Language, Sex, and Luther: Feminist Observations

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Abstract: Reading Luther from a feminist perspective reveals paradoxes and ambiguities in Luther's writings related to language and sex, but we cannot make sense of Luther without important historical information, particularly the history of the meaning of sex; it affords a fresh reading of Luther. Even while Luther reinforces male-identified language and symbolism, he begins to shift it, and his work offers clues relevant to theological dialogue on the androcentrism of the Christian tradition 500 years into the ongoing reformation of Christianity. Because of the power dynamics infused in Western accounts of sex, gender, and sexuality for humans, Christians cannot in good faith cling to a primary gender or sex identity for God. More careful English translations demonstrate Luther is a resource in this work because he begins to shift an androcentric view of God and humanity even while paradoxically repeating it. Previous English translations of Luther have obscured his shifts in language and imagery and thus have led English readers to misunderstand Luther's subtle but powerful views.

Keywords: feminist; Lutheran; language; sex; gender; father; son

1. Introduction

How is it possible for feminist theologians to draw upon Martin Luther's work? Debates abound on this question. In the last century, German theologian Hermann Sasse argued that each age tries to press Martin Luther into its own form—whether orthodox, pietist, or nationalist.[1] One could certainly add feminist to this list. Arguing against proof-texting Luther to shape theology, Sasse urges contextual alertness and empathy when he writes:

> A true understanding of Luther's theology is possible only if we refrain from reading our theology into his books. He must be understood from his own presuppositions. If we want Luther to speak to us, we must allow him to speak in his language and on his terms even at the risk of hearing unexpected things. It may be that the unexpected answers are more helpful to us than a mere reaffirmation of what we have been thinking all the time.[2]

At the risk of pressing Luther into feminist form, I think readers in every age can read with empathy to understand him in his context, as Sasse argues, but we nevertheless do so with contemporary scholarship, which sometimes alerts us to facets of his context perhaps previously unnoticed. Unexpected answers, may, indeed, come from reading Luther again.

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1 See (Sasse 1967, pp. 47–50).
2 (Sasse 1967, p. 50).

Reading Luther from a feminist perspective reveals paradoxes and ambiguities in Luther's writings related to language and sex,[3] but we cannot make sense of Luther without important historical information. As Sasse contends, we need to know Luther's own presuppositions. One aspect of historical analysis necessary to read Luther critically is the history of the meaning of sex; it affords a fresh reading of Luther.

People in Luther's context overwhelmingly saw humans belonging to one sex. If interpreters are not mindful of his context's predominant though at times porous one-sex model of humanity and of the post-Enlightenment two-sex model, we are at risk of misreading Luther. Knowing this historical feature can help us to read him "on his terms even at the risk of hearing unexpected things," as Sasse writes. From a feminist Lutheran perspective, I have found something unexpected in his work. Even while Luther reinforces male-identified language and symbolism, he begins to shift it, and his work offers clues relevant to theological dialogue on the androcentrism of the Christian tradition 500 years into the ongoing reformation of Christianity.

In this article, I offer some feminist observations about Luther on language and sex, and these observations belong within the scope of a larger project on language and images of God. Because of the power dynamics infused in Western accounts of sex, gender, and sexuality for humans, Christians cannot in good faith cling to a primary gender or sex identity for God. Fathers and sons are central characters in these accounts. In fact, the father-son dyad is an ancient motif that expresses and reinforces unequal value between people based on sex. Whether human or divine, this dyad communicates a hierarchy of humanity based on sex and gender. The results have been devastating.[4] Thus, there are practical reasons male-identified language must not dominate Christianity. Moreover, Christian language for God *theologically* depends upon a model of manifold sex and gender.[5] Luther is a resource in this work because he begins to shift an androcentric view of God and humanity even while paradoxically repeating it. Noticing some clues in Luther's writing depends upon knowing something about the history of the meaning of sex and accurately translating from his German texts.

2. Sex in the West is about Ongoing Constructions of Power

Models to explain sex and gender change over time. Until roughly the Enlightenment, as marked in the West and North, humans predominantly understood sex, gender, and sexuality according to a one-sex model, even when observation belied greater distinctions between males and females than a one-sex model purported. By the end of the seventeenth century, the prevailing way people understood human sex, gender, and sexuality was according to a two-sex model, even when observation belied greater similarities between males and females than a two-sex model purported.[6] Significantly, both models maintained a certain order of power and authority. In both models, males are better and higher than females.

