

# HE OPENED TO US THE SCRIPTURES

ESSAYS IN HONOR OF  
ARTHUR A. JUST JR.

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Edited by  
Charles A. Gieschen



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# CONTENTS

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|                                                                                                                                            |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Preface                                                                                                                                    | v   |
| Abbreviations                                                                                                                              | ix  |
| Arthur A. Just Jr.: Biography and Bibliography<br><i>D. Richard Stuckwisch</i>                                                             | xi  |
| <u>THE SCRIPTURES OF THE CHURCH</u>                                                                                                        |     |
| Luke: Beauty, Discipleship, and the Law's Third Use<br><i>Peter J. Scaer</i>                                                               | 3   |
| What Shall We Do? Mercy and Hospitality in the Gospel of Luke<br><i>James G. Bushur</i>                                                    | 17  |
| The Parable of the Good Samaritan: Jesus' Brilliant Three-Pass Buffet<br><i>James W. Voelz</i>                                             | 33  |
| Sensual Aspects of the Lukan World<br><i>Alexey Streltsov</i>                                                                              | 41  |
| He Learned Obedience Through What He Suffered: Jesus' Spiritual<br>Growth as a Pattern for the Christian Life<br><i>Gifford A. Grobien</i> | 57  |
| Did Paul Place Luke into Office at Philippi?<br><i>John G. Nordling</i>                                                                    | 71  |
| The Word Became Flesh: The Nature of the Holy Scriptures<br>in Light of the Prologue of John<br><i>Roberto E. Bustamante</i>               | 87  |
| Critical Approaches to the Scriptures<br><i>David P. Scaer</i>                                                                             | 99  |
| God on the Move: A Truly Real Presence Theology<br><i>Jeffrey H. Pulse</i>                                                                 | 119 |
| Doxological, Incarnational, and Sacramental: A Rich Ecclesial<br>Hermeneutic<br><i>Dean O. Wenthe</i>                                      | 135 |

## THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

|                                                                                                                                  |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Worship in Heaven within the Book of Revelation: Implications<br>for the Church's Worship on Earth<br><i>Charles A. Gieschen</i> | 145 |
| The Arrangement of the Divine Service in the Early Church<br><i>John W. Kleinig</i>                                              | 159 |
| Homily 2 "On the Holy Pascha" by the Blessed Hesychius,<br>Presbyter of Jerusalem<br><i>William C. Weinrich</i>                  | 171 |
| It Is Truly Good, Right, and Salutory: A Liturgical Analysis<br>of the Eucharistic Preface<br><i>Sergio Adrián Fritzler</i>      | 185 |
| Is the Three-Year Lectionary Really All That New?<br><i>Paul J. Grime</i>                                                        | 203 |
| Preparing for a Blessed Death: Lord, Let at Last Thine Angels Come<br><i>Timothy C. J. Quill</i>                                 | 221 |

## THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

|                                                                                                                                        |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Mission Perspectives from the Lutheran Confessions<br><i>Andrew K. Pfeiffer</i>                                                        | 239 |
| Whose Is the Child? The Michigan School Fight of 1920–1925<br><i>Lawrence R. Rast Jr.</i>                                              | 255 |
| Lutheran Higher Education and the Church's Mission<br><i>Daniel L. Gard</i>                                                            | 267 |
| Pilgrimage to Encounter: The Impact of Arthur Just<br>on the Theology of Worship in Confessional Lutheranism<br><i>John J. Bombaro</i> | 281 |

## PREFACE

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Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road,  
while he opened to us the Scriptures? *Luke 24:32*

THESE words that Cleopas and the disciple with him exchanged about the transformative hermeneutical lesson that Jesus gave them on their walk together to Emmaus can also be used to describe the life of Arthur A. Just Jr. since his ordination as a Lutheran pastor, especially his service for more than four decades as professor of exegetical theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW): “He opened to us the Scriptures.” Anyone who has heard Arthur preach or teach knows very well how foundational the Emmaus narrative in Luke 24:13–35 is in his teaching and theology since he studied and wrote on it during his doctoral studies at the University of Durham. All of those individuals know that his primary vocation day after day has been opening the Scriptures to others so that they see Christ clearly in them, even as Jesus did with those Emmaus disciples: “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27).

