

THE INSEPARABILITY OF LIFE AND THEOLOGY

*It is through living, indeed through dying
and being damned that one becomes a theologian,
not through understanding, reading, or speculation.*

MARTIN LUTHER, *OPERATIONES IN PSALMOS*



THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION is a deeply personal venture; it does not leave room for cool scientific detachment.¹ At its best theology may be considered both an art and a science. Here we encounter the beauty and holiness of God, and such an encounter is always emotive, whether we realize it or not, whether we want it to be or not. We do not stand off in the distance as neutral observers, but rather we are engaged as those who wrestle with and rest in the God who has made himself known. The Reformers

¹Cf. Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). All affirmations have an unavoidably personal reality to them. The Enlightenment goal of impersonal, objective knowledge was a mirage, and an undesirable one at that.

were willing to call theology a science, as long as it was understood as a practical science (*scientia practica*) rather than a speculative one (*scientia speculativa*). William Ames (1576-1633) defined theology as the "teaching [*doctrina*] of living to God."² He understood that true theology is inevitably *lived* theology. Given this reciprocal activity between reflection and life, I believe that there are certain elements which should accompany any good theologian and theology. Attempting to separate life and theology is to lose the beauty and truthfulness of both.

How is my life related to my theology? It is a fairly modern notion to separate theology as a science from theology as a practical reflection on life. Only in the last four hundred years have people tended to treat them as distinct disciplines rather than as interwoven activities.³ Notice how often the structure of Pauline letters in the New Testament, for example, moves from the indicative to the imperative, from theological observations to practical application. The interplay between theological theory and Christian living is similar to the relationship between hermeneutical theory and our current prejudices and expectations. Christians can agree with the postmodern critiques claiming that it is naïve to try to separate one's

²William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, ed. John Dykstra Eusden (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), p. 77.

³David Clyde Jones, *Biblical Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), p. 7. See also the excellent survey by Brian Brock, "Christian Ethics," in *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), chap. 12.

experience from one's interpretation of the world, of oneself or even of texts. The church has always recognized elements of this claim. Scripture adopts the perspective that our sin corrupts our interpretations of reality. It also confesses—in contrast to postmodern critiques—that with the Spirit's help people can understand the truth of God. Paul puts it this way:

But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. (1 Cor 2:9-13; cf. Job 32:8-9)

Both our theological constructions and our practical convictions are subject to the superintending work of the Holy Spirit.

When Gregory of Nazianzus (330-390) found himself engaged in difficult discussions about the nature of the triune God, he unhesitatingly argued that life and theology are inseparable. Religion is trivialized, Gregory

warned, when one approaches theology obsessed with "setting and solving conundrums," rather than with an attitude of worship. For Gregory, ideal theologians were those set apart not only by rigorous study but also through spiritual preparation; for "one who is not pure to lay hold of pure things is dangerous, just as it is for weak eyes to

Christianity is dogmatical, devotional, practical all at once; it is esoteric and exoteric; it is indulgent and strict; it is light and dark; it is love, and it is fear.

John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*

look at the sun's brightness."⁴ Here we are reminded of Jesus' beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8). Here the point is not arrogant self-righteousness but humble sensitivity and response to God's presence. Gregory often pointed out that theological discussion is not the same thing as true theology, nor is a theological discussion a substitute for knowing God.

Fifteen hundred years later, Princeton theologian Charles Hodge (1797-1878) made the same connection between life and theology. Although his methodology was scientific and logical, Hodge did not divorce it from per-

⁴Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 27.3, in *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*, trans. Frederick Williams and Lionel R. Wickham (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), p. 27; see pp. 25-35.

sonal attachment to God. Talking to an audience of theological students, Hodge tied piety to theology, arguing that bad theology often grows out of dying religious feelings: "if a man's religious opinions are the result and expression of his religious feelings, if *heterodoxy be the consequence rather than the cause of the loss of piety*, then 'keep your hearts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life' (Prov. 4:23, KJV)." We often think that theology becomes defective because of faulty thinking. Not so, argues Hodge. Our theology can become corrupted because we neglect to attend to our lives, for true theology

Christians learn doctrine in order to participate more deeply, passionately, and truthfully in the drama of redemption. Intellectual apprehension alone, without the appropriation of heart and hand, leads only to hypocrisy.

Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*

must always be true spirituality. He concludes, "Holiness is essential to correct knowledge of divine things, and the great security from error."⁵ While Hodge, of all people, was not naïve about the intellectually demanding task of

⁵Charles Hodge, "Lecture to Theological Students," in *The Princeton Theology, 1812-1921: Scripture, Science and Theological Method from Archibald Alexander to Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield*, ed. Mark A. Noll (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), p. 112.

theological exploration, he recognized that cognitive reflection always occurs within the context of experience. The goal here is not perfection or some strange attempt at spirituality defined by ever-increasing attempts of self-improvement. A pious and holy person is not one who is free from the struggle with sin but one who freely soaks in the love of the Father and the grace of the Son and

The person who speaks [of] God and divine matters [but does so] not from love of God and for God's glory is not able to speak God truly, for he does not really know him and does not speak from God and in God.

Johannes Cocceius,
Summa Theologiae

finds renewal in the strong fellowship of the Spirit. Simply talking about God does not make one pious.

Given the reciprocal relationship between theology and practice, it becomes imperative that theologians, whether armchair or professional, cultivate faithfulness. J. I. Packer has warned us, "If our theology does not quicken the conscience and soften the heart, it actually hardens both; if it does not encourage the commitment of faith, it reinforces the detachment of unbelief; if it fails to promote humility, it inevitably feeds pride."⁶ Pride and

⁶J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1990), p. 15.

arrogance, which often accompany theological discussion, are not simply the temptation of the domineering pastor or condescending professor; they are a temptation for all of us. When we speak of God, a strange enticement can occur. In subtle ways we begin to confuse ourselves with God. We think our words, our understanding, our convictions perfectly reflect God's truth. In fact, we are not God, we have blind spots, we do not ever fully see how all things work together. Marks of a corrupted theology include fits of anger, jealousy, division and strife (Gal 5:19-21), where understanding has become an idol rather than an avenue to the living God. Genuine theology cultivates a spirituality of grace, humility, truth, gentleness, unity, peace, patience and love (Gal 5:22-26). To separate theology and spirituality is to misunderstand, and eventually damage, both.

What I am advocating here is what I have elsewhere called an anthroposensitive theology, by which I mean a *refusal to divorce theological considerations from practical human application, since theological reflections are always interwoven with anthropological concerns.*⁷ This combination of "anthropo-" ("human"; "relating to human beings"; from Greek *anthrōpos*) and "sensitive" is an attempt to avoid an overly simplistic classification of theology as either theocentric (God-centered) or anthropocentric (human-centered).

⁷See Kelly M. Kopic, *Communion with God: The Divine and the Human in the Theology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007). Some of the wording from this paragraph comes directly from pp. 33-34.

Clearly our theology must be God-centered, but this language can mask the reality that our theology is, at the same time, concerned with our relation to this God. While other terms such as "pastoral" or "experiential" could be used, these terms often carry either unnecessarily negative connotations or represent a notion of what is done only *after* theological reflection, as though we work to get our theology correct and then move on to practical concerns. Yet in the complex relationship between life and theology, we should admit that for good or ill our experience and practice not only grow out of our theology but also inform it. With this in mind, we turn our attention to characteristics that we must cultivate as the appropriate context for our theological activity:

- faithful reason
- prayer and study
- humility and repentance
- suffering, justice and knowing God
- tradition and community
- love of Scripture

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FAITHFUL REASON

*For if you do not come, you do not see;
if you do not see, neither do you believe;
if you do not believe, you are still standing far off.
But if you believe, you come near,
and if you believe, you see.*

AUGUSTINE, "EXPOSITION OF THE PSALMS"



NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO recently ran a series entitled "This I Believe." Once a week NPR played recordings of short essays read by a variety of people, including politicians, religious leaders, artists and teenagers. The essays explored what was central to people's lives—what gives them meaning, guides their convictions and strengthens them when times are difficult. Amid such public discourse various questions arise, such as, "What is a good foundation for your life?"