The ancients thought fathers were the genitor of all human life. Prior to the Enlightenment, as historian Thomas Laqueur explains, sex was not an ontological category, something one *was* because of one's body; rather, sex was sociological—"a social rank."[7] People thought bodies simply represented metaphysical hierarchies, an inherent way things were created to be in a rank. Human bodies in this model were of one flesh, one kind, and observed and experienced differences meant that the female was the imperfect version of the "canonical" male body.[8]

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[3] In this century, the term "sex" refers most often to biology of bodies, whereas before the Enlightenment sex and gender were more bound together and differently understood than contemporarily. See (Laqueur 1990, pp. 7–8).

[4] See (Katz 2006; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America 2019).

[5] While I make arguments here for inclusive language for humans and for God, expansive language for God, which is non-human symbolism and language, is also scripturally and theologically faithful. See, e.g., (Streufert 2016, pp. 3–7).

[6] (Laqueur 1990, p. 154).

[7] (Laqueur 1990, p. 8).

[8] See (Laqueur 1990, pp. 34–35).

Aristotle underscored the ideas that the female provided the body for a baby and the male provided the soul. As Laqueur writes, "To Aristotle being male *meant* the capacity to supply the sensitive soul without which 'it is impossible for face, hand, flesh, or any other part to exist.'"[9] Aristotle assigned grave power to semen. He did not link reproduction to the actual fluid but to a power thereof. Human conception involved the male having an idea, a concept, that is gestated in the body of the female.[10] Ejaculate seemed simply to represent the power—the concept—the male was giving the female to gestate.

What this all means is that the one-sex body with two genders, as Laqueur argues, "was framed in antiquity to valorize the extraordinary cultural assertion of patriarchy."[11] Sex was a position or a place taken, not a biological "fact." The meaning of sex was inferred from a metaphysical hierarchy of value and power, not based on scientific observation.[12] It was about the making, meaning, and maintenance of power.[13] At heart, the "biology" of the one-sex model was "an idiom for claims about fatherhood."[14] In other words, the one-sex model said "father" is best.

The one-sex model was not water-tight in the centuries it dominated human imagination, and it shifted to a two-sex model gradually. After thousands of years of a predominant theory of humans sharing one sex, the cultures of the West veered away from the interpretation that female bodies were varying degrees of inferiority compared to male bodies, the ideal. As Laqueur writes, the shift was to "a shrill call to articulate sharp corporeal distinctions."[15] Explanations for sexual difference turned from the idea that woman related to man in a metaphysical hierarchy to anatomical and physiological explanations that there are two incommensurable sexes. Biology, not a cosmic metaphysical order, was the new arbiter of character and power. Thus, we see that the shift from a one-sex model to a two-sex model was based on a change in epistemic ideals, from metaphysics to biology as the trusted source of knowledge.

Both of these models—one-sex and two-sex—continue to perpetuate negative effects for people. Throughout history, what counts in evaluations of human differences and similarities—of which there are many—has been affected by context. What sex is and what sex means, then, is "situational;" what sex means has been determined largely by struggles for power.[16]

What appears to have lingered into the present are not only the battles for power related to sex and gender for humans, but also, more specifically for my purposes here, the symbolic, pragmatic, and existential meanings and effects of father primacy. Both models of sex put the father in a higher order of value and authority so that "Father is best." In the one-sex model, the father is the creator of all, the only one who actually generates life and civilization, without whom no one would live or have the order of society. In the two-sex model, the father is primary because he is biologically distinct from the mother; he is opposite her supposed passivity, softness, and weakness. He must therefore be the head of family, society, and religious life.

Although in this century there is little danger of reverting to the one-sex model of human biology described here, the profound symbolic effects of it cannot be ignored. *The only true parent* according to the one-sex model *is the father* because he is the only one with legitimate seed. Again, arguments about bodies and semen in the one-sex world are not about scientific observation, but "about power, legitimacy, and fatherhood."[17] The one-sex model preserves the Father, originator of legitimate heirs,

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[9]　(Laqueur 1990, p. 30). Emphasis in original. Aristotle in *GA* 2.5.741a8-16, as quoted in (Laqueur 1990, p. 30).
[10]　See (Laqueur 1990, p. 42).
[11]　(Laqueur 1990, p. 20).
[12]　See (Laqueur 1990, pp. 6, 8, 22).
[13]　See (Laqueur 1990, 50ff).
[14]　(Laqueur 1990, p. 55).
[15]　(Laqueur 1990, p. 5.)
[16]　See (Laqueur 1990, pp. 10–11).
[17]　(Laqueur 1990, p. 57).

founder of civilization and order, and source of life.[18] This patriarchal symbol has a powerful hold in the history of the West, and it shapes the Christian Church.

