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The Doctrine of Justification and Christology

Chapter A, Section One of *The Christ Present in Faith*

Tuomo Mannermaa

Translated by Thomas F. Obersat

I. The Doctrine of Justification and Christology

A. The Foundation of Justifying Faith in the Ancient Church's Christology

1. Christ as "the greatest sinner" (*maximus peccator*)

Luther's view of the Christian faith rests on the Christological thought of the early church in which Luther, however, incorporates a specific accent. Luther understood the common early church incarnational thought in such a way that the incarnation fits seamlessly into the doctrine of justification. The eternally begotten second person of the Trinity, the Logos, "didn't consider it robbery" (Paul), to be in the form of God (*in forma dei*), rather out of sheer love took the "form of a servant" (*forma servi*), in which He became man. The Word of God according to Luther had by all means not only taken on [assumed] a "neutral" human nature as such, but the pronounced human nature of the sinner. This means that Christ truly has and carries the sins of all men in His assumed human nature. Christ is the greatest of all sinners (*maximus peccator, peccator peccatorum*). The Reformer says:

And all the prophets saw this, that Christ was to become the greatest thief, murderer, adulterer, robber, desecrator, blasphemer, etc., there has ever been anywhere in the world. He is not acting in His own person now. Now He is not the Son of God, born of the Virgin. But He is a sinner, who has

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and bears the sin of Paul, the former blasphemer, persecutor, and assaulter; of Peter, who denied Christ; of David, who was an adulterer and a murderer, and who caused the Gentiles to blaspheme the name of the Lord (Romans 2:24). In short, He has and bears all the sins of all men in His body—not in the sense that He has committed them but in the sense that He took these sins, committed by us, upon His own body, in order to make satisfaction for them with His own blood.¹

The text of the lecture notes (Hs) goes beyond the printed text (Dr). From this position emerges how real Luther thinks the union of Christ with the sinner is. The Logos communicates with the human nature of the “thief and the sinner” and is downright “submerged” in it. “And so He is looked upon as one who is among robbers although innocent; the more, where He out of His own and the Father’s free will wanted to unite with the body and blood of all those who were robbers and sinners. Therefore He is submerged in all.”²

The characteristic of Luther’s incarnational theology is contained exactly in the thought that Christ became a sinful man and that He, in His assumed human nature, is really the greatest sinner. The Reformer knows about the strangeness of this thought advanced by him, and therefore defends his view many times.

“But it is highly absurd and insulting to call the Son of God a sinner and a curse!” If you want to deny that He is a sinner and a curse, then deny also that He suffered, was crucified, and died. For it is no less absurd to say, as our Creed confesses and prays, that the Son of God was crucified and underwent the torments of sin and death than it is to say that He is a sinner or a curse. But if it is not absurd to confess and believe that Christ was crucified among thieves, then it is not absurd to say as well that He was a curse and a sinner of sinners. . . . [Isaiah chapter 52] Isaiah 53:6 speaks the same way about Christ. It

¹LW 26:277; WA 40 I:433, 26-434, 12 (Dr).

²WA 40 I:434, 1-4 (Hs); comparative from LW 26:278: “Christ was not only found among sinners; but of His own free will and by the will of the Father He wanted to be an associate of sinners, having assumed the flesh and blood of those who were sinners and thieves and who were immersed in all sorts of sin.”

says: "God has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." These words must not be diluted but must be left in their precise and serious sense. For God is not joking in the words of the prophet; He is speaking seriously and out of great love, namely, that this Lamb of God, Christ, should bear the iniquity of us all. But what does it mean to "bear"? The sophists reply: "To be punished." Good. But why is Christ punished? Is it not because He has sin and bears sin? That Christ has sin is the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the Psalms. Thus in [Psalm 39] Psalm 40:12 we read: "My iniquities have overtaken Me"; in [Psalm 40] Psalm 41:4: "I said: 'O Lord, be gracious to Me; heal Me, for I have sinned against Thee!'" and in [Psalm 68] Psalm 69:5: "O God, Thou knowest My folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from Thee." In these psalms the Holy Spirit is speaking in the Person of Christ and testifying in clear words that He has sinned or has sins. These testimonies of the Psalms are not the words of an innocent one; they are the words of the suffering Christ, who undertook to bear the person of all sinners and therefore was made guilty of the sins of the entire world.³

2. Christ as "the greatest person" (*maxima persona*) and "the sole sinner" (*solus peccator*)

In the view that Christ is "the chief of sinners" [der allergrößte Sünder], the central presupposition for Luther's incarnational theology and soteriology comes to light, according to which Christ is, as it were, the "collective person," or rather, as the Reformer himself says, "the greatest person" (*maxima persona*) who unites the persons of all men really in Himself. Christ becomes the sinner in each person.

This is the most joyous of all doctrines and the one that contains the most comfort. It teaches that we have the indescribable and inestimable mercy and love of God. When the merciful Father saw that we were being oppressed through the Law, that we were being held under a curse, and that we could not be liberated from it by anything, He sent His Son into the World, heaped all the sins of all men upon Him, and

³LW 26:278-279; WA 40 I:434, 29-36; 435, 21-436, 16 (Dr).

said to Him: "Be Peter the denier; Paul the persecutor, blasphemer, and assaulter; David the adulterer; the sinner who ate the apple in Paradise; the thief on the cross. In short, be the person of all men, the one who has committed the sins of all men. And see to it that You pay and make satisfaction for them."⁴

The thought of Christ as "the greatest person" (*maxima persona*) culminates in the statement about Christ as the "sole sinner" (*solus peccator*). After the incarnation of the Logos there is nowhere else more sin as in His person. Christ is "drowned" (*submersus*) in all sins and all sins are submerged in Christ. This thought forms the starting point for Luther's soteriology. Without going deeper into the details of the soteriology, which is not as yet satisfactorily examined, its goal should be described briefly.

Because Christ as man is at the same time "the chief of sinners" and in His being as Logos is at the same time God, or rather, is "absolute righteousness and life," His person stands in an extreme and far-reaching tension and disunion. According to His divine nature, Christ is "divine Power, Righteousness, Blessing, Grace and Life."⁵ These divine attributes fight against other culminating powers of destruction, sin, curse, death in His person and conquer them. Thus there is no longer any sort of sin, death or condemnation because, in Christ, "all sin is collected together" in Christ, and He remains the "sole sinner." It should be pointed out, that the defeat of the powers of destruction decidedly takes place in Christ's own person. He has won "in Himself" (*triumphans in seipso*) the struggle between righteousness and sin. Sin, curse, and death are emphatically first conquered in the person of Christ, and "after that" shall the whole world be changed through His person.⁶ Salvation is participation in the person of Christ.

⁴LW 26:280; WA 40 I:437, 18-27 (Dr). See also Luther's Choral, "Nun freut euch, lieben Christen gmein" (EKG 239) WA 35:422-425; "Dear Christians, Let Us Now Rejoice," LW 53:217-220.

⁵LW 26:282; WA 40 I:440, 21, "divina virtus, iustitia, benedictio, gratia et vita."

⁶LW 26:282; WA 40 I:440, 26-30.

3. Faith as participation in the person of Christ

In accordance with the structured idea of Luther's theology, the man in faith truly has the person of Christ and in faith partakes of divine life and victory. On the other hand, it can be said, through faith Christ gives to man His person. Faith means participation in Christ in whom there is no sin, death, or condemnation.

To the extent that Christ rules by His grace in the hearts of the faithful, there is no sin or death or curse. But where Christ is not known, there these things remain. And so all who do not believe lack this blessing and victory. "For this," as John says, "is our victory, faith" (1 John 5:4).⁷

According to Luther faith is therefore victory, because faith unites the faithful with Christ's person; the person of Christ is Himself the victory.

