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Righteousness, Mystical Union, and Moral Formation in Christian Worship

Gifford A. Grobien

Ethics is concerned with moral evaluation of people, actions, and institutions—the determination of whether these are good or bad. Lutheranism, which identifies the doctrine of justification apart from works as the central article of the Christian faith, takes various stances toward ethics. Because the central doctrine of Lutheranism is that believers are justified solely on account of Christ apart from human effort, the typical foundations of ethical reflection and discourse are called into question. If a believer can state with confidence that he is free from sin and is completely righteous before God, of what concern are the questions of good or bad behavior? He is already good, at least where it really counts. In some cases, the preaching of justification takes up the full attention of the church and sustained, corporate reflection on ethical questions is neglected. As important as good works are, they are not as important as getting into heaven. Ethics becomes secondary to doctrinal questions, and even when ethics is addressed, it is addressed in doctrinal terms, such as the distinction between law and gospel, or the doctrine of vocation or sanctification.

Lutheranism has been perennially criticized on this basis for its inability to articulate an ethic, to advocate moral behavior, and to teach good works.¹ Although the Lutheran tradition has produced significant work in

¹ Luther had to deny throughout his career that he rejected good works. See, for example, 35:18; 26:137; 41:111–112 in *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols., ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1986). The various confessional writings of the Lutherans include articles that deal specifically with this accusation. The Augsburg Confession denies the charge that the Lutherans forbid good works (AC XX, 1–7), and the greater part of the article on justification in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession falls under the subheading “Of Love and the Fulfilling of the Law,” in which the explicit charge of not teaching good works is countered with an extended explanation of the Lutheran understanding of good works and their relationship to justification (Ap IV, 122 and following, and especially 136–140). The Formula of Concord

Gifford A. Grobien is Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology and Supervisor of the Doctor of Ministry Program at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

ethics,² the tradition remains mixed because of the unique methods and concepts that characterize Lutheran ethics. Ethics is typically concerned with questions of norms, intention, means, ends, duty, virtue, and agency, but these kinds of terms are secondary or may even be absent from Lutheran ethical discourses. Instead, Lutherans have distinct categories for reflecting on and discussing ethics: law and gospel, functions of the law, the two kingdoms or realms, sanctification, vocation and the created orders, and the theology of the cross.³ These distinctly Lutheran ethical categories do not easily translate into other ethical traditions. This difficulty in correlation may suggest to other traditions that Lutherans do not actually engage in ethical reflection, perpetuating the misconception that Lutherans forbid, discourage, or neglect good works.

I. Law and Gospel in Contemporary Lutheran Ethics

Lutheranism does have a powerful, if rather unsystematic, way of speaking of ethical formation. Moral capacity grows through sanctification, the growth in righteousness experienced by a Christian because of the continuous forgiveness of sins. In receiving the full forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ, the Christian is not left as a blank slate, as if only evil is taken away so that he is now morally neutral. Rather, the righteousness of Christ is given to him. All that Christ lived, suffered, and conquered in his resurrection is given freely to the Christian. The understanding and will of the newly created person is redirected from sin and idolatry outward toward God and the neighbor. The person becomes loving. Faith, which receives the forgiveness of sins, becomes active in love toward God and neighbor.⁴ Robert Benne elaborates:

Dazzled as they are by the wonder and profundity of God's justifying grace in Christ, Lutherans are tempted to think that the only really interesting ethical question is the motivational one. After being

includes an article on good works to reject the idea that good works are harmful to salvation, affirming instead that good works are necessary (SD IV).

² See, for example, Werner Elert, *The Christian Ethos* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957); Gustaf Wingren, *Creation and Law* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961); Helmut Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, ed. William Lazareth (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966-); and numerous writings of George Forell and Gilbert Meilaender. For a more recent treatment, see Benjamin Mayes, *Counsel and Conscience: Lutheran Casuistry and Moral Reasoning after the Reformation* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011).

³ Robert Benne, "Lutheran Ethics: Perennial Themes and Contemporary Challenges," in *The Promise of Lutheran Ethics*, ed. Karen L. Bloomquist and John R. Stumme (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 12-17.

⁴ Benne, "Lutheran Ethics," 14-15.

affirmed and reconciled in Christ, Christians are powerfully motivated to live the life of love. The theological problem revealed here is a kind of soteriological reductionism The ethical weakness that ensues is one of lack of ethical substance. The gospel forgives and motivates, but from what and to do what? Lutherans have shied away from contemporary explications of the Decalogue that would give Old Testament content to the ethical life. Love becomes both a permissive affirmation of any behavior and a rather amorphous serving of the neighbor. Without a richer notion of life in community (covenantal existence) that comes from our Jewish roots, Lutheran ethics does not really know what is “good for the neighbor.”⁵

On the one hand, the unconditional nature of God’s gracious love empowers the believer to love in an analogous way. On the other hand, the emphasis on this gracious love and divine motivation has been taken as license to neglect questions of ethical content, formation, and ambiguity. Love calls the Christian to serve the neighbor, but efforts must be made to discern the needs of the neighbor. The encompassing power of love does not mean that greater understanding of law, norms, and principles is to be neglected, but that these provide insight into how love expresses itself. The sinful and tragic condition of the world means that the loving action will not always be easily apparent, and that love can benefit from sustained, complex, ethical thinking.

