Do Lutherans Shout Justification But Whisper Sanctification?

by Carter Lindberg

A survey of "Justification and Sanctification in the Lutheran Tradition" is similar to the famous final examination question: "Write a history of the universe, with a couple of examples." Needless to say, there will not be any time for nuance in the following mad dash through the history of Lutheran theology. Bookshelves groan with the weight of volumes on justification and sanctification. Indeed, the author of Ecclesiastes might have had our topic in mind when he wrote: "Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh" (12:12). Yet, the preacher also addressed our topic in the next verse where he concluded that our whole duty is to "fear God, and keep his commandments." How simple our duty is! Yet, the question of how to "fear God and keep his commandments" has fueled perennial theological controversy, social conflict, and personal anxiety.

Luther

According to Luther, fearing God and keeping his commandments is an impossible possibility. Impossible for us, but possible for God. Luther never tired of proclaiming that salvation is received, not achieved. The sole purpose of theology is to serve this proclamation.¹ "The proper subject of theology is man guilty of sin and condemned, and God the Justifier and Savior of man the sinner. Whatever is asked or discussed in theology outside this subject, is error and poison."² Is sanctification outside this discussion? Absolutely not! But insofar as sanctification is a legitimate theological locus for Luther, it cannot be separated from justification. We have difficulty grasping this point not just because, as Luther said, we are all born Pelagians or because our thinking and speaking is sequential, but also because our Enlightenment mentality is dominated by an ideology of progress. When Luther rhetorically
asked Karlstadt and the Christians at Strasbourg, "What makes a person a Christian?" he was pointing to the priority of God's grace.

Furthermore, Luther insisted that justification and sanctification are inseparable: "Once a Christian is righteous by faith and has accepted the forgiveness of sins, he should not be so smug, as though he were pure of all sins. For only then does he face the constant battle with the remnants of sin, . . . He is righteous and holy by an alien or foreign holiness. . . . It consists completely in the indulgence of another and is a pure gift of God, who shows mercy and favor for Christ's sake . . ." Thus Luther stated: "It is well known that the new obedience in the justified brings with it the daily growth of the heart in the Spirit who sanctifies us, namely, that after the battle against the remnants of false opinions about God and against doubt the Spirit goes on to govern the actions of the body so that lust is cast out and the mind becomes accustomed to patience and other moral virtues." Luther may have thought it was well known, but apparently others did not. From Luther's day to our own, the old chestnut, "cheap grace," continues to be reiterated.

The tone and substance for centuries of suspicion that Luther preached "cheap grace" were set by his contemporaries. In the words of the Hutterite Chronicle: Luther "struck the jug from the pope's hand but kept the broken pieces in [his] own." The Christian life, Luther's evangelical critics claimed, depends upon regeneration. By the 1520s, Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt and Thomas Müntzer forcefully expressed this critique. The former is the prototype of Puritanism, and the latter is the forerunner of Protestant liberalism.

If Luther's theological leitmotif is justification, Karlstadt's is regeneration. The fundamental question for Karlstadt was not "How do I find a gracious God?" but rather "How can I fulfill the law of God?" Karlstadt's question runs through consequent renewal movements from Pietism to contemporary charismatics. The fundamental concern is not the unconditional forgiveness of sins but a quest for the power to fulfill the will of God, to advance in sanctification through fulfillment of the law. "With his theology of
rebirth and sanctification, Bodenstein was a forerunner of Pietism."

Müntzer, too, emphasized the new obedience of the elect. To Müntzer, Luther's proclamation of the alien righteousness of the Christian was but a "false faith" that promoted and supported princely tyranny. Luther was a preacher of a "honey-sweet Christ" who called for belief without works. Such "cheap grace" avoids the "bitter Christ" and the discipleship of the cross. It may seem strange to label Müntzer a forerunner of Protestant liberalism since it has been customary to view him as a revolutionary in light of his association with the Peasants' War of 1525 and his call for the execution of the godless. These events, however, are but the dark side of an obsession with sanctification. I would argue that modern efforts to renew the world on the basis of inner renewal are simply pale reflections of Müntzer's basic orientation. According to Müntzer, the Holy Spirit works in the individual for the sake of the re-establishment of the original order of creation. In both Pietism and later Protestant Liberalism's Social Gospel, there is a Kingdom of God theology that receives its impetus from changed hearts. Furthermore, Müntzer's emphasis that Spirit-inspired faith in the heart "is identical with that in the hearts of the elect throughout the earth" including the Turks foreshadows the experiential-expressive model of ecumenism in which different religions are diverse expressions of a common core experience.