This collection of essays is a *festschrift*, which means that it is a collection of writings by various scholars to celebrate and honor an esteemed colleague. Although Arthur is still active in teaching at CTSFW, his decades of faithful service—he has passed the mark of threescore and ten years in his earthly pilgrimage—and exemplary scholarship merit such recognition. The content of these essays can be grouped within three subjects that have dominated his life since he became a pastor: the Scriptures of the church, the worship of the church, and the mission of the church. None of these subjects has been a mere academic pursuit for Arthur. A life of service to Christ is a life “in the church” where the Scriptures are heard in the midst of the Divine Service, which is the context from which Christ reaches out through his church to the world. As Arthur’s biography and bibliography below well attest, all three—the Scriptures, worship, and mission—have been the focus of his teaching and travels.

This volume would not have been possible without the gracious gift of individual essays from the contributors. Their ready willingness to write for this *festschrift* speaks to their esteem and affection for Arthur. The fact that

some contributors are from different continents speaks to Arthur's global mission focus and impact. The following friends and colleagues contributed to this volume:

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I also want to express my personal thanks, as well as the appreciation of each of these contributors, to Concordia Publishing House for their willingness to take on this publication project. Special thanks go to Jacob Corzine, Laura Lane, and Dawn Mirly Weinstock, who all guided this project from acceptance to publication.

Finally, on behalf of the thousands impacted by Arthur's teaching and writing, I want to express our profound appreciation to him for all that he has given and done for Christ and his church. May this volume be but a small token that reflects the sincere love and esteem that we all have for you, Arthur.

As Jesus did for those two Emmaus disciples, Arthur Just has "opened up the Scriptures" by revealing Christ to many across the world and made their "hearts burn." It is my prayer that these essays by Arthur's cherished colleagues and treasured friends will do the same for him and all other readers of this *festschrift* written to honor him and glorify our Lord Jesus Christ.

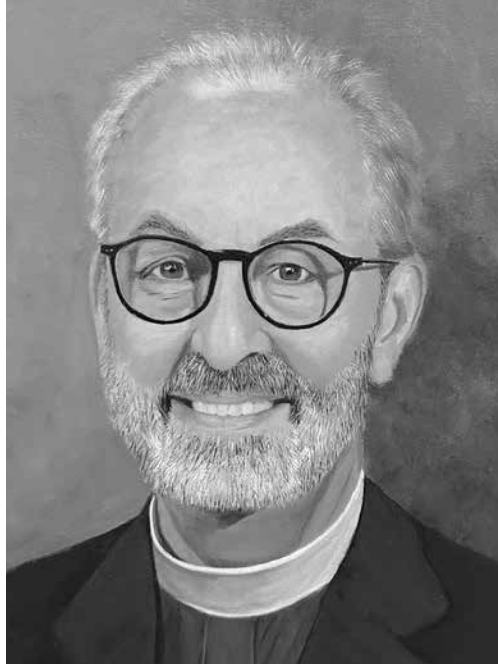
Charles A. Gieschen  
The Baptism of Our Lord  
January 11, 2026