Gerhard Forde claims that, underlying the inadequacy of contemporary Lutheran ethics, there has been a crisis in the Lutheran understanding of the law, which can be traced back to the Formula, although the crisis was not evident until the 19th century. The Formula defines the law of God as his eternal, unchanging will, to which people must conform their life and behavior or suffer God’s punishment. According to Forde, this supposedly differs from Luther, who spoke of the law as God’s particular claim on a person in order to bring a person to repentance for failing to keep God’s demand. This supposed difference was somehow undetected until Johannes von Hoffman began to speak not only of the law in this subjective, personal way, but also the Holy Trinity and the atonement. In particular, the atonement was not Jesus as the divine Son suffering the wrath of God as vicarious punishment for humanity’s disobedience to God’s law, but a historical suffering at the hands of humanity that reconciled God’s wrath and love. By not forsaking the love for his Son, but by raising him up, God reconciled to himself all who believe in the Son. God’s wrath against humanity is not punishment for violation of divine

⁵ Benne, “Lutheran Ethics,” 27–29.

law, per se, but an expression of the displeasure and death in which humanity lives by not receiving the Son of God. There is no eternal law, but a condemning expression of God's wrath against each person in his particular situation of unbelief.⁶

Werner Elert promoted a similar way of thinking about the law: any structure or good order dictated by the law is permanently lost to the lawlessness of sin. God's law persists in this world only to accuse, to announce the failure and consequence of sin. The remedy is the gospel, God's promise of new life, which he grants through faith.⁷ Forde also argues this way: the gospel inspires faith which leads to new life, a new good life with no need of the law. The new and old persons are bifurcated, so that there is no place for the law for the new person; for the old nature it only accuses.⁸ The law is depicted only as a threat, so it is lost as instruction. Gradually, too, the law comes to be seen as wholly negative, in spite of Psalm 119. The law begins to be seen not as something to be distinguished from the gospel, while remaining good, but as something in opposition to the gospel.⁹

Scott Murray argues that this is the root of gospel reductionism and contemporary antinomianism in American Lutheranism. Murray himself has attempted to overcome this trend in the doctrine of the law by demonstrating that this opposition between law and gospel does not have its roots in Luther, is a new development of the 19th century, and violates Scripture.¹⁰ Yet for those who have adapted this new perspective on the law, Murray's work is not always convincing.

II. The Twofold Righteousness

Another way to support the classical understanding of the law and to recognize it not in opposition to the gospel, but working with the gospel, is to expand on the Lutheran understanding of the two kinds of righteousness. The two kinds of righteousness complements the doctrine of law and gospel, with its special conceptual strength being that it does not

⁶ Gerhard Forde, *The Law-Gospel Debate: An Interpretation of its Historical Development* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1968), esp. 3-9, 12-23, 131-134, 176-181, 191-199.

⁷ Werner Elert, *The Christian Ethos* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 50-62, 297-299.

⁸ Forde, *Law-Gospel Debate*, 221, 231.

⁹ Joel D. Biermann, "Virtue Ethics and the Place of Character Formation within Lutheran Theology" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 2002), 162.

¹⁰ Scott Murray, *Law, Life, and the Living God: The Third Use of the Law in Modern American Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 57, 110-111, 122.

put law and gospel in opposition to each other, but reinforces their proper relationship. The twofold (or two kinds of) righteousness is a traditional way of speaking in Luther and the Confessions, if not as broad or extensive as the teaching of law and gospel.¹¹

I prefer to speak of the twofold, rather than two kinds of, righteousness. By referring to righteousness as one, twofold righteousness, I am emphasizing that all true righteousness comes from God through faith, both imputed and active righteousness. Both have Christ as their source. In other words, both the imputed, forensic righteousness that covers sin and the active righteousness of regeneration are received by grace through faith. The first is the merit of Christ; the second is the life and power of Christ, exercised by the Holy Spirit. As Luther says:

So there is no admitting a separation of the righteousness of faith and works, as though, in the manner of the Sophists, there were two diverse righteousnesses. But there is one, simple righteousness of faith and works, just as God and the human being (in Christ) are one person, and the soul and body are one human being.¹²

I am not saying that justification, strictly speaking, is renewal in the broad sense. As the Formula explains, the regeneration or vivification of justification excludes the renewal, sanctification, and good works that result from justification. But I am saying, as the Formula also affirms, that renewal, sanctification, and good works do in fact result from justification, that is, the righteousness of faith. The active righteousness of faith comes forth from the passive righteousness of faith. The twofold righteousness of a Christian is received and exercised through faith, beginning with God's declaration of righteousness on account of Christ's merit, and continuing with this continued declaration and true renewal and sanctification in the Holy Spirit (SD III, 41). The active righteousness that stems from faith is "instilled" by Christ (cf. Luther's Sermon on Two Kinds of Righteousness)

¹¹ The whole first section of Apology IV (8–47) is a contrast between the two kinds of righteousness, the righteousness of reason and the righteousness of faith. See also AC XVI; AC XVIII; AC XX, 13 and 18; AC XXVIII (where the righteousness of faith is emphasized as the purpose of bishops' work); SD III, 32; and Luther's sermons on the two kinds of righteousness (AE 31) and threefold righteousness (*Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe [Schriften]*, 65 vols. [Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–1993], 2:41–47), Rhapsody on Justification (WA 30/2:652–676), his later disputations, and the introduction to his Lectures on Galatians.

¹² "Proinde non est admittenda separatio Iustitiae Fidei et operum, quasi sint duae diversae Iustitiae more Sophistarum. Sed est una Iusticia simplex fidei et operum, Sicut Deus et homo una persona, et anima et corpus unus homo" (WA 30/2:659).

or “created” by the Holy Spirit (SD III, 23). It is real righteousness, which nevertheless exists alongside the persistent, decaying flesh of our old nature (SD III, 32).

A justified person, therefore, is both declared and made righteous through faith, as Melancthon declares several distinct times in Apology IV (73, 78, 117, 172b). To be made righteous does not mean that a person’s works justify him before God, or that he has been transformed into a new person with proper righteousness apart from Christ, but that faith “makes alive, that is, it cheers and consoles consciences and produces eternal life and joy in the heart” (Ap IV, 172b). As fruits of this new life, then, the Holy Spirit works sanctification and good works. Eberhard Jüngel explains:

If sinners are pronounce righteous by God’s judging Word—which is also pre-eminently creative in its judging power—and thus *recognized* by God as being righteous, then they not only *count* as righteous, they *are* righteous. Here we must again remind ourselves that *the Word alone* can in this way do both things at once: a *judgement* and a *creative Word*—a *pardon* and a *Word which sets free*.¹³

A Christian who is really righteous, then, receives the law with joy and is instructed by it. Affirming the twofold righteousness strengthens the proper, confessional distinction between law and gospel, and the three functions of the law. Indeed the law condemns the sinful nature; the new, regenerate nature, however, delights in the law, embraces it, and learns from it.

