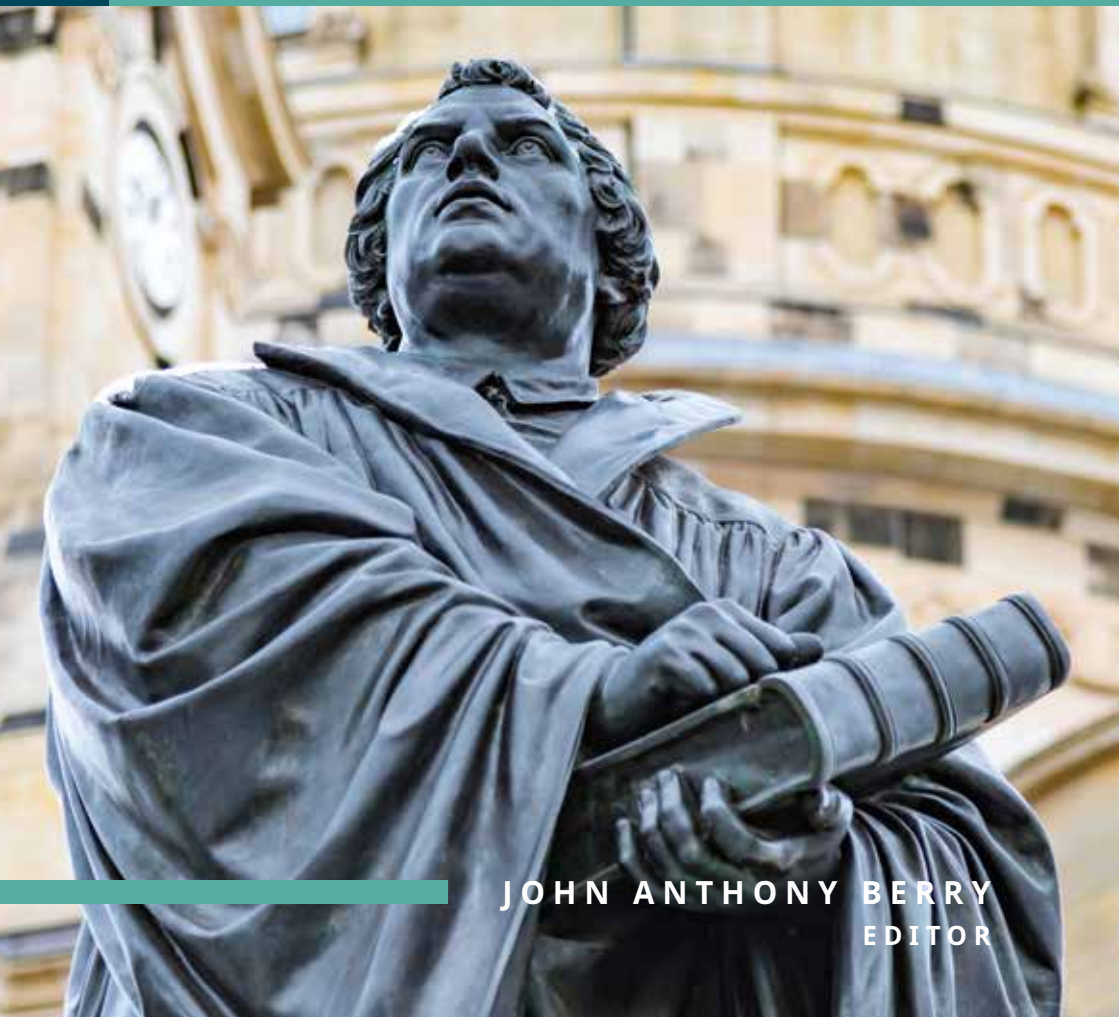
The Spirit of the Reformation

500 YEARS ON

Proceedings of the Malta International Theological Conference II



JOHN ANTHONY BERRY
EDITOR

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II

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Introduction

The commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation has gone down in history as one of the most important achievements in the ecumenical movement and in the life of the Church at large. Not long ago, the convening of a meeting like this would have been unthinkable. The atmosphere of mutual distrust and rivalry that for almost five centuries marked the relations between Catholics and Protestants has finally been transformed into a spirit of open dialogue and honest commitment to reconciliation.

It has been the often unnoticed, hard and sterling work of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, that after four phases (1967–1972; 1973–1984; 1986–1993 and 1995–2006) advanced to a point that such commemoration became possible. Both sides have come to acknowledge that there is more that unites them than divides them: above all, common faith in the Triune God and the revelation through Jesus Christ, as well as recognition of the basic truths of the doctrine of justification. Today, no one would deny that Lutherans and Catholics enjoy a growth in mutual understanding, cooperation, and respect.

The Faculty of Theology at the University of Malta, just like many other academic and ecumenical institutions around the globe, has most fittingly looked back on the events that occurred during Luther's time by placing the Gospel of Jesus Christ at the centre. The Faculty sought to

mark its calendar with an international conference titled "The Spirit of the Reformation: 500 Years On" and held on Friday, 27 and Saturday, 28 October 2017. The event was extraordinary, precisely for the inspiring eagerness of Catholics and Lutherans and even other Christians, both local and foreign, who were willing to commemorate this anniversary for the first time in history "together." It was a favourable occasion to live such an event ecumenically and to overcome the one-sidedness that has persisted until a few decades ago when grappling with certain theological issues, such as those of justification, authority in the Church, indulgences, spirituality and the sacraments.

Dialogue between Catholic and Protestant theologians is not new at the Faculty of Theology within the University of Malta. Since the time of the Second Vatican Council, the Faculty adopted an ecumenical approach to theology. This has been implemented by introducing a course in ecumenism and by nurturing an ecumenical perspective in teaching and research that exposes students to both Catholic and Protestant theologians. Ecumenical openness is a constitutive dimension of any academic institution in a University. Lecturers in the main disciplines in theology, namely systematic, moral and pastoral theology, biblical and patristic studies, liturgy, canon law and Church history, are familiar with many theologians in both Christian traditions. Moreover, the theological formation at our Faculty reflects an ecumenical approach which cultivates in our students openness to dialogue and respect for truth.

A question that remains fundamental up till our very day is the following: "Does Martin Luther's lived theology have anything to say to us today?" This led my colleagues René Camilleri and Hector Scerri and I to discuss the possibility of organising an academic event that does justice to a basic truth, namely that Martin Luther was Catholic and had no intention to form a new Church or have one named after him. His concern was with reforming and not re-inventing medieval spirituality.

Apart from Joseph Lortz (1887–1975), a renowned Reformation historian and ecumenist, who popularised the thesis that Luther must be described as a serious religious person and a conscientious man of prayer, one cannot fail to notice that the positive picture of Luther was also complemented by Pope John Paul II, and more recently by Popes Benedict and Francis.

Pope John Paul emphasised that Luther's wish was to renew the Church. Pope Benedict appreciated the deep passion and intensity with which Luther dedicated his entire life to the search for God; whereas as Pope Francis recently opined, "the past cannot be changed," but "it is possible to engage in a purification of memory," that is, to "tell that history differently." This encouraged us to explore what can be dubbed as Luther's 'provocative theology of existence' in order to discern its relevance to the human struggle of today's Christians who live in a vastly different world to the one we know.

We are grateful to God that the Reform, though it unfortunately ended in a schism in the Roman Catholic Church, has begun to heal after five hundred years. As was proposed by the Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017, what was to be done was a twofold undertaking: to discuss in dialogue the issues and consequences of the Wittenberg Reformation, which mainly centred on the person and thought of Martin Luther, and to develop perspectives for the remembrance and appropriation of the Reformation today.[1]

1 In this book, when referring to Luther's writings, either the English version called "Luther's Works" (LW) or the German version known as "Weimarer Ausgabe" (WA) will be used. For further information on these sources, please consult Martin Luther's "Luther's Works," edited by Helmut T. Lehmann and Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. Carl W. Folkemer, published in 55 volumes by American Edition in Philadelphia and St. Louis between 1955 and 1986, or Martin Luther's "D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimarer Ausgabe)," published by Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger in Weimar in 2000.

For this reason, academics and ecumenists from a number of distinguished European Universities as well as from the University of Malta came together to interpret anew the theological gifts received through the Lutheran Reformation in their appropriate historical and ecclesial context. It was an astonishing moment where its participants could reflect together on the impact of Martin Luther's theology and life on the Church, and implicitly on the Europe of his time. Further still, this event was a clear answer to an ever-present wish expressed in the decree on ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio* for different Christian bodies to engage in dialogue.

The conference was a sincere effort to come together, delve into each other's respective research, and to share the deep appreciation of the tradition from which Martin Luther emerged as well as that in which he was thoroughly immersed. Conference participants wanted to understand the spirit of the Reformation and hence live it anew through the celebration of this singular anniversary in an ecumenical and communal spirit. This anniversary was being commemorated both out of an ecumenical duty as well as a clear sign of *une main tendue* for future ecumenical undertakings, particularly in the local ecclesial landscape.

The speakers at the conference delved deep into historical and theological issues in order to explore the profound changes in understanding that have evolved over the past decades of theological dialogue. The purification of past memories and the healing of wounds have now turned theological conflicts into an occasion for growth in communion. "An attentive and rigorous study, free of prejudice and polemics" is the correct way to find "all that was positive and legitimate in the Reformation." With these words, Pope Francis exhorted the participants at the conference on Luther: 500 Years Later, held on 31 March 2017 by the Pontifical Committee of Historical Sciences, to understand better what happened at the onset of the Reformation in order to be messengers of truth, rather than judges of history.

Martin Luther was an orator, a scholar and a public figure. However, above all, he was a man of faith and a theologian, and if anyone today wants to understand his continuous appeal for renewal, then one needs to immerse oneself into Luther's mind with an open attitude. This is what the conference speakers sought to do, that is to acquaint themselves with his theological insights in order to approach any discussion and consequent deliberations throughout this conference more fruitfully. Luther was never tired of saying that only experience makes a theologian. "I did not learn my theology all at once," he said, "but I had to search deeper for it ... not understanding, reading, or speculation, but living … make(s) a theologian."

People can understand Luther's theological challenge for the Church today, when they first distinguish that which is polemical from the theological insights of the Reformation. It is through dialogue and shared witness that Catholics and Lutherans do not remain strangers. A commitment to theological dialogue involves both listening and replying, seeking both to understand and to be understood. It is a readiness to put questions and to be questioned again. This conference should also be seen as a modest attempt in doing justice to the past as service to the future. There are three remarks I wish to include here.

First, ours was a commitment to narrate the story in a different way. The past does not change, but what actually changes is what is remembered about it and how it is remembered. We looked for what is common in the context of differences, or even contrasts, and in this way worked towards overcoming the differences that separate the Churches. The Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Reformation, the latter of which had one of its driving forces in the Council of Trent, both constituted, in parallel, a break with respect to the ecclesial tradition of the Middle Ages. Michel de Certeau (1925–1986) referred to this phenomenon as a "rupture establishing tradition." The reform processes have acted, in both ecclesial realities, as real factors of ecclesiogenesis.

Luther's reforming action brought about an unwanted outcome as a result of political and, not least, economic reasons. Today, we are able to go beyond emotional and identity factors that prevented the construction of a common and reconciled memory of these events. This journeying progressed so far that a consensus between the two Churches was reached with the 1999 Joint Declaration on the doctrine of justification, hailed as a strong pillar of the authentic, albeit still imperfect, communion between Catholics and Lutherans.

Second, we wanted to answer a basic question: "Can a Catholic celebrate 500 years of the division of the Western Church?" In other words, should the Reformation of 1517 be merely commemorated or also celebrated? Certainly, there is very little to celebrate if we talk of the division of the body of Christ, however, the return to the sources of the Christian faith has actually produced a process of regeneration of the faith both for Lutherans and for Catholics. When we speak about the spirit of the reformation, we wish to emphasise that a constant reform of the Church is a factor that keeps her true to herself, while never forgetting that human beings can pose an obstacle to the action of the Spirit, both individually and collectively.

Third, we wished to underline the fact that, while visible unity between the Churches is not yet possible, mutual recognition can never be underestimated. Recognition that each Church is a manifestation of the Church of Jesus Christ is certainly always in need of conversion and purification. Recognition is a process, often a slow process, but an indispensable one in tracing a common belonging while acknowledging a historical difference. We speak of a "reconciled diversity" that inspires us to move forward in working for Christianity unity. The conference was divided in three parts: the exploration of the historical context, major theological issues within that context, and an appraisal of the spirit of the reformation today.

The first two contributions set the historic context. Dominic Fenech (University of Malta) appraises the Reformation's historical impact by locating its place in the long-range history of the wider Euro-Mediterranean area. He opines that while the Reformation is anything but a Mediterranean affair, it coincided and interacted with the onset of that decided shift, from the South to the North, of the centre of gravity of international relations. On her part, Ute Gause (Ruhr-Universität Bochum) avers that any historical reading of a "triumphalist Luther and his Reformation" has to be dismissed. She argues that the theological impulses of renewal that Luther pursued and the "Theology of Reformation" cannot be understood as a mere reform among reforms. The message of the Reformation remains even today revelatory of Luther's thought about Church renewal.

The following five contributions made up the second part of the conference concerning theological issues. Paul Sciberras (University of Malta) addressed the issue of justification by faith in Paul's *Letter to the Romans*. He argues that the pauline doctrine of justification *sola fide* is to be seen as essential (inasmuch as it expresses relationships that others cannot enunciate), but insufficient (inasmuch as it does not include in itself the means chosen by God to justify man). Beate Bengard (University of Basel) studies the interpretation of *imago Dei* as a central element in Luther's theology. For Luther, she explains, it is not reason that constitutes human nature in the proper sense, but one's relation to God. She proceeds by explaining that the restoration of God's image is in progress.

Piotr Roszak and Damian Dorocki (Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń) highlight the issue of "merit" and how this is understood by both Luther and Aquinas. They contend that the differences between these two thinkers result from a different approach to theological themes. Aquinas is characterised by the *sapiential* approach, whereas Luther reflects the *existential* one. Taking her cue from Luther's interest in the sacraments, Anne Kull (University of Tartu) investigates his understanding of baptism and its inference on girls' education and women's ordination. She argues

that the *ecclesia semper reformanda* essentially touches present issues including climate change, loving one's enemy, and others. Hector Scerri (University of Malta) focuses on the common understandings of ministry in Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue with emphasis on the common priesthood of all the baptised, the ministry of word and sacrament, and the exercise of service to the community. His contribution treats aspects of the differences in the understanding of ministry between the two Churches.

The third part of the conference sought to interpret the spirit of the reformation today. René Camilleri (University of Malta) dwells particularly on the anguish, authenticity, and spirituality that shaped the man Luther. By exploring the labyrinth of Luther's heart, mind, and soul, Camilleri seeks to understand today's position on the issues of justification and God's mercy. Charló Camilleri (University of Malta) explains the difference and interplay between *reformatio* and *renovatio.* He explains that Luther's reform is in line with the *reformatio* movement coming down from the Middle Ages as an ideal of "changing a bad present situation by returning to the good and better times of the past." Christ, the core of the Trinitarian Counsel and the one at the heart of the Church and humanity, emerges as uniquely central to both Luther and Magdalena de' Pazzi.

Oleh Kindiy (Ukrainian Catholic University) studies the apocalyptic rhetoric used by both Catholic and Lutheran authors to interpret the ecological crisis as a definite sign of the second coming of Christ. The Catholic eschatological perspective, in contrast to the Lutheran one, is more of the transformative type. Kindiy distinguishes between a new society brought about by the second coming of Christ and the idea of total annihilation derived from the theology of the sixteenth century Lutheran preachers. Pauline Dimech (University of Malta) examines the concept of the *communio sanctorum* by providing a quick glance at a limited selection of the writings of Martin Luther and of Hans Urs von Balthasar. She explains that a re-appropriation of the theological concept of the

communio sanctorum is essential, that such a re-appropriation requires a clarification of what the *communio sanctorum* stands for, and that an ecumenical venture is required for a proper hermeneutic of the term.

By way of conclusion, George Grima (University of Malta) explained that ours was an individual and collective effort to understand afresh the significance of an event that marked so deeply not only the history of Christianity but also so many cultural, economic, political and other social aspects of our life in the past 500 years. Whatever its impact on history, the Reformation remains meaningful, first and foremost as a spiritual event focusing on the relationship of the self with God, as an opportunity to bring out the riches in both traditions, as well as a reminder that dialogue opens up fresh avenues of thought.

A special word of gratitude goes to my predecessor Emmanuel Agius, then Dean of the Faculty of Theology, to the administrative staff members and academic colleagues of the Faculty, the International and Erasmus Office, Rev. Dr Kevin Schembri, and the GhST committee members who supported this event. Moreover, a word of appreciation also goes to sponsors and collaborators, namely the Archdiocese of Malta, APS Bank, the Diocesan Commission for Interreligious Dialogue, the harpist Jacob Portelli, Rev. Christopher Caruana O.P., Rev. Kim Hurst, Chris Schinas, John and Alda Anastasi, Karen Booker, Dr Dorianne Buttigieg, Anna Farrugia and Dr Rebecca Janelle Wellman.

To conclude, by focusing on the context of the Reformation, the theological issues it raised and its continuing relevance for today, this international conference was a humble contribution to foster unity among Christians through an open and honest theological debate that is the only way forward to build bridges which lead to deeper mutual understanding and respect.

John Anthony Berry
Editor

Biographies

BENGARD Beate studied Protestant Theology and French Literature in Leipzig, Lausanne, Paris and Strasbourg. She holds a Franco-German PhD from the theological faculties of Strasbourg and Leipzig. She wrote her doctoral thesis on the ecumenical hermeneutics of the French philosopher Paul Ricœur. After a postdoctoral scholarship at the "Fonds Ricœur" in Paris, Bengard has been working at the University of Basel since 2017. She also won the Dissertation Prize at the University of Strasbourg.

BERRY John Anthony is Associate Professor of Fundamental and Dogmatic Theology and the convenor of the International Theological Conference on "The Spirit of the Reformation: 500 Years On." He is the former Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Malta and former President of the European Society for Ecumenical Research, *Societas Oecumenica* and Member of the Presidium of the European Society for Catholic Theology. In his academic studies, he explored the theologies of Hans Urs von Balthasar, Joseph Ratzinger and Yves Congar O.P. He was a visiting scholar at the University of Leuven in Belgium and at Institut Catholique de Paris in France. Berry obtained the Doctorate in Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome with a *Summa cum laude*. He was a guest lecturer in various universities including České Budějovice, Dortmund, Leuven, Lviv, Rijeka and Toruń, and his recent articles are published in *Melita Theologica, Biblica et Patristica, Roczniki Teologiczne* and *Scientia et fides*. His recent publications are *Yves Congar's Vision of Faith* (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2019), *Fidelis et Verax* (Malta: Kite, 2022) and *Love Alone (*Malta: Horizons, 2023).

CAMILLERI Charló O.Carm. received a degree in Art History, Philosophy (1997) and Theology (2000) from the University of Malta. He specialised in Pastoral Theology and later obtained a Licentiate in Theology (2002). He then pursued his studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, completing a Post Graduate Diploma in the Interdisciplinary Course for Formators (2004) as well as his Doctorate in

Theology (2007). He is currently a member of the Department of Moral Theology at the University of Malta as Senior Lecturer in Spiritual Theology, Consecrated Life, Spiritual Direction, and Gender Spiritualities. From 2008 to 2018, he was the Executive Director of the Carmelite Institute of Malta advancing the research and study of Spirituality and Mysticism. He serves as a member of the Board of Directors and Academic Board in the same Institute besides being a member of the Akkademja tal-Malti. In 2019, he was nominated as editor for the multi-volume critical edition project of the complete works of John of Saint Samson. A former Research Fellow at Bloemfontein Free State University, South Africa he is currently a member of the International Editorial Board of 'Carmel in the World', a spirituality magazine for the laity, as well as a member of Spiritual Directors Europe. In 2023 he was appointed to the International Editorial Board of 'Carmel in the World', a spirituality magazine for the laity. In 2023 he was nominated as Directeur des recherches at the Centre d'études de l'histoire de la spiritualité (CEHS) in Nantes.

CAMILLERI René is a renowned Maltese theologian and former Senior Lecturer of Fundamental and Dogmatic Theology. Born in Luqa, Malta, on 29 October 1953, he studied Philosophy and Theology at the University of Malta and subsequently earned a doctorate in Dogmatic Theology with a thesis on *The Sensus Fidei of the Whole Church and the Magisterium: From the Time of Vatican I to Vatican Council II* at the Pontifical Gregorian University in 1987. Camilleri lectured in Theology at the University of Malta from 1984 to 2019, and served as Head of the Department of Fundamental and Dogmatic Theology between 1988 and 2001. He was visiting scholar at Heythrop College at the University of London in 1994. Between 1987 and 1994, he was responsible for the professional development of the Maltese clergy. In the 1990s, he played a key role in the preparation of a diocesan pastoral plan and was the redactor of the documents *Towards an Adult Church* and *A Boat in a Storm.* He was an active member of the Diocesan Synod (1999–2003) and in 2007, he was appointed Delegate for Catechesis at the Archdiocese of Malta (2007–2015). Eight years later, he was appointed Episcopal Vicar for Evangelisation. He dedicated his life and writings to disseminate theological thinking among the general public and for the last decade he was a regular contributor on the *Sunday Times of Malta*.

† DIMECH Pauline earned her doctorate in Systematic Theology at Durham University, UK. She was Senior Lecturer within the Faculty of Theology and the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta. Her research interests included method in theology, evangelisation and Catechesis, Religious Education in schools, the language of doctrine, St George Preca, the Society of Christian Doctrine, Hans Urs von Balthasar, ecclesial authority, and the saints as authoritative figures. Her recent publications include *The Authority of the Saints. Drawing on the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (2017) and *The Gaze of the Crucified Christ: A Life, a Story, a Vision* (2022).

DOROCKI Damian is a PhD student at the Faculty of Theology of Nicolaus Copernicus University. His thesis is titled *A Relation of God to the World in the Thought of Thomas Aquinas and Open Theism.* Dorocki seeks to popularise the thought of the protestant theologian Jacob Arminius in Poland. He was raised in a conservative protestant community, known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church. His scientific interests revolve around following topics: historical theology (especially theology of Arminius), doctrine of God, "free will-grace" relation, predestination and protestant-catholic theological dialogue.

FENECH Dominic is Professor of modern and contemporary history. He is Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Head of Department of History. In 1974 he was chosen as Rhodes Scholar and continued his studies at the University of Oxford, where he completed his D.Phil in 1977 with a dissertation on modern Anglo-Vatican diplomatic relations. He joined the University of Malta as a lecturer in 1979 and in 1986/87, he was elected fellow of the Centre for International Studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He later launched and for a number of years directed Contemporary Mediterranean Studies at the University of Malta. His recent publications include *Endemic Democracy:* 1919-1930, the first volume of a study of Maltese political history in the inter-war years. Besides his academic interests, Dominic Fenech is a regular contributor to public discussion and has a long-standing interest in journalism and the media.

GAUSE Ute is Professor of Reformation and Modern Ecclesiastical History at the Ruhr-University Bochum. Her main areas of research include Historical-Theological Women's and Gender Studies since the Reformation period, studies on Paracelsus, Paracelsismus and Contemporary Ecclesiastical History. She is the main editor of the scientific book series *Historical-Theological Gender Studies* and

Co-editor of the scientific journal *Protestant Theology.* Her recent publications include *Theodicy and Protest: Jewish and Christian Perspectives* (2018), *Sündige Sexualität und reformatorische Regulierungen* (2020) and *Paracelsus (1493–1541) Genese und Entfaltung seiner frühen Theologie* (2020).

GRIMA George is Professor Emeritus of Moral Theology and former Dean of the Faculty of Theology (1992–2007). He studied Literature, Philosophy and Theology at the University of Malta from where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts and a Licentiate in Theology. He studied for an MA in Philosophy at the Institute of Philosophy and wrote a dissertation on *Conversion and Responsibility: The Evolution of H. Richard Niebuhr's View of Christian Ethics* for the Doctorate in Theology at the Faculty of Theology of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. Between 1981 and 1982 he was doing research in Catholic social ethics on a Fellowship from the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung. His research interests include moral theology, fundamental moral theology and Christian social ethics. Grima has published several articles on Catholic social teaching, bioethics, business ethics and theology and human rights.

KINDIY Oleh is Associate Professor of Patristic Theology and former Assistant Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Theology of the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU). He gained his PhD in Historical Theology at the Catholic University of America (CUA), Washington, DC in 2007. His main research interests include Late Antiquity, Patristics and Medieval Studies, Byzantine Studies, Religious Education, Ecumenism, Translation of Historical, Theological and Philosophical Literature, and Catholic Social Doctrine.

KULL Anne is Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Tartu since 2005. She earned her doctorate in 2000 and had earlier studied at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, USA. She is currently the President of the Society Women in Theology and a member on various boards including the European Society for Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies; Nordic Network for Philosophy of Religion and the Estonian Society of Academic Theology.

ROSZAK Piotr is an adjunct Professor of Fundamental Theology at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland; Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at University of Navarra, Pamplona, Spain. He is member of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas; editor-in-Chief of the journal *Scientia et Fides* and director of the series *Scholastica Thoruniensia,* where the

polish translations of medieval biblical commentaries are published. His recent publication is *Reading the Church Fathers with St. Thomas Aquinas. Historical and Systematical Perspectives* (Brepols: Turnhout 2021).

SCERRI Hector is Associate Professor of Fundamental and Dogmatic Theology and former Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Theology (2015–2019). He has been lecturing in the Department of Fundamental and Dogmatic Theology since 1998. He was Head of this Department from 2001 to 2016. After his university studies in Malta (1984–93), he defended his doctoral thesis, *Summa cum laude*, at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome in 1998. His main areas of interest are Christology, Mariology, Sacramental Theology and Eschatology. He has published articles in *Melita Theologica, Omnis Terra, Seminarium, Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum, Teresa, Studia Patristica* and *Nicolaus.* He has delivered academic papers at the Augustinianum, Rome, the University of Oxford, Strasbourg, Durham and Ludwigshafen. He is the author/editor of eighteen books and over forty peer-reviewed articles. He was Chairperson of the Malta Ecumenical Council (2014-2022). He is the Founder-President of the Maltese Patristics Society, and since 2014 Consultor to the Pontifical Council (now Dicastery) for the Promotion of Christian Unity.

SCIBERRAS Paul is Associate Professor of New Testament and Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Theology. He is the former Head of Department of Sacred Scripture, Hebrew and Greek (2013–2021). He lectures mainly in the New Testament areas (Synoptic Gospels, Pauline Letters and Acts of the Apostles, Language and Text of the New Testament, and New Testament Exegesis) at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Sciberras obtained his Doctorate in Sacred Theology with a thesis *Summa cum laude* on Mgr Prof. Pietru Pawl Saydon's version of 1 Thessalonians: An exegetical and translation-critical study. He is member of the Commission for the Revision of the Bible in Maltese.

The Reformation and the Ascent of the North

Dominic Fenech

Among the Reformation's many features one of the most striking is its manifestation at the junction where the geopolitical power relationship between North and South begins to be reversed. What follows seeks to appraise the Reformation's historical impact by locating its place in the long-range history of the wider Euro-Mediterranean area. Euro-Mediterranean: because while the Reformation is anything but a Mediterranean affair, it coincides and interacts with the start of that decided shift, from the South to the North, of the centre of gravity of international relations. At its political heart, within the Christian world, it ushered a Nordic rebellion against the established powers of the South, namely the Church of Rome and the imperial Hapsburg dynasty, symbiotically and for their own ends both promoters of European unity in the form of some neo-Carolingian Single European Christian Empire.

The Long Roman Empire

If one may start by stating the obvious, the main reason why the Protestant Reformation is such a seismic event in the history of Europe is that Christianity was still at the centre of that history—albeit just about—having claimed that place ever since the late Roman Empire. Under a certain light the extended train of political events linked to the Reformation—from Luther's coming out in 1517 to the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648—may be said to bring a conclusion to the history of the long Roman Empire.

In his seminal work *Mohamed and Charlemagne* (published posthumously in 1937) the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne ventured that the unity of the Roman Mediterranean did not end when Rome fell in 476 AD, but two centuries later with the rise of the Islamic Empire.[1] His thesis has had its fair share of critics, not least in our own times when the West's relationship with Islam has become such a sensitive topic.[2] But it is true enough that Rome's barbarian conquerors wanted to inherit rather than destroy it, and sought to become assimilated into it, while the eastern segment of the Empire carried on for several more centuries under Constantinople. Importantly, Christianity, the cement and identity of the later Roman Empire, survived and thrived on its footprint, until, that is, the Muslim imperial conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries substituted Islam for Christianity in large parts of the formerly all-Roman Mediterranean.

After the first wave of Islamic expansion the frontier between Christianity and Islam moved back and forth, as the high and late Middle Ages saw the Christian recovery of Western Mediterranean Europe and the Islamic conquest of Asia Minor, the Balkans and

1 Henri Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (Paris: Félix Alcan; Bruxelles: Nouvelle société d'éditions, 1937).

2 Edward W. Said, "The Clash of Ignorance," in *Essential Readings in World Politics*, ed. Karen Mingst and Jack Snyder (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019), 170-173.

Constantinople. Up to the point when the wars of the Reformation and Counterreformation rent the Christian world apart, the Christian-Muslim standoff still appeared to be the essential political cleavage within the Euro-Mediterranean area and remained the dominant feature of international relations. For Mohamed and Charlemagne, as incarnations of two distinct worlds, now read the Ottoman Suleiman the Magnificent (1520–1566) and the Hapsburg Emperor Charles V (1516/1519–1556).

The Holy Roman Empire

Conceptually at least it may be said that the Roman Empire, transmuted and transposed, survived for much later than even Pirenne would have it. If in the Middle Ages political Christianity had lost forever much of the Mediterranean, it won instead the European heartland. Notably in Germany, Charlemagne went even further than the Romans had themselves, by crushing all German resistance beyond the Rhine. Just as the Roman Empire had unified the Mediterranean, Charlemagne's reconstitution of it unified the European core. The essentially Christian identity and civilisation of this Europe were sealed through his coronation at Aachen in 800 AD as Emperor of the Romans, by the Pope (Leo III). Charlemagne's political unity of Europe did not survive him, and after a period of civil war the Empire was partitioned into three kingdoms (Treaty of Verdun, 843).

In the West, the France we know roughly begins to emerge shortly before the turn of the millennium, under the Capetian and later the Valois dynasties. But to the East, the German parts achieved no such centralised unity. Old tribes re-emerged as autonomous units and a rump 'Holy Roman Empire' survived as a loose federation of countless jurisdictions, with an Emperor elected as a *primus inter pares* by seven prince electors. Power struggles between the Emperor and the constituent parts of the Empire become a regular feature of its history.

(Meanwhile the Central Frankish Kingdom gradually dissolved into mainly France and the Germanic imperial amalgam). The Holy Roman Empire is the stage on which the Reformation and the events it unleashed are mostly played out, to become a major page-break in that long-drawn out imperial Roman narrative.

Many are familiar with Voltaire's famous barb that the Holy Roman Empire was neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire. The Empire came under no centralised authority except a nominal one, and it was if anything German not Roman. The medieval epithet of 'holy,' first adopted by Frederick Barbarossa (1155–1190) to emphasise the empire's Christian ideological coherence as well as to serve his imperial ambitions on Italy and the papacy itself, did not outlive the Reformation except in name.

Two-thirds of Voltaire's wisecrack already held true in Luther's day. But the holy bit, that is to say, the symbiosis of the Empire's imperial identity and its Christian one, was still central to its existence. An identity more cohering than any other constitutional arrangement, it was also what gave the papacy its authoritarian pretenses, symbolised by the Pope's prerogative of crowning the Emperor. So although rivalry between Emperor and Pope was never far beneath the surface, both had a strong vested interest in holding the whole together. And conversely, those who wanted to break free from it were likely to position themselves against both the Emperor and the Pope. A theological challenge to the authority of Rome was thus tantamount to a challenge to the authority of the Emperor and the unity of the Empire.

Charles V, the last Holy Roman Emperor to be crowned by the Pope in 1519 and Martin Luther's 'implacable' enemy,[3] personifies the apex of Habsburg dynastic power. He comes closer to unifying western European Christendom than any before or after him. Completing a

3 Lyndal Roper, *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet* (New York: Random House, 2017), 321.

process started the previous century with the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella, he united the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile into modern Spain, now enriched by the recent discovery and exploitation of America. Outside Spain he ruled the Netherlands, Burgundy, large parts of Italy and assorted other territories in Europe. Above all he united the Habsburg possessions in Austria with those of Spain. And now from the seat of his Austrian kingdom, and in his capacity as elected Holy Roman Emperor, he makes a bid to seriously unite the Holy Roman Empire into a German mega-state under his rule. For Charles V, the Reformation posed the biggest threat, but also presented him with a unique opportunity.

The Holy Roman Empire was already a tenuous construction as it was, and the Protestant Reformation threatened to weaken it further. It is a particularly bad moment for Charles who had only become Emperor two years after Luther began his rebellion, as he is busy fighting France in Italy and fending off an Ottoman attack from the Balkans. On the other hand, here was a window of opportunity. If he could hold off the Ottomans, especially long enough to be able to bring to heel the rebellious Protestant states within the Empire, he might in the process bring the whole of Germany under his real, as opposed to nominal, control, and then truly become the new Charlemagne, only bigger. A Hapsburg empire comprising a unified Germany, along with the rest of Hapsburg territories, should have been well nigh irresistible, especially by an encircled France, and produce a formidable unity of and hegemony over European Christendom without precedent.

There was one flaw in this grand plan. By the age-old principle that the enemy of the enemy is a friend, this selfsame scenario compelled the French King Francis I (1515–1547) to reach out to and forge an alliance with the Ottoman Suleiman the Magnificent (1536). The same enemy-of-the-enemy principle would also motivate France to actively support the Protestant states against the Emperor (something not

even the Catholic Cardinal Richelieu would in the next century avoid doing). These alignments, cutting across religious-ideological lines, are an early indicator that, even as it peaked, the historic Christian-Muslim confrontation was fast losing relevance while the Christian-Christian one was gaining it.

To contemporaries the Ottoman-Hapsburg contest would have been dominant enough, something akin to the superpower confrontation of the twentieth century, an ideologically-grounded East-West contest waged by players with binary world-views.[4] There were, to be sure, proper clashes: in central Europe the Ottoman capture of much of Hungary (1526) and the failed Ottoman siege of Vienna (1529); in the Mediterranean the Ottoman victories at Prevesa (1538) and Djerba (1560) and the Christian victories in Malta (1565) and Lepanto (1571).[5] But all this mostly served to crystallise the frontier between the two sides, and although contemporaries probably might not have thought it, these events with hindsight may be seen as the last fling of the Christian-Muslim contest before becoming an anachronism.[6] In contrast, the intra-Christian confrontation that contemporarily emerges with the Reformation heralded a new era and was set to become a defining moment in the transition from medieval to modern European history.

4 See Dominic Fenech, "East-West to North-South in the Mediterranean," *Geojournal* 31, no. 2 (1993): 129-140.

5 Noel Malcolm, *Agents of Empire: Knights, Corsairs, Jesuits and Spies in the Sixtheenth Century Mediterranean World* (London: Penguin, 2016); Roger Crowley, *Empires of the Sea: The Siege of Malta, the Battle of Lepanto, and the Contest for the Center of the World* (New York: Random House, 2009).

6 See Fenech, "East-West to North-South in the Mediterranean," 129-140.

The Papacy

The papacy of the early sixteenth century is very much a Renaissance papacy, one striving to consolidate an authority that had been dented by some seriously unedifying experiences, the most recent of which being the pontificate of Alexander VI (1492–1503), Rodrigo Borgia. Borgia's successor, Giuliano della Rovere, who became Pope Julius II (1503–1513), dedicated himself to building the temporal power of the papacy both through his involvement in Italy's chronic wars and by consolidating his visible authority, among other things by spending ostentatiously in the Renaissance fashion. He did not think the fourth-century Basilica of St Peter did justice to the world status of the papacy, so he had it pulled down to replace it with the imposing one we see today. Unlike, say, the Medici of Florence, Julius had no family bank to plunder; and so, he set about selling on an industrial scale the one limitless resource at his disposal: salvation.

Same as with the Emperor, these were for the papacy times of danger but also of opportunity. Even as the unity of Christendom was being threatened from within, the Medici Pope Leo X, who succeeded Julius II in 1513, dreamed up grand schemes of a new crusade against the Ottomans. By concentrating on the infidel, he calculated, a crusade might rally Christian Europe behind Rome. And not just the restless Germans, but maybe even the Orthodox Church—both Leo X and his successor Clement VII made overtures to Moscow to join in an anti-Ottoman alliance.[7] Like the Hapsburg Emperor these popes were not short on big ideas. Nothing came of it, because in reality the urge to resist papal authority, whether in Muscovy or Saxony, was stronger than the fear of the Turk. As a result, the historical window on the Medieval Papacy closed for good.

7 Malcolm, *Agents of Empire*, 60.

The Historical Moment

So why would a simple monk, however brave and articulate, bring about such a sea change in history by putting hammer to timber? Except perhaps in its scale, there was nothing new in the Pope's cash-for-indulgences scheme, which got Martin Luther going. This commodification of salvation credits was so standard that the peddler of indulgences could buy printed certificates to save himself the trouble of writing out a receipt in longhand each time he made a sale. Johannes Gutenberg, whose invention of modern commercial printing would later prove to be such an important instrument in the dissemination of Protestantism, printed indulgence receipt books in the same workshop that produced his famous bibles. Such was the diffusion of the practice. He'd been doing it since the 1450s.[8] So what was it that made of Martin Luther such a huge agent of change, when he proposed that the sale of indulgences was pointless as well as blasphemous, especially considering that outside the theological sphere he was neither revolutionary nor progressive, notwithstanding that twentieth century East German propaganda celebrated him as one such? Consider his ruthless hostility to the German peasant revolt of 1524–1525, even if ironically it was inspired by his own rebellion;[9] or his intolerance of other Protestant groups outside his direction.

