



# Martin Luther's First Lectures on the Psalms (1513–1515): Historical and Hermeneutical Observations

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Pastors and other scholars of the Bible more than likely know that Martin Luther was, vocationally speaking, a consecrated priest called to preach and administer the sacraments *and* a university professor sworn to study and teach the Holy Scriptures. Still, a quick review of how Luther found himself teaching the Bible is in order. In 1505 Luther entered the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt, Germany. Three years after the start of his monastic life, Luther received a bachelor's degree in biblical studies from the relatively new university in Wittenberg. A year later he received another bachelor's, this one in a sixteenth-century version of systematic theology. In the fall of 1512, after some funds were freed up for the expected academic regalia and festivities, the twenty-eight-year-old Luther was made a Doctor of (Biblical) Theology and appointed to the Wittenberg faculty.<sup>1</sup> Luther held this teaching post for more than thirty years, lecturing each year until the year before his death in 1546.

<sup>1</sup> See Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation, 1483–1521* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 125–26.

*Martin Luther's 1513–1515 lectures on the Psalms, which were his first major work, show him as a late-medieval exegete, toiling over an extremely detailed exposition of them for students. But within the details of his painstaking work is the centrality of his christological approach to the Psalms, as well as flashes of his evangelical theology that would later become his trademark.*

Luther chose the Psalms as the subject of his first major lecture series. Luther scholars refer to these lectures as the *Dictata super Psalterium*—as Luther himself referred to them.<sup>2</sup> The *Dictata super Psalterium*—or *Dictata*, for short—represent Professor Luther’s initial efforts as a sworn Doctor of the Church. As such, the *Dictata* have been the subject of scholarly scrutiny, especially by those seeking to understand the early years of Luther’s development as an exegete and theologian. Consequently, when German scholars began work on the definitive, critical collection of Luther’s works, the *Dictata* were the first of Luther’s lectures to be published.<sup>3</sup>

In this essay I will describe the circumstances and physical production of the lectures. The material strategy Luther implemented to prepare and conduct the lectures will be described, followed by a description of how, for more than two years, students engaged and experienced the lectures. To these ends, I will attend in great part to the literal text, the physical copy of the Psalter that Luther prepared for himself and for his students. Finally, I will describe the hermeneutical strategies the newly minted doctor of theology employed as he sought to convey a scholarly understanding of the Psalms to his students.

#### THE PRODUCTION THE *DICTATA*

Luther began lecturing on the Psalms in mid-August 1513. The lacuna between his acceptance onto the faculty in October 1512 and the start of his biblical teaching duties the following summer is somewhat of a mystery. Because the biographical sources are scant for those intervening months, Luther’s activities during the nine months between joining the faculty and undertaking his first lectures on the Psalms are not fully known. The delayed start may have had something to do with Luther attending to administrative duties on behalf of his monastic order and/or a sojourn in Erfurt, where he may have had to smooth over some thorny intra-order politics.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, it is possible that Luther spent many of these months carefully working his way through the Psalms in preparation for his first lecture series.<sup>5</sup>

Why did Luther begin his Wittenberg professorship with a long series on the Psalter? The late-medieval tradition did not dictate that a novice Bible professor

<sup>2</sup> *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Briefwechsel*, 18 vols. (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1883–1980), 1:56.

<sup>3</sup> See volume 3 (Psalms 1–84, published 1885) and volume 4 (Psalms 85–150, published 1886) of *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 60 vols. (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1883–1980), 3:v–526; 4:vii–652 (hereafter cited as *WA*). In the twentieth century, subsequent scholarly work on Luther’s *Dictata super Psalterium* resulted in the publication of new and improved translations and editorial notes; see *WA* 55 and 56. In the American Edition, volume 10 (Psalms 1–75, published in 1974) and volume 11 (Psalms 76–126, published in 1976) represent a distillation and translation of the commentary (*scholia*) material found in volumes 10–11 and 55–56 of the *WA*. See *Luther’s Works*, 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia and Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958–1986), 10:ix–464, 11:ix–553 (hereinafter: *LW*).

<sup>4</sup> See for instance Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 127–28.

