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# THE TESTAMENT OF A WORM: LUTHER ON TESTAMENT AND COVENANT

*Kenneth Hagen*

The theology of the young Luther has been described as a theology of testament.<sup>1</sup> What happened to the testament theology of the young Luther? Given the current interest in late medieval and early reformation developments of covenant theology,<sup>2</sup> what was Luther's position on covenant? This study is intended to answer these questions and thus broaden the basis for evaluating the development "From Testament to Covenant in the Early 16th Century." In pursuit of the answer to these questions every place has been chronologically researched where Luther used testament, covenant, and cognates through 1525. The material has been systematized around six main points, which constitute Luther's theology of testament. In this process I have become fascinated with Luther's curious designation of the testator (Christ) as "worm."

## THE TESTAMENT<sup>3</sup>

The various aspects of the category of testament provided Luther with a frame of reference to handle the disparate, polemical issues he confronted. "Testament" was a means or model for theologizing about the Christian faith. The promise to Abraham was given "*per modum testamenti*."<sup>4</sup> Testament is also the message. "And so

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1. Kenneth Hagen, *A Theology of Testament in the Young Luther: The Lectures on Hebrews* ("Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought," Vol. 12; Leiden: Brill, 1974).
  2. Heiko A. Oberman, "Wir sein pettler: Hoc est verum: Bund und Gnade in der Theologie des Mittelalters und der Reformation," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 78 (1967), 232-52.
  3. I wish to thank Marquette University and Prof. Heinz Bluhm and associates for allowing me and associates to use Prof. Bluhm's *Index verborum* of Luther's German works from 1517-25. We were able to note the places where Luther used *Testament(um)*, *Bund*, and ca. 20 cognates and words associated with testament and covenant.
  4. *Ad Galathas* (1516), WA 57.II.24.9-10.

that little word ‘testament’ is a short summary of all God’s wonders and grace, fulfilled in Christ.”<sup>5</sup> The “whole gospel” is summarized in the testament of Christ.<sup>6</sup> The mode and message of testament comes from the New Testament and was read by Luther back into the Old Testament. It was important hermeneutically for Luther that the New Testament illumine the Old Testament; otherwise the latter remains obscure.<sup>7</sup> The Jews of the Old Testament had the same Christian faith that New Testament Christians did.<sup>8</sup> Luther first read the Old Testament as the Christian’s book; then read the New Testament in the light of the Old Testament: “The books of Moses and the prophets are also the Gospel”<sup>9</sup>; the Old Testament is “the ground of our faith.”<sup>10</sup> “*Nam vetus testamentum est fons novi, novum est lux veteris.*”<sup>11</sup>

1. PROMISE. Testament or will is initiated by God through the promise(s) to send the testator (God in Christ) to validate by his death the inheritance of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

The promise was given at the beginning. “It must happen in this manner . . . that God alone without any entreaty or desire of man must first come and give him a promise.” The promise is “the beginning, the foundation, the rock.”<sup>12</sup> The one who makes out a testament is the testator. “God is the testator, for it is he himself who promises and bequeaths.”<sup>13</sup>

The testament is the promise,<sup>14</sup> and the promise is in both Old Testament and New Testament: “all the fathers in the Old Testament, together with all the holy prophets, had the same faith and Gospel as we have,” because, “it is all the one truth of the promise.”<sup>15</sup> Properly speaking (“*proprie*”) the New Testament is primarily promise with some law, and the Old Testament is primarily law with genuine promises.<sup>16</sup> Really for Luther there is no book in the Bible which does not contain both law and promise.<sup>17</sup>

The testament is eternal, the promise is constant and continuous, and there is no development of testament within or between the Old Testament and New Testament. Some would say that the prophets and the New Testament add something to the books of Moses. “No,” said Luther regarding all books of Scripture, “throughout them all there is one and the same teaching and thought.”<sup>18</sup> Moses is the primary source. Moses pointed out that the New Testament, the testament consisting of the

5. *Ein Sermon von dem neuen Testament* (1520), LW 35.84; WA 6.357.25-27.

