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allows him to hold together these paradoxical elements. Participation is a 'perfected state of mind' and not 'the default state of a human being through creation' (p. 276). Since this is the case, what is needed is a vision of God. This vision of God is available only in the *eschaton*, and to the pure in heart – those who have had their wills transformed. This transformation is the grace that comes through Christ. According to Wisse, neither presently nor eschatologically does Augustine have space for deification in terms of ontological participation. So salvation is moral rather than ontological, and therefore 'doing the good takes priority over knowing the truth' (p. 313).

The genius of Wisse's book is its grand scope. The three-fold intent to reread Augustine, to confront contemporary theologies, and to suggest a fresh Reformed trajectory for contemporary theologians is admirable. The contrarian nature of the work can be helpful in creating some critical distance for those in the wake of the *Trinitätsvergessenheit*. Wisse leads us to question whether the trinitarian movement of the twentieth century should be called a renaissance or a revolution.

On the other hand, this work is far too ambitious to establish persuasively very much with respect to either Augustine or his contemporary interpreters. Where detailed exegesis of *De Trin.* is called for, Wisse almost invariably resorts to lengthy block quotes. And when it comes to modern theologians, Wisse paints with too broad a brush. Yes, Hegel's ontology is relational. And yes, many of the theologians Wisse cites see the doctrine of the Trinity as undergirding a relational ontology. But is this commonality a damning critique? Does it mean that no such understandings of relationality are present in Augustine, other Church Fathers or the Bible? Further, given the sheer number of very serious charges made, the book has insufficient space to demonstrate a patient, accurate reading of these contemporary theologians. As it is, one wishes that Wisse would have narrowed his focus to Augustine *or* contemporary theology.

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Steven D. Paulson, *Lutheran Theology*. London: T. & T. Clark, 2011, 293pp. £45.00 / \$90.00 hb., £14.99 / \$24.95 pb.

Steven D. Paulson is well aware that theology in the tradition of Luther is as conflicted today as ever. He does not shy from dealing with this 'in-house' conflict forthrightly, indeed with Luther-like polemical edge. Indeed, if a theologian is convinced that fellows are trapped in systems of self-justification and hence impervious to normal reasoning, he has little recourse rhetorically but to expose and attack the web of self-deception by any and all means. Just so, according to Paulson, most theology past and present is deeply entangled in a 'legalistic framework'; nothing less is required than the frontal assault of divine and unconditional promise to break the rest of us free. Rejecting, then, scholastic models of presentation by

patient reasoning and hermeneutical charity, Paulson organizes his book as commentary on the Letter to the Romans, introducing the key Lutheran motifs *seriatim* and extending these lines of thought either backward to the interpretation of the Apostle or forward in critique of latter-day Lutherans along with everyone else. 'Faith is polemical' (p. 48). Paulson's very manner of presentation (Luther over Melancthon, pp. 134–6) reflects the church-historical argument that Lutheranism originally rediscovered and advanced the apocalyptic framework of Pauline theology, although through the course of time it has more or less betrayed this insight to various legalisms disguised under the name of 'love'. A brief against 'love' – 'God is not true love's goal' (p. 147) – is thus not least of the unlikely causes Paulson boldly undertakes in these pages.

In fact, his account of 'Lutheran' theology takes up a party position within conflicted Lutheranism, that of the self-styled 'Gnesio' (authentic) Lutherans against the 'Phillipists', followers of Melancthon, who in innumerable ways are faulted for deviations from Luther's historically unique recovery of genuine Pauline theology (pp. 60, 116, 124, 127, 166, 186, 247, 258, continuing on against the giant of Lutheran Orthodoxy, Johann Gerhard, pp. 221–2, 265–6). There is a highly unlikely view of church history at work here, one which Paulson himself cannot fully sustain. Yet the urgent need for Lutheran self-critique today should not be dismissed on that account. Paulson briefly entertains (pp. 124–6) an alternative path to that critique, only to dismiss it, a *deconstruction* which would ask how *all* the party positions in historical Lutheranism, including the Gnesios, participate in a common flaw attending the origins of Lutheranism. That alternative is the position of this reviewer. Unsurprisingly, then, I find that Paulson executes his updated Gnesio-Lutheran case with exasperating dash. In the urgency and immediacy of eschatological proclamation, he pauses only long enough to execute passing clarifications of apparently contradictory evidence or alternative readings of the sources, as we will see below. In place of such patient and detailed work, he recurs repeatedly instead to his alleged exposé of an alien conceptual scheme, which, being sneaked in, distorts everything with legalism. By this device Paulson accounts for sundry failures of historical Lutheranism in the name of an original vision, now lost, of pure proclamation theology.

Gnesio-Lutheran theology was notorious for several polemical positions, which Paulson knowingly takes up and advances: that 'good works are harmful for salvation' (Amsdorf, cf. pp. 230, 234, 236), that 'the very substance of the human has become original sin' (Flacius, cf. pp. 155–9, 176, 179, 235). With such formulations, Gnesios sought to continue (1) Luther's argument against self-chosen religious works for one's own heavenly salvation in favor of divinely commanded works for the sake of others now on the earth, and (2) Luther's attack on the self-bootstrapping theology of the *moderni* in order instead to give faith and love by the Holy Spirit as the gospel way to newness of life. By these one-sided and overly paradoxical formulations, Gnesios more preserved Luther's attack on the hidden egoism of religious works than advanced Luther's vision of truly good works and newness of life.

