I. The Historical Context of Luther’s Tract

Against the Heavenly Prophets

A topic of such historical and theological immensity such as the Lord’s Supper may overwhelm scholars approaching this topic. The present article does not treat the full import of theological or hermeneutical issue surrounding the Supper, but rather explores Luther’s grammatical argumentation in the tract Against the Heavenly Prophets \(^1\) (1525) which was his response to the position of Andreas Karlstadt. At that time the doctrinal differentiation between the Wittenberg and the Swiss Reformation was just emerging. However, the term “Swiss” is an over-generalisation

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because Karlstadt was Luther’s master and fellow from the University of Wittenberg. Karlstadt can barely be counted among the “Swiss” Reformers. Later Calvinistic orthodoxy classified him as one of the enthusiasts (Schwärmer). It seems that, by 16th-century standards, Karlstadt was a solitary theologian because he departed from the Wittenberg Reformation, could not easily conform to the theology of infant baptism professed by the established Reformed theology, but did not adhere to the consensus of the social revolutionaries.²

Patristic Christianity did not formalize a doctrine of the Lord’s Supper. The statements of the Church Fathers appear diverse, incoherent, and do not address issues which became relevant as a consequence of Reformation controversies. Thus, they do not answer questions which are important to us. Besides, no ecumenical council defined this doctrine, so that a latitude therein was evident to the Ancient Church. Although the practical authority of local church bodies was beyond question, only resolutions of ecumenical councils could delimit orthodoxy within the Imperial Church. As a consequence of this principle, the rejection of Pelagianism in Western Church under the influence of Augustine has few repercussions in the Eastern Church, which considered Pelagianism as compatible with the prominent Neo-Platonic theory of θέωσις in the East.

Consequently, Augustine’s symbolic interpretation of the Lord’s Supper³ did not capture attention of his contemporaries,

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and it coexisted with opposing views for a long time. Even in the Middle Ages, before the Fourth Council of the Lateran (1215), there was no definitive Catholic doctrine of the Supper. Some theologians claimed that the material elements of bread and wine are not transubstantiated, but annihilated.4

Until 1524, Luther was preoccupied with confuting Catholic theology and took the unity of Protestantism for granted. After 1524, it came to light that the Wittenberg Reformers did not accept certain assertions of the “Swiss” Reformers and the enthusiasts. Undoubtedly, the concept of means of grace peculiar to the Wittenberg Reformation is found in Luther’s5 and Melanchthon’s6 thought prior to 1524, but their mature development was born in response to the opponents.

II. No Differentiation between the Grammar and the Hermeneutics

The Greco-Roman and medieval scholars in humanities employed the term “grammar” in a wide sense and did not differentiate this discipline from the philosophy, rhetoric or logic. Therefore, what is meant by the term “grammar” must be determined by the context. From the contemporary perspective, it is obvious that first a text

(Ps 99:5).

is analyzed in terms of its language (i.e., grammar) and then it is interpreted within certain presuppositions (i.e., hermeneutics). Thus grammar seems to be more objective than the hermeneutics, which is always embedded in a specific historical, social and religious setting. However, such a distinction would be unintelligible to the ancient and medieval literati.

III. Luther’s Call for the Grammatical Theology

Between 1517 and 1524, Luther along with Melanchthon hammered out the rudiments of Reformation theology, including the *sola Scriptura* principle. By claiming that the Bible is the only, unique, absolute, infallible, irreplaceable and divine authority over the Christian doctrine, it implies that this text must clearly communicate what should be believed. This highlighted the importance of hermeneutics, as every message is interpreted pursuant to certain procedures.

In *De servo arbitrio*\(^7\) (1525), Luther opposed Erasmus’ hermeneutics and maintained that every proposition, unless the context suggests otherwise, is about the simple, pure and natural meaning of words which is constituted by grammar and the common use of language (*usus loquendi*). Consequently, the meaning of the text originates from the language competence bestowed by God upon man in creation.