<sup>5</sup> See Gerhard Ebeling, *Lutherstudien*, vol. 1 (Tubingen: Mohr, 1971), 88–89.

begin with the Psalter. But Luther was already intimately acquainted with the Psalter. As an Augustinian friar since 1505, Luther had spent seven years cycling through the rhythms of the monastic life, rhythms which were ordered around the Divine Office, the appointed hours of prayer and devotion. These hours included daily Psalms recitation patterned in such a way that the *entire* book of Psalms would have been prayed all the way through *once per week*. By the time he started lecturing in 1513, Luther had the Latin Psalter memorized.<sup>6</sup> It is said, “Go with what you know”; Luther likely went with what he knew best.

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Luther began preparing for his Psalms lectures in the first half of summer 1513. Before making his notes on the text, Luther prepared the text upon which he would make his notes. Here is where we turn to a consideration of the original physical lecture notes that Luther used as the basis of his *Dictata super Psalterium*, for by happenstance or providence, Luther's original lecture notes—complete with his own original notations—are extant.

There is, as of this writing, an online resource featuring high-definition images made from Luther's personal copies of his first lectures on the Psalms. If you, the reader, are reading this essay and have access to the internet, please open a browser and locate a *Google Arts & Culture* exhibit titled “Key Documentation of the Early Activity of Martin Luther” (<https://tinyurl.com/5a8capu5>).<sup>7</sup> The images that serve as the background of the exhibit's title page are taken from two of the introductory pages of the volume that contains Luther's original, handwritten lecture notes. Known as the *Wolfenbütteler Psalter*, the volume contains the intertextual and marginal notes—called *glossa*—written by Luther for his 1513–1515 Psalms lectures.<sup>8</sup> As Luther's lecture notes came into the hands of subsequent

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<sup>6</sup> Luther later reported that he had difficulty parting with his original Psalter even though it was torn to shreds. Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 85. For a detailed description of Luther's monastic practices and his early experiences with biblical texts, including especially the Psalms, see Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 82–90.

<sup>7</sup> “Key Documentation of the Early Activity of Martin Luther,” *Google Arts & Culture*, June 1, 2023, <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/KQUxuklRxxPJJQ>. Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge are preferred browsers for this resource.

<sup>8</sup> Martin Luther, *Martin Luther Wolfenbütteler Psalter*, 2 vols., ed. Eleanor Roach and Reinhard Schwarz (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel, 1983), 2:7–8. Volume 1 represents the critical edition of Luther's *Dictata*, transcribed from Luther's original hand. Regarding the images of Luther presented in the online exhibit (and which are found in the first pages of volume 2 of the *Wolfenbütteler Psalter*): the image on the left is a medallion woodcut featuring Luther encircled with the words “Doctor Martinvs Luthervs”; the image on the right is an image

owners, material was added, including the two images of Luther included toward the front of the Psalter. As one scrolls down in the online exhibit, these two images appear again, accompanied by the text “This personal copy of Luther is called the ‘Wolfenbüttel Psalter’ because of the location at which it is preserved.” Stop at that section, take in the two images of Luther, then continue reading here.

By July 1513, Luther had prepared the text that would become a printed edition of a Psalter optimized for the annotations. This new edition of the Latin Psalter would serve as the basis for Luther’s lecture preparations and the medium for notetaking by Luther’s students. Luther had two main sources for his new and improved Latin text: one, a 1506 Hebrew-Latin Dictionary written by the great humanist scholar Johannes Reuchlin; the other, the *Psalterium Quintuplex* by Jean Faber Stapulensis, a well-known humanist of the time. Stapulensis had based his Psalter on five older Latin Psalters, only one of which matched Jerome’s fourth-century translation, the *Vulgata*, which in 1545 was declared the Roman church’s official translation. The Stapulensis edition was also based on current rabbinic consensus of the Hebrew text. Luther used these sources to create a new edition of the Latin Psalter, one that Luther understood represented the best scholarship of the day.

