Reading Scripture as Lutherans in the Post-Modern Era

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For Lutherans, Scripture is central in the Christian existence. It is the source and norm of what we believe and do. We deem it important how the interpretation of its books is actually carried on. Yet what does it mean for us in the “post-modern” era to read and to interpret Scripture as Lutherans?

The Contemporary Post-Modern Context

As a starting point, no scriptural interpretation is done in a vacuum. It is always done within the context of a contemporary world. In our own case, this is no bad thing, by any means. Interaction with our current world, the post-modern world, not only provides an understanding of the necessary context for reading and interpreting the sacred Scriptures at this time; it also provides important clues to arrive at an understanding of what such reading and interpretation actually entails.

But just what is this “post-modern” general context? What are its characteristics? Many could be enunciated, but I would like to highlight four and to do so in contradistinction to modernism. The main characteristics of “modernism”—the dominant outlook of the West since the Enlightenment—are the following: belief in the superiority of reason; belief in the possibility of the objective access to and assessment of data; belief in the possibility of comprehensive explanation of whatever is under investigation, and belief in the inevitability of progress. Modern science, especially as popularly understood, exhibits all of these traits.

In our contemporary world, each of these beliefs is questioned; indeed, each is virtually stood upon its head, and that in the minds of virtually everyone in this nation. Post-modernism is characterized by: increasing distrust of reason and its ability to achieve real
understanding; lack of belief in objectivity in the understanding of anything in the world; disbelief in the possibility of comprehensive explanation of anything and everything in life, so that all explanation is partial; and loss of faith in the notion of “progress,” including the loss of belief in the inevitability of progress.¹ Post-modernism in its extreme forms questions the notion of a “reality out there,” separate from any observer/interpreter, even in the scientific realm.²

What has been the cause of this move from modernism to postmodernism in general outlook? Certainly the work of Sigmund Freud was a key, with his blurring of the distinction between reality outside the observer and projection of the observer’s own mind. But perhaps most influential have been the discoveries of contemporary physics. Consider what has happened since the turn of the twentieth century in our understanding of the universe around us. In the centuries before, classical physics—and here we use Newton as shorthand for this view—saw the universe as a “normal” place, a world congruent with our own personal, everyday experiences:³ material is solid, energy is not; actions elicit equal and opposite reactions; time is constant, and so forth.

But since the early twentieth century—and we use Einstein as typical and archetypal here—the universe can be and is also seen as a highly unusual place, incongruent with our personal, everyday experiences. Consider the following current “facts” of contemporary physics: according to Einstein’s Special Law of Relativity (1905), as speed increases, time slows down and the length of objects contracts;⁴ according to Einstein’s General Law of Relativity (1915), space is curved⁵ and time slows down in strong gravitational fields;⁶ according to Heisenberg (1929), one cannot know both the position and the momentum (\(=\) mass \(\times\) velocity) of a particle simultaneously;⁷ according to de Broglie (1925), matter has a dual nature, so that particles have the properties of, and behave like, waves;⁸ according to Quantum Theory (1920s), the movement of subatomic particles cannot be predicted individually, only plotted statistically;⁹ according to the standard “Copenhagen interpretation” of New Quantum (Wave) Theory (1920s to the present), physical properties have no objective reality independent of the act
of observation;\textsuperscript{10} and finally, the results of Relativity Theory and Quantum Theory cannot be reconciled to produce a “Grand Unification Theory” of everything in the universe.\textsuperscript{11}

It is not hard to see how these insights provide the most basic theoretical foundation to question every aspect of modernism, with its devotion to reason, to objectivity, to totalizing explanation, and to increased understanding of the whole, which is exemplified by the “truths” of Newtonian, classical science.\textsuperscript{12}

What impact should these developments have on us as Lutherans who seek to interpret the sacred Scriptures at this time? On the one hand, we can and should react negatively, I believe. We cannot embrace the supposed “insights” of radical post-modernism, especially the “truth” that there is no truth or fact outside of subjective apprehension and that everything is, in fact, completely relative. Aside from the obvious fact that external reality does seem to impinge upon our existence, whether we acknowledge it or not (getting rear-ended unexpectedly in an automobile should convince anyone of that), we, as Christians confess: “I believe in God . . .” And this is not a confession that we believe in a projection of God (however subjective our understanding of God might be) but that we believe in a reality external to us who has acted external to us in order to affect our lives.

But it is the burden of this paper to contend that contemporary post-modern developments should influence us as Lutheran exegetes positively, especially with regard to two of the insights which it offers. The first is that there is no objective understanding of anything, including written texts. And the second is that there is no comprehensive explanation of anything under consideration, again, also including written texts. The first insight, concerning objective understanding, contends, on the one hand, that all data is situated and, therefore, understood and described only within its context, and, on the other, that all consideration of that data entails heavy involvement by the interpreter. This is not to say that “there is nothing out there which we consider,” but it is to say that there is no pure, isolated “thing in itself” which we come to understand and to describe, and that there is no immediate, non-observer-affected access to such a supposed “thing in itself.” The second insight
(concerning comprehensive explanation) contends, on the one hand, that all explanation is partial and perspectival, and that understanding of reality around us, including texts, can only be achieved through the use of models, which models give an insight into one (or more) aspect of the object of interpretation, and, on the other, that the appearance of the data is affected depending upon which perspective and/or model one uses. This is not to say that no type of large-scale understanding can be achieved, but it is to say that paradox is at the heart of all reality, including the reality of texts. Both of these insights are, I believe, worthy to be embraced.

Hermeneutically, what do post-modern insights, especially the two we have just detailed, mean for us today? Specifically, how do they influence us as we seek to interpret Scriptural texts from a Lutheran perspective in AD 2000?

Concerning Objectivity

All discourse is situated or contextualized (as are the data of the reality which it seeks to reflect) which means that there is no discourse which is a non-context-bound description of reality and, therefore, immediately transferrable to all other contexts. This applies to biblical discourse, even as it does to all others.