Along these lines, it is common for theological works, especially those in the tradition of the Enlightenment, to spend considerable time on the "prolegomena" to theology, in other words, on assumptions and considerations

PRAYER AND STUDY

*Be constant as well in prayer as in reading;
now speak with God, now let God speak with you . . .*

CYPRIAN (D. 258), EPISTLE 1.15



ONE OF THE GREAT DANGERS in theology is making our faith something we discuss rather than something that moves us. We lapse into this problem when we treat God as the mere object of our study rather than as the Lord we worship. Helmut Thielicke exposed this temptation in his delightful book, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*. He noticed that students of theology often developed soul-starving tendencies, such as the shift from reading the Bible in the "second person" to the "third person," from seeing that it addresses them personally to treating it as an impersonal system of thought. "This transition from one to the other level of thought, from a personal relationship with God to a merely technical reference, usually is exactly synchronized with the moment that I no longer can read the word of Holy Scripture as a word to me,

but only as the object of exegetical endeavors."¹ Reading Scripture merely to look for doctrinal proof texts or sermon illustrations, rather than as the blazing Word which is alive and active, kills our spirit. We should not ignore abuses of interpretation or neglect important

True Light, assist us,
O God the Father all powerful!
Light of Light, assist us,
Mystery and power of God!
Holy Spirit assist us,
The bond between Father and Son.

Marius Victorinus
(c. 300-370), "First Hymn"

hermeneutical principles, but at its most fundamental level, Scripture is God's voice to his people, and by his Spirit we encounter it as a living, rather than a dead, letter.

Another danger for those beginning theological studies is what Thielicke calls an "illegitimate identification with another."² To learn the story of Luther's personal discovery of God's radical grace is not the same thing as personally receiving that grace. Being able to speak eloquently about Søren Kierkegaard's passionate wrestling in the faith is not the same thing as embracing that faith

¹Helmut Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), p. 33.

²*Ibid.*, p. 11.

oneself. There is a potential for confusion between factual knowledge and personal experience. If not addressed, this gap can be deadly. The popular seventeenth-century pastor Richard Baxter warned his fellow preachers that telling others to believe the gospel is not the same thing as feasting upon this reality for oneself. His warning came by way of analogy: "Many a tailor goes in rags, that maketh costly clothes for others; and many a cook scarcely licks his fingers, when he hath dressed for others the most costly dishes."³ How sad for us to speak of God often, and yet neglect our own communion with him.

Theological work does not merely begin with prayer and is not merely accompanied by it; in its totality it is peculiar and characteristic of theology that it can be performed only in the act of prayer.

Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology*

So how do we avoid depersonalizing our theological endeavors? How do we avoid not knowing the person we study? *There can be no substitute for prayer.* Here we speak not merely of times set apart when we fold hands and

³Cited by Paul Chang-Ha Lim, "The Reformed Pastor by Richard Baxter (1615-1691)," in *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Randall C. Gleason (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), p. 152.

bow heads, but also of a way of being. We are concerned not only to have a few minutes a day set apart for God but also to have a constant communion with him (1 Thess 5:17; cf. Jn 15:1-17). Whether eating, drinking, laughing or working, all that we do is done before the face of God. This is what undergirded the Reformation slogan *coram Deo*—living before God in all areas of life. This especially applies to our theological studies. Here we are on holy ground, and thus our attitude must be an attitude of prayer. If we are to be faithful, we must always be aware of his presence.

