

Studies of Luthera 1509-10 Marginal Notes

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Luther's Theology of the Cross, 1513-18

Luther's first five years as professor of Scripture in Wittenberg brought him to a position of considerable influence. In the university, his lectures struck responsive chords, and in May 1517 he described in a letter to an Erfurt Augustinian the impact he was having.

Our theology and St. Augustine are progressing well, and with God's help rule at our university. Aristotle is gradually falling from his throne, and his final doom is only a matter of time. It is amazing how the lectures on the *Sentences* are disdained. Indeed no one can expect to have any students if he does not want to teach this theology, that is, lecture on the Bible or on St. Augustine or another teacher of ecclesiastical eminence. (LW 48, 42)

A year later Luther wrote to one of his Erfurt teachers, Jodocus Trutvetter, and sketched a conception of reform that would stretch far beyond Wittenberg's lecture halls.

I plainly believe that reform of the church is only possible through the total uprooting and replacement of the can-

ons and papal decretals, and of scholastic theology, philosophy, and logic as they are now taught. My convictions on this have developed to the point that I beg the Lord each day that as soon as possible the pure study of the Bible and the Fathers of the Church might be reestablished. (WABr 1, 74,33; p. 170)

These views on reform and its proper method resulted from Luther's study and reflection as Professor of Scripture in Wittenberg, where he lectured on the Psalter (1513-I S), Romans (1515-16), Galatians (1516-17), and Hebrews (1517-18). We are fortunate in being able to study these lectures - not published in Luther's day - and so we can trace his development toward becoming a Reformer. These years yielded the "theology of the cross," which underlay Luther's October 1517 protest over the preaching and practice of indulgences, and which Luther portrayed succinctly in the Heidelberg Disputation of April 27, 1518. This is a remarkable spiritual teaching on our life before God, an articulation of the perennial Christian message of conversion and the progressive eradication of sinfulness under the influence of healing grace.

Lectures on the Psalter

Luther began his exposition of the Psalms (partially translated in LW 10-11) with a hermeneutical decision leading to an adaptation and simplification of the traditional four-fold sense of Scripture. Luther set out in 1513 to understand the Psalms as prophecy, and so to find Christ himself described in their literal sense, e.g., as praying, suffering, and witnessing in the Psalms. Luther's underlying theological conviction was that Scripture describes God's work in history as it unfolds initially and paradigmatically in Christ in the literal sense and then in the believer as related in the main derived sense. God's purpose with us is to conform us to the image of his own Son (LW 10, 52; 11, 378). And so the

Christian is assimilated under God's hand to Christ's prayers and experiences as related in the biblical text.

Wherever in the Psalms Christ complains and prays in bodily affliction according to the letter, there, in the same words, every faithful soul, born and trained in Christ, complains and prays, confessing that it has been tempted to sin, or has fallen into sin. For to the present day Christ is spitted on, killed, scourged, and crucified in us ourselves. (LW 10, 139)

Consequently, a theological account of the life of the believer is a constant characteristic of these lectures, since for Luther the derived and applied sense is the ultimate and principal meaning of Scripture (WA 3, 335,19). What is perceived in Christ is realized in the life of faith (*fides Christi*) by which we are renewed under his reign. Luther's theological optic was sharply focused on the appropriation of redemption in the life of faith.

For whatever is said about the first coming into the flesh is understood at the same time with regard to the spiritual coming. In fact, the coming into the flesh is determined and comes into being because of that spiritual coming. Otherwise it would have done no good....What good would it do for God to become man, if it were not that by believing this very fact we might be saved? Therefore Christ is not called our righteousness, peace, mercy, and salvation in his person except in an effectual sense. But it is faith in Christ by which we are justified and granted peace, and by that faith Christ reigns in us. (LW 11, 174)

What then are the spiritual experiences and imperatives entailed in this *fides Christi*? A fundamental trait is the acceptance of God's word of judgment in ruthless self-accusation of sin.

