

Martin Luther's Concern for Human Life

Robert Kolb

“Life” in Luther's World

STATISTICALLY, OVER ROUGHLY A CENTURY, people died as often in the 1500s as today, with one death for every birth over the long term. However, sixteenth-century European societies could not hide death as effectively as modern Western cultures do.¹ The vulnerability and fragility of life confronted everyone much more directly than is the case with many in North America and Western Europe today. In the Christian ethos that dominated those early modern “Christian” societies, the obligation of every individual to promote and protect the life of others was as clear as the many threats to life all around—disease and violence—even in a world with little careless use of weapons and reckless driving.

Some of what today must be regarded as “life issues” did not surface in Martin Luther's day. Euthanasia, for instance, was not an issue because few people lived beyond the “climatic” year of age 63. This was thought to be a dangerous point in life. It was the age in which both Melancthon and Luther died.² Their friend, Nikolaus von Amsdorf (1483-1565), lived into his eighty-second year, and the printer Urban Gaubisch (1521-1612), who printed Luther's works after the reformer's death as well as works by many of his disciples, died at 91. His pastor, Christoph Schlepner, chose the example of Barsillai from 2 Samuel 19: 32–40 as the basis for Gaubisch's funeral sermon. This supporter of King David declined the royal offer of a benefice in Jerusalem to return in his old age to his homeland, Gilead. The preacher admonished the younger to respect the aging, bear their infirmities with them, and provide for their needs. Schlepner reflected Luther's treatment of the fourth commandment in the Large Catechism with his depiction of both Barsillai and Gaubisch as the preacher urged the mourners to foster the community's welfare by having the younger care for the elderly and give them comfort and support.³ The vulnerability of life in this time rendered euthanasia a topic that made no sense.

Furthermore, abortions did take place in Luther's time and were mainly regulated by the rule of the village. But no epidemic of abortion threatened unborn life in his time, and he did not comment on it. He reported on the punishment of a woman who had given birth and then had slain the newborn child. He reported this

without any extensive comment beyond his condemnation of infanticide.⁴ He did react, however, not only to those sins of commission that brought bodily harm and death to others but also to sins of omission that neglected the needy and excused the unwillingness of Christians to sacrifice for the care of others.

The Tensions of the Time

MARTIN LUTHER LIVED IN AN AGE where threats to human life abounded, and antidotes for bodily ills were scarce. Although he did not face the challenges to life of those who in modern times prize individual freedom above the common good and God's commands to love even our enemies, he recognized that among his contemporaries, the lives of others were often seen as cheap. He viewed Satan as the enemy of life as God had created it. He frequently echoed Jesus' description of the devil as a "liar and murderer" (John 8:44) and saw him as very active in his own time. He lamented over the assassination of Halle Pastor Georg Winkler in a conspiracy hatched at the court of Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz. Luther stated that Satan

shows himself straightforwardly as the murderer in all the killing that is done throughout the world, on water and land, at home and at court: this man is stabbed, that one's throat is cut; someone drowns; another burns to death; yet another is slain by a falling wall, and the wolves devour the next and so on, and so on. People are killed in all sorts of ways, all of which are the devil's work or that of his servants. He rages most violently when he inflames princes and kings against one another, so that the whole world is filled with nothing but war and murder, strife and bloodshed without ceasing or ending, as though people were born for nothing but killing and were afraid that they could not die unless they strangled and murdered each other. But he delights most in murdering those who want to speak of Christ's word in the inn of this world [the devil provides a temporary abode in this world]. He cannot stand them; they cast suspicious eyes on his inn and reveal him to be a liar and a murderer.⁵