In the tract *Against the Heavenly Prophets*\(^8\) (1525), the Wittenberg Reformer declared natural language is an empress\(^9\) who wields authority in all communication. Thus, only the context

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7 Martin Luther, “De servo arbitrio (1525),” in *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (1908), 18:700.
9 In German, the word *Sprache* (language) is feminine.
(such as other passages on the same issue or figures of speech employed) allows of a non-literal interpretation. In various places throughout *Against the Heavenly Prophets*, Luther summons us to interpret the Bible solely on the basis of the simple, natural significance of words and the common use of language.

When Luther commented on the status of language in the academic disputation *De homine*¹⁰ (1536), he noticed that human reason is the best and the most perfect of all terrestrial phenomena. It leads to inventions and governs all arts, and stands behind any earthly wisdom, power, virtue and splendor including the language competence which distinguishes man from animals.¹¹

### IV. Karlstadt’s Grammatical Arguments

In his writings from 1524 to 1525¹² and in his letter from 1528,¹³ Karlstadt discussed the use of demonstrative pronouns in the words of institution attributed to Jesus as well his theological interpretation of them. The grammatical theses were one of those many premisses on which Karlstadt built his doctrine of the Supper.

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¹⁰ Martin Luther, “De homine (1536),” in *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (1926), 39/I:175 [§4–6].
¹¹ Martin Luther, “Vorrede auf den Psalter,” in *Biblia das ist die ganze heilige Schrift Deutsch*, trans. Martin Luther (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1545), [sine pagina].
From Karlstadt’s and Luther’s writings, the inference is that the debate about the use of pronouns was not critical to their divergent positions. Their differences were primarily depended on divergent hermeneutics. Karlstadt and Luther presumed that the use of demonstrative pronouns in Greek, Latin and German is identical.

According to Karlstadt, the punctuation (probably a dot) and the capitalization of τοῦτό in Luke 22:19 indicates that τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου is disconnected from the preceding participle λέγων and cannot be recognized as direct speech. Thus, τοῦτό begins a new, separate sentence.

In fact, both editions of the Greek New Testament existing at that time (Erasmus¹⁴ and Complutensian Polyglot¹⁵) had no unified system of punctuation and capitalization. Therefore, direct speech was introduced either by a dot or by a comma, and not by the semicolon (‘’) as it is customary nowadays. In Erasmus’ Greek text, τοῦτό in the words of institution is never capitalized. It is introduced by the comma, except in Matthew 26:28 and Luke 22:19–20 where the dot is applied. The Complutensian Polyglot never capitalized the word τοῦτό and preceded it either with a dot (Matt 26:26; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:19–20; 1 Cor 11:24–25) or with a comma (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:22).

Karlstadt maintained that, both in Greek and in Latin, the demonstrate pronoun οὗτος, αὕτη, τοῦτο (hic, haec, hoc) shares the gender of its antecedent regardless of whether the pronoun refers to the noun which precedes it or follows it. He argued that since τοῦτο (hoc) is neuter in the words of institution, it refers not to the masculine noun ἄρτος (panis, bread) but to the neuter

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¹⁴ Erasmus Roterodamus, ed., Novum instrumentum omne (Basel: Johannes Froben, 1516).

¹⁵ Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine in Academia Complutensi noviter impressum (Alcala: [sine nomine], 1514).
noun σῶμα (corpus, body). For Karlstadt, if the demonstrative pronoun was to point to the bread (ἄρτος, panis), it would take the masculine (οὗτος, hic), not neuter (τοῦτο, hoc), form.

In Karlstadt’s opinion, that τοῦτο (hoc), as the subject of the linking verb (τοῦτο ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα μου), refers to Jesus’ body σῶμα (corpus). Consequently, τοῦτο ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα μου denotes “this body is my body.” In the narrative, Christ was pointing to his own body sitting at the table. Karlstadt asserted that in the words of institution of the cup, τοῦτο appertains not to the cup (ποτήριον) but to the blood (αἷμα) albeit both nouns are neuter. Accordingly, τοῦτο ἐστιν τὸ αἷμα μου means “this blood is my blood.” Jesus was referring to his own blood circulating in his body. Ultimately, Karlstadt compared the function of τοῦτο in the words of institution to the word ἴδε which unveils the Lamb of God in John 1:29, 36 (‘Ιδε ό ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ).