Our total concern must be to magnify and aggravate our sins and thus always to accuse ourselves of them more

and more, and earnestly judge and condemn them. The more deeply a person has condemned himself and magnified his sins, the more is he fit for the mercy and grace of God. (LW 10, 368)

Righteousness and life come to us under the contrary appearance of a humility conforming us to the cross of Christ. In him God's power was paradoxically manifest in the most profound humility (LW 10, 402). In intense paradox, God's judgment and saving righteousness coincide as the believer accepts condemnation in faith and is saved by grace! The person adhering to God in faith lives out the divine judgment by punishing and crucifying the flesh and condemning everything in the world. Under this alien form of the judgment, one is then made righteous by God's grace (404).

Luther's earliest spiritual teaching placed great emphasis on submission to God. He made a forceful application of this in speaking of prelates of the church. Although they are not princes in their own right but only vicars, they are to be revered and humbly obeyed as representatives of Christ (LW 11, 544ff). For one who is a subject, the appropriate righteousness lies in "humility, obedience, and a resigned subjection of one's own will to the superior" (547). Occasionally Luther turned in a critical vein upon his contemporaries in religious life. They keep reserving judgment about superiors' decisions and spread about their diabolical penchant for questioning commands they are given (LW 10, 16). Like the Jews of Christ's time who preferred their own works to God's work of *fides Christi*, some of Luther's fellow religious were puffed up over special works of their own devising instead of following the modest path marked out by obedience (LW 10, 130f).

Luther's earliest spirituality of subjection to God's transforming work was not restricted to a once-for-all moment of conversion, since authentic humility leads to the desire to keep ever moving and advancing (LW 11, 429). The flesh

remains with the believer and so one must never enjoy secure satisfaction over what is already achieved - a view also taught by St. Bernard, whom Luther cited.

We are always in motion, and we who are righteous need always to be made righteous. From this it comes that every righteousness for the present moment is sin with regard to that which must be added in the next moment. For blessed Bernard says truly, "When you cease wanting to become better, *you* stop being good. For there is no stopping place on God's way. Delay is itself sin." Hence he who in the present moment trusts that he is righteous and stands in that opinion has already lost righteousness. (LW 11, 496)

This concern for humility and constantly moving onward was for Luther especially needed in his own day. The present main trial of the church is an insidious sense of peace and security undermining authentic devotion.

Accidia now reigns to such an extent that there *is* much worship of God everywhere, but it is performed merely by rote lacking all affection and spirit of devotion. Only a handful are fervent. All this is due to our thinking highly of ourselves and trusting in our self-sufficiency. (WA 3, 416,17; cf. LW 10, 351)

Satan is at work beneath the apparent prosperity, and so all the more must one fear God and embrace the cross.

Luther, the young biblical lecturer of 1513-15, was aware he was traversing a path quite uncommon in a late medieval university. He rated highly the mystics' "negative way," for it sensed the feebleness of our speech about the God whom we should revere in silent awe. He spoke critically of "our theologians" for their inflated self-assurance in disputing. The true theologian cherishes silence, rapture, and ecstasy (LW 10, 313). Scholastic theology is irreverent, and its loquacity impedes God's interior instruction of the heart

(322). Luther sensed the difference between scholastic philosophy and the biblical mode of thought and expression. The word "substance" in the Vulgate text of Ps 69,2 does not refer to an objective subsisting reality, but to the values on which one bases one's life (355f). Paradox, a thought form; alien to scholasticism, is, according to Luther, all-important in Scripture, because God's work is hidden beneath contrary appearances. As in Christ, so in our experiences "God confers gifts under contrary forms and so makes the sign discordant with what is signified" (WA 4, 82,17; cf. LW 11, 230f).

Luther's theological beginnings in 1513-15 reveal an emerging thought passionately attentive to two poles; Christ and Christian experience. Both stand under the sign of the cross, and in Christian experience the main themes are ruthless self-accusation, radical obedience, and fervent concern to grow and advance. In 1515 Luther passed from the Psalter into the world of Pauline thought, and the seeds laid in the lectures on the Psalter grew into the "theology of the cross" as Luther lectured in the following semesters on Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. Under the influence of Augustine's anti-Pelagian works, Luther became a forceful exponent of man's fallen and forlorn condition, of conversion as a radical shift of one's self-estimate, of the life-long struggle to eradicate deep-rooted sinfulness, and (especially in 1517) of Christ as the effective source of new life, attitudes, and conduct.

