

## ***Sola Scriptura*, the Fathers, and the Church: Arguments from the Lutheran Reformers**

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### I. INTRODUCTION

*I learned to show this reverence and respect only to those books of the scriptures that are now called canonical so that I most firmly believe that none of their authors erred in writing anything. And if I come upon something in those writings that seems contrary to the truth, I have no doubt that either the manuscript is defective or the translator did not follow what was said or that I did not understand it. I, however, read other authors in such a way that, no matter how much they excel in holiness and learning, I do not suppose that something is true by reason of the fact that they thought so, but because they were able to convince me either through those canonical authors or by plausible reason that it does not depart from the truth.<sup>1</sup> Augustine to Jerome, Letter 82*

**M**artin Luther and his reforming colleagues maintained that Scripture alone determines the articles of faith. All that the church believes, teaches, and confesses rests upon the authority of the canonical scriptures, upon the unique revelation of God himself through his prophets and apostles. Luther declares, “It will not do to make articles of faith out of

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<sup>1</sup>Augustine, *Letter 82.3* in *Letters 1–99*, trans. Roland Teske (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 316.

the holy Fathers' words or works. ...[T]he Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel."<sup>2</sup> Hermann Sasse, a twentieth-century Lutheran theologian and faithful student of the Reformers, insists, nonetheless, "a church without the Fathers becomes a sect."<sup>3</sup> If the articles of faith depend upon the scriptures alone, a point Sasse himself acknowledges, then why contend that the absence of the Fathers, the church's tradition, leads to sectarianism? What is the relationship between scripture and its faithful reception throughout the history of the church? For Sasse, something of inestimable value rests with the defense and clarification of the articles of faith, with the proper patterns of speech or theological grammar passed on or traditioned by the church's Fathers. Sasse's provocative statement suggests that a church expresses its orthodoxy in two necessary ways: what it believes and confesses, which derives solely from the articles of faith revealed in Scripture, and how it speaks, sings, and prays that confession among the fellowship of the faithful.

If what Sasse says is true, it is not enough that those committed to *sola scriptura* tolerate the reading of the Fathers; they must endorse the reading of the Fathers by the community of the faithful. Here difficulties arise. Reading the Fathers is a daunting task. For the first-time reader, the Fathers resemble more the eccentric John the Baptist than the avuncular magi. Patient readers will discover a shared language with the Fathers but will struggle at times with what we might call their provincial accent. Less patient readers may openly wonder if the Fathers are relevant for our Christianity and our church today. To think this, however, raises Sasse's concern: either the Fathers belong to our church or they do not. If they belong, they were gathered, according to Scripture, by the Holy Spirit through the Word into the church, the Body of Christ, and this to the glory of the Father. If they do not belong, then the Spirit who gathered them is decidedly not the Spirit who gathered us: different Spirit, different faith, different church.

Theologians throughout the history of the church have always had something to say about the authority of Scripture and the place of extra-scriptural authorities like the Fathers, councils, or pope in determining the faith of the church. During the sixteenth century, the different reforming parties vigorously debated these issues of authority and tied them to a proper understanding of the church. Here we see the issue raised by Sasse: our view of the Fathers says something about our understanding of the church. So too we could add that our view of *sola scriptura* for establishing the articles of faith necessary for salvation says something

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<sup>2</sup>Luther *Smalcald Articles* II.II.15 in *The Book of Concord*, ed. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959) [hereafter cited as Tappert], 295 and *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998) [hereafter cited as BSLK], 421.

<sup>3</sup>Hermann Sasse, "Credo Apostolicam Ecclesiam," *Das Luthertum* 47 (1936), 264. "[E]ine Kirche ohne Patristik wird zur Sekte."

about our understanding of the church. The following essay will focus on the exchange between the Lutherans and their Roman opponents during the sixteenth century. Part One will briefly sketch the different positions among the reformers on the Fathers, summarize the early debate between Sylvester Prierias and Martin Luther on the authority of Scripture and the church, and conclude with the settled position of Rome at Trent and the Lutherans with the *Book of Concord*. Part Two will examine the striking claim made by the Lutherans that they represent the catholic position on these questions and not their Roman opponents. We will test their claim by looking closely at Thomas Aquinas, a figure with undisputed catholic credentials and a figure with whom the Lutheran reformers did not often agree.

## II. PART ONE: *SOLA SCRIPTURA*, THE FATHERS, AND THE CHURCH

Andreas Hyperius (1511–1564), a Reformed theologian, observed that many people in his day found the works of the Fathers confusing and unsatisfying because they had little to do with the issues of the day.<sup>4</sup> Some went so far as to reject the Fathers entirely, arguing that they were harmful to the spiritual welfare of the believer. Sebastian Franck (1499–1543), a Spiritualist theologian, decried the history of the church catholic, along with its faith and worship, as the product of antichrist. Franck concluded that his ecclesial and theological identity had nothing to do with the church's long history, so he rejected it. Put in sharper relief, Franck's gospel was not the gospel proclaimed in the early and medieval church. He saw these two gospels as hostile to one another. In a letter to Johann Campanus, Franck named his enemies: Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory the Great. He declared, "not even one knew the Lord, so help me God, nor was sent by God to teach. But rather all were the apostles of Antichrist and are that still."<sup>5</sup> In Franck's estimation, Ambrose and Augustine, among others, embraced a false god and false gospel and therefore belonged to a false church.

Franck's construal of ecclesiology and the doctrine of God echo the best insights of the Fathers, even if they were not his Fathers. Cyprian of Carthage once remarked, "A person cannot have God as Father who does not have church as mother."<sup>6</sup> Augustine repeated Cyprian's comment and

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<sup>4</sup>Andreas Hyperius *Methodus theologiae* (Basel: J. Oporinus, 1567), 2–3. For a discussion of Hyperius, see Irena Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 199.

<sup>5</sup>Autobiographical Letter to Johann Campanus, in *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, ed. G. H. Williams (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), 151.

