

LUTHER'S WORKS

VOLUME 67

ANNOTATIONS ON MATTHEW

Chapters 1–18

SERMONS ON THE GOSPEL OF ST. MATTHEW

Chapter 18

Edited by

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INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 67

THE Gospel according to St. Matthew had long served the Christian Church as the backbone of its liturgical proclamation of the life of Jesus, providing a majority of the traditional Sunday Gospel readings. Martin Luther's liturgical reforms in Wittenberg maintained the Sunday lectionary and also appointed Matthew as the text for weekly serial preaching on Wednesday mornings.¹ Thus, though Luther had a special regard and affection for St. John's Gospel—itself the text for Wittenberg preaching each Saturday at Vespers—he preached just as much on Matthew's Gospel.² If—as Luther wrote in the first edition of his preface to the New Testament—Matthew and the other Synoptic Gospels did not focus so sharply on the essence of Christ's words of promise as did St. John or St. Paul, giving more attention instead to the works and miracles of Christ,³ nonetheless Matthew was, Luther insisted, “an excellent evangelist for the instruction of the congregation, [who] records the fine sermon of Christ on the Mount, and strongly urges the exercise of love and good works.”⁴

LUTHER'S PREACHING ON ST. MATTHEW

Both the Sunday morning Gospel preaching and the Wednesday morning preaching on Matthew in Wittenberg were usually the responsibility of Johann Bugenhagen (1485–1558), who began his service as pastor of the parish in 1523.⁵ But since Bugenhagen was much in demand as a consultant

¹ *German Mass and Order of Service* (1526), LW 53:68; *Wittenberger Kirchenordnung* (1533), Sehling 1:702.

² See Gerhard Ebeling, *Evangelische Evangelienauslegung* (Munich: Lempp, 1942; repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1962; 3rd ed., Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), Tabelle I (before p. 457), which indicates 371 sermons on Matthew and 338 on John. See also Kurt Aland's catalog of 2,027 preserved sermons altogether (*Hilfsbuch zum Lutherstudium*, 4th ed. [Bielefeld: Luther-Verlag, 1996], pp. 205–62).

³ Cf. *Preface to the New Testament* (1522), LW 35:361–62.

⁴ *German Mass and Order of Service* (1526), LW 53:68.

⁵ On Bugenhagen, see Kurt K. Hendel, “Johannes Bugenhagen, Organizer of the Lutheran Reformation,” *LQ*, n.s. 18, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 43–75; David C. Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings: From Geiler von Kaysersberg to Theodore Beza*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University

for the organization of Evangelical churches elsewhere, he was frequently absent from Wittenberg for months or years at a time. In 1528 and 1529, when Bugenhagen was in Braunschweig and Hamburg, Luther preached on Matthew 11–15. Only a few of these sermons survive in his hearers' notes, though two were printed, and one other was eventually incorporated into the 1559 edition of the *House Postil*.⁶ It was probably during Bugenhagen's subsequent absence in Lübeck from 1530 to 1532 that Luther preached on Matthew 5–7, sermons that were edited for publication by another hand as a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount.⁷ During Bugenhagen's 1534–35 journey to Pomerania, Luther did not take on the Wednesday and Saturday sermons in the parish church, likely in part because in 1533 he had begun a series on Matthew's Gospel in the Wittenberg Castle Church. Luther preached on days when the elector or other princes were in residence,⁸ but otherwise provided exegetical and homiletical notes for preaching done by one of his students—translated in this volume as the *Annotations on Matthew*. In the years 1537 to 1539, while Bugenhagen was in Denmark, Luther preached on Matthew 18–24, first, on the usual Wednesdays; then, after Bugenhagen's return (from about August 1539 onward), Luther continued his preaching on Matthew on Sunday afternoons until the fall of 1540.⁹ During much of this time, Luther also took responsibility for the Saturday preaching on John's Gospel as well as for a good deal of the Sunday preaching. The translation of the 1537–40 sermons on Matthew, recorded in notes later edited by Johann Aurifaber¹⁰ but not published until the eighteenth and

Press, 2001), pp. 58–63; Hans-Günter Leder, *Johannes Bugenhagen Pomeranus—vom Reformator zum Reformatoren: Studien zur Biographie*, Greifswalder theologische Forschungen 4 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2002).

⁶ WA 28:4–30 (Aland Pr 962–966). The sermons on Matt. 12:31–32 and Matt. 12:46–50 were printed in 1529 (LW 56). The sermon on Matt. 13:24–30 was edited for the 1559 Rörer-Poach edition of the *House Postil*: Klug 1:264–77 (cf. Aland Pr 965).

⁷ *Sermon on the Mount* (1530–32/1532), LW 21 (Aland Pr 1189–91); cf. LW 21:xix–xxi. Although the editorial handling of the printed version of the Matthew 5–7 sermons has been harshly criticized (cf. Walther von Loewenich, *Luther als Ausleger der Synoptiker* [Munich: Kaiser, 1954], p. 14), Luther commended the published text as his own (see below, p. 33; cf. Luther's preface to the *Annotations*, p. 4).

⁸ Sermons of December 18–20, 1533, and February 28, April 16, June 18, and October 31, 1534: WA 37:217–26, 308–12, 381–85, 451–61, 571–77 (Aland Pr 1440–41, 1462, 1478 [= Aland 786, Po 264], 1489 [= Aland 469]).

⁹ Cf. Brecht 3:249.

¹⁰ On Aurifaber (1519–75), see Reinhold Jauernig, "Johannes Aurifaber: Lutherischer Prediger und Sammler von Lutherschriften," in Karl Brinkel and Herbert von Hintzenstern, eds., *Luthers Freunde und Schüler in Thüringen*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1961), pp. 147–54.

nineteenth centuries, begins in the second part of volume 67 (Matthew 18) and continues in volume 68 (Matthew 19–24).

During most of these absences, as health permitted, Luther also took much of the Sunday morning Gospel preaching with its emphasis on Matthew. Erwin Mülhaupt has collated (in German) selections from this exegesis, spanning most of Matthew's Gospel, from across Luther's career.¹¹ For the sixteenth-century public outside Wittenberg, however, Luther's lectionary preaching was exemplified by his *Church Postil*, to which he referred as an authoritative source elsewhere in his expositions of Matthew,¹² and by the 1544 *House Postil*, assembled during Luther's lifetime by Veit Dietrich (1506–49) (with substantial editorial interpolations), and then in an alternate posthumous edition of 1559 by Andreas Poach with the help of Georg Rörer and his notes.¹³ Finally, Luther's Passiontide and Easter sermons must be added to the sum of his preaching on Matthew. According to the 1533 Wittenberg church order, the weekly serial preaching on Matthew and John was intended to proceed through these Gospels up to the beginning of the Passion narrative; the remainder of the Gospel text was reserved for preaching during the last weeks of Lent (Passiontide) and on Easter.¹⁴ Although Luther usually preached on the Passion from the harmony of all four Gospels prepared by Bugenhagen in 1526, Matthew's narrative of course played a prominent role there.¹⁵ The texts assembled in this volume and in volume 68, however—the *Annotations* on Matthew 1–18 written in 1534–35 and the series of sermons on Matthew 18–24 from 1537 to 1540—constitute Luther's most substantial continuous engagement with St. Matthew's Gospel or indeed with any of the Synoptics.

