

Concordia Theological Quarterly



Volume 79:1-2

January/April 2015

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Not Just Proof-Texting: Friedrich Balduin's Orthodox Lutheran Use of Exegesis for Doctrine

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Lutheran exegesis in the Orthodox period (1580–1750)¹ took place in a wide variety of contexts and forms. Much has been explored regarding Orthodox Lutheran dogmatics, and more has been done recently to study their piety and meditation. But the history of scriptural exegesis is still mostly untouched.² In textbooks of church history, the military history of the Thirty Years War takes far more space than the theology and religious life of Lutherans in the seventeenth century. The theology of the period is remembered as scholastic. The work of hymn writers is remembered, but nothing more.³ The theology of the period was supposedly based on Scripture, but due to “rigid, exact, and demanding intellectual conformity,”⁴ faith had become impersonal, consisting of assent to dogma. This Protestant Scholasticism, so it is often thought, was influenced by the rationalism against which it struggled.⁵

¹ Robert Kolb, “Lutheran Theology in Seventeenth-Century Germany,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (2006): 429–456; Ernst Koch, *Das konfessionelle Zeitalter: Katholizismus, Luthertum, Calvinismus (1563–1675)* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2000), 211–259; Markus Matthias, “Orthodoxie: I. Lutherische Orthodoxie,” *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995); Johannes Wallmann, “Lutherische Konfessionalisierung—Ein Überblick,” in *Die Lutherische Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1992), 33–53.

² Johann Anselm Steiger, “The Development of the Reformation Legacy: Hermeneutics and Interpretation of the Sacred Scripture in the Age of Orthodoxy,” in *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, ed. Magne Sæbø, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 2:699; Kolb, “Lutheran Theology in Seventeenth-Century Germany,” 444.

³ Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, 4th ed. (New York: Scribner, 1985), 526–534.

⁴ Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, 587.

⁵ Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, 587; Jürgen Quack, *Evangelische Bibelvorreden von der Reformation bis zur Aufklärung* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus G. Mohn, 1975), 167, 176.

This view of the era, however, is quite narrow. It knows the theology of the era only via the dogmatics texts, superficially considered. Not surprisingly, scholars who only know of dogmatics texts think that Lutheran exegesis in the seventeenth century declined sharply. Humanism was set aside, they think, and the scholasticism that Luther had condemned marched victoriously into Lutheran theology. Even though Johann Gerhard, as a prominent example, used Scripture copiously in his *Theological Commonplaces* and other works, many still think that, as a whole, Scriptural exegesis retreated. The Bible was used, they think, merely as proof-texts for preconceived dogmatic theses. While it may have been pious, the Lutheran Orthodox system was supposedly only the production of an uncreative age, deficient of authority; dogmatics and polemics choked all other theological disciplines, including exegesis; the Bible became nothing more than a collection of proof texts; the results of this “phony philology” were grotesque, according to this view, such as the attempt to find all of Lutheran dogma in the book of Genesis.⁶

Thankfully, a number of recent studies have called into question this view of the Orthodox Lutherans only as defenders of rigid dogma to the neglect of exegesis. These recent studies have noticed the central role that exegesis played for the Orthodox Lutherans in general.⁷ Richard A. Muller’s words are fitting: “Since it has so often been implied that the Reformation was a time of exegesis, virtually without dogma, and the era of orthodoxy was a time of dogmatic system without exegesis, it must be added that at no time before or since the era of orthodoxy was systematic

⁶ Friedrich Uhlhorn, *Geschichte der deutsch-lutherischen Kirche*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Dörfeling & Franke, 1911), 1:135-136; Karl Heussi, *Kompendium Der Kirchengeschichte*, 11th ed. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1956), 356-366.

⁷ Kenneth G. Appold, “Abraham Calov on the ‘Usefulness’ of Doctrine,” in *Hermeneutica Sacra: Studies of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Torbjörn Johansson, Robert Kolb, and Johann Anselm Steiger (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 312; Kenneth G. Appold, “Scriptural Authority in the Age of Lutheran Orthodoxy,” in *The Bible in the History of the Lutheran Church*, ed. John A. Maxfield (St. Louis: Concordia Historical Institute, 2005), 26; Michael Coors, *Scriptura efficax: Die biblisch-dogmatische Grundlegung des theologischen Systems bei Johann Andreas Quenstedt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 23-25; Steiger, “The Development of the Reformation Legacy: Hermeneutics and Interpretation of the Sacred Scripture in the Age of Orthodoxy,” 723; Volker Jung, *Das Ganze der Heiligen Schrift: Hermeneutik und Schriftauslegung bei Abraham Calov* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1999), 222-223; Robert D. Preus, *The Inspiration of Scripture: A Study of the Theology of the Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmaticians*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 193-194; Bengt Häggglund, *History of Theology*, trans. Gene J. Lund, 4th English ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2007), 299-303.