<sup>6</sup>Cyprian *De Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitate* 6 in *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1866ff.) [hereafter cited as CSEL], 3.1, 214.23–24.

established its canonical status for the western church. By the time of the sixteenth century, Jesuit Peter Canisius would quote it as “the rule of Cyprian and Augustine.”<sup>7</sup> Luther too affirmed this rule in his *Large Catechism*. When someone asks you how the Holy Spirit makes you holy, you respond, explains Luther, “Through the Christian church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.” Luther especially emphasized the place of the church in delivering these saving gifts to the believer:

It [the church] is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God. The Holy Spirit reveals and preaches that Word, and by it he illumines and kindles hearts so that they grasp and accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it... For where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Spirit to create, call, and gather the Christian church, and outside it no one can come to the Lord Christ.<sup>8</sup>

Franck, with striking honesty, declared the mother who spiritually begat Augustine as alien to him as Augustine’s God. Therefore, Franck rejected Augustine, his God, and his church.

Despite their shared commitment to *sola scriptura*, Luther and Franck arrived at very different understandings of the church and the place of the church’s tradition for securing a proper interpretation of scripture. Luther’s commitment to the Fathers and the church’s catholic tradition is even more noteworthy given the strong claims for tradition made by his Roman opponents. The cry often went out against Luther and his colleagues, “church, church, fathers, fathers, councils, councils.”<sup>9</sup> In a sermon before the faithful in Wittenberg, Luther reports, “the papists...shout: “Church! Church!” They declare that everything the church has ordered and the fathers have said must be obeyed. ...They flatly declare: “The church has spoken! The fathers have spoken! Whoever refuses to believe is, without further ado, a heretic!”<sup>10</sup> In 1538, Albert Pighius, a Roman Catholic theologian, echoed these sentiments

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<sup>7</sup>Petri Canisii *Summa Doctrinae Christianae* I, q. 18 (Augsburg: Carolum Kollman, 1833), 83: “Certa est enim Cypriani et Augustini regula: Non habebit Deum Patrem, qui Ecclesiam noluerit habere matrem.” For the long quotes from Cyprian and Augustine, see 107–8.

<sup>8</sup>Martin Luther *Large Catechism* II.42–45, Tappert 416, BSLK 655. Luther’s final sentiment echoes yet another of Cyprian’s comments: “there is no salvation outside the Church.” Cyprian *Ep.* 73.21 (CSEL 3.2, 795.3–4). For a lengthier reflection on the motherhood of the church, see *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), in *Luther’s Works*, 55 vols., eds. J. Pelikan and H. Lehmann (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress, 1955ff.) [hereafter cited as LW], 26:440–42.

<sup>9</sup>Johann Spangenberg *Postilla* (Nürnberg, ca. 1700), 72: “Kirche, Kirche, Väter, Väter, Concilia, Concilia.” Luther gives numerous examples of this in his commentaries, dogmatic works, sermons, and letters. See, among others, LW 34:39; LW 36:163, 184, 240; LW 38:228; LW 41:12; and LW 49:375.

<sup>10</sup>*Sermons on the Gospel of John, 1537-39*, LW 22:271.

and went so far as to declare tradition a more reliable authority than Scripture. Pighius writes:

We easily and openly believe...that the authority of tradition is equal to or even superior to that of Scripture, in its certitude and its faith in undoubtable truth. For we do not believe Scripture except on the faith and authority of the witnessing church... [Therefore] it is necessary for us that ecclesiastical authority be better known than that of scripture.<sup>11</sup>

Luther and his colleagues could have spared themselves a great deal of hardship if they had rejected the ancient creeds of the church and the labors of the Fathers.<sup>12</sup> Why did they not champion Franck's radical position on Scripture alone? Why did they insist upon *sola scriptura* and, as Pighius puts it, the witnessing church?

### 1. What Does it Mean to be Catholic?

Sylvester Prierias (c. 1456–1527), an Italian Dominican and theological adviser to the pope, holds the distinction of being Luther's first literary opponent.<sup>13</sup> In 1518, using the *Ninety-five Theses*, Prierias wrote a fictional dialogue between Luther and himself on Scripture, the church, and papal authority. Prierias prefaced his *Dialogus* with four rules or foundations: (1) the universal church is the Roman church and the pope is the head of the church; (2) neither the Roman church nor the pope can err; (3) the doctrine of the Roman church and the Roman pontiff is the infallible rule of faith; and (4) the Roman church in both word and deed determines that which pertains to faith and customs.<sup>14</sup> What place does Scripture have in the Roman church? According to Prierias, sacred Scripture draws its power and authority from the Roman church and

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<sup>11</sup>Albertus Pighius, *Hierarchiae ecclesiasticae assertio*, sigs. B6-C1, C5-D2v, quoted in Ralph Keen, "The Fathers in Counter-Reformation Theology in the Pre-Tridentine Period," in Irena Backus, ed. *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West* (Brill: Leiden, 2002), vol. 2, 715.

<sup>12</sup>Luther's opponents pointed to the doctrine of the Trinity as a product of the church's tradition. Therefore, all who confess the doctrine of the Trinity must also acknowledge the authority of the Fathers and the popes. Luther rejected this and insisted that the Fathers demonstrated the doctrine of the Trinity from scripture alone. On this issue, see Carl L. Beckwith, *The Holy Trinity* (Fort Wayne, IN: The Luther Academy, 2016), 127.

<sup>13</sup>Prierias served as Master of the Sacred Palace. He provided theological opinions on issues of controversy for the pope, oversaw the Roman tribunal of the Inquisition, and granted or denied the imprimatur for all publications. Michael Tavuzzi, *Prierias: The Life and Works of Silvestro Mazzolini da Prierio, 1456–1527* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 75–78.