¹¹ Erwin Mülhaupt, ed., *D. Martin Luthers Evangelien-Auslegung*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957), vols. 1, 2, and 5.

¹² On the *Church Postil*, see the introduction by Benjamin T. G. Mayes in LW 75:xiii–xxviii; for the postil sermon texts, see LW 75–79; Lenker 1–8. Cf. below, pp. 126, 187, 195, 229, 253, 259, 306.

¹³ On the *House Postil*, see the introduction to Luther's preface to Corvinus, *Brief Exposition of the Sunday Epistles* (1537) and *Brief Exposition of the Sunday Gospels* (1535), LW 60:104–5, and the introduction to John 18–20:18, LW 69:137. On Poach (1515–85), see Reinhold Jauernig, "Andreas Poach," in *Luther in Thüringen* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, [1952]), pp. 198–206. On his apprenticeship under Rörer, see Poach's letter in WA 28:34 (English translation: LW 69:137–38); Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther as Prophet, Teacher, Hero: Images of the Reformer, 1520–1620* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), p. 173. On Rörer (1492–1557), see Reinhold Jauernig, "Magister Georg Rörer: Im Dienst der 'Werke Luthers,'" in Karl Brinkel and Herbert von Hintzenstern, eds., *Luthers Freunde und Schüler in Thüringen*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1961), pp. 155–61.

¹⁴ Sehling 1:701.

¹⁵ See LW 69:xx nn. 23–24 and the conspectus below, pp. xviii–xxiii.

MATTHEW 23:34–39 (*St. Stephen*)

Church Postil (1540–44), LW 75:330–41, cf. LW 52:89–101. *Festival Postil* (1527), Baseley 1:148–63, WA 17/2:332–45. Sermon for December 26, 1514, WA 1:30–37.*

MATTHEW 24:15–28 (*Trinity 25*)

Church Postil (1540–44), Lenker 5:363–78, WA 22:406 (LW 79); cf. WA 21:189–91. *House Postil* (1544), Loy 2:591–604, WA 52:544–51 (LW 81). *House Postil* (1559), Klug 3:192–206, E² 6:234–52, cf. WA 52:544–51.*

MATTHEW 25:1–13 (*St. Barbara; St. Catharine*)

Festival Postil (1527), Baseley 1:16–29, 2:197–208, WA 17/2:264–70, 493–96.

MATTHEW 25:31–46 (*Trinity 26*)

Church Postil (1540–44), Lenker 5:379–95, WA 22:410–23 (LW 79).

MATTHEW 26:1–27:66 (*Passion*)

Sermons on the Passion, 1525, WA 17/1:67–86; 1528, WA 27:99–115; 1529, WA 29:219–53, Sandberg-Wengert, pp. 37–118; 1531, WA 34/1:258–71, cf. Klug 1:435–51 (E² 4:466–86); 1534, WA 37:322–35, 338–44, 352–58, cf. Klug 1:372–434 (E² 4:392–466); 1535, WA 41:41–51; 1538, WA 46:241–313; 1540, WA 49:66–97.

Sermons for Good Friday, 1518, WA 1:336–45; 1521, WA 9:649–56; 1524, WA 15:509–16; 1537, WA 45:60–68; 1539, WA 47:716–21.

Sermons for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, 1522, WA 10/3:68–80 (LW 56); 1536, WA 41:521–31.

Sermons for Good Friday and Holy Saturday, 1533, WA 37:21–25, cf. Klug 1:466–75 (E² 4:502–13), WA 28:406–15.

MATTHEW 28:1–10 (*Easter*)

House Postil (1544), Loy 2:5–32, WA 52:245–59 (LW 81).*

MATTHEW 28:10–19

Sermon for March 15, 1525, WA 17/1:92–101.

LUTHER AND THE EXEGETICAL TRADITION ON MATTHEW¹⁹

Luther's exposition of St. Matthew's Gospel is important, both exegetically and theologically, in part because of the prominence of Matthew's text—sometimes in conjunction with the other Synoptic Gospels, sometimes on its own—in the preceding medieval tradition and its understanding and defense of its foremost practices and institutions. The theology of monasticism as the form of Christian life that pledged to keep not only the universally binding divine commandments but also Jesus' optional "counsels

¹⁹ On Luther's preaching on the Synoptics including Matthew, see Loewenich, *Luther als Ausleger der Synoptiker*, and Ebeling, *Evangelische Evangelienauslegung*.

of perfection” was rooted in Matthew’s text (cf. Matt. 19:21).²⁰ Matthew’s presentation of Jesus’ teaching was used to describe the Gospel as the “evangelical law,” which superseded the Jewish Law of Moses.²¹ Indeed, the whole medieval theology of good works and reward echoed the language of Matthew’s Gospel (e.g., Matt. 16:27; 19:17).²² Not least, the claims of the papacy to primacy over the whole Church found their central support in papal interpretations of Matt. 16:18–19.²³

Given the centrality of Matthew to these theological traditions that Luther criticizes so sharply, it is not surprising that he makes relatively little reference to patristic and medieval commentaries on Matthew.²⁴ Indeed, one of Luther’s major polemical themes in his exegesis of Matthew is to denounce theological opponents who appeal to the traditions of the “church” and the “fathers” over against Christ’s Word.²⁵ Thus, though Luther gives signs and occasionally explicit acknowledgments of familiarity with the exegetical tradition, both to criticize it and to make constructive use of it in his reading of Matthew, his relationship with it here is at arm’s length.

The major patristic commentators on Matthew were Origen (ca. 185–253/254), Jerome (ca. 345–420), and John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407), authors whose theology Luther found suspect.²⁶ Augustine (354–430),

²⁰ See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–74), *ST*, 1–2 q. 108 a. 4 (Blackfriars 30:60–65). See Luther’s critique in *Sermon on the Mount* (1530–32/1532), LW 21; *Sermons on Matthew 18–24* (1537–40/1796–1847), below, pp. 348–49, 351–52, and LW 68:33–35, 39, 45–49, 289. On the “counsels of perfection,” see LW 76:118 n. 104.

²¹ See, e.g., Aquinas, *ST*, 1–2, qq. 106–8 (Blackfriars 30:2–65); below, p. 147.

²² See, e.g., Aquinas, *ST*, 1–2, qq. 109, 114 (Blackfriars 30:66–107, 200–231); below, pp. 298–302.

²³ See, e.g., Aquinas, *Commentum in IV Libros Sententiarum*, 2 d. 44 q. 2 a. 3 ad 5 (Busa 1:257); Innocent III (r. 1198–1216), *Mysteria evangelicae legis et sacramenti Eucharistiae* 1.8 (PL 217:778–79); and the documents collected in Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State, 1050–1300* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964; repr., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), *passim*. See below, pp. 271–86.