To the Reformer, justifying faith does not exclusively mean the reception of imputed forgiveness of sins on the basis of Christ's merit. The Formula of Concord places special importance on the emphasis of this fact. Real participation in Christ means faith participation in the accomplished institution in Christ of "blessing, righteousness, and life." Christ is Himself life, righteousness, and blessing, because God is all of these "*naturaliter et substantialiter*."⁸ Justifying faith means then, participation in God's essence in Christ.

The core of this understanding of participation comes to effect in Luther's concept of the "joyful exchange." According to this, Christ Himself takes on the sinful person of man and gives to him His own righteous person. An exchange of attributes (a sort of *communicatio idiomatum*) therefore occurs between Christ and the faithful: Christ, as divine righteousness, truth, peace, joy, love, strength, and life gives Himself to the faithful. At the same time Christ "absorbs" the sin, death, and condemnation of the faithful.⁹ In the real participation in Christ the Christian has no more sin and death. In scholastic theology, according to the Reformer, an exactly

⁷LW 26:282; WA 40 I:440, 31-35.

⁸LW 26:282; WA 40 I:441, 19-28.

⁹LW 25:331-332; WA 56:343, 16-21.

opposite way of thinking is typical: there sin forms there a substance, a quality belonging to the human nature. On the other hand, "true theology" now teaches that "there is no more sin in the world" for all sin is "collected in Christ," and He has overcome all sin in His own person. Therefore wherever man is united in faith with Christ, there sin has truly been annihilated. Luther says:

Now that Christ reigns there is in fact no more sin, death, or curse—this we confess every day in the Apostles' Creed when we say: "I believe in the holy church." This is plainly nothing else than if we were to say: "I believe that there is no sin and no death in the church. For believers in Christ are not sinners and are not sentenced to death but are altogether holy and righteous, lords over sin and death who live eternally." But it is faith alone that discerns this, because we say: "I believe in the holy church." If you consult your reason and your eyes, you will judge differently. For in devout people you will see many things that offend you. You will see them fall now and again, see them sin, or be weak in faith, or be troubled by a bad temper, envy, or other evil emotions. "Therefore the church is not holy." I deny the conclusion that you draw. If I look at my own person or at that of my neighbor, the church will never be holy. But if I look at Christ, who is the Propitiator and Cleanser of the church, then it is completely holy; for He bore the sins of the entire world.

Therefore where sins are noticed and felt, there they really are not present. For, according to the theology of Paul, there is no more sin, no more death, and no more curse in the world, but only in Christ, who is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, and who became a curse in order to set us free from the curse. On the other hand, according to philosophy and reason, sin, death, etc., are not present anywhere except in the world, in the flesh, and in sinners. For the theology of the sophists is unable to consider sin any other way except metaphysically, that is: "A quality clings to a substance or a subject. Therefore just as color clings to a wall, so sin clings to the world, to the flesh, or to the conscience. Therefore it must be washed away by some opposing motivation, namely, by love." But the true theology teaches

that there is no more sin in the world, because Christ, on whom, according to Isaiah 53:6, the Father has laid the sins of the entire world, has conquered, destroyed, and killed it in His own body. Having died to sin once, He has truly been raised from the dead and will not die any more (Romans 6:9). Therefore wherever there is faith in Christ, there sin has in fact been abolished, put to death, and buried. But where there is no faith in Christ, there sin remains.¹⁰

Since faith means real union with Christ's person, Luther's concept of faith is immediately christologically anchored. Christ and faith belong "essentially" [*wesensmäßig*] together. On account of this it is understandable that Luther connects to the Christology of the early church, according to which the divine nature of Christ has the same essence as God the Father. Therefore Luther bases his critique of Arius directly on the concept of justifying faith. The train of thought is as follows: God is by His "nature and substance" (*naturaliter et substantialiter*) righteousness, blessing, and life.¹¹ Christ can in Himself conquer sin, curse, and death only if He in Himself is righteousness, blessing, and life. In other words, that He is essentially [*wesensmäßig*] God. In connection with the declaration that the believer who is united with Christ has no more sin, condemnation, and death follows the combination of thoughts concerning the divinity of Christ with the righteousness of faith in Luther's writing:

These are the chief pieces of our theology, which are being darkened by the scholastic theologians. And here you can see how necessary the article of faith is: (I believe in) the Son of God, the Christ. As Arius puts the article of faith in question, he is forced off the article of redemption. For the "conquering of sin in itself" belongs together, that it is called "man"; therefore He must be true God. For, to destroy the Law, death, and wrath, [it takes divine might]; to give life in itself must be done by divinity. Thus to destroy and create are the attributes of divine majesty. Therefore the Scriptures say that He destroys death and sin in Himself and has given life. Whoever denies

¹⁰LW 26:285-86; WA 40 I:444, 30-445, 34.

¹¹LW 26:282; WA 40 I:441, 25-27.

the divinity of Christ loses the whole Christ-being and becomes a Turk. Therefore I have often said: Please learn the article of justification well! As long as we teach that we are justified through Christ we must show that Christ is the true Son of God. These are our speculations, which by all means are useful and keep an upperhand against work righteousness.¹²

Since faith means real union with Christ and because in Christ the Logos is identical with God, it follows that the believer also participates really in God's essence. This is meant especially whenever Luther speaks of Christ as "gift." Christ is not only God's favor (*favor*), that is, forgiveness, but He is also really the "gift" (*donum*).

4. Christ as gift (*donum*)

Luther's theology is entirely permeated with the thought that Christ is at the same time both God's favor (*favor*) as well as gift (*donum*). Favor means the removal of the wrath and absolution. It concerns the "subject" of God and His attitude toward men. Christ

¹²WA 40 I:441, 1-12 (Hs); comparative from LW 26:282-283: "This is the chief doctrine of the Christian faith. The sophists have completely obliterated it, and today the fanatics are obscuring it once more. Here you see how necessary it is to believe and confess the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. When Arius denied this, it was necessary also for him to deny the doctrine of redemption. For to conquer the sin of the world, death, the curse, and the wrath of God in Himself—this is the work, not of any creature but of the divine power. Therefore it was necessary that He who was to conquer these in Himself should be true God by nature. For in opposition to this mighty power—sin, death, and the curse—which of itself reigns in the whole world and in the entire creation, it is necessary to set an even higher power, which cannot be found and does not exist apart from the divine power. Therefore to abolish sin, to destroy death, to remove the curse in Himself, to grant righteousness, to bring life to light (2 Timothy 1:10), and to bring the blessing in Himself, that is, to annihilate these things and to create those— all these are works solely of the divine power. Since Scripture attributes all these to Christ, therefore He Himself is Life, Righteousness, and Blessing, that is, God by nature and in essence. Hence those who deny the divinity of Christ lose all Christianity and become Gentiles and Turks through and through.

"As I often warn, therefore, the doctrine of justification must be learned diligently. For in it are included all the other doctrines of our faith; and if it is sound, all the others are sound as well. Therefore when we teach that men are justified through Christ and that Christ is the Victor over sin, death, and the eternal curse, we are testifying at the same time that He is God by nature."

as "gift" again means that God gives Himself really to man. In faith, Christ is with all His attributes—such as righteousness, blessing, life, power, peace, and so forth—really present. The thought of Christ as "gift" means, therefore, that the believing subject partakes in the "divine nature." The Reformer frequently cites the same passage of 2 Peter (1:4), upon which also rests the patristic doctrine of *Theopoiesis*.¹³

The thought of Christ as gift is developed by Luther especially in his famous writing against Latomus. Although in the Galatians commentary (WA 40), the differentiation of "gift" and "favor" is not thematically executed, the distinction itself and theme of "gift" is obvious throughout. Likewise the following quote demonstrates both the view of Christ as gift as well as the Reformer's "realistic" understanding of the relationship between Christ and faith. The Christian "is greater than the world," because the gift of Christ found in his heart "rises above the world."