Much short of murder, bodily harm and damage to reputations affected every community, whether village in the countryside or neighborhood in a town. A Reformation scholar who had examined popular attitudes in sixteenth-century England once commented in a private conversation that the people he studied were irritable. He added, "And you would be irritable, too, if you had the same two meals every day, ill-fitting clothing, drafty homes, and hard, hard work." Luther's acquaintances were often irritable, which sometimes led—through contempt and manipulation—to violence. Bitter attacks on him and his colleagues revealed the level of hatred that afflicted even theologians. Students occasionally fought with townspeople in the streets of Wittenberg, and the town council finally granted students the same right as

apprentices had, the right to wear swords in public, much to Luther's chagrin.⁶ His close friend, Peter Beskendorf, for whom Luther composed a guide to praying in 1535, later in that year became inebriated at a family gathering. When his son-in-law, Dietrich Freyenhagen, a professional soldier, claimed that his body was magically protected from all assaults and every weapon, Beskendorf ran him through with his sword. The barber escaped the death penalty only through Luther's intervention and died destitute in exile in nearby Dessau. Luther remained in contact with him, giving counsel and aid while condemning his careless disregard for life.⁷

Luther's Attitude toward Life in his Treatment of Genesis 3 and 4

LUTHER'S REGARD FOR THE WORTH and value of every human life extended far beyond opposing such violent actions. In 1524, he preached a series of sermons on Genesis. In one sermon on Genesis 2:18, he emphasized that Eve was created to be Adam's helper, with focus on the gift of children. Not only were they created with one flesh but also one spirit, sharing all things.⁸ His 1535 lectures on Genesis articulate his firm conviction that God provides for his human creatures through the aid and support they give each other. God recognized that it was not good that Adam be alone (Gen. 2:18), thus forming the community of love for friends and enemies, intimates and strangers alike, that Jesus, for instance, described in the Sermon on the Mount. The professor observed that alone Adam had the personal good that God gives his human creatures in relating to them. But with the creation of Eve, God provided for the common good, linking human beings inextricably to each other. Luther noted God's reason for creating Eve was the need for human companionship and protection—mutual support—along with the need to continue the human race.⁹ Luther reflected this understanding of humanity in a sermon on the parable of the Good Samaritan in 1531. He noted that the word "neighbor" is often defined as a person "who needs a favor or should be served and shown love," but in this parable, the neighbor is, in the view of Scripture, the one who simply shows love even to a Samaritan, a member of a despised race. It understands the term "neighbor" in what Aristotle named the sphere of relationships, emphasizing that the reality of human life takes shape within the context of such personal relationships. Mutual love marks the godly life; neighbors were created to aid and support others.¹⁰ Luther presumed that God determined the very nature of human creatures as creatures fashioned for community with each other and their Creator. This presupposition shaped Luther's view of life and carelessness with one's own life and the life of others.

Lecturing on Genesis 4 in 1536 gave the reformer further occasion to comment on God's regard for human life and the attitude toward life that he expects from other human beings. Cain's murder of Abel provided Luther with a model for tracing the

development of sin from the failure to fear, love, and trust in God above all things to the attitudes of arrogance, discontent, resentment, envy, and pride that finally led to the deed of murder. Because he wanted to be lord of all, in control of his environment, Cain felt no need to hearken to God.¹¹ Luther analyzed the course of Cain's resort to murder: his disappointment at being deprived of what he wanted led him to kill Abel. He then became brusque and surly when God asked about Abel. He could only reply with scorn, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Luther pointed out that Cain had defied God's design for human life together in caring community.¹²

Luther's Preaching on the Fifth Commandment

IN 1525, LUTHER PREACHED ON the giving of the Law in Exodus 20. God gave this command in order to cage the "wolves, bears, lions, etc." in this world because he was worried about human welfare. For God knew that the human heart was intent on stamping out the lives of others after the fall into sin. People lose patience at any hurt, and revenge ensues. The slightest offense brings kindness to a halt. Even when the hand does not make a move, we laugh up our sleeves when something goes wrong for the other, whether the person is ill, faces ruin, or is dying. As Christ had taught in the Sermon on the Mount, the preacher reminded the congregation that the fifth commandment forbids not only striking with the fist but also insulting with words, showing anger with gestures, and nursing rage in the heart.¹³

In 1528, one of the reformer's catechetical sermons that paved the way for the composition of his catechisms the next year explained the fifth commandment as God's provision for protection for his human creatures. The commandment extends beyond forbidding harm. It extends even to condemning words or thoughts that injure. It also embraces the six works of mercy found in Matthew 25:35-36: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, opening one's home to the stranger, looking after the sick, and visiting the imprisoned. This command therefore "requires a heart that is gentle, friendly, and sweet toward everybody, ready to do good to all." Luther cited Deuteronomy 15:7-8 in which Moses commanded people to open their hands and give to others what they need.¹⁴

