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**Editor's Note**

This year marks the 150th anniversary of Concordia Publishing House. Since her founding, she has supported the church in a number of ways, most especially through the publication of materials used to proclaim God's word. The Editors now take this opportunity to thank Concordia Publishing House for her work, in general, and for supporting the publication of this issue in particular. May the Lord grant Concordia Publishing House increased blessing in service to him.

The Editors

## **The Useful Applications of Scripture in Lutheran Orthodoxy: An Aid to Contemporary Preaching and Exegesis**

**Benjamin T. G. Mayes**

Anyone who says “I’m a good preacher” is probably deceiving himself. We all need to improve. Where should we turn for help? If we look at the preaching of Lutheran Orthodoxy, we will find rich resources, some of them quite surprising to those of us who have grown up with Walther’s *Law and Gospel*. What Lutheran Orthodoxy can give us is the “useful applications of Scripture.” The useful applications of Scripture, based on 2 Timothy 3:16 and Romans 15:4, are a major staple of post-Reformation Lutheran exegesis and preaching that has been lost and needs to be restored.

The Lutheran approach to exegesis in the seventeenth century can be summarized as, first, finding the sense of the biblical text, and second, applying it to one’s hearers or readers. “Now the church’s preacher has two duties,” Johann Gerhard said, “the interpretation of Scripture and applying it to salutary use.”<sup>1</sup> The “salutary use” of Holy Scripture is what concerns us here. This salutary use—especially in teaching, rebuking, warning, and consoling—was a standard feature of Lutheran exegesis and preaching in the seventeenth century. The distinction of law and gospel, on the other hand, was understated in the post-Reformation era. Apparently the fourfold use of Scripture was more significant for exegesis.<sup>2</sup> To be sure, law and gospel are actually being proclaimed whenever Scripture’s admonishing, warning, teaching, and comforting are being proclaimed, and the Lutheran dogmaticians continued to teach the distinction of law and gospel. But when reading and expositing Scripture, the Lutheran Orthodox seem to have thought in terms of multiple *uses* more than in terms of distinguishing law and gospel. These “uses” could be thought of as points of application through which the

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<sup>1</sup> Johann Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” in *On Interpreting Sacred Scripture and Method of Theological Study*, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, trans. Joshua J. Hayes, Theological Commonplaces, I–II (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 201.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Robert D. Preus, “The Influence of the Formula of Concord on the Later Lutheran Orthodoxy,” in *Discord, Dialogue, and Concord: Studies in the Lutheran Reformation’s Formula of Concord*, ed. Lewis William Spitz and Wenzel Lohff (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 93–94.

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concrete, unchanging, historical reality of what Scripture discusses is applied in various ways to people now.

A few passages of St. Paul stand as the classic passages establishing the useful applications of Scripture. The two passages that Gerhard cites time and again are “For all Scripture, inspired by God, is useful for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness, that a man of God may be complete, ready for all good work” (2 Tim 3:16–17)<sup>3</sup> and, “Whatever was written previously was written for our teaching, so that we through patience and consolation of Scripture might have hope” (Rom 15:4). In his commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy, Gerhard’s exposition of the former passage is short and pithy. The uses of Scripture are: teaching, refutation of errors, correction of life and morals, and training in righteousness (or admonition or exhortation). From Romans 15:4, he adds also “consolation.”<sup>4</sup> Another passage often cited by the Lutheran Orthodox is 1 Corinthians 10:11: “All of that happened to them as an example, but it was written for our warning, upon whom the end of the world has come.”<sup>5</sup> From these passages the useful applications of Scripture are drawn and numbered either at five or four. These useful applications come up repeatedly in the writings of Lutheran Orthodoxy. They are the primary categories that preachers must keep in mind as they preach and teach so as to preach and teach with the intentionality that is already present there in the divine Word.

### I. State of the Question

The useful applications of Scripture in Lutheran Orthodox exegesis and preaching<sup>6</sup> have often been overlooked by scholars. One line of research focuses on the history of Lutheran preaching. Here Martin Luther was an important source with regard to the content of later Lutheran preaching, but he was insignificant with regard to method and form. He did not leave behind any manual for homiletics,

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<sup>3</sup> My translation from Luther’s 1546 German Bible, WA DB 7:281. All Scripture quotations not specifically noted are from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>4</sup> Johann Gerhard, *Commentary on 1 Timothy and Commentary on 2 Timothy*, trans. Joshua J. Hayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 173, 179–180.

<sup>5</sup> My translation from Luther’s 1546 German Bible, WA DB 7:113.

<sup>6</sup> With the term “Orthodox,” the churches of the Reformation claimed the concept of the church found in the ancient Christian confessions for themselves. By claiming to be “Orthodox,” they claimed continuity with the Christendom of the Bible, of the ancient church, and of the first centuries. Thomas Kaufmann, “Luther and Lutheranism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Protestant Reformations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 146–166, here at 160; Markus Matthias, “Orthodoxie: I. Lutherische Orthodoxie,” in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 25 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 464–465.

and his manner of preaching was inimitable, not useable by average preachers.<sup>7</sup> Some historians of the homiletics of the sixteenth century have noticed that what influenced Lutheran preaching in that century were rather Philipp Melanchthon's and Erasmus's rhetorical handbooks.<sup>8</sup> It is also common to point out that a new approach to preaching was set forth by Andreas Hyperius (1511–64), a theologian of Marburg in the mode of Melanchthon and Martin Bucer.<sup>9</sup> Hyperius was important for developing a fivefold use or application of Scripture from 2 Timothy 3:16 and Romans 15:4, consisting of teaching, refuting heresy, guiding, correcting, and consoling. This approach to applying the biblical text in preaching, set forth by Hyperius in 1553, was influential on Lutheran homiletics not right away but beginning at the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

Yet there is still a lack of clarity on how, when, and why Lutherans picked up this method. According to Janis Krēsliņš, Hyperius' homiletics text was rarely referenced by the Lutheran Orthodox homiletics texts, even though they were "directly or indirectly" aware of Hyperius' work.<sup>11</sup> Krēsliņš, more thoroughly than all others, has explored the adoption of Hyperius' method of applying Scripture, but one significant exegete he neglected was Matthias Flacius (1520–75). The useful applications of Scripture, based on 2 Timothy 3:16–17 and Romans 15:4, were central to Flacius' hermeneutic in his *Clavis Scripturae Sacrae* (1567), according to Aaron Moldenhauer.<sup>12</sup> Flacius, of course, had drawn heavily on Hyperius in his

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<sup>7</sup> Jānis Krēsliņš, *Dominus Narrabit in Scriptura Populorum: A Study of Early Seventeenth-Century Lutheran Teaching on Preaching and the Lettische Lang-Gewünschte Postill of Georgius Mancelius*, Wolfenbütteler Forschungen 54 (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1992), 16–17, 42–43; Yngve Brilioth, *A Brief History of Preaching*, trans. Karl E. Mattson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 118–119.

<sup>8</sup> Krēsliņš, *Dominus Narrabit in Scriptura Populorum*, 41, 46–47, 53–56; Amy Nelson Burnett, "How to Preach a Protestant Sermon: A Comparison of Lutheran and Reformed Homiletics," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 63, no. 2 (2007): 109–119.

<sup>9</sup> On Hyperius, see Bernd Schröder, "Hyperius, Andreas," in *Religion Past & Present*, ed. Hans Dieter Betz et al., vol. 6 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 365–366; Gerhard Rau, "Hyperius, Andreas," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986).

<sup>10</sup> Brilioth, *A Brief History of Preaching*, 126; Krēsliņš, *Dominus Narrabit in Scriptura Populorum*, 16–17; Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Age of the Reformation*, vol. 4 in *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 371; Mary Jane Haemig and Robert Kolb, "Preaching in Lutheran Pulpits in the Age of Confessionalization," in *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture, 1550–1675*, ed. Robert Kolb (Boston: Brill, 2008), 136–141; Alfred Niebergall, "Die Geschichte der christlichen Predigt," in *Leiturgia: Handbuch des evangelischen Gottesdienstes*, vol. 2, Gestalt und Formen des evangelischen Gottesdienstes: I. Der Hauptgottesdienst (Kassel: Johannes Stauda-Verlag, 1955), 291.