I have hinted that legalism and antinomianism are the errors toward which Lutheran ethics, and indeed Protestant ethics, of the 20th century have tended. And, to the point of this article, both of these undermine the sustained reflection and practice that contribute to ethical formation. I am hardly the first to notice this or to offer a proposed solution to these tendencies. Stanley Hauerwas has responded to this issue with his now well-known concepts of character and narrative. Hauerwas calls character the interaction of personal qualities that orients or determines a person to be and act in certain ways. Character determines agency. The way one is characterized determines how a person will act. Character, furthermore, is continuously formed by choice. Choice forms character, for by moving in a certain way, one is also inclined that way as through exercising one’s

¹³ Eberhard Jüngel, *Justification: The Heart of the Christian Faith*, trans. Jeffrey F. Cayzer (Edinburgh & New York: T&T Clark, 2001), 211; emphasis original.

powers, and by the results affirming the choice. Character makes a person the way he is, according to Hauerwas.¹⁴

Thus, for Hauerwas, a weakness of a theology that offers continual forgiveness is that it leaves no room for the development of character. If forgiveness wipes the slate clean, then a person's previous actions have done nothing to move him further in a life of virtue. And this is the problem Hauerwas sees with communions that emphasize "too strongly" the doctrine of justification. If a person is being newly created day after day, then this person has no foundation upon which to grow in character, good works, and sanctification. This reveals one of Hauerwas' underlying concerns, that theology not be bifurcated from ethics in some division between theory or belief and practice. Ethics has to express theology in a close-knit way; the justified person must also act righteously in sanctification.¹⁵

To link justification and sanctification, Hauerwas highlights the uniqueness of conversion in establishing Christian character. Conversion to Christianity is the forgiveness of past sins, a power which not only takes away the punishment for sin, but regenerates the person. This regeneration includes the gift of Christian character—the "orientation" of Jesus Christ. This new orientation is not limited to outward works, but manifests itself both in the interiority of character (new habits and a system of reasons) and the exteriority of works intentional to this character (works pursued according to these new habits and matrix of reasoning).¹⁶ Conversion occurs in a distinct point of time, when the new believer's character changes from sinful to Christ-like. It is not gradual, but instantaneous. Hauerwas does not at all mean that there is no development of character following conversion. The new, Christian character develops just as any other character does, through habit, choice, intention, and circumstances. Rather, it is that the fundamental character of the Christian life is given and defined in conversion.¹⁷ Conversion provides the starting point for the believer to act according to his new agency and to develop this character in conjunction with the Christian community.

To be sure, Lutherans will certainly find a number of problems with Hauerwas, most fundamental of which are an abandonment of the theoretical for the pragmatic, and a failure to distinguish between the

¹⁴ Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 83–128.

¹⁵ Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life*, 2–5, 183–188.

¹⁶ Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life*, 201–2.

¹⁷ Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life*, 206.

spiritual and the temporal. However, his work is noteworthy in his insistence that justification and sanctification be understood as complementary, and that their connection is to be found in the work of Christ in the Christian. In justification, a person is newly born in Christ, which grants him a new Christian character to do good works. This character continues to develop through the exercise of virtues under the guidance of the Christian narrative, that is, the practices of the Christian community, such as preaching, prayer, rituals, and communal good works.

The point of contact with Hauerwas that I want to emphasize is conversion. For Lutherans also confess that in conversion—justification—a person receives the forgiveness of sins and is given the new life, out of which the subsequent fruits of righteousness and good works proceed. Indeed, Joel Biermann has drawn extensively from Hauerwas in developing his understanding of Lutheran ethics and the three kinds of righteousness. Like Hauerwas, Biermann is concerned with the inseparability of theology and ethics, even while he recognizes a distinct place for both, contra the later Hauerwas.¹⁸ Biermann is also concerned with practical questions facing the parish,¹⁹ and asserts that the law-gospel framework is not as appropriate for dealing with temporal, practical questions, as it is for assuring people of their salvation before God.²⁰ Finally, Biermann also argues that the two—or three—kinds of righteousness is a proper conceptualization for understanding the relationship between justification and sanctification.²¹

For Biermann, *justifying* righteousness is that new righteousness received in justification or conversion. *Sanctifying* righteousness is that righteousness performed by the Christian on behalf of other human beings, and which corresponds to Hauerwas' character development and sanctification.²² The defining narrative for the Christian, that is, the narrative

¹⁸ Biermann, "Virtue Ethics," 47–50.

¹⁹ Biermann, "Virtue Ethics," 4–8.

²⁰ Biermann, "Virtue Ethics," 153–164.

²¹ Biermann, "Virtue Ethics," 200–213.

²² Biermann, "Virtue Ethics," 171–182. Biermann clarifies at length the nuances of the kinds of righteousness that were actually expressed by Luther and Melancthon. Of particular importance is Melancthon's occasional uses of "civil righteousness" or the "righteousness of reason" to speak of any kind of work that could be considered good by non-theological standards, whether done by a Christian or not. I have distinguished this from specifically Christian good works with the term "active righteousness," as Luther does, while Biermann goes on to speak of three kinds of righteousness: "governing," "justifying," and "sanctifying." Biermann's "justifying" righteousness cor-

that shapes the character of a Christian qua Christian, is the gospel—forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God. This defines the Christian as Christian and connects sanctifying righteousness to justifying righteousness. This fundamental character of the person cannot cease to be Christian character, without the person ceasing to actually be a Christian, but character does develop in smaller degrees by the influence of other narratives and practices.

For Biermann, then, justification is also new creation, so that our ethical attention can stay where it belongs: in this creation, rather than in attempts to justify oneself before God. In our created setting, we can indeed speak of a sustained character, one that is not erased or reset with each experience of forgiveness. While sanctification may not be predictable and continually on the increase, present acts draw from the possibilities of past acts: the qualification of the self with an orientation.²³ Virtues and character can be developed through participation in the Christian narrative—the Creed—and through the practice of good works. Thus the righteousness of good works is interwoven with the righteousness of justification, which is received through the Word and sacraments.