theology so closely wedded to the textual and linguistic work of the exegete."⁸ In both Latin and German, Lutherans in Germany wrote cursory explanations of biblical books; preached through books of the Bible and the Apocrypha at midweek services; published postils and sermon studies for the liturgical year; published polyglot Bibles and study Bibles; wrote rhymed paraphrases of biblical books; and published pedagogical, philological, and exegetical Bible commentaries. Indeed, the center of theological study was the philological study of the Bible.⁹

Much Orthodox Lutheran exegesis, but by no means all of it, was dogmatic and polemical. In this Lutheran dogmatic exegesis, exegetes were interested in presenting the doctrines of the Christian faith as resting on certain, clear passages of Scripture (*loci classici* or *sedes doctrinae*).¹⁰ This approach to exegesis, which gathered dogmatic points of teaching as a result of exegetical work, can be seen first of all in Johann Gerhard's locus *On Christ* (1625), in which his entire chapter on the two states of Christ is an extended commentary on Philippians 2.¹¹ The same approach can be seen, secondly, in Gerhard's *Method of Theological Study*. From the very beginning of theological study, Gerhard leads his students to read Scripture in two ways: cursorily and accurately. In the cursory reading, the student reads through the Bible every year in the vernacular or Latin, reading didactic books of Scripture in the morning and historical books in the evening. The accurate reading of Scripture requires students to study

⁸ Richard A. Muller, "Biblical Interpretation in the 16th & 17th Centuries," in *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 135-136.

⁹ Ernst Koch, "Die 'Himlische Philosophia des heiligen Geistes'. Zur Bedeutung alttestamentlicher Spruchweisheit im Luthertum des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 115 (1990): 706-20; Koch, *Das konfessionelle Zeitalter*, 227; Stephen G. Burnett, *Christian Hebraism in the Reformation Era (1500-1660)* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 93-137; Johann Georg Walch, *Bibliotheca Theologica Selecta Litterariis Annotationibus Instructa*, 4 vols. (Jenae: sumtu viduae Croeckerianae, 1765), 4:400-1050; Muller, "Biblical Interpretation in the 16th & 17th Centuries," 146.

¹⁰ Jung, *Das Ganze der Heiligen Schrift*; Hägglund, *History of Theology*; Steiger, "The Development of the Reformation Legacy: Hermeneutics and Interpretation of the Sacred Scripture in the Age of Orthodoxy"; Appold, "Abraham Calov on the 'Usefulness' of Doctrine"; Preus, *The Inspiration of Scripture*; Muller, "Biblical Interpretation in the 16th & 17th Centuries"; Koch, "Die 'Himlische Philosophia des heiligen Geistes'. Zur Bedeutung alttestamentlicher Spruchweisheit im Luthertum des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts."

¹¹ Johann Gerhard, *On the Person and Office of Christ*, ed. Benjamin T.G. Mayes, trans. Richard J. Dinda, *Theological Commonplaces, Exegesis IV* (1625) (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009), 298-317.

the Bible in Greek and Hebrew every day, reading a trusted commentary alongside, and writing observations and excerpts in large blank books that would serve future ministers as a portable library. In disputations, students were instructed to take the foundations of their position first from Scripture, including necessary conclusions drawn from Scripture, and only thereafter to bring forth testimonies of the early church fathers and decrees of councils as witnesses, followed by an argumentative use of the adversaries' assent and philosophy. Doctrinal and exegetical tradition was cultivated and revered, but not seen as above criticism.¹²

I. Friedrich Balduin and Dogmatic Exegesis

The exegesis of Wittenberg theology professor Friedrich Balduin (1575–1627) sets forth this same approach to dogmatic exegesis. Balduin became superintendent and chief preacher of Wittenberg in 1607, succeeding Georg Mylius. In 1608 he became the senior member of the Wittenberg faculty, after the death of Leonhard Hutter.¹³ His often-reprinted works include sermon studies for the church year (*Hypomnemata*); Latin commentaries on Luther's *Smalcald Articles* (1537) and the Saxon *Visitation Articles* (1592); polemical works against Roman Catholics, Socinians, and the Reformed; a short hermeneutics text; and large-scale commentaries on the Pauline Epistles arising from his presidency at academic disputations. In German he published sermon series on Old Testament books, a plethora of funeral sermons, books on types of Christ from the Old Testament, and a postil. Posthumously his *Cases of Conscience* and editions of his collected Pauline commentaries were reprinted several times.

Besides writing a significant Lutheran casuistry,¹⁴ Balduin's work centered on exegesis and dogmatics. His exegesis is typical of all the Lutheran

¹² Johann Gerhard, *Methodus Studii Theologici* (Jenae: Tobiae Steinmanni, 1620); Johann Gerhard, *On Interpreting Sacred Scripture and Method of Theological Study*, ed. Benjamin T.G. Mayes, trans. Richard J. Dinda, *Theological Commonplaces*, I-II (St. Louis: Concordia, forthcoming 2017); Benjamin T.G. Mayes, "Lumina, Non Numina: Patristic Authority according to Lutheran Arch-Theologian Johann Gerhard," in *Church and School in Early Modern Protestantism: Studies in Honor of Richard A. Muller on the Maturation of a Theological Tradition*, ed. Jordan Ballor, David Sytsma, and Jason Zuidema (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 457–470.