Since, in the words of institution of the cup, both the blood (αἷμα) and the cup (ποτήριον) are neuter, according to Karlstadt’s axiom, that the demonstrative pronoun and the antecedent thereof must share the same gender, he had not proved yet that τοῦτο refers not to the cup but to Christ’s blood. Therefore, Karlstadt argued further that, since in the words of institution of the bread, τοῦτο points to the subsequent noun (i.e., σῶμα), therefore, in the words of institution of the cup, τοῦτο shall also refer to the subsequent noun (i.e., αἷμα). Thus, Karlstadt explained why the latter τοῦτο could not point to the preceding neuter noun ποτήριον.

Even if the demonstrative pronoun serves as the subject of the linking verb, it is arguable whether that must refer to the subsequent noun. Even in a purely deictic function, there is usually a sort of antecedent distinct from the predicate. For instance, in Matthew 3:17 (Οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου), the antecedent of deictic οὗτος is the person of Jesus mentioned in the previous verse. As a matter of fact, Karlstadt did not notice that, in the words of
institution concerning the cup, τὸῦτο was used in two diverse ways. In Matthew 26:28 and Mark 14:24, τὸῦτο is the subject of the linking verb, whereas in Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25 it functions as the adjective modifying ποτήριον.

Karlstadt insisted that both in Greek and in Latin any incongruence in gender between the demonstrative pronoun and its antecedent is a solecism and resembles a misapprehension of gender in Latin (e.g., istud panis instead of iste panis) or in German (e.g., der Brot in place of das Brot).

Moreover, Karlstadt appealed to the Vulgate to prove his theses. For him, if the masculine panis was the antecedent of neuter hoc, the masculine calix would be represented by the neuter hoc, not by the masculine hic, which is attested both in the Vulgate and in the Latin translation of Erasmus that accompanied his edition of the Greek New Testament. Such an argument presupposed that both in Greek and in Latin the gender of the demonstrative pronoun corresponds to the gender of its antecedent.

An auxiliary argument set forth by Karlstadt is worthy of attention. In his works Karlstadt only outlined this thesis by a schema. He elaborated this schema orally and some Strasbourg theologians described it more fully. Luther mentioned that

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16 Andreas Karlstadt, Auslegung dieser Worte Christi >Das ist mein Leib welcher für euch gegeben wird. Das is mein Blut welches für euch vergossen wird (Lukas 22)< (sine loco): (sine nomine), 1524), D [Beschluss].


18 Luther, “Wider die himmlischen Propheten, von den Bildern und Sakrament
he heard of this argument instead of reading it. In the schema Karlstadt drew an analogy between the words of institution concerning the cup and Jesus’ address to Peter recorded in Matthew 16:18 (σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν):

“You are Peter. And upon this rock I will build my church.
Take bread etc. This is my body which is given for you”.

According to the Strasbourg theologians, Karlstadt claimed that, in light of the context, the demonstrative pronoun ταύτη refers not to Peter but to Jesus. For Karlstadt, Christ applied the said pronoun to himself in both narratives. Formally speaking, in the words of institution τοῦτο is the subject of the linking verb, while in Matthew 16:18 it acts as the adjective modifying πέτρα. Moreover, the meaning of πέτρα is to be determined not by the pronoun ταύτη, but rather by contextual interpretation which relies on particular hermeneutical presuppositions. Besides, to support his position, Karlstadt must presume that τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου is not the direct speech.

Karlstadt presented his grammatical theses and their exegetical ramifications so clearly that Luther and others (cf. Urbanus Rhegius, the Strasbourg theologians) understood him well. At the end of 1524, Rhegius resisted Karlstadt’s theses. Firstly, he emphasized that the punctuation and capitalization do not establish the syntactic relationship between clauses. In his view,

(1525),” in Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe (1908), 18:209 (n. 1) [Von Frau Hulda].
19 Ibid., 18:209 [Von Frau Hulda].
the context confirms that τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου is direct speech which is connected to the preceding words (particularly to the participle λέγων which introduces the direct speech).

Secondly, Rhegius criticized Karlstadt for a partial and incomplete study of the use of τοῦτο because, in the very words of institution (τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν), the pronoun also denotes what happened before and conveys the previous action (cf. the abstract antecedent).