Lectures on Romans

In his first lectures on St. Paul, Luther found the central drama portrayed by the Epistle to the Romans being the opposition between the righteousness we achieve by our efforts and in which we take satisfaction and the alien righteousness given from outside ourselves by God in pure mercy (LW 25, 136-138). To accept the latter as God's gift, we must yield all sense of achievement and "become a

sinner" who needs God's grace. Scripture's fundamental imperative is a radical change "in our mind or in our self-estimate and our opinion of ourselves" under the condemning word of God (217f). The Pauline message confronts a person caught in sin, but arrogantly sure of himself. God must effect a sharp and violent reversal of self-understanding.

If the word of God comes, it comes contrary to our thinking and our will. It does not allow our thinking to stand, even in those matters which are most sacred, but it destroys and eradicates and scatters everything,... Hence it is an infallible sign that one really has the word and carries it in himself, if he finds nothing in himself which pleases him, but only what is displeasing, that he is sad at all he knows, says, does, and feels, and finds pleasure only in others or in God. (LW 25, 415)

Luther's conception of repentance took on a crucial new element when he appealed to Rom 7:5.7.20 in order to explain Paul's reference to "sins" in Rom 4:7. Sin is not an instantaneous choice or act, nor is it the obligation to suffer punishment, but rather the more basic and pervasive "passion, tindeF, and concupiscence, or the inclination toward evil and the difficulty in doing good" (259). This definition of sin is fraught with consequences for both spirituality and theology.

If sin is a deep-seated, lasting infection of the affectivity, one has the basis for a continual consciousness of sin, for remaining in the humble posture of self-accusation, and for a continual struggle for healing, even after sacramental forgiveness. Luther related that this insight solved personal difficulties for himself.

In my foolishness I could not understand how I should regard myself a sinner like others and thus prefer myself to no one, even though I was contrite and had made confession; for I then felt that all my sins had been taken

away and entirely removed, even inwardly. . . . God has promised that they are forgiven to those who confess them. Thus I was at war with myself, not knowing that it was a true forgiveness indeed, but that this is nevertheless not a taking away of sin except in hope, that is, that the taking away is still to be done, and that by the gift of grace, which begins to take sin away, so that it is not imputed as sin. (LW 25, 261)

One can in truth "be a sinner" before God, continually humbling oneself, ever-fearful and self-critical, ever begging God to eradicate sin totally.

The person is at the same time a sinner and righteous, sinful because still infected and unable to serve God with enthusiasm and delight, but nonetheless righteous because one affirms the truth about oneself (210-215). God's judgment does envelop the whole process, regarding at once our self-accusation, the gift of initial righteousness presently hidden beneath contrary appearances, and the future, eschatological completion of his healing work.

Now, is one perfectly righteous? No, for one is at the same time both a sinner and a righteous person (*sinnulpeccator et iustus*): a sinner in fact, but righteous by the sure imputation and promise of God that He will continue to deliver the believer from sin until He has completely cured him. And thus one is entirely healthy in hope, but in fact still a sinner; but one has the beginning of righteousness, so that he continues more and more always to seek it, yet ever realizing he is unrighteous (WA 56, 272,16; cf. LW 25, 260)

Conversion, therefore, is the shift from proud self-satisfaction before God to self-accusation of one's sin. It unfolds in a life of penitential purification, with the earnest petition for healing grace and for the eventual fullness of health manifest in generous service of God.