Therefore a Christian, properly defined, is free of all laws and is subject to nothing, internally or externally. But I purposely said, "to the extent that he is a Christian" (not "to the extent that he is a man or a woman"); that is, to the extent that he has his conscience trained, adorned, and enriched by this faith, this great and inestimable treasure, or, as Paul calls it, "this inexpressible gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15), which cannot be exalted and praised enough, since it makes men sons and heirs of God. Thus a Christian is greater than the entire world. For in his heart he has this seemingly small gift; yet the smallness of this gift and treasure, which he holds in faith, is greater than heaven and earth, because Christ, who is this gift, is greater.¹⁴

This text shows how real Luther considers the "gift," that is, the presence of Christ. Several appropriate passages are found in the Galatians commentary (1531-1535). In the following, one sermon of the so-called *Kirchenpostille* (Church Homilies) is cited, in which the thoughts of "favor," "gift" and the "participation in the divine nature" are especially clearly expressed.

¹³One may see, for example, LW 26:100; WA 40 I:182, 15.

¹⁴LW 26:134; WA 40 I:235, 26-236, 16 (Dr).

This is truly a striking, beautiful and (as St. Peter says in 2 Peter 1) the dearest and the greatest of all promises, given to us poor miserable sinners, that we also are to take part in divine nature and be so highly ennobled, that we are not only to be loved by God through Christ—to have his favor and grace as the highest and dearest holiness—but to have the Lord Himself abide in us. Then it shall be (as he says) that we not only remain in His love and that He takes from us His wrath and offers to us a gracious Fatherly heart, but that we should enjoy the same love (otherwise it would be wasted, “lost love” as the saying goes, to love and not enjoy, etc.) and have great benefit and treasure from it, and such love proves itself in deeds and great gifts.¹⁵

Christ is thus, in addition to “favor” (forgiveness of sins), also “gift.” In other words, the presence of Christ means that the believer takes part in the “divine nature.” As the Christian participates in the essence of God, he receives anew a part of the attributes of His essence.

5. Faith and the *communicatio idiomatum*

The thought that the Christian takes part in the “divine nature” means that he is “filled with all of God’s abundance.” God’s righteousness makes the Christian righteous; God’s “life lives in him”; God’s love induces man to love, and so on. Luther uses diverse expressions for this occurrence, such as “the joyful exchange.” The truly appropriate expression is “the communication of attributes” (*communicatio idiomatum*), which is seldom used by the Reformer, but explains his fundamental idea well. The *communicatio idiomatum* in its relation to the *inhabitatio Christi*, clearly takes effect in the following quote:

And we are so filled “with all kinds of God’s fullness,” that is so much spoken of in the Hebrew manner: that we are filled in all manner, that He makes full and we become full of God, overwhelmed with all gifts and grace, and filled with His

¹⁵Crucigers Sommerpostille (1544), WA 21:458, 11-22. See also Tuomo Mannermaa, “Theosis as a Subject of Finnish Luther Research,” translated by Norman M. Watt, *Pro Ecclesia* IV (Winter 1995): 46, for a comparative partial translation.

Spirit, which makes us brave and illuminates us with His light, and His life lives in us, His blessedness makes us blessed, His love in us awakens love, in short, that all that He is and can do in us becomes total and works powerfully. . . .¹⁶

Faith imparts to man divine attributes, because in faith Christ Himself as the divine person is present. In faith is also given the entire "goodness" (*bona*) of God. It is quite evident, that in Luther's theology—as was shown earlier—the concept of justifying faith and of the dwelling of Christ in faith are not to be separated from each other. Justification means not only the crediting of Christ's merit to the sinner, to which, as a factor detached from it, the *inhabitatio Dei* might possibly follow afterwards. Justification and communication of attributes form in Luther's theology expressions and different aspects of one and the same thing. This is especially evident based on the doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*. The Christ present in justifying faith communicates in the "joyful exchange" the redeeming attributes of God to the believer. God is righteousness—in faith man is granted righteousness; God is joy—in faith one takes part in joy; God is life—in faith one has a part in life; God is strength—in faith one takes part in strength, etc.

The concept of the real participation of the faithful in the "divine nature" in Christ and the connected doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum* reveals how vitally and inseparably the Reformer's theology of faith is based on the real-ontic (*real-ontischen*) Christology of the early church. The early church soteriology, together with its *theopoiesis*-thinking, indeed, comes to fruition in the theology of the Reformer on the basis of the doctrine of justification. So the particular imprint of Luther's theology of faith becomes evident based on the examination of it, as he criticizes the scholastic soteriology. The scholastic view was summarized in the formula "*fides charitate formata*." On this point the Reformer places—as one perhaps can express it plainly—his own program, "*fides Christo formata*."

B. *Fides charitate formata*—*fides Christo formata*

¹⁶Sermon of 1525, WA 17 I:438, 14-28. One may also see Watt, 47, for a comparative translation.

1. The program of *fides charitate formata* criticized by Luther

a. Intellect—love

In Luther's view participation in divine life in Christ takes place, as shown, in faith. For an analysis of the Reformer's view of faith, an investigation of how he criticized the scholastic lines of thought familiar to him is helpful.¹⁷ According to the view especially criticized by Luther, faith is something belonging to the realm of the intellect, although [having only] logically uncertain proof of such objects, which stand outside the range of rational knowledge. Also in this view the intellect obtains its knowledge through assimilation of the so-called intelligible element (*species intelligibilis*) inherent in the object of knowledge. This element becomes its own actualization [*Seinswirklichkeit*] of the subject. Therefore, the presupposition of the origin of knowledge is that the subject and the object become one (*idem est intellectus et intellectum*).

This doctrine of knowledge has considerable influence on the view of faith. On the road of knowledge, God is unreachable, otherwise man and God would become one. Therefore, faith, which—as stated—belongs to the realm of the intellect, cannot be the essential organ of the God-relation [*Gottes-Verhältnisses*]. Intellect joins to the form of the recognizable (*species intelligibilis*), and this is, with respect to the recognition of God, simply impossible.

The relation of God can nevertheless emerge with the help of the basic human tendency (*tendentia*), of the will, of the *e-motio* [sic], that is, love. Love, according to the common scholastic view is the desiring of an object. Love is, in a sense, "blind" movement towards its object. Love reaches the object, and consequently love touches the object, without assimilating the object to itself. Love is in its innermost being movement toward the transcendence, toward the infinite being, that is, toward God. In as much as this movement is pardoned (*gratia*

¹⁷The following representation rests primarily on Luther's interpretation of Galatians 2:16, which contains an extensive critique on scholastic theology.

infusa), and love, by the movement, receives the strength [*Kraft*] of grace, "love reaches" and "rises to" the Triune God.