# ABBREVIATIONS

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|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AC        | Augsburg Confession.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| AE        | <i>Luther's Works: American Edition</i> . Vols. 1–30: Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan. St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–76. Vols. 31–55: Edited by Helmut Lehmann. Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–86. Vols. 56–82: Edited by Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes. St. Louis: Concordia, 2009–. |
| ANF       | <i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325</i> . Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Revised by A. Cleveland Coxe. 10 vols. Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885–96. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.                               |
| Ap        | Apology of the Augsburg Confession.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| BDAG      | W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. University of Chicago Press, 2000.                                                                                                                         |
| CCSL      | <i>Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina</i> . Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Concordia | <i>Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions</i> . 2nd ed. St. Louis: Concordia, 2006.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| COW       | Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| CPR       | <i>Concordia Pulpit Resources</i> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| CTQ       | <i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| CTSW      | Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (Indiana).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| FC Ep     | Epitome of the Formula of Concord.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| FC SD     | Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| ILCW      | Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| K-W       | Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. <i>The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church</i> . Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000.                                                                                                                                                               |
| LCMS      | The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| LSB       | The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. <i>Lutheran Service Book</i> . St. Louis: Concordia, 2006.                                                                                                                                                                                          |

- LXX Septuagint.
- NPNF<sup>1</sup> *A Select Library of the Christian Church: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series*. Edited by Philip Schaff. 14 vols. New York, 1886–89. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- NPNF<sup>2</sup> *A Select Library of the Christian Church: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series*. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. 14 vols. New York, 1890–1900. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- PG *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Graeca*. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 161 vols. in 167. Petit-Montrouge: Apud J. P. Migne, 1857–66.
- PL *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina*. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 221 vols. in 223. Paris: Garnier Freres, 1844–64.
- SA Smalcald Articles.
- SC Sources chrétiennes.



# ARTHUR A. JUST JR.

## BIOGRAPHY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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D. Richard Stuckwisch

I have had the privilege of knowing Dr. Arthur Just since my first day at Concordia Theological Seminary, as my wife and I were seated at the same table with him and his wife, Linda, at the opening dinner for new students in the fall of 1989. Arthur had already been on the faculty for five years by that point, but—looking back now from thirty-six years later—it is clear that he was just getting started. And the fact that my acquaintance with him began with that table fellowship is, in retrospect, a delightful foreshadowing of one of the central things he would contribute in the decades ahead. For so much of Arthur's work

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The portrait is oil on canvas by Ana Maria Ash given by the CTSFW Class of 2023 and on display at Concordia Theological Seminary. Photograph printed with permission of Ana Maria Ash.

and teaching has focused on the table fellowship of Christ Jesus, which we are graciously granted to share in the liturgy of the Lord's Supper.

Born in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1953, Arthur lived with his family in Mexico and Spain for a number of his formative childhood years. That early experience has borne abundant fruit in his adult life, as Arthur spent a sabbatical year in Spain ministering to the growing number of Lutherans throughout that country, and he has subsequently traveled not only to Spain but also to Spanish-speaking countries in Central and South America to assist with the mission and ministry of the church abroad. He has served on the Board for International Missions of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), and in that capacity he has contributed to Lutheran seminaries in Buenos Aires and the Dominican Republic.

Having earned a bachelor of arts degree in history and English literature in 1975 from Union College in Schenectady, New York, Arthur then attended Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), and graduated with a master of divinity degree in 1980. From that point until being called to the CTSFW faculty in 1984, he served as the pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Middletown, Connecticut. It was also in 1984 that Arthur received a master of sacred theology degree in New Testament and liturgics from Yale Divinity School. The New Testament Holy Scriptures and the liturgical life of the church have remained at the forefront of his scholarship and service throughout the ensuing years.

By the time I met Arthur in 1989, he was nearing completion of his doctor of philosophy degree in New Testament studies, which he received in 1990 from the University of Durham in the United Kingdom. His doctoral thesis was published three years later in 1993 under the title *The Ongoing Feast: Table Fellowship and Eschatology at Emmaus*. That work embraced his exegetical and liturgical interests, and, in many ways, it anticipated what is surely one of his most significant contributions: his two-volume commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke, which was published in 1996 and 1997. As a newly ordained parish pastor at the time those commentary volumes were published, I can attest to what a blessing and benefit they were then—and have been ever since—by serving the homiletical task in a most salutary manner.