Prayer makes faithful theology possible, but it is not a substitute for sustained theological reflection. In 1911, the famed B. B. Warfield was asked to speak on the "Religious Life of Theological Students" at Princeton Theo-

By means of the speech of the Father in heaven his children learn to speak with him. Repeating God's own words after him, we begin to pray to him.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms*

logical Seminary. He stated that a minister must be learned, which is why they were at seminary in the first place. If they were not educated, then they would likely become incompetent and unable to pastor with the skills demanded of those handling the Word of God. However, being well-read was not enough, since "before and above

being learned, a minister must be godly."⁴ What frustrated Warfield was that people pitted these two ideas against each other: *either* you were a learned minister *or* a godly minister, but you could not be both. Warfield would have none of it: "Nothing could be more fatal. . . Recruiting officers do not dispute whether it is better for soldiers to have a right leg or a left leg: soldiers should have both legs."

Warfield adds:

Sometimes we hear it said that ten minutes on your knees will give you a truer, deeper, more operative knowledge of God than ten hours over your books. "What!" is the appropriate response, "than ten hours over your books, on your knees?" Why should you turn from God when you turn to your books, or feel that you must turn from your books in order to turn to God? If learning and devotion are as antagonistic as that, then the intellectual life is in itself accursed, and there can be no question of a religious life for a student, even of theology.⁵

How often do we set up this false dichotomy? Theological reflection can and should be a rigorous, authentic and humble dialogue with God.

Anselm (1033-1109), the archbishop of Canterbury, ex-

⁴B. B. Warfield, "The Religious Life of Theological Students," in *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, ed. John E. Meeter, 2 vols. (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), 1:411-12. For the whole essay see 1:411-25.

⁵*Ibid.*, 1:412.

plored questions about everything from the incarnation to potential proofs for the existence and essence of God. Modern students who read extracts from his work, however, often do not realize that he framed some of his writ-

Be very careful, Christian friends, that no one of you be found not only not speaking with or reflecting wisdom, but even despising and opposing those who pursue the study of wisdom. The ignorant, among other problems, have this worst fault of all: they consider those who have devoted themselves to the word and teaching as vain and useless. They prefer their own ignorance (which they call spiritual "simplicity") to the study and labors of the learned.

Origen of Alexandria (185-254),
Homily on Psalm 36

ings not as logical puzzles but as extended prayers. Anselm begins his *Proslogion* by calling his readers to pray while reading, as he does while writing. His prayer gives us a model for our own studies:

I acknowledge, O Lord, with thanksgiving, that thou hast created this thy image in me, so that, remembering thee, I may think of thee, may love thee. But this image is so effaced and worn away by my faults, it is so obscured by the smoke of my sins, that it cannot do what it was made to do, unless thou

renew and reform it. I am not trying, O Lord, to penetrate thy loftiness, for I cannot begin to match my understanding with it, but I desire in some measure to understand thy truth, which my heart believes and loves. *For I do not seek to understand in order to believe, but I believe in order to understand.* For this too I believe, that "unless I believe, I shall not understand."⁶

Anselm understood that "a theological thought can breathe only in the atmosphere of dialogue with God."⁷ Our study informs our prayers, and our prayers enliven our study. We cannot choose between prayer and study; faithful theology requires prayerful study.

⁶Anselm, "An Address (Proslogion)," in *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, ed. Eugene R. Fairweather (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 73, emphasis added.

⁷Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, p. 34.

7

HUMILITY AND REPENTANCE

*He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way.*

PSALM 25:9



GOD OPPOSES THE PROUD but gives grace to the humble (Ps 138:6; Prov 3:34 [cf. the Septuagint version]; Mt 18:1-4; Jas 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5). What is it about arrogance that God so abhors, and why does he regard humility so favorably? Both of these attributes are attitudes toward God and others (Lk 18:9-14). Pride has lost sight of the gap between the holy Creator and sinful humanity, producing self-absorption and contempt for others. Humility has a vision of God's majesty, love and forgiveness in Christ, producing love for God and one's neighbors (Phil 2:1-5). How we treat others—whether living neighbors or ancient authors—reveals a great deal about how we view ourselves before God (1 Jn 3:10-17; 4:7-21).