Luther preached on Matthew 5:21 to the congregation in Wittenberg around 1530, while his pastor and colleague Johannes Bugenhagen assisted the Lübeck government in introducing reform. In this sermon, Luther charged that the Pharisees of Christ's time had applied the fifth commandment only to "course outward deeds," forbidding nothing other than "striking dead with the hand." This narrow interpretation pays no attention to Christ's explanation of the commandment presented in this passage. Hearts may be filled with anger, hate, and envy, with many plots to harm another person, and with words of cursing. Luther condemned these attitudes of contempt toward living human beings even as he recognized that being kind to

others, helping them in need and treating them as every human being wants to be treated, may be a burden. Nonetheless, it is the way God wants his human creatures to practice their being human (Matt. 5:20, 22). Luther dismissed the halfway measure of forgiving but not forgetting; had God not forgotten our sinfulness, we would all go to hell, he observed.¹⁵ He did, however, explain to the congregation the nature of godly anger that must be exercised as part of the callings of parents and governmental officials charged with keeping public order. He maintained that their strict discipline should be directed against the deed, not the person.¹⁶ Luther then elaborated on the Word “*raca*,” a term of contempt, and a word that Matthew preserved in its original Aramaic. It embraces any symptoms of anger against others, including refusing to talk to them, laughing at them, and dreaming of their ruin. Luther contrasted these with the “motherly” attitude that rebukes in love to correct a child.¹⁷ He urged reconciliation as Christ had suggested. His concern for life went beyond preserving a breathing body to working to prevent shortening life artificially and to the bearing of burdens that foster and nourish the goodness of life that God intends for his human creatures.

Luther’s Treatment of the Fifth Commandment in Catechetical Works

IN THE SUMMER AND FALL OF 1520, Luther published four programmatic works that detailed his call for reform. Two deconstructed medieval piety: his *Open Letter to the German Nobility* critiqued a series of individual practices, and his *Prelude, On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church* dismantled the ritualistic system that focused on the individual’s participation and performance in the sacred works connected with the sacraments. The culmination of these four treatises came with his *On the Freedom of a Christian*, which laid out how trusting in Christ produces the fruits of faith, in freedom from sin, God’s wrath, and death, and in bonding to the neighbor, the freedom to act in truly human fashion. The first of these, *On Good Works*, countered the charge of his opponents that his doctrine of justification through the forgiving Word of absolution and the trust in Christ that it elicits would lead to disobedience and licentiousness. He used the Ten Commandments as his framework for demonstrating how faith exhibits itself in hearkening to the commands of God. Against the “angry and revenge-seeking passion” that God forbids in the fifth commandment stands the obedience expressed in “meekness.” Not intended is the kind of meekness that seems present when a person simply wants to avoid involvement in the troubles of others. Beasts and unbelievers practice that kind of meekness that turns to resentment and anger when the needs of others impose themselves. Godly meekness seeks no vengeance and avoids cursing, speaking, or thinking evil of others, even enemies. These meek people do good to those who curse and insult them, as Paul admonishes in Romans 12:14. Even though all feel

anger toward others when threatened, Luther describes true godly meekness: the heart feels compassion toward enemies when evil happens to them. For, as he says, “the heart is most tormented when it has to be angry and severe.”¹⁸

Luther explained what violates the fifth commandment in the Prayer Book he began constructing in 1522. His list included anger, using “insults, profanity, slander, backbiting, condemnation, scorn” against others, revealing another’s sins in public rather than protecting them from such information being shared with the public, failure to look for the best in others, failure to forgive and pray for enemies, failure to practice mercy also toward enemies, inciting others against each other or causing disunity in other ways, failure to reconcile others, failure to prevent or fend off anger and discord where possible, along with all forms of violence against others.¹⁹

Luther’s Small Catechism traces the violation of the fifth commandment back to a failure to fear and love God, the root sin from which all defiance of God stems. God forbids hurting or harming others and commands helping and befriending them in every physical need.²⁰ The Large Catechism expands on this simple summary. Referring to Matthew 5:21-26, Luther condemned harming others by hand or heart, word or gestures, or aiding and abetting others in harming another person. Anger, reproof, and punishment God reserves for those called to keep order in society.²¹ Luther noted that the devil arouses enemies who envy our blessings, tempting us to respond in kind. He traced the course of sin from hearts filled with anger to a readiness to get revenge. Curses follow, then blows, eventually calamity and murder. God gave this commandment as a “wall, fortress, and refuge” around his human creatures to protect them from violence. The people of Christ learn to calm their anger and have a patient, gentle heart.²² Beyond this, Luther called for action to aid those in need.