The whole life of the new people, the faithful people, the spiritual people, is nothing else but prayer, seeking, and begging by the sighing of the heart, the voice of works, and the labor of their bodies, always seeking and striving to be made righteous, even to the hour of death, never standing still, never possessing, never in any work putting an end to the achievement of righteousness, but always awaiting it as something which still dwells beyond them, and always as people who still live and exist in their sins. (LW 25, 251f; cf. p. 244)

Such a conception of the Christian life led Luther to incisive criticism of the theses defended by his Ockhamist teachers. If sinful unwillingness is a pervasive malady of our humanity, it is blind arrogance to think one can begin the process of justification by positing morally good acts, even to the extent of loving God above all things. This would make grace peripheral to our actual condition.

It is plain insanity to say that one by his own powers can love God above all things and can perform works of the law according to the substance of the act, even if not according to the intentions of Him who gave the commandment, because he is not in a state of grace. O fools, O pig-theologians! By your line of reasoning, grace is only necessary because of some new demand above and beyond the law. (LW 25, 261f)

Scholastic views on the will, sin, and preparation for grace are spreading Pelagian heresy in the church and are making people disregard prayer for God's healing grace. They think they can automatically gain grace by doing their best (*'faciendo quod in se est'*). So they completely forget how the deep-seated illness of sin has weakened and perverted them (496).

Over against the Ockhamists' ethical way to justification, Luther places the person under the cross and calls for con-

version, that is, "faith whereby one makes his own mind captive to the word of the cross and denies himself and denies all things to himself" (411). The life of faith is devoid of security and any sense of having arrived at one's goal.

Those who are truly righteous not only sigh and plead for the grace of God because they see that they have an evil will and thus are sinful before God, but also because they see that they can never understand fully how deep is the evil of their will and how far it extends, they believe that they are always sinners, as if the depth of their evil will were infinite. Thus they humble themselves, thus they plead, thus they cry, until at last they are perfectly cleansed - which takes place in death. (LW 25, 220f)

During the time of his Romans' lectures Luther applied their doctrine in a gentle letter of spiritual direction to Georg Spenlein, an Augustinian confrere. Spenlein should learn what Luther himself now senses about radically rejecting the quest for peace of heart based on his own virtues and merits. He should turn rather to Christ in whom God's righteousness is abundantly given.

Learn Christ and him crucified. Learn to praise him and, despairing of yourself, say, 'Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, just as I am your sin. You have taken upon yourself what is mine and have given to me what is yours. You have taken upon yourself what you were not and have given to me what I was not.' Beware of aspiring to such purity that you will not wish to be looked upon as a sinner, or to be one. For Christ dwells only in sinners. . . Meditate on this love of his and you will see his sweet consolation. For why was it necessary for him to die if we can obtain a good conscience by our works and afflictions? Accordingly you will find peace only in him and in confident despair of yourself and your own works. (LW 48, 12f)

Within Wittenberg University, a student defended Luther's anti-Ockhamist views in a disputation on September 25, 1516, on the powers remaining in our humanity after Adam's fall. Appealing to Paul and Augustine as allies, the disputation developed with all desirable clarity the forlorn condition of fallen humanity outside grace.

One bereft of the grace of God can in no way keep the commandments, nor can he prepare himself either congruously or condignly for grace, and so he inevitably (*necessario*) remains under the sway of sin. (WA 1, 147, 10)

Luther's course on Galatians in 1516-17 offered him ample opportunity to confirm his view on fallen man and conversion to new life in faith. Faith brings one to union with Christ and so constitutes all righteousness (WA 57II, 69,23), but not simply by knowing Christ. Faith is a matter of "life, reality, and experience modelled on Christ" (94,7). But no believer has so much faith that it cannot be increased to the point that all things outside Christ are rejected (70,29).

Contemporary with the Galatians course, Luther preached regularly in the Wittenberg parish church. On January 1, 1517, he gave an ordered account of his developing vision of Christian living. A basic point is the priority of cleansing repentance over good works. But repentance is not our work: "This cleansing is God's work as he infuses grace and so justifies us independently of ourselves" (WA 1, 118,15). The moralistic emphases of other preachers spread a baneful self-confidence and obscure the role of earnest prayer.