²⁴ For a survey of patristic commentaries, see Manlio Simonetti, ed., *Matthew*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament 1a–b (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), pp. xliii–l. On Luther’s limited use of the Matthean commentary tradition in his *Annotations on Matthew*, see WA 60:81.

²⁵ See below, pp. 49, 116, 162, 204, 235, 240; and *Sermons on Matthew 18–24* (1537–40/1796–1847), below, pp. 341, 360, and LW 68:204–5, 215.

²⁶ Origen, *Commentaria in Evangelium secundam Matthaëum* [*Commentary on Matthew*], PG 13:829–1800 (ANF 9:409–512); Jerome, *Commentaria in Evangelium S. Matthaëi* [*Commentary on Matthew*], PL 26:15–218 (FC 117:51–330); Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Matthaëum* [*Homilies on Matthew*], PG 57:1–472 (NPNF¹ 10:1–515). For Luther’s evaluation of Chrysostom and Jerome, see the introduction in LW 69:xix–xx.

Luther's favorite ancient interpreter of St. John's Gospel,²⁷ never attempted a full commentary on Matthew. Augustine did address particular questions of exegesis and harmonization among the Synoptics, upon which Luther drew, and he preached in detail on the Sermon on the Mount, though Luther did not draw much on Augustine's sermons for his own preaching on those chapters of Matthew.²⁸ The Matthew commentary of Hilary of Poitiers (ca. 315–67), whom Luther valued as a Trinitarian theologian, does not seem to have been before Luther's eyes when he was preaching on the Gospel, despite its emphases on faith and grace;²⁹ on the other hand, neither did he have any interest in the incomplete commentary on Matthew attributed to Chrysostom that Aquinas had highly valued but which Erasmus revealed to be the work of a later Arian exegete.³⁰ In some cases it is difficult to establish Luther's direct reading of these sources, since they were excerpted in the standard medieval exegetical resources—especially the *Glossa ordinaria* and perhaps Thomas Aquinas' *Catena Aurea* as well.³¹

Despite his general independence from the patristic tradition of interpretation, Luther could make selective use of earlier sources as auxiliary support for his Evangelical reading of Matthew. Gregory the Great's (pope,

²⁷ See the introduction in LW 69:xviii–xx.

²⁸ Augustine, *De Sermone Domini in Monte Secundum Matthaëum* [*Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount*], PL 34:1229–307 (NPNF¹ 6:3–63); and *De Consensu Evangelistarum* [*Harmony of the Gospels*], PL 34:1041–230 (NPNF¹ 6:77–235); cf. Luther, *Sermon on the Mount* (1530–32/1532), LW 21.

²⁹ Hilary, *Commentarius in Evangelium Matthaëi*, PL 9:917–1078 (FC 125). For Luther's esteem for Hilary, see, e.g., *Table Talk* no. 252 (1532), LW 54:33–34.

³⁰ Ps.-Chrysostom, *Opus Imperfectum in Matthaëum*, PG 56:611–946 (CCSL 87B; James A. Kellerman, trans., *Incomplete Commentary on Matthew* [*Opus Imperfectum*], vol. 1, ed. Thomas C. Oden [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010]). Desiderius Erasmus (ca. 1467–1536) had argued against Chrysostom's authorship when he edited the text in the third volume of his edition of Chrysostom's works in 1530.

³¹ The *Glossa ordinaria* (and the *Glossa interlinearis*) are cited from the *Biblia Latina cum Glossa Ordinaria: Facsimile Reprint of the Editio Princeps Adolph Rusch of Strassburg 1480/81*, ed. Karlfried Froehlich and Margaret T. Gibson (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992). On the history of the *Glossa*, see Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952; repr., South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), pp. 46–66. On Luther's use of the *Glossa*, see Ebeling, *Evangelische Evangelienauslegung*, pp. 143–44; and Karlfried Froehlich, "Martin Luther and the *Glossa ordinaria*," in *Biblical Interpretation from the Church Fathers to the Reformation* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010). The *Catena Aurea* of Thomas Aquinas is edited by Angelico Guarienti, *Catena Aurea in quatuor Evangelia* (Turin: Marietti, 1953). Guarienti's text is reproduced in and cited here from Roberto Busa, ed., *S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980), 5:367–441; English translation edited by John Henry Newman, *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels Collected Out of the Works of the Fathers* (Oxford: Parker, 1841–45; repr., Southampton, England: St. Austin Press, 1997).

RHETORIC, EXEGESIS, AND HOMILETICS IN THE *ANNOTATIONS*

The origins of the *Annotations on Matthew* as Luther's notes for the benefit of another scholar and clergyman who would have to develop them into sermons to preach helps to explain some of its distinctive features as well as its special interest. In annotating Matthew's text for another doctor of theology, Luther grappled with questions of the exegesis of the Synoptic Gospels at a level of technical detail more characteristic of his university lectures than of his preaching. Since Luther never offered a series of lectures on the Gospels, the *Annotations on Matthew* have tremendous importance as his fullest systematic scholarly engagement with a Synoptic text.⁹⁰ In that exegetical engagement as well as in his recommendations to Weller for preaching on the texts, Luther drew especially on the discipline of rhetoric—the use of language to persuade and move human beings—to interpret Matthew's narrative and Jesus' speech presented there and to identify strategies for the effective homiletical presentation of those texts to Weller's contemporary audience.

The identification of rhetoric, rather than logical or metaphysical analysis, as the central discipline of education was a fundamental characteristic of the movement known to later scholarship as the Renaissance.⁹¹ Renaissance “humanists” were not man-centered atheists in the occasional modern sense of the word, but students of the humanities—the rhetorical disciplines of oratory, poetry, history, and moral philosophy—as distinct from the dialectic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics that formed the backbone of the traditional medieval university curriculum. Humanists criticized their university-trained (hence “scholastic”) contemporaries for engaging in subtle analysis of problems while ignoring the rhetorical methods of persuasion that might actually move human beings to respond affectively to truths about God, moral life, and human society. In humanist polemic, the scholastic theologians were often labeled as “sophists,” preoccupied with logic-chopping rather than with the persuasive proclamation of truth.

For humanist scholars, the exemplary instruction needed to undertake the task of persuasion was to be found in classical antiquity—the literature of ancient Greece and Rome as well as of the early Christian Church, which had, after all, emerged in that cultural context. Humanists looked not only to the finished works of antiquity as examples to imitate—the orations of Cicero (106–43 BC) or the sermons of Augustine—but also to the

⁹⁰ See Loewenich, *Luther als Ausleger der Synoptiker*, p. 14.

⁹¹ See Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, ed. Michael Mooney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), pp. 21–25.

handbooks and discussions of rhetorical theory and education by Aristotle (384–322 BC), Cicero, Quintilian (35–96), Augustine, and others, many of which had been rediscovered during the Renaissance and applied anew as textbooks and curricula in humanist schools.