<sup>11</sup> Krēsliņš, *Dominus Narrabit in Scriptura Populorum*, 41.

<sup>12</sup> Aaron Moldenhauer, "All Scripture Is Useful: Biblical Interpretation in the *Clavis Scripturae* of Matthias Flacius Illyricus" (STM, Concordia Theological Seminary, 2005), vi, 3–4, 21–22. This theme was also noticed by Rudolf Keller, *Der Schlüssel zur Schrift: die Lehre vom Wort Gottes bei Matthias Flacius Illyricus* (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1984), 140.

*Clavis*<sup>13</sup> and could easily have discovered the fivefold application of Scripture from him. Flacius's use of the applications of Scripture shows that they were significant not just for homiletics but also for exegesis per se. This is shown also by a study of Bible prefaces in the era of Lutheran Orthodoxy. The applications, whether five or four in number, were central to several study Bibles of the era.<sup>14</sup> This indicates that the applications from 2 Timothy 3 and Romans 15 were more significant for the Lutheran Orthodox than simply as a homiletical technique.

Despite the growing number of scholars who have noticed the useful applications in the Lutheran theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the topic is mostly passed over in silence<sup>15</sup> or underappreciated.<sup>16</sup> This indicates that the useful applications of Scripture have been insufficiently appreciated for their role in the exegesis and preaching of early Lutherans. So far, no one has explained how the useful applications of Scripture really functioned. Scholars have noticed them but not explored how they enriched Lutheran preaching and exegesis.

Perhaps this it to be expected, given that the useful applications dropped out of Lutheran preaching in the twentieth century. Whereas Walther and Wilhelm Loehe expected that preachers would use the fivefold applications,<sup>17</sup> standard twentieth century Lutheran homiletics texts completely neglected this topic.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Moldenhauer, "All Scripture Is Useful," 126; Keller, *Der Schlüssel zur Schrift*, 148.

<sup>14</sup> Jürgen Quack, *Evangelische Bibelvorreden von der Reformation bis zur Aufklärung* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus G. Mohn, 1975), 169, 194–197; cf. 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, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 741.

<sup>15</sup> Bernd Jörg Diebner, "Matthias Flacius Illyricus. Zur Hermeneutik der Melanchthon-Schule," in *Melanchthon in seinen Schülern*, ed. Heinz Scheible (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997), 157–182; Bengt Hägglund, *Die Heilige Schrift und ihre Deutung in der Theologie Johann Gerhards: Eine Untersuchung über das altlutherische Schriftverständnis* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1951).

<sup>16</sup> Henning Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation*, trans. Leo G. Perdue, vol. 3 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 231; Henning Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation*, trans. Leo G. Perdue, vol. 4 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 8; Johann Anselm Steiger, *Philologia Sacra: Zur Exegese der Heiligen Schrift im Protestantismus des 16. bis 18. Jahrhunderts*, *Biblich-Theologische Studien* 117 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft, 2011); Old, *The Age of the Reformation*, 369–408.

<sup>17</sup> Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, ed. David W. Loy, trans. Christian C. Tiews (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 98–109; Wilhelm Loehe, *The Pastor*, ed. Charles P. Schaum, trans. Wolf Dietrich Knappe (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 349–351.

<sup>18</sup> Johann Michael Reu, *Homiletics: A Manual of the Theory and Practice of Preaching*, Concordia Heritage Series (Chicago: Wartburg, 1922); Richard R. Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959).

## II. The Useful Applications Instead of Law and Gospel?

The Formula of Concord confesses the distinction of law and gospel to be “an especially glorious light that is to be maintained with great diligence in the church” (FC Ep V 2).<sup>19</sup> It serves as a hermeneutical key to Scripture, that “the writings of the holy prophets and apostles may be explained and understood correctly” (FC SD V 1).<sup>20</sup> Yet Robert Preus found that Lutherans after the Formula of Concord did not think that the topics considered in FC V and VI (Law and Gospel and Third Use of the Law) needed extensive discussion in their dogmatics.<sup>21</sup> Preus’ observation is confirmed, in part, by an examination of the annotated bibliography of Lutheran theological writings edited by Johann Georg Walch (1693–1775) in the eighteenth century. Walch does not list many treatises dealing with “law and gospel.”<sup>22</sup> This raises the question: does “law and gospel” cease to be a central category for exegesis after the Formula of Concord?

If the four or five “uses of Scripture” are so primary in the exegesis and preaching of Lutheran Orthodoxy, does this shove the distinction of Law and Gospel to the side? Not necessarily. What it indicates, instead, is that the Lutheran Orthodox took the characteristics of individual biblical texts seriously and sought to apply them to people in more ways than simply “law” or “gospel.” For the Lutheran Orthodox, “law and gospel” was not a Procrustean bed onto which everything else must fit.

When expositing 2 Timothy 2:15 (“rightly dividing the word of truth”), Gerhard does not even mention the proper distinction of law and gospel. For him, 2 Tim 2:15 is more general than that. Gerhard takes ὀρθοτομοῦντα τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας as “cutting the Word of truth straight.”<sup>23</sup> It deals with every categorization and distinction that is rightly made within God’s Word. So for Gerhard, 2 Timothy 2:15 is not specifically about the proper distinction of law and gospel. There are other passages that speak to that distinction more clearly, such as Jeremiah 31:31–34; 2 Corinthians 3:6–11; and Galatians 4:24–25.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 478.

<sup>20</sup> Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, 558.

<sup>21</sup> Preus, “The Influence of the Formula of Concord on the Later Lutheran Orthodoxy,” 93–94.

<sup>22</sup> Johann Georg Walch, *Bibliotheca Theologica Selecta Litterariis Adnotationibus Instructa*, vol. 1 (Jenae: sumtu viduae Croeckeriane, 1757), 119.

<sup>23</sup> Gerhard, *1 and 2 Timothy*, 145–146.

<sup>24</sup> See Johann Gerhard, *On the Gospel and Repentance*, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes and Heath R. Curtis, trans. Richard J. Dinda, *Theological Commonplaces*, XVII–XVIII (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016), 129–137, “On the Gospel,” §§ 119–126.

The useful applications could be described as subcategorizations of law and gospel. In his *Method of Theological Study*, Gerhard looks at 2 Timothy 3:17: “so that the man of God may be prepared, equipped for every good work.”<sup>25</sup> From here he describes the useful applications as leading towards faith, hope, and love, or to “complete Christian piety (as far as happens in this life).”<sup>26</sup> Gerhard does not superimpose law on rebuking, correcting, and admonishing, nor does he superimpose gospel on consoling. Instead, he puts both law and gospel within “teaching.” One must avoid confusing law and gospel, he says. 2 Timothy 2:15 applies here, which tells ministers of the church to “divide rightly the Word of truth.”<sup>27</sup> If the gospel is preached to impenitent and secure people without first preaching the law, they will be hardened in their impiety. On the other hand, if the gospel is omitted and only the law is preached to the contrite, they will become anxious and may even despair.<sup>28</sup> So for Gerhard, the distinction of law and gospel remains important for preaching and pastoral care.

While speaking of law and gospel in the context of “teaching” in homiletics, Gerhard says something that seems to contradict Walther’s precept that the gospel must predominate in every sermon<sup>29</sup> but fits well with the rest of Walther’s homiletic instruction and his actual sermons. Gerhard says that sermons should give teaching based on the law and gospel, yet, as he says, “because the majority of those in the mixed gathering of the church are impenitent, worldly people, Law sermons should be urged and inculcated more frequently. Plus the salutary use of the gospel holds no place in their hearts unless they have first been crushed by the hammer of the law.”<sup>30</sup> However, I do not find that this leads Gerhard to be a legalist. Instead of the Law predominating, I find that “teaching” predominates in his sermons,<sup>31</sup> and to this are added appropriate consolations, warnings, and admonitions.