But the doctrine of faith teaches one to constantly yearn inwardly for grace, based on the realization that the heart is not pure simply because the works are unblemished, nor is the will in good health because one's conduct is good. Consequently one must never desist from displeas-

sure over oneself, from self-hatred, and from vexation over one's own life. (WA 1, 118,37)

On February 24, 1517, Luther's sermon stressed that the authentic source of new life before God is given to us in Christ, to whom we turn as God leads us through despair over ourselves. Luther moves quickly from God's gift outside ourselves in Christ to the presence of Christ who becomes effective within us as the source of a new affectivity.

Where then is wisdom? Where is righteousness? Where is virtue? Not in us, but in Christ. It is outside of us, in God. Thus we have been made babes, fools, sinners, liars, weaklings, and nothing, since everything was given over to Christ. (LW 51, 28)

They do not sit around taking their leisure in whom wisdom, that is, Christ, has been revealed, for such persons live no longer to themselves but Christ lives in them. No need to fear that Christ will do nothing. On the contrary, he is supremely active and effective with all sweetness and ease. (WA 1, 140,19; cf. LW 51, 29)

Lectures on Hebrews

The preceding text reminds us that Luther's teaching on the Christian life began its development from the Christological exegesis of the Psalter in 1513. After only brief glimpses of Christology in the intervening years, the lecture course on the Epistle to the Hebrews brought a full unfolding in 1517-18. The text offered ample occasion and Luther did not hesitate to expound many sides of Christ's saving work. *Fides Christi* brings a whole new vitality to the person, because by it Christ lives, works, and reigns in the believer, "and in this way works flow forth spontaneously from faith. Our patience flows from the patience of Christ, and our humility from his, provided only that we believe

firmly that he has done all these things for us" (LW 29,123).

Luther explained Christ's work in terms of Augustine's concepts, *sacramentum et exemplum*. As sacrament, Christ is the sign and effective cause of new life in those joined to him by the bond of faith. Christ's passion and exaltation were events reaching out beyond themselves with saving efficacy to assimilate believers to themselves by the conversion in which they die to sinful attachments. It is, therefore, perverse to begin with a moralistic struggle to imitate Christ's example.

He who wants to imitate Christ insofar as he is an example must first believe with a firm faith that Christ suffered and died for him insofar as this was a sacrament. Consequently, those who contrive to blot out sins first by means of works and labors of penance err greatly, since they begin with the example, when they should begin with the sacrament. (LW 29, 124)

God has made Christ the great sign for all the world to see. For those attracted to him, Christ is God's instrument in leading believers to salvation (131f). His death and entry into heaven are sacraments of our mortification of self-righteousness and our new life of loving only what is above (225).

The background of this remarkable interweaving of justification and the new life of faith with Christology lay in Luther's dramatic conception of Christ's redemptive work. Breaking with St. Anselm's theory that the passion was Christ's satisfactory payment recompensing for the dishonor or sin gave to God, an idea long dominant in Western Christian thought, Luther was inspired by Hebrews 2:14 to reactivate the patristic notion of Christ's struggle to overcome death with life and defeat the devil. Luther was fascinated with the paradoxical coincidence of death with life in the redemptive event, where Satan's killing work against Christ was turned into a work of life by the resurrection (135f). Christ, victorious, is the sacramental source of life for those united with him by faith.

Just as it is impossible for Christ, the Victor over death, to die again (cf. Rom 6:9), so it is impossible for one who believes in Him to die. . . . For just as Christ, by reason of his union with immortal divinity, overcame death by dying, so the Christian, by reason of his union with the immortal Christ - which comes about through faith in him - also overcomes death by dying. (LW 29, 136)

These early passages on the work of Christ prepared Luther to expound at length the verses on Christ's priesthood beginning with Heb 4:14. His priestly office makes his humanity a refuge in which we are saved from judgment. As the one who bears away sins, Christ offers consolation to terrified consciences (167-171). Luther was here moving toward one of the major roles he saw himself called to play: the herald dedicated to announcing Christ the Savior who grants peace and assurance to those casting themselves on his word in faith.