3. Luther Gives Clues to Relinquish the Father-Son Dyad in Theology

Given the predominance of the one-sex model, in which "Father is best" because the father is understood as the source of life, civilization, and authority, it is no small wonder that Luther continued to repeat images of God as Father and Christians as sons. As I will show, however, despite these strong androcentric images and despite the primacy of the father Luther's theology and vision of life communicate, his work gives cues to knowing God and our human selves beyond the narrow scope of one predominant sex. Here I focus on his translation and interpretation of biblical texts through two examples.

Although Luther certainly repeats a significant degree of the androcentrism of the Christian tradition, he also uses gender-inclusive and gender-neutral references for humans and for God. He also interprets some biblical passages with great sensitivity to female-identified perspectives. These are some of the unexpected answers in Luther from a feminist perspective.

Unfortunately, the English translations in *Luther's Works* often obscure his unexpected answers. The translators did not render literal translations of Luther at the very points that literal translations matter. Granted, translators make decisions because what is expressed in one language is not necessarily said exactly the same way or naturally in another language. Idioms may be completely different, and a translator must have intimate knowledge of each language in order to cross the metaphorical border of communication between the two languages. Translators also need to know their audiences and the context and sensibilities of the author and the original text in order to use language aptly to promote understanding across time and cultures. In fact, one project, *The Annotated Luther*, importantly begins to address the androcentric translations of *Luther's Works*. Further efforts remain.[19]

From a feminist perspective, the English translations of *Luther's Works* fail to promote understanding of important details in Luther. In sum, I notice at least two problems. Translators of *Luther's Works* made androcentric decisions with individual words. For example, they moved from Luther's references to "children of God" to "sons of God;" from "child of God" to "son of God;" and from "God" to "Father." They also occasionally interpret passages with strikingly different nuances than the original texts. The theological, social, and ecclesial androcentrism of the English translations is like a mantle of divinely ordained male superiority that rests on generations of scholars, preachers, students, and lay persons. Intended or not, there are theological and social consequences. Clues in Luther himself offer a way forward.

4. Luther Retains and Transforms Androcentric Language

Luther's writing shows a paradox. His commentary on John 1–4, written from 1537 to 1540, is one example. Who God is and who Christians are come together in Luther's exegesis of John 1–4, wherein he gives two important cues to reform androcentric language in Christian faith. First, Christian identity is not by merits or faults of people, either collectively or individually. Rather, Christian identity is only through Christ, a true *human*:

> Komen wir alleine durch die geburt von oder aus Gott, also, das wir gleuben an den namen des Menschen, der Jhesus Christus heisset, warer, natürlicher Son Marian, in der zeit von ir geborn, von ewigkeit aber vom Vater gezeuget.[20]

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[18] See (Laqueur 1990, p. 58).
[19] (Hillerbrand et al. 2015–2017).
[20] Luther, *Weimarer Ausgabe* (WA) 46: 623. Readers of German will note that Luther's German is different from contemporary German.

> We come alone through the birth from or out of God, that is, that we believe on the name of the person, who is called/named Jesus Christ, was, the natural son of Mary, born of her in time, from eternity but fathered from the Father.[21]

Following the Christian tradition, Luther emphasizes Jesus Christ as the source of Christian identity—new birth in Christ, who is fully human and fully divine. Luther portrays Jesus Christ as a human—born naturally from a woman—but also divine—literally "fathered" by the Father. It is interesting that Luther's emphasis on Jesus is not as the "Son" but as the redeeming human-divine *person* ("Mensch"), whom humans need. However, in contrast, God, portrayed as the one who "fathers" the person all humans need is clearly explained within the parameters of the one-sex model, wherein the father fathers legitimate children, and, most importantly, sons.

Significantly, however, Christians are not portrayed here as sons. We become God's *children* through Christ: "das wir Gottes Kinder warden." [22] Luther repeats the image of being God's children—"that we become God's children." Luther even underscores his interpretive expansion beyond the focus on sons when he refers specifically to daughters. Expressing God's viewpoint, Luther writes: "Ich wil dein Vater sein, und du solt mein Son oder Tocheter sein."[23] "I want to be your Father, and you should be my son or daughter." Luther repeatedly underscores that humanity is not only about fathers and sons and that Christians are not only sons.