The various roles that Arthur has held and served at CTSFW in the course of his long tenure give some indication of the impressive breadth of his interests and contributions. In addition to his teaching of New Testament, liturgics, homiletics, catechetics, and pastoral theology, he has served as chairman of the Department of Exegetical Theology, dean of the chapel, co-director of the Good Shepherd Institute, and the director of Deaconess Studies. Not only was he instrumental in starting the deaconess program at CTSFW, but he also brought that focus and training to the Kenyan Lutheran Church, with frequent visits to

Africa throughout the 2000s. Prior to that, he was integral in the beginnings of the Russian Project in the late 1990s and the founding of the Siberian Lutheran Seminary in Novosibirsk, Russia.

Although he has managed to serve the mission of the church in multiple countries around the world, Arthur has not been absent from the life and work of the church in the United States. He has for many years been in demand as a conference and workshop presenter across the LCMS, especially on the theology and practice of the liturgy. In the classroom, in the chapel, and around the country, he has expressed, explained, and exemplified the very principles and practices that he advocated in his chapter on “Liturgical Renewal in the Parish,” included in the long-awaited 1993 publication *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*. And with his exegetical, homiletical, and liturgical expertise, he was well-suited for his role as chairman of the Lectionary Committee of the *Lutheran Service Book* project. I had the joy of serving with Arthur on that committee from its first meeting in 1998 until the publication of this hymnal in 2006. Meanwhile, as a member of the Indiana District’s Worship and Spiritual Care Committee, Arthur developed and recorded two video studies, a twelve-part series on the Lutheran liturgy (1999) and a six-part series on the theology, practice, and significance of Holy Baptism (2004). Later, the content of his video series on the liturgy was expanded and published in his 2008 book *Heaven on Earth: The Gifts of Christ in the Divine Service*.

Something should be said about the blessing and activity of Arthur’s family. He and Linda have been blessed with three children, Abigail, Nicholas, and Jacob. Abigail and her husband, Joshua, have seven daughters. Nicholas and his wife, Haley, have a daughter and a son. Jacob and his wife, Michaela, have a daughter. Together the extended family has enjoyed many summers at a home in New Hampshire, which Arthur and Linda purchased when he began teaching at CTSFW. The two of them have also traveled extensively, leading countless Mediterranean and European tours, and visiting Spain, Italy, Greece, Germany, Turkey, Egypt, and the Holy Land. More than once they have made the “El Camino” pilgrimage from the Pyrenees Mountains of southern France to the coastal Spanish city of Santiago. Closer to home, recent winters have found Arthur serving as a seasonal parish pastor at Grace Lutheran Church in Naples, Florida.

As I reflect upon the decades that have come and gone since I first met Arthur in 1989, I marvel at the multiple ways I have been influenced by his teaching and example, and I give thanks for the opportunities I have had to work with him in various endeavors. And then I realize how many others—pastors, deaconesses, and laity—have likewise benefited from the fruits of his labors in the Lord: in the United States, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Central and South America. Even a brief consideration of his extensive service to the church

and his numerous writings makes it clear what a gift he has been, and still is, to the Body of Christ on earth.

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# THE SCRIPTURES OF THE CHURCH

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# LUKE: BEAUTY, DISCIPLESHIP, AND THE LAW'S THIRD USE

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Peter J. Scaer

IT is easy to see why Arthur Just was drawn to Luke's Gospel, and how his life has been shaped by it. It seems a match made in heaven on earth.<sup>1</sup> There is a great beauty in a life well-lived, seen clearly in the Christ, our beautiful Savior. This is the life into which all Christians are invited. What was it that brought Just to Luke? Matthew offers us foundational catechesis. Mark is determined to preach nothing but Christ crucified, and John plunges us into matchless spiritual depth and raises us up to lofty heights. What Luke offers is beauty, a compelling story that highlights the glory of Israel, a light to lighten the Gentiles (Luke 2:32). In a world made ugly by sin, Luke pictures for the world a life that is attractive, a life embodied by the Lord and reflected in his disciples. This beauty is to be found in the sanctuary and is to be taken to the ends of the earth.

