seen by Luther as confirmation of the absence of pure word (and the Spirit who gives unity). Once again it is confirmed that the word is superior to doctrine.⁶⁸⁾

However, in the world we can encounter also blasphemy represented by tyrants, enemies, persecutors, but also one's own sinfulness, as the believer's faith and hope enter a struggle.⁶⁹⁾ According to Luther, blasphemy is such speech that aims to

66) WA 31.1: 264.30-31. For Luther's understanding of doctrine see the study from Richard Bucher, *The Ecumenical Luther*, 2003, pp. 19-59.

67) WA 31.1: 265.20-22; WA 31.1: 301.2-4.

68) This is also confirmed by the statement that “the devil can often snatch away the Scripture with a single word”(WA 31.1: 305.24-25. Por. WA 31.1: 312.24. WA 31.1: 368.18-20). The point here is that the primary problem rests in the understanding of God's word rather than discussing human interpretations.

69) WA 31.1: 280.18-21.

call into question the trustworthiness of God's word in a brute manner. Luther compares such words to the poisonous words causing *tribulatio verbi*. If false doctrine is not good because it does not offer good counsel, teaching and delight, so blasphemy is not good because it torments the soul of the believer.⁷⁰⁾ If a man should lose faith and hope, if he should not have the word and stop calling out to God, he would be in a state that can be likened to "hell."

Despite all this, the cross is part of every Christian's life, it leads to "exercising one's faith", which teaches one "to trust God"⁷¹⁾. We can assume here that this emphasis on external struggles and the experience of the cross should be viewed against the "internalized" experience of God as spoken of by Müntzer. Unlike mysticism, in which divine presence is evidenced by feelings of delight, Müntzer spoke of the living voice of God in the Son of God as the suffering Lamb of God. Suffering as the process of purification is of importance, but it occurs as the "internal" voice of God.⁷²⁾ "To be able to trust God when all is well is no great achievement. But in suffering, when things do not go well? It could be seen as the chastening rod and to say in those times: Dear father, that is a feat."⁷³⁾ If a Christian were to flee suffering, he cannot find Christ. Christ also went through the "experience of suffering," was strengthened by the word of God to the extent that he "endured" in suffering, learned "obedience" and became the first true

70) WA 31.1: 270.18-25; WA 31.1: 273.13-14. Even though the ungodly do not fear God, this does not mean they have no fear. They are afraid of other things. Fear is a common symptom of unbelief (WA 31.1: 309.24-29).

71) WA 31.1: 269.21-24. Cf. WA 31.1: 290.14-16; WA 31.1: 305.11-20; WA 31.1: 314.12-18; WA 31.1: 315. Luther teaches in the same vein in *Operationes*: „Crux probat omnia“ (WA 5: 179.31).

72) Reinhard Schwarz, Thomas Müntzer und die Mystik, s. 291. In: Siegfried Bräuer, *Der Theologe Thomas Müntzer*, 1989, s. 283-301.

73) WA 31.1: 269.26-28.

doctor [of theology].⁷⁴⁾ A variant of the theology of cross can be found in Luther's claims stating that the faithless do not suffer the cross but live in pleasures. As soon as trust in God's word is found, so too is the cross, suffering, hatred, jealousy, slander, shame, sad thoughts, blasphemy.⁷⁵⁾ This line of thought has to do with Luther's historical experience. In *Operationes, experientia* is used to point to spiritual struggles; ten years later these struggles are "externalized." They appear from outside and take place in the external sphere. It would be right to ask, however, if Luther's view might not be merely a simplified interpretation of reality, or perhaps a negative twist of the "joyful exchange" in the world. If there is a theological model that led Luther in this direction, it could be the notion that divine action takes place *sub contraria*. Often it seems that God loves the world, which receives many gifts from God, and forgets about his own.

An example from the natural world that Luther gives of a farmer who feeds his swine better than his son despite the fact that he loves his son more, while the fattened pig is readied for slaughter, is intended to comfort the "sons."⁷⁶⁾ We can assume that Luther did not intend to evoke such theological consequences from this statement that would imply that God leads this world for the benefit of those who belong to him. The point here is rather that God, not man, enacts judgment on the enemies. The enemies are primarily "enemies of the word." Judgment over them takes place in no other manner than through the word.⁷⁷⁾ Victory means that the enemies will "descend into hell." What seems at first a harsh and unacceptable wish is endowed with a spiritual meaning. Descent into hell

74) WA 31.1: 317.5-12.