Although Renaissance humanism first developed in the cities of northern Italy in the fourteenth century, by the end of the fifteenth century it had spread and established itself north of the Alps as well. The acknowledged leader of northern humanism in the early sixteenth century was the Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus. Erasmus' Christian humanism saw good literature—including the church fathers and the Bible as well as classical orators and philosophers—as the essential means for the moral transformation of the inner man, which for Erasmus was the essence of Christianity.⁹² He thus dedicated himself to the production of new editions of such texts, including the first printed Greek New Testament in 1516 and his encyclopedic compilation of proverbs from antiquity, the *Adages*.⁹³ Although there were some efforts to install humanist studies in or at least alongside the northern universities, if not as an integral part of the curriculum, the movement flourished particularly as a network among societies (“sodalities”) of educated men in the towns.

Luther for his own part had been educated primarily as a scholastic theologian, but he took an early interest in humanist approaches to language and study.⁹⁴ He lamented the gaps in his own education that had emphasized “that devil’s dung, the philosophers and sophists,”⁹⁵ rather than the humanistic reading of poetry and history (though Luther himself could quote such poets as Ovid and Virgil from memory). As a professor at the University of Wittenberg, Luther embraced humanist texts—including Erasmus' Greek New Testament—in his own teaching and helped to lead the transformation of the university curriculum along humanist lines.⁹⁶ In turn, the humanists in the towns quickly embraced Luther after his emergence into public

⁹² See, e.g., Erasmus, *Enchiridion*, CWE 66:1–127.

⁹³ Erasmus, *Adagiorum chiliades*, CWE 30–36.

⁹⁴ See Helmar Junghans, *Der junge Luther und die Humanisten* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1984); Junghans, “Luther’s Development from Biblical Humanist to Reformer,” in *Martin Luther in Two Centuries: The Sixteenth and the Twentieth*, trans. Katharina Gustavs and Gerald S. Krispin, ed. Terrance Dinovo and Robert Kolb (St. Paul, MN: Lutheran Brotherhood Foundation Reformation Research Library, 1992), pp. 1–14; Lewis Spitz, *The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 237–66.

⁹⁵ *To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany* (1524), LW 45:370.

⁹⁶ See, e.g., Luther’s letter to Georg Spalatin, March 11, 1518, WA Br 1:153–54, no. 63; cf. Heinz Scheible, “Die Reform von Schule und Universität in der Reformationszeit,” *LJB* 66 (1999): 237–62.

controversy in 1517 and indeed took a major role in circulating and printing the *Ninety-Five Theses*.⁹⁷

For Luther, humanist interest in the ancient languages and rhetoric was vital for theologians because it was an essential tool for properly understanding and applying the Scriptures. When in 1523 Eobanus Hessus (1488–1540), the well-known Latin poet, posed a question about the compatibility of the humanities and Wittenberg's theology, Luther responded:

I myself am convinced that without the knowledge of the [Humanistic] studies, pure theology can by no means exist, as has been the case until now: when the [Humanistic] studies were miserably ruined and prostrate [theology] declined and lay neglected. I realize there has never been a great revelation of God's Word unless God has first prepared the way by the rise and the flourishing of languages and learning, as though these were forerunners, a sort of [John] the Baptist. Certainly I do not intend that young people should give up poetry and rhetoric . . . since I realize that through these studies, as through nothing else, people are wonderfully equipped for grasping the sacred truths, as well as for handling them skillfully and successfully.⁹⁸

Luther's associate in the humanist reform of the university—and of Lutheran schools across Germany—was Philip Melanchthon, who arrived in Wittenberg in 1519. Melanchthon taught Greek literature and rhetoric but quickly extended his scope to include the Greek New Testament as well. Melanchthon composed handbooks of rhetoric (which included advice on interpreting the Scriptures)—his *De rhetorica* of 1519, the *Institutiones rhetoricae* of 1521, and his *Elementa rhetorices* of 1531—each of which was frequently reprinted.⁹⁹ His biblical commentaries applied rhetoric to the task of interpreting the sacred text, especially his 1522 *Annotations on Romans* and his 1523 *Annotations on John*.¹⁰⁰ (His *Annotations on Matthew*, published at

⁹⁷ Bernd Moeller, "The German Humanists and the Beginnings of the Reformation," in *Imperial Cities and the Reformation: Three Essays*, trans. and ed. H. C. Erik Midelfort and Mark U. Edwards Jr. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), pp. 19–38.

⁹⁸ Letter to Hessus, March 29, 1523, LW 49:34, no. 131.

⁹⁹ *De rhetorica libri tres* [*Three Books on Rhetoric*] [VD16 M4179ff.]; *Institutiones rhetoricae* [*Rhetorical Instructions*] [VD16 M3514ff.], neither available in a modern edition. The *Elementa rhetorices* (CR 13:413–506) are cited here from the edition by Volkhard Wels, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Weidler, 2001; repr. online, Institutional Repository of the University of Potsdam, 2011). An English translation was made by Mary Joan La Fontaine, *A Critical Translation of Philip Melanchthon's Elementorum rhetorices libri duo* (PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 1979).

¹⁰⁰ See Timothy J. Wengert, "The Biblical Commentaries of Philip Melanchthon," in *Philip Melanchthon: Theologian in Classroom, Confession, and Controversy*, ed. Irene Dingel, Robert Kolb, Nicole Kuroepka, and Timothy J. Wengert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), pp. 43–76; Wengert, "Philip Melanchthon's 1522 *Annotations on Romans* and the Lutheran

the same time, did not engage in the same kind of rhetorical analysis.)¹⁰¹ His textbook systematization of Luther's theology, based on his Romans lectures, adopted the rhetorical idea of *loci communes*, or "commonplaces" of argument, to structure the theological presentation.¹⁰² Melanchthon's influence and activity served, with Luther's support, to place the mark of humanist studies and methods on the teaching of Lutheran theology. Certainly not all humanists became Lutherans, but nearly all Lutherans trained in the schools reformed by Luther and Melanchthon received a humanist training in languages and rhetoric.

The public break between Luther and Erasmus in 1524–25 over the freedom or bondage of the human will in relation to God¹⁰³ thus served to delineate that division among German humanists, but it certainly did not mean that Luther, Melanchthon, or their followers abandoned their focus on rhetoric. As Luther wrote in response to Erasmus: "[I], although no rhetorician myself, will teach a distinguished rhetorician his business."¹⁰⁴

Melanchthon, too, continued to use rhetorical approaches to exegesis precisely to oppose Erasmus' theological position.¹⁰⁵ For Erasmus, the rhetoric of the biblical text was directed to moral exhortation and social peace. For the Wittenberg exegetes, scriptural rhetoric reinforced the fundamental theological distinction between Law and Gospel, conveying either terror or comfort to sinful human beings. Luther's *Annotations on Matthew* constitute one of the most extensive examples of his constructive use of rhetoric for biblical exegesis and evangelical preaching. In a way that is usually concealed beneath the surface in Luther's own preaching, the *Annotations on Matthew* demonstrate Luther's use of the discipline of rhetoric not only to analyze the biblical text, its authors, and Jesus Himself as speaker and

Origins of Rhetorical Criticism," in *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation: Essays Presented to David C. Steinmetz in Honor of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 118–40; and Wengert, *Melanchthon's 'Annotations in Johannem' of 1523*, especially pp. 167–212. See Luther's preface to Melanchthon, *Annotations on John* (1523), LW 59:43–47.