The answer that suggests itself is that he was a citizen of a semi-stateless German nation that was sizzling with merchant and productive economic activity and which possessed one of the most literate societies in Europe, a literacy now supported by affordable commercial printing. On this last feature it has been remarked that 'the sixteenth century Church could no more control this new technology than a twenty-first century government can control social media.'[10] To

8 Neil MacGregor, *Germany: Memories of a Nation* (London: Penguin, 2016), 296.

9 Roper, *Martin Luther*, 13, 259ff.

10 MacGregor, *Germany: Memories of a Nation*, 108.

this must be combined Luther's linguistic genius, as well as his ability to write in a direct and lucid German vernacular that people from all walks of life could relate to. Most importantly, he was operating within this dicey imperial edifice, where princes and assorted rulers of many German states, jealous of their autonomy, found in his rebellion a handle of resistance against the hegemonic pretentions of emperors and popes alike and, why not, a way of stopping the flight of hard currency to Rome.

The Spirit of Capitalism

Taking a long view of history, one of the most relevant and lasting phenomena exposed by the Reformation and its aftermath was the North-South economic divide that was developing within Europe, and of which the geographical distribution of Protestants and Catholics (concentrated in the north and south respectively) was an immediate reflection. World-systems theorist Immanuel Wallerstein proposed that Charles V's attempt to crush Protestantism was part of an ambitious plan to seize what he calls the 'capitalist world-economy' and transform it into his own world-empire.[11] By capitalist world-economy he means capitalism as we have come to know it—an international division of labour that is not controlled by a single state, unlike a world-empire, which is. He concludes: "Once the Hapsburg dream of world-empire was over—and in 1557 it was over forever—the capitalist world-economy was an established system that became almost impossible to unbalance."

So according to this, the pattern of modern capitalism with the north racing ahead was already set around the time that the Reformation began. This implicitly runs counter to Max Weber's famous proposition that Protestant attitudes towards work and thrift,

11 Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 18; 26.

and the consequent capacity to accumulate wealth, is what gave those societies an edge in the modern capitalist economy. See Max Weber, *Die protestantische ethik und der geist des kapitalismus*, (Tübigen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1905). So was Weber putting the cart before the horse? The wobbling trajectory of capitalism, including its origins, is so ambiguous to trace historically that it can be easy to mix up causality. However, what can be said with some degree of certainty is that the modern capitalist economy, generally speaking, did flourish more in the north, where Protestantism took root, than in the south, where Catholicism held sway—although you can find as many exceptions as you like (the early honing of capitalist practices in Italy, for example) and definitions of north or south can be tricky: is France south or north; or what about Switzerland, which produced Zwingli and hosted Calvin?

Anyway, whether the correlation between Protestantism and capitalism is a matter of coincidence, causality or catalysis (probably the last) it does not alter the revolutionary impact of the Reformation in politico-economic terms, much more revolutionary in fact than Luther himself, who deemed the profit motive ungodly,[12] anticipated or wished for. The upheaval it raised created the conditions for societies possessing economic power to protect their interests by seizing political power. It is what revolutions do. And not just in Germany, but even more emphatically and immediately in a mixed-denomination society such as the famously-entrepreneurial Dutch who, fed up of sustaining their Hapsburg rulers with their taxes, went on to overthrow Spanish rule to become independent.

12 Philipp Robinson Rössner, ed. Martin Luther, *On Commerce and Usury (1524)* (London: Anthem Press, 2015).

The 'Roman' Imperial Ambitions of Charles V and Their Collapse

So then, Charles V from his base in Austria and its hereditary possessions reaches out to impose his authority over the whole of Germany. His involvement in the affairs of the Reformation is personal and deep, even at the theological level.[13] He has a strong vested interest in the religious cohesion of the Empire, and he will try to preserve and consolidate it by persuasion, mediation, and ultimately by military force. When he fails, he cuts his losses and seeks peaceful coexistence. What for many years restrains Charles from using force against the Protestant princes is his need for their financial and military support, for as previously noted he is already embattled on two fronts, against the Ottomans in Hungary, and France in Italy. This conversely gave the alliance of the Lutheran Princes, the Schmalkaldic League (led by the Landgrave of Hesse and the Elector of Saxony), a lever to bargain and time to consolidate its defensive capability.

By the mid-1540s, Charles has cleared the tables and is ready to strike. In 1544 he signs a temporary peace with France to stop fighting in Italy; and in 1555 he accepts a humiliating truce offered by the Ottoman Turks in which he acknowledges their conquests in Hungary and agrees to pay an annual tribute. Thus released, he wages war on the Schmalkaldic League between 1546 and 1547, crushes its resistance in the Battle of Mühlberg, and moves to eradicate Protestantism and impose his control over the League's territory. But in 1552, the Lutheran princes regroup under the leadership of the Elector of Saxony, Maurice of Nassau, enter into an alliance with Henry II of France, and resume the war. At this point Charles opts for damage limitation: better to

13 Roper, *Martin Luther*, 173ff.

accept toleration than watch the Empire sink into civil war and rip itself apart irremediably. The Treaty of Passau (1552) put an end to the fighting. The Peace of Augsburg (1555) sealed the settlement.

Augsburg establishes the important principle of peaceful coexistence, *cuius regio; eius religio,* which acknowledges the Catholic or Lutheran identity of each state according to the personal confession of its ruler. A time window allowed subjects whose religion differed from their ruler's to migrate to another state without hindrance or penalty, a form of voluntary ethnic cleansing that only made the confessional fracture more permanent. The peace was strictly between Catholics and Lutherans, leaving other Protestants in the lurch, in particular the Calvinists and the Zwinglians.

Augsburg saved the Empire, such as it was, by accommodating divisions within it, and marked decisively the Hapsburg failure to control it. Charles V abdicated the following year, and re-divided its dynastic lands, putting his son Philip II in charge of the Spanish territories and his brother Ferdinand in charge of the Austrian ones. Then he pulled himself out of the picture, and spent his remaining days in a monastery. Augsburg was only the end of the beginning of intra-Christian warfare. Religious warfare would continue on and off, and not just in Germany but across Western Europe. Sixty years later it would erupt in the worst bloodbath of the era, the Thirty Years' War, which would devastate Germany, seriously reshuffle the balance of power in Europe, and give birth to the so-called Westphalian system, supposedly a recipe for the conduct of modern international relations.

The Protestant Reformation will turn out to have been a major page-breaker between medieval and modern history, the catalyst for a long list of developments that followed, some of them very long term. Among many others these included, immediately speaking, the end of the medieval papacy and the long-overdue housekeeping exercise known as the Catholic (or counter) Reformation; and the

end of the Habsburg dream of a new pan-European Roman Empire. In the medium term, it led to the further fragmentation of Germany; the rise of France to supremacy in Europe; the reduction of Spain to a second-rate power.

In the longer term, it opened the way for the rise of Brandenburg-Prussia as a major European power and a standing challenge to Austria, a contest that would only end with Prussia's unification of Germany in 1871, to the exclusion of Austria; and the institutionalisation of Franco-German hostility. Out of the upheavals caused by the wars of the Reformation and Counterreformation evolved the international order based on the so-called 'balance of power,' an order that would only unravel in the twentieth century. Finally, to return to the point made in the beginning, the events surrounding the Reformation will have been the fingerpost in the path to the ascendancy of Northern Europe over Mediterranean Europe, and eventually the whole Mediterranean.

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From Reform to Reformation: Luther's Concept of Renewal

Ute Gause

The debates on confessionalisation during the last decades, mainly initiated by Heinz Schilling, have largely contributed to the fact that the view on the Reformation as an epoch has changed.[1] Schilling stated that the Reformation as a universal historical change had been lost as early as 1998.[2] Provocatively, he raised an issue that had been discussed for some time, namely, whether the Reformation had been "lost, crushed between the pre-Reformation reform movements of the late Middle Ages on the one hand, and the "actual" post-Reformation impetus of formation and modernisation during the Age of Confessionalisation on the other hand.[3]

In his article, Schilling advocated confessionalisation – instead of the Protestant Reformation alone — to be regarded as a period of modernisation and actual reform. In support of his argument, he quoted

1 Heinz Schilling, "Reformation – Umbruch oder Gipfelpunkt eines Temps des Réformes?," in *Die frühe Reformation in Deutschland als Umbruch*, ed. Bernd Moeller (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1998), 13. All direct quotations in absence of English versions of the literature referred to have been translated from German by the author.

2 See ibid.

3 See ibid.

Berlin sociologist Hans Joas, who seeks to expose a linear impetus, as derived from Renaissance and Reformation, as the "unbearably vain, self-satisfied and Protestant-biased view of history."[4] These debates have a long tradition, but are a pressing issue in regard to the Reformation anniversary, since even church history as an internal discipline of Protestant Theology is on the brink of abandoning the term 'epoch.'

One grave consequence of the confessionalisation paradigm seems to be that even Reformation research is giving up the focus on Luther's protestant theology in favour of a plea for a longue durée of reforms since the late Middle Ages. If, however, Luther's theology no longer appears unique and distinctive for its time, i.e., not different from previous theology, the paradigm of confessionalisation gains so much importance that abandoning the term "Reformation" for the epoch seems indeed plausible.

Apart from this concept of a broad confessionalisation, which examines the coexistence of confessions and their contribution to the development of the modern state, two further church historical concepts have recently come to the foreground, either voting – each with different emphases – to forgo the term 'Reformation' as a term for an epoch completely, or to widen the confessionalisation paradigm on a European level and remove its focus on the emerging major confessions. Mostly, this is a matter of sovereignty of interpretation as well as the shift of paradigms to the point of relinquishing them completely.

This article presents these concepts and depicts their implications for both Church historiography and the Reformation anniversary.

4 Ibid., 21.

Constructions and Deconstructions

About twenty years ago, Martin Brecht asked whether one might speak of "theology or theologies of the Reformation" and adhered to the reconstitution of one theology:

> "For the Protestant concept of justification, the unconditional acceptance of the human being through grace, radical sin, mercy as the requirement of utter justice, simul iustus et peccator, the eschatological finality of justification, the certainty of salvation, the distinction between freedom and bondage, sola fide, and the bond between faith and the biblical word are constitutive. That, however, there are certain modifications and accentuations among the great representatives of the Reformation, has to be granted."[5]

Compared to later theological research, Martin Brecht – in contrast to contemporary views – also holds on the constitutive importance of humanism for the reformation.[6] "Monocentring" was one key term Berndt Hamm used in 1998 in an attempt to describe the contrast between the previous and the innovation of the Reformation, thus pursuing a similar concept to Brecht's:

> "The place of the hierarchy, which, on its respective levels, offers many forms of coexistence and many niches for radicality and oddity, is instead taken by the monocentric circle

5 Martin Brecht, "Theologie oder Theologien der Reformation," in *Die reformation in Deutschland und Europa: Interpretationen und debatten*: Beiträge zur gemeinsamen konferenz der Society for Reformation Research und des vereins für reformationsgeschichte, 25-30 September 1990 im Deutschen Historischen Institut, Washington, D.C. ed. Hans R. Guggisberg, Gottfried G. Krodel (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1993), 101.

6 See ibid.

> of Christian life in the works of Luther and other reformers. Linguistically, this becomes apparent in the well-known "sola"-expressions, which articulate a novel, normative focus by overriding the pluralistic concept of norms of the traditional church: the consolidation of the Christian normative in the unconditionally self-endowing, redeeming grace of God alone (*sola gratia*), i.e., in the trust of faith alone (*sola fide*), the community of faith with Christ and his self-endowing justice alone (*solus Christus*), the word of God alone establishing and sustaining faith (*solo verbo*), the Holy Scripture containing the God's word alone (*sola scriptura*), the power of the Holy Spirit alone awakening faith and thus empowering the word (*solo spiritus*), and the aim which all these references strive to serve: God's glory alone."[7]

The parallels to Brecht's focus are obvious. Both descriptions adhere to the Reformation as a theological event with fundamental constituents and as a break. Volker Leppin's Luther biography, published in 2006, implicitly abandons the concept of the Reformation as an epoch. Leppin's book caused a sensation, because he portrayed Luther mainly as a late medieval man. In the biography, Luther is not presented as an "impulsive revolutionary," but rather as a person "only slowly separating himself from his medieval heritage."[8]

Leppin deals intensively with Luther's monastic years and, in contrast to Luther's self-accounts, shown in his autobiographical surveys, that Luther, as a monk, remained within conventional piety and embarked on a monastic career, hereby adopting his father's

7 Berndt Hamm, "Einheit und Vielfalt der Reformation – oder: was die Reformation zur Reformation machte," in *Reformationstheorien*, ed. Berndt Hamm, Bernd Moeller, and Dorothea Wendebourg (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 77.

8 Volker Leppin, *Martin Luther* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2006).

mentality of a social climber. Furthermore, Leppin stresses the support and encouragement Luther received from his confessor Staupitz and regards the mystic impulses which influenced Luther as a young monk, as being predominantly inspired by Staupitz. These were in turn adopted by a Wittenberg group around Karlstadt, Luther and others to the point where Leppin speaks of a "Staupitzianism" in Wittenberg instead of a Wittenberg "Augustinism."[9]

Generally, Leppin puts more emphasis on the group of Wittenberg reformers "that gathered around the Augustinian-antischolastic Luder,"[10] rather than highlighting Luther's unique position. The influence of humanism, however, is clearly and blatantly de-emphasised.[11] Surrendering the portrayal of the reformer, who hammered the theses on the door with massive blows – an image Leppin and Erwin Iserloh seem to find almost amusing – Leppin regards Luther's Protestant discovery as a process that was only later stylised by Luther himself as a breakthrough.

More than others, Leppin observes Luther to be influenced by late medieval monasticism, its theology of piety and its mysticism, and is therefore close to a Catholic interpretation, similar to the Lortz and Jedin schools. Regarding the dispute with Erasmus about the unfree will, Leppin points out that Luther owes the concept to Staupitz and thus again to the late medieval theology of piety.[12] According to Leppin, Luther undertakes important dissociations in 1525, after which he gives up the role of the charismatic leader. He is seen to retreat into the background, as far as his popularity is concerned, namely because of the rulers, who, starting at the Diet of Speyer, take the matter of the Reformation into their own hands.

9 Ibid., 98.
10 Ibid., 97.
11 See ibid., 91.
12 See ibid., 255.

> "The agitator of the Protestant movement, whom some consider to have started a whole new epoch, was, at the most, one among others who participated in the process, which now only gradually evolved into a process of reformation in the sense of a transformation of church, law and society."[13] Apart from evening out the distinctive theological features, the emphasis lies on the continuities with the late Middle Ages as well as diminishing the focus on Luther. In this regard, Leppin is thus in line with the research on confessionalisation.

In 2012, Berndt Hamm discharged the idea of the Reformation as an epoch. Although he wants the Reformation to be understood as a system break, the historiographic memory of its contemporaries did not grant it relevance as either a break or the reconstitution of an epoch:

> "What kind of historiographical status can be attributed to the Reformation between the reforms of the 15th century and the religious-political confessional systems of the late 16th century, once it loses the myth of a dawn of a new age of mankind and of an outstanding, though short yet all the more phenomenal and powerful, historical period in the cultural memory of the present?"[14]

Hamm defines 'system break' as follows:

> "In contrast to the general religious structure of the so-called Middle Ages with its astonishing pluralities and new beginnings, a new sense of theology, piety, and church

13 Ibid., 258 (Emphasis added).

14 Berndt Hamm, "Abschied vom Epochendenken in der Reformationsforschung," *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 39, no. 3 (2012): 375; 388.

> with a new structure of signs, legitimations and norms was created by reformatory processes of selection, reduction and transformation, but mainly by a revolutionary focus on Bible, Gospel, faith and community."[15]

His argument thus draws its conclusion from the modernisation and secularisation paradigm developed following the input contributed by Max Weber.[16] Hamm now concludes that taking the changes of paradigm seriously, as occurred throughout the centuries, implies an end of historical thinking in epochs in general.

In doing so, he declares even those constructions as outdated that regard an extension of the epoch in the sense of the confessionalisation paradigm as reasonable, and thereby implicitly avoids the idea of a conflict of confessions in the sense of Protestant superiority. Although the Reformation presents a "system-demolishing radicalisation" in its Lutheran, Zwinglian, Calvinist reformed, Upper German, Anabaptist, Spiritualistic and Anti-Trinitarian movements, epochal terms merely grasp partial phenomena, and point out partial, reductionistic conherences.[17]

His conclusion reads as follows: "The cause of the general dubiousness of former concepts of periodisation and epochs has already become apparent: They block the clear view on a course of history which has been wrapped up into epochal portions neither by God nor according to world-immanent essence-ontologist laws."[18] It was simply a matter of "illusionary universal labelling."[19]

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15 Ibid.

16 See Lucian Hölscher's essay in the same issue of *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 39, no. 3 (2012).

17 See Hamm, "Abschied," 389ff.

18 Ibid., 392.

19 Ibid.

In this fashion, Hamm wants to pursue a "secularisation and demythologisation of historiography"[20] and abandon all "large-scale periodisations."[21]

Thomas Kaufmann's Luther biography, published in 2006, expresses the opposite view. He focuses on the man at the turn of an era, who embraces the new medium of bookprinting and whom he describes as "a person in two natures": namely, Luther as the withdrawn, introverted "contemplative Bible reader, […] and man at prayer" on the one hand, and the "agitator, fighter and propagandist, the linguistic virtuoso pushing into the public world" on the other hand.[22] In this evaluation, the positive characteristics are predominant: Kaufmann rejects Luther's interpretations as "anti-Western-German" or "anti-Semitic Luther," "God's bull-necked barbarian" (Thomas Mann) as "extreme projections," to finally describe Luther's distinctive identity to be – even compared to his contemporaries – as "entirely determined and borne by the ongoing acts of its God."[23]

Kaufmann considers this as constituent for Luther's personality. Additionally, the importance of Luther and the Reformation in world history remain irrevocable for Kaufmann: His [Luther's] life "changed the occidental Church and thus changed the world, as rarely a human being did before or after him."[24] These features are repeated in Kaufmann's History of Reformation, published in 2009, which adheres to the concept of the Reformation as a radical change and an epoch. For him, the Reformation is a "revolt of the Church against the Church."[25]

20 Ibid., 399.
21 Ibid.
22 Thomas Kaufmann, *Martin Luther* (München: C.H. Beck, 2006), 8.
23 Ibid., 13.
24 Ibid., 14.
25 Ibid.

He ascribes an epochal significance to the new rise of the Protestant church in the 16th century.[26] With the Reformation, Luther intended to initiate a "radical reorientation of the entire Christian society."[27]

Due to the consequence of the confessionalisation paradigm and the analysis of its formation, as well as in the context of Reformation research starting to open itself to the "left wing" in the 1960s, i.e., to the Anabaptists and to Reformed Protestantism as the dominant confessionalising power (defined as second confessionalisation), more and more voices seek to turn this very opening, which has led Anglo-American research to speak of "German Histories in the age of Reformations (1400–1650), into the new general paradigm.[28]

In the 21st century, a Reformation historiography that focuses entirely on Luther and the German-speaking areas during the short period from 1517 to 1555, is dismissed to be a "Rankean triumphalist approach," only pursued further by old-fashioned, conservative church historians.[29] The Reformation as a period of "long reformation" spanning from1450 to 1650, although other time frames exist.[30] It is a European event in which various religious groups participate. Thus, this re-adjustment aims at deconstructing an older narrative, coined already by Ranke, and fundamentally rejects a Reformation historiography focused on Luther and Lutheran-oriented theology, as it is contaminated by national Protestantism and adheres to a fatal linearity of development and to the German *Sonderweg*.

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26 See Thomas Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Reformation* (Frankfurt a.M. — Leipzig: Verlag der Weltreligionen im Insel Verlag, 2009), 17.

27 Ibid., 18.

28 See the monograph of the same title by Thomas A. Brady, *German Histories in the Age of Reformations, 1400–1650* (Cambridge — New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

29 Emidio Campi, "Was the Reformation a German Event?," in *The Myth of the Reformation*, ed. Peter Opitz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 21.

30 See Ibid., 18ff.

This position from 2013 was published in a collection edited by Peter Opitz, correspondingly titled "The Myth of the Reformation,"[31] which consequently explores the European horizon of the Reformation in various articles. Emidio Campi's essay accuses Kaufmann's History of the Reformation of having a hidden agenda, since it clings to the central position of Luther: "Here we are, back in the world of manifest destiny and the "Eternal German."[32]

Deciding on the question of whether the Reformation is to be abandoned as an epoch in a democratic vote would, based on the previous considerations, show an almost unanimous consensus to either dissociate oneself from the term 'epoch' entirely or to turn the dawn of Protestantism into one of several radical changes during the 16th century. Emidio Campi thus concludes: "The result is the "Long Reformation": a series of fragmented events in small and often competing groups, plus some greater ones, but without a centre and lacking a bold vision. In short, this is the way in which Reformation history is being written today."[33] While Hamm at least held on to the idea of a systematic break and the concept of an identifiable, qualitatively new theology, Campi even disapproves of this minimal consensus.

Along with historian Luise Schorn-Schütte, I would like to advocate against pursuing "political education," that aims to enlighten "one's own contemporaries about the paths and wrong tracks of national history," but rather in favour of outlining "the modalities of movements, the time horizons and the creation of a sense of values of contemporaries of the

31 Peter Opitz, *The Myth of the Reformation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013).

32 Campi, 20.

33 Ibid.

Reformation era itself."[34] In my opinion, the debate's "hidden agenda" roots in unreflected equation of national Protestant interpretations of Luther of the 19th and 20th centuries with Luther's 16th century concerns and – what is more — the appropriation of Luther by National Socialism. Also, Marcus Sandl's findings seem highly relevant. Whereby he states that the "historiographical abandonment of the Reformation," was "a result of an epistemological reorientation, which led to a separation of claims of validity from a transcendent concept of truth."[35] Berndt Hamm has done exactly that. In my opinion, however, to give up of the Reformation as an epoch means to abandon Protestant theology itself.

Luther's Religious Problem: The Concept of Renewal

1. An External Perspective

After this survey of the current trends within Reformation history, I will not continue with the deconstruction of Reformation history in my second part, but instead I will illustrate what is to be associated with Luther's agenda or rather, what he defines as the rediscovery of the Gospel.

To support my argument, I will refer to the habilitation thesis of historian Marcus Sandl from Zurich, which was published in 2011 and adheres to the key role Luther and his theology played in the 16th century. His monograph, entitled: *Mediality and Event. A Contemporary History of the Reformation*, emphasises the function of book printing

34 Luise Schorn-Schütte. "Reformationsgeschichtsschreibung – wozu? Eine Standortbestimmung," in *Historie und leben. Der historiker als wissenschaftler und zeitgenosse. Festschrift für Lothar Gall zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Dieter Hein et al. (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2006), 149ff.

35 Marcus Sandl, *Medialität und ereignis. Eine zeitgeschichte der reformation* (Zürich: Chronos, 2011), 34.

as an essential medium of the Reformation on the one hand, but also asks about the relevance given by the contemporaries to Luther's and Melanchthon's public appearances in Wittenberg.

In Sandl's opinion, Luther gave credibility and relevance to the mediality of God's word itself, i.e., the Bible. Along with this well-received literality came performative actions and certain staged personal acts (e.g., the Diet of Worms in 1521, the Dispute on the Eucharist in 1529, and the Diet of Augsburg in 1530). Sandl allows room for the Reformation as a theological event, regarding it as a "turning point."[36] As a theologian and church historian, I am fascinated by the way Sandl provides an external description from a historical, or system-theoretical point of view, which, by means of close observations of the events and the published literature of the time, analyses the reformatory events and the theological literature in a way that is compatible with a theological point of view.

Eventually, Sandl successfully describes the denominational differences between Roman Catholic and Lutheran self-conceptions within the 16th century. Since inner-Christian confessional studies are confronted with the problem that God, despite revealing Himself, ultimately remains hidden from human insight and knowledge; and that the confessions have developed their own respective ways of how Christ, as the bearer of revelation, can be adequately communicated to the believers in a complex process of assurance and how the believers can establish a relationship with God. Sandl succeeds in describing Luther's process of assurance precisely, yet without the use of inner-theological terminology. In his introductory proposition, Sandl states: "At the beginning of the Reformation stood an act of remembrance. Its object were the true contents of Christianity, which – according

36 See Ibid., 10.

to Martin Luther and his fellow campaigners – had been obscured and given over to oblivion through human traditions, introduced by medieval scholasticism."[37]

Reformation was a break of tradition, a reconstitution of history through the "occurrence of a new relationship between worldly immanence and transcendence."[38] This becomes particularly apparent in the courage to avow, stemming from the interaction with the Gospel, clearly shown in Luther's demeanour at the Diet of Worms in 1521. I will now illustrate in two steps how Luther's interpretation of the Bible results in a new interaction with transcendence and how, in turn, a specific attitude of faith is actually to be communicated. I will discuss the interpretation of the Bible, as well as the Protestant discovery as an attitude of faith and its transmission into sacrament and pastoral care. Both of these aspects I consider to be essential characteristics of Reformation theology.

2. Interpretation of the Scripture as Concentration and Reduction

Luther's argumentation at the Diet of Worms in 1521 becomes programmatic for the many groups and individuals joining the Reformation:

> "If I am not refuted by (testimony of the) Scripture and rational arguments – for I neither have faith in the Pope nor in the councils alone, since it is a fact that they have often erred and contradicted themselves – , I am bound by the words I have quoted. And as long as my conscience is captured in God's

37 Ibid., 13.
38 Ibid., 20.

> words, I cannot and do not want to recant anything because it is uncertain and threatens salvation to do something against the conscience. God help me. Amen."[39]

At the Diet of Speyer in 1529, the Protestant imperial estates take this commitment to Scripture and the conscience as justification for their adherence to the Reformation. Karl Holl, the great Luther scholar of the early 20th century, could therefore define Luther's attitude as a "religion of conscience," as it was based on the conviction that "the divine reveals itself most definitely in the awareness of the "ought" , [and] in the irresistibility, with which the demand, aimed at the will, takes possession of man."[40] Through a personal relationship with God, more precisely, through a relationship with Christ, arises the legitimation, almost the necessity to act as one thinks is right. This relationship with God is rooted in the bible, which is interpreted with regard to Christ. The principle of exegesis, developed by Luther with active support from Melanchthon, was, by all means, considered something novel, not only in his eyes, but also in the eyes of his contemporaries.

Apart from Luther, Melanchthon also addressed the unbridgeable cleft between the teachings of scholastic theology, which were based on dogmatic eternity values, and the dynamic biblical theology, fructified by the Holy Spirit and based on the sources, in his first speech as a professor of Greek in Wittenberg in 1519 ("On the Necessity of Reforming Youth Studies").

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39 See Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, Vol 1. (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1981), 438ff.

40 Karl Holl, "Was verstand Luther unter Religion," in *Gesammelte aufsätze zur kirchengeschichte*, Vol. 1: Luther. Ed. Karl Holl (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1948), 7th edition, 35.

Initially, Melanchthon refers to this in a humanist sense, which means that one has to turn to the biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek. He points out that the study of theology requires a high degree of thinking skills, hard work and diligence (*potissimum ingenio, usu et cura*). According to him,

> "Only with the help of the sources will the words with their clarity and actual meaning reveal themselves to us, and just as in the bright light of the midday sun, the true and actual meaning of the letter (genuinus literae sensus) we have been looking for will manifest. As soon as we have grasped the meaning of the letter, we will be able to obtain reliable evidence for the matters that are indeed conveyed."[41]

Human sciences, philological accuracy – those are all essential, but need the support of the Holy Spirit: "Guided by the Holy Spirit, accompanied by education in our arts and sciences, we are able to find access to the sacred."[42] Through engaging intensively with the sources, Christ is eventually truly recognised (*Atque cum animos ad fontes contulerimus, Christum sapere incipiemus* […][43]). It is the handling of the sources by the individuals in their respective time, which eventually allows the Gospel to speak.

Statements like these are key phrases that represent the core of Reformation theology. Historian Marcus Sandl has characterised this novelty of Protestant theology of the 16th century from an external perspective as follows:

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41 Philipp Melanchthon, "Wittenberger Antrittsrede (De corrigendis adolescentiae studiis)," in *Melanchthon deutsch*, ed Michael Beyer, Stefan Rhein and Günther Wartenberg (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2011), 2nd edition, 62.

42 Ibid., 61.

43 Ibid., 62.

> "In a nutshell, one could say that it [Protestant theology], by breaking with tradition, made time a constituent dimension of historical events, and thus put itself into opposition to everything that was before."[44] Luther "linked Protestant theology to the conditions of reversal and change."[45] The focus does not lie on communicating eternal truths anymore, but rather on a truth that is always solely revealed in the process of the word being actually appropriated, biblical truth is not "static, but dynamic."[46] In Reformation theology, it was no longer a matter of giving a lecture, but rather of what actually happened in the act of cognitive formation, in reading, writing and preaching the word of God, to show what was revealed and what no human being was able to show from his own capacities."[47] "Reformation recognition was successful only if it was possible to bring the Bible and its exegetes into an immediate relationship with each other."[48]

The text also has a self-evidence and coherence from which the interpreter must allow himself to be inspired. For that to occur, he needs to believe.[49]

44 Sandl, 40.
45 Ibid., 41.
46 Ibid., 42.
47 Ibid., 43.
48 Ibid.
49 See ibid., 56.

3. The Protestant Discovery as an Attitude of Faith and its Theological Mediation

The *Sermo de duplici iustitia*, first published in 1519 and preached by Luther on Palm Sunday, March 28th, in 1518,[50] is a record of Luther's Protestant discovery, he abandons the concept of humility, and instead, articulates the liberating breakthrough of the understanding of God's merciful justice through the belief in Christ.

Luther's Sermon is based on the Christ Psalm of Phil. 2,5 ff. The first justice is given to the human being (*ab extra infusa*), it is infused from the outside: *Haec est qua Christus iustus est et iustificans per fidem.*[51] "It is the justice by which Christ is just and justifies by faith." It is granted to man in baptism and renewed by repentance. By believing in Christ, Christ's justice becomes that of man. It is bestowed upon the unworthy human by grace, *gratis […] ex pura misericordia*[52] *("freely and out of pure mercy"*) and thwarts original sin. In this, the relationship to Christ appears to be almost mystical: *at qui credit in Christo, haeret in Christo, estque unum cum Christo, habens eandem iustitiam eum ipso*[53] (The soul believes in Christ, it clings to him and is one with him and thus participates in his justice").

In my opinion, this represents the second and indispensable component of Protestant theology: piety in the sense of an experienceable faith, created by a kind of Christ mysticism. Here, the influence of medieval mysticism adopted by Luther during his monastery years, becomes apparent. Berndt Hamm has stated that a "theology of piety," i.e., a theology, "which aims at piety as a practical

50 See Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, Vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1981), 222.

51 *WA* 2, 145, Z. 9ff.

52 *WA* 2, 145, Z. 32-146, Z. 1.

53 *WA* 2, 146, Z. 14ff.

way of life"[54] – is conveyed through communication, namely, popular religious literature. While Luther's Latin sermon surely represents a form of elitist theology, the young Luther in his early German sermons, sought to communicate these beliefs in his theological treatises for all believers.

While one could call exegesis the craft of Protestant theology, as it provides the set of tools and the base necessary to successfully make the *viva vox evangelii* heard, Luther's theology of piety, based on justification with an often mystical undertone, provides images and narratives, which offer consolation to the soul of the believer and provides encouragement to seek, out of the reign of sinfulness, from the awareness of one's own fallibility and finiteness, the sole consolation in Christ.

In the Sermon on the Preparation to Die, published in 1519, both baptism and eucharist – even in the form of hospital communion – are presented to the dying human as an immovable and steadfast consolation, because they offer physical comfort.The sacraments are warranted promises of God and help in times of impugnment. The earthly human being needs physical assurance. People shall trust in these warrants in their hour of death – even if the devil tries to convince them otherwise. The sacrament of Communion also assures the believer that they do not die alone. God, Christ, the angels and all the dead saints are with them in the hour of their death. In addition to the acts of confession, communion and unction, making the sign of the cross assures the dying of God's blessing. Moreover, Luther adopts the well-known and popular *ars-moriendi* imagery, takes up previous ideas and modifies them, e.g., by emphasizing not the impugnments that the

54 Berndt Hamm, "Frömmigkeit als gegenstand theologiegeschichtlicher forschung. Methodisch-theologische überlegungen am beispiel von spätmittelalter und reformation," *Zeitschrift für theologie und kirche* 74 (1977): 489.

dying is exposed to, but rather the consolation in dying. The faithful have to adopt this attitude with utmost concentration in order to be able to resist the horrors of death.

"Dan Christ(us) ist nichts dan eytell leben / seyn heyligen auch / yhe tieffer und vehster / du dir dß bild eynbildest / und ansiehest / yhe mehr des tods bild abfelt und von yhm mit Christo / und ynn Christo geruglich sterben."[55] [For Christ is nothing less than sheer life as are his saints. The deeper and firmer you imagine and visualise this, the more the image of death will crumble, so that you can die in peace with Christ and in Christ.]

Similar to the medieval *ars* of pictures, which first confronts the dying with the horrors that make it more arduous for them to die, and then visualises the overcoming of impugnment through Christ, as well as supporting angels, Luther creates these images metaphorically. This motif of the dead saints and believers attending the process of dying is also essential for the Sermon on the Lord's Supper, which was written at the same time;[56] it is a constitutive element of Luther's consolation. Here, he adopts a late-medieval concept and holds on to it. This communion also illustrates the concept of a universal priesthood, which Luther develops in opposition to the hierarchically structured Roman Catholic Church.

In his writings of 1519, Luther thus still remains strongly connected to the momentum of late medieval piety of an ars moriendi. Sacraments and sacramentals, as well as a vivid visualisation of Christ are recommended as consolation against the impugnments of impending

55 Martin Luther, "Ein sermon von der bereytu(n)g zum sterben," in *Martin Luther studienausgabe*, Vol. 1., ed. Hans-Ulrich Delius (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1979), 235ff.

56 Martin Luther, "Eyn sermon vo(n) dem hochwirdigen sakrament / des Heyligen waren leychnams Christi. Vnd von den bruderschaften," in *Martin Luther Studienausgabe*, Vol. 1., ed. Hans–Ulrich Delius (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1979), 272-287.

death.[57] The continuity to late medieval piety is clearly visible, whereby he [Luther] thus remains within "the tradition of an internalising image-religiousity, focused on meditative internalisation."[58]

In the Prayer Booklet of 1522, Luther articulates "Tröstung was bey eynem sterbenden Menschen zuhandeln sey."[59] In contrast to the sermon, it is worth noting that confession and Communion are not mentioned as assuring signs of God's promise anymore, but, rather, baptism instead. Baptism is a warrant that the believers, like Christ, are lifted up out of death and may be certain of the Resurrection. Here, the idea of eternal life together with Christ shall console the dying person. The sight of Christ on the Cross shall make the dying person aware that Christ has overcome sin, death and hell for them. Here, the dying person can be shown a crucifix to strengthen their faith; thus, Luther adopts existing customs and traditions. Subsequent Church Orders, however, insist on abandoning candles and crucifixes, because Christ can be internally envisioned.

In 1534, Luther once again comments on the question of how to deal with the impugnments of dying. Again, he regards dying and death as situations in which every believer is threatened by the devil and impugnments. The composition of the sermon was based on the specific question of a sick person during a pastoral visit, of whether he could still be assured of Christ's promise, if Christ did not answer his prayers during his illness. Luther's advice does not relativise the impugnment, but rather underlines that Christ's promise clearly and irrevocably applies to to each and every Christian:

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57 The Christo-centric orientation of consolation is also present in the Middle Ages. See Claudia Resch, *Trost im angesicht des todes. Frühe reformatorische anleitungen zur seelsorge an kranken und sterbenden* (Tübingen – Basel: A. Francke, 2006), 40.

58 Berndt Hamm, "Luthers anleitung zum seligen sterben vor dem hintergrund der spätmittelalterlichen ars moriendi," *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 19 (2005): 338ff.

59 Martin Luther, "How to Console a Dying Person," *WA* 10/2, 454-457.

> "It is God's thought and will that I shall believe in His son Jesus Christ, for this, God has gifted me with His Holy Spirit. For without the Holy Spirit I could not have such ideas about Christ, that he, as I believe, has been given to me by God and that he died for me; but as a testimony of such faith, I have been baptised and by such baptism I have become a member of his spiritual body."[60]

The signs and acts assuring the human being of God's grace and promise are the sacraments of baptism and the Communion, as well as the Holy Spirit dwelling within the heart of every Christian who enables the believer to say: I believe in Jesus Christ.

Based on these assurances, there is a clear conclusion that, according to Luther, the believers have to draw: "You would not utter such words, unless God had written them into your heart with His finger and through the Holy Spirit."[61] Required piety lies within mental repetition of these promises. They are truths, engrained into the hearts by God, which one has to become aware of. To thwart the devil, they should be spoken out loud on a regular basis, i.e., practised piety consists of spoken prayer, expressing these assurances of faith again and again. Rather than on cognitive examination, the focus lies on emotional address and a meditative use of biblical words. The Prayer is further strengthened by the support of the entire Christian church, already articulated in the sermon:

60 Martin Luther, "Tröstlicher unterricht, wie man in leibesschwachheit de kleinmüthigkeit und anderen anfechtungen des teufels begegnen möge, 1534," in *Martin Luthers sämtliche schriften*, Bd. 10., ed. Johann Georg Walch (Halle: Sp. 1780-1789), esp. Sp. 1781.