<sup>14</sup>Prierias *Dialogus Reverendi Patris Fratris Silvestri Prieriatis de potestate Papae in Lutheri conclusiones* (1518), in *D. Martini Lutheri Opera Latini*, ed. H. Schmidt, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main and Erlangen: Heyder and Zimmer, 1865) [hereafter cited as MLOL], 346–47.

pope.<sup>15</sup> Only a heretic, concludes Prierias, would disagree with these four rules. Over twenty years later, Luther, who was just such a heretic, could still quote Prierias' rules from memory.<sup>16</sup>

Luther offered a feisty response.<sup>17</sup> He argued that Prierias' four foundations contradicted not only Scripture but also the Fathers and canon law—both of which acknowledge Scripture as the norm for faith and morals.<sup>18</sup> To argue, as Prierias does, that the church is its own norm is to equate the church with divine revelation, placing the pope over God.<sup>19</sup> As a counter, Luther the Augustinian friar undermines his Dominican confrère by cleverly quoting a text from Augustine that Thomas Aquinas used to demonstrate the authority of Scripture over all other writers. Augustine writes:

I have learned to honor only those books, which are called canonical, as I believe most firmly that these writers have not erred in any way. As to all other writers, however great their holiness and learning, I do not believe them to be true because they have thought it so.<sup>20</sup>

Thomas Aquinas addresses this issue in his programmatic question on *sacra doctrina* at the beginning of his *Summa Theologiae*. For Thomas, the canonical scriptures are authoritative and incontrovertible in matters of faith; church authorities—whether Fathers or councils—are only probable authorities. Thomas explains, “For our faith rests upon the revelation made to the apostles and prophets who wrote the canonical books, and not on the revelations (if any such there are) made to other

<sup>15</sup>MLOL 1, 347: “Quicumque non innititur doctrinae Romanae ecclesiae, ac Romani Pontificis, tanquam regluae fidei infallibili, a qua etiam sacra Scriptura robur trahit et autoritatem, haereticus est.”

<sup>16</sup>LW 34:311 (*The Licentiate Examination of Heinrich Schmedenstede*, 1542); cf., LW 54:265 (*Table Talk* no. 3722, February 2, 1538).

<sup>17</sup>*Ad dialogum Silvestri Prierias de potestate papae responsio* (1518) in *Luthers Werke*, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 57 vols., eds. J. F. K. Knaake, et al. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1883ff.), vol. 1, 647–86 [hereafter cited as WA].

<sup>18</sup>Cf., Gratian *Decretum* d. 9, c. 5 and d. 9, c. 9 in *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. E. Friedberg (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1879; reprint Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1959), vol. 1, 17–18. Gratian's *Decretum*, from which Luther takes the Augustine quote below (see note 20), serves the double purpose of being canon law and providing patristic sources for Luther. There is, however, more to the story than Luther suggests. For the role played by the canonists in establishing papal infallibility, see Brian Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility: 1150-1350* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 14–57.

<sup>19</sup>Cf., Yves Congar, “Church Reform and Luther's Reformation, 1517–1967,” *Lutheran World* 14, no. 4 (1967), 353–54.

<sup>20</sup>Augustine, *Letter* 82.3 (CSEL 34.2, 354.5–8, 11–13). Both Luther and Thomas elide the quotation in the same place. I have translated it as it appears in Luther (WA 1, 647.23–25). For the full statement from Augustine, see the head of this article. Many years later Luther identifies Gratian's *Decretum* as his source for this quotation. See LW 41:25 (*On the Councils and the Church*, 1539); WA 50, 524.14–15. It would make sense to suggest that Gratian is the common source for Luther and Thomas but Gratian does not elide the quotation as they do.

doctors.”<sup>21</sup> Thomas then quotes the aforementioned passage from Augustine. For Luther, Prierias’s “foundations” have no foundation in Scripture, the Fathers, or canon law.<sup>22</sup> Luther’s point to Prierias is clear: both Augustine and Thomas stand with me against you. Should Prierias wish to continue the fight, he must, quips Luther, “take care to bring your Thomas better armed into the arena.”<sup>23</sup>

The argument between Prierias and Luther highlights two important and related issues of the Reformation. Luther’s great concern is the authority of the canonical scriptures for establishing the articles of faith. Prierias’ great concern is the authoritative interpretation of those canonical scriptures. Who or what determines the correct interpretation of the scriptures? Even more to the point, since Scripture teaches some things explicitly and some things implicitly, who determines the correct interpretation of those things taught only implicitly? Are all of these implicit teachings, like transubstantiation or the existence of purgatory, necessary to believe for salvation? These issues were heatedly debated throughout the sixteenth century and very much a part of the late medieval debates on Scripture and its interpretation.

The Council of Trent settled the debate between Prierias and Luther by declaring the equal authority of unwritten traditions and Scripture.<sup>24</sup> Rather than understanding the church’s tradition as guarding and proclaiming the proper interpretation of Scripture, Trent viewed tradition as an authoritative unfolding or explication of Scripture. For Luther and his colleagues, the church stands under the scriptures as the creature of Word and Spirit, nourishing the faithful as mother; for Trent, the church authors and authorizes the Word by appeal to unwritten traditions. Apart from these unwritten traditions, which are said to be the secrets dictated by the Holy Spirit in addition to the canonical scriptures, we could not know the purity of the Gospel.<sup>25</sup> Yves Congar states Trent’s position plainly: “certain truths necessary for salvation were not contained in the

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<sup>21</sup>Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* 1.1.8 ad 2, trans. Laurence Shapcote (Lander: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), vol. 1, 12. In this opening question, Thomas presents his hierarchy of authorities: scripture (infallible), church Fathers (fallible and intrinsic), philosophers (fallible and extrinsic). Thomas’ list differs from Gratian *Decretum* d. 20 (see also dd. 17 and 19), where the hierarchy is scripture, pope, councils, and Fathers. Prierias stands much closer to the strong papalist position of Gratian than to Thomas.

<sup>22</sup>WA 1, 647.32–33: “...sine scriptura, sine patribus, sine Canonibus, denique sine ullis rationibus.”

<sup>23</sup>WA 1, 686.30–31.

<sup>24</sup>*Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman Tanner, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 663.22–24.