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<sup>25</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 204.

<sup>26</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 205.

<sup>27</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 205. Note that although the general precept of rightly dividing God’s Word includes much more than the distinction of Law and Gospel, it does also include that distinction.

<sup>28</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 205.

<sup>29</sup> Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, 112–113.

<sup>30</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 205.

<sup>31</sup> This is, by the way, the use that Walther says is “most important among them.” Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, 99.



### III. The Prevalence of the Useful Applications in Seventeenth-Century Lutheran Theology

The post-Reformation Lutheran theologians especially were concerned about finding the useful applications of Scripture.<sup>32</sup> This focus on the applications based on 2 Timothy 3:16 and Romans 15:4 is found here and there in sixteenth century Lutheran texts, but it becomes extremely prevalent in the seventeenth century, especially from 1620 and on.

Luther occasionally spoke of the applications of Scripture as a summary of pastoral duty. Based on a sermon from 1532, Andreas Poach's version of the House Postil (1559) records these words:

In every way, therefore, it is serving God when one does what God has commanded, and does not do what God has forbidden. When a preacher preaches God's Word, baptizes, administers the Sacrament, *exhorts, rebukes, warns* the secure, *comforts* the timid and distressed, he in this way is serving not only men but God, who has ordained and commanded these things; and there is joy in doing them, knowing of a certainty that it is God's will and command.<sup>33</sup>

Luther's preaching consisted of teaching and exhortation especially, and it often ended with admonition and critique. Luther used dialectic in his preaching to make his teaching clear, and he used rhetoric to apply the teaching to his hearers in the forms of praise and blame.<sup>34</sup> In his sermons, Luther would first explain the text of Scripture, then summarize it and explain its doctrines. Then he would teach the faith and admonish people to do good works. He would go back and forth, consoling and admonishing.<sup>35</sup>

In 1526, Luther explained three "methods for strengthening faith" while he explained the prophet Habakkuk.

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<sup>32</sup> Steiger, "The Development of the Reformation Legacy," 741.

<sup>33</sup> Martin Luther, *Sermons of Martin Luther: The House Postils*, ed. Eugene Klug, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 106, emphasis added; E2 6:35; StL 13b:2358. Poach made his version of the Church Postil from notes taken by Luther's scribe Georg Rörer, as a correction to perceived problems with Veit Dietrich's 1544 edition. Since Poach's edition was published after Luther's death, it was not included in the Weimar edition of Luther's writings, though it was included in previous editions, such as the Erlangen and St. Louis editions.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God: The Wittenberg School and Its Scripture-Centered Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 185–189.

<sup>35</sup> Kolb, *Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God*, 195. On Luther's preaching, see Kolb, *Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God*, 174–208; Robert Kolb, *Luther and the Stories of God: Biblical Narratives as a Foundation for Christian Living* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 29–64.

In addition to such promises and exhortation Habakkuk also resorts to threats, as he seeks out every method by which they might be sustained and preserved in the faith. For more methods of strengthening faith cannot be found than these three inscribed on this tablet, namely, promise, exhortation, and threat. If these do not help, nothing will. But in keeping with good order, threat is the last and promise the first. For if we promise good things and then implore and exhort, we must let anyone go his way who will not abide by that. Only as a final measure do we resort to threats . . . Christ and the apostles, as well as Moses and all the prophets, observe these three items.<sup>36</sup>

Besides challenging some modern Lutheran notions of preaching—such as the idea that law must never follow gospel—what this shows is that Luther, like all good preachers, was aware of various forms of how God’s Word should be applied to people. At the same time, it is clear that the structure of four or five useful applications from 2 Timothy 3:16 and Romans 15:4 was not in the forefront of his mind.

As mentioned previously, in 1553, a new approach to preaching was set forth by Hyperius of Marburg.<sup>37</sup> Hyperius developed five genres of preaching based on 2 Timothy 3:16 and Romans 15:4: teaching, refuting heresy, guiding, correcting, and consoling.<sup>38</sup> Shortly thereafter, these useful applications were adopted by Flacius in his biblical hermeneutics text, *The Key to Holy Scripture* (1567).<sup>39</sup> According to Flacius, an exegete must know four different things: the individual words, the sense of the discourse, the spirit of the scriptural (human) author, and the *use* of each passage. According to 2 Timothy 3:16–17, all of Scripture has such a use.<sup>40</sup>

The useful applications of Scripture find a significant place also in the Book of Concord. In FC SD XI 12, on God’s eternal election, these passages appear in their usual connection with each other and function to exclude false teaching on predestination, which leads people either to carnal security or despair. Instead, the two passages on the useful applications show that the *uses* are the purpose for which God gave us all of Scripture. Any use of Scripture is by definition wrong

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<sup>36</sup> Luther, *Habakkuk* (1526), LW 19:196; cf. WA 19:393.17–27. Cf. Kolb, *Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God*, 123.

<sup>37</sup> On Hyperius, see Schröder, “Hyperius, Andreas”; Rau, “Hyperius, Andreas.”

<sup>38</sup> Brilioth, *A Brief History of Preaching*, 126; Krēslīņš, *Dominus Narrabit in Scriptura Populorum*, 16–17, 41; Old, *The Age of the Reformation*, 371; Haemig and Kolb, “Preaching in Lutheran Pulpits,” 136–141; Niebergall, “Die Geschichte der christlichen Predigt,” 291.

<sup>39</sup> Moldenhauer, “All Scripture Is Useful,” vi, 3–4, 21–22. This theme was also noticed by Keller, *Der Schlüssel zur Schrift*, 140.

<sup>40</sup> Keller, *Der Schlüssel zur Schrift*, 140; Moldenhauer, “All Scripture Is Useful,” 29–31. See Matthias Flacius, *Clavis Scripturae S. seu de Sermone Sacrarum literarum*, vol. 2 (Basel: Episcopius, 1580), 38–64.

if it leads toward ends that conflict with reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, patience, comfort, and hope.<sup>41</sup>

The useful applications soon became important for exegesis and preaching. The 1587 postil of Johannes Baumgart (or Pomarius, 1514–78) set forth not just the reason for and summary of each Gospel pericope of the church year but also doctrines, consolations, “reminders” (which are admonitions), and warnings. This is already indicated in the title, which reads: “Postil, in which there is shown most briefly what one should notice from each Sunday and festival Gospel: besides its occasion and summary, especially what kind of teachings, consolation, reminders, and warnings should be noticed, composed in certain questions and answers.”<sup>42</sup>

In 1610, when he wrote his *On Interpreting Sacred Scripture*, Gerhard did not deal with the uses of Scripture.<sup>43</sup> Gerhard’s hermeneutical rules dealt with the *interpretation* of Scripture—but that is only one of a preacher’s two duties. As Gerhard explained ten years later in his *Method of Theological Study*, a preacher’s other duty is to make salutary application of Scripture to his hearers. He writes: “Explanation of the true meaning is nothing but a periphrastic explication of the text. Application of the found and explained meaning to its use is nothing but gathering teachings from the text and making an application for the salvation and well-being of the hearers. One must join these together in sermons since each without the other is incomplete and fruitless.”<sup>44</sup> So for Gerhard, preachers must paraphrase the biblical text and then apply it to their listeners in various ways. In individual pastoral care, such as the “salutary use of private confession and absolution,” the pastor is able to take full account of the specific spiritual condition of individuals and give them “the appropriate remedy applied to them from the physician’s office of the heavenly Word.”<sup>45</sup> Sermons, on the other hand, need to include applications that would serve all the people, and as a result the “mode of application” has to be “manifold, various, and diverse.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> W. H. T. Dau and F. Bente, eds., *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church, German-Latin-English* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 1067; *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche: Herausgegeben im Gedenkjahr der Augsburgischen Konfession 1930*, 11th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 1067; Irene Dingel, ed., *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche: Vollständige Neuedition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 1564–1566.