In accord with this Gnesio-Lutheran polemic, Paulson's chief thesis is announced early on. There are

two separate justifications. The first justifies according to the law (which holds among humans awhile), but does not suffice before God – indeed that law was used to kill God's only begotten Son when he came into the world. The second kind of justification is Christ who gives himself to his opponents in the form of a simple promise: I forgive you. These two justifications are called law and gospel, and distinguishing them is the Lutheran passion on earth. The slogan of this way of doing theology is: The Law! . . . until Christ! (Galatians 3:4). God justifies himself by justifying sinners in a simple word. (p. 5)

This formulation seemingly posits a contest of wills, pitting human self-assertion in legalism against a radical divine assertion of forgiveness. Here 'law' stands for what Paulson regularly calls 'the legalistic framework' and its consequent mindset (Luther's 'presumption of righteousness', Melancthon's *opinio legis*). A further key move is to associate these Lutheran concepts with Platonic eros, the desire for the good, hence theologies of the *summum bonum*. Such ontotheology not only makes an idol of God as the object of human desire (what Luther called *amor concupiscentiae*), but makes a substance of the human person, who acquires the desired but accidental quality of righteousness by meritorious works. Possession of the quality, righteousness, can thus by right demand recognition from God, justification by works (pp. 150, 159).

Wilhelm Pauck famously showed in his Introduction to the English translation of the rediscovered Lectures on Romans that the early Luther learned this critique of the *amor concupiscentiae* from Augustine. But that counts for little here. Taking up Nygren's association of legalism with eros or Augustinian caritas (pp. 146ff., 160, 178, 195–7), Paulson radically excises Luther's appropriation of Paul from the stream of Augustinian tradition and indeed turns Luther against Augustine (not to mention against Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, Bernard, Tauler, Staupitz and the like, pp. 54, 250). In contrast with legalism, the gospel's promise of grace may then be portrayed as a 'simple' divine word which gives what it says, indeed so unrelentingly simple that it can only be had by a corresponding passivity, which fundamentally is what 'faith' is. So faith, and faith alone as pure clay in the potter's hand, justifies.

Although human 'legalism' is the predominant way in which Paulson writes about the law, he also writes of the law as *God's* holy law, *God's Word* as the judge, executing *God's wrath*. Conversely, he can even acknowledge that 'love fulfills the law' (p. 247). An equivocation thus appears that Paulson never takes time to clear up. In this latter case, significantly, it is not legalism at bottom but sin, that is, lovelessness which opposes God, and legalism in turn is diagnosed as the form lovelessness takes in hypocrisy, religiosity and moralism. Likewise, while the fiat of the 'Word alone' is the predominant way in which Paulson writes about the gospel as divine promise, he also takes up Luther's Christology of the *communicatio idiomatum* and Luther's existential application of it in the motif of the 'joyful exchange' (pp. 50, 116). This relation between promise and narrative is one which

Paulson affirms, but neglects to clarify – something needed, since there is nothing ‘simple’ about gospel narrative as the medium of divine promise! Here it is not sheer fiat but the narrated work of Christ as the divine-human person which at length forgives sins – by *right*, not merely by *divine power*, on the basis of Christ’s all-sufficient *human obedience* and vindication on the third day.

What Paulson wants to affirm in this further development of his theology is clear enough (even if the negative qualifications at the end of the following citation interfere and muddle the point):

the predicate ‘sin’ really belongs to the subject ‘Christ’ in such a way that Christ became sin for you. There is no other way: redemption requires the exchange of Christ’s innocence for your sin. God does not require it, nor does the law, or Satan – but ‘I,’ the sinner, require it. (p. 100)

This fundamentally is the right reading of Luther’s mature theology: God’s redemptive purpose innovates and in this sense ‘requires’ the *opus alienum* of bearing the curse of the cross *ut faciat opus proprium* (p. 195), in order to confer the blessing on the ungodly. But in that case Paulson has finally decided against reducing the problem of law to human legalism and decided for the truly good news of God surpassing God in the atoning work of the incarnate Son.

That would amount to a significant departure from the stance of one of Paulson’s teachers, Gerhard Forde, in favor of another, Robert Bertram. Paulson can hardly deny the presence and importance of the motif of Christ as sin-bearer in Paul or in Luther (as did Forde), and thus he tries valiantly to incorporate it into a theology of divine verbal fiat (pp. 222–5). Paulson, to his credit, wrestles here with a very substantial piece of evidence in Luther’s *Antinomian Disputations* from 1538, where Luther maintains with unmistakable clarity that the divine law is eternal and must be fulfilled for sinners to be justified and that, accordingly, justification by faith alone is valid because of Christ alone, that is, the narrated Christ who has not merely spoken forgiveness but done the true and good work of forgiving love (p. 223) which thus makes forgiveness both just and justifying. If that is so, God’s *holy* law is fulfilled by *love*, that is, Christ’s *good work* is precisely to have loved his Father by loving us all the way to bearing our sin as his own at the cross. Christ fulfills the double-love commandment for us and now also by his Spirit in us, though the latter is not completed until the redemption of the body on the day of resurrection. Thus the Word which justifies does not merely announce but narrates; it is a promissory narrative which gains no traction nor possesses any validity apart from the news of Christ’s fulfillment of the law that it relates.

Paulson has written a passionate and stimulating sermon. In the desperate situation of Euro-American theology, one preaches to the extent that one discerns forgetfulness of the gospel above all among the theologians. If Paulson has erred in doing this, he has erred on the side of the angels.

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