6. *Ibid.*, WA 6.374.3-9.

7. *Evangelium in der Christmesse*, Luk. 2,1-14 (1522), WA 10,1,1.79-84; cf. *Ein Klein Unterricht was man in den Evangeliiis suchen und gewarten soll* (1522), WA 10,1,1.14.16-15.9.

8. *Von weltlicher Obrigkeit, wie weit man ihr Gehorsam schuldig sei* (1523), WA 11.255.35-256.1.

9. *Epistel S. Petri gepredigt* (1523), WA 12.275.5.

10. *Ibid.*, WA 12.274.34-35.

11. WA Tr 5.378.25-26 (§5841).

12. *Ein Sermon von dem neuen Testament*, LW 35.82; WA 6.356.3-8.

13. *Ad Galatas* (1519), LW 27.264; WA 2.519.5.

14. *Ibid.*, WA 2.519.6-7.

15. *Das Magnificat* (1521), LW 7.354; WA 7.600.1-9.

16. *De servo arbitrio* (1525), WA 18.692.19-20; WA Tr 6.140.26-31 (§6714).

17. *Adventspostille* (1522) WA 10,1,2.159.7-8; cf. *Ein Sermon von dem neuen Testament*, WA 6.356-57.

18. *Von Menschenlehre zu meiden* (1522), LW 35.132; WA 10,2.73.7-18.

promise of Christ, is the oldest, promised from the beginning of the world.<sup>19</sup>

In every promise there is a word and a sign, just as notaries affix their seal or mark to make a will binding and authentic.<sup>20</sup> The signs were the rainbow, circumcision, rain on the ground; in baptism the sign is the water, in the eucharist (the testament of Christ), bread and wine. "The words are the divine vow, promise and testament. The signs are the sacraments, that is, sacred signs. Now as the testament is much more important than the sacrament, so the words are much more important than the signs . . ." <sup>21</sup>

2. WORD. The more one works on testament and covenant in the later Middle Ages and Reformation, the more one is struck how verbally oriented Luther's theology was. Luther often bemoaned the fact that we have the New Testament in written form.

The Word is the living, eternal promise of the testament of Christ. The gospel of Christ is not a writing but a word of the mouth.<sup>22</sup> "This report and encouraging tidings, or evangelical and divine news, is also called a New Testament. For it is a testament when a dying man bequeaths his property, after his death, to his legally defined heirs. And Christ, before his death, commanded and ordained that his gospel be preached after his death in all the world."<sup>23</sup> Luther preferred the gospel of John over the synoptics, because John is much more about the preaching of Christ than about his works. "If I had to do without one or the other — either the works or the preaching of Jesus — I would rather do without the works than without his preaching. For the works do not help me, but his words give life."<sup>24</sup> Christ did not write anything; the New Testament is a "living Word."<sup>25</sup> The church is a "mouth house" and not a "pen house."<sup>26</sup>

The testament itself is the word of Christ, " 'This is my body' . . . In like manner he says over the cup, 'Take it and all of you drink of it: this is a new everlasting testament in my blood' . . . In proof and evidence of this he has left his own body and blood under bread and wine, instead of letter and seal."<sup>27</sup> Everything depends on the words of Christ's testament: "You would have to spend a long time polishing your shoes, preening and primping to attain an inheritance, if you had no letter and seal with which you could prove your right to it. But if you have a letter and seal, and believe, desire, and seek it, it must be given to you, even though you were scaly, scabby, stinking, and most filthy. So if you would receive this sacrament and testament worthily, see to it that you give emphasis to these living words of Christ . . ." <sup>28</sup> The Word is the promise. The Word is the testament. The Word is Christ. Christ's testament is the eucharist. "Let this stand, therefore, as our first and infall-

19. *Deuteronomion Mosi* (1525), WA 14.602.34-603.36.

20. *Ein Sermon von dem neuen Testament*, WA 6.358.35-359.3.

21. *Ibid.*, LW 35.91; WA 6.363.4-7.