I have dwelt on Karlstadt's and Müntzer's reactions to Luther's proclamation of justification because their critiques will be repeated up to the present. Pietism, for example, claimed that the reform of doctrine initiated by Luther must be completed by the reform of the Christian life, by a theologia experimentalis (Gottfried Arnold, d. 1714). Without rebirth, justification is a fiction (Christian Hoberg, d. 1675). Later, John Wesley could praise Luther for his recovery of justification while lamenting that Luther was ignorant of, or at least confused about, the doctrine of sanctification. Not too long ago, an Anglican report stated that one of Luther's "two radical errors" was the "dissociation" of justification and sanctification. More recently, a Reformed theologian stated: "In our traditions, justification typically has been discussed in the
context of what stems from it: membership in the covenant and a life-long process of sanctification”; and an Eastern Orthodox scholar remarked that “Lutherans shout justification but whisper sanctification.” Ulrich Bubenheimer posited “that there is a Lutheran line, in which the motives of the Hussite, the Radical and the Magisterial Reformation are integrated. This second Lutheran tradition stresses reformation of life after reformation of doctrine. It leads from Karlstadt through Valentin Weigel, Johann Arndt, Johann Valentin Andreae and others to pietism. Some representatives of this line show more ecumenical openness than the classic reformers and therefore are to be taken as seriously as Luther as interlocutors in ecumenical dialogue.”

Bubenheimer’s generous evaluation was not shared by Orthodox Lutherans of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1712, Valentin Löscher, the champion of Lutheran Orthodoxy, termed the doctrine of justification the articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae. The church stands or falls on justification as the foundation of salvation. Löscher’s context, however, differed from that of the Reformation period. Although his formula is comparable in intent to Luther’s position, Löscher was speaking in the aftermath of the period of confessionalization, and hence the “church” to which he referred was identified with the Lutheran church as denomination.

According to Luther and the Lutheran Confessions the doctrine of justification proclaims Jesus Christ and his saving act. “[W]ith the articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae we are not dealing with one theological doctrine out of many, but with the basic aspect of theology and religion on which all the various doctrines depend.” “Justification by faith alone, without works of the law” is thus a “metalinguistic stipulation” that presents the proclamation of Christ as unconditional promise. In this sense, justification by faith alone is the Lutheran ecumenical proposal to the churches. In the face of the current theological forgetfulness of the doctrine of justification, this cannot be overstated.

The erosion of the centrality of justification by grace alone cannot, however, be laid solely at the door of contemporary theologies. The most vocal defenders of justification have, at times,
themselves undermined the unconditionality of forgiveness. Seventeenth-century Lutheran Orthodoxy is a case in point. The well known polemical drive by Lutheran Orthodoxy to systematize doctrine shifted Luther's proclamatory language into definitional language. Once justification began to be viewed as a principle rather than a relationship, it was only a step further for systematic theology to formalize an *ordo salutis* in which faith becomes a cause or condition of justification. "While justification is supposed to be the cause or ground of the newness of life, it becomes a mere effect of faith, of what is already a radical change in a human being." Lutheran Orthodoxy then proceeded to use its "order of salvation" both to judge other confessional churches and to delineate the steps of sanctification in the Christian life after justification. In turn, the doctrine of justification was seen increasingly in forensic terms. Here the emphasis on the identification of justification and sanctification in Luther's Large Catechism, the Augsburg Confession, and the Apology fades into the background.

As Luther emphasized in his commentary on the Third Article, forgiveness and holiness are inseparable. "But outside the Christian church (that is, where the Gospel is not) there is no forgiveness, and hence no holiness. . . . Meanwhile, since holiness has begun and is growing daily, we await the time when our flesh will be put to death, will be buried with all its uncleanness, and will come forth gloriously and arise to complete and perfect holiness in a new, eternal life. . . . All this, then, is the office and work of the Holy Spirit, to begin and daily to increase holiness on earth through these two means, the Christian church and the forgiveness of sins. Then, when we pass from this life, he will instantly perfect our holiness and will eternally preserve us in it. . . ."