On the most fundamental level, this is seen in linguistics. There is no "real" meaning to words as signifiers, neither is etymology any key to the meaning of a word in any given passage, nor is there a solid "general" meaning of a word.13 Diachronic linguistic notions, the foundation of etymological exegesis and the notion of "real" meanings to words, are not the basis for textual discourse. On the contrary, synchronic usage is the (normal) basis for textual discourse,14 namely, words are used with the meanings that are contextualized temporally (they are appropriate to their time), contextualized socially and culturally (they reflect the social/cultural setting of their users), and contextualized literarily (they are dependent on their literary co-text). Equally important, syntax bears the same characteristics.
On a "higher" level, this is seen in literary argumentation, or, perhaps better put, in the applicability of a description or of a line of reasoning in a text. Here Hans Frei's masterful book *Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* is of great help. As Frei shows, in the pre-modern, pre-Enlightenment era, all biblical texts were seen to be descriptions of reality as such and therefore, immediately transferrable to the contemporary world.\(^{15}\) Medieval, and Reformation, exegesis would exemplify this view. With the Enlightenment, however, things changed,\(^ {16}\) and a "wheat and chaff" situation developed; now some of the Bible was seen as conveying eternal, unchanging, "objective" truths, while other parts were context-bound and should not be applied. This is the view of modernism. It is certainly the view of historical-critical methods and of the Jesus Seminar, indeed, of any method or approach which seeks to establish the "true" religion or preaching of Jesus and assumes that that system of belief or kerygma is immediately relevant and transferrable to today. An articulate example of this approach is taken by Marva Dawn. In an essay entitled "Hermeneutical Considerations for Biblical Texts," she distinguishes among three kinds of texts:

(A) Normative or Instructive Texts—those which give basic, fundamental principles which should characterize the people of God.
(B) Descriptive Texts—those which narrate examples of practices acceptable among the people of God.
(C) Problematic or Corrective Texts—those which deal with specific problems among the Jews or in the early Church.\(^ {1}\)

The post-modern insight is that both the pre-modernist and the modernist position are incorrect, because, in fact, all texts are context-bound, making none of them descriptions of reality as such and, thus, immediately applicable to a contemporary scene. (Using Dawn's classification, there are no type A texts.) This can be seen in the writings of many authors who make sweeping statements of a general nature concerning, for example, freedom, oneness, and egalitarianism, on the one hand, but, on the other hand, in other situations, put restrictions on what they say. St. Paul does this often, most pointedly in Galatians 3:28 ("There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male nor female, for
you all are one is Christ Jesus"), and in 1 Timothy 2:12 ("I do not permit a woman to engage in teaching or to engage in exercising authority over a man/husband, but she is to be in quietness"). Martin Luther does this frequently, as well. It is well known that Luther extols all offices of all Christians, contending that no one office is inferior to any other and that no one person is inferior to any other. Consider his words in the essay "To the Christian Nobility":

It follows from this argument that there is no true, basic difference between laymen and priests...between religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of status. They are all of the spiritual estate, all are truly priests, bishops, and popes.19

Yet, Luther can also sound much less egalitarian than this. In his 1527 commentary on 1 Timothy, for example, he says: "[God] considers this [the teaching of the word] the greatest thing that goes on in the church."20

In other words, in the more restrictive passages, authors like St. Paul and Luther might be said (i) to be inconsistent, or (ii) to be accommodating themselves to backward thinking, or (iii) themselves to be bound to older ways, or (iv) to be giving advice which, in this instance, is situational and context-bound.21 Or, it might be said (v) that the passage is not written by the same man. But a sixth explanation, and, I would contend, a more satisfactory explanation, is somewhat different from them all. A more satisfactory explanation is that the sweeping generalizations are not really so sweeping, not so all-encompassing, not so general, after all. They too are contextual, spoken within specific, real-life situations, in the end. Thus, when Martin Luther extols the priesthood of all believers, its value, its freedom, its authority, and its rights, is he not, in his given situation, extolling that priesthood in the face of a Roman Catholic insistence that the church is really the hierarchy of clergy,22 that laity must be subservient to ecclesiastical authorities, even in matters of the state, and that the Reformation movement was actually quite illegitimate, at its very core? And when St. Paul speaks of our oneness in Christ, no differences between Jew and
Greek, slave and free, male and female, might he not be addressing a Galatian context in which barriers for people were common and in which access to and worthiness before God was severely limited by laws of every kind? This is most likely the case, and, therefore, we observe that in a different context, when different concerns arise—in the two cases I have presented, when confronted not by external devaluation but by internal anarchy, or, differently conceived, when confronted, not by a problem of worth but by a problem of organization or of order—the talk of men like Luther and St. Paul is significantly less egalitarian, indeed! The context-bound nature of all discourse is the basis of "deconstructive" analysis of texts, which takes as its primary task the de-constructing or "unmasking" of the moves made by authors, when the meaning of texts is assumed to be obvious and when the scope of a text's description (or prescription) is seen to be totalizing or complete. And this observation shifts our focus to the interpretation of texts and to the "moves" interpreters make in dealing with texts, to which we will now turn.

**Concomitantly, all interpretation of discourse is situated or contextualized, which means that there is no objective interpretation of any text.** Otherwise expressed, all interpretation involves an interpreter in a given context, which interpreter is never uninvolved or detached from the process of interpretation. This principle is true for two reasons. First, it is true because of how the process of the interpretation of texts itself proceeds. Consider that readers/receptors of any text are hardly passive in the reading of any text. First, they activate what they see, making the marks on the page "say" something instead of simply defacing a sheet of paper. Second, they decipher the words they identify as conveyers of meaning, which includes connecting or matrixing their meanings, dealing with ambiguity, and filling in the shorthand of the text. Third, they interpret the text on a second level, which involves, if it is a narrative, for example, "reading" the significance of the deeds, situations, and conditions, which are depicted, and this with minimal guidance or direction. Finally, interpreters may, if they so choose, interpret on still another level, detecting implications of what is said for the reconstruction of the author's situation. To put it pos-
itively, the readers/receptors of any text play an important, active role in the process of textual interpretation.

