



Hearing the Word

Lutheran Hermeneutics A Vision of Life Under the Gospel

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“Who has the right to provide an authoritative interpretation of scripture? What about the church? What is its relationship to scripture? What is the distinction between human words and the word of God?”

In every generation the church struggles with the issues surrounding the authority of Scripture, the development of a coherent, and credible hermeneutic. For Lutherans the questions about the authority of scripture have been part and parcel of Lutheran theology from Reformation itself. Luther declared at Worms,

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the scriptures or by clear reason I am bound by the scriptures ... and my conscience is captive to the Word of God.”

Luther makes his appeal to scripture. Scripture shall be the foundation of Christian faith. This much is clear. In this same statement, however, he also appeals to “clear reason,” which is not always equally clear to everybody. What seems clear in one time and one place does not seem so clear in another time and place.

One can accept scripture as literal, inerrant, and infallible, or one can reject it as fabricated fiction. If the church claims a middle ground, then how does it determine the meaning and authority of scripture for Christian life and discipleship?

The papers of this book seek to contribute to an ecclesial climate, process, and means for fostering healthy and spirited conversation which faithfully relates the truths revealed in the Scriptures.

The Association of Teaching Theologians is a community of theologians engaged in a ministry of teaching in the classroom, in the church, and in the world at large. The purpose of the Association (ATT) is to help Evangelical Lutheran Church in America teaching theologians better understand, affirm, and carry out their vocation as teachers of the church. Sustained and rigorous reflection on issues of concern to the church is central to this teaching ministry.