**Pietism and the Enlightenment**

A new period of Western Christianity was ushered in by Pietism and the Enlightenment. Numerous religious, political, social, and intellectual indicators of a new spirit that may be characterized by the imprecise concept "modernity" permeated all areas of life. In
terms of the history of theology, this period extends from Spener's *Pious Desires* (1675) to Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793).²⁶

Pietism and the Enlightenment may be viewed as siblings, with Pietism as the older sister. Pietism pressed for the individualizing and interiorizing of religious life, and developed new forms of personal piety and social life. In its effort to overcome the spirit of the confessional era that it saw as creed-bound, spiritually sterile, and ethically lax, Pietism advocated personal regeneration, rebirth and sanctification. The stress on holy living sometimes reached the level of calls for perfection. With sloganeering skill, Pietists emphasized that Christian life is “a walk not a talk,” “a becoming not being,” and contrasted “heart religion” with “head religion,” “life over doctrine,” “reality versus the appearance of godliness.” Faith is to be internalized in contrast to its externalization in font, pulpit, confessional, and altar (“the four dumb idols of the church”).

The ideal of Christian sanctification as evident in the ethical as well as spiritual renewal of the individual suggests Pietism’s affinity with the Enlightenment. Other affinities may be seen in its incipient rationalism (a means to distinguish the Holy Spirit from other spirits), its optimistic hope for a “better time,” and its abiding concern for education. Many of the leading figures of the Enlightenment came from a Pietist background: Lessing, Kant, Schiller, Goethe, Fichte, and of course the “Father of Protestant Liberalism,” the Reformed theologian, Schleiermacher. As is well known, Schleiermacher considered himself “a Moravian of a higher order,” and developed his theology on the “feeling of absolute dependence.”

Pietism was reacting to the perceived formalism and spiritual aridity of Protestant Orthodoxy, but it also was responding to the larger cultural context. The state, law, commerce, industry, science, philosophy, literature, and art were less and less aspects of an ecclesiastical civilization, and were beginning to look to standards and aims supposedly derived from the “nature” of human life and society. In short, the pluralism accompanying the breakdown of the *corpus Christianum* was becoming more and more apparent. There were now alternative modes of living and understanding life.
What did this mean for Christians who must spend a good portion of their lives in the non-churchly aspects of this developing culture? What could that “Christianity” be which was not the standard and the motive for the whole life of the Christian?

Pietism provided a provisional and, it turned out, a less than helpful answer: Individualization and internalization of the faith. Cultural development and fragmentation could be ignored by seeking religious fellowship with the like-minded (ecclesiolae in ecclesia); by personal appropriation of religious truth that was no longer accepted as universal; by subjective religious experience and personal devotion and discipline. The downside of Pietism’s response to its contemporary culture involved the segregation of a certain sphere of life as peculiarly religious. The rest of life, by default, could be seen as secular. Pietists might lament this state of affairs, but adherents of the Enlightenment rejoiced in it and sought to expand it.

The Enlightenment echoed and sharpened many of Pietism’s emphases such as orientation to the future, a non-dogmatic Christianity, the centrality of human experience, and a historical reading of the Bible. The Enlightenment’s optimistic expectation of a continually improving future influenced nineteenth-century Protestant liberalism. All of this, of course, was not without tension. Lessing’s “ditch” (the accidental truths of history can never be the proof for the necessary truths of reason) and his parable of the ring (Nathan the Wise) not only irritated Orthodox Lutherans but further emphasized that “real” religion is manifest in its experience and practice, now seen primarily as the “essential” religion of love and reason. The consequences of the separation of justification and sanctification were increasingly clear as faith was being reduced to morality.

The reduction of Christian faith to morality reached its high (or low!) point with Immanuel Kant. Under his banner of autonomy, all heteronomous and theonomous authorities came under fire. Kant’s Critiques posited that the only “reasonable” faith is the faith based on “practical reason,” that is, on morality. Pure religious faith, morality, has no need for the church or forgiveness and justification: “I ought, therefore, I can.” Religion within the Limits of Reason
Alone, Kant's "critique" of religion, displaces all the "solas" of the Reformation by that of autonomous reason.