As God's creatures, Luther also writes, children of God share equality: "ich bin so gut als du, ob du gleich Vater, Fürst, Herr, Fraw [sic] bist, denn ich bin eben so wol Gottes Creatur als du."[24] "I am as good as you, whether you are father, prince, lord, or lady; then I am equally truly God's creature as you are." For Luther, there is no unevenness in humanity's existence as God's creatures.

Unfortunately, Luther tempers these cues beyond androcentrism in two ways. Immediately after proclaiming human equality before God, he asserts an order of humans that should not be trespassed. He opens his call to earthly order with a beautifully equitable phrase: "Und wenn du ein rechter Christ und Gottes kind bist;"[25] "And if you are a true Christ and God's child." Luther directs such equality towards supporting an order of obedience because each arena of the order belongs to God and God wills the order: "So mus auch in der welt der unterscheid der Personen bleiben."[26] "So must also in the world the difference among persons remain." Notably, Luther's cosmic order adheres to the cosmic order of the one-sex model as Laqueur outlines, even while he uses some gender-inclusive language and claims equality as God's creatures.

In addition, problematically, several pages later Luther ties Christian identity to Sonship: "Dieser Jhesus Christus, unser Herr, allein bringt dise geburt, gibet die freiheit, recht und macht denen, die an jn gleuben, das sie Gottes Kinder sind, der gibt alleine die Sonschafft."[27] "This Jesus Christ, our Lord, alone brings this birth, gives the freedom, justice and strength to those who believe on him, that they are God's children, he alone gives the Son-creation/Sonship." The word "Sonschafft" is interesting. It literally refers to creation, order, relief, cause, management, or even energy.[28] In a literal use of the word, only Jesus gives the Son-relief; this is a word that draws from the one-sex model that holds to the male as *the* progenitor, the only one who truly causes life and has legitimate power. We see again the paradoxes in Luther. From my perspective, he seems to repeat androcentric ideas embedded in the Christian tradition, even while he reforms it with the wonderful language of *children* of God and a theology of equality as God's creatures and in identity through Christ.

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21 Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine. In this instance, I have rendered the passage more closely to the German in order to demonstrate some of Luther's thinking more clearly.
22 WA 46: 623. See also WA 46: 619, 621, 622, e.g.
23 WA 46: 620.
24 WA 46:616.
25 WA 46:616.
26 WA 46:617.
27 WA 46:623.
28 See (Terrell 1980, p. 564).

5. Luther Usurps Androcentrism

Luther's commentary on The Magnificat in 1521 is another rich resource to notice Luther's language and ideals. Again, reading from a feminist perspective with empathy and alertness leads to some surprises.

In the English versions of Luther's commentary on The Magnificat, God is predominantly referred to as "Father" or with male-identified pronouns. Likewise, humans, individually and collectively, are referred to in English with male-identified pronouns and nouns. Luther, in fact, does not refer to humans or to God in exclusively androcentric fashion in the original German of his commentary. Given the one-sex worldview that permeated his historical context, this fact is perhaps all the more compelling to notice. Throughout the text, Luther refers to humans not as "man," "men," or "mankind." Only a few examples suffice.

In discussing verse 48, Luther argues that God's eyes look into the depths of humans but that human eyes look to what they think is famous and fancy. The English uses the term, "men's [eyes],"[29] whereas in German Luther uses the term "Menschenaugen,"[30] "people's eyes." Shortly thereafter, the English translation is "men," whereas Luther refers to "Leute," "people."[31] Again, in Luther's exposition of verse 48, the translators used the phrase "totality of mankind," whereas Luther wrote "der Gesamtheit der Menschen," "the totality of people/humans."[32]

The translators' shift to androcentric terms is startling because these words are not exclusively assigned to males in the German language, a language that is known for its specificity and precision. "Leute" specifically refers to "people" or "folk;" it is meant to evoke the sense of a mass of ordinary people. "Mensch" refers to "person," and *in context* there can be clues that it refers to a man or a woman, but it most typically refers to a person. This holds true for the plural, as well. The translators even made an androcentric translation of the German word "man,"[33] which means "one."

Even more provocatively, the English translators moved from "child" to "son." One passage is worth quoting in full, first in the translator's English, then in German, and then in my translation.