<sup>25</sup>*Decrees*, vol. 2, 663.18, 28–30. Trent’s position should not be understood only as a response to Luther and the other Protestant reformers. Trent’s carefully worded position belongs to the lingering debates of the fourteenth and fifteenth century on Scripture, tradition, and salvation. See Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 4 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 118–26, 276–77; and especially Ian Christopher Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority at the End of the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012).

Scriptures.”<sup>26</sup> For the Lutherans, the Holy Spirit works through and not apart from the external words of Scripture. Trent’s separation of the *verbum externum* and the Holy Spirit departed from the church’s catholic tradition. No longer did Rome read Scripture in the tradition of the church as an act of kinship or baptismal identity but rather they sought an affinity with the catholic tradition insofar as that tradition accorded with the secret dictates of the Spirit as known and guarded by the church’s magisterium. Trent’s enthusiasm represents the opposite extreme of Franck’s enthusiasm and the Lutherans rejected both.<sup>27</sup>

## 2. The Lutheran Proposal for Scripture’s Relationship to Tradition

The Lutherans officially stated their position in the *Book of Concord* (1580), a collection of authoritative writings by Luther, Melancthon, and a group of theologians from the late sixteenth century under the leadership of Martin Chemnitz. In these writings, the Lutherans resolutely identified the substance of their faith, both confessed and sung, with the church’s catholic tradition. For example, in the *Augsburg Confession*, the Lutherans declared, “nothing has been received among us, in doctrine or ceremony, that is contrary to Scripture or to the church catholic.”<sup>28</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan argues that the condemnatory clauses (*damnant*) used throughout the *Augsburg Confession* show where the Lutherans stand with the catholic tradition and where Rome has departed from it.<sup>29</sup> The Lutherans concluded that their sixteenth-century Roman opponents had only a partial claim to catholicity.<sup>30</sup>

Despite these strong assertions, the Lutherans knew their Roman opponents could cite as much, if not more, tradition in support of their theological positions. Although the Lutherans may seem to make an arbitrary distinction between what constitutes the genuine catholic tradition of the Church and what departs from it, their argument has more to do with the question of authority. The Lutherans were never interested

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<sup>26</sup> Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004), 41.

<sup>27</sup>Cf., Luther *Smalcald Articles* 3.VIII.3–4; Tappert 312, BSLK 453–54: “In these matters, which concern the external, spoken Word, we must hold firmly to the conviction that God gives no one his Spirit or grace except through or with the external Word which comes before. Thus we shall be protected from the enthusiasts—that is, from the spiritualists who boast that they possess the Spirit without and before the Word and who therefore judge, interpret, and twist the Scriptures or spoken word according to their pleasure. . . . The papacy, too, is nothing but enthusiasm, for the pope boasts that ‘all laws are in the shrine of his heart,’ and he claims that whatever he decides and commands in his churches is spirit and law, even when it is above and contrary to the Scriptures or spoken Word.”

<sup>28</sup>Tappert 95; BSLK 134; Cf., Tappert, 48; BSLK 84.

<sup>29</sup>Jaroslav Pelikan, “Tradition in Confessional Lutheranism,” *Lutheran World* 3, no. 3 (1956), 216.

<sup>30</sup>Tappert, 47; BSLK 83c–83d: “Since [our] teaching is grounded clearly on the Holy Scriptures and is not contrary or opposed to that of the church catholic, or even the Roman church (insofar as the latter’s teaching is reflected in the writings of the Fathers), we think that our opponents cannot disagree with us in the articles set forth above.”

in indiscriminately accepting the teachings of the Fathers that stood in tension and contradiction with Scripture. They maintained a distinction between the authority of the canonical scriptures and all other writings.

We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged... Other writings, whether of the Fathers or modern teachers, whatever their names, should not be put on par with the Holy Scriptures. Every single one of them should be subordinated to the scriptures and should be received in no other way and no further than as witnesses to the fashion in which the doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved in post-apostolic times.<sup>31</sup>

For the Lutherans, Scripture alone serves as the only judge, rule, and norm for all doctrine (*norma normans*). That insistence, however, does not lead them to reject all other writings. The Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and even Luther's catechisms serve as faithful witnesses to the teachings of scripture. These writings are judged by Scripture (*norma normata*) and received by the church catholic as faithful expositions of the scriptures. The norming authority for what is and is not catholic is Scripture. The closest relationship avails between the two. Scripture breathes life into the tradition of the church; this living tradition guards and defends the witness of Scripture by exposing false claims made about it both from within and without the church. Any doctrine or practice embraced contrary to Scripture, even if it is believed and celebrated for centuries and by a great number of holy and learned people, is not catholic because it is not scriptural.<sup>32</sup>

In accord with these convictions, Robert Barnes, an English reformer and close associate with Johann Bugenhagen, Martin Luther's dear friend and pastor, published in 1536 a collection of sayings from the Fathers that supported the theological position of the reformers. Bugenhagen wrote a preface to Barnes' work and explained why the reformers read the Fathers. We read them "because we are also in the very same church, having the same God, one Lord Christ, one gospel, the same sacraments, the same faith, the same calling to eternal life in Christ alone."<sup>33</sup> For Bugenhagen, the reformers read the Fathers because they are the church's

<sup>31</sup>Tappert, 464–65; BSLK 767–68, translation slightly altered.

<sup>32</sup>Cyprian of Carthage *Ep.* 74.9 (CSEL 3.2, 806.23–24): "custom without truth is the antiquity of error" (*consuetudo sine veritate vetustas erroris est*); Gregory of Nazianzus, *De Sua Vita* 585: "custom, backed by time, issues as law."

<sup>33</sup>Preface to Robert Barnes, *Sententiae ex Doctoribus collectae* (Wittenberg: Josef Klug, 1536), A6v: "...habere tales Patrum sententias, quibus saepe fidem suam confessi sunt, & suas Ecclesias docuerunt, ut confirmetur fides nostra, quod cum ipsis in eadem Ecclesia sumus, habentes eundem Deum, unum Dominum Christum, unum Evangelium, eadem Sacramenta, eandem fidem, eandem vocationem vitae aeternae in solo Christo."