<sup>42</sup> Johann Pomarius, *Postilla, In welcher, was aus einem jeden Sontags vnd Fests Euangelio, benebenst desselbigen Occasion vnd Summa, fürnemlich für Lehren, Trost, Erinnerungen vnd Warnungen zu mercken, auffß kürztze angezeigt, vnd in gewisse Fragen vnd Antwort gefasset ist* (Magdeburg: Andreas Gene, 1587), <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb00022231-6>; cf. Niebergall, “Die Geschichte der christlichen Predigt,” 276.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. footnote 1, Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 55–131.

<sup>44</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 201.

<sup>45</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 204.

<sup>46</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 204.

In 1701, the Tübingen theology professor Andreas Adam Hochstetter set forth his “Short Treatise on How to Preach Aright and How to Expound and Apply the Sacred Text,” a short homiletic that Loehe included as an appendix to his pastoral theology. Here, too, the uses of Scripture play an important role in exegesis and preaching.<sup>47</sup>

The useful applications of Scripture also were important for Lutheran study Bibles in the seventeenth century. Fairly early in the century, a Lutheran study Bible was prepared by Daniel Cramer (1568–1637), general superintendent of Stettin in northern Germany.<sup>48</sup> The Bible was first published in parts in 1619–1620, with a full edition in 1625. The lengthy title, translated, reads:

Bible: That is, the entire Holy Scripture according to the translation, prefaces, and marginal notes of Dr. M. Luther, with several concordances, along with a new summary explanation, in which not only is every book and chapter correctly summarized and outlined, but also the *use* is given afterwards for: doctrine, correction, consolation, warning—in brief and yet richly, so that it can take the place of a sizeable commentary, and it is confirmed with testimonies and examples of Holy Scripture, and thus Scripture is explained with Scripture.<sup>49</sup>

Cramer applies all exegesis to one of four uses: doctrine, consolation, warning, and correction. These uses are the summary of the Bible passage, which show what a willing reader should find in the Bible (according to Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 2, 3, 10, 11).<sup>50</sup>

The useful applications also play a role in another major Lutheran study Bible—arguably the best Lutheran study Bible of all time. This remarkable work was commissioned in 1635 by Duke Ernst “the Pious” of Sachsen-Gotha and published in 1641. This Bible—variously named *Kurfürstenbibel*, *Nürnbergiger Bibelwerk*, *Weimarisches Bibelwerk*, and Ernestinian Bible—had Gerhard as its general editor until his death in 1637, and thereafter, Salomon Glassius (1593–1656). Despite its enormous size, the “Ernestinian Bible” was reprinted repeatedly until the early 20th

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<sup>47</sup> Andreas Adam Hochstetter, “A Short Treatise on How to Preach Aright and How to Expound and Apply the Sacred Text,” in *The Pastor*, by Wilhelm Loehe, trans. Joshua J. Hayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 337–358.

<sup>48</sup> Bülow, “Cramer, Daniel” in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 4 (1876): 546–547 [Online-Version]; URL: <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/gnd119180049.html#adbcontent>

<sup>49</sup> Daniel Cramer, ed., *Biblia Das ist Die gantze H. Schrift, Nach der Dolmetschung Vorreden vnd Marginalien D. M. Lutheri mit mehre[ren] Concordantien Gesambt newer summarischer Auslegung darin nicht allein ein jedes Buch und Capitel richtig verfasst und getheilt sondern auch darauff der nutz an L. Lehr: B. Besserung: T. Trost: W. Warnung Kürztlich vnd dennoch reichLich das es an stat eines Zimlichen Commentarij sein kan, gezeuget, vnd mit Zeugnissen vnd Exempeln H. Schrift bewähret, vnd also Schrift mit Schrift erklärt wird*, trans. Martin Luther (Straßburg: Zetzner, 1625).

<sup>50</sup> Quack, *Evangelische Bibelvorreden*, 169.

century in both Germany and the United States. Glassius' preface, starting from 2 Timothy 3:14–17, gives a full, Orthodox-Lutheran doctrine of Holy Scripture. The rebirth and renewal of the human creature is set forth as the goal of the Bible. In contrast to Luther's Bible prefaces, law and gospel is not a theme; it is mentioned only once in passing. Instead, Glassius focuses on the uses or benefits (*Nutzbarkeiten*) of Scripture, which include teaching, comforting consciences, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. This Ernestinian Bible strives to explain the literal sense of Scripture; not all of the "uses" mentioned by St. Paul in 2 Timothy 3:14–17 could be indicated.<sup>51</sup> Until his death, Glassius edited and revised new editions of the Ernestinian Bible and composed new practical applications (uses) for each chapter, which were then included in this Bible beginning with the 1686 edition.<sup>52</sup> This Bible sets forth the literal sense as the basis for the many uses. The literal sense must be found, but it must not stay there. Rather, it must proceed to application. For Glassius, this distinction between the literal sense and its application is different than the distinction between the literal sense and the spiritual or mystical sense of Scripture (such as typology or allegory), which he also approves. The exegesis that takes the literal sense and applies it in teaching, rebuke, correction, training in righteousness, and consolation goes beyond the facts and makes clear that it applies to *me*, to the individual.<sup>53</sup>

Abraham Calov, too, had a study Bible. His German study Bible, published in 1681–1682, is a heavily glossed Bible with many citations from Luther. On the title page of volume 1, it claims to present not just the literal sense, but "in good part also the salutary use of Holy Scripture."<sup>54</sup> Again, on the title page of volume 2, it says that it intends to set forth not just the literal sense of Scripture "but also the salutary use, especially set forth from the writings of the German prophet Luther,

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<sup>51</sup> Salomon Glassius, "Salomon Glassius' Vorrede zum Nürnberger Bibelwerk (1640). Kommentierte Edition," in *Philologia Sacra: Zur Exegese der Heiligen Schrift im Protestantismus des 16. bis 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Johann Anselm Steiger (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft, 2011), 155–226; Salomon Glassius and Johann Gerhard, eds., *Biblia, Das ist: Die gantze H. Schrift, Altes und Newes Testaments Teutsch/ D. Martin Luthers: / Auff gnädige Verordnung deß ... Herrn Ernsts/ Hertzogen zu Sachsen ... Von etlichen reinen Theologen ... erkläret* (Nürnberg: Endter, 1641); Salomon Glassius and Johann Gerhard, eds., *Das Weimarische Bibelwerk. Biblia das ist die ganze Heilige Schrift Alten und Neuen Testaments verdeutscht von Doctor Martin Luther, and auf Herzog Ernst's Verordnung von etlichen reinen Theologen dem eigentlichen Wortverstand nach erklärt*, Neue Ausgabe, dritte Auflage (St. Louis: Fr. Dette, 1902); Jürgen Quack, *Evangelische Bibelvorreden*, 182–197.

<sup>52</sup> Salomon Glassius, *Enchiridion S. Scripturae Practicum* (Gotha: Typis Reyherianis, 1651); C. F. W. Walther, "Neue Vorrede," in *Das Weimarische Bibelwerk*, Neue Ausgabe, dritte Auflage (St. Louis: Fr. Dette, 1902), iii–vii.

<sup>53</sup> Quack, *Evangelische Bibelvorreden*, 194–197.