The vital point in this way of thinking is that man is brought pronouncedly to unification with God through love lifted up through grace. Faith itself is an inadequate organ for the relationship with God [*Gottesverhältnis*]. Faith mediates imperfect knowledge of this, upon which love rests, but faith is "dead" and "lifeless" without the love lifted up and inspired by grace.

b. Faith as matter and love as form

In the scholastic view criticized by Luther the relationship between faith and love was defined with metaphysical concepts, so that faith is the material cause (*materia, der Stoff*), and love, on the other hand, is the formal cause (*forma, die Gestalt*). The love inspired by grace is the *forma*, that is, the divine actualization [*Seinswirklichkeit*], which gives faith form, which thus informs faith. Since love bestows reality upon faith, faith transforms itself from dead knowledge to living, active, and—as one also said—"colored" recognition. The totality [*Inbegriff*] of this view of justification crystallizes in a single slogan: faith informed by love (*fides charitate formata*), that is, faith brought to divine reality through love. Through the infused love, man's love changes from false love of the world to love of God. With it, he can find the right order [*ordnung*] of love, can be freed of the false love of the world and do appropriate works out of love of God, by means of which he can be saved and reach God.

c. Love as "substance" and grace as "accident"

Luther criticizes the described view of faith vehemently. The pinnacle of his critique is that in the program of the *fides charitate formata* the relationship between faith and love is improperly defined. It is of special significance for the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue that the Reformer does not criticize the scholastic view primarily only because the grace therein is understood as an actualization [*Seinswirklichkeit*] (*forma*) received into the being of man. Also according to Luther the righteousness present in faith, that is, Christ, is in

man. Luther also describes the righteousness of faith as formal righteousness (*formalis iustitia*), that is, as real, based on the actualization [*Seinswirklichkeit*] of received righteousness.¹⁸ The point of the Reformer's critique lies in that, according to the scholastic doctrine, abstract love is the essential reality of salvation. Thus the love quickened and deified by grace remains in this context, namely, man's love.

The critique of the Reformer means that he does not approve of the view that is connected with the scholastic solution, namely that grace should be a disposition [*Habitus*] combined with the substance of man, that is, an accident, or a qualitative entity (*qualitas inhaerens*).¹⁹

Since grace is only "accident," which gives of the substance, that is, of the new quality of the self-existing love of man, what really remains and gives a foundation in the relationship with God [*Gottesverhältnis*] is man's own love. Grace is—as said—a quality, which stands in the inherent relation to this substance, that is, to the self-existing love of man itself. The pinnacle of Luther's theology of faith is directed against this view. Grace is, one could say, no "accident." Rather grace has a pronounced "substance" character. In other words, grace is God Himself in Christ. This reality has being in itself and not in any other. The Christ really present in faith is completely the real actualization [*Seinswirklichkeit*] of His own righteousness, that is, love. This righteousness however retains its "substance" character. In other words, the *formalis iustitia* is Christ Himself,²⁰ who also, as the one present in man, remains that which He essentially is, namely God's own righteousness and love, of which man cannot boast.

The character of grace as "in itself" comes to effect in Luther's often repeated thoughts that faith is a "living," "powerful," and "busy" thing, which does not rest in the soul as "the color on an object." The thought standing behind these

¹⁸One may see, for example, WA 40 I:229, 2; LW 26:130.

¹⁹LW 26:129; WA 40 I:228, 12-13.

²⁰LW 26:130; WA 40 I:229, 918-21.

typical pictures can be expressed by saying that grace in essence is not "accidental" but "substantial" reality.

d. Love as law

Still a further aspect is joined to Luther's already described criticism of the scholastic doctrine of grace, as its essential dimension. Proceeding from this assumption—that in this life the fundamental organ for salvation is the love lifted up directly from grace—must the whole relationship with God inevitably be considered within the bounds commanded by the law [according to the Reformer].²¹ Love as man's own reality remains a human endeavor and movement towards God. That is why love belongs in the realm of the law.

Love as the way of salvation is impossible because, in the consideration of man before God (*coram deo*) Christ is the only righteousness. The place of the law lies in the old sinful man.

2. "*Fides Christo formata*"

a. Christ as the form of faith (*Christus forma fidei*)

Luther's critique of scholastic soteriology can be summarized as follows: The righteousness in man is always "alien righteousness," although this alien reality is a reality (*formalis iustitia*) controlled substantially [*real*] by the being of man and united with it. "Alien" is not the uplifted love of man, but rather Christ Himself and His true presence.

This criticism on the program of *fides charitate formata* forms at the same time the core of Luther's Reformation criticism and states that not the love, but Christ Himself, is the form of faith. Luther, then, also uses the motto: *Christus forma fidei*.²² The difference between the Lutheran and the scholastic view lies, according to Luther's perspective, exactly in that the scholastics teach *fides charitate formata*, while the doctrine of the Reformer,

²¹[LW 26:127-128]; WA 40 I:226, 14-19.

²²[LW 26:129-130]; WA 40 I:229, 9.

on the contrary, advances the formula *fides Christo formata*.²³ Faith has the divine reality of being, that is, *forma*. This divine actualization [*Seinswirklichkeit*] is the Christ present in faith. He is the only way of salvation.

b. "Faith justifies thusly, that it grasps and possesses this treasure, namely the present Christ."

Luther's conception of faith is not correctly understood if one thinks Christ is merely the object of faith, just as any kind of object is the object of human knowledge. The object of faith is His present person and with that is essentially also "subject." Luther says that Christ is the object of faith, and, indeed, not only the object, but "in faith itself Christ is present" (*in ipsa fide Christus adest*). Faith is a knowledge "which sees nothing." Therefore faith resembles, according to the description of the Reformer, the righteous [*waltenden*] cloud in the Holy of Holies of the Old Testament temple, in which God wanted to live (one may see 1 Kings 8:12, [KJV], "Then spake Solomon: The Lord said He would dwell in the darkness"). Especially in the darkness built by faith Christ sits upon His throne in His complete reality and rules equally with God in the dusk and in the cloud of the Holy of Holies. The following is a guiding quotation of Luther's theology of faith in which the Reformer crystallizes his thought of "*Christus forma fidei*":

But where they speak of love, we speak of faith. And while they say that faith is the mere outline [*μονόγραμμα*] but love is its living colors and completion, we say in opposition that faith takes hold of Christ and that 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

²³This expression is used, for example, by Heiko A. Oberman, "'Iustitia Christi' and 'Iustitia Dei': Luther and the Scholastic Doctrines of Justification," *Harvard Theological Review* 59 (1966): 20 and following. Translator's note: Mannerman references Oberman as it is found in *Der Durchbruch der reformatorischen Erkenntnis bei Luther*, edited by Bernhard Lohse, (Darmstadt, 1968): 423. In the edition used in translation, it appears that Mannerman is referencing pages 436 and following.

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.

Therefore faith justifies because it takes hold of and possesses this treasure, the present Christ. But how He is present—this is beyond our thought; for there is darkness, as I have said. Where the confidence of the heart is present, therefore, there Christ is present, in that very cloud and faith. This is the formal righteousness on account of which a man is justified; it is not on account of love, as the sophists say. In short, just as the sophists say that love forms and trains faith, so we say that it is Christ who forms and trains faith or who is the form of faith. Therefore the Christ who is grasped by faith and who lives in the heart is the true Christian righteousness, on account of which God counts us righteous and grants us eternal life. Here there is no work of the Law, no love; but there is an entirely different kind of righteousness, a new world above and beyond the Law. For Christ or faith is neither the Law nor the work of the Law.²⁴

This quotation shows what the Reformer means with his famous statement "Christ is the essential secret of faith." It is furthermore clear, that faith—in which faith Christ himself is present—can by no means be a "speculation" that exists "inactive or static" in the soul. A lifeless, dead and empty faith is an "absolute" faith, that is, a faith detached from Christ.²⁵

²⁴LW 26:129-130; WA 40 I:228, 27-229, 32.

²⁵For comprehension of absolute faith see Regin Prenter, "Luther's Doctrine of Salvation," edited by Vilmos Vajta, *Luther's Research Today* (Berlin, 1958), 66.

This faith is nevertheless not made alive by the *habitus* of love [*Liebeshabitus*] inspired by grace but through the present Christ. He brings the attributes of God's essence along, such as love, righteousness, strength, life, freedom—in short, God Himself, "life and salvation" [*Seligkeit*], as it is called in the Large Catechism.