V. Luther Unwittingly Initiates a Discussion

Already in 1520, Luther had pondered on the grammar of the words attributed to Jesus, and Karlstadt was definitely familiar with this famous book. Challenging Catholic sacramentology, Luther asked why the words of institution are Hic est sanguis meus, and not Hoc est sanguis meus. Generally, his comment was vague:

>Quod autem in graeco et latino pronomen >hoc< ad corpus refertur, facit similitudo generis, sed in hebraeo, ubi neutrum genus non est, refertur ad panem, ut sic liceat dicere >Hic est corpus meum<, quod et ipse usus loquendi et sensus communis probat, subiectum scilicet esse monstrativum panis et non corporis, dum dicit >Hoc est corpus meum, das ist mein Leib<, id est, >iste panis est corpus meum<.\(^{22}\)

That both in Greek and in Latin the pronoun hoc refers to the body comes from the similitude of gender. In Hebrew there is no neuter gender, so the pronoun refers to the bread. Therefore,

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22 Ibid.
it can be said “Hic est corpus meum” which corresponds to the use of language and the common sense. In other words, the bread, not the body, is the antecedent of the demonstrative pronoun as he [i.e., Christ] says: “Hoc est corpus meum, this is my body” to wit “this bread is my body.”

In De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae praeludium, Luther assumed that, since the demonstrative pronoun (τοῦτο, hoc) is neuter, its antecedent must be neuter noun, namely σῶμα (corpus). The Wittenberg Reformer did not know how the gender of demonstrative pronouns is determined in Greek or in Latin if they serve as the subject of linking verbs. His appeal to Hebrew is confusing because the words of institution are extant only in Greek, and we cannot appeal to an non-existent text. The Hebrew language has no neuter gender, and the words “bread” (לחם) and “body” (גוף) are masculine. It is astonishing that Luther considered that the Latin clause “hic est corpus meum” is plausible, because Luther, as a semi-native speaker of late medieval Latin, ought to acknowledge such a sentence as a solecism.

In the quoted fragment Luther laid out the foundations of his hermeneutics. Thus, usus loquendi and sensus communis are crucial to any meaning. The former denotes how a language works, whereas the latter is not just common sense but rather the sense of words common and evident to those who are immersed in that language.

VI. Luther’s Response to Karlstadt’s Grammatical Statements

Against the Heavenly Prophets is Luther’s response to Karlstadt’s views on sacramentology (particularly on the Lord’s Supper) and
on the admissibility of ecclesiastical art. In the present paper, we examine only the grammatical arguments. Luther admitted that his knowledge of Greek was far from professional. He tended to regard grammar as common to various languages, so that he felt free to skip from Greek to Latin or German and ignored any grammatical differences.

Luther objected to Karlstadt’s theses on the punctuation and capitalization, as well as his identification of the antecedent of τοῦτο. In addition, the Wittenberg Reformer furnished arguments from the literary analysis of the words of institution and from the exegesis of 1 Corinthians 10:16 and 11:26–31. He also opposed Karlstadt’s interpretation of Matthew 16:18. Besides, Luther explained what the synecdoche is and how it allows us to call an entity composed of two elements by the name of one of the elements, though Karlstadt did not explicitly question the validity of this figure of speech.

From Luther’s account, it seems that Karlstadt contended that the words of institution (τοῦτο ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα μου) recorded in Luke are preceded either by a comma or by a dot (Punkt), and that the demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο (hoc) is capitalized in certain editions of the Vulgate. Actually, no Greek edition of the New Testament available at that time offered such a punctuation or


26 According to Luther.
capitalization.

In the 16th century, punctuation and capitalization depended on particular printers and editors, and they are not documented in critical editions. The vast majority of the Vulgate editions from 1500–1524 contains no year of publication, so it is difficult to verify which editions of the Vulgate would support Karlstadt’s observation, though some editions indeed do support him. Being acquainted with typography, Karlstadt must have realized that, in all existing editions of the Vulgate and of the Greek New Testament, punctuation and capitalization were arbitrary decisions of the printer or editor.