Just resonates with the third evangelist, who so clearly demonstrates that the love of liturgy and mission go hand-in-hand. For many years, his calling centered on the life of the seminary chapel, but that love of the sacred has exerted a centripetal force, propelling him to places such as Spain, Russia, the Dominican Republic, and to just about every other place on God's globe. His persona is one of hospitality, even as the early disciples turned houses into homes for our Lord's dwelling. And that is a spirit he has taken on all of his journeys. To this we might add Just's pioneering work with the deaconess program, an idea that has its inspiration in Luke's gospel, which highlights the role of women in Jesus' ministry (Luke 8:1-3), as well as in the early church through the examples of Lydia and Dorcas.

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<sup>1</sup> See Arthur A. Just Jr., *Heaven on Earth: The Gifts of Christ in the Divine Service* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008).

The title of Just's first book, *The Ongoing Feast*, seems almost prophetic of his own ministry.<sup>2</sup> Luke's Emmaus account invites us to a life of pilgrimage, from font to altar, a journey in which God's people are gathered and the Scriptures are read, taught, and studied. As Just puts it, "For the Christian, life is a pilgrimage from Baptism to death, which is the entrance into eternity."<sup>3</sup> Our sacramental trajectory is based on our Lord's own pilgrimage, who came from heaven above to live among us, that we might dwell with him in the heavenly places. The first and primary path always leads to God. Our Lord Jesus came to save us that we might be with him, that we might find joy in his presence. Those of us of a certain age remember well "the page 5 service" of *The Lutheran Hymnal*, which was essentially a Communion service without Communion.<sup>4</sup> But things have changed, and for the better. It has been heartening to see congregation after congregation embracing more frequent Communion. The Eucharist is not simply an add-on or an option. The Lord's Supper is the never-ending end and culmination. As Just writes, "The goal of the journey is to live in Christ's presence forever and to feast at his table for eternity."<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, our church body remains indebted to Just for opening our eyes to the Lord's presence in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24:35).

Apart from God's Word, all ceremonies are practice without purpose. Accordingly, Just has continually emphasized that the Bible belongs not to the academy but to the church. Even more, we read the Scriptures with those who have gone before us. As he puts it in his *Ancient Christian Commentary* series volume, "Patristic exegesis of Luke's Gospel reminds us that the gospel is always heard and interpreted within the worshipping community."<sup>6</sup> As the Scriptures are expounded, hearts burn with the fire of the Spirit (Luke 24:32, 44). The font and altar must be accompanied by a pulpit, by faithful preachers and teachers. Catechesis on the road is an ongoing process, as Just writes: "In fact, catechesis is 'the way' as the catechumen follows Jesus and travels with him along the catechetical road to Jerusalem."<sup>7</sup> Peter preaches Baptism, which leads to further teaching, and the breaking of bread and prayers (Acts 2:37–42). Word and sacrament belong together.

2 Arthur A. Just Jr., *The Ongoing Feast: Table Fellowship and Eschatology at Emmaus* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993).

3 Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 1:1–9:50* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 24.

4 *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), 5–14.

5 Just, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, 24.

6 *Luke*, ed. Arthur A. Just Jr., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament 3* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), xvii. Hereafter *Luke* (ACCSNT 3).