> A **son** serves his father willingly and without reward, as his heir, solely for the father's sake. But a **son** who served his father merely for the sake of the inheritance would indeed be a wicked **child** and deserve to be cast off by his father.[34]

> Wie ein **Kind** dem Vater dienet willig umsonst als ein Erbe, nur um seines Vaters willen. Und wo ein **Kind** dem Vater nur ums Erbe und Gut dient, das ist billing ein feindseliges **Kind** und würdig, daβ es der Vater verstoβe.[35]

> Like a **child** serves the father willingly, without an inheritance, only to serve his father's will (only of his father to will). And where a **child** serves the father only [for] inheritance and goods, this is reasonably to be said a hostile **child** and deserves the father's repudiation/to be disowned.

Once again, Luther uses the word "child" to refer to the Christian. He uses the masculine pronoun "er" in this passage, a practice hardly surprising given the priority of sons and boys. Nevertheless, Luther chose to refer to Christians as *children* of God, even when he could have easily referred to Christians as sons. Although a small move, it is powerful. From a feminist perspective, Luther's use of words fractures Christian androcentrism.

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[29]   Luther, *Luther's Works* (LW) 21:313.
[30]   (Luther n.d., p. 384).
[31]   LW 21:315. (Luther n.d., p. 386).
[32]   LW 21:324. (Luther n.d., p. 392).
[33]   In German, "man" is distinct from "Mann," with the latter meaning "man" in English.
[34]   LW 21:312.
[35]   (Luther n.d., p. 384).

The translators make the same transgression with some of Luther's references to God, as well. I find the pattern of changing what Luther wrote quite telling. Even while the predominant view Luther has of God is masculine, the translators shore up an androcentric God. For example, the translator chose to refer to God in the third person singular pronoun, "he," even when Luther writes "God." Again, in his explication of verse 48, Luther writes, "so groβ angesehen wäre vor Gott,"[36] which is a simple reference to God as God. The English reads, "so highly esteemed by Him."[37] Later in the same section, the translators make the same move. The English reads, "and far beneath Him;"[38] the German reads "und weit unter Gott stellen."[39] Given not only his own context, but also given the language of much of Scripture, Luther could have referred to God in these passages as "He" or as "Father;" but he did not. Again, this is a powerful reformation.

Yet another choice in translation stands out when a feminist reads Luther in his original language. As I have observed, individual word choices that are gender neutral stand out due to the prevailing one-sex model of his time. Yet the idiom of Luther's explanation of verse 46 is doubly compelling. He writes with notable sensitivity to the female-identified perspective of Mary. Here Luther explains her role in becoming the Mother of God. The English in *Luther's Works* reads: "she lets God have His will with her and draws from it all only a good comfort, joy, and trust in God."[40] For those unfamiliar with it, the trope "let him have his way with her" is a euphemism for rape, one that squarely places the responsibility for the rape on the woman or girl. This phrase is old and influential. It is also horrifying when used to explain God's relationship with any human. God does not invade us sexually.

Luther's original text is a stark contrast: "[Sie] läβt Gott in sich wirten nach seinem Willen, nimmt nicht mehr davon denn einen guten Trost, Freude un Zuversicht in Gott."[41] Literally, this reads: "[She] allows God in herself to be host according to/following his will, taking nothing more from God than a good consolation, joy, and trust." From a feminist perspective, a few details matter.

Mary is not passive in Luther's rendering. She allows God to be host *in herself*. Allowing someone to be your host is active because allowing this to happen means you move from not allowing someone to take care of you to allowing it. You let someone give you shelter, food, and drink. You have power to provide for yourself but being hosted means giving up the control to tend to your own needs to someone else, in this case, a loving God, from Luther's perspective. Another notable detail is that the hosting occurs within herself. She is still a person; her integrity is intact. God becomes the caregiver. Lastly, there is a particular way that God hosts, which is according to or following God's own will. In fact, Luther's opening of this passage on verse 46 is that we learn how to praise God through God working in us.[42] A literal and less sexist interpretation reveals an entirely different nuance in Luther's encouragement to Prince John Frederick, to whom he commends Mary as exemplar. Clearly, the formation and worldview of a translator affects the idiom chosen in the target language. In German, Luther communicates not only far more agency on Mary's part, but also a less androcentric and a less violent God. So should the English translation of Luther.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not close these feminist observations on language with an observation on his theology, for it, too, gives clues for the ongoing reformation of Christian language for God. Luther's commentary on The Magnificat naturally focuses on Mary and God's relationship with her. Through this story of Mary and God, Luther highlights notable aspects on the difference between God and humanity and the relationship between God and human creatures.