If you send a naked person away when you could clothe him, you have let him freeze to death. If you see anyone who is suffering from hunger and do not feed him, you have let him starve. Likewise, if you see anyone who is condemned to death or in similar peril and do not save him although you have the means and ways to do so, you have killed him. . . . Therefore, God rightly calls all people murderers who do not offer counsel or assistance to those in need and peril to body and life.²³

In paraphrasing Matthew 25, Luther noted that Jesus would say to such people, “You would have permitted me and my family to die of hunger, thirst, and cold, to be torn to pieces by wild beasts, to rot in prison or perish from want.” God thereby encourages gentleness, patience, and kindness, even toward our enemies.²⁴ Commenting on this passage in the Large Catechism, Warren Lattimore quotes Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “The church has an unconditional obligation toward the victims of any societal order, even if they do not belong to the Christian community. Let us work for the good of all.”²⁵

Though not strictly a catechetical work, Luther's *A Simple Way to Pray* of 1535 reviewed the Ten Commandments as a guide to prayer. This meditation responded to a request for instruction for praying, and the reformer dedicated it to his barber, Peter Beskendorf, who, shortly after its appearance, plunged a sword into his son-in-law in an inebriated moment. Luther analyzed the Decalogue in this work according to a four-fold scheme, viewing each commandment as instruction, thanksgiving, confession, and prayer. The fifth commandment instructs God's people to love the neighbor and to harm no one, either by word or deed, out of anger, vexation, envy, hatred, or for any other reason. Instead, God's people give aid and assistance in every physical need. This provides protection for others a person helps and for oneself whom others help. The command not to kill gives cause to give thanks to God for the protection his provision gives for order in society and mutual assistance. Luther then confessed his own lack of gratitude for God's fatherly protection, ignoring the command and neglecting to give support to others in need.

We amble along complacently, feel no remorse that in defiance of this commandment we neglect our neighbor, and, yes, we desert him, persecute, injure, or even kill him in our thoughts. We indulge in anger, rage, and villainy as though we were doing a fine and noble thing.²⁶

Finally, Luther counseled praying for God's help in obeying this commandment, joining others in dealing with those in need with kindness, gentleness, and love, forgiving, bearing with the faults of others patiently, and living together in true peace and harmony.²⁷

Luther's Confrontation with Physical Afflictions as Pastor, Son, and Parent

LUTHER'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE VALUE and wonder of God's gift of life led him to view death as the enemy, the tool of the Enemy, who is the devil himself. Furthermore, illness came from Satan's hand, and God has given not only his consolation but also medical means of combatting disease.²⁸ Yet Luther always confronted the dying and the grieving with the promise of life everlasting through Christ's resurrection. He brought this consolation to friends, students' families, his own family, and himself. When his close friend and collaborator, the court painter Lukas Cranach, and his wife received news of the death of their son Johannes in distant Bologna, Luther came to their side with the consolation of Christ's triumph over death.²⁹ A letter to his friend Caspar Müller, chancellor of the county of Mansfeld, who was enduring illness, reflects Luther's own struggle with illness, leaving no doubt that life is precious and every bodily affliction reveals the world's fallenness. He emphasized that Christ had conquered "the world, the devil, sin, death, flesh, sickness, and all evils."³⁰ Although Urban Rhegius was to realize that in his illness, he was being