All of this may be viewed in yet another way. Readers/receptors are themselves complexes of beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, ideas, experiences, and so forth. When they interpret, these are brought into connection with the text as interpretation takes place and proceeds. The readers' beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, ideas, experiences, and so on, become part of the matrix for textual interpretation, so that nothing is interpreted in a text, unless it is part of a matrix with what the interpreters are as persons. They are, as it were, texts themselves, complementary "second texts," we might say, which are always a factor in textual interpretation. Therefore, the interpretation of any given text involves, in actual fact, two texts: the given or "target" text (for example, the book of Galatians or Genesis), and, as part of the matrix for understanding the target text (as a whole or focused on any of its parts), the so-called "second text" of the person/s doing the interpretation. And it is "against" the features of the "second text" that the target is, in fact, interpreted. Thus, the significance that Jesus is divine, perceived in the matrix or collocation of Jesus' miracles in Matthew (11:2-6) will be the result of a further matrix between these activities portrayed and the interpreter's own personal self as text. But different beliefs and different experiences in life could lead to another conclusion, for example, that Jesus was in league with Satan (Matt. 12:24). The same is true for the perceived significance that Jesus was totally human, derived from a matrix of several passages in Mark. Another's personal second text could lead to the conclusion that, as fully human, Jesus Christ was not also fully divine (against classical Christology) but simply possessed by God.28 To restate the last sentence of the previous paragraph in the terms here given: the reader's self as "second text" is active in virtually all phases of textual interpretation.

Second, there is no such thing as objective, non-reader-involved interpretation because of how literature itself is "set up" and "works."29 Here, our focus is upon literary documents and how communication through those documents takes place. We can begin to understand this set-up and working by examining a diagram
which details the distinction between the reader, the text, the author, and the story of the text, using a narrative text as the example:\textsuperscript{30}

![](image)

The inner box represents the (physical) text. The actual author (#1) and the actual reader(s) (#5) are concrete entities in the world outside the text, while the action of the story (#3), which constitutes the "world" of the text, is not physically in the text (not as the marks are on the page) but is depicted or evoked by the signifiers of the text itself.\textsuperscript{31} What, then, is the relationship between the readers, on the one hand, and the text, author, and story, on the other? The readers (#5) read the text, and in so doing they "(re)construct" the author in their own imaginations = the "implied author" (#2), plus, they bring the story (#3) to life ("actualize the text") from the marks which they see on the written page.

But what is on the opposite side of the implied author (#2) in the scheme? The answer is the obverse of or the complement of the left side, namely, readers of whom the author is conscious, who may also be called "implied." And these implied readers (#4) stand in the same relationship to the actual readers as the implied author stands to the actual author; they are, again, a construct, not in the real world, and they are detectible (only) in the text.\textsuperscript{32} These implied readers are persons, receptors, with that knowledge, those abilities, that competency, which enables them to "actualize" the text. They are a conception of the author; it is for them that the author writes, although they never correspond fully to any actual readers of the text. Who, then, is a valid interpreter of a text? It is the one who conforms to the expectations of the author. It is the one who conforms to the given text’s assumptions. It is the one and only the one who becomes the implied reader of a given text. Which means that an "objective" reading, a non-involved reading of a text, is not only impossible; it is not to be desired! More
positively expressed, adequate interpretation of a text is not to have no assumptions; rather, it is to proceed with the proper assumptions. Readers are not to have no involvement; rather they are to be involved in the proper way. The implied author and reader schema, by the way, exercises an important control over the two-text interpretation process described several paragraphs above, because, with the exception of radical post-structuralist interpretation which avowedly “reads against the grain,” only readings which are done by interpreters who seek to conform to the implied reader make “satisfactory” sense out of the acknowledged key elements and organizing features of the text. They are, in two words, “more satisfying” as a whole.

A corollary can be seen when we further ask where one finds the implied readers of the Bible or any other text. The answer of post-modern criticism is, and the answer of the church traditionally has been that one does not find them by looking for an individual, for a reader is not alone. Readers are taught to read. Readers handle language, because they are instructed. Readers develop beliefs and attitudes, a personal or “second” text, by conversation and discussion. Readers thus interpret in a community, with other readers, with other receptors, with those who are their contemporaries, and with those who have gone before. Therefore, readers can become implied readers, only as they are trained to be those implied readers, within a context where the implied reader of a text is appreciated and understood. A valid interpreter of a text, then, is that person who assumes the role “required,” as it were, by a given text, who becomes the reader “implied” or called for by that very text. And such a one is formed to assume that role by a community, a community which has assumed that role itself.

But, then, we may ask, “Are all community interpretations equal?” There is probably no agreement on the answer, and a radical post-modern answer would be “definitely, yes!” But I would propose that the community which has produced, received, and preserved a given set of documents—or, better put, that community whose personal formation includes the production, reception, and preservation of a given set of documents—is likely to teach its members to read those documents in a way “congenial”
to them, that is, in such a way as to find in the texts what reasonably may be found in them. In such a community there will be those who can assume the role of the “implied reader” of the documents. That is to say, this community’s members will possess the competencies for interpretation called for by its documents, for they will operate by a set of beliefs, standards, and knowledge congruent with the beliefs, standards, and knowledge of those who produced those documents and, therefore, congruent with the beliefs, standards, and knowledge assumed by the texts themselves. Therefore, to be able to assume the role of the “implied reader” for a given set of documents, one must be a member of the community of those documents and be taught to read by it.  

What does this mean for a reading of the sacred Scriptures? It means, it would seem, the following: As far as the New Testament is concerned (the Old Testament presents its own unique set of difficulties in this regard) these books were produced, received, and preserved by the Christian community. Therefore, that community is likely to teach its members to read these documents in a way “congenial” to them, to assume, as we have said, the role of the “implied reader” as they read. To assume the role of the “implied reader” of the documents of the New Testament, therefore, one must be within the Christian community and be taught to read by it. Put into the terms of this argumentation: as one is in the church and adopts what is confessed, one’s “personal text” becomes congruent with the “personal text” of those who produced, received, and preserved those New Testament texts.