At some point in June 1513, Luther approached the local printer with a vision of how to create an up-to-date Latin Psalter suitable as the basis for a lengthy lecture series. Conveniently, the monastery where Luther lived with his fellow Augustinians had a movable-type printing press in-house. The printer, Johannes Rhau-Grunenberg, prepared the Psalter according to Luther’s specifications. Luther’s edition of the Psalter—his first published work, technically speaking—began rolling off the press on July 8, 1513. It was printed on sheets of paper roughly the size of what is today sometimes called a “tabloid” sheet of paper—the largest paper size that can be handled by most modern office printers. The pages of this Psalter were arranged in the press so that four pages were printed on one side of one large sheet. After the ink dried on that side, the sheet was flipped. The four pages that were in sequence with the first four pages were then printed on the back side of the sheet. Then the sheet was cut into fourths—hence the term *quarto* to describe this common early-modern print format.

At Luther’s direction, Grunenberg centered the biblical text on the page, with ample spacing between the lines of text and with exaggerated margins on all sides. The purpose of all the blank space was, of course, to provide ample room for making notations. However, the word *ample* here should be understood in context, literally. The size of the original pages—and of all the pages in the Psalter Luther constructed for the *Dictata*—is a mere 16 x 21 centimeters—that is, about 6¼ inches wide by 8½ inches tall: three-fourths the size of an 8½ x 11 sheet of paper.

The compact size of the original Psalter is remarkable, but what is truly astonishing about the physical specimen is the extremely small annotations.

based on Lucas Cranach’s 1520 image depicting Luther in friar’s garb. Both of these images were glued to blank pages and added to the original collection of lecture notes.

Luther's notes seem impossibly tiny and, unless you have very good eyes, practically unreadable. If you are (still) able to access the "Key Documentation of the Early Activity of Martin Luther" online exhibit, scroll down the image accompanied by this description: "The psalter illustrates Luther's workstyle, which was oriented closely to the biblical text. In his careful handwriting, he wrote countless comments on the margins and between the lines." Luther's handwritten notes are much smaller than the already small, printed text of the psalm. In fact, Luther rendered his annotations in letters that measure from one to two millimeters, or around 1/25<sup>th</sup> of an inch—roughly the height of the date on a US penny. And yet it is with such minuscule handwriting that Luther set down his notes—his *glossa*—on, around, and in between the text of his novel Psalter, page after page, psalm after psalm, week after week, for more than two years.

In 1982, an updated critical edition of Wolfenbütteler Psalter was published and with it an actual-size facsimile of the original. The introductory material includes the story of how the Psalter has survived for more than five centuries. Here is a condensed version of that story: After Luther completed his *Psalms Dictata*, he kept the unbound notes for later reference. Luther did indeed consult his notes for subsequent treatments of the Psalms. These notes were already considered a treasure *while* Luther still owned them, as attested by a visitor to Wittenberg around 1540: "I saw Luther's 'First Born,' in which he . . . lectured through the entire Psalter with such detail, making notations with his own hand from one word to the next. . . . I held his own copy in my hands and I looked through it in wonder."<sup>9</sup>

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At some point before his death in 1546, perhaps in 1542, Luther gave the packet of notes to one of his oldest friends, the Wittenberg-educated Jacob Probst. Probst had helped introduce the Reformation in Bremen, was godparent to at least one of Luther's children, and showed up frequently in Wittenberg. It's likely that Probst was among the original hearers of the *Dictata*. After Probst's death in 1562, Luther's notes fell into a variety of hands, not all of which were careful. Around the year 1640, the notes were accepted into the collection of the Herzog August Library in Wolfenbüttel, Germany, where they remained hidden for another seventy years. In 1710, a pastor rummaging around the library's sparsely cataloged collections

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in J. M. Krafft: *Das Andere Hundert-jährige Jubel-Jahr Der Evangelischen Kirchen . . .* (1717) 2, June 1, 2023, <https://books.google.com/books?id=WStUAAAacAAJ>. Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge are preferred browsers for this resource.

rediscovered Luther's original Psalter. Since then, the notes—written in Luther's own hand on 102 sheets of quarto paper—have received the honorable treatment due them. The original Wolfenbüttler Psalter, as the physical specimen of Luther's *Dictata* is called, still resides at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel. In 2015, the Psalter was added to the UNESCO "Memory of the World" Register.<sup>10</sup>