“buffeted by a messenger of Satan and suffering from a thorn in the flesh,” he could find comfort in God perfecting his strength through this affliction (2 Cor. 12:9).³¹ Illness also elicited words of comfort from Luther. In 1519 he placed the “affliction” suffered by Elector Frederick the Wise in Christ’s body to be borne also by him.³² He reached out with concern and support to those suffering “melancholy,” the sixteenth-century label for depression.³³ Luther’s own description of his approach to visiting the sick demonstrates his recognition of the worth of life and health while also revealing his intent to place all in God’s hands.³⁴ His counsel in the face of the plague and other illnesses demonstrates a trust in God and a firm belief that medical science served as a gift of God, which Christians are bound to use. For with medical science, God contends against dying and for life with common sense and the medical tools produced through rational human investigation.³⁵

Luther’s prayers for his parents, as they struggled in their last days against illness and approaching death, offered the consolation of Christ’s presence and his sharing the evils afflicted upon body and soul that take away the joy of life.³⁶ The record of his reaction to his father’s death, intense weeping, and physical pain,³⁷ illustrates the deep grief that he also felt at the death of his daughters Elizabeth³⁸ and Magdalena.³⁹ He experienced death first-hand and reacted fiercely against all that threatened life.

However, Luther also has a reputation for his harsh criticism of others. His fear of the breakdown of law and order in writing against the “robbing, murderous hordes” of peasants⁴⁰ must, however, be set in the context of the more than one hundred—primarily local—peasant revolts that preceded the outbreak of widespread peasant revolt and peasant violence in 1524/1525.⁴¹ Little known is his letter to Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz of July 21, 1525, pleading for the release of a young man imprisoned for alleged participation in the revolt. In this letter, he admonished the prince-bishop that “it is not good for a lord to incite his subjects to displeasure, ill will, and hostility, and it is also foolish to do so.” Luther conceded that it is proper to be strict when people are seditious or when they become unmanageable and stubborn in the performance of their duties, but once they have been defeated, they are a different people and deserve mercy with punishment. He quoted James 2:13, “mercy rejoices against judgment.”⁴²

It is also true that he condemned those whom he thought should know better than to deny the core beliefs of Scripture, including followers of the pope, as well as Jews and Muslims. Despite his shameful, inexcusable attacks on Jews at the end of his life, when he heard rumors of active Jewish attempts to convert Christians as the end of time approached, his concern for the conversion of Jewish neighbors continued well beyond his treatise of 1523, *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew*.⁴³ He also argued for catechetical training, in part to prepare Christians to witness to Muslims should they fall captive to Turkish invaders.⁴⁴

He did utter denunciations of friends who had turned to false teachings regarding justification, such as his colleague Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt. However, not long after their severe rupture over Karlstadt's denial of the true presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper, along with his attempts to introduce Old Testament ceremonial laws as necessary for Christians, he was accused of aiding the revolting peasants. First, his family, and then Karlstadt himself, found refuge in Luther's home, where the Luther family hid him in secret since he was *persona non grata* with the Saxon government. Karlstadt renounced his contrary views temporarily, but when he returned to them, the break with Luther was inevitable.⁴⁵ Luther also attempted reconciliation many times with his student Johann Agricola, who consistently attacked Luther's fundamental hermeneutical distinction of law and gospel until Agricola finally escaped city arrest and fled Wittenberg for the rest of his and Luther's lives.⁴⁶

On the contrary, Luther did not display the prejudices sometimes held against those from other lands in Europe. His pastoral care for the Croatian-Italian student Matthias Flacius Illyricus turned Flacius into a life-long defender of Luther's teachings, even against German fellow students, who used his Slavic origins to combat Flacius' criticism of their hero, Philip Melancthon.⁴⁷ His relationship with the English found expression in his support of Robert Barnes, whom King Henry VIII burned at the stake,⁴⁸ and in his relationship with students from the kingdoms of Denmark and Sweden.⁴⁹

And Luther's Followers in Our Own Time

THESE OPEN ATTITUDES ACROSS TRIBAL DIVIDES have not always been shared by those who claimed Luther's name. Among the forms of animosity that are rising in the midst of the prospering yet deeply dissatisfied populations of Western Europe and North America, drawing even Lutherans into their vortex, is racism in its various forms. Theologians in Germany were drawn to the National Socialist Party as a bulwark against forces undermining Christian values and institutions in the Germany of the 1920s. However, Canadian historian James M. Stayer points out that it was those anchored in the Lutheran confession, for instance, University of Erlangen theologians Werner Elert and Paul Althaus, and not those from the nineteenth-century Liberal tradition, who recognized the danger and discarded their infatuation with Adolf Hitler.⁵⁰ Their colleague Hermann Sasse never understood the attraction; he was among the very first voices among German Evangelical theologians to condemn both the racism that attributed superior characteristics to the so-called Aryan race and the racism that bred hatred of the Jews.⁵¹