Much more traditionally expressed, to be in that Christian community is to adhere to, to confess, and to interpret the Scriptures within the context of its creeds and the regula fidei, which underlies the creeds. Such creeds and regula are not something foreign to the books of the New Testament. On the contrary, they are—and from the first were seen as—“of a piece” with these very books, in that they are drawn from the same apostolic source. Therefore, to live within the creeds and regula gives one a matrix or an orientation to the books of the New Testament, an orientation which is congenial to them and which enables one to interpret them in accordance with their intention. To interpret
from outside this context risks what Irenaeus says of the Valentinians and other heretics: their teachings, which “neither the prophets announced, nor the Lord taught, nor the apostles delivered,” cause them “to adapt...to their own peculiar assertions the parables of the Lord, the sayings of the prophets, and the words of the apostles...,” and in so doing they “disregard the order and connection of the Scriptures, and so far as in them lies, dismember and destroy the truth.”

Wall, treating the _regula_ specifically, puts it thus: “Scripture is not self-interpreting...but is rather rendered coherent and relevant by faithful interpreters whose interpretations are constrained by this Rule.” It was for this reason that some of the early church fathers contended that the heretics had no right to use the Scriptures in their argumentation against the church.

This is the context in which we must view our Lutheran Confessions. The confessional documents stand firmly within the tradition of the creeds and of the _regulae fidei_ of the early church, and they have a specific function regarding scriptural interpretation. That function is a matter of discussion, of course, because in one respect they are significantly different than the early church’s _regulae_ and creeds. They are avowedly drawn from the Scriptures themselves and are not, so to speak, “independently apostolic,” as are the _regulae_ and the creeds. Several models have been proposed for the relationship of the Confessions to the Scriptures, but whatever view is taken, the same position is proposed: our interpretation of Scripture as Lutherans is not “objective.” Rather, it is creedal and confessional and, therefore, properly “subjective,” with our “second texts” seeking to be in conformity with the implied readers detectable in the Scriptures themselves.

_Cconcerning Comprehensive Explanation_

We now turn to the second of post-modernism’s insights, that concerning disbelief in comprehensive, totalizing explanation. According to this insight, reality is complex and antinomous, not
single and totally coherent. Again, we focus both upon the characteristics of discourse itself and upon method of interpretation.

All discourse is perspectival and partial; it does not convey an easy, comprehensive message and therefore an easy, comprehensive picture of reality. The background for this principle is, again, contemporary physics, which has many surprising characteristics. To review several of the most important: according to relativity theory, time slows down as speed increases; according to quantum theory, matter has a dual nature, exhibiting characteristics of both particles and waves; and, the results of relativity theory and quantum theory cannot, at the present time, be reconciled to produce a Grand Unification Theory or Supersymmetry Theory of everything in the universe.

Two things may be noted which are relevant to scriptural interpretation. On the one hand, the discovery by de Broglie that matter has a dual nature, exhibiting at some times particle characteristics and at other times wave characteristics, brought to the forefront the issue of perspective on a very delimited scale. There is no comprehensive explanation of light in the quantum world. From one perspective, in accord with one set of experiments, light behaves as particles do; its wave characteristics do not appear. From another perspective, in accord with another set of experiments, it behaves as waves do; its particle characteristics do not appear. In this situation, several models are needed for explanation. Furthermore, the models ("waves" and "particles") do not cohere. They do not fit together smoothly. They are antinomous with one another. One configuration of data will be congruent with one model; another configuration will be congruent with another, and the twain shall never meet. Yet each will provide a valid understanding.

Lutherans should have little problem with this insight. In fact, in many respects, we have been "ahead of the curve" all along. We are familiar with the contrast between law and gospel, and we tend to divide all Scripture into these two contrasting categories. Also helpful is the contrast between simul justus et peccator within the Christian life. Even better, exhibiting the antinomous nature of the clash of models, is the Lutheran concept of the Christian as totus
*justus et totus peccator.* We as Lutherans expect these modular understandings of our relationship to God and of the Christian life to be present in the sacred texts.

On the other hand, the general contrast of contemporary physics (whether Einsteinian or Quantum) with classical or Newtonian physics provides a clash of models and perspectives on a massive scale. The world of Newton in and of itself assumes an everyday perspective, a human perspective on the ordinary world around us. Its perspective is intuitive, and its data are phenomenological. Its world does not seem odd (time, for example, is constant), and things in this world are as they appear (space is not curved but extends outward). By contrast the universe of Einstein, both the relativity theory and the quantum theory, exhibits characteristics and assumes a perspective which is quite the opposite in all respects. It assumes not an everyday perspective but the perspective of scientists and researchers, and its focus is not upon the objects of our everyday life and world, but, rather, upon distant galaxies and subatomic quarks. Its perspective is counter-intuitive, its data are mathematical, and its world is very odd (there is no gravity, only the geometry of space), with things not at all as they would seem (there is no solid matter; forces are the key). Put another way, the general contrast of the assumed perspectives between Newtonian classical physics, on the one hand, and of Einsteinian contemporary physics, on the other, is a contrast of frames of reference and of scale. The frame of reference assumed by, and the scale of, Newton is everyday life as we know it, while the frame of reference assumed by, and the scale of, Einstein is the universe "as it truly is."

Now, this contrast can also be seen in the texts of sacred scripture analogically. There is an intuitive, everyday, phenomenological understanding of us, of God, and of our relationship to God within these texts—a "Newtonian theology," as it were. And there is a counter-intuitive, universe-as-it-is, non-phenomenological understanding of us, of God, and of our relationship to him, an "Einsteinian theology," so to speak. Let me characterize them briefly, according to four characteristics: God and his actions, the state of humankind, personal salvation, and the Christian life.
First, let us consider biblical theology according to the everyday “Newtonian” perspective.

1. God and His Actions: According to the “Newtonian” perspective, God is revealed as a partner, one who responds to what human beings do. He is pleased by the sacrifices of people and responds to them (Genesis 8:21: When the Lord smelled the pleasing odor [of Noah’s sacrifice] the Lord said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man. . .”). He is pleased by all those who fear him and do what is good and acceptable in his sight (Acts 10:35). He is not far from us (Acts 17:27). In this perspective, God changes his mind and can be appealed to to change (see Abraham and Sodom and Gomorrah [Gen. 18:22–33]).