22. *Ein klein Unterricht*, WA 10,1,1.17.4-11.

23. *Vorrede auf das Neue Testament* (1522), LW 35.358; WA DB 6.4.12-17.

24. *Ibid.*, LW 35.362; WA DB 6.10.20-22.

25. *Adventspostille* (1522), WA 10,1,2.35.1-2.

26. *Ibid.*, WA 10,1,2.48.5.

27. *Von den guten Werken* (1520), LW 44.55-56; WA 6.230.10-25.

28. *Ein Sermon von dem neuen Testament*, LW 35.88; WA 6.360.29-361.9.

ible proposition — the Mass or Sacrament of the Altar is Christ's testament."<sup>29</sup>

3. CROSS. Luther's theology of the cross was a part of a larger picture — it is not the whole story of Luther's thought. The whole picture is a theology of testament with many aspects, the cross being one. Luther's theology of death, Christ's, was more than a theological construct. As much of his theology was, it was a strategy to deal with an every day, existential dread: death, physical and imminent. Christ's death was a *sacramentum* and an *exemplum*. The example of Christ shows us how to die confidently in the "passing over of our flesh."<sup>30</sup>

The sacramental effect of Christ's death is the validation of the eternal testament.<sup>31</sup> "So you have the Testator, the testament, the substance of the testament, and those for whom it was made. Now it remains that it be ratified . . . that is, made valid through the death of Christ."<sup>32</sup> Heb. 9.16 was often cited by Luther, " 'For where there is a testament, the death of the testator must of necessity occur.' Now God made a testament; therefore, it was necessary that he should die. But God could not die unless he became man. Thus the incarnation and the death of Christ are both comprehended most concisely in this one word, 'testament'."<sup>33</sup> Testament is not a vow to be altered or recalled by the living; it is an irrevocable will of one about to die. The cross then is in the context of the promise of the testament, "that God would become man and die and rise again, in order that his word, in which he promises such a testament might be fulfilled and confirmed."<sup>34</sup>

The cross for Luther meant suffering and humiliation: the wounds of Christ, the blood of Christ, Christ as worm on the cross. Christ as worm meant, in part, total humiliation: "I am a worm and no man," (Ps. 22.6), said Christ on the cross, according to Luther.<sup>35</sup> "We find him [Christ] dying a shameful death."<sup>36</sup> The real holy relic of which the Psalmist speaks, "*In reliquiis tuis praeparabis vultum eorum*," (Ps. 20.13), is the testament which consists of cross and humility.<sup>37</sup>

4. INHERITANCE. The cross ratifies the legacy bequeathed. The inheritance bequeathed is the "grace of the new testament."<sup>38</sup> Whether seen as promise, Word, cross, inheritance or faith, the testament is grace. Luther defined the inheritance in

29. *De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae praeludium* (1520), LW 36.37; WA 6.513.14-15.

30. Hagen, *A Theology of Testament*, pp. 114-15.

31. *Dominica Judica Sermo M. Lutheri* (probably 1516), WA 4.618.20-30: "A testament is the last will over a legal thing and is finished by the death of the testator. Thus the Old Testament was the land flowing with milk and honey (Ex. 24; Heb. 9), containing earthly and external things. God did not die there as testator, but cattle died instead, in order that the testament might be ratified. Since the Old Testament was earthly and transitory and, indeed, out of date, it was fitting that it be ratified with the blood of cattle, to affirm temporal possession, in which all the commandments of the law grew strong. In the New Testament, however, the remission of sins is promised, eternal life, and a heavenly inheritance, in the following words: 'This is the cup of the New Testament, which is poured out for you and for many,' etc. And, in order that this testament might stand, the testator himself died."

32. *Ad Galatas* (1519), LW 27.265; WA 2.519.38-520.6.

33. *De captivitate Babylonica*, LW 36.38; WA 6.514.6-10.

34. *Ein Sermon von dem neuen Testament*, LW 35.84; WA 6.357.22-24.

35. Cf. Part Two: the Worm; below.

36. *Zwei deutsche Fastenpredigten* (1518), LW 51.40; WA 1.270.26.