III. Mystical Union

I essentially agree with Biermann that the twofold righteousness is a helpful way of conceptualizing the connection between justification and sanctification, even while I disagree that it ought to replace the law-gospel paradigm when it comes to ethics. It rather relies on the proper distinction between law and gospel. Furthermore, however, I am not convinced we need to go to Hauerwas to find this link, because it is already in the Confessions and Luther, as I outlined earlier. In fact, when we find ourselves relying too deeply on Hauerwas, we fall into the bugaboo which has plagued Hauerwas throughout his career, and that is the question of the role of grace in conversion, narrative, and ethics. When one reflects on Hauerwas's structure, one wonders what is specifically Christian about it. The narrative is Christian. The practices of the Christian community have the appearance of Christianity. But there is precious little said about the inner working of grace by the Holy Spirit. There is no description in Hauerwas of how grace works through the Christian narrative. This is in contrast to the Lutheran confession, which holds grace to be bestowed

responds to my "passive" righteousness, and his "sanctifying" righteousness corresponds to my "active" or "proper" righteousness.

²³ Biermann, "Virtue Ethics," 214–215, 220.

through the word and sacraments—a grace that has particular spiritual effect, more foundational than and different from the outer effects of narrative and practices.

Biermann does not substantively address this difference of Hauerwas from Lutheranism. Biermann affirms that the work of grace is not an external, worldly work, and that it comes through the word and sacraments. But there is more that can be said in explaining the relationship between grace and spiritual righteousness, and the formation of character and virtue in a Christian.

Justification does not bring about a new character in the typical way that character is understood, or even in the way that Hauerwas describes it—through the reflective exercise of agency nurtured in a community narrative for the developing new habits. Rather, justification operates by grace. Thus, the question is, how does the grace of justification establish a new character in a believer? How can we describe anthropologically and theologically the reception of the imparted righteousness of Christ?

I propose that we understand the reception of the righteousness of sanctification by the concept of mystical union. This is a classical category in Lutheran dogmatics that has received a new spin in recent years from the Finnish school. The first offering in this area was Tuomo Mannermaa's *In ipsa fide Christus adest* (1979), which argues that the presence of Christ in justification implies a real participation of God, which corresponds to an Eastern Orthodox understanding of theosis. The Finns are motivated by the prospect of progress in ecumenical relations with the Orthodox, and they have sometimes been criticized for reading comparisons with Orthodoxy into Luther's writings.²⁴ Particularly, they have argued that union with Christ, rather than God's Word, is the instrumental cause of justification,²⁵ a position that is indefensible with the Lutheran Confessions, and with a fair reading of Luther's writings.

²⁴ See, e.g., Klaus Schwarzwäller, "Verantwortung Des Glaubens," in *Freiheit als Liebe bei Martin Luther: Referate = Freedom as Love in Martin Luther: Papers*, ed. Dennis D. Bielfeldt and Klaus Schwarzwäller (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1995), 146–148; Timothy Wengert, "Review of *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*," ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, *Theology Today* 56 no. 3 (October 1999): 432–434; R. Scott Clark, "Iustitia Imputata Christi: Alien or Proper to Luther's Doctrine of Justification?" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 70 (2006): 280–284.

²⁵ Documented in William W. Schumacher, *Who Do I Say that You Are? Anthropology and the Theology of Theosis in the Finnish School of Tuomo Mannermaa* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 88–89. The Finn's connection between atonement and the flesh of Christ leads them to this conclusion. While this connection is generally commendable, it does

Nevertheless, the Finns have contributed positively to Luther studies simply by reinvigorating the conversation about mystical union, and by offering a penetrating critique of the philosophical underpinnings of 19th- and early 20th-century Luther studies. While addressing these philosophical issues is not the purpose of this study, for this context it is worth mentioning Risto Saarinen's published dissertation, *Gottes Wirken Auf Uns*, which traces the theology of Albrecht Ritschl, Karl Holl and other 19th- and 20th-century Lutherans to the Kantianism of philosopher Hermann Lotze. Under Lotze's influence, these theologians denied knowledge of God at an objective or metaphysical level, and correspondingly excluded a relation or intimacy with God's person. Rather, only the effects of God's actions on a believer and in the life of the Christian community could be perceived through the subjective power—or feeling—of faith (note also the similarities to Schleiermacher). In this system, not only objective justification, but also subjective justification in the classic sense, was meaningless, and these had to be reinterpreted under a kind of moral influence theory. Such theology also denied true union with God, a clear contradiction with the Formula of Concord (SD III, 65).²⁶

So it is in this sense that the Finn's revitalization of the category of union contributes to the discussion of character and moral formation. Again, let me reiterate: union is not the cause of justification; rather, union follows logically upon justification and imprints the new character of the Christian serving as the basis for moral formation. In fact, union does not merely imprint a new character, but is the hypostasis, if you will, of the new man. To understand this, we need to consider further Luther's theological anthropology.

Departing from customary medieval thought, the significance of personhood for Luther is not rationality and individual substance, but perception, relational experience, and dependence. Luther admitted the need for a ground for individual existence and action, but a human person does not have an independent or autonomous ground or hypostasis. A person is, to an extent, how he is perceived by others, what role he plays in a society, what he gives and receives relationally. There is human sub-

not require that the only way to benefit from the flesh of Christ is to join in union with it.

²⁶ Tuomo Mannermaa, "Why Is Luther Research So Fascinating? Modern Finnish Luther Research," in *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jensen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 5, 7; Risto Saarinen, *Gottes Wirken auf uns: die Transzendente Deutung des Gegenwart-Christi-Motivs in der Lutherforschung* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1989), 241.

stance, but that substance is formed by relationships and action to determine personality. Theologically, then, how a person is viewed by God is fundamental to his personhood.²⁷

With the righteous judgment of justification, a person receives standing before God, a new *persona*, upon which righteous acts are built.²⁸ The judgment grants a new being, a new nature, which is the life of Christ in the person: “Not I, but Christ in me,” as St Paul says in his epistle to the Galatians.²⁹ It is the new presence of Christ upon which the new creation is founded. The judgment of justification and the presence of Christ are complementary.³⁰ The relation with God becomes determinative of the kind of actions the person will produce. The judgment (*Urteil*) of God gives the person a true, meaningful existence. “The person as source of [his] deeds is minted through a judgment issued over [him], a judgment toward which [he]—in acceptance or refusal—aims and shapes [himself].”³¹ It is no longer the person making an image for and in himself, but God dwelling in and making the person after his image. Thus union with Christ offers the new imprint, character, and nature, empowered by the Holy Spirit with new faculties (SD II, 25; IV, 7–8).