75) WA 31.1: 320.13-18.

76) WA 31.1: 273.29-37. Cf. WA 31.1: 276.2-3.

77) WA 31.1: 292.29-293.1. Cf. WA 31.1: 304.7-305.3.

means the realization of one's sin and the judgment of God, which leads to repentance and turning of the enemies (of the word) to the word, faith and righteousness: "I do not want them to perish, but be reformed: I want them to confess their sins."⁷⁸⁾

God will enact his judgment, but not immediately. For a Christian, therefore, two things remain – "prayer" and "faith" – which are needed in all suffering. The connection of two "mighty weapons" also helps in that faith protects from despair and prayer give strength to overcome suffering.⁷⁹⁾ Prayer, even if it takes on the form of a complaint (Ps 6, Ps 23), is necessary as "the devil is too strong, the body too weak, and the world too evil" for man to stand.⁸⁰⁾

Faith protects from despair, thus where there is faith, there is hope. When Luther speaks of hope in this exposition, it is obvious that he is no longer thinking in terms of the categories of "theological virtues" and sees "hope" as giving up wanting to see (thus hoping).⁸¹⁾ Faith itself does not need to see. Its essence lies not in itself, for it is the faith in the "friendly word" of God.⁸²⁾ The word here is *dabar* – word and deed, so only a word is needed and man can live again – this is the power no human words have, because it is by the word of God that "everything is sanctified, ... without the word of God nothing is holy."⁸³⁾ This statement captures not only the essence of Christian life *coram hominibus*, but also *coram deo*. The word

78) WA 31.1: 293.11-12.

79) WA 31.1: 271.8-9. Cf. WA 31.1: 272.25-26; WA 31.1: 276.13-14. Even with regard to false teaching, there is no "weapon" apart from "*verbum externum and vehemensoratio*." WA 31.1: 321.22-30. The same is true of managing worldly affairs and successful actions of the authorities (WA 31.1: 346.18-20).

80) WA 31.1: 322.20.

81) WA 31.1: 274.22-23.

82) WA 31.1: 275.11-13. Cf. WA 31.1: 275.26.

83) WA 31.1: 263.11-12.

of God is at the center of Luther's theology even in the *Exposition of Psalms 1-25*.

Conclusion

It is typical for Luther's theology found in his *Exposition of Psalms 1-25* at Coburg to interpret the psalms in context he was experiencing. At the forefront is interpretation of the psalms as prophecies of events unfolding in Luther's own time. The troubled events surrounding the Schwärmer movement and the Peasants' War changed Luther's direction of thought in that he gave up publicly praising *Theologia Deutsch* and turned his attention to the relation between *verbum aeternum* and *verbum externum*.

Increasingly, Luther is growing interested in man before God (*coram deo*), and creation as such recedes into background. In his exposition written at Coburg, one can see a shift in the hamartiological emphasis and in defining human sin not only as unbelief in God and Jesus Christ, but rather as a state of unbelief in God and his word. The word of God and the theology of the word of God do not serve as the foundation for a theoretical theological discourse. The word of God gains primacy in the sense that anyone who does not have the word of God is without faith and thus without God and the truth. In contrast, to have God means to have his word, and to have his word means to have God.

Implied here is the connectedness of Luther's theology of the word to the person of Jesus Christ. Where there is Christ, there the gospel is being preached to the people. If one believes the gospel, he belongs in Christ's kingdom, because in Christ the statement is completely true: "*Natura verbi esset varenos*"

(WA 31.1: 344.19). Even though Exposition of Psalms 1-25 does not feature the term *theologia crucis*, we can argue that this essential form of piousness recognizing God's actions *sub contrario* has become a steady part of Luther's theology. Sin is greatest where no mention is made of it and man does not know it or negates it. On the other hand, sin disappears there where its realization is maximized. This dialectic is related to a more emphatic distinction between the functions of the word of the law and the gospel, which is another important characteristic of Luther's later period.

The law turns the glory of the world into "nothing." The main office of the word of the gospel is to create and bring life to where there is none. Trust, which attributes everything to God based on the gospel message of God's gracious affection for sinful people as made known and realized in Jesus Christ, shifts the weight of the entire saving action to God in Trinity. The Trinitarian aspect of God's speaking is inseparable from the language of the Scripture in this interpretation. Owing to growing spiritualist misuse, however, we can see Luther taking greater care when discussing the Holy Spirit. Knowing God in Trinity is connected to the written word of the Scripture. On the other hand, the Spirit gives the right interpretation of the word.