61 Ibid., Sp. 1783ff.

"Thus, you are not alone in impugnment, but have throughout the world so many brothers and sisters who all pray with you […], give support and lament and say: "Our Father, who art in heaven." It is not one Christian who prays: my father; but they all pray, Our Father."[62] Those, to whom this spiritual communion is not enough, shall call someone to their sickbed to speak about Christ or to read a comforting text. The focus on the word does not imply intellectualisation, instead, the word supports the acquirement of faith, which outer forms would distract from.

Christ is the absolute counterbalance to the impugnment of sin and death. Therefore, I would like to point out that the focus on the word does not necessarily imply desensualisation and intellectualisation, but rather, that Luther and many other Protestant preachers succeed, by envisioning biblical texts, in leading the listeners through actualisations and images onto a path of faith, which leads to Christ.

Conclusion

From the last part of my paper, I think it is obvious that, as a Reformation historian, I am convinced that it is this focus on Christ, the consolation of Him being with the Christians in a world of challenges up to their own death, and the vivid visualisation of grace – even in participating in the sacrament of Communion – that is the core of Reformation theology and piety. Interpreting and then actualising scriptures is a way to reach people in a world of suffering and sinfulness. This is, in a way, quite a simple message, a reduction perhaps – but I think that the success of Luther among all parts of the population lies in this message.

62 Ibid., Sp. 1785.

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Martin Luther's Take on Justification by Faith in Romans
Gauging its Centrality or Otherwise for Paul

Paul Sciberras

Martin Luther's name has been linked with Paul's letter to the Romans as a pivotal intersection in the doctrinal trajectory within Christian theology. Following his stand at the Diet of Worms and his productive solitude in the Wartburg, in 1522, Luther published his translation of the New Testament in German.[1] He prefaced The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans with these words:

> "This Epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament, and is truly the purest Gospel. It is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but also that he should occupy himself with it every day, as the

1 Timothy George, "Martin Luther," in *Reading Romans through the Centuries from the Early Church to Karl Barth*, eds. Jeffrey Greenman and Timothy Larsen (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2005), 102.

daily bread of the soul. We can never read it or ponder over it too much; for the more we deal with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes."[2]

The Beginning and the Beginnings of the Reformation

His posting of the Ninety-five Theses on All Hallows Eve in 1517; his 1519 'Tower Experience,' when he grasped the true meaning of "The one who is righteous will live by faith," in Romans 1:17; his debate with John Eck at Leipzig in 1519; his "Hier stehe, ich kann nicht anders" speech at Worms in 1521, are inexplicable apart from the seven-year (1512–18) exegetical labours that went into a series of lectures he had given in Wittenberg, which are even more fundamental for our theme than the Romans preface. In this endeavour Luther developed what Heiko Oberman has called the 'theologische grammatik' of the scriptures.[3]

Luther's estimation of Romans was not hyperbole! It had been hard won through his own intense struggle with the issues Paul raises in this Hauptbriefe, issues that had pursued Luther in his torturous quest to find a gracious God. He was a person who recognised that the harder he tried, the more he fell short, a person who precisely in his piety reached the very depths of the abyss of futility and shortcomings before God; a person who knew guilt in its most introspective intensity. And this young man Luther found in Paul and in his words on how "the righteous shall live by faith" (Rom 1:17, quoting Hab 2:4) and in

2 Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 35, *Word and Sacrament*, ed. F. Theodore Bachmaim (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 365. See also Brooks Schramm and Kirsi I. Sterna, eds., *Martin Luther, the Bible and the Jewish People. A Reader* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 53-54; Timothy J. Wengert, *Reading the Bible with Martin Luther. An Introductory Guide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 58-68.

3 Heiko A. Oberman, "Martin Luther Contra Medieval Monasticism: A Friar in the Lion's Den," in *Ad Fontes Lutheris: Toward the Recovery of the Real Luther. Essays in Honor of Kenneth Hagen's Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, eds. Timothy Maschke, Franz Posset and Joan Skocir (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001), 183-84.

similar sayings, the message of God that lifted him out of despair and placed him in that mighty fortress of grace about which he wrote his stirring hymn, Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott.[4]

In Paul and in his words about justification in Christ by faith, and without the works of the Law, Martin Luther found the liberating answer to all his struggles. However, the reading of Paul through the experience of Luther caused Paul to be greatly misunderstood. We know from his later testimony that Luther was deeply concerned with the holiness and justice of God, the sacrament of penance, and his own desperate inadequacy to obtain salvific solace from it, with issues of predestination and grace, all reinforced by bouts of dread and fear; the famous Anfechtungen (temptations), that caused even the rustling of a dry leaf – referring to a verse in Leviticus 26:36 – to bring on the torments of hell in him.[5]

In the course of Luther's spiritual depressions, Johann von Staupitz, his superior, confessor, and mentor, directed him to proceed to complete the requirements for his doctorate in theology. On 18 October 1512, the degree was solemnly conferred upon him and he was appointed Lector in Biblia for life at the University of Wittenberg, succeeding Staupitz himself. He took up Paul's Letter to the Romans for three semesters, from Easter 1515 to early September of 1516.[6] After Romans, he continued his academic lectures in Paul, first with Galatians and then with Hebrews (which he regarded as Pauline).

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4 See Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 78-96, especially 85-87.

5 Luther will return to the image of the windblown leaf in his *Lectures on Romans*; see *Luther: Lectures on Romans*, ed. Wilhelm Patick, *Library of Christian Classics*, vol. 5 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 283.

6 This constituted ninety class hours in all, as Luther followed this sequence in his lectures: first semester, 1:1-3:4; second semester, 3:5-8:39; third semester, 9:1-16:27.

Although Luther never published his Lectures on Romans,[7] Romans continued to have a formative influence in Luther's theology and preaching, as can be seen from the high praise he lavished on Romans in his 1522 Preface. There are also more than thirty extant Luther sermons from various texts in Romans.

Luther at the Lectern

Given that Luther's lectures took place on Mondays and Fridays at 6:00 in the morning, what was his methodology? What were his sources and style? As far as we know, they were the first university lectures on the Bible delivered in the German tongue. John Oldecop of Hildesheim[8] had this to say in Luther's regard: "The students liked to hear him for no one like him had been heard there who translated so boldly every Latin word."[9]

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7 Luther never regarded his *Lectures on Romans* as a definitive, publishable exposition of this Pauline epistle. He was usually reticent about promoting his published writings, the one notable exception being his larger commentary on Galatians (1535). When Luther first lectured on Romans, his reformational theology was still fluid, with new ideas bursting from almost every page. Later on, he was happy for his followers to learn their Reformation theology from his Galatians work, the Schmalkald Articles, the two Catechisms, and the Augsburg Confession, rather than from the unfinished and uneven comments of the young Luther of Romans.

There is a second, more practical, reason why the Romans lectures were never published in Luther's lifetime. In 1518 Philipp Melanchthon was brought from Tübingen to Wittenberg as professor of Greek and New Testament, and Romans was assigned to Melanchthon. When specific questions about Romans were directed to Luther in later years, he usually referred them to Melanchthon. Pauck's translation is based on the critical edition of Luther's *Römerbriefvorlesung* by Johannes Ficker, published as vol. 56 in the Weimer edition of Luther's works. Hereafter, *LW*.

8 Oldecop, who later on became a bitter enemy of Luther, registered at the University of Wittenberg just as Luther began his course on Romans at Easter 1515.

9 Robert Herndon Fife, *Young Luther: The Intellectual and Religious Development of Martin Luther to 1518* (New York: Macmillan, 1928), 185.

What exactly were the students hearing from Luther?[10] In developing his glosses on Romans, Luther drew on the tradition of Christian exegesis that had preceded him, making special use of five sources: the glossa ordinaria of Strabo, the glossa interlinearis of Anselm of Laon, the postillæ perpetuæ of Nicholas of Lyra, the translation and commentary of the French humanist Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples, and Erasmus.[11]

Even in his abundant glosses, Luther displayed a remarkable freedom in dealing with all of these sources. He appreciated Nicholas of Lyra's focus on the literal meaning of the text, but he did not hesitate

10 Already, in his first lectures on the Psalms, Luther had developed a style of lecturing that he continued to use with Romans. He had asked the local printer, Johann Grunenberg, to print the Vulgate text of Romans (from the 1509 Froben edition published at Basel) on a special sheet of paper with broad margins and a full centimeter between the lines. The text of Romans printed in this way took up twenty-eight sheets, with fourteen lines on each page. Luther followed closely the medieval exegetical tradition of glossing the text, writing in a small meticulous hand his own marginal comments in this special edition of the text prepared by Grunenberg. The students were provided with an identical copy of this text and copied down, word for word, Luther's carefully dictated comments. (We know this from several student copies of Luther's lectures that were discovered and published by Johannes Ficker in the *Weimar Ausgabe* [Henceforth *WA*].)

11 The *glossa ordinaria* of Strabo, from the 9th century school of Alcuin. Strabo had provided a word-by-word analysis of the biblical text, drawing on the major patristic witnesses.

The *glossa interlinearis* of Anselm of Laon. A somewhat more expansive interpretation of the phrases of the biblical texts, with special emphasis on their spiritual meaning.

The *postillæ perpetuæ* of Nicholas of Lyra (d. 1340), a Franciscan theologian from Paris, whose commentary on scripture emphasized the literal or historical interpretation of the text. These three resources had been made conveniently available in Froben's six-folio volumes of the Bible, an edition with which Luther was thoroughly familiar.

Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples, whose translation and commentary on Paul's letters Luther had before him as he developed his lectures.

Erasmus: in his comments on the early chapters of Romans, Luther frequently referred to the Greek in Lorenzo Valla's Greek edition of the New Testament, as well as to Faber's Latin translation, which was based on the Greek. However, from chapter 9 onward, Luther had available, and frequently cited, Erasmus's newly published critical edition of the Greek New Testament.

to criticise his interpretation of Romans 1:17: "The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith." Nicholas interpreted that phrase, in typical medieval fashion, to mean "from unformed faith to formed faith." Luther finds this distinction invidious, claiming that "there is only one faith, the same for the laity as the scholars and that while there may be growth in saving faith, that 'growth does not make it more real but only gives it greater clarity'."[12] As for Erasmus, while Luther was appreciative of his philological prowess, there was already a growing disdain for his inability to grasp the gravity of sin and the true dilemma of the human before God. "No one is a wise Christian just because he knows Greek and Hebrew," Luther noted. Between Romans and the De servo arbitrio ten years later, the theological chasm between Luther and Erasmus would grow deeper and wider.[13]

In addition to his glossing of the text, Luther also prepared extensive expository notes, which were handwritten on 123 separate sheets of paper. These scholia constitute the bulk of the Romans manuscript. While Luther did not present most of this material to the students, it is precisely here that we can track most clearly his personal struggles with the text and his evolving theology of grace.

Both Gerhard Ebeling and James S. Preus argue that Luther's 'new hermeneutics' – a shift that commenced in his first lectures on the Psalms in the years immediately preceding his Romans commentary – involved his reducing of the traditional four senses of scripture to two: Christ himself as the literal sense, and faith in Christ as the moral or tropological sense. Justification by faith was deduced from

12 *Lectures on Romans*, 19.

13 Published in December 1525, *De servo arbitrio* was Luther's reply to Desiderius Erasmus' *De libero arbitrio diatribe sive collatio* or *On Free Will*, which had appeared in September 1524 as Erasmus' first public attack on Luther after Erasmus had been wary about the methods of Luther for many years.

the merging of these two senses – in other words, "faith became Jesus Christ tropologically understood, or what Jesus means for me" (*Christus pro me*).[14]

Romans and the Shape of Reformation Theology

Near the end of his life, in 1545, Luther looked back on his early work as a biblical theologian and the difficulty he had had in understanding Romans 1:17: "For in the Gospel is the righteousness of God revealed." Only after several long and tormented years did he begin to understand the righteousness of God as a righteousness by which a just man lives as by a gift of God, that means by faith.[15]

Alister McGrath, among others, has pointed to the Romans lectures as the locus of Luther's decisive break with the theology of justification in which he had been trained as a student of the *via*

14 Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 71. See also Gerhard Ebeling, "The Hermeneutics and the Early Luther," *Theology Today* 21 (1964): 34-46; James S. Preus, *From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964). Schramm and Sterna, *Martin Luther*, 53-54 find in Romans the key for how to read the Old Testament properly, and Luther himself points to Romans as the single most important book in the Bible.

15 I hated the expression "righteousness of God," for through the tradition and practice of all the doctors I had been taught to understand it philosophically, as the so-called 'formal'– or, to use another word, 'active' – righteousness through which God is just and punishes sinners and the unjust. But I could not love the righteous God, the God who punishes. I hated him… I pondered incessantly, day and night, until I gave heed to the context of the words, namely: "for in the Gospel is the righteousness of God revealed, as it is written: the just shall live by faith." Then I began to understand the righteousness of God as a righteousness by which a just man lives as by a gift of God, that means by faith. I realized that it was to be understood this way: the righteousness of God is revealed through the Gospel, namely the so-called 'passive' righteousness we receive, through which God justifies us by faith through grace and mercy… Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. *WA* 54:179-87; *LW* 34:336-37. For a balanced assessment of this famous and much discussed test, see Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 85-95.

moderna.[16] Elements of Luther's later views are present already in Romans: an emphasis on God's righteousness as *iustitia aliena*; the utter passivity of humans in their own justification; the abandonment of the idea (earlier embraced by Luther) that by doing one's best – *facere quod in se est* – one could prepare for the reception of grace.

In all our efforts to procure divine favour, Luther says, we are treating God "like a cobbler handles leather."[17] Such a strategy is not only futile, but blasphemous.

All the same, at this point in his theological trajectory, Luther was still working within the framework of medieval Augustinian soteriology. From the time of the Romans lectures in 1515-16 until his Preface to Romans in 1522, Luther abandoned a set of images and ideas inherited from the Augustinian tradition in favour of what he took to be a more purely Pauline approach. Luther later evaluated his definitive position on justification vis-à-vis Augustine thus: "Augustine got nearer to the meaning of Paul than all the Scholastics, but he did not reach Paul. In the beginning I devoured Augustine, but when the door into Paul swung open and I knew what justification by faith really was, then it was out with him."[18] Luther's new insight was that the imputation of Christ's alien righteousness was based, not on the gradual curing of sin, but rather on the complete victory of Christ on a cross.[19] The once-for-allness of justification was emphasised: "If you believe, then you

16 Alistair McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, ²1991).

17 *Lectures on Romans*, 33.

18 Quoted in Gordon Rupp, "Patterns of Salvation in the First Age of the Reformation," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 57 (1966): 52-66. See also David Maxwell, "Luther's Augustinian Understanding of Justification in the Lectures on Romans," *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 5 (1996): 9-14.

19 See Michael J. Gorman, "Romans: Gentile and Jew in Cruciform Covenant Community," *Apostle of the Crucified Lord. A Theological Introduction to Paul and his Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004), 343-346.

have it!" Nor is there any direct correlation between the state of justification and one's outward works, as Luther made clear in his sermon on the pharisee and the publican in Luke 18:10-14 (1521): "And the publican fulfils all the commandments of God on the spot. He was then and there made holy by grace alone. Who could have foreseen that, under this dirty fellow?"[20]

Luther's doctrine of justification by faith fell like a bombshell on the theological landscape of medieval Catholicism. It shattered the entire theology of merit and indeed the sacramental-penitential basis of the church itself.[21] Many were rightly shocked at the import of Luther's message. Essentially, Luther's statement is no less shocking than Paul's upon which it was based: "God justifies the ungodly" (Rom 4:5) and "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom 5:20).

We must point out that this does not mean that Luther had no place at all for good works in the Christian life. While we are in no way justified by works, works follow faith as its proper fruit: not faith without works, but rather faith that works! The fruit of justification is faith active in love. Such love is directed in the first instance not toward God in hope of attaining some merit toward salvation, but toward one's neighbour, for "the Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbour."[22] In his 1522 Preface, Luther describes such faith as:

> "a living, busy, active, mighty thing… It is impossible for it [faith] not to be doing good works incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done but before the question is asked, it has already done them, and is constantly doing them. Whoever does not do such works, however,

20 *WA* 17:404.

21 See Ozment, *Age of Reform*, 150.

22 George, "Martin Luther," 117.

> is an unbeliever… Thus, it is impossible to separate works from faith, quite as impossible as to separate heat and light from fire."[23]

Centre of Paul's Theology

This said, can we hypothesise a centre or a nucleus for the theology of Paul, one that unifies all 'discourse on God'? What in Martin Luther's analysis is this point? This question implies yet another, deeper one: does Martin Luther consider Paul's theology as deriving from a fundamental structure, which every ethical and ecclesial problem and conflict actualises, or changes according to the problems, for which the answers and argumentations of the Apostle would be contextually fundamental, without having to be necessarily unified?

According to the Lutheran reading of Paul – and there is a lot of introspective intensity in Luther's analysis of Paul – justification by faith alone (*sola fide*) does constitute this centre, this pointe. Luther pulls the weight with Rudolf Bultmann, Ernst Käsemann, Hans Hübner.[24] But some commentators object that this would be valid for three letters only of the seven proto-Pauline letters: Galatians, Romans, and Philippians, but not for 1 Thessalonians, 1-2 Corinthians and Philemon.[25]

The hypothesis of an evolution of the theology of Paul up to its final formulation in Romans would be typical of his theology. In this regard, one might confer thought of James D.G. Dunn.[26] For the purpose of

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23 *LW* 35:370-71.

24 See James D.G. Dunn, "Justification by Faith," in *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 336-340.

25 See Antonio Pitta, *Lettera ai Romani*. Nuova versione, introduzione e commento (Milano: Paoline Editoriale Libri, ^{3}2009), 66-67; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Bible 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 116-117. Not so Dunn: "The Beginning of Salvation," in *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 371-372.

26 *Theology of Paul*, 2-26, especially 25.

our paper concerning 'justification by faith alone,' we wish to delimit ourselves to Romans, seeing that Martin Luther himself considered it to be the height of Paul's Letters.[27]

Luther's reading of the human situation disallowed the kind of watered-down, attenuated doctrine of original sin that had come to prevail in Nominalist soteriology of the late Middle Ages. For example, in his comments on Romans 5:12-14, Luther opposes those theologians who construe original sin as the mere absence of original righteousness. According to this teaching, the human will has been weakened, impaired by original sin. This serious breach must be restored initially through the sacrament of baptism (gratia gratum faciens), and this initial healing then supplemented and enhanced through the penitential-Eucharistic channels of sacramental grace (*gratia gratis data*).[28]

For Luther, however, this schema is totally inadequate. Original sin is not merely the privation of quality in the will, indeed, not merely the loss of light in the intellect or of strength in the memory, but, in a word, the loss of all uprightness and of the power of all our faculties of body and soul and of the whole inner and outer man. Over and beyond this: proneness toward evil; the loathing of the good; the disdain for light and wisdom, but fondness for error and darkness; the avoidance and contempt of good works, but an eagerness for doing evil.[29]

Luther describes humans affected by sin as incurvati in se, "curved in on themselves." This is so because, due to original sin, our nature is so curved in upon itself at its deepest levels that it not only bends the best gifts of God toward itself in order to enjoy them,

27 "This Epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament, and is truly the purest Gospel": Luther, *LW*, vol. 35, 365.

28 George, "Martin Luther," 114.

29 *Lectures on Romans*, 167-168.

rather it "uses" God in order to obtain them, but it does not even know that, in this wicked, twisted, crooked way, it seeks everything, including God, only for itself.[30] Such a radical reading of the human situation could only be answered with an even more radical reading of divine grace. Hence, justification comes from faith alone.[31]

The theme of justification through faith in Paul's epistles is a complex matter.[32] We can safely say that justification is not reducible to a mere forensic act of absolution or remission issued by a third party, but implies the reintegration of full and fecund interpersonal relations that pertain to the two parts in the lawsuit, the Old Testament rîb model of justification as used by Paul in his argumentation in Romans.[33] Since God himself is part in the lawsuit, it is a situation of general order which has to be re-established.

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30 *Lectures on Romans*, 159. Luther's insight here derives not only from his critique of external religious practice, but also from his own tortured quest to find a gracious God. In his struggles with penance and confession, Luther's problem was never whether his sins were large ones or small ones, but whether in fact he had confessed every single one. What about the sins he could not remember? What about the sins committed in his sleep? Luther anticipated Freud by recognizing a depth-dimension to the human person and by refusing to limit the effects of sin to the conscious mind alone.

31 See John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2015), 97-116.

32 See Romano Penna, "Il tema della giustificazione in Paolo. Status quaestionis," in *La giustificazione*. Atti del convegno dell'Associazione Teologica Italiana 1997, ed. Giovanni Ancona (Padova: Messaggero, 1997), 19-64; Charles H. Cosgrove, "Justification in Paul. A Linguistic and Theological Reflection," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (1987): 653-670; Jean-Noël Aletti, "Comment Paul voit la justice de Dieu en Romains. Enjeux d'une absence de définition," *Biblica* 71 (1992): 359-375.

33 See Penna, "Il tema della giustificazione in Paolo," 19-64. For a complete discussion of the Old Testament *rîb* model of justice, see Pietro Bovati, *Re-Establishing Justice*. Legal Terms, Concepts and Procedures in the Hebrew Bible, trans. Michael J. Smith (JSOTSS 105; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); "Parole di giustizia. La controversia bilaterale (*rib*): un modello biblico di giustizia nella riconciliazione e nel perdono," *Dignitas* 5 (2004): 81-92.

We must insist that this reference to this model is inadequate, because some of the elements that make up the *rîb* genre are absent in Romans.[34]

1. Request for confession of guilt and request for pardon

Reconciliation between God and humanity is obtained before the recognition of guilt on the part of humanity. Paul does not link divine pardon to the confession that man might emit for his sins. The divine way of acting (or that of Christ) precedes conversion or the confession of sins. Paul does not mention a request for remission or pardon (like that we find in Psalm 51 and other Old Testament texts), because pardon and justification have already been given by God before any request for pardon on our sides. In other words, Paul never says that justification is linked to an explicit request for pardon and reconciliation.

On the contrary, reconciliation and pardon are the effect of pure gratuity on the part of God: Paul makes this more than clear in Romans 3:24: "They are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," and in Romans 5:20: "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."[35] What follows is a further element that is absent in Romans.

34 Pitta, *Lettera ai Romani*, 204-205.

35 Sherri Brown, "Faith, Christ, and Paul's Thought of Salvation History," in *Unity and Diversity in the Gospels and Paul*. Essays in Honour of Frank J. Matera, eds. Christopher W. Skinner and Kelly R. Iverson, Early Christianity and Its Literature 7 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical literature, 2012), 249-271. See also *The Faith of Jesus Christ*. Exegetical, Biblical and Theological Studies, eds. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle (Peabody, MA: Milton Keynes – Paternoster: Hendrickson, 2009).

2. Romans does not say sin is a guilt or an injustice made against God

Romans 1 seems to contradict the assertion that God punishes man for rejecting him, but just the same it cannot be chosen as proof of Paul's position, who is satisfied to repeat some topoi of biblical (and Jewish) doctrine on the just retribution of God against those who commit injustice. God punishes because humans are fully responsible; punishment is proper because God cannot tolerate injustice. If we want to have Paul's position concerning this question, we have to consult the end of the section that goes from Romans 9 to Romans 11.

In fact the crisis in the interpersonal relations between God and humanity is not described there as blame, guilt or injustice suffered by God, but as an effect of his unique initiative: "For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all" (Rom 11:32). This crisis in God-Man relations has therefore a clear objective in God himself (after all, according to Luther, humanity is not responsible for its negative situation;[36] it is thus understandable why God does not want to destroy humanity), and it has been absolved from this crisis on God's unique initiative. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, on 11:32 comments:

> All, both Jews and Greeks, have as groups been unfaithful to God, who makes use of such infidelity to manifest to all of them his bountiful mercy, to reveal about God just what he is. As v.31 makes clear, ethnic distinctions will remain, even when God does eventually display his mercy to 'all.'[37]

36 "Confession concerning Christ's Supper," in *LW* 37:362; *WA* 26:502, 28-30. See "The Disputation concerning Justification," in *LW* 34:155-156; *WA* I:85, 3-86, 19, *Theses* 15, 22, 24, 27, 29, 33. *Lectures on Romans*, *ad loc.*

37 *Romans*, 628.

What constitutes the nucleus of the Pauline thought begins only at 3:21. The problem of Romans 1:18–3:20 is not so much human injustice against God, as how to know whether God will judge the Jew just as the non-Jew.[38]

The first section of Romans deals therefore with the problem of the criteria with which God judges and retributes: i) according to works, ii) with impartiality, iii) according to the circumcision of the heart. Such a judicial structure is cancelled by sin, but unexpectedly confirmed, because God has justified all in the same way, and in so doing, he reveals himself most just.[39]

The structure of the pericope of Romans 1:18–3:20 permits Paul to draw the consequences regarding justification equal for all human beings and coming from one common law. However, we know that such a relationship is not typical of the Pauline thought: the pericope begins with a situation of global retribution, to arrive at unheard of conclusions, that is, to the Pauline doctrine of justification *sola fide*.[40]

We come across the same vocabulary of judgement (accusation, sentence of condemnation, defence, etc.) in Romans 8:31-34, a text that acts as a conclusion to all the argumentation from Romans 1 to Romans 8.[41] Paradoxically, the function of such vocabulary is to demonstrate that the judgement structure is not adequate enough to describe the relations between God and those in Christ (See Rom 8:1-3).

Therefore, if we consider the argumentation which goes from Romans 1 to Romans 8, one can clearly see how Paul

i) starts (in Romans 1:18–4:25) from a judgement context,

38 See Jean-Noël Aletti, *La Lettera ai Romani e la giustizia di Dio* (Roma: Borla, 1997), 80-89; "Rm 2. Sa cohérence et sa fonction," *Biblica* 77 (1996): 153-177.

39 See Jean-Noël Aletti, *God's Justice in Romans.* Keys to Interpreting the Epistle to the Romans, trans. Peggy Manning Meyer, Subsidia Biblica 37 (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2010), 273-306.

40 Pitta, *Lettera ai Romani*, 156.

41 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 529-530.

ii) to demonstrate its fundamental limits, and
iii) concludes (in Rom 8:31-34) by affirming that it does not pertain to Christians.[42]

Finally, judgement structures are inadequate to describe what has actually happened in and through the Christ Event. What we are here dealing with in the vocabulary with root δικ- (like δικαιόω, δίκαιος, δικαιοσύνη, δικαίωμα, δικαίωσις, ἀδικία, ἔνδικος, ἔκδικος, ὑπόδικος) in the Pauline Epistolary is the instrument of justification: by means of the Mosaic Law or without it.[43] When such a root is used, Romans does not insist on the relationships or the harm done, i.e., the injustice done to the divine partner, but on the means of justification, i.e., Law, faith without the Law (Rom 3:21.28.30; 5:1).

The Law and Justification in Romans

In Romans, therefore, the Law is not called the instrument of justification – an affirmation enunciated in several places: Romans 3:20; 5:20, "where sin increased, grace increased." There is, however, a fundamental difference between: 1) the just purpose of the Law and 2) the justifying purpose of the Law. With just purpose we mean that the Law must have justice as its aim; with justifying purpose we mean that the Law can declare its subjects just and render them just.

42 Romano Penna, *Lettera ai Romani*. Introduzione, versione, commento (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, [4]2010), 606-609; Pitta, *Lettera ai Romani*, 310-312.

43 See also Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 341-342, especially footnote 25; William Fiddian Moulton and Alfred Shenington Geden, *A Concordance to the Greek Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, [5]1978), *ad loc.*; Gottfried Quell and Gottlob Schrenk "δίκη, κτλ," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. II, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 174-225.

Such a distinction comes from Romans itself, where it is said that the Law only makes known what one should or should not do (Rom 7:7-12). Romans 3:20 explicates that the Law makes sin known to us, but without being able to justify itself.[44]

Romans does not identify the two purposes, and expressions such as τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου, the just requirement of the Law, in 8:4 imply only that the Law aims at or determines what is just, and not that it renders its subjects just. In fact, nowhere in Romans or in any other of Paul's letters is this justifying function of the Law found. The only one who justifies is God (and not the Law), and he does it without the Law and without the works of the Law (Rom 3:21).[45] Therefore, the δικαίωμα of the Law is the just command that the Law requests one to accomplish. This is in fact the purpose of the sending of the Son of God: the interior transformation of the believers.

Conclusion: The Pauline paradoxes

The Pauline reasoning with regards to justification seems to be negative, at least in Romans. It is expressed prevalently in a negative way, to insist on the fact that justification does not take place by means of the Law or by means of the works of the Law. But, if Romans deals with justification primarily by exclusion, it is not perchance.

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44 See Stefano Romanello, *Una legge buona ma impotente. Analisi retorico-letteraria di Rom 7,7-25 nel suo contesto*, Supplementi alla *Rivista Biblica* 35 (Bologna: Associazione Biblica Italiana – Edizioni Dehoniane, 1999). See also Jean-Noël Aletti, *Justification by Faith in the Letters of Saint Paul.* Keys to Interpretation, Analecta Biblica Studia 5 (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2015), *ad loc*.

45 See also Rom 3:26.30; 4:5; 8:30-33, and the theological passives [God as agent of the action] in Rom 2:13; 3:20.24.28; 4:2; 5:1.9; 6:7). See Jan Lambrecht and Richard W. Thompson, *Justification by Faith. The Implications of Romans 3:27-31* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989).

In fact, qualifying Martin Luther's analysis, justification is not the climax of the theology of Romans, but rather a means to prove the equality of all the believers in the Church, whatever their origin, Jewish or non-Jewish, (i.e., pagan).

The Mosaic Law is meant to function as a necessary stage in the attempt to make manifest the unheard of ways of God, who, by justifying all men in the same way (through faith and without the works of the Law), wanted to make manifest his totally unconditional grace to all, and his will to make sons/daughters of all men/women, without even asking for any condition whatsoever, except his own pure mercy. The vocabulary of justification, therefore, aims to underline the absolute gratuitousness of the salvific way of acting of God.

It is evident that Paul wanted to reject maxims that were taken for granted by contemporary Judaism (one of the major aspects of Paul's contribution to Christianity). He undermines the *rîb* model which he takes up from the Jewish Tradition (and this to underline the transformations which it had to undergo). This is most manifestly seen in Romans 11:28-32,[46] the formulation of which is eminently paradoxical and compels exegete and theologian alike to reflect not only upon the Mosaic system (and its purpose), but also upon the Pauline theological paradoxes.

One has, therefore, to see the Pauline doctrine of justification (through faith without the works of the Law) as an essential but not sufficient model: essential inasmuch as it expresses relationships that others cannot enunciate; insufficient inasmuch as it is not ambiguous and does not include in itself the means chosen by God to justify man.

46 See Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 628.

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The Human Being Created in the Image of God

Luther's Exegesis of *Imago Dei*

Beate Bengard

The interpretation of *imago Dei* is a central element in Luther's theology and is well suited as an example for illustrating the tendencies of his entire anthropology. Today, I will be presenting an outline of Luther's ideas about *imago Dei* and referring to a few important texts on the subject.

In his *Disputatio de homine*[1] (Disputation concerning man) from the year 1536, Luther voices his concept of the nature, destiny, and qualities of human beings. This is a very remarkable text which has often been cited in theological research, in part because it encompasses much more than just a definition of man. The *Disputatio de homine* is also a reflection on whether faith-based theology or reason-based philosophy would be more able to capture the nature of human beings and it is not surprising that the theologian Luther believed the ultimate interpretation to be on the side of theology. Because, as useful and

1 Martin Luther, "The Disputation Concerning Man, 1536," in *Martin Luther's Works,* (from now on referred to as *LW*), vol. 34, ed. Lewis W. Spitz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1960), 133-144.

important as reason may be for rule of worldly things, it is missing the ability to capture the true nature of human beings and their reason for existence.

The traditional interpretation was that human beings are most notably different from their fellow creatures through reason, and it is this which provides him with a particular closeness to God. However, Luther sees this differently: though human beings are most notably different because of their ability to reason, it is not reason that constitutes his nature in the proper sense. Luther explains that it is not an internal quality that constitutes human beings – in other words, none of his own characteristics or abilities, rather it is an external quality, namely his relation to God that distinguishes him. This connection to God, which gave human beings their innermost spirit, is expressed by Luther as follows: human beings were created by God in his image. Therefore, through this external relationship, human beings were designed and created for an interconnectedness with God.

Faith is the realisation of this relationship and sin is its rejection.[2] Following the theses 20 to 23 of the *Disputatio de homine*, one can say the following about human beings: Man is the creation of God. He was created by God at his best, meaning without sin, and with the charge of ruling over his fellow creations in God's image. But he turned away from this calling and has since been subject to the power of the devil. He can only be freed through his belief in Jesus Christ.[3] Before we

2 Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luthers Theologie. Eine vergegenwärtigung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 143.

3 *LW*, vol. 34, 138, "20. Theology to be sure from the fullness of its wisdom defines man as whole and perfect: 21. Namely, that man is a creature of God consisting of body and a living soul, made in the beginning after the image of God, without sin, so that he should procreate and rule over the created things, and never die, 22. But after the fall of Adam, certainly, he was subject to the power of the devil, sin and death, a twofold evil for his powers, unconquerable and eternal. 23. He can be freed and given eternal life only through the Son of God, Jesus Christ (if he believes in him)."

reconstruct the individual steps of loss and reclaiming of the *imago* Dei, let us first take a look at how Luther is positioned in these theses compared to the traditional theological anthropology of his time.

Reformatory Differentiation from Tradition

In his understanding of the imago Dei, Luther distances himself from Augustinian and scholastic theology.[4] Augustine purported that the ability of human beings to become a likeness of God is reflected in three core qualities of the human soul, corresponding to the Holy Trinity. These are the faculties of memory (*memoria*), reason (*intelligentia*), and will (*voluntas*). Therefore, the inner state of mind of human beings is the actual *imago*, a reflection of the Holy Trinity.

While Luther does not openly criticise this Augustine teachings here (though he does at other points, such as in the Genesis Teachings…), he doesn't adopt them in the portrayal of human beings in the *Disputatio de homine*. In contrast to Augustine, Luther is not searching for substantial indicators of one special aspect of human being in which he can localise the imago. Instead, he is insisting on the relationally existential substance of God-likeness. In doing so, he is not engaging in Trinitarian speculations, but very clearly insisting on the likeness as a feature of creation, and furthermore, on the loss of this God-likeness through the Fall of Man.[5]

This emphasis on the loss of imago is very apparent in Luther's differentiation from scholastic tradition. The scholastic tradition usually points to the book of Genesis for an interpretation of God-likeness. Genesis 1:26 says:

4 Gerhard Ebeling, *Lutherstudien, Band II: Disputatio de homine: Dritter Teil: Die theologische definition des menschen: Kommentar zu these 20-40* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 99-101, notes 32-36.

5 Albrecht Peters, *Der mensch* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1979), 196.

> And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness (…).
>
> In Latin:
>
> *Et ait: Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostrum* (…).

Ever since the time of the church fathers, theologians have identified the Latin terms imago (Hebrew: *zelem*) and similitudo (Hebrew: *d'mut*) with two different levels of sameness with God. In this interpretation, human beings are the likeness of God in two different ways: first, as the image (*imago*), in that they are equipped with reason, with which they are also able to perceive God, and beyond that, secondly, in their ability to love. This quality to love – love in the sense of the *agape*, the unselfish love that gives itself away for the other – is identified by the term *similitudo* in the text of Genesis.[6]

The scholastic tradition interprets the Fall of Man to the effect that only one part of the God-likeness was lost, namely the ability to love – referred to as the *similitudo*. Consequently, a portion of the God-likeness is preserved – the actual imago, de-noting reason. This is different in Luther's depiction. As a translator of the Old and New Testaments, he was of course aware of the difference between the two terms imago and similitudo. Nevertheless, he did not apply the scholastic interpretation, instead, he proposed a different understanding of the God-likeness.

Luther assumes a complete loss of the God-likeness. This loss is not restricted to one of the qualities of reason or capacity for love. The very fact that human beings possess reason endowed by God, is not something which Luther questions. Reason, is also for Luther,

6 Peters, *Der mensch*, 197.

the inner space wherein human beings should hear God's words. But unfortunately, since the Fall of Man, this reason has been subject to the power of the devil and is therefore incapable of choosing God of his own free will, as the scholastic teachings would suggest. For Luther, the loss of God-likeness is rooted in the loss of the original righteousness, which the first man was created and endowed with. Adam was initially fully devoted to God, his creator, and, by virtue of their sameness, shared his strengths and goodness. These vital central aspects were completely lost through the Fall. From Genesis, Luther interprets the Fall of Man as Adam turning away from the saving relationship with God through his own doing.[7]

In contrast to the scholastic tradition, Luther assumes that God-likeness is lost for the human being, which means that he is not capable of recovering it on his own. Human beings cannot through reason alone decide to recover it by turning back to God. They cannot contribute in this way to their salvation, which itself exists through the reclaimed closeness with God. While it is possible through reason to envision the existence of God's likeness, the human being cannot on his own grasp what this would mean for his existence.[8] According to Luther, even true Christians have only a rough and imperfect concept of the reality of God-likeness.