The path of pride burdens us with defensiveness,

while the way of humility frees us to receive teaching and correction. The first path seeks self-justification, while the second pursues truth wherever it leads. We cannot engage properly in theological reflection without

When pride comes, then comes disgrace,
but with the humble is wisdom.

Proverbs 11:2

due humility, both before God and before others. Humility recognizes one's dependence on the wisdom and insight of others.

While Augustine is commonly considered the father of Western orthodox Christianity, he never saw his own conclusions as indisputable. In response to a letter that questioned ideas from one of his books, Augustine distinguished his own thoughts from those of Scripture's binding authority. He described his theology as a work in progress, and he believed that since the goal was truthful reflection on God, he should constantly be open to revision. If he saw error in one of his conclusions, such a "mistake is *not* to be regarded with surprise or grief, but rather forgiven, and made the occasion for congratulating me, not, of course, on having erred, but on having renounced an error."¹ It is the subtlety of "self-love" that hardens us, keeping us wanting others to be wrong and

¹Augustine, Letter 143.2, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff et al. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 1.1:490, emphasis added.

preventing our spiritual development. Near the end of his life Augustine put together a book titled *Retractions*, in which he looked at his own voluminous writings and revised countless claims he made earlier in his life.² This was a sign of strength rather than weakness in Augustine's approach. Anyone who stands at the end of his days and claims never to have changed his mind should not be

In God you come up against something which is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself. Unless you know God as that—and, therefore, know yourself as nothing in comparison—you do not know God at all. As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you.

C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

praised for unwillingness to compromise but rather pitied for naïve pride.

Humility reminds us that there is One far greater than us. We love and acknowledge this Lord who surpasses us in every way. Humility also bears in mind our finitude and fallenness. Our finitude constantly reminds us of our dependence on others and of the incomplete-

²Augustine, *The Retractions* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1968).

ness of our theological constructions. Theological error develops not simply out of our sin but also because there are limits to our attempts at cognitive harmony. We cannot fathom how all things work together; every time we believe our accounts are exhaustive, we inevitably discover just how much we do not know or all that we have misunderstood. No divine reality can be flatly reduced to words, concepts, images or narratives. God is never less than these, but he is more than them. The reality of God always exceeds our expressions and our understanding of them.

Despite our limits, we take our task with utmost seriousness, and we recognize that our fallen, not just finite,

Love theology, of course: but love theology for no other reason than it is THEOLOGY—the knowledge of God—and because it is your meat and drink to know God, to know him truly, and as far as it is given to mortals, to know him whole.

B. B. Warfield, "Spiritual Culture in the Theological Seminary"

nature clouds our vision. It should not be surprising, therefore, that wrestling through the teachings of the faith often changes us—our thinking and our lives—and in this way we experience the joy of repentance.

Repentance occurs not only when we recognize the

need to change our actions but also when we change our minds after discovering improper or weak thoughts regarding God. Scripture often highlights repentance in the context of dealing with idolatry; problems with obedience frequently stem from a growing divide between idolatrous ideas about God and his reality (see 1 Kings 8:48; Ezek 14:3-5; Rev 9:20-21). When the people of God found themselves clutching an idol, in whatever form, they were called to repent. They had worshiped that which was not God. For example, when King Josiah found and read the Book of the Law which had been lost, he discovered how the people of Judah had strayed from God in their thoughts and actions, and with this new knowledge came the call for repentance (2 Kings 22-23).