¹³ Roderick Henry Martin, "The Reformation of Conscience: Rhetoric in the Lutheran Casuistry of Friedrich Balduin (1575–1627)" (Ph.D., University of Virginia, 2008), 59–85.

¹⁴ Benjamin T.G. Mayes, *Counsel and Conscience: Lutheran Casuistry and Moral Reasoning after the Reformation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 30–37.

Orthodox. In his exegesis, he analyzes and explains sections of the biblical text with the goal of discovering the doctrines that they contain.

All of this may seem vague, however. How could dogmatics and scriptural exegesis come together? A key to answering this question can be found in a little-known book of Balduin, the *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum* ("Way of Biblical Dispositions," 1622). This work is a guide to exegesis and preaching, very similar in aim to St. Augustine's *On Christian Teaching*. In this little book, written in Latin, Balduin directs the reader of Scripture first of all to pray, and then to explain and analyze the text regarding its structure. After a biblical pericope has been explained and partitioned, the next step is to gather doctrines from the text. The gathering of doctrines is not left to the whim of the interpreter; Balduin provides nine rules that draw mainly on Scripture (but also on early church fathers) for their support. Finally, not just the text but also the doctrines are to be applied both to the "well" and to the "sick."¹⁵ Part two of the text is an isagogical introduction to the books of Scripture. Part three deals with how to interpret different biblical genres. This is also where allegories and types are discussed, as well as homiletics.

Because Balduin's rules for deriving doctrine from exegesis are completely unknown to churches and scholars of our day, it will be useful to examine what these rules were. Chapter four, where Balduin explains his rules, is entitled, "How to Gather Doctrines from the Text, After It Has Been Explained and Divided."¹⁶ The word for "divided" here is *distributo*, meaning "outlined" or "partitioned." That is, one must know what parts of the text belong together. Now, the point of gathering doctrines from Scripture is to make "use" of it. Balduin writes: "The meaning of Scripture without use is empty knowledge. Paul writes that this 'puffs up' (1 Cor 8:1)." All that were written (*scripta*) were written for our teaching (*in nostram doctrinam*) (Rom 15:4). Scripture is "divinely inspired" (*θεόπνευστος*), and is useful for teaching (*ad docendum*), etc. (2 Tim 3:16).¹⁷ Therefore, after understanding Scripture, it is correct to deal with its *use*, which consists in its true application. Application deals with the doctrines that are to be

¹⁵ Friedrich Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum* (Wittebergae: Helwigius, 1622); Appold, "Scriptural Authority in the Age of Lutheran Orthodoxy," 27–28; Robert D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 2 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970), 1:337.

¹⁶ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 31. All translations are the author's.

¹⁷ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 31.

drawn from the biblical text and then also with the people whom those doctrines serve.¹⁸

The first rule is, “Doctrines must not be heterogenous” (i.e., of a different kind) “from the text, but similar [*conformes*] to it.” Thus a legal text does not yield an evangelical doctrine. Therefore it would be erroneous to derive doctrine about Christ from the Decalog, since the Decalog in and of itself does not mention Christ. Nevertheless, indirectly, Christ can be mentioned since he is the fulfillment of the law, and for this reason the law is called a “tutor unto Christ” in Galatians 3:24.¹⁹ Balduin here recognizes different categories and genres in Scripture. He denies that everything can be gotten from just any passage. Not all passages are gospel. Not every passage speaks explicitly and directly of Christ.

The second rule is, “Doctrines must not be taken from corrupt translations, but must flow from the sources themselves, if possible.” For example, it would be bad to teach from the Vulgate of Titus 3:10 that “a heretical man [should be removed] from life” (*Haereticum hominem devota*) since the Greek means “avoid or shun a heretical man.”²⁰

The third rule: “An example in its own genus—for example, ethical, domestic [*Oeconomicum*]*—has the force of a general rule, according to the logical axiom, ‘A genus in actuality is in each species.’”* Thus Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:11 says the examples of the punished Israelites were our types. (He means, they instructed us not to act as they did.) And Christ in Luke 13:3 used the example of the death of Galileans to make the general rule that unless you repent, you all will perish together.²¹ Note that these are examples where God’s judgment was also expressed. Balduin does not make this clear, but his examples demonstrate it. Thus his rule could be reformulated to say, “Whenever an example is given with a divine judgment on that action, this has the force of a general rule within its category.”

The fourth rule: “There can be many doctrines from one Scripture [passage], but not all should always be set forth at the same time. Instead, one should select those that are apt to each place and time.”²² For example, when Christ preached on Isaiah 61:1, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,” etc., he did not deal with the Holy Spirit’s person and office, manner of

¹⁸ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 32.

¹⁹ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 32.

²⁰ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 32.

²¹ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 33.

²² Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 33.

anointing, or other doctrines, but only with his ministry, in which that prophecy had been fulfilled (Luke 4:18). That is what he intended to fulfill at that time.²³ This rule, by the way, makes it clear that Balduin is using the word *doctrina* to mean not just a "doctrine" (i.e., an official point of the church's faith and teaching) but also "teaching" in a more general sense, that is, something that a preacher needs to teach his people on a given occasion. For Balduin, doctrines are not just formulaic statements in catechisms and textbooks but scriptural content relating to faith in Christ and life according to God's law that is actually being taught.

The fifth rule: "Even though the doctrines that flow from the letter of the text are the best of all, because it is certain that the Holy Spirit intended them, nevertheless it is not always necessary that all [doctrines] be precisely literal. Rather, the text can also be applied to other things that the Holy Spirit did not directly intend, as long as they are not completely heterogenous, but have an analogy with the literal sense."²⁴ This is the broadest of the rules, and Balduin gives many examples of it.

The Holy Spirit himself gives examples of this rule when he applies Old Testament texts in the New Testament to doctrines that are not found directly in the text. Hebrews 4:3 uses Psalm 95:11, "they will not enter into my rest," to teach about eternal life since "allegorically" the land of Canaan signified this. The doctrine is gotten "by the translation of hypothesis to thesis," or the application of the history to a commonplace. For example, this is how the gathering of the manna in Exodus 16:18 is applied in 2 Corinthians 8:14-15. Another example is Jeremiah 48:10: "Cursed is he who does the Lord's work negligently." Literally and historically this applied to the war against the Midianites, but it is correct to apply it, says Balduin, to any work commanded by the Lord in any genus of life.²⁵ This seems to be a case where the Scriptures give a general principle. Balduin is saying that one may gather doctrines from these general principles even if the application of the principle in the biblical text was different.

Sometimes doctrines are taken from *types*. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7) is taken from the history of the Passover lamb in

²³ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 33-34.

²⁴ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 34.

²⁵ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 34-35.

Exodus 12. Now, Exodus 12 says nothing about Christ or the lamb being sacrificed, yet Paul refers it to Christ who was sacrificed on the cross.²⁶

Sometimes doctrines are taken from *anagogy*. For example, Deuteronomy 25:4 reads, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,” and Paul applies this to the salary of ministers (1 Cor 9:9; 1 Tim 5:18). Here again, a general principle is drawn out and applied to different situations. Likewise, the ancients used Isaiah 1:5 and Luke 10:30 (the man “half dead” in the parable of the Good Samaritan) to speak of the corruption of human nature in spiritual matters.²⁷

Sometimes a doctrine is drawn out by *synecdoche*. Hosea 11:1, “Out of Egypt I have called my son,” is applied to Christ, the head of his people (Matt 2:15). The ancients applied Hosea 6:2, “After two days he will revive us,” to the resurrection of Christ. Hosea was speaking of the members, and this is rightly applied to the head, Christ.²⁸

Sometimes doctrines are elicited from a text by *fitting argumentation* when the letter of the text does not contain it. In Rom 3:11, Paul teaches that the whole world is guilty of sin on the basis of several Psalms and of Isaiah 9, even though those passages deal with the specific sins of certain individuals. Paul is arguing from the lesser to the greater. If things were bad at the time of David and Hezekiah, things are much worse now, he argues.²⁹

Balduin explains why he has used all these biblical examples. It appears that he is guarding the legitimacy of deriving doctrine from Scripture where it is implied but not explicitly stated. He writes,

More doctrines of this sort, which should be drawn from the text even though the literal exposition does not suggest them, could be noted from the Scriptures of the New Testament. But these suffice, and we should set them against the ignorant and rigid censors, who criticize a similar application of passages of Scripture—something they cannot by rights do unless they want to criticize the holy apostles, who gather doctrines from the Scriptures similarly in this category.³⁰

²⁶ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 35.

²⁷ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 35–37.

²⁸ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 37.

²⁹ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 37.

³⁰ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 37–38.

From this, it is clear that Balduin sees the apostles' exegesis of the Old Testament as *exemplary* for our exegesis, not *exhaustive* of the prophetic, typological, and doctrinal content of the Old Testament.

The sixth rule: "From one passage diverse doctrines can be elicited, as long as they are not contrary." For example, from Isaiah 43:19, "Behold, I make all things new," Paul teaches about the renewal of man in 2 Corinthians 5:17, while John in Revelation 5:17 speaks of the glory of the blessed in the other life. Paul's doctrine flows from the literal sense of that passage, while John's only alludes to it.³¹

The seventh rule: "Sometimes one doctrine is confirmed from two passages of Scripture." When Jesus cleanses the temple in Luke 19:46, for example, he takes his biblical rationale for his action from two separate passages: Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. Paul in Romans 9:25-26 proves the calling of the Gentiles from Hosea 1:10 and 2:23.³² Thus according to Balduin, a doctrine does not have to be stated in its entirety in a single part of Scripture. Due to the unity of divinely inspired Scripture, a doctrine can be drawn from multiple passages.