37. *Ibid.*, WA 1.270.38-39.

38. *Sermo de triplici iustitia* (1518), WA 2.45.26-27.

slightly different ways. Sometimes it is “righteousness,”<sup>39</sup> sometimes it is “the grace and righteousness of faith.”<sup>40</sup> Sometimes the inheritance is given as the forgiveness of sins,<sup>41</sup> sometimes as the grace for eternal life.<sup>42</sup> Most often the inheritance is defined as the combination of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Grace is promised for the forgiveness of sins so that the heirs might obtain the eternal inheritance.<sup>43</sup> “What is bequeathed to us by Christ in his testament? Truly a great, eternal and ineffable treasure: . . . the forgiveness of all our sins and life eternal.”<sup>44</sup> Testament, at least God’s style, is totally gratuitous.

The testament is unilateral gift. One of the primary functions of the testament model is that the testator made out his will (the promise) without the heir having to do anything to deserve the inheritance. In the testament of the mass God does not receive a benefit but confers a benefit. By definition, a testament is “*beneficium . . . datum.*”<sup>45</sup> “Christ has set up the mass as a sacrament and testament, which no one can buy, initiate or give, but like baptism one must receive it for himself.”<sup>46</sup>

The unilateral testament is not a bilateral covenant. Whenever Luther thought positively about covenant, he was thinking about the covenant of grace as a synonym of testament. “This testament of Christ is foreshadowed in all the promises of God from the beginning of the world . . . Hence the words ‘*pactum, foedus, testamentum domini,*’ occur so frequently in the Scriptures. These words signified that God would one day die. For where there is a testament, the death of the testator must of necessity occur (Heb. 9.)”<sup>47</sup> In the Old Testament there was an old covenant which began and ended in time. Faithfulness to that covenant depended on works.<sup>48</sup>

Research on Luther’s use of testament, covenant, and cognates to 1525 shows that, except where Luther sees covenant as a synonym for the testament of Christ, he uses *Pactum* and *Bund* pejoratively and in negative contexts. For example, there is a covenant between the Pope and the German people to raise money to fight the Turks; the context is deceit. Rome never intends to keep the *Bund* — it keeps the money in its “bottomless bag.”<sup>49</sup> An example of disobeying the first commandment is a covenant with the devil.<sup>50</sup> For God to covenant with a person and place is to delimit God; to tie him down is contrary to Ps. 67.<sup>51</sup> Or, “Don’t let yourselves be fooled” into making “oaths, vows, covenants, and adamantine or ironclad pledges . . . that you will not produce seed and multiply,” unless you are a eunuch.<sup>52</sup> Those merchants who buy up certain goods to control supply and raise prices engage in selfish profiteering — “when they have cornered the supply, they draw up a

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39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ad Galatas* (1519), WA 2.519.7-8.

41. *De abroganda missa privata* (1521), WA 8.444.22-23.

42. *Sermon von der wurdigen Empfangung des heiligen wahren Leichnams Christi* (1521), WA 7.696.2-3.

43. *De captivitate Babylonica*, WA 6.515.5-16.

44. *Ein Sermon von dem neuen Testament*, WA 6.358.14-20.

45. *Ibid.*, WA 6.364.20.

46. *Adventspostille* (1522), WA 10.1.2.79.29-32.

47. *De captivitate Babylonica*, WA 6.514.4-7.

48. *Deuteronomion Mosi*, WA 14.627.7-8; 668.7 & 15; 721.19 & 22.

49. *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation* (1520), WA 6.419.5-6; cf. 424.8.

50. *Eine kurze Form der zehh Gebote* (1520), WA 7.207.19.

51. *Deutsche Auslegung des 67. (68) Psalms* (1521), WA 8.34.6-7.

52. *Vom ehelichen Leben* (1522), LW 45.19; WA 10.2.277.11.