Union, for Luther, then, is relational union. The human person or spirit takes form in its object, comparable with medieval realism. That is, when intellect considers something, it becomes united to that concept. When a soul loves someone, it becomes united to the beloved. Luther applied this model also to faith: whatever a person trusts, to that he unites himself. Furthermore, the soul becomes formed by the object of faith.³² When Luther defines man with the sentence, “Man is justified by faith,” he is saying this: a true man must have Christ as the object of his belief, for only

²⁷ Johannes-Friedrich Albrecht, *Person und Freiheit: Luthers sicht der Dynamik und Struktur des Personseins und ihre Bedeutung für die Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2010), 92–93, 96–97, 99–100. See also AE 27: 206–207, WA 2, 480, 17–20.

²⁸ Karsten Lehmkuhler, *Inhabitatio: Die Einwohnung Gottes im Menschen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 299–301.

²⁹ Lehmkuhler, *Inhabitio*, 301

³⁰ Lehmkuhler, *Inhabitio*, 314

³¹ “Die Person als Quelle ihrer Taten ist geprägt durch ein über sie ergehendes Urteil, nach dem sie sich—in Zustimmung oder Ablehnung—richtet und entwirft.” Lehmkuhler, *Inhabitio*, 301.

³² “Those who believe this are like God; that is, they think of God altogether as He feels in his heart, and they have the same form in their mind that God or Christ has. This, according to Paul, is to ‘be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God’ (Eph 4:23–24),” *Lectures on Galatians 1535*, AE 26:431, WA 40/1:650, 29–32.

in Christ does a man live and do as he was created to do. Without such faith, a man is not truly a man.³³ Luther also speaks extensively of Christ as his form and the form of faith in the Galatians lectures:

[F]aith takes hold of Christ and . . . He is the form that adorns and informs faith as color does the wall. Therefore Christian faith is not an idle quality or an empty husk in the heart, which may exist in a state of mortal sin until love comes along to make it alive. But if it is true faith, it is a sure trust and firm acceptance in the heart. It takes hold of Christ in such a way that Christ is the object of faith, or rather not the object but, so to speak, the One who is present in the faith itself. Thus faith is a sort of knowledge or darkness that nothing can see. Yet the Christ of whom faith takes hold is sitting in this darkness as God sat in the midst of darkness on Sinai and in the temple. Therefore our "formal righteousness" is not a love that informs faith; but it is faith itself, a cloud in our hearts, that is, trust in a thing we do not see, in Christ, who is present especially when He cannot be seen.³⁴

Luther also says elsewhere, "Faith is the creator of the divinity, not in [his] person, but in us."³⁵ This is not just a conceptual grasping, but the present reception of Christ in the soul through faith.

The subsistence of a person's subjectivity, then, is God. Although we think in terms of our personal individuality, we must be grounded in God, whether as creatures, or as new creatures.³⁶ Christ becomes the ground of the believer, the ground of action. Wilfried Joest, in his classic study of the Luther's ontology of the person, calls the ground of a person's actions in Christ the "transsubjective power." A human person truly wills and acts in Christ, so that his desires and actions are attributable to the person. Yet they are empowered in Christ and remain only so long as the person is in Christ.³⁷ A person never possesses righteousness innately, such as a *habitus*, or apart from Christ. Joest also refers to this as "nicht-Subjektivität," which I translate as "non-self-subsisting agency of spirituality." Essentially this is human agency, which nevertheless relies on the

³³ WA 39/1:176, 33-177, 10; AE 34:139.

³⁴ Luther, *Lectures on Galatians 1535*, AE 26:129-130. See also WA 40/1:282, 21-22; 282, 14-16; AE 25:166-167.

³⁵ "Fides est creatrix divinitas, non in persona, sed in nobis." WA 40/1:360, 5-25.

³⁶ Lehmkuhler, *Inhabito*, 245-247. See WA 2:480, 11 for Luther's polemic against Boethius' definition: "A person is an individual substance with a rational nature."

³⁷ Wilfried Joest, *Ontologie der Person bei Luther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 256-261.

life of Christ and power of the Holy Spirit, and gives up a claim to self-subsistence.³⁸

Yet this non-subjectivity is a subjectivity in that the person's will is engaged and active in action in the world. This synergism comes about through the union of the soul with Christ, which Lutherans have traditionally labeled the mystical union. There are points of comparison to the personal union of the two natures in Christ in that some attributes—or the character or virtues of Christ—are communicated to the believer. Proper or imparted righteousness is not simply the change of a person, new habit, or the transference of power, but the grounding of the new person in the person of Christ, in union with him.

To sketch the anthropology of the Christian in union with Christ, there are the two natures of the believer: the old, fleshly, outer nature, which is dying, and the new, inner, spiritual nature, which is alive through faith and grounded in the person of Christ. This spiritual nature is in mystical union with Christ, receiving the character and virtues of Christ.³⁹

IV. Worship as Formation

In light of this, how do we speak of ethical formation from the theological conviction that a man is justified through faith on account of Christ, apart from the works of the law? We understand that apart from Christ, a man can do nothing: he is dead in trespasses and sins. Through faith, a person is justified and united to Christ, which creates the new man, grounded in Christ's person and empowered by the Holy Spirit. This new, spiritual man, hears the law, is instructed by it, and loves it. This new man struggles against the old, fleshly, sinful nature. This new man has righteous, Christian character, and this new character can be developed through practice, the development of good habits or virtues, and the continued mediation on the Word of God—both law and gospel. And thus we come to the connection to worship. Union and growth in character occur through faith, but faith itself is not an operation of a person to reach out or to connect with God. Such active work is done by the Word himself, which comes forth from God and presents God to the person. In this presentation of the Word, faith recognizes the person's proper place in relation to God's person.⁴⁰

³⁸ Joest, *Ontologie der Person*, 273, 234.

³⁹ AE 25:332; WA 56:343, 18–23.

⁴⁰ Joest, *Ontologie der Person*, 297–298.

Because the means of grace are the means by which a person is justified, they are also the means by which the new character and nature are given. Worship is the primary context for the granting of new character and the strengthening of it. Worship strengthens and develops the new character not through mere habituation or narrative qualification, but through the operation of grace, which endows and develops a new way of being, a new subjectivity. This formative character of worship centers on the word of God and the sacraments, which are supported by the full activity of worship.