The eighth rule: "From the Scriptures that deal with the created things that were made for our use, moral doctrines should be taken." The beauty of the sun and stars should not only teach us about their more beautiful and glorious Creator. If God adorned his exiles with excellent gifts, even though they are burdened with the stain of sin, the gifts he gives to his elect in the blessedness of heaven will be even more splendid. The earth on which we tread should teach us humility, since we ourselves were made of it. The dominion that we have over beasts should admonish us to love mankind and not to become brutish since we are lords over the brutes. A quote from St. Basil's commentary on the seven days of creation, the *Hexameron*, extends the treatment here.³³ In this rule Balduin seems to be saying that when finding created things in a text of Scripture, keep in mind the purpose for which they were created, especially as this is stated at the beginning of Genesis. This created purpose, then, will lead the interpreter to derive a moral doctrine from them.

Finally, the ninth rule: "In the sins of the saints, doctrine is not to be referred to imitation, but to emendation and caution." A quotation from St. Augustine's *On Christian Teaching* (chs. 22-23) ends with: "There is almost

³¹ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 38.

³² Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 38-39.

³³ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 39-40.

no page of the Sacred Books in which one does not hear that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble."³⁴

The next chapter of this book, chapter 5, is worthy of future study. In brief, Balduin deals there with the "Distinction of Sacred Doctrines." After discussing the difference between "open" and "hidden" doctrines, he discusses legitimate ways to gather doctrines by drawing conclusions from statements in the biblical text. These are: 1) Concluding the genus from a species, 2) An antitype from the type, 3) The lesser from the greater, 4) The greater from the lesser, 5) The effect from the cause, 6) The cause from the effect, 7) One contrary from the other, and 8) The antecedent from the consequent. In the final section of the chapter he discusses the different kinds of doctrines that one will find in Scripture: "teaching," "reproof," "instruction in righteousness," and "correction." He draws these from 2 Timothy 3:6, a verse that gave very many of the Lutheran Orthodox their approach to exegesis: finding not "law and gospel" in the text, but finding the *use*.³⁵

In his commentaries on the Pauline Epistles, which were published individually during his lifetime and in a single large volume after his death,³⁶ Balduin put this method into practice. For each chapter of Paul's epistles, Balduin provided a summary and general outline, the biblical text in Greek and Latin, analysis and explanation of the text, a paraphrase, questions that arise from the text with their answers (usually resolving apparent contradictions, sometimes polemical), and finally theological aphorisms—a plethora of doctrinal statements resting on each section of Pauline text. Each of these sections merits further study. Balduin's dogmatic exegesis shows that the search for dogmas in the text of Scripture came especially from the desire to make salutary application (*usus*) of the text to the lives of Christians.

II. An Example of Dogmatic Exegesis, on 2 Corinthians 3:1-5

How, then, is dogmatic exegesis done? As an example, we choose Balduin's comments on 2 Corinthians 3:1-5, of which only verse 5 is cited in the Book of Concord, where it helps prove that fallen human beings have no free will in spiritual matters before conversion (FC Ep II 3; SD II

³⁴ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 40-41.

³⁵ Balduin, *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, 41-47.

³⁶ See, for example, Friedrich Balduin, *Apologia Apostolica: hoc est, S. Apostoli Pauli Epistola Posterior Ad Corinthios, Commentario perspicuo illustrata* (Wittebergae: Selfichius, 1620); Friedrich Balduin, *Commentarius In Omnes Epistolas Beati Apostoli Pauli* (Francofurti: Mevius, 1654).

12, 26, 71). Given this use in the Book of Concord, one would expect Balduin to find the doctrine of the bondage of the will in this text as well. Balduin, however, finds much more in this passage.

Overview and Translation

At the beginning of his commentary on 2 Corinthians 3, Balduin gives a brief overview of the chapter and summarizes the pericope we will consider. "Therefore there are two parts of the chapter. The former includes a commendation of the apostle's ministry and of the labors in it that he had undertaken hitherto, up to verse 6."³⁷ He then provides the Greek text of 2 Corinthians 3:1-5 parallel with a Latin translation. His Latin version, translated into English, reads:

¹ Are we beginning again to commend ourselves? Do we really need, as some [do], letters of commendation among you, or of commendation from you? ² You are our letter, written in our hearts, which is understood and read by all men, ³ while you declare that you are a letter of Christ furnished by us, inscribed not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on stone tablets but in fleshy tablets of the heart. ⁴ This is the sort of confidence that we have through Christ toward God, ⁵ not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as from ourselves, but if we are sufficient for anything, it is from God.³⁸

Explication of the Text

The first main part of Balduin's commentary consists of analysis and explication of the text. Paul here is using two arguments to commend the dignity of his ministry. First, he cites the testimony of the Corinthians, whom he had converted to faith in Christ. Second, he cites the authority of God himself, who had committed this office to him and equipped him with sufficient gifts. He uses the metaphor of a "letter." Their piety and faith were the "letters in action" [*reales literae*] that testified of Paul's sincerity and fidelity.³⁹ Balduin unpacks what features every letter has and shows how Paul mentions these: author, amanuensis, writing material, and page. The language of writing letters on fleshy hearts was undoubtedly taken, according to Balduin, from Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26; and Jeremiah 31:33.⁴⁰

³⁷ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 591.