*Bund*.”<sup>53</sup> The peasants force good people to join their “devilish *Bund*” against their wills.”<sup>54</sup>

Luther’s understanding and experience of covenants, historical and contemporary, seem to be consistently negative because they circumscribe freedom — theologically, the freedom of God. This is consistent with Luther’s view of the bondage of the will. The freedom of the will to enter into a covenant of works with God destroys the freedom and authority of God. “If”-type soteriologies are the way of the law. The freedom of the Christian man depends on the sovereign freedom of God to give the promise of the New Testament.<sup>55</sup>

The testament is unilateral sacrifice. “In the New Testament there is no sacrifice other than the sacrifice of the cross and of praise.”<sup>56</sup> Deceptive priests, papists and sophists want to change the testament into a sacrifice: “There is, they say, a single God and a single church, between which only the testament mediates from above and the sacrifice from below.” Luther opposed a bilateral notion of sacrifice because the “sacrifice from below” meant “works.”<sup>57</sup> Christ is the only testator in the mass, the beneficent giver of the inheritance. “How can we then, out of this pledge and seal of God given to us as a gift, make a sacrifice and work of our own? Who among men would be so foolish as to sacrifice the seal on a letter, in which something is promised to him, to the one who makes the promise?”<sup>58</sup>

The mass is a unilateral testament and sacrifice. The sacrifice is also the sacrifice of prayer and praise offered by every Christian as spiritual priest through Christ as mediator. “We do not offer Christ as a sacrifice, but Christ offers us . . . That is, we lay ourselves on Christ by a firm faith in his testament . . .”<sup>59</sup>

The legacy is the free gift of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. The Christian cannot and does not offer a benefit, but he receives the benefit of the sacrifice on the cross.

5. FAITH. Faith is a part of the inheritance: “the grace and righteousness of faith.” One receives faith through the Word accomplishing its purpose. The free gift of grace is unilateral. The heirs are those who believe.<sup>60</sup> “The Word of God is decisive for you; it determines when and how far you may believe.” Faith builds on the Word and where there is no Word there is no faith. “That is why the words of God in Scripture are referred to as testament, *testimonia*, *pacta*, *federa*, because they demand faith.”<sup>61</sup>

Faith is trust in the promise. God deals with his creatures through a Word of promise, and they with him through faith in the “Word of his promise . . . For anyone can easily see that these two, promise and faith, must necessarily go together. For without the promise there is nothing to be believed; while without faith the promise is useless, since it is established and fulfilled through faith.”<sup>62</sup> The certitude of trust (“*cum fiducia*”)

53. *Von Kaufshandlung und Wucher* (1524), WA 15.308.25.

54. *Wider die rauberischen und morderischen Rotten der Bauern* (1525), WA 18.361.10.

55. *De servo arbitrio*, WA 18.690.31-693.5.

56. *Vom Missbrauch der Messe*, WA 8.506.11-12.

57. *Ibid.*, LW 36.180; WA 8.522.3-13.

58. *Ibid.*, LW 36.174; WA 8.517.1-2.

59. *Ein Sermon von dem neuen Testament*, LW 35.99; WA 6.369.3-7.

60. *De abroganda missa privata*, WA 8.444.23-24.

61. *Kirchenpostille* (1522), LW 52.199; WA 10,1,1.616.2-7.

62. *De captivitate Babylonica* LW 36.42; WA 6.516.30-32 & 517.8-10.

is based on the unworthiness of the heir and the magnitude of the inheritance.<sup>63</sup> We are “*debitores*” in the “*pactum fidei*.”<sup>64</sup> Trust is confidence that God will keep his Word and provide; it is the same in both Old Testament and New Testament.<sup>65</sup>

Trust in the Word and promise is the foundation for life and death. Christ on the cross overcame sin, death and hell; his victory gives comfort and confidence for death. “What will it profit you to assume and to believe that sin, death, and hell are overcome in Christ for others, but not to believe that your sin, your death, and your hell are also vanquished and wiped out and that you are thus redeemed?”<sup>66</sup> Personal certitude of faith is based on God’s promise, the validation of that promise in the death of the testator, and the fact that there is absolutely nothing the heir can do to deserve the promised inheritance.