Fathers, because they are fellow believers gathered into Christ's church by the same Holy Spirit that gathered them into the church.

### III. PART TWO: THE CATHOLIC POSITION ON SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS

According to Luther and the *Book of Concord*, Hermann Sasse is right. A church without the Fathers becomes more and more unrecognizable, more and more sectarian, because it moves further and further from Scripture and the faithful patterns of speech used by believers to confess and defend those scriptures. As a community departs from the catholic voice of the church, cultivating its own provincial accent, which is to say, its own patterns of speech, worship, and prayers, it becomes more and more unrecognizable to the broader body of Christ.

At the same time, a clear distinction exists between the authority of Scripture and the witness of the Fathers and the church. To confuse this distinction also moves a community further and further away from the catholic voice of the church. From the perspective of Luther and Lutheran reformers, Sebastian Franck and Sylvester Prierias compromised their catholicity by wrongly understanding the relationship between Scripture and the Fathers, though in different ways and for different reasons. Although Franck had no interest in maintaining any catholic identity, Prierias certainly did. To what extent, we must ask, are the Lutherans *historically* right in identifying themselves with the catholic tradition of the church on the relationship between scripture and the Fathers? If their position is catholic, it must be diffuse and readily found even where significant disagreement exists on the interpretation of Scripture. Since Luther pointed Prierias to Thomas Aquinas, we will focus on him.

### IV. THOMAS AQUINAS

Many people today associate medieval theology with dense arguments, speculative questions, and convoluted commentaries on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. Although not wrong, such a description overlooks the principal task of the medieval masters. The foundation for teaching and learning during the medieval period was the Bible. Bachelors pursuing advanced study in theology began by lecturing cursorily on the Bible (*cursor biblicus*) and then progressed to lectures on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*.<sup>34</sup> After successfully completing lectures on the *Sentences*, a bachelor, at the recommendation of the other masters, received his license

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<sup>34</sup>The cursory lectures on the Bible focused on basic grammatical and textual issues and did not examine doctrinal questions or mystical senses. Only masters discussed these issues in their advanced courses on scripture. Ian Christopher Levy, *Introducing Medieval Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 195–96.

to teach (*licentia docendi*), completed an elaborate inception ceremony, and began his mastership as *magister sacrae paginae*.<sup>35</sup> Masters, generally speaking, did not continue lecturing on Lombard; that was the bachelor's responsibility. Masters were required to lecture on the Bible (*legere*), to resolve difficult questions arising from their reading of Scripture (*disputare*), and to preach regularly (*praedicare*).<sup>36</sup> James Weisheipl describes the typical approach of a master in the classroom:

The basis of the whole scholastic method was the text. A portion of the text, the sacred page, was read aloud in class. ...After the reading of the text, the master divided the section into parts. This division was most important, for by division, it was held, the mind comes to understand the whole. Then a line-by-line and word-for-word explanation was given, with reference to other texts of Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, and rational argument. Whenever conflicting statements appeared, either because of some apparent contradiction in the text of Scripture or in the comment of some ecclesiastical authority, the arguments from both sides would be debated briefly and a solution found.

Here we glimpse into the classroom and see the role played by the Fathers. The master read and taught Scripture along with and never apart from the church's Fathers. More to the point, the Fathers mattered to the master and to the students because Scripture mattered. The desire to understand the full significance of Scripture drove both master and student to the insights and interpretations offered by the Fathers.

Soon after Thomas became *magister sacrae paginae*, he began lecturing on the Gospel of Matthew. His biographer, William of Tocco, relays a famous story about Thomas that shows why the Fathers were important to him. One day Thomas and his students were returning to Paris after visiting the relics of Saint-Denis. As they paused to observe the beauty of Paris, one of the students, overcome with the grandeur of the city, declared to his master how wonderful it would be if Friar Thomas were lord of the city. Thomas, somewhat puzzled by the suggestion, asked the student what he would do with it. The student piously suggested that he sell Paris to the king of France and use the money for the needs of the Dominicans. Thomas replied, "I would rather have the homilies of Chrysostom on the Gospel of Saint Matthew."<sup>37</sup> It was not the homilies of Chrysostom that Thomas regarded

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<sup>35</sup>James A. Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D'Aquino: his life, thought and works* (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 96–110. The inception ceremony began with a lecture (*principium*) by the aspiring master commending the study of Holy Scripture. For examples of these lectures, see Levy, *Introducing Medieval Biblical Interpretation*, 197–261.

<sup>36</sup>Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work*, vol. 1, 54–74.

<sup>37</sup>William of Tocco, *Hystoria Beati Thomae* 43, quoted and discussed in Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D'Aquino*, 121–22.

as more valuable than Paris; it was the proper interpretation of the Bible that he valued. The Fathers mattered, Chrysostom mattered, because the interpretation of Scripture mattered.

Thomas also frequently discusses the relationship between Scripture, the Fathers, and human reason. Toward the end of his first stay in Paris as regent master, Thomas began writing his *Summa contra gentiles*, an extracurricular work that sought to present the truths of the Christian faith in an orderly and coherent manner. Thomas begins his treatise with a lengthy preface on the calling of the wise man, the pursuit of wisdom, the relationship between divine truth and human reason, and recommendations for how a person should engage unbelievers in theological discussion.<sup>38</sup> Thomas explains with great clarity and insight the relationship between Scripture—its authority, uniqueness, and purpose—and the various human attempts to clarify and defend those scriptures with reason.