7 Just, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, 23.

## THE PLACE OF BEAUTY: LUKE'S GIFT TO THE CHURCH

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Arthur Just has long been a lover of art and literature, a theologian at home in the literary world of T. S. Eliot and F. Scott Fitzgerald, finding inspiration in films such as *Babette's Feast* and in artists such as El Greco. This love of literature and the arts matches most closely to Luke, a literary artist and iconographer, the most cosmopolitan of the evangelists.<sup>8</sup> The third evangelist engendered a cultural confidence as Christians took the gospel into the larger Greco-Roman world. While our Lord's first disciples were Galilean fishermen, Luke was a man of letters. As Just notes in his commentary, "Luke begins like no other gospel. The prologue is a brilliant periodic sentence written in elegant koine Greek that would impress a Hellenistic audience."<sup>9</sup> The third evangelist knew the language of the learned. Luke's prologue signals the evangelist's intent to take his Gospel not only to Pharisees and Sadducees but also to Stoics and Epicureans (Acts 17). This missionary thrust is seen in a birth story that takes place not simply in Bethlehem, but on a stage in which Caesar Augustus is emperor (Luke 2:1). Luke's literary brilliance is exhibited in a beginning that offers a foretaste of the end, Christ's death under Pontius Pilate (Luke 23) and Paul's preaching in Athens (Acts 17), then Rome (Acts 28).

Too often Luke has been thought of as Paul's junior partner. In many ways, the Lutheran Church is a child of the apostle Paul's boldness, a willingness to speak truth to power. Within the church catholic, there must always be prophets, those willing to say that the emperor has no clothes. The church is always in need of an Elijah, a John the Baptist, and a Luther. *Ecclesia semper reformanda est*. The Lutheran Church especially embodies the fighting spirit of Paul's letter to the Galatians, also a favorite subject for Just. But Just has never been a pugilist. Within the church, it takes all kinds. The church of every age depends on writers and speakers who play the role of cosmopolitan Luke the artist, those who present the church in all her beauty. Luke gives us the canticles of Mary (Luke 1:46–56) and Zechariah (Luke 1:68–79), so also the Song of Simeon (Luke 2:29–32), and even the Gloria of the angels (Luke 2:14). His Gospel fulfills Psalm 96: "Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth" (Ps 96:1). This is a song of celebration, of incarnation, and also mission: "Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!" (Ps 96:3). And what will draw the nations together? Beauty!

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8 For a summary of Luke's erudition, see Vernon K. Robbins, "The Social Location of the Implied Author of Luke-Acts," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. Jerome Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 305–332.

9 Just, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, 37.

The psalmist cries out, “Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!” (Ps 96:9).

Indeed, the gospel is itself a beautiful thing, as Luke conveys so well. We can see it in the humble obedience of Mary (Luke 1:38), the piety of Anna (Luke 2:37), the heartwarming story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32), and the hopefulness of a thief saved while dying (Luke 23:39–43). Christ’s life is salvific, but it is also compelling. Even as a daughter wishes to imitate her mother, and an athlete seeks to please a favorite coach, so also do Christians wish to be like their Lord. St. Paul says, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). What St. Paul exhorts, Luke pictures. Christ’s self-giving inspires godly imitators such as Joanna, Susanna (Luke 8:3), and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–9). His willingness to face death is imitated by Stephen, who prays for his enemies and offers himself—like Jesus—to God (Luke 23:34, 46; Acts 7:59–60).

## LUKE AND PARAENESIS

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Luke may be known as a literary artist, but he is also the evangelist of discipleship. The Christian as Christian loves the imperative mood; he delights in our Lord’s commands. As Just notes, Luke’s exhortation is marked by “a Christological foundation” and is “a natural expression of the baptismal life in Christ.”<sup>10</sup> The Lord says, “Come, follow me,” and the Christian is happy to do so. Even as our Lord went to the Mount of Olives, the disciples followed, as we all must (Luke 22:39). What does Lukan discipleship look like? It is not some amorphous thing based on platitudes; the Christian life has a cruciform shape. No wonder our Lord cautions would-be disciples to count the cost (Luke 14:28). Tellingly, the first time Luke uses the word “cross” he applies it not to Christ but to the life of the Christian. Our Lord himself says to us all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). Christ’s ministers are called to put their hands to the plow, not looking back (Luke 9:62). The Lord sets his face toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51), and we are invited to sing in chorus: “I will follow you wherever you go” (Luke 9:57).