Revelation and repentance often come together, as God draws people to a deeper knowledge of himself. Significantly, we find that repentance is called for as people encounter the Messiah, God's revelation of himself. It is not a coincidence that John the Baptist's message of repentance is one of the few episodes included in all four Gospels (Mt 3:1-12//Mk 1:2-8//Lk 3:2-17//Jn 1:6-7). John called the people to be ready for God's kingdom and its King. Using the words of the prophet Isaiah, John proclaimed that with the coming of the Lord "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Lk 3:6//Is 52:10). But this was light coming in the midst of darkness, and thus required repentance. One must approach the revelation of God in humility and repentance, ready to receive what God gives rather than impose preconceived ideas. The New

Testament records many expectations held by first-century Jews that did not match the reality of the Messiah who arrived. He neither crushed Israel's political or social enemies nor restored the nation to freedom from foreign rule. The New Testament shows us that in Christ the mystery of God is made known, the hidden is revealed, and the call to a changed life grows out of an encounter with the Lord (Rom 16:25-27; Col 1:24-29; 2:2-3). Jesus conquered sin, death and hell, which were greater threats to the Jews than Rome. His victory through the cross and resurrection, rather than the sword or public policy, is an absurdity to the Greeks and a scandal to the Jews (1 Cor 1:21-25), and understanding this victory requires repentance in the form of letting God reshape our minds and hearts. The good theologian works in humility and repentance.

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Book of Common Prayer

because there is no other posture to take—we come as worshipers with open hearts and lifted hands. We thank God for his Son and Spirit, and we praise him that he has faithfully revealed himself to his people.

Finally, the call for humility and repentance requires the theologian to be an honest broker, about others and about self. This means we need to speak what is true, say and believe hard things and live them out amid human brokenness. Sadly, many of us think this is about telling others how they are wrong. In reality, the judgment and need for truth telling always begins not with others but with ourselves. A theologian must first be honest with self and about the realities of a fallen world; we are not faithful if we present a plastic and sanitized portrait that does not correspond to reality.

Martin Luther made a distinction between what he called a "theologian of the cross" and a "theologian of glory."³ Luther thought that by nature we are all prone to use our theology to justify ourselves, through various "works," whatever shape they may take. His main concern with the theology of glory is self-justification based on self-deceit. Luther worried about our relentless tendency to put the best possible spin on our own motives, actions and lives, and in this way, we seek to justify ourselves before God and others. A theology of glory goes against the way of the cross. Gerhard O. Forde captures the differences:

³Note that Luther speaks not of "theology" but more personally of the "theologian." The debate between the pattern of glory or the cross is personal, about who we are, not simply what we say. See Gerhard O. Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 69-70, 81.

The hallmark of a theology of glory is that it will always consider grace as something of a supplement to whatever is left of human will and power. . . . Theologians of the cross, however, operate quite differently. They operate on the assumption that there must be—to use the language of treatment for addicts—a “bottoming out” or an “intervention.” That is to say, there is no cure for the addict on his own. In theological terms, we must come to confess that we are addicted to sin, addicted to self, whatever form that may take, pious or impious.⁴

Consequently, the theologian always remains a sinner and thus completely dependent on grace. Grace is not just a conclusion one arrives at, but it must be a reality woven

It was through Pride that the devil
became the devil . . .
it is the complete anti-God state of mind.

C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

into the fabric of our being. Grace is the necessary and liberating experience of the theologian living a life of humility and repentance. We cannot rightly respond to

⁴Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, pp. 16-17. It should be noted that when Luther spoke of a “theology of the cross,” this phrase did not exclude the value of Christ’s resurrection. Luther’s point was not to pit cross against resurrection; instead he aimed to highlight our ongoing need of God’s radical grace over against our subtle attempts at improperly constructing views of self-improvement.

God’s revelation and worship him in any other posture. Judgment, truth telling and the confession of need must always begin with the theologian. This is the path of genuine humility and repentance. This is the path of good theological study.