To the Biblical Findings

For Luther, this new interpretation of imago Dei is also found within the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament and Apocrypha there are five passages about the God-likeness of the human being, in contrast to the New Testament, where there is only one. Instead,

7 Johann Anselm Steiger, *Fünf zentralthemen der theologie Luthers und seiner erben: communicatio – imago – figura – Maria – exempla* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2002), 109-110.

8 Bayer, *Martin Luthers Theologie*, 145-146.

there are multiple passages in the New Testament where Jesus Christ is referred to as the true likeness of God to which the human being should strive to become. The strong influence of the scripture in Luther's theology can be seen by the inclusion of Pauline theology in Luther's approach.

In Paul's juxtaposition of "flesh and spirit," Luther observes that the term "sins of the flesh" is in no way restricted to physical misdeeds or even sexuality. It is much more the soul itself that is entangled in physical or materialistic desires that affect the human spirit. This shows that not just one facet of man – namely the physical – was corrupted by the sin, while a spiritual-rational part remained intact. Instead, the entire person in his physical-soul-spirit condition is governed by the sin and cannot find his way back to the God-likeness. Through the inclusion of Paul's work, Luther is able to avoid a rationalizing or speculative line of thinking, which would reduce the influence of the original sin mainly on the physical desires of the human being. Instead, Luther delivers an existential interpretation of the idea of original sin which fully incorporate human beings, including reason and body.[9]

The exegetical findings however, result in a new question about the interpretation of imago Dei. It is apparent that there are two utterly conflicting theories in the Old and New Testament about who possesses the God-likeness. Is it mankind, who gained it through Adam? Or is it only Christ, who Paul describes as the true likeness? How is the God-likeness even to be understood? As protological, anthropological given, as suggested by the text of Genesis? Or as a Christian-centric and eschatological statement?[10] The latter clearly points out the way to a recovery of the God-likeness, as suggested by many passages in the New Testament, from which only Colossians 1:13-15 is cited here. There it is said:

9 Peters, *Der mensch*, 39-40.

10 Ibid., 55.

> Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:
>
> In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:
>
> Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.

In response to this apparent conflict between the God-likeness of Adam and Christ as God's image, Luther develops a narrative approach to both forms of the likeness.[11] In his interpretation of imago Dei, he envisages the loss and recovery of the God-likeness as a coherent path within the history of salvation, which is based on the juxtaposition of the antitypes Adam and Christ.

Loss and Restoration of *Imago Dei*

1. Before the Fall

In his commentary to the Book of Genesis from 1535, Luther presents a detailed account of the condition of the first human before the Fall. The supralapsarian Adam (Adam before the Fall) possesses, through Creation, the full God-likeness. This is indicated through the sharing in God's essence and a special, intimate relation to his Creator - a status of righteousness, strength, and fearlessness:

"Therefore, when we speak about that image, we are speaking about something unknown. Not only have we had no experience of it, but we continually experience the opposite; and so, we hear nothing except bare words. In Adam there was an enlightened reason, a true knowledge of God, and a most sincere desire to love God and his neighbor, so that Adam embraced Eve and at once acknowledged her

11 Ibid., 31.

to be his own flesh. Added to these were other lesser but exceedingly important gifts – if you draw a comparison with our weakness – namely, a perfect knowledge of the nature of the animals, the herbs, the fruits, he trees, and the remaining creatures. If all these qualities are combined, do they not make up and produce the sort of man in whom you would think that the image of god is reflected, especially when you add the rule over the creatures? Just as Adam and Eve acknowledged God as their Lord, so later on they themselves ruled over the other creatures in the air, in the water, and on earth. Who could adequately describe this glory in words? I believe that Adam could command a lion with a single word, just as we give a command to a trained dog. And he was free to cultivate the soil to produce what he wished. Our later discussion will show that thorns and thistles were not in existence at that time. Similarly, I also believe that in those days the beasts were not as fierce as they are now. But this condition is the fault of original sin, and from it all the remaining creatures derive their shortcomings. I hold that before the sin the sun was brighter, the water purer, the trees more fruitful, and the fields more fertile. But through sin and that awful fall not only our flesh is disfigured by the leprosy of sin, but everything we use in this life has become corrupt, as we shall point out more clearly below. (…)

Therefore, that image of god was something most excellent, in which were included eternal life, everlasting freedom from fear, and everything that is good. However, through sin this image was so obscured and corrupted that we cannot grasp it even with our intellect. Although we utter the words, who is there who could understand what it means to be in a life free from fear, without terrors and dangers, and to be wise, upright, good, and free from all the disaster, spiritual as well as physical? However, greater than these was the fact that Adam was fitted for eternal life. He was so created that as long as he lived in this physical life, he would till the ground, not as if he were doing

an irksome task and exhausting his body by toil but with supreme pleasure, not as a pastime but in obedience to God and submission to His will. After this physical life was to come a spiritual life, in which he would neither make use of physical food nor do the other things which are customary in this life but would live an angelic and spiritual life. As the future live is pictured to us in Holy Scripture, we shall not drink, eat, or carry on any other physical functions. Therefore St. Paul says (1 Cor. 15:45): "The first man was made a living soul;" that is, he will be a spiritual man when he reverts to the image of God. He will be similar to God in life, righteousness, holiness, wisdom, etc."[12]

So, Adam was created in God's image, from which sprung a deep personal connection to God, as well as an exceptional physical and psychological strength. The Fall can be perceived in contrast to this, like an avalanche of decay ending this state of affairs.[13]

2. The Fall and Consequences

As the previous quotes from the Genesis reading shows, without the Fall of Man, God would have led him from his corporal life (*vita animalis*) to his spiritual life (*vita spiritualis*), without having to endure physical death. But after the Fall, as described in Genesis 3, the way to an eternal life is no longer accessible. It is only possible to reach this through death and judgement, and the call to Jesus Christ, who is the only true likeness of God.

The transformation of mankind after the Fall is depicted in drastic terms by Luther. In the beginning, human beings were created in the image of God. But because they sinned against this image of God, after the snake tempted them to eat from the forbidden tree with the promise that this would bring them closer to God, they were in truth

12 LW, vol. 1, comment on Genesis 1,26.

13 Peters, *Der mensch*, 45.

closer to the Devil. Instead of an image of God, an image of the Devil was placed within the human being. Because of this, human beings are no longer able to behold God as before.

The original trust in God then becomes mistrust. And man, no longer able to find stability and security in God, now turns to a search for stability in creation, namely himself, through which he will always find new disappointments. Only the conversion to Jesus Christ may stop this selfish instinct. Jesus Christ delivers the exact antithesis to the existential instability of man. In his earthly life, which the human being comprehends through the teaching of the gospel, the central trust in God the Father is restored. It can be seen in the call to Abba and the God-forsaken call on the Cross. Jesus Christ isn't tied to his worldly belongings or his human existence, instead he follows the path towards trust in God through his death and resurrection.[14]

3. Restoration

Luther abundantly illustrates the restoration of the God-likeness, in which mankind wins back the original harmony with God and his creatures through Jesus Christ. For this, it is necessary for human beings to transform themselves into the image of Christ and experience a spiritual recreation. Only then is it possible for Man to stand once again before God without fear. In Disputatio de Homine (Theses 35-38), Luther describes how Man remains fully passive throughout this re-creation, doing nothing by his own efforts.

35. Therefore, man in this life is the simple material of God for the form of his future life.
36. Just as the whole creation which is now subject to vanity (Rom. 8:20) is for God the material for its future glorious form.

14 Ibid., 204.

37. And as earth and heaven were in the beginning for the form completed after six days, that is, its material,
38. So is man in this life for his future form, when the image of God has been remolded and perfected.[15]

In Luther's conceptualisation, the decision about the spiritual re-creation of the human being is in the center of his life, at the heart of his existence before God. This place is alone for God, the Creator of the human being. From this body-mind existential point, this new being permeates through all other dimensions of the human existence – his relationship to his fellow humans, to creation and to himself.[16] According to Luther, the human being lives as a singular creature in different *coram*-relationships: *coram mundo* – towards the world, *coram se ipso* – towards himself, *coram Deo* – towards God. Through the renewal in Jesus Christ, these coram-relationships are once again in harmony and healed.[17]

The goal of God's design is to restore Jesus Christ as the *imago Dei* and recover the image lost through Adam's Fall. Luther establishes that this is the reason Christ became a man, because Christ had been in the image of the Father since all eternity. It is interesting, how at this point the anthropology of God-likness relates to the two natures doctrine. According to the two natures doctrine, Christ is both truly human and truly God. Consequently, Christ is both the image of God as well as the image of humanity.

For Martin Luther, the restoration of *imago Dei* is to be equated with the justification of man by faith and by grace alone, his central reformation idea. God becomes human in Jesus Christ and therefore the image of man. Jesus Christ takes on the sins of humanity, while

15 LW, vol. 34, 139.
16 Peters, *Der mensch*, 49.
17 Ibid., 206.

the foreign righteousness of Jesus Christ is ascribed to man. In his theology, Luther also refers to this exchange of attributes as the "joyful exchange." As a result, the human being is awarded the foreign qualities of Christ, in particular his righteousness, and appears before God's judgement in the image of Christ.[18]

At this point it is clear that in this theological scenario, the term "image" extends beyond the basic definition. Here, "image" means not only the "representation of something." If there was no representational relationship behind the God-likeness of the human being, but an existential relationship between God and Man, then we are also talking about an extraordinary form of depiction with the God-likeness of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, Christ is not an image of God in the sense of a plain representation or even a qualitatively defined copy. Rather, the doctrine of the Trinity teaches us that God himself exists within him. From the perspective of the believer, Christ is the visualisation of both the human and divine qualities. And only through the incarnation of God in Mankind do human beings find a link to the foreign image of God, otherwise fully closed to them. Luther metaphorically illustrates the unification of the human soul with Christ through the uniting of bride and groom. This comparison with the bride and groom visualises the tremendous attraction that Christ exerts as the likeness of God on the human being, who is under the power of the Devil.[19] Luther writes the following in his Lecture to Genesis about the transformation of man when faced with the likeness of God:

> "But now the Gospel has brought about the restoration of that image. Intellect and will have remained, but both very much impaired. And so the Gospel brings about that we are formed

18 Steiger, *Fünf zentralthemen der theologie Luthers und seiner erben*, 113.

19 Ibid., 114.

> once more according to that familiar and indeed better image, because we are born again into eternal life or rather into the hope of eternal life by faith, that we may live in God and be one with Him, as Christ says (John 17:21). And indeed, we are reborn not only for life but also for righteousness, because faith acquires Christ's merit and knows that through Christ's death we have been set free. From this source our righteousness has its origin, namely, that newness of life through which we are zealous to obey God as we are taught by the Word and aided by the Holy Spirit."[20]

Conclusion: Life in Conflict

In his mortal condition, the human being cannot return to full God-likeness. The restoration of God-likeness is instead an eschatological process. This means, that it will not happen until the Day of Judgement. Whereby only then will the mystical unity of the human being with Christ will be achieved. Until then, during his mortal lifetime, the believer is in an everchanging relationship with two different images – that of God and that of the Devil. In this life the process of becoming the image of Jesus Christ can only be started. Until then, human beings find themselves in conflict between their sinful nature and the likeness to God. Martin Luther coined a Latin formulation for describing this divided condition, where the human being is justified by God and at the same time a sinner: simul iustus et peccator. So, life in God's likeness begins in this life. Yet it is not achieved, and the human being – in contrast to the supralapsarian Adam – is far away from possessing that God-likeness.[21]

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20 LW, vol. 1, comment on Genesis 1,26.

21 Steiger, *Fünf zentralthemen der Theologie Luthers und seiner erben*, 117.

In this life it is the teachings of the gospel and the baptism which bring about the transformation of the human being back in to the imago. Nonetheless, this is a process that is first beginning, and which will be brought to completion after death and judgement. An analogy is hereby created between the dual nature of Jesus Christ, both as an image of God as well as an image of Man, as far as Man itself is already beginning to accept the likeness of God, and at the same time is under the power of the Devil and therefore revolting against God.

Therefore the question stands, what status does Luther give the imago Dei in the life of Christian believers? One is most likely to do justice to this quality of the God-likeness, when understanding it as a promise that stands over mankind and from there works as an influence on his identity – also considering the contest through sin and death that continue to be present in Man's life.[22] In other words: The idea of Godlikeness has a performative influence on those who believe in it and provides orientation for their daily actions.

As with the German theologian Albrecht Peters, we can draw three features that characterise the Lutheran anthropology.[23]

1. Man's life is defined by an external relation: he exists not through his own force, but as God's Creation, who created him and endowed him with all that he needs.
2. Man is a responsive creature: He was created in the image of God, meaning he is called to a partnership with God, which the tradition of God-likeness denotes. However, this God-likeness is always in contest with sin. The message of the imago Dei therefore requires actualisation by means of human structures through the sacraments and teaching of the gospels.

22 Gerhard Sauter, *Das verborgene Leben. Eine theologische anthropologie* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2011), 87.

23 Peters, *Der mensch*, 207.

3. Finally, the existence of the human being and his dependency on God is an eschatological reality what means that it is still in an emerging state. It is only begun through the mortal existence of the human being and achieved on the Day of Judgement in the full transformation.

Here we can draw several implications for Christians. Luther summarised this in a handy formulation, that Christians exist "solely through God." In keeping with his critique of reason, Luther emphasises that it is the Spirit of God that, with the help of the Word of Man, can reach down to the human being. The human being does not rise up but stays passive as this comes to pass, meaning that Man does not bring about the imitatio Christi by his own power. Through the influence of the Word, Luther says, the "old Adam" – meaning the Adam after the Fall – is tirelessly pushed to his death every day. Through this, the restoration of God's image is in progress. God breaks through from the future world, into that of the believers, and in them creates new people – the people that here and now are already living a just and sanctified life before God.[24]

24 Ibid., 212-213.

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Meritum in Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther

Piotr Roszak, Damian Dorocki

The term "merit" often induces something akin to an allergic reaction in many who view this conception of man and his actions as somehow inappropriate.[1] For them, searching for any kind of merit on the part of man is a destruction of the primacy of grace, reducing it to a form of remuneration, making salvation no longer a gratuitous gift of God. For a great number of theologians, from the beginnings of Christianity until the present, it is a legitimate term, however, as it reveals the essential truth about man and his free answer to God's call, even though it carries, deservedly or not, some negative connotations as a result of certain disputes.

Is it worth purifying the theological language of the notion of merit which has functioned in the Christian terminology to date? Do Martin Luther, known for his opposition against such merit-language, and St. Thomas Aquinas, who in his works repeatedly uses the term, represent two opposing views? For both theologians, merit is not the cause of

1 The text is in line with the research conducted within the framework of the grant of the National Science Center (NCN) "Identity and Tradition. The Patristic Sources of Thomas Aquinas' Thought," agreement number: UMO-2016/23/B/HS1/02679

grace but the result of it and there is no way we deserve this grace (*sine gratia vero nihil potest esse meritorium*),[2] as Thomas emphasises. Thus, the question appears to be in what sense Aquinas speaks of the "merit of faith" or the merit of eternal life. For many years, researchers have undertaken comparative studies on this problem but, as M. Root rightly observes,

> "Merit does not appear to be a contemporary ecumenical problem … the continuing discussion should neither be confessional nor ecumenical, it would simply be theological."[3]

In this chapter we attempt to summarise this debate by referring to the biblical commentaries of Aquinas, which were previously absent in the discussions over the merit and the thoughts which they contain. These have rarely been quoted in recent studies[4] and we will also seek to take into consideration not only a classic interpretation of Martin Luther's thought, but also the Finnish school, opening up new perspectives for dialogue. It is worth noting not only their similarities, but also differences in anthropology, especially the perception of sin and concupiscence (*concupiscientia*), which led both theologians to different conclusions. Finally, after presenting these two ways of understanding merit, we will attempt to answer the question of their mutual relation.

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2 Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q.26, a. 6, ad 12.

3 Michael Root, "Aquinas, *Merit* and Reformation Theology after the 'Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification'" in *Aquinas in Dialogue: Thomas for the Twenty-First Century,* ed. Jim Fodor, Frederick Ch. Bauerschmidt (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 5-22.

4 See Piotr Roszak, Jörgen Vijgen, ed., *Reading Sacred Scripture with Thomas Aquinas. Hermeneutical Tools, Theological Questions and New Perspectives* (Brepols: Turnhout 2015).

Aquinas on Merit
Towards a Relational Theological Framework

The semantic spectrum of the term meritum is invaluable, but for St. Thomas it is not of a transactional character but rather a personalist one, as it reveals the quality of personal life. Thus, it expresses the way of treating a person whether they deserve a certain treatment, such as a beautiful woman who deserves to be married to a king.[5] Merit is not something natural, as it does not refer to equal partners or relations between equals, which would create some form of "debt" and oblige payment (*ex condigno*), but is a gift (*ex congruo*),[6] *ex gratia Spiritus Sancti*,[7] as Thomas says.

Merit is possible due to God's ordination (*ordinatio*), on the basis of which God associates the merit of a gratuitous reward with certain actions; they themselves do not carry any "power" but this "power" has been established by God.[8] God wishes to give eternal happiness to man in an unmerited way and, as a means to achieve this aim, He establishes the meritum based on a free choice of good. That is why man needs God's grace even if he does not commit sin: this is due to the difference between human and divine nature.

In this logic of God's order, namely Providence, some actions become meritorious because they originate from the free will of man permeated by love. The divine gift is assimilated by man in his freedom in a manner which is typical for man (*convenientia*), as a being possessing both reason

5 *De veritate*, q. 26, a. 6, sol.

6 *S.Th.*, I-II, q.114, a.3c: According to Thomas, it is termed as "congruous (*congruum*)" because God should reward good human deeds, even though "considered as regards the substance of the work (*secundum substantiam operis*), and inasmuch as it springs from the free will, there can be no condignity because of the very great inequality."

7 *In Rom*, cap. VI, lect. 4 (nr 517): "Thus, therefore, if our works are considered in themselves and as coming from our fee will they not merit eternal life condignly, but as coming from the grace of the Holy Spirit."

8 That is why Thomas states that "merit and reward refer to the same, for a reward means something given anyone in return for work or toil, as a price for it." – *S.Th.,* I-II, q. 114, a.1c.

and will, whereas merit offers the way to realise it. Thus, merit expresses not so much gathering points which give us the right to demand something in the future (it does not establish any kind of responsibility on the part of God), but entering the logic of God's action and receiving His gift. For Thomas, merit is not what the act of creation "gives" to God because "man can give God only what he has received from God."[9] Thus, merit is primarily the "property" of a good work which entitles man to receive a reward.

The same key to understanding merit lies in the range of what we are the masters of, and Thomas repeatedly reminds us that only that which is truly free might be meritorious; the merit of faith is based on the free answer of man to the granting of grace; the merit of the passions is based on controlling our will over them and only in this way will they truly be "ours."

It refers to both actions directly commanded the by will, such as wanting or love, but also those which, although fulfilled by other powers, remain under the influence of the will (*imperium voluntatis*). That is why Aquinas does not distinguish types of certain passions as being meritorious by themselves, because merit does not concern a certain form of action but charity:[10] But every virtuous act is meritorious, if it is performed with charity.[11] For Thomas, we are most free ("what we do out of love we do most willingly") when we love others with charity (*caritas*) and this is the reason why he considers love as the radix meriendi and states that "merit chiefly rest[s] with charity."[12] It is impossible to interpret it without referring to the divine

9 *In Rom*., cap. XI, lect. 5 (nr 941).

10 *De veritate*, q.26, a.6, ad 7: … meritum autem non consistit in actu, proprie loquendo, secundum speciem actus, sed secundum radicem, quae est caritas. Et ideo non oportet quod formaliter passione mereamur, quamvis habeat se ut obiectum

11 *In 1 Cor*., cap. VII, lect. 1.

12 *S.Th.*, I-II, q.114, a.4c.: "Hence, even inasmuch as merit depends on voluntariness, merit is chiefly attributed to charity."

idea of ordinatio since proprius actus caritatis, for Aquinas relies on directing our minds to the ultimate end for man and this end is the subject of charity.[13] The relations of free and responsible agents to their ends must, in some sense, be one of merit.[14]

Thomas's approach to merit, as presented in his *Summa Theologiae*, clearly refers to a biblical framework which makes it possible to fully understand the theological significance of meritum. It is visible, for example, in biblical citations in *sed contra* or in q.114 where he refers to 2 Tm 4:8 and the "crown of righteousness," which will be the reward. It denotes that a merit is a different name for a gift which answers human nature thanks to a gracious grant of God.

Understanding the Passion of Jesus, as happening by means of a "merit" which is communicated to the faithful, testifies to the relational context of merit.[15] It stems from an understanding of grace that stresses the participative moment of it: the source of our justification is not our actions, but rather the meritorious righteousness of Jesus, thanks to which the renewal and sanctification of man occurs through his sharing in the life of God.[16] It is not based on the addition of our merits to those of Jesus, but rather on their appropriation.[17]

Given the generic understanding of merit, it is easier to grasp the sense of the term meritum fidei which seems dangerously to liken Thomas to Pelagianism, however interpreted (naturalised grace, etc.). Nevertheless, Thomas does not wish to indicate whether freedom or

13 *S.Th.*, I-II q.114 a.4c.

14 *In IV Sent.*, d. 49 q. 1 a. 4 qc. 4. "Actus enim noster non habet quod sit meritorius ex ipsa substantia actus, sed solum ex habitu virtutis quo informatur. Vis autem merendi est in omnibus virtutibus ex caritate, quae habet ipsum finem pro objecto; et ideo diversitas in merendo tota revertitur ad diversitatem caritatis; et sic caritas viae distinguet mansiones per modum meriti."

15 *In I Cor.*, cap. I, lect. 2.

16 Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation According to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 120.

17 *S.Th.*, III q.8, aa.1 and 5.

grace is primary, despite his belief in the latter being so, but instead he focuses on the realism of freedom in the act of faith. *Assentire* is essential for faith since what is not apparent happens not as *necesarium* but as *voluntarium*.[18] That is why Thomas, following the Fathers of the Church, St. Gregory the Great in particular, underlines that For faith has no merit where human reason offers proof.[19] Yet in the case of faith, there is no obvious evidence for the reason: in order to believe, we must be willing to do so. Thus, the presence of reason after the act of faith which follows its directions, increases the merit of faith and somehow supports the man who searches to understand that which he believes in.

Ultimately then, what is the significance of merit for Thomas? It describes the manner of growing in grace by means of offering a free answer on the part of man to the gift of God in the form of good deeds stemming from love and which direct man towards his ultimate end. It is significant that Thomas treats merit as a certain way (per modum meriti) of describing how the fruits of Christ's Passion, namely Salvation, reaches us.[20] According to Aquinas, humans need grace after the Fall for the removal of sin (operative grace) and to make human actions proportionate to God (cooperative grace.) How do human freedom and a grace which is realised in "merit" meet?

A. *Pondus animae*. Merit and cooperation with grace

This vision of merit clearly indicates the primacy of grace, but for Thomas it is not totalizing, nor does it exclude the reality of human freedom. It is the result of his perception of the relationship between nature and

18 *Super De Trinitate*, pars 1 q. 2 a. 1 ad 5.

19 *In II Thes*., cap. I, lect. 2.

20 *S.Th.*, III, q.48, a.6.

grace, two elements which do not operate on the same level and cannot compete with one another. Undoubtedly, the key to understanding merit (and also the reason for the related misunderstandings with Protestant theology) is a viewing of grace in an analogical rather than an unambiguous manner. These are not two sets which are parallel and they sometimes overlap: for Thomas, grace is a pneumatic substance which is autonomous but has a character of the habitus and, according to the famous adage, *supponit naturam*.[21]

Grace does not replace the fallen nature and become a new "nature" of man in a somehow substantial manner (which, after Luther, is supported by a considerable percentage of the Protestant tradition) because Thomas describes its action as being habitus, the facilitation of nature. The healing of nature and its elevation are the effects of grace which complement each other. It is not the replacement but the perfection and granting of what the nature wishes, but is not able to achieve itself. This is not the change of nature but rather granting it a power which exceeds its natural faculties. This can be compared to a situation where the Maltese rabbit whose nature is not to play the compositions of Chopin, suddenly performs the interpretation of The Revolutionary Etude, although it can only jump on the musical keyboard and make some sounds.

21 See Gilles Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom: The Summa Theologiae as Spiritual Pedagogy* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2015), 135. It is perfectly confirmed by the place of the treatise on grace in the structure if *The Summa Theologiae,* which is a pedagogical or even therapeutic work and its aim is to help young students to associate theoretical truths of faith about God in the Holy Trinity and the Incarnate with everyday life. It proves why *conformitas Christi* is the principle of Christian life from which it originates and how it functions. Grace appears to be, in this way, a trace and the image of God and it is elevated to the Image of the Only begotten Son. The foundation of this proposal is the origin of the Word which develops in the second part and concerns the forms of the presence and operation of grace.

Thus, the acts that are meritorious with respect to eternal life are hence the result of two agencies: the agency of human free will and that of God moving the will. The image used by Thomas to show the manner in which grace influences freedom is not based on a "manual steering" but on moving by means of "ebb and flow." They do not violate nature, although they do contradict its natural cursus, and they stem from the movement of an external factor (the moon) which directs them towards new aims.[22] In this image, sin is a form of resistance against grace, but the strength of this vision is based on showing the relation between nature and grace, not as the division of work into two parts but as a form of cooperation respecting these two realities. This gravity of grace, described by Thomas (following St. Augustine) as pondus anime, its weight: "like talent is the weight of metal so that the grace is the weight that inclines the soul,"[23] namely grace is not "something" added to the soul but it is its causative inclinatio.

Thus, within this framework of grace the sense of merit in Christian life might be summarised in the words of St. Paul (1 Cor 15:10) as cooperari gratiae Dei. If Paul's preoccupation is to lead such a life in which, "his grace toward me has not been in vain" (*et gratia Dei in me vacua non fuit*), it is important to understand the nature of this co-operatio. For Thomas, it is not a passive approach, as in the Protestant understanding, but it relies on making good use of this grace: "For God not only infuses but he also moves us to use the graces infused well, and this is called cooperating grace."[24]

22 *S.Th.*, II-II, q.2, a.3

23 *In Matt.*, cap. XXV, lect. 2: "sicut enim talentum pondus dicitur metalli, sic gratia pondus est quod inclinat ipsam animam; unde amor est pondus animae."

24 *In I Cor.*, cap. XV, lect. 1.

The development of this idea can be seen in one of Aquinas' biblical commentaries. Explaining the reasons for human eternal happiness and making an exegesis of the scene of the Last Judgment in Mt 25, Thomas observes that this cooperation with grace is based on performing works of mercy:

> "We ought to consider that thre is a twofold cause of beatitude: one cause is on the part of God, that is to say, God's blessing; the other is on our part, meaning our merit which is from our free will: for men ought not to be lazy but cooperate with God's grace, as it is said: By the grace of God, I am what I am. And His grace in me hath not been void (1 Cor 15:10). But although there are many good and meritorious works, He only mentions the works of mercy."[25]

Against the background of Thomas' understanding of *concupiscientia*, the difference in Aquinas' approach to merit is clearly visible: according to him, many of the actions of the faithful are not perfect but they are not sins, since those must be chosen voluntarily. What determines the action is its subject and thus the greater good of the action does not depend on its species or the kind of action (for example, doing one activity, such as reading, is not better than any other activity, such as cleaning).[26] For Luther, such an explanation seems impossible, as grace and merit are not the same. The difference appears not only to be in linguistic divergences but is also rooted in the doctrine on sin and concupiscence. It is visible in the reflection on

25 *In Matt.* [rep. Leodegarii Bissuntini], cap. XXV, lect. 3, trans. Paul M. Kimball.
26 *S.Th.*, I-II q.18 a.11 ad 1.

whether a venial sin cannot be more meritorious and how the degree of meriting increases. Aquinas explains it in his Commentary on the Letter to the Corinthians.[27]

2. Thomistic Grammar of "Merit"

In his commentaries, Thomas develops the relation between merit and reward by introducing a division between principle reward, which we owe to charity (*praemium substantiale*) and accidental reward. Interpreting the passage from the Gospel according to St. Matthew, he observes that:

> "It ought to be said that the principle of merit pertains to charity, and consequently, charity pertains to the merit of the other virtues. For merit regards the principle reward, governing which, charity is considered. Thus, every work, which is performed with greater charity, has more merit. Charity alone has God for its object and end. Hence, the merit of charity corresponds to the accidental reward. Therefore, because charity informs the intention, inasmuch as man intends to do something out of greater charity, so much does he do; but the same is not true as far as the accidental reward."[28]

27 *In I Cor.*, cap. 11 vs. 27: "totum meritum hominis est in caritate, et ideo quanto aliquis actus magis est ex caritate, vel secundum suum genus vel quantum ad modum faciendi, tanto magis est meritorium; et dico secundum suum genus, quia contingit aliquem actum minus meritorium secundum genus aequiparari actui secundum genus suum magis meritorium quantum ad modum faciendi, in quantum fit ex maiori caritate, sicut actus matrimonii fit aliquando ex tanta caritate quod aequiparatur actui virginitatis in merito."

28 *In Matt.*, cap. XII, lect.2. See also "The greatness of merit pertaining to the essential reward is primarily measured by charity" (*In Rom*, cap. VIII, lect. V, no. 677).

Thomas also poses a question about the "growth of merits" in man when he reflects upon Jesus' behavior in Mt 9, where he seems to ask his listeners the question of whether he is able to perform something or not. It does not result from Christ's lack of knowledge but is somehow an occasion for merit. Aquinas understands it to be a gracious expression of incorporating us in the communion with God which occurs through merit.

Luther on Merit

Martin Luther is frequently difficult to interpret because he was not really a systematic theologian like Philip Melanchton, for example. However, in terms of merit, one can expect that his position would be strongly anti-scholastic since Luther affirms that no one can merit salvation. So, is it true that there is nothing in Luther's writings which can surprise the reader?

This part of the chapter will present two modes of interpretation of the Reformer's thought. The first one is termed the "classical perspective" by us with second constituting a "new perspective" associated with the New Finnish Interpretation of Luther.

1. Changing *meritum* to *praemium*

It has to be mentioned that the problem of Luther's break with medieval theology of merit began from his rejection of the via moderna theology of merit which today could be called "semi-pelagian" by some. Authors such as John Duns Scotus, Wilhelm Ockham or Gabriel Biel have observed that prior to receiving grace, man can perform acts which are "half-merits," that is, the acts not truly deserving grace but receiving

grace on the basis of God's covenantal contract and generosity. Thus late medieval theologians believed that the meritum de congruo could occur before the obtainment of grace from God.[29]

Luther explicitly abandoned this concept and considered it to be heresy.[30] Nevertheless, when the Reformer started his biblical lectures from the Book of Psalms (1513–1515) in Wittenberg, he used the language of Ockhamist nominalism[31] and spoke about the meritum gratiae and gloriae in the sense of meritum de congruo. But his understanding of merit developed alongside his doctrine of justification the seeds of which are visible in Luther's lectures on Psalms. However, in his lecture on Romans (1515–1516) he broke with the meritum gratiae and from 1518 onward, he also broke with the *meritum gloriae.*[32]

This turn can only be understood in light of the fact that Luther changed his mind in the matter of sin, will, grace and – as the fruit of this – in the matter of justification. As Rafał M. Leszczyński, a Polish Reformed theologian observed, in his Commentary to the Romans, Luther developed his opinions on justification and limited Ockhamist terminology to that of St. Paul's.

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29 Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross. Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 78-80.

30 Alister McGrath warns against calling this position a "Pelagian" or "semi-Pelagian" because such terms were not known to Biel. Biel was not aware of the decrees of the Second Council of Orange (529) and understood Pelagianism as it was described in the canons of the Council of Carthage (417–418) so his doctrine of justification which embraced a notion of *meritum de congruo* was orthodox if we measure orthodoxy by the consciousness (McGrath 2011, 81-83). Nevertheless, Luther rejected the *via moderna* opinion about merit as unbiblical.

31 Rafał Marcin Leszczyński, *Ojcowie reformacji i filozoficzne wątki ich teologii* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo "Nowe Spojrzenia," 2010), 27.

32 Johann Heinz, "Luther's Doctrine of Works and Reward," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 22 (1984): 68-69.

Phrases such as *arbitramur hominem iustificari ex fide absque operibus* (Rom 3:28) or *simul iustus et peccator* (Rom 7:14-25) come from that work.[33] A closer analysis of his Commentary on Romans shows that he was under the influence of Augustine, especially his *De spiritu et littera* which Luther cited as an argument for the so-called iustitia aliena by means of which God covers the sinner.[34] Luther's anthropology plays an important role in our topic. When compared and confronted with soteriology, it was pessimistic. In one of his early sermons Luther called a fallen man an unsuccessful vessel, which God the Potter had to reject and re-paste.[35] By this illustration, Luther described the experience of the death of the old-self. This view is reflected in his Small Catechism:

> *What does such baptizing with water indicate?*
>
> It indicates that the Old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should emerge daily and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

33 Rafał Marcin Leszczyński, *Ojcowie reformacji i filozoficzne wątki ich teologii* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo "Nowe Spojrzenia," 2010), 27-28.

34 See for example Luther's *Commentary on Romans* (Rom. 3:21) where he cited *De spiritu et littera* in context of imputed righteousness (Luther 1954, 76-77).

35 Luther Martin. 1884. "Ein sermon von dem heiligen hochwürdigen sakrament der tauffe" in *Weimar Ausgabe*, Vol 2/1, 727-737, Access: 27 December 2017, 727-737. https://archive.org/stream/werkekritischege02luthuoft#page/726/mode/2up.

> Where is this written?
>
> St. Paul writes in Romans chapter six: "We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."[36]

So, grace which is not built on anything, on the human part alone, is not a starting point but only a change by grace, and therefore salvation gives a starting point for the change of man and his restoration or sanctification. Divine activity alone is the beginning of salvation. It has to be mentioned that Luther's soteriology has a monergistic character. It is crucial for our topic because in monergism the notion of merit in relation to man cannot work. So it is the reason why he rejected the meritum de congruo but also the meritum de condigno.

This logic stems from the doctrine of justification. Since faith – which is not merit – "but rather the means or medium, that receives the grace of God in justification (…), is the ground of our justification, and since justification is not an infusion of righteousness that makes a sinner righteous in and of himself,"[37] the sinner cannot do anything of merit, even of "half-merit." "The good acts which flow from grace are divine acts in us and contribute nothing at all to man's salvation. Since, in this view, only perfect righteousness can be meritorious, only Christ merits life in and of himself, not for himself, but vicariously for us. This merit of Christ (…) is the superabundant ground of salvation and is

36 http://www.st-ansgars-montreal.ca/WhatIs/Small_Catechism.pdf [20.12.2017].

37 Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms. Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1985), 162; 283.

the sole true merit."[38] But here it should be noticed what the Reformer said about iustitia infusa or "the second kind of righteousness," i.e. the relation between justification and sanctification:

> "The second kind of righteousness is our proper righteousness, not because we alone work it, but because we work with that first and alien righteousness. This is that manner of life spent profitably in good works, in the first place, in slaying the flesh and crucifying the desires with respect to the self (…) in the second place, this righteousness consists of loving one's neighbour, and in the third place, in meekness and fear toward God. This righteousness is the product of the righteousness first type, actually its fruit and consequence (…) This righteousness goes on to complete the first for it ever strives to do away with the old Adam and to destroy the body of sin."[39]

So, for Martin Luther, forensic justification, which is complete, precedes an inner sanctification as the basis for it. Only a justified believer can experience sanctification, which is the work of a lifetime for the Reformer. And grace is not a "new nature" (in the sense of replacement) of a corrupted sinner. Sanctifying grace is a work of the Holy Spirit who shapes the heart of a man. As Luther puts it:

> "Moreover, we are here admonished, that, according to the flesh, there are yet natural vices remaining in the Churches, and in the godly. Grace maketh not such a change in the faithful, that by-and-by they become altogether new creatures, and perfect in all things: but there remain yet certain dregs of their old and

38 Ibid., 190.

39 Martin Luther, "Two Kinds of Righteousness," in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 157-158.

> natural corruption. As if man, that is naturally prone to anger be converted to Christ, although he be mollified by grace (the Holy Ghost so framing his heart, that he is now before more meek and gentle), yet this natural vice is not utterly quenched in his flesh. So it is with such as are, by nature severe and sharp, although they be converted to the faith, yet they cannot entirely forsake this vice (…) Thus the Spirit of God, being poured into diverse vessels, doth not quench at once the vices of nature: but by little and little, during this life, He purgeth that sin which is rooted (…) in all men."[40]

Although Luther had to struggle with biblical fragments about reward, he insisted that those passages do not refer to merit and so he changed the Latin meritum to the Latin praemium. This change is not only a linguistic modification, but it also entails either a new theological perspective or this perspective is the cause of a shift from merit to reward. The "biblical reward implies that the work is done for God's sake and is an illustration of the promise of God, which the believer now possesses by faith and will later possess by sight."[41] Thus the term of promise is crucial in this context since reward is not based on our meritorious works but on God's promise. The moral dimension of a believer's deeds is not important for Luther in the first place. The most important is the theological aspect of good works – i.e. the reference or relation to God.

40 Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, Trans. Erasmus Middleton (Grand Rapids: Kregel Classics, 1979), 102.