The thought of the Christ present in faith allows the well-known and often-cited theological sentence contained in the preface to Romans to be completely understandable:

Faith, however, is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God, John 1[:12-13]. It kills the old Adam and makes us altogether different men in the heart and spirit and mind and powers; and it brings with it the Holy Spirit. O it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly.²⁶

The thought already described, that in faith Christ is truly present, reveals not only the inner structure of Luther's theology of faith, but also from this the skilled criticism by the Reformer of false deification thought [*vergöttlichungsdenken*] becomes understandable.

3. "*Christus praesentissimus in nobis.*" Criticism of the false deification concept [*vergöttlichungsvorstellung*].

According to the incorrect deification concept, Christ is not really present in faith "below," but rather He is "above" in heaven. According to this view, the relationship with God is thought to be resting on the love (*eros*) in which man moves to transcendence, that is, straight to heaven where Christ is. A relationship to Christ [*Christusbeziehung*] resting on such a love is, according to Luther, always partial, a constant, unceasing movement toward transcendence which always remains "Partheckenwerk." The Reformer emphasizes instead that God in the abundance of His whole being "came down" and became man. He who believes is now already really "in heaven," where in Christ God's whole

²⁶LW 35:370; WA DB 7:10, 6-10.

abundance stands complete and where Christ is truly present. Luther says:

This is the true faith of Christ and in Christ, through which we become members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones (Ephesians 5:30). Therefore in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Hence the speculation of the sectarians is vain when they imagine that Christ is present in us "spiritually," that is, speculatively, but is present really in heaven. Christ and faith must be completely joined. We must simply take our place in heaven; and Christ must be, live, and work in us. But He lives and works in us, not speculatively but really, with presence and with power.²⁷

Although Luther's criticism is directed here, above all, against the so-called spiritualists of the Reformation era, it also affects the scholastic theology. The core in this criticized view lies in the already often-mentioned fact that faith is thought of as a certain accident, that is, as a quality found in the heart, which is detached from Christ. Christ is consequently in heaven, to where one then strives in love quickened by the spirit. Concerning this thought of *fides charitate formata*, which according to Luther is common to the enthusiasts [*Spiritualisten*] and scholastics, Luther says typically:

The fanatical spirits today speak about faith in Christ in the manner of the sophists. They imagine that faith is a quality that clings to the heart apart from Christ. This is a dangerous error. Christ should be set forth in such a way that apart from Him you see nothing at all and that you believe that nothing is nearer and closer to you than He. For He is not sitting idle in heaven but is completely present with us, active and living in us as chapter two says (2:20): "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me," and here: "You have put on Christ."²⁸

Faith according to Luther is the right way to share in God, because faith possesses the whole fullness of God's being [*Wesensfülle Gottes*] in Christ. The participation in "divine life" happens decidedly in justifying faith. Therefore a clarification of

²⁷LW 26:357; WA 40 I:546, 21-28.

²⁸LW 26:356; WA 40 I:545, 24-30.

Luther's concept of faith presupposes the consideration of his view of the law. Also the Reformer's understanding of the essence and the function of the law leads to the thought of participation in "divine life."

C. Law and the participation in the "divine life"

1. The law belongs "to the world"

a. The impossibility of the law as way of salvation

To Luther's aforementioned christological view of faith belongs his view of the law, as an essential dimension and, to some extent, as an antagonistic counter point.

A first aspect of Luther's view of the law forms the unconditional exclusion of the law as a way of salvation. That means that no intentional works of love may be demanded of man so that he, because of those works, could possibly gain righteousness before God. If works of love are established as the basis of redemption, then that is the primary source [*urquell*] of the corruption of faith. God Himself wants to give as love, namely, out of His pure and sheer goodness, His merciful righteousness—that is, Himself—and to be to man "life and salvation"—also love. The law does not produce such "strong and powerful life" and does not change the human into a new creature. Faith uniquely and solely—thus, exclusively Christ—gives birth to the new man. The human who wants to attain righteousness only on account of works, plagues himself day and night, but "foolishly," because "the law brings neither advice nor refuge." The striving for redemption and peace of mind on account of works that are demanded from the law, that is, love, is a "Sisyphean task" and "Danaidenwerk." One "milks the billy goat" and "holds a sieve under" Luther says:

Anyone who wanted to grow rhetorical here could develop these words further actively, passively, and neutrally. Actively: the Law is a weak and beggarly element because it makes men weaker and more beggarly. Passively: because it does not have of itself the power and ability to grant or confer righteousness. And neutrally: of

itself it is weakness and poverty, which afflict and trouble the weak and the poor more and more all the time. Trying to be justified through the Law, therefore, is as though someone who is already weak and sick were to ask for some even greater trouble that would kill him completely but meanwhile were to say that he intends to cure his disease by this very means; or as though someone suffering from epilepsy were to catch the plague in addition; or as though a leper were to come to another leper, or a beggar to another beggar, with the aim of giving him assistance and making him rich. As the proverb says, one of these is milking a billy goat and the other is holding the sieve!²⁹

b. The burdensome and weakening work of the law upon man

Luther uses varied but strong expressions where he describes the Sisyphean character of the "righteousness of the law."

... namely, that trying to be justified by the Law is like counting money out of an empty purse, eating and drinking from an empty dish and cup, looking for strength and riches where there is nothing but weakness and poverty, laying a burden upon someone who is already oppressed to the point of collapse, trying to spend a hundred gold pieces and not having even a pittance, taking clothing away from a naked man, imposing even greater weakness and poverty upon someone who is sick and needy, etc.³⁰

Where Luther criticizes the law as way of salvation, his statement resounds in overtones that echo the criticism of human weakness in modern, "independent" man—although from completely different origins. The righteousness of the law makes man weak, powerless, and "womanish" [*weibisch*]. Luther's aim with his criticism points not to the "superman," but to man strengthened by the power of God's grace.

²⁹LW 26:403-404; WA 40 I:613, 23-614, 16 (Dr).

³⁰LW 26:406; WA 40 I:617, 25-30.

Therefore everyone who falls away from the promise to the Law, from faith to works, is doing nothing but imposing an unbearable yoke upon himself in his weak and beggarly condition (Acts 15:10). By doing this he becomes ten times as weak and beggarly, until he finally despairs, unless Christ comes and sets him free.

The same thing is shown by the Gospel story (Mark 5:25-26) about the woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years and had suffered much under many physicians, on whom she had spent all that she had; but she could not be cured by them but grew worse with longer care. Therefore those who perform the works of the Law with the intention of being justified through them not only do not become righteous but become twice as unrighteous; that is, as I have said, through the Law they become weaker, more beggarly, and incapable of any good work. I have experienced this both in myself and in many others. Under the papacy I saw many of the monks who performed many great works with burning zeal in order to acquire righteousness and salvation; and yet there was nobody in the world more impatient, weaker, and more miserable than they, and nothing more unbelieving, fearful, and desperate than they. Political officials, who were involved in the most important and difficult issues, were not as impatient and as womanishly weak, or as superstitious, unbelieving, and fearful as such self-righteous men.³¹

The Reformer maintains that those, who in the realm of legal regulation [*gesetzlichen Ordnung*], "want to be righteous and have life"

... fall further short of righteousness and life than do tax collectors, sinners, and harlots. These latter cannot rest on confidence in their own works, which are such that they cannot trust that they will obtain grace and the forgiveness of sins on their account. For if the righteousness and the works done according to the Law do not justify, much less

³¹LW 26:404; WA 40 I:614, 28-615, 19 (Dr).