2. Humankind’s State: In this perspective, the human state is revealed as bad, but we are not helpless and therefore not without responsibility. We are ignorant (Acts 17:30). We walk in our own ways (Acts 14:16). We are distant from God (Acts 17:27).

3. Personal Salvation: In the “Newtonian” perspective, we must in some way respond to our situation and to the approach of God. We can seek after him and find him (Acts 17:27). We are called to repent (Acts 17:30). We are called to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation (Acts 16:31). We are told to turn to the living God (Acts 14:15).

4. The Christian Life: According to this perspective, the Christian life is one of responsible personal action. We as Christians have the ability to respond positively and to overcome the evil in our lives. All of the exhortations in Deuteronomy and in the Pauline epistles would essentially fall into this class, e.g., “Let sin never reign in your mortal bodies.” From this perspective, sin in the Christian life is like the black horse which vies with the white horse to pull the (“neutral”) charioteer in its own direction. The exhortations are to the charioteer, who has the responsibility to decide in which direction he would go.

This first perspective is phenomenological; it is the view from within our time and from within our daily lives. In general, it is the way things seem from our experience and the way reality strikes us, especially outside times of crisis. It is the way things also seem to outsiders, as one can note in the approaches taken in the evangelism efforts in Acts. This is “Newtonian” theology, as it were, the view of the way religion and our lives strike us day by day.
Now let us consider theology according to the second perspective, the “Einsteinian” theology.

1. God and His Actions: According to the Einsteinian perspective, God is revealed as creator, elector, savior, and life-giver. He created and creates out of nothing (Gen. 1). He chooses and he says to his people, “…the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people of his own possession…” (Deut. 7:6). He is the creator of the new creation of those who are in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). His people are made holy and justified by him (1 Cor. 6:11). He gives them life (Col. 2:13).

2. Humankind’s State: According to this perspective, people are revealed as in a hopeless condition. They are lost (Luke 19:10). They are totally in the dark (John 1:5); Jesus is the Light of the World (John 8:12). They are sinful and while such, Christ died for them (Rom. 5:8). Most of all, they are dead (Col. 2:13) and cannot help themselves.

3. Personal Salvation: In “Einsteinian” theology; this is the act of God alone. We contribute nothing. He died for us (Rom. 5:8); he chooses (John 15:16); he makes alive (Eph. 2:5); he saves (Luke 19:10); he finds those who are lost (Luke 15:1ff).

4. The Christian Life: This, too, is God’s act, from the view of this perspective. The chief passage here is Romans 7. We are wretched and do what we desire not to do, Paul says. We must be delivered from our body of death, saved by someone else, even when we are Christians! Christians, from this perspective, are not much better off than unbelievers, in some respects. They must still cry with David, “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Ps. 51:10). Or again: “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean” (Ps. 51:7). From this perspective, sin is like cancer: it ravages Christians and they are helpless against it. They certainly do not have to be encouraged to hate it, for as Paul says in his despair: “The evil that I do not desire, that is what I do (Rom. 7:19b). . . . I am a terribly wretched man; who will deliver me from this body of death” (Rom. 7:24).

This second perspective is the eternal one, *sub specie aeternitatis*, which is God’s point of view, one might say. It is the perspective for mature consideration of one’s person and of one’s situation; thus, it is the position also of the desperate person who has experienced the depths (cf. Ps. 51). This is the “Einstein” view, “Einsteinian” theology, as it were; it is the perspective of “what is really going on.”
How are these two theological perspectives related? Even as Newtonian and Einsteinian physics are related: both are true but both are true on different scales or in different frames of reference. “Newtonian” theology is true from a normal human point of view. “Einsteinian” theology is true from God’s eternal point of view. Each is necessary to understand and to function in the world in which we live. Indeed, Luther struggled with this problem until his final day.60

There are tremendous advantages to the approach I have here suggested for us as Lutheran interpreters, we who have learned to and can live with paradox and antinomy, both in the sacred Scriptures and in our Christian lives. First, the “Newtonian/Einsteinian” approach helps us to understand ourselves as Lutheran thinkers and interpreters of texts. We are “Einsteinian” to the core. Methodists and Baptists are “Newtonian” in their bones.61 And we all have passages and insights on our side! It also helps us to appreciate each view. “Einstein” has his weaknesses, of course. He can seem irrelevant—too complicated—day by day. “Newton” is more “practical,” in the minds of most. But when real explanation is required, “Einstein” simply cannot be beat. There are no good “Newtonian” sermons at the side of a child’s funeral casket. Indeed, the approach we are here suggesting may shed some light upon the so-called problem of the “Third Use of the Law” among Lutherans. The Third Use of the Law is essentially a “Newtonian” use, it would seem (guidance for how to live), as is the First Use. The Second Use is “Einsteinian” (Lex semper accusat, no matter how you act). To use the Third Use of the Law at the end of a sermon is in some ways to switch categories, as much as it is to switch from gospel to law, as we always fear. The real challenge is in not letting people believe that “Newtonian” statements are complete analyses of reality, but to have them see them for what they really are.62

Second, the approach suggested also helps us to be gentle with the sacred text, enabling us to be patient with it, not finding undue difficulties and problems within virtually every part. Could the psalmist say in the same Psalm: “For you have no delight in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased” (Ps. 51:16), in close proximity to “Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, then will you delight in
right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings” (Ps. 51:18–19a)? They are only two verses apart. Yes, he really could; it is likely not another source. It is “Einstein” next to “Newton.” Could Paul the apostle say: “We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom. 7:14), in close proximity to “But now, having been liberated from sin, and having been enslaved to God, you have fruit issuing in holiness and its end, eternal life” (Rom. 6:22)? They are but one chapter removed from one another. Yes, he really could; it is not a psychological problem on his part. It is “Einstein” next to “Newton.” Indeed, we see the close proximity of these two perspectives in Phil. 2:12–13: “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling [Newton]; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure [Einstein]. The Scriptures use both models and perspectives, of this we must be aware.