<sup>54</sup> "gutes Theils auch der heilsame Gebrauch der Heil. Schrift." Abraham Calov, *Die Heilige Bibel* (Wittenberg: C. Schrödter, 1681), title page of vol. 1.

through his Spirit-rich power and lively, edifying explanation.”<sup>55</sup> Calov’s useful applications in this Bible are based on 2 Timothy 3:16 and Romans 15:4.<sup>56</sup>

Not only in preaching and study Bibles, the useful applications of Scripture even played a role in dogmatics. In 1625, when Gerhard returned to the topic of Holy Scripture and wrote a more lengthy locus on it in his *Exegesis, or A More Copious Explanation of Certain Articles of the Christian Religion*, he wrote again of the uses of Scripture. Speaking of the end purpose of Scripture, he wrote, “With respect to God, the goal of Scripture is the salutary knowledge and glorification of God.”<sup>57</sup> The intermediate goal with respect to us is “teaching, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness,” and “encouraging” (Rom 15:4; 2 Tim 3:16), while the ultimate goal with respect to us is eternal salvation.<sup>58</sup> For nearly every commonplace in his *Theological Commonplaces*, Gerhard includes “practical uses” that correspond to the categories now familiar to us from 2 Timothy 3:16 and Romans 15:4: the didactic use, paraenetic use, elenctic use, paracletic use, and so on. The dogmatics of Balthasar Meisner (1587–1626), Calov, and David Hollaz (1648–1713) featured these useful applications, too.<sup>59</sup>

The useful applications of Scripture also found a place in hymnody and sacred music. Johann Rist in 1655 wrote *New Musical Feast-day Devotions, Consisting in Hymns Rich in Teaching, Comforting, Admonishing, and Warning, on All the Gospels*.<sup>60</sup>

These are but a few examples. The useful applications of Scripture became a rich part of Lutheran approaches to Scripture in the seventeenth century. Now that

<sup>55</sup> “Sondern auch der heilsame Gebrauch, Sonderlich aus den Schrifften des deutschen Propheten Lutheri, durch seine geistreiche Krafft, und Lebensvolle erbauliche Auslegung fürgetragen werden . . .” Calov, *Das Andere Volumen Der Göttlichen Schrifften Alten Testaments . . . Durch mühsamen großen Fleiß D. Abraham Calovii* (Wittenberg: Christian Schrödter, 1682), title page, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:gbv:3:1-506268>.

<sup>56</sup> Volker Jung, *Das Ganze der Heiligen Schrift: Hermeneutik und Schriftauslegung bei Abraham Calov* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1999), 18.

<sup>57</sup> Johann Gerhard, *On the Nature of Theology and On Scripture*, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, trans. Richard J. Dinda, rev. ed., *Theological Commonplaces, Exegesis I* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 318, *Commonplace 1 (Exegesis)*, § 362.

<sup>58</sup> Gerhard, *On the Nature of Theology and On Scripture*, 318–319, § 363.

<sup>59</sup> Hans Leube, “Die Theologen und das Kirchenvolk im Zeitalter der lutherischen Orthodoxie (1924),” in *Orthodoxie und Pietismus: gesammelte Studien* (Bielefeld: Luther-Verlag, 1975), 44–45; 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), 304.

<sup>60</sup> Johann Rist, *Neüe Musikalische Fest-Andachten, Bestehende In Lehr- Trost- Vermahnungs- und Warnungsreichen Liederen, über Alle Evangelien und sonderbahre Texte, welche Jährlich, an hohen und gemeinen Fest- Apostel- und anderen Feirtagen, in den Evangelischen Kirchen werden erkläret und ausgeleget, Die den Grössern Theils auf gewöhnliche und bekante; Alle aber auf gantz Neüe von Herren Thoma Sellio . . . wolgesetzete Melodyen können gespielet und gesungen werden* (Lüneburg: Johann und Heinrich Stern, 1655).

their importance for Lutheran theology, exegesis, devotion, and preaching has been demonstrated, the question naturally arises: how were these uses actually used?

#### IV. The Useful Applications in Detail

Following Romans 15:4 and 2 Timothy 3:16–17, Gerhard identifies five uses or applications of Scripture: instruction (διδασκαλία), reproof (ἐλεγχος), correction (ἐπανόρθωσις), training (παιδεία), and consolation (παράκλησις).<sup>61</sup> Walther, drawing on the wisdom of Lutheran Orthodoxy, uses the same categorization of applications of Scripture in his *American Lutheran Pastoral Theology*. Again, the five uses are teaching, rebuking, correcting, instructing, and consoling (or encouraging). Walther uses the technical terms: applying God’s Word didactically, elenctically, epanorthotically, paedeutically, and paracletically.<sup>62</sup> Walther can here be seen as a commentary on Gerhard.

#### Rules for Teaching

For each of the five uses of Scripture, Gerhard gives rules. For “teaching”: first, the doctrines (i.e., teachings) must be native to the text, not far-fetched. Second, more law sermons are needed than gospel ones, due to widespread impenitence. Third, law and gospel must be distinguished. Fourth, doctrines cannot simply be taken from a deed in a historical text of Scripture but must be taken from clear texts.<sup>63</sup> (That is, there must be clear judgments on the will of God related to the historical deed. So, to give an obvious example, after explaining Saul’s suicide in 1 Samuel 31:4, it would be wrong to teach that it is permissible to imitate his act.) Fifth, when teaching, one should draw out doctrines from legitimate, logical consequences, such as “from effect to cause, from positing one thing to removing the contrary, from similar things to similar things.”<sup>64</sup> Sixth, only basic doctrines should be preached to the laypeople. Lofty doctrines should be relegated to academies. Seventh, after confirming the doctrine from the text that is being preached, it is a good idea to cite other testimonies of Scripture that speak of the same doctrine. This shows the harmony of Scripture and strengthens the hearers’ knowledge of and faith in the truth.<sup>65</sup>

Compare this with Walther’s *Pastoral Theology*. For Walther, the didactic (teaching) use is the most important. Without sufficient teaching, people are not being given the bread of life; they will be disgusted by God’s Word. Teaching the

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<sup>61</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 204.

<sup>62</sup> Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, 98–99.

<sup>63</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 205.

<sup>64</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 205.

<sup>65</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 205–206.

facts has to be the foundation, without which admonition, reproof, and consolation make no sense.<sup>66</sup> Walther explains:

Precisely the eternal thoughts of the heart of God revealed to us humans in Scripture for our salvation, precisely these divine truths, counsels, and mysteries of the faith which were once kept silent by the world but have been made known to us by the writings of the prophets and apostles are the heavenly seed which must be planted in the hearts of the hearers if the fruit of true repentance, pure faith, and sincere, active love is to grow up in them.<sup>67</sup>

So preachers must preach doctrine. When this does not happen, it shows that preachers do not have any thorough knowledge of doctrine. Walther says that a good example of didactic preaching is St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, in which the first eleven chapters are doctrine; only then does he turn to admonitions.<sup>68</sup>

Comparing the two, Gerhard gives more insight on how to actually draw out doctrine from the text of Scripture, while Walther provides more motivation to do so. A contemporary of Gerhard was especially good at drawing out doctrine from the text of Scripture. Friedrich Balduin (1575–1627) of Wittenberg wrote a lengthy commentary on the Pauline epistles that is a paragon of dogmatic (or doctrinal) exegesis.<sup>69</sup>

### Rules for Reproof

Reproof deals with refuting false doctrine. Thus it is the polemical side of teaching.<sup>70</sup> This, by the way, is something Luther does habitually after nearly every main point of his sermons. Gerhard does it less often than Luther, but it still comes up frequently. Indeed, much of his *Theological Commonplaces* consists of reproof. Gerhard's rules for using reproof are as follows. First, do not refute all possible errors before the laypeople, but only the fundamental, central errors. Second, explain contemporary errors and reprove them but "remain cautiously silent" about errors that are not widespread, which people do not know. Here the idea is to avoid giving them new errors to consider. Third and fourth (these points in Gerhard's *Method* are essentially the same), reproof works best when it is taken

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<sup>66</sup> Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, 99–100.

<sup>67</sup> Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, 100–101.

<sup>68</sup> Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, 100–101.

<sup>69</sup> Friedrich Balduin, *Commentarius In Omnes Epistolas Beati Apostoli Pauli* (Francofurti: Mevius, 1654); Benjamin T. G. Mayes, "Friedrich Balduin (1575–1627)," in *Lives & Writings of the Great Fathers of the Lutheran Church*, ed. Timothy Schmeling (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016), 97–112; Benjamin T. G. Mayes, "Not Just Proof-Texting: Friedrich Balduin's Orthodox Lutheran Use of Exegesis for Doctrine," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 79, no. 1–2 (2015): 103–120.