#### THE EXPERIENCE OF THE *DICTATA*'S ORIGINAL AUDIENCE

Before turning to some observations about the literal, philological Christocentrism of the *Dictata*'s text, a word about Luther's original auditors is in order. The students who experienced Luther's Psalms lectures were mainly young men who, like Luther, had taken monastic vows and were now studying the Holy Scriptures as they worked toward the bachelor's degree (as Luther had done just six years earlier). The bachelor's was usually needed to qualify for the rank of priest or prior. In August 1512, these students gathered in the main hall of the ground floor of the Augustinian monastery on the east end of the town of Wittenberg. As Luther's Psalms lectures commenced, each student had with them loose pages of the very same Psalter Luther had prepared and used himself—the one with all the blank space. Students also had with them completely blank sheets of paper for additional note-taking. In addition to the enrolled students, Luther's colleagues on Wittenberg's theological faculty would also have been present for these lectures.

There is a long scene in the 2000 film *Luther* that purports to show what it was like to be a student in Luther's classroom. The scene shows Luther regaling his classroom with offhand jokes and inspiring waves of hearty laughter. If what is depicted in that scene ever happened during Luther's early years as a lecturer, there's no record of it. Instead, as was common practice in the late-medieval classroom, Luther mainly stuck to his script. He slowly and carefully dictated his *glossa* to his students, who were expected to make verbatim copies in their own pages of the printed Psalter (hence, "*dictata*"). Then Luther provided general, long-form commentary on the text. Luther prepared his commentary—called *scholia*—on separate sheets of paper. Students were expected to reproduce Luther's *scholia* in the same way they'd reproduced the *glossa*. Note that the extant *scholia* are *not* part of the Wolfenbütteler Psalter. Instead, these *scholia* make up another treasured document, the Dresdener *Scholia* Manuscript, housed in the city library in Dresden, Germany. As it happens, examples of Luther's long-form commentary are also featured in the "Key Documentation of the Early Activity of Martin Luther" exhibit. Keep scrolling past the images of the Psalter's *glossa* and you will come upon the *scholienheft*, described as "a kind of notebook, crammed with notes in Luther's hand, which contains further exegetical observations on the Psalms."

<sup>10</sup> For a full accounting of the "chain of transmission" of Luther's Psalter with *glossa*, see *Wolfenbütteler Psalter*, 1:XXXVIII–XXXII.



In the *scholia*, Luther's handwriting is still remarkably tiny, although not quite as minuscule as with the *glossa*.

Luther delivered his early lectures in keeping with the pedagogy of the time. This is known primarily by analyzing the extant student notebooks, which echo in large part the material that appears in Luther's original notes. Alas, an extant example of a student's version of Luther's *Dictata* does not exist. However, there are multiple copies of student notebooks of Luther's *next* lecture series, the Romans lectures of 1515–1516. We know a great deal about whether and how students received what Luther had prepared in his original notes. By comparing Luther's original notes with the students' notebooks, it is clear that students wrote down what Luther had himself written. If Luther launched into extemporaneous flights of fancy, his students didn't record it. In short, during his earliest lectures Luther did not depart much from his carefully prepared script.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, by comparing Luther's prepared *glossa* and *scholia* to what his students wrote down, it is known that Luther often ran out of time (or energy or interest) before he ran out of prepared material. For the most part, Luther dictated—and students recorded—most or all of the interlinear and marginal *glossa* he had prepared. But student notebooks from Luther's Romans lectures also show that Luther left large sections of his *scholia* unspoken. It is safe to say that the same holds true for the *Dictata super Psalterium*: students did not hear everything that Luther had prepared in the *scholia*.