God's operation of grace through the word can be understood analogically through recent arguments in the philosophy of language. Louis-Marie Chauvet, a Roman Catholic liturgiologist, criticizes the medieval scholastic metaphysical scheme that imposed a transactional view on language and grace, such that these were purely instrumental in assisting beings to reach their telos. Rather, language should be seen as part of a symbolic order that actually establishes social relationships and expectations. While this can be hijacked by the postmodern deconstructionists and reconstructionists, it actually has analogical applicability to the way we can understand God's words. God's word does what it says. God's word does construct the reality it speaks—the social reality, when we understand God's society to be all of creation. When God speaks to his creation, he creates, establishes, and determines things to be the way he speaks. Thus, God's language is not just information, advice, instructions, or history, but also the gracious working of bringing the believer into the story of salvation by uniting him to the life, death, and new life of Christ.⁴¹ The language of preaching, then, does not form believers simply by unique meaning, but through the accompanying supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, the regeneration to a new life, and the union with Christ. Grace is the spiritual power that converts a person and enables him to understand the spiritual language of the church. Grace, through the preaching of God's language and judgment, communicates the new, Christian life.

Christian ethics, then, begins out of the "judgment" of God.⁴² In worship, the gathered faithful assent and acquiesce to God's judgments—through faith, to be sure, not their own abilities. Worship introduces a discontinuity with secular life, calling the worshipper to understand

⁴¹ Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995), 84–85, 92–95.

⁴² Bernd Wannenwetsch, *Political Worship: Ethics for Christian Citizens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4–5.

ordinary life differently, through the eyes of faith.⁴³ The assent to God's judgment teaches, instills and develops a new kind of ethos, forming and structuring the lives of worshipping Christians. From this different, Christian structure of life, faithful people make judgments and take action in the world, according to the circumstances and conditions in which they find themselves.⁴⁴

The word places the believer into a new relationship with God, that of child of the Father, and brother or sister of Jesus. With this new relationship is the empowerment to live as a child of God. This empowerment is the Holy Spirit himself, who enacts in a person what is declared and promised in the word.⁴⁵ The Spirit inscribes the word into the body of the believer through the washing of Baptism, through the creative promise, and through the continued nourishing of Jesus' body and blood. This suggests a structure of the Christian life on earth girded by Scripture, sacraments, and ethic. More than this, it suggests a movement or maturing in the Christian life that comes in hearing the word, being embodied through the sacraments in the body of Christ, and living out the Christian life of witness as worship and ethical service to others.⁴⁶ The body becomes the place that bears the "marking" or "character" of the word of God. Because this word is embodied, it is also lived out.⁴⁷

I am arguing, then, that Christian worship ought to be recognized as a fundamental source for ethics. Yet, although worship is a source, traditional philosophical methods of deducing actions from principles do not hold. Instead, ethics grows forth from worship. Ethics focuses on the gracious power of the word and its verification in ethical action.⁴⁸ Christ gives himself in the speaking of his word in Scripture and sacrament; Christians give themselves in the life of witness, both confession of faith and acts of love. Nevertheless, even as the liturgical is verified in "ethical reinterpretation," so the ethical always returns to the liturgical and is reinterpreted liturgically, as an action brought forth in response to the grace of

⁴³ Philippe Bordeyne, "The Ethical Horizon of Liturgy," in *Sacraments: Revelation of the Humanity of God: Engaging the Fundamental Theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet*, ed. Philippe Bordeyne and Bruce T. Morrill (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2008), 124–125.

⁴⁴ Wannewetsch, *Political Worship*, 6.

⁴⁵ Wannewetsch, *Political Worship*, 439–440.

⁴⁶ Wannewetsch, *Political Worship*, 527–528.

⁴⁷ Wannewetsch, *Political Worship*, 530.

⁴⁸ Bordeyne, "The Ethical Horizon of Liturgy," 127.

God in the sacrament. It is this response to grace that makes the action specifically Christian, and specifically ethical for that matter.⁴⁹

Such ethical verification does not mean that the presence of Christ is *dependent* upon the ethical. The presence of Christ depends upon his words and promises. And this presence shapes an ethical stance that receives, is formed by, and begins to act or attempts to act in accordance with the presence of Christ. Christ's presence brings about a new creation, a change in the character of the gathered, faithful people, so that their perspective, intentions, and actions will begin to be different from the way they were prior to or apart from the presence of Christ. Such verification cannot be evaluated by quantity or quality of good works, which would only serve to separate ethics again from worship. Rather, the ethical is a stance of continuously holding forth whatever benefit one has for the benefit of the neighbor. This is a stance of confidence, of faith, that what one has can be given and not be lost. Such verification in faith can only be a theological verification.

The inscription of godly character occurs through word and sacrament, which is verified in the ethical, which is the life of Christian love. It is the love "*to be toward others as God is toward us.*"⁵⁰ Much of what I have been saying here is drawn from Chauvet, but these things are not foreign to Lutheranism. Luther, in his 1519 treatise on the *Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ*, focuses on the unity of love wrought by the partaking of the Sacrament of the Altar. And lest we think that he discarded this view later in his career, he repeats this theme in a sermon preached for the Vigil of Pentecost, 1528, after his polemical exchanges with Zwingli.⁵¹ This sermon could be considered his most mature and excellent statement on the relationship of the Eucharist, union, and good works. He says that just as the bread is a unity formed from many grains, the church has all things in common when it partakes of Christ. All Christians share "infirmity, folly, lack, poverty."⁵² Strength serves weakness—the one with more serves the one with less—until all are restored. Yet this mutual sharing, again, is grounded first in the fellowship they have with Christ. By eating his body and drinking his blood they are

⁴⁹ Bordeyne, "The Ethical Horizon of Liturgy," 128.

⁵⁰ Bordeyne, "The Ethical Horizon of Liturgy," 312, emphasis in original.

⁵¹ Translated by Aaron Moldenhauer, "A Translation and Analysis of Martin Luther's 1528 Catechetical Sermons on the Lord's Supper," in *Concordia Journal* 33 (2007), 43–60. See also, *Die erste Reihe des Katechismuspredigten (1528)*, "30 Maij quae erat vig[ilia pent]ecostes 28," WA 30/1:24–27.