From the point of view of our knowledge, we may say that truth is twofold. On the one hand, there is divine truth accessible to human reason and available to demonstrative arguments. When dealing with this sort of truth (e.g., the existence of God), we may confront our adversaries and overcome their false arguments with human reason. On the other hand, there is divine truth that is above reason and available only to faith (e.g., the doctrine of the Trinity). Here reason reaches its limit and cannot advance any arguments to prove the articles of faith revealed by Scripture. Thomas explains:

However, since such arguments are not available for the second kind of divine truth, our intention should not be to convince our adversary by arguments: it should be to answer his arguments against the truth; for, as we have shown, the nature of reason cannot be contrary to the truth of faith. The sole way to overcome an adversary of divine truth is from the authority of Scripture—an authority divinely confirmed by miracles. For that which is above human reason we believe only because God has revealed it.<sup>39</sup>

Thomas takes up this same point a few years later at the beginning of the *Summa Theologiae*. He distinguishes between articles of faith (*articuli fidei*) and preambles to the articles (*praeambula ad articulos*) to make the same point.<sup>40</sup> Articles of faith, necessary for salvation, transcend human reason, which is why God reveals them in Scripture.<sup>41</sup> Some know the preambles to the articles of faith by reason (e.g., the existence of God) but others require Scripture to know even these. Thomas again specifies that

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<sup>38</sup>Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I.1–9, trans. Anton C Pegis (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 59–78.

<sup>39</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I.9, 77.

<sup>40</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I.2.2, ad 1.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, I.1.1c.

reason may not prove these articles but only answer objections made against them:

If our opponent believes nothing of divine revelation, there is no longer any means of proving the articles of faith by reasoning, but only of answering his objections—if he has any—against faith. Since faith rests upon infallible truth, and since the contrary of a truth can never be demonstrated, it is clear that the arguments brought against faith cannot be demonstrations, but are difficulties that can be answered.<sup>42</sup>

A person may argue from one article of faith to another but never from reason alone to the articles of faith. Scripture alone makes known the articles of faith and these we believe, as Thomas puts it, because God revealed them.<sup>43</sup> A person uses reason to defend the articles of faith, answer objections to them, and undermine arguments against them. But one never proves these articles with bare reason. As Thomas observes elsewhere, Peter exhorts us to defend the faith, not prove it (1 Pet 3:15).<sup>44</sup> For Thomas a clear distinction exists between the authority of Scripture and all other authorities. Faith rests upon the incontrovertible authority of the scriptures and not on the probable insights of others like the Fathers.<sup>45</sup>

Thomas left Paris for Italy in the spring of 1259. From 1261–65, he served as lector at Orvieto and developed a close friendship with Pope Urban IV, who resided in the papal apartments at Orvieto. The resources of the papal archives, access to translators, and timely assignments from the pope enriched Thomas' reading of Scripture by providing greater access to the writings of the Fathers. Three events are especially noteworthy. First, Thomas discovered in the papal archives the acts and proceedings of the ecumenical councils from the Early Church, especially from the council of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451), and began using verbatim excerpts of these councils in his writings—something only Thomas did among his contemporaries.<sup>46</sup> Second, at the request of Urban

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., I.1.8c.

<sup>43</sup>Cf., Ibid., II–II.1.1c: Faith assents only to what is revealed by God.

<sup>44</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *De rationibus fidei ad Cantorem Antiochenum 2*, *Opera Omnia*, Leonine edition (Rome: Ad Sanctae Sabinae, 1968), vol. 40 B, 57: “Ad hoc igitur debet tendere Christiani disputatoris intentio in articulis fidei, non ut fidem probet, sed ut fidem defendat: unde et beatus Petrus non dicit: parati semper ad probationem, sed ad satisfactionem, ut scilicet rationabiliter ostendatur non esse falsum quod fides Catholica confitetur.”

<sup>45</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I.1.8 ad 2.

<sup>46</sup>Thomas may have discovered the acts of Ephesus and Chalcedon at the Abbey of Monte Cassino before arriving at Orvieto. Corey Barnes, “Thomas Aquinas’s Chalcedonian Christology and its Influence on Later Scholastics,” *The Thomist* 78 (2014), 189–217, especially 189–90; M. Morard, “Thomas d’Aquin lecteur des conciles,” *Archivum franciscanum historicum* 98 (2005), 211–365; G. Geenen, “En marge du concile de Chalcedoine. Les textes du Quatrième Concile dans les oeuvres de saint Thomas,” *Angelicum* 29 (1952), 43–59. For a fascinating example of how Thomas made use of this

IV, Thomas composed a continuous gloss on the four Gospels drawn from patristic texts. Thomas' gloss, affectionately referred to as the *Catena aurea*, the golden chain, exercised considerable influence well into the nineteenth century. Weisheipl regards Thomas' work on this commentary as the turning point in his theology.<sup>47</sup> Ignatius Eschmann more exuberantly states that this work marks a turning point in the history of Catholic dogma.<sup>48</sup> Thomas tells us he employed translators to render excerpts from the Greek Fathers into Latin for the commentary.<sup>49</sup> For Jean-Pierre Torrell, the high praise by Weisheipl and Eschmann rests here. Thomas significantly enhanced his own reading of Scripture and that of his scholastic colleagues by providing excerpts from fifty-seven Greek authors and twenty-two Latin writers.<sup>50</sup> Third, Urban IV asked Thomas to evaluate a pamphlet of Latin excerpts translated from the Greek Fathers that showed beyond any doubt that they agreed with the Roman position on the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son (the *filioque*), the primacy of the pope, the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist, and the existence of purgatory. These events illustrate the importance of the Fathers for Thomas' reading of Scripture and the efforts to which he went to recover long neglected patristic resources. Likewise, they helped clarify Thomas' critical reception of the Fathers and his understanding of how their authority relates to Scripture.

Pope Urban IV and Michael VIII Paleologus, the Byzantine emperor, sought to heal the division between the Latin and Greek churches. Toward this end, the Byzantine emperor invited Nicholas of Durazzo, a Greek by birth and bishop of Cotrone in southern Italy, to Constantinople to assist in these efforts.<sup>51</sup> At some point, Nicholas assembled and translated a small book (*Libellus*) of excerpts from the Greek Fathers supporting the Roman position on the main issues of dispute between the two churches.<sup>52</sup> When the pope received Nicholas' *Libellus*, he asked Thomas to comment on it. Thomas, who did not know Greek, could only evaluate the document based on the words attributed to the Fathers. Unknown to him was how poorly translated the excerpts were. Weisheipl

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material in his patristic research, see Gilles Emery, *Trinity in Aquinas* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2003), 238–40.