### CHRIST *LITERALLY* EVERYWHERE IN THE PSALMS

Luther returned to lecture on the Psalms throughout his career. He continued to extol the Psalms in ways that reflected the common medieval understanding: that the Psalms were an enchiridion or handbook—a compendium or guide for Christian faith and life. More specifically, for Luther, the Psalter offered Christians the *best language* for faith and life. “Where does one find finer words of joy than in the psalms of praise and thanksgiving?” Luther once asked. “On the other hand, where do you find deeper, more sorrowful, more pitiful words of sadness than in the psalms of lamentation?”<sup>12</sup> In addition, also in keeping with late-medieval piety and biblical study, Luther understood that the Psalms offered believers a picture of Christ himself. In 1528—fifteen years after he began the *Dictata*—Luther wrote a preface to his German translation of the Psalms. “The Psalter,” he declared, “ought to be a precious and beloved book, if for no other reason than this: it promises Christ's death and resurrection so clearly—and pictures his kingdom and the condition and nature of all Christendom—that it might well be called a little Bible.”<sup>13</sup> But here again, the understanding that the Psalms speak about Christ does not

<sup>11</sup> See Hans Wiersma, “Martin Luther's Lectures on Romans: Their Rediscovery and Legacy,” *Word & World* 39, no. 3 (Summer 2019): 226–35.

<sup>12</sup> LW 35:255–56.

<sup>13</sup> LW 35:254.

originate with Luther or in the Middle Ages. The understanding is embedded in the New Testament itself and becomes only more embedded in Christendom via the writings of the church's earliest theologians.<sup>14</sup>

Luther's *glossa* written between the lines and in the margins of his Psalms text, as well as the *scholia*, are filled with references to the writings of these theologians, including John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, Bernard of Clairvaux, and above all, Augustine of Hippo. In fact, Augustine is the most-cited ancient authority in Luther's treatment of the Psalms. As Luther applied the standard, fourfold hermeneutical method to the text (more on the medieval *quadrigena* below), it makes sense that he was guided by Augustine's *On the Spirit and the Letter* (412 CE), a work that forms the basis of the fourfold sense of Scripture. Yet Luther cites Augustine's own Psalms commentary even more than *On the Spirit and the Letter*, drawing inspiration and guidance from Augustine's own Christocentric interpretations of the Psalms. Written over a thirty-five-year period, the *Expositions on the Psalms* (392–422 CE) is Augustine's longest work—twice the length of *City of God*. As Luther prepared his own lectures, he consulted Augustine's own Christic exposition of each psalm and often dictated Augustine's words to his auditors in Wittenberg. And yet, as will be seen, Luther's *Dictata* introduce a pronounced, literal, and *literary* "Christ in the Psalms" that was novel for Luther's time and context.

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What did Luther's hearers experience on the first day of his first lectures on the Psalms? Luther began by reading the first page of his *scholia*: "You have come, fathers and excellent men and brothers, with magnanimous and benevolent spirit, I see, to honor the opening and beginning of the study of this illustrious prophet, David." Luther presented himself humbly, as an unworthy exegete:

I confess frankly that even to the present day I do not understand many psalms and, unless the Lord enlightens me . . . as I trust He will, I shall not be able to interpret them. . . . There is truly much toil in expounding

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<sup>14</sup> There are three major English-language studies of Luther's first Psalms lectures, each of which seeks to understand the *Dictata* in their late-medieval context. See James Samuel Preus, *From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1969); Scott Hendrix, *Ecclesia in Via: Ecclesiological Developments in the Medieval Psalms Exegesis and the Dictata super Psalterium (1513–1515) of Martin Luther* (Leiden: Brill, 1974); and Brian German, *Psalms of the Faithful: Luther's Early Reading of the Psalter in Canonical Context* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2017). German's PhD thesis is available at Brian German, "Martin Luther's First Psalms Lectures and the Canonical Shape of the Hebrew Psalter" (thesis, University of Toronto, 2017), <https://hdl.handle.net/1807/67632> (permalink).



the Psalter by Greek, Latin, and Hebrew scholars in manifold ways and, I think, more than in any other book of the Holy Scriptures. But it has not yet been worked out completely even now, so that in many places the interpretations seem to require more interpretation than the text itself.<sup>15</sup>