¹⁰¹ See the introduction above, p. xxvii.

¹⁰² In English, see Christian Preus, trans., *Commonplaces: Loci communes, 1521* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2014); Clyde Leonard Maschreck, trans., *Melanchthon on Christian Doctrine: Loci communes, 1555* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965); J. A. O. Preus, trans., *The Chief Theological Topics: Loci praecipui theologici, 1559* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011). Editions of the original text are found in MSA 1.1–2 and CR 21–22.

¹⁰³ Erasmus, *On the Freedom of the Will*, LCC 17 (CWE 76:1–89); Luther, *Bondage of the Will* (1525), LW 33.

¹⁰⁴ *Bondage of the Will* (1525), LW 33:36.

¹⁰⁵ See Timothy J. Wengert, *Human Freedom, Christian Righteousness: Philip Melanchthon's Exegetical Dispute with Erasmus of Rotterdam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

preacher but also to describe the contemporary preacher's task, as Luther recommends rhetorical strategies to use in preaching on the biblical text under consideration.

Tracing the sources of Luther's knowledge of the rhetorical tradition in the *Annotations on Matthew* is challenging.¹⁰⁶ Luther mentions only one rhetorical handbook by name—the *Topica*—and that reference itself is ambiguous, possibly referring either to the work by Aristotle or to the work by Cicero that shares the name.¹⁰⁷ The rhetorical terminology Luther uses cannot be identified with any single source. Although there are numerous parallels between Melancthon's presentation of rhetorical figures and Luther's exegesis and homiletical advice, Luther seems in the *Annotations* to be drawing directly upon classical texts (chiefly ones in Latin) rather than on the textbook of his younger colleague.¹⁰⁸ Sometimes, however, Luther uses medieval rhetorical terminology instead of or alongside the classical terms, reflecting the range of influences on his own education and his integration of them in his mature work.¹⁰⁹

Among the Latin rhetorical authorities known to Luther, scholars have debated the relative influence of Cicero and Quintilian—Ulrich Nembach arguing for the importance of Quintilian and Helmar Junghans for the greater significance of Cicero for Luther.¹¹⁰ An analysis of Luther's rhetorical discussions in the *Annotations* suggests the influence of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, an anonymous handbook ascribed by medieval writers to Cicero, along with Cicero's own *De inventione* and dialogues on oratory.¹¹¹ The most prevalent source for Luther's rhetorical analysis in the *Annotations*, however, seems to have been Quintilian's *Institutes of Oratory*.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ On Luther's use of rhetoric in general, see Helmar Junghans, "Martin Luther und die Rhetorik," in *Spätmittelalter, Luthers Reformation, Kirche in Sachsen: Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, ed. Michael Beyer and Günther Wartenberg, *Arbeiten zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte* 8 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001), pp. 177–92; Birgit Stolt, *Martin Luther's Rhetorik des Herzens* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); Neil R. Leroux, *Luther's Rhetoric: Strategies and Style from the Invocavit Sermons* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2002).

¹⁰⁷ See below, p. 227.

¹⁰⁸ Thus, e.g., Luther's exhortation to illustrate a point "with examples, stories, and sayings" reflects Quintilian's grouping of these figures in *Institutes of Oratory* 5.11 (Loeb 125 [2001], pp. 450–55), whereas Melancthon separates his discussion of them in *Elementa rhetorices*, pp. 272, 274. See below, p. 16.

¹⁰⁹ E.g., *dilatari* for *amplificare* (below, p. 14); *exaggeratio* for *hyperbole* (below, p. 161).

¹¹⁰ Ulrich Nembach, *Predigt des Evangeliums: Luther als Prediger, Pädagoge und Rhetor* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972); Junghans, *Der junge Luther*, pp. 80–83, 197–99.

¹¹¹ Cicero, *On Invention* (Loeb 386).

¹¹² Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* (Loeb 124–127, 494). In the editorial notes here on the *Annotations*, Melancthon's *Elementa rhetorices* are cited twenty-three times. Cicero is cited

DR. MARTIN LUTHER'S
ANNOTATIONS
ON SOME CHAPTERS
OF ST. MATTHEW

WRITTEN DOWN BY THE AUTHOR
NOT FOR PUBLICATION
BUT FOR THE PRIVATE USE OF A FRIEND

1534-35/1538

Translated by
Jon Bruss

CHAPTER SIXTEEN¹

1. ¹*And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, testing Him; they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven.*

As we have often said, there is nothing more haughty, more insolent, more prideful than hypocrites, the worst kind of men, who claim for themselves a wisdom and righteousness beyond others. In this passage they are depicted well, in their own true shape.

See how they approach—not to be taught (for they wish to be the teachers, not the students), but to make Christ into an itinerant entertainer and jester² for themselves, to perform signs at their behest—which would serve rather to confirm them in their own teaching, as the sort of people who have such a great performer at their beck and call.

Moreover, as if those miracles done by Him to this point were nothing at all—nothing, that is, but deeds done on earth—they ask for a heavenly miracle. It is as if they were saying: “Ah, those earthly miracles are nothing. If He were to demonstrate that He has power in heaven, then we could believe in Him”—not because they were then going to believe, but because meanwhile those miracles, which are far greater than the ones they are asking for in the heaven, could be brought into disrepute. For reviving the dead and giving sight to the blind are above all the signs¹ that could possibly be shown in heaven, even as much as man, the image of God, exceeds the heavens and all bodily creatures, and as eternal life exceeds corruptible creatures, etc.

That is why the evangelist observantly reports that they were asking for this sign “testing Him,” that is, with malice, trickery, [and] cunning, like the desperate scoundrels they were.³ And they want⁴ Him to be reduced in the sight of the people so long as He is not doing the signs that they choose and command themselves. In contrast, they care nothing for the signs that the

¹ Beginning again at the start of chapter 16, Luther’s manuscript is preserved through the annotations on Matt. 16:23 (below, p. 291), and then continuing with Matt. 16:28 (below, p. 302). See the introduction above, p. xlv.

² *Stocknarrum*, an unusual Latinization of a German word [*Stocknarr*] referring to a dwarf jester.

³ The last clause is given in German.

⁴ Reading *volunt* with the 1538 edition and Luther’s manuscript for the misprint *nolunt* [“do not want”] in the WA 38 text.