41 Johann Heinz, "Luther's Doctrine of Works and Reward," 46.

The Bible calls for Christians to do good because living faith is fruitful (the so-called fides incarnata), otherwise it would not be real faith. This call reminds the believer about his need for obedience to God.[42] The reward is fully gratuitous and, in general, it is eternal life. Yet apart from this universal reward, Luther distinguished a special "charismatic reward." The charismatic reward refers to extraordinary Christians, such as Apostles or martyrs. "This greater reward is derived from the greater gifts which were given to the Apostles and the martyrs, gifts which "without any cooperation and thought" come from God and therefore do not provide a basis for any merit."[43] This obviously raises the question of what the object of this merit is. It appears that it must be some greater glory or some other spiritual gifts added to that of the general reward – of eternal life.

Thus it seems that this concept of reward is built upon Luther's doctrine of justification within the monergistic framework of soteriology. In this perspective, man's freedom or goodness is not important. They are only a means by which God reveals his mercy and glory. Therefore, a discussion on the divine response to good does not make sense for Luther, since the only reason of one's salvation is Christ – His person and work. As a result of this understanding, the notion of meritum de condigno had to be useless for the Reformer. The Holy Spirit does not work in us in order to contribute something to our salvation. Christ's redemption provides everything that is needed to reach heaven and it eliminates any type of merit from the equation.

42 Ibid., 54.
43 Ibid., 46.

New Finnish Perspectives on Luther

A new interpretation of Luther's thought has recently been proposed by Finnish Lutheran theologians. The context of the origins of this new perspective is an ecumenical one, namely the theological dialogue since the 1970's between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church. Finnish scholars emphasise the motif of a living Christ in faith or the indwelling of Jesus' righteousness in Christians, which is known in Protestant theology as the unio cum Christo. Once again, a discussion about the new opportunities offered by the Finnish School concerning the issue of merit lies in the context of justification.

The main point of the Finnish theologians is that for Luther, justification means a close ontological union with Christ, as the author of this line of thought, Mannermaa, wrote:

> "According to Luther, Christ (in both his person and his work) is present in faith and is through this presence identical with the righteousness of faith. Thus, the notion that Christ is present in the Christian occupies a much more central place in the theology of Luther than in the Lutheranism subsequent to him. The idea of a divine life in Christ who is really present in faith lies at the very center of the theology of the Reformer."[44]

What is interesting is that, for the Finns there exists a discontinuity between Luther and Lutheranism in terms of theological accents. The "Finnish Luther" is not focused on forensic justification as much as on the presence of Christ in the believer. One of the most important sources for Finnish theologians is Luther's Commentary on Galatians.

44 Tuomo Mannermaa, "Why is Luther so Fascinating? Modern Finnish Luther Research," in *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. Carl E. Braaten, Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids-Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 2.

The crucial text is Gal. 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (NIV) These words of the Apostle Paul were commented upon by the Reformer in the following manner:

> "And he (i.e. Paul) teacheth what true Christian righteousness is, namely, that righteousness whereby Christ liveth in us, and not that which is in our own person. And here Christ and my conscience must become one body, so that nothing remain in my sight but Christ crucified, and raised from the dead. But if I behold myself only, and set Christ aside, I am gone."[45]

In light of the theology of the union with Christ, justification appears as the intrinsic dwelling of Christ in persons who have faith. Thus, if we understand it rightly, the *iustitia aliena* is not imputed but infused, or at least imputed as something in the believer, and this is the main novelty of the Finnish interpretation. Christ lives in the believer, He is one person with him, and his righteousness belongs to the Christian. That is why every good deed which we do, we do because of this ontological *unio cum Christo*. Christ is present in our faith, as Luther expressed it in his Commentary on Galatians: "He is my form, my furniture and perfection, adorning and beautifying my faith (…)"[46] But following this logic, it can be said that Jesus Christ is present in our works as well. And if this is true, the door to embracing the language of merit in Lutheranism is open.

45 Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, trans. Erasmus Middleton (Grand Rapids: Kregel Classics, 1979), 88. Emphasis added.

46 Ibid.

At least, this is the thesis of the Roman-Catholic theologian Mats Wahlberg, whose ideas will be presented later and against whom we will raise some objections.[47] Since Christ meritorious works made outside the sinner, are transferred by faith to him in order to become his attribute, what about the deeds which Christ performs in and through Christians? They still have to be works worthy of merit, because Christ is their source and He is one person with the believer. Obviously, human nature is corrupted by sin, even after the conversion, but the same nature is involved in the life of Christ, who now lives and not me.[48]

The most interesting argument of Wahlberg's stems from Luther's analogy between the human and divine nature of Christ regarding the relation of faith and works. He criticises Luther for his claim that only the divine nature of Jesus played a role in the salvific process of redemption. It would mean that incarnation was unnecessary and useless, but if God wanted to save people as He did, the humanity of Christ was actively involved in salvation. "The incarnation represents an extension of divine action by which God implicates human nature as a vital element in the process of salvation."[49] Returning to faith and works, the Reformer from Wittenberg believed that faith "divinised" the believer's deeds and called them the opera deificata or fides incarnata. And if that relation is analogous to the hypostatic union in Christ, it naturally follows that the works of the Christian have a salvific dimension because faith, which produces the good works, makes them pleasing to God. According to Wahlberg, this is the reason why Catholic tradition maintains that the deeds of those who are united with Christ are considered as merits which secure access to heaven.[50]

47 Mats Wahlberg, "Merit and the Finnish Luther," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16 (2014): 284-290.

48 Ibid., 285.

49 Ibid., 287.

50 Ibid., 286-7.

It is divine grace that makes works pleasing to God, but grace really makes the works pleasing, which means that they too are implicated in salvation (albeit in a way that is totally dependent on grace). Luther's own Christological argument should lead him to the same conclusion. Works, as 'incarnate faith/grace,' are meritorious in relation to salvation.[51]

The theology of merit in such a form should not necessarily lead to "self-trust" and pride, because every believer knows that he is deeply dependent on Christ and the divine grace which dwelt in Him. It is only due to the unio cum Christo that one can produce meritorious works and, therefore, who can be proud if the first cause of my righteous deeds is grace?[52]

Wahlberg, however, notices one serious obstacle – the formal cause of justification.[53] For the Council of Trent, it is God's justice which transformed the sinner into a righteous person, but for Lutherans it is the righteousness of Christ alone. If we cannot overcome this difficulty, we cannot speak about the possibility of the language of merit in Lutheran theology. Yet he also tries to harmonise the Tridentine declarations with the Finnish interpretation of the doctrine of justification. He notices that the term "faith" in the Finnish School reminds us of the Catholic infused grace/virtues, because faith always occurs for Finns together with love. The second point is that a formal cause would be interpreted not as Christ's righteousness but as a participation of the believer in this righteousness. It reflects the Tridentine "distinction between 'the justice by which God himself is just' (Christ's righteousness) and 'inhering justice' or 'infused grace'

51 Mats Wahlberg, "Merit and the Finnish Luther," 286-7.

52 Ibid., 289-90.

53 Ibid., 291-2.

(the believer's participation in Christ's righteousness).[54] This is only a cursory analysis and the starting point for further research, something of which Wahlberg is well aware.

Wahlberg's perspective is an interesting one and certainly has its strengths, however it seems to us that he omitted some aspects of Luther's thought. Firstly, he mentions that merit is "that property of a good work which entitles the doer to receive a reward."[55] This means that merit is closely related to the virtue of justice (Catechism of the Catholic Church, § 2006) and morality. However, for Luther, the ethical dimension of a good deed should not be important in his theology of reward. For Luther, the motif of the good works which he calls sins occurs repeatedly and it is a theological qualification, not an ethical one – these are deeds without faith. Sin is not a moral category; it is primarily a theological category that defines the relationship (or rather its absence, God's negation, unbelief) to God.[56] Faith, then, really makes works pleasing to Him, because faith is a proper reference to God. Thus, a believer acts as one who is justified, being in a good relation to God and this is what counts in the first place.

Secondly, since Christ redeemed us by His death and resurrection and this redemption is perfect, there is no need for merit in our life. Even if Christ dwells in us and leads a righteous life, his works done both in and through us are the fruits of his righteousness, but they are not merits because the *meritum Christi* which secured eternal life was made up outside of us and nothing can be contributed to it, otherwise Christ's righteousness would not be perfect and full. Thirdly, while the Council of Trent defined justification as a process, Luther (no matter if we consider him in his classic or Finnish incarnation)

54 Ibid., 292.

55 Ibid., 276.

56 I am thankful to Dr Jerzy Sojka, a Polish Lutheran theologian from the Christian Theological Academy in Warsaw for his help in understanding the theology of Martin Luther and for showing me this specific element of Luther's thought.

considered it to be a single act. Man is justified by God in the moment when he believes in Christ. The repair of man's nature is obvious, so the entire work of God cannot end with imputed righteousness. Making someone righteous is a salvific process in terms of the recreation and preparation for God's kingdom, not in terms of earning the eternal life. So, it appears that the Finnish Luther does not necessarily lean towards merit theology.

An Attempt to Summarise Thomistic and Lutheran Approaches to the Question of "Merit"

In Luther's approach, there is a conviction that the salvation (or damnation) of man is not a question of merit as nothing can determine God in His freedom. The sign of this freedom is the granting of grace, namely love revealed in Jesus Christ. According to Luther, it is not possible to reconcile grace and merit, since they are like two parallel lines. For Aquinas, the perspective is different, as expressed in his division of merit into the *de condigno* and *de congruo* varieties which, however, do not happen consecutively but are two aspects of one action (whether it is discussed from the perspective of grace or freedom acting under the influence of grace).

Aquinas, however, does not think about the way it is presented later in nominalism, where grace and merit are seen as the "partial" causes of salvation, concepts Martin Luther had to struggle with. Evident anthropological differences overlap with metaphysical ones, especially in the understanding of freedom, which for Luther is associated with free will whereas for Thomas a voluntary act does not equal a free act. Similarly, Luther understands contingency as a coincidence or good luck and therefore he excludes it from the world in which God

acts. However, all these differences are rooted in a more fundamental distinction – the rejection of analogical language and following nominalist solutions.[57]

In the field of anthropology there is a considerable difference between Aquinas and Luther which is visible in their manner of treating concupiscence and sin, although it seems that there is a change of approach in this respect. In a recent publication *Aquinas Among the Protestants*, Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen draw attention to the surprising absence of those noticing the anthropological potential of Aquinas' theology which is so close to Protestant ideas, such as the creation of the world as the act of grace, the fall as a loss (the wound of sin) and not as the loss of likeness and the redemption as an "asset" and not as the return to a former state of the Paradise.[58]

By the way of a conclusion, for those trying to discover a profound message hidden behind the language of "merit" in Aquinas' thought it is worth concentrating on three issues presented here in the following sub-sections. They reveal not only the truth about man, but mostly about God and His manner of acting.

3.1 A God who Reacts to Good

Merit emphasises the responsiveness of God who reacts to the good done by man thanks to God's movements. *Ordinatio* is a sign of wisdom in relating some actions with reward, not a compulsion of God. For both thinkers, merit is based on the internal action of the Holy Spirit, whereas what divides them is the notion of sin and the manner of cooperation with grace. For Luther, it is passive, such as a new birth out of the divine womb (*uterus divinus*), whereas for Aquinas, who

57 See Piotr Roszak, "Analogical Understanding of Divine Causality in Thomas Aquinas," *European Journal of Philosophy of Religion* 4 (2017): 133-153.

58 Manfred Svensson, David VanDrunen, *Aquinas Among the Protestants* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2018).

does not think in a dialectic nominalist manner, cooperation with grace is possible thanks to grace itself; it is not placing man on the same level as God. This is a consent to God's action in man resulting from respecting one's created nature and leading it in the manner which is most appropriate (*convenientia*) to its full realisation in grace. It is perfectly illustrated by the metaphor of the tides.

3.2 A Loss of Ontology

It is difficult to find in Thomas' thought the conviction that there is a purely natural area in human action so that it would be possible to separate the sphere of God and the sphere of man. Merit is not a notion which expresses a sterile human act which results in the obligation of remuneration on the part of God. Thomas does not present this kind of attitude, but he inscribes merit in the dynamics of the growth of grace: God does not contradict human freedom, nor does He replace it, but makes it truly free by means of cooperation with grace. The language of merit is a promotion of human self-trust whereas, for Thomas, it directs one towards the realism of human freedom which in the service of grace is able to receive the gift of salvation. The aim is to discover the truth about God who elevates and brings the true good performed by man to fruition. This seems to be insignificant for Luther because of his concept of the theological dimension of human actions.

3.3 Zero-Sum Game? Extrinsicism in Perceiving Grace

Thomas' approach to reality is based on the logic of *inchoatio*, namely the initiation on earth of what man will participate in for eternity thanks to God's grace. Thus, faith is "the beginning of eternal life" that is not so much the choice of one of many options but the true seed of eternity. The granting of the reward will not happen later but is

happening now and merit is the element of this logic which makes the work of grace in life more concrete. For Thomas, merit is not the cause of grace, but the result of it.

Thus, it is not a zero-sum game where we do not have anything now, but we are accumulating points in order to receive gratification later. Metaphysical thinking within the capacity-realisation framework undoubtedly helped St. Thomas to express what happens through the Holy Baptism in theological language.

The relation of nature/grace and, by extension, merit is analogical to the relation between human nature and divine nature in Christ. Both faith (grace) and acts which result from faith (merit) are truly engaged in human salvation but to a different extent. The frequently recalled resolutions of the Council of Chalcedon concerning the natures of Christ are pertinent to the reflections on merit: the point is to propose such a discourse which would present nature and grace "without confusion" and "without separation."

Conclusions

The literature on the question of the relation between Aquinas and Luther has formed two ways of perceiving this problem. One of them is represented by Father Otto-Herman Pesch OP who draws attention to the fact that the differences between these two thinkers result from a different approach to theological themes.[59] Aquinas is characterised by the sapiential approach, whereas Luther reflects the existential one.[60] Further studies by, among others, Servais-Théodore Pinckaers OP open up perspectives on the theses widespread in the late Middle

59 See Olli-Pekka Vainio, "Martin Luther on Perception and Theological Knowledge," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie* und Religionsphilosophie. *Gruyter* 57, no. 1 (2015): 87 -109.

60 See Otto Hermann Pesch, "Die lehre *vom* 'verdienst' als problem für theologie und verkundigung," in *Wahrheit und verkündigung: Festgabe M. Schmaus*, ed. L. Scheffczyk, et al. (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1967), 2: 1865–1907.

Ages concerning human freedom which was identified with free choice and not with the choice of good, as Aquinas emphasises.[61] This was the intellectual climate which Luther encountered.

Perhaps a different suggestion, namely of viewing the reflections of both thinkers on merit, might be expressed by analyzing the inspirations of Eleonore Stump and her proposal of "quantum theology."[62] This is practicing a form of theology which is able to describe the same reality (such as light) in many different ways (waves, particles). It will not be limited to only one discourse but will rather be aware of its own multifaceted nature.

Applying a slightly different metaphor, it might be said that Thomas is an advocate of a symphonic approach which stems from his awareness that the manner of speaking about God is analogical. However, it does not mean that the unisono, which clearly and distinctly articulates the main melodic line, is worthless. It is frequently difficult to recognise the main motif in the symphony, although great theologians have always been able to do so. Perhaps in a world of clear-cut divisions (black and white, us and them) Thomas appeared to represent an avant-garde approach which is also relevant to the treatment of his thought nowadays.[63]

61 Servais-Théodore Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1995).

62 Eleonore Stump, "God's Simplicity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies, Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 135-146.

63 We would like to thank to Anna Olkiewicz-Mantilla and Aeddan Shaw for their help in translation and proof-reading of this text.

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Baptizatus sum: Consequences and Possibilities for the *Ecclesia Semper Reformanda*

Anne Kull

I would like to structure my thoughts on this topic around some key ideas: baptism and the priesthood of all believers, including women; education; freedom; fear; understanding; and hope/promise. But let us first start by exploring the context.

Some Characteristics of a post-Christian Society

In a secular, post-Christian society we are finding ourselves in a situation where people are no longer familiar with the basics of Christian faith. Thus, the definition of a sacrament as a "word plus matter" event, or theological explanations of their "effectiveness," or the nuances in the characterizations of divine presence in the Sacrament, or the concept of grace in general, and so on, are no longer comprehensible.

A post-Christian society is not merely a society in which agnosticism or atheism is the prevailing fundamental belief. It is a society rooted in the history, culture, and practices of Christianity but in which the religious beliefs of Christianity have been either rejected or, worse,

forgotten. In other words, a post-Christian society is a particular sort of Christian society.[1] Though much of what Christianity taught is forgotten, even unknown, by modern Europeans and Americans, they nonetheless act on its teachings every day. At an emotional level, the Christian character explains why many agnostics and atheists nonetheless find Christian hymns suitable and comforting at occasions such as funerals and weddings. Intellectually, the dormant Christian beliefs – notably those about the nature of the human being – underpin our ideas on politics and foreign policy, as for instance on human rights. Post-Christian tends to refer to the loss of Christianity's cultural monopoly, if not its followers, in historically Christian societies. Post-Christian societies can be found across the Global North - though the surveys indicate that many hold some form of belief in a higher power, or spirit, but considerably less point explicitly to the God, understood in a Christian manner.

Religion has not disappeared, but it operates under changed conditions. We can call it the New Age or something else, but it would be difficult to deny the change. Many also note that a section of religion has turned very political, very cruel and rather narrow-minded. While claiming to return to the tradition and scripture, the new religious warriors are not aware of hermeneutical issues and traditions. New ecumenical ties between churches or their members are not created necessarily around the big doctrinal issues (like the Trinity, Christology) but rather around the issues of sexuality, gender and power.

1 https://www.nationalreview.com/2013/12/our-post-christian-society-john-osullivan/ John O'Sullivan "Our Post-Christian Society," in National Review 14.12.2013

Baptism as a Public Sacrament

The meaning and relevance of baptism is not obvious in a post-Christian society. In many European countries, baptism rates are decreasing. This development indicates that baptism is no longer necessarily considered to be important or even relevant. Baptism was seen, in much of Christian history, as the sign of belonging to a community – the Church. Whether the baptized baby was conscious of this belonging, was irrelevant – the child's parents and godparents knew and that was sufficient for the grace of God to be present for the child and the child's parents.

In the post-Christian society, the increased plurality is connected to increased individuality: the unique religious self-expression becomes more highly valued than one's commitment to a religious community. At the same time, individuality and responsibility are both important heritage of the Reformation.

Baptism, in the second sense, as a personal reminder of grace received from God who creates and sustains, is a kind of baptism that calls for the re-appropriation of one's Christian freedom with a significant re-adjustment of the naturally self-centered focus in order to consider the needs of the other.

Baptism as an entrance ticket to a community (Church) may mean renouncing all previous communities. "The sacramental efficacy of baptism is that it irrevocably initiates into the Church and that the spirit of the Church is the Holy Spirit himself."[2] Thus, baptism means turning away from the many claimed gods, and toward the one true God. Loyalty to the Triune God is interpreted in terms of loyalty to the church. However, baptism may be seen as a means of grace whereby God gives us all the gifts of salvation, without thereby

2 Robert W. Jenson, Systematic Theology: The Works of God, Vol. 2 (Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 196.

saying that God's power to save is restricted to this sacrament.[3] Or we might say that baptism gives stability to the spirituality that is so much related to the faith.

So Wolfhart Pannenberg connects faith, spirituality and baptism. He claims that Martin Luther's mystical interpretation of the act of faith corresponds perfectly to his doctrine of baptism. Contrary to the medieval doctrine on baptism, the act of baptism does not transform the life of the sinner into a righteous one. Rather, the sinner must die. The act of baptism anticipates the future death of the baptized person, and it is only beyond this death-bound life that we participate in a new life. In this sense, our life is reconstituted "outside ourselves" in Christ.[4] Christ's righteousness becomes ours as we participate in it by faith. Faith here means an ecstatic movement, since it puts us outside ourselves in the one in whom we trust.

For Martin Luther it became more and more clear that baptism is the central event and sacrament. When discussing Luther and the sacraments, one tends to gravitate towards his views on the Lord's Supper, and with good reason. It was disagreement over this sacrament, and not baptism, that led to a division among the Protestant Reformers. Nonetheless, it is arguable that baptism held the pre-eminence in Luther's thought and affection. With glowing praise, the German Reformer depicts baptism as "excellent, glorious, exalted, precious, of greatest importance, and an inexpressible treasure."[5]

This is where God promises human beings divine grace, love, care and a sense of the meaning of life. All the failures and aberrations of life cannot cancel that out. If we can go back to our baptism, we need

3 See Kirsi Stjerna, "Seeking Hospitable Discourse on the Sacrament of Baptism," in *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 53, n.2 (2001): 4.

4 Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Luther's Contribution to Christian Spirituality," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 40,4. Winter 2001.

5 *The Book of Concord; The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 457, 458.

no repentance, no sacrament of repentance. We are redeemed, we have long been the children of God. Baptism is our protective shield. In times of temptation and anxiety, Luther clung to the fact that he had been baptized.

Martin Luther considered the sacrament of baptism as the greatest jewel, a rite that matters with regard to our relationship to God, to our salvation. However, God saves as only God can, with or without the means. God's promise of grace cannot be tied to any ritual: even if only one person is baptized, it is enough to save all.

Baptism and Women

Luther said, everyone who has emerged from baptism is priest, bishop, pope. And from there, Luther also developed respect for women. They are baptized and therefore they are on an equal footing. It was highly unusual for his time (and still is in many places).

However, the Reformation for women was not necessarily, in every way, the same as it was for men. It is not true that men were always active, or leaders and women were always passive bystanders or receivers, or that women adopted the gendered world with its gender-biased options and parameters without scrutiny.

Until recently we did not know even the names of the active women in the Reformation (and we probably still do not know many). Women of the Reformation period are not known for their scholastic treatises and textbooks, or from their preaching.

Women's place was not the public realm. Forbidden from the preaching office and from academia, with the convents (slowly but surely) closed (or turned into the schools), women were geared to stay within the realms of the oikonomia, the house and family life. Protestant women were to find their place and satisfaction in the now newly glorified roles of wife and mother.

Protestant reformers strikingly emphasised the spiritual equality between sexes. If only that idea had translated into practice in real life: in Luther's world, women remained institutionally subjected to the authority of their husbands and male pastors, whose duty it was to care for the "weaker" link, as women were traditionally seen by male theologians.

In a world ordered according to patriarchal values, women's education – now a new opportunity for girls outside the convents – was geared to nurture women for their future domestic roles (including knowledge of the catechism, hymns, reading the Bible, creeds).

Without doubt, learned independent women made men nervous and were under suspicion for sexual unchastity. Women were not to aspire to higher learning, nor were Protestant women permitted to seek the path of being mystics or visionaries, unlike their visionary medieval foremothers who had produced an abundance of theological texts. Protestant women mostly wrote letters – both private ones and others meant for publication. They also prepared guidebooks or manuals for their children and family; they crafted songs or hymns and poems, and they were keen on biblical interpretation. Often women's works included autobiographical elements. Some of the women had a very clear sense of mission.

An example of this is Argula von Grumbach (1492?–1563?) from Bavaria, Germany, who set up a letter campaign against the Catholic faculty at Ingolstadt University in defence of a young student accused of Lutheran heresy. Most distinctively, perhaps, Argula focused on an area of utmost theological importance: justice and Christian freedom. She boasted that she had read all of Luther. To her, theology was best used not for miniscule articulation of doctrinal divisions, but for compassion and defending the vulnerable.

Another example is Katharina Schütz Zell (1498–1462), a pastor's wife from Strasbourg. She was defending Protestant reforms of marriage, and she had a strong sense of being called to the office of a "church mother" (her own term). She ministered to the people through different venues, through hospitality in her own house, hosting ecumenical table discussions between different confessional parties, caring for the sick and the imprisoned, and offering refuge, shelter, and a word of comfort for all in need, without discrimination. For her, "family" was the whole Church, not just a kinship group.

We may be shocked when we learn about the mistreatment of the Reformation mothers, abused by their husbands or lords or clergy or opponents, or those suffering from poverty, or those murdered as martyrs and witches, but more shocking are the newscasts of our day, daily reminders that women continue to be harassed, tortured, bullied, raped, even killed, as we write, read, or speak. Reformation mothers and women today share an experience of being a woman in a world that is not safe for women.

With their own lives transformed by the Protestant theological principles of justification by faith through grace, Reformation women emerged as emancipated lay reformers. In the priesthood of all believers, they were biblical theologians with clear catechetical intentions – they wished to educate and emancipate others. This understanding of baptism gradually developed through the centuries into the conviction that women should in fact be able to exercise any office in the Church.

Kirsti Stierna on whose research the previous remarks are based, notes,"One word best characterises the Reformation women's theology: "compassion." That is both a powerful word and a good compass for continued Reformation."[6]

Freedom and Fear

If education is a constant and mandatory consequence of the Reformation, its core is freedom. A person who is justified by grace and grasps that fact through faith, is free. Where the bonds that keep us prisoners are severed, we are not only freed from something, but are free to or for something, and that takes us straight to what appear to be the contradictory core statements in Luther's great treatise on freedom of 1520. In *The Freedom of a Christian* he states: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."[7]

Precisely because freedom comes through faith, Christians are free to place themselves in the service of others. If I am no longer preoccupied with my own salvation – or my own well-being – I am free to devote myself to the needs of others. If I have absorbed the liberating word of the gospel, I can respond to the call of others and assume responsibility – responsibility for the world. Justification and justice belong together in this context. If I believe in justification, I will also want the world to be as just as possible. It has been a long time since the political world was driven by such fears and anxieties as the ones we are experiencing now. But Christian freedom involves standing up to fear.

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6 Kirsi Stierna, "Reformation Revisited. Women's Voices in the Reformation," in *The Ecumenical Review. The World Council of Churches.* DOI: 10.1111/erev.12282 Copyright VC (2017) World Council of Churches. Published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

7 Martin Luther, "On the Freedom of a Christian," in *Luther's Works*, Vol. 31: Career of the Reformer, ed. Harold J. Grimm, Helmut T. Lehmann, see https://www.spucc.org/sites/default/files/Luther%20Freedom.pdf

Just when our European societies started to forget the terrors and fears of the First and Second World Wars, we have been experiencing the fear of terror since 11 September 2001. We also have fears concerning our pensions, jobs, social security, the future of Europe, and global justice – the latter being something that is sorely in need of improvement. Our more recent fears concern transatlantic relations and world peace. And over all this, hangs the ominous cloud of fear generated by climate change. Even if the media is distracted with other news items, the world's ice is melting at an alarming rate. It is not just about our personal convenience and affluence, but whether whole ecosystems, villages and cities will survive. But fear and anxiety are restricting. They assail our freedom by causing us stress or paralysis, by triggering frenetic activity or forcing us into passivity.

Nowadays, we are constantly being implored to be fearless. It happens after every terrorist attack; we even hear it after crushing election results. Politicians say it, bishops too. This reminds us of Jens Stoltenburg, the then prime minister of Norway, who in response to attacks in Oslo and Utoya at the time, said: "We must not allow ourselves to fall prey to fear. We will defend our open, democratic society."[8] At the heart of Christian faith is the belief that the nails that human fear drove through the hands and feet of Christ lost their power. His disciples sat behind closed doors, paralysed with fear until he appeared before them, saying: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21).

According to Luther, baptism is a good necessity, not in terms of facilitating salvation per se but for experiencing what "being saved" (being saved from fear and anxiety) means in daily life. We must understand his words about a warfare against the devil and evils in the

8 See Jennifer Baldwin, "Introduction," in *Navigating Post-Truth and Alternative Facts: Religion and Science as Political Theology* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, an imprint of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2018), xxiii.

light of the troubled world he lived in, a world where death was often a visitor. It was a world where people did not have many securities; the heavenly insurance met the spiritual need of ordinary folks. Baptism offered people a spiritually relevant, concrete tool in their battle for survival amidst the many calamities they faced.

Even if contemporary people do not share Luther's view of the devil, we can still recognise the power of the spiritual teaching of baptism as a divine power against all that stands against God, goodness, and humanity in our existence. Issues such as violence, sexism, racism – all forms of inequality and injustice – would certainly count. Baptism can offer a starting point for the life of the individual with a spiritual focus and a sense of security. The advantage is not only therapeutically promising, but also existentially significant.

Humans now dominate earth, changing it in ways that threaten its ability to sustain us and other species. Climate change can be seen as one of such fearsome "super wicked problems"[9]: these are problems that lack a discreet solution or end point, that allow no immediate test of a potential solution, no opportunity to learn by trial and error, etc. Of particular urgency, is the notion that time is running out, to halt it, is what distinguishes climate change from other social or political challenges. Also in the case of climate change, there is no central authority and the decision makers tend to disregard both the available information and the long term effects of their decisions (or indecisions).

While we have to be aware of the history of the modern techno-culture (how we got to this point of crisis?), we also might use path dependency scholarship to understand how different interventions, even unintended consequences, may guide us to consider multiple

9 The term "super wicked problems" was first identified, defined, and presented at the International Studies Association Convention Chicago, February 28th – March 3, 2007. See Kelly Levin et al. "Overcoming the Tragedy of Super Wicked Problems: Constraining our Future Selves to Ameliorate Global Climate Change," *Policy Sciences* 45 (2012): 123-152.

alternative futures and plausible plot-lines. But we cannot do all this when we are paralyzed by fear. Baptism allows us to be confident in our faith. Christians can endure their private and public hells without succumbing to false security. Our fear, our despair, places us in very close proximity of grace.

Institutions and states are like people: they do not want to change. And the change has to be simultaneous: the individual members of the Churches (and states) must change, so that the institutions can change. All religions are about transformation, and so is Christianity; and we could use our available resources to trigger transformative decisions and mechanisms that will keep us on the "narrow" and possibly inconvenient track. Societies are increasingly demanding that Churches fulfil their role of offering hope. How that will work, will differ from country to country. Luther wrote, "A Christian life is a daily baptism, once begun and continued forever"(*WA* 30/I, 501). Baptism can be an anchor for our hope.

Five hundred years of Reformation deserve to be a topic of much discussion, both within the Lutheran Church and outside. Let us hope that these discussions will inspire us to achieve broad education, genuine freedom, proper fear, better understanding and courageous hope – in short: a deeply felt sense of common responsibility for the world. For Christians, the motif of responsibility for the world is simple yet powerful. Martin Luther summed it up well when he wrote: So is the world full of God. In every alley, at your own door, you find Christ. Don't stare at the heavens.[10]

10 "Also ist die Welt vol von Gott. In allen gassen, vor deiner thür findest du Christum. Gaff nicht ynn himel." *WA* [Weimarer Ausgabe], 20:514, 27ff. Thanks go to Most Rev. Dr Antje Jackelén for this quote and her inspirational speech at a Reformation conference in Tallinn in 2017.

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Aspects of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Ministry

Hector Scerri

This international conference has, so far, enabled us to listen to several learned contributions, yesterday evening and this morning. We started off with the historical contextualisation of the birth of the Reformation. Professor Dominic Fenech (1950–) masterfully presented, from a secular point of view, the socio-historical vicissitudes which frame the Reformation. This has been, what I deem to be, a very necessary starting-point. We then moved on, step by step, to tackle a variety of fundamental theological issues. This is essential if we have to make a proper evaluation of Martin Luther (1483–1546) and the Reformation.

In this paper, I will first focus upon the question of ministry, as Luther understood this aspect of Church life, and, secondly, upon the contemporary situation regarding ministry within the context of Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue. The American Catholic theologian Avery Dulles (1918–2008), himself a former Presbyterian, explains that in the initial years after his split from Rome, Luther spoke aggressively against the Catholic teaching regarding ordination. In fact,

Luther described the priesthood solely as a ministry of the word. It was like choosing an able and learned speaker to explain scriptural texts to the community of the faithful.[1]

Martin Luther on Ministry in the Church

What did Martin Luther think about ministry in the Church? This is where we have to start. As Christians from different Churches, we all agree that Jesus Christ is the High Priest, as we read in the Letter to the Hebrews: "Since in Jesus, the Son of God, we have the supreme high priest who has gone through to the highest heaven, we must hold firm to our profession of faith" (Heb 4:14); and, "Son, though he was, through his sufferings, when he had been perfected, he [i.e. Christ] became for all who obey him [i.e. the Father] the source of eternal salvation and was acclaimed by God with the title of high priest of the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 5:8-10). Luther stressed that the relationship between believers and Jesus is a "joyful exchange." In this joyful exchange, the believer participates in the properties of Christ, and, therefore, also in his priesthood. In a text by Luther, called *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520), he affirms:

> "Now just as Christ by his birthright obtained these two prerogatives, so he imparts to them 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

1 Avery Dulles, *The Priestly Office. A Theological Reflection* (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1997), 34.

> 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.'"[2]

In another text addressed *To the Christian Nobility*, Luther states, black on white, that "we are all consecrated persons through baptism."[3] We have to underline an important clarification: although in Luther's understanding, all Christians are priests, he does not consider them as ministers.[4] Well, this is the distinction we make today, as easily as when we open a door or when we click a computer mouse, in contemporary Catholic theology between the universal priesthood of the faithful on one hand, and the ministerial priesthood. As we know, the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (1962–1965) would endorse this in one of its Dogmatic Constitutions, *Lumen Gentium*. Regarding the affirmation that all Christians are priests, but not all are ministers, Luther, in his Commentary on Psalm 82, states:

> "It is true that all Christians are priests, but not all are pastors. For to be a pastor one must be not only a Christian and a priest but must have an office and a field of work committed to him. This call and command make pastors and preachers."[5]

In the previous paper, Professor Anne Kull (1959–), from the University of Tartu, Estonia, stated that according to Luther, everyone who has emerged from Baptism is priest, bishop, Pope, and that therefore, all Christians are on an equal footing. We are not surprised

2 Lutheran World Federation and Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *From Conflict to Communion. Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2017), 66.

3 Ibid.

4 See ibid.

5 Ibid.

that what Luther was affirming – although based on 1 Peter 2 – rocked the Catholic Church, sending shock waves throughout sixteenth-century Europe. Why was 1 Peter 2, and its patristic interpretation, in a sense forgotten or put aside? The reason lies in the fact how society had been ordered since the Middle Ages, bearing in mind the normative structures imposed by feudalism. The great lawgiver Gratian had underlined that there were two types of Christians: the clerics (i.e. priests) and the laity, in other words, the ordained and the non-ordained.[6]

Now, with his doctrine on the common priesthood of the faithful, Luther's intention was to abolish the distinction I have just described. Luther insisted that all Christians are priests because they all participate in the priesthood of Christ. All Christians, through prayer, bring before God the needs of all the people. God's concerns and will are brought to the people by means of the transmission of the Gospel.[7]

In clear terms, Martin Luther understood and presented the office of those who were ordained as a public service for the whole Church. Pastors are nothing but servants (*ministri*). He understood this particular office not in competition with the priesthood of all the faithful, but as a service they give to all the Christian faithful, so that all men and women could act as priests to each other.[8] Luther was known to affirm: "We are all priests, insofar as we are Christians, but those whom we call priests are ministers (*diener*) selected from our midst to act in our name, and their priesthood is our ministry."[9]

6 See ibid.

7 See ibid.

8 See ibid., 66-67.

9 Martin Luther, *Tischreden (Table-Talk)*, Vol. 16, 62, as quoted in *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, ed. H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), 112.

A great debate in the context of Lutheran theology lies in whether ordained ministry depends on divine institution or on human delegation. Yet, we must remember, especially by going to the sources, namely to Luther's works, that Luther speaks about a divine institution. Indeed, in his work *To the Christian Nobility*, Luther talks about "the office of pastor, which God has established, which must rule over the congregation with sermons and sacraments."[10]

It is clear to Luther's mind that this office finds its foundation in the Passion of Jesus. Quoting Luther's own words in a work called *A Sermon on Keeping Children in School*, we are struck by what he delineates, underlining the fact that the ordained ministry he was talking about possessed a divine institution. Let us listen to Luther's own words in this Sermon:

> "I hope, indeed, that believers, those who want to be called Christians, know very well that the spiritual estate has been established and instituted by God, not with gold or silver but with the precious blood and bitter death of his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ [1 Pet 1:18-19]. From his wounds indeed flow the sacraments […] He paid dearly that men might everywhere have this office of preaching, baptizing, loosing, binding, giving the sacrament, comforting, warning, and exhorting with God's word, and whatever else belongs to the pastoral office [...] The estate I am thinking of is rather one which has the office of preaching and the service of the word and sacraments and which imparts the Spirit and salvation."[11]

10 Lutheran World Federation and Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *From Conflict to Communion*, 67.

11 Ibid.

If the Reformation officially commenced in October 1517, it was only in 1535 – eighteen years later – that ordinations were first carried out, in Wittenberg. For Luther it was clear that one must be called to the office. In other words, one became a pastor not through his own initiative; in fact, three conditions had to be satisfied: (i) one had to be called by God, (ii) his doctrine and life formally examined, and (iii) if there had been a call by a particular congregation of the faithful. It has to be pointed out as well that the ordination was not performed at the place of the congregation requiring a pastor, but centrally, at Wittenberg. The reason behind this initial practice was that ordination was ordination to the service of the whole Church, and not to a specific community.[12]

Ordinations were carried out with prayer and the imposition of hands. An emphasis was made on the *epiclesis* – a prayer to the Holy Spirit – to emphasise the fact that it is God who is actually active in the rite of ordination.[13] Luther did not consider ordination to be a sacrament. Because of his difficulty regarding understanding the Mass as a sacrifice, and because Luther perceived the Catholic sacrament of Holy Orders as being in strict relation to celebrating the Mass, he did not consider ordination as a sacrament.[14] Philip Melanchton (1497–1560) would later express himself in a different way:

> "But if ordination is understood with reference to the ministry of the Word, we have no objection to calling ordination a sacrament. For the ministry of the Word has the command of God and has magnificent promises … If ordination is understood in this way, we will not object to calling the laying

12 See ibid.

13 See ibid.

14 See ibid., 68.

> on of hands as a sacrament. For the church has the mandate to appoint ministers, which ought to please us greatly because we know that God approves this ministry and is present in it."[15]

Bishops in Germany, in the 1530s, refused to ordain individuals who embraced the Reformation. In fact, the Augsburg Confession (in art. 28) complains that bishops refused to ordain pastors. So to overcome this hurdle, the Reformers said that pastors could ordain other pastors. Faced with the dilemma I mentioned, they had to opt either to retain ordination by bishops (in which they were unsuccessful), or to remain consistent with what they had come to understand to be the truth of the Gospel.[16]

Luther and the Reformers came to the conclusion that there is only one ordained ministry – the office which included primarily the proclamation of the Gospel to the congregation and, secondly, the administration of the sacraments, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Yet, from the beginning the need was felt to have a role of supervision. So, the role of the superintendent was developed to supervise over the pastors.[17] It is interesting to note that in 1535, Melanchton said:

> Because in the church rulers are necessary, who will examine and ordain those who are called to ecclesial office, church law observes and exercises oversight upon the teaching of the priests. And if there were no bishops, one would nevertheless have to create them (*Consilium de moderandis controversiis religionis*).[18]

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 See ibid., 69.
18 Ibid.