Luther refuted Karlstadt’s assertions by appealing to the context. He asserted that τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα μου is part of the direct speech of Jesus, and that punctuation and capitalization are not part of the original text but rather random, editorial features carrying no authority. For Luther, a text structures itself according to its content and in line with the grammar. He also showed that a dot and a capital letter do not always introduce a new sentence isolated from the previous one. Furthermore, Luther stressed that lack of a conjunction between τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα μου and the preceding words (in Matt 26:26 [Δάβετε φάγετε] and in Mark 14:22 [Δάβετε]) indicates that the words belong to direct speech, which is also evident from parallel passages (the verb εἶπεν [1 Cor 11:24] and the participle λέγων [Luke 22:19] that introduce τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα μου). The Wittenberg Reformer argued that the words (τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν) in Luke 22:19 and in 1 Corinthians 11:24 urge Christians to say what Jesus said (τοῦτο ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα μου), and to do what Christ had previously performed, namely to take a bread, to give thanks, to distribute (i.e.,

to break and to give) the bread. Thus, the context shows that the clause τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα μου as part of a direct speech.

Although Luther mentioned the Latin conjunction enim, which in the Vulgate renders the Greek conjunction γὰρ in Matthew 26:28 (τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου), he made no use of it. Undoubtedly, that γὰρ (plausibly in an epexegetical function) links τοῦτο ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου to what precedes (Πίετε ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες), and therefore it confirms the position of τοῦτο ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά as direct speech introduced by the participle λέγων.

Luther and Karlstadt could not agree on the proper antecedent of τοῦτο in the words of institution (concerning both the bread and the cup). In Karlstadt’s opinion, Christ referred to his own body seated at the table and to his own blood because the neuter demonstrative pronoun demands the neuter antecedent. Paradoxically, both Luther and Karlstadt affirmed that the Vulgate translation of the words of institution is accurate.

Luther remarked that, in German, the neuter demonstrative pronoun serving as the subject of the linking verb could be applied regardless of the gender of the predicate or antecedent (e.g., Das ist die Stadt). As the Wittenberg Reformer noticed, it happens particularly if the pronoun is merely deictic. On that account Luther taught that the same is true of Greek but not of Latin because “Latin has no articles.” Actually, in Latin the neuter form of the demonstrative pronoun may be used similarly to the German word das. Luther’s statement about the genders and articles is indefensible because a language without articles (e.g., Latin)

28 Ibid., 18:151–81 [2. Teil].
29 Ibid., 18:154 [2. Teil]: “In Deutscher Zunge gibt’s die Art der Sprache, dass wenn wir auf ein Ding deuten, das vor uns ist, so nennen und deuten wir’s ein >das<, es sei sonst an ihm selbst ein >der< oder >die<.” Such an use of das indeed resembles the Greek adverb ἰδον.
30 Ibid.
can be still gender-based. Moreover, Luther was in fact begging the question (*petitio principii*) when he stated that if, Karlstadt’s insistence on the agreement of gender was right, native Greek speakers in the antiquity would have to observe that the gender of the demonstrative pronoun in the words of institution does not agree with the gender of its antecedent. Since those ancient speakers are silent on this point, Karlstadt was wrong. Clearly, Luther’s inference is based on the assumption that the particular pronoun must refer to the bread.

Furthermore, Luther juxtaposed the words of institution concerning the cup recorded in Matthew and Mark (τὸ τὸ αἷμα μου) with respective accounts in Luke (τὸ τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἷμα μου) and in 1 Corinthians (τὸ τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστίν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἷματι). Thus, he concluded that τὸ τὸ, which is Christ’s blood, must be tantamount to τὸ ποτήριον, which contained the fruit of the vine (cf. Matt 26:28; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18). Accordingly, τὸ τὸ, which is Christ’s body, must stand for the bread.

Finally, Luther resorted to 1 Corinthians 10:16 and 11:26–31, arguing that Scripture is to be interpreted by the Scripture.³¹ From 1 Corinthians 10:16, the Wittenberg Reformer inferred that to do “this” in remembrance of Christ (τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν) means to break the bread which is united with (κοινωνία) his body and to bless the cup containing the wine which is united with his blood. On the basis of 1 Corinthians 11:26–31, Luther claimed that, since eating the bread and drinking the wine in an unworthy way means being accountable to Christ’s body and blood, the bread and the wine coexist with the body and the blood of Christ.

Luther reconstructed Karlstadt’s exposition of Matthew

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³¹ Ibid., 18:166–82 [2. Teil].
16:18 from his outline and from the letter which the Strasbourg theologians sent him.\textsuperscript{32} In Karlstadt’s opinion, Christ was doing something else (in the words of institution—he took a bread) or speaking of something else (in Matt 16:18—of Peter) as he suddenly applied the demonstrative pronoun (in the words of institution—τοῦτο, while in Matt 16:18—ταύτη) to himself. Luther rebuked Karlstadt by pointing out that there is no syntactic correspondence between the words of institution and Matthew 16:18 because the words of institution are direct speech, whereas Matthew 16:18 is part of a complex sentence composed of two parts ([1] σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, [2] ἐπὶ ταύτη τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν) joined by the coordinating conjunction καὶ.

In Luther’s view, the rock (τῇ πέτρᾳ) upon which Christ will build his Church, is not the person of Peter because the proper name Πέτρος is masculine while the noun πέτρα is feminine. As a matter of fact, the nouns πέτρος (from which the proper name Πέτρος derives) and πέτρα are distinct, though they are cognate and originate from the same stem. Ultimately, Luther consented to two possible interpretations, namely that πέτρα denotes either Christ or Peter’s previous confession of faith (cf. Matt 16:16).\textsuperscript{33}

VII. The State of Grammatical Knowledge in the Age of the Reformation

The most comprehensive Greek grammars existing in the Age of the Reformation did not even touch on the use of demonstrative pronouns; it confined its discussion to their declension.\textsuperscript{34} In 1524,

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 18:209–10 [Von Frau Hulda].

\textsuperscript{33} In the gloss on Matt 16:18 in the final version of the German Bible, Luther preferred Peter’s confession as πέτρα. Martin Luther, trans., \textit{Biblia das ist die ganze heilige Schrift Deutsch} (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1545), [sine pagina].

\textsuperscript{34} Theodorus Gazes, \textit{Introductio grammatica}, trans. Erasmus Roterodamus (Basel:
neither Greek nor Latin concordances of the New Testament were available to facilitate finding passages in which these pronouns occurred.

Greek Church Fathers and classical Byzantine commentators (cf. Theophylact of Ohrid), who were native Greek speakers, never addressed the issue of demonstrative pronouns in the words of institution. Therefore, 16th-century scholarship of Greek was unable to answer questions raised in the controversy about the Lord’s Supper. Admittedly, Karlstadt alluded to “impartial judges of Greek tongue who have experienced the style of our New Testament” but never disclosed their identity.

Now we know that, if the Greek demonstrative pronoun ὁὗτος, αὕτη, or τοῦτο is the subject of the linking verb, that pronoun can share either the gender of its antecedent or the gender of the predicate, depending on the context. Thus, in

Ex officina Valderiana, 1541), 45 [I, De pronomine, Demonstrativa]; 336–37 [IV, De pronomine, Demonstrativa]; Philipp Melanchthon, “Grammatica graeca integra,” in Opera quae supersunt omnia (Corpus reformatorum), ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider and Heinrich Ernst Bindseil (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1854), 20:132–33 [De pronomine, Demonstrativa duo]; Johannes Oecolampadius, Graecae literaturae dragmata (Basel: Cratander, 1546), 107–12 [De pronomine].

36 Conradus Halberstadensis, ed., Concordantiae Maiores Sacrae Bibliae (Strasbour: Ioannes Cnoblouchus, 1526).
Matthew 22:38 (αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μεγάλη) and 7:12 (οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ νόμος) the pronoun’s gender corresponds to the predicate, whereas in 1 Peter 2:19–20 (τοῦτο [ἐστιν] χάρις) it corresponds to the abstract antecedent. On the contrary, in Latin the demonstrative pronoun serving as the subject of the linking verb always follows the gender of the predicate, unless the antecedent is considered abstract. Accordingly, Greek and Latin employ the neuter form of the demonstrative pronoun (e.g., τοῦτο ποιεῖτε, hoc facite) with reference to the abstract antecedent. Besides, in both languages, if the demonstrative pronoun functions as the adjective (e.g., τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον, hic calix), the pronoun’s gender agrees with the gender of what it modifies.