Luther's accounts of faith in the Hebrews lectures develop in two directions not easily harmonized. There is no doubt about the centrality and sufficiency of faith. One is a Christian solely through hearing the word of God, for "the ears alone are the organs of a Christian" (224). Under the influence of mysticism, Luther can, on the one hand, accentuate the self-abnegation entailed as one is brought to righteousness and union with God in faith.

Faith in Christ is an exceedingly arduous thing, because it is a rapture and a removal from everything one experiences within and without to the things one experiences neither within nor without, namely, to the invisible, most high, and incomprehensible God. (LW 29, 149)

Faith causes the heart to cling fast to celestial things and to be carried away and to dwell in things invisible. For patience is necessary in order that by it the heart may be sustained not only in its contempt for the visible things that attract but also in its endurance of those that rage. For this is how it happens that the believer hangs between

heaven and earth, and. . . in Christ he is suspended in the air and crucified. (185)

Central to Luther's early work was the relentless call to renounce all traces of a positive self-assessment before God. He had been confirmed in this by occasional reading in the sermons of the German mystic, Johann Tauler, whom he recommended to his students and friends (e.g., LW 25, 368; 48, 35f), and by his preparation for publication of the mystical treatise, *Eyrck theologia deutsch* (cf. LW 31, 73-76).

But another theme emerged in Luther's accounts of faith in the course on Hebrews, a theme central in Luther's life-long attention to the way ordinary people regularly exercise their Christian faith in receiving the sacraments of the church. Faith should have its transforming and consoling effect precisely in these events woven deeply into the fabric of Christian living. In the sacraments, one encounters Christ, who is sacrament and high-priest. Luther comes to place great emphasis on the personal reference to oneself in the life of faith. Faith grasps the pro *me*, namely, that the Christ one meets in the sacraments brings graciousness and forgiveness for *me*.

No one attains grace because he is absolved or baptized or receives communion or is anointed, but because he believes that he attains grace by being absolved, baptized, receiving communion, and being anointed in this way. (LW 29, 172).

A good, clean, quiet, and joyful conscience is nothing except faith in the remission of sins. This faith can be put only in the word of God, which proclaims to us that the blood of Christ was shed for the remission of sins. . . . Indeed, it is not enough either to believe that it was shed for the remission of sins unless they believe that it was shed for the remission of their own sins. (210)

These passages on faith in the sacramental word are the first expressions of Luther's teaching on the "apprehending

faith" that lays hold of Christ's work applied to me through an unconditionally valid promise (see below, pages 129-32). In 1518 the dominant content Luther placed before the believer was shifting from the divine word of judgment, accentuated in the lectures on the Psalter and Romans to God's consoling word to me of forgiving mercy, as he developed repeatedly in the course on Hebrews (e.g., LW 29, 211, 217, 235).

Indulgences and Disputations, 1517-18

Autumn 1517 saw a pastoral-theological issue emerge in Luther's work as he grew seriously concerned over the way people were perceiving the great offer of indulgences to gain contributions for the building of St. Peter's basilica in Rome. Luther's "theology of the cross," insisting as it did on repentance and arduous healing from pervasive sinfulness, clashed with the indulgence preachers' exaltation of saving graces offered by the Pope in exchange for so little effort. Luther wrote to Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz on October 31, 1517 (LW 48, 45-49), urging him to exercise supervision over John Tetzel and the other preachers, and enclosing the Ninety-Five Theses (LW 31, 25-33) in order to show how questionable were the preachers' claims in view of a sound theology of sin and repentance. There is no contemporary evidence that Luther posted the theses publicly; in fact, he claimed he did nothing in public until time had elapsed *fora* response from church authorities (WA 1, 528,20; LW 41, 233f; LW 34, 329f). In the conclusion of his *Treatise on Indulgences*, also sent to Archbishop Albrecht, he stated with all desirable clarity what was at issue.