The main role of the Lutheran minister was a preaching one. All notions related to the sacrificial role of the priest were eliminated, and the predominant image, in the Lutheran context became that of the preacher in the pulpit with the Bible in his hand while proclaiming the word of God. The ordinary celebration of the sacraments was substituted by preaching.[19] The renowned Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968) stated:

It is very clear that the Reformation wished to see something better substituted for the Mass it abolished, and that it expected that the better thing would be—our preaching of the Word. The verbum visibile, the objectively clarified preaching of the Word, is the only sacrament left to us. The Reformers sternly took from us everything but the Bible.[20]

Therefore, in a sense, the new 'sacrament' for Luther and his followers was the preaching of the Word. This would take pride of place, so much so that Luther affirmed that "God speaks through the preacher. When we preach (*lehren*) we are passive rather than active. God is speaking through us and it is a divine working."[21]

Aspects of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Ministry

In his book on the basic aspects of Christian Faith in ecumenical dialogue, *Harvesting the Fruits,* Cardinal Walter Kasper (1933–), in 2009, reminds us that the question of ministry in the Church was present from the genesis of Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue.[22]

19 See Donald E. Messer, *Contemporary Images of Christian Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 38.

20 Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), 114.

21 Wilhelm Pauck, "The Ministry in the Time of the Continental Reformation," in *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, 114-115.

22 Walter Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits. Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (London and New York: Continuum International, 2009), 110.

Ministry features in the first bilateral dialogue document between Lutherans and Catholics, the *Malta Report* of 1972, officially called *The Gospel and the Church*.[23] This was the first phase of the mentioned dialogue (1967–1972). Ministry was again discussed in the second phase of this dialogue (1973–1984) and features in the document *The Ministry in the Church* (1981).[24]

This document states that "ministry signifies the priority of divine initiative and authority in the Church's existence" (n. 20).[25] *Ministry in the Church* is dependent on the one unique ministry of Jesus Christ. The 1981 document reaffirms: "This ministry is not simply a delegation 'from below,' but is instituted by Jesus Christ."[26]

Lutheran-Roman Catholic bilateral dialogue reveals that the two sides are in agreement when they affirm together:

> "It is Jesus Christ who, in the Holy Spirit, is acting in the preaching of the Word of God, in the administration of the sacraments, and in the pastoral service. Jesus Christ, acting in the present, takes the minister into his service; the minister is only his tool and instrument. Jesus Christ is the one and only high priest of the New Covenant."

This is stated in the 1981 document, *The Ministry in the Church* (n.21) and was re-iterated in another bilateral document, *The Apostolicity of the Church* (2006, n.274).[27] Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue affirms that Christ's unique ministry as High Priest is exercised with the scope of building the community. In the light of this, Lutherans and Catholics agree that "the office of

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., 110-111.
25 Ibid., 110.
26 Ibid.
27 See ibid.

the ministry stands over against the community as well as within the community" (*Malta Report*, 50; *Ministry*, 23).[28] So, ordained ministers are builders of the community and within the community: this is, as I see it, both on a vertical plane (top-down), as well as on a horizontal plan, or in other words, collaborative ministry.

There is no bone of contention regarding the divine institution of ministry. What is striking is that both Churches have agreed that "the authority of the ministry must therefore not be understood as delegated by the community" (*Ministry*, 23).[29] The fourth phase of Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue (1995–2006) returned to this aspect. The Bilateral Document, which was the result of this dialogue, *The Apostolicity of the Church* (2006), talks about the essential dimensions of ministry, the importance of apostolicity and apostolic succession, the relationship between the universal priesthood of the faithful and ordained ministry. I will quote the more relevant parts of the text with regard to what I have just outlined:

> "The ordained ministry belongs to the essential elements which, through the power of the Holy Spirit, contribute to the church being and remaining apostolic, while they in turn express the church's apostolicity. To fulfil that task, the ministry itself must be ministry in apostolic succession" (*Apostolicity*, n.270).
>
> "For both Catholics and Lutherans, the common priesthood of all the baptised and the special, ordained ministry do not compete with each other. Instead, the special ministry is precisely service to the common priesthood of all … As

28 See ibid., 111.

29 See ibid.

> service to the word of God this ministry stands over against the congregation, while at the same time the minister also belongs to the congregation (ibid., 275).
> Catholics and Lutherans affirm together that God instituted the ministry and that is necessary for the being of the church (ibid., 276)."[30]

Although Lutherans do not speak of ordination as a sacrament, yet there is considerable convergence between the two sides on the essential elements of the rite. The 1984 bilateral document *Facing Unity – Models, Forms and Phases of Catholic-Lutheran Church Fellowship* underlines the substantial convergence that wherever ordination is carried out there is the laying on of hands and an *epiclesis* as an act of blessing (n.78).[31] There is also considerable agreement that the function of ordained ministry embraces the assembling and building of the community by means of the *kerygma*, celebration of the sacraments and presidency over the various aspects of Christian community life, i.e. the liturgy, *diaconia* and evangelisation (*Ministry*, 31; also see *Malta Report*, 47-67, *Apostolicity*, 274).[32]

The 2013 Lutheran-Roman Catholic document *From Conflict to Communion* highlights what is held in common, namely the priesthood of all the baptised, the divine source of ministry, the ministry of word and sacrament, the convergence of the Lutheran induction rite and Catholic ordination, and the apostolicity of the Church.[33] These aspects have already been mentioned earlier.

30 Ibid.

31 See ibid., 113.

32 See ibid.

33 Lutheran World Federation and Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *From Conflict to Communion*, 70-73.

I will now refer to the differences acknowledged by both sides: differences in the theology and institutional form of ordained ministries, among them, the ordination of women, practised by most Lutheran Churches. Another question is whether the Catholic Church can recognise the ministry of the Lutheran Churches. There are significant differences concerning the understanding of ministry. The 2013 document refers to the 2006 text, *The Apostolicity of the Church*, acknowledging that for Catholics the episcopate is the full form of ordained ministry and therefore the point of departure for the theological interpretation of church ministry. The document cites *Lumen Gentium* 21: "The holy synod teaches, moreover, that the fullness of the Sacrament of Orders is conferred by Episcopal consecration…[which] confers, together with the office of sanctifying, the offices also of teaching and ruling, which, however, of their very nature can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and the members of the college" (cited in *Apostolicity*, 243).[34]

There are also notable differences with regard to the sacramental identity of the priest, as well as concerning the fullness of the sacramental sign, on the one hand in the case of Catholic bishops and priests, and on the other in the case of pastors. The fullness of the sacramental sign is related to the structure of the Church which is based on apostolic succession.[35] The Joint Document of 2013 acknowledges the reality of the situation when it states that:

> "It is also Catholic doctrine that in Lutheran churches the sacramental sign of ordination is not fully present because those who ordain do not act in communion with the Catholic

34 Ibid., 74.

35 See ibid., 75.

> episcopal college. Therefore the Second Vatican Council speaks of a defectus sacramenti ordinis (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 22) in these churches" (*Apostolicity*, 283)."[36]

There are also differences in understanding the offices and authority of ministry and leadership beyond the regional level. On the one hand we have the Catholic structure of Pope and College of Bishops, while on the other hand, the divergent views among Lutherans on the competency of leadership bodies.[37]

Conclusion

This paper has sought, firstly, to present Luther's seminal thoughts on the common priesthood, ministry in the context of the sixteenth-century genesis of the Reformation and the difficulties encountered then. Secondly, I have sought to highlight the main aspects of Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue in the last fifty years with regard to one dimension, namely, ministry.

My concluding remarks are based on the first two of the five imperatives presented at the end of the 2013 document *From Conflict to Communion*:

> Catholics and Lutherans realise that they and the communities in which they live out their faith belong to the one body of Christ. The awareness is dawning on Lutherans and Catholics that the struggle of the sixteenth century is over. The reasons for mutually condemning each other's faith have fallen by the wayside (n.238).

36 Ibid.

37 See ibid., 75-76.

> The first imperative: Catholics and Lutherans should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced.
>
> "The second imperative: Lutherans and Catholics must let themselves continuously be transformed by the encounter with the other and by the mutual witness of faith."[38]

The bitter differences and the pungent acrimony generated in the first half of the sixteenth century, and propagated on both sides during the subsequent centuries, have not been repaired by a magic wand. Yet, firstly, we have to appreciate the fact that Catholics and Lutherans have, fifty years ago, commenced a slow, yet fruitful, process of bilateral dialogue on many aspects. It has indeed been important to listen to each other and appreciate the respective viewpoints. Secondly, although apart, we have come to realise that for a good number of aspects, Lutherans and Catholics were affirming similar principles, albeit using a different theological language. Discussing ministry and appreciating the different points of departure, we realise that ministers, on both sides, have been called by God to serve their respective communities. It is no small thing to affirm that individuals have generously responded to a divine vocation and selflessly dedicated themselves to serve God and their community.

Mutual respect between the two Churches and, consequently, between their respective ministers is a constitutive aspect of the path towards Christian unity. What can be carried out together – for example, shared pastoral strategies, shared on-going scriptural formation, pastoral counselling, the exercise of *diaconia* – can indeed contribute

38 Ibid., 92-93.

to move the Lutheran Church and the Roman Catholic Church closer to each other. This is truly the way forward. In very insightful terms, Walter Kasper affirms that "ecumenical progress does not mean that we abandon the convictions of our own faith, but rather […] that we penetrate these more deeply, until we reach the point at which they are compatible with the convictions of the faith of the other church."[39] This is indeed the future of ecumenical dialogue.

39 Walter Kasper, *Leadership in the Church* (New York: Crossroad, 2003), 204.

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Martin Luther
Deviant Monk or Well-Meaning Reformer?

René Camilleri

We were brought up to think and believe that a man of faith cannot be a rebel or work for reform. A man of faith should simply assent religiously to a tradition received and to an authority that legitimises. For Catholics, Luther was for a long time simply the heretic to blame for the division of the Western church and all that this implied. Now times have changed, and we can see in Martin Luther both a man of faith and a reformer, we can recognise his genuine religious concerns which to some extent are ours too. As the Jesuit James Martin writes, there is something very significant that united two contemporaries like Martin Luther and Ignatius of Loyola: It was to help souls.[1]

Luther's rebellion was not rooted in a liberal and progressive type of standing up against a conservative church. His rebellion was against a decadent church and it was rooted in a true understanding of spirituality, of Christian practice itself, and of the individual's intimate relationship with his or her God. In our context today, where now

1 James Martin SJ, "Foreword," to *October 31, 1517. Martin Luther and the Day that Changed the World*, ed. Martin E. Marty (Brewster, Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 2016), vii.

God is the stranger, and spirituality as it is understood in mainstream culture possibly bypasses religion, revisiting the issues that prompted the Reformation may easily make us discover that now we are much more in line with the basic concerns that made Luther do what he did.

The scenario today has changed considerably and our standpoint has changed as well. What would we answer today if and when asked about indulgences? What is our perception and our immediate reaction to corruption in the church? What is our position today on the issue of justification and our understanding of God's mercy, particularly now that the issue is again dividing the church, this time, though, with the Pope himself as protagonist?

We cannot deny or downplay the demand for a reform in the church of Luther's time, a call that was constantly unheeded. It was a world that was changing, transitional, and where the old and the new came into conflict. It was the demarcation line between the Middle Ages and the Modern Era, a spot without doubt of high tension. It was a context when the reputation of the papacy was at its lowest with three popes opposing one another as rivals and mutually excommunicating each other. There were unresolved problems in the late medieval church which provide the background to the Reformation. There were many treatises advocating reform written in the century preceding the Reformation. Yet, while many thought the church was in desperate need of reform, others believed it was healthy, serving the religious needs of society impressively.

One symptom of the disarray felt at that time may be found in The Imitation of Christ by Thomas a' Kempis. Kempis was writing in late Middle Ages, in what would soon become the territory of the Reformation, at a time when the instiutional church was largely unreliable as a spiritual guide. John Henry Newman, in the preface to the third edition of his *Via Media*, described the life of the church as a dialectical interplay between the theological, devotional, and

hierarchical elements - sort of, those who pray, those who think, and those who rule. At the time Kempis wrote *The Imitation of Christ*, all three of these dimensions were in terrible shape.

From the title of my intervention, rather than entering into the specifics of the issues dominating the Reformation, I'd like to dwell more on the anguish, authenticity, and spirituality that shaped the man Luther. I confess that the more I dwell on the church of Luther's time, the more eager I become to explore the labyrinth of Luther's heart, mind, and soul. Was he a deviant monk? Was he well-meaning in his rebellion?

Erik Erikson, in his 1958 study *Young Man Luther*, sought to figure out the features, from a psychological standpoint, that might have led the man Luther to do what he did. Erikson claims to have found in Martin Luther a good model of his discovery of 'the identity crisis.' He went so far as depicting Luther as a fulminating, hysterical extremist, very nearly the psychotic. His interpretation of Martin Luther's life is that "great figures of history often spend years in a passive state. From a young age, they feel they will create a big stamp on the world, but unconsciously they wait for their particular truth to form itself in their minds, until they can make the most impact at the right time."[2] According to him, Luther suffered through an environment that fomented crisis. Luther was thirty-four when at the height of this conflict experience and Erikson makes the point that his standing up to the Roman church can only be understood in the context of his initial disobedience to his father.

It is true that there are incidents that may corroborate this thesis. Returning to Erfurt where he had just begun his legal studies, a sudden thunderstorm broke and he took refuge under a tree. When lightning struck nearby, possibly knocking him to the ground, he cried out in

2 Tom Butler-Bowden, *Psychology Classics: Who We Are, How We Think, What We Do* (London: Nicholas Brealey, 2007), 50.

fear, "Help me, St Anna, and I will become a monk"[3]. Also, he himself once wrote of his parents: "The severe and harsh life I led with them was the reason I afterward took refuge in the cloister and became a monk."

But can we explain Luther's rebellion as simplistically a manifestation of the rebellion characterising the youthful age? Can we blame the upheaval simply on the personal, internal issues of crsis identity of the monk Luther? This would amount to downplaying the historical backdrop of the late Middle Ages in which the church operated and how effectively the church was responding to the times, According to historian Thomas Cahill,[4] the best route to understanding Luther's theological positions may lie in appreciating the man's psychology. He was a natural conservative, someone who preferred black-and-white statements to unnecessarily clever and elusive formulations, someone more at home with the literal than the metaphorical, someone who respected tradition and wished only for necessary changes and adjustments.

In order to make a sound evaluation of what constitutes a true reform, and perhaps come to terms with the man Luther, it will be helpful to unpack the concept of reform itself.[5] Avery Dulles provides this analysis. To reform is to give new and better form to a preexistent reality, while preserving the essentials. Unlike innovation, reform implies organic continuity; it does not add something foreign or extrinsic. Unlike revolution or transformation, reform respects and retains the substance that was previously there. Unlike development, it implies that something has gone wrong and needs to be corrected.

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3 Ernest Gordon Rupp; Benjamin Drewery, eds., *Martin Luther* (London: Edward Arnold, 1970), 3.

4 Thomas Cahill, *Heretics and Heroes. How Renaissance Artists and Reformation Priests Created Our World* (London: Doubleday, 2013), 173.

5 Avery Dulles, "True and False Reform," *First Things* 135 (August/September 2003): 14-19.

The goal of reform is to make persons or institutions more faithful to an ideal already accepted. This I consider very much in harmony with the man Luther and his queries. More than ten years before Vatican Council II, Yves Congar wrote his True and False Reform of the Church where he establishes criteria that make a reform true or false. Reformers, Congar asserts, will have to exercise the virtue of patience, often accepting delays. He acknowledges that Luther was lacking in this. But lacking patience does not necessarily make him a deviant monk.

The struggle of the papacy over the leadership of medieval society was a purely political struggle whose point of reference was in Unam Sanctam of Boniface VIII, making extreme claims for papal power. For twenty-three years popes resided at Avignon which Petrarch labelled as the Babylonian captivity of the church. Many respected and saintly people lifted their voices against this state of affairs and demanded the pope's return to Rome. Amongst them Catherine of Siena (1347–1389) and Bridget of Sweden (1303–1373), who without restraint was so critical as to state that the pope was "like Lucifer in envy, more unjust than Pilate, harsher than Judas." It was also a time when we had two sets of cardinals as well as two popes.

The conflict over leadership between the rival popes led to a further conflict as to where the final authority in the church resides, whether in a Council or in the papacy. What followed were turbulent years with three popes reigning, amongst them John XXII (1410–1415) who reluctantly called the Council of Constance in 1414 which finally brought this saga to an end. All along, the potential for meaningful reform was undermined. The work Julius Exclusus published in 1517 and believed to have been written by the humanist Erasmus, reveals the way many in Europe viewed the Renaissance papacy at the time of the Reformation.

The work contains an imaginary dialogue between St Peter and Pope Julius as the pope appears at the gates of heaven demanding to be welcomed into heaven with ceremonies befitting his office. In

the dialogue, Peter contrasts Julius' lifestyle and values with those of Jesus Christ. While Julius brags of his accomplishments and revels in the wealth, military power, and adulation he received as pope, Peter reminds him what Christ and the apostles taught about true Christian values. Julius replies: "This is all new to me."[6]

Yet, it was in the wake of his theological breakthrough that Luther had become increasingly critical of abuses in the church. The sale of indulgences was carefully organised and it was becoming clearer that money alone could release a soul from the terrible sufferings of purgatory. A popular slogan used by indulgence preachers goes "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."

It is true that at the outset of the Reformation and what actually triggered it were personal religious issues Luther was struggling with. Luther was not the kind of person whose background suggested he would one day rebel against the church to whose service he had dedicated his life. As Philip Melanchthon wrote, Luther had no intention of beginning a revolution when in 1517 he wrote the Ninety-Five Theses questioning the sale of indulgences.[7] Luther's brush with death had made him vividly aware both of how transient this life is and of how uncertain he was about his own salvation. In Luther we sense also what may best be called existential terror of death. Commenting on the Fifth Psalm, he finds the life of the believer filled with "pain, temptation, doubt, and fear."

Although the church never taught that people were saved solely by their good works, at a popular level the emphasis on the human contribution to salvation was so strong that many probably believed that their salvation was largely dependent on their own effort. In 1545, a year before his death, Martin Luther reflects on his early life. For him

6 Rudoph W. Heinze; Tim Dowley, *Reform and Conflict. From the Mediaval World to the Wars of Religion*, Vol. IV (Chicago: Lion Hudson, 2005), 55-56.

7 Philip Melanchthon, *The Life and Acts of Martin Luther* (London: Unwin, 1845).

the righteousness of God could only mean the condemnation of sinners, himself included. Luther relates how, after wrestling with the meaning of Romans 1,17, he finally came to understand the righteousness of God – *iustitia Dei* – in a different way, thus opening the door to his theological reformation.

"I had been taught to understand 'the righteousness of God' philosophically, in the sense of the formal or active righteousness by which God is righteous and punishes unrighteous sinners … I was angry with God, saying 'As if it were not enough that miserable sinners should be eternally damned through original sin, with all kinds of misfortunes laid upon them by the Old Testament law, and yet God adds sorrow upon sorrow through the gospel, and even brings wrath and righteousness to bear through it! … At last I begun to understand that righteousness of God as that by which the righteous live by the gift of God, namely faith. I began to understand the righteousness of God is revealed to refer to a passive righteousness by which the merciful God justifies us by faith … This immediately made me feel as though I had been born again, and as though I had entered through open gates into paradise itself. From that moment, the whole face of Scripture appeared to me in a different light."

Luther's new view of justification meant that justification could no longer be viewed as a process in which the sinner was made righteous. In the medieval view, righteousness was something God worked within human beings, and they cooperated in achieving it. For Luther, this righteousness was always external and fully depended on the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The Christian life with its required good works was not the condition of salvation but its consequence.[8]

8 Bernard M.G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Reformation*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1995), 54.

The Ninety-Five Theses were written by a loyal son of the church who was seeking to reform an abuse. It was not a call to revolution and was not addressed to the common people. It was written in Latin and directed to the academic community. Luther later even wrote a lengthy exposition of the Ninety-Five Theses which was sent as an appeal to the pope. In the dedication, Luther expressed his confidence that the pope would judge the matter fairly, writing: "I put myself at the feet of your holiness with everything that I am and have … I will regard your voice as the voice of Christ, who speaks through you."[9]

In the spring of 1520 Luther produced two tracts which proved to be a giant step toward what would soon become the national churches of Protestant Europe. In September of that same year, Johann Eck arrived in Germany attempting to promulgate the Bull Exsurge Domine, demanding Luther's recantation under pain of excommunication. In the first week of October, Luther published in Latin his most incendiary tract, On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church which was the beginning of the end. After that he published The Freedom of a Christian which makes many of the same arguments as the previous work, though in more elevated style. But at this time, there was no going back.

As the Lutheran and historian Martin Marty writes, Martin Luther's insights still speak to us and the differences between Catholics and Protestants serve to enrich our Church.[10] These differences, in fact, only underline the various ways both groups have sought to serve the one Lord, Jesus Christ, by, in their own ways, striving to "help souls."

9 *LW* 31: 83; James M. Kittelson, *Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and his Career* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2016), 114

10 See Martin E. Marty, *October 31, 1517. Martin Luther and the Day that Changed the World* (Brewster, Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 2016).

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Maddalena de Pazzi's *Consilium Trinitatis* in the light of Luther's *Solus Christus* Doctrine. An Approximation

Charló Camilleri

> "The Church needs a reformation which is not the work of man, namely the pope, or of many men, namely the cardinals, both of which the most recent council has demonstrated, but it is the work of the whole world, indeed it is the work of God alone. However, only God who has created time knows the time for this reformation."[1]

> "Most dear, most dear, most dear Father, ponder, ponder, ponder, please ponder, please ponder-a thousand times I should like to say it -ponder what I have said to you, that the appointed time has come when God wants to renew His Church by means of His Vicar and His ministers. But you will wonder, you will wonder and I myself would also wonder, and rightly can men wonder, that God should wish to reveal such

1 Martin Luther, "Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses," trans. Carl W. Folkemer, in Helmut T. Lehmann and Jaroslav Pelikan, eds., *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols, (Philadelphia and St. Louis, 1955–1986), 31:250. (=*LW*); *WA* 1, 62, 27–31.

> a thing to a creature so mean, so ignorant and so uninformed as I am. Yet remember that God wishes men to see that it is He Who works; for were He to reveal this to someone who possessed wisdom and some power, men would not recognise it in all its fullness as the work of God. But God wants to reveal this to a mean little worm of His, such as I am, because He wishes men to see more clearly how great is His goodness in this work of His."[2]

Prolegomena

Placing together Martin Luther (1483–1546), the initiator of the Reformation, and Magdalena de' Pazzi (1566–1607), the Catholic Revival mystic saint par excellence, might seem too much of a daring endeavour. Seemingly antithetical to each other to the extent that the latter's flourishing, and exuberantly fruitful mystical experience was the card put on the table by the Roman Catholic Church to neutralise Luther's claim that she is the *spelunca latronum licentiosissima, lupanar omnium impudentissimum, regnum peccati, mortis et inferni.*[3] In truth Luther's condemnations were addressed to the Roman Curia, headed by Leo X, whom he recognised *sicut agnos in medio luporum sedes, sicut Daniel in medio leonum, et cum Ezechiele inter scorpiones habitas.*[4]

2 Maddalena de' Pazzi, "Al Rev.do Pietro della Compagnia del soave nome di Gesù," in *Tutte le opere*.

3 Martin Luther, "Letter to Leo X on the Treatise 'Concerning Christian Liberty'," in *Documents Illustrative of the Continental Reformation,* ed. Beresford James Kidd (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 73-74. For the 'politics' of canonizations, see: Clare Copeland, *Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi: The Making of a Counter-Reformation Saint*, Oxford Theology and Religion Monographs (New York/NY: Oxford University Press, 2016); Clare Copeland and Jan Machielsen, *Angels of Light? Sanctity and the Discernment of Spirits in the Early Modern Period*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2013); Andrea Cutlip, *The Influence of Holiness: Religion, Politics, and the veneration of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi* (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, Wilmington 2003), *Pro manuscripto*.

4 Ibid.

Indeed, there's no much difference here from Magdalena de' Pazzi's vocabulary used in the "Letters on the Renewal of the Church" addressed to the Pope, Cardinals, Bishops and other Prelates and influential people upon whom the onus of the renewal of the Church fell. The image itself of Daniel in the Lions' Den is central to the volume known as *La Probatione* functioning as the foundational paradigm for the prophetic words and dramatic gestures the mystic performs within her community to elucidate the urgent need of reform within the Church. Perhaps also they share also much in common through St Augustine who was to both a source of doctrinal inspiration.

It is well recognised that in his protestations Luther appeals to the authority of Paul the Apostle and of previous reformers and saints, like for example the Carmelite Baptist of Mantua, considered as the Precursor of the German Reformation, of whom in 1571 an *Anthologia... sententiosa collecta ex operibus Baptistae* was published at Nürnburg. The Mantuan, honored by Erasmus as the Christiano More was infact was a zealous advocate of reform, and his *Fastorum libri duodecim*, dedicated to Leo X, warns of the pending disaster upon the Church. Mantuan's attacks were so strong that Luther simply borrowed them. In the *Tischreden* (*The Table Talks*) Luther recalls that the Baptist was the first poet he read, even before Virgil and Ovid. Manganaro observes that

Oltre che dal valore attribuito ai suoi versi latini, l'ampia diffusione delle opere del Mantovano lungo tutto il Cinquecento e in tutta Europa fu determinata certamente dall'"ansia polemica e riformatrice," particolarmente presente nelle sue due ultime ecloghe: "la IX sui costumi della Curia romana, la X sugli abusi e sulle divisioni dell'Ordine, nell'auspicio del ritorno al genuino spirito originario." Si deve in buona parte a questa componente la straordinaria fortuna delle

sue Egloghe nel XVI secolo, "come conferma di un filone umanistico-cristiano fortemente originale proprio nell'uso innovatore di un genere antico e classico per eccellenza, come il bucolico-pastorale."

La fortuna del Mantovano assume dimensione e valenza altamente significative nell'Europa della Riforma e in particolar modo in Inghilterra. Gli attacchi alla corruzione papale resero le sue Egloghe (in cui essi erano particolarmente presenti) un testo curricolare in molte scuole inglesi, sancito dai programmi. Su quei testi si formarono, tra gli altri, Edmund Spenser e John Milton.[5]

It is not the scope of this contribution to analyse historically the Reformation movement. What is to be pointed out however is that Luther's Reform is in line with the *Reformatio* movement coming down from the Middle Ages as an ideal of "changing a bad present situation by returning to the good and better times of the past."[6]

This ideal for an *ecclesia semper reformanda* did not only find as its promoters and advocates spirit filled reformers and visionaries but also the Church herself in the Council of Constance (1414–1418). Similarly, can be stated on Magdalena de' Pazzi, whose prophetic existence and project of reform is in line with the high aspirations of the Middle Ages. She herself chose to join the Florentine Carmelite monastic community wherein the Savonarolian ideals of reform were held in high esteem. As much as seldom did Luther use the term reformatio, "reformation," so Magdalena never used the word. She preferred instead to use renovatione from the Latin *renovatio.*

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5 Baptista Spagnoli, "Eclogae. IX. Falco. De moribus curiae romanae," in *Poeti latini del quattrocento*, ed. Francesco Arnaldi; Lucia Gualdo Rosa; Liliana Monti Sabia (Milano-Napoli: Ricciardi, 1964), 898-911.

6 Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, *From Conflict to Communion. Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*, 36. (on-line):vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/lutheran-fed-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_2013_dal-conflitto-alla-comunione_en.html. Accessed on August 10, 2017.

In the course of history, *reformatio* came to be associated with a movement of rupture and change of present structural forms in the ecclesial and political spheres, thus "re-form," namely refers "to forming again." *Renovatio* on the other hand seems to emphasise more the "act of making new again," hence to "re-new." While the former ideal seeks for "a return back to the good and better times of the past," the latter seeks a way forward in continuation with the present. Today we would argue for a hermeneutics of continuity.

Renovatio and *reformatio* are not mutually exclusive as both are rooted in Biblical revelation in the dynamic movements of

1. conversion, namely a "returning back" after "breaking up" with sin (convertere ad Deum et relinque peccata tua - Eccl 17:21), and;
2. trust in the promise of the faithful and true Risen One who assured us "I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5). In Matthew Henry's words "we may and ought to take God's promise as present payment; if he has said that he makes all things new, it is done."[7]

Underlying the *reformatio* is a penitential spirit, whereas the tinge of renovatio is positively paschal. While "the term "Reformation" came to be used as a designation for the complex of historical events that, in the narrower sense, encompass the years 1517 to 1555, thus from the time of the spread of Martin Luther's "Ninety-five Theses" up until the Peace of Augsburg," Maddalena's Renovatione is a reflection of the final stage of the Catholic Reform under Pope Sixtus V (1585–1590) shifting from forcing reform on the Church to attracting the Church to renewal. Ultimately however, at the core of both movements stands God's grace reaching us in Christ. "Reformation which is not the work of man, …

7 Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, *VI: Acts to Revelation*, unabridged edition by Ernie Stefanik from the 1706-1721 edition, Christian Classics Ethereal Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 1705.

indeed it is the work of God alone" and "the time established by God to renew his Church has come." Both Luther and Maddalena would agree that "the Church is founded on the Word of God. It is *creatura Verbi*, not *creatura fidelium*. It is not us that make – or, for that matter, reform or renew – the Church; it is God who does so, through the preaching of the Gospel, under the power of the Holy Spirit."

So, the real question is about two distinct ways of relating to God, of experiencing faith, of understanding it and preaching it to conform oneself to it. This said, approaching the Trinitarian mystery and the uniqueness of Christ in de' Pazzi and Luther, this contribution aims at showing there are more common elements of agreement rather than disagreement. A fundamental characteristic of both Maddalena and the Reformers is a certain intuition that Christ, the Word is 'absent,' 'missing.' Both feel the urgency to make him 'sacrametally' present: Maddalena through the 'preaching' or verbalisation of the Word through the mystical utterances and her prophetic drama, while Luther and the Reformers by placing Sacred Scriptures at the core of the Church's life. In both, *Solus Christus* and *Sola Scriptura* are we might say interchangeable.

Firstly, it has to be pointed out that the Reformers had no real issue with the Trinitarian dogma. Only they demanded this fundamental dogma "be grounded and proved not philosophically but exegetically." If philosophical terms were to be used in the doctrine on God, these should be permitted "only insofar as those words actually illuminated the meaning of Scripture."[8] This is exactly how de' Pazzi approached the mysteries of faith, primarily that concerning the Trinity.

De' Pazzi would find herself in Melanchton's argument that Christ "wills that our eyes be fixed on the Son who has been manifested to us, that our prayers be directed to the eternal Father who has revealed

8 Michael Reeves, "The Holy Trinity," in *Reformation Theology. A Systematic Summary*, ed. Matthew Barrett (Illinois: Crossway, 2017), 195-196.

himself in the Son whom he has sent."[9] Her mystical doctrine is a commentary on the Scriptures read and celebrated both personally (at least two hours a day) and in the Church's Liturgy (the Divine Office, the daily Mass and Communitarian reading of Scriptures during meals and meditation in choir). Though well read in theology she was not one of the learned, thus her primary source were the Scriptures, illumined from the teachings of the Fathers, especially Augustine, and the Scholastics, especially Aquinas. Imparted to her by the learned chaplains of the Monastery and by the daily spiritual reading. Similarly could be said regarding to Christology.

Luther's and Maddalena's Case

Luther's standpoint is human unworthiness, reflecting his perennial struggle with God, ultimately a struggle to find a gracious Father in God. Magdalena's starting point on the other hand is human dignity, reflecting her trust in God as loving Father who delights in communicating with her and through her.[10] These two ways of percieving God and thus relating to him are rooted in the negative and positive father figure experiences both faced in their upbringing and formation.

In Luther's case, his childhood experience, "particularly his experience with his demanding father, is one reason why Luther had a robust doctrine of the fear of God."[11] Largen observes that

> The home in which Luther was raised contributed to his emphasis on the fear of God; more specifically, one of the reasons that the fear of God was so pervasive for Luther was

9 Philipp Melanchthon, *Loci communes, 1543*, trans. J.A.O.Preus (St. Louis/MO: Concordia, 1992), 18.

10 See as an example of the Eternal Father speaking through Maddalena's voice, "Colloquio 46,' in *Tutte le opere,* III,

11 Kristin Johnston Largen, "The Role of Fear in Our Love of God: A Lutheran Perspective," in *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 50, no. 1 (2011): 27.

his own childhood and religious development, as well as his early monastic experience of the faith. (…) Leppen observes that "Luther reports that his education was harsh ... in addition to his father, who 'whipped him so severely,' his mother also once beat him 'until the blood flowed' because he had stolen a mere nut." In this context of a somber and fearful childhood, then, it is no surprise that Leppen asserts, "The punishing God haunted Luther's childhood and also the later Luther's spiritual horizon and theology." Even after Luther became a monk, he was still haunted by a punishing God. What is perhaps surprising is that Luther even uses fear language in describing his understanding of Christ. Leppen argues that "Although the young Luther struggled constantly with the devil, another figure loomed large in Luther's spirituality. This figure was Christ. The picture Luther paints of Christ in some key texts is as a menacing person in his own right, not as a friendly antithesis to the devil." This fear of Christ was pervasive. Leppin describes how, in Luther's Commentary on Galatians, Luther states how he learned early to stand in awe of Christ as the great judge, and also to fear the very sound of Christ's name. In another text, Luther somewhat shockingly even compares the fear he has of the devil to the fear he has of Christ; this comparison, as Leppin notes, "captures the entire panorama of his childhood's religion. Christ appears as a threatening judge together with a threatening devil." Thus, Leppen concludes: "The glaring ambivalence between punishing God and freeing God is the distinctive characteristic of Luther's spirituality and theology. Luther cultivates both sides throughout his

> spiritual biography. Both sides are worked into his theology in different ways. The profound tension shapes the theological ambivalence that Luther could never resolve." [12]

In Maddalena's case, the childhood experience of warm parents, thrust her into a relationship of loving trust in God who is merciful love. In the The Colloquies for example God the Father speaks through her voice and in contemplating the divine mystery she exclaimes that in everything God is moved by love. Even if he were to give us hell he is motivated by love.[13]

This is not to state that Luther did not believe in or experience God as Love, or that Maddalena did not confront herself with God's judgement.[14] Rather these themes are present in both to a larger and lesser extent with a particular emphasis shaping their respective spiritual worldview. For Luther "the great fire of the love of God for us" consists of "the heart and conscience becoming happy, secure, and content." Consequently, "this is what preaching the Christian faith

12 Ibid. 27. See also: Volker Leppin, "God in Luther's Life and Thought," in *The Global Luther: A Theologian for Modern Times*, ed. Christine Helmer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 84-89.

13 'I Quaranta giorni,' in *Tutte le opere I (16th day)*.

14 Though Maddalena reflects on God's judgement, the theme of God's wrath seldom appears in her theological reflection. Rather in *The Forty-fifth Colloquy* she contests the wrath of God for us: "Sei mirabile nel Padre placandolo dall'ira (se può avere ira in sé) verso di noi…" And even if God is wrathful in relation to us sinners, he is easily moved to compassion and mercy out of love towards us through the merits of the Blood of Christ and at the sight of an act of humble pentiment "È cosa mirabile considerare che colui che è infinito e talmente grande e potente da contenere in sé ogni cosa, si lascia offendere ed è offeso da una cosa tanto meschina e bassa come è la creatura, e si placa così facilmente per un po' di umiliazione da parte della stessa creatura. Anche questa è una grande meraviglia operata da te, Verbo, presso il tuo eterno Padre mediante il tuo Sangue. Chi la può comprendere? La comprende soltanto chi la prova, e la prova colui al quale è fatta comprendere dalla tua bontà.": *Tutte le opere III*.

means."[15] In one instance, where he mentions divine love in De servo arbitrio, "the manifesto of the Reformation,"[16] Luther clarifies that the apostle "Paul is contending that all men are unrighteous and in need of God's special grace—the love, wisdom, and power of God by which He saves us."[17]

Consequently, as he argues in his manifesto human will has been obstructed and deadend by sin. The sinful human person stands in need of God's saving grace in order to freely arise to Christ. In Luther's view, the state of being in need of God's grace nullifies claims to human freedom and autonomy. To argue in favour of autonomy and freedom is tantamount to rejection of the Trinitarian faith in God who created us, saved us and sactified us. Only in Christ and empowered by the gift of the Holy Spirit that we take our flight towards the Triune God. Similarly, de' Pazzi says that divine love manifests itself in God lavishly

15 Martin Luther, "What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels," in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull. 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 106. Recently modern Finnish Lutheran scholars in the course of ecumenical dialogues have sparked an interest in reexamining Luther's theology from the perspective of Love rather than Justification as the former has been underestimated and the latter overemphasized. For Luther, love is the fruit of faith, and is revealed in our love of God, of others, and of self. See Sun-young Kim. *Luther on Faith and Love: Christ and the Law in the 1535 Galatians Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2014). See also Egil Grislis, "Luther's Understanding of the Wrath of God," *The Journal of Religion* 41, no. 4 (1961): 277-292 for the relationship between God's Love and Wrath in Luther's Theology.