Luther followed his introductory *scholia* with an introduction to the *glossa*. This is written on the inside of the title page of Luther's Psalter. Luther opened this introduction with a passage from 1 Corinthians 14: "I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind, also." Luther implemented this passage as a metaphor to reveal the common view that the Psalter could only be interpreted under the illumination of Christ. On the one hand, Luther explained, are those Christians who sing the psalms mindfully and with the Holy Spirit. On the other hand are those who "understand nothing of what they sing, as nuns are said to read the Psalter." In addition, there are those who sing the psalms "in a carnal way . . . taking pleasure in the voice, the sound, the staging, and the harmony, vainly sing[ing] without thinking about the words." Others who sing with "a carnal understanding of the Psalms" are "the Jews, who always apply the Psalms to ancient history apart from Christ." But, Luther concluded, "Christ has opened the minds of those who are his so that they might understand the scriptures."<sup>16</sup>

The comment about a Jewish "carnal understanding of the Psalms" is, of course, indicative of the supersessionist viewpoint that prevailed throughout the Middle Ages. The comment is also the first textual glimpse we have into the state of Luther's anti-Judaism in 1513.<sup>17</sup> Exegetically, Luther understood that the faith exhibited by the patriarchs, matriarchs, and prophets of the Old Testament was honorable and worthy of emulation. In the Psalms, King David himself was the supreme model of faith. By contrast, Luther understood that the Jewish population of his day had become unfaithful and divorced from the faith described in the Psalms since they now read the Psalms and the rest of Tanakh without discerning Christ. This understanding is underscored in the next section of what Luther wrote inside the cover page of the *Dictata*.

Here Luther had his printer create text arranged in a kind of chart. In the American Edition, this chart or table is represented like so:

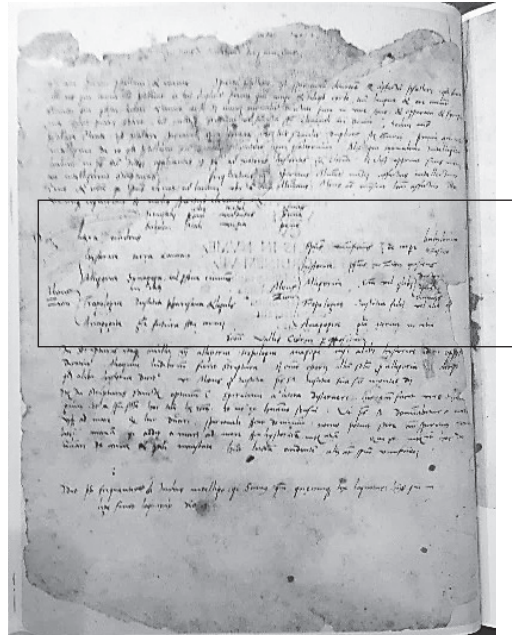
<sup>15</sup> LW 10:8. For a full overview and analysis of Luther's introduction to his first lectures on the Psalms, see Daniel Metzger, "A Consideration of Luther's 'Preface of Jesus Christ,'" *Logia Online: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* (November 4, 2008), <https://logia.org/logia-online/29>.

<sup>16</sup> LW 10:3.

<sup>17</sup> For an overview and investigation of anti-Jewish/anti-Semitic themes in Luther's earliest lectures, see Brooks Schramm and Kirsi Stjerna, *Martin Luther, the Bible, and the Jewish People: A Reader* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 3–69, especially 41–49: "Text #1 First Psalms Lectures, 1513–1515."

		Jerusalem	allegorically: the good people tropologically: virtues anagogically: rewards
		Babylon	allegorically: the bad people tropologically: vices anagogically: punishments
		the killing Letter	the life-giving Spirit
Mount Zion	historical	the land of Canaan	the people living in Zion
	allegorical	the synagogue or a prominent person in it	the church or any teacher, bishop, or prominent person
	tropological	the righteousness of the Pharisees and of the Law	the righteousness of faith or some other prominent matter
	anagogical	the future glory after the flesh	the eternal glory in the heavens

Here is the *quadriga*, the fourfold method for interpreting Scripture that was developed over the course of the Middle Ages. The first aspect identified the literal, historical sense of a word or passage. That aspect or sense is indicated by the equation of “Mt. Zion” with “the land of Canaan.” Beyond the literal sense there followed three other senses: the allegorical sense, the tropological sense, and the anagogical sense. According to Luther’s example, readers were to understand that whenever the term *Mt. Zion* appeared in the Psalter, it could be understood in up to four ways, as long as the interpretation did not contradict other scripture. It is this fourfold method that opens the door to discerning Christ in the Psalter.