In summary, then, for this entire section, I propose that the sacred scriptures are more complex than you and I have ever suspected in our wildest dreams. This means that awe and humility before these texts is the proper posture, especially in our day, and that hard work lies before us as we engage in their interpretation. Finally, I would contend that all interpretation of discourse is perspectival and partial, even as is the discourse of our texts. Here again, contemporary physics is a key, especially de Broglie and his experiments with light. De Broglie discovered in his work that what you look for determines in a large measure what you see and what you do not see. If you do an experiment in which light will be able to behave as waves, it will behave as waves, and you will not see particle characteristic as you look. If you do an experiment in which light will be able to behave as particles, it will behave as particles, and you will not see it as waves. In other words, the object of investigation will exhibit different characteristics depending upon the perspective of the observer in each case. It is just so with texts. Do you come with a dispensational-millenialist perspective and not a-millennial glasses on your eyes? You will find dispensations of God’s activity in the text, and a-millennial activity will not
appear. Do you come with a Law-Gospel dichotomy as you read? You will find these divisions in the text, and other divisions will recede. Do you feel your sins cannot be forgiven? Then the verse “...God has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Is. 53:6) will be to you the purest Law, for your sins put him on the tree. Do you look for sins forgiven? Then “...God has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Is. 53:6) will be to you the purest grace, your sins were taken to the tree. For this reason, texts can seem quite different to us at different times within our lives.64

Conclusion

When we think about what goes on as we as Lutherans interpret written texts, especially the texts of sacred Scripture, we may be surprised to find that our understanding of that process is enhanced by, if not actually enabled by, our current context, the post-modern world in which we live. Modernism’s ideals of a detached mind doing objective assessment of data and arriving at objective, comprehensive explanations of what is under consideration is not only passé; it seems to be seriously flawed and not congruent with the process as it actually takes place. This should not threaten us; Lutherans are uniquely suited to affirm this insight.65 With our developing understanding of what interpretation of the text of sacred Scripture actually entails, we are wonderfully situated to present our biblical theology and to express our interpretive method in a way which is intelligible to the post-moderns in our world.

NOTES


2. Walter T. Anderson notes that “constructionist science” knows only “versions” of the world and he concludes, “since we are admitting that anything we say about ‘out there’ is a construct, don’t we create ‘out there’ also?” Reality Isn’t what It Used to Be (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), 76.

3. Strictly speaking, this way of putting it is true of us modernists in the West. His-
torically, Newtonian physics was itself revolutionary, contrary to "the appearances," that is, to what seemed natural to everyday observation. "Aristotle's cosmological system, which had survived almost intact for two thousand years, was based on a common-sense view of the universe. To the ordinary observer the sky seems to move . . . " With Newton's theories, by contrast. "[m]an was no longer at the center of a system created for his edification by the Almighty: the earth was merely a small planet in an incomprehensibly vast and inanimate universe. . . ." James Burke, The Day the Universe Changed, (Boston: Little, Brown. 1985), 132 and 161. See also Roger S. Jones, Physics For the Rest of Us (Chicago: Contemporary Press. 1992), 100—101. For us, however, Newton's revolutionary theory of universal gravitation now seems congruent with our everyday understanding of life.

5. Ibid. 59—62.
6. Ibid, 76.
10. Jones, 162—166. The following quote from Gribbin (160) is typical: "... whereas in classical physics we imagine a system of interacting particles to function, like clockwork, regardless of whether or not they are observed, in quantum physics the observer interacts with the system to such an extent that the system cannot be thought of as having independent existence"
11. Jones, 304—314. Perhaps the best attempt at unification is so-called "string theory," which involves "superstrings." whose vibrations account for all elementary constituents of nature and the four dimensional space time of relativity (Jones, 313—314). As one might expect, "string theory," which requires ten dimensions, has not achieved general recognition (Jones, 101, 172 note).
12. For a similar but more general argumentation, see Robert E. Webber, Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World (Grand Rapids. MI: Baker, 1999), 21. He says: "The first and perhaps most fundamental challenge to modernity with its emphasis on reason and the empirical method has come from the twentieth-century revolution in science."
Webber, properly in my view, sees a philosophical revolution and a communications revolution building upon the revolutionary developments in science: "... the new philosophical thought . . . is a response to the scientific revolution. (22) . . . The revolution in communicaion, birthed after 1950, has followed the same trajectory" (24) One might add a revolution in the social sciences to this list. The revolution in the hard sciences provides the base-line warrant for a revolution in thinking in the other disciplines.
13. See the discussion in James Voelz, What Does This Mean? 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1997). 109—114.
14. There is, of course, the exceptional situation in which old or archaic meanings are specifically selected, but that is another matter and an exceptional case. Equally different and exceptional is technical linguistic usage.
15. Hans W. Frei, Eclipse of Biblical Narrative (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974). 37. Frei also makes this point by saying that in this era, the contemporary world
(of, e.g., the 14th century) was seen as of-a-piece with the Biblical world, so that descriptions and assertions made in the scriptures were immediately applicable to the reader of the day.


18. Both Dawn and I understand Paul to be the author of the pastoral epistles. Indeed, for the many who see the pastorals as deutero-Pauline, part of the difficulty is the clash of outlooks discussed in this section.


21. This would correspond to Dawn's type (C) text in her essay on hermeneutical considerations.


23. The same thing is seen in Exodus, which has a discussion of the priesthood of all of God's people Israel and a discussion of the more restricted, Levitical priesthood.


25. As an example, the Augsburg Confession VII (hereafter AC) and its satis est assertion concerning the true unity of the church is not an abstract statement, a non-contextualized programmatic utterance which stands isolated in and of itself. Rather, it is uttered contextually, vis à vis the Roman Catholic assertion that the Reformers destroyed the true unity of the church by their proclamation and their actions. Article VII asserts that the true unity of the church is maintained if the Gospel is preached purely and the sacraments administered rightly; allegiance to a church organization or commonality in traditions is not necessary for the maintenance of this unity. Therefore, AC VII does not constitute an abstract, if not minimalistic principle for establishing denominational pulpit and altar fellowship. Similar observations can be made on the sola scriptura principle. See Phil Mullins, ed. "Sacred Texts in the Sea of Texts" in Philosophical Perspectives on Computer-Mediated Communication, edited with introduction by Charles Ess (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996). 271-302 especially p. 282 and note 13.