Luther recognized that evil lurks behind the closed doors of our homes, even those homes with crosses or pious sayings on their door. We are surprised when a shooting occurs in our neighborhoods or an overdose brings an ambulance to the

house across the street. However, the tensions of modern life foster in all people the fermenting of fears that glide into hatred. Stresses of many kinds stir up resentment that stews inside and turns into physical assaults or more subtle ways of undermining the bodily well-being of others. Finding identity in ancestry or “race” amounts to nothing other than idolatry. Our twenty-first-century Western expectations that life should include freedom for leisure of many kinds and the toys that modern life supplies for our entertainment divert our sensitivity to the needs of others within our reach, a number that has grown larger with modern devices that facilitate global contacts. The expectations of our society, however, arouse the desire to have what others have. At the same time, we ignore the poverty of goods or spirit in those we encounter in our neighborhoods, at work, or even in our own families.

Luther observed in lecturing on 1 John 3:15 in 1527 that those who are envious of others and wish them harm have the scorpion’s tail mentioned in Revelation 9:10, with its sting that has the power to hurt others.³² The assertion that only sticks and stones can harm a person is false. Words can indeed injure us, and so can thoughts, for they bear the poison of the scorpion’s sting. Desires to be free of the burden of the needs of those around us sting even when we think we have them in a sheath.

Luther understood that the only way to truly overcome our tendency to turn in on ourselves to protect ourselves by lashing out at others is to find our true security in Christ’s words that accept us and his incorporation of us into his family. The restoration of a relationship with our Creator produces the knowledge that frees us from self-concern so that we might risk reconciliation with others. Thus, Luther’s logic of life leads his followers to oppose all threats to life, from in the womb to life in the weakness and vulnerability of old age. Luther’s logic of life leads those who take his message seriously to condemn and repudiate every attempt to demean and disadvantage others for any reason. Luther’s logic of life leads his followers to strive for the welfare of the hungry and thirsty, the imprisoned, the sojourners and refugees, and the broken and desperate. Luther’s logic of life delivers the joys of self-sacrifice that Jesus modeled and his disciples displayed as Christ’s people reach out to all who need their support.

Robert Kolb is professor of systematic theology emeritus at Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, is co-editor with Timothy J. Wengert of the 2000 translation of *The Book of Concord* and co-editor with Irene Dingel and Lubomir Batka of *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology* (2014). He has authored several books on Luther and Lutheran teaching, including two appearing in 2024: *Face to Face. Martin Luther’s View of Reality* (Fortress Press) and the second edition of *The Christian Faith, a Lutheran Exposition*, co-authored with Theodore J. Hopkins (Concordia Publishing House).