16 Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Works* – IX (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House 2003), 471.

17 Martin Luther, *De servo arbitrio*, 4.

outpouring himself upon us, the unrighteous. She argues that God creates and loves the soul of the worst of sinners with the same love with which he created and loves the soul of the Virgin Mary.[18]

Divine Mercy and the Flood from Dry-bled Lamb

For Maddalena, God's merciful love, is revealed to us to the fullest in Jesus Christ. It is a deluge which inundates the whole of creation, none excluded. Divine Mercy, when compared to man's indifference and ingratitude, seems more powerful and awesome. Very often she reflects on man's sinful indifference towards God, and asks, in an astonishing way, what it is that man wants from God inorder to decide for God. In her first performance experience of the Passion, while contemplating on the beatings suffered by Jesus Christ, the saint asks in an amazing way: 'What is needed from You, O great Love? Is it knowledge? Is it goodness, kindness? Is it Mercy? Is it Gentleness or Love?'[19]

De' Pazzi puts together the powerful contrast between human sinfulness and God's lavishness through the image of two councils convened in heaven and earth. In line with the theology of the consilium trinitatis understood by her as a loving between the divine Persons, she deciphers twelve gradations or channels of water (grace) starting from the divine decision to create and redeem humanity. The vision constitutes the central phase of St. Mary Magdalene's mystical experience. In it De' Pazzi gives a global view of the Christian mystery,

18 "I Quaranta Giorni" (day 2), in *Tutte le opere I*: "Poi mi sembrava di vedere la Ss.ma Trinità piena d'amore per le creature, ma le creature non riconoscevano questo amore e non s'impegnavano ad amare puramente Dio. Vedevo che Dio ama l'anima di un infedele con lo stesso amore con cui ha creato l'anima della sua santissima Madre." Maddalena's doctrine echoes Mechtild of Magdebourg and the Medieval *minne mystiek* movement. See *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity*, ed Paul L. Gavrilyuk – Sarah Coakley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

19 "I Quaranta Giorni" edited by Ermanno del SS. Sacramento in *Tutte le opere di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi dai manoscritti originali I*, compiled by Fulvio Nardoni (Firenze: Centro Nazionale del Libro: Firenze, 1960), 173.

presenting the history of salvation, looked at from the final stage: the presence of Christ the dry-bleeding lamb (*agnello svenato*) who is forever active in the bosom of the Father. As in Luther's doctrine, for de' Pazzi, the salvation brought to us by Christ is infact a Trinitarian salvation. Thus in her understanding, plastified in the vision inspired by the imagery of Revelations, the Christus passus et gloriosus is central. In these twelve channels the entire story of salvation, starting from the ab eterno trinitarian *perichoresis*, to the incarnation of the Word, his passion, death and resurrection, right through the time of the Church to the second coming of Christ.

These twelve channels reveal God's intent to save humanity from nothingness/oblivion and destruction first in creation, understood as the communication of divine love. Another contrasting council is convened on earth by the wicked, who plan a way forward to do away with Christ. In response to this eartly council of the wicked God's intent is manifested in the work of redemption. Two scenes constitute the vision:

1. Eternal divine love which emanates through history, until the end of time, until everything is recapitulated in Christ (Eph 1:10). The creation of the cosmos as a communication of love. There follows the creation of the angels and then the creation of human beings in a state of innocence, so that men and women could communicate with God and receive God's gifts.
2. Humanity does not respond adequately and so the second scene opens. Because of sin, humanity becomes incapable of understanding God and of receiving God's gifts. At this point God's plan for humanity's redemption from the slavery of sin and to confer grace's sublime gifts enabling us to be once more faithful and capable of divine communication, is revealed. This plan of salvation is brought about through the Mystery of Christ.

Thus, spiritual journey is presented here as a re-creation in Christ incarnate, the bridge and staircase of salvation. It is through Christ alone, that the complete return to God does not remain only a possibility but becomes an exultant reality as "it is the uniqueness of his person that determines the efficacy of his work."[20]

In de' Pazzi's mystical writings the centrality of Christ is conveyed also through a number of images and metaphors. Christ is the book, the mirror, the keeper, the guarantee of our access to the Father.[21] De' Pazzi holds to the theological logic of the *logos incarnandus*, showing that the Son of God, from eternity, is the one to be incarnated for us and for our salvation. She repeatedly stresses that the Word became clothed in our humanity in order to redeem us from sin and to show us the greatest and final expression of love in his passion and death on the cross.

The blood of Christ, symbol and witness to his burning love for humanity, is the means offered to us to be free from sin and to become god-like. In the ecstasies of the saint, the passion, the cross, the death and the blood of Christ constitute the place where humanity is re-created, in an even more perfect way than originally and in a way that surpasses the state of the angels. To elucidate this, de' Pazzi further on states that God drowned the world with two floods: that of justice in the flooding of Genesis and that of mercy in the flooding of the Blood of Christ.[22]

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20 Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ. Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove/IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 29.

21 Similar metaphors are found in the Reformers' writings. See David Gibson, *Reading the Decree: Exegesis, Election and Christology in Calvin and Barth* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 4.

22 "I Colloqui" edited by Claudio Catena in *Tutte le opere di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi dai manoscritti originali* II, written by Fulvio Nardoni (Firenze: Centro Nazionale del Libro, 1960), 191.

In Scripture, the event of the flooding portrays in as in a dyptich the image of God entirely destroying evil and evildoers, as well as the image of God who in this way purifies creation. We have therefore not complete destruction but an act of purification, a washing. It is violence that brings about death and the culture of death that leads to destruction. The biblical text tells us that God intervenes in a merciful way: 'But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord' (Genesis 6:8). Faced with violence, God's reaction is one of love and mercy. Grace is mercy. God's judgement is always merciful in his justice as there is unfailingly the promise of salvation usually through the choosing of a remnant from a perverse generation. In this case, it is Noah and the remnant refugees in the Ark with him. In Maddalena's thought these are the 'elect of God' (*i sua eletti*) the chosen ones by, in and through Christ.[23]

De' Pazzi allegorically interprets the deluge story as a pre-figuration of the annunciation account. Just as Noah found favour in the eyes of God, so Gabriel announces to Mary that she has found favour in the fulness of time: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God" (Luke 1:30). Allegory Mary becomes the new Ark carrying forward the Incarnate Jesus Christ, who is God's peace and mercy to us. In Jesus Christ, God is revealed as humanity's friend extending to us a plan of peace. Rather than destruction God gives us a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11):

23 The theme of the election and the elect is an important one in de' Pazzi's doctrine and deserves to be studied deeply. The centrality of Christ in election is to be found also in the Reformers. See Gibson, *Reading the Decree*, 4-5.

Then he sent the deluge. In this little world the Incarnate Word sent the deluge. And what deluge is this? A superabundance of grace and infusion of his blood, where he drowns all desires, affections and temptations of the soul which are not according to his will.[24]

[...]

And moreover she understood that in the times of Noah God sent the deluge of water, namely of Justice because of the increase of sins in the world; in the present he sent the deluge of mercy with such an abundance of divine knowledge given to creatures, in such a way as when giving many beautiful books and ways of learning how to live spiritually, through divine teachings, participation in the sacraments and other good things God sends nowadays in the world through his infinite mercy. And as all creatiures drown in the water's deluge, so they can drown in a deluge of wine, which is the deluge of mercy. However, as all the creatures who entered the ark drowned in the waters sent by God as punishment, so those who enter the ark of the Most Sacred Humanity of Jesus will drown in co-operation with his infinite mercy. In this way they become ready to receive his Blood.[25]

Blood gushing out from the holy wounds as the symbol of life in de' Pazzi's view is intimately bound to mercy. The shedding of the Incarnate Word's blood is the giving of life to us condemned to eternal death. De' Pazzi speaks of 'seeping' mercy, in the same way she speaks of blood flowing from the sacred wounds. She teaches that Jesus' wounds on the Cross gush out 'an abundance of mercy' (read, blood) so that

24 This text was used in F. Marchese's work, *Unica speranza del peccatore che consiste nel Sangue del Gesù Christo* (Roma 1670, 34), in which in the front piece he shows an etching by Bernini. Recent studies show that Bernini was inspired by the doctrine of Mary Magdalen regarding the flooding or the washing in the Blood of Christ as well as from her drawings about Christ in the mystic winepress. See Stefano Pierguidi, "L'iconografia del 'Sangue di Cristo' del Bernini: Santa Maria Maddalena de Pazzi e il torchio mistico," in www.academia.edu (accessed on March 16, 2016), 103-106.

25 "I Colloqui," 191.

the soul drinks from it becoming 'with all humility evenly abundant in mercy towards her brethren in material and spiritual needs.'[26] In a very beautiful way, she explains that she aims towards God 'because anything that emerges from him is justice and so from him mercy is expressed through faith and love towards all sinners.'[27]

In *The Colloquies*, de' Pazzi considers merciful love gushing out of the Trinity, through the Incarnate Word. Merciful Love is passed on to us through his blessed wounds and from us to all men. Part of this consideration explains that:

She saw the unity of the Most Holy Trinity full of Mercy, infused in the humanified Word. The Word was effusing Mercy through the five wounds as from five beautiful channels diffusing it in all creatures. She saw that everyone was covered in Mercy, both the just and the sinners. Mercy had this effect in the creatures, covering up all their sins, except those of malice and hard-headedness. She saw clearly that mercy, although plentiful, did not cover those creatures where there was no understanding and repentance of sin.

For this reason, these remained out of mercy. She also understood that those creatures who understood and repented of sin were all covered in mercy and were consumed by mercy, as the sea engulfs a drop of water. In these creatures, sin was not visible, but only mercy which covers and consumes in us sin and moreover accompanies us in all our actions. She was given to understand the words of the Psalmist: Et misericordia tua subsequetur me (Psalm 22:6). Mercy always co-operates with us in every good thing we do, lending us the hand of divine help. She used to tell us that the mercies of the Lord were infinite as we find in the book of Scriptures. In particular she understood the

26 "I Quaranta Giorni," 217.

27 "I Colloqui," 115.

psalm's verse in the liturgy of hours: Lucerna pedibus meis verbum tuum; et lumen semitis meis (Psalm 118, 105). It seems to me (she said) that it was God's great mercy that gave us his Word as lamp and light.[28]

So, it is through this mercy that the malady of sinful indifference is healed. For indifference and a cold heart, God who operates soley for the benefit and good of humanity in Wisdom, namely Christ,[29] gives the medicine of mercy that unwinds the heart (*miseri-cordia*) and moves us towards God and towards our brethren. Indeed such a person

28 "I Colloqui," 95-96.

29 "I Quaranta Giorni": "Mercoledì 30 Maggio 1584. Dopo essermi comunicata, meditavo le parole del salmista: *Omnia in sapientia tu fecisti*. Mi sembrava che l'eterno Padre facesse tutto con la sua sapienza che altri non era che il suo Figliolo. L'eterno Padre, cioè, operava per mezzo del Figliolo e nella Ss.ma Trinità c'era l'infinita perfezione di tutte le cose. Ne mancava una sola: l'umanità. Perciò il Padre, mandando Gesù a incarnarsi, con la sua sapienza perfezionò e fece sì che nella Ss.ma Trinità vi fosse anche ciò che prima non c'era. L'anima mia vedeva quante cose Dio operava nella sua sapienza unicamente a vantaggio delle creature, dal momento che egli non ne ha affatto bisogno. Vedendo quanto poco le creature conoscono questi benefici e quanto poco amano Dio, per il gran dolore sentivo una pena quasi insopportabile ed ero spinta a dire: "O dolce Dio, quanto è grande la malizia dell'uomo; o amore, perché tanta cecità?." Era tanta la pena e lo slancio che parlavo a voce alta. Mi fu dato di conoscere tutto questo meditando le parole: *Omnia in sapientia tu fecisti*. La mia anima, conoscendo i benefici di Dio, rivolta a lui diceva tutta lieta: *E in bonitate tua sperabo*. Voglio dire che vedevo la bontà di Dio nei nostri riguardi così grande, che riponevo tutta la mia speranza in lui che è la stessa bontà. Vedevo quanto egli aveva fatto per le creature con la sua sapienza, cioè con Gesù, e la sua infinita bontà, e ripetevo spesso le parole: *E in bonitate tua sperabo.* Raccomandando poi le creature a Gesù, terminai come al solito la mia meditazione."

is mystically bonded and conformed with the Triune God: One with the Father through purity, one with the Son through obedience and one with the Spirit through poverty.[30]

Conclusion

In virtue of the mystery of the incarnation the Trinitarian life and the faithful's participation in it through Christ, in Christ and with Christ, is therefore revealed to us. Christ is uniquely central therefore to both Maddalena and Luther, as Christ is at the core of the Trinitarian Counsel and at the heart of the Church and humanity. Bavnick specifies that the doctrine of Christ is not the starting point, but it certainly is the central point of the whole system of dogmatics. All other dogmas either prepare for it or are inferred from it. In it, as the heart of dogmatics, pulses the whole of the religious-ethical life of Christianity.[31]

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30 "I Quaranta Giorni": "Il primo legame era il voto di castità, mediante il quale ero legata e unita all'eterno Padre che è la purità medesima. Vedevo che la purità era uno dei legami più stretti dell'unione che l'anima può avere con Dio, perché quando è pura l'anima è conforme a Dio. Io gli ero così unita e stretta, che non avrei mai e poi mai potuto separarmi da lui, a meno che fossi caduta nel peccato della carne. Per gli altri peccati il legame della purità non si sarebbe sciolto, ma piuttosto macchiato e così allentato da sembrare pressoché sciolto. Questo legame mi sembrava così prezioso che è impossibile esprimere la sua grandezza e l'unione dell'anima con Dio con linguaggio umano. Mi vedevo poi legata e unita al mio sposo Gesù con il voto di obbedienza, e anche questo legame mi sembrava così grande da non potersi immaginare. Vedendo la preziosità, la grandezza e l'utilità di questa santa virtù, ero tutta dispiaciuta per non averne conosciuto prima a sufficienza l'utilità: essa rende l'anima conforme a Gesù, che è stato tanto obbediente. Se le creature conoscessero la grandezza e l'utilità di questa virtù per l'anima, credo che vorrebbero sottomettersi a ogni creatura, anche la più piccola. Mi sembrava che questa virtù fosse particolarmente necessaria nel Noviziato, ma che le novizie non ne conoscessero il grande valore. Allo Spirito Santo ero legata invece col voto di povertà. Non perché l'anima sia ricolma come lo Spirito Santo di tutti i tesori e le ricchezze celesti, ma come ha detto Gesù nel Vangelo: *Beati pauperes spiritu*, e beate le anime che riconoscono e sanno ricevere e conservare in sé stesse le ricchezze e i tesori dello Spirito."

31 Herman Bavinck, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, vol. 3: *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. Jon Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic 2006), 274.

Both Luther' *Solus Christus* doctrine and the centrality of Christ in de' Pazzi's mysticism are based on the exclusive identity of Christ and his sufficient work. In both, the Person of Christ and his work are one in the Incarnation. The mystery of Christ, "the incarnate Son's life and death reveal who Jesus is and how his divine-human identity is necessary to accomplish our reconciliation."[32]

32 Stephen Wellum, *Christ Alone. The Uniqueness of Jesus as* Saviour, The Five Solas Series, ed. Matthew Barrett (Zondervan, Nashville 2017), 25.

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The Impact of Eschatological Differences in Catholic and Lutheran Traditions on Modern Understanding of God's Creation

Oleh Kindiy

In his book on the roots of secularisation of Western society, Charles Taylor singled out three main domains in which the category of God, once deeply rooted in the premodern period, lost its essential role. He spoke of the physical world that surrounded people, the social order, such as a kingdom, *polis*, and Church, and finally the "enchanted" world in its fullness.[1] He noted that in the year 1500 one could hardly imagine anyone who would not have faith in God; however, in 2000 many consider this not only a plausible alternative, but also, in many cases, an inevitable choice.

1 Чарльз Тейлор, Секулярный век (Москва: Издательство Библейско-богословского института, 2017), с. 33, Russian translation by Alexei Vasiliev, Leonid Kolker, and Andrei Lukianov from Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

Most modern authors, mainly the disciples of Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, while speaking about "economic systems" and "human labor,"[2] overlook what Weber himself was very emphatic about, namely, a secularist framework (disenchantment / Entzauberung) as the most essential prerequisite factor for a Capitalist economy.[3] In the overwhelming majority of the so-called Protestant countries, economic prosperity took place precisely because of the process of secularisation of societies. Jürgen Kaube recently explained this trend of secularisation on the level of economics and politics by suggesting that the Capitalist system was most likely not a Protestant invention, as some followers of the theory of Max Weber would present it, but rather Protestantism was the most fitting and appealing religious system that suited merchants.[4]

Indeed, it would be hard to imagine the modern societies of Germany, the Netherlands and Switerland without the secularisation of the Doctrine of the Church and without the replacement of a

2 To name just three authors, who follow this trend of thought: Hanna Arendt, *Vita activa: oder Vom tätigen Leben* (München: Piper, 1967); Alain de Botton, *The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2009); Татьяна Сидорина, Жизнь без труда или труд во спасение (Санкт-Петербург: Алетейя, 2018).

3 An in-depth analysis of the transformations that took place in economic, political, and social life of the European and indeed all Western countries was done by Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation. How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012). Here he demonstrated how reduction in dogmatic teachings and easing in ecclesiological structures led to subjectivizing of morality and a secularist freedom for economic activity.

4 Макс Вебер. Жизнь на рубеже двух эпох (Москва: Дело, 2016), с. 240, Russian translation by Ksenia Timofeeva from Jürgen Kaube, *Max Weber. Ein Leben zwischen den Epochen* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2014).

conservative Christianity by secular humanism.[5] Moreover, Weber himself frequently emphasised that the focus of his research was dedicated to the historical periods, when the spirit of Capitalism was only nascent, and not to the contemporaneous times, in which the Capitalist economy no longer required any religious basis.

Nowadays, advancement in the sphere of the workplace is associated with the process of rationalisation (de-sacralisation, demythologisation, and disenchantment). When economically developed countries are considered, one needs to honestly acknowledge that Protestantism was open to a secularisation that can be seen as a form of reconciliation with individualism, modern education and science, as well as urban life. The Reformation limited the church's right to establish laws for the state, economy, science, art, and professions. From then on, each sphere of human activity had to live according to its internal laws. Hence, if we are interested in looking for the relationship between effective work and religion, we must also think about the non-orthodox, i.e., secular religiosity.

This secular religion must be understood in terms of alternative perceptions and interpretations of moral and spiritual life in the broadest sense of these words. It is necessary to tell the whole truth, and not only parts of it. We are often told that the Reformation helped Christianity to liberate itself from the escapist paradigm. But we often forget to observe that the same Reformation led to the situation in which Christianity inevitably merged with the "world." Economic activity and the drive for hard work took advantage of ascetic practices of Puritanism, which is based on radical individualism and religious non-desire to put up with any mediating authority between God and

5 Antônio Flávio Pierucci, "Secularização segundo Max Weber: da contemporânea serventia de voltarmos a acessar um velho sentido," in *A atualidade de Max Weber,* ed. Jessé Souza (Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 2000), 105-162; Warren S. Goldstein, "Patterns of Secularization and Religious Rationalization in Emile Durkheim and Max Weber," *Implicit Religion* 12, n.2 (Jul 2009): 135-163.

man (authority, institution and rituals). Over time, the Puritans, who were once pulverised, gradually became prudent merchants who did not practice leniency, either towards themselves or towards others. Subsequently, Protestantism became identified with modernity.

One could endlessly continue analyzing the impact of the Reformation on our modern society, and to follow Brad Gregory's lead, to discern what was intended and unintended in this impact. Taylor provided a very helpful threefold framework of secularisation that took place in Europe on the level of nature, society and the world at large. In this presentation, I would like to focus on the first dimension, namely the demythologisation of nature and how the conceptual split between Catholic and Lutheran theology that occurred in times of the Reformation made an impact on the treatment of the environment within modern culture. More specifically, I would like to look at eschatological doctrines of these Churches, and how differences that derived from that separation are reflected in attitudes towards not only economic and political activity, but on the sphere, which is often overlooked, namely the environment.

In current theological discourses, Catholic and Lutheran authors often use an apocalyptic rhetoric to interpret the ecological crisis as a definitive sign of the Second Coming of Christ. However, the destiny of a world doomed for annihilation is not the only Christian perspective. It is more characteristic of Orthodox Lutheran theology, as Jürgen Moltmann pointed out, since the idea of the total annihilation derived from the theology of the sixteenth century Lutheran preacher and scholastic theologian, Johann Gerhard.[6] The Catholic eschatological perspective, in contrast to the Lutheran one, is more transformative

6 See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God. Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 268-270.

in nature. This presentation aims to contribute towards showing the plausible consequences of these eschatological attitudes and how the tragedy of this modern ecological crisis may be overcome.[7]

Judeo-Christian roots of environmental crisis

The standard modern legend goes as follows. In1967, an American Historian called Lynn White, Jr., ventured a challenge, in a short article, that the roots of the current ecological problems derive from Christian theology and its vision of the world.[8] He contended that the Western Judeo-Christian missionary zeal was responsible for demythologizing old religious beliefs that worshipped different elements of nature. Hence all animistic beliefs that safeguarded trees, rivers, mountains, and other natural resources were obliterated. This, according to White, led to an intellectual shift in human attitude towards the environment, which substituted the intrinsic value of nature with an instrumental one and, as a result, the societies that embraced Christianity began to treat nature as being at the service of their needs and whims. White also claimed that such a shift was sanctioned by the Book of Genesis, where the relationship between human society and the environment seems to be presented as a relationship between a dominator and dominated.[9]

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7 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report, Contribution of Working Groups I, II, and III to the Fourth Assessment Report,* ed. Rajendra K. Pachauri and Andy Reisinger (Geneva: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2008); see also Lloyd E. Sandelands and Andrew Hoffman, "Sustainability, Faith, and the Market," *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* 12 (2008): 129-145.

8 Lynn White, Jr, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155 (March 10, 1967): 1203-1207.

9 Ibid., 1205.

White's challenge provoked long lasting discussions among historians, philosophers, ecologists and theologians. Many refutations have been written since the article 1967 was published,[10] but the general trend to articulate an ecological blame on the Christian attitudes towards the nature has not vanished.[11] Many secular environmentalists still contend that the Christian and Jewish religions contributed to the emergence of a world-view in which nature is at mercy of human hands.

The Reformation, the Enlightenment, and Redefinition of "Nature of Nature"

On the other hand, there are attempts among some theologians to show that the civilisational shift took place not on the axis of Christianity versus paganism, but rather on the changing attitudes towards the environment within the late Western scholastic tradition

10 John B. Bennett, "On Responding to Lynn White: Ecology and Christianity," *Ohio Journal of Religious Studies* 5 (April 1977): 71-77; Jeanne Kay, "Human Dominion over Nature in the Hebrew Bible," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 79, no. 2 (June 1989): 214-232; Robin Attfield, "Christian Attitudes to Nature," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44, no. 3 (Jul.-Sept. 1983): 369-386; Wesley Granberg-Michaelson summarized several conclusions reached in twenty years after the publication of White's article: a) White's description of biblical teaching regarding environment is selective and distortive; b) his view that Christianity paved way for scientific and technological revolutions is questionable; and c) his opinion that environmental destruction has flowed solely from the mind-set of Western culture, and not from others, is historically dubious ("Why Christians Lost an Environmental Ethic," *Epiphany: A Journal of Faith and Insight* 8, no. 2 (1988): 40-50); Robert Booth Fowler, *The Greening of Protestant Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 60; see also Ernst M. Conradie, *Christianity and Ecological Theology. Resources for Further Research* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2006) 61-65. This latter book contains about 150 pages of just bibliography on different aspects of eco-theology, see pages 207-353.

11 See John Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions* (London: Duckworth, 1974) 3-40, 111-18; William Coleman, "Providence, Capitalism, and Environmental Degradation, English Apologetics in an Era of Economic Revolution," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37 (1976): 1203-07; Graham Huggan, Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London; New York: Routledge, 2010).

that produced the discussion between the nominalists and realists. As a digression, I must note that some Christian cultures, namely those in the East (mainly the countries with Byzantine Orthodox tradition) never produced a replacement of God's heaven with a non-existing utopia that subsists only in human mind.

According to the patristic and early medieval Christian world-view, the vital link between God and His creation, and hence between heaven and earth exists within the human person, which reflects this unity by through his psychosomatic harmony. But the surfacing of the Nominalist philosophical school in the West reduced our understanding of the world to the realm of purely human rational thinking. According to this trend of thought, as observed by B. Aidan, the ultimate reality resides in the simplest crude particulars, and hence in the higher strata of being derived from the lower substances of the world. Instead of seeing this world as being preceded by, and being an epiphany of, God, nominalists like Roscelin of Compiegne and William of Ockham regarded the world as only that which can be observed and empirically scrutinised, leaving the Revelation and God beyond the scope of human knowledge.[12]

Nominalist thinkers paved the way to the emergence of the era of Enlightenment that proposed a deistic world-view in which God, as the "Creator of a Clock," after having wound it up, does not interfere with human activity: the whole world, laws of nature, and social structures can be empirically studied and rationally improved to create "the Kingdom of God" on earth even before the Second Coming of Christ. According to Karl Löwith, thinkers of the modern period transformed a transcendental eschatology into an immanent eschatology in an attempt to approximate the yonder side of the world, the future reality of God's Kingdom, to the here and now of history, giving it the sense

12 Brother Aidan, "Man and His Rôle in the Environment," *Epiphany* 12 (June 1992): 29ff.

necessary for the concept of progress.[13] Enlightenment thinkers believed that our hope, our expectation, of a better life, must be built upon the abilities and skills of man.

Such a technical program of progress was articulated by Francis Bacon and René Descartes in the seventeenth century. Bacon, in his utopia Nova Atlantis, depicts a perfect society in which scientific research must grow into practical implementation. Thus, human knowledge becomes the power that forces nature to serve men. He speaks about the acceleration of plant growth, tests on animals, artificial wells and rainbows and even artificial parts of the human body. Science and technical progress must create "the kingdom of man."

The nature of the human body is explained solely as a mechanism and a machine. *Theses res extensae* (spacial things, things pertaining to space and time) are juxtaposed to the spirit, *res cogitas* (things pertaining to the thinking). This spirit encloses inborn ideas. A man is able to arrange and organise his life and the material world according to these ideas. Due to his vulnerability and transience, a man has an obligation to become "the lord and dominator of nature" and to overcome his impoverished life. A hope of an eschatological improvement of the world beyond the human realm becomes superfluous: we can imagine a perfection of an organised human society, but not of the raw matter. Furthermore, we cannot expect God to overcome our earthly hardships, but rather, we shall entrust it to human technical aptness and competence.[14]

In this context we have three important points to make: namely those of Church reform, education and the union between Protestant Christianity and the Enlightenment. The first real breakdown with Rome, came with the Protestant Reformation. Then, ecclesiastical

13 Dieter Hattrup, *Eschatologie* (Padeborn: Bonifatius, 1992), 67.

14 Антон Ціґенаус, Есхатологія. Майбутнє сотвореного в Бозі (Львів: Свічадо, 2006), с. 15, translated from Anton Ziegenaus, *Die Zukunft der Schöpfung in Gott: Eschatologie.* Leo Scheffczyk und Anton Ziegenaus [Hg]. *Katholische Dogmatik.* Aachen: MM-Verlag, 1996.

authority underwent a serious reconsideration of its role in society. The rule of cuius regio eius religio stirred political tensions and often bloody wars, and hence the emergence of Catholic and Protestant countries. Historic Protestantism tried to establish its authority, but this too was challenged. The Reformation created a spirit of independence and the right to interpret the Bible according to the commands of one's own conscience.[15] In some cases, this led to competition in spiritual matters, denying any and all kinds of authority, even the authority of God. From the sixteenth through to the nineteenth century we witnessed reactions to historic Protestantism, which had become the established organisation in Protestant countries.

The first reaction to historic Protestantism was led by the Roman Church and in particular by the Society of Jesus.[16] About twenty years after the beginning of the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church began the Counter-Reformation, which was responsible for the recovery of most of Poland, Austria, and parts of Southern Germany, for Catholicism. It was also responsible for keeping Bavaria, Belgium and Ireland in the Catholic fold. The Counter-Reformation succeeded because of various reasons. In some instances Protestants lost their early evangelical enthusiasm, and there also arose a controversial spirit among Protestants themselves; the papacy was able to take advantage of a vertically organised system, and, at last, the Roman Church profited by the Protestant Reformation in that it reformed its ecclesiastical structures and educational institutions.

Protestant Churches, particularly those in Germany and England, established public educational institutions which no longer dwelled under the auspices of the Church (Roman Catholic or Reformed). The political elite who endorsed Protestantism aimed to create public

15 Charles George Fry, "Why Did the Reformation Succeed?" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 41 (October 1997): 7-17.

16 Kirstin Noreen, "*Ecclesiae militantis triumphi*: Jesuit Iconography and the Counter-Reformation," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 29, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 689-715.

universities, where the Protestant clergy received their education in the same auditoriums as other lay pupils, unlike in the Roman Catholic Church, which safeguarded seminary formation and distanced this from secular classrooms.[17] This led to the embracement of secular philosophical concepts by Protestant theologians or to the rise of Romanticism as a reaction to the pressure of purely rational theological discourse.

Liberal Protestantism adopted modern science and its concomitant secularity. Confidence in rational thought, inductive and scientific reasoning, portraying human intellect as the defining feature of being human, a questioning toward all authority, individualism, and belief in progress became paramount characteristics, not only of the Enlightenment but also of the Protestant theological thought and practice.[18] On the other hand, seventeenth century Pietism and Romanticism sought to internalise Christian Revelation and subvert reason to faith, according to the original theological program of Luther and Calvin or their Catholic counterparts, Erasmus of Rotterdam and Thomas Moor.

Split in Christian Eschatology: Protestant and Catholic approaches

In the sixteenth and the seventeenth century, during the Orthodox Lutheran period, Johannes Gerhard was involved in the Eucharistic debates, which questioned the real presence of Christ in Eucharist. Originally, in this dispute the focus was on the elevation of the hostia and on the when and how the union of the divine Word takes place

17 See Robert Scharlemann, "Theology in Church and Univeristy: The Post-Reformation Development," *Church History* 33, no. 1 (Mar 1964): 23-33 and Johannes Wischemeyer, "Continuity and Change: The Study of Protestant Theology in Germany between Reformation and the Humboldtian University Ideal," *Communio viatorum* 47, no. 3 (2005): 240-256.

18 Leslie A. Muray, *Liberal Protestantism and Science* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2008), 7-13.

within the elements of bread and wine. A subsequent question was raised whether after the Liturgy those elements remain as the incarnate Word whether they return to their previous form, as was predominantly, but not exclusively, adopted by the Lutheran Church.[19]

In the second Eucharistic dispute, Gerhard insisted that after the Liturgy the elements of communion, i.e., the bread and wine, return to their pre-Eucharistic form. Building on this belief he developed the concept of reduction, and this in turn provided him with arguments that the ultimate destiny of the world is annihilation.[20] Gerhard distinguished between issues concerning divine cult and issues concerning administration, and so he concluded that there exist invisible and visible dimensions of the Church.[21] Everything that is of the administrative body of the Church and of the earthly realm will altogether cease to exist after the Second Coming of Christ: "Except for angels and human beings, everything belonging to this world will be burnt with fire and will dissolve into nothingness."[22] By "this world" was meant everything that belongs to the world of injustice and death, as reflected in Paul's verse in his First Letter to Corinthians: "the form of this world passes away" (7, 31).

Moltmann explains that even though the biblical use of the word "world" makes a distinction between the "cosmos" and "ktísis" (God's creation), where "cosmos" is never mentioned in the Bible in the context of the new creation of heaven and earth, but rather it is the "ktísis," God's creation, is foreseen to revive after the Last Judgement.

19 Godefridus J. C. Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist: A Process of Mutual Interaction* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 56.

20 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 268. Here Moltmann refers to Gerhard's *Loci Theologici,* ed. H. Preuss, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1885), 163.

21 Robert Colb (ed.), *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture,* 1550-1675 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 393.

22 As Jürgen Moltmann indicates, Heinrich Schmid refers to Johannes Gerhard as the authoritative source of Lutheran dogmatic theology, see *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche, dargestellt und aus den Quellen belegt* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann 1893), 407.

Hence, the Lutheran theologians of the seventeenth century believed in the annihilation of the entire earthly reality. Matter is doomed for disappearance or will return to the state of nihilo (reductio in nihilum, a reversal of creatio ex nihilo), and only the soul will enjoy the future life with God. Hence the soteriological theocentricism of the Lutheran theology began advocating an eschatological anthropocentricism stripped of material world and body.

Moltmann confesses that today most of the modern Lutheran theologians "have reverted to the patristic and mediaeval hope for 'transformation, not annihilation,' and thus to Luther himself,"[23] but there was a long period in Lutheran theology that developed a gnostic attitude towards nature, which corresponded to the instrumental understanding of it in the intellectual milieu of Enlightenment thinkers. This may also explain why Evangelical and Lutheran Churches have developed an eco-theological stance albeit rather belatedly. Only recently, within the last twenty years or so, did Lutheran communities begin to formulate their eco-theological concerns. Yet even today such advocacy groups as the Evangelical Climate Initiative still receive strong criticism from the mainstream leadership of the Lutheran and Evangelical Churches.

In the milieu of the Catholic theology, a different eschatological path was undertaken. Unlike the perspective of annihilation, characteristic of Gerhard's theology, which seems to discount the physical world and opts for the salvation of human persons and not their bodies, Roman Catholic theologians developed an eschatology of transformation, which presents a gradual positive growth of human civilisation into the Kingdom of Heaven. This transformation, or transfiguration, implies

23 Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 270.

a certain moment of change in human society and the entire created world, from the old quality to a new one at a certain historical moment in time, which is called the Second Coming of Christ.

In the seventeenth century, the Roman Catholic balance between faith and reason was articulated by Blaise Pascal, who rejected the God of philosophers and championed belief in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was of the opinion that human reason cannot prove or disprove the existence of God. For him, the God of the philosophers during the Enlightenment has the only metaphysical properties – infinite, immutable, spiritual, and eternal being. But the God Pascal was interested in was One that can be prayed to, relied upon, the God of love and God that knows what it means to be loved.[24] Also, Catholic theology did not accept Gerhard's argument of post-Eucharistic reduction and strongly followed the theology of transsubstantiatio,[25] which was also reflected in the devotional extra-liturgical practice of Eucharistic adoration that had existed in the Western Christian tradition since the twelfth century.[26]

In Catholic eschatology, the main concern was also to build a new set of arguments against Protestant millennialism and against popular outbursts of prophecies and divinations, which were viewed in connection with popular magic and doctrinal deviance. This Protestant apocalyptic zeal was regarded as part of the millenarian hopes in

24 Giuseppe Tanzella-Nitti, "Blaise Pascal e il progetto apologetico delle Pensées (1662) a 350 anni dalla sua morte," *Annales Theologici* 26, no. 1 (2012): 21-50, Chung Kee Lee, "The Limits of Reason and the Rationale for Faith in the Thoughts of Blaise Pascal," *Jian Dao* 37 (Jan 2012): 29-53.

25 A wonderful historical and theological elucidation is in Terence Nichols, "Transubstantiation and Eucharistic Presence," *Pro Ecclesia* 11, no. 1 (Wint 2002): 57-75.

26 Despite the fact that the devotional practice of Eucharistic adoration was challenged by the Protestant movement, the Roman Catholic Church cherished it and employed it again the pessimistic attitudes towards human nature in Jansenistic circles, see Nathan D. Mitchell, "Eucharistic Adoration Revisited," *Worship* 83, no. 5 (Sep 2009): 457-471.

support of Protestant resistance in Catholic countries of Europe.[27] Catholic eschatology followed the patristic vision, which synchronised anthropological, ecclesiological, societal and cosmological dimensions on the basis of the Christological model: as Christ died and rose again (His body was the same body before and after His death and resurrection), so every human being, the Church, human civilisation, and the entire cosmos would cease to exist, but not in the fashion of annihilation but rather in the continuity of transformation in and through the resurrection.

Such eschatological synchronisation of different dimensions of life is best captured by the Pastoral Constitution of the Second Vatican Council "On the Church in the Modern World: *Gaudium et spes*" promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1965. Paragraph 39 addresses the relationship between the old and the new creation, human life and God's promise, as well as human progress and the expectation of the Kingdom of God. The Fathers of the Council humbly confess that we stand before the mystery of time and manner of the consummation and transformation of all things. But what we do know is that in Christ, death is overcome, and so the human heart's longings for peace and justice will be surpassed on a new earth:

Therefore, while we are warned that it profits a man nothing if he gains the whole world and loses himself, the expectation of a new earth must not weaken but rather stimulate our concern for cultivating this one. For here grows the body of a new human family, a body which even now is able to give some kind of foreshadowing of the new age.