We must be quite earnest in preventing indulgences, that *is*, satisfactions, from becoming a cause of security, laziness, and neglect of interior grace. Instead, we must be diligent to fully cure the infection of our nature and thirst to come to God out of love for him, hatred of this life, and

disgust with ourselves. That *is*, we must incessantly seek God's healing grace. (WABr 12, 4212a,152; p. 9)

Luther's plea for reform of the preaching of Christian penance went unheard; instead, he was cited to Rome for teaching suspect doctrines about penance and papal authority.

But in Wittenberg the beginnings of the indulgence controversy were overshadowed by Luther's theological campaign against the Ockhamist views on the human condition, freedom, and grace. On September 26, 1517, Luther's *Disputation against Scholastic Theology* (LW 31, 9-16) framed his views with precision and force. The unaided natural powers of fallen humans do not suffice for avoiding sin and preparing for grace. The ethical way to salvation is closed to those alienated from God and deeply infected with perverse self-love and attachments to creatures. "On the part of man . . . nothing precedes grace except ill will and even rebellion against grace" (LW 31, 11). The Scholastics who attribute so much to man's abilities have been deceived by philosophy and so neglect the role of God's grace in effecting conversion. Grace is the potent instrument, "a living, active, and operative spirit" (13), which overcomes lust and anger in the heart and leads one to delight in God's law (14f).

In April 1518 Luther journeyed to Heidelberg for the triennial chapter of the German Augustinians. Staupitz commissioned him to hold a public disputation on April 26, 1518, in which Luther gave classic expression to his early thought, in sharp opposition to recent scholasticism. The audience received Luther's ideas enthusiastically and from it came later leaders of the Reformation like Martin Bucer and Johann Brenz. Luther's starting point was the deep inroads of sin into human abilities. Working on our own, we not only choose wrongly but also act without fear in secure self-confidence, perversely taking glory away from God. Outside of the realm of grace, "free choice" is a deceptive term, since there a person is captive to sin (LW 31, 48f). Consequently an adequate preparation for grace is simply

the conviction that we are distant from God, caught in perverse seeking, and so must long for God's grace. Conversion takes the form of despair over one's abilities (51f).

Justification then follows as a pure gift, infused by faith (cf. WA 1, 364,5; LW 31, 55). It is not produced by human activity, but by it the believer becomes active for good.

His works do not make his righteousness, but rather his righteousness brings forth works. For grace and faith are infused independently of our works; but once they are infused works then begin to follow. (WA 1, 364,7; LW 31, 56)

The source of this new life is the vitality of Christ himself, whose work or instrument the believer has become for the effective keeping of God's commandments.

For through faith Christ is in us, indeed, one with us. Christ is just and has fulfilled all the commands of God, wherefore we also fulfil everything through him since he is made ours through faith.

Since Christ lives in us through faith so he arouses us to do good works through that living faith in his work, for the works he does are the fulfilment of the commands of God given us through faith. (LW 31, 56f)

Theses 19-24 of Luther's Heidelberg Disputation presented basic principles of theological method that guided Luther's life-long work. He claims as his own the anti-speculative "theology of the cross" which finds God hidden in suffering. We must first encounter God in humility and the ignominy of the cross (LW 31, 52f), if we are ever to know him in glory and majesty. There is but one place where genuine theological understanding occurs. "True theology and recognition of God are in the crucified Christ"(53). But this theology is not simply an endeavor of science. The theology of glory, against which Luther ranges himself, leads to a perverse love of the great performance in this

world, while the theology of the cross is a way of suffering, conversion, and submission to God's working.

Through the cross works are dethroned and the old Adam, who is especially edified by works, is crucified. It is impossible for a person not to be puffed up by his good works unless he has first been deflated and destroyed by suffering and evil until he knows that he is worthless and that his works are not his but God's. (53)

This stern doctrine of the believer's self-emptying in conformity to Christ crucified is the seed-bed both of Luther's reform program and of his mature doctrine on the life of faith. From the Hebrews lectures, Luther had the more consoling doctrine of merciful forgiveness, which he then developed in further biblical expositions and especially in his popular instructions for the guidance of anguished consciences.

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