27. Indeed, the interpreters must also do many other complex operations on this level, including "filling in the blanks" of the story world and matrixing the deeds of the story together for an overall narrative significance.

28. No part of an interpretive matrix is unaffected in the process of interpretation. That is to say, the meaning of any given part is affected by the meaning of every other part. Therefore, the meaning of the target text affects interpreters as "second text," i.e., their understanding of their experiences, ideas, beliefs, etc. We call this, commonly, "application." See Voelz, 323-325.

30. The diagram presented is my own variation of a standard diagram (see, e.g., Keegan, 94), normally attributed to Seymour Chatman, Story and Discourse (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 146-151.

31. I have made the outline of this somewhat amorphous, because the content of a story will be different when read by different readers or when read repeatedly by the same reader.

32. It may also be said that the detection of the implied reader is accomplished only by a reader in the act of reading.

33. Note that for the sacred scriptures, personal faith would seem to be involved as one characteristic of the implied reader. St. Paul writes "to the saints" (Rom. 1:7). St. Luke tells Theophilus that he writes "that you may know the surety of those matters in which you were first instructed" (Luke 1:4). The role of personal faith in interpretation is, itself, a large issue and worthy of a complete discussion. See Voelz, 223-226.

34. See the provocative Stephen D. Moore, Post-Structuralism and the New Testament: Derrida and Foucault at the Foot of the Cross (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Such a reading is a dubious enterprise for it sees texts as catalysts to personal insight rather than as documents which seek communication. It "balkanizes" the use of literature and our understanding of it, reducing virtually all readings to expressions of the will to power.

35. In this and the previous sentence certain terms are put into quotation marks. I realize that there is argument over what is "satisfactory" and which readings are "satisfying," but that is the nature of interpretation.

36. We said above that two factors are involved in the "non-objectivity" surrounding texts: 1) all data is situated and this gives rise to contextualized understanding, and 2) all consideration of that data entails heavy involvement by the interpreter. The first of our points within this section, namely, concerning textual discourse itself, focused on the former factor and the second, concerning textual interpretation, on the latter. It is important to note, however, that each point does involve both factors. The discourse of any text is actually the result of the interpretation of reality by its author, thus entailing involvement of the author as interpreter, while textual interpretation, taking place (as it does) against the interpreter as second text, finds its data contextualized within the features of that (second) text.


38. Community instruction encompasses such basic things as grammar. For example, does a ἵνα clause ever convey result in the New Testament? (The answer is disputed.) It is because of the commonality of community that one can communicate at all. A community gives us a common understanding of language and of life.


40. Note that this analysis does not mean that a text is a "waxen nose," as many who evaluate positions such as this seem to fear, though it is far more flexible than many believe. Cf. Anthony Thiselton, New Horizons in Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan,
A text, because it is an item of intention and not an arbitrary pattern with no preconceived intentionality, does have the ability to judge the community of which it is a part. In other words, a text can "rise up on its hind legs," as it were, and say to the very people whom it serves: "You are wrong! You must rethink!" And this dialectical relationship between text and community, between the produced and those who produce and who preserve, is seen repeatedly within the history of the church.

41. See Voelz, 226—229 for a treatment of this topic in this context.

42. Note that the question of canon comes immediately to the fore.

43. The *regula fidei* or Rule of Faith (also called the Rule of Truth) did have a general content, though it appeared in different localities expressed slightly differently, addressing slightly different concerns. Hence, one can speak of *regulae fidei* or of "rules" (plural) of faith. A typical example is given by Irenaeus in *Adversus Haereses* I, 10, 1 ("Against Heresies," in *Ante-Nicene Fathers. The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D 325*, Vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 330. The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: [She believes] in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and His [future] manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father "to gather all things in one," and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race, in order that to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Saviour, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, "every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess" to Him, and that He should execute just judgment towards all . . .


44. The creeds were either materially identical with the *regula fidei* or a minimal summary of it, according to R.P.C. Hanson (*Tradition in the Early Church* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962], 64—68). Wall (89) describes the relationship between the creeds and the various *regulae* in this way: "Precurors to the later, more formal creeds of the ecumenical church, these "rules" summarized the heart of Christian faith and served as theological boundary markers for Christian identity."

45. What is said here concerning the creeds and *regula* is true also with regard to the Old Testament, as can be seen from the quotations below.

46. See, for example, the argumentation by Irenaeus in *Adversus Haereses* I, 22, 1 ("Against Heresies," 347): "The rule of truth which we hold, is, that there is one God almighty, who made all things by His Word, and fashioned and formed, out of that which had no existence, all things which exist. Thus saith the Scripture, to that effect: 'By The Word of the Lord were the heavens established, and all the might of them, by the spirit of His mouth.' And again, 'All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made.'"
This is what Martin Chemnitz (Examination of the Council of Trent, Part 1. translated by Frederick Kramer [St. Louis: Concordia. 1971] 231) calls, following Irenaeus, "[t]he tradition of the apostles, which has been made known in all the world." See Chemnitz's outstanding discussion of different kinds of tradition (Topic 2, "Concerning Traditions," 223–307) and the relationship of these different kinds of tradition to the interpretation of the Scriptures. For a fine contemporary treatment, see Wall. 96–99.

48. To focus on one portion of this in the present terminology, we can say that adherence to the creeds and regula enables one to "matrix" what one encounters in a text for interpretation and then to interpret that matrix in a way which is "congenial" to the text, for the creeds and regula are of one piece with that text and provide, as it were, the interpretive "key" to the matrix at large.

49. Adversus Haereses I, 8, 1 ("Against Heresies," 326). Irenaeus goes on to illustrate this with a vivid example (326): such people act as a man would do if he, having "a beautiful image of a king...constructed by some skilful artist out of precious jewels," were to "take this likeness of the man all to pieces,...re-arrange the gems, and so fit them together as to make them into the form of a dog or of a fox....and...then maintain and declare that this was the beautiful image of the king which the skilful artist constructed, pointing to the jewels which had been admirably fitted together by the first artist...." Chemnitz (244) expresses this truth with a slightly different focus: "[T]here is no doubt that the primitive church received from the Apostles and apostolic men, not only the text (as we say) of the Scriptures, but also its legitimate and natural interpretation."