Notes

1. Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: The Free Press, 1973).
2. On the climactic year, see Robert Kolb, “Memoria Melanchthonia 1560. The Public Presentation of Philip Melanchthon at his Death,” in *Memoria – theologische Synthese – Autoritätenkonflikt. Die Rezeption Luthers und Melanchthons in der Schülergeneration*, ed. Irene Dingel (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2016), 89-102.
3. Schleupner, *Barsillai octogenarius: Das ist: Von Barsillaj Achtzigjährigem Hochlöblichem Alter Leichpredigt/ Bey Begräbnüß/ des ... Alten Vrban Gaubischen/ weyland Buchdruckers zu Eißleben ...* (Eisleben, 1616), E2b–E4b.
4. WA 42: 202, 29-35, LW 1: 274.
5. WA 23: 404/405,14.-7, LW 43: 146-147.
6. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, Vol. 1: *His Road to Reformation, 1483-1521*, trans. James L. Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 295.
7. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, Vol. 3: *The Preservation of the Church, 1532-1546*, trans. James L. Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1986), 14–15.
8. WA 14:126,18-128,16. Cf. his sermon with similar comments on the verse in a sermon from 1519, WA 2: 167,16-168,9, refashioned in the Winter Postil of 1528, WA 21: 67,16-68,16.
9. WA 42: 87,11-88,14, LW 1:115-116.
10. WA 22: 249, 28-35, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, ed. John Nicholas Lenker (1905-1909; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 3:51.
11. WA 42: 192,14-203,6, LW 1: 259-275.
12. WA 42: 203,7-209,34, LW 1: 275-281.
13. WA 16: 507,22-510,19.
14. WA 30,1: 72,28-75,26, LW 51:152-153.
15. WA 32: 360,23-362:14, LW 21: 74-76.
16. WA 32: 362,15-363,18, LW 21: 76-77.
17. WA 32: 363,19-364,29, LW 21:77-78.
18. WA 6: 265,27-268,7, LW 44:100-103.
19. WA 10,2: 383,1.17, LW 43:19.
20. *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*, ed. Irene Dingel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014 [henceforth BSELK]), 864, *The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000 [henceforth BC]), 352.
21. BSELK 992/993, 25-994/995, 12, BC 410-411.
22. BSELK 994/995, 13-996/997, 21, BC 411-412.
23. BSELK 996/997, 22-998/999, 18, BC 412.
24. BSELK 998/999, 19-1000/1001, 6, BC 412-413.
25. Lattimore, “Hatred as Murder,” in *Luther’s Large Catechism with Annotations and Contemporary Applications*, ed. John T. Pless and Larry M. Vogel (St Louis: Concordia, 2022), 234-235, citing Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Berlin: 1932-1933*, trans. Isael Best and David Higgins, ed. Larry Rasmussen, in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer; Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009) 12: 365.

26. WA 38: 368,35-369,28, LW 43: 205.
27. WA 38: 369,28-35, LW 43: 205-206.
28. WA Tischreden 3: 501-503, Nr. 4784; *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, Theodore G. Tappert, ed., (Westminster: Philadelphia, 1955), 46-47.
29. WA Tischreden 4:505-508, Nr. 4787. On Luther and death, see Neil R. Leroux, *Martin Luther as Comforter. Writings on Death* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), and Robert Kolb, *Face to Face. Luther's View of Reality* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2024), 63-67.
30. WA Briefe 7: 117-119, Nr. 2147.
31. WA Briefe 7:147-148, Nr. 2167.
32. WA Briefe 6: 104-106, Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 26-28.
33. Stephen Pietsch, *Of Good Comfort. Martin Luther's Letters to the Depressed and their Significance for Pastoral Care Today* (Adelaide: ATF, 2016), and Ute Mennicke-Haustein, *Luthers Trostbriefe* (Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1989).
34. WA Tischreden 2: 356, Nr. 2194b., Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 36-37.
35. Cf his report on the plague of August 19, 1527, in a letter to Georg Spalatin, WA Briefe 6:232-233, Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 228-230, cf. his treatise *Whether One May Flee from a Deadly Plague*, WA 23: 338-379, LW 43:119-138.
36. WA Briefe 5: 239-241, Nr. 1529; 6: 103-104, Nr. 1820, LW 49: 267-271, 50: 17-21.
37. As the amanuensis Veit Dietrich, who accompanied him to the Fortress Coburg in 1530, related, WA Briefe 5: 379, 16–19; Nr. 1595.
38. WA Briefe 4: 511, Nr. 1303, LW 49: 203.
39. WA Tischreden 5: 189–192, Nr. 5494; WA, TR 5: 186,19–26, Nr. 5490c.
40. WA 18: 357-361. LW 46: 455.
41. Robert Scribner, “The Reformation movements in Germany,” in *The New Cambridge Modern History, Volume II, The Reformation 1520-1559*, ed. Geoffrey Elton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 86-87; Tom Scott, *Town, Country, and Regions in Reformation Germany* (Leiden, Brill, 2005), 3-188.
42. WA Briefe 3: 547-548, Nr. 905, Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 174.-75.
43. *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew*, WA 11: 314-336, LW 45: 199-229, LW 45: 200-201, 229; WA 11: 314-336; cf. similar expressions in a sermon of 1524, WA 15: 447,11-22, and a letter of July 9, 1530, WA Briefe 5: 452-1-28, with instructions for the catechetization of a young Jewish woman. See Mark U. Edwards, Jr., *Luther's Last Battles. Politics and Polemics, 1531-1546* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 115-142, and Steven G. Burnett, “What Could Luther Have Known of Judaism,” in *Juden, Christen und Muslime im Zeitalter der Reformation*, ed. Matthias Pohl, 133–146. (Heidelberg: Verein für Reformationsgeschichte, 2020), 133-146.
44. *Military Sermon against the Turks*, WA 30,2: 185,18-186,18, 192, 22-193,5, 194, 23-195, 6; *Appeal for Prayer Against the Turks*, WA 51: 621, LW 43:239; see Edwards, *Luther's Last Battles*, 97-114, Gregory J. Miller, *The Turks and Islam in Reformation Germany* (London: Routledge, 2017).
45. Amy Nelson Burnett, *Karlstadt and the Origins of the Eucharistic Controversy: A Study in the Circulation of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 10–36; Scott H.