Father has given and willed to be done through Him. God should do as they wish, or He shall not be God. But what God wills is that they should believe just as He wills, speaks, and acts, or else they shall not be His people, nor He their God.⁵

Such is the case today: If our doctrine were to accomplish all the miracles of Christ and the apostles (and, of course, many do take place every day), still if it did not do what they themselves chose, it would be nothing. Conversely, if the things they chose were actually to take place, then they would soon be ready with the accusation that these things had been done by the devil, since they (who alone are the Church and the sons of God) are unable to perform such things. Things have to be done just as they want, or it is all wrong.⁶ If, however, what they want comes to pass, it is only catholic if it pleases them, since they themselves are the Lord omniscient⁷ in heaven and on earth, without God, apart from God, above God. Consequently, I myself have never wished for any sign to be done on behalf of this doctrine, since I am certain that it would produce no benefit, and everything would be attributed to the devil⁸ by this sort of lost hypocrites. For me it is enough that they have been proven wrong by the power of the truth, and in their conscience they are αὐτοκατάκριτος—condemned of themselves [Titus 3:11].

But the kind of signs that such men deserve are scandals, only passive ones (as they say):⁸ those by which they are offended, entangled, caught, and stumble (as Isaiah 8:14–15 says), and in this way they receive in themselves the penalty which they deserve [cf. Rom. 1:27]. Since they do not wish to be built up in the Christ who is glorious in His Word and miracles, in order that they might be saved, it is altogether just that they should be destroyed and perish in the Christ who is made inglorious and weak through the cross. That is how our hypocrites—those who refuse to be built up through the Word of truth (which they perceive) and by works of sincerity (which they cannot deny)—receive their own most righteous judgment: that they should be offended and come to ruin over our way of life and the scandals that proliferate apart from our will. Amen.

⁵ The last two sentences are given in German.

⁶ The sentence is given in German.

⁷ *Dominus factotus*, a medieval Latin expression meaning a ruler with unlimited power.

⁸ Scholastic theologians distinguished between active scandal (scandal given by one person's sinful act which provokes someone else to sin) and passive scandal (scandal taken by one person at someone else's innocent gifts or virtuous action). Medieval theologians associated it especially with the scandal taken by the Pharisees at Christ. See, e.g., Aquinas, *ST*, 2-2 q. 43 a1 ad 4 (Blackfriars 35:112-13) and a7 resp. (Blackfriars 35:128-33).

2. *But He answered and said to them:*
3. *“Hypocrites, you know how to interpret the face of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.”*

Here behold Christ Himself, with what emotion He reacts toward those hypocrites. “You know how to judge,” He says, “the appearance of the sky, but you are not judging the signs of this time. You know what a sky that is calm in the evening and stormy in the morning means. But you take no account of what these signs mean, which you are seeing and hearing Me do publicly.” He is saying everything allegorically and in signs. For just as a calm evening is a sign of a cheerful and calm day on the morrow, conversely ¹a stormy morning is the sign of a gloomy and rainy day. For thus the proverb in our language has it too: “Evening red, morrow fair.”⁹ And again:

Red sky at morn no lie will give;
A maiden’s plumpness can’t deceive.
If there’s no rain, still wind comes wild
If she’s not fat, then she’s with child!¹⁰

Thus the signs of Christ have a twofold power, for they are resurrection and the joy of justification to the godly, but to the godless they are a scandal and the stormy weather of eternal death. For the godly are made better by them; the ungodly perish by the same.

Therefore, He says: “You understand these signs of the heavens. Why do you not also understand these signs which are happening to you for the salvation of believers and for the ruin of those who do not believe? For at present you have a calm evening in which you might lay hold of the hope of the coming day of salvation and calm. Afterward there will follow a stormy morning in which you will have to fear eternal destruction.

“For My signs and this time of grace and of the wrath to come are no less evident and clear than the sky itself with its evening and morning, if you were to examine the prophets who prophesy about this time and if you were willing to think about the very things that you are seeing. But you are moved neither by the things promised by Scripture nor by the things that have been made manifest, ¹being mired only in these temporal questions—how¹¹ there will come fair days or gloomy ones. And so you go on without any concern, and yet meanwhile you still seek other signs. Oh yes, you will

⁹ The proverb is given in German. Cf. Wander 1:9, “Abendroth” no. 4.

¹⁰ The rhyme is given in German. For similar forms, see Wander 3:731-32, “Morgenroth” no. 3, and “Morgenröthe” no. 7.

¹¹ Reading *quomodo* with Luther’s manuscript (and the abbreviation of the 1538 edition) for *quod* [“that”] in the WA text.

get your¹² signs!—seeing that you blaspheme the ones that you see and bury them under your slanders.”

4. *“An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.”*

“You adulterers, you foreigners—you are no longer sons of Abraham and the fathers; you will not have any sign, except the sign of Jonah the prophet. This is a scandalous sign, by which you will not be built up (since you do not want to be built up, but you ridicule and blaspheme the Builder). Rather, you will be offended; you will stumble, fall, and perish. This, I say, is the sign that will be given to you, so that you who are not moved to believe by signs of glory and power will be offended at Me because of the scandals of the cross and weakness. And you will understand neither My suffering nor My resurrection. For from the signs of glory and power you could have been drawn to believe Me, that I am from God—since no one has done such things before—and, thus having become My disciples, to hear the mysteries of My suffering and cross. But since you do not believe the signs of glory, it will come to pass that, once they have come to an end, I shall be set before you weak, crucified, and dead; then you will be all the less able to believe in Me, since you will be offended at the enormity of the scandal of the cross. After I rise, you will most especially not believe, and thus you will perish by a righteous judgment, since you have spurned the signs of the present time, glorious as they are.”

¹This is what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1 [:21]: “Since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through its wisdom, it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe.” Those who refuse to be made good through God’s kindnesses must be made worse by His rod. Those who hold God’s wisdom in contempt perish as they deserve through God’s foolishness.

Whoever will not laugh when God plays the pipe [cf. Matt. 11:17] must become angry when He chides. If He does a good thing, it goes unnoticed. If He causes suffering, it is blasphemed. He¹³ can never do things as we want them. That is why we must perish, since we cannot be helped, not by sweetness or sourness, not by laughing or crying.¹⁴

Therefore, let them have no other sign than the sign of Jonah—not that they do not have all the other signs of Christ (since they have seen them all and blasphemed them). But this sign of Jonah will be theirs especially,

¹² The first part of this sentence is given in German.

¹³ Luther’s manuscript reads: “Ah yes, He . . .”

¹⁴ The paragraph is given in German.

because it was effective among them in producing scandal and destruction (as they deserved)—since all the others were, to them, not only ineffective and useless but even diabolical and most detrimental, etc. Indeed, out of the medicine of salvation they made for themselves a deadly poison.

Now, Christ Himself explains above in chapter 12 [:39-40] how Jonah was the sign of Christ, except that in both passages it is remarkable that it is said that Christ is the sign of Jonah,¹⁵ when ¹Jonah was himself the sign of the Christ who was to come. But here grammar easily supplies the answer that Christ is said to be the sign of Jonah since Christ Himself is a Jonah-like sign to the Jews, that is, a simile,¹⁶ as He Himself explains it: “Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale,” etc. [Matt. 12:40]. The point is that Christ, having been handed over into the belly of the whale—that is, into death—and having been cast out on the third day and raised up, will be a sign full of scandal to the unbelieving Jews.