do sins committed against the Law justify. Therefore such people are more fortunate than the self-righteous in this respect; for they lack trust in their own works, which, even if it does not completely destroy faith in Christ, nevertheless hinders it very greatly. On the other hand, the self-righteous, who refrain from sins outwardly and seem to live blameless and religious lives, cannot avoid a presumption of confidence and righteousness, which cannot coexist with faith in Christ. Therefore they are less fortunate than tax collectors and harlots, who do not offer their good works to a wrathful God in exchange for eternal life, as the self-righteous do, since they have none to offer, but beg that their sins be forgiven them for the sake of Christ.³²

2. In faith "all that is worldly and all laws end and the divine begins"

a. Law, conscience, and Christ

As shown, it is characteristic for Luther's view of the law that the law belongs only "in the world." Thus it has validity for the "old" man, that is, for "the flesh." In contrast, the law may not rule "in heaven," that is, in the conscience of man. The law may not be enthroned in the conscience, rather Christ, who is the righteousness given from God. He is the "law of the law," that is, freedom; and the "death of death," that is, eternal life and salvation. The Reformer says the conscience is like a bride chamber where the bride, that is, the believer, and the bridegroom, that is, Christ, are alone together, and the servants, that is, works, are not allowed to be present. The servants belong in the kitchen and in other places in the house, where the joyful bride serves her neighbors and keeps busy. The moment "the devil places works in the conscience," (in other words, makes a person believe works are a prerequisite for salvation), joy ceases to exist, life passes, and the man becomes weak and powerless. For this reason Luther emphasizes that beyond the conscience, that is, in relation to one's own flesh (namely, "the old man"), the law "must be

³²LW 27:13-14; WA 40 II:15, 28-16, 18 (Dr).

converted into God." Here on this point it can not be spoken "honorably enough." In the conscience, however, hence before God, the law is a "death-bringing devil." The Reformer maintains, that the law and Christ are mutually exclusive in the conscience:

Therefore let the godly person learn that the Law and Christ are mutually contradictory and altogether incompatible. When Christ is present, the Law must not rule in any way but must retreat from the conscience and yield the bed to Christ alone, since this is too narrow to hold them both (Isaiah 28:20). Let Him rule alone in righteousness, safety, happiness, and life, so that the conscience may happily fall asleep in Christ, without any awareness of Law, sin, or death.³³

b. The spiritual office of the law and the participation of the believer in Christ

Although the law principally belongs "in the world" and not "in heaven," it has, nevertheless, an essential function in the life of faith [*Glaubensleben*]. Notwithstanding this, that the law in the conscience, that is, in the determination of the relationship with God, is "fatal," it is "inherently good," (one may see Romans 7:12-13). In taking notice of its office of death [*Todesamtes*], it is the most important spiritual function of the law to expose "the true face" of the man behind the mask and to show his ugly wickedness. Precisely in the exposing of sin, the law kills the old Adam. In this way Luther interprets the thought of Paul: "But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good. . ." (Romans 7:13, KJV). Luther speaks concerning the exposing and therefore killing function of the law:

(The Law) produces in a man the knowledge of himself Therefore the Law is a minister and a preparation for grace. For God is the God of the humble, the miserable, the afflicted, the oppressed, the desperate, and of those who have been brought down to nothing at

³³LW 26:366; WA 40 I:558, 33-559, 15 (Dr).

all. And it is the nature of God to exalt the humble, to feed the hungry, to enlighten the blind, to comfort the miserable and afflicted, to justify sinners, to give life to the dead, and to save those who are desperate and damned. For He is the almighty Creator, who makes everything out of nothing.³⁴

Christ is thus the death of death, which the law points out. One may compare this with the thought of Paul: "Therefore, my brethren, you were made to die to the law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit to God" (Romans 7:4, NASB). From the same starting point Luther interprets also the following word of Paul: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4, NASB). Because the law means "death" and "ruin," it is obvious that this "darkness" and "cloud" in which, according to the Reformer, Christ is really present, is also such "darkness" and "ruin" as it emerges through the self-recognition on account of the law. The self-recognition revealed through the law "kills," that is, brings man to a state that the Reformer describes with the concepts "meek," "pitiful," "downcast," "afflicted," "despairing," "ruined," "dead," and "blind." "The darkness" of faith is certainly not unique and alone-a "darkness" drawn immediately from the law. In addition there is and belongs also, for example, a "twilight" that is at work in faith in God's dominion and visitations. It is certainly obvious that also the "nothing" effected by the law and the "darkness" of self-recognition are an essential dimension of that "darkness" and "cloud" in which Christ is truly present.

Altogether, that which has been said above about Luther's view of the law confirms the result which has been achieved in the interpretation of the real character of Luther's conception of faith. The law brings about only "something worldly"; on the other hand, faith in no way deals with those "worldly things," but in it "the worldly ceases" and "the heavenly

³⁴LW 26:314; WA 40 I:487, 32-488, 19 (Dr).

begins." Faith is participation in the divine life itself. Luther says:

Therefore the Law of Moses produces nothing that goes beyond the things of the world; that is, it merely shows both politically and theologically the evils that there are in the world. With its terrors it merely drives the conscience to thirst and yearn for the promise of God and to look at Christ. But for this the Holy Spirit is necessary, to say to the heart: "After the Law has performed its function in you, it is not the will of God that you merely be terrified and killed, but that you recognize your misery and your lost condition through the Law and then do not despair but believe in Christ, who is 'the end of the Law, that everyone who has faith may be justified' (Romans 10:4)." Clearly there is nothing of the world being granted here; but everything of the world comes to an end here, and so do all the laws, while that which is divine begins.³⁵

It is then, in the last analysis, the "theological" function of the law to make the human partake of the person of Christ and the divine life found in Him. Herein the Reformer's view of the law unveils also the early church's realistic character of his Christology. In the commentary on the letter to the Galatians are places in which this especially manifests itself:

Thus with the sweetest names Christ is called my Law, my sin, and my death, in opposition to the Law, sin, and death, even though in fact He is nothing but sheer liberty, righteousness, life, and eternal salvation. Therefore He became Law to the Law, sin to sin, and death to death, in order that He might redeem me from the curse of the Law, justify me, and make me alive. And so Christ is both: While He is the Law, He is liberty; while He is sin, He is righteousness; and while He is death, He is life. For by the very fact that He permitted the Law to accuse Him, sin to damn Him, and death to devour Him He abrogated the Law, damned sin, destroyed death, and justified and saved me. Thus Christ is a poison against the Law, sin, and

³⁵LW 26:364; WA 40 I:556, 20-28.

death, and simultaneously a remedy to regain liberty, righteousness, and eternal life.³⁶

According to Luther, justification, viewed from Christ's work, is "outside" of man, (although justification happens within him) and is accounted to him. Luther, however, discusses justification essentially from the person of man. From this aspect is the person of Christ likewise real ontological righteousness, as He is freedom and eternal life. In the participation in Christ the believer has a real ontological portion in the "death of death" (that is, in life), in the "sin of sin" (that is, in righteousness), and in the "law of the law" (that is, in freedom). This Christ-realism [*Christus-Realismus*], according to the theme of our examination, underlies Luther's interesting thoughts that the union of the believer and Christ is so complete that they form "one person."