- Hendrix, *Martin Luther, Visionary Reformer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 168; Edwards, *Luther and the False Brethren*, 34–59.
46. Hendrix, *Visionary Reformer*, 256–258; Mark U. Edwards, *Luther and the False Brethren* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 156–179; Timothy J. Wengert, *Law and Gospel: Philip Melancthon's Debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over Poenitentia* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 103-175; “Johann Agricola neben Luther: Schülerschaft und theologische Eigenart,” in *Lutheriana*, ed. Gerhard Hammer and Karl-Heinz zur Mühlen (Cologne: Böhlau, 1984), 131-150.
47. Oliver K. Olson, *Matthias Flacius and the Survival of Luther's Reform* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 47-49; Luka Ilić, *Theologian of Sin and Grace. The Process of Radicalization in the Theology of Matthias Flacius Illyricus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck/Ruprecht, 2014), 61-65; Irene Dingel, “Flacius als Schüler Luthers und Melancthons,” in *Vestigia Pietatis. Studien zur Geschichte der Frömmigkeit in Thüringen und Sachsen, Ernst Koch gewidmet*, ed. Gerhard Graf, Hans-Peter Hasse et al. (Leipzig 2000 [Herbergen der Christenheit, Sonderbd. 5]), 77-93.
48. Luther's preface to Barnes' confession of faith demonstrates their relationship, WA 51: 449-451, LW 60: 228-233.
49. Simo Heininen, *Die finnischen Studenten in Wittenberg, 1531-1552* (Helsinki: Oy, 1980).
50. James M. Stayer, *Martin Luther, German Saviour: German Evangelical Theological Factions and the Interpretation of Luther, 1917-1933* (Montreal/ Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000), 70-95.
51. Sasse, “Die ‘Krisis der Religion’ und die Verkündigung der Kirche,” and “Die Kirche und die politischen Mächte der Zeit,” *Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelischen Landeskirchen Deutschlands 1932* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1932), 129, 30-113. Although he sharply criticized Sasse for abandoning the effort to compose the Barmen Declaration of 1934, on which he had initially worked, the faithful follower of Karl Barth, Arthur Cochrane, in his *The Church's Confession under Hitler* (2. ed., Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1976), stated “It is to the lasting credit of Prof. Hermann Sasse, of the University of Erlangen, that he was the first to declare that because of this one plank in the Party's program [the embrace of positive and negative racism] the Church could in no way approve of Nazism. It had to be categorically repudiated. The fact that Sasse eventually broke with the Confessing Church in the interest of a narrow Lutheran confessionism, and thereby greatly weakened the church's opposition to National Socialism, must not obscure the prophetic role he played at the outset,” p. 36. On Sasse and his colleagues, see Lowell C. Green, *The Erlangen School of Theology. Its History, Teaching, and Practice* (Fort Wayne: Lutheran Legacy, 2010), 231-309, and Lowell C. Green, *Lutherans Against Hitler. The Untold Story* (St. Louis: Concordia 2007), 325-357.
52. WA 20: 710, 30-711, 26, LW 30: 276.