<sup>47</sup>Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas d'Aquino*, 171.

<sup>48</sup>Ignatius Eschmann, "A Catalogue of St. Thomas' Works: Bibliographical Notes," in E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Random House, 1956), 397, quoted by Weisheipl.

<sup>49</sup>Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas d'Aquino*, 173.

<sup>50</sup>Studies of the *Catena aurea* show that Thomas provides excerpts from fifty-seven Greek authors and twenty-two Latin writers. Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work*, vol. 1, 139; see also 136–41 for Torrell's comments on Thomas' use of the Fathers in the *Catena aurea*.

<sup>51</sup>For a helpful historical introduction to Nicholas' *Libellus* and Thomas' response, see Mark D. Jordan, "Theological Exegesis and Aquinas's Treatise 'against the Greeks,'" *Church History* 56 (1987), 445–56.

<sup>52</sup>*Libellus de processione spiritus sancti et fidei trinitatis contra errores grecorum*, in *Opera Omnia*, Leonine edition (Rome: Ad Sanctae Sabinae, 1967), vol. 40 A, 107–151.

comments, “For some unexplained reason, a large part of the *Libellus* consists of falsifications, fabrications, and false attributions.”<sup>53</sup> Although modern scholarship has shown the dubious character of many of the excerpts, Thomas knew none of this and assumed they were genuine.

Thomas divides his response, *Contra errores graecorum*, into two parts. Part One focuses on the difficult and questionable statements made by the Fathers and offers an explanation or interpretation of what they must have meant. Part Two highlights the agreement of the Greek Fathers with the Latin church on the disputed points in question. The value of Thomas’ short treatise resides less with his engagement of these excerpts and more with the critical advice he offers in the prologue and epilogue. Thomas identifies a number of problems with the pamphlet that all bear on the catholic reading of the Fathers. Although the translated texts are useful and generally affirm the church’s faith, there are a number of perplexing statements made by the Fathers. Thomas worries that these incautious statements may diminish the value of the collection and provide an occasion for false claims. For example, some of the excerpts show that the Fathers sometimes spoke too freely before a controversy arose and only became more circumspect in their language after the controversy. Thomas gives the example of Arius and Pelagius. Before these false teachers came along, the Fathers did not speak as clearly and prudently as they should have. Even Augustine, notes Thomas, had to change the way he talked about the human will when confronted by Pelagius.<sup>54</sup> Readers of the Fathers must keep these historical considerations in mind and read accordingly. If the reader encounters statements from the Fathers that fail to express with caution the church’s faith, those statements should be neither ridiculed nor repeated by the faithful but rather reverently explained (*exponere reverenter*).<sup>55</sup>

Thomas also has a number of concerns with the translation and offers advice on the art of translation. A person should not translate word for word, from Greek to Latin, as this will only lead to confusion. The good translator conveys the ideas and intentions of the author in a representative idiom.<sup>56</sup> Thomas identifies a number of inappropriate expressions (*indecentes expositiones*) in the epilogue and concludes that they could not have come from the Greek Fathers but only from the translator.<sup>57</sup> For example, the translator renders “logos” as “sermo

<sup>53</sup>Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas d’Aquino*, 169.

<sup>54</sup>For a good example of how Thomas explains unfortunate statements from Augustine’s trinitarian theology, see *Summa Theologiae*, I.39.5 ad 1.

<sup>55</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Errores Graecorum*, I, prologue, *Opera Omnia*, Leonie edition (Rome: Ad Sanctae Sabinae, 1967), vol. 40 A, 71. On the issue of reverent exposition or explanation, see Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work*, vol. I, 124, nn. 25 and 26.

<sup>56</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Errores Graecorum*, I, prologue (A71): “Unde ad officium boni translatoris pertinet ut ea quae sunt catholicae fidei transferens servet sententiam, mutet autem modum loquendi secundum proprietatem linguae in quam transfert.”

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, II, epilogue (A105).

mentalis” where he should have used “verbum”;<sup>58</sup> he uses “essentiale persona” for “hypostasis” rather than simply “persona”.<sup>59</sup> Thomas regrettably notes that the translator has incorporated these poor phrases into his own explanations of the disputed issues. Even worse the translator has adopted some of the incautious statements of the Fathers that he should have reverently explained rather than endorsed by using. The translator has done this, Thomas suspects, because he misunderstands the relationship between the writings of the Fathers and the canonical scriptures. Thomas scolds the translator for esteeming the Fathers too much, forgetting that they are mere men and not the authors of our faith. Much to Thomas’ dismay the translator refers to them as *patres fidei*, as the fathers of the faith, which suggests to Thomas that they have in some sense authored our faith. This, however, is only true of Christ, the author of our salvation and faith (Heb 2:10). The Fathers usefully clarify and defend the articles of faith given to us in Scripture and are appropriately regarded as “teachers” and “expositors” of the faith not authors of it.<sup>60</sup>

As much as Thomas insists that the canonical scriptures alone establish the articles of faith and make known the necessary truths of salvation, he also just as clearly argues that the pope possesses the unique authority to determine the meaning of Scripture and to decide what pertains to the faith.<sup>61</sup> Thomas firmly believes the scriptures establish the primacy of the pope and that it is necessary to be subject to him for salvation.<sup>62</sup> In his later *Summa Theologiae* he reiterates these sentiments and explains more thoroughly the relationship between the pope and Scripture. Jesus declared to Peter that his faith would not fail and that he would confirm the faith of his brethren (Lk 22:32). Thomas applies this to the pope, the successor of Peter. It is his particular duty as “the sovereign pontiff” to ensure that the church speaks with one voice and not fall into schism (1 Cor 1:10). When any question of faith arises, the pope, who presides over the whole church, decides what the church believes and his authority is final.<sup>63</sup> Does that mean that the pope adds to the substance of the faith revealed by God in Scripture? Thomas says no. The pope merely states more explicitly what Scripture teaches.<sup>64</sup> This often occurs through creeds issued by papal authority and approval. The Nicene Creed, for example, does not add to Scripture but draws its truth from Scripture.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Cf., *Libellus*, 12.15 (A106); 15.76–77 (A120); 48.38–39 (A133), etc.