For good reason, the earliest Christians were said to be members of “The Way” (Acts 9:2), for they knew that Jesus was the only way of salvation. Likewise, their own lives had a twofold destination: the cross, as represented by Jerusalem, and mission, as represented by Rome. Such a life may be difficult, but its weight brings a certain joy. The lawyers “load people with burdens hard to bear” (Luke 11:46). Christ offers a life of vigor, and his recruitment promises adventure. “Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning,” he says (Luke 12:35). Our Lord speaks to his disciples in the manner of an athletic

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<sup>10</sup> Just, *Luke* (ACCSNT 3), xxvii.

trainer or a leader preparing his troops for battle: "Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation" (Luke 22:46). Our Lord's exhortation has a certain attraction, for it is a life worth living, a life with a clear mission and purpose.

## DISCIPLESHIP AND THE LAW

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Again, Luke is the Gospel of beauty, but it is marked by exhortation and paraenesis, commonly spoken of as the law's third use. The law is often spoken with a sense of dour censoriousness, as if it were simply a matter of rules and regulations, of an endless dotting of *i*'s and crossing of *t*'s. The law comes to the sinner as bad news, demonstrating the ugliness of our sin and acting as a mirror to our fallen nature. On the other hand, the law eternal conveys a sense of beauty, and the law fulfilled is the very definition of love. Christ saved us through his obedience and fulfillment of the law. As such, the life of Christ is one of beauty, of a higher righteousness which means the fulfillment of the law not simply as an avoidance of immorality but in doing good and showing mercy. "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). This is the life of Christ, who showed his love for us even while we were his enemies.

The summary of the law is found in the commandments to love God and neighbor (Luke 10:27). The First Commandment instructs us to fear, love, and trust God. But this is no cold injunction. There is beauty in worship of the true God, and our liturgical life reflects that love. For Luke, the temple is holy, the dwelling place of saints such as Zechariah, Simeon, and Anna. It is a place where angels dwell (Luke 1:11). Likewise, there is something appealing about Luke's depiction of the early church, where people of God were gathered around the apostles' teaching, the breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts 2:42). The church is recognized by spiritual fruits that include love, joy, peace, kindness, and gentleness (Gal 5:22–23). While Paul speaks, Luke paints a picture. Many have been drawn to the truth by a community that shares earthly goods (Acts 2:44) and takes care of the poor (Acts 4:32–35). Barnabas is lauded for encouragement and generosity (Acts 4:36–37). The beauty of the church can be seen in a world where men and women live in godly harmony. Luke rightly honors women who made our Lord's ministry possible, a group that included Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna (Luke 8:2–3). Luke paints for us a picture of numerous godly women, including hospitable Lydia (Acts 16:11–15), generous Dorcas (Acts 9:36–43), and the knowledgeable Priscilla (Acts 18). God is the one who is kind to the ungrateful and the evil (Luke 6:35). Following in his footsteps, we see the kindness of Stephen who prays for his enemies (Acts 7:60), the kindness of Paul who ended up offering spiritual release to his Philippian jailor (Acts 16:25–40).

## THE THIRD USE OF THE LAW AND ITS LUKAN APPLICATION

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The third use of the law is so often misunderstood, thought to be the last resort for pastors who wish to whip their congregation into shape, to spur on good works by a reapplication of the law that never worked in the first place. But such thinking is misguided and often leaves the church mute when she should be speaking. We are prone to chafe at the law's third use when we wish to hold onto the sins that beset us. Apart from repentance and a true desire to live the new life, the third use comes to us as an unwelcome visitor. To be sure, this is a problem for us all, and perhaps that is why we do not always want to hear the law's third use, do not want a word of encouragement, for that would mean a change in living. What is offered as an invitation is pushed away when we want to hold onto things of which we should let go. Sin may be spoken of as a common disease, but it manifests itself in specific ways that we must recognize and which call us to repentance. As long as we remain sinners, that is, until our burial, the law indicts us, shows us our sin, and leads us to repentance.