³⁸ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 591.

³⁹ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 591.

⁴⁰ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 592.

The second argument to commend Paul's ministry is the efficient cause of his ministry: God. He is the one who made Paul sufficient for this ministry even though of himself Paul was insufficient for it. He did this by granting Paul the gifts necessary for such a great undertaking. Yet Paul is careful to take glory away from himself and to refer it to God. He attributes all the power of the preached gospel to God. In 2 Corinthians 3:6, Paul calls himself a "minister of the New Testament," that is, a herald of the gospel (that is, of the doctrine of Christ incarnate, the fulfillment of the predictions and promises of Moses and the prophets). "Testament" means all the doctrine pertaining to the new covenant that was sanctioned by the blood of Christ on the cross toward God and in the Lord's Supper toward us. What is set forth in the covenant in brief words is explained in Holy Writ most fully. From this occasion Paul will next transition to a comparison of the two testaments in the second part of the chapter.⁴¹

Paraphrase of the Text

After the commentary, Balduin gives a paraphrase of the biblical text. This is where he restates the apostolic text in accord with the explanation that he just gave. For example, he paraphrases verses 1–2 as follows:

In all of these things which I hitherto have written about myself – lest I seem to be a witness in my own suit, as some people commend themselves or take your testimonies forcefully – I am appealing explicitly to the testimonies of all the churches in which I have been teaching hitherto. Moreover, I am producing you yourselves as a living testimony that is written not on paper or parchment, where it could be erased easily, but in the innermost part of my heart, where it has the indelible testimony of my office, that I have administered it rightly among you.⁴²

Questions Arising from the Text

Next, Balduin presents several "questions" on the text. The question section for each pericope presents apparent contradictions and doctrinal challenges that Balduin then resolves. The questions that he considers are often taken from the Bible commentaries of theological adversaries, who use the biblical text to try to prove false doctrine. On 2 Corinthians 3:1–5, Balduin answers the following questions:

⁴¹ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 592.

⁴² Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 592–593.

1. Why does the apostle speak with such contempt about letters of recommendation, which teachers of the word receive from their churches (v. 1), when elsewhere he writes that a bishop must have a good testimony from those who are outside (1 Tim 3:7)?
2. Why does the apostle write in verse 3 that the Corinthians are a letter of Christ written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not in stone tablets but in fleshy tablets of the heart? Is it right to infer from this that in the time of the New Testament there is no need for the written word, that traditions of the living voice suffice, which penetrate the heart itself and do not remain in written letters?
3. Is it right to infer from our apostle's text, where he says, "Christians have the Spirit of God in fleshy tablets of the heart," that the justification of the ungodly consists not in the forgiveness of sins alone but in the sanctification and renewal of the inner man?
4. The heart of a man not yet converted is compared with tablets of stone in v. 3. Is there, therefore, no difference between a heart not yet converted and a stone tablet?
5. Paul speaks non-specifically about the "powerlessness" of human powers, namely, that we are not sufficient of ourselves "to consider anything." Hence, it is not at all beside the point to ask: in all matters whatsoever, can man think nothing good without the specific aid of God?
6. In v. 5 Paul writes that we are not sufficient to think anything from ourselves, as of ourselves, etc. On the basis of this, is it possible to establish free choice in spiritual matters?⁴³

Question 2 gives Balduin the opportunity to discuss the five-fold necessity of apostolic Scripture. Here the discussion is against the Roman Catholic claim that unwritten, nonscriptural traditions are necessary.⁴⁴ Question 3 deals with justification. Here Balduin grapples with the exegesis of Petrus Stevartius, who claimed from this passage that the justification of the wicked consists in the sanctification and renovation of the inner man.⁴⁵ Question 4 deals with conversion. Here Paul's discussion of writing not on tablets of stone but on the fleshy tablets of hearts leads Balduin to consider the difference between the human heart and stone,⁴⁶ a

⁴³ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 593–596.

⁴⁴ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 593–594.

⁴⁵ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 594–595.

⁴⁶ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 595.

topic that also had arisen in FC SD II 59 (“On Free Will”). In question 6, Balduin opposes exegesis based on rationalization (*λογίσασθαι*), which tries to narrow the scope of this passage from dealing with our human thoughts to dealing only with rational conclusions.⁴⁷

In question 5, 2 Corinthians 3:5 leads to the question of whether God’s special help is needed for man to think anything good in absolutely all matters. The question is dealing with whether there is any goodness left in natural man after the fall, even in civil matters. Balduin is careful to explain the context of 2 Corinthians 3:5. Paul is ascribing the efficacy of his ministry not to his own powers but to God, who made him sufficient as a minister of the New Testament. Balduin then limits how far this text can be used to make doctrine. “But if this hypothesis should be transferred to thesis,⁴⁸ beyond spiritual actions concerning the cure of the soul and or our salvation, this text cannot be extended.” But it does speak to natural man’s ability to think salutary thoughts of himself.⁴⁹ Here we should note that Balduin exercises restraint in how 2 Corinthians 3 can be used for doctrine. This could be an example of Balduin’s rule 1, that “Doctrines must not be heterogenous from the text.” Not every doctrine can be derived from every passage of Scripture.