<sup>70</sup> Gerhard, "Method of Theological Study," 206.



directly from the text and does not seem far-fetched.<sup>71</sup> For example, on the basis of Matthew 18, the parable of the unmerciful servant, a refutation of universalists seems to flow directly from the text. Fifth, you should reprove with moderation of tone and with gentleness. Avoid rage, coarseness, and ridicule, not to mention obscenity. Sixth, do not use the terms of logic when reproving false doctrine before the people. Seventh, reproof should be only a minority of the sermon's content.<sup>72</sup>

Walther deals with reproof, too, calling it the "elenctic use." It has to do with both coarse and subtle false doctrines, and in both friendly and forceful manners. Not only must false teachings be addressed, but false teachers must be addressed, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). And sometimes they must even be reproved by name! Scripture has many examples of reproving false teachers by name.

- Galatians 5:10 I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.
- Matthew 16:6 Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."
- Revelation 2:15 Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.
- 2 Timothy 2:17-18 And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

This elenctic use of Scripture is necessary to defend the people against false belief. Walther quotes Luther: "A teacher who is silent about errors and nevertheless wants to be a proper teacher is worse than an overt enthusiast, and he does more damage with his hypocrisy than a heretic. He cannot be trusted."<sup>73</sup>

Comparing the two, Gerhard offers more caution on how to use reproof effectively, especially if one does not already have the full heart and confidence of the hearers. Walther again gives more motivation to do it, and he insists (as Gerhard does not) upon naming errorists while preaching to the people.

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<sup>71</sup> Gerhard, "Method of Theological Study," 206.

<sup>72</sup> Gerhard, "Method of Theological Study," 206.

<sup>73</sup> Report on Georg Major's last conversation with Luther (Jan. 1546), WA Br 12:362, no. 4298, quoted in Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, 101-102.

### Rules for Training

“Training” is Gerhard’s term for admonition. His rules are as follows. First, “exhortation toward the pursuit of piety and towards the duties of the Christian in this old world wherein charity is nearly dead should be especially frequent.”<sup>74</sup> Second, biblical stories of the saints are excellent material for admonitions. Third, admonitions should deal not just with outward works but also with “the inner man’s progress, which consists of putting the old Adam to death, contempt for the world, the denial of self, sincere humility of heart, etc.”<sup>75</sup> Fourth, take account of the hearers’ situation in life. Admonishing rich people to endure poverty patiently would be out of place. Fifth, general biblical principles and admonitions should be applied specifically to the hearers. Sixth, after expounding the meaning of biblical prayers, canticles, and psalms (which is teaching), add an admonition to imitate, pray, and so on. Seventh, admonition to remain in the truth should also be given after teaching and reproof.<sup>76</sup>

According to Walther, a preacher should not just command, threaten, and rebuke; he should also admonish Christians to do good works. True Christians really *do* want to live for God and serve Him and be completely renewed in the image of God, but that does not mean that they know what to do or, if they do know, that they are always motivated to live lives of Christian love. Despite Luther’s insistence to the contrary in the 1520s, good works do not necessarily follow of themselves.<sup>77</sup>

The model for admonitions is Romans 12:1: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” When the preacher admonishes, he should not be commanding. He is talking to Christians, and he wants them to be happy and eager servants of God.<sup>78</sup> That is Walther’s approach to admonition.

Comparing Gerhard and Walther, Gerhard again gives more practical advice on how to give admonition within the context of biblical preaching, while Walther gives more motivation and theological rationale for doing so. It is worth mentioning here that both Gerhard and Walther think that people should be admonished with the expectation that what is being admonished is actually *possible*. It is not too much to expect a forgiven, regenerate Christian to begin to love God, show love

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<sup>74</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 206.

<sup>75</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 206.

<sup>76</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 206.

<sup>77</sup> Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, 104–106. Walther notes that Luther, too, knew the importance of admonition. See the long quotation in Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, 105–106, referring to Luther, *Church Postil* (1540), AE 79:181–182.

<sup>78</sup> Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, 106–107.

to his neighbor, and control his outward actions. If a preacher states that everything he admonishes is impossible, people will not strive to do it—and then he is not really admonishing but is teaching people that they are sinful or is admonishing them just to have a sorry feeling (but not to show their contrition by changing their lives). Gerhard and Walther see a new, better life—inside and out—as possible in this life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

### Rules for Correction

By “correction,” Gerhard means moral correction. Because both this one and the elenctic (or reproving) application deal with rebuking error, either of faith or of life, many of the Lutheran Orthodox combined them together and called them “warning,” based on Luther’s translation of 1 Corinthians 10:11: “All of that happened to them as an example, but it was written for our *warning*, upon whom the end of the world has come.”<sup>79</sup> Essentially, the preacher is doing the exact same thing in both cases, except that the objects of his warning differ: either false teaching and faith, or false living and behavior.

According to Gerhard, this correction is especially necessary now “in these most corrupt dregs of this final age.”<sup>80</sup> This is the first rule. It is necessary; do it. Gerhard’s second, third, and fourth rules deal with the biblical texts that give occasion for correction. These include prophetic sermons, rules for godly living, God’s moral attributes (such as truthfulness, righteousness, or justice), praise of the godly, and condemnation of the ungodly.<sup>81</sup> Following these, Gerhard gives rules for how to give correction. And so his fifth rule is to make sure that the correction is suitable for the situation of the hearers. There is no sense in reproving luxurious clothing to sick people in a hospital. Sixth, use prudence. Do not rebuke sins on the basis of rumors. Do not name names. Private grudges are out of place. Do not treat “great atrocities” lightly nor light matters as though highly important. Seventh, make sure it flows from fatherly love. Eighth, move from lesser to greater; that is, start with something small that people agree is wrong, then move to something related that is even worse. For example, on the basis of Romans 11:22, Gerhard states, “If those who did not feed the hungry and clothe the naked will one day be placed on His left hand, then what shall they fear who have stolen their neighbor’s goods through injustice and deceit?”<sup>82</sup>

When Walther deals with this use of Scripture, he quotes Luther: “Whichever pastor or preacher does not rebuke sin must go to the devil with the sins of others,

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<sup>79</sup> My translation from Luther’s 1546 German Bible, WA DB 7:113. Emphasis added.

<sup>80</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 206.

<sup>81</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 206.

<sup>82</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 207.

even if with regard to his own sins (which are forgiven him [ . . . ]) he is a child of blessedness.”<sup>83</sup> Walther gives some tips here. Students (such as vicars) who preach are not able to rebuke sins too specifically. Preachers must avoid bitterness. Admonition of specific sins in private must precede public rebuke. If it is a mixed assembly of Christians and non-Christians, sins should be rebuked in general, but not specific persons’ sins.<sup>84</sup> On this application, Gerhard and Walther are essentially the same.

### Rules for Consolation

The “paracletic use” is sometimes called “encouraging,” but I prefer “consoling.” It is based on Romans 15:4: “Whatever was written previously was written for our teaching, so that we through patience and consolation of Scripture might have hope.”<sup>85</sup> It is using the Word of God for comfort and hope.

Gerhard seems to take the “paracletic use” as both consolation and encouragement. His first four rules deal with the biblical material for consolations: first, God’s promises; second, the examples of the saints who were rescued by God from adversity; third, statements of “God’s mercy, the benefits of Christ, the joy of eternal life,” and so on; and fourth, the reasons why the cross is imposed upon the godly in this life.<sup>86</sup>

The former rules deal with material for consolations, which is the paracletic use applied to “inner testings.” The next two rules (the fifth and sixth rules) deal with material for encouragements to patience. The fifth rule is to compare the inner gifts of God with external evils.<sup>87</sup> What does this mean? Here is an example from Gerhard’s German *Postille*, his model sermons for the church year. He is preaching on Matthew 19:27–30 for the day of the conversion of St. Paul (January 25), on the passage “whoever forsakes house or brother or sister or father or mother or wife or children or land for the sake of My Name, he shall receive a hundred fold and shall inherit eternal life.”<sup>88</sup> Gerhard preaches:

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<sup>83</sup> Luther, preface to 1544 summer half of the Church Postil (LW 77:10), cited in Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, 102.