Sanctification was here entirely separated from justification. Instead of good works flowing from grace, Kant begins with good works and reads all theological topics in that light. Christ is not our Redeemer, but our moral archetype, a model of the godly life to be imitated. God does not descend to us; we ascend to God's commands. The freedom of the Christian now means freedom from God. Anything affecting our lives extra nos—including the grace of God—destroys our autonomy. If God forgives; if God has mercy on whom he wills, then we are not free.

That Kant's heirs—including Hegel—took him seriously may be seen in their efforts to mount major theological salvage operations. Their work is impressive, but the consequences once again threw believers back upon themselves. The enfants terribles among Hegel's students called the very possibility of theology into question. Ludwig Feuerbach claimed that the "queen of the sciences" had no clothes when he stated that theology is nothing but anthropology. In advancing the theory of religion as human projection, Feuerbach called into question the theological subject of faith: God. David Friedrich Strauss called the historical subject of faith, Jesus, into question with his theory of religion as myth. And for those who heeded Marx's call to socialism, that myth was not benign but an opiate that fogged the minds of the masses.

The barbarians were at the gates! Protestant theologians were not immune to the temptations of the Roman Catholic stance—lock the gates as securely as possible. But without a Magisterium, Protestant theologians either retreated into biblical inerrancy theories or tried to dialogue with the barbarians. The latter effort is behind the innumerable reductionist defenses of the faith that appeared under the general title of "the essence of Christianity." That process continued until Barth's resounding "no" fell like a bombshell on the playground of the theologians.

The Diaconal Movements

There is, however, a chapter in this story of modern Protestant theology that is all too rarely told. That chapter has to do with the
diaconal movements associated with Johann Hinrich Wichern (1808–1881) and Wilhelm Löhe (1808–1872). Löhe, in particular, returned to Luther’s view of the inseparability of justification and sanctification, especially as anchored in the liturgy, in worship. Here Luther’s Reformation orientation is a “diaconal theology” because “in a comprehensive sense, the person is included in a direct way in God’s universal service to the world.” We may, I think, use the Eastern Orthodox phrase “the liturgy after the liturgy” to describe these self-conscious efforts to relate sanctification as a communal leaven to the world. With Luther, the nineteenth-century pioneers of diaconia recognized the worshipping community as the place and source from which God creates a new world. In the words of Oswald Bayer, there is here Luther’s sense of “sanctification” as the institutional aspect of the event of justification.

Wichern, the “father of the Inner Mission,” began his career establishing rescue homes for neglected and delinquent children during his pastorate in Hamburg. He emphasized education and job training in the context of God’s forgiving grace. He enlisted and trained assistants for this work, and thereby began deacon and deaconess training institutes. Concerned that the future of both Christianity and society was jeopardized by the growing alienation of the urban masses from a seemingly uncaring state church, he emphasized that “love no less than faith is an indispensable mark of the church.”

Already known for his Inner Mission work, Wichern was invited to the 1848 Wittenberg Kirchentag, itself prompted by the revolutionary events of that year. In a two hour(!) extemporaneous speech to the Assembly, Wichern set forth his vision of the church’s mission: “My friends! It is necessary that the evangelical church in its entirety recognize this: The work of the Inner Mission is mine! . . . Love belongs [to the church] as much as faith. Saving love must become its great instrument with which it manifests the reality of faith. This love must flame up in the church as the bright torch of God, making known that Christ has taken form in his people. As the whole Christ reveals himself in the living Word of God, so he must be proclaimed also in divine deeds, and the highest, purest, most churchly of these deeds is redeeming love.”
LUTHERAN QUARTERLY

Wichern's Inner Mission was not, of course, an isolated expression of Christian faith. Throughout Europe at this time Christian renewal movements inspired social concern for the masses of people pauperized by industrialization. The Methodists in England had long been laboring at these same issues of adult education, schooling, reform of prisons, abolition of slavery, and aid to alcoholics, women, and children. The famous missions that arose in Basel, London, and Paris as well as such organizations as the YMCA (1844) and Salvation Army (1865) were only some of the numerous efforts of Christians to respond to the ills of modern society. My point here is that with Wichern we may see a reassertion of the Lutheran connection of justification and sanctification.