6. LUTHER’S THEOLOGY OF TESTAMENT IS SOTERIOLOGICAL — SACRAMENTAL. It is a mode or model for explaining a theory of salvation, and it is the message of salvation. Luther, like other medieval theologians, discusses testament in terms of the books of the Old and New Testament and their hermeneutical relationship.<sup>67</sup> The two books cover the two great eras of salvation, the old and new eras of divine providence. Luther’s principal interest in the category of testament, however, is not in terms of books or eras but ways of salvation. Like St. Augustine, Luther sees Old and New Testament as an old and new way of salvation, both ways being present in both books (Old Testament, New Testament) and eras.<sup>68</sup> When Luther and Augustine discussed old and new, they often meant old man and new man, letter and spirit, flesh and spirit. The man of faith is a New Testament man, that is, he has received the testament of Christ in faith and trust. Because the testament of God is eternal and his Word eternally effective, those men of faith who lived during the old era covered by the Old Testament belong to the New Testament. Luther does not conceive of salvation in terms of progressive providence, developing from Old Testament to New Testament to church, but in terms of the ever-present promise, Word of God, inheritance, faith, all grounded in the death of Christ.

## THE WORM

Luther’s theology of testament (to 1525) was primarily a testamental soteriology. Some have suggested that all of Luther’s theology was really a spirituality or all soteriology, or that Luther lacked a Christology. Most of these problems depend on the definitions of these terms. This research on testament and covenant has revealed something of a Christology: the nature of the person of Christ on the cross is worm. “I am a worm and no man” (Ps. 22.6). For research on worm, I have gone beyond 1525.

In reference to Heb. 2.7, “Thou didst make him a little lower than the angels,”

63. *Ibid.*, WA 6.519.29 & 520.4.

64. *Operationes in Psalmos* (1519-21), WA 5.663.27-29.

65. *Predigten uber das 2. Buch Mose* (1525), WA 16.457.29-458.11.

66. *Ein Sermon von der Bereitung zum Sterben* (1519), LW 42.109; 2.691.12-21; 693.21-24; 695.12.

67. *Von dem Papsstum zu Rom wider den hochberuhmten Romanisten zu Leipzig* (1520), WA 6.302.21 & 303.10,12,26; cf. 314.5,7. “Von der figur und deutung,” *Evangelium von den zehn Aussatzigen* (1521), WA 8.386.15-397.17.

68. *Grund und Ursach aller Artikel D.M. Luthers* (1521), WA 7.327.5-328.4.



Luther first discounted those who understood “him” to be human nature close to the angels in dignity. Then he opposed those who understood “him” to be Christ but had an inadequate Christology. “Others understand this verse to refer to Christ as being lower than the angels, not according to his soul but according to his body which is capable of suffering. But even this interpretation is not precise enough, since he was not only made lower than the angels, but as he himself says: ‘I am a worm, and not a man’ (Ps. 22.6).”<sup>69</sup> Being made “lower than the angels” meant for Luther the time of total humiliation between the cross and the resurrection, the three days when, forsaken and deserted by God, “Thou didst hand Him over into the hands of sinners.”<sup>70</sup> The meaning of Christ as worm on the cross carried the connotations of Christ being abject, the object of contempt, forsaken, nauseating, abominable, rotten stench, scandal, offensive or, simply, rotting worm.<sup>71</sup> “The prophets have a special way of speaking, but they mean exactly what the apostles preach; for both have said much about the suffering and glory of Christ and of those who believe in him. Thus David says of Christ in Ps. 22.6: ‘I am a worm and no man.’ With these words He shows the depth of His abject humiliation in His suffering.”<sup>72</sup>