D. Christ and the believer as one person (*quaedam una persona*)

The preceding has established that both Luther's thought of Christ as *forma fidei* and his view of the law lead directly to the central theme of his theology of faith, according to which faith means the presence of Christ and thus participation in the "divine life." His interpretation of the sentence in the letter to the Galatians: "I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20) shows further how thoroughly the Reformer understands the union between Christ and the believer. The "old I" of the Christian dies and the person of Christ steps in its place. Christ "is in us" and "remains in us." The life with which the believer lives is really ontologically "Christ Himself." At the same time it turns out to be that Luther deems it necessary to express the relationship between Christ and the believer in the *forma* concept. If this relationship were described only in a "spiritual manner"—as the Reformer states—man could not understand how close this union is in reality. The place which in a fundamental way illuminates Luther's theology of faith, reads as follows:

["Yet not I."] That is, "I do not live in my own person now, but Christ lives in me." The person does indeed live, but not in itself or for its own person. But who is this "I" of whom he says: "Yet

³⁶LW 26:163; WA 40 I:278, 20-29.

not I"? It is the one that has the Law and is obliged to do works, the one that is a person separate from Christ. This "I" Paul rejects; for "I," as a person distinct from Christ, belongs to death and hell. This is why he says: "Not I, but Christ lives in me." Christ is my "form," which adorns my faith as color or light adorns a wall. (This fact has to be expounded in this crude way, for there is no spiritual way for us to grasp the idea that Christ clings and dwells in us as closely and intimately as light or whiteness clings to a wall.) "Christ," he says, "is fixed and cemented to me and abides in me. The life that I now live, He lives in me. Indeed, Christ Himself is the life that I now live. In this way, therefore, Christ and I are one."³⁷

The thought of the *unio personalis* reveals anew that Luther understands the ontological quality of the presence of Christ as entirely real. Christ is freedom, righteousness, and life. Through His presence He banishes or "absorbs," as it were, the sin, condemnation, and death found in the believer. The Reformer says:

Living in me as He does, Christ abolishes the Law, damns sin, and kills death; for at His presence all these cannot help disappearing. Christ is eternal Peace, Comfort, Righteousness, and Life, to which the terror of the Law, sadness of mind, sin, hell, and death have to yield. Abiding and living in me, Christ removes and absorbs all the evils that torment and afflict me. This attachment to Him causes me to be liberated from the terror of the Law and of sin, pulled out of my own skin, and transferred into Christ and into His kingdom, which is a kingdom of grace, righteousness, peace, joy, life, salvation, and eternal glory. Since I am in Him, no evil can harm me.³⁸

Many of the central themes of the Reformer already mentioned, such as faith as participation in the person of Christ, the participation in the "divine nature," faith as victor over powers of destruction, the *communicatio idiomatum* and so forth, are expressed in connection with the picture of the *unio personalis* as, for example, the following quotation shows:

³⁷LW 26:167; WA 40 I:283, 20-32.

³⁸LW 26:167; WA 40 I:283, 33-284, 19 (Dr).

Meanwhile my old man (Ephesians 4:22) remains outside and is subject to the Law. But so far as justification is concerned, Christ and I must be so closely attached that He lives in me and I in Him. What a marvelous way of speaking! Because He lives in me, whatever grace, righteousness, life, peace, and salvation there is in me is all Christ's; nevertheless, it is mine as well, by the cementing and attachment that are through faith, by which we become as one body in the Spirit. Since Christ lives in me, grace, righteousness, life, and eternal salvation must be present with Him; and the Law, sin, and death must be absent. Indeed, the Law must be crucified, devoured, and abolished by the Law—and sin by sin, death by death, the devil by the devil. In this way Paul seeks to withdraw us completely from ourselves, from the Law, and from works, and to transplant us into Christ and faith in Christ, so that in the area of justification we look only at grace, and separate it far from the Law and from works, which belong far away.³⁹

From the pictorial expressions, which illustrate the union between Christ and the believer, the *unio personalis* is perhaps the most intensive. Although here it refers to a concept that comes close to mysticism, it is an essential element of Luther's doctrine of justification. The thought of the personal union is no mere accidental or incidental critical development. The Reformer underscores the *unio* thought often, especially when he polemicises against the scholastic doctrine of justification. The thought of the personal union contains therefore something important from the substance of the Reformation view itself. Luther says also:

But faith must be taught correctly, namely, that by it you are so cemented to Christ that He and you are as one person, which cannot be separated but remains attached to Him forever and declares: "I am as Christ." And Christ, in turn, says: "I am as that sinner who is attached to Me, and I to him. For by faith we are joined together into one flesh and one bone." Thus Ephesians 5:30 says: "We are members of the body of Christ, of His flesh and of His bones," in such a way that this faith couples Christ and me more intimately than a husband is coupled to his wife. Therefore this faith is no idle quality; but it is a thing of such magnitude that

³⁹LW 26:167-168; WA 40 I:284, 20-33.

it obscures and completely removes those foolish dreams of the sophists' doctrine—the fiction of a “formed faith” and of love, of merits, our worthiness, our quality, etc.⁴⁰

There is thus no doubt that the thought of the real participation in Christ belongs to the essence of Luther's view of justification. The distinction between justification and the dwelling of God in the believer representative of later Lutheranism, is, at least conceptually, foreign to the Reformer. In the large commentary on Galatians there is a place where Luther explicitly seems to throw out the view of later Lutheranism, although the bulk of his polemics is directed against the program of *fides charitate formata*. The Reformer maintains that—if in the doctrine of justification the persons of Christ and of the believer are separated from one another—simultaneously salvation is still conceived as being in the realm of the law, which means, once again, “to be dead in the sight of God”:

It is unprecedented and insolent to say: “I live, I do not live; I am dead, I am not dead; I am a sinner, I am not a sinner; I have the Law, I do not have the Law.” But this phraseology is true in Christ and through Christ. When it comes to justification, therefore, if you divide Christ's Person from your own, you are in the Law; you remain in it and live in yourself, which means that you are dead in the sight of God and damned by the Law. . .⁴¹

The persons of Christ and of the believer become one in faith, and, at the danger of forfeiting salvation, may not be separated.

Luther does not shy away from the conclusion that man in faith becomes “God.” This thought, which has fallen into oblivion in Protestantism, is—rightly interpreted—an organic component of Luther's theology of faith.

⁴⁰LW 26:168-169; WA 40 I:285, 24-286, 20 (Dr). The postscript is even stronger: “Sed fides facit ex te et Christo quasi unam personam, ut non segregeris a Christo, imo in hoescas, quasi dicaste Christum, et contra: ego sum ille peccator, quia inheret mihi et econtra.” WA 40 I:285, 5-7.

⁴¹LW 26:168; WA 40 I:285, 12-17.

E. "Through faith man becomes God"

1. The Christian as "divine person"

Luther knows not only in substance the thought of the participation of divine life. He, as already established in the introduction, also refers terminologically to the doctrine of deification. Thereby he uses mostly the same passage (2 Peter 1:4), upon which the patristic deification concept rests also. In the Galatians commentary, the Reformer indeed does not refer often to the *theopoiesis* doctrine, but the work is not completely without points of contact with this doctrine. For instance, when Luther illustrates the relation between faith and love, he says, "through faith man becomes God, 2 Peter 1."⁴² Further, according to him the union between Christ and the believer has the result that the believer is a "completely divine person." Also the Christian himself is victor over the powers of destruction because of the Christ really present in him.

The one who has faith is a completely divine man, a son of God, the inheritor of the universe. He is the victor over the world, sin, death, and the devil. Hence he cannot be praised enough. . . . Therefore the Abraham who has faith fills heaven and earth; thus every Christian fills heaven and earth by his faith. . . .⁴³

Faith owns Christ as "a precious stone in a signet ring." Therefore the believer, who possesses this "small gift" in his conscience, is "greater than heaven and earth, law, devil, and death." In the sight of men Christ's gift is small, but its "insignificance is greater than the whole world."⁴⁴

From the fact that Christ as "gift" is present in the believer follows the unique position of the Christian in creation. Christians become "lords over all things," including sin and death. Luther's view of the participation of the Christian in the spiritual priesthood and of the kingship of all believers is also based on the thought of the presence of Christ. Thus the classic place in Luther's

⁴²LW 26:100 [For at this point faith makes a man God (2 Peter 1:4)]; WA 40 I:182, 15.