27 Bernard J. McGinn, John J. Collins, Stephen J. Stein, *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 336.

Hence, while earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God.[28]

This document sophisticatedly solves the problem of the tension between transcendental and immanent eschatology. Even though human progress, with its technical and social achievements once endorsed by the Enlightenment, can contribute to the ongoing improvement of society, the future Kingdom of God cannot be reduced to it. From the eco-theological point of view, the Fathers of the Council urge us to take responsibility not only for the social well-being, but also to be aware of the responsibility for the entire creation of God.[29] The vision of the transformation or transfiguration of the world does not preclude the full use of human reason for solving social conflicts and building a just society, but at the same time it leaves space for the intrinsic value of the world and all natural resources, since all of creation is not at mercy of human whims but remains in the realm of God's possession (Ex 9, 29; Deut 10, 14; Ps 24, 1; 1 Cor 10, 26). Creation shares the postlapsarian tragedy of man, but with man it also expects to be redeemed. This thinking is based on the Pauline vision of the relationship between humanity and the cosmos, which he formulated in his Letter to the Romans:

For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that all creation

28 Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: Gaudium et spes* (Boston: Pauline Editions and Media, 1966), §39.

29 The latter notion is profoundly explicated by Pope Francis' Encyclical "On the Care for Our Common Home: *Laudato si*'" (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2016).

is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.[30]

Conclusion

The history of the traditions concerning the differences between Catholic and Lutheran eschatological perspectives has evolved. Yet the impact of those differences has left deep traces in modern perceptions and attitudes. In the times of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation those differences were more explicit in philosophical debates and in the resurgence of millenarianism and apocalypticism that carried political import. In the Christian understanding of the relationship between our human civilisation, the Catholic and Lutheran traditions share the belief that the creation is a gift from God and that the survival of our planet lies in the act or in the event of its communion with God. It has become apparent that the debates between intellectuals from both sides have deepened our understanding of the interaction between man and nature.

I hope that in this presentation I was able to show that the views held by the Catholic and Protestant theologians have much to offer in providing common ground for ecumenical dialogue that can bring Christianity to the forefront of the global environmental debate and also to bring those disillusioned by what they perceive as an irrelevant Christianity detached from any environmental concerns, to an awareness that the Church holds a hope for the future of the entire creation of God.

30 Rm 8, 19-23.

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Communio Sanctorum Communio Bonorum
Von Balthasar and Luther

Pauline Dimech

I have chosen not to look at the issue of sainthood and the veneration of the saints, nor at Luther's arguments concerning indulgences and Purgatory, or the theological concepts of satisfaction, and of merit, or the question of personal sanctification, which are among the more controversial issues between Catholics and Protestants to this day. I have, instead, decided to examine the concept of the Communio Sanctorum itself, convinced that delving into the former topics often serves as an avoidance tactic by theologians, and that, before one delves into the many controversial issues associated with the theme, one ought to try and clarify the concept itself, since it will have to act as the grounding for all further discussion.

In carrying out this hermeneutical exercise, I wish to compare the writings of the two great theologians: Martin Luther and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Considering that this paper is being written on the anniversary of the Reformation, Martin Luther was a compulsory choice. However, Luther was not just a central figure in the Reformation, he is also one

of the more important theologians where the communio sanctorum is concerned. I chose von Balthasar not only because I am familiar with his writings on the communio sanctorum and on the saints, but also because the communio sanctorum was a very important theological concept for him too.

Already in 1988, von Balthasar had said that attempts to reunite the Churches "will continue to fail until the ecclesial aspects of faith and order [the central theme which was kindling the discussion during his time] have become united with the aspect of the communio sanctorum." Von Balthasar stated that only when the ecclesial aspects of faith and order are united with the aspect of the communio sanctorum, will the concept of the sanctorum "come to fruition."[1]

Three important points need to be made before I even attempt at some explanation. Firstly, there is still a problem concerning whether the phrase communio sanctorum should be taken as an explanation of the Church, and a different way of describing the holy Catholic Church, or whether this is a different article of faith altogether. According to Balthasar, if one uses the Pauline image of the church as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27), the "Holy Catholic Church" and "the communion of saints" inter-penetrate each other and are woven seamlessly together.'[2] However, it is difficult to merge the former, "the visible, functional, and charismatically ordered Catholic Church," with the latter, i.e. the "invisibly functioning laws of the communion of saints."[3]

Secondly, there is the issue concerning the role which the concept of the communio sanctorum played in the Reformation. The Lutheran theologian Herman Amberg Preus wrote that "There were men before Luther who had seen the need of a Reformation. But it was Luther

1 Hans Urs Von Balthasar, "Catholicism and the Communion of Saints," trans. Albert K. Wimmer. Communio: International Catholic Review 15, no. 2 (1988): 168.

2 Hans Urs Von Balthasar, "The Communion of Saints," in Elucidations, ed. Idem, trans. John Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1975,) 97.

3 Von Balthasar, "The Communion of Saints," 99.

who first saw clearly that at the root of the trouble lay a human and unscriptural conception of the very nature of the Church."[4] Preus also states that "[i]t took the Lutheran Reformation to give back to the Church the glorious doctrine of the Communion of Saints."[5] Even today, the subject remains very emotionally charged, and it can make rational theological argumentation difficult. Luther had told the Church, "we are the true ancient Church, and with the entire holy Christian Church we are one Body and a Communion of Saints… You are the new false church, apostate from the ancient true Church."[6] While the Reformers would claim that during the Reformation, Luther set out to restore the Church, for too long Catholics interpreted this as a brutal attack on the Church.

Thirdly, there is the issue of the interpretation of the Reformation. Balthasar's judgment of the Reformation is based on that of Karl Barth. Von Balthasar writes about this in his essay on "Christian Universalism." He argues that "[f]or Karl Barth the history of the Church of Christ begins not with the Reformation, but with Christ. The main point of his exposition of Luther is that his real function was to bring about a reform of certain essential doctrines within the one Corpus christianum, whereas his "founding a church" was a mistake with tragic consequences."[7] According to Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Catholic thought…presupposes that the division was not necessary, that if both sides think deeply and widely enough and in the spirit of

4 Preus, *The Communion of Saints* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1948), 10.

5 Ibid., 9.

6 *Wider Hans Worst*, written in 1541, was Luther's satirical response to Duke Henry of Brunswick. The Duke was one of the most bitter antagonists of Luther and his followers, and was described as the "greatest Papist in all Germany." Quoted in Preus, *The Communion of Saints*, 92.

7 Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Christian Universalism," in *Explorations in Theology*. Volume 1: *The Word made Flesh*, trans. A.V. Littledale and Alexander Dru (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 244-245.

obedience, agreement can and must be reached, and that Protestantism, which the Catholic Church is obliged to describe as heretical, is yet, ultimately and seen in the light of its origins, only a schism."[8] Writing about the communio sanctorum in the light of such dire accusations is always difficult, especially because the historical context within which both theologians lived and wrote, as well as the personal issues which each one of the theologians had at the time of writing, impinges on their epistemological understanding and their hermeneutics of history.

This essay will be divided into three sections. The first of these sections will deal more directly with Luther's reflections, in so far as the communio sanctorum is an ecclesiological theme. The second section of this essay will deal with Hans Urs von Balthasar's theology of the communio sanctorum. The conclusion which follows will compare the two theologians together, as well as emphasise the importance for Systematic Theology to investigate the subject.

The *Sanctorum communio* in Luther

The two basic texts that will be used here are Luther's 1519 "Treatise Concerning The Blessed Sacrament And Concerning The Brotherhoods," dedicated to the Duchess Margaret of Braunschweig and Limeburg, and the Large Catechism, which Luther published in January 1529. The former is one of three "essentially catechetical sermons for the instruction of all Christians." They are, as Dean Zweck has pointed out, "written in clear, simple German, they avoid difficult theological issues, and they are deeply pastoral."[9] The Large Catechism, *Der Große Katechismus*, is also not a systematic work. There are no

8 Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Christian Universalism," 241.

9 Dean Zweck, "The Communion of Saints in Luther's 1519 Sermon on the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 49, no. 3 (2015): 117.

technical terms and no argumentation in this work. It is free of polemic against Rome, and the theology presented in it is easy to comprehend,[10] which makes it so helpful.

In the Treatise on the Blessed Sacrament, Luther emphasises the communio bonorum. "To receive the bread and wine of this sacrament, then, is nothing mor than to receive a sure sign of this fellowship and incorporation with Christ and all saints." He adds that the sacrament derives its common name "communion" from the fact that "the significance or effect of this sacrament is fellowship of all the saints" (*Die gemeinschaft aller Heiligen*).[11] And also that "This fellowship is of such a nature that all the spiritual possessions of Christ and His saints are imparted and communicated to him who receives this sacrament; again, all his sufferings and sins are communicated to them, and thus love engenders love and unites all." Luther uses the metaphor of the city where "every citizen shares with all the others the name, honor, freedom, trade, customs, usages, help, support, protection and the like, of that city, and on the other hand shares all the danger of fire and flood, enemies and death, losses, imposts and the like."[12]

Luther understood the word communio to refer primarily to eucharistic Communion. He was, however, willing to grant that it could refer to the assembly of believers in Christ.[13] It seems, in fact, that this shift in emphasis from the Eucharist to the assembly of

10 Preserved Smith, *The Life and Letters of Martin Luther* (Boston – New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), 234.

11 Luther, "Treatise on the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ," trans. J.J. Schindel, par.4.

12 Ibid., par. 5.

13 Lutheran World Federation and Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *From Conflict to Communion. Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2017), 94.

believers took place around and after the publication of the Papal Bull Decet Romanum Pontificem, which excommunicated him from the Catholic Church.[14]

Writing about the third article of the Creed, in the Large Catechism, Luther pointed out that the communio sanctorum is a later addition to the creed, and that it was meant to be nothing but an interpretation or explanation by which some one meant to explain what the Christian Church is. The problem is, according to Luther, that in German, the communio sanctorum means something else. He himself preferred to refer to the Christian Church as a group (*Haufe*), an assembly (*Versammlung*), or a congregation (*Gemeinde*), when the Catholic Church has always preferred *Gemeinschaft* (communion).[15]

Luther attempts to explain the words Gemeinschaft der Heiligen (communion of saints), knowing full well that the expression "has become so established in usage that it cannot be uprooted and it would be next to heresy to alter a word." Luther argues that the communio sanctorum, which has been translated into German as eine *Gemeinschaft der Heiligen*, a communion of saints, is nothing but a poor and unintelligible translation. Luther says that it was rendered *Gemeinschaft der Heiligen* (communion of saints), simply because people understood neither Latin nor German. He claims that "no German would so speak or would understand the expression." On the other hand, according to Luther, if it is to be rendered plainly, the *communio sanctorum* must be expressed quite differently in the German idiom; for the word ecclesia properly means in German *eine Versammlung*, an assembly.

14 Pope Leo X, Papal Bull *Decet Romanum Pontificem,* on the Excommunication of Martin Luther and his Followers, 3 January 1521.

15 Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*, Christian Educational Series, trans. John Nicholas Lenker (Minneapolis, 1908), 123 (Second Part, Article 3).

According to Luther, in "genuine" German, "the word *communio*, which is attached to it, should not be translated *Gemeinschaft*, but *Gemeinde.* Secondly, the communio sanctorum ought to be called a Christian congregation or assembly (*eine christliche Gemeinde oder Sammlung*), or, and this would be the best and most clear translation, as holy Christendom (*eine heilige Christenheit*).[16] And, thirdly, according to Luther, to speak correct German, it ought to be eine Gemeinde der Heiligen (a congregation of saints), that is, a congregation made up purely of saints, or, to speak yet more plainly, eine heilige Gemeinde, a holy congregation, "a small holy flock, a holy assembly of pure saints under one Head, Christ.[17]

With regard to the first issue above (whether the phrase *communio sanctorum* should be taken as an explanation of the Church, or whether this is a different article of faith altogether), Luther would agree that the phrase *communio sanctorum* would have been added as an explanation of the Church. However, whereas the phrase may have been useful when it was originally added to the Creed, the phrase had become problematic over time. The *Communio Sanctorum* and the Church were not equivalent if we read "the Holy Catholic Church" to refer to the Roman Catholic Church. As Preus has said, before the Reformation, Luther already did not "identify the Communion of Saints with the Roman Church, nor exclude the possibility of other church bodies being within the spiritual Church of God."[18]

Luther accused Catholic theologians of proceeding to shut up the communio sanctorum within the Roman Catholic Church. So, while Catholics considered the statements of Hugo of St Victor and of

16 Luther, *The Large Catechism*, 123, par.158.

17 Ibid., par. 159. In Psalm 111, Luther would argue that only the word "congregation," serves to denote both the godly and the ungodly grouped together. See Brian Thomas German, "Martin Luther's First Psalm Lectures and the Canonical Shape of the Hebrew Psalter," 145.

18 Preus, *The Communion of Saints*, 45.

Thomas Aquinas to be a confirmation that the communio sanctorum is equivalent to the Catholic Church, Luther was totally against equating the sanctorum communio with the Roman Catholic Church.[19] He extricates the communio sanctorum from the Roman Catholic Church.[20] Luther still believed in the Church, and he still believed that the communio sanctorum was a good description of the Church, but he came to understand the Church as primarily a spiritual entity. His dismay at certain practices within the Roman Catholic Church had a lot to do with this disassociation of the communio sanctorum from the Roman Catholic Church. He felt that he could no longer identify the communio sanctorum with such a Church.

It is made clear in the Large Catechism that the Church is not a bodily assembly, but rather an assembly that is founded on faith and love. He writes of the *Christlichen Gemeine* (the unity of the Christian Church). Luther is thus making three arguments. Firstly, any ecclesial unity must be spiritual, and only for this reason is it possible to speak of a "communion of saints." Secondly, since the unity of the Roman Catholic Church is based on external membership, the phrase *communio sanctorum* cannot be applied to it. And, thirdly, the "external assembly and unity" is insufficient, and ineffective in the case of sinfulness.[21]

Luther points to other problems which emerge with the translation of the word *Kirche*, as well as with how one is to understand "sanctorum." Luther says that the word *Kirche* (church) means really nothing else than a common assembly. Therefore, in German, it ought to be called a Christian congregation or assembly (*eine christliche Gemeinde oder Sammlung*), or, best of all and most clearly, holy Christendom (eine

19 Ibid., 30.

20 Preus, *The Communion of Saints*, 51.

21 See Preus, *The Communion of Saints*, 80.

heilige Christenheit)."[22] *Christenheit* is the true Church, and should not be applied to an assembly except on account of the faith of its members.[23] Should one insist on using the term *Christenheit* for both the spiritual and the bodily Church, it would be best to qualify them as the "spiritual, inner" *Christenheit* (Christendom), and the "man-made, external" *Christenheit* (Christendom).[24]

There is also the issue concerning who the "saint" in the phrase refers to. Does it refer to all Christians? Does it refer to those Christians who are around the altar? Does it refer to those who have faith? Does it refer to those who are exceptionally holy (only "the saints," in the narrow sense)? There is also the issue as to whether the holiness of an individual can ever be established, and whether we may speak of some who are holier than others. Luther also called for a recollection that the communion of saints is a communion of sinners. In his work on Romans 7, Luther emphasised that the law of God in the spirit is at war with the law of sin in the person, and sin persists in the baptised and the holy.[25] Even saints cannot deny their sin, and believers must take the reality of their sinfulness seriously. Finally, there are also questions (which the whole of the Christian tradition struggles with), namely, whether the word *sancti* is to be restricted to Christians, or whether we may incorporate among the sancti those who are holy, irrespective of whether they are 'Christian' or not.

The constituents of the sanctorum communio also extends beyond the physical world. The assembly of the saints incorporates both the living, those on earth (*eorum qui in terris peregrinantur*), as well as the dead.[26] This is the *Communio cum sanctis*. Here, too, we have problems

22 Luther, *Large Catechism*, 123, par.158.

23 Preus, *The Communion of Saints*, 82.

24 Preus, *The Communion of Saints*, 83.

25 Luther, "Romans 7," trans. Andrew Thornton. [Accessed online 18/11/2017]. https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/luther/romans/7.html.

26 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par.958.

to do with the perimeter of the communio sanctorum, particularly, because the scope of the defunctis remains unclear. Does the defunctis refer to all the faithfully departed? Does it refer solely to those in heaven (qui caelesti beatitudine perfruuntur)? Or does it also include those in purgatory, those undergoing purification (qui vita functi purificantur)?[27] Could it even include the unfaithfully departed?

The *Communio Sanctorum* in Hans Urs von Balthasar

Where Hans Urs von Balthasar is concerned, we shall be using the two short editorials which the Catholic theologian wrote about the communio sanctorum in the 1940's, an essay which was later published in Elucidations,[28] and his "Retrieving the Tradition. Communio – A Program."[29] His sources, as he himself claims, are J. Czeny and Émile Mersch, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Georges Bernanos.[30]

The first point that must be made is that, like Luther, von Balthasar has what would seem to be a capricious reading of the communio sanctorum, where the meaning of the concept depends on the context. There is a sense in which, for von Balthasar, the communio sanctorum is equivalent to the Church. According to von Balthasar, the communio sanctorum is to be identified with the Roman Church, and it is what sets the Catholic Church apart from all other Christian churches.[31] Von Balthasar follows Augustine and Gregory of Tours in this regard. Augustine never referred to the doctrine of the communio sanctorum by name, but "he presented one of its earliest and clearest elaborations, arguing that there was a logical necessity in the Civitas Dei for the idea

27 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par.962.

28 Von Balthasar, "The Communion of Saints," in *Elucidations*, trans. John Riches, 91-100.

29 Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Retrieving the Tradition," *Communio* 33 (2006): 153-169.

30 Von Balthasar, "Editorial: The Meaning of the Communion of Saints," *Communio* 15, no. 2 (1988): 160-62.

31 Von Balthasar, "Catholicism and the Communion of Saints," 163.

of a communion of saints, one in which a unitas caritatis embraces the saints in heaven, the angels, and the believers on earth."[32] On his part, Gregory of Tours wrote that one life nourishes all lives: una tamen omnes vita corporis alit in mundo.[33] In von Balthasar, *communio* takes the sense of an "exchangeability of merits," of "togetherness" and mutual love, of an "active love for each other," of an act of "representation."[34] Balthasar says that "[t]he whole of St Paul's teachings on the Church as the body of Christ, where each believer functions as a member of this body for the well-being of the whole as well as for that of each of the other members, ultimately seals the central meaning of the Christian idea of community (Gemeinschaftsidee)."[35]

There are other instances where von Balthasar understands the *communio sanctorum* as wider than the Church. In such instances, von Balthasar distinguishes between the "Holy Catholic Church" and the communio sanctorum.[36] This makes analysing the subject less complicated. In his essay on "Catholicism and the Communion of saints," he argues that although "the external church is capable of many good works, but these are no longer the direct result of justifying faith; they can also be performed by the others, that is, those who have been damned."[37] This means that von Balthasar is very much aware that distinguishing between the Church and the *communio sanctorum* may be crucial, and that equating the Church with the *communio sanctorum* is not always helpful.

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32 Augustine discussed the *Communio Sanctorum* in his *Enchiridion*. See Thomas J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, 131.

33 Gregory of Tours, *Vita Patrum*. See Thomas J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, 136.

34 Von Balthasar, "Editorial: The Meaning of the Communion of Saints," 162.

35 Ibid., 160.

36 See von Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 441. Von Balthasar states that "The fact that grace is bestowed through the communion of saints does not mean that it must, for this reason be bestowed directly through the Church as an external institution."

37 Von Balthasar, "Catholicism and the Communion of Saints," 166.

A wider concept of the *communio sanctorum* enables von Balthasar to stretch much further than the limits of the Church. The *communio* is no longer restricted to those who are explicit believers of Christ, or the baptised. In terms of its identity, the *communio sanctorum* incorporates all those who are seeking to praise God's glory. Von Balthasar does not rule out the possibility of having someone from "outside" the ecclesial circle be included among the saints. According to Balthasar, Ishmael, Esau, the Pharoah and Israel could be saved alongside Isaac, Jacob, Moses and the Church.[38]

In terms of its effectiveness, von Balthasar simply refuses to describe the communion of saints as "a closed circle of those who exchange their merits and rewards among themselves," as it is generally understood in economics. On the contrary, he maintains that it "can only be an open circle of those who 'give without counting the cost'." He adds that, "Consequently, "it is not possible to draw any dividing line around this open circle marking off its extent and the extent of its effectiveness."[39] In terms of its effectiveness, as early as the 1950s, von Balthasar had already extended the communio sanctorum to "unbelievers."[40]

Von Balthasar also gives the concept of the *communio* a narrower sense, to refer to the saints. However, he qualifies this, arguing that the *communio sanctorum* does not consist solely of the saints in the narrow sense (those singled out). The saints (in the narrow sense) are to be acclaimed because they are the best "protectors and inspirers" of the communio sanctorum.[41] The implication is that the *communio*

38 Von Balthasar, "The Church and Israel," 291.

39 Von Balthasar, "The Communion of Saints," in *Elucidations*, 96.

40 Von Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit. Thérèse of Lisieux and Elizabeth of the Trinity,* trans. Donald Nichols, Anne Englund Nash, Dennis Martin (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 40. This is a concept which Balthasar owes to De Lubac. *See Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man,* trans. Lancelot C. Sheppard (London: Burns and Oates, 1962), 118. See also "The Communion of Saints," 96 and 99.

41 Von Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 40.

sanctorum (the holy ones within the community) is the arbiter of doctrinal reasoning within the larger community. In this case, the *communio sanctorum* is a sector within the larger Church, which is supporting the Church, as well as slowly growing into the larger Church.

The whole of von Balthasar's theology seems to acquire a consonance when he reflects on the communio sanctorum, including his theology of the saints, his ecclesiology, his pneumatology, and his theology of grace. In his essay "The Communion of Saints," von Balthasar writes that if the phrase "communion of saints" is to be used to refer to the whole Church, it is only because of the saints, and thanks to them. The church has access to an abundance of treasures that have been procured for the Church through them. It is as a result of having been established as a community by the spirit.

Von Balthasar describes it thus: [i]f "communion of the saints" is a closer, more intimate and secret description of the Catholic Church, then this means that, in the first place, the communion of those who have been sanctified with the sanctity of Jesus by the Holy Spirit – they are the 'saints' – is a communion of those who have received a gift, who all communally share in something which of themselves they are not and could indeed never be."[42] Using the Letters of Paul to the Corinthians, von Balthasar comments on the process whereby the saints become a communion of saints: "They do not become a communion of saints, if grace sanctifies them individually, on the basis of a universal human nature in which they already form a community; rather they became such a communion expressly through the community established by the Spirit (2 Cor 13:13), naturally on the basis of their call by the Father into the communion of his Son Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:9), as it is realised particularly in the eucharistic community."[43]

42 Von Balthasar, "The Communion of Saints," in *Elucidations*, 91.

43 Ibid., 91-92.

Von Balthasar's translation of communio as communion goes beyond the context of the sacrament of the altar. He writes that

> [i]t is of course true if one equates the communion of saints with the "Holy Catholic Church," then there will indeed be many profiteers whom one has to count among its number. And the transition from the "losers" to the "winners" is such a gradual one that it will not in practice be possible to draw any sharp dividing lines. Who, even among the true saints, does not profit from Mary's word of assent? She is the archetype of those who bear fruit, the Virgin Mother herself. We all take shelter under her cloak. But there are others within this cloak who themselves have smaller cloaks, and they do not know who it is that finds shelter under them, for, at least on earth, only God knows what the extent and effect of the fruitfulness of the saints may be.'[44]

In his essay on "Foundations of Christian Ethics," Marc Ouellet highlights that which distinguishes the theology of the communio sanctorum in von Balthasar: it is "at once divine and human," and it "resembles the Trinitarian communion" in that, what becomes common property – their very personhood – is more than just what belongs to each one.[45] Ouellet has argued that "by recovering the essential implication of community in the occurrence of grace," Balthasar "advances beyond the Protestant individualism of justification by faith and the Catholic individualism of merit."[46]

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44 Von Balthasar, "The Communion of Saints," in *Elucidations*, 96.

45 Ouellet, "Foundations of Christian Ethics," 238 and 241. Henri de Lubac had said that "the modern theology of the Church has reflected the Protestant individualism which it sought to correct in too extrinsic a fashion." *Catholicism*, 168.

46 Mark Ouellet, "Foundations of Christian Ethics," in *Hans Urs Balthasar. His Life and Work,* ed. David L. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 241.

Von Balthasar understands the communio sanctorum as extending beyond time. De Lubac once wrote that: "If there is not admitted beyond all visible mortal societies a mystical and eternal community, beings are left in their solitary state or are crushed into annihilation; in any case they are destroyed, for suffocation too can cause death."[47] For von Balthasar the communion of saints includes both the living and the dead.

According to Balthasar, the communio is what "makes the church Christ-like."[48] Von Balthasar uses the concept of "pro-existence" in order to explain himself. According to him, the *sanctorum* is, first and foremost, the communion of "saints" on earth. In this context, communion is realised the more a Christian takes over the "pro-existence," the form of Christ, the unselfishness of love. However, besides this earthly reality, the sanctorum also "constitutes…the communion with those who have become holy and Christ-like in heaven, in whose 'pro-existence' the still sinful Church may place her trust."[49] Here, von Balthasar's scheme is marked by a dialectic between the maximalist and the minimalist position: the saints in the narrow sense, and the saints in the wide sense. Within the whole schema of von Balthasar's work, this is very significant, since it allows von Balthasar to understand different things by "Christifidelis," as well as to single out individual saints.

Von Balthasar is critical of both the Catholic Church and the Protestant Church. According to him, "the reformed churches lack this element of an organic constitution." In his view, within the Reformed Churches, "the Church can never seriously be held to be the 'body of

47 Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism*, 182.

48 Von Balthasar, "Catholicism and the Communion of Saints," 168.

49 "Pro-existence" is a concept developed by 20th century Western Christian theologians to describe the service of the Church facing contemporary challenges. It generally means "a being there for others." Von Balthasar uses it to refer to the "pro-existence" of the saints. Von Balthasar, "Catholicism and the Communion of Saints," 168.

Christ,' redeemed and instituted (as representative of all mankind) by him." [50] On the other hand, the Catholic Church has "lost her sense of the 'body' and the truth of the Eucharist."[51] While criticizing the Reformed churches for their concept of the communio, von Balthasar also criticises the Catholic Church's own pretenses. In his essay on "Catholicism and the Communion of Saints," von Balthasar states quite unashamedly that neither "the invisible church of the true believers, the chosen ones," nor "the external and visible church of the congregation that gathers for worship and, together, recites the creed," corresponds to what St Paul describes as the "body of Christ?"[52]

Conclusion

In this essay, I have attempted to provide some insights into a limited selection of the writings of Martin Luther and of Hans Urs von Balthasar regarding the communio sanctorum, emphasizing the importance of the concept of the communio sanctorum to both theologians. I focused on the logical aspect of communio, i.e., the conceptualisation and designation of the phrase communio sanctorum. I argued that both Luther and Balthasar tend to use the term to indicate different things: The Church, the Eucharist, the saints, and more. Both of them were well-disposed towards the communio sanctorum as an ecclesiological model. Both of them wished to use the concept to revive Christian faith and life. In both theologians, God's precedence is not neglected. Von Balthasar writes that, "the goal of the communion of saints" is "to hold oneself ready.

The aim is the abandonment of all aims of one's own, in order that God's aims may be fulfilled through his own people."[53] Luther describes the community of believers as mutually interdependent and mutually

50 Von Balthasar, "Catholicism and the Communion of Saints," 167.

51 Von Balthasar, 'Catholicism and the Communion of Saints,' 167.

52 Ibid., 166.

53 Von Balthasar, "The Communion of Saints," 97.

dependent upon God. As Preus has pointed out, the fellowship of the Church, according to Luther, "expresses itself in an outward corporate life and community." But the essence of the fellowship is spiritual." The Church is the Body of Christ to which belong not those who give what they have to others but those who believe in Jesus Christ. As Preus puts it, "A communistic society at its best is not the Church." [54] Von Balthasar also points out that the communio sanctorum is not a communio in the sense of a communistic society.[55] He writes that "a church sustained by ethics, good works, social consciousness, and the liberation of those who are politically and socially downtrodden – essentially a caricature of the communion of saints."[56]

My preoccupation in writing this article went beyond my interest in Martin Luther and Hans Urs von Balthasar. I intended to emphasise firstly, that a re-appropriation of the theological concept of the communio sanctorum is essential, secondly, that such a re-appropriation requires a clarification of what the communio sanctorum stands for, and, thirdly, that an ecumenical venture is required for a proper hermeneutic of the term. My view is that, reading the concept from a historical, liturgical, spiritual, ethical or even pastoral, perspective, though exceptionally interesting, makes it very difficult to shed the emotional baggage which the subject carries with it, making a Lutheran-Catholic dialogue on the subject even more difficult than it already is.

The risk is that those involved will end up discussing all sorts of things: the blemishes of the church of late medieval times, the abuses concerning relics, the issue of indulgences, the structure of the liturgical year, the feast of All Saints, the process of canonisation, the cult of the saints, the pastoral initiatives which have been taken surrounding

54 Preus, *The Communion of Saints*, 26-7.

55 Von Balthasar is in agreement with Preus, who claims that 'A communistic society at its best is not the Church. See Von Balthasar, "Catholicism and the Communion of Saints," *Communio* 15, no. 2 (1988): 163-68., and Preus, *The Communion of Saints*, 26.

56 Von Balthasar, "Catholicism and the Communion of Saints," 163-68.

death, the practice of remembering celebrated ancestors in the faith, and so on and so forth. These are important, but there are other more fundamental issues which must be tackled before these ones, if these are then to be evaluated effectively.

Surely, if we are to speak of the communio sanctorum, we must agree, at least in principle, on what we mean by it. What it refers to. Who is to be included within it. Who its constituents are. Who makes it up? Where the limits should be drawn. Whether the sanctorum communio incorporates "'all" the saints. The Catholic Catechism states that the sanctorum communio, i.e., the assembly of all the saints, incorporates Omnes qui filii Dei sumus et unam familiam in Christo constituimus (all of us who are sons of God and form one family in Christ).[57] This would be what Paul VI described as the *communionem omnium christifidelium*.[58] This reference to the Christifideles, to the *unam familiam in Christo* and to the communionem omnium christifidelium may seem very straightforward. However, this is far from being the case. For, the *communio sanctorum* understood as the Christifideles, could be taken to refer as much to those who explicitly confess their faith, and who manifest evidence of their discipleship, as to the community of implicit believers in Christ.

Clearly, the subject requires further analysis from an exegetical and a systematic perspective. Such an analysis may require the exploration into various well-traversed, but closely related, theological issues such as that of the *sola fide*, the visibility or invisibility of the Church, the priesthood of all believers, the notion of holiness attributed to an institution, and the concept of eternal life. The communio sanctorum has in the past decades emerged as a subject that can act as a bridge between the Catholic and the Lutheran side, and this is significant,

57 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par.959. *Lumen gentium*, 51.

58 Paul VI, *Solemni Hac Liturgia* (Credo of The People of God), 30. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 962.

but one must be careful not to get carried away by that which is less substantial. I wish to emphasise that further work is required if the concept of the *communio sanctorum* is to remain relevant, and whether it is to act as a bridge, rather than to serve as a sign of contradiction between Lutherans and Catholics, and among Catholics themselves.

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Concluding Reflections

George Grima

After listening to the conference papers, with some discussion in between, there is place only for some general remarks. A rather obvious remark is that whatever reflections we may share with each other at the close of any conference, especially a conference like the one we have just had, can never be final. Our reflections and discussions can perhaps be best understood as a small part of our individual and collective effort to understand afresh the significance of an event that marked so deeply not only the history of Christianity but also so many cultural, economic, political and other social aspects of our life in the past 500 years.

The programme of this conference has focused on the context of the Reformation, the theological issues it raised and its spirit or continuing relevance for today. I wish to make a very brief remark on these three objectives that have been set for this conference.

There is, first of all, the context. How the Reformation fits within the big historical changes, especially within the political sphere at the time, is a matter of debate. It may not have brought about those changes by itself alone, but it could well have acted as a catalyst. Whatever its impact on history, the Reformation is meaningful, first and foremost,

as a spiritual event focusing on the relationship of the self with God at every moment of his or her life and, particularly, at the moment of death. It is precisely faith as trust in a merciful God that Martin Luther sought to bring back to the centre of Christian life.

'Meaning' is shaped and sometimes distorted, depending on the mode we try to seek it. It is natural to try to defend yourself in the presence of a situation that you perceive as a threat to what you believe in perhaps so strongly. The outcome of this mode of seeking has been the Counter-Reformation that drew the line between Catholic doctrine and Lutheran teaching or orthodox and heretical belief. The Report of the Lutheran–Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation this year reflects the journey that we have made in the course of the last 500 years. We started from 'conflict' and are slowly moving toward 'communion.'

This conference has an important significance for the history of ecumenism here in Malta. In fact, Malta has been the venue for a meeting in February 1971 at which the Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Study Commission on "The Gospel and the Church" finalised its report on the progress made in the previous five years in clarifying further the theological questions and improving relationships between the Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church. As far as I know, Malta's contribution to this important milestone in the history of ecumenism was simply that it provided a venue for the meeting and, I would assume, a hospitable environment. I am sure that what we have not done in 1971 we have been trying to do, at least partially, yesterday evening and today. We too placed on the table some of the traditionally disputed theological issues between Catholic and Lutherans and considered how we can move forward in better understandig ourselves and each other.

This brings me to my second remark, namely, the particular theological issues we brought up for consideration and discussion. We have actually touched on some of the core theological issues between Catholics and Lutherans. We have tried to recover aspects of the Christian tradition that need to be seen as 'both and' rather than 'either or': justified by faith and called to be God's humble servants; sinners and yet men and women created in the image of God; salvation as a gift offered by a gracious God to everyone and salvation that we can only deserve by letting God help us not to reject it; baptism as the sacrament of initiation in the Church and as a vocation to contribute to its ongoing reformation; the hierarchical priesthood and the priesthood of the laity. As we have seen, in trying to do justice to both sides implied in each one of these theological issues, while taking into account the particular convictions of the Lutheran churches and the Catholic Church, we have been seeking to bring out the riches in both traditions.

The last section has been rightly devoted to the spirit of the reformation today. The Reformation was a historical event that initiated a tradition which embodies more than an ongoing argument. It can be fully understood, if Luther is seen as a figure, surely a prominent one, among so many other figures that worked for the reform of Christian practices and Church institutions. One of the ways in which the spirit of the Reformation can be kept alive is to present Luther in dialogue with contemporary theologians and spiritual writers who have themselves sought to open up fresh avenues of thought. And in view of the contemporary ecological concerns, it is certainly important to try to uncover how differences in belief of Lutherans and Catholics about the destiny of the world can strengthen our common response to a world that is crying for justice and salvation. I have been on the receiving end at this conference.

Let me just say that I am thankful to what I have received from the speakers and the other participants.

General Index

Malta International Theological Conferences

1. *Between Two Synods: Journeying Together*

   A conference organised by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Malta in collaboration with the European Society of Catholic Theology on 20 February 2015 at Verdala Palace, Rabat, Malta.

   Agius Emmanuel and John Anthony Berry (eds). *Between Two Synods: Journeying Together. Melita Theologica* 65 no.1 (2015): 1-156. ISSN 1012-9588.

2. *The Spirit of the Reformation. 500 Years On*

   A conference organised by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Malta on 27 and 28 October 2017 in the ICT Building Conference Hall, University of Malta, Msida Campus, Malta.

   John Anthony Berry (ed). *The Spirit of the Reformation. 500 Years On.* Malta: Horizons, 2023. ISBN 978-99957-1-711-7.

3. *Resilience in a Troubled World*

   A conference organised by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Malta in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Malta from 7 to 9 November 2018 at the University of Malta Valletta Campus.

   John Anthony Berry (ed). *Resilience in a Troubled World.* Malta: Kite, 2023. ISBN 978-9918-23-110-2.

4. *Reconsidering Transcendence: Between Presence and Absence*

   A conference organised by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Malta on 10 and 11 May 2019 in the ICT Building Conference Hall, University of Malta, Msida Campus, Malta.

   John Anthony Berry (ed). *Reconsidering Transcendence: Between Presence and Absence.* Malta: Kite, 2023. ISBN 978-9918-23-111-9.

The Spirit of the Reformation

500 YEARS ON

Proceedings of the Malta International Theological Conference II

The commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation has gone down in history as one of the most important achievements in the ecumenical movement and in the life of the Church at large. A question that remains fundamental up till our very day is the following: "Does Martin Luther's lived theology have anything to say to us today?"

For this reason, academics and ecumenists from a number of distinguished European Universities including the University of Malta came together to interpret anew the theological gifts received through the Lutheran Reformation in their appropriate historical and ecclesial context.

The conference proceedings are divided into three parts: the exploration of the historical context, the major theological issues within that context, and an appraisal of the spirit of the reformation today.

This endeavour revealed significant insights: a commitment to narrate the story in a different way, a celebration of the return to the sources of the Christian faith that has actually produced a process of regeneration of the faith both for Lutherans and for Catholics, and a mutual recognition that ought never be underestimated.

Whatever its impact on history, the Reformation remains meaningful, first and foremost as a spiritual event focusing on the relationship of the self with God, as an opportunity to bring out the riches in both traditions, and as a reminder that dialogue opens up fresh avenues of thought.

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