⁵² Moldenhauer, "Luther's Catechetical Sermons," 47.

in him and receive all good from him. Only then is the believer strengthened to bear his neighbors' burdens.

Thus we eat the Sacrament bodily and spiritually to strengthen our faith and *thereafter to fulfill the signification* . . . I offer my sin and death to Christ; He gives righteousness and eternal life. Thus I say to the neighbor, "If you are poor, come to me, and you shall have bread, coat, and so on; similarly if you are ignorant of the faith."⁵³

Note the strong unidirectional language of all merit and virtue coming from Christ to the partakers, then to be shared with the neighbor.

Thus, the Christian ethic that grows out of worship is an ethic of interconnection with other people, of identifying with the neighbor and even becoming the neighbor in order to serve and to love the person. Such an identification is not a psychological or sympathetic identification, both of which are limited in their intimacy with the neighbor, and neither of which necessitate the empowering of the Holy Spirit. A person limits psychological and emotional sympathy by filtering the neighbor's experience through his own stance. Rather than entering into the neighbor's experience, the self-orientation tries to fit the neighbor into oneself, overlooking or collapsing the real difference between the subject and the neighbor.⁵⁴

Instead, the Holy Spirit brings about a "transposing" of the believer with the neighbor. The "transposing" that occurs for the Christian is the transposing of oneself into another "as Christ." Because the believer is in unity with Christ, he now addresses and engages the neighbor as Christ would. This union with the neighbor—ideally—is not filtered or corrupted by the person's perspective (although, in practice, it will be flawed if the persisting old nature interferes), but the believer has now put on the mind of Christ and sees the neighbor from Christ's perspective. In this renewed stance, the neighbor does not remain at a distance, nor is his experience subsumed or collapsed into the other. The Christian, in this instance, has become a "little Christ" to the neighbor.⁵⁵

Because the person serves out of the abundance of Christ, he is not afraid of being limited with what he can offer.

For where the question about justice is seen as a problem about the distribution of goods or opportunities . . . the fundamental point of

⁵³ Moldenhauer, "Luther's Catechetical Sermons," 48, emphasis added. See WA 30/1:26-27.

⁵⁴ Wannewetsch, *Political Worship*, 328-329.

⁵⁵ Wannewetsch, *Political Worship*, 330-331.

departure is the deficiency. But deficiency makes the other in a threateningly primary way a competitor for restricted goods, and someone who can therefore only in a secondary way become a partner (or accomplice). It is only where abundance “rules” (in the literal sense) that the other is not a threat.⁵⁶

In the realm of Christian abundance, justice is not concerned with the equity of limited resources, but with offering all that is good. When Christians have received everything from Christ, as they do in worship—the word and sacraments—they have abundance to offer. There is no fear of the loss of self, but only the confidence that all will be brought into the great fellowship of Jesus Christ, who gives without qualification.⁵⁷

Love, then, is no mere motivation for good works, nor is it only following the example of Christ (although it includes these). Love shapes the good works of a Christian by binding the Christian to the person he loves, serves, and for whom he works. True love has no fear of losing anything, for the resources available to love are infinite in communion with Christ. While through faith a person is united to Christ, through love the Christian is united to others he loves.⁵⁸

V. Ethics and the Ten Commandments

At the beginning of this article, I noted that contemporary Lutherans may be reticent to explicate the Ten Commandments, for fear of seeming legalistic, irrelevant to contemporary contingencies, or simply wrong for trying to apply the Hebrew Covenant to a new era. But when the two-fold Christian righteousness is affirmed, the commandments do not merely accuse the old, sinful nature and lead to death, they instruct and direct the new nature of the Christian, serving the Christian in the growth and formation of active righteousness. They give instruction of wisdom and love.

Thus the commandments are to be embraced as part of the formative way of life for the Christian. Such an approach is very distinct from the post-Enlightenment Kantian method of moral norms, even though Luther has often been interpreted through such a method.⁵⁹ It is true that Luther emphasizes the Ten Commandments in teaching ethics, probably giving them the first priority in this area. Yet it would be a mistake to see the

⁵⁶ Wannewetsch, *Political Worship*, 332–333.

⁵⁷ Wannewetsch, *Political Worship*, 334–339.

⁵⁸ Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, AE 31:371.

⁵⁹ Wannewetsch, *Political Worship*, 59.

main difference between a modern, purely rational ethic and Luther's commandment ethic as merely one of secularization. Modern theories of norms may claim to be based on pure reason, but the commandment of God for Luther is never a decontextualized command appealing to pure reason. The divine command comes through the act of hearing the word of God, meaning the command comes in the context of worship and is received through faith.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the sense of the command is given meaning by the life, traditions, and relationships in which the Christian lives.

For Luther, this is most clear in the way all commands are particular ways of obeying the first commandment, and only by obeying the first commandment can the others be fulfilled. The stance a person takes towards killing, adultery, lying, stealing, and coveting depends on his stance toward God and the worship of God. Worship is the greatest work of the commandments: "in [hearing and learning his Word], one gives to him his greatest and highest service [*Gottesdienst*]." ⁶¹ Luther is not hesitant to describe attending the divine service, listening to the sermon, and receiving the sacraments in faith as work that pleases God and gives him honor, glory, and pleasure.⁶²

Worship is tied together with good works not simply because it is commanded, however, but because through worship comes the promise of the gospel. The Word of God, as the one true holy thing, makes those who hear it forgiven and holy, faithful to receive it. This good work of worship is greater than all others, because it is the first good work, it is the activity by which people are made holy and good, and can go forth and do other good works.⁶³ All good works give honor to God, not just as obedience, but as furthering goodness in the estates of life, thereby speaking forth in word and deed the goodness, mercy, love, and care of God.⁶⁴ All of these give God his glory, and in a broad sense are also worship.

In worship, the intertwining of God's gracious forgiveness and gifts of life with the good works of faithful people is clearly seen. To be sure, forgiveness is utterly an act of grace and mercy, in which God takes away sin and makes holy the person he forgives. Yet such forgiveness occurs

⁶⁰ Wannenwetsch, *Political Worship*, 61.