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36   (Luther n.d., p. 387).
37   LW 21:317.
38   LW 21:322.
39   (Luther n.d., p. 391).
40   LW 21: 309.
41   (Luther n.d., p. 381).
42   LW 21:302

Luther declares that we cannot understand God without the Holy Spirit, who works through experience. "Denn es kann niemand Gott noch Gottes Wort recht verstehen, unmittelbar."[43] "Then no one can rightly or suitably understand God even God's Word, unless he has (it) unhindered from the Holy Spirit." In other words, we are not in control of knowing or understanding God, who is beyond human comprehension. Mary, he contends, learns through experience in the Holy Spirit. Luther continues that through Mary's experience, we see that our God is a God who lifts up the lowly and puts down the mighty.[44] Humans, however, do exactly the opposite, we strive for what is important in our own eyes. As Luther writes, we are just the opposite of God: "Es ist hier kein Schöpfer unter den Menschen."[45] "There is here no creator among people." Our human problem, he continues much later in the treatise, is that we are not satisfied. Mary was, though. Mary recognizes God as the giver, and thus she is not inflated with herself.[46]

God's relationship with humans comes through God working in our spirits to affect our whole selves, just as God worked through Mary's spirit.[47] God evokes faith by working through the Holy Spirit on our spirits. We come to trust God, just as we see that Mary trusts God.[48] Luther points to Mary's trust in God and the fact that she praises and loves God for God's own sake, not for doing good things for her. Mary, Luther believes, reveals the true Christian relationship of faithfulness and praise to God because, unlike the false preachers, she praises God without expectation of any payment of good works from God. In other words, Luther writes, a true bride of Christ is faithful even if no good things come from God—if God remains hidden.[49]

False preachers, on the other hand, urge human good works not because God is good but so that they can enjoy their good works themselves.[50] Quite the opposite of a transactional relationship with God, Mary remains faithful to the God who sees her through trust. False preachers, what might be called false believers, stray from God when things go badly. Mary, as epitome of a person of faith, and as a leader, relates to God in humility. She knows that God's gifts come from God's own hand.[51]

The relationship between humans and God means that we share a place of humility in relationship to God. Who truly belongs to God does so because of faith. The problem is that we try to make ourselves more than God, forgetting our relationship and our difference from God. We make ourselves into an idol. Yet even in this most important of passages, the English in *Luther's Works* strays into androcentrism:

> These men are mere parasites and hirelings; slaves, not sons; aliens, not heirs. They turn themselves into idols, whom God is to love and praise and for whom He is to do the very things they ought to do for Him.[52]

Luther is here describing the ideal Christian, one who belongs to God by faith in humility. Yet his German is more expansive:

> Das find eitel Rieβlinge und Mietlinge, Diesntknechte und nicht Kinder, Fremdlinge und nicht Erben; die machen sich selbst zum Abgott und Gott soll sie lieben und loben, eben das ihren tun, das sie ihm tun sollten.[53]

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[43] (Luther n.d., p. 373).
[44] LW 21:299.
[45] (Luther n.d., p. 374).
[46] LW 21:328-329.
[47] See LW 21:302ff.
[48] See LW 21:309ff. on verse 47.
[49] See LW 21:311.
[50] See LW 21:312.
[51] See LW 21: 308.
[52] LW 21:312.
[53] (Luther n.d., p. 383).

These are vain pretend/sub-lords[54] and mercenaries, indentured servants and not children, strangers and not heirs; they make themselves into an idol [,] and God should love and praise them, [and] even/actually do for them, what they should do for him.

Whereas the English in *Luther's Works* casts ideal Christians as sons, Luther casts the ideal Christians as children. This is remarkable, given that Luther could have easily chosen to refer to sons as heirs. Of course, some of the nouns in German are in the masculine declension. In Luther's world, for example, mercenaries would most likely have been men. Most, but not all, rulers would have been men. And legally, men were the heirs. Theologically, Luther answers who truly belongs to God. It is not someone who is willing to follow a powerful person's orders, kill for pay, or engage in someone else's war for wages. Luther explains that true Christians are children and heirs. The point is that the people who are not true children and therefore heirs are people who posture—people who pretend to belong to God, but they do this by making idols of themselves.

And this is exactly what the one-sex model communicates—that males are made into an idol, particularly symbolized in the father-son dyad. Luther, however, subtly begins to disrupt the idol through his choice of words and through his theology. From my feminist theological perspective, this is one unexpected but encouraging answer.

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[54] Literally, people willing to be paid to rule and work on someone else's orders.