⁴³LW 26:247; WA 40 I:390, 22-24.

⁴⁴LW 26:134; WA 40 I:234-235, 2.

Reformation program document [*Programmschrift*], "The Freedom of a Christian," unfolds exactly the *Christus-praesens* concept:

Just as Christ is the first born, with honor and dignity, so He shares with all His Christians, that they through faith shall all also be kings and priests in Christ. As St. Peter says 1 Peter 2, you are a priestly kingdom and a royal priesthood, and this means that a Christian through faith becomes so exalted over all things, that he is a lord spiritually above all, so that nothing can do him any harm for his salvation. Yes, everything must be under him and serve him in obtaining salvation. As St. Paul teaches Romans 8, all things must help for the best for the elect, be it life, death, sin, godliness, good and evil, however one would say. Likewise, 1 Corinthians 3, all things are yours be it life or death, the present or the future, etc. . . .⁴⁵

Because of the Christ present in faith, the Christian according to Luther is also a "wonderful creator": ". . . a Christian becomes a skillful artisan and a wonderful creator, who can make joy out of sadness, comfort out of terror, righteousness out of sin, and life out of death, . . ."⁴⁶

In its Lutheran form the deification concept manifests itself when Luther explains that the believer acquires the form of Christ

⁴⁵From "Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen," Sta Z, 281, 1-12 WA 7:27, 17-28. "The Freedom of a Christian" (LW31:354) reads: "Now just as Christ by his birthright obtained these two prerogatives, so he imparts them to and shares them with everyone who believes in him according to the law of the above-mentioned marriage, according to which the wife owns whatever belongs to the husband. Hence all of us who believe in Christ are priests and kings in Christ, as 1 Peter 2 [:9] says: 'You are a chosen race, God's own people, a royal priesthood, a priestly kingdom, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.'

"The nature of this priesthood and kingship is something like this: First, with respect to the kingship, every Christian is by faith so exalted above all things that, by virtue of a spiritual power, he is lord of all things without exception, so that nothing can do him any harm. As a matter of fact, all things are made subject to him and are compelled to serve him in obtaining salvation. Accordingly Paul says in Romans 8 [:28], 'All things work together for good for the elect,' and in 1 Corinthians 3 [:21-23], 'All things are yours whether. . . life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ's. . .'"

⁴⁶LW 27:74; WA 40 II:93, 29-31.

through faith. In faith, the Christian becomes the image (*imago*) of God immediately [*aleich*]. The Christian has the form (*forma*) of Christ and the likeness (*similitudo*) of Him. Becoming similar to God means, according to Luther, the *Transitus a lege in fidem Christi*.⁴⁷ Faith is, once again, becoming Christ-like, because Christ is present in faith and makes man take part in His divine attributes. This is expressed quite clearly in a passage in the *Kirchenpostille*, which has previously been noted in part.

... and we are filled with all kinds of God's fullness, that is in the Hebrew manner said so often: that we are filled in all manner, that *He makes full and we become full of God*, and overwhelms with all gifts and grace, and fills with His Spirit, which makes us brave and illuminates us with His light, and His life lives in us, His blessedness makes us blessed, His love in us awakens love, in short, that *all that He is and can do, in us becomes total and works powerfully that we will become totally deified*, not only partly or have alone some pieces of God, but all abundance. It is much written about, how the human being is to become deified, they have built ladders on which one could climb to heaven and many such things. But it is vain, partial work. Here is the right and closest way that shows the way to get there, that you become full of God, that you lack not a piece, but that you have all in one lump, that all that you say, think, or where you go, in summary: *your entire life be godly*.⁴⁸

Luther maintains in this cited piece — which for the most part has fallen into oblivion in Luther research — that faith means true and complete deification. The program of *fides charitate formata*, which rests on the Greek ontology and its *eros* concept, however defines only a partial, imperfect, and inferior deification. In it the relationship with God is a perpetual movement toward the transcendent, toward God, who, however remains always in "heaven." True faith, on the other hand, unites, according to Luther, the Christian with God, who "came down" and who in

⁴⁷LW 26:430-432; WA 40 I:650, 3, 651, 3.

⁴⁸WA 17 I:1, 438, 14-28. Emphasis is Mannernmaa's. One may also see Watt, 47, for an alternate translation.

faith is present with His whole fullness in sinful man. Faith is "heaven."

2. The deification concept and the relation between faith and works

The meaning of the deification concept for Luther's doctrine of justification culminates in that he understands the relationship between faith and works as analogous to the relationship between the divine and the human natures of Christ. The Christ present in faith is a *forma*, which informs the works or incarnates itself in them.

Therefore in theology let faith always be the divinity of works, diffused throughout the works in the same way that the divinity is throughout the humanity of Christ. Anyone who touches the heat in the heated iron touches the iron; and whoever has touched the skin of Christ has actually touched God. Therefore faith is the "do-all" in works, if I may use this expression.⁴⁹

For Luther faith is the *forma* and works, on the other hand, the *materia*. The Christ present in faith gives to the works His *forma*, that is, He incarnates Himself in the works (*fides composita*, *fides concreta*, *fides incarnata*).⁵⁰ When the reality of faith incarnates itself into the works, these therefore become faith-generated works (*opera fideificata*) or—as Luther explicitly determines—"deified works" (*opera deificata*).⁵¹

The *deificatio*-concept belongs thus to the core of Luther's doctrine of justification. Based on this foundation it is clear to understand how the doctrine of justification and the view of the sanctification of man both form unity in Luther's theology.

⁴⁹LW 26:266; WA 40 I:417, 15-19.

⁵⁰[LW 26:266-267]; WA 40 I:417, 13.

⁵¹WA 40 I:20, 29.

Book Reviews

***The Postilla of Nicholas of Lyra on the Song of Songs.* By Nicholas of Lyra. Introduced, translated, and edited by James George Kieker. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998.**

This is the third volume of a series of texts and translations on biblical studies being issued by Marquette under the guidance of Kenneth Hagen as the general editor. *Reformation Texts with Translations (1350-1650)* is proving to be a very scholarly, yet readable addition to a pastor's library. James George Kieker is to be commended for accomplishing his goal of making the translation "clear and useful."

One of the benefits of this series is a brief introduction regarding the author. In addition to his life and works, a short summary of his place in exegetical history is provided. Finally, Kieker supplies a few examples of Luther's exegesis in relation to Lyra which should encourage the Lutheran pastor to plunge a little deeper into Luther's writings.

Nicholas sees the *Song* as a parable, but he desires to present a better and more literal interpretation than the Jews or other Catholic expositors. This literal sense is "not that which is signified by the words, but that which is signified by the things signified by the words" (31). Thus, the bride is the church of both Testaments and the *Song* is to be read as a retelling of the church's history from Adam through Constantine to the end of the age. His exegesis is thought-provoking and eye opening with regard to a discussion of what the literal sense really is.

Karl F. Fabrizio
Our Father Lutheran Church
Greenfield, Wisconsin

***African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness.* Edited by Milton Sernett. Second Edition. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 1999. x+608 pages. \$23.95. Paper.**

Milton Sernett, one time professor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois (1972-75), originally published *African American Religion* in 1985 to challenge an historiographical claim: that the paucity of sources for the African American religion in America rendered the task of interpreting that tradition within American religion generally an historical impossibility. Sernett's first edition effectively accomplished that task. Now in its second edition, *African American Religion* remains a rich collection of resources and an absolute necessity for any serious student of American Christianity.

Sernett organizes the text chronologically for the most part, beginning with the seventeenth century and ranging through the late 1970s. Seven sections cover different historical periods and geographical regions. The majority of the material comes out the broader Protestant tradition, though Sernett does include selections