Christ as worm refers to “the mode of his passion as pure man.”<sup>73</sup> The state of *purus homo* is that he is a bag of worms. The first enemy that tempts the Christian away from the Word of God and faith is “our own flesh,” a rotten old bag of worms hanging heavy around our neck.<sup>74</sup> “We are nothing other than filth, corruption and worms.” In death the flesh turns to dust and the worms consume it. Faith looks beyond death and the consumption by worms, and believes that the body will rise.<sup>75</sup> “For thus it has pleased God to raise up from worms, from corruption, from the earth, which is totally putrid and full of stench, a body more beautiful than any flower, than balsam, than the sun itself and the stars.”<sup>76</sup> The inheritance for the worm of faith is eternal life.<sup>77</sup>

Christ destroyed the devil’s tyranny over death. God chose not to use heavenly spirits and princes, Gabriel, Michael and others, but “He degrades himself so profoundly and becomes a man, yes, even degrades himself below all men, as it is written in Ps. 22.6: ‘I am a worm and no man; scorned by men, and despised by the people.’ In such physical weakness and poverty he attacks the enemy, lets Himself be put on the cross and killed, and by His cross and death He destroys the enemy and the avenger.”<sup>78</sup>

How is it that a worm on a cross destroys the enemy’s tyranny over death? The

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69. *Ad Hebraeos* (1517-18), WA 57,III.117.4-10.

70. *Ibid.*, WA 57,III.119.1-5.

71. *Operationes in Psalmos*, WA 5.614.4-24.

72. *Epistel S. Petri gepredigt und ausgelegt* (1522), LW 30.24; WA 12.279.23-27.

73. *Operationes in Psalmos*, WA 5.614.8-9.

74. *Das funfte, sechste und siebente Kapitel Matthaei gepredigt und ausgelegt* (1532), WA 32.308.13-14 & 489.34-38. Cf. LW 12.105 & 230; LW 24.44.

75. *Lectures on Genesis* (1535-45), WA 43.318.22-23 & 303.36-304.6.

76. *Ibid.*, LW 4.190; WA 43.272.37-39.

77. *Das 16. Kapitel S. Johannes gepredigt und ausgelegt* (1537), WA 46.54.36-55.8.

78. *Der 8. Psalm Davids, gepredigt und ausgelegt* (1537), LW 12.110; WA 45.220.14-22.

force of the image of worm is illumined by an examination of some early Christian literature. In *I Clement* (16.15) Ps. 22.6 is used to describe the humiliation of Christ, and later (25.3) the worm is used as a resurrection symbol — the worm comes forth from the decaying flesh of the phoenix bird. The resurrection of the mythical phoenix is used as an illustration of the Christian doctrine of resurrection. "Now, from the corruption of its flesh there springs a worm, which is nourished by the juices of the dead bird, and puts forth wing." In Origen the worm as Christ's humanity is used as bait to catch the devil and his angels.<sup>79</sup> In Cyril of Jerusalem new life comes from worms, as evidenced by the bees and the birds. The transformation of the phoenix from a worm is proof of Christian resurrection.<sup>80</sup> In Gregory of Nyssa the gluttonous fish is lured by the flesh of Christ as bait; the divinity of Christ is the hook.<sup>81</sup> Luther refers to Gregory<sup>82</sup>: God took a sharp fishhook, put an angleworm on it and threw it into the sea. The worm is the humanity of Christ, the hook the divinity. On the hook the worm is "gebunden". The devil says, "Should I not swallow the little worm?" He did not see the hook.<sup>83</sup>

For Luther the testator on the cross is pure man, a worm. The testator is also the one who made the promise of the eternal inheritance. "The humanity did not conquer sin and death; but the hook that was concealed under the worm, at which the devil struck, conquered and devoured the devil, who was attempting to devour the worm."<sup>84</sup>

79. *Selecta in Ps.* 21.7, PG 12.1254C.

80. *Catechesis* 18.8, PG 33.1026-27.

81. *Oratio Catechetica* 24, PG 45.66A.

82. Probably, Gregory the Great; cf. *Moralium in Job*, lib. 33, PL 76.682C,D.

83. *Predigt am Ostersonntag* (1530), WA 32.41.12-26.

84. *Ad Galatas* (1531/35), LW 26.267; WA 40.1.417.31-33.

# The Good Samaritan Society

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*"The Good Samaritan Cared — so do we"*