If someone desires to deal here with the account of Jonah and expand upon it rhetorically, he has a remarkable passage [Matt. 12:40] about faith in the resurrection from the dead, or on life in the midst of death, so that we might learn that a miracle and the power of God are being set before us here in Jonah, who dies a threefold death—namely, by the water, by the monster, and by the wrath of God—and yet even so he does not die, but lives in life eternal. But these matters do not pertain to this passage.

So He left them and departed.

“Leaving behind those who were putting Him to the test,” the evangelist says, “He went away,” since with such people everything that happens and is said is in vain. For they are not doing this in order to learn, but in order to test and then to slander the things that have been supremely well said and done. Therefore, on the basis of this example, we, too, ought to leave behind those who examine us not in order to learn but to test. We know that they shall find the signs and tests they deserve.

5. *When the disciples reached the other side, they forgot to bring bread.*
6. *He said to them, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”*

¹This is written with reference to instruction in faith and doctrine. For the Lord gives the disciples, who were concerned about having left the bread behind, an answer concerning avoiding the leaven of the Pharisees

¹⁵ See Erasmus, *Paraphrase* 16:3-8 (CWE 45:242); Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 12.3 (PG 13:979-82; ANF 9:451).

¹⁶ See Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 8.3.72 (Loeb 126 [2001], pp. 380-81).

MATTHEW 18-24,
EXPOUNDED IN SERMONS
SERMONS OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER ON SEVERAL
CHAPTERS OF THE EVANGELIST MATTHEW

1537-40/1796-1847

Translated by
Kevin G. Walker

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

1. *In that same hour, the disciples came to Jesus and said, “Who, then, is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” etc.*

The¹ sermon which the Lord Christ here delivers to His disciples with great seriousness is one terrifying to those who are possessed by baleful pride and want to be something better than others. For here the Lord Christ earnestly threatens them and forbids that anyone should be presumptuous [cf. Luke 12:29] in the Christian Church. For He has not made His kingdom into a worldly dominion—though the pope and the heretics have abused it in that way. [The pope] has made himself preeminent in the name of the devil and exalted himself above all emperors and kings on earth. But Christ, our dear Lord, surely has not shed His blood in order that He might thereby make His Christians in the world into great lords and squires, and make their lives pleasant, and in order that they might seek no more than money and possessions here. God could certainly have achieved this by means of reason and human wisdom, as the world is accustomed to do, and He would not have needed to lavish upon us such a precious treasure as His dear Son, who expends so much bloody sweat [Luke 22:44], and suffers and dies for us, and lets His beloved disciples, as well as all the other Christians who believe in Him, be persecuted and killed, if it were not a question of something much greater and loftier.

Therefore, Christ did not acquire for us the sort of kingdom in which we are meant to govern and rule in the world and in which the pope, that devil,² makes people kiss his feet and insists on being the head in the holy Christian Church. For Christ wants to have no other, alien head there. He wants to be and remain [the Head] alone, and there, too, all Christians should be equal, one¹ having as much as another. For Him it is not a matter of money or property or temporal honor; He is not concerned with this refuse (for gold and silver are nothing but refuse). He wanted in this sermon to give His Christians a picture of this in order to shock them so that they do not imagine that they will become great lords or plan to seek dominion by means of the Gospel. For in His Church He cannot and will not tolerate or endure any kind of head or

¹ The first of Luther's sermons on Matthew 18–24, this one on Matt. 18:1, begins here. Luther probably preached it in early July 1537 (cf. StL 7:852).

² Literally, “devil's head” [*Teufelskopf*].

dominion such that one person wants to be higher and better than another, or so that one lashes out at those who are above and tramples down all others. Christ wants to be and remain [Head] alone.

In this way He wants to have His kingdom distinguished from the kingdom of the world. In the world there must be a distinction among people, so that some sit on top and rule, but the others let themselves be ruled. So also in a house there are various people and offices. The wife is subject to her husband; the daughter is obedient to her mother, and the son to his father; servant and maid should honor their master and mistress; and the countryman should be subject to his lord. This is how the world must be ruled.

This is not how things work in the kingdom of Christ, however, for it is not founded and built upon the world, but upon the blood of Jesus Christ. Here one person is like every other, for there is one Master and Lord, who is called Christ. Therefore, whoever wants to be greatest should be the servant of the other, so that we all alike might attain Christ and the treasure He has gained for us. For here there should be one Lord, one Baptism [cf. Eph. 4:5], one Gospel, and one Sacrament [of the Lord's Supper]; yes, we should all have one Christ. In the sight of the world, people are unequal. A pastor or preacher is at the top, but he has no better Baptism on account of this, nor is he any better than the lowliest farmer on account of this. I, an old fool, have no better Baptism than the young child who lies in the cradle and is baptized. For a child who still feeds on milk and gruel is washed from sins through the blood of Christ in Baptism just as much as I am. Indeed, it is often more pious than the old fool that I am. For it knows nothing of the wickedness in which I, an old man, am mired. So it is that we are all equal, equally noble, equally highborn. For we are all alike called Christians.

Therefore, the Lord Christ does not want to have in His Church any dominion whatsoever. Instead, all of our work—I with my preaching and you with your listening—should be directed toward learning to know Christ. For we all have one Christ, just as we all have one Baptism. Thus we should also endeavor that we possess one and the same Word of God and are all equal in knowledge and everything that belongs to the Lord Christ. But that externally, in the sight of the world, one of us is rich and another poor—that does not belong to the kingdom of Christ. That is why He sets before our eyes a picture or mirror of His kingdom or the Christian Church: in order to separate and distinguish it from the secular government, and so that we also may learn to separate these two kingdoms from each other and pay attention to which one is or is not the true Church. For the devil is always wanting to cook and brew these two kingdoms together. In this way the pope, too, has mingled the secular kingdom and the government of

the church and has become emperor and king in the world. And all fanatics and sectarians are still eager to possess a worldly dominion.³ They take up the enterprise with great holiness, wanting to be better than other people, just as do all the others who let themselves imagine and dream that they are good Evangelicals.⁴

But it is not Christ's intention here in this text that we should seek dominion—that one person should be a Papist and another gain some other following for himself. That is why St. Paul rebukes the Corinthians severely in 1 Corinthians 2 [1:10–16] for having instigated such strife among themselves, each one wanting to be better than the other, everyone boasting of the one by whom he had been taught or baptized. One said he was of Peter, another of Paul, a third of Apollos. So St. Paul says: “Why do you call upon Peter? Why do you call upon Paul or Apollos? Did Peter or Apollos suffer for you? Did I, Paul, die for you? Are you baptized in Peter's name?” Neither Peter nor Paul nor Apollos matter here, but only the one Lord and Master, who has shed His blood for you and from whom alone you are called Christians. You are not called Petrists, Paulists, or Apollists, but Christians.

The pope, too, has led us away from Christ and directed us to the Virgin Mary, to call upon her, and to rely upon my own holiness and yours, and to trust in the intercession of the saints. He has sought out all kinds of saints who have never lived on earth, such as St. Barbara, Catherine, Margaret, St. Christopher, and St. George,⁵ which are nothing but made-up saints, so that nothing of Christ would ever be taught.⁶

But let every Christian learn to make a proper distinction between the churches, to distinguish the one that is the true Christian Church from the one that has nothing but the bare name of the Church and leads all the world astray with its appearance. The true Church knows of no Lord and Master

³ Luther may particularly have in mind Münzer and his role in the Peasants' War of 1525 (cf. above, pp. 92–93 n. 15), as well as the 1534–35 Anabaptist theocracy in Münster; see preface to Menius, *On the Spirit of the Anabaptists* (1544), LW 60:334; preface to *New Report on the Anabaptists at Münster* (1535), LW 60:91–98.

⁴ “Evangelical”—those adhering to the Gospel—was the preferred term of self-identification for those seeking to reform the church, even apart from Rome. On “Evangelical” as a term of identification in the Reformation, see John A. Maxfield, *Luther's Lectures on Genesis and the Formation of Evangelical Identity* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2008), pp. 3–5.

⁵ Luther commonly refers to Barbara, Catherine of Alexandria, and Margaret of Antioch (all of whom were martyred in the fourth century), Christopher (ca. 251), and George (ca. 275–303) in deriding fictional saints; see, e.g., *Sermons on John 18–20* (1528–29/1557), LW 69:162 and n. 72 there; and Luther's preface to the *Summer Postil* (1544), LW 77:8 and n. 4 there.

⁶ On the use and abuse of lives of the saints, cf. *Preface to the Psalter* (1528), LW 35:253–57; Luther's preface to Major, *Lives of the Fathers* (1544), LW 59:315–23.

other than Christ alone. It is in Him that she believes, as Christ Himself also says, “My sheep hear My voice” [John 10:27], and John says in his Epistle [1 John 4:2–3]: “Whoever confesses Jesus Christ, that He has come in the flesh, is from God. But whoever does not confess that He has come in the flesh is not from God.” In this Church, the Christians are all equal. Here none is better than another. Here none should exalt himself over another. Even if you are a small child, you still have your jewelry and wedding garment and glory just as much as an old man does. I should not exalt myself for being a doctor, nor should another be proud that he is a ruler or lord. Instead, I must say, “In that life a child is just as good as I am.” For it is altogether intolerable that in the Christian Church anyone should want to be higher than another. This is how things should be in each case: When this small child is born, bring it ^lto its mother, the Christian Church. And if I, a great or an old man, err and am admonished by the Church, then I should accept correction. This should be the sign of the Church. Where this takes place, there is the true Christian Church.⁷

Now, since the true Church knows of nothing else but Christ, it follows that the church which leads us from Christ to something else, as the pope and his crew do, is the devil’s church. When they want to do their best, they indeed say with their mouth that Christ died for our sins, but then they teach us that we should invoke the saints, of whom they have assembled so many that, in the end, saints are being invoked and celebrated who have never been born into this world, such as St. Anne, St. Margaret, etc., nor ever shall be born.⁸ Here the pope steps forward and says, “You shall esteem me as the head of the Christian Church,” while directing the people to call upon Mary and saying: “If you do not believe in the saint I have exalted⁹ and you do not observe a festival in his honor, then you belong to the devils and are damned eternally. For I have power and authority to forgive and to retain sins, to open and to lock heaven. So, then, whoever is a sinner must do this or that, just as I say—must travel to Rome for an indulgence, make a pilgrimage to St. James.”¹⁰ That is not leading and subjecting the people to the Lord Christ, but to the devil. And here let a Christian also make answer

⁷ On Baptism and reproof (the Office of the Keys) as marks of the Church, cf. *On the Councils and the Church* (1539), LW 41:151, 153.

⁸ On St. Margaret, see above, p. 333 n. 5. St. Anne, very popular as an intercessor in late medieval Germany, was the mother of the Virgin Mary according to extrabiblical sources; see LW 58:275 n. 96.

⁹ Since the pontificate of Alexander III (r. 1159–81), the canonization of saints had been a papal prerogative.

¹⁰ That is, the shrine of St. James (Santiago) at Compostela in Spain, one of the most popular pilgrimage sites of the Middle Ages. Cf. *Afternoon Sermon for St. Stephen’s Day* (1544), LW 58:204; sermon notes for Easter 1 (1531/1544), LW 69:394.

and say: “Now I hear clearly enough that you are a devil! For you do not want to make me a Christian, but a Romanist, Jamesist, Papist, and fool of that sort. Instead, I will remain with the company where I am told about Christ, my Lord and Savior, apart from whom there is no other helper. You, pope, with your crew, may abide where you can. I see clearly enough that you are a powerful lord, and you presume to issue many commands, but my Lord Christ was not like that. Nor did He want His own to rule in the world or to desire to be great lords. You are not the true Church, because you want to persuade us of something contrary to Christ’s doctrine and command. Although you call yourself and your followers the Christian Church, you are instead a bunch of fools, wearing pointy caps and greasy tonsures and carrying sticks,¹¹ and I find none of that written in the Word and doctrine of my dear Lord Christ.”

If salvation depended upon the pope and his precepts—for example, that one must be a Romanist or St. Jamesist—how, then, is a Christian supposed to be saved who lives in India or at the ends of the earth and knows nothing of the pope in Rome and all his foolishness?¹² But just as that [Christian] at the ends of the earth is saved, so shall I also be saved: namely, through the knowledge of Christ, in whom I believe, whom I also confess, in whom I have been baptized, and whose Word and Gospel I have just as well as someone who lives toward the rising sun or midday or midnight.¹³ No one has any advantage over another; rather, there is one faith, one Christ, one Baptism [Eph. 4:5]. And if someone were to come from India or Ethiopia, or anywhere else, and say, “I believe in Christ,” then I would say, “I, too, believe thus, and so I will also be saved.” And Christians agree with one another in their faith and confession no matter where in the whole wide world they are scattered. For it is not called “one Roman, or Nürnberg, or Wittenberg Church,” but “one Christian Church,” in which belong all who believe in Christ.

In the world, to be sure, it is right and as it should be when I say, “I am a citizen of Wittenberg; therefore, I am Saxon and Electoral.”¹⁴ Another says, “I am an inhabitant of Bavaria; therefore, I am Bavarian or Palatine.”¹⁵ A third says, “I am a Hessian”; therefore, he is called the landgrave’s man.¹⁶

¹¹ I.e., the episcopal miter and crozier are identified with the fool’s cap and scepter.

¹² For Luther’s views on the geographic reach of Christianity, see above, p. 282 n. 88.

¹³ I.e., east, south, or north, a common German idiom for directions, from the position of the sun in the Northern Hemisphere at these times of day.

¹⁴ I.e., a subject of the elector of Saxony.

¹⁵ Part of Bavaria was subject to the dukes of Bavaria, and part (the Upper Palatinate) was subject to the Elector Palatine.

¹⁶ I.e., a subject of the landgrave of Hesse.