These questions depict Balduin’s rule 4, that there can be many doctrines from one passage of Scripture, and rule 7, that one doctrine is sometimes taken not from just one passage but from several passages together. Most of the time, however, he is not discovering doctrines in the text, but dealing with the false doctrines that other commentators had tried to find there.

Theological Aphorisms Arising from the Text

In the final section, Balduin lists ten theological aphorisms that he has drawn from this text. This is especially where we see his dogmatic exegesis at work.

“1. Ministers of the word should see to it that they are commended not so much by their hearers as by their own conscience.”⁵⁰ Here, in accord with rule 3, the example of Paul’s conduct toward the Corinthians has be-

⁴⁷ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 596–597.

⁴⁸ Balduin used this expression in rule 5 of his *Idea Dispositionum Biblicarum*, where it dealt with applying a history to a commonplace.

⁴⁹ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 595.

⁵⁰ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 597.

come a general rule for those in the same category as Paul, i.e., ministers of the word.

"2. Hearers of the word are like a mirror or book in which what teachers of the church have taught by word or example is contained and presented to others to see."⁵¹ This is drawing from 2 Corinthians 3:2 and stating that what holds true for the Corinthians holds true also for all Christian hearers of the word. This seems, again, to be an application of Balduin's rule 3.

"3. Love between teachers and hearers of the word ought to be a wall, so that they may offer each other mutual testimony wherever it is needed."⁵² This is a moral doctrine, once again taking Paul's statements of how love in the Corinthian congregation was supposed to be and applying it more widely to all preachers and their hearers.

"4. The conversion of man is a work of the Holy Spirit, who through the ministry of the word makes stone hearts fleshy, v. 3." This draws in other verses that are similar to 2 Corinthians 3:3 in order to assert this doctrine (Psalm 51; Ezekiel 36), which Balduin's rule 7 had explained. He adds a moral doctrine: "The third verse therefore teaches us to consider the fall of man as sad and his restoration through the Holy Spirit of Christ as desirable."⁵³

In Aphorism 5, Balduin posits a threefold inscription of God's law on human hearts: first, in creation (Gen 1:27; Rom 2:15); second, by Satan after the fall, by which he uses the law to accuse us (Jer 17:1); third, in the restitution of man through Christ, of which Paul is speaking in this passage and in Ephesians 4:24. God himself says the same in Jeremiah 31.⁵⁴ Balduin is not drawing doctrines from the text that are not present. He is careful to limit the claims he makes from 2 Corinthians 3:1-5, but he also shows how this passage fits together with others to speak of this doctrine. Here we again have an application of Balduin's rule 7.

In the explication of the text, Balduin had identified what are the epistle, amanuenses, pens, subject matter, and letters. In Aphorism 6 he draws two reminders from the text: "First, let the teachers of the word not be despised, for they are God's secretaries and scribes; wrongdoing toward them passes on to God himself. Second, let everyone see to it that he not

⁵¹ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 597.

⁵² Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 597.

⁵³ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 597-598.

⁵⁴ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 598.

delete the letters written in his heart by impurity of life; instead, let him live in such a way that everyone may recognize the mark of the Holy Spirit in his behavior and pursuits.”⁵⁵ This seems to be a doctrine from analogy (Balduin’s rule 5) with implicit support from elsewhere in Scripture (rule 7).

In Aphorism 7, the reference to the “living God” in 2 Corinthians 3:3 has to do with his work referenced here, of inscribing the “doctrine of life” into our hearts, renewing them, preparing them for living works, and preserving them for eternal life.⁵⁶ Here Balduin again is drawing a doctrine from analogy with the text (rule 5).

Aphorism 8 deals with the distinction of law and gospel on the basis of Jeremiah 31:33. The law had been written upon stone hearts, but the gospel was written through the Holy Spirit on fleshy hearts. The doctrine of the law was unable to take away the hardness of our hearts, but the Holy Spirit through the doctrine of the gospel pours in grace and makes hearts soft.⁵⁷ Again, Balduin has placed this text into a larger constellation of texts that, together, present a doctrine about the inscription of hearts and the two covenants. Again, we have an example of Balduin’s rule 7.

“9. Christ is the one through whom we have access to the Father, and in him alone we have confidence toward God, as Paul speaks in v. 4, for outside of Christ neither the person nor his works can please God.” Balduin cites Ephesians 3:12 and mentions that since we have Christ, we do not need the patronage of the saints.⁵⁸ Here Balduin is taking the clear text and making its antithesis explicit. This was not one of his rules.

In Aphorism 10 Balduin draws together thoughts from Ephesians 4:17–18; John 1:5; Ephesians 6; Ecclesiastes 1; and Psalm 62:

The capability of human powers in spiritual matters is none at all. For even the thinking about good is denied to man considered in his nature, v. 5. Of course, in human matters we attribute to man thinking and good plans, even in divine matters, those things that pertain to external motion, such as that one can hear and read the word. But from himself he is unable to be concerned or to think about his conversion, much less either to prepare himself for grace or help the Holy Spirit.