Wilhelm Löhe (1808–1872), our other example, was even more self-conscious about rooting the Christian life in eucharistic worship. Pastor of the rural Bavarian community of Neuendettelsau, Löhe developed a comprehensive theology of pastoral care rooted in the liturgy of confession and the Lord's Supper. In his Three Books About the Church (1845), he advanced the thesis that the Reformation "is complete in doctrine but it is incomplete in the consequences of doctrine." However, the consequences yet to be completed focus not on personal sanctification but on the mission of the church. "For mission is nothing but the one church of God in motion, the actualization of the one universal, catholic church. . . . The catholic church and mission—these two no one can separate without killing both, and that is impossible." The missionary seminary he established in Neuendettelsau sent more than three hundred men to North America, and sent others to Australia and South America. Throughout his ministry Löhe advanced this communal missionary understanding of the unity of justification and sanctification based on the Lutheran confessions.

In light of Löhe's piety and extraordinary local, national, and international ministry, it is of interest that he insisted that holiness of life is not a mark of the church. "Holiness of life cannot be a mark of the church. It is either internal or external. If it is internal, men who see only what is before their eyes cannot recognize it, and thus it cannot serve as a mark of the church. If it is external, it may perhaps be hypocrisy and sheep's clothing and thus cannot
serve as a trustworthy mark of the true church. . . . Doctrine and confession help to identify a man properly, but external conduct is deceptive, . . . even the Antichrist does not mind affecting a certain sort of external piety."

The Twentieth Century

Contemporary Lutheran theological reflections on justification and sanctification stem from the renaissance in Luther studies spearheaded by Karl Holl in the 1920s. The recovery of a theocentric orientation, the consciousness of human sin, divine wrath, and the theology of the cross led to a renewed emphasis on the doctrine of justification. Holl, however, has been criticized for viewing justification as an “analytical” rather than a “synthetic” judgment. Gerhard Forde points out that the former is “a judgment made by God on the basis of God’s analysis of the whole process and its successful completion (one is declared just because God knows one will become so), rather than a judgment which by its sheer unconditionality and liberality makes (synthesizes) what it declares. If there were such a process and justification were an analytical judgment, . . . [i]mputed righteousness would be a temporary loan given to cover lack of capital until one earned enough oneself. The more one acquired, the more the imputation could recede into the background.”

Contemporary Lutheran perspectives on justification have been influenced strongly by post-war apologetics and ecumenism. An influential voice for the former was Paul Tillich. As an “answering theologian,” Tillich thought it crucial to know what “question” is being asked. In his analysis, the period of the early church was concerned with the question of death, the Middle Ages with guilt, and the modern world with loss of meaning. Therefore the church expressed its proclamation of justification in terms applicable to these questions, respectively, of life, forgiveness, and meaning.

Tillich sought to relate his Lutheran heritage to a culture he perceived to be permeated by radical doubt and existential loss of meaning. Hence, he rephrased the doctrine of justification in psy-
ological terms as the acceptance of one's acceptance in spite of being unacceptable, thereby receiving "the courage to be." While this existentialist orientation to the "new being" may have "saved" the faith of some in the churches, it also injected a cultural-philosophical analysis into theological reflection that created some confusion. A case in point is the controversy over justification that surfaced at the Fourth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Helsinki in 1963.

Under the theme, "Christ today," the Assembly debated a document on justification developed by study groups in the member churches of the Lutheran World Federation under the leadership of the LWF Commission on Theology. "A contemporary restatement of this dogma of the church must be undertaken not only with reference to the controversies of the sixteenth century, but by a re-evaluation of the heritage of the middle ages, by the reassessment of the soteriology and christology of the ancient church, and above all, by a new confrontation with the testimony of the Scriptures." 

In spite of all the preparation, the LWF Assembly at Helsinki was unable to reach a consensus on the doctrine of justification. The lack of a "tangible conclusion" in itself "captured the attention of the churches." The effort to make the Reformation doctrine of justification plausible to the contemporary world affected directly or indirectly the entire discussion, and led to an emphasis upon subjective justification. Thus the opening of the Assembly Document 75 reads: "The Reformation witness to justification by faith alone was the answer to the existential question: 'How do I find a gracious God?' Almost no one asks this question in the world in which we live today. But the question persists, 'How do I find meaning for my life?'" 