		Jerusalem	allegorically: the good people <u>topologically</u> : virtues <u>anagogically</u> : rewards
		Babylon	allegorically: the bad people <u>topologically</u> : vices <u>anagogically</u> : punishments
		the killing Letter	the life-giving Spirit
Mount Zion	historical	the land of Canaan	the people living in Zion
	allegorical	the synagogue or a prominent person in it	the church or any teacher, bishop, or prominent person
	tropological	the righteousness of the Pharisees and of the Law	The righteousness of faith or some other prominent matter
	anagogical	The future glory after the flesh	The eternal glory in the heavens

At the advent of Luther's first Psalms lectures, it is worth noting that the young professor dictated to his young exegetes a chart, a rubric, a reference for interpreting each line of the Psalter according to the hermeneutical practice of the day. Nevertheless, Luther himself would soon abandon applying all four aspects of the fourfold rubric to every verse of the Psalms. He figured out that the best way forward was to interpret according to the historical sense and one or more of the other three senses.

To this end, one can discern in the chart the first written example of Luther's law/gospel distinction—a distinction that would eventually become defining. In the example dictated to his students at the start of the lectures, the tropological metaphor for Mt. Zion is defined as the righteousness of the law on the one hand

and the righteousness of faith on the other. It's this dialectic that Luther would develop as he worked through the Psalter.

I conclude by highlighting one additional feature that stands out from Luther's 1513 Psalter. From the very first sentence of the *scholia*, Luther proclaimed his Psalmic Christ. In his introduction, Luther began with the claim, "The First Psalm speaks *literally* concerning Christ." Luther's amplified sense of Christ's presence in the Psalter is underscored by a feature of the physical, printed Psalter that is completely ignored in the American Edition's presentations of these lectures. As such, the addition of the allegorical understanding of Christ and the church *into* the printed text of Luther's novel Latin Psalter is not yet fully appreciated.

Here is what I mean: Luther prepared each psalm with a header. These titles, which Luther himself conceived and wrote, were for the most part adapted from Augustine's various allegorical interpretations of each psalm. The headers are printed in large text atop the actual text of each psalm and stand out because of the larger font. There are 148 of these headers; 132 of them explicitly mention Christ and, more often than not, his relationship to his church.<sup>18</sup> That is, Luther literally inserted Christ (and the church) into the text of his Psalter. For instance, the header above Psalm 15 reads "The one who is worthy to be in the church of Christ, both militant and triumphant . . ." According to the header Luther inserted above Psalm 27, the psalm is about "the praise and prayer of the early church, trusting in Christ and boasting against enemies and deserters . . ."

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And the header above the famous Twenty-Third Psalm? Return to the online exhibit, to the image accompanied by the text "The Psalter illustrates Luther's work-style . . ." Here, in the middle of the page on the right, you will see in larger letters the words "De ECCLESIA LAVDANTE CHRISTum sup[er] erudition et gubernatione de refectione sacramenti eucharistiae" (Regarding the Church's praise of Christ upon the teaching and government of the refreshment of the sacrament of the Eucharist). Then begins the actual Latin text of the psalm, which in English begins, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." Again, these are not Luther's handwritten notes; these headers are instead part of the initial, printed text of Luther's new Psalter. It seems clear, therefore, that prior to receiving any dictation of *glossa* or *scholia*, Luther's Christ-centered understanding of the Psalms was, via each header, "baked into" the 1513 printed text.

<sup>18</sup> The 1513 Psalter's original pages containing Psalms 1 and 2 were lost. These pages were replaced later with pages bearing different print and different handwriting. There are therefore no titles for Psalms 1 and 2.

As other interpreters have observed, Luther's Psalms lectures of 1513–1515 have Jesus Christ interpreted into and out of each psalm, sometimes each verse. What these interpreters have not sufficiently observed (as far as I have been able to determine) is that Luther's 1513 Psalter—the printed document that forms the basis of the *Dictata*, Luther's first publication—has Jesus literally written *all* over it. In large type. ⊕

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