<sup>84</sup> Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, 102–104.

<sup>85</sup> My translation from Luther’s 1546 German Bible, WA DB 7:75.

<sup>86</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 207–108.

<sup>87</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 208.

<sup>88</sup> Johann Gerhard, *Postille: Exegesis and Explanation of Sunday and Main Festival Gospels; Part Three: Apostle and Other Festival Days; Part Four: Appendage of Passages for Midweek Sermons*, ed. Heidi D. Sias, trans. Elmer M. Hohle (Fort Wayne, Indiana: Lutheran Legacy, 2012), 25.

From this we see how richly God the Lord rewards everything that is forsaken upon this earth for the sake of Christ and His Word. Also, this reward actually begins in this life, that they receive a hundred-fold.

If one, however, wanted to object—as frequently happens, since it does not always result that those who are driven away from and deprived of their good possessions have such hundred-fold possession—the answer to that is this: such people possess a good, joyful conscience, which is better than any kingdom. They possess God’s grace, which surpasses all the riches of this world. They keep the treasure of God’s Word, which is far nobler than all temporal goods. And, they shall discover what Christ says in Mark 10:30, “at that time homes and brothers and sisters and mothers and children.” They shall find them again at the place where they shall come to. On the other hand, others who have fallen away from God’s truth, will have lost faith, a clear conscience, God’s grace, and salvation; and that is the greatest of poverty. If such stubborn betrayers even had an empire, they would still be poor before God. On the other hand, those who for the sake of Christ and His Word, forsake what is theirs, are rich before God—even if it were to be cumbersome for them. For in their hearts they have restful peace and a good conscience. However, this temporal reward shall not remain. Instead Christ shall richly replace it with eternal glory and heavenly blessings.<sup>89</sup>

So what Gerhard means by comparing inner gifts of God with external evils is that consolation can be given by pointing hearers to God’s invisible gifts—now in the Gospel and in eternal life. Sixth, Gerhard cites the example of Christ’s suffering as something that can be used to preach encouragement to people to bear suffering patiently.<sup>90</sup>

Gerhard distinguishes, as said previously, between consolation toward inner testing and encouragement to patience amid external evils. His seventh and final rule is that more frequent and stronger consolations should be given for the inner testing, since these trouble people more than the external evils in their lives.<sup>91</sup>

For Walther, consolation is the goal for every sermon. Consolation is to be given not just with regard to sin but also to the miseries of this life.<sup>92</sup> In preaching consolation, the preacher must consider the causes of all kinds of worries and afflictions, with regard to how people experience them.<sup>93</sup> According to Walther, the

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<sup>89</sup> Gerhard, *Postille, Parts Three and Four*, 31.

<sup>90</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 208.

<sup>91</sup> Gerhard, “Method of Theological Study,” 208.

<sup>92</sup> Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, 107.

<sup>93</sup> Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, 107.

masterpieces of consolation are found especially in the writings of Luther and of Luther's student Hieronymus Weller (d. 1572).<sup>94</sup>

Gerhard and Walther are similar here, though perhaps Walther is more focused on the Gospel aspect of "consolation," whereas Gerhard tends to treat it as something distinct from the doctrine of the Gospel.

If we consider how the "paracletic use" is used in Gerhard's sermons and other seventeenth century Lutheran literature, it seems that "consolation" is really the application of the Gospel. But consolation here is also broader than the "forgiveness of sins." It comes down to having God for you, on your side. It addresses all the legitimate worries and concerns that people have in life.

## V. Examples of the Uses in Exegesis and Preaching

### Gerhard's Postil

How does Gerhard put these uses into practice? In his postil, he seems mostly to teach or give a paraphrase of the text, and this teaching is interspersed with the other applications. As an example, we will consider Gerhard's sermon for the conversion of St. Paul (January 25) in his German postil.<sup>95</sup> The text was Matthew 19:27–30, about Peter's question regarding the reward that he and the other apostles would receive.

In this postil, Gerhard always begins his sermons with a type or a parallel from the Old Testament that depicts something in the Gospel reading, specifically or generally. Here he selects the story of Job's suffering and restoration. He says, "What pious Job experienced back then in deed and truth, Christ promises the same in our text. He does so to Peter, and to all who for the sake of Christ and His Word forsake goods or family members—so that they may have the certain hope that to them likewise shall be richly and convincingly rewarded and restored."<sup>96</sup> This is more of a general parallel than a specific type.

Following the type or parallel, which is Gerhard's sermon introduction, he gives a two-point outline for his sermon: "First about Peter's question[;] Then about Christ's answer."<sup>97</sup>

### *Teaching*

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<sup>94</sup> Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, 108. For Weller's writings, see AE 67:xxx–xxxiv.

<sup>95</sup> Gerhard, *Postille, Parts Three and Four*, 25–34.

<sup>96</sup> Gerhard, *Postille, Parts Three and Four*, 26.

<sup>97</sup> Gerhard, *Postille, Parts Three and Four*, 26.

Most of this sermon is either paraphrase of the text or teaching. As an example, he says:

The Evangelist records in the previous words that a ruler came to Christ and asked Him what good he should do in order that he might have eternal life. When Christ directed him to the Law as the perfect rule for all good works, the ruler thereupon gave him a haughtily proud answer, he had kept all the commandments of God from his youth on. But since such was a false boast—especially since “there is no one who does not sin,” 1 Kgs 8:46, but sinning means transgressing God’s Commandments—this Christ wanted eagerly to bring him to acknowledge. And He said to him, “If you want to be perfect, then go out, sell what you have, and give it to the poor. Thus you shall have a treasure in heaven. And come follow Me.” This was a very specific calling and order to this ruler—that he was to forsake everything, and like the other Apostles, commit himself to the school of Christ. However the text records that this young man turned back around and sadly walked away from Christ, because he had many goods. Thereupon Christ preached a harsh sermon to His disciples—that it is difficult for a rich person to come into the kingdom of heaven.<sup>98</sup>

This is a summary of the text, but it also teaches in giving other biblical texts and explaining the meaning of the events recorded in the Gospel. It is not possible to make a clean distinction between teaching and paraphrase of the text in Gerhard’s sermon.

#### *Warning*

Following 2 Timothy 3:16, Gerhard distinguishes “reproof” from “correction,” but really they are the same thing applied to different objects: faith or morals. As Gerhard preaches these, there is sometimes no noticeable difference, especially when he addresses attitudes, which are both moral and based on teaching or doctrine. That is, they are matters of faith and morality at the same time. As an example, he writes,

From this we can see how we humans generally think—that we so gladly see the reward in everything, and constantly carry the concern that God might not richly enough reward us for what we do for the sake of His Name, or for the evil we stand up against. What was it then that Peter had forsaken? A tumbledown, decaying tent, a pair of fisherman’s nets, and whatever else it may have been. And he at the same time so precisely asked what he would be reimbursed for all that? We generally have a similar mindset—that we are more

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<sup>98</sup> Gerhard, *Postille, Parts Three and Four*, 26.

concerned about the wages than about the labor. But that should not be, and the more faith and love in Christ increases, that much more so this seeking of rewards recedes. For faith is a sure confidence of the things for which a person hopes for, Heb 11:1, but then believers are saved in this hope, Rom 8:24. God has given them a sure promise of eternal life. If then this faith, and this assurance, is correct and proper, why should they be concerned—as if the good things they have done, and their cross that they have suffered, will not be sufficiently rewarded[?]<sup>99</sup>

This addresses wrongful actions based on wrongful attitudes, and it deals also with faith and hope. It is reproof and correction at the same time, and so it can fittingly be called “warning.”