But as Gerhard Sauter points out, this slogan-like model takes justification away from its independence as God's sovereign action and declares it to be the answer to the question of meaning—a surrogate that is widely held and that promises to liberate from a privatistic salvation-egoism that supposedly adheres to the doctrine of justification. But the question of the contemporary relevance of justification leads to a dead-end if this doctrine is not taken up as
the theological conception that asks how faith and theology are grounded in God. In its quest for relevance, contemporary theology has become wrapped up in questions of plausibility. But the doctrine of justification is not plausible! Indeed, God’s justification of the godless is a scandal. The point is that justification and sanctification are not at our disposal!

The contemporary loss of Luther’s emphasis on justification extra nos and the verbum externum is also noted by the Catholic scholar, Carl Maxcy: “In my opinion, the twisted spirituality which has plagued Roman Catholics in the twentieth century is also partially the result of the post-Freudian obsession with self-analysis. The tendency is quite ‘ecumenical,’ because it afflicts Christians of every denomination. Our culture has told us that introspection is the proper modus operandi in life. As a result contemporary spirituality has turned increasingly to navel-gazing and has made us unable to get outside ourselves. . . . A healthy person is one who looks outside for truth and meaning. . . .”

Two Ecumenical Dialogues

In the area of ecumenism there are two recent major developments. One is the work of the Lutheran–Roman Catholic Joint Commission of the LWF and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity that has led from the “far-reaching” consensus on the interpretation of justification that began with the Malta Report (1972) to their recent publication, Church and Justification: Understanding the Church in the Light of the Doctrine of Justification (Geneva: LWF, 1994). The orientation of the latter study is to approach the question of consensus on justification through the perspective of ecclesiology. The goal of these studies is to prepare for reception by the churches of a “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” that may lead to the lifting of the mutual condemnations of the sixteenth century. The goal and the document, however, remain controversial among Lutheran theologians. The Vatican has also indicated its reservations, especially about the Lutheran simul, at once justified and a sinner, the very point at the heart of the sixteenth-century differences. Thus, Athina Lexutt’s recent
study of the 1541 Regensburg Colloquy emphasizes the centrality of justification by grace alone to those ecumenical dialogues. Her painstaking study of archival sources shows that controversy over justification was far more central to the outcome than has been thought. She further argues that such historical analysis must be made fruitful for contemporary ecumenical discussion: “Only in the consciousness of the historical is can the question of the ecumenical goal be responsibly posed; only in the clarity of the particular whence can the view toward the common whither be realized.”

The other major development arose in the context of the dialogue between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox churches. Tuomo Mannermaa and his students at the University of Helsinki have since advanced their argument for “theosis” or “divinization” in Luther's theology in a variety of ecumenical and academic settings.

The Finnish Lutheran-Orthodox dialogues have sensitized Finnish Luther research to the Orthodox “paradigm of holiness” that “stands for the sanative process of Christians, their way leading to theosis or glorification.” A qualified Lutheran affirmation of theosis and synergeia “gives the Lutherans a possibility to approach the ‘paradigm of holiness,’ a paradigm of Christian life which is less developed in Lutheranism than in some other Christian traditions, for example, Orthodoxy, Methodism and Roman Catholicism. But the qualifications done as a result of this process of affirmation also show the boundaries, for instance, that human persons cannot simply become gods or that the fundamental difference between created and Creator is never abandoned.”

Risto Saarinen in his review of Finnish Luther research, points out that according to Mannermaa, “Luther stresses the presence of Christ in the very heart of his theology, in the doctrine of justification. It should be further noticed that the idea that our righteousness is not found in us but in Christ (extra nos in Christo) does not imply that Christ remains totally ‘outside’ of our existence. The presence of Christ in faith enables us to say that we are righteous in the sense that we participate in the righteousness of Christ, but at the same time the origin and merit of this righteousness is
external to our capacities, because Christ alone is the source of everything good."

Conclusion

Do Lutheran theologians shout justification, but whisper sanctification? No. Their rejection of any concept of sanctification apart from justification is loud and clear. Leading contemporary Lutheran theologians follow Luther in rejecting all forms of theology *per modum Aristoteles*. The Christian life is not a progress from vice to virtue but a continual starting anew by grace, *simul iustus et peccator*. "If justification is unconditional and total, it explodes into love and good works. If not, it simply leaves the self to contend with its own righteousness and despair."