God's word is the only guarantee of true hope and true life. The nature of the external form of the message becomes, in this period, the alpha and omega of Luther's theological thought. Christ rules "by word alone." At the same time, it remains true that the abilities of the minister are irrelevant, but remain in the background. It is not true that the words of a holy man are a blessing, but rather that holy words are a blessing to man. Thus it is understandable that Luther emphasizes a broadly conceived discussion of the word of God as "meditation", "preaching", "writing", "reading", and all other

“external” methods of dealing with the word. We can say that we are talking here about the essence of evangelical spirituality.

The second central aspect of dealing with God's word on the part of the believers is *doctrina*. The connection between preaching and doctrine in the Coburg exposition is much closer than in *Operationes*. What is new here is the emphasis on authorities and worldly order. Luther rejects all spiritual efforts which undermine the foundation of social order. God finds delight in authorities, protects them, it is a challenging “state” for which one should pray. Not only in this sphere, but also on the personal level spiritual struggles can be found. Luther's emphasis on external struggles and the experience of the cross has to be viewed against the backdrop of an “internalized” experience of God as spoken of by Müntzer. If a Christian were to flee from (external) suffering, he would not be able to find Christ. Christ, too, went through the “school of suffering,” was strengthened by God to the point that he endured suffering, learned obedience and became a true doctor [of theology]. The communicative character of the life form of faith and following Christ is based on the word of God, which alone is the instrument of God's righteous reign, the Son's presence and the work of the Holy Spirit in the world. The word of God is at the center of Luther's theology in the *Exposition of Psalms 1-25* (1530).

<주요어>

루터의 말씀 신학, 시편 1-25장, 삼위일체 교리, 시학적 신학, 소통

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Luther's theology of the Word, Psalm 1-25, the doctrine of Trinity, poetological theology, communicative character

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<Abstract>

루터의 말씀 신학

- 『코부르크 시편 1-25편 주석』을 중심으로(1530년)-

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마르틴 루터에게 시편은 그의 전 생애 동안 가장 소중하게 생각했던 거룩한 지혜의 끊임없는 원천이었다. 루터가 시편을 성령에 의해 영감된 본문이라고 믿었던 것처럼, 루터의 이해 속에서 시편은 어느 시대에나 모든 신자의 삶에 적용할 수 있는 하나님의 말씀과 신학적인 교리를 포함하고 있다. 루터는 그의 평생 동안 두고두고 시편을 주해하였다. 루터의 후기 시편 주해는 1530년 코부르크에서 쓴 『시편 1-25편 주석』(*The Exposition of Psalms 1-25*)에 나타난다. 이 주석은 그 분량에 있어서 『첫 시편 강해』(*Dictata super Psalterium*, 1513-1516)와 『두 번째 시편 강해』(*Operationes in Psalmos*, 1519-1521) 만큼 방대하지 않지만, 여전히 개혁자로서 시도한 진정한 신학적 연구로 평가될 수 있다. 그의 작업은 아우구스부르크 의회(Diet of Augsburg) 시대까지 거슬러 올라간다. 따라서 루터가 코부르크에서 쓴 『시편 1-25편 주석』은 아직까지 연구되지 않았던 보다 상세한 루터의 신학적 분석에 대한 귀중한 본문적 기초를 제공하고 있다. 우리는 루터 신학에 대한 분석을 통하여 그가 첫 시편들에 대하여 시도한 다른 주해들과 여기에 나타난 그의 신학적 사상을 비교해 볼 수 있을 것이다.