Sometimes, however, reproof against the false doctrine of a rival confession is clearly discernible in his preaching. After teaching what it means to “leave houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands” for the sake of Christ’s name (Matt 19:29), Gerhard launches into a refutation of the Roman Catholic position that, by abandoning one’s vocation to family and embracing monasticism, one can achieve perfection and atone for his own sins and those of others (supererogation). He says,

There are those who maintain that the willing poverty of when a person forsakes everything that is his—as well as out of necessity and during times of persecution—is a great service to God. They maintain that by this a person can fulfill the counsel Christ has given to those who gladly want to do more [than] God has commanded in the Law. And, they then maintain that they thereby achieve perfection, by which they are able to atone for their own sins and also the sins of other people. They then use the previously recorded words where Christ said to the young man, “If you want to be perfect, sell what you have and give it to the poor” to this end. To this end they even also use the example of the Apostles. They make the claim that it was not only a good counsel that Christ gave to this young man and to the Apostles, but a serious, special Commandment. Because the young man did not want to follow this command, Christ thereupon proclaimed that it is difficult for the rich to enter into the kingdom of heaven. He herewith shows that this very same young man hereby forfeited heaven in that he did not forsake everything and did not want to follow Him. Now then, when those—who without any need to do so and without having any periods of persecution—forsake everything, it still remains a fact that this is a personal-choice service to God that may not please Him.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Gerhard, *Postille, Parts Three and Four*, 26–27.

<sup>100</sup> Gerhard, *Postille, Parts Three and Four*, 27–28.



*Admonition*

An example of an admonition from Gerhard's sermon is as follows:

So then, weigh one against the other, Here one sometimes forsakes a house—which is a collapsing building; there on the other hand one obtains a building, built by God, a house not made by hands, that is eternal in heaven, 2 Cor 5:1.

Here you forsake beautiful fields, wheat, delightful gardens; but, in place of them you there receive the heavenly Paradise, where there is fullness of joy, and the lovely essence at Your right hand forevermore, Ps 16:11.

Here you forsake father and mother, who of course will soon be separated from you by death; there you come before the heavenly Father, Who is the true Father over all that is called “family” in heaven and upon earth, Eph 3:14–15.

Here you forsake brother or sister; there you come before the holy fellowship of the angels and all the elect.

Here you forsake wife and children; there you shall find them again in eternal glory.

Here you forsake temporal, perishable fame; but there you receive the crown of the unfading glory.

Here you forsake your own life; there you shall find it again—for “whosoever” thus “loses his life, shall find it,” keep it, Matt 10:39.<sup>101</sup>

An example of encouragement was quoted above.

**Ernestinian Bible**

The Ernestinian Bible, which Gerhard and Salomon Glassius edited, provides examples of all the uses of Scripture. Here, as at the end of each chapter, there is a listing of the “useful applications” [*Nutzanwendungen*]. These should be seen not as exhaustive of all possible applications but as illustrative of good ways to apply the text to self or others. The useful applications for Matthew 19 are as follows:

I. Admonition: That divorce (except for adultery) as well as taking plural wives has been completely abrogated and forbidden by God in the New Testament, even though God permitted it in the Old Testament for certain reasons (vv. 3–9).

II. Doctrine: That Christ loves the children dearly and earnestly desires to accept them and take them into His heavenly kingdom (v. 14).

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<sup>101</sup> Gerhard, *Postille, Parts Three and Four*, 31–32.

III. Doctrine: That love toward God is shown to be genuine in this: when one gladly surrenders everything temporal on account of the confession of His name. That is what this young man lacked, who thought he had kept everything in the Law (vv. 20–22).

IV. Warning: Against misuse of temporal goods, because of which, according to the word of Christ, so few rich people enter into the kingdom of heaven (vv. 23–24).

V. Consolation: That those Christians who in persecution lose what is theirs and must do without it will have hundredfold repayment in heaven and will inherit eternal life (v. 29).<sup>102</sup>

This *Ernestinian Bible* is a rich guide to using the useful applications of Scripture.

## VI. Using the Uses

Now it is clear that seventeenth century Lutherans in their exegesis, followed by classic Lutheran homiletics even to the time of Walther in the nineteenth century, sought and found several uses of Scripture based on 2 Timothy 3:16, Romans 15:4, and 1 Corinthians 10:11. They saw the uses as extremely useful.

But why are the useful applications of Scripture important for us? There are several reasons. St. Paul in several places said *this* is how Scripture—all of it—should be used. Consider the fact that despite the clear teaching of the distinction of law and gospel in various places, when it comes to using and applying Scripture, St. Paul directs people to the useful applications of Scripture rather than only Law and Gospel. Since the Apostle commands us to use Scripture for doctrine, admonition, warning, and consolation, we should do so.

Besides this, the various applications give direction and clarity to sermons and individual care of souls. Too often, pastors are not distinct and clear in their

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<sup>102</sup> “I. V. Daß die Ehescheidung (ausser dem Ehebruch) ingleichen auch die Nehmung mehrer Weiber, im Alten Testament zwar, um gewisser Ursach willen, von GOTT nachgelassen, aber im Neuen gantz aufgehoben und verboten sey, v. 3–9. II. L. Daß Christus die Kinder hertzlich liebe, und sie gern und willig in sein Himmelreich auf und einnehme, vers. 14. III. L. Daß die Liebe gegen Gott darinn, als rechtschaffen, erwiesen werde, wenn man alles Zeitliche, um Bekänntnis seines Namens willen, gerne und willig fahren lasset, woran es diesem Jünglinge, der da vermeinte, er hätte alles im Gesetz gehalten, gemangelt, v. 20.21.22. IV. W. Für Mißbrauch der zeitlichen Güter, um welches willen, dem Wort Christi nach, so wenig reiche Leute ins Himmelreich kommen, vers. 23.24. V. T. Daß diejenige Christen, welche in der Verfolgung das Ihre verlieren und entrathen müssen, hundertfältige Vergeltung im Himmel haben, und das ewige Leben ererben sollen, v. 29.” Salomon Glassius and Johann Gerhard, eds., *Biblia, Das ist: Die gantze H. Schrift, Altes und Newes Testaments Teutsch/ D. Martin Luthers: / Auff gnädige Verordnung deß ... Herrn Ernsts/ Hertzogen zu Sachsen ... Von etlichen reinen Theologen ... erkläret* (Nürnberg: Endter, 1720), 524.

sermons, and usually this is because they are not clear in their own minds about what they are trying to do. Preaching requires intentionality. Are you teaching, admonishing, or consoling? Many pastors try to do all at once, and the result is that they are hard to follow and not edifying. If the uses are mixed, it's likely that people will just tune out.

Also, there is a real danger in just using "law" in the first half of every sermon and "gospel" in the last half of every sermon. While this sermon structure can be useful in some situations, if you use it or even some other pattern in every sermon, no matter what text of Scripture you are preaching, then people will know exactly what is coming next, and they will tune out. Also, more dangerously, they may begin to think that the different parts of Scripture are all exactly the same and that Scripture has nothing more to say—nothing more to teach, admonish, warn, or console—this week over and above what they heard last week. That is dangerous.

Also, how often have you heard about people who request more practical application in sermons and Bible studies? Some pastors teach Bible studies every week filled with huge quantities of data about biblical history and archaeology, and sometimes doctrine, but do not apply it in teaching (i.e., showing how the text taught or supported an article of faith); they do not apply it in admonition, warning, or consolation, either. If this is you, do not be surprised if people react by saying silently "so what?" to such preaching and teaching. People want practical application, and that is not wrong.

So how do preachers become skilled in preaching the useful applications of Scripture? First, they should be aware that they exist and know what they are. Second, they should find portions of Scripture that are sermonical and identify which of the applications are being used. The sayings of Jesus and the letters of the apostles would fit here. Third, they should analyze the sermons of great preachers to see how they do it, such as Augustine, Martin Luther, Johann Gerhard, and C. F. W. Walther.

All preachers have room for improvement. One excellent way to do so is to restore the useful applications of Scripture, based on 2 Timothy 3:16 and Romans 15:4.