Oswald Bayer reminds us that Luther can indeed speak of progress, but this progress is ethical not soteriological. "[U]nder all circumstances the doctrine of justification is bound to the message of the free grace of God. By it God meets humanity. . . . The proclamation of justification is not to be heard only once so that the hearer can go on with a daily agenda. It must be heard repeatedly, and ever anew, because in it humanity hears God's judgment, consents to it, and through it experiences his or her life."

Slightly revised version of a paper presented at the "Prague V" consultation sponsored by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Lutheran World Federation, Geneva 13–17 February 1998. The consultation included representatives of the so-called "First Reformation" and Radical Reformation as well as the Lutheran and Reformed communions. The focus was on "Justification and Sanctification."

NOTES

9. Ulrich Bubenheimer, “Andreas Rudolff Bodenstein von Karlstadt,” in *Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt. 500-Jahre-Feier, Festschrift der Stadt Karlstadt zum Jubiläumsjahr 1980* (Karlstadt: Arbeitsgruppe Bodenstein, 1980), 40. Bubenheimer points not only to substantive theological agreement, but to the seventeenth-century reprint of his central work on “Gelassenheit” and his rehabilitation by the radical Pietist, Gottfried Arnold.
Catholicity: A Study in the Conflict of Christian Traditions in the West being a Report to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury (Westminster Dacre Press, 1947, reprint 1952), 16

The other error was the dissociation of justification and the doctrine of creation. 17


See Gerhard Sauter's article, "Rechtfertigung," TRE 28 315ff, an English version by Arthur Sutherland and Stephan Klas in Lutheran Quarterly 11 (Spring 1997) 17-102, here 44

Gerhard Muller & Vinzenz Pfur, "Justification-Faith-Works" in George W. Forrell & James F. McCue, eds., Confessing One Faith: A Joint Commentary on the Augsburg Confession by Lutheran and Catholic Theologians (Minneapolis Augsburg, 1982), 118


Carl Braaten, Justification: The Article by Which the Church Stands or Falls (Minneapolis Fortress Press, 1990), 10. "The doctrine of justification seems to be eclipsed in most current academic trends of theology, including the various liberationist and feminist models of theology, as well as the theologies of process and theologies of religious pluralism. The cumulative impact of these theologies has relegated theologies normed by the article of justification to a relatively marginal existence." See also Sauter, Lutheran Quarterly, 56-57. "The socio-ethical view of the doctrine of justification remains dominant in the United States. The question is no longer how one stands before God, but how God as the driving power steps into the midst of human activity."

Braaten, Justification, 31

See Muller & Pfur, op cit, 131. Albrecht Peters, Kommentar zu Luthers Katechismen, vol. 2 Der Glaube (Gottingen Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 175-250. In his "Ten Sermons on the Catechism," 1528 (LW 51:169 WA 301:94), Luther confessed "I believe in God, that he is my creator, in Jesus Christ, that he is my Lord, in the Holy Spirit, that he is my sanctifier. God has created me and given me life, soul, body, and all goods, Christ has brought me into his lordship through his body, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies me through his Word and the sacraments, which are in the church, and will sanctify us wholly on the last day."


27. For Luther's emphasis on this point see my Beyond Charity: Reformation Initiatives for the Poor (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), and "Luther's Concept of Offering," dialog 35 (Fall 1996):251-57. For a contemporary ecumenical recognition of the liturgical foundation for ethics see Oswald Bayer and Alan Suggate, eds., Worship and Ethics: Lutherans and Anglicans in Dialogue (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996).

28. Theodor Strohm, "'Theologie der Diakonie' in der Perspektive der Reformation" in Paul Philippi & Theodore Strohm, eds., Theologie der Diakonie (Heidelberg: Heidelbergerverlaganstalt, 1989), 179. Strohm continues: "In service, reconciliation approaches the transvaluation of all values, to the reformation of the damaged image of God. One is only righteous when one sees, as in Luther's theology of the cross, in which we are initiated into the direct way, that redemption and creation are related at the same time. The diaconia of reconciliation aims at the revealing of the nova creatura, the renewal of creation according to God's ordained will" (179).