⁵⁵ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 598.

⁵⁶ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 598.

⁵⁷ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 598.

⁵⁸ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 598.

Man is *pure passive* in conversion.⁵⁹ Balduin had explained this aphorism in question 5. The doctrine is based on the clear text of 2 Corinthians 3:5. Balduin's rule 3 may be in play here. What Paul asserts of himself holds true for all who share his fallen nature. It should also be mentioned that this is the one way in which the Book of Concord used 2 Corinthians 3:1–5 in the Formula of Concord's discussion of free will (Article II). Balduin's doctrine corresponds with that of the Formula exactly, but he does not quote the Formula or even refer to it.

III. Conclusion

In this short section of Balduin's *Commentary on All the Epistles of St. Paul*, many of his rules for dogmatic exegesis have been seen. Rule 3 figures prominently. What Paul asserts as holding true for himself and the Corinthians is more broadly applicable to all who share their vocations. An example in its own genus has the force of a general rule, but only to the other members of the same genus or category. Rule 4, that there can be many doctrines from the same passage, is also prominent. 2 Corinthians 3:3 gives Balduin the opportunity to discuss the relation of preachers and hearers, regeneration, conversion, and the effects of law and gospel. Rule 5, on analogy, allows Balduin to find several doctrines in the text. The metaphor of a letter written on hearts allows Balduin to derive doctrines from analogy with letter-writing practice at the time of Paul and Balduin's own time, as he admonishes people on this basis to respect preachers as God's scribes. Rule 7 is used quite often. Sometimes a text only seems to allude to other passages where a doctrine is taught explicitly. Thus when 2 Corinthians 3:3 mentions writing on tablets of stone and fleshy hearts, Balduin connects this with Jeremiah 31:33 and draws doctrine from the whole constellation of topically-related passages.

By considering Balduin's rules for drawing doctrines from Scripture, it has become clear that "doctrines" are not just things written in catechisms and textbooks, but also "teachings" that a preacher communicates to his hearers. (Thus, for example, rule 4 speaks of a selection that should be made among many doctrines that are to be presented to the people, and this must be suitable to the place and time. The example is of how Jesus did this in his own preaching.) So doctrines are for preaching and for the *use* of Christians. Doctrines are not merely speculative; they are eminently practical. True, Balduin is not starting from a blank slate as he approaches the Bible. He knows the creed and the Reformation doctrine—not to men-

⁵⁹ Balduin, *In Omnes Epistolas Pauli*, 598.

tion logic with its genera, species, contraries, synecdoches, antecedents, and consequents—and he does not pretend not to know these things as he does his exegesis.⁶⁰ At the same time, he is very clear about two things: First, the literal sense in its original context must be understood. Second, after that, doctrines must be discovered from the text for the purpose of teaching and preaching. This search for doctrines is motivated by 2 Timothy 3:6 and the needs of Christians to *use* Scripture for warning, admonition, teaching, and consolation. That is to say, doctrinal, dogmatic exegesis served practical purposes. Dogma was motivated not just by the love of truth but also the love of people and the necessity of serving them with the means of grace and the knowledge of God’s word.

This is not to say that there was no illegitimate proof-texting going on. One side of the scholarly debate has said that Lutheran Orthodoxy practiced stiff, proof-text exegesis, while the other side has shown that there was more to it than this, that Lutherans approached Scripture as a whole and then derived doctrine from it. An explanation was given by Jaroslav Pelikan, who suggested that only later, in the latter half of the seventeenth century, did the Orthodox Lutheran theologians subordinate exegesis to dogmatics, and that this provoked Pietism’s criticism and explains their focus on biblical theology.⁶¹ There was a lot of “dogmatic” exegesis in which Lutherans were interested in presenting the doctrines of the Christian faith as resting on certain clear passages of Scripture. While specific examples could perhaps be given in which a Lutheran exegete forced Scripture to conform to pre-defined dogmas, this by no means *characterizes* Lutheran exegesis of the period, which studied Scripture as a whole and had many other genres of commentary and uses of Scripture than just dogmatic exegesis.

The study of Balduin’s dogmatic exegesis, however, debunks a number of myths and hopefully motivates us to study Scripture and draw from it the doctrines taught by the Holy Spirit, who inspired the prophets and apostles. The Bible would have far less to teach us if we refused to draw doctrines from it in the way that Balduin explains.

⁶⁰ A listing of works of logic that are roughly contemporary with Balduin can be found in Johann Anselm Steiger and Alexander Bitzel, eds., *Bibliotheca Gerhardina: Rekonstruktion der Gelehrten- und Leihbibliothek Johann Gerhards (1582–1637) und seines Sohnes Johann Ernst Gerhard (1621–1668)* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2002), 408–412.

⁶¹ Jaroslav Pelikan, “In Memoriam: Johann Albrecht Bengel,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 23, no. 11 (1952): 793.