필자의 분석은 말씀하시는 성부, 성자, 성령 하나님의 삼위일체 교리에 근거하여 세 부분으로 나누어질 것이다. 루터는 시편 1-25편의 주석에서

삼위일체 교리를 구체적으로 다루고 있지는 않는다. 이것은 이 작품이 짧으며 신학적 진술을 하는 것이 배경을 이루고 있지 않기 때문인 것으로 이해할 수 있다. 우리는 이 논문에서 삼위일체적 구조를 지지하는 베이어(Oswald Bayer)의 논지를 사용하고자 한다. 하나님은 자신을 충만하게 그리고 온전하게 제공하시는 성경적 약속과 선물을 통하여 최종적으로 유효하게 우리와 함께 소통하신다. 베이어는 한편으로는 성부, 성자, 성령 사이의 영원한 관계를 명시하려는 시도 이외에도 삼위일체 신학을 위한 대안을 제공한다. 또한 다른 한편으로는 성부, 성자, 성령께서 연이어 시대를 열어가는 가설을 제공한다. 베이어는 하나님을 “시인”으로 보는, 소위 “시학적 신학(poetological theology)”의 견해를 발전시킨다. “시학적 신학”은 하나님의 말씀과 행위의 실체성을 포착한다. 하나님은 그의 말씀과 연설에서 시인이다.” 따라서 하나님 아버지, 성자, 성령의 행위와 관련된 하나님의 행위에 대한 묘사는 루터의 강의들(*Operationes*) 가운데 시편 9:7에 관한 그의 주해로 뒷받침될 수 있을 것이다. “성경 안에서 우리가 그 정신을 이해하기 원한다면 명사들보다는 동사들에 더 주의를 기울여야만 한다.”

이 논문은 첫 번째 부분에서 루터가 주석을 썼던 배경을 제시할 것이다. 그리고 나서 뒤따르는 세 부분에서 하나님 행동의 특성을 소개 할 것이며, 마지막 부분에서 사람과 그의 영적 삶과 관련된 하나님의 말씀에 초점을 맞출 것이다. 우리는 이 글을 통하여 하나님의 말씀에 근거하여 믿음으로 실천하는 삶과 하나님과 소통하며 그리스도를 따르는 삶을 살펴보고자 한다. 이런 과정을 통하여 『코부르그 시편 주석』에서 나타난 루터의 신학을 드러낼 수 있을 것이다.

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<Abstract>

Luther's Theology of the Word in the *Exposition of Psalms 1-25* at Coburg (1530)

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For Martin Luther, the Book of Psalms was a never-ending source of divine wisdom which he cherished during his entire life. As he believed the psalms to be texts inspired by the Holy Spirit, in Luther's understanding they contain the word of God and theological doctrine applicable to the life of every individual in any era. Luther returned to exposition of psalms throughout his life. In a later period such exposition can be found in the *Exposition of Psalms 1-25*, which Luther wrote at Coburg in 1530. Even though this exposition, in terms of its length, does not compare to Luther's extensive lectures, such as the first and second lecture on the psalms (*Dictata super Psalterium*, 1513-1516, and *Operationes in Psalmos*, 1519-1521), it still is an authentic theological work of the reformer. The work dates back to the time of the Diet of Augsburg and offers a valuable textual basis for a more detailed theological analysis, which has not until now been the subject of research. The analysis of Luther's theology will make it possible to compare Luther's theological thought revealed here with other expositions of the first psalms.

The analysis will be divided into three sections based on the doctrine of Trinity[1] as God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit speaking. Although Luther does not specifically address

the trinitarian doctrine in the *Exposition of Psalms 1-25*, which can be explained by the shortness of this piece and its context, we will use the thesis of Oswald Bayer to support such structure in this article: “The divine being communicates itself with final validity as a gift and testamental promise in which he himself gives himself to us fully and completely.”[2] Bayer offers an alternative for a theology of the Trinity other than an attempt at specifying the timeless relationship between the Father, Son and the Spirit on the one hand, or an assumption of subsequently following epochs of the Father, Son and the Spirit on the other hand. Oswald Bayer develops the idea of the so-called “poetological theology,” which sees God as the “Poet”, thus capturing “the identity of divine speech and action; in his spoken action and performing speech [God] is a poet.”[3] Thus laid out, a depiction of God’s actions with regard to the actions of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit can be supported by Luther’s comment on Psalm 9:7 in *Operationes*, which states that “in the Holy Scripture one has to pay more attention to the verbs than to the nouns, if one wants to understand the Spirit.”[4]

In the first section, this article will relate the context in which Luther wrote the exposition. The subsequent three sections will then introduce the character of divine action and the final part will focus on the word of God in relation to man and his spiritual life. It will offer a glance at the praxis of living out one’s faith and following Christ in a communicative character based on the word of God. It can be assumed that this procedure will reveal Luther’s theology also in the Coburg exposition of psalms.