29. Oswald Bayer, Aus Glauben Leben: Uber Rechtfertigung und Heiligung, Second revised edition (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1990), 65-66: "Whenever Luther nevertheless speaks of 'sanctification' he is only expressing justification in other words. Justification and sanctification are not two actions to be distinguished so that sanctification follows or even must follow justification. When Luther speaks of 'sanctification,' he is emphasizing in particular the institutional aspect of the event of justification. Thereby he distinguishes, according to the first and second tables of the Ten Commandments, God's spiritual and secular 'rule and government.' The church belongs to both."


34. Three Books, 140-41.


36. Lutheran World 8 (June 1961), 122. Many of the papers on the subject were published in this and following issues of the Lutheran World/Lutherische Rundschau.

37. Justification Today: Studies and Reports Supplement to Lutheran World 1 (1965), 14. This publication describes the work of the Commission on Theology as well as the Assembly Document 75 on justification and its revision by the Commission after the Assembly. A review of the Assembly and "Document 75" is in Lutheran World 11 (January 1964).


39. "Rechtfertigung VI," TRE 28 (1997):342-44; Lutheran Quarterly, 81. See also his extended critique of the contemporary shift of the doctrine of justification from proc-
lamination of one’s standing before God to a theory of religious mastering of existence (343–344/82–84)


41 For an extensive discussion of this volume by Harding Meyer and Kenan Osborne, O F M, see dialog 34 (Summer, 1995) 213–21 See also Karl Lehmann & Wolfhard Pannenberg, eds, The Condemnations of the Reformation Era Do They Still Divide? (Minneapolis Fortress Press, 1990, German original, 1988)

42 For the text and a commentary see Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification A Commentary by the Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg (Geneva LWF, 1997)

43 See for example Gerhard Forde, “What Finally To Do About The (Counter-) Reformation Condemnations” and Meg H Madson, “The Incredible Shrinking Doctrine of Justification,” Lutheran Quarterly 11 (Spring 1997) 3–16 and 103–18 In Germany a storm of controversy over the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification erupted in 1998 that reminds one of Melanchthon’s deathbed sigh about the “rabies theologorum,” the madness of the theologians Some 160 German theologians signed a statement rejecting the Joint Declaration The critics charge, among other things, that it is part of an ecumenical programme designed to integrate evangelical pastors into the Roman Catholic hierarchy The controversy has raged in the public press, including the Frankfurter Algemeine Zeitung as well as church and theological periodicals Some have accused supporters of being fools and liars, and the critics of the critics have responded that the rejection of the Joint Declaration indicates a Lutheran identity crisis and a “bunker mentality” See the series of articles con and pro in the December (1997), January, and February (1998) issues of Evangelische Kommentare Those with access to the internet can find the position papers and responses by searching “altavista” under Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre


45 Athina Lexutt, Rechtfertigung im Gespräch Das Rechtfertigungsverständnis in den Religionsgesprächen von Hagena, Worms und Regensburg 1540/41 (Göttingen Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 13 Later, p 275, she states “There are fundamental differences in the doctrines of original sin and justification which may not be bridged without abandoning the understanding of God and Christ behind them”

46 Tuomo Mannermaa, Der im Glauben gegenwartige Christus Rechtfertigung und Vergöttlichung Zum okumenischen Dialog (Hannover Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1989), idem, Thesaurus Lutheri Auf der Suche nach neuen Paradigmen der Luther-Forschung (Helsinki Luther–Agricola-Gesellschaft, 1987), Simo Peura & Antti Raumo, eds, Luther und Theosis Vergöttlichung als Thema der abendländischen Theologie (Helsinki Luther–Agricola-Gesellschaft, 1990), Simo Peura, Mehr als ein Mensch? Die Vergöttlichung als Thema der Theologie Martin Luthers von 1513 bis 1519 (Mann Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1994), Antti Raumo, Summe des christlichen Lebens Die “Goldene Regel” als Gesetz der Liebe in der Theologie Martin Luthers von 1510 bis 1527 (Helsinki Reports from the Department of Systematic Theology, 1993) Raumo participated in the prior “Prague” consultation, see his “The Golden Rule” in Towards a Renewed Dialogue, 122–42 See also Oswald Bayer,


52. Sauter, *Lutheran Quarterly*, 89.