

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Implications

Our study comes to summary here. There was a departure from the glory of Christ in the late medieval doctrines of Mary and the saints, the treasury of merits and the sacraments. Luther rediscovered the pure doctrine of the Gospel and refocused theology on Christ-centeredness and Scripture alone. The glory of Christ plays a central and significant role in Luther's theology. Indeed, it is at the very heart of Luther's thought. The glorification of the Son in His exclusive identity and His sufficient work, and in the theology of the cross, glorifies the Father, and the glorification of the Father glorifies the Son. The five sola affirmations, developed after the Reformation, summarize well the theological themes proclaimed in Luther's thought: *sola Scripture, sola fide, sola gratia, solus Christus, and soli deo gloria*.

The most fundamental battle of the Reformation, the first sola, the primacy of Scripture as the single-source theory of doctrine against Rome's dual-source theory of doctrine, which witnesses and glorifies Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit in history and in persons, lays the foundation of Luther's thought. Luther's theology of the Word brings the powerful Word of God, back to the center of His church as the only solid foundation and living fountain of the doctrines, church ministries and practices, and the lives of His people. It enables the voice of the living God to be heard through the world, though it had almost vanished in the late medieval church because of the various false doctrines, authorities, and traditions departing from Scripture and Christ-centeredness. The Word of God is the object that Satan attacks and the focal point of the spiritual warfare. Luther exalts that the Word of God creates, determines, and reigns in all realities, defining the purposes and meanings of all things in the universe and giving new birth of the faithful;

and the Word is also the royal rod of Christ through which the King reigns and defeats devil and his evil power. This is the powerful message for us today, given our postmodern culture, which rejects authority and truth (relativism). It is critical for all Christians and the world to hear and return to the truth of Scripture and the power of the Word, especially for those in the seminary, pulpit and Christian educational ministries where fierce spiritual warfare lies, so as to turn our mind back to God's Holy Word, our emotion to God's divine love and our acts to God's eternal will.

Luther's thought is theocentric and monotheistic compared to the many human-centered thoughts of the late Middle Ages. He manifests the glory of Christ by interpreting His unique person and His sufficient work in the context of the Trinitarian Godhead, which attributes sovereignty and glory to God. God is the One living and loving, speaking and acting, personal God in Trinity throughout the entire history of creation in the past, and the re-creation (salvation) in the present and the consummation in the future. It is our turn and our opportunity to reflect on how we are going to fit in God's metanarrative in our time today, in our lives (priesthood in our family, profession and neighborhood), church and Kingdom as Luther and his followers did in their time to "fight the good fight".

Luther's theological themes of Christ as the Word, King, and High Priest, are Christologically and soteriologically oriented. They are pastorally meaningful to bring true faith, assurance and love in Christ to the elect in their relationship with God. This had almost been lost and replaced by meritorious works in the late Middle Ages. Luther tightly grasped both Christ and His Word in faith, which was manifested in his dichotomous Christology influenced by realism and his doctrine of the Word of God by nominalism. To Luther, true faith does God the highest honor. It is through faith in Christ alone, not the law

nor the church tradition that brings new birth and new life in Christ leading to the restoration of the glory of God's image in the faithful in their pilgrimage till the Last Day, when they will finally see the glory of their Savior face to face with unspeakable joy.

Luther's theology of the cross, against the theology of glory which appears in different forms at all times throughout history, attributes the highest glory to Christ in a paradoxical way. Distinct from scholastic theology which relied on human rational thinking, Luther's theology of the cross, as well as his doctrine of the Word, led the church back to Christ-centeredness and apart from the rational autonomy and self-sufficiency in theology. Thus, it is the true, theocentric *theology of Holy glory*. In fact, we cannot find any better antidote to the "diseases" in our times besides the Word of the cross, nor any other source of victory besides the glorious King Christ of the cross. The cross is the Way, the Truth and the Life, as the transcendent wisdom and power of God for us to approach Him for our salvation, to know God for His revelation and to glorify God for our chief end. We shall fix our eyes and our hearts on Christ and His cross alone, daily confess our sins, crucify our old selves, bravely carry our own crosses and follow Christ. The Word of the cross equips us to face all the challenges, sufferings (especially in the current pandemic), persecutions (if we witness Him), secularization, liberalism, charismaticism, triumphalism, and any other worldview or philosophy independent of the Word of God, where Satan speaks his lies and lays his hand! May God help us let God be God, let the Word of God be the Word of God, let the Cross be our story, and let the glory be to God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit alone!

Sola Dei Gloria, Soli Deo Gloria!