Yet there is another way. See it in the way of the convert, of someone who has been released from a life of bondage. A prisoner set truly free has no desire to return to the prison of his sinful self. As children, we wish to please our heavenly Father, and as servants, we aim to please our Lord. For the new man, the Christian as Christian, the Law is a delight and pictures for us something better than the ugliness of sin. For Luke, discipleship is key, and the Christian life is a better way (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). In a world of darkness, tongues of spiritual fire drive away the darkness and exert a kind of magnetic force, a light in which the Christian wishes to stand. St. Paul tells us to pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17), to fight the good fight (1 Tim 6:12). Such commands are also invitations. Likewise, Luke depicts for us a life which we want to live, a life worth living, when he records Jesus' teaching of self-denial and cross-bearing (Luke 9:23–24). Of course, it is Christ alone who saves. But to that Luke adds: salvation includes a life of self-denial, prayer, and discipleship. We may think of salvation from different vantage points. To a young man going off to college, we might say, "Rely on Christ; believe on his name." So also we might offer wisdom, reminding him to stay in the Scriptures, to go to church, to struggle to enter in through the narrow door (Luke 13:24). When we speak such commands, they are exhortations toward a better and more fulfilling life, one without the heart-ache that comes with bad choices and the world's empty promises. Luke offers up the life of the cross, but it is not cast as drudgery or depression. For the Christian, suffering for Christ brings with it joy. When the apostles preached, they were put in jail and beaten, and yet they rejoiced that "they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name" (Acts 5:41).

## THE LIFE OF CHRIST, THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN

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Luke the literary artist offers up language as a kind of brushwork, painting a portrait of the Christian life. It is about praying and taking up the cross. It is about showing compassion, seeking after the lost, welcoming the prodigal. But so also it is about using our time wisely, about dealing with money in a godly way. Luke encourages both humility in posture and activity in mission. It is about kneeling and walking. It is about struggling to enter through the narrow door. The Christian faith comes to us by grace. But Luke encourages us to then live that life. The Pauline epistles include sections of paraenesis. Likewise, Luke is the great gospel of exhortation. And this exhortation is not beating the Christian with a stick, as if to prod him toward things he wished he did not have to do.

The third use of the law is encouragement for the Christian; it is letting the disciples know that their lives have meaning. See this joyful obedience in Zacchaeus, who gladly gives away earthly treasures, for he has found a treasure eternal (Luke 19:1–10). See it in the woman who has been forgiven much and, therefore, loves much (Luke 7:36–50). Through the third use of the law, our Lord teaches us how we may please him. Through instruction, the Scriptures cultivate and develop the mind of Christ; they show us a better way. This we see also in the preaching of John the Baptist.

## THE THIRD USE OF THE LAW BY JOHN THE BAPTIST

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John the Baptist pointed people to Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). His message could be distilled in the words “Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand” (Matt 3:2). But Luke does not leave it there. He answers the question of “Now what?” Luke tells us that John called the people to repentance by saying, “Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Luke 3:9). The crowds then asked, “What then shall we do?” (Luke 3:10). The Baptist does not reply by saying, “Wrong question.” Good trees will naturally and automatically bear good fruit. Even as a mother instinctively rushes to protect a child in danger, a Christian, as Christian, does good works. But that is not the end of the story, for the Christian seeks training, wisdom, and instruction. The Christian craves exhortation as a way to live a life that is pleasing to God.

Instead of ending on a word of the gospel, the Baptist offers a word of exhortation; that is to say, he offers the third use of the law. The soldiers and tax collectors were cut to the heart and wished to live the kind of lives that would