<sup>59</sup>Cf., *Ibid.*, 15.82–83 and 107 (A120); 45.33–34 (A131); 48.35–36 (A133), etc.

<sup>60</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Errores Graecorum*, II, epilogue (A105): “ceteri vero possunt dici doctores vel expositores fidei, non autem patres.”

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 36, (A102–103)

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 38, (103): “Ostenditur etiam quod subesse Romano pontifici sit de necessitate salutis.” Thomas appeals to Matthew 16:16–19 and Luke 22:32 to establish the pope’s primacy and authority in matters of faith.

<sup>63</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II.1.10c.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, II-II.1.10 ad 1.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, II-II.1.9 ad 1.

## V. FINAL REFLECTIONS

The Lutherans distinguished their understanding of the Fathers and the catholic reading of them from their Roman opponents who clamored, “The church has spoken! The Fathers have spoken. Whoever refuses to believe is, without further ado, a heretic!”<sup>66</sup> For Luther and the *Book of Concord*, a clear distinction exists between the authority of Scripture and the labors of the Fathers. The scriptures alone establish the articles of faith, never the words of the Fathers. At the same time, the writings of the Fathers provide indispensable insights on Scripture and establish proper patterns of speech that clarify, guard, and defend the scriptures. Here the Lutheran reformers stood in continuity with the medieval masters. Both read the Fathers because they read the scriptures.

There is also a sense in which Luther’s Roman opponents were in close agreement with the medieval masters. Although the Lutheran appeal to Scripture alone for the articles of faith and their use of the Fathers for reading Scripture agrees with the medieval masters, it does not resolve the problem of competing interpretations. A persistent question debated throughout the medieval and late medieval period had to do with who or what determines the authoritative interpretation of Scripture. Although the medieval masters shared a common position on Scripture and the Fathers, they did not agree on scriptures’ meaning. Lively exegetical debates prevailed on the Eucharist, penance, grace and merit, predestination, and the primacy of the pope. Masters variously appealed to the Fathers, church councils, canon law, and the pope to demonstrate their understanding of the biblical text but no consensus prevailed among them on the identity of that final and binding authority.<sup>67</sup>

The medieval debates on the authoritative interpretation of Scripture raised questions about the authority of the church. Should a person believe Scripture or the church? Some said Scripture; some said church; some said there is no difference and thought the question improper. For those in this latter group, the church believes what Scripture reveals. This led to a more fundamental question. Do you believe Scripture because of the church or do you believe the church because of Scripture? If you believe Scripture because of the church, then it will never be possible for the church to say anything contrary to Scripture. Moreover, to depart from the church is to depart from Scripture and, as Prierias concluded, only a heretic would do that. Disagreement over the meaning of Scripture led many medieval masters to insist on the indefectibility of the church and ultimately papal infallibility. Luther, of course, disagreed with Prierias and his Roman opponents on this very point. He writes:

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<sup>66</sup>See note 10 above.

<sup>67</sup>For a clear presentation of these issues, see Ian Christopher Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority at the End of the Middle Ages*, xi–xiv, 1–11, 23–53.

We have brought the papists to the point where they were obliged to concede that we have Holy Writ on our side. But now they bid us defiance and say that they side with the holy church. They shout: “Church! Church!” But that is nonsense. We, too, side with the Christian Church—but with that church which preaches that Christ, our Bridegroom, was born, was crucified, and died for us. If the church did not do this, I would not regard her as the church. For Christ says that the church and the fathers believe in Him; the church relies solely on Christ and teaches reliance on Him.<sup>68</sup>

For Luther, the church’s authority derives from its faithfulness to Christ. In his early *Lectures on Romans*, Luther declared that the whole of Scripture points to Christ and finds its “meaning” in him.<sup>69</sup> Likewise, toward the end of his life, Luther declares that all of Scripture is pure Christ. All points to him. Luther explains, “To him who has the Son Scripture is an open book; and the stronger his faith in Christ becomes, the more brightly will the light of Scripture shine for him.”<sup>70</sup> The church guards and defends this faith by pointing to Christ. Should the church no longer point to Christ, it would cease to be the church.<sup>71</sup>

The Lutheran reformers identified themselves with the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church precisely by confessing the unique and sufficient authority of Scripture in all matters of faith. Since the Word of God alone makes something holy, tradition’s holiness depends always upon its adherence to the Word. The Lutheran commitment to the church’s catholic tradition, to the patristic and medieval writers who sought to clarify, guard, and defend the scriptures in both writings and prayers, arises first and foremost from their commitment to Scripture. That commitment extends to wherever they find those scriptures—whether it be the faithful exposition of the scriptures by the Fathers or the prayers and hymns of the church’s liturgy.<sup>72</sup> This is the catholic spirit of the Lutheran reformers: “our consciences are clear... for we know that our confession is true, godly, and catholic.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>LW 22:269 (*Sermons on the Gospel of John*, 1537–39).

<sup>69</sup>LW 25:405 (*Lectures on Romans*, 1515–1516).

<sup>70</sup>LW 15:339 (*Treatise on the Last Words of David*, 1543).

<sup>71</sup>For examples of Luther’s view on the church, the holiness of the Roman church, and the objective character of the Word and sacraments, see *Martin Luther’s Basic Exegetical Writings*, ed. Carl L. Beckwith (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 211–13, 251–52, 314–17, and 326–29.

<sup>72</sup>Tappert, 523; BSLK 877. Cf., C. F. W. Walther, “Church Fathers and Doctrine,” in *Essays for the Church* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), vol. 2, 70: “A proper explanation of Scripture is precisely nothing else than Scripture itself.”

<sup>73</sup>Tappert, 214; BSLK 297.