⁶¹ WA 36:353, 11-12; AE 51:260.

⁶² WA 36:352-356; AE 51:260-265. The Confessions speak in a similar way, with the activity of worship being the first good works of the saints, acceptable to God when performed in faith; see Ap. XXIV, 25-26; LC, 91-94.

⁶³ WA 45:682, 22-34; AE 24:242-243

⁶⁴ WA 36, 352-354; AE 51, 260-262.

within the human activity of worship: preaching the word of God, listening to the word of God, praying, giving thanks, and communing on the body and blood of Christ.

At whatever time God's word is taught, preached, heard, read, or pondered, there the person, the day, and the work is hallowed, not on account of the external work but on account of the Word that makes us all saints Other work and business are really not designated holy activities unless the person doing them is first holy. In this case, however, a work must take place through which a person becomes holy. This work, as we have heard, takes place through God's Word. (LC I, 92-94)

Commandment ethics, for Luther, then, cannot be isolated to the pure commandment or universal norm issued outside of the church's life of worship in which the commandment is heard alongside the promise of life in the gospel.

The old nature is dying under the law, yet the new nature, enlivened through faith, embraces, delights in, and begins to fulfill the law, because the doer and fulfiller of the law, Jesus Christ, is present and active. The righteousness that is Christ's alone through his work, suffering, and merit, is shared and given to each believer, so that believers also work and act righteously, specifically to live according to the structure and direction of the law.⁶⁵ After justification, the heart is changed to see the law no longer as a prison, tutor, or slave driver, but as a palace, or a light for the path that leads to eternal life.⁶⁶

The law offers concrete parameters for expressing the love of God in the world. It establishes the church and the worship of God. It sets forth order and respect in society, beginning with parents, and implicitly including other authorities. It expresses the dignity of life, fidelity in marriage, the significance of property, the value of honesty and uplifting speech, and even warns against nurturing temptations that begin in the heart. There is a positive, expansive understanding of the commandments that comes with faith in the Lord as the lover and provider of all things for this life and the life to come. This understanding is a living and growing

⁶⁵ Cf. Rom 7:22; 8:2-10; Gal 2:19-20,

⁶⁶ David Yeago, "Martin Luther on Grace, Law and Moral Life: Prolegomena to an Ecumenical Discussion of *Veritatis Splendor*," *The Thomist* 62 (1998): 187-189. Cf. Gal 3:23-26; Ps 19:8; Prov 6:23; Ps 119:105.

embrace of the commandments, in contrast to the prohibitive, deathly way they are understood apart from faith.⁶⁷

The commandments also lead believers further in their understanding of this gracious nature of God. By learning, reflecting on, and practicing the commandments, God's loving nature is better understood and more firmly established in the minds and hearts of believers. The commandments reveal further the gracious, merciful, and sacrificial nature of God, after his gracious, merciful, and sacrificial nature has begun to be understood and believed in the gospel of Jesus Christ through faith.⁶⁸ The giving of the Spirit means that the church is the community or the politics to live as God expects of all humankind. This inscription of the Spirit calls Christians to pursue goodness as expressed in the commandments not only so that others experience the goodness God intends for humanity, but also to present a glimpse of God's hope for humanity as an invitation to all people to enter into it.⁶⁹

Thus the law can be seen to be in harmony with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit carries out the work of Jesus Christ in the world; he fulfills the will of God in the world. Whatever fruits of the Spirit he brings forth in Christians are thoughts, words, and deeds in harmony with the will of God.⁷⁰ Luther explains this in his preaching for the eighteenth Sunday after Trinity, 1537:

Thereafter [God] also promises to give the Holy Spirit, by which the heart looks to love God and keep his commandments. For God is not gracious and merciful to sinners because they do not keep the Law, nor so that they should remain as they are. Rather, he endows them and forgives both sin and death for the sake of Christ, who has fulfilled the whole Law. He thereby makes the heart sweet and through the Holy Spirit enkindles and drives the heart that it begins, in contrast to its old way, to love more and more from day to day.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Stanley Hauerwas, "The Truth about God: The Decalogue as Condition for Truthful Speech," in *Sanctify Them in The Truth: Holiness Exemplified* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 51-54.

⁶⁸ Hauerwas, "The Truth about God," 57.

⁶⁹ Hauerwas, "The Truth about God," 57-59.

⁷⁰ Murray, *Law, Life, and the Living God*, 194.

⁷¹ "Darnach verheisset er auch den heiligen Geist zu geben, damit das hertz ansahe Gott zu lieben unde sein Gebot zu halten, Denn Gott ist nicht darumb den sundern gnedig und barmhertzig, das sie das Gesetz erfuellen hat, das er dadurch das hertz also suess mache und durch den heiligen Geist entzunde und treibe, das es beginne in wider zu lieben von tage zu tage mehr und mehr." WA 45:149, 25-32.

The contrast between the effect of the law on the old nature and its being embraced by the new nature is even more clearly articulated by Luther elsewhere: "Our empty law is ended by Christ, who fills its emptiness first by being outside of us, because he himself fulfills the law for us, and then fills it again by the Holy Spirit in us, because, when we believe in him, he gives us his Holy Spirit, who begins in us this new and eternal obedience."⁷²

Dead in our old nature, Christ is outside of us, propitiating the wrath of God in order to count us justified. With the pronouncement of forgiveness, he comes near and enters in, received by faith, granting us his Holy Spirit, and creating the new man in union with him. His one righteousness serves both to impute and impart righteousness. This new creation is also the inscription of a new character, a character that continues to be formed by the working out of God's love in us through the Spirit, by the means of grace and centered in the divine liturgy. Finally, the Spirit works in us to work out God's love toward our neighbor through the learning and practicing of God's commandments.

⁷² "Caeterum nostra lex vacua cessat per Christum, qui replet vacuitatem illam, primum per sese extra nos, quia ipsemet implet legem pro nobis, deinde replet etiam per Spiritum sanctum in nobis, quia, quando credimus in eum, dat nobis Spiritum sanctum, qui inchoat hic in nobis novam et aeternam obedientiam." "Second Disputation against the Antinomians," WA 39 I:435, 18. See also WA 39 I:438, 2; 383, 8; 388, 4.