In light of the contemporary knowledge, the neuter gender of the Greek demonstrative pronoun (τοῦτο) is not a puzzle. If the pronoun refers to ἄρτος, it can take either the masculine form (οὗτος) on account of its antecedent (ἄρτος) or the neuter form (τοῦτο) due to the predicate (τὸ σῶμα). In the New Testament, if the pronoun serving as the subject of the linking verb (οὗτος ἐστιν) is masculine, it predominately appertains to the antecedent that is personal, not impersonal like ἄρτος. Perhaps, in order to avoid the confusion that the pronoun refers not to the bread but to the one of the participants in the Supper, the narrative resorted to the less personal neuter form.

VIII. Luther’s Juxtaposition of Faith with Grammar

In Luther’s Against the Heavenly Prophets, we encounter a juxtaposition of faith with grammar unprecedented in his earlier or later writings. Since, for Luther, all theology is entirely drawn

from the Scripture interpreted in light of its historical and linguistic setting, we would not expect any conflict between faith and grammar in his thought. In Luther’s opinion, God is what he has revealed to man in propositional form within the Bible. It is impossible for mortals to search the hidden aspect of Godhead, nor would that profit them. Thus, God reveals himself as his Word to mankind and no other saving revelation is to be expected.

Nevertheless, against Karlstadt, Luther announced that faith must be based on something higher than the rules of grammar. In his view, rules of grammar cannot establish or determine the articles of faith. 41 We might think that Luther’s statement was aimed at Karlstadt’s appeals to the punctuation and capitalization, but Luther refuted those arguments elsewhere. 42 Therefore, it seems that by the rules of grammar Luther meant the way in which the language works.

Subsequently, Luther produced some evidences from the New Testament (cf. John 1:10) and from German to demonstrate that a confusion of genders, numbers and persons is typical both in the Bible and in any living language. 43 In fact, Luther’s examples prove no exception to the rules of grammar, but rather display the contextual nature of language and primacy of common usage. For instance, in John 1:10c (καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω), the personal pronoun αὐτὸν stands for Christ who was identified (in John 1:9–10) as the true light (τὸ φῶς), which is unexceptional provided that the true light and Jesus are synonymous in these

verses and that \( \alphaυτὸν \) is an ordinary *constructio ad sensum*.

Although it sounds as if Luther wanted to derive his doctrine from a non-textual and non-propositional source, he probably intended only to undermine Karlstadt’s grammatical arguments.\(^{44}\) Let us remember that, because of his limited grammatical proficiency, Luther could not easily subvert Karlstadt’s grammatical theses. The Wittenberg Reformer put all his effort into utilizing parallel passages (primarily 1 Cor 10:16; 11:26–31), and his literary analysis of the words of institution was more comprehensive than Karlstadt’s.

**IX. Conclusion**

Luther and Karlstadt were working on an inaccurate assumption that, when the demonstrative pronoun is the subject of the linking verb, the pronoun shares the gender of its antecedent. For the lack of Greek concordances to the New Testament, they did not study how such sentences function in other passages. Moreover, Luther and Karlstadt illegitimately presupposed that, in this respect, Greek, Latin and German have the same grammatical structure.

A grammatical discussion would not be decisive in settling the meaning of the Lord’s Supper which has divided Protestantism into at least two distinct parties. There were other underlying theological, hermeneutical and philosophical presuppositions. Nevertheless, the grammatical debate between Luther and Karlstadt had an impact upon the clarification of the meaning of the Lord’s Supper, predominantly upon the sacramentology of the Wittenberg Reformation. Later on, Calvin\(^{45}\) and the Reformed

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\(^{44}\) Ibid., 18:158 [2. Teil]: “Wir glauben eurer grammatica nichts, der Grund ist zu sandig und ungewiss.”

orthodoxy\textsuperscript{46} rejected Karlstadt’s grammatical argumentation, and they developed another interpretation based on the assumption that τοῦτό refers to the bread.

\textsuperscript{46} Johannes Wolleb, \textit{Compendium theologiae Christianae} (London: Henry Woodfall, 1760), 117 [I, XXIV, XIII].