50. Wall. 97. See, for example the argumentation by Irenaeus in Adversus Haereses I, 10, 3 ("Against Heresies," 331): "...one may...bring out the meaning of those things which have been spoken in parables, and accommodate them to the general scheme of the faith...." It is for this reason that the regula and creeds had a normative function when interpretations of Scripture were in dispute. In the words of Wall (89): "The [regulae] were statements of core theological affirmations, which might continue to serve the church as criteria for assessing the coherence of one's interpretation of Scripture." Similarly, Frances Young (The Making of Creeds [London: SCM, 1991], 9) says that the early church regarded the creeds as "a normative over-view, as 'apostolic' and as the standard to which appeal was to be made when controversy about the content or interpretation of scripture arose."


52. The confessors of the 16th century recognized that the creeds (especially the Apostles' Creed) can trace their lineage back to the regulae fidei which contained the sum of apostolic doctrine. The early fathers indicate that these precursors reach back to the processes of handing on the faith orally by the apostles and not directly from the Scriptures alone, as we have indicated above. The summarized content which they represented, however, was entirely congruent with the Scriptures and contained nothing that could not be found in the Scriptures themselves. And so the early church regarded such a "normative over-view as 'apostolic' and as the standard to which appeal was to be made
when controversy about the content or interpretation of scripture arose" (Young, 9). What might be said of the earliest regulæ fidei and the creeds cannot be said with reference to the 16th-century Lutheran Confessions from the Augustana to the Formula of Concord (hereafter FC). Without exception, the confessors claim to draw their doctrine from the fountains of Scripture themselves. See The Book of Concord, Theodore G. Tappert, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959, 503-4, 506; Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelsch-lutherischen Kirche, 11th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1992), 833: 1-15, 834: 16-21; 837: 16ff. The Augsburg Confession concludes on the note that the confessors are ready to present further information on the basis of Scripture (AC 28 Tappert, 81-94). The Formula of Concord pledges itself to the Augsburg Confession “because it is taken from the Word of God and solidly and well grounded therein.” Tappert, 504 (SD, Rule and Norm, Summary Formulation, 3).

53. But see footnote 3. above.

54. The world of relativity and the world of quantum also clash with each other, and on a massive scale, but that is another matter and not relevant to the point at hand.

55. Here the parallel to contemporary physics begins to break down. While the Einstein view is more “real” than the Newtonian view, it does not pretend to describe how things actually are in any objective (not to mention literal) sense.

56. Rom 6.12; see also Deut. 30: 11-18a.

57. See Paul Raabe and James Voelz, “Why Exhort a Good Tree: Anthropology and Paraenesis in Romans,” in Concordia Journal 22 (1996): 154-163, where we apply the ideas articulated here specifically to the paraenetic sections of Paul’s epistle to the Romans. That article also discusses the images of the charioteer/white horse/black horse with reference to its Platonic background.

58. More positively put, Paul declares that God is responsible for all of the good within him. He says that he no longer lives; rather, “Christ lives within me” (Gal. 2:20).

59. But see footnote 55, above.

60. See especially William C. Placher’s important book The Domestication of Transcendence. How Modern Thinking About God Went Wrong (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), which seeks to demonstrate that Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin all developed systems of theology which struggled with the contrast between the divine and human point of view. Indeed, his presentation of Luther’s understanding of deus absconditus and deus revelatus is quite congruent with what is argued in this paper (51): “Luther was struggling with a legitimate problem of perspective or standpoint. From God’s perspective, the pieces do fit together, and one could see God at work, even in the trials of our lives. But no human theologian can occupy that perspective, and so, even to make such confident claims is to reach beyond faith.” See also his discussion of Calvin’s struggles with the problem of the will(s) of God and the question of predestination (63-64).

61. So are transdenominational movements, by and large: WWJD, Promise-Keepers, Church Growth, etc. They are practical and thus “Newtonian” at their core, for they are designed to help people in their normal, daily lives. Consider, e.g., a recent piece in the Concordia Seminary student newspaper, Spectrum 31 no. 5 (February 12, 1999), in which a high school student, responding to something asserted in a previous issue concerning WWJD, writes: “I have a bracelet that I try to wear every day because it is a great reminder for me. A couple times this school year I was tempted to look at my neighbor’s paper, when I came to a hard question on a test. But instead of my eyes drifting on the other person’s paper they drifted to the bracelet. Once I saw the bracelet, I realized that I was
about to do something I knew was wrong, and so I didn’t do it.” Here we see “Newton” in all his glory!

62. For further homiletical considerations, see Raabe and Voelz, 162–163.

63. Another example would be the following: According to St. John, Jesus says: “No man can come to me except the Father draw/pull him” (John 6:44). According to St. Luke, Peter says: “God is pleased by all those who fear him and do what is good and acceptable in his sight” (Acts 10:35). These are not competing theologies; they are an “Einstein”/“Newton” clash.

64. We may note that hearing texts as law and hearing texts as gospel is a matter of pragmatics—still another contemporary issue for consideration: it concerns the impact (e.g., accusation, comfort, promise, threat), not the meaning of a text, and it is a special concern of Speech-Act Theory. An author intends an impact for a text (what Speech-Act Theory calls it “illocutionary force”), but it is the readers and interpreters who feel the actual impact of that text (what can be called the actual “perlocutionary force”). Indeed, the perspectives of the readers, the interpreters’ perspectives—and theirs alone—determine the real pragmatics, the final impact of a text. And that pragmatics may change, virtually every time they read. Here we Lutherans have been ahead of the curve, I would say again. We have spoken of three “uses”—perhaps better, three “impacts”—of the law, not three “meanings” of the law (for the content of the law does not change, whatever its impact on us might be). And the actual use, the actual impact of a text, is dependent upon the readers of that text, upon the perspectives which they bring.

65. We as Lutherans have been weaned on law and gospel. For example, for us paradox is nothing new: