“BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MINDS”:
CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AS THE ROOT
OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ETHICAL FORMATION

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by

Gifford Andrew Grobien

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Gerald P. McKenny, Director

Graduate Program in Theology
Notre Dame, Indiana
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Abstract

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This dissertation offers an alternative to the common but misleading criticism that Lutheranism is unable to provide a sustained account of ethical formation. The dialectic of law and gospel has suggested to some that forgiveness and the advocacy of ethical norms are in contention with each other. However, by grounding them in the single righteousness of Christ, this dissertation argues that forgiveness and ethics complement rather than oppose each other.

Stanley Hauerwas suggested that the dichotomy between freedom in divine grace and ethical rigor is overcome through a community narrative integrating forgiveness with holy living. Joel Biermann adapts Hauerwas’ model with Luther’s
concept of the two kinds of righteousness to suggest a framework of ethical formation centered on instruction and a creedal narrative. Yet Biermann’s model does not adequately treat the conceptual roots of the question: that Christian righteousness is both imputed and imparted, and that a Christian receives and works with righteousness through Christian worship.

Justification as forgiveness includes conversion, by which God grants a believer a new character. Traditional Lutheran anthropology says that this regeneration is God granting to a believer a new nature in mystical union with Jesus Christ. By critically exploring the work of the Finnish Luther School led by Tuomo Mannermaa, this dissertation explains how union with Christ imparts righteousness and the corresponding new character to the believer. Justification and the call to works of love are not dialectical opposites, but they are both rooted in Christ’s righteousness.

Furthermore, as the means of grace are held in the Reformation heritage to bestow grace to the believer, the Word and sacraments are the means of establishing union with Christ and of nurturing the new character. Considering Louis-Marie Chauvet’s “symbolic order” and Bernd Wannenwetsch’s understanding of worship as Christianity’s unique “form of life,” this dissertation argues that worship practices are the foundational and determinative context in which grace is offered and in which the distinctively Christian ethos develops virtues consistent with Christian character. This understanding is also compared with Hauerwas’ narrative ethics and the traditional Lutheran practice of ethical instruction by the Ten Commandments.
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ap</td>
<td>Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>The Augsburg Confession (Confessio Augustana, 1530)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ep</td>
<td>Epitome of the <em>Formula of Concord</em> (1577)</td>
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<td>FC</td>
<td><em>Formula of Concord</em> (1577)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LC</td>
<td>Large Catechism of Martin Luther (1529)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Smalcald Articles (1537)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Small Catechism of Martin Luther (1529)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Solid Declaration of the <em>Formula of Concord</em> (1577)</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Those who have written a dissertation know that it is normally one’s first full-length scholarly work and that the process trains, in an advanced way, one’s research methods, critical questioning, logical thinking, and ability to articulate an argument. In my own experience, this process began not with the dissertation itself, but with my coursework in the PhD program. Of course, this is the intent of the program, and, from my own perspective, the program has been an unqualified success. More than almost any other particular experience in my life, my education in Notre Dame’s Department of Theology has changed me by beginning to make me a scholar.

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The Moral Theology faculty who did not serve on my dissertation committee also profoundly influenced me to begin to see things from a scholarly point of view. Jean
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theretofore little considered by me. Her painstaking, dedicated, and thorough scholarship is a model for me, and one which I hope to be able to emulate in months and years to come.

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I have in other contexts referred to my colleague and senior, the Rev. Dr. D. Richard Stuckwisch, as a pioneer of the thoughtful, scholarly, and confessional pastors who have been graduating in the last two decades from the Concordia Seminaries of St.
Louis and Fort Wayne. He has been a model, assistant, and brother to me in this process, proofreading some of my work and discussing and reflecting on ideas with me. Most of all, he has been a faithful and compassionate pastor to me and to my family.

Finally, as all scholars know, we could not do what we do without the support of our families. While it is true that our families help us learn to prioritize and to remember what is important, I do not think that the role of the family in this process is best expressed in some general sense that families remind us that people are more important than projects, or some such thing. Indeed, in completing this program, with the support of my family, I have learned more deeply that projects are important too, and that thinking about ideas contributes to the well-being of other people.

The deepest truth that I have discovered about the relationship between the scholar and his family is that one’s family is inseparable from what one does, and that when I undertook this project, they undertook it with me. Whether they appreciate it or even realize it now, they have been affected by my research into the relationship between worship and ethical formation. Similarly, when they have undertaken projects, other occupations, or new experiences, such as their education, welcoming a new child into the family, or taking up a sport, I have undertaken those with them. Family bonds reveal our current and expected responsibilities. They teach us what to do. And in this way, they also support and form us into who we are. I could not have written this dissertation without my family, not because they contributed to it in a direct way, but because they contributed to me. Without them, it would be a different “me” who wrote the dissertation.
Lawrence (1943-2008) and Regina Ricketts and Gifford and Karen Grobien provided truly unwavering support through all my years of graduate school. I could not ask for more loyal or dedicated parents for this process, which is reflected in the way they have donated their time, goods, and reputation to what I have done. And I thank my wife, Regina, and my children, Alena, Julianna, Kimberley, Brigitta, Amelia, Cillian, and Makrina. Their love was one of the early impulses for this project, and has continued to verify what I have discovered. I hope that what I have written is a faithful expression of their lives—of love born out of the life of the church, regardless of the turmoil and surprises that accompany this life.
CHAPTER ONE:

THE PROBLEM OF ETHICAL FORMATION IN THE LUTHERAN TRADITION

1.1 Introduction

How does one speak of *ethical formation* within a theological framework defined by the principle of justification by grace alone through faith alone? Lutheranism has been perennially criticized on this basis for its inability to articulate an ethic, to advocate moral behavior, and to teach good works. Luther had to deny throughout his career that he rejected good works.¹ The various confessional writings of the Lutherans include articles specifically to deal with this accusation. *The Augsburg Confession* denies the charges that the Lutherans forbid good works, and the greater part of the article on justification in the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*—an article that defends the Lutheran position on the forgiveness of sins—falls under the subheading “Of Love and the Fulfilling of the Law,” in which the explicit charge of not teaching good works is rejected.² The *Formula of Concord* includes an article on good works to reject the idea

¹ Unless otherwise noted, references to English translations of Luther’s works are from Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, eds., *Luther’s Works*, American ed., 55 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-86), hereafter abbreviated LW. For Luther’s defense against criticisms of laxity with respect to good works, see, e.g., LW 35:18; 26:137; 41:111-12.

² *The Augsburg Confession* (hereafter abbreviated CA) 20.1-7; *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* (hereafter abbreviated Ap) 4.122ff., esp. 136-40. All references to the confessional documents
that good works are harmful to salvation, affirming instead that good works are necessary.³

Furthermore, the Lutheran tradition has produced significant manuals of casuistry and theoretical and practical ethics. Scholars such as Anders Nygren, Werner Elert, Helmut Thielicke, Gustaf Wingren, Gene Outka, William Lazareth, and Gilbert Meilaender gave new vibrancy to the tradition in the twentieth century. However, the Lutheran ethical tradition remains mixed in spite of this recent vibrancy, because of the unique methods and structures which characterize Lutheran ethics. Generally speaking, ethics is concerned with moral evaluation of people, actions, and institutions—the determination of whether these are good or bad. Yet Dietrich Bonhoeffer (a Lutheran) famously asserted that the first task of Christian ethics is to overthrow the knowledge of good and evil in order to know only God.⁴ Ethics is typically concerned with questions of norms, intention, means, ends, duty, virtue, and agency, but these kinds of terms are secondary or may even be absent from Lutheran ethical discourses. Instead, Lutherans have distinct categories for reflecting on and discussing ethics: law and gospel (not just law), functions of the law, the two kingdoms or realms, sanctification, vocation and the

created orders, and the theology of the cross. These distinctly Lutheran ethical categories do not easily translate into other ethical traditions. This difficulty in correlation may suggest to other traditions that Lutherans do not actually engage in ethical reflection, perpetuating the misconception that Lutherans forbid, discourage, or neglect good works.

Yet the enigma of Lutheran ethics comes not just from the terminological or categorical realm. Lutherans recognize that the foundational challenge to their ethical construction comes from the exclusive nature of the doctrine of justification: the exclusivity of God’s saving work apart from any effort or contribution on the part of the human person. When the central doctrine of Lutheranism is that believers are declared or made righteous solely on account of Christ apart from human effort, the very foundations of ethical reflection and discourse are called into question. The greatest threat is not so much that ethical teaching may call into question the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins in Christ, but that, in light of the free, full forgiveness and life granted through Christ, ethical questions become peripheral and unimportant. If a believer can state with confidence that she is free from sin and is completely righteous before God, of what concern are the questions of good or bad behavior? She is already good, at least where it really counts. The preaching of justification takes up the full attention of the church, because that is the true means of righteousness, while sustained, corporate reflection on ethical questions is neglected. As important as good

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works are, they are not as important as getting into heaven. Thus ethics becomes secondary to doctrinal questions, and when addressed, is addressed in doctrinal terms. Lutheran ethical categories are distinct largely because they are shaped by the distinctive Lutheran theology.

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

This love expresses itself in deeds that follow spontaneously from faith and no longer from the compulsion of the law. Such love is creative and dynamic. It goes beyond the limits and structures of the law but does not violate them. It “grasps the kind of hand that need holds out,” to use the words of Joseph Sittler. It is a love shaped by the engendering deed of God’s love in Christ. It is self-giving and neighbor-regarding....

This heightened sense of both divine and human agape seems to differentiate Lutheran ethics from others. Without affirming the exaggerated separation drawn by Anders Nygren between eros and agape, Lutherans seem to have such a high estimate of human agape because they have such an acute sense of God’s agape in Christ.6

6 Ibid., 14-15.
The profound emphasis on God’s gracious love as expressed in his work to justify sinners inspires an equally profound appreciation for agape, Christian love, neighbor love. If Lutheran ethics abounds in distinct or unique formal principles, its defining material principle is divine love “permeating” the soul of the believer.

This is in no way to suggest that love is absent from other Christian ethical traditions. Indeed, it is probably accurate to say love is the material principle of most Christian ethical systems. Yet Benne is suggesting that the centrality of the absoluteness of God’s grace and love in Christ bestows Lutheran ethics with a unique clarity of perspective regarding the self-denying nature of Christian love. As God gave up everything for the salvation of his creation, so the Christian is inspired with this divine love to give up all selfish ambition for the sake of the neighbor.

Yet this vigor of Lutheran ethics detracts from a comprehensiveness that is found in other ethical traditions. Benne’s critique poignantly reveals the dilemma:

A persisting tendency in Lutheran ethics is to reduce the whole of ethical life to the motivation touched off by justification. Dazzled as they are by the wonder and profundity of God’s justifying grace in Christ, Lutherans are tempted to think that the only really interesting ethical question is the motivational one. After being affirmed and reconciled in Christ, Christians are powerfully motivated to live the life of love.

The theological problem revealed here is a kind of soteriological reductionism that downplays the role of the First and Third persons of the Trinity. The ethical weakness that ensues is one of lack of ethical substance. The gospel forgives and motivates, but from what and to do what? Lutherans have shied away from contemporary explications of the Decalogue that would give Old Testament content to the ethical life. Love becomes both a permissive affirmation of any behavior and a rather amorphous serving of the neighbor. Without a richer notion of life in community (covenantal existence) that comes from our Jewish roots, Lutheran ethics does not really know what is “good for the neighbor.” We tend to beg the question….

Lutherans have been weak in developing a notion of the church as “a community of character.” We have left that to our sectarian and Catholic
comrades. But we need to get serious about this issue. Can Lutherans talk about the church as a living tradition that forms moral virtues, or does such talk threaten the spontaneous love that flows “unmotivated” from justification? What is the relation between agape and virtue? Are they antithetical? If they are, can Lutheranism ever talk persuasively about Christian virtue?

Further can Lutheran ethics really talk about a decision-making process without questioning the “ecstatic” notion of motivation with which they have operated for so long? Will such attention to weighing relative goods and bads clash with the spontaneity of love with which we have been enamored? Will we be able to give ethical dignity to anguished decisions? How does a community of faith sustain and support such ethical necessities?

I have quoted Benne at length because he has expressed so well the strengths and weaknesses of an ethical tradition centered on the teaching of justification by grace alone through faith alone. On the one hand, the unconditional nature of God’s gracious love empowers the believer to love in an analogous way. On the other hand, the emphasis on this gracious love and divine motivation has been taken as license to neglect questions of ethical content, formation, and ambiguity. Love calls the Christian to serve the neighbor, but efforts must be made to discern the needs of the neighbor. The encompassing power of love does not mean that greater understanding of law, norms and principles is to be neglected, but that these provide insight into how love expresses itself. The sinful and tragic condition of the world means that the loving action will not always be easily apparent, and that love can benefit from sustained, complex, ethical thinking. Finally, as Benne suggests, the church as the body of Christ will be involved in shaping the love of a Christian.

All of Benne’s criticisms relate to the question of moral formation. He even speculates explicitly about the possibility of a Lutheran church that “forms moral
virtues.” Although Benne does not answer his own questions, he has provided a matrix of the theological resources for answering them and of the challenges facing those who would attempt to answer.

This dissertation answers the criticisms of Lutheran ethics in a twofold manner. First, it offers a theoretical and comprehensive presentation of the relationship between justification and ethical formation, describing theologically and anthropologically the conversion of an unbeliever into a regenerate, morally capable Christian. Second, this dissertation argues that the power of this conversion and of the moral capacity comes through worship. Through the means of grace and on the basis of the ethos established by Christian worship, a Christian is empowered and formed to exercise Christian ethics. My central argument is that justification and moral formation intersect in a congruent way in the worship life of the Christian church. In worship, the Christian community is spiritually renewed by grace, while worship and other community practices express paradigmatic and formative ways of living as a Christian.

In the remainder of this chapter, I do two things. First, I delve further into the roots of the problem of Lutheran ethics, by tracing developments in the Lutheran doctrine of the law, the classical basis for Lutheran ethics. My purpose is to suggest not that the law is obsolete or impotent for Lutheran ethics, but that the current status of the doctrine has undermined Lutheran fundamental ethics. As a result, as already suggested by Benne, Lutheran ethics is in need of revitalized foundations. Consistent with the Lutheran tradition, I will be arguing that this is best done beginning from the doctrine of justification and the relationship of justification to ethics. Thus the second
part of the remainder of this chapter briefly rehearses the Lutheran doctrine of justification and defends my proposal as being consistent with this doctrine.

Specifically, I argue that an understanding of justification consistent with Luther and the Lutheran tradition has its own resources for developing Christian ethics, through the lens of the *twofold righteousness* of a Christian. A person who is imputed righteous on account of Christ through faith, also receives an accompanying, imparted righteousness by which to do good works. This way of thinking about righteousness comes out of the roots of the Lutheran tradition and offers a way of thinking about ethics that is in harmony with the tradition.

Finally, by consistency and harmony with Luther and the Lutheran tradition I mean not only that what I propose neither conflicts with the *Book of Concord* nor with the consistent, regular teachings of Luther himself, but also that what I propose agrees with the fundamental teachings on good works in the *Book of Concord* and in Luther. In other words, I am not basing my arguments on Luther’s snide or off-handed remarks, but on arguments he made with regularity in various writings throughout his career. I am careful to include a variety of sources from the “late Luther,” to show that I am in harmony with his mature teaching. At the same time, I do not claim that my project is an exhaustive review of the *Book of Concord*’s and Luther’s teachings on good works. I especially do not claim that my project is the only way good works in the Lutheran tradition may be understood. Treating all of the sources for these kinds of projects would be a monumental task. My claim is more moderate: I demonstrate, simply, that Christ’s bestowed righteousness, received in worship (especially the means of grace),
empowers and begins to form a believer for Christian ethics, and that such a position is in harmony with the Lutheran position expressed by the Book of Concord and Martin Luther’s consistent theology.

1.2 Law, Gospel, and Righteousness

From the period of Lutheran orthodoxy (seventeenth century) and on, Lutherans have understood the divine law to be the norm and rule of good works or ethics. Excluded as primary principles of good works, then, are the conscience, and, by some opinions, even the natural law and reason, although prudence is accepted as a secondary norm for “particular action.” Teleological concerns have never been foundational for Lutheran ethics, because the human end is given freely in Christ. The gospel, as well, is not the rule for good works, but as the forgiveness of sins, it is the “conferring” and “productive” principle of good works. That is, the gospel confers the Holy Spirit, which is the power for good works, and it produces the renewed faculties required to do good works. Both the forgiveness of sins and the growth in good works occur by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit acts through the gospel, the announcement of Christ’s righteousness to forgive and empower, and through the law, to teach the regenerate person what good to do and what evil to avoid.

Here we have one way of distinguishing between law and gospel, a distinction that Luther himself taught and held dear:


9 Ibid.
Therefore whoever knows well how to distinguish the Gospel from the Law should give thanks to God and know that he is a real theologian. I admit that in the time of temptation I myself do not know how to do this as I should. The way to distinguish the one from the other is to locate the Gospel in heaven and the Law on earth, to call the righteousness of the Gospel heavenly and divine and the righteousness of the Law earthly and human, and to distinguish as sharply between the righteousness of the Gospel and that of the Law as God distinguishes between heaven and earth or between light and darkness or between day and night. Let the one be like the light and the day, and the other like the darkness and the night. If we could only put an even greater distance between them! Therefore if the issue is faith, heavenly righteousness, or conscience, let us leave the Law out of consideration altogether and let it remain on the earth. But if the issue is works, then let us light the lamp of works and of the righteousness of the Law in the night. So let the sun and the immense light of the Gospel and of grace shine in the day, and let the lamp of the Law shine in the night.  

Luther here refers to a distinction between the heavenly and earthly realms. The gospel governs the heavenly realm, and establishes a person as righteous before God, while the law governs the earthly realm, and directs a person’s efforts at growing in righteousness by teaching her good works. In this distinction, the law teaches good works, while the gospel bestows righteousness, the new birth, and the corresponding renewed faculties which empower the person to begin to do good works and to grow in them.

However, there is another way of understanding the divine law—and with it also another way of understanding the distinction between law and gospel—and Luther’s comments should not be taken as though the law merely teaches good works. In the Lutheran understanding, the law also serves to condemn the sinner. The Formula teaches that the law is both the revelation of the divine will regarding “what is to be the quality of man in his nature, thoughts, words, and works,” and that “it threatens its

10 Luther, Lectures on Galatians (1535), in LW 26:115-16.
transgressors with God’s wrath and temporal and eternal punishments.” Because the law reveals the will of God and what a person should do to obey this will, it also reveals that a person is a sinner when she does not conform to the standard of the law. Because of original sin, no one is able to fulfill the law; by extension, the law reveals to all people that they are sinners. Because it is a standard for goodness, those who fail to meet this divine standard are revealed to be sinners. Thus the Apology states that “the Law always accuses us.” Indeed, the Lutheran tradition typically has held this to be the primary function of the law.

The confessional writings of the Lutheran church—except for the Smalcald Articles (which were written by Luther)—along with the later dogmatic tradition, tended to maintain this dual emphasis on the functions of the law. The second and longest part of the Apology’s article on justification is actually titled “On Love and Fulfilling the Law,” in which Melanchthon painstakingly distinguishes justification from good works, while maintaining that the good works of a Christian actually fulfill the law. Both functions were upheld in the dogmatic tradition, even while carefully distinguished from one another.

11 FC, Solid Declaration (hereafter abbreviated SD) 5.17.
12 Ap 4.128.
13 There is another function of the law: to restrain evildoers from outward crime and to maintain general civil order, but, because this is a civil function, it is not of central significance to theology. See e.g., SD 6.1.
14 See, e.g., 4.122-141.
15 Schmid, 515-16. Some dogmaticians divided the accusing use into two parts, so that, altogether, there was fourfold function of the law: 1) civil, 2) elenctical, 3) pedagogical or compelling, and
However, Luther heavily emphasizes the accusatory function of the law, and while he implicitly assumes its instructional function, he consistently highlights what he calls the “theological” use:

Here one must know that there is a double use of the Law. One is the civic use. God has ordained civic laws, indeed all laws, to restrain transgressions.... The other use of the Law is the theological or spiritual one, which serves to increase transgressions. This is the primary purpose of the Law of Moses, that through it sin might grow and be multiplied, especially in the conscience. Paul discusses this magnificently in Rom. 7. Therefore the true function and the chief and proper use of the Law is to reveal to man his sin, blindness, misery, wickedness, ignorance, hate and contempt of God, death, hell, judgment, and the well-deserved wrath of God.16

These remarks are representative of Luther’s references throughout his Lectures on Galatians to the condemning function of the law. This way of thinking is evident also in his antinomian theses and disputations, the Smalcald Articles, and in his early work.17

There may appear, therefore, to be some difference in emphasis between Luther’s teaching on the functions of the law and the Lutheran confessional and dogmatic tradition. While the latter includes the instructional function in theological reflection, Luther focuses on the accusatory function of the law, to emphasize the guilt of people before God apart from the forgiveness of sins. It should be noted, however,

4) instructional. Theologically speaking, however, there remain two general functions of the law: accusatory and instructional.

16 Luther, Lectures on Galatians (1535), in LW 26:308-9.

17 See, e.g., Martin Luther, Solus Decalogs Est Aeternus: Martin Luther’s Complete Antinomian Theses and Disputations, ed. and trans. Holger Sonntag (Minneapolis, MN: Lutheran Press, 2008), 170-73; SA 3.2; Martin Luther, Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed (1522), in LW 45:89-90.
that Luther does understand the law to be the “ewige, unverrückliche unwandelbarer wille Gottes” (eternal, irrevocable, unchangeable will of God).\(^{18}\)

Gerhard Forde argues that this apparent difference over the law between Luther and Lutheran Orthodoxy remained overlooked into the nineteenth century until the flowering of Luther research, beginning with Erlangen theologian J. C. K. von Hofmann.

Von Hofmann criticized the orthodox Lutheran view of the atonement as propositional rather than historical and experiential.\(^{19}\) At the root of this criticism, Forde maintains, was a crisis in the orthodox understanding of the law. In the orthodox understanding, the law of God is an “eternal and unchangeable standard” of propositions which must be fulfilled in order to avoid God’s wrath and punishment. No sinful human person is able to meet this standard, resulting in the need for Christ to suffer vicariously in the place of humankind, even while obeying the law perfectly. Christ’s obedience is credited to those with faith, and punishment is transferred to Christ. The orthodox understanding of the atonement, then, is based on an understanding of the law as a kind of *lex aeterna*\(^{20}\). When von Hofmann criticized the orthodox understanding of the atonement as propositional rather than historical and experiential, he was also attacking this propositional understanding of the law.

The ensuing arguments centered on the question of the atonement, in response to von Hoffmann’s attention to that doctrine. Although several theologians responded to


\(^{20}\) Ibid., 3-9.
or developed von Hoffman’s work, none was able to articulate a satisfactory place for the law within the new proposals regarding the atonement. Consequently, the crisis in the orthodox understanding of the law, which was implicitly revealed by von Hofmann’s work, lingered without direct attention to the law and the dialectic between law and gospel. Extensive attention would not be given to the question of the law and the gospel until Barth made the problem explicit with his 1935 essay, “Evangelium und Gesetz.” However, the resurgence of Luther studies that developed in response to von Hofmann bore twofold fruit. First, it articulated this apparent difference between Luther and the orthodox position with respect to the law. Second, Forde suggests that Luther’s position, rather than the orthodox position, provides material to resolve the question of the law-gospel dialectic in the twentieth century, after Barth brought the question to the fore.

Barth argued that the law is gracious simply because it comes from God. Any word or revelation from God is an act of God’s grace, his deigning to reveal himself to people, so the law also is gracious. Barth acknowledged that the law serves to accuse the sinner, but claimed that this function is improper and made obsolete when a person believes in Christ. When sin is forgiven, no obstruction remains to the power of the law, which, for Barth, strengthens the believer to live out the fulfillment of the law. For

21 Ibid., 131-34
24 Barth, Gospel and Law, 72.
Barth, the law is empowering and strengthening, effective once the weakness of sin is eliminated by the forgiveness of sins.\(^{25}\) Thus, he reverses the dialectical order to gospel-law, because the law is properly what is given to the Christian to live by.

In contrast, the Lutherans responded, based on their understanding of the law from Luther’s writings, the law is God’s word of confrontation and threat. Law reveals to human beings their sin, and condemns them to death. Law, sin, and death are integral, so that death is the end of the law. For those who are in Christ, however, there is new life after this death, the life of the gospel given to those who have died to sin. In the gospel, the law still ends in death, but in the death of Christ. Thus, Forde, explains, the Lutheran reformulation of the law-gospel dialectic in response to the crisis of the law in orthodoxy and the challenge of Barth is eschatological. The law and the gospel operate in two distinct ages, the former in the age of sin and death, and the latter in the age of eternal life. In Forde’s view, although these ages meet in the personal experience of the believer so that the believer experiences law and gospel simultaneously, the ages themselves do not mix. The believer suffers the law only insofar as he remains a sinner, in his old nature. Under the gospel, the sinful nature is dead, killed by the law, while the new nature lives perfectly under the gospel and there is no place for the confrontation and threats of the law. The age of sin, death, and the law is swallowed up and complete in the age of Christ and the gospel.\(^{26}\) Forde is picking up on Luther’s distinction between heaven and earth, but while Forde separates them into ages which never meet, Luther

\(^{25}\) Ibid., 78-79, 87.

distinguishes them as realms, in which a person lives simultaneously. Luther allowed that the redeemed and forgiven person engages in the earthly realm with, in part, the direction of the law. Nevertheless, this distinction between Luther and Forde’s interpretation of Luther was overlooked by many Luther scholars. As a result, Forde’s existential emphasis squeezes out the third use of the law, because the law became an encounter in the conscience, convicting the conscience of sin. Once freed by the Gospel, the law has no further work of accusation in the conscience, and therefore no significant place in an existential Lutheranism. In this understanding, the law is defined as that which confronts, threatens, and accuses, so that it can never serve with a teaching function for the new nature. The law has no place in the age of the gospel, but only in the age of sin, to hinder outward evildoers in the civil realm, and to accuse all people in their consciences as sinners before God.

Werner Elert, one of the chief responders to Barth, exemplifies this view. With the entrance of sin into the world, Elert says that the law effectively becomes retribution and judgment. The all encompassing scope of the law as a binding structure, or ethos, becomes limited in function to judgment. For the Christian, while the law remains retributive, it never takes on an instructional function, because Christian love fulfills the law. The love of a regenerate Christian so surpasses any descriptive or didactic use of the law that the law is of no practical use to the regenerate nature.

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29 Ibid., 58-62.
instructional use is really just the accusatory use to restrain and expose the persistent sinful nature in the believer. Although Elert terminologically allows for the third function of the law, he effectively denies it, limiting the theological function to the accusatory, or retributive. This significantly marginalizes principles and norms as resources for a Christian ethic.\textsuperscript{30} Forde acknowledges the “problem for ethics”:

\begin{quote}
The breaking of the continuity in the law means that the message and influence of the gospel threaten to become radically separated from the “everyday” world. The “new age” is in no way to be understood as the realization of the potentialities inherent in the “old age.” Unless it is carefully handled, this leads to an unfortunate cleavage between Christian ethics and secular ethics.\textsuperscript{31}
\end{quote}

He is optimistic that this problem can be avoided so long as we resist the temptation to see faith as a “translation” from one realm to the other, rather than as a proleptic experience of judgment and new life.\textsuperscript{32} Yet Benne’s judgment, as examined at the beginning of this chapter, suggests that the problem for ethics is not being adequately overcome.

Scott Murray writes in response to what he sees as the persistent problem of ethics, and traces some ways Lutherans have tried to operate in a milieu where the third function of the law has been marginalized or even discredited. Some Lutherans attempt to re-label the law for the Christian, to “shift from forensic terminology to descriptive terminology.” Instead of explaining good works as those things called for by the law,

\begin{footnotesize}
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\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 297-99.
\item\textsuperscript{31} Forde, \textit{Law-Gospel Debate}, 221.
\item\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 231.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
they were merely described as fruits, good works, or expectations of the Christian.\textsuperscript{33} By eliminating law-like language, they hoped to retain the concrete, descriptive benefits of a third use of the law without actually speaking of the law. Murray exposes this as mere rhetorical sleight of hand.

Another danger identified by Murray is the effort to replace the third function of the law with gospel paranesis, or a practical use of the gospel, as if the gospel had two functions or uses, one to justify, and another to teach, shape, or form the Christian for good, spiritual works. Rather than clarify the situation, this confuses it further by retaining a didactic function of the law, but calling it the gospel instead of the law.\textsuperscript{34} Besides introducing terminological confusion, it also upsets the dialectic between law and gospel. When the fulfillment of good works is seen as the purpose of the gospel, the gospel becomes the guide for Christian behavior, mixing the functions of law and gospel.\textsuperscript{35}

In reality, both advocates of gospel paranesis and Murray in his opposition seem to have set themselves too firmly in extreme positions. In criticizing gospel paranesis, Murray lumps together formation, instruction, empowerment and doing good works as mistaken purposes of the gospel. Yet it can hardly be denied from the Biblical testimony that doing good works is, in fact, at least one of the purposes of forgiveness and

\textsuperscript{33} Murray, \textit{Law, Life, and the Living God}, 57.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 110-11.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 122.
salvation. And if the gospel grants new life, some kind of formation is occurring as the result of the gospel. More care needs to be taken to distinguish these various notions if a fair critique of gospel paranesis is to be offered. One of the main distinctions that seems to be lacking in advocates of gospel paranesis is the distinction between empowerment and instruction. Within the traditional law-gospel framework, the gospel certainly empowers, but it does not instruct. This distinction Murray does not develop.

Another lingering question not addressed completely by Murray is the content of the law that is taught. Murray refers to the importance of the norming function of the law and the external code that it provides. This hearkens back to the orthodox position of the lex aeterna. But he does not resolve the problems raised by the existential perspective of the new Luther studies, namely, that the external code cannot possibly provide principles for every condition and situation, and, more theoretically, that this understanding of the law seems to suggest a strict, propositional understanding of the atonement.

To summarize, deficiencies in the presentation of the functions of the law fall into two general categories: 1) those which minimize or deny the instructional function of the law in the face of the accusatory function, and 2) those which separate the instructional function from the accusatory function. In the first case, the dominant role of the accusatory function diminishes or marginalizes the place of effective

36 "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works...." (Eph. 2:10, ESV); "[Jesus Christ] gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possessions who are zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14, ESV). These are but two examples of the references throughout the Bible which suggest good works are a purpose of salvation.

righteousness. When the believer faces a law that persistently emphasizes his sinfulness, it becomes difficult for him to believe that he experiences or even can experience some kind of growth in personal righteousness. The law always accuses, yet if it only accuses, then it does not serve as a source for moral vision and behavior. Incidentally, while Luther is sometimes read as falling into this category, by those such as Elert and Forde, Luther actually escapes from this category because his pastoral writings demonstrate appeal to the law for instruction, even if he does not typically speak of an explicit instructive use of the law. This will be demonstrated conclusively in chapter six.

In the second case, those who separate the instructional from the accusatory function run a greater risk of legalism or self-righteousness, diminishing or marginalizing the foundational place of imputed righteousness. If the law accuses only prior to belief and conversion, after which it only instructs, then there is no word of God to remind the believer of his continuous need for forgiveness and the gift of Christ’s righteousness. If the law stops accusing after one becomes a Christian, then one may be tempted to believe that merit can be attained before God apart from the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Joel Biermann, whom this dissertation will take up more thoroughly in chapter two, argues that a false imposition of a radically dualistic perspective of law/gospel feeds either of these cases. The soteriological roles of law—the word which accuses and condemns—and gospel—the word which forgives and regenerates—are expanded to

\[38\] For example, in both the *Large Catechism* and the *Small Catechism.*
become universally applicable, holding sway also in the secular realm. Furthermore, the duality is interpreted in a negative-positive manner, so that one pole is preferred over the other. Either the law is favored, risking legalism, or the gospel is favored, risking antinomianism. “At that point, the otherwise beneficial paradigm actually forces apart what is intended to be kept together. This is particularly problematic in light of the propensity of theologians, or perhaps human nature generally, to gravitate to one or the other of the poles.” 39

When the law is redefined, misunderstood, or misapplied in these ways, it becomes something from which the gospel frees a person, so that any attempt to use the law for ethical construction is undermined by the neutralizing effect of the gospel. 40 This undermining can be avoided when the proper work of the gospel is recalled: forgiveness and new life. The gospel does grant freedom, but it is not a kind of freedom from principles. The freedom of the gospel is the freedom from guilt, death, and accusation, so that no person can claim authority over another in the realm of salvation. But this freedom of a Christian, as Luther points out in his treatise by the same name, places one squarely into servitude to others when it comes to serving them in love with good works. 41 The gospel is not a freedom from the law; it is a freedom from its accusations and condemning power.

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


None of the functions of the law or the gospel is to be confused with another, nor are they to be separated and divided off from one another. Rather, they are to be distinguished and established within their proper doctrinal, ethical, and pastoral loci, working in tandem to maintain both the imputed, alien righteousness of Christ and the proper effective righteousness of the person, which grows and thrives from Christ’s righteousness. This need for a proper understanding of righteousness points to the need for the continued proper articulation of the doctrine of justification.

### 1.3 Righteousness and Justification in the Lutheran Confessions

One of the basic disagreements over the term *justify* (dikaioō) is whether it refers to making righteous or declaring righteous. For the Lutheran confessors, both meanings were acknowledged and received. Melanchthon explains the two meanings: first, that an unjust person is *made* a just person, or is *regenerated* (born again); second, that a person is *pronounced* or *accounted* as just. In fact, Melanchthon does not separate the two meanings, but argues that, because Scripture includes both meanings, the Lutherans also hold to both meanings:

And because “to be justified” means that out of unjust men just men are made, or born again, it means also that they are pronounced or accounted just. For Scripture speaks in both ways. Accordingly we wish first to show this, that faith alone makes of an unjust, a just man, i.e., receives remission of sins. ⁴²

In the paragraphs that follow, Melanchthon focuses his attention on the forensic character of justification, that a person is considered righteous by God on account of

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faith in Christ, but he also refers to justification as regeneration of a righteous life.\textsuperscript{43}

Justification actually makes a person righteous, because sins are taken away. The remission of sins is not merely a statement or a legal recognition of something that is not true in fact, but it is a declaration and accounting of righteousness which also makes a person righteous.

We may describe justification thusly, based on article four of \textit{The Augsburg Confession}, along with the explanation given above from the \textit{Apology}: A person is forgiven sin and “becomes righteous” (gerecht werden) before God through faith in Christ, whose merits God “imputes” (imputat, halten und zurechnen) as righteousness on account of this faith. Faith receives the righteousness of Christ, which is counted (in a forensic sense) as righteousness for the believer. At the same time, the believer becomes righteous.\textsuperscript{44} Imputation and rebirth are included in the work of justification.

The \textit{Formula of Concord} raises a further distinction relevant to our consideration. Due to the controversies that arose regarding justification following publication of \textit{The Augsburg Confession} and the \textit{Apology}, the Lutherans had to distinguish more specifically the righteousness of faith from the believer’s good works. The \textit{Formula} article three is adamant that a believer’s good works contribute nothing to justification, but that the imputation of righteousness to a believer is completely gracious and prior to new, good works.

\textsuperscript{43} See, e.g., \textit{Ap} 4.94-95, 117. Throughout this section of the \textit{Apology} (4.61-121), Melanchthon seems to be suggesting that the initial regeneration is faith itself, or, at the very least, the comfort, consolation, peace, and hope of salvation that a person experiences upon believing. In this sense, faith itself is regeneration. See, esp., 4.114-116.

\textsuperscript{44} CA 4.
The *Formula* clarifies the meaning of the words regeneration (*regeneratio*, *Weidergebur*) and vivification. It notes that *The Apology* often uses these words as synonyms for justification, so that justification means forgiveness of sins and adoption as children of God. Justification makes alive by transferring from death to life. This meaning is not to be confused with sanctification and renewal, the second sense of these terms, which is often used in contexts apart from justification.\(^{45}\)

In making this argument, *The Formula* goes on to emphasize that justification “does not mean that after rebirth unrighteousness no longer clings to the essence and life of the justified and reborn. Instead, it means that with his perfect obedience Christ has covered all their sins, which inhere in human nature during this life.”\(^{46}\) This makes clear that the regeneration of justification does not mean a perfect transition to goodness so that the justified person can no longer sin. On the contrary, the new heart or new life is a beginning of righteousness which yet needs completion. What remains of sin is covered by the imputed righteousness of Christ.

The Formula’s words are actually intended to strengthen the doctrine of justification in the face of sin that still clearly seems to remain in a Christian’s life even after justification. The Formula is addressing the problem that seems to arise when a Christian is said to be made righteous on account of Christ, on the one hand, yet, on the other hand, still commits sin. Against those who would argue that a righteous life is the basis or comfort of justification, the Lutherans are affirming that, even in the face of sin,

\(^{45}\) SD 3.18-21.

\(^{46}\) SD 3.22.
a person can have confidence that he is forgiven and righteous because of Christ’s righteousness, not his own. Nor does the Christian’s person and life have to conform perfectly to Christ’s righteousness before he can be considered righteous, but a person is made righteous and given Christ’s righteousness as a covering, remedy, and cure for his unrighteousness. Thus the *Formula* teaches both that Christ covers the sin that remains in the believer’s mortal body, and that the believer receives the righteousness of Christ through faith—righteousness is both forensic and imparted.  

The *Formula* further distinguishes between justification and sanctification or renewal—the maturing of this new life through cooperation with the power of the Holy Spirit—as the “two kinds of righteousness:”

It is also correctly said that believers who in Christ through faith have been justified, have in this life first the imputed righteousness of faith, and then also the incipient righteousness of the new obedience or of good works. But these two must not be mingled with one another or be both injected at the same time into the article of justification by faith before God. For since this incipient righteousness or renewal in us is incomplete and impure in this life because of the flesh, the person cannot stand with and by it before God’s tribunal, but before God’s tribunal only the righteousness of the obedience, suffering, and death of Christ, which is imputed to faith, can stand, so that only for the sake of this obedience is the person (even after his renewal, when he has already many good works and lives the best life) pleasing and acceptable to God, and is received into adoption and heirship of eternal life.  

With this distinction, the *Formula* addresses the particular concern that a person might think that her acceptance by God is based on some kind of inherent or even imparted

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47 Believers “receive and have (*erlangen und haben, consequimur*) forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, sonship, and heirship of eternal life” (*SD* 3.25). Also it says, “God’s grace and the merit of Christ in the promise of the Gospel are received, apprehended, accepted, applied to us, and appropriated” (*SD* 3.38).

48 *SD* 3.32.
righteousness. Although one receives regeneration in justification, regeneration can never be considered the basis for justification. The first kind of righteousness, imputation of faith and the new birth, in the narrow sense, is the ground for the second kind of righteousness, the good works that flow out of regeneration. This second kind of righteousness begins, attendant with faith, and then grows into good works which follow upon justification.\footnote{SD 3.27.}

The Formula does not greatly expand on this notion of the two kinds of righteousness, being content to emphasize their distinction and to uphold imputed righteousness exclusive of the believer’s good works. However, the notion of the two kinds of righteousness appears periodically in Luther’s writings, and by considering these we can develop the idea that the “two kinds of righteousness” serves as a conceptual conjunction between justification and sanctification or ethics, even while this second kind of righteousness is itself not part of justification.

\textbf{1.4 Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness}

The phrase, “the two kinds of righteousness” is ambiguous because the “kinds” of righteousness have variably referred in Lutheranism to more than two, depending on the time and context of the writing. When comparing Luther and Melanchthon the kinds of righteousness differ, and even for Luther alone, depending on the context of the writing, the “two kinds” of righteousness may refer to different pairs of righteousness, so that we are not really limited to only two kinds of righteousness when speaking of this theological category. Luther himself recognizes, if not the lack of consistency, the
multiplicity of kinds of righteousness, for he refers to some of them—political, ceremonial, legal, and the righteousness of faith—in introducing his Lectures on Galatians (1535), and acknowledges, “righteousness is of many kinds.”

Nevertheless, generally among Lutherans, when the phrase “the two kinds of righteousness” is utilized, there is consensus on the meaning of one kind of righteousness. This is the righteousness of faith by which God counts a person righteous on account of Christ’s merit. In short, it is the righteousness of justification as I have described above. As we will observe, Luther most consistently called this passive or alien righteousness, because it was received and its benefits applied to a person apart from any merit or qualities in the person, and only through faith. In order to maintain clarity, through this dissertation, when referring to this kind of righteousness, I will usually refer to it as passive, alien, or imputed righteousness.

On the other hand, there is lack of consensus regarding the definition of the other kind of righteousness, even among Luther and Melanchthon. Often Lutherans assume it to refer to civil righteousness or righteousness before people or before the world. Such civil righteousness refers to works that are good by the standard of the civil law or social expectations, such as being an orderly citizen, not breaking laws, working hard, caring for those under one’s responsibility, and the like. Both Christians and non-

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50 LW 26:4.


52 This is the general way Kolb and Arand describe the "contours" of this kind of righteousness, ibid., 28-29. However, as I will argue, the meaning of this kind of righteousness in the Lutheran tradition is more nuanced.
Christians are able to fulfill the demands of civil righteousness, if they apply reason and effort. It is not a righteousness which merits salvation before God, or makes a person righteous in God’s sight. However, what may be considered good according to the standards of civil righteousness may actually be evil in God’s sight. While Luther worked with an understanding of civil righteousness, this is not all he has in mind when considering active Christian righteousness, the good works of a Christian which flow from the passive righteousness received from Christ. Often, he distinguishes civil righteousness from active Christian righteousness. This active, Christian righteousness is specifically inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and motivated by love. This is distinct from Melanchthon’s second kind of righteousness, which consistently referred to the outward good works done according to the law and civil standards of goodness, whether by Christians or non-Christians.

In this dissertation I am almost always concerned with Luther’s active Christian righteousness rather than civil righteousness. In fact, I want to emphasize this distinction, because I am concerned with specifically Christian ethics and how the justification of a believer relates to ethics. Thus, to maintain clarity regarding what I mean by the second kind of righteousness, I will usually refer to it as actual or imparted righteousness, or something similar. I will not refer to this specifically kind of Christian, active righteousness as civil righteousness, but will use civil righteousness to refer to any


54 Ibid., 36-40.
outward good works that conform to a secular understanding of justice and goodness, and could be performed by Christian or non-Christian alike.

One of Luther’s first treatments of the topic of the two kinds of righteousness comes from a sermon preached early in his career titled, “Two Kinds of Righteousness.” The first kind of righteousness is Christ’s righteousness, which Christ earned. It is not simply that righteousness which he had by virtue of his divine nature, but that which he accomplished through humility, obedience, suffering, and death, according to the will of God the Father. This righteousness of Christ is given to the one who repents of sin, believes, and is baptized. It is an alien righteousness, yet nevertheless becomes the believer’s righteousness as a gift: “Just as a bridegroom possesses all that is his bride’s and she all that is his—for the two have all things in common because they are one flesh—so Christ and the church are one spirit.” Luther very directly speaks of the righteousness of Christ becoming the believer’s possession, citing various passages such as Romans 8:32, in which Christ is promised to the believer:

Through faith in Christ, therefore, Christ’s righteousness becomes our righteousness and all that he has becomes ours; rather, he himself becomes ours. Therefore the Apostle calls it “the righteousness of God” in Rom. 1: For in the gospel “the righteousness of God is revealed ...; as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by his faith.’” Finally, in the same epistle, chapter 3, such a faith is called “the righteousness of God”: “We hold that a man is justified by faith.” This is an infinite righteousness, and one that swallows up all sins in a moment, for it is impossible that sin should exist in Christ. On the contrary, he who trusts in Christ exists in Christ; he is one with Christ, having the same righteousness as he. It is therefore impossible that sin should remain in him.

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55 Martin Luther, "Two Kinds of Righteousness," in LW 31: 293-306. The sermon was probably preached at the end of 1518 or the beginning of 1519. See WA 2, 143.

56 Martin Luther, "Two Kinds of Righteousness," in LW 31:297.

57 Ibid., 298.
The Christian lives in Christ and becomes one with him, thereby possessing this righteousness of Christ. It is an infinite righteousness, and sin no longer dwells in nor brings judgment to the Christian, for sin cannot exist where true and perfect righteousness exists. This passive righteousness is a direct contrast to original sin; both Christ’s righteousness and original sin are alien, attributed to the person not through works but by birth (spiritual birth, in the case of Christ’s righteousness).\(^{58}\)

The second kind of righteousness is the actual good works of the believer. It is “proper righteousness, not because we alone work it, but because we work with that first and alien righteousness.” The first righteousness becomes the operative power for the Christian’s good works, the “basis, the cause, the source of all our own actual righteousness.”\(^{59}\) This second kind of righteousness is parallel in contrast to actual sin. Where actual sin is those acts of evil committed by a person, in part because of the force of original sin, the second righteousness works toward doing what is right on the basis of Christ’s righteousness. Luther compares it to the response of a bride to her groom: he has already committed himself to her so that she has fully what is his (first kind of righteousness); she now commits herself to him to imitate him and do what is good (second kind of righteousness).\(^{60}\)

Luther makes another observation about the two kinds of righteousness which may help explain the seeming contradiction of being both righteous and sinner at the
same time: “Christ daily drives out the old Adam more and more in accordance with the extent to which faith and knowledge of Christ grow. For alien righteousness is not instilled all at once, but it begins, makes progress, and is finally perfected at the end through death.”61 Previously he said that alien righteousness is whole and “infinite,” casting out sin completely. It is possessed by the believer, yet it is not “instilled” all at once. Based on everything else Luther says about the two kinds of righteousness, this instilling of the alien righteousness seems to refer to active righteousness. Christ’s righteousness is possessed from the moment of faith, removing completely the full guilt of sin, but only gradually being instilled or developed as one’s own proper righteousness, through action and habit.

At about the same time, Luther preached a sermon on threelfold righteousness.62 The additional kind of righteousness in this sermon refers to apparent righteousness, comparable to the civil righteousness I described above. It is interesting to note that Luther is critical and even deprecating of this apparent righteousness, referring to it as the righteousness of hypocrites and a means for obtaining earthly rewards, but of no use for salvation.63 Specifically, he never refers to apparent righteousness as pleasing to God, and, even though God rewards it in an earthly way, it is still “evil” (mala) and those

61 Ibid., 299.

62 “Sermo de triplici iustizia,” WA 2, 41-47. This edition dates the sermon at the end of 1518 and implies that it was written prior to the sermon on the two kinds of righteousness, but see Walther von Loewenich, Duplex Iustitia: Luthers Stellung zu einer Unionsformel des 16. Jarhunderts (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1972), 9-13, for further discussion regarding the dating of the two sermons in reference to each other.

63 WA 2, 43-44.
who measure their righteousness in this way are under a “curse” (maledicto).\textsuperscript{64} Another point of significance to make with respect to Luther’s consideration of civil righteousness here is that in so designating a third kind of righteousness, besides the passive and active Christian kinds, is that it demonstrates Luther’s clear distinction between civil righteousness and active Christian righteousness. Again, we reiterate the importance of this, especially in distinguishing Luther from Melanchthon. For Luther, civil righteousness is not equal to imparted Christian righteousness.

Otherwise, the two kinds of Christian righteousness, passive and active, are described similarly to the way they are described in his sermon on the two kinds of righteousness. The passive righteousness is alien, received through faith by grace in baptism.\textsuperscript{65} It is Christ’s righteousness, alien to the believer, yet applied fully, completely, and eternally, so that it is not disrupted or overthrown by a believer’s actual sin.\textsuperscript{66} The actual righteousness is flowing (“fluens”) out of faith and the righteousness of Christ received through faith.\textsuperscript{67} Acts of righteousness are understood to be pleasing to God—unlike civil righteousness—so long as the doer’s trust remains in Christ.\textsuperscript{68}

Finally, in considering what kinds of works are good and to be done as acts of righteousness, Luther here does not emphasize works of love, but lists acts that work against original sin and thereby allow the received righteousness of Christ to manifest

\textsuperscript{64} WA 2, 44, 3-4, 12-13.
\textsuperscript{65} WA 2, 45, 5-8.
\textsuperscript{66} WA 2, 44-45.
\textsuperscript{67} WA 2, 46, 1.
\textsuperscript{68} WA 2, 46, 29-32.
itself more strongly. Luther advocates works that mortify the old nature of sin, such as prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. His argument is that the righteousness of Christ is advanced and reigns more powerfully when sin is hindered and put away. \(^{69}\) There is less of the sense in this sermon that the believer needs to cooperate with the righteousness of Christ to produce good works, and more the sense that the believer needs to put away and put an end to sinful thinking and behavior. This is comparable to the work of instilling Christ’s alien righteousness so that it develops into the proper righteousness of the Christian. As a result, the righteousness of Christ which is given to the person will manifest itself in good works.

Luther’s 1530 “Rhapsody or Concept on the Topic of Justification” is a sketch of a planned work on the topic of justification. Although Luther did not pursue writing this work, the notes offer—within his reflection on justification—his perspective on the relationship between faith and works, a full decade into his development as a reformer. \(^{70}\) His driving concern is to demonstrate that faith apart from works justifies; \(^{71}\) yet he also includes several poignant statements regarding the proper relationship between works and faith. In fact, apparently due to the criticisms of his opponents, Luther pays close attention to articulating the priority of faith, and its singular operation in justification before God, while also emphasizing the close relationship of good works

\(^{69}\) WA 2, 47, 1-9.

\(^{70}\) “Rhapsodia seu concepta de iustificationis Loco 1530,” WA 30/2, 652-676. There does not appear to be any scholarly questioning of the general validity of this reconstruction, although at least one scholar has questioned the extent to which it represents Luther’s systematic thought. For a brief discussion of this question, see von Loewenich, Duplex Iustitia, 13-15.

\(^{71}\) WA 30/2, 654.
as following on the faith of justification. Also significant in this work is Luther’s new, different way of expressing the relationship between faith and works, speaking not about two kinds of righteousness, but about the one righteousness of God:

So there is no admitting a separation of the righteousness of faith and works, as though, in the manner of the Sophists, there were two diverse righteousnesses. But there is one, simple righteousness of faith and works, just as God and the human being (in Christ) are one person, and the soul and body are one human being.72

To separate righteousness into two righteousnesses would actually threaten salvation through faith alone and the priority of faith. Luther argues that, in that situation, faith would become overlooked or forgotten, leaving only the consideration of works and a resulting legalism.73 When faith and works are divided, works become isolated for reflection, piety, and in action, leading to a misappropriated valuation of works. Rather, when they are always kept in proper relation to faith, they will remain in their proper consideration, that is, as the fruit of faith, or as that which flows out of faith. Indeed, works also serve faith, in that faith is manifest in works and becomes stronger through exercising itself in works.74

In this account, Luther depicts righteousness as being received through faith, granting forgiveness and salvation, and also becoming the empowerment for good works. Faith, in turn, finds expression in works. Both faith and works operate in relationship to each other, each grounded in a different way in the righteousness of

72 “Proinde non est admittenda separatio iustitiae Fidei et operum, quasi sint duae diversae iusticiae more Sophistarum. Sed est una iusticia simplex fidei et operum, Sicut Deus et homo una persona, et anima et corpus unus homo” (WA 30/2, 659).
73 Ibid.
74 Von Loewenich, Duplex iustitia,16.
Christ. It is one righteousness, through faith, which receives Christ’s benefits and acts in love toward others. 75 Is this a change from or contradiction of what Luther said earlier in his career about the two or even three kinds of righteousness? It may indicate a kind of development, but not a fundamental contradiction. Luther consistently understood the two kinds of righteousness as being grounded in the righteousness of Christ and received through faith. While in his earlier sermons he emphasized the differences between one’s righteous standing before God and good works, he still recognized the hinge of Christ’s righteousness received through faith.

Again, the comparison may be made to Luther’s earlier comment about the “instilling” of Christ’s righteousness. Imputation of Christ’s righteousness through faith is complete; the impartation of this righteousness also occurs through faith, yet it takes time, effort on the part of the believer, and the continuous operation of faith.

Furthermore, later in the “Rhapsodia” in one instance he does refer distinctly to the righteousness of faith and the righteousness of works in a way that reflects their relationship toward each other: “[F]aith is the active righteousness of works, and works are the passive righteousness of faith.” 76 Note that while, in his two early sermons, faith is passive righteousness, because it receives Christ without human initiative, and works are active righteousness, because the person cooperates with Christ to do works, here Luther designates faith and works with the opposite terms. This is initially confusing, but is clarified in recognizing the context of his argument in “Rhapsodia.” Because he is

75 Von Loewenich, Duplex Iustitia, 15-17.
76 “...ut fides sit activa iusticia operum et opera sint passiva iustitia fidei” (WA 30/2, 659).
focusing on the relationship between the cause and effect of righteousness here, Luther switches the terms. Faith is the “cause” of righteousness in a person, the truly active cause of works, while works are the effect of faith, flowing forth passively from faith.

More broadly, the significance of this statement shows that Luther understands there to be one righteousness with a twofold way of speaking of it in the relationship between faith and works. It is really two kinds of one righteousness, as he says in various ways throughout his career. The duality is in the manifestation, effect, or operation of faith, while the righteousness itself is unitary. Because of this it may be more accurate to speak of twofold righteousness rather than two kinds of righteousness.

The disputations of Luther later in his career are another source by which we see his general adherence to a twofold righteousness, even while recognizing development in his thought. Luther’s teaching on the twofold righteousness in these disputations can be summarized as the inclusion of the spiritual regeneration of a believer under the faith of justification. Luther’s arguments are grounded in christology and the understanding that faith takes hold of Christ and his merits. His theses on faith and the law (1535), explicitly treating the relationship between faith and works, state that the commandments and demands of scripture all are understood as being accomplished in Christ, and they are accomplished in the life and actions of the believer by Christ who is in and with the believer.77 Because Christ and his benefits are received through faith, the effects of faith are not merely forensic, but broad, encompassing the empowerment of Christ in a person, the renewal of the person, and the good works which grow out of

77 "Die Thesen für die Promotionsdisputation von Hieronymus Weller und Nikolaus Medler," September 11, 1535, WA 39/1, 47, esp. theses 40-50.
this. This all-encompassing, renewed and enlivened faith Luther refers to as “fides incarnata,” an incarnate faith which takes shape and expression in the life of a Christian, showing itself by works. This demonstration of faith through works is beneficial also for the believer herself, as assurance of faith. This kind of incarnate faith grounded in Christ remains a process of formation in this life: “Therefore Christ is formed in us continuously, and we are formed according to his image, so long as we live this way [in faith].”

In this way Luther indicates that the beginning of—or, perhaps, capacity for—actual righteousness is included in the imputation of Christ’s righteousness through faith. In his theses on faith he states, “Justification is in reality regeneration, a kind of regeneration into newness.” In the “Disputation on Justification,” both imputed righteousness and imparted righteousness are clearly spoken of, as distinguishing the place of works in relation to justification is one of the chief concerns of the disputation. God “decrees” (Th. 22) and “consider[s]” (Ths 24 & 33) the believer righteous on account of Christ and his merits, which “serves us like an umbrella against the heat of God’s wrath” (Th. 26). Sin that remains even in the flesh of a believer is not


79 "Die Disputation über Lukas 7,47," 1535, WA 39/1, 131, thesis 57.

80 "Formatur enim Christus in nobis continue, et nos formamur ad imaginem ipsius, dum hic vivimus," (WA 39/1, 204, thesis 34).

81 "Justificatio est revera regeneratio quaedam in novitatem" (WA 39/1, 48, thesis 65).

82 Von Loewenich, Duplex Iustitia, 60. Theses of the "Disputation on Justification" are found in WA 39/1, 82-86, and English translations are from LW 34:152-53.
“imputed...but as if it were nothing, removed in the meantime by remission” (Th. 34).

This language of imputation is interspersed with language of rebirth. The believer is moving or journeying toward righteousness (Th. 23); Christ “sanctifies” his “beginning in righteousness” (Th. 25), which beginning is not condemned (Th. 26); works done after one believes are “truly good works” (Th. 31) and through the Holy Spirit are of a “heavenly” righteousness in contrast to the natural works of “earthly righteousness” (Th. 30). Christ’s righteousness is never possessed in that it is not produced by the believer (Th. 29), but a believer does possess a beginning righteousness through regeneration and the accompanying empowerment of Christ.  

All of this logically follows on faith and imputed righteousness, yet temporally accompanies faith and the impartation of Christ through faith. This is perhaps best said in Thesis 35: “The beginning of the new creature attends this faith and the battle against the sin of the flesh, which same faith in Christ both pardons and conquers.” Faith brings both imputation and regeneration; faith both forgives and creates a new person for good works.

Finally, we should note that in Luther’s explanation of Thesis 29, he explains the twofold righteousness as an inward and outward righteousness, but this is not spiritual and civil righteousness. The outward righteousness he speaks of here is the

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83 See also Luther’s explanation of this thesis: “To be outside of us is not to be outside of our powers. This righteousness is our possession, because it is given to us out of mercy; this same is alien to us because we have not merited it (Extra nos esse est ex nostris viribus non esse. Est quidem iustitia possessio nostra, quia nobis donata est ex misericordia, tamen est aliena a nobis, quia non meruimus eam)” (WA 39/1, 109, 1-3).

84 My translation. “Hanc fidem comitatur initium creaturae novae, et pugna contra carnis peccatum, quod eadem fide Christi et ignoscitur et vincitur.”

85 See, similarly, “Faith cleanses by the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit cleanses by accomplishing [cleansing]” (Fides purgat per remissionem peccatorum, spiritus sanctus purgat per effectum, WA 39/1, 99, 27).
righteousness that flows from justification and faith, revealing of the believer to the
world that she has in fact been forgiven and justified. “Spiritual justification, then,” not
merely natural righteousness, “is twofold in nature.” Again, the phrase “twofold” is
most appropriate.

From this brief presentation of Luther, we are beginning to see that the twofold
righteousness counters any suggestion that the Lutheran doctrine of justification
undermines comprehensive teaching on ethics. The twofold righteousness assumes in
its own rubric the teaching of good works as following on the rebirth of the believer
which accompanies faith and imputed justification. Such a rebirth or regeneration
means that a believer has actual, instilled, beginning, or imparted righteousness, not out
of his own nature, but as a gift from Christ. This active righteousness is to be used by the
person, engaging with the mind, will, and body, to put away sinful desires and actions,
and to do good works. These good works are the fruit of the actual righteousness—and,
therefore, are technically distinguished from justification—and are pleasing before God.
Imputed or passive righteousness remains with the believer, so that, to the extent that
his actual righteousness and good works are only partial, he still remains righteous
before God through forgiveness of sin, again, on account of Christ’s merit. Thus, in
Luther, there is a twofold righteousness, imputed and imparted, both of which are
received through faith and grounded in the merits of Christ. Both are spiritual and
pleasing before God, and are thus distinguished from civil righteousness. Finally, the
fruits of righteousness, good works, are the product of the use of actual righteousness,

86 WA 39/1, 93; LW 34:161-62.
yet distinct in that they follow from this righteousness. The good works themselves, and the growth in good works, we refer to as sanctification.

1.5 Justification and Ethical Progress

Within this expression of the Lutheran tradition, the centrality of justification for the Christian life is not displaced, yet extending forth from this central place are many other doctrinal and pastoral loci. Christian ethics is one of these loci. As our consideration of the twofold righteousness has suggested, moral formation, or a growth in proper righteousness, is complementary to the doctrine of justification. What follows is a comprehensive articulation of the doctrine of justification with a view toward ethical progress.

According to the confessional Lutheran tradition considered above, justification is the forgiveness of sins and the new birth or adoption into eternal life. This occurs through faith, which is itself a gift, on account of Christ’s merit, which is credited or imputed as righteousness to the believing sinner. Justification is a forensic event, because the basis for the judgment of forgiveness is not a righteousness that is within oneself, but Christ’s righteousness. Christ’s righteousness is credited to the sinner. Justification is, in this sense, acceptance or recognition by the one making the determination. In this case, it is God making the determination, making the justification, accepting or recognizing Christ’s merit in place of the believing sinner’s failure to be righteous. Theological justification is always something acknowledged and given from the outside. Therefore, excluded from justification is the notion that Christ’s imputed
righteousness is a process or growth. There is no development or formation or growth of imputed righteousness, because it is given as all or nothing.\textsuperscript{87}

Nor may imputed righteousness be understood as something that is possessed apart from Christ, at least in the sense that justification can be proven “before God by referring to ourselves, instead of pointing only and exclusively to Christ crucified.”\textsuperscript{88} Receiving Christ’s righteousness, even participating in it through union with him, never allows the believing sinner to claim sole possession of this righteousness, as if it were in any way given up and over by Christ and was no longer his. This also excludes pointing to the believer’s works as a basis for justification, because it is the work of Christ that serves as the sufficient basis for imputed righteousness.

Thus, to justify is for God to declare a sinner righteous. Yet this does not make God’s pronouncement valid only in terminology. God remains righteous himself and shows himself to be righteous even while declaring a sinner righteous. God’s word is not like the words of creatures, which merely state an opinion or a truth, and whose commands are not performative in themselves, but only when acquiesced to by the will of another. God’s word is creative and is his power of action. God’s word does not, like an expression of reason, merely “determine facts, call things by a logical name and give a logical judgment as to what is the case.”\textsuperscript{89} God’s word also creates and does what it is saying, according to the biblical testimony in Genesis 1, Romans 4:17, and Psalm 33:9.


\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 207.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 201. The theological significance of "speech-acts" will be developed in chapter four.
Thus, by declaring sinners righteous, God makes them righteous. The act of declaration communicates by faith the righteousness of Christ to the sinner:

This forensic act is the effective act of making the ungodly righteous. It is! Imparted righteousness is what we must discuss here, despite Melanchthon’s timidity. It is not something which differs from imputed righteousness; it neither precedes nor follows it. The imputation of extraneous righteousness (imputatio alienae iustitiae) can only be rightly grasped when it is seen as God granting divine righteousness in such a way as to effectively change the being of humans. If sinners are pronounced righteous by God’s judging Word—which is also pre-eminent in its judging power—and thus recognized by God as being righteous, then they not only count as righteous, they are righteous. Here we must again remind ourselves that the Word alone can in this way do both things at once: a judgement and a creative Word—a pardon and a Word which sets free.”

In this second kind of righteousness, the imparted righteousness which comes as a gift of justification, Luther can speak of a person being partially sinful and partially righteous. This partial righteousness is begun by Christ’s righteousness and continued by the Holy Spirit, but also properly called and belonging to the believer. When the believer is born again, his nature is created anew, so that his spiritual, inner nature is made righteous. His heart is made righteous, yet stands in conflict with the old nature of sin. When the new heart engages the old nature to purify it of sin and to do good works, it demonstrates the proper righteousness of the person. When the heart fails to engage the old nature or is overcome by the old nature with respect to works and self-control, the incompleteness in appropriating the imparted righteousness is revealed. But neither the success nor the failure of imparted righteousness is indicative of a lack of righteous standing before God.

90 Ibid., 211.
I have shown that the Lutheran teaching on justification theoretically allows for ethical progress. Lutheranism affirms a range of action in the ethical, the ability of a believer working with the Holy Spirit and the imparted righteousness of Christ to fight against sin and to do good works.

Most significant, perhaps, is the positive character of both kinds of righteousness, in contrast to the polarity of the law-gospel duality. I noted previously that under the law-gospel paradigm theologians can hardly avoid seeing one pole as positive and one as negative. Typically the law is seen as negative, something that accuses and condemns, to be escaped from, avoided, or relieved of. The gospel, then, is seen as that positive power freeing a person from the law. But when this carries over to ethics, the law, as negative, offers nothing for the ethical life. However, under the framework of the twofold righteousness, both passive and active righteousness offer a positive perspective. Passive righteousness positively forgives sins and makes one righteous before God; active righteousness, the fruit of passive righteousness, positively serves good works. Both kinds of righteousness are constructive.

When the second kind of righteousness is labeled “active” this helps to retain the connection between the two kinds of righteousness better than if it is labeled “civil” righteousness. Civil righteousness may be understood as having nothing to do with faith and spirituality, while active righteousness encompasses activity which is done out of
the ground of Christ’s righteousness with the engagement of the human person, and may relate to civics, ethics, spirituality, or other types of good works, broadly speaking.⁹¹

Yet this has been, in a way, only prolegomena. Many questions remain to be addressed, such as, can the sanctifying effect of the new birth on the heart of the believer be explained in greater detail? What is the exact place of faith in justification and sanctification? How do we articulate the possession of Christ’s righteousness by the believer? How, exactly, do Christ and the Holy Spirit work on the heart to make it good?

One contemporary Lutheran theologian, Joel Biermann, treats some of these questions under the rubrics of the two kinds of righteousness and virtue ethics. Biermann is responding to Stanley Hauerwas, who raises similar questions to those of the beginning of this chapter. In the next chapter, I will treat Hauerwas and Biermann in conversation with each other and consider the adequacy of their proposals for a Lutheran or Protestant ethic in light of our treatment of the twofold righteousness here.

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CHAPTER TWO

CHARACTER AND CHRISTIAN FORMATION

2.1 Introduction: Stanley Hauerwas, Virtue Ethics, and the Lutheran Tradition

In the previous chapter I argued that prevailing Lutheran ethical theories in the twentieth century were undermined by an inadequate treatment of the divine law, resulting in theories which tended toward legalism or toward antinomianism. An antinomian ethic tends to understand freedom as being outside of authority, meaning that moral decisions are ultimately personal and determined in the moment. A law-oriented ethic attempts to counter the perceived license of an ethics of freedom, but runs the risk of various kinds of legalism. Either case tends to exclude consistency and experience as a resource for moral choice. There is no disposition or character to inform freedom; there is no perception or skill in applying the law. Sustained accounts of ethical development and formation are scant in the recent Lutheran tradition. Furthermore, theologically speaking, when ethics are separated from the doctrine of justification by faith, the subject continually second-guesses her behavior as being too libertine or too legalistic, falling into false guilt or unreflective antinomianism.

In this chapter, I will present Stanley Hauerwas as the ethicist who, in the last generation, has most prominently addressed the weak continuity of agency in Protestant ethics. In his early work, Character and the Christian Life, Stanley Hauerwas
argues that Protestant ethics would benefit from a shift in thinking to include character and virtue.¹ He criticizes the Protestant emphasis on situation ethics (which can be compared with antinomian tendencies in Lutheranism) with its moments of decision-making as offering little or no account of Christian personhood, character, or growth. Ethics which emphasize freedom and responsibility offer only agency in the moment as a basis for decision. Principles or commands cannot consistently apply, because they are inadequate to account for the unique circumstances of each ethical moment. Because of this, moral continuity is impossible, eroded, or, at best, unaccountable and inexplicable. As a result, sanctification, and self-renewal can only be accounted for in the moment of decision-making. On the other hand, Protestants who uphold a strong ethic of principles and commands (comparable to the law-oriented Lutheran ethic) resist giving sustained meaning to these commands apart from the moment of ethical decision.² In either case, sustained formation does not fit well into these theories. Because Hauerwas challenges these views and offers a coherent understanding of sanctification which, he argues, does not undermine the Protestant teaching on justification, I introduce Hauerwas’ thought as a potential solution to the dilemma of addressing ethical formation in


² Ibid., 5-10. Hauerwas was not the first recent Protestant ethicist to speak of virtue ethics, and he was followed by a number of Protestant explorations in virtue ethics. See, e.g., Paul Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1950), 191-233; Gilbert C. Meilaender, The Theory and Practice of Virtue (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984); Nancey Murphy, Brad J. Kallenberg, and Mark Thiessen Nation, eds. Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics after MacIntyre (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997); Jennifer A. Herdt, Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008). However, because of Hauerwas’ initial attempt to address the relationship between justification and sanctification, and his focus on character, he is an important representative of the challenges to ethical theories with both legalistic and antinomian tendencies.
traditions which value primarily the absolute graciousness of justification. In short, Hauerwas offers the potential to speak of both justification and sanctification without one overriding the other.

Even though Hauerwas is critical of Lutheranism in particular, his concerns resonate with some expressions and interpretations of Lutheranism, particularly those I noted in chapter one. More than this, Hauerwas’ actually has a few touch points with the picture of Lutheranism I am presenting. It is not that Hauerwas and the Lutheran tradition are in overall agreement, but that there are analogies to be made between Hauerwas’ arguments and a developed ethic which remains within the Lutheran theological tradition. Indeed, Joel Biermann is a Lutheran whose concerns parallel those of Hauerwas and who seeks to develop a Lutheran understanding of virtue ethics by drawing from Hauerwas. Like Hauerwas, Biermann takes up the indictment against the “practical atheism” of the contemporary Protestant church. Biermann’s purpose is to show that “training in ethics” ought to be a central concern to the church due to the inseparability of ethics and theology, and due to the practical questions that regularly face pastors in the parish. His dissertation argues that virtue ethics is not antithetical to Lutheran theological commitments, and he sets out to demonstrate how Lutheran ethics may be revitalized and advanced by acknowledging its compatibility with and

3 Biermann, "Virtue Ethics," 4-8.
appropriation of virtue ethics. He also argues that virtue ethics was commended by the early Lutherans as the fundamental manner by which ethics was to be taught.

Also like Hauerwas, Biermann is critical of the prevailing Protestant ethical theories. Biermann considers but finds wanting two proposed “frameworks” for understanding the relationship between justification and formation in good works: the motivational framework and the law/gospel dualism. The motivational framework is inadequate because it says only that good works necessarily follow, but relies on the spontaneity of good works, without describing how the works are motivated or what they look like. The law/gospel framework serves the context of a person’s relationship to God—*coram Deo*—but is inappropriately applied to the temporal context of ethics and good works. These modes may be roughly compared to Hauerwas freedom ethic and ethic of law, respectively. Periodically through this chapter, I present Biermann as an interlocutor with Hauerwas to clarify and criticize Hauerwas’ position, and to set up a framework for speaking of character from within the Lutheran tradition.

Hauerwas is not just responding to the situation ethics of his day, but charges most of Protestant ethical thought (excluding Calvinist and Wesleyan traditions) with providing inadequate doctrines of sanctification. His criticism of Lutheranism is implicit, in the criticism of an ethics of freedom and facile agapeism, and explicit, in his explanation of Luther’s dualistic understanding of human nature. Referring to Luther’s

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4 Ibid., 37.
5 Ibid., 129-48.
6 Ibid., 153-164.
description of a person’s two-fold nature from *The Freedom of a Christian*, Hauerwas asserts that “there is no sense in which the ‘spiritual’ man has a reality except in discrete acts of neighbor love, for such acts contribute nothing to the old ‘bodily’ man’s development.” This makes it “impossible to account for the importance of the ongoing determination of the self through its acts.” Hauerwas understands Luther to be saying that the holy nature given by justification is so spiritual that it manifests itself only sporadically through truly good works of neighbor love, but has no extended effect on the bodily, earthly nature.

Biermann sees Hauerwas’ criticism of Lutheranism to be two-pronged: Hauerwas’ disapproval of 1) the divorce of ethics from theology and of 2) the distinction between the “dialogue” metaphor and the “journey” metaphor. For Hauerwas, the Reformation emphasis on faith alone led to an attitude of protecting this faith as expressed in doctrinal formulations. Because good works did not save, they were distinguished from faith, a distinction which eventually led to the full separation between theology and ethics. Because Lutherans are especially focused on justification through faith alone, this separation has affected them severely.

Furthermore, Hauerwas does not accept the dual metaphor for the Christian life offered by Lutheran ethicist Gilbert Meilaender, that of “dialogue” and of “journey.” As dialogue, the Christian existence alternates between God’s word of law and gospel. The

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10 Ibid.44-46
law shows sin; the gospel forgives it. This cycle continues throughout the Christian life on earth, and under this metaphor, no progress in righteousness can be conceived. Such righteousness is “relational.” Under the metaphor of journey, the Christian life is understood as one of progress toward a goal, that of holiness and eternal life with God. Yet there is a tension between these metaphors, a tension that cannot be reconciled.

Hauerwas thinks that dialogue and journey can be reconciled, and in so doing, will help see the reunion of theology and ethics. To do so, dialogue can and should be understood as part of the journey. Conversation leads somewhere—at least good conversation does—and should be considered part of the journey of holiness. For Hauerwas, justification is the relational pronouncement of forgiveness which commences the Christian journey on the path to an eschatological hope. The metaphor of dialogue, then, becomes subordinate to and complementary to the metaphor of journey. This also allows for a reunion of theology and ethics.

Biermann responds that the two (or three) kinds of righteousness paradigm sufficiently conceptualizes the dialogue and journey metaphors in harmony with each other. Because of this integration, neither dialogue nor journey need be subordinated. Furthermore, theology and ethics remain integrated through the structure of the


13 Biermann, "Virtue Ethics,” 47-50.
creedal life which is the confession and model of the Christian life. The remainder of this chapter explores core concepts in Hauerwas’ ethics, especially character and narrative as examples for understanding the development of virtue ethics among Protestants more broadly in the last generation. Alongside of this, I will trace Biermann’s appropriation of Hauerwas and his development of a particularly Lutheran framework for virtue ethics, centered especially on the three kinds of righteousness and a creedal narrative. In presenting these as alternatives to the inadequacies of the command, situation, or libertine ethics, I will nevertheless suggest that a fuller explanation of the role of practices and formation for ethics remains to be made.

2.2 Character and Agency

In Character and the Christian Life, Hauerwas constructs an alternative to the dominant Protestant ethical theories by describing human agency in relation to character. The Protestant view of action is unable to give an account of agential consistency, because the subject is continuously renewed. This renewal comes in the way of constant forgiveness, which exonerates and erases past misdeeds, and/or through each existential moment, a new situation without coherent grounding in the past. Such continuous renewal leaves no deeds or experiences from which to draw in making new judgments and choices. The self is renewed in each new situation; moral continuity is eroded or impossible, leaving unresolved questions regarding the identity

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of the self. Hauerwas is essentially saying that the lack of continuity means there is no sense of a sustained, developing, Christian personhood.

Hauerwas suggests character as an alternative to this discontinuous self. It is the mark of consistency, integrity, and, for those of strong character, incorruptibility. Hauerwas argues that the effects of action persist by imprinting character. Past actions shape the present character of a person, and actions that she takes in the present shape who she will be in the future. In this early work, Hauerwas emphasized that such shaping is not passive, as if actions and events operate on the person. She is not the product of what happens to her, but she holds to a certain autopoietic identity, an ethical continuity even in the face of external instability. The content of this character is understood and expressed in virtues, which, in turn, are shaped by “norms, values, and direction.” The person of character, by attending to these norms, values, and direction, shapes her character; in some cases she may choose to act against norms, community, or tradition.

Character and agency are closely linked. An agent is someone who acts in order to bring about a certain effect, an effect which she reasons can be attained through action. She commands and carries out the action. An agent acts not according to a theoretical notion of ungrounded freedom, but in order to bring about a result or

15 Hauerwas, Character and the Christian Life, 5-10.
16 Ibid., 15.
17 Ibid., 17.
effect. Character serves as the agent’s “determination of choice.” Character is both a horizon for choice and is affected by choice:

Choice is the center of our action, but character is the determination of choice as well as its continuing result. Our character is that aspect of our self by which we deliberately determine our action in the light of our chosen pattern of descriptions. The limits of our character are in effect the limits of our possible intentions. As our agency is so determined, our character is in effect the cause of our actions, for it is our character that determines the range of descriptions that we have available to us.

We are misled by our language to think that our motives and intentions are somehow moving us apart from the kinds of persons we are. Character is both formed and revealed by actions. It is the concrete determination of agency and may be shaped by roles and expectations of society. In this way character may have a passive aspect, yet the agent is still the one that accepts these givens and acts in accordance or in reaction to them. The resulting character is uniquely hers, according to how much she has adopted and received from society. Character “denotes” people as agents. It is the personal, determining power of values and reasons which have been shaped by norms, social practices and religious commitments. Yet it avers that the self acts (for character is a basis for action) and is determined in action, yet without being lost in this determination.

For Hauerwas, then, the self is not a transcendental subject than can be defined absolutely and apart from action, but the person takes shape in the “description under which we move ourselves to act.” Character consists of levels of description which are

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18 Ibid., 83-87.
19 Ibid., 112-113.
20 Ibid., 114-115.
21 Ibid., 21.
expressed in varying kinds of actions and situations. Only in the continually present context can the claims of our character continue to be expressed, and, at times, contradictions discovered and resolved. Apparent inconsistencies in character may trouble a person as suggesting a weak character or lack of character, but they serve to reveal character more deeply. Thus the directional nature of character does not need to be understood specifically or in terms of one overarching goal. There is a limit to inconsistent action, but the potential for inconsistency nevertheless presents itself because of the complex and changing situations of life, the rational nature of the human person, and the freedom to choose.\textsuperscript{22}

Contingencies and changes in life situation do not provide the opportunity to step back and reevaluate options by some new belief system. Rather, the new situation is evaluated according to one’s belief system. The resulting action may bring about a change in the person and a shift in her beliefs, but not a totally new person. In this model, radical change in beliefs and commitments is not possible, but gradually comes about in the intention and act.\textsuperscript{23}

Hauerwas’ understanding of character relies heavily on Aristotle’s virtue ethics and Aquinas’ appropriation of it.\textsuperscript{24} Aristotle is not concerned only with good or bad action, but how a person becomes good through proper action. In Hauerwas’ terms, the question is how a person forms good character through good exercise of her agency. For

\begin{footnotes}
\item[22] Ibid., 120-22.
\item[23] Ibid., 125-26.
\item[24] Ibid., 35-37.
\end{footnotes}
Aristotle, activity leads to a state or disposition different from the one prior to the action. This new state occurs not just for someone or something acted upon, but for the agent as well, because the agent through activity is fulfilling a potentiality. Through action, an agent brings to effect a state or disposition that had previously been only a desire. Choice is action determined by deliberation over the means to attain a desire. In this understanding, choice is not only the efficient cause, but also the final cause, because it leads to a different state. The different state reached in the subject is the change in or formation of her character. Choice is more than opinion, in that it includes activity, and choice is more than passion, because it includes deliberation. Action achieves the direct result of the activity.

Character-forming choice is the interaction of desire and reason, in that reason both suggests the means for attaining what is desired, and, more importantly, orders desires appropriately. Deliberation “enters into the determination of the kind of end to be desired in relation to the possible means. The means to the end enter into our understanding of the end to be desired and consequently determine the proper description under which we act.” The ongoing exercise of choice forms certain dispositions to act in the agent, because of the interworking of reason with desire. Reason serves not only to judge what action should be pursued in a given circumstance; it also disposes the person to tend to act in certain ways. These tendencies or

25 40-41.
26 47-49.
27 Ibid., 51
dispositions are called habits in Aristotle and Aquinas, and good habits which dispose a person to act rightly are virtues.\(^{28}\)

For Thomas, some habits are from nature, although moral virtues, the habits of the appetites, are not from nature. Habits may be infused in a person by God. Naturally, habits are caused in the appetites of a person by the movement of an active principle presented by reason. The appetites—the will, the concupiscible, and the irascible—incline toward the good presented to them. Habits are established and developed as qualities of the appetites themselves, inclining the power of these appetites more toward certain kinds of actions than other kinds.\(^{29}\)

Thus habit or virtue is not to be equated with character. A virtue, according to the understanding presented so far, is an appetitive power disposing a person to act well, within the scope of that power, such as being courageous in circumstances requiring courage, or just in circumstances requiring justice. Character, on the other hand, while related to virtue, is not just the sum total of the virtues. For up to this point, the consideration of virtue has said nothing of how the virtues relate to each other. A person may be courageous and just, but he also needs to know the circumstances in which to exercise courage or justice. Character, as the qualification and determination of one’s agency and self, Hauerwas says, “cannot be equated with the simple sum of all the recommended good qualities in their individual specification that we may feel a

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 70-71.

\(^{29}\) Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II-I.51.3.
person should have. It may, however, be thought of in terms of the particular ‘mix’ or connection between various virtues characteristic of any one person’s life pattern.”

Therefore, character, for Hauerwas, is the “qualification” or “determination” of the self established by action, which not only requires the agent to give reasons for her action, but also causes and strengthens (or weakens) habits and dispositions within the appetites of the agent. Yet Hauerwas also wants to deepen the notion of character while recognizing that it is not solely determinative. Thus he goes on to describe character as the orientation of the self: “Character is not just the sum of all that we do as agents, but rather it is the particular direction our agency acquires by choosing to act in some ways rather than others.” That is, character is not just the system of reasons and justifications which one is able to present to others, nor is it a determinative kind of behaviorism which requires programmed actions in response to certain conditions, ingrained in the body and passions due to previous, repetitive actions.

[I]t is possible to understand why character is best understood as a direction or orientation rather than a compelling force. The fact that our character is of a certain kind or denotes a certain kind of orientation does not mean that all we shall do in the future is necessarily programmed into what we are now. Our character gives us direction; but as such it does not have to determine all that we shall be in all that we do…. Character is directing, but it is not compelling in the sense that it represents an external force over which we have no control.

30 Hauerwas, Character and the Christian Life, 75-76.
31 Ibid., 114-15
32 Ibid., 117
33 Ibid., 123
Character is the interconnection of habits along with the history of reasons which gives an orientation to the self, yet an orientation that can be overruled or even shifted with any given action, by the exercise of reason and the will.

Later in his career, Hauerwas fine-tunes this understanding of character and agency. Whereas in *Character and the Christian Life* he defined character as the “orientation” or “qualification” of the self, which provides direction or limits to agency, he later says “character is the source of our agency, that is, our ability to act with integrity.”  

There is no need for a separate account of agency apart from character, as if agency were an autonomous part of the self, unfettered by life experience and able to choose freely and objectively, for or against character. For if one embraces an account of habituation, as Hauerwas does, then there is no such thing as autonomous agency. The historical narratives surrounding a person form her life, so that action is informed by the virtues and habits endowed by the narrative.

Yet although Hauerwas says “story is a more determinative category than self,” he stops short of saying that human life is determined, or, at least, that Christian lives are determined. Narrative is powerfully formative, indicative of the mutual influence individuals have on each other’s lives, and indicative of the reliance of a person on her community or cultural practices and traditions. Choices are limited to those available within the setting offered by life narratives and limited by the actions of others, and

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35 Ibid., 95-96.

36 Ibid., 101, 103.
choices are typically made without the person knowing fully what she is committing herself to:

At most, ‘agency’ names the skills correlative of a truthful narrative that enable us to make what happens to us our own, which includes ‘decisions’ we made when we thought we knew what we were doing but in retrospect seem more like something that happened to us.37

This is to say, agency is the embrace of integrity, the willingness to claim one’s past actions—the result of which have imprinted a way of being on oneself—as one’s own, thereby acknowledging this imprint, or character as who one is. Agency is owning up to character formed by past action. Agency is the practice as naming one’s past actions as one’s own, for better or for worse.

Through this development of agency, the Christian need not fear past actions, even those influenced largely by the community narrative and by others, even those recognized to have been sinful, for the Christian practices confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Through these practices, through this narrative through death to new life in Christ, the Christian is able to acknowledge sin as having been her own, while also acknowledging that such sin is not determinative in Christ Jesus. This is because the community narrative practices of the church are to confess sin and to recognize that it is forgiven and removed in Christ.38 Character is the formation of habits by one’s narratives; choice is the acting out of these habits, which reinforces the habits and character; agency is assent to the narrative in one’s own life. To exercise one’s agency is

37 Ibid., 102.
38 Ibid., 102-3.
to identify with a narrative, either positively or negatively, more than to choose autonomously and objectively every particular action.

Biermann appears to receive Hauerwas’ later understanding of character without dissent. It is the accumulation of traits and habits which informs and is the source of action. He favorably quotes Hauerwas’ definition of character and says that it “offers no grounds for differentiating between an individual’s identity and his or her character,” and “the person and the person’s character are indistinguishable.” As with Hauerwas, for Biermann, agency and identity are inseparable, and are synonymous with character.39

2.3 Character and the Christian Life

In Character and the Christian Life, Hauerwas offers a proposal for the place of character in Christian ethics based on the classical Protestant dialectic between justification and sanctification. This is in contrast to Barth, whom he presents as a divine command ethicist, and Bultmann, whom he presents as teaching freedom from past decisions and character.40 Yet, although he relies on the classic justification-sanctification paradigm, he argues that the dialectical relation between the two has never been sufficiently demonstrated, especially when it comes to accounting for the change in the believer.41 The challenge is to avoid both making ethics the basis for justification before God or for the Christian life, and also reducing the gospel to

41 Ibid., 193-94.
empowerment for right living. Hauerwas responds to this challenge by presenting Jesus Christ as the change of character in a Christian.\textsuperscript{42} Jesus Christ is not just a moral force and salvation is not just a means to the end of improved behavior. Rather, conversion to Christianity is exactly that: the forgiveness of past sins, a power which not only takes away the punishment for sin, but regenerates the person. This regeneration includes the gift of Christian character—the “orientation” of Jesus Christ. This new orientation is not limited to outward works, but manifests itself both in the interiority of character (new habits and a system of reasons) and the exteriority of works intentional to this character (works pursued according to these new habits and matrix of reasoning).\textsuperscript{43} Conversion occurs in a distinct point of time, when the new believer’s character changes from sinful to Christ-like. It is not gradual, but instantaneous. Hauerwas does not at all mean that there is no development of character following conversion. The new, Christian character develops just as any other character does, through habit, choice, intention, and circumstances. Rather, it is that the fundamental character of the Christian life is given and defined in conversion.\textsuperscript{44} Conversion provides the starting point for the believer to act according to his new agency and to develop this character in conjunction with the Christian community.

Such a description maps onto the two kinds of righteousness, such that Biermann finds common ground with Hauerwas also in this area. Similar to my

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 182-83.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 201-2.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 206.
presentation in chapter one, Biermann offers the two kinds of righteousness in response to those who argue that Lutheran doctrine inherently mitigates against a comprehensive ethical teaching and practice. He nevertheless recognizes the uniqueness of Lutheran teaching, and indicates that a Lutheran framework for ethics must take into account the various unique features of Lutheranism.\textsuperscript{45} By speaking of the active righteousness of the Christian which grows out of the passive righteousness of Christ received by the Christian through faith, Biermann retains the Lutheran emphasis on justification while demonstrating that ethics is not antithetical to Lutheran doctrine.\textsuperscript{46} Furthermore, it maps onto Hauerwas’ understanding of Christian character which is received in conversion, yet which develops through the course of thought and action. For Biermann, justifying righteousness is that new righteousness received in justification or conversion, which would correspond to Hauerwas’ justification or new character. Biermann’s sanctifying righteousness is that righteousness performed by the Christian on behalf of other human beings and which corresponds to Hauerwas’ character development and sanctification.\textsuperscript{47} The defining narrative for the Christian, that is the narrative which shapes the character of a Christian qua Christian, is the gospel—forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God. This defines the Christian as Christian and

\textsuperscript{45} Biermann, "Virtue Ethics," 151-52.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 165-171.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 171-182. Biermann clarifies at length the nuances of the kinds of righteousness that were actually expressed by Luther and Melanchthon. Of particular importance is to note is that Melanchthon sometimes spoke of civil righteousness or the righteousness of reason as any kind of work that could be considered good by non-theological standards, whether done by a Christian or not. I have distinguished this from specifically Christian good works with the term "active righteousness," as Luther does, while Biermann goes on to speak of three kinds of righteousness: "governing," "justifying," and "sanctifying." Biermann’s "justifying" righteousness corresponds to my "passive" righteousness, and his "sanctifying" righteousness corresponds to my "active" or "proper" righteousness.
connects sanctifying righteousness to justifying righteousness. This fundamental character of the person cannot cease to be Christian character, without the person ceasing to actually be a Christian, but character does develop in smaller degrees by the influence of other narratives and practices.

Hauerwas describes further the growth of Christian character in terms of sanctification. Sanctification is not first an outward orientation, that is, the attempt to conform oneself to an outward standard and thereby to bring about holiness. Rather, sanctification has already begun in the transformation of character, which then expresses its commitment to holiness through intended action. In his view, Protestants who have previously had the strongest expression of sanctification, such as Calvin and those in the Wesleyan tradition, appear to fall into the trap of resorting to exhortation through the external moral code. They rely on what they understand to be the positive directing force and forming power of the law, and the expression and perfection of sanctification in good works, without addressing the internal issues of character or fundamental orientation.48

It appears that in some cases Biermann slips into this practice which Hauerwas criticizes. Biermann argues that, in the realm of ethics, the gospel restores the believer to a prelapsarian state and strengthens him to fulfill the Ten Commandments. The Spirit, by the gospel, empowers and “prompts” good works, while the Ten Commandments give “shape” to believers’ works. A believer must still be instructed and “indoctrinated”

48 Hauerwas, Character and the Christian Life, 206-208.
in the work of the Commandments. Faith points back to the commandments so that one’s character be informed and formed by them. A person is “justified in order to fulfill the law,” says Biermann. Luther’s prefaces to the Catechisms emphasize diligence in learning the Commandments, models for behavior, and diligent, regular practice of good works according to the commandments. The result, in Biermann’s mind, is a life of excellence.

Furthermore, doing good works exercises faith. By this, the Lutherans do not mean that faith must be supplemented by something else, as in ‘faith formed by love’, or that faith is formed or completed by obedience, but that the strength of faith is retained and increased—as in literal exercise—through doing good works. Good works exercise faith in order that faith “continue and... grow in a human heart still plagued by sin.” This is also a theme taught by the Lutheran Confessions, which understand such exercise not to be the growing of faith, but the restraining of the sinful nature to avoid temptation, so that the expression of faith may be unhindered. In this point of view, formation involves working against bad habits or temptations. In both understandings of formation through instruction and in the exercise of faith, character formation occurs through attention to and the regular practice of God’s law.

50 Ibid., 107.
51 Ibid., 129-133.
52 Ibid., 137.
Yet while Biermann in some places does seem to narrow formation to the external work of the law and the practice of good works, a full survey of his dissertation reveals that he recognizes the importance also of internal formation. The practice of good works, for one, is evidence and confirmation of the work of the Holy Spirit. Without the internal change and empowerment of the Spirit, these works would not be possible in their fullness (e.g., to include proper intention, consideration of circumstances, and insight into the law). Good works shows cooperation with the Holy Spirit and point to the Spirit as operative in the believer.54

Furthermore, formation is not only outward conformity due to fear of punishment, but the formation of the heart into one of good character. Again, activity of the Holy Spirit instructing and eliciting trust in God in the heart of the believer is the central, converting work of the Christian narrative of forgiveness and new life. The Holy Spirit is the link between justifying and sanctifying righteousness. Thus, when a person does a good work in obedience to the Ten Commandments, she is also being shaped in her heart by the confirming and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. This is the activity of grace, along with the inner shaping of character through action described above in our discussion of Hauerwas. Thus, formation is very much concerned with the inner person. “Their character, or ‘what they are in their hearts’, is stamped by this process of learned obedience to God’s commandments.”55

55 Ibid., 129-134.
Biermann recognizes the internally transforming power of the Holy Spirit working in conjunction with the external teaching of the law:

[The new Christian] avails himself of the blessings of Word and Sacrament. Consequently, his character, his guiding and directing morality, is further shaped. It is the work of God through the Third Article [of the creed] that shapes his character in these new ways, complementing and fulfilling what had already been put in place via the First Article training he had received even before becoming a Christian....

From Biermann’s perspective, then, character formation occurs both through attention to the Commandments and the practicing of them in daily life, and also through the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit through the Word and sacraments. Indeed, Biermann insists that the defining narrative which connects sanctifying righteousness to justifying righteousness is God’s activity of salvation carried out in the believer by the Holy Spirit. Ethics in relation to conversion is not moral formation as much as “moral transformation.” Conversion puts to death the old nature and creates a new nature of the believer, utterly transforming his values, orientation, and character. Yet for this new orientation or character to become coherent, it must be morally formed through instruction and action. “The Christian stake in moral formation is centered in the belief that formation can help to render a person’s transformations intelligible and desirable.” That is, formation, or the gradual development of character through habituation, gives concrete expression to Christian transformation—that is, justification and conversion.

56 Ibid., 217.
57 Ibid., 179-180.
Biermann goes on to say that the three kinds of righteousness, in turn, conform to a creedal understanding of theology, with a proper recognition of the place of creation in the theological task. Not only does the Christian remain in creation and do good works, his purpose for remaining on earth is to work toward the holiness which will be enjoyed in the eschaton. The framework, then, is both a re-establishment of creation and an anticipation of eschatology. God, in saving a believer, recreates him as he is intended to be—without sin and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, so that he can pursue the fullness of the redeemed human nature to be established eternally in the kingdom of God.\(^59\) Redeemed creation, although very good, grows even further into a maturity and richness of humanity attained in the fulfillment of the kingdom of God.

To speak in this way is to speak of justification as *new creation*. The justified person is newly created in the nature of restored humanity, and is also thus able to do good works. This new creation can be compared to the new character granted in justification as described by Hauerwas. In this sense the new character is a fundamental renewal and transformation of the believer.\(^60\) Thus the attention of ethics, for Biermann, is on creation, in that it is the created realm in which the human person does good works. Here one is engaged in serving one’s neighbor, becoming aware of other’s needs through various kinds of relationships, and meeting these needs with care, hard work, and attention to the neighbor. Yet ethics does not statically subsist in creation,

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 190-97, 202-5.

\(^{60}\) See 2 Corinthians 5:16-19.
but looks forward to the fulfilling of the eternal kingdom of Christ, in which the
goodness Christians have done will be perfected. 61

When Lutherans emphasize the death-and-life movement in salvation, rather
than the punishment-forgiveness paradigm, it is more compatible with virtue ethics. The
gospel does not just free from sin and condemnation; it gives new life with Christ. There
is a positive, constructive work of the gospel, besides the freeing, liberating work. 62 At
the same time, Biermann clarifies that sanctification does not mean a person’s ethical
development will be predictably steady or empirically verifiable all the time. He denies a
correlative growth in fruits of faith with the regular practices of formation and
habituation. 63

Hauerwas’ continued discussion of sanctification is also compatible with this
Lutheran understanding: sanctification is a single-mindedness in following Christ. This is
not a limitation, but a way of grounding and expanding one’s ethical expression, by
continuously evaluating actions in light of the commitment to Christ. Sanctification is a
matter of both growth and stability. It is growth

because our present acts draw our past determinations into a new synthesis of
possibilities made by the agent’s vital decisions and beliefs. These possibilities do
not occur de novo however; they arise only because the self remains qualified by
its past in such a way that our history is given a definite orientation toward the
present. 64

61 Ibid., 204-5.
62 Ibid., 58-59.
63 Ibid., 105.
64 Ibid., 214-215, 220.
This is not only a growth of improvement, but a growth in the deepening of the Christian's relation to Christ. Growth in experience opens up new opportunities and possibilities for acting in accordance with faith, and therefore confirming the believer and deepening her in that character. Furthermore, because character encompasses every aspect of life, it goes beyond and more deeply than any code of laws, and therefore is not limited to adherence to the law.

In fact, laws, or principles and norms, are mere “shorthand reminders necessary for moral education and explanation; their moral significance is contained in stories.” Only metaphors and stories express the richness and complex integration of an agent’s values, beliefs, ethical commitments, and moral intention and action. This corresponds with Hauerwas' criticism of situation ethics and rule-oriented ethics—they are too episodic in their understanding of ethics to consider the way a person’s life experience, community formation, and history of actions have shaped the person as an agent. But an agent does not make moral decisions in isolation, as if pure reason or momentary religious inspiration determines the proper action in the circumstances, and the will chooses one of those actions in view of attaining an end. For even the possible actions and their perceived ends are shaped by the character of a person. A person pictures goals because of the expectations of his values and hopes. A person understands actions according to the framework of behavioral expectation he experiences and which others

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65 Ibid., 222.
66 Ibid., 224.
expect of him. And the person’s intention indicates how he thinks the end can be achieved. Action directly follows upon a person’s way of comprehending the world and the way he expects to be able to change the world by this action. In other words, while a person’s character limits the way he sees the world, it also offers a depth and moral perception from the stance of the tradition in which his character has developed.

Hauerwas’ corollary argument is that any ethic must be an ethics of virtue or character. The orientation of a person according to his beliefs, values, and commitments is the person’s character, which can be understood as the integration and long-term stance of his virtues. Action is not episodic—not limited to the situation of the moment, nor the existential command of God—but integrated with this orientation. Because character is the moral orientation of a person and influences action, all ethics must consider the place of virtue and character, how character is formed, and how character leads to action:

[O]ur moral lives are not simply made up of the addition of our separate responses to particular situations. Rather we exhibit an orientation that gives our life a theme through which the variety of what we do and do not do can be scored. To be agents at all requires a directionality that involves the development of character and virtue. Our character is the result of our sustained attention to the world that gives a coherence to our intentionality. Such attention is formed and given content by the stories through which we have learned to form the story of our lives. To be moral persons is to allow stories to be told through us so that our manifold activities gain a coherence that allows us to claim them for our own. The significance of stories is the significance of character for the moral life as our experience itself, if it is to be coherent, is but an incipient story.”

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68 Ibid., 80

69 Ibid., 74
Principles and norms may be adequate to guide a moral life based on law or existential freedom, but as Hauerwas considers these accounts of the moral life inadequate, likewise are moral principles inadequate. Rather, one requires stories and metaphors to communicate the comprehensiveness of moral character. Principles are inadequate fully to capture the depth and single-mindedness of consistent, virtuous character. The stories and metaphors which shape a person’s milieu and character, and thereby his ethic, are the narratives of a person’s life. For this reason narrative is central to Hauerwas’ ethics.

At this point it should be noted that Hauerwas later in his career departs methodologically from this early conception of character formation within the justification-sanctification paradigm. Several years after publishing *Character and the Christian Life*, Hauerwas began to make known his desire to modify what he had presented in that early book. One fundamental shift was from presenting an abstract notion of character, which he had tried to fit into the justification-sanctification paradigm, to encouraging a modeled and holistic exercise of character formed in a concrete community. Shifting the theoretical discussion of justification and sanctification to a “secondary” place in favor of the Wesleyan concept of perfection, he argues that perfection should be understood as the practical judgment and skill of practicing virtue in the face of temptation. Perfection does not mean sinlessness, but

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70 Ibid., 74-75

“singleness” and “constancy” in dedication to the Christian life, resulting in a persistent maturing toward the goal of holy fellowship with God. Such perfection requires prudence, which can only be learned by the example of other Christian lives, because theory, by definition, cannot account for the particulars and conditions of a moment of judgment.  

For Hauerwas, the theoretical discussion of justification and sanctification must take a back seat to their actual instantiation in the Christian life as Wesleyan “perfection”. Hauerwas’ emphasis also suggests that when a Christian achieves this kind of perfection, then a theoretical analysis of justification and sanctification is unnecessary and of little significance. In fact, he suggests that such an analysis may be detrimental, because it relies on the language of stages. Stages are a misleading paradigm of the Christian life, because the journey of the Christian life has setbacks, and progression differs across individuals.

Hauerwas does not think that his earlier discussion of justification and sanctification was wrong, but that it was “systematic” and subjective, oriented around the “relational character of the self” rather than the concrete character of a Christian as developed in the community of the church. His presentation of justification and sanctification accomplished what he wanted—to demonstrate that an ethics of character is not “works-righteousness.” Yet Hauerwas is not so concerned about accusations of works righteousness. For him, the emphasis is on the journey of the Christian toward his end, a singleness of purpose in pursuing this journey, and practical

72 Ibid., 254, 260.

73 Ibid., 253, 261 n15.
action within the Christian community which supports this journey and is an expression of this journey. It goes almost without saying that all this occurs through the grace of God.\(^{74}\) Simply put, for Hauerwas, the *analysis* of the relationship between justification and sanctification is secondary.

We will see below that Biermann offers an alternative narrative which manages to retain the justification-sanctification distinction without it falling into dualism or to a stage theory of sanctification. He places the two kinds of righteousness into a creedal paradigm, allowing for the continued appreciation for the justification-sanctification language without withdrawing into the realm of the theoretical. In this way Biermann is able not simply to remain consistent with his Lutheran heritage, but to offer a narrative understanding of virtue ethics which does not sideline theological work, but integrates it with ethics.

To summarize Hauerwas so far, then, his view succeeds in refuting both the command theory of ethics and the extreme dialectical view. His is neither so episodic and passive as the dialectical view, which speaks of sanctification only as a gift, never connected to the past which is repented of. He avoids the risk of the legalism of holiness theories, which tend to emphasize human exercises, whether self-denial or good works, rather than internal change, as operative in sanctification. He likewise improves over the command theory, which holds obedience to be momentary, never thick, personal, or occurring as growth within the person. Rather, Christianity presents continuity to a believer—a new personhood—through the gift of Christ given in justification. This new

\(^{74}\) Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life*, xxix-xxxii.
form of Christ shapes action; it provides a new orientation, determination, or agency. Furthermore, actions and participation in community (churchly) practices after conversion continue to shape this character through the narratives. We turn now to a deeper exploration of Hauerwas’ understanding of narrative and practice before considering how Biermann integrates Hauerwas’ thinking into a Lutheran structure for ethics.

2.4 Narrative and Practice

Stories and metaphors—or narratives—communicate the intricacy of the interaction of moral agents in the fluctuating conditions of the world. Narratives have direction; they prompt a person to ask what happens next. Yet this account of events is never simple and linear, as if the cause of one action can be traced to a previous action in the story, and so on back to the beginning. Nor can the end be predicted by the actions related to a certain point in the story. Narratives present an account of lives that are unpredictable.

Stories are thus a necessary form of our knowledge inasmuch as it is only through narrative that we can catch the connections between actions and responses of men that are inherently particular and contingent. The intentional nature of human action is exactly that which creates the space demanding narrative as the necessary form to account for the connection and intelligibility of our activity.75

Hauerwas sometimes calls character ‘determination’, but it is not necessarily or predictively so. Recall that a subject makes prudential choices in reference to her habits.

Furthermore, social life is neither determined nor predictable because of the complexity of the interactions between agents within ever-developing contexts. For Hauerwas, a systematic account of action in this understanding is impossible. Only in narrative can all persons involved in a mutual setting be presented in a meaningful way. Stories and metaphors picture the connection between details in a way that a systematic delineation is unable to do—by retaining the interplay between people and things while communicating the meaning of them. Stories present the interplay of one subject with various and multiple objects. Stories further invite the hearer to picture himself in the story, to place himself as the subject in relation to the various objects. In this way, stories serve as a framework for imagining reality.

Finally, stories—particularly as metaphors—provide a way for interpreting and understanding the unknown.

To a wholly new sensational or emotional experience, one can give sufficient organization only by relating it to the already known, only by perceiving a relation between this experience and another experience already placed, ordered, and incorporated. A metaphor allows us to connect the known of ourselves to the unknown of the world, and, making available new relational patterns it simultaneously organizes the self into a new and richer entity; so that the old known self is joined to and transformed into the new, the heretofore unknown self.\(^7^6\)

Stories thereby portray a vision of the moral ought—the way the world ought to be according to the community or tradition telling the story. Precisely because, in a new experience, a person is trying to internalize something new, he is unable to

\(^7^6\) James Olney, *Metaphors of Self; the Meaning of Autobiography* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), 30-31, quoted in Hauerwas, *The Self as Story*, 71 n7. This is only part of an extended quote Hauerwas includes to describe how he understands the role of stories and metaphors in shaping character.
conceptualize it, at least not with the meaning and impact of a story. Stories and metaphors, then, serve not only to capture the meaning of an agent’s values, beliefs, commitments, interpretation of norms, and actions in all of their rich intricacy, but also communicate new values, beliefs, and commitments to the hearer.

Stories, or narratives—the term Hauerwas employs most regularly through his career—and practices serve as the way members of a community are formed. They operate mutually, with the narrative establishing and continuously informing the community, and with the community practicing or acting according to the narrative.

Practices initiate people into the community. Hauerwas unabashedly speaks of conversion to Christianity. Just as recruits or students are transformed into marines or chemists not primarily by receiving information, but by being inculcated into new ways of speaking and behaving, a person becomes a Christian not just by learning information about Jesus, but by being converted through baptism and catechesis. Christian conversion places one most fundamentally into a confession which provides a completely new language, frame of reference, and community of action by which one lives as a Christian. Repentance and forgiveness are core practices that are learned and done from baptism.

Practices are more important than ideas. Indeed, the very creation of the notion of ‘idea’ suggests that the church has already lost its moorings from the habits that sustain it. We want to help Christians discover modes of how the church can be enculturated as the church.

Again, it is more important to remember that no practice more determines the church’s being than how we have learned to speak the church’s language.  

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Languages are languages in use. Language is a set of practices rather than a collection of words. In this way, practices even include the narrative, although the narrative is the most foundational of all practices, as it is the narrating again of what has already been narrated by the historic community, the tradition. Such a practice of narrative is the confession of faith. By speaking words of truth and claiming this truth as an identity, Christians have truth as a resource for their own character. By claiming to be something, they identify with it and seek to become more like it.

The Christian tradition is narrated in the church gathered in worship and prayer. By insisting on gathering, the church is claiming a distinct loyalty to its community. By regular prayer, the church learns its language—it practices its language—of the narrative of the life, passion, resurrection and rule of Jesus Christ. Such worship and prayer includes the celebration of the Eucharist, which is to be steeped in the practice of forgiveness and reconciliation. The Eucharist empowers Christians. The Eucharist is not an empowerment of secular hierarchies of coercion and violence, but it is to practice the power of God: the power of healing, forgiveness, and a politics in contrast to the world.

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78 Ibid., 58-59.
79 Ibid., 107-8, 111-12.
80 Ibid., 41-42.
Practices provide discipline. Through repetition they make contrary actions unthinkable. They thereby shape character by orienting the self in a certain way.\textsuperscript{82} Hauerwas never provides an exhaustive list or categorization of practices, because, even within the churches, practices may differ in their emphasis or detail. Furthermore, the church is never to feel bound by an established list of practices, according to what has worked previously. The church is always to hear the word of Christ as prophetic and challenging, as in contrast to the world. This means practices in the church will develop as the challenges of the world change in succeeding generations.\textsuperscript{83}

Biermann, resonating with Hauerwas’ appeal to a grounding narrative or narratives, offers the Apostles’ Creed and Nicene Creed (which he practically refers to together as “the Creed”) as a narrative that serves the “framework” of the three kinds of righteousness: “this framework of three kinds of righteousness grounded in a creedal paradigm will be designated simply as the creedal framework.”\textsuperscript{84} His attraction to the Creed is in part due to its appeal to all of Christianity, its succinct expression of the interrelationship between salvation and the Christian life, its avoidance of dualities, its capacity to “receive, accommodate, and make sense of the sometimes disparate data that are encountered in Scripture, the Confessions, and Christian experience,” and its trinitarian basis.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{82} Hauerwas and Willimon, \textit{Where Resident Aliens Live}, 112.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{84} Biermann, "Virtue Ethics," 186.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 184-86.
Biermann indicates that, most prominent for ethics with this trinitarian basis, is the attention to the doctrine of creation. Although salvation is not found in creation, salvation does not remove the believer from creation. Indeed, it returns the redeemed to the realm of creation in order to serve others, to do good works, in all of the ordinary and extraordinary activities of daily life, whether eating and drinking, employment, or intervention to save a person from death or despair. In fact, the three articles of the creed are tightly connected. Redemption serves to restore humanity to being truly human, both in relationship to God, and in relationship to others. Redemption reconciles a person to God, yet returns her to serve others within the world, within creation. The Third Article brings to completion the restoration to humanity, with the Holy Spirit keeping the believer in faith in view of the eschatological fulfillment of humanity’s purpose. The Creed expresses what it means to be fully human, both before humanity, and before God. “When one becomes all that God intends either coram deo or coram hominibus, then one has righteousness in that particular sphere.”

Righteousness before God is one purpose of the human person. This righteousness is a gift, the justifying righteousness expressed in the Second Article. Yet to pursue virtue is

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86 Ibid., 190-92.
87 Ibid., 195.
88 Ibid., 196.
89 Ibid., 210.
to pursue the purpose of being fully human, yet in a different realm, in the realm of creation.\textsuperscript{90}

In this creedal paradigm it is initially unclear how Biermann distinguishes First Article righteousness from Third Article righteousness, although it may be teased out of summary statements and implications. He offers the fictitious example of a man who was “righteous coram hominibus” prior to his conversion. After his conversion, this man:

strives to conform more fully to God’s vision for humanity as revealed in the Word, especially the Decalogue.... [He does so] with new understanding and with new purpose. Indeed, he pursues the third righteousness, sanctifying righteousness, similar yet completely different from the righteousness he once sought as an unbeliever. Now, his desire is to be what God created him to be—fully human, a creature rightly related to God through faith and eager to demonstrate love for his fellow creatures. So he follows the pattern of the One who fulfilled God’s will for humanity. Intentionally, he seeks a character more like that of his Lord.\textsuperscript{91}

Biermann then refers to Hauerwas and Lutheran theologian Gustaf Wingren to suggest that sanctifying righteousness is not a matter of following commandments or rules, but being conformed to the image of Christ by further plunging into the narrative of the story of Christ, and into the Word and sacraments.\textsuperscript{92} The sanctifying work is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. The difference between a non-believer and a believer working in the world is that the believer “follow[s] the lead of the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{93}

If we can summarize Biermann’s paradigmatic narrative for Christian ethics, it is the creedal narrative which succinctly expresses the interwoven life of a Christian both

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 212.

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 214-216.

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 216-217.

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 190-92.
before God as righteousness through justification (Second Article) and before the world as righteousness through good works and love of the neighbor (First Article). It seems that the Third Article fits in that the Holy Spirit operates to conform the believer through grace more in the image of Christ, so that good works do not consist merely of following commandments, but spring out of a transformed inner character, and that the Holy Spirit also serves as a guide to help the believer interpret the commandment in view of the current conditions and experience. The believer thereby chooses a better action or course of action than could be done apart from the Holy Spirit.

Biermann has not only embraced Hauerwas’ theory of narrative, but he has presented a concrete example of what that narrative is and how it operates in Christian ethics. Along with Hauerwas, he is saying that the narrative of Jesus becomes the new narrative of the Christian reality. The Scriptures announce the Kingdom of God, embodied in the life and actions of Jesus, and into which the Christian is brought. This narrative begins to shape the life of the new Christian in the deep, intricate way that stories and metaphors shape character—more so than the momentary, intellectual transfer of a moral command—so that the believer is transformed not only internally but also externally to become more like Christ. This transformation of character, which also shapes action because of the way character and action are integrated, results in a transformation of the believer’s ethic—a transformation into the ethic of the Christian
community. For both Hauerwas and Biermann, ethics is not a separate intellectual
pursuit from theology, but the very living of theology.  

2.5 Implications for the Lutheran Position

Biermann has demonstrated that ethical training was a matter of importance for
the early Lutherans and that concerted attention on ethics is compatible with Lutheran
theology. He succeeds in his purpose of offering a framework which demonstrates this
compatibility, that is, the three kinds of righteousness articulated through the creedal
narrative. And he argues convincingly that the reformers assumed ethical training to
involve character formation, and that Lutherans today would be well-served in
reclaiming a kind of virtue ethic. Biermann is successful in showing that The Creed
“provides a norming horizon, within which a believer’s life coram deo and coram
hominibus can be seen together as a unity.” Within this framework, the life of a believer,
restored to creation and moving toward the final purpose of eternal life with the Triune
God, is unified as the whole work of God. Here justification and sanctification are
brought together. Within this narrative, a believer strives to do all good works for the
sake of his neighbor, knowing that this is really God’s work in him and for others. “There
is no polarizing antithesis to be maintained, no dichotomy to be balanced. There is
simply the overarching work of God for his people and in his people.”

However, Biermann’s engagement with Hauerwas is somewhat limited. Although
Biermann has treated the particular criticisms he drew from Hauerwas, namely, that the

94 See, e.g., Hauerwas, A Community of Character, 36-52.
95 Biermann, "Virtue Ethics," 242-43.
Protestant emphasis on justification through faith has separated ethics from theology and that the “dialogue” metaphor should be subsumed into the “journey” metaphor, there are further aspects of Hauerwas’ work that remain suggestive for the typical Protestant or Lutheran ethical perspective. Biermann himself suggests one: determining the “spiritual habits” to be developed and practiced in a Christian community in service of character formation.96 Furthermore, he has not comprehensively addressed what should be a central Lutheran concern in engaging Hauerwas—the role of grace, and this role as particularly expressed in the means of grace, the Word and sacraments.

But a more fundamental question remains: how exactly does character formation occur according to the Lutheran understanding? How is the change to one’s character that occurs in conversion to be described theologically, anthropologically, or even philosophically? Biermann does not answer this question in a substantive way because it is not the focus of his project. By demonstrating the historical and confessional basis for Lutheran ethics and offering a conceptual framework, he has provided a scheme for thinking about the question of character formation, but has left answering the question to further scholarship. This question is significant for Lutherans because the justification/sanctification connection is constructed upon an understanding of the way a person is changed through conversion. Hauerwas subsumes justification into sanctification as part of the larger story of the Christian life. But for the Lutheran and the classical Protestant who want to retain justification through faith alone as the referencing center of theology, a systematic, coherent, and justifiable

96 Ibid., 261-62.
account of character formation—or transformation—with reference to justification has yet to be made.

At this point, I summarize my consideration of Hauerwas in a way that will outline in greater detail the remaining work of my project. Firstly, the problem of Lutheran ethics is a manifestation of the crisis in Protestant ethics identified by Hauerwas, namely, the ungrounded freedom from ethical prescriptions epitomized by situation ethics on the one hand, and the attempt to retain some kind of ethical reference point through divine command theory or universal, philosophical accounts of the law, on the other hand. The peculiar Lutheran manifestations may appear as the claim to be free from the law through the gospel, the existential response to God’s address, or an emphasis on the “third use of the law” which is misunderstood or misused in a legalistic way.

Hauerwas has suggested that a resolution can be found in an account of character. Because character develops only through time, it stands in contrast to the problematic notions of freedom and existentialism, and to an episodic conception of law and command. The Christian is not an existentially new subject with each moral question, nor is he bound by theoretical commands which are difficult to apply or not relevant to the situation. Rather, character grows and develops over time through the appropriation of narratives and community practices. Divine commands are integrated into the narrative of Israel and the church, and no existential moment is so conditioned that it is completely detached from the orientation and determinations developed through previous experiences.
Such a claim for an ethics of character is not in contradiction to the classic Protestant distinction between justification and sanctification. Although Hauerwas now considers the justification-sanctification distinction to be theoretical and secondary, and not of great concern to him, he has nevertheless offered a way of thinking about this distinction which retains the significance of each, even while developing his understanding of character. Justification as regeneration establishes the new character of the Christian. It marks the beginning of the new narrative of the Christian life. The continuous forgiveness of sins is not a “resetting” of the character, but it is the strengthening of this established character. Continuous forgiveness results in sanctification; it deepens the character of one as a Christian. His account therefore harmonizes with the notion that sanctification is not measurable growth in outward good works. Instead, sanctification is the persistent effect of justification—the fruit of ongoing justification.

In the following chapter, I will give a Lutheran account of the relationship between justification and sanctification, integrating the notion of justification as the establishment of the new, Christian character. This requires clarifying if Hauerwas’ notion of a singular Christian character in the believer can be harmonized with the Lutheran understanding of two natures in a believer: the old, dying, sinful nature, and the new, regenerate Christian nature. Hauerwas shifted the treatment of the two natures to the realm of systematic theology and avoided offering an answer to the question of their relation. The Lutheran heritage, however, is compelled to resolve this question if it is comfortably to address ethics. The resolution comes when Lutherans
recall not only their forensic tradition of justification, but also the understanding of justification as the death of the old nature and the birth or creation of a new nature in Christ. The daily death of the old nature in baptism is a basic catechetical theme in traditional Lutheranism. Yet the daily death of the old nature through repeated remembrance of baptism and forgiveness of sins does not mean that the Christian has to re-commence character construction each day. The old, sinful nature is daily put to death, but the new life in Christ is not! Quite the contrary: as the old nature is being subdued, the new nature established in justification has ever greater opportunity to manifest and flourish.

This is really to develop the broader question of to what extent a Lutheran may say that a believer is really renewed and sanctified. What exactly happens to the believer, whether anthropologically, metaphysically, ontologically, or relationally, and is there enough of a change to argue that the Christian has new character, or does she remain fundamentally a sinner? To treat these points I will draw on the recent research of the Finnish Lutherans on the question of the believer’s union with Christ. By considering recent developments in the Lutheran understanding of participation and union with Christ, the anthropological and ontological questions will be addressed in chapters three and four.

Secondly, what are the means by which one receives a new character and develops it? Or, what are the means of justification and sanctification? Hauerwas says that character formation occurs through the forming effect of a narrative and practices

97 SC 1.4.
which reinforce this narrative and put it into action. Although he typically seems vague about defining or describing particular practices which correspond to the Christian narrative, he does regularly refer to the gathering of the church for worship, which includes mutual confession, the speaking of forgiveness, and prayer. And again, because he considers the theoretical discussion of justification secondary, he is not concerned with pinpointing a moment of justification for a Christian, or the practice that brought about this conversion.\(^9\) Again, however, this is not a stance that is typically accepted in the Lutheran tradition. Rather, Lutherans understand that justification occurs through the means of grace—preaching and the sacraments—by which the Holy Spirit works forgiveness and renewal. This is a definite notion of the supernatural work of grace.\(^9\)

Furthermore, as the fruit of ongoing justification, sanctification is nourished by these same means of grace. Thus, in Lutheranism, what Hauerwas calls the central “practices” of the church are very definitely understood to be the means of grace: preaching, baptism, confession and absolution, and communion. In short, the core “practices” for Lutherans occur in worship. In chapter five, I will investigate the manner in which worship serves ethical formation. Although some comparison of worship with Hauerwas’ narrative and practices will be evident, I will present a deeper interconnection between worship, grace, and spiritual formation than has been offered both by Hauerwas and Biermann. I will consider what these means of grace look like in

\(^9\) In fact, because Hauerwas emphasizes gradual character development, he might deny that a moment of conversion can ever be identified.

\(^9\) While Hauerwas certainly does not deny grace, it is not a theological category he relies on. This is probably because grace is a theological category. Instead, he prefers to refer to the narrative and practices of the community, in which he assumes the gracious work of God, but because it is gracious and supernatural, it is not something about which he speculates.
practice, and how these means operate spiritually, anthropologically, or relationally in establishing and developing character.

Finally, what, if anything, is unique to Christian character, and, correlatively, to Christian ethics? Hauerwas insists upon the uniqueness of Christian ethics because Christian practices are unique to the church and not practiced by other communities. He also speaks of maintaining the integrity between the language of faith and the nature of reality, that is, that theology must be kept pure in order to inspire corresponding practices and character for meaningful Christian ethics. On the other hand, Lutherans are commonly understood to say that good works are good works for all people, regardless of faith status. This is the civil righteousness to which all people should aspire. Yet they also say that good works flow from justification and sanctification, suggesting that some aspect of Christian goods works differs from those of non-Christians, even if it is just the source of empowerment. For Biermann, the uniqueness of Christian ethics seems to be in sanctifying righteousness, or the Third Article, which would refer to being transformed into the image of Christ and following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Yet, is this enough to distinguish Christian ethics, the actions of believers, or is Christian ethics particular only in “motivation,” as Benne laments? These questions will be addressed in chapter six.
CHAPTER THREE

THE ONTOLOGY OF JUSTIFICATION: NEW CHARACTER AS RELATION AND UNION

3.1 Character and the Finnish School of Luther Studies

In chapter one it was shown that within the Lutheran tradition the righteousness of justification is not only imputed, but also imparted. In being made righteous before God, the believer receives the righteousness of Christ and moves from the state of unrighteousness to righteousness: he is converted. In chapter two it was argued that, in view of recent difficulties in Protestant ethics due to an emphasis on justification, Stanley Hauerwas’ understanding that the righteousness of justification bestows new character offers a constructive way of thinking about ethical formation without losing the central place of justification. Yet it was also unclear from Hauerwas, and his Lutheran interlocutor Joel Biermann, what the nature of this new character is, from a distinctly Christian perspective. That is, justification does not bring about a new character in the typical way that character is understood, or even in the way that Hauerwas describes it—through the reflective exercise of agency nurtured in a community narrative for the developing new habits. Rather, justification operates by grace. Thus, the question is, how does the grace of justification establish a new
character in a believer? How can we describe anthropologically and theologically the reception of the imparted righteousness of Christ?

It has been one of the fundamental tasks of the Finnish Lutheran school for the past forty years to investigate how righteousness actually becomes the believer’s. Besides attempting to clarify the relationship between imputation and impartation, they also ask in what sense righteousness may be said to belong to the believer. Generally, the Finns argue for a kind of theosis. In investigating these questions and the Finnish research, we will see what resources are available to Lutherans to speak of a new character or personhood.

In his consideration of various frameworks to understand the relationship between justification and sanctification, Biermann notes the Finnish research and the concept of theosis, but dismisses this as “unnecessarily obscur[ing] the picture.” Theosis introduces too many “intricacies, potential vagaries, and manifest difficulties” to be helpful in explaining the connection between salvation and the Christian life. Biermann says very little else about the Finnish research in his dissertation. To be sure, some of the methods and claims of the Finnish school are questionable, such as their ahistorical read of Luther and the way their own interests in ecumenism have driven their conclusions about Luther’s theology. Perhaps least convincing of their claims are the

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1 See Tuomo Mannermaa, "Why is Luther Research so Fascinating? Modern Finnish Luther Research," in Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 1-4. Mannermaa summarizes the scholarly work of the Finnish Luther School since the 1970s, and lists the major dissertations. See also Olli-Pekka Vainio, Justification and Participation in Christ: The Development of the Lutheran Doctrine of Justification from Luther to the Formula of Concord (1580) (Leiden ; Boston : Brill, 2008) for a more recent bibliography of Finnish works.

2 Joel Biermann, "Virtue Ethics," 85.
notions that theosis is a central concept for Luther and that God’s declaration of
justification follows upon the believer’s union with Christ. ³ At the same time, the Finns
have contributed significantly to Luther studies, especially in challenging the nineteenth
century philosophical underpinnings of nineteenth and twentieth century Luther
research, and by giving attention to the believer’s union with Christ, a teaching that is
oft-neglected in the face of the doctrine of forensic or declarative justification.

The Finns generally read Luther as understanding righteousness to be bodily—
righteousness is the work of the incarnate Christ. This righteousness bestowed to the
believer includes both the favor of God and the gift of Christ’s person and benefits.
Because this gift of the full person of Christ includes all his benefits, the renewal of the
person for sanctification cannot be separated from this gift. The Finns contrast this with
their reading of Melanchthon and the Formula of Concord, for which they say
justification is simply the imputation of a juridical decree based on Christ’s merit, and
for which they say the gift of renewal follows not only logically, but temporally upon
God’s favor of forgiveness. ⁴ While I criticize some of the Finnish arguments and
conclusions, I will draw on their account of bodily communion with Christ to explain the
impartation of righteousness for good works.

³ William W. Schumacher, Who do I Say that You are? Anthropology and the Theology of Theosis
in the Finnish School of Tuomo Mannermaa (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 88-89.

⁴ Vainio, Justification and Participation in Christ, 10.
3.2 Communication and the Blessed Exchange

Of central significance to the Finnish argument is that Luther links justification with the atonement, and the atonement very prominently takes place in the flesh of Christ. Justification of the sinner, then, occurs in accordance with some relation to the flesh of Christ. This relation may be understood by the doctrines of the communication of attributes and the blessed exchange.

The communication of attributes refers to the communication of Christ’s attributes to and from his own natures and person. That is, the attributes of the human and divine natures are communicated to the person Jesus Christ, and, within the Lutheran understanding, the attributes of the divine nature are communicated to the human nature. All of this communication occurs, however, without the mixing of the natures or the forming of a new substance or being. Because of this communication, the atonement is effective. Christ is able to make satisfaction for sins because his suffering in the human nature has infinite value, because his divinity is communicated to the person and to the human nature. His human suffering takes on unlimited effect in the person of the divine-human Jesus. At the same time, Jesus fulfills human righteousness in a positive way by obeying all that is required of him and by fulfilling the law of God, which theretofore had been left unfulfilled by other human persons. The boundlessness of his divinity gives infinite effect to his human work. That is, although he is obedient as only one human being, this obedience merits the obedience of all humanity because of its divine capacity. At the same time, it is a true, human

5 See, e.g., Ep 8.
righteousness, because a truly human person accomplished this good. The uniqueness of Christ’s righteousness stands then in both its human and divine character, bound up in the one person, Jesus Christ. As a human person, he accomplished human obedience. As God, this obedience takes on infinite meaning. The effectiveness of the atonement, therefore, cannot be separated from either nature. This means, in turn, that the atonement cannot be separated from the person Jesus Christ, who is the union of God and human nature.⁶

Note that the righteousness of the atonement, then, is not merely God’s essential righteousness being packed into the human Jesus. That is, whatever is essentially righteous about the divinity is not simply communicated to sinful humanity

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⁶ Vainio, Justification and Participation in Christ, 21-24. Luther says, typically, in his lectures on Galatians:

Now let us see how two such extremely contrary things come together in this Person. Not only my sins and yours, but the sins of the entire world, past, present, and future, attack Him, try to damn Him, and do in fact damn Him. But because in the same Person, who is the highest, the greatest, and the only sinner, there is also eternal and invincible righteousness, therefore these two converge: the highest, the greatest, and the only sin; and the highest, the greatest, and the only righteousness. Here one of them must yield and be conquered, since they come together and collide with such a powerful impact. Thus the sin of the entire world attacks righteousness with the greatest possible impact and fury. What happens? Righteousness is eternal, immortal, and invincible. Sin, too, is a very powerful and cruel tyrant, dominating and ruling over the whole world, capturing and enslaving all men. In short, sin is a great and powerful god who devours the whole human race, all the learned, holy, powerful, wise, and unlearned men. He, I say, attacks Christ and wants to devour Him as he has devoured all the rest. But he does not see that He is a Person of invincible and eternal righteousness. In this duel, therefore, it is necessary for sin to be conquered and killed, and for righteousness to prevail and live. Thus in Christ all sin is conquered, killed, and buried; and righteousness remains the victor and the ruler eternally....

This circumstance, “in Himself,” makes the duel more amazing and outstanding; for it shows that such great things were to be achieved in the one and only Person of Christ—namely, that the curse, sin, and death were to be destroyed, and that the blessing, righteousness, and life were to replace them—and that through Him the whole creation was to be renewed. If you look at this Person, therefore, you see sin, death, the wrath of God, hell, the devil, and all evils conquered and put to death. To the extent that Christ rules by His grace in the hearts of the faithful, there is no sin or death or curse. But where Christ is not known, there these things remain. And so all who do not believe lack this blessing and this victory. “For this,” as John says, “is our victory, faith” (1 John 5:4) (LW 26:280-82).
to make them righteous. In fact, in Lutheran teaching, such an encounter of the essential righteousness of God with a sinful human person would lead to the destruction of human, as a purifying of the unholy by the holy. Rather, Jesus actually earns human merit through human activity, which is then of infinite worth and universal applicability because of his divine nature.\footnote{See, e.g., FC 3, esp. Ep 3.2-3.}

By the communication of attributes, the saving righteousness of God becomes located in the person Jesus Christ. Thus, the Finns have argued, Christ cannot bestow his righteousness apart from his person. The goodness of Christ in his obedience to the Father is communicated, but it is done so by the bestowing of Christ’s presence. In turn, the sin of the believer is communicated to Christ, and then punished in his atonement. This communication of sin to Christ (forgiveness) and of Christ’s righteousness to the believer (regeneration) is called the \textit{blessed exchange}. By the blessed exchange, there is no mixing of persons so as to destroy the integrity of either Christ or the believer.

Thus, for the Finns, communication with divine-human Jesus is necessary for salvation. Salvation comes about then not merely through the receipt of information of Christ’s mercy, which leads to God’s favor, but salvation is inseparable from the flesh of Christ because that is where atonement is made.\footnote{Vainio, \textit{Justification and Participation in Christ}, 26-27. Luther does in some places identify personal salvation with the presence of Christ: “Christ is God’s grace, mercy, righteousness, truth, wisdom, power comfort, and salvation, given to us by God without any merit on our part. Christ, I say, not as some express it in blinds words, ‘casually,’ so that he grants righteousness and remains absent himself, for that would be dead. Yes, it is not given at all unless Christ himself is present, just as the radiance of the sun and the heat of fire are not present if there is no sun and no fire” \textit{LW} 14:204.} Tuomo Mannermaa, the intellectual founder of this Finnish school of research, even goes so far as to suggest that one may
speak of the communication of attributes, not only with respect to Christ’s two natures, but as a communication of Christ’s attributes to the believer and the sinner’s attributes to Christ. Christ gives all of his gifts, power, and life itself. Luther uses the terms *maximus peccator, maxima persona*, and *solus peccator* to refer to Christ, implying the communication of human sin to Christ in a real way. Christ is the greatest person, and becomes the greatest and only sinner.⁹

### 3.3 Christ the form of faith

Up to this point I have not written extensively with respect to faith. This has not been an oversight, but a recognition that because the role of faith is central to the question of justification, it is also central to the ethical question of how Christ forms the character of a person. If justification is related to character formation and justification occurs through faith, then an investigation of the role of faith may provide insight into the account of how Christ forms character.

It would seem that faith is the criterion that distinguishes between those who are to be justified, and those who are not.¹⁰ A person is saved by faith. Yet if a person is saved by faith alone, and by Christ alone, how do these two apparently exclusive claims correspond? If justification is the forgiveness of sins and the bestowal of Christ’s righteousness, this latter which, ethically speaking, may be termed the establishment of

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Christian character, what is the role of faith? In other words, how does faith fit into a framework that appears to be dominated by christology?

This dilemma may be depicted also with respect to a common understanding about faith and justification: Faith believes the justifying work of God, suggesting that faith comes prior to justification. There can be no justification without faith. Yet to avoid Pelagianism or synergism, faith prior to justification cannot be a human work. Thus, faith is concluded to be a divine work that comes prior to justification, wrought in a person to prepare him for justification.

Yet faith is more than a prevenient power related to righteousness; the Bible says that faith itself is reckoned as righteousness (Romans 4). Faith is or is included in the righteousness of justification. As righteousness, faith cannot be prior to justification. As that which receives and trusts God’s word and work of justification, it cannot be subsequent. Faith is part of the righteousness of justification.\(^{11}\)

This faith is received along with the righteousness of justification. “It is not our own decision, interpretive activity, or construction of meaning.”\(^ {12}\) Oswald Bayer specifically contrasts this with modern interpretations of faith, such as grasping and evaluating the faith by means of recollection and construction, or by discerning it as an inward feeling of absolute dependence. Faith is not a criterion of judgment in any kind of scientific context of observation and analysis. Faith is given; it is the trust or confidence that a person has before God. It is a trust that is given by the stance of God

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 4, 15.

toward the believer. In God’s granting mercy and favor to a person, the person is inspired to have trust and confidence toward God, and to feel secure in God’s relation to her. This confidence is faith, which is a divine work bringing forth the new birth of conversion. This understanding of faith also tempers or eliminates the language of causes with respect to faith. Both the medieval scholastics and the later Protestant scholastics spoke of faith as an efficient cause, with the effect that faith was separated from justification. Such a separation suggests an ordo salutis, dissecting the unity of justification.13

Luther deals with the question of the relation of faith to Christ and justification not by separating faith from justification, nor by outlining an ordo salutis, but by calling Christ the form of faith. By contrast to the church teaching of his day, which claimed that faith was formed by love, Luther said that faith was formed by Christ himself. Faith is empty not when it lacks the working out of love, but when it lacks an object, something or someone in which the believer puts his trust. An empty or absolute faith—an appeal to transcendence without any explanation of the transcendent—is not Christian faith. To say that one must trust, but then not say in what that trust is would be nonsense.14 The object, or form, of faith, is Christ:

[W]here they speak of love, we speak of faith. And while they say that faith is the mere outline but love is its living colors and completion, we say in opposition that faith takes hold of Christ and that He is the form that adorns and informs faith as color does the wall. Therefore Christian faith is not an idle quality or an


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

Therefore faith justifies because it takes hold of and possesses this treasure, the present Christ. But how He is present—this is beyond our thought; for there is darkness, as I have said. Where the confidence of the heart is present, therefore, there Christ is present, in that very cloud and faith. This is the formal righteousness on account of which a man is justified; it is not on account of love, as the sophists say. In short, just as the sophists say that love forms and trains faith, so we say that it is Christ who forms and trains faith or who is the form of faith. Therefore the Christ who is grasped by faith and who lives in the heart is the true Christian righteousness, on account of which God counts us righteous and grants us eternal life.¹⁵

Christ gives structure and specific existence to the matter of faith for each person. Christ and faith are not exclusive of each other, and to understand the exclusive phrases that way would be a misunderstanding of Scripture, which clearly links faith and Christ. Rather, they must be understood with their prepositions, to explain in what way each operates exclusively in salvation. Salvation is “on account of Christ alone,” and “through faith alone.” The merits of Christ alone provide the merit worthy of forgiveness and righteousness. These merits are located in Christ’s person, as explained above. But while Christ—his life and his work alone—is the meritorious power unto salvation, faith is the instrument—the means by which this merit of Christ is received and applied to a person. The object of faith is Jesus Christ: He is the one who is grasped

¹⁵ Luther, Lectures on Galatians 1535, in LW 26:129-30.
and received by faith. Thus, Christ works alone and faith works alone, each in a particular way, in justifying a person.

In the above quote, Luther explicitly calls both faith and Christ a Christian’s righteousness. Similarly, the Bible says both that “faith is reckoned as righteousness” (Romans 4:5) and that Christ himself is our “righteousness” (1 Corinthians 1:30) and that “in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Christ is righteousness; through faith in Christ, he is reckoned, counted, or attributed as righteousness to the believer.

Here it is to be noted that these three things are joined together: faith, Christ, and acceptance or imputation. Faith takes hold of Christ and has Him present, enclosing Him as the ring encloses the gem. And whoever is found having this faith in the Christ who is grasped in the heart, him God accounts as righteous. This is the means and the merit by which we obtain the forgiveness of sins and righteousness. “Because you believe in Me,” God says, “and your faith takes hold of Christ, whom I have freely given to you as your Justifier and Savior, therefore be righteous.” Thus God accepts you or accounts you righteous only on account of Christ, in whom you believe.16

Faith must be described and discussed with respect to its object—that in which faith trusts. This object is what gives real form to faith. It identifies and structures faith’s way of being. With Christian faith, Christ gives shape to faith—he forms faith—because he is the object of faith. Through faith—trust and assurance that Christ is the believer’s righteousness—Christ becomes the life of the sinner, and Christ’s righteousness is so

16 Ibid., 132.
reckoned to the sinner. Faith is the means by which a person is justified, and occurs concurrently with justification.\textsuperscript{17}

For Luther, then, faith is the divine reality in the human being.\textsuperscript{18} Because the object of faith is the divine man, Jesus Christ, that divine man is brought to the believer through his faith. The nature of faith is that it grasps something that would otherwise be incomprehensible. Faith apprehends Christ and his righteousness, righteousness that is outside of a person as being essentially Christ’s and not essentially the believer’s. Yet through faith the righteousness of Christ becomes present, hidden within a cloud to the natural senses. Faith alone perceives that the righteousness is for the believer, and appropriates this righteousness for the believer’s self. Because it appropriates righteousness, faith itself may be called righteousness.\textsuperscript{19}

With respect to the new character of the justified person, faith also receives this new character. Not that faith trusts in the character of the believing person, but, through faith taking hold of Christ, Christ becomes operative in a person to establish, form, or imprint this new, Christian character or nature in the believer. Faith justifies, imputing righteousness to the believer; faith justifies as regeneration, giving the believer new life in Christ. As regeneration, the new nature or new character has Christ’s righteousness imparted to it. While it is possible to speak of a logical sequence, here


\textsuperscript{18} Vainio, \textit{Justification and Participation in Christ}, 33. “If you believe that God is your Dwelling Place, He is truly a Dwelling Place for you. If you do not believe this, He is not” (Luther, ”Commentary on Psalm 90,” in LW 13:88; WA 40/3, 4, 26-27); “[Faith] is the creator of the Deity, not in the substance of God but in us” (Luther, \textit{Lectures on Galatians 1535}, in LW 26:227; WA 40 /1, 360, 25).

\textsuperscript{19} Vainio, \textit{Justification and Participation in Christ}, 40.
Luther’s understanding integrates Christ, righteousness and faith, indicating that there is no temporal sequence in his thinking. Christ is the righteousness of the sinner as the one who actually merits righteousness before God; faith is righteousness as that which trusts God and receives His mercy in the person of Christ, and this righteousness is both imputed to the person and communicated to the person as regeneration and the beginning of the believer’s own new, righteous character.

This understanding of faith and justification is not the only one in the Lutheran tradition, however. According to the Finns, Philip Melanchthon, Luther’s younger colleague, friend, and successor as leader of the Lutheran movement, highlighted different aspects of justification. Although Melanchthon’s view developed and changed in the details, Vainio describes its basic characteristics thusly: faith is made up of assent, desire, and reception, and is a fruit of the operation of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit creates faith by renewing the intellect to know Christ and renewing the will to desire Christ. Faith, in turn, receives God’s favor and acceptance of the sinner on account of Christ. Rather than Christ personally communicating his righteousness to the believer, righteousness is imputed as a judicial or transactional act. Faith produces joy and consolation in the person because of the awareness of God’s favor. The creation of faith is an efficient renewal, but a renewal which is distinct from justification.

In this Finnish understanding of Melanchthon, while faith is an affect created by the Holy Spirit’s work, faith is not a work, habit, or virtue, because the basis of its merit

20 Ibid., 77.
21 Ibid., 74; Carl E. Braaten, Justification : The Article by which the Church Stands Or Falls (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 27-28.
comes from nowhere inside the person. Nevertheless, because of this renewal of the will, and the apprehension of Christ and application of his merit through this faith, a person is declared righteous. The emphasis is on the relationship between faith and justification, rather than that between faith and Christ which effects justification, as for Luther.\footnote{Vainio, \textit{Justification and Participation in Christ}, 66-67.} But in the position of Luther, prevenient grace and justifying grace are the same: there is no prevenient grace preparing one for justification in the form of faith or anything else, but justification takes place through the first, personal gracious act which also bestows faith.\footnote{Braaten, \textit{Justification : The Article by which the Church Stands Or Falls}, 36. Vainio suggests that Melanchthon works from a unique philosophy of mind. Melanchthon denied that the form of an object is received by the observing subject, and that only the representation of the object is received. The object never forms the apprehension of the object, but only communicates by comparison or relation. In this understanding, Christ does not form the faith of a person, but his righteousness is transferred by representation or knowledge. In Melanchthon’s view, this transfer of righteousness is an intellectual phenomenon, and does not reform the will, the seat of faith for Melanchthon. To make up for this and to work out the actual creation of faith, the Holy Spirit must complete what the knowledge of Christ does not do. See Vainio, \textit{Justification and Participation in Christ}, 87.}

Melanchthon lacks the strong christological language of communication that was seen in Luther.\footnote{Vainio, \textit{Justification and Participation in Christ}, 76-80.} Finnish Lutheran Olli-Pekka Vainio describes Melanchthon’s understanding of Christ’s presence for justification as follows:

While Melanchthon speaks about Christ’s presence, for him the apprehension of Christ is first and foremost a cognitive event in which the divine Logos illuminates the mind through the Gospel. The Word, i.e., the Son, has an informative role; the Word is heard and the mind understands God’s love. The Spirit, infused through the Word, takes over control of the will and evokes new movements of the mind. These can be felt as new states of mind.

The presence of the Son occurs in a ‘word-event’ when the Son as the Word is in the mind of one who hears the Gospel. The Son is not present through salutary exchange but correlative, in a cognitive relation with the understood promise of grace. Christ, as the righteousness of the sinner, is a new state of the
intellect. God’s real presence occurs through the person of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is not only information, but an actually present entity in the believer which renews the sinner and produces new affects. Justification as forgiveness of sins and donation of the Spirit is a formulation typical of Melanchthon’s late works.\textsuperscript{25}

Justifying righteousness remains something that is outside and juridically imputed.\textsuperscript{26} The personal union of Christ’s natures is necessary to accomplish salvation, but the communication of attributes cannot be carried over to describe the relationship between Christ and the believer. The person of Jesus Christ accomplishes salvation through his work, and becomes the information that is taught to the believer’s intellect, but any union with Christ himself is not effective in communicating this righteousness.\textsuperscript{27} This externality must be emphasized in this view, because faith is a renewal of human faculties rather than part of the righteousness communicated in Christ’s person. Furthermore, to maintain the teaching that salvation occurs apart from works, faith has to be distinguished sharply from a human work, even while it is understood as a human faculty.\textsuperscript{28}

In this Melanchthonian understanding of justification, it would be more difficult to credit the establishment of a new character to the person of Jesus Christ. Instead, the new character would result from the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing about new

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 85-87.
\item \textsuperscript{26} While we observed in \textit{The Augsburg Confession} and the \textit{Apology} that Melanchthon did recognize a regenerative aspect to justification, the juridical emphasis is characteristic of him, especially later in his life. See Vaino, \textit{Justification and Participation in Christ}, 64-92.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 65-66.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 73.
\end{itemize}
“affects” in the believer. The rehabilitation of these affects would lead to a gradual change or development in one’s moral orientation or determination.

Martin Chemnitz, a second-generation Lutheran theologian, brings some continuity and correspondence to his two predecessors’ views of justification. By switching from the favor-gift structure of Luther to a merit-application distinction, Chemnitz can say that the merit of Christ is of no use apart from its application, which comes through faith as the apprehension of the person of Christ. 29 Using Melanchthon’s definition of faith from his *Loci Communes*, Chemnitz affirms that faith is a renewal and work of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God teaches knowledge of salvation by Christ and his work. To this knowledge, assent is added, and then the desire of the will renewed by the Holy Spirit. Finally comes trust: the turning away from oneself and one’s sins to Christ. 30

Yet these “degrees of faith” are not a kind of work wrought by the Holy Spirit apart from the presentation of Christ to the believer by the Word of God, and the laying hold of this presence of Christ through assent and trust. That is to say, in Chemnitz’s account, the Holy Spirit does not inspire a person preveniently or apart from the Word of God so that when addressed by the Word of God, the person would be in the right spiritual state to receive and trust this Word. Rather, the Holy Spirit creates and develops faith, even in its various degrees, by the address from the Word of God. “This

29 Ibid., 152
clause shows the means through which faith is kindled by the Holy Spirit, nourished, preserved, and increased, namely the Word of God.”

Faith, then, is Christian, justifying faith only when it has taken hold of Christ presented to it.

“We are justified by faith...because of the object on which it lays hold, namely Christ, who is the Mediator in the promise of grace. Therefore when faith does not err in its object, but lays hold on that true object, although with a weak faith, or at least tries and wants to lay hold on Christ, then there is true faith, and it justifies.”

Faith is not truly faith apart from already being presented with and receiving Christ. This action of hearing, assenting, desiring, and trusting occurs by the power of the Holy Spirit but in confrontation with the Word, which is Christ Jesus. “[T]his apprehension or acceptance or application of the promise of grace is the formal cause or principle of justifying faith, according to the language of Scripture.” Faith has no form or existence unless it is taking hold of the promise which is presented to it. This application of the promise of grace is, in turn, the application of the flesh of Christ: “Faith means sharing the consubstantial relation, in which a connection with Christ is established on the

31 Ibid., 2:501.
32 Ibid., 2:503.
33 Ibid., 2:502-503
grounds of the consubstantiality of the natures..."  

Contemporary Lutheran theologian Oswald Bayer describes the relationship of the Word, faith, and justification in like manner. The Word is not just sound waves that dissipate after split seconds, having only the effect of symbolizing a thought or purpose. The Word bears the gospel itself; it bears justification to the sinner. For the Word of justification is a particular kind of Word: it is a promise, a promise that Jesus Christ obeyed the Father, suffered, died, and rose again on behalf of human beings. Furthermore, it not only promises this justification, it bears Christ himself, for Christ himself is the Word (John 1:1) spoken, preached, and given in the sacraments: absolving, baptizing, and celebrating the Lord’s Supper. Thus, the promise does not refer just to a future act, but takes immediate effect. The promise of salvation is not the anticipation of future salvation, but it is salvation already granted with Christ’s presence.  

This affirms both the priority of the word of God and the real nature of the union between Christ and the believer. Faith is created and strengthened only by the external word. This is the testimony of Scripture (Romans 10:17), Luther, and the Lutheran confessions. Article five of The Augsburg Confession expounds on article four ("On


35 See also the clear articulation of this with respect to Word and sacraments within the broader discussion of the indwelling of Christ in the believer, in Karsten Lehmkühler, Inhabitatio : Die Einwohnung Gottes Im Menschen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 166-67.

36 Bayer, Living by Faith, 51.
Justification”) by declaring the very way the faith of justification is obtained is through the office of the ministry, which presents the Word of God through preaching and sacraments. The Word is external, not only in that it is God’s and not a Word originating in the hearer, but also in that it is experienced in the world in an external way, through preaching and the sacraments.37

Yet such an external word does not require a non-effective forensic understanding of justification. For, as Bayer emphasizes, with God, word and action are not exclusive concepts. On the contrary, God acts by his word. God creates by his word, and he continues to act in creation by speaking (e.g., Psalm 33:6, Psalm 19:2). Thus Christ is actually called “the Word” even as he is the one who acts in order to accomplish salvation for humanity (John 1:1-18).38 God’s word is both declarative and effective. What he says, he does and accomplishes. There is no separation between God’s declaration of a person as righteous and his making of a person righteous. Justification does both and is both. What God declares forensically, he accomplishes ontologically.39

The righteousness which God declares and presents to a person by the Word, then, is Christ himself. Christ is the Word, so that God’s speech is the action and presentation of Christ himself. When that Word is received and believed, Christ is received, believed, and internalized into the believer. The Word brings true communion

37 Ibid., 44-45.
38 Ibid., 46-47.
39 Ibid., 42-43.
with God, a communion through faith. God “enters the deadly dispute of ‘justifications’”, bears the consequences of sin in his body, and thereby provides the resolution to the believer in communion with him.\textsuperscript{40}

The Word remains external, in that it is properly Christ, but also becomes internal to the believer through this communion. The actual righteousness of Jesus is communicated to the believer in the speech-act of God which unites the believer to God, communicating her sin to Christ, and God’s righteousness to the believer. It is forensic and imputed in that it establishes a right relationship and covers over all sin, and it is effective or imparted in that it makes the believer a new creation.

Continuing with Chemnitz’ line of thought, “the flesh of Christ vivifies the believers not only meritoriously but also efficaciously by application and communication.”\textsuperscript{41} Here, Christ’s merit is clearly applied not only forensically, but properly. Chemnitz also situates faith in this christological context. Not the strength of faith justifies, but the object to which faith holds. Thus not only the aspect of trust, which is emphasized in contrast to the scholastic notion of faith alone, but also the object or source of faith, Christ, justifies the believer.

Faith in itself, as a quality, without Christ, is not our formal righteousness. And Christ, unless He is apprehended by faith, is not your righteousness. But if faith lays hold on Christ, but does not in Him also lay hold on the grace and mercy of God, it does not thereby establish that it will receive forgiveness of sins or acceptance, and it is certainly lacking the form of righteousness before God. For justification is absolution or acceptance. Thus when all of these are included at

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 50-53.

\textsuperscript{41} Chemnitz, \textit{The Two Natures in Christ}, 332.
the same time, in their own order, then nothing is lacking from our righteousness before God. This is the formal cause of justification.\textsuperscript{42}

Note the affiliation with Luther, both in the threefold integration of faith, Christ, and righteousness, and in the terminology of \textit{form}. For Luther, Christ is the form of faith unto righteousness; for Chemnitz, faith in the merits of Christ which provide the mercy of God—all this working together—is the formal cause of justification. Note also that Chemnitz sees these aspects of justification as temporally simultaneous—“at the same time”—even while having a logical order—“in their own order.”

Thus Chemnitz offers a synthesis of Luther and Melanchthon by correlating the presence of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in justification. A person is justified through faith wrought by the Holy Spirit, which receives its form in the presence of Christ, by which his meritorious work is communicated to the believer for both imputation and the beginning of effective, proper righteousness. The spiritual renewal of the faculties is not separate from the presence of Christ.

These effects of renewal, for Chemnitz, include the renewal of the believer’s faculties by the Holy Spirit in order to do good works, an effect which follows upon the operation of justification, in order to distinguish justification from any human contribution.\textsuperscript{43} The impact of justification on the faculties is not simply that they are purified and strengthened, but that Christ and his merits are communicated to the believer. Christ, in turn, becomes the source and power of the new faculties, which power is applied in the believer by the Holy Spirit. Chemnitz does not use terms like

\textsuperscript{42} Chemnitz, \textit{Loci Theologici}, 2:554.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 2:504, 523, 573; Vainio, \textit{Justification and Participation in Christ}, 162.
“character” and “virtue” but notes the biblical passages that indicate that good works are done out of the “newness of the Spirit,” “a new creature,” “a new heart,” “a renewed mind,” or the “new inner man.” Such a new heart or subject corresponds to the new orientation or determination of character as described in chapter two, and it affirms that this new character is granted through justification as regeneration, not in the Aristotelian sense of repeated acts of virtue. “[S]ince the teaching of reconciliation [justification] is connected with the bestowal of the Holy Spirit who renews the mind and arouses new desires in the heart which are in agreement with the law of God, man now begins to love God and ‘delight in His law.’” In justification through faith, Christ becomes present for and with the believer, establishing also a new direction or orientation of the self—a new character.

In this brief review of Luther, Melanchthon, and Chemnitz, I am not suggesting that the whole Lutheran tradition has explained christology, justification, faith, and renewal in such an integrated way. Some have interpreted the dominant view of Lutheranism since the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy (roughly the sixteenth century) to teach that faith is prior to justification. In this view, faith is a subjective condition which moves God to justify the sinner. The development of the ordo salutis contributes to this interpretation. I have demonstrated, however, that justification which both imputes and imparts Christ’s righteousness is not outside the Lutheran tradition as expressed in the Book of Concord and in Luther’s consistent teaching. For Luther and Chemnitz,

44 Chemnitz, Loci Theologici, 2:581.
justification is God’s act of forgiving the ungodly, in which the concurrently bestowed faith takes form as it receives Christ and his benefits communicated to the believer, and is worked powerfully by the Holy Spirit.\(^{46}\) “Strictly speaking, it would even be misleading to say that if I believe in Christ, God will be gracious to me, as if my believing is not already evidence of God’s grace, as if my faith is not itself created by the forgiving grace of God while I am still a sinner.”\(^{47}\)

Such an integrated view of justification is in harmony with the Lutheran tradition, and this integrated view also teaches the bestowal of a new character to the believer. For Luther and Chemnitz, the power of renewal is not a human deed, for its source is the righteousness of Christ, and it remains rooted in Christ and his work (which are inseparable).\(^{48}\) Both reconciliation or forgiveness and renewal or sanctification are benefits of Christ, located in his person.

The exclusion of good works from justification does not imply the exclusion of sanctification from the orbit of God’s grace. Chemnitz emphasizes that while sanctification is necessary for a Christian, the power to perform good works comes from Christ. Justifying faith especially is the source of the good works. When the person is engrafted in Christ, like a branch engrafted in a tree, the power to bear good fruit comes from the trunk, which is Christ, who rules (regit) the Christian through the Holy Spirit.\(^{49}\)


\(^{47}\) Braaten, Justification, 25-26.

\(^{48}\) Vainio, Justification and Participation in Christ, 47.

\(^{49}\) Ibid., 160
The entire merit of Christ is granted through faith, merit both for forgiveness and for renewal.\textsuperscript{50}

A brief consideration of the \textit{Formula of Concord}, the final document included in the Lutheran Confessions, supports this understanding. Although the \textit{Formula} is sometimes criticized by the Finns as offering an alternative understanding of justification from Luther, the differences are in emphasis rather than essence. The \textit{Formula} was compiled in part to respond to parties who blurred the distinction between justification and good works, and to refute Andreas Osiander, a Lutheran who taught that Christian righteousness was due to the indwelling of Christ’s divine nature.\textsuperscript{51} Osiander taught that the divine nature overwhelms the sin of a person in a quantitative sense, and also makes the person righteous before God on account of new virtues instilled in him.\textsuperscript{52} In this context and against these views, the \textit{Formula} is very careful to distinguish the righteousness of faith before God from the renewal to good works, and to emphasize that the basis of this righteousness is the person and work of Christ as both human and divine, credited to the believer, not simply the essence of Christ’s divine righteousness blended with, merged into, or overwhelming the essence of the Christian.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 158-59. See also Martin Chemnitz, \textit{Examination of the Council of Trent}, trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 1:465, 580-81. Both justification and renewal are located in Christ. They are connected christologically, not merely logically. As Christ’s person is the source of forgiveness; he is also the source of new fruits, as the vine.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{BOC}, 482.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 562n101, 573n129, n131-32.
For these reasons the *Formula* states that good works are necessary, but in a logical sense as following the renewal of the believer, not in that works are necessary in order to accomplish or to retain one’s salvation. 53

“[N]either renewal, sanctification, virtues, nor good works are to be viewed or presented tanquam forma aut pars aut causa iustificationis (that is, as our righteousness before God or as a part or a cause of our righteousness). They are also not to be mixed into the article of justification under any other pretense, pretext, or terminology.” 54

Yet even with this strong distinction, the *Formula* reaffirms that justification is not just imputation, but also regeneration; not just a legal forgiveness without actual result, but the actual taking away of sin and granting of new life. When regeneration is used in a more limited yet legitimate sense to mean new birth (while technically excluding the fruits of this new birth, good works which occur as a result), regeneration is constitutive of justification, not just a product of it. “[Regeneration] is also used in the limited sense, “pro remissione peccatorum et adoptione in filios Dei....[Justification] is truly a rebirth, because a child of wrath becomes a child of God and is therefore brought from death to life.” 55 This regeneration does not mean that the believer becomes perfect, without any sin, so that justification always includes the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. 56

Justification in the *Formula*, as in the *Apology*, is both forgiveness and regeneration, the crediting and communication of righteousness.

53 SD 4.15-31.
54 SD 3.39.
55 SD 3.19-20.
56 SD 3.22-23.
The Formula also retains the instrumental notion of faith, including phraseology that hearkens to Christ and his righteousness as the form of faith. Faith “lays hold of (ergreift) and accepts (annimmt)” the merit of Christ. This merit “must be applied to us and appropriated (zugeeignet) through faith if we are to become righteous through it.”\(^{57}\) Faith is the “sole means and instrument with which and through which we may receive (empfangen) and accept (annahmen) God’s grace, the merit of Christ, and the forgiveness of sins....”\(^{58}\) This merit of Christ rests upon Christ’s “entire person,” so that faith looks to Christ’s merit not as if the works were separated from Christ’s person, but as they are accomplished specifically in the one person of Christ and inseparable from that person, both God and human.\(^{59}\) Although the word “form” is not used, the argument and trajectory of the Formula in this article follows closely Chemnitz’ insistence that faith can only be considered justifying, effective faith when it grasps—or is formed by—Christ.

Therefore, it is congruent with the Formula to argue, in the terms I have been using, that justification renews and bestows new life or character. The Holy Spirit is like an “artisan,” renewing and converting a person’s “mind, will, and heart.”\(^{60}\) This renewing work of the Holy Spirit is not only for new “impulses,” “movements,”

\(^{57}\) SD 3.13.

\(^{58}\) SD 3.31. The Formula also uses the term reckoned (gerechnet) in a number of places in this article, e.g. 3.14, 56, 58. Reckoning on the one hand, and appropriating, laying hold of, or receiving, on the other hand, are not in contradiction, but express the twofold work of justification as the imputation of Christ’s righteousness and the new birth as the beginning of actual righteousness, also on account of Christ’s righteousness.

\(^{59}\) SD 3.55-58.

\(^{60}\) SD 2.89-90.
“powers,” “gifts,” or “virtues,” but is the conversion of the sinful person into a person with a new “heart, mind, and disposition,” “new creatures for good works.

Thus, also in the Formula of Concord, faith is both that which justifies and that which renews. It both apprehends the righteousness of Christ for justification, and renews a person to do good works. Christ is the foundation and form both for justification and renewal. Christ as the one who justifies, also imprints and creates in the believer the new character or nature for the life of virtue, to produce fruits of good works.

### 3.4 Contemporary Questions of Union and Communication

The contemporary Finnish school of Luther research has reiterated the integrity of Christ, faith, and justification by highlighting Luther’s thought. Research began with the question of what could serve as a basis for ecumenical dialogue between Lutherans and the Eastern Orthodox. Tuomo Mannermaa responded with his study, In ipsa fide Christus adest (Helsinki, 1979), which argued that the presence of Christ in the Christian through faith “implies a real participation in God” and can be understood as corresponding to the Orthodox teaching of theosis. This claim and the subsequent work of the Finnish school quickly moved beyond the arena of ecumenical theology and

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61 SD 2.65, 70, 71.
62 SD 2.25; 4.7-8.
63 Vainio, Justification and Participation in Christ, 216.
64 The English edition, Mannermaa, Christ Present in Faith: Luther’s View of Justification, is translated from the German edition, Der im Glauben gegenwärtige Christus (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1989).
65 Mannermaa, "Why is Luther Research so Fascinating?" 2.
have inspired new research in Luther studies into the question of Christ’s presence and union with the Christian.

The Finns have presented their perspective as a corrective to nineteenth and early twentieth century Luther research. They maintain that this earlier Luther research, influenced by the philosophy of Hermann Lotze, argued that the being of others cannot be known or experienced, but that only the effect (Wirkung) of another can be known. Furthermore, because knowledge of the other does not include the being of the other, this knowledge receives its form only from the knower, the one affected by the other. Anyone or anything that is known, then, is known and understood only as perceived by the knower’s nature or soul. The knower’s form is imposed onto the effect of the other, so that knowledge is significantly filtered by the “constitution” of the knower.66

In this interpretation of nineteenth and early twentieth century Luther research, God’s relationship to a person, analogously, is not a fellowship or union of being, but the effects of his will in the person’s will. Just as knowledge is not the communication of a substance to the knower but the perception of effects, likewise the religious experience is not the communication of being but the effect of God’s will in our own will. The presence of God in the believer, then, is not the presence of being, but a “community of willing and of affecting.”67 Albrecht Ritschl and Karl Holl, two of the major scholars of nineteenth and early twentieth century Luther research, integrate this thinking into their theology of justification and union. They argue that when Luther speaks of Christ’s

66 Ibid., 5, 7.
67 Ibid., 7
presence in a believer, it means an “impulse of God’s will” or a “tool” by which God exercises his will in a person. Using Hermann Lotze’s philosophy of effect, they interpret all of Luther’s teachings about the presence of Christ as the effect of God’s will distinct from his real presence.\footnote{Ibid., 7-9. The thorough scholarly treatment of Lotze’s influence on Luther studies is Risto Saarinen, \textit{Gottes Wirken Auf Uns : Die Transzendentale Deutung Des Gegenwart-Chri$t-Motivs in Der Lutherforschung}, (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1989), 241. For a summary in English, see Mannermaa, "Why is Luther Research so Fascinating?," 4-9.}

Such an interpretation is indeed problematic, not only because of its distorted interpretation of Luther, but because of the moralistic framing of justification. Besides the lack of union with God, God’s activity in the Christian is God’s will working together with the will of the person, filtered through the nature or soul of the person. In other words, there is no forgiveness of sins, no bestowal of external righteousness, and there is not even the establishment of a new character. Rather, God only has a kind of moral effect working together with the fundamentally unchanged will of the person. In this perspective, God either becomes a tyrant, overwhelming the will of the person with his own will, or he brings about no fundamental change in the person. One Finnish scholar characterizes this moralism thusly: “When a Christian has become aware of forgiveness and finds himself freed from the punishment for sin, his mood changes and he begins to do good works toward others.”\footnote{Simo Peura, "Christ as Favor and Gift (Donum): The Challenge of Luther’s Understanding of Justification," in \textit{Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther}, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 47.} The Finns are correct to oppose this view from the Luther renaissance as being discontinuous with Luther’s own understanding of justification and sanctification.
The Finns have thereby positioned themselves as an alternative to what they see as the prevailing Luther scholarship since Ritschl and Holl.⁷⁰ They have also argued in some places that this Wirkungstheologie can be traced to Melanchthon’s differences with Luther (traced above), that the Melanchthonian view prevailed in the Formula of Concord, and that Lutheranism since the Formula of Concord has been dominated by the Melanchthonian view.⁷¹

However, it would be an exaggeration to say that all or even the most prominent Luther research of the twentieth century rejected some understanding of real union. During the second half of the twentieth century, major Lutheran scholars have moved away from the perspective of Holl and a forensic-only notion of justification. It would not be accurate to view the Finns as the first modern Lutherans to give attention to the believer’s union with Christ in justification.

For example, Gerhard Ebeling generally defends the relational nature of justification, but not a relation of mere effects. In the modern context, he argues, justification must be understood as the human person’s encounter with God as a confronting persona (Gegenüber) which relativizes all other confrontations. The address of Jesus Christ establishes this relationship with the transcendental God in the concrete situation, through the man Jesus Christ. This relationship with God establishes courage.

⁷⁰ Mannermaa, “Why is Luther Research so Fascinating?,” 9.; Vainio, Justification and Participation in Christ, 9. However, even while referring to a “one-sidedly forensic interpretation” of justification characterizing Lutheranism since Karl Holl and his school, Mannermaa acknowledges that it is due to the intense interest of the Luther Renaissance in Luther’s concept of faith that the work of the Luther Renaissance “inevitably” led to a deeper appreciation of the connection of faith to Christology. See Mannermaa, Christ Present in Faith, 7.

⁷¹ Vainio, Justification and Participation in Christ, 9-11.; Mannermaa, Christ Present in Faith, 4.
and trust, and takes away doubt and the uncertainty of self-grounding.\textsuperscript{72} Justification is grounded in this confrontation of Christ, the divine address who is received in faith and becomes the foundational companion \textit{(Gegenüber)}. Thus, participation with Christ is relational, yet defining of one’s character. In fact, Ebeling notes that justification includes having one’s being outside of oneself and in Christ, although he addresses this theoretically as a problem of maintaining worldly existence rather than a question of how one actually participates in Christ and receives a new character.\textsuperscript{73}

Wolfhart Pannenberg fully embraces the foundational role of union with Christ, declaring, “Ecstatic fellowship with Christ, to whom believers entrust themselves, forms the basis of Luther’s understanding of justification.”\textsuperscript{74} This “ecstatic fellowship” is the term he uses to describe the Finnish view.\textsuperscript{75} However, Pannenberg emphasizes carefully the \textit{ecstatic} nature of this fellowship. This fellowship by faith takes the believer outside of himself into union with Christ. The believer thus dwells in Christ, which also means that Christ dwells in the heart of the believer.\textsuperscript{76} Pannenberg argues that this view is compatible and complementary with the forensic view, unless the forensic verdict remains absolutely external.\textsuperscript{77} The theological challenge for Pannenberg is


\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 225


\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 215n368.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 216-17.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 219.
understanding how a believer is both outside of himself in Christ, and yet remains in himself in his empirical existence. This is explained through baptism, by which a person believes and is adopted “into the filial relation of Jesus Christ to the Father,” even while continuing in an earthly existence.\(^{78}\)

Both Ebeling and Pannenberg highlight that justification cannot be seen as either relation or union exclusive of the other, but rather that union and relation complement each other. Justification is the restoration of relationship—reconciliation—yet it is a relationship that is an intimate, real participation between those in relation, Christ and the believer. In fact, even a participatory union must be understood as a relation of some kind, unless the union were to result in a third, unique substance after the annihilation of the two substances which formed the union. None of the theologians under consideration argue for this.

There is another point to be gleaned from Ebeling and Pannenberg. Both recognize the difficulty of describing the union with Christ from an existential viewpoint. Existential ontology assumes that existence depends upon experience, so, as Ebeling notes, if one’s being is taken up in Christ, there is the problem of explaining how one maintains worldly existence. On the other hand, if the person remains in the worldly, empirical existence, the closest one comes to Christ is a relation that changes one’s “self-understanding” through “experiencing” Christ.\(^{79}\) In an existential-ontological

\(^{78}\) Ibid., 235.

framework, to be in Christ would mean to be taken out of the world. This question will be addressed further in the next chapter, when various models of union are considered.

Eberhard Jüngel, who has written the most recent comprehensive work on justification from the German perspective, defends and emphasizes the relational view of justification. In fact, when speaking of the righteousness of God, “we are always talking of a relational concept.” Sin, also, is an “ontic-existential realization” of the human “ontological structures,” a turning inward to “relationlessness.” Nevertheless, while Jüngel is implicitly critical of Mannermaa, he acknowledges that there is an “element of truth in T. Mannermaa’s interpretation of Luther.”

Indeed, Jüngel can hardly be said to hold the relational-intellectual view of justification attributed to Melanchthon by modern Luther research and the Finns. Jüngel criticizes the view that justification is purely imputed, and disassociates a Melanchthonian view from Lutheranism when Melanchthon is used to support a view of merely imputed justification. More importantly, Jüngel insists that righteousness is both imputed and imparted—that God makes a believer righteous—and that justification is real, ontological union with Christ.

Jüngel is concerned that justification be understood as God’s declaration of righteousness, not based on an ontological change in the nature of the believer.

Oswald Bayer, Robert W. Jenson and Simo Knuuttila (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft, 1997), 96, 104-5.

80 Jüngel, Justification, 74.
81 Ibid., 131-32, 179.
82 Ibid., 212n.
83 Ibid., 74, 205, 211, 213n146.
Logically, if not temporally, God’s declaration precedes the person being righteous. Righteousness can never be based on anything possessed or attributed to the person himself, but only in reference to Christ’s righteousness outside of him. Thus the relational sense of justification is upheld: a person is righteous by determination of someone else who relates to him, God, and on account of the righteousness of someone else in relation to him, Jesus Christ.  

Yet Jüngel unreservedly upholds that God’s righteousness is imparted. Upon God’s speaking the judgment of righteousness—with that word—the sinner becomes righteous and believes. “The imputation of extraneous righteousness (imputatio alienae iustitiae) can only be rightly grasped when it is seen as God granting divine righteousness in such a way as to effectively change the being of humans.”  

Justification is not based on ontological change, but it is ontological change. The imputation of righteousness imparts proper righteousness.

Jüngel further affirms that faith also cannot be separated from justification in any sequential way. Belief is neither subsequent to the declaration of righteousness, nor is it a prerequisite. Like righteousness, faith is created upon the speaking of God’s word. Faith is not a deliberative reception of what God offers, but an awakening to what God has done—and is indeed part of that awakening. Faith is the “discovering understanding of the divine decision about human beings.”

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84 Ibid., 205-9.
85 Ibid., 211. All emphases in Jüngel are his unless otherwise noted.
86 Ibid., 240-41
Christologically, God identifies himself with Jesus, who, in turn, has identified himself with all humanity. In this sacrifice which is approved by God, the human nature, not just one particular human person, dies and is resurrected. Faith becomes “the transfer of identity by which the individuals so identify themselves with the fate of Jesus that they know they have died and been raised from the dead with him.”

In Jüngel, then, we see a similar integration of Christ, faith, and justification that we see in Chemnitz’ synthesis of Luther and Melanchthon. Justification is the declaration of God that the sinner is righteous, a declaration which simultaneously imparts righteousness, creates faith, and communicates Jesus Christ to the believer. The relational aspect of justification is retained, as he understands the identification of Jesus with humanity and vice versa as a “transference of the subject.”

But for Jüngel, a relational understanding of justification does not rule out an understanding of union, and a very real understanding of union, at that.

On the negative side, peace means that every human being really died on the cross of Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:14; Col. 2:20, 3:3) and since the death of Christ the old self no longer has a future. ‘I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live’ (Gal. 2:19f). This negative side must on no account be seen as purely ‘symbolic’. It is not possible to interpret it ‘realistically’ enough!

Jüngel treats the question of union and renewal explicitly at one point, and for the sake of clarity I offer his extended comments:

87 Ibid., 161-63
88 Ibid., 159-161.
89 Ibid., 165.
[T]he claim that the justification of sinners is after all the renewal of the inner person can, under certain conditions, be interpreted in the best light and, thus viewed, can also represent the Protestant view.... What renews the inner person is the external Word, which addresses us from outside ourselves and grants us God’s righteousness. If any discussion of the gracious renewal of the inner person (*renovatio interioris hominis*) is to be acceptable to Protestant theology, it must never be seen as complementary, as an alternative or as completing the extrinsetist view of justification....

This occurs when we take the justifying Word of God seriously as one that *speaks to us creatively*. Such a Word can never remain ‘external’ to those addressed. Together with the righteousness of God that brings it to us, it touches us so greatly that it touches us more closely than we can touch ourselves. It becomes to us something more inward than our inmost being: *interior intimo meo*.

However, now we need to emphasize again that the justifying Word that so addresses and touches sinners does not let us remain in ourselves; it calls and places our inner being outside ourselves. If our inner being were to stay put, it would not be justified. This is what creatively defines those who are in concord with God: they come out of themselves in order to come to themselves—outside themselves, among other persons, and above all with the person of the wholly other God....[The Word] calls us out of ourselves as it comes so close to us, as it speaks and relates to what is outside ourselves, to what has been definitively moved by God’s righteousness. It speaks and relates to the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ as they are outside us. The justifying Word from the cross addresses our inner being in this exterior aspect of our existence so that there we may come to ourselves and thus really, effectively be renewed.\(^90\)

For Jüngel, justification is both the imputation of Christ’s righteousness and the rebirth of a new person, the creation of a righteous person. The declaration and act of imputation also creates the righteous person, the “inceptive” aspect of righteousness. The righteous person existentially and to the senses remains in conflict with the old, sinful nature, so that in this sense, justification can be seen as a process, not complete, but in progress until temporal death, when the old nature is fully and finally destroyed. But because the righteous nature is already granted in Christ and is grounded not only in

\(^{90}\) Ibid., 212-13.
faith but in hope for the future, in the hope of the promise that one will stand before God—*coram Deo*—righteous, this inceptive righteousness is full and true. It is the reality of imputation.\(^91\)

Anthropologically, what is happening with the believer in Jüngel’s understanding? May we refer to this relational union with Christ and renewal of the self as the establishment or creation of a new character? We may, so long as we recognize that this is not merely the establishment of a new character, but the creation of a new nature, which, because this nature is more fundamental than character, also includes a new character. As we noted earlier, Hauerwas came to a parallel conclusion, that character is more than orientation or qualification, but also agency and determination. From the perspective of subjectivity, a new agency is really a new person, created in God’s justifying act. Because this new creation is righteous and established in Christ, we may also say that this character is Christian or Christlike, and good. The new self is not Christ himself, nor a member avatar of Christ, but it is a newly created personal self of the believer, a self who has been called outside of the old, sinful, outer, fleshly self and nature. Both of these “selves” remain in our temporal experience and sensation, so that one’s proper righteousness emerges out of the conflict between these two.\(^92\)

We conclude this review of justification and communion with Christ in the following representatively Lutheran summary of these teachings: Firstly, justification is God’s declaration that a person is righteous (imputation). Secondly, this declaration

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\(^91\) Ibid., 217-21.

\(^92\) Ibid.; see Romans 7:15-25.
simultaneously creates the faith which acknowledges, receives, and affirms the righteousness of Christ. Thirdly, Christ’s righteousness is not only imputed, but the declaration is an intimate, creative word which imparts righteousness by pulling the old self outside of oneself into fellowship with Christ, which new, intimate relationship is the creation of a new self or nature. Fourthly, this proper righteousness and fellowship is never something that becomes an absolute possession of the believer, as if the new nature were an essence that could exist apart from Christ. “Justifying grace simply cannot be possessed by us in the sense of a habitus, for then it would no longer be the God of grace himself…. Just as human beings cannot in any real sense have or possess themselves, so we cannot have or possess God or his grace.”\(^93\) The nature of a person is such that he is truly himself only when in relation to others. Autonomous, isolated possession of righteousness by a human person other than Christ is impossible, for this righteousness is gained in relational union with Christ. Yet the new nature of the believer in union with Christ, created by God’s justifying work, establishes as a ground for ethics this new person or character.

### 3.5 A Critical Consideration of the Finnish School and the Poignancy of Union

The Finnish School of Luther research has been criticized for a selective reading of Luther and for being too influenced by ecumenical motivations to offer a truly scholarly account of Luther’s views on justification and union.\(^94\) I have also shown that


\(^{94}\) See, e.g., Klaus Schwarzwäller, "Verantwortung Des Glaubens," in *Freiheit Als Liebe Bei Martin Luther : Referate = Freedom as Love in Martin Luther : Papers*, eds. Dennis D. Bielfeldt and Klaus
their argument is not groundbreaking in that the question of the relation of union to justification has been treated regularly by others in the Lutheran tradition. Nevertheless, their research is helpful in isolating and emphasizing the thinking and terminology of Luther with respect to union with Christ. While their conclusions have sometimes gone beyond the evidence, when read with caution, they introduce a helpful perspective into contemporary Luther studies. With this attitude I will briefly consider the criticisms of the Finnish School in order to highlight what may be beneficially taken away from their work.

Schwarzwäller and others demonstrate that the Finns have read their own "structuring idea" into the source documents. In their efforts to find common ground with the Eastern Orthodox, they have sought for comparisons and similarities to theosis in the thought of Luther. In their investigation of the union of Christ with the believer, they have imposed an understanding of divinization onto the notion of union. Rather than uncover a lost perspective of Luther, they have presented a lopsided one.95

While it is outside the purview of this study to consider the Finnish relation to Eastern Orthodoxy, with respect to the study of regeneration, the new character or person need not be understood as theosis, but as a change of agency or orientation due to Christ. I do argue that within the Lutheran perspective this change comes about with union with Christ. However, this union need not be understood in the sense of the

95 Schwarzwäller, "Verantwortung des Glaubens," 146.
Eastern Orthodox doctrine of theosis. Thus, even if the Finns are found to read too much of their own perspective of theosis into Luther, this does not detract from the renewed attention their research has given more generally to understanding union in Luther, and my further argument that character development has its basis in this union.

Secondly, for Schwarzwälder, the Finnish interpretation goes against the overall thrust and force of the texts they consider. The Finns are able to elide their conclusions with the “immanent dynamic” of the work and thereby present their conclusions as naturally following from them. Mannermaa emphasizes the question of the favor and gift, and the unity between them, when a broad survey of Luther’s writings suggests this distinction is not of major theological significance to Luther. More generally, in Luther’s writings, the notion of gift is tied primarily to the Holy Spirit. This suggests a more significant role for the Holy Spirit in the theology and ontology of union than the Finns typically recognize.⁹⁶

This criticism is acknowledged and generally accepted. Mannermaa does rely heavily on the favor-gift distinction in Luther’s Against Latomus, and does so to argue for the precedence of union to justification. My own analysis of the material above has not argued for this precedence, but rather that faith, justification, and union with Christ occur in mutual relationship to each other, with God’s justifying declaration creating the faith which received imputed and imparted righteousness, thereby also imparting union with Christ. The priority of union over justification is not necessary for the argument that character is formed by union with Christ, for character is something that is

⁹⁶ Ibid.
established from and grows out of justification and union. Furthermore, I have presented an understanding of the way the union involves the work of the Holy Spirit, in that the Holy Spirit operates within a person due to the presence of Christ in and for the person. (The work of the Holy Spirit will be taken up in the following chapters.)

Thirdly, for Schwarzwäller, it is unclear how the terms surrounding the question of union are to be understood. He says that the Finns seem simply and unequivocally to equalize all of the following: God’s “being,” his “righteousness,” “Jesus,” the “being of faith,” “real participation,” and “divinized being of faith.” Luther’s doxological and kerygmatic language undermines the logical or systematic use of these terms, so that it is impossible to determine what kind of ontological relationship Luther has in mind. To read an ontological meaning into them discards the doxological sense and also minimizes the eschatological tension of the saint-sinner dichotomy, which is important in Luther’s thought. Similarly, Schwarzwäller accuses the Finns of confusing literal and metaphorical terms: “Luther expresses in a large number of various uses the connection of the believing human person with God, that is to say, Jesus Christ—from the joyous exchange, to the famous ‘one cake,’ to Christ as virtually the persona of the believer—and these uses are in many ways linguistically pregnant and appear as illustrations.”

Shwarzwäller goes on to add that Luther is not concerned with ontology, per se. Luther’s concern for human existence or life had to do with a person’s standing before God, not in an abstract sense, but as one living and with the possibility of living or dying

97 Ibid., 147. “Luther drückt in einer Fülle verschiedenster Wendungen die Zusammengehörigkeit des glaubenden Menschen mit Gott bzw. Jesus Christus aus - vom fröhlichen Wechsel über den berühmten ,einen Kuchen’ bis hin zu Christus als nachgerade persona des/der Glaubenden - , und diese Wendungen sind vielfach sprachlich prägnant und erscheinen als bildhaft.”
eternally. Not just being, but being in relation matters to Luther. More significantly, to raise ontology to the level of significance which the Finns have is to place God along with all other creatures under the conception of being. “But this is possible only under two conditions, that being is the comprehensive parameter and that the area of universalized abstraction is the reality.” Then to take God described this way and bring him into such an immanent connection and unrestricted communicability is to deny him to be God. The concept of being is set before and over God. 98

These last few points, I believe, are the weakest of Schwarzwäller’s criticisms. Schwarzwäller seems unable to see that the metaphorical language can be communicating the comparison of union or participation. He suggests that we do not think of a husband and wife giving their being or participating in the other’s being, although it is not at all clear that we do not conventionally think this way. From this he wants to distinguish between participation and fellowship of love. For Schwarzwäller it is an absurdity that the metaphorical language of God’s mercy and giving of himself should be shifted to ontological language of empowerment, especially after “almost a century of categorical research.” 99 While this dissertation cannot investigate the theological ramifications of the concepts of being and God, this is where Schwarzwäller seems best to fit Saarinen’s criticisms of neo-Kantianism and falling guilty of separating effects from being under the influence of German philosophy. Saarinen’s work may be

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98 Ibid., 146-48.
99 Ibid., 147-48.
the strongest and most impactful of the Finnish research, and Schwarzwäller has not countered Saarinen’s argument, but seems to fit it.

Thus, although much of Luther’s language is analogical, the analogy still indicates a participation or union. The joyous exchange is a real exchange of sin and righteousness for Luther; the one cake is a confession of the sharing between Christ and his people of all sufferings and blessings. One of Luther’s main points in using the cake analogy is to present an understanding of the unity of Christ with the people of the church. In some cases, Luther would even understand Christ to be the subject of the believer, in that it is by Christ’s reason, will, and strength that a Christian acts righteously. And Luther does not shy away from insisting on ontological language in his discussion of the Lord’s Supper. The simple, basic point that the Finns are making about ontology is that union with Christ is real. That is also the point for this dissertation.

Finally, there is the criticism of the Finns from a classic Lutheran position on justification, offered by Mark Mattes. In his treatment of Jenson, Mattes argues that the Finns base the imputation of righteousness and God’s declaratory verdict of righteous on Christ’s indwelling. Logically, if not temporally, the indwelling comes first, followed by God’s declaration of righteousness. Mattes says that the basis for righteousness, however, must remain outside the believer in the declaration of God. Christians always are to be directed to the outward, objective proclamation of the gospel in Christ as the only way to be converted from egocentric self-reliance. Were the imputation of God to be based on Christ’s unifying presence with the believer, believers would be tempted to look to some kind of evidence of Christ’s presence in themselves as the confidence for
their justification. Only by retaining the priority of the forensic declaration can the purpose of consolation and the resulting justifying faith be retained.100

Mattes affirms that forensic justification is effective, just that the declaration must logically come first. If the declaration comes second, it must be based on the extent to which the human subject in se is righteous. He has no difficulty affirming that the believer receives Christ and all his benefits, even using images of perichoresis to describe this union, such as “saturation,” the baking of Christ and the believers in one cake, and the closeness of fire and iron in heated iron. Yet he wants to affirm that even this interior, renewing righteousness of Christ remains, properly, Christ’s, and not the human subject’s, an error he believes the Finns make. Mattes sees an ontic bond of Christ with the believer as granting the believer an inherent righteousness before God that somehow no longer relies on Christ and is established or developed by the human subject. In his mind, this teaches a false doctrine of ascent, of moving ever closer in relationship to God because of growth in righteousness that pleases God.101

These are important criticisms, and relate to the proposal of justification establishing new character by questioning exactly what kind of union is occurring in justification, and how this bond communicates righteousness and establishes it in a believer. As indicated in my earlier analysis, I am in basic agreement with Mattes with respect to the location of righteousness and the sequence of its communication to the believer. The Finnish argument that Christ’s presence in a person becomes the basis for


God’s declaration of righteousness cannot be substantiated as Luther’s view or the view of the Lutheran confessions. However, as Mattes’ (and others’) response indicates, the Finnish research has redirected attention to the question of union with Christ, the effects of union, and clarifying what kind of union this might be. It is for this reason that I have critically treated their work, and will continue to consider it in the following chapter. There I will propose some philosophical or theological models of union in an attempt to better explain the relationship between union and Christian character.
CHAPTER FOUR

A BELIEVER’S UNION WITH CHRIST:

PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 The Meaning of Union

We began the last chapter by responding with Lutheran resources to Hauerwas’ challenge that justification bestows a new character or person. We have come to the point where we recognize that such a new character or creation comes about through justification and the accompanying union with Christ, and we must attempt to describe this union.¹ My description will not be exclusively theological, but will include

¹ Hauerwas himself suggests a conception of union in "The Sanctified Body: Why Perfection Does Not Require a 'Self',' chap. 4 in Sanctify them in the Truth: Holiness Exemplified (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 81. His way of understanding the new person in relation to the person of Christ, in whom one participates, is to challenge the modernist conception of the self. This modernist conception overemphasizes the duality between the body and the soul, so that the self becomes, in a way, an observer of the body. The self is distinct or aloof from the body, with the conclusion that the self is only the spirit of a person. Such a modernist conception is contrary to the Pauline perspective, which portrays the body as “permeable” or “communicative” (Ibid., 81-82, 87-89). Hauerwas gets these terms from Dale Martin, The Corinthian Body (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) and Arthur Frank, The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). The permeable body of the Christian is not an individual body, but a body in participation with the body of Jesus Christ and other Christians. Such a corporate body receives its identity from Christ, his victory over sin and death in the cross and resurrection, yet is also corrupted by the persistence of unconfessed and unforgiven sin. Thus Paul is concerned with the exclusion of the unrepentant from within the church community. Likewise, the communicative body experiences contingency and also openly shares and communicates herself with others, and receives the communication of others to herself. Such a communication is not mere words, but the story experienced in each other’s lives. This communicative body very much comes out of the narrative perspective embraced by Hauerwas. Nevertheless, if the point may be broadened, it is that a
philosophical descriptions which may help conceptualize by analogy this \textit{mystical} union between a believer and Jesus Christ.

Firstly, the presence of Christ should not be understood merely as a supernatural quality or power that is infused. This would be to liken the presence of Christ with the Roman Catholic understanding of habitual grace. Without denying that the gifts of grace can in some instances be likened to habitual grace, the presence of Christ should not be confused with or reduced to it.\footnote{Robert Preus, \textit{Justification and Rome} (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Academic Press, 1997), 45.} Even more, the impression should be avoided that a human person can possess the deity of God according to her own self-subsistence.\footnote{Lehmkühler, \textit{Inhabitatio}, 287.}

Secondly, although the notion of union seems to hearken to categories of Greek philosophical ontology, it need not refer to this. Rather, the language and categories of biblical ontology may be pursued, whether in harmony with or contrast to Greek philosophy. Luther rejected the scholastic integration of Aristotelian metaphysics into the Christian teaching on grace because the scheme downplayed both the impact of sin and the renewal of the human person, treating them as accidents. The criticism is not of ontology \textit{in se}, but of an Aristotelian or Greek metaphysics, physics, nature, or law. Sin person is not self-determining, or even self-consciously distinct from one’s physical experience, but that identity is caught up with other people--other bodies, with whom we interact.

Thus, for Hauerwas, Christian identity is bodily, relational, and corporate, grounded in Christ’s body, who is the head of all the members, yet these members give and receive of their bodily experiences in shaping one another. Personhood is not individualistic; union is a union of experiences and actions. Yet as helpful as this conception may be in opposing the modernist, individualist conception of the self, it does not really describe the manner of union. Furthermore, it is difficult to see in Hauerwas’ model how the Christian society would differ from other societies. Communication is not a communication of substance, but a communication of stories, experiences, and actions, things which can be shared by any society. Hauerwas would say that the difference is precisely in the content and narrative of the story shared, but this does not seem adequate to explain the Lutheran conception of union which includes Christ’s being, not just his story.
and grace simply do not fit into an Aristotelian scheme of substance and accidents. Sin is not merely an accident, an attribute that comes and goes, but it corrupts the “rectitude” of all human powers. Yet sin is not a substance. Likewise, grace does not simply come in as a thing and attach itself to human nature, but it is both the favor of God more forceful than personal sin, and also the power of God to restore the rectitude of humanity. That is, grace cannot be understood according to the Greek philosophical scheme as substance or accident. Likewise, in undertaking this investigation, we are not excluding analogies of philosophical ontology, but they must adequately meet the criticisms of theology.

This is consistent with the Lutheran tradition, in which we find a rich conception of union with Christ. Besides the recent Finnish research, the notion of true, mystical union with God is basic to Lutheran theology. The *Formula* condemns the position that only God’s gifts, and not God himself, dwells in the believer. The Finns have rightly picked up on and developed the truth that not only Luther, but Chemnitz and Melanchthon taught the indwelling of God. In some instances it seems that Luther does not try to explain the manner of union in detail, confessing his ignorance and inability to understand it. Luther states that Christ is truly present in faith, not just an object, but as

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5 Ibid., 38-39.

6 SD 3.65.

7 See Vainio, *Justification and Participation in Christ*, 81-91, for the affirmation that Melanchthon believed in the indwelling of God, although God the Holy Spirit is emphasized rather than God the Son.
one who is present. Yet he admits that the way Christ is present is incomprehensible to
the human mind, only that he is present in faith and lives in the heart. Yet in keeping
with the appropriateness of philosophical analogy, Luther was determined to
characterize the indwelling in a certain way, as biblical and revealed, and therefore
known in a certain way, even if not explicable or completely comprehensible. Because
analogical language is language of proportionality, it evokes recognition of who God is
and what he does, even if it does not reveal the full, deepest, or precise meaning.

In interpreting Luther’s ontology, Mannermaa is often misunderstood as trying
to introduce Aristotelian categories into Lutheran theology, but in keeping with the
method I describe above, he points out that theological ontology surpasses the bounds
of Aristotelian categories. The terms ontological and Being are retained in a more
foundational sense, because they describe real existence. Their simpler meaning of real
is emphasized. Thus, when Mannermaa speaks of participation, he means simply that
there is participation in the mutual, real existence of the two persons.

He argues that Luther’s model of theological ontology is expressed in his 1514
Christmas Sermon on John 1:1-14. Here Luther states that the being of God exists in the
procession of the Word from the Father, that God in himself is the movement

[8] Mannermaa, Christ Present in Faith: Luther's View of Justification, 27; Luther, Lectures on
Galatians 1535, LW 26:129-130.

[9] Paul Louis Metzger, "Luther and the Finnish School: Mystical Union with Christ: An Alternative


Sein Christi Im Glauben Als Strukturierendes Prinzip Der Theologie Luthers, eds. Anja Ghiselli, Kari Kopperi
and Rainer Vinke (Helsinki; Erlangen: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft; Martin-Luther-Verlag, 1993), 14-15.
(Bewegung) of God of begetting the Son, by which God lives or is. God is the act of
motion as such. The act of motion needs to be the act by which the Word is brought
forth; it is not just any act of motion, but the begetting of the Son which is the essence
of God.12 One of the implications of this begetting being the being of God is that
ontology and relation share aspects. The relation of the Father to the Son is “at the
same time” (zugleich) the Being of God.

The movement, actus mobilis, as such is the esse of God itself. Relatio and esse
are thus concepts interwoven with each other. This mutual integrity of relation
and being is, as shall be shown, of substantive meaning for Luther’s
understanding of the participation of humanity in God, a participation which
happens in faith.13

To be in relation to God means to participate in the divine nature in an ontological way.
Luther seems to confirm this point because he says elsewhere that God becomes the
human person, and the human person becomes God,14 and “in faith we do not merely
have the Word, [but] we also are it.”15 This does not mean that human beings actually
become God, but that there is a communion of being that is best understood through
ontological terminology.16

The connection between relation and being is made also in the consideration of
the essence of a subject’s intellect or desire. According to Mannermaa, in Luther’s

12 Ibid., 10-11


14 “ideo Deus fit homo, ut homo fiat Deus,” WA 1, 28, 25-32.

15 WA 1, 28, 41.

16 Ibid., 16-19

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philosophical understanding, the esse of the intellect or of love is the thing actually thought or loved, respectively. Without an object to be grasped, the intellect and love are merely potential, but not in existence. It is impossible to think nothing and there still to be an intellect; it is impossible to desire no one or nothing and there still to be a will. Without an object these do not exist. Luther says that the object of the intellect or the affects is the being and act of these; without an object they are like matter without form. Conceptually, then, the act and being of the soul relies on an object, who is, in the case of faith, God himself. When God is grasped by the soul, through faith, then faith has an existence, it is the new person, it is the divinized man, Jesus Christ, living in the person. The aspects of relation and being cannot be separated in matters of the soul or spirit. As a communication, it must be relational.

When a person comes to believe God, God forms the person after Himself, that is, in the likeness of love. This argument shows up further, implicitly, in Luther’s “Disputation on the Human Person.” In the disputation, the human person apart from grace is reduced to “simple material” (pura materia) which must again be formed by God for the person’s “future life,” that is, when the image of God has been “remolded and perfected” in the person. This remolding begins with justification—with Luther, the

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

18 WA 1, 29, 22-31; Mannermaa, Hat Luther Eine Trinitarische Ontologie?, 20-21. Thus not any kind of relation is union, and this is an important point in Mannermaa’s argument. Gebhardt, at one point, tries to argue that all relation is a form of being, and can be considered a kind of participation: “Beziehung’ is thought of as a specific (namely: foundational) form of being” Gebhardt, Heil Als Kommunikationsgeschehen, 51. However, the kind of union through justification is not just a foundational form of being, but a sharing of substances. See also Bielfeldt, "The Ontology of Deification," 104-5.
definition of the human person is “Man is justified by faith.”¹⁹ Luther develops it again a bit more in the Galatians lectures when he refers to Christ as “mea forma”. This form of Christ is grasped by faith, but specifically by having nothing else in view but Christ. The person, the Law, and other temptations must be forgotten and not looked upon, so that only Christ is seen. “But here Christ and my conscience must become one body, so that nothing remains in my sight but Christ, crucified and risen….For the Christ on whom our gaze is fixed, in whom we exist, and who also lives in us, is the Victor and the Lord over the Law, sin, death, and every evil.”²⁰ These later arguments, from the 1530s, resonate with the earlier Johannine argument.²¹

The presence of God is a coming of God, an entering into the soul of a person. This corresponds to the believer’s passivity of receiving this coming of God. Faith is formed by Christ, and the person is formed by Christ when Christ enters into the person. The acts of God occur where God is. Where he is present, there he acts, to form those in whom he is present. God does not act according to his needs or his limitations, but according to what he has to give, and for whom he exists. When he is present for the believer, he acts on behalf of the believer.²² As Luther says, “faith makes a person.”²³

¹⁹ WA 39/1, 176, 33-177, 10; LW 34, 139.
²⁰ WA 40/1, 282, 21-22, 282, 14-16; LW 25, 166-67.
²¹ One challenge to this position is that even when a person recognizes or grasps an object intellectually and/or with the will, he is not grasping the object itself, but only an abstract concept (Lehmkuhler, Inhabitatio, 295). Medieval realism understands the idea itself to be reality, yet this is still problematic for the incarnational, Lutheran tradition, which is not content with ideas, but with tangible and experiential means of grace. However, this kind of participation is not merely intellectual or affective, but a participation of faith, which is grasping the incarnate, present Christ in the Word and sacraments. This point will be developed further below and especially in the next chapter.

²² Lehmkühler, Inhabitatio, 297-98.
Karsten Lehmkühler describes Luther’s understanding of presence as a location. The human person is a “place” where God dwells, a notion which fits with Luther’s two-fold concept of the person: someone who exists with and in the presence of other people, and someone who exists as the foundation of characteristics and actions. A person is someone who is in relation, who is viewed, respected and judged by others. A person is also someone who acts, out of whom moral purpose drives behavior and works. Yet without relation to God, a person has no standing before God. It is as if she does not exist. With the righteous judgment of justification, a person receives standing before God, a new persona, upon which righteous acts are built.24

In Lehmkühler’s interpretation, the new judgment grants a new being, a new nature, which is the life of Christ in the person: “Not I, but Christ in me.”25 The judgment and presence of Christ are complementary and the presence is real, especially in view of salvation. It is actually God himself who creates the new person, not just that God presents a recognizable picture as representative or exemplary.26 The relation with God becomes determinative of the kind of actions she will produce. The judgment (Urteil) of God gives the person a true, meaningful existence. “The person as source of her deeds is minted through a judgment issued over her, a judgment toward which she—in

24 Lehmkühler, Inhabitio, 299-301
25 Ibid., 301
26 Ibid., 314
acceptance or refusal—aims and shapes herself.”

Yet the presence of the new age under the form of the old either can in no way be described, or only with analogies....[I]t must remain clear that “recognition” in this connection—above all in the Bible—refers to an occurrence that happens to the person, and that this occurrence transcends all natural, mediated insights.

Oswald Bayer offers a similar account of the being of God. The ontology of God is his word, the “power of communication.” Bayer does not mean this in a postmodern sense, as if God emerges in existence due to his speech, although he is not dismissive of postmodern accounts of existence and relation. Rather, God’s speech is from eternity, the Word, and this Word is God himself. This “existence” is outside of time and prior to any created thing. God’s Word is not only his speech and action, but his being. Thus, from eternity, God’s being is relation, known theologically as the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This eternal relation of being—one substance yet three persons—is the relationship into which human beings are invited in creation.

Bayer refers to sin, in the context of ontology, as the “ontology of self-justification.” Rather than receive one’s being from God, created by God’s speaking and invited into the Trinitarian love, Adam and all human beings seek to justify themselves through personal action, effort or speech. The Word of God in creation and nature is

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27 "Die Person als Quelle ihrer Taten ist geprägt durch ein über sie ergehendes Urteil, nach dem sie sich—in Zustimmung oder Ablehnung—richtet und entwirft," Ibid., 301.


rejected. The human person by nature is faithless. Yet the Word is offered repeatedly to the human person, this time as a word of promise and forgiveness, as a word of life and blessedness. The Word would free the human person from the self-entrapment of sin. This Word, still offered, still invites the person into the “narrative” of mercy, in which the whole being of the Son is given to humankind. It is rehearsed and offered repeatedly in baptism and the Lord’s Supper, the bodily word of Christ. By this word the reconciliation of humankind is communicated to the believer.

This narrative, or speaking, of redemption is union with God, the one who is in his speaking from eternity. The narrative should be understood neither as a simple historical account of past events, nor as a timeless, transcendental structure of relation. Although salvation does occur through historical events and is described this way, it is not in this way limited to the empirical account of these historical events, nor to a believer’s historical appropriation of them. To say that a Christian participates in the being of Christ does not mean that this has a predictable historical or empirical manifestation. On the other hand, the union is not reducible to the experience with the immanent divinity, whether in this is perceived to be immediate, or through the participation in the word and sacraments. On the opposite extreme, the union is not

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30 Oswald Bayer, "Luthers Verständnis Des Seins Jesu Christi Im Glauben," in Luther Und Ontologie: Das Sein Christi Im Glauben Als Strukturierendes Prinzip Der Theologie Luthers, eds. Anja Ghiselli, Kari Kopperi and Rainer Vinke (Helsinki; Erlangen: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft; Martin-Luther-Verlag, 1993), 99-100.

31 Ibid., 103-4
merely a transcendental relation between my rational or spiritual self, and the mind or spirit of God.  

Rather, as Bayer explains, the redemption of the Christian occurs through the participation in the “leibliche Wort,” Christ who is presented to the believer through preaching, baptism, absolution, and the Holy Communion. This is not a mere existential experience, but an objective participation, analogous in a certain way to the communication of attributes in Christ’s person. “The communication [of Christ’s presence] is effective in the bodily Word, present sensibly and with certainty, and by the faith created by God. This communication has, in a manner of speaking, an interior quality.” This presence of God, in a theologically ontological way, is in the believer, completely and definitively.

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32 Ibid., 104-5.

33 “Die im leiblichen Wort sinnlich gewiß geschehende und im von Gott geschaffenen Glauben wirksame Kommunikation hat gleichsam eine „Innenseite”,” Ibid., 106.

34 Ibid., 105-07. The indwelling of God is the activity of God in-forming the person in his image, in that he causes the believer to take hold of him, and in fact takes the believer out of his old self, and grounds him in the image of God. This direct in-forming differs from idolatry, which is mediation through images only perceived to be spiritual. The mediation of God is established and grounded in divinely instituted means of grace, and further persists by the Holy Spirit as a direct relation between God and the human person. (Lehmkühler, Inabitio, 315-16). God unites with the person through the means of grace, yet remains united even apart from the means. They testify to his gracious presence, which is not otherwise experienced or felt. The means of grace, although perceptible objects, are not idols because they do not communicate what is merely perceived. The bread and wine of the Holy Communion are not put forth for the believer to trust in the divinity of bread and wine, but in God who binds himself with these things, even while mysteriously remaining God and not bread and not wine. Idols make a person dependent by arousing inclinations and desires in a corrupt way. Idols play off of one’s worldly experience. The idol sensible to one’s perception relies on the sensations of the flesh to grow in its corrupting strength. But the water of baptism or bread and wine of Holy Communion do not seek to grow in their own status for the Christian, but point deeper and beyond the surface experience and perception. The Word and sacraments bear the presence of God to the believer, even though the divine, mysterious presence may not itself be felt or sensed (Lehmkühler, Inabitio, 328). This will be explored further in the next chapter.
As we have seen from the previous chapter, Luther does not differentiate between the person, presence, work, and body being grasped through faith. “For [Christ] is wholly with flesh and blood in the believing heart.” This affirms a substantive union with the believer. His description of the union is perhaps most complete in his preaching on John 6. Here Luther repeats Christ’s own illustration, that as Christ lives in the Father, so the believer lives in Christ (John 6:57), that is, with the essence, life, and righteousness of God:

This applies in every respect except that we are not one natural essence with God as Christ is.

Just as God and man are one indivisible person in Christ, so Christ and we also become one inseparable body and flesh. His flesh is in us, and our flesh is in Him, so that He also abides in us with His essence, etc. But this differs from a person union; it is not as sublime and profound as the union of Christ, the true man, with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the eternal Godhead. And yet it is devised so that Christ, with His flesh and blood, becomes one body with us, that I am His, as all the members of the body belong together....

Just as He derives His life from the Father from eternity, so we too, shall live in Him, but with this difference, that He is God’s Son from eternity, and that He accepts us in mercy as heirs of His possessions and makes us partakers of His divinity.

In this passage, Luther uses both language of perichoresis and language of adoption. In Luther’s conception, the divinity is communicated to the humanity of the believer, as it is for Christ, except that with Christ, this is a natural communication, through birth, and for the believer, this is a communication through adoption, and the union between Christ and the believer is therefore not as strong.

35 WA 19, 498,30-499, 36.
36 WA 33, 224ff; LW 23:144-155.
37 LW 23:148-150.
Thus the communication through faith differs from all other kinds of communication of the intellect or the will. The person is not formed by what she chooses to observe, reflect upon or desire, but God encounters her spiritually by faith, and she receives her personhood from the indwelling of God.\(^{38}\) The time and space of this indwelling is created by preaching and the sacraments. The union begins in time through the means of grace, and it also creates the “space” of the church, where people dwell in God.\(^{39}\) “Faith is the creator of the divinity, not in [His] person, but in us.”\(^{40}\) God is not detected or perceived through the senses, feelings, or other empirical means, but only through faith.\(^{41}\)

Besides the Trinitarian explanation, two other features of union should be noted here: Luther’s union is bound to preaching and the sacraments, and thus avoids mysticism. Indeed, Luther explicitly rejects a Dionysian view of union, which would understand union with God as some kind of journey and ascent to be worked at.\(^{42}\) Secondly, Luther affirmed and taught hypostatic, communicated properties in the union of the divine and human natures in Christ and in the believer.\(^{43}\)

This hypostatic, communication of properties helps explain how Luther can say that humanity becomes God, while not meaning that human beings become God in

\(^{38}\) Lehmkühler, *Inhabitio*, 322.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 326-27.

\(^{40}\) WA 40/1, 360, 5-25.

\(^{41}\) Lehmkühler, *Inhabitio*, 264-65

\(^{42}\) LW 54:112.

\(^{43}\) Vainio, *Justification and Participation in Christ*, 12 n. 36.
their own essence. Because the being of creatures is only analogous to God’s being, the existence of creatures is always a becoming, while God’s is. The being of creatures exists in and on the being of God, and the being of God always operates in the being of creatures. Yet there remains a distinction between the being of the creature and the being of God, nor does the creature emanate from God. Even though existence relies on God’s being, presence, and effect in the life of the creature, there is elusiveness to this being so that the creature is built in and on Him, but never possesses Him.⁴⁴

Thus two extremes should be avoided: one of simply dissolving being into becoming, and the other of understanding being in an utterly static and unchanging manner.⁴⁵ For the human person in Christ, being involves becoming, maturing more into the creature God intends her to be without sin. Although Mannermaa’s language is not always careful enough to demonstrate his agreement with these kinds of clarifications, generally he does recognize in Luther the denial of the believer’s possession of God’s essence, a mixture of the divine and human essences, or literal deification of the human substance. Furthermore if being is in relation, which includes movement, then this would correspond conceptually to the movement of the human person in becoming more mature and perfected.

⁴⁴ Aleksander Radler, "Theologische Ontologie Und Reale Partizipation an Gott in Der Frühen Theologie Luthers: Korreferat Zum Vortrag Von Tuomo Mannermaa," in Luther Und Ontologie: Das Sein Christi Im Glauben Als Strukturierendes Prinzip Der Theologie Luthers, eds. Anja Ghiselli, Kari Kopperi and Rainer Vinke (Helsinki; Erlangen: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft; Martin-Luther-Verlag, 1993), 33-34. In his just quoted sermon on John 6, Luther also said the union with Christ was not as strong as Christ’s personal union. We will address this apparent consistency as we continue in this chapter.

To summarize Luther’s ontology of a person as we have sketched it so far, being is relation, not only for a person relating to other people or to God, but also for God’s own being as Trinitarian in three persons. Human nature since the Fall rejects the created, natural relationship with God, reducing the self to relationlessness, pure material, or a person turned in on oneself. Such a person is gradually deteriorating into destruction. On the other hand, when a person through the regenerating judgment of God begins to believe in Christ, the believer is united with Christ in a perichoretic and filial way, re-establishing the believer’s relationship with God and establishing the believer as a new creation or person. At this point we need to consider in greater detail what this perichoresis, adoption, and new creation is.

4.2 Models of Union

4.2.1 Recent Proposals for Thinking about Union

Risto Saarinen echoes Luther’s statements that the exact nature of the union cannot be described in a philosophical manner, as it is an article of faith. The simplest way it can be described is as a “real-ontic” union under a worldview of theological ontology.\(^{46}\) He does, however, from this theological perspective, go on to treat three possible views of union: perichoresis, deification (Vergöttlichung), and adoption (Gotteskindschaft).

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\(^{46}\) Risto Saarinen, “Die Teilhabe an Gott Bei Luther Und in Der Finnischen Lutherforschung,” in *Luther Und Ontologie: Das Sein Christi Im Glauben Als Strukturierendes Prinzip Der Theologie Luthers*, eds. Anja Ghiselli, Kari Kopperi and Rainer Vinke (Helsinki; Erlangen: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft; Martin-Luther-Verlag, 1993), 170-71.
Perichoresis is the interpenetration of two things to such an intimate extent that there is a communication of properties, yet not so great an interpenetration that the two things blend into a different, third thing. Perichoresis describes the union between Jesus Christ’s human and divine natures, united in one person but not mixed into a third nature. Perichoresis also describes the fellowship of the three persons of the Godhead. Each person is in perfect unity with the other, sharing divine properties and even substance, yet they remain distinctly three persons.

Luther uses traditional metaphors of perichoresis—the heat of fire transferred to and retained in iron, the mixing of water and wine at communion, the unity of the body and soul—when describing the salvific exchange of the believer’s sin and death being transferred to Christ and Christ’s life and perfection being transferred to the believer. Other analogies used by Luther are that of head and members of a body, the source and streams of a river, or the sun and beams from the sun. Each of these is real, existent, and different from the source, yet would not exist apart from the source.47 Because of these kinds of examples, Saarinen notes that perichoresis is a helpful way to think of the believer’s union with Christ in its “real-ontic” character—it reveals Luther’s understanding of the union as real and essential because the analogy is the same used to describe the real union between the persons of the Trinity and the natures of the person Jesus Christ.48

47 Wilfried Joest, Ontologie Der Person Bei Luther (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 377.

48 Saarinen, Die Teilhabe an Gott Bei Luther Und in Der Finnischen Lutherforschung, 175-76. Saarinen also indicates that perichoresis is insufficient in describing the union, because the metaphors can
However, perichoresis suggests that all properties are shared through this interpenetration. This would mean that believers actually receive divine power, which does not appear to correspond to the believer’s experience. Indeed, rather than always overcoming temptation and performing miracles, the life of a Christian is one of struggle against sin, repentance, and the reliance on God’s continued mercy. If perichoresis is used to describe the believer’s union with Christ, then it must be distinguished in degree from the perichoresis of the inter-Trinitarian relationship and the personal union of Christ.

Deification is problematic because of the range of meaning, and the fact that it is not a significant theological concept in Luther’s thought (although he does occasionally use the word and words like it). Luther’s early language of deification is influenced by the medieval mystical tradition to which he gave attention early in his career. But this mystical influence, while not completely rejected later, becomes secondary to his christological and evangelical focus, which begins to develop in the late 1510s and becomes primary by the early 1520s. As the term “theosis” has been more recently used in Luther research, especially among the Finns, Saarinen, says that it is useful as a heuristic term aiding in the search for better and more accurate terms and conceptions for the participation in Christ by the believer. The term “deification” is a pointer, an indicator that some kind of conception of participation in the divine is intended, but that

be over-interpreted and force rational or physical categories onto the theological concept. The limits of perichoresis are precisely in its inability to describe physically the interrelationship of the two things—it is comprehensible only through metaphor. However, we are continually emphasizing that our modeling of the union is metaphorical and analogical.

49 Schumacher, *Who do I Say that You are?* 111-130.
this conception needs to be explored further and developed more precisely.\textsuperscript{50} Saarinen’s reluctance to use “deification” as the descriptor of union with Christ should resonate with those like Biermann, who resist the concept for fear of complicating the question of character formation.

Saarinen argues that one of the terms deification points to is “Gotteskindschaft,” because it explains one of the bases for the believer’s deification. Becoming a child of God is to become like God, in a manner of speaking. But it also clarifies both the force of perichoresis and the ambiguity of deification, because it distinguishes between being a natural child of God and an adopted child. Only Jesus Christ is, by nature, a child of God, his only-begotten Son, while all believers in Christ are children through adoption. In the words of Augustine, Christ is both like and equal to God, while the believer is like but not equal to God. Thus all the attributes of God do not communicate to the believer in the same way that they communicate to the human nature of Christ in the incarnation. Nevertheless, Luther specifically connects adoption with the partaking of the divine nature referred to in 2 Peter 1:4. Furthermore, he says that a person becomes this partaker of the divine nature through faith in the name of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{51}

Yet the metaphor of adoption also has its limitations, for it is easy to interpret too strongly or too weakly. If too strongly, a person may think that he has received attributes of God that are not really given to him, or may consider himself to have his purity, righteousness and strength in himself and according to his own abilities. This

\textsuperscript{50} Saarinen, \textit{Die Teilhabe an Gott Bei Luther Und in Der Finnischen Lutherforschung}, 177-78.

\textsuperscript{51}WA 17,2, 324, 8-15; Saarinen, \textit{Die Teilhabe an Gott Bei Luther Und in Der Finnischen Lutherforschung}, 180.
would be to fall back out of faith in Christ, to rely on oneself, rather than to trust solely in Christ. On the other hand, if understood too weakly, a person may consider his adoption to be only in the future, occurring after his death or the Last Day. In the meantime, justification would be only forensic, and the significance of being God’s child would have little to no impact in one’s earthly life.\textsuperscript{52}

Another theologian who has systematically conceptualized possible understandings of union is Dennis Bielfeldt. He suggests seven potential models,\textsuperscript{53} the two most relevant of which I consider here.\textsuperscript{54} The first is Ecstatic Formal Union (EFU), by

\textsuperscript{52} Saarinen, \textit{Die Teilhabe an Gott Bei Luther Und in Der Finnischen Lutherforschung}, 180-81.

\textsuperscript{53} Bielfeldt, "The Ontology of Deification," 92-94. These models must meet the eight distinct characteristics of the Finnish understanding of theosis in Luther: 1) deification is a participation with God by means of participation in Christ, who is God; 2) God’s love is present in the believer and is the cause of deification; 3) God is present through faith; 4) God’s work is not separate from his presence, but there is a kind of identity of Christ’s person and work; 5) the unity between Christ and the Christian is “real-ontic,” meaning it is more than a communion of wills or an external relation, or even an effect of God on the believer, yet the substances in union are not mixed and do not change, so that the union is neither a static substance ontology nor a habit inhering in the person; 6) “the imputation of righteousness and the inhabitation of Christ in the Christian mutually presuppose each other”--each depends on the other; 7) Christian love toward others results from the union through faith, so that a Christian has two natures--the divine nature which is Christ, and the human nature which is the suffering of the neighbor “assumed by the Christian”; 8) the unity with Christ is hidden from observation until the Last Day.

It should be noted that, with respect to (7), it would not be accurate to say of Luther or the Finns that the two natures are Christ and the sufferings of the neighbor. Rather, Luther’s typical distinction is between the old and new person, such that the new person is regenerate (and sometimes even identified with Christ), but the old person is the sinful nature which persists and remains after baptism, against which the person of faith struggles. Mannermaa picks up this understanding from Luther (\textit{Christ Present in Faith}, 55-61).

\textsuperscript{54} Besides the two I discuss, also of interest are the Heideggerian models of Ontic-Existentiell Change and Ontological-Existential Change, especially because Gerhard Ebeling and Wilfried Joest appropriate a kind of Heideggerian ontology. While a sustained consideration of these models is not directly pressing for this dissertation, it may be briefly noted that Bielfeldt rejects both because the former is not strong enough to describe a real ontic union with Christ, and the latter cannot account philosophically for ontic union without including a change in the structure of human existence, i.e., a change to human nature. However, as Christ himself is human, to experience an ontological-existential union with Christ would not seem to necessitate a change in human nature. It may indeed be that an "existential union with the divine" need not mean a "discontinuity" with fallen human nature, especially considering that Christ’s own existential ontology has him sitting at the right hand of God in heaven.
which formal union occurs through an act of knowing, loving, hoping, or—specifically for
Luther—believing. Christ is grasped by the soul through the soul’s activity of believing, in
such a way that the soul itself becomes formed by that which it grasps: Christ. The soul
only has form when it is acting toward Christ through belief. This is the model suggested
by Mannermaa which we considered previously. Bielfeldt finds this inadequate, because
he does not see a distinction in this model between the way God is cognized or loved by
the soul, and how any other object may be grasped. Indeed, if faith were like other
perceptive powers such as sight or rational comprehension, the bond would be only as
persistent as the conscious attention of these powers on the object, Christ, and Bielfeldt
would be correct. There would be nothing special or persistently formative about
grapsing God, who could be loved or believed one moment, and then slip from the
soul’s grasp when the soul’s attention turns elsewhere.⁵⁵ For this model to be true, the
bond that is formed between a person and her object of faith or love must be deeper or
unique when this “object” is God in Christ. Yet faith, as a power given by God himself, is
foundationally persistent in that it changes the orientation and reliance of the person to
Christ. Faith is indeed powerful and active in grasping Christ, not because of the
believer’s natural attentions, but because of the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit. This
unique, mystical comprehension is established and maintained by Word and sacrament.
Such a union would not be a mere relational union of intellects or wills, but a true union

(Ephesians 2:6) and also remaining in the world and with the church (Ephesians 1:23, Matthew 28:20). See
Bielfeldt, "The Ontology of Deification," 104-5.

⁵⁵ Bielfeldt, "The Ontology of Deification," 102-3. Luther also apparently rejected this model: "I
have read Bonaventure on this, and he almost drove me mad because I desired to experience the union of
God with my soul (about which he babbles) through a union of intellect and will. Such theologians are
nothing but fanatics" (LW 54:112).
persisting in the work of God, and a union that can be described with language of perichoresis and adoption.

The other relevant model described by Bielfeldt is that of Mystical Person Union (MPU), by which the believer is actually the union of two persons, the old and new Adams (cf. Romans 7-8). He acknowledges this model to be problematic because it includes two subjectivities—the “Old Adam” with the properties from the Fall, and the “New Adam” having the properties of Christ—and therefore is a novelty in the philosophical tradition. Nevertheless, he finds it compelling especially in providing an account of a “real-ontic” unity outside of the “static substance ontology.” He goes on to argue that participation or union does not require a “Platonic notion of instantiating a universal,” but can also refer to the mutual sharing of people present with each other. In this model, Christ is united with the new Adam, so that the properties of Christ are shared with the new person, yet neither the believer nor Christ are substantively dependent on the other. There can, in fact, be two persons dwelling together in union, Christ and the believer.

4.2.2 Perichoresis and Adoption

In considering Luther and the various ways the Finns and their interlocutors describe the mystical union of Christ and the believer, we see the common rubric of perichoresis. Perichoresis, an ontic interpenetration of two subjects—in this case, Christ

[56 Ibid., 101]
[57 Ibid., 107]
[58 Ibid., 108]
and the believer—is a prominent model used by Luther, Saarinen, and Bielfeldt. Even Mannermaa, who describes his understanding as a formal union, ends up using perichoretic language to describe the union. Another prominent model is that of adoption, used by both Luther and Saarinen. Adoption does not describe the union as much as the relation, yet is significant because of the close connection between union and relation in Luther’s thought. I will use perichoresis as a basic way to understand the union between Christ and the believer, and adoption as the basic way to understand the relationship between God the Father and the believer as a result of justification. Attendant to the justifying Word of God, faith is created, the believer is perichoretically united with Christ, and the believer becomes a spiritual child of God the Father.

However, this explanation inadequately deals with the question of subjectivity. Specifically, it does not explain how the believer acts in righteousness when Christ—another subject—is united with her. To say it another way, perichoresis simply as a model of union does not explain how the believer takes hold of the righteousness of Christ and acts with it so that it can be called her imparted or proper righteousness. We will explore this question—how union imparts the righteousness of Christ to the believer—in the next section.
4.3 A Systematic Approach to Describing Union with Christ

4.3.1 A Distinct Category of Union

Lehmühler reads Lutheran Orthodoxy as continuing Luther’s preferred metaphor of perichoresis to describe the mystical union. Although all people are united to God through his omnipresence or immensity, only believers are united to the flesh of Christ, and believers’ bodies also enjoy the union, as opposed to just their souls. Lehmkühler notes that one representative of Lutheran Orthodoxy, Johannes Andreas Quenstedt (1617-1688), further distinguished the mystical union, or unio specialis, between the gratiosa and gloriosa. The latter is experienced in eternity, the church triumphant, and is life in God. The former is the union experienced now, in earthly life, in which God dwells in the believer. This is one union, but designated and combined in these two ways. This example suggests that, in the Lutheran tradition, the mystical union is understood to exist in degrees, unlike Christ’s personal union, which is full and complete. While the personal union communicates the attributes of God to the human nature in the person of Christ, the mystical union effects a “transferring” (Übereignung) of gifts to the believer. The presence and properties of Christ are attributed to the believer as gifts, not absolute possessions. In the personal union effects are spoken of in personal predication to Christ, while in the mystical union the

59 Lehmkühler, Inhabitatio, 153-54.
60 Ibid., 162-63.
61 Ibid., 156.
62 Ibid., 157.
63 Ibid., 261.
sixteenth and seventeenth century Lutherans referred to them as accidental predications.\textsuperscript{64} I noted earlier the problem of referring to the union as accidental, that this language is not strong enough to overcome the notion of a sinful nature.

Lehmkühler even suggests that Quenstedt understands the union not to be a real union of Christ’s person with the believer, but a relation bound together by the will of God.\textsuperscript{65}

On the other hand, as Lehmkühler understands Lutheran orthodoxy, the language of hypostatic union is used to describe the mystical union, so that the overall force of the language exaggerates the strength of the mystical union. It can even give a picture of a Christian with a human nature and a divine nature which is Christ, as if Christ makes up one of the believer’s natures.\textsuperscript{66} The Christian person must be understood as subsisting in the gracious presence of Christ, not in Christ’s properties that are given over to him and possessed by him. The Incarnation is the permanent, irrevocable taking of the human nature for God, while the mystical union is God in Christ coming to the human person and sharing His benefits and properties.\textsuperscript{67} Thus, although the analogy of perichoresis is oft-used to describe the mystical union, it is itself merely analogous to the perichoresis of the intertrinitarian relationship and the incarnation.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 157.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 164. “\textit{Während der von Quenstedt benutzte Begriff „unio substantiarum“ lediglich die zu einenden Objekte als Substanzen benennt, kennzeichnet die Wendung „unio substantialis“ den \textit{Modus} der Einung als einen substanzaften. Demgegenüber kann Quenstedt sagen, die unio substantiarum sei eben nicht substantialis, sondern accidentalis: Die Einung mit der jeweils anderen Substanz kommt gleichsam hinzu, sei gehört nicht selbst zum Wesen dieser Substanzen, sondern geschieht durch den Willen Gottes, der sie durch ein festes Band zusammenhält.”

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 158.

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 158-59.
God, the perichoresis is of stronger interpenetration than for the indwelling in a believer.\(^6^8\)

Lutheran orthodoxy, then, may be seen as teaching too weak of a union, by speaking of it as accidental, yet implying too strong a notion of union, by using language that suggests the personal union. However, I already noted that the mystical union is too strong to be accidental, because of the incongruence of Aristotelian categories to theological anthropology. On the other hand, the mystical union is not so strong as the personal union of Christ, and varies in its strength. Not that Christ is only partially present in some cases, but that the strength of his presence varies. Furthermore, while through Christ’s personal union the divine properties properly belong to Christ, the mystical union does not bestow in an absolute sense the properties of Christ to the believer. That is to say, the believer never comes to the point in his worldly existence when he can speak of Christ’s properties as absolutely belonging to himself, because there is the possibility of the mystical union being dissolved by the loss of faith.\(^6^9\)

Thus, a distinct category of union and attribution is necessary for the union of Christ with the believer, which we will designate with the traditional term *mystical*. *Mystical attributes* are those received by faith and constituted by union with Christ. These attributes include righteousness imparted inchoately, and grow in strength as the

\(^6^8\) Ibid., 290.

\(^6^9\) In heaven, the dissolution of the mystical union would no longer be possible, in which case one could make the case that there the properties of righteousness belong to the redeemed. This may be what Quenstedt had in mind when he distinguished between the gracious and glorious mystical union.
believer’s faith is strengthened by the Word and sacraments. A few further points of contrast may be made with the personal union of Christ: In the incarnation, God takes human nature for himself, while in the mystical union, He indwells the believer by grace. The communication of the Son to his human nature results in enhypostasis, that is, the personhood of Christ is the Son of God, while the mystical union does not overturn the personhood of either the believer or Christ. Thus the mystical union is not a “mechanical implanting” of righteousness, but a lively communication. Although the believer receives this communication passively, in that nothing in him causes the communication, the communication wakes the spirit, life, and holy activity of the believer. There is nothing passive about the person after he has been made alive through faith and communion with Christ.

Finally, the mystical attributes are relational, because apart from Christ these mystical attributes would be lost; yet they are attributes of union, because they are given through a kind of perichoresis. The importance of the relational is retained as the person relies on Christ for her existence. She is a new creation in Christ, not just the same creation with a new character. This new creation stands in conflict with the old nature which is not yet dead or destroyed (Romans 7-8). The Spirit is a deposit, but a deposit is not just a promise, it is “...even now a real property which yet indicates a still

70 Lehmkühler, Inhabitio, 282.
71 Gebhardt, Heil Als Kommunikationsgeschehen, 75.
72 Lehmkühler, Inhabitio, 282.
Because it has the future age in view and the old nature somehow persists with the new creation, we are limited to the analogical language of theological mystery, yet a present deposit surely means the real presence of God now.  

4.3.2 Personhood and Union

How, then, do we describe the actual relationship between the person of the believer in union with the person of Christ? How does the believer take hold of the righteousness given by Christ and use it for what may be called his own good works or acts of righteousness? In his lectures on Hebrews, Luther speaks of faith as the substance of one’s life, or Christ as the one who is grasped by faith as substance or ground. By substance here Luther means something very different from the Aristotelian category substance (although he does not always absolutely exclude this understanding). Rather than a kind of persistent essence, substance in this sense for Luther is a broader means of existence—it is the thing outside of oneself upon which a person grounds himself in order to exist and act. Personal existence, then, assumes something prior to the self. This ground or substance is either the world, in the case of the sinner, or the ground is Christ, through the justifying decree of God which comes

73 Ibid., 287-88, “ein bereits jetzt reales Eigentum, das aber auf eine noch zukünftige, engültige Gabe hinweist.”

74 Ibid., 288.

75 This may partially explain how the sinful nature still persists after conversion: it is grounded in worldly goods, in idolatry, and will perish when the world perishes.
especially because of Hebrews 11:1, Luther understands substance not only as a present thing upon which someone or something subsists, but as a promise or expectation upon which existence is made secure. The true permanence of existence in eternity is in God, not in what a person possesses self-subsistently. Thus the sinner perishes eternally with the world; also faith offers permanence only in Christ who is permanent and subsisting.77

Faith, then, as grasping Christ, brings Christ to be the ground of a believer. Christ’s person gives identity to the believer, as faith establishes and strengthens identity in Christ. Christ becomes the ground of good works, for the believer receives as a kind of “allotment” the properties of the ground in which she stands.78 Because faith is the link to Christ, Luther moves directly from faith to works, saying that faith is the substance of good works.79 The power for good works comes from Christ, but as the believer subsists in Christ, in a kind of “trans-subjective power” (transsubjektiven Mächte), actions really come from the believer’s will and operation.80 Although in the old, sinful nature a person is a sinner, through Christ’s overthrowing of this status before God and making the person righteous through faith and in the believer’s grounding in Christ, the person becomes a bearer of the qualities of righteousness along

76 WA 3, 419-420; Lehmkühler, Inabitio, 239-41, 242-44. This notion of faith and Christ as the substance of a believer Luther draws especially from the Epistle to the Hebrews 3:14, 10:34, 11:1, in all three of which the Vulgate uses “substance.”

77 Lehmkühler, Inabitio, 245-47. See WA 2, 480, 11 for Luther’s polemic against Boethius’ definition: “A person is an individual substance with a rational nature.”

78 Joest, Ontologie der Person bei Luther, 243-44.

79 Ibid., 249.

80 Ibid., 256.
with the characteristics of the dying sinful nature.  

For example, the mystical union gives to the believer the quality of good reason and a good will. Goodness and other positive predications of a person are spoken only of believers, and then only as “bearers” (Träger) of the predicates which properly belong to God. The qualities of God are not transferable as a self-subsistent quality, but as the “manifold names of the reality and of the operations of God himself.” These things, therefore, may only be said of a person when God is with the person.

Sin may still be attributed to a person, according to the persistent old nature, warring against the renewed mind and Holy Spirit (Romans 7:13-8:17). “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:13). This putting to death of the deeds of the body—the old nature—occurs continuously, day by day, until the end of life in this world. The power to put to death the old nature is Christ’s, through the operation of the Holy Spirit in the mystical union. So long as the person remains in faith, he receives the grace of God and is holy, living “by the Spirit.” Through the presence of God in and with the believer, the believer does good things. Joest calls this a “non-self-subsisting agency of spirituality.” When a person desires or does live in self-subsistence, he is a sinner. Only

81 Ibid., 255-56.
82 Ibid., 261, “mannigfachen Namen der Wirklichkeit und des Wirkens Gottes selbst.”
83 Ibid., 267-68.
84 Ibid., 273, “geistliche Nicht-Subjektität.” For Joest’s understanding of “Subjectität,” see p. 234.
living from the being-with and operation of God does a person have good and holy foundation.  

In one of his lectures on Psalm 5, Luther discusses the role of the human will in works in a way that helps explain the cooperation of a believer with Christ and his righteousness in order for the believer to develop proper righteousness. Luther distinguishes the role of the will in internal works from external works of a person. Good internal works, relating to faith, hope and love, are affected by the word of God, while the will of the person is not active. With regard to external good works, however, the will actively participates with the will and word of God. Luther compares this cooperation with the way a sword cooperates with its wielder: not as though they work mutually together, side-by-side, but that the will acts as an instrument or means by which God carries out good works in the world.

Even the cooperative work of the person with grace is done according to the movement of God, not after the comparison of two workers exerting equally. At the same time, Joest suggests that this illustration need not be taken to the extreme, so that the will of the believer is a mere “dead object.” Rather, although the will is moved by God, it is still the will that is being moved. Just as the soldier wields the sword to accomplish with it what its properties aim at, so the will is moved by God to act as the will. This means that the human person’s will is fully engaged in cooperation with God,

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85 Ibid., 274.
86 WA 5, 177.
choosing to act in external matters. When God moves the will, He moves it according to its properties, so that it is not lifeless, but the power of choice for the believer.\textsuperscript{87}

Joest summarizes Luther’s understanding of cooperation under three main characteristics. Firstly, with respect to the inner person standing before God, the person does nothing to establish himself. In this sphere the person is utterly passive, God working faith and righteousness in him. Secondly, and similarly, human beings do not determine their relationships to one another. Just as God establishes (\textit{setzen}) a person in faith, so He places (\textit{setzen}) people into relationship with one another. However, once placed into these relationships, through love the believer exerts himself and applies (\textit{einsetzen}) himself to serve the neighbors given to him.\textsuperscript{88} Finally, when it comes to property and situation, a person both chooses those things to use for various purposes and applies them for the benefit of the neighbor (both \textit{setzen} and \textit{einsetzen}). “The significance of the worldly influence of the human person is the commitment of the self to the neighbor; the source of this commitment for the neighbor is the divesture of self-establishment before God, our permission to let ourselves be established upon God.”\textsuperscript{89}

Transition and improvement toward holiness—progress—is really the perseverance of God and His favor. The subjectivity of a person is in the being of God, and any growth that occurs is due to His faithfulness and love which will not release the

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 315-316

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 319-20. The German here suggest that God “plants” people in their various relationships, yet believers then insert themselves into engagement with others as will serve the neighbor best.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 320. ”Der Sinn der Weltmächtigkeit des Menschen ist der Selbsteinsatz für den Nächsten; der Ursprung des Selbsteinsatzes für den Nächsten ist die Enthebung von dem Selbsteinsatz für uns selbst vor Gott, die Erlaubnis uns für uns selbst auf Gottes Einsatz zu lassen.”
believer back to sin. Participation in this perseverance of God is due to faith, not self-effort. Because faith itself is a gift from God, the person continuously finds herself returning to the grace of God found in His Word and sacraments. To progress means to begin again, not in that the person’s being is cut off from her past and the person is created anew with each encounter with the gospel, but rather that progress is to cling to those things that are given at the beginning: the preaching of salvation, the washing of baptism, the forgiveness of sins, and the nourishment of the Holy Communion. In those things is the grace of God—the grace which operates for the salvation of the believer, and that same grace with which the believer cooperates to serve her neighbor in the world.  

Because it includes this cooperative grace, such progress also affects the sanctified will.

Joest’s explanation of subjectivity offers an adequate resolution to Bielfeldt’s concern that there is no philosophical model for thinking of two persons (Christ and the believer) as united in one. Extrinsic personhood, by which the object of faith becomes the ground of the believer’s personhood, offers an adequate explanation for this relationship. Through faith, the believer and Christ are united, and the object of faith, the person of Jesus, becomes the ground of the person of the believer. A person is not just a thing or an object, a tool to be worked by God’s power, but God causes a person to be regenerated, to grow, and to develop as the person is rooted in Christ. The awareness and full consciousness and capacity of a person comes about through the grounding in God and the work of God. Thus, the being of a person is not just a

\[90\] Ibid., 352-53.
participation in God, as if it were some kind of mutuality. Rather, the being of a person is a grounded relation of communion with God. From an Aristotelian perspective one could protest that a person relying on another person to be her subsistence or ground is not really a person. It is true that a Christian person is not a wholly independent substance. But personhood also may be understood as the subjectivity of a person to act, such that she is the source of action. The substance of a Christian person—Christ through faith—is the ground of her action in that Christ qualifies and empowers the action of the believer through mystical union, but Christ does not determine action apart from the will of the believer. The believer engages his personal will and intellect in acting. He is a responsible agent, even if this responsibility is guarded and undergirded by Christ, and mysteriously intertwined with Christ’s power.

4.3.3 Being in Faith

Along with what we have now said about union with Christ, we can take Joest’s formulation:

The reality of salvation for the human person is Christ, who has the effect with us that he takes up the subjectivity of our life before God. And that means that he takes up the responsibility of our guilt upon His person, and that he works in us the sanctification of our life and the erasing of our sin due to his righteousness. The being of the person in reality of salvation is faith, in which we submit to Christ being with us, to the effect that we give over the subjectivity of our own spiritual life to him.

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91 Ibid., 310.
92 Ibid., 380-81.
Thus, for Luther, faith is not a focus on the relationship or bond with Christ, but upon Christ himself for the believer, the form of faith. The righteousness of Christ, then, is out of faith for the strengthening of faith (cf. Romans 1:17). 

“[I]n the word itself is the promised presence of God, and faith is the self-relinquishment to this presence.”

The union envisioned by Luther between Christ and the believer, therefore, is a mystical union closely comparable to Christ’s personal union. It is not yet an inseparable union as is the union of Christ’s two natures. Yet it is more than a mere verbal declaration or imputation. Imparted righteousness is not simply a change of the person, but it is Christ’s presence in the person communicating righteousness, serving as a new ground for action. Therefore Luther’s depiction of faith as formed by Christ cannot just be new relation apart from union. This is not just a new consciousness given by an outside influence. This reality of the righteousness of faith is the apprehension of Christ through faith, “not an inchoate righteousness or efficiency of the presence of Christ,” but it begets an inchoate righteousness and efficiency in the powers of the believer through the grounding of her subjectivity in Christ. In each believer, the presence of Christ remains for the continued fighting against temptation. New habits are formed in the believer, not in an absolutely self-subsisting sense, but perhaps as

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93 Ibid., 392.
94 Ibid., 394.
95 Vainio, Justification and Participation in Christ, 35.
96 Ibid., 51.
97 Ibid., 34 n60.
those habits which grow out of the inclinations and grace bestowed by Christ’s presence.

4.3.4 The Two Natures of the Human Person: Reflections on Romans 7-8

In the classical understanding of a person as a persistent, self-subsisting substance, there could be no sense of continuity between an old nature and a new creation in union with Christ, nor could there logically be a person with both an old, persistent nature and a new, regenerate nature. However, if a person finds existence in an external ground, then it is possible to conceive of these two natures in one person. Luther does not say that

the identity of the ‘I’ in the relation to Christ is destroyed (auflösen), but that in the relation to Christ it attains (gewinnt) its true identity. Ontologically considered, however, this is possible only if it is a question of a connection (or, more precisely, of a relationship) of the ‘I’ of the human person, who—instead of annihilating the self in the relation—through the relation to Christ is constituted and is determined in his identity.”

This new relation is the new creation of the believer as one alive and established in Christ rather than dying in the way of the world. The true self—the “inmost self” (Romans 7:22) is no longer determined by the relation to the law, the desires of the old nature, and the idolatry of the world, but through the relational communion with Christ.


99 Ibid., 167.
The regenerate nature of the believer is not Christ, as if the believer dies and has no identity other than the person Christ. The new nature is the resurrection or regeneration of the old nature. It is the restoration and salvation of one continuous human being, not an annihilation of one person and a brand new creation of a new, different person. But according to the biblical eschatology the old nature remains in the flesh or members and the new nature of the spirit takes its place as the true identity of the believer. The old nature is grounded in the world and in sin, and it is dying. The death this nature suffers in baptism continues daily as the believer puts to death the old nature by not offering his body to serve the activity of the flesh (Romans 6:13). Yet the new nature, while only made complete and unencumbered by the fleshly nature in the world to come, is truly present and alive in the person also: “Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17, RSV). The flesh and the Spirit dwell for a time in the same person, until this worldly experience is complete.

Luther offers his own attempt to explain this in his lectures on Romans:

Therefore we must note that the words “I want” and “I hate” refer to the spiritual man or to the spirit, but “I do” and “I work” refer to the carnal man or to the flesh. But because the same one complete man consists of flesh and spirit, therefore he attributes to the whole man both of these opposing qualities which come from the opposing parts of him. For in this way there comes about a communication of attributes, for one and the same man is spiritual and carnal, righteous and a sinner, good and evil. Just as the one and the same Person of Christ is both dead and alive, at the same time suffering and in a state of bliss, both working and at rest, etc., because of the communication of His attributes, although neither of the natures possesses the properties of the other, but are absolutely different, as we all know.\(^\text{100}\)

\(^{100}\) LW 25, 332; WA 56, 343, 18-23.
The flesh does not possess the properties of the Spirit, and the spiritual nature does not possess the properties of the flesh. Both are attributed to the believer by a communication of attributes, even though, for the believer, the life of the Spirit is at work, putting to death the flesh, which will finally be completely destroyed in earthly death.  

In the new nature, the inner self, the person is righteous, but it takes a lifetime for the old nature, which is no longer the self, to be killed and put off. “The new reality of life, therefore, not only comes into existence through the occurrence of the new relationship [to Christ], but it retains the character of the new relationship.”  

As the human spirit is that which communes with the Spirit of God, it is in the spirit that human identity becomes completely renewed, without overturning or annihilating the human self. The orientation or ground of existence is changed from self to God.  

Briefly, then, we schematize the anthropology of the believer this way: the justifying Word of God forgives the person’s sins, imputes Christ’s righteousness to her, and regenerates the person so that she has the new, spiritual nature even while the old, dying, sinful nature persists until earthly death. This forgiveness, imputation, and regeneration are passive righteousness. The believer herself is two natures in one person, and the one person may be said to have both good and evil attributes by  

102 Gebhardt, Heil Als Kommunikationsgeschehen, 169. “Die neue Lebenswirklichkeit entsteht also nicht nur durch ein Beziehungsgeschehen, sondern sie behält den Charakter eines Beziehungsgeschehens” (emphasis in original).  
103 Ibid., 177.
communication from these natures to the person. Furthermore, the regenerate nature of the person is in union with Christ through the justifying word of God; it is the union with Christ that regenerates the believer. Christ, through the Holy Spirit, serves as the new, good ground of the believer’s existence. This union is a perichoretic interpenetration so that the powers of the believer’s soul receive the righteousness of Christ as a gift and are activated to use Christ’s righteousness as their own righteousness. Thus the intellect, will, and other powers of the regenerate nature have imparted, inchoate, proper righteousness to use for good works. Through cooperation with the Holy Spirit, the new nature fights against the old nature to accomplish good works, casting off the self-righteousness which is grounded in the ways of the world, repenting of sin, fleeing from temptation, and actively striving to do good works.

The new creation is grounded in or subsists in Christ, yet lives not mechanically as a tool wielded by God. The new creation lives and works as a person free, with reason and will, growing and maturing through the sanctifying process which relies on God’s grace of cooperation, a deepening understanding of God’s law, and the death of the old nature. The new, defining nature of a Christian is the nature which lives as a unique, distinct human being, out of the life-giving source which is Christ. This relationship is a relationship of union—the believer’s life is hidden with Christ in God; it is no longer I who live, but Christ in me—and union could, theoretically, end with a loss of faith, so that the person cannot be said to have or possess righteousness apart from Christ.

On the other hand, the believer may be said to have righteousness in that the new creation lives as a truly human subject. Subjectivity is grounded in Christ, yet it is
still personal subjectivity. The renewed intellect and will operate in a mystical, perichoretic synergy with the subjectivity of Christ, so that apart from Christ the believer can do nothing righteous, yet with Christ the believer is said to be righteous and do righteous things. A believer has his own, inchoate, proper righteousness, as Luther has described this imparted righteousness. So long as a believer continues to cling to the means of grace and to put down the flesh through repentance, this proper righteousness grows and matures even in his earthly life.

In the following chapter we will consider in detail the role of worship, especially the means of grace, in bringing about this justification, regeneration, and growth in good works—or ethical formation.
CHAPTER FIVE

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters I showed that justification through faith includes, as a logical result but not temporally distinct, union with Christ, and that this union is to be understood as bestowing a new character or nature upon the believer. Such character is dependent upon the union with Christ, yet not overpowered by Christ present in the believer. Rather, the union conceives of Christ as remaining “outside” the person, in that the person never has or possesses Christ in an absolutely proper sense. Besides a believer subsisting outside of herself and in the essence of another (Christ), the personhood of a human being is also responsive—responsive to the Word through faith. The Word is a “confrontation with the operative presence of God.”¹ This confrontation calls a person from self-reliance and the self-deception of self-subsistence, to receive in faith the new life and grounding in the life and work of God. God gives to the believer himself so that God becomes the ground and reality of the believer’s spiritual life. Thus faith itself is not an operation of the person to reach out to or connect with God; that work is done by the Word, which comes forth from God and presents God to the

¹ Joest, Ontologie der Person bei Luther, 297, “Konfrontierung mit der Wirkgegenwart Gottes."
person. In this presentation of the Word, faith recognizes the person’s proper place in relation to God’s person.²

The believer then responds by faith, confession, and in cooperation with God’s work in the believer to work within the world for the benefit of others.³ In his lectures on Romans, Luther states that grace is operative as God’s power in the believer, but then becomes cooperative, that is, the favor and power of God with which the believer works. These are not two different kinds of grace, but this describes rather how grace works in a person: first, completely on its own, with the person passive, to grant and strengthen the person in faith, then as the strength by which the faithful person lives and works in the life of faith. Such twofold grace continuously comes to the believer through the Word and sacraments, principally offered in Christian worship.⁴

In conjunction with the Lutheran tradition, in this chapter I argue that, because the means of grace are the means by which a person is justified, they are also the means by which the new character and nature are given. Expanding on this, I argue that worship is the primary context for the granting of new character and the strengthening of it. Worship strengthens and develops the new character not through mere habituation or narrative qualification, but also through the operation of grace, which endows and develops a new way of being, a new subjectivity. This formative character of worship centers on the Word of God and the sacraments, which are supported by the

² Ibid., 297-98.
³ The new believer cooperates with the Holy Spirit in doing good works. See, e.g. SD 2.65-66.
⁴ WA 56, 379, 2-21; LW 25, 368; Joest, Ontologie der Person bei Luther, 313-314.
full activity of worship. Finally, I show that this way of thinking about worship and ethics is compatible with the Lutheran reformers.

In making this argument, I rely extensively on an integration of the thought of Louis-Marie Chauvet and Berndt Wannenwetsch. Chauvet is a Catholic liturgical theologian who has challenged a static, metaphysical view of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist, arguing that God manifests himself through active, symbolic expression in worship in a way that invigorates believers as the church to serve as his presence in the world. He develops sacramental theology as a kind of fundamental theology, portraying the sacraments as the revelation of God and describing the human condition for receiving this revelation. The receptive response to this revelation of the utter gratuity of God reveals Christian anthropology and ethics. He interprets Christianity, then, in a threefold nature of subjectivity—knowledge, gratitude and ethics—rather than a static, internal notion of ‘being’ prior to the world of existence. Although not an ethicist, in this argument, Chauvet outlines a fundamental ethical theology that grows out of his eucharistic understanding. Wannenwetsch is a Lutheran ethicist who has argued that Christian ethics has its distinct political nature in the fellowship of the church, a fellowship which is expressed fully in worship. As the central activity of the church, worship not only shapes Christian ethics, but is, in a way, the beginning of Christian ethics.

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5 Brunk, xv-xviii
5.2 The Linguistic Basis of Christian Worship

While a cursory overview of Chauvet and Wannenwetsch might produce no apparent grounds for bringing them into sustained conversation, a deeper examination of their work suggests a common foundation in their way of thinking about worship, a foundation in language theory.

5.2.1 Chauvet’s Symbolic Order

Chauvet criticizes the Scholastic adoption of classical metaphysics and concept of being, which resulted in the analogy of being as a way of thinking about the sacraments, especially the eucharist. According to Chauvet, this way of thinking is misleading for at least two fundamental reasons. Firstly, almost universally in the West since Plato, the metaphysical concept of being sets up a duality between language and being, in spite of the variety of metaphysical expressions which have been proposed since Plato. For example, for Plato language gives meaning to the worldly shadow of the ideal, which can be thought apart from language. Yet in St. Thomas’ realism, a similar method is at work, in that language serves as the labeling of a sensed object, whose reality exists only in the mind. Chauvet is arguing that, in Greek-rooted metaphysics, language serves as a “purely instrumental intermediary” between some universal concept of being and the human subject. Because being is an object in reference to the human mind, it is also an “objective to be reached.” This leads to Chauvet’s second basic objection against metaphysics, its “productionist” or “technical scheme.” In this productionist

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understanding, process, development, transition, or change of any sort are all to serve a final, good existence. Whatever change or development occurs in a thing or a person ought to tend toward some better state, a state which is the good existence for that thing.\textsuperscript{7}

Putting together both of these arguments, Chauvet claims that language under the metaphysical framework is nearly purely instrumental, serving the human person by conceptualizing a thing in order to objectify it, to use it for one’s good, and to move on toward the goal of one’s essence. This metaphysics influenced the Scholastic system of the sacraments, so that their meaning as signs was overcome by their causality: to “produce,” “contain,” and “confer” grace to the recipient.\textsuperscript{8} While recognizing and affirming that the Scholastics understood being and causality as only analogy, Chauvet raises the penetrating question of why they were restricted to this kind of analogy, when there were presumably other analogies available to them. Why would they conceive of grace—something that ought not be considered an object of production or measurable value—in terms which are oriented to production, cause, and value in obtaining an objective? He answers that it is due to their metaphysical presuppositions. However, “there is an (apparently fundamental) heterogeneity between the language of grace and the instrumental and productionist language of causality.”\textsuperscript{9} It is Chauvet’s

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 21-26.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 7-8.
project to overturn this causal or productionist scheme of the sacraments, by suggesting an alternative symbolic-linguistic analogy.

In a “non-instrumental conception of language,” language does not transfer an intellectual idea of being to an object in a mere act of naming or translating. Rather, words actually make a thing appear or be present to others. For this argument Chauvet relies heavily on Heidegger. While something may exist without language in a stark, natural way, it is only by being called out, by being named, by being acknowledged and spoken that the thing becomes present with and for other people and things. This can be seen in the example of an infant, who begins to have relational existence when it is spoken to. It learns how to respond, how to seek care and love, and how to speak itself only after it is spoken to.

That is why, continues Heidegger, “we speak when awake, we speak in our dreams. We speak continually, even when we are uttering no word and are only listening or reading; we speak even when, no longer really listening or reading, we immerse ourselves in work or give up and simply decide to do nothing.” This clearly shows that humans and language are inseparable. At the same time, this shows that it is impossible to treat language as “a simple instrument” which human beings, supposedly existing before it, would have created, just as they fabricated the spear or wheelbarrow for their own convenience. On the contrary, it is only in language—itself the voice of Being—that humans come into being. It is only within this matrix, that of a universe always-already spoken into a “world” before they arrive, that each subject comes to be.¹⁰

Rather than a metaphysical order, Chauvet is proposing a symbolic order, in which reality is always mediated and constructed in a cultural network.

This symbolic order designates the system of connections between the different elements and levels of a culture..., a system forming a coherent whole that allows the social group and individuals to orient themselves in space, find their

¹⁰ Ibid., 57, with quotations from Martin Heidegger, Acheminement vers la parole (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 13, 133.
place in time, and in general situate themselves in the world in a significant way.... 11

This order is created and established through language, one of the most fundamental of symbols. In this symbolic order, something exists not by having a foundation in universal Being, but by being identified and identifying itself as a subject. The subject comes into existence through being spoken and by speaking. This is discourse, in which the I and you are not a subject and an object, but two subjects manifest for each other. For even to speak to a you is to recognize that this you may also be an I in the discourse. Two interlocutors face each other, not as in reference to one of them only, but as two subjects, both speaking, engaging, and interacting with the other. No matter how different the you is from the I, they have in common that they are both speakers, both spoken to, and both existing subjects in the symbolic world. 12

Developing the performative role of language, Chauvet draws from J. L. Austin’s theory of language acts. 13 Words are not only declarative, or locutionary, in that they give information of things referred, but illocutionary—action performed in saying something—and perlocutionary—speech causing an action to be done in response to the speech itself. The illocutionary most literally fits the term “language act” in that the very speech itself does something: a commitment or a promise is the most obvious example. Perhaps the simplest way to define these latter two is to say that the

11 Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 84-85, emphasis in original.

12 Ibid., 92-95. This picks up the line of thinking from the previous chapter regarding the relationship between the believer and Christ being one of union and relation.

Illocutionary has an “intra-linguistic” effect while the perlocutionary has an “extra-linguistic effect.” Yet all three of these dimensions need not be sharply distinguished, but are mixed together in everyday life. A command is locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary all at once. At the same time, the force of any of these dimensions also depends upon the circumstances: if the socially expected actions do not accompany the speech, then the speech is meaningless. It does not merely lack force; it is actually void of any kind of meaning because the surrounding circumstances do not correspond to what was said. Even the locutionary dimension of such speech is in danger of being lost.\textsuperscript{14} In summary:

“[I]llocutionary acts are conventional” while “perlocutionary acts are not.” The performative function thus depends, not only on the internal conditions of the language, but also on circumstances attending the statement—notably, the existence of a recognized procedure; its correct execution; the legitimacy of agents, locations, and times...

4. This last trait shows two things. First, the paradigmatic examples of illocutionary acts are to be sought in the verbal or gestural language acts of rituals; or rituals are stagings which unfold the illocutionary-performative dimension of language. Second, as Bourdieu and F. A. Isambert have stressed, the “illocutionary force: of this language is not to be sought in a “magic power of words” or some “verbal mana,” [sic] but rather in “the consensus that validates them.” Thus, an “I promise” has value only as a pact between my partner, myself, and the collectivity which governs the conditions for the validity of promises or as a “relation between the properties of the discourse, the properties of the one who pronounces it, and the properties of the institution that authorizes one to pronounce it” the power of words in the illocutionary act, notably as a performative ritual manifestation, resides in the fact that they are not pronounced by an individual as an individual, but rather as the proxy of the group, as the representative of its “symbolic capital.” Thus, this shows clearly

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 131-133.
what is going on in all language: a relation of places between subjects, a recognition, an identification, within a social and cultural world.¹⁵

In this way Chauvet finds correspondence between language and ritual, in that both have a “symbolic efficacy.”¹⁶ This connection between the performative nature of language and ritual in the symbolic (rather than metaphysical) order grounds his later theological argument that God’s gift of grace is manifested in the rituals of the sacraments and has the effect of transforming believers from slaves into spiritual sons and daughters, an analogy superior in its description of grace to the analogy of causality found in the Scholastics.

5.2.2 Forms of Life

Wannenwetsch’s understanding of language corresponds in many ways to Chauvet’s effective and performative language. Although Wannenwetsch does not treat language theory to the extent that Chauvet does, the role of language underlies his argument as he sees worship to be the “grammar of the Christian life” in which Christians are made fluent through the activity of worship.¹⁷ At a few points, Wannenwetsch explains his understanding of language by appealing to Ludwig Wittgenstein.


¹⁶ Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 135.

Drawing from Wittgenstein, Wannenwetsch, like Chauvet, opposes a view of language which is “purely instrumental,” but operates in a “shared social context of living [which determines] the way things are perceived and the terms deployed.”

Language does not merely symbolize a form or idea, but it expresses the shape and structure of life—vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and style reflect how people live in relationship with each other. As an expression of a way of life, it also teaches and informs hearers and participants of the language to live in accordance with the described structure. This structure of life Wannenwetsch calls “political,” in the classical sense of public living together in a community in a way which seeks to harmonize needs and contributions to the society. Language is never only ideal or instrumental, for it occurs already in a political context. It expresses and shapes a structure of life, not merely symbolizing a form or idea. Language is “agreement in judgements” between those who use the common language. “Agreement in judgements springs from a shared ethos, and at the same time sustains that ethos. The specific forms of the shared social context of living determine the way things are perceived and the terms deployed.”

Disputes within a community are really clarifications of language, and where they are more than this—actual disagreement over the meaning and description of an event—disputes lead to rifts in community.

In the structure of language, for Wannenwetsch, there is no getting behind language to a less encumbered sphere of reality. Language gives a thing existence and

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18 Ibid., 32.
19 Ibid., 32-33.
reality, specifically because of its grammatical expression—the logic, framework, or conceptual structure of the inhabited realm. Nor is thinking a kind of intermediate step to get from a concept in the mind to an utterance, as if speaking were a different manner of expression from thinking. Thinking, rather, is the same way of expressing as speaking, for both use the same language. One can think only by thinking language.

This resonates especially with Chauvet, whose criticism of metaphysics eliminates language as a bridge between pure, conceptual reality, and the referent; language itself structures things in mutual relationship in a world.

Here Wannenwetsch is especially concerned with overturning a hermeneutics of suspicion, which attempts to get behind what is said to understand what is really meant. But for Wannenwetsch, taken over from Wittgenstein, there is no getting behind what is said, for speaking is part of the process of thinking, understanding, and articulating what is intended. A hermeneutics of suspicion which would have it another way has invaded everyday life, and “must itself be viewed as being in a way a pathological phenomenon, inasmuch as it would like to make a traumatic experience—the experience of misused trust—the basis for normal behavior.” Misunderstanding between interlocutors, then, is not due to a failure of hermeneutics, but due to their speaking different languages—as coming from different forms of life. If there is some obstacle to resonating with what another party is saying, it is due to an inability or refusal to understand it, because the

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20 Ibid., 220-221.
21 Ibid., 286-287.
22 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 31, 36.
two do not share in that aspect of life. A discontinuity in the form of life means also a disconnect at some level in the language. As will become apparent, this point is central for Wannenwetsch, who argues that Christian faith and life can only begin and flourish in a person who hears, submits to, and learns the language of Jesus Christ.

The fundamental agreement between Wannenwetsch and Chauvet regarding language and the structure of life can be seen in the way Chauvet also relies on Wittgenstein, especially in the latter’s description of language games. Like a game, the use of language follows rules which are not determined by the speakers. Speakers, in a way, must be agnostic about the origin of their language, for the language determines the experience of subjects, even though the context sets conditions for the use of language. The use of language expresses a life experience and gives form to that experience. The rule “makes the game work,” and the players of the game assume this for purposes of the game. Like the rules of a game, language structures life experience, even while the experience provides an opportunity for the utterance of language. Furthermore, the different forms of life, whether scientific, theological, poetry, or

24 Ibid., 288-289.

25 Although Chauvet’s counterargument to metaphysics and the instrumental view of language relies on an analysis and discussion of Heidegger, Chauvet notes that this is an explanation and development of what he understands to be Wittgenstein’s theory of language games and forms of life (Symbol and Sacrament, 42).

26 Ibid., 426.

27 Wannenwetsch, Political Worship, 289.
whatever, all use language differently so that there is “no one kind of criterion of meaning” and they “cannot be translated into one another.”

5.3 “Political” Worship

5.3.1 The Language of the Church

This unique, untranslatable form of the Christian life is worship, which has its own language, the words and rituals used in expressing and structuring this life. In worship, Christians hear their unique language spoken to them by God, and they speak it back in agreement. The agreement in judgments unique to the Christian community is agreement with God’s declaration pardoning sinners. Central to the Christian language is God’s Word of justification, the judgment which forgives believers and grants them the righteousness of Christ. This Word is received by the believer as Jesus Christ himself, and is agreed with through confession of faith. This agreement over forgiveness and reconciliation is expressed in the worship of Christians. It is participation in this way of life, joining in with the particular discipline or expression of Christian worship, that a person is identified as Christian.

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28 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 427. Wannenwetsch agrees completely. There is no translation between the forms of life, only the sharing or experience of a new form of life which begins to introduce the newcomer into the new language. Linguistic translation is only a rough comparison of experiences between different forms of life (*Political Worship*, 39).

29 Wannenwetsch, *Political Worship*, 33-34. This concurs with Chauvet’s more general discussion of language and symbolism, in which language is part of the symbolic construction of a world, effectively setting objects into relationship with each other, relationships designated by language and symbolism which indicate their cultural significance. Language actually serves to construct this world, for language does not merely say what is, but says how things are to be thought of and acted toward. See *Symbol and Sacrament*, 84-92, 130-35. When God speaks in Scripture, he designates an alternative world to any secular construction, a world which Christians find to be authoritative and to which judgments they submit.
The new language or grammar of the new creation, the language spoken in the church, is different from other foreign languages in that it does not use new terms, but in that terms “acquire a new meaning” according to the rule of the Holy Spirit. This new meaning of same terms is a “parabolic” use of the language—a different language game in the church from the world. Both Chauvet and Wannenwetsch again acknowledge Wittgenstein, but also point out that this understanding of language does not originate in philosophical or linguistic theory. Parabolic use of language is inherent to the theological tradition; it is the Holy Spirit’s grammar of faith which “inserts” the speaker into the form of life to which they are called and in which they respond.\(^{30}\) This new meaning of the language is due to the transformation of the person through faith, the transformation through baptism resulting in spiritual worship (Titus 3:5; Romans 12:1-2). This transformation, this new creation, is brought about by the speaking of Christ by the Word and power of the Holy Spirit, so that the language of the church is not only a new language, but it is the cause of the transformation and the new creation. This divine language brings Christ to the people. Language, as the agreement of judgments, when spoken by Christ in the Holy Spirit, also brings about this new agreement with God in these judgments.\(^{31}\) The language of the church, then, does not form believers simply by its unique meaning, but through the accompanying supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, the regeneration to a new life, and the union with Christ. These may be referred


to generally as grace. Grace is the spiritual power which converts a person and enables him to understand the spiritual language of the church.

Grace introduces and communicates a new life, the Christian life. As argued by Wannenwetsch, Christian ethics begins out of the “judgement” of God, and not the judgments of Christians.\(^{32}\) In worship, the gathered faithful assent and acquiesce to God’s judgments. Worship does not continually interrupt life, but it introduces a discontinuity with secular life. This discontinuity does not contradict life in the world, but calls the worshipper to understand ordinary life differently, through the eyes of faith.\(^{33}\) It announces a new judgment about the world and calls the worshipper to assent to this, God’s judgment. Such an assent teaches, instills and develops a new kind of ethos, forming and structuring the lives of worshipping Christians. From this different, Christian structure of life, faithful people make judgments and take action in the world, according to the circumstances and conditions in which they find themselves. Ethics is not the “theoretical way of transferring from the one reality (worship) to another (everyday life),” but the real effect the experience of worship has for the experience of the Christian in everyday life.\(^{34}\) In other words, there is no bridging activity, by which the ‘theory’ of worship has to be translated into the ‘practice’ of everyday life, but the shaping of the person in worship structures her outlook and values in the world. The ethos of the Christian life, which is given shape by the Word of God in the structure of

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 4-5.


\(^{34}\) Wannenwetsch, Political Worship, 6.
worship, is also the beginning of Christian ethics, for in the ethos of worship a Christian is already beginning to act, to practice, according to a Christian ethic. The believer is invited to participate in the Christian ethos, and in so doing, begins to practice those ethics which are distinctively Christian.

The structuring or “regulating” language of worship is the “canon” of Scripture, and where the canon is communicated worship is already beginning. The expression of the common judgment of the canon through the proclamation of Scripture, preaching, and the administration of the sacraments, or the “Word,” for short,\(^{35}\) is the speaking of the Holy Spirit, and the agreement of those who listen in faith. Worship is the first application of the canon, the beginning or primary locus of the “common life” of the congregation.\(^ {36}\)

5.3.2 Activity or Institution? The Church and the Mediation of God

The language of worship establishes and forms the life of the church. The church, as the community distinctly worshipping Jesus Christ, hears and confesses the language that is spoken first to them in the Word. Thus, worship and the Christian life are not to be understood as different spheres or disciplines which have a relationship interpreted

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\(^{35}\) Wannenwetsch iterates in the preface to the English edition of Political Worship that he understands the "Word" in the Reformation sense of including the sacraments, which "have their own specific quality as proclamation" (vii).

\(^{36}\) Wannenwetsch, *Political Worship*, 34-36. Again, this is not fundamentally different from Chauvet. Although Chauvet tends to express himself with sacramental language rather than using "Word" as shorthand for God’s interjection or mediation into the world, he understands both scripture and sacrament to do this same work. Scripture is sacramental "in essence" and the sacraments are the "precipitate of the Scriptures" *(Symbol and Sacrament*, 213, 220). He further notes, "The dynamic...shows us that it is always the Word that deposits itself in the sacramental ritual as well as in the Bible. In more rigorous terms, it would thus be better to speak, safeguarding the sacramental essence in each case, of a liturgy of the Word under the mode of Scripture and of a liturgy of the Word under the mode of bread and wine" *(Symbol and Sacrament*, 221).
by theology, but theology is the confession of the Word of God and the living of the life shaped by the Word. This is another way of articulating a solution to Hauerwas’ concern about a bifurcation between theology and ethics.

Similar to seeing the unity of worship and theology, there is a unity between worship and the church. In Wannenwetsch’s political definition of the church, it is not an institution as much as it is an activity. Church is a practice, something that exists around Scripture reading, preaching and the sacraments. The church lives in, to, and from the Word, without disappearing when rites of preaching and sacraments cease for a time. The church exists by continual practice of the activities given by God, which impact also secular life. “Ethical knowledge will always be available to it only in the mode of ‘being’, embodied in its own praxis,” which is worship. For Wannenwetsch this means that the church is not an institution in that it is not a foundation for something else, nor does it possess anything. Church is, rather, the gathering of people called by the Holy Spirit for receiving the Word, confessing it, and living it out. Christian ethics, then, is not grounded in the church as an institution, nor conceptualized or articulated as an expression of the church’s thought, but is an “ethics springing from worship.” Christian ethics are actions shaped by the language of the Spirit and done in response to the Word. Worship, indeed, becomes the activity in which all the sources of ethics operate in synergy, for example, Scripture, the natural law, and human

37 Wannenwetsch, Political Worship, 3.
38 Ibid., 2.
experience, by submitting to the judgment of God and the corresponding actions of His people in light of these other sources.39

This denial of the institutional character of the Church marks Wannenwetsch’s greatest difference from Chauvet in our area of consideration. In contrast to Wannenwetsch, Chauvet does perceive an institutional character to the Church. But to discern the differences we need to explore the significance of ritual for Chauvet, and the way that a body serves as the symbol and mediation of a subject. First, consider his explanation of ritual and the place of the sacraments as a unique kind of ritual:

Every sacrament is a rite; but the rite does not becomes a sacrament unless it is in-dwelt by the word of God and converted by the Holy Spirit. The second clause underscores that it is the word which constitutes the sacrament; the first clause, that the word happens in the sacrament only under the ritual mode. This is why we cannot say anything about the meaning of the sacraments without taking into account the very act of their celebration, that is to say, their ritual unfolding, their “practice.”40

Chauvet says that rite is governed by law, so that a rite may not be turned into something it is not supposed to be. The law prevents those who, wittingly or unwittingly, destroy a rite through innovation. Ritual law prohibits some things from interfering with the rite, but also “allows and fosters” other things.41 Yet by law Chauvet does not intend to introduce some other structuring force than language and symbol.

39 Ibid., 14.
41 Ibid., 98.
Ritual law is one kind of *language game*—the form of life of ritual, and with respect to the sacraments, the form of life of Christian worship.\(^{42}\)

The fundamental law of ritual, and of the liturgy, is “do not say what you are doing; do what you are saying.” This is not an arbitrary anthropological or sociological determination; this is according to the understanding that God’s Word itself is performative. We have already considered at length the performative nature of language in general. But when it comes to the Word of God, the illocutionary and perlocutionary dimensions operate at a level beyond that of human language. God’s Word is *the* manner in which God acts. With it God creates. With it he inhabits and convinces the prophets. In it he enters into the human experience as a human being. As God’s word is active, the manifestation of this word in the liturgy and the response to it is also activity. When referring to God’s speech, the illocutionary and perlocutionary dimensions uniquely reflect the mediation of grace through God’s speech. Grace is the central work of God in the life of the believer, mediated through God’s speech.

The liturgy is the means by which this “performance” of the divine word is symbolically given to be seen and lived by. In the liturgy, the word is made not only of words but of materials, gestures, postures, objects; the words seek not only to be there but to be “seen” and “touched”.... In the last analysis, are the sacraments anything else than the unfolding, down to the today of each generation and each person, of this efficacious character of the word as word of God?\(^{43}\)

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 99.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 101.
The ritual law of the sacraments is God’s instituting Word. And while God’s word does things, fostering the activity of the liturgy, this activity confesses what God is doing in each gathering of faithful people.

Chauvet also goes on to mention other “laws” of the liturgy: “spareness,” which reflects not only the anthropological truth that the symbolism of the ritual is distant from what is real, but also that the real is “eschatological” and not completely fulfilled until the last day; the “break” of symbolic language and artifacts from the everyday; and the “programmed,” and thereby repeatable character of ritual, which avoids the extremes of layered, excessive ritual and the “deprogramming” of the ritual.  

Ultimately, however, the significance of speaking of these laws of ritual is to show the institutional nature of the liturgy. It is never something that is invented, even by the church, but the church does what is given to it and instituted by God. The most personal of all spiritual experiences is not to go it alone, but to embrace a rich “apprenticeship” in the way of life structured in the church. Ritual, and specifically the sacraments, therefore, has an institutional nature. Furthermore, because these sacramental rituals, at least in their initial and core practice, were given to the Church by Jesus, the Church itself is an institution which practices these rituals.

Institutional, however, does not mean mindless or mechanical, especially for the church. Indeed, in the church ritual must be, at the same time that it is institutional, alive, inspired, and invigorating. The ritual of the church is unique in that it is “inhabited

44 Ibid., 101-8.

by the word of God and the Spirit."46 Thus the true power of the church’s ritual—and here this means especially the sacraments at the center of the ritual—is not merely a sociological initiation and training in an outward way of doing something, or a change in psychological stance, but the engagement of the believer in his spirit by the Spirit of God. This engagement is the overthrow of the power of sin—which Chauvet refers to illustratively as spiritual slavery—and the beginning and subsequent growth in a new spiritual life described as adoption by God and a new brother- and sisterhood with other believers in the church. It is the bestowal of grace.47

The “ritual gestures” of the Church are Jesus’ gestures, and they are the means by which a person is “invited to recognize him.”48 Not only in ritual gestures, however, but in the Church itself does Chauvet say Jesus is recognized. The Church is “the fundamental sacramental mediation within which alone the believing subject can emerge.” The Church is the new “body” of Jesus which he leaves in the world as his physical body has departed from the world in the ascension. “[H]e now allows himself to be encountered only through the body of his word, in the constant reappropriation that the Church makes of his message, his deeds, and his own way of living.”49

To delve further into what Chauvet means by body, we must examine briefly Chauvet’s understanding of the body in the symbolic order. In this order, the body is a kind of speech. The non-instrumental understanding of language means that speech is

46 Ibid., 112, emphasis in original.
47 Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 439-440.
48 Ibid., 164.
49 Ibid., 166.
already to take hold of a form of life by articulating oneself according to the rules of this form of life. Speaking is identifying oneself within the meaning of the language and the cultural world established by the language. In the same way, the body is the person taking place in the world—taking a particular place in the face of many theoretically possible places—and thus serves as the presentation of a person to the world, the person’s mediation. Just as language mediates a person’s thought to the world, so the body mediates the subject to the world. It is the joining of the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside.’...[T]he body is the human ‘way’ of inhabiting the otherness of the world as a home, a familiar dwelling. The body is the binding, the space in the middle where both identity and difference are symbolically connected under the authority of the Other.\(^{50}\)

As such, a subject’s body is not different from the subject in any dualistic sense, but the human person is body. She does not have a body, but is body. This body is more than the natural body, but includes the culture—“the symbolic network of the group to which each person belongs”—and the tradition into which the person is born.\(^{51}\) The body then, is the “arch-symbol” of the symbolic order, because in the body language finds its cultural and worldly expression, even as the body finds itself shaped by the cultural language into which it is born.\(^{52}\)

Therefore the body does serve to limit a person in some way, yet it also serves to define her. There could be no existence without such delimitation, no being-in-the-world along with other people and things in the world. The body itself institutes a

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 146-147.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 149-150.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 151.
person and denies from the outset the speculation that a subject can shake off the body to experience immediacy with any other subject or thing. Existence is mediated through the body. Language, as the mediation of a subject’s thoughts, is simply part of this mediation.  

When Chauvet says that the Church serves as Jesus’ body, he is saying that the Church is the mediation of Jesus in the world, the “presence of the absence” of Jesus’ circumscribed or local body. While Jesus’ local body has ascended and is in this way absent, he nevertheless remains present with his disciples for all time (Matthew 28:20) in the presence of the Church. The Church is the way Jesus exists and presents himself in the world today. It is an encounter that can only be recognized by faith, by the giving up of the desire for the direct encounter with Jesus’ local body, and accepting—or “consenting to” his presence as it is offered in the existence of the Church.  

The encounter with this new body of the Church occurs in the three elements of the structure of the Christian life: Scripture, sacraments, and ethics, where Scripture includes everything related to the “understanding” of faith, sacraments “everything that has to do with the celebration of the Triune God in the liturgy” (a very inclusive definition!), and ethics every action which bears witness to Christ. This tripartite structure centers on the sacraments themselves, which serve as the bridge between the letter (of Scripture) and the bodily life (of ethics). The sacraments become the

53 Ibid., 141.
54 Ibid., 171-173; 177-178.
55 Ibid., 179. These elements will be examined further below.
inscription of the Church in the life of a believer. All of the symbolic elements—the splash of the water, smell of bread, wine and oil, the sign of the cross touching the forehead, the tasting of bread and wine, and whatever other material, gestures, and actions make up and serve the sacraments—become the inscription, “stamp,” or “trademark” of the Church on the Christian. In this way, the structure of the body of Christ is “inscribed” into the body of the Christian; the way of being in the world of Christ becomes the way of being in the world for the Christian; the grammar of faith spoken by the Holy Spirit shapes the form of life of the Christian.\(^{56}\)

It is in this statement, perhaps, that we see the greatest difference between Chauvet and the Lutheran perspective. As we heard Wannenwetsch explain above, the church is not an institution for it is already action, the action of being gathered around the Word, the Scripture and the Sacraments. For Chauvet, because the Church stands in for God’s presence, God is to be understood and accepted as absent. However, rather than a surrogate presence distant from God, the structure of unity in relation between Christ and his people, described in the previous chapter, presents both the continued presence of God in the church while still addressing the concerns raised by Chauvet about the dynamic, living presence of Christ. In Christ’s present unity with the Christian through Scripture and the sacraments, a person is energized to a Christian ethic. It is exactly the living, active, presence of Christ with the believer that forms the believer to live and to act in Christian ways. In this understanding, emphasizing the presence of Christ does not limit him or restrict him to a certain conceptualization of presence, but

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 154-55.
releases the dynamic of Christ’s living presence into the life of the believer. The Church need not be considered the surrogate presence of Christ in order to guard the Christian from idolatry or limiting of the presence of Christ. Rather, Christ bursts into the life of the Christian through the activity of the church, with a presence that cannot be confined or limited. This presence of Christ in the church, for the believer, and on behalf of the world, enlivens, inspires and invigorates the Christian for ethical action. Just as the Holy Spirit is not bound by the Word but uses the Word to do his work, so Christ is not bound by the church or the Christian, but uses these to accomplish his salvation of the world.

In this line of thinking, the presence of God and the reality of the church is not reduced or undermined outside of the liturgical assembly. The presence of Christ persists in the new creation, a verifiable persistence in the ethic of faithful people. The manifestation of the church to the world is not only in the act of assembling together, but also in the activity of Christians engaged with the world even when the liturgical assembly is dispersed.57

As we have seen, Wannenwetsch defines the Church as the activity of God and believers around Word and sacraments, and he also denies the disappearance of the church when it is not assembled for worship. Wannenwetsch would perhaps take issue with the notion that the Church is prior to the Christian, at least at the very origin of the Church. For Wannenwetsch, the Church comes into being as Christians come into being, as the Word goes forth both in proclamation and celebration, Christ creates Christians anew and forms them after himself, activities which are the establishment of the

57 Timothy M. Brunk, Liturgy and Life: The Unity of Sacrament and Ethics in the Theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 235.
Church. Yet both Wannenwetsch and Chauvet recognize the church as a locus of action, and even agree upon these actions—proclamation of the Scripture, celebration of the Eucharist, and the practice of Christian ethics. Chauvet, indeed, is quick to recognize that his model can be construed as being more institutional than necessary and is not the only correct model.\textsuperscript{58} For Wannenwetsch, the church is the activity of Christ’s redeemed people, the worship and ethics both as the speaking of the Spirit to them and as their response to this speaking. They have the Word that is Christ spoken into them and forming their life, so that their ethic begins already in worship, and continues in other activities which grow out of worship.

Yet we must recall that for Wannenwetsch the Church is a \textit{public}, political in its existence, in the classical sense of the word: “Politics is the civil life in the \textit{polis},” and is concerned with the “formative orders” of the public community, and also with the action (\textit{praxis}) and virtue (\textit{arete}) of the civil life.\textsuperscript{59} In reference to the Church, it is political in that God initiates the activity of the Church through “institution of the different elements of worship,” and that people respond by joining in with this activity through hearing the Word, receiving the sacraments, confessing the faith, and living in reconciliation with one another.\textsuperscript{60} The Church first “formed” by the speech and “law” of the Holy Spirit, frees the believing people to act in harmony with the activity of God.\textsuperscript{61} I particularly point out the terms used here by Wannenwetsch, to show their

\begin{footnotes}
\item[58] Chauvet, \textit{Symbol and Sacrament}, 161, 172.
\item[60] Ibid., 10.
\item[61] Ibid., 10-11.
\end{footnotes}
compatibility with the terms used by Chauvet. Indeed, in some cases, they use the same terms in the same way, even while Chauvet works from the perspective of the symbolic order, and Wannenwetsch from the perspective of political praxis. Wannenwetsch says further:

[T]he Christian service of worship is a service of the divine and human word.... This makes it an inescapably social event, and inescapably sensory. Its ‘object’ is itself logos, the Word which communicates itself....

[H]uman beings in worship experience themselves as drawn into the dramatic happening in which God communicates himself bodily, in word and sacrament, and in which human beings respond: listening, tasting, and seeing.... Speaking and hearing opens the door to the world, or even constitutes ‘a world’ as our sphere of communication.  

Therefore, drawing from both Chauvet and Wannenwetsch, we may understand the Church to be an assembly called, instituted, and gathered by the Holy Spirit in Christ’s Word and sacraments, continually formed by the Holy Spirit through participating in the speech and bodily engagement of this Word and sacrament, and acting as Christ’s body in the world.  

5.4 Christian Ritual and Ethical Formation

The Church is the assembly or community in which Christian ethics is formed. Yet how does this occur? What kind of formation is happening? Wannenwetsch’s approach is to consider worship phenomenologically from within the worship perspective, not externally from a scientific perspective. The “functions” of worship or other scientifically categorical concepts are not under consideration, but worship as the “place,”

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62 Ibid., 198-200.

63 For the notion of the body of Christ as the worshipping church in Wannenwetsch, see, ibid., 302, 144, 154-55, 160-1.
experience, or event “where ethical perception can be acquired, as the happening which
shapes practical knowledge.”\textsuperscript{64} Worship is not an activity done to accomplish something,
or to reach some kind of goal, but is the constitutive and living activity of the Christian
community. It is the distinctive life of the church, and, as such, it shapes ethical thinking
and acting.

For Wannenwetsch, this means there are a few ways of thinking incorrectly
about the relationship between worship and ethics. He criticizes both a Hegelian
conceptual interpretation of worship and a Kantian moralization of worship. Worship is
not a means for activating a higher principle in the mind (Hegel) but constitutes and
forms the church in various times and places. Nor is worship merely a motivation for
ethics (Kant), but it gives shape to Christian existence in the first place.\textsuperscript{65}

Wannenwetsch even goes on, however, to criticize a “Church ethic” which would
set the church community as a more foundational setting than worship itself. Any
notion of church community—\textit{koinonia}—as a context for ethical formation without
considering worship as the identifying activity of the church risks introducing a foreign
context of church community that is sociological or political rather than theological. The
church is activity: gathering around the Word. The church is worship. When the church-as-worshipping is not understood, two kinds of mistaken church ethics may arise. One is
the individual church ethic of the individual asking what he or she is to do because he is
a member of the church community; the other is the church ethic of clericalism in which

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 21.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 41-53.
the clergy pronounce ethical statements to be followed by those in the community. In either case, Christian ethics follows a concept of the church as a particular kind or subcategory of a sociological community, rather than understanding the ethic to begin in the activity of worship which is also what brings forth the church and its perspective. The church cannot “determine” Christian ethics apart from being determined by worship.  

Yet this determination of Christian ethics must also avoid another communitarian error, and that is to see the church as a worshipping community with rituals which are only sociologically or psychologically formative. Christian ethics are not the fruit of mere repetition of certain rites, as if ethics were only habit, and as if Christian ethics were summed up by the ritual activities which occur in the liturgy. As a community which lives out of faith, the church lives nourished by the grace of the Holy Spirit through the Word, so both liturgy and good works live out of the Word. In this way, Christian ethics is an ethics springing from worship, springing from a life centered on the Word. In this understanding, other contributions to ethics, such as consideration of the natural law and the agential nature of an individual are not neglected. The discernment of an individual subject is distinct from the community tradition, and there may even be a resistance or a criticism by a person against his community. The formation of an ethics of worship does not overlook these. Rather, it recognizes that these other sources for ethics are brought to bear in that community which is the

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66 Ibid., 54-57.
worshipping community. The sacraments and the liturgy do not conform each member of a community to a certain tradition, but offer a “reactivating” and “transforming” encounter with Christ to nourish, inspire, or reignite the ethical life.⁶⁸

There is, then, not only the ritual relationship between ethics and liturgy, but also the gracious, spiritual, and existential-corporeal reciprocity to the relationship. The example of Christ is not only imitation but spiritual fellowship, a sharing in the life of Christ. Christians become like Jesus through “filial adoption,” not through mimicry.⁶⁹

5.4.1 The Holy Spirit and the Word

To support the argument that worship is not just habituation and that it is not just a conforming but a transforming and an enlivening, it is vital to perceive the role of grace in worship. Grace is given through the work of the Holy Spirit. Central to Christian traditions in one way or another is the understanding that the Holy Spirit is active primarily in worship.⁷⁰ In the Reformation tradition this is expressed in the binding between the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has voluntarily bound himself to the Word and the sacraments in order to offer certainty of God’s attitude toward his worshipping people—certainty that they receive forgiveness and new life. This is not to say that the Holy Spirit cannot or may not operate outside of these verbal and visible signs, but that these signs offer simplicity, clarity, and certainty to people

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⁶⁸ Ibid., 125.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 128-29.

⁷⁰ This is not to say that the Holy Spirit is not active outside of worship—on the contrary, the Spirit upholds all of creation at all times.
who are trying to discern the work of God in the world. The testing of the spirits is verified by the Word and sacraments. 71

The Holy Spirit “effects faith where and when it pleases God in those who hear the Gospel.” 72 In other words, the preacher or the hearer cannot limit the power of the Spirit, the extent of his operation, or the meaning of the Word of God, when the Word is proclaimed. Instead, the meaning of the Word comes forth from the words of Scripture and is applied to the heart of the hearer for repentance and faith by the inner working of the Spirit. Such an interrelationship of the Spirit and the Word, again, is not a limitation of the Spirit, for it is the manner chosen by the Holy Spirit to do his work. Rather, the interrelationship guards against two extremes. The first extreme, and the one of greatest concern to the early Lutherans, was that of the “Enthusiasts” or spiritists, who were accused of claiming to have the power and insight of the Holy Spirit apart from the Word of God. In so doing, they were perceived as modifying or distorting the teaching of Christianity according to their own imagination or for their own devices. When the invisible Spirit was claimed to work apart from any perceptible and certain sign, then any message, movement, or power could be claimed as the Spirit’s. By affirming the desire of the Spirit to come in no other way than through the Word and sacraments, the Lutherans sought to protect the constancy, certainty, and accessibility of the teachings of Christianity. 73

71 SA 3.8, 9-13.
72 CA 5.2, BOC 41.
73 SA 3.8.3-6.
Yet, on the other hand, the Lutherans also sought to safeguard the freedom and sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. This concern is not so frequently highlighted, and in the Reformation controversies it is more nuanced. For, to be sure, the Lutherans iterate an objectivity of the Word and sacraments that offers certainty and comfort to Christians. Yet they also sought to guard against an extreme objectivity, the objectivity of *ex opere operato*, which could lead some to believe that grace is operative simply in the conduct of an action without the inner engagement of faith and the soul. The importance of the objective Word is certainty and clarity; but the importance of the freedom of the Spirit is the graciousness of God, that God is actually bringing about a transformation in the believer, engaging the soul to believe, forgiving and cleansing of sin, and empowering for the Christian life.  

Thus the Spirit is not a servant nor enclosed in the Word and sacraments. The Spirit also interprets and applies the Word internally. This does not mean that the words of Scripture are manipulated or are empty of symbolic meaning in their own right, serving merely as a conduit of supernatural power. That would be akin to magic. Rather, the meaning of the Word is interpreted in the soul of each hearer to address her peculiar situation and circumstances, and is applied to these as law or gospel, as a particular and applicable call to repentance, or as a particular comfort of forgiveness and reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ.

74 See, e.g., CA 5.2, where the confessors says that the Holy Spirit "produces faith, where and when he wills" through the means of grace; Ep 2.5-6; LW 22:301-3.

75 Wannenwetsch, *Political Worship*, 68.
The Spirit works, then, not according to a law that is calculable by human comprehension, nor to establish a law which would serve a person to piece together principles as a path to salvation: “The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Thus the ritualistic character of Christian worship is not in opposition to the Spirit, but rather is the expression and operation of the Spirit under the new covenant.

5.4.2 Presence, Location, and Mercy

From Israel to Christianity there is a transition from letter to Spirit, book to body. This is one of the themes in Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 1; John 4 and 2 Corinthians 3. Where Judaism emphasized hearing, historical account, commemoration, and anticipation of the future messiah, Christianity favors the sign of living, of body. Jesus lives. The Church lives as the body of Christ. The Eucharist is the sign of this unity, and indeed the bearer of this unity and corporality. Christian liturgy, whether of the sacrament or of life, is a living liturgy, and ethics is connected to the sacrament. Indeed, the Sacrament is the

symbolic place of the on-going transition between Scripture and Ethics, from the letter to the body. The liturgy is the powerful pedagogy where we learn to consent to the presence of the absence of God, who obliges us to give him a body in the world, thereby giving the sacraments their plenitude in the ‘liturgy of the

76 John 3:8. See also 1 Corinthians 2:11 and Jesus’ parables about the kingdom of heaven, which highlight the fruitfulness of God’s work apart from human understanding of how growth, fruit, and abundance are brought forth.

77 Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 252-53.
neighbor’ and giving the ritual memory of Jesus Christ its plenitude in our existential memory.  

The Sacrament is the place of the eschaton, of the breaking through of Jesus, where memory moves from the past to a future of hope, to one grounded in the future and the eternal, saving activity of God. And as the memory of the church is grounded in this future saving hope, so the life of the church continues steadfast in action, living out this salvation in the world to which it has been given.

Christ is present to, for, and in His Church in the Eucharist. This presence is not a static one for the sake of presence alone, but for the sake of action. He acts to forgive, save, unite, and give. His action, furthermore, is not only for His faithful, but for the world through His faithful who now bear His presence to the world. Christ is the priest of the church; the church is the priest of the world. Christ shows mercy to His people, and shows mercy to the world through His people. The grace of God pours into the hearts of His people for eternal life. By “dispossession” of this grace, through love, the people of God make no claim on this grace, but continue the outpouring by serving not only the temporal life of the world, but by Beckoning it to the same eternal life enjoyed already by the church in Christ. Christ is present in the bread and wine for the church; He is present in the church for the world. So the Eucharist is the sacrament of for the church, and the church is the sacrament for the world. And so the liturgy of the Eucharist and the ethical life of the Church are connected always by this active presence of Christ, for the life of the church and for the life of the world.

Ibid., 263-64, emphasis in original.
5.4.3 Describing Worship and Ethics Phenomenologically

To summarize thus far: God institutes ritual which serves as the means by which the Holy Spirit freely works to regenerate the believer and give structure and form to the believer’s new life. Chauvet’s structure of the Christian life centers on his understanding of the Church as the sacrament of God, with the life of liturgy and ethics occurring within the Church. Again he uses a diagram to depict this: God, through the Son, encounters the Church. Within the Church, Scripture, the sacraments (especially the Eucharist), and ethics interact with each other and mutually inform each other. Scripture, the sacraments, and ethics also are the three main “elements” of the Christian life: the knowledge of life in Christ, the thankful recognition and acceptance of this knowledge and life, and the practice and action correlative to this knowledge and reception. The Church itself, as the institution in which these elements arise, resides in the Holy Spirit. 79

The eucharist is a centering point of this structure, for it brings together and provides expression to all the phenomena of the Christian life. The sacraments are a “precipitate” of the Scriptures, in that the community becomes the embodiment of what is read in the Scriptures when it celebrates the sacraments. The ritual expresses in word and deed the acknowledgement of salvation through Christ and the thankful response of the people. 80 In the Eucharist, Christ, who is ever mediating before the throne of His heavenly Father, grants the people of God His body and blood, forgiving

80 Ibid., 220.
their sins, strengthening the unity they have with Him so that they also remain reconciled before the throne. The Holy Spirit also, in this unity, strengthens the people, so that they go forth in love to intercede and work on behalf of the world. This is the relation between the Eucharist and ethics; the body that is precipitated in the celebration of the sacrament then acts on this embodiment in living for others as Christ lives for them. Chauvet develops this with his understanding of dispossession and verification.

5.5 Dispossession - Gift and Return

Central to Chauvet’s understanding of the interrelationship between liturgy and ethics is the notion of “dispossession.” He understands dispossession to be the act of faithful people receiving what they have from the Lord, acknowledging in worship ritual that what they have is a gift from God, and offering it back to God to be used to give to others who are in need.

5.5.1 Possession, Dispossession, Offering, and Charity

Ritual action is an expression of possession of the blessing of God. Because the Christian liturgy is an encounter with God and a commemoration of his gifts, it includes expressions and actions of reception and thanksgiving. Thanksgiving flows out from Christian rites, especially the eucharistic rite. Yet the liturgy is also an expression of one’s own dispossession. As an example, Chauvet offers Israel’s rites of commemoration and thanksgiving.
During the liturgy of the offering of first fruits (Lev 23:9-22, Dt 26), the account of God’s redemption by freeing the Israelites from Egypt through the Exodus and the giving of the land of Canaan is recounted. Although the Hebrews conduct this offering of the firstfruits while in possession of the land and the bounty of its harvest, it reminds them that all they have—their freedom, their property, and their livelihood—is given to them freely by God. All is gift. Thus the Israelites offer the first of the harvest in ritual dispossessing. By giving the first of what they have, they acknowledge that they are, apart from God, without any goods, even the necessities of life.

The ritual takes dispossessing further. The Levite and the alien are specifically mentioned as those who are to be recipients of the offerings. The Levite and the alien are those who remain dispossessed (at least ritually) even in the days of possession. The alien is not allowed to own land, nor is the Levite, as one who is dedicated to priestly service. Instead, they are to eat of the produce offered by the Israelites in these and other offerings. By placing the alien and the Levite in reliance on Israel, it is a reminder to the nation that they cannot continue in faithfulness without the continued provision of God, just as the alien and Levite would not continue without Israel’s provision to them.\(^\text{81}\)

It is significant to note that this ritual of possession and dispossessing is done not only in the liturgical context in which firstfruits are offered to God and he is blessed as the giver and possessor of all things, but that this liturgical context includes the recitation of the full salvation history, beginning with the account of Abraham as the

\(^{81}\) Ibid., 234-237.
wandering Aramean and concluding with the possession of the land. The confession of
god’s redemptive action is “where the identity of Israel is brought forth in the very act
of enunciating itself,” identifying itself and remembering itself as dispossessed and only
possessing anything because of God’s action. Offering, commemoration, redemption
and charity are all connected to the ritual. Words, actions, promises, and care for others
are linked. A peculiar language of liturgy—the new language of God’s faithful people,
agreeing with the judgments of God, is established and continued in this rite.

5.5.2 The Significance of Those in Need

If this is the case, then, the rites of worship may not in any way be seen as a
possession of those who are gathered for the liturgy in a particular time and place; nor,
indeed, may the liturgy be celebrated only for the benefit of the faithful. The rituals
cannot be isolated to reciprocity between the worshiper and God, in which God gives
blessing and the worshiper merely acknowledges the blessing and receives it in ritual
worship. Rather, a third party is included, whether he is present at the liturgy or not.
The dispossessed—whether the Levite by vocation or the alien by social status, or the
poor parishioner or the unbeliever in the contemporary setting—is included in worship,
at the very least as a recipient of the love of the church. His benefit is not merely that of
the church’s general intercession on his behalf (although that is certainly an important
and real benefit). His benefit is the intercession occurring throughout the full rite, the
proclamation of the Gospel that comes to the world in various forms as an overflowing
extension of the liturgy (Ex 19:5-6, 1 Pt 2:9), and the acts of charity and mercy worked
by the faithful in their lives in the world. Justice and mercy are the responses of the
worshiper to others, whether in or out of the assembly. As God is just and merciful, so
the worshiper is to be just and merciful.

This connection of justice and mercy to the worship of God’s people is affirmed especially by the Old Testament prophets (e.g. Amos 5, Hosea 6, Isaiah 1, Micah 6) who criticize the worship of Israel when it gives God only “lip service.” The Law

enjoins Israel to be as non-possessive toward others as God was toward it when it possessed nothing. Recognition of God and thankfulness toward God shown by the offering of the symbolic representatives of the land can be true only if they are veri-fied (sic) in recognition of the poor: it is in the ethical practice of sharing that the liturgy of Israel is thus accomplished.82

5.6 Sacramental Efficacy and the Inscription of the Holy Spirit

In Chauvet’s symbolic order, then, how, comprehensively, are the sacraments effective? How do they offer grace to the recipient? In answering this question we are treating the core of this project, explaining how the sacraments actually work, and how they work specifically in relation to ethical formation, a formation we have already explained in the broader context of worship, the church, the Word, and the Holy Spirit.

Chauvet answers the question about the efficacy of the sacraments by placing the sacraments particularly into the symbolic order of speech or language acts, especially as illocutionary, and understanding the sacramental act to be an expression of subjective intent—in this case, Christ as the subject—which establishes and strengthens the inter-subjective connection between Christ and the believer through its symbolic

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82 Ibid., 238-39.
power.\textsuperscript{83} It is important to keep in mind that by symbolic Chauvet means real—more real than the onto-theological understanding of real, which he criticizes for being concerned merely with the effect of a thing, rather than the very nature of a thing. Although he is speaking here of sacramental efficacy, it is an efficacy which comes to bear with the expression, emergence, or being-for of the sacrament, not a static presence of the sacrament perceived as an object, instrument, or conduit of grace.\textsuperscript{84}

5.6.1 Revealers and Operators of Grace

The sacraments are both “revealers” of grace and “operators” of grace. As a revealers, a sacrament gives expression to that which already exists. The grace of God is not limited to the moment of the sacramental act, but is the continuous, covenantal stance in which the believer and God stand. God has already worked salvation for his people, and believers already take hold of this salvation through faith. The sacraments give expression both to God’s already offered grace and also to the receptive, thankful, and faithful response of the Church and believer.\textsuperscript{85} As an example, Chauvet describes the sacrament of reconciliation in this perspective, a rite which expresses the forgiveness and reconciliation that exists already when a person is contrite and believes in the forgiveness offered by God, even before the ritual is enacted.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 430-431.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 389-390, 393-396, 406-7, 410-412.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 431.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 432.
At the same time, the sacrament reveals that the internal stance of faith must be manifest in exterior action. The penitent confesses to a minister, and the minister verbalizes and conveys the forgiveness of God through gesture. Furthermore, the exteriority of the response includes the spoken intent to change from sinful behavior and subsequent actions which demonstrate the repentant heart: gentler speech, a helpful hand, or whatever is the appropriate reform. Indeed, the external action has already begun in the sacrament. While the penitent is already forgiven in the interior movement of repentance, such repentance is “always-already structured by the ecclesial and sacramental dimension.” The “sacramental expression” of the Christian in the church is always part of the converted life, because, as expression, it is the new, unavoidable language of the convert in the Church. The believer can no less “speak” in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church than a person can avoid speaking the language of the culture into which she is born and raised. As a “reveler,” the sacrament expresses what the Holy Spirit is doing in the life of the believer, and it expresses the believer’s regenerate desire to participate in the sanctified life.

The sacraments as revealers in no way denies the traditional understanding of the sacraments as operators, however, but suggests how the sacraments operate in the symbolic order. The sacraments are operators as bestowing and strengthening communion between Christ and the believer in the life of the Church. The reality of this communion, according to Chauvet, is of the symbolic—not “physical, moral or

87 Ibid., 434-435.
88 Ibid., 436.
metaphysical”—order. Yet this symbolic reality is the “most ‘real,’” in that it brings about true change in believers as subjects brought into the world of Christ. 89 For example, in baptism the believer is not physically killed and resurrected as Christ was, yet she enters into that new world of eternal life in which the old nature—the nature of sin ordered by the language of the world, is made impotent and meaningless. The believer does not physically eat Christ’s body and drink Christ’s blood, but she does truly eat and drink of the body and blood of Christ as she is brought into the world of Christ’s body, the Church, as a member of that body. 90 That this symbolic reality cannot in a fully satisfactory way be explained in a declarative or attributive mode is not due to an inadequacy of the symbolic order, but due to the difference between declarative and symbolic expression. Symbolic acts are expressed for the symbolic order, not for the metaphysical order of being, and speaking out of a metaphysical perspective can only inadequately explain the symbolic. Likewise,

[S]acramental theology can say nothing about the res the faith proclaims except on the basis of the act of celebration. What we are talking about is a ritual act whose specificity we have spelled out. No more than a metaphor can be translated into explanatory language, no more than an illocutionary act...can be changed to a declarative statement, can religious language, especially ritual language (where subjects take a position with regard to God and others concerning what they say) be rendered into theoretical language. This is to say that taking seriously the sacramentum as the inescapable mediation of every sacramental discourse commits us to taking seriously the specificity of the illocutionary-performative-ritual language act that makes it up. 91

89 Ibid., 438.
90 Ep 8.17.
91 Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 437, emphasis in original.
Grace, then, is the establishment of a new relation with God, or the sustenance of a new relationship. Such an understanding comes from the socio-linguistic point of view of Chauvet, but it is not reduced to this understanding. Rather, Chauvet argues, this metaphor of new relationship is a better metaphor than the metaphor of instrumentality and substance, which the scholastics used from the framework of ontological theology. The language of new relationship permeates the Scriptures; the defining term of Christ’s revelation—“new covenant”—expresses the same. The sacraments place the believer into a new relationship with God, that of daughter or son to the Father, and that of brother or sister to Jesus Christ. This new relationship is not only a matter of terminology—God does not merely declare that a person is now his daughter or son, but the sacramental structure and practice of the church both empowers the believer and lays the expectation on the believer to live as a daughter or son of God. Indeed, the empowerment is unlike that of any ritual or other language game, for the power of the sacrament is of the Holy Spirit himself, who really enacts in a person what is declared and promised in the sacrament. Yet within the ritual structure of the sacrament, this spiritual empowerment is given a context, framework, and social expectation, along with the spiritual. The Spirit fills even the things of humanity and creation, and sanctifies them also.

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92 Ibid., 439, 443-44.
93 Ibid., 445-46.
94 Ibid., 439-440.
5.6.2 Spiritual Inscription and Verification

While the symbolic order may be the metaphor of choice, and as grace is nevertheless not reducible to this metaphor, there is more to be said theologically about grace. Indeed, if grace only establishes a new relation between subjects, even if it is a spiritual relation of adoption and brother- and sisterhood, then we have not completed the argument in light of all we said in chapter three about conversion not being a mere relation, but a communion or union with Christ. And, indeed, Chauvet’s notion of *inscription* as the work of the Spirit by grace helps to fill out a theological understanding of the symbolic order. The Spirit inscribes the Word of the cross—the Word which is Jesus Christ, yet especially as that separation and nothingness of the crucifixion—into the body of the believer. The structure of the Christian life as Scripture, sacraments, and ethics, is more than three legs of a stool, but also suggests a movement, development, or maturity in the Christian life from hearing the Word, being embodied through the sacraments by the body of Christ, and living out the Christian life of witness as worship and ethical service to others.\(^95\) This does not mean there is ever a progression beyond the Scripture, but that the Scripture serves as the structuring language which gives meaning to the embodiment of the sacraments and the testimony of the embodied Christian life. Nevertheless, in this threefold structure, the body becomes the new location of the letter of Scripture, the place that bears the “marking” or “character” of the Word of God. Because this Word is embodied, it is also lived out.\(^96\)

\(^{95}\) Ibid., 527-28.

\(^{96}\) Ibid., 530.
This interconnection and empowerment to live in the body according to the Word of God is accomplished by the Spirit, the grace of the Word and the sacraments offered to the believer in worship.

I am arguing, then, that Christian worship ought to be recognized as a fundamental source for ethics. Yet, although worship is a source, traditional philosophical methods of deducing actions from principles do not hold. Instead, ethics grows forth from worship. Ethics focuses on the symbolic power of the sacrament and its verification in ethical action. The symbolic power of the sacrament is to manifest in ethical actions, expressions of response. However,

the obligation to give in return, according to a countergift that is never equivalent to the initial gift, does not remain purely exterior: every act of language brings with it an illocutionary dimension in such a way that ‘it is always ultimately oneself that one gives’ in the given word. The relationship between ethics and liturgy thus escapes moralism.  

Christ gives himself in the speaking of his Word in Scripture and sacrament; the Christian gives herself in the life of witness, both confession of faith and acts of love.

Nevertheless, even as the liturgical is verified in “ethical reinterpretation,” so the ethical always returns to the liturgical and is reinterpreted liturgically, as an action brought forth in response to the grace of God in the sacrament. It is this response to grace that makes the action specifically Christian, and specifically ethical for that matter.

This theological definition of the liturgy emphasizes that the social sciences (here the study of rituals) should never have the last word for evaluating its potential ethic. The theologian claims responsibility for an object that exceeds the competence of the social sciences: faith that allows itself to unfold in all its human mediations. Consequently, the risk of critical verification of the liturgy

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97 Bordeyne, "The Ethical Horizon of Liturgy," 127.
through the epistemology of the social sciences proceeds at the risk of the faith, and not the opposite.\(^98\)

What does Chauvet mean by ‘verification’, then, if not the observations and conclusion of science? He means, first, that verification is not accomplished by an outsider, but verification of the liturgical is self-verification accomplished by the liturgical assembly, by the community of Christ. For by ‘ethics’ Chauvet “includes every kind of action Christians perform in the world insofar as this is a testimony given to the gospel of the Crucified-Risen One and this conduct, as J. B. Metz has emphasized, concerns not only interpersonal ‘moral praxis’ but also the collective ‘social praxis’.”\(^99\) As a testimony to the gospel, first and foremost, ethics can only be understood and interpreted rightly by those who believe the gospel, subjecting ethical verification not to the world, but to the church.

Nor does the verification of the ethical mean that the presence of Christ is dependent upon the ethical. The presence of Christ depends upon his own words and promises. And this presence shapes an ethical stance which receives, is formed by, and begins to act or attempts to act in accordance with the presence of Christ. The presence is verified by this shaping. Christ’s presence brings about a new creation, a change in the character of the gathered, faithful people, so that their perspective, intentions, and actions will begin to be different from the way they were prior to or apart from the presence of Christ. Such verification cannot be evaluated by quantity or quality of good works, which would only serve to separate ethics again from worship. Rather, the

\(^98\) Ibid., 128.

\(^99\) Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 179, emphasis in original.
ethical is a stance of continuously holding forth whatever benefit one has for the benefit of the neighbor. This is a stance of confidence, of faith, that what one has can be given and not be lost. Such verification in faith can only be a theological verification.

This is not to say that Christian ethics will not sometimes manifest as what the world considers to be morally good works, such as advocating justice for a victim of criminals or sharing basic goods with victims of natural disasters. But it does mean that Christian ethics, as it springs forth from worship, is the practice of the worshipping community, including social and loving actions which have their definitions of ‘social’ and ‘love’ from within the Christian tradition.

Finally, this becoming of God’s ecclesial body submits the church to living in love as God lives in love. “[T]o become historically and eschatologically the body of him whom they are offering sacramentally, the members of the assembly are committed to live out their own oblation of themselves in self-giving to others as Christ did, a self-giving called agape between brothers and sisters.”¹⁰⁰ It is precisely because of this that ethics is caught up with worship, and not merely an extrinsic result of worship. To celebrate the eucharist in faith is to take on the life of Christ, which is a life of love.

The verification of the liturgical is the ethical, which is the life of agape: Christian love. Christian love is an attitude of faith which bears witness to God. Christian love is an attitude of confidence, an unworldly graciousness which grows out of the infinite graciousness of God—a fearless courage to help, serve, and love others in freedom, knowing that God withholds none of his blessing. It is the love “to be toward others as

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 277, emphasis in original.


God is toward us.”101 And it is to act in loving ways toward others, ways that call the neighbor from the world toward faith in God, actions which are not always judged by the world to be moral.

5.7 Worship, Communion, and Ethics in Luther and the Confessions

Throughout this dissertation, I have been showing that my explanation of Christian ethics in relation to worship is in line with the Lutheran tradition, particularly Luther and the Lutheran Confessions. In this section, I continue this argument, reviewing Luther’s teaching on the Eucharist and how he understood it to relate to communion with Christ and to good works, as well as considering the Apology of The Augsburg Confession’s article twenty-four, which treats the question of the sacrifice of the mass. In reviewing these writings, it will become clear that the early Lutherans held to an understanding of Christian ethics or good works which grows or springs out of worship.

5.7.1 Luther and The Blessed Sacrament

The first and most significant of Luther’s texts about the Eucharist is his 1519 treatise, The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods.102 In this treatise, we see Luther’s explicit connection between the eucharist, union with Christ and other communicants, and the consequent sharing of each other’s burdens and mutual service. In later writings he never retracts this understanding, and, in fact, refers to it as his consistent position. In this early treatise on

101 Ibid., 312, emphasis in original.

the Lord’s Supper, our interest focuses on Luther’s discussion of the significance of the sacrament, which Luther says is the “fellowship of all the saints.” This fellowship is compared to becoming a member of Christ’s body, or being recognized as a citizen of a city, with the rights and recognition of that citizenship. In this body or citizenship, all members share in common the property, goods, benefits, maladies, infirmities and losses attributable to the common life. As members of a common group, all things are shared in common. As members of Christ’s body, this refers specifically to the life and suffering of Christ, and the lives and sufferings of the other believers. Luther specifically explains that the struggle against sin is shared by all. Christ and the whole company of communicants and saints fight against sin alongside each believer, and they also pray that the guilt of sins succumbed to will not be charged against them.

Luther describes the effect of this union with Christ that comes through the eating and drinking of his body and blood, as if Christ were saying, “I am the Head, I will be the first to give himself for you. I will make your suffering and misfortune my own and will bear it for you, so that you in your turn may do the same for me and for one another, allowing all things to be common property, in me, and with me.” This is not only a sharing of goods and afflictions, but a sharing that depends on the unity of the communicant with Christ, for it is a sharing done “in” Christ and “with” him. The

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103 LW 35:51; WA 2, 743.
104 LW 35:51-52; WA 2, 743-44.
105 LW 35:53; WA 2, 744.
106 LW 35:54-55; WA 2, 745, 38-746, 1. "[I]ch bin das heupt, ich will der erst sein, der sich fur euch gibt, will erw leyd und unfall mir gemeyn machen und fur euch tragen, auff das yhr auch widderumb mir und untereynander ßo thut und alles last yn mir und mit mir gemeyn seyn...."
strength and help of Christ are “pledged” in the sign of the sacrament, and by this same sign of the body and the blood the communicant is “incorporated (eyngeleybt)” into Christ.\(^\text{107}\)

Luther’s strongest language explaining the union of the communicant with Christ comes in paragraphs 14-16, from which I will quote extensively:

To signify this fellowship, God has appointed such signs of this sacrament as in every way serve this purpose and by their very form stimulate and motivate us to this fellowship.... Christ with all saints, by his love, takes upon himself our form, fights with us against sin, death, and all evil. This enkindles in us such love (\textit{wir yn lieb entzundet}) that we take on his form, rely upon his righteousness, life, and blessedness. And through the interchange (\textit{gemeynschaft}) of his blessings and our misfortunes, we become one loaf, one bread, one body, one drink, and have all things in common. O this is a great sacrament, says St. Paul, that Christ and the church are one flesh and bone. Again through this same love, we are to be changed and to make the infirmities of all other Christsains our own; we are to take upon ourselves their form and their necessity, and all the good that is within our power we are to make theirs, that they may profit from it. That is real fellowship, and that is the true significance of this sacrament. In this way we are changed into one another and are made into a community by love. Without love there can be no such change.

Christ appointed these two forms of bread and wine, rather than any other, as a further indication of the very union and fellowship which is in this sacrament. For there is no more intimate, deep, and indivisible union than the union of the food with him who is fed. For the food enters into and is assimilated by his very nature, and becomes one substance with the person who is fed. Other unions, achieved by such things as nails, glue, cords, and the like, do not make one indivisible substance of the objects joined together. Thus in the sacrament we too become united with Christ, and are made one body with all the saints, so that Christ cares for us and acts in our behalf....

Besides all this, Christ did not institute these two forms solitary and alone, but he gave his true natural flesh in the bread, and his natural true blood in the wine, that he might give a really perfect sacrament or sign. For just as the bread is changed into his true natural body and the wine into his natural true blood, so truly are we also drawn and changed into the spiritual body, that is, into the fellowship of Christ and all the saint and by this sacrament put into possession of all the virtues and mercies of Christ and his saints (\textit{werden auch})

\(^{107}\) \textit{LW} 35:55; \textit{WA} 2 746, 13-14.
wir... durch diß sacrament yn alle tugende und gnad Christi und seyner heyligen gesetzt).... For this reason he instituted not simply the one form, but two separate forms—his flesh under the bread, his blood under the wine—to indicate that not only his life and good works, which are indicated by his flesh and which he accomplished in his flesh, but also his passion and martyrdom, which are indicated by his blood and in which he poured out his blood are all our own. And we, being drawn into them, may use and profit from them.108

From this quote, I want to elucidate three points, that the union 1) is the most intimate union that can be experienced by a human being; that it is 2) a partaking in Christ’s righteousness which bears fruit in righteousness and love toward others; and that it 3) grounds the person in the life and virtue of Christ, which then becomes the person’s possession to use in her own life.

In chapter four, we considered various kinds of unions from a philosophical perspective, and suggested that the mystical union could be understood as a perichoretic relationship between two distinct persons, by which the life and existence of the believer are grounded in the person of Christ. Although Luther is not speaking philosophically, his imagery captures the same conception: the union of food with the eater is such that they become one substance, so that the communicant becomes part of the one body with Christ, holding all things in common. The communicant takes on the “form” of Christ, so that his being is shaped, structured and grounded in Christ’s.

Secondly, this union grants the “righteousness, life, and blessedness” of Christ to the communicant. This is the same language as that of the twofold righteousness. This is the passive righteousness and life that is received by the communicant through faith, which then becomes the ground of the believer’s active life of good works, or active

108 LW 35:58-60; WA 2, 748, 6-749, 22.
righteousness. The first righteousness is a complete gift, out of which grows the second righteousness. The gift of this righteousness takes place through union.

Finally, there is real character formation that occurs through this union. The sacrament grants the “virtues and mercies” of Christ, especially love. The love of Christ compels him to take on the burdens of sin an affliction of all believers, and it is this love that makes them into a true community, a community in which the members also demonstrate their love for one another. This love is the real significance of the sacrament. Christ loves the people of the church, and they in turn become formed with his virtues to love and serve one another, so that they also sacrifice of themselves to bear the burdens of others. Indeed, Luther says also, “[T]he sacrament has no blessing and significance unless love grows daily and so changes a person that he is made one with all others.”

This is the formation of virtue with an emphasis on unity, love and sacrifice—not a sacrifice of propitiation, but an offering of oneself for the benefit of others.

The holy communion is to be partaken of regularly in order to maintain and strengthen the unity with Christ and the other believers. Luther says that the union would be lost or “forgotten” if Christians did not regularly “exercise” themselves in the fellowship.

This exercise and remembrance includes not just the celebration of the eucharist, but also the proper preaching of Christ’s ministry and example. For without

109 LW 35:58; WA 2, 748, 3-5. "Dan wo die lieb nit teglich wechst und den menschen alßo wandelt, das er gemeyn wirt yderman, da is diß sacrament frucht und bedeutung nicht."

110 LW 35:56; WA 2, 747.
proper preaching, the significance of the sacrament is forgotten and the benefits of it do not take hold.

While Luther, in this sermon, is speaking in an exhortatory way, and is not at all as comprehensive in his presentation as Chauvet and Wannenwetsch, the comparisons between the figures should be apparent. The important consideration of Christ’s presence is not a metaphysical account of this presence, but the encounter with Christ which binds the communicant not only to Christ, but to the church as a whole. Christ’s local presence is not detectable, yet Christ creates a body for himself with all the communicants as members, a corporate body which has the righteousness and other virtues of Christ to use to help one another. There is not a systematic method of getting to the ethical life from the practices of worship; instead, the exercise of the sacrament and the Word with the grace of the Holy Spirit works the particular virtues of Christ in each person, so that there is an ethic which springs from worship through grace and regular use. Finally, Luther suggests even a kind of “verification” of the ethical when he says that the sacrament is of no use unless it brings a change in love for the communicant.

The centrality of worship for Luther as that which forms and is the beginning of Christian ethics is clear. Preaching and sacraments bind the Christian in union with Christ and with other Christians, forming and transforming the Christian with virtues for loving the neighbor. The mystical bond with others increases the reliance Christians have on one another for mercy and love. Worship is to be regularly observed, to exercise this union and these virtues, and all of this is received by faith.
This portrayal of Luther as one who taught the significance of the Lord’s Supper to be communion and that the sacrament served as a bond and strengthener of love may seem contrary to the usual characterization of Luther as one who emphasized the bodily presence of Christ for the forgiveness of the sins of the communicant. More than this, Luther, in works like The Babylonian Captivity of the Church\textsuperscript{111} and the Smalcald Articles, excoriated those who viewed the Supper as an offering, contribution, or meriting the forgiveness of sins. An overwhelmingly testamental perspective on the Supper appears in A Treatise on the New Testament, That Is, the Holy Mass,\textsuperscript{112} Luther’s treatise on the Eucharist written immediately subsequent to The Blessed Sacrament, a perspective which remained throughout Luther’s lifetime. This testamental perspective understands the Lord’s Supper to be Christ’s promise of his body to his church, a promise that is freely offered and need only be received by faith.

Luther’s views of the Lord’s Supper developed in reaction to two main streams of thought. The first, which Luther observed in the Roman Catholic practice, was the teaching that the Mass was an offering of Christ’s body and blood which merited forgiveness or reduction in punishment for sin. The second stream was that of Zwingli and the subsequent Reformed who denied that the body and blood of Christ were consumed with the consumption of the bread and wine of the sacrament. In response to the Reformed, Luther wrote repeatedly to demonstrate that Christ’s true body and

\textsuperscript{111} LW 36:3-126.

\textsuperscript{112} LW 35:75-112.
blood were actually consumed in the eating and drinking of the Lords’ Supper.113 This is My Body (1527) and Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper (1528) cover very similar material, as the former is Luther’s major writing directed against Zwingli and his colleagues, and the latter is his rejoinder to their response. Generally Luther addresses articles that obtain to the bodily presence of Christ in the bread and wine. Very little is said of the fellowship in the supper, and even less about the relationship of good works to this fellowship.114

Luther’s insistence on the sole merit of Christ for the forgiveness of sins and the distribution of this merit in his body and blood reach full maturity in these writings. With the attacks of Zwingli, Oecolampadius, and others, who in their denial of the body and blood also denied the distribution of the forgiveness of sins, Luther articulates most clearly against them the main thing in this sacrament: Christ for the sinner by the forgiveness of sins.115 The presence of Christ’s body and blood is inseparable from the forgiveness of sins, for the forgiveness is given in the body and blood. Thus Luther’s ardent defense of the body and blood: the one who takes these away removes Christ, forgiveness, and salvation.116 In this way his twofold structure of thinking about the Lord’s Supper—against the Mass as a meritorious sacrifice for forgiveness, and for the presence of the body and the blood of Christ for the true bestowal of this forgiveness—

113 See "The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ--Against the Fanatics" (1526), in LW 36:329-362; That These Words of Christ, "This Is My Body," etc., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics (1527), in LW 37:3-150; Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper (1528), in LW 37:151-372.

114 LW 37:131-32.


are connected. Both defend the one underlying concern: that the Lord’s Supper above all be believed to be Christ’s promise of forgiveness received through faith, apart from the worthiness or actions of the communicant.

However, while the bodily presence is Luther’s primary concern with respect to the Lord’s Supper, he does not nullify the fundamental points of what he argued in The Blessed Sacrament. When the question of participation in Christ and community charity are raised, Luther affirms with similar statements and phrases the claims he made in his early treatise.

In his 1523 treatise, The Adoration of the Sacrament,117 Luther refers to the common image of the church being gathered together as one in Christ just as grains of wheat are baked into one loaf, and grapes are united in the making of wine. Christ offers his natural body in the sacrament to make all believing partakers members of his spiritual body.118 Christ is everything to the Christian, and Christians serve as all things to each other: “Christ has become all things to us; and we, if we are Christians, have become all things among ourselves, each to the other.”119 In this concise statement Luther traces a flow of virtue from Christ, to all believers as a corporate body of Christ, then as individuals each to each other. The community of Christians becomes the actual bearer of the power of Christ, so that to be members of Christ’s body is not an ethereal or intangible concept, but an effective experience.

117 LW 36:269-306.
118 LW 36:282-86.
119 LW 36:286-87.
At the same time, all grace and power begins with Christ, so that the church is wholly reliant upon him. The sharing, as Luther describes it now, is not one of the people sharing in Christ’s misfortunes, which Luther affirmed in his 1519 treatise. “All this is achieved by Christ, who through his own body makes us all to be one spiritual body; so that all of us partake equally of his body, and are therefore equal and united with one another.” Christians bear nothing of Christ’s trials. In becoming his body, Christians participate in all gifts he has to give, but not in the sufferings, which are unique to Christ’s ministry. The direction of work now flows only one way—from Christ to the church to one another—not in two ways, back and forth between Christ and Christian. There need be no contradiction between the testamental character of the Supper, and the mutual sharing of burdens by the members of the church.

At the end of this section, Luther says, “What one has belongs to the other, and what one lacks is a matter of concern to each of the others as if he were lacking it himself. Concerning this I have spoken elsewhere at greater length.” This “elsewhere” can only refer to The Blessed Sacrament of 1519, because it is the only “greater length” publication of this sub-topic prior to his writing The Adoration of the Sacrament. By 1523 Luther has experienced his “evangelical maturation,” having come to clear terms with the doctrine of justification and an evangelical hermeneutic, so he clearly understands his notion of participation not to be in conflict with justification. 

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120 LW 36:286-87.
121 LW 36:287.
122 See, e.g., Robert Kolb, Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 42-71, which argues for a gradual development in Luther’s thought through the 1510s.
This statement confirms Luther’s continued, fundamental agreement with his earlier teaching on participation with Christ in the eucharist and the sharing of virtue that occurs through this participation.

In his 1526 sermon series, “The Sacrament—Against the Fanatics,” Luther describes the benefit of the Supper as the forgiveness of sins, as promised in the Words of Institution. But the fruit of the sacrament is “nothing other than love.” The benefit of forgiveness, which means freedom from all spiritual adversity and affliction and that the “heart should be strengthened,” is, among other things, to bear fruit in love for the neighbor. This love is further demonstrated by the example of Christ and the figure of the elements of the Sacrament. Christ’s love is demonstrated in the humility, suffering, and death he accepted in order to earn forgiveness for humankind, and in the reminder of this example in preaching and in the distribution of his body and blood. Luther resorts to the familiar example, the image of the grains being united in the bread and the grapes in the wine. Thus Christians are to understand themselves as in union with one another, making no distinction of goods or benefits for each other. Luther is so adamant about the connection of charity to the eucharist that he says, “Thus this sacrament is a taskmaster by which we order our lives and learn as long as we live.”

Clearly Luther has a multidimensional view of the significance of the sacrament, a

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123 *LW* 36:352.
124 *LW* 36:350.
125 *LW* 36:352.
126 *LW* 36:353.
perspective that is often overshadowed by his screeds against the sacrifice of the Mass and in defense of the bodily presence of Christ in the Supper. Although he does not elaborate in this place, that the sacrament is a “taskmaster” for the order of one’s life is clear and strong language that the sacrament has for Luther a formative and principle role in Christian character and behavior.

This train of thought continues in Luther’s writings. His 1528 Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper picks up on the analogy of the common possessions of citizens in a city. Fellowship comes from the body and blood that are eaten and drunk. This body and blood are Christ’s; they are the “common possession” of Christ, “distributed among many for them to partake.” Thus fellowship comes not just from gathering together and mixing with each other, but it comes from partaking of one thing in common, namely Christ. Fellowship with Christ is first; as a result of this, then Christians have fellowship with each other.

In a sermon preached for the Vigil of Pentecost, 1528 (about five months after his Confession), Luther offers the strongest reiteration of his 1519 treatise. This sermon could be considered his most mature and excellent statement on the relationship of the Eucharist, union, and good works. He says that just as the bread is a unity formed from many grains, the church has all things in common when it partakes of Christ. All Christians share “infirmity, folly, lack, poverty.” Strength serves weakness—the one with more serves the one with less—until all are restored. Yet this mutual sharing,

127 LW 37:353.

again, is grounded first in the fellowship they have with Christ. By eating his body and blood they are in him and receive all good from him. Only then is the believer strengthened to bear her neighbors’ burdens.

Thus we eat the sacrament bodily and spiritually, to strengthen our faith and thereafter to fulfill the meaning.... I place my sin and death upon Christ; he gives righteousness and eternal life. Thus I say to the neighbor: If you are poor, come to me, that you might have bread, coat, etc. In the same way if you are ignorant of the faith.¹²⁹

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

This survey of Luther’s writings on the eucharist shows the consistency of Luther on this topic through his career. To be sure, his discussion of the bodily presence and the forgiveness of sins comes to the fore after The Blessed Sacrament, and the union and love enacted and empowered in the eucharist were not always mentioned (notably in the catechisms, the Smalcald Articles, and Luther’s later Brief Confession).

Nevertheless, love and unity remain the fruit and significance of the supper in Luther’s thought, as indicated by his consistency in opinion and in the language and illustrations used to express his opinion. We do see him develop in that his later language more strongly establishes Christ as the source of all benefits that flow from communion, and that the mutual sharing between Christians relies on Christ as the source of all grace and virtue, in keeping with his testamental interpretation of the eucharist. Fundamentally, however, the connection between worship, union with Christ, fellowship, and love is

¹²⁹ WA 30/1, 26-27, trans. Aaron Moldenhauer, emphasis mine. "Sic edimus Sacramentum leiblich et geistlich, unsern glauben zu stercken und zu erfullen die deutung hernacher....Ego propono christo peccatum, mortem, etc. Ipse dat iusticiam et vitam eternam. Sic ad proximum dico: Si pauper es, etc., gib mirs her, da hastu brod, rocke etc. Sic si es ignarus fidei, etc."
consistent over Luther’s career, so that his writings which speak in most detail about grace in worship, union, and love, *The Blessed Sacrament*, may be taken as representative, as Luther himself affirmed. For Luther, worship centers on the eucharistic unity with Christ, and establishes a community of mutual sharing within which an ethic of love, mercy, and self-sacrifice is to be practiced. Love is the “fruit” of the sacrament.

5.7.2 The Meaning of Eucharistic Sacrifice

With Luther’s opposition to the sacrifice of the Mass, it may seem non-Lutheran to argue that the character of the eucharist is sacrificial. However, Lutherans do not deny the role of sacrifice in the Christian life in general. They deny only that sacrifice on the part of a Christian is *atoning* or earns merit before God. This distinction, and the Lutheran understanding of sacrifice, is explained in detail in the *Apology of The Augsburg Confession*, Article 24.

This article groups both sacrifices and sacraments under the rubric of “ceremony” or “sacred work.”\(^\text{130}\) In a sacrament, God offers to a person the promise which has been attached to the ceremony, while, in a sacrifice, a person or people offer to God glory, praise, or honor due to him. A sacrifice is “a ceremony or work that we render to God in order to give him honor.”\(^\text{131}\) The importance of ceremony or ritual is foundational to Melanchthon’s theology of worship in this article. These “sacred works”

\(^\text{130}\) *Ap* 24.17.

\(^\text{131}\) Ibid., 24.18. “Econtra sacrificium est ceremonia vel opus, quod nos Deo reddimus, ut eum honore afficiamus.” Again, it should be noted how the Lutherans of the sixteenth century do not shrink from referring to works that are done by Christians, or to sacrifices, but rather carefully distinguish how they are referred and in which contexts they apply.
go along with the words of worship, because they are embodied words, actions which affirm and verify the things spoken. In comparison with Chauvet’s language theory and Wannenwetsch’s understanding of language to form the life of the church, so Melanchthon’s sacred works or ceremonies are the institutional, symbolic acts which present the fundamental form of life in the church. Both sacrifices and sacraments embody the life of the church according to the Word of Christ, connecting the inner power of the Spirit with the outer action of the participating believers. Some of these ceremonies are sacramental, in that they embody the grace of God to be received in the ceremony, and the other ceremonies are sacrificial, in that they are the graced human expression in response to receiving the grace of God.

Melanchthon goes on to distinguish two kinds of sacrifices: 1) those which atone for guilt and punishment, reconciling someone to God, and 2) “eucharistic” sacrifices, which are expressions of thanksgiving for something God has given to the one who offers.\textsuperscript{132} After arguing that there has been only one true atoning sacrifice, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, Melanchthon turns his attention to the nature and meaning of eucharistic sacrifices.\textsuperscript{133}

Eucharistic sacrifices are defined, broadly, as “all the good works of the saints,” and Melanchthon lists as examples of Eucharistic sacrifices preaching, faith, prayer, thanksgiving, confession, and “the afflictions of the saints.”\textsuperscript{134} These are not sacrifices

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 24.19.

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 24.20-24.

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 24. 25.
which produce merit, but sacrifices which are “performed by those who are already reconciled.”\textsuperscript{135} For biblical support and comparison, Melanchthon refers to 1 Peter 2:5, “a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices,” Romans 12:1, “[P]resent your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship,” and Hebrews 13:15, “let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name.” The sacrifices of the church under the new covenant are spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. They are offered by faith, fruit of the forgiving and reconciling work of God in Jesus Christ, the only one who offered an atoning sacrifice.\textsuperscript{136} Melanchthon repeats in several places his examples of such spiritual sacrifices: prayer, thanksgiving, confession, faith, preaching, and suffering for the good.\textsuperscript{137}

Such spiritual worship of the New Testament is twofold. It is the “righteousness of faith in the heart” and “the fruits of faith.”\textsuperscript{138} Although Melanchthon does not make the explicit connection here, this twofold worship parallels Luther’s twofold righteousness. This is the passive righteousness of faith and the active righteousness of love and good works, as discussed in chapter one. Here, Melanchthon suggests the implications of the twofold righteousness with respect to worship. Melanchthon also points out that this twofold understanding of Christian worship—forgiveness and thanksgiving—is testified by the early church theologians and pastors, as well, and that

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 24.26.

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 24.26, 30, 32.

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 24.27.
the term “eucharist” arises from this use especially in the context of thanksgiving. The righteousness of faith in worship is the passive reception of God’s promise of forgiveness, merited by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The active righteousness in worship is the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, that is, all the good works of prayer, preaching, faith, suffering, and so forth. The paradigm of the two kinds of righteousness has its parallel also in Christian worship.

Melanchthon goes on to include specifically the eucharist in this category of new testament worship, so that the eucharist itself is both a sacrament, or a reception of the righteousness of faith, and a sacrifice, a ceremony of thanksgiving for its benefits. Melanchthon’s caveat is that the eucharist does not make righteous “ex opere operato,” that is, simply by the performance of the work without faith in the recipient. For without faith there would be no reception of the passive righteousness received from Christ, and without the righteousness of Christ, there can be no active righteousness of good works. But where there is faith, Christ is united with the believer, and the believer is newly created and empowered to do good, including the worship of God.

In fact, Melanchthon seems to be of the opinion that one must understand the eucharist as a sacrifice, and not only the eucharist, but all Christian worship. Interpreting Numbers 28:4-5 as laying out the criteria for the daily sacrifice of God’s faithful people, he notes that the Old Covenant offering required the burning of a lamb, a drink offering, and an offering of wheat flour. Under the New Covenant, this is to be interpreted to

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139 Ibid., 24.75-76.
140 Ibid., 24.33.
determine the spiritual and theological significance, while the old ceremonies are to be discarded. The sacrifice of the lamb signifies the death of Christ, the drink offering signifies the forgiveness of believers by the blood of Christ, and the grain offering, as a peace or thank offering, corresponds to faith, prayer, and thanksgiving of a Christian. When- and wherever Christ’s death is commemorated, whether in preaching or in the sacraments, these three components are required. “Offerings are also required, that is, thanksgiving, confession, and affliction.” Not only may the eucharist (and preaching, for that matter) be understood as a sacrifice, but, when rightly celebrated in faith, it necessarily includes responsive sacrifices of thanksgiving, faith, and confession.\textsuperscript{141} The connection between the means of grace—those things which offer the passive righteousness of faith—and the spiritual sacrifices of the Christian—those which are summed up as good works—is so close for Melanchthon that he declares a logical relationship from the former to the latter: “Since, therefore, we retain the proclamation of the gospel and the proper use of the sacraments, a daily sacrifice remains among us.”\textsuperscript{142}

Melanchthon increases the connection even more, finally developing his argument to the point that he says simply that the whole ceremony of the eucharist is a sacrifice of praise. The sacrament and the sacrifice are so intertwined, that they cannot be separated. Because the sacrament has the effect of making alive, the Christian who receives the sacrament in faith, and thereby the promised benefits, is also enlivened

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 24.37-38

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 24.49.
and inspired to respond with thanksgiving. Yet the response of thanksgiving is not merely subsequent to the sacrament: “[The conscience] uses the ceremony itself as praise to God, as a way of demonstrating its gratitude, and as a witness of its high esteem for the gifts of God. In this way the ceremony becomes a sacrifice of praise.”

The sacramental and sacrificial elements in the ceremony itself are so interconnected, that the ceremony may be called both a sacrament and a sacrifice. This is not to say that the sacramental and sacrificial elements cannot be distinguished, only that the ceremony contains both kinds of elements and may be referred to after either fashion.

This way of seeing the sacramental and sacrificial elements of the eucharist as intertwined also has close comparisons to Chauvet. That, for Melancthon, the eucharist must be recognized as sacrificial is another way of speaking of the verification that is important for Chauvet. In Melanchthon, this verification includes the praise of and thanksgiving toward God, not just ethical action for others. A parallel with dispossession may be seen in Melancthon’s argument that a worshipper has nothing to offer apart from receiving first the gifts of God. But the most striking comparison is with Chauvet’s concept of the return gift.

Relying on research from the social sciences, Chauvet argues that the recipient of a gift is obligated or bound to offer a gift in return. The return-gift need not be of equal value, nor must it necessarily be an object. The return-gift is, at minimum, an acknowledgement by the recipient that he has received something. To receive something without any kind of acknowledgement, such as a “thank you,” gesture, or

\[143\] Ibid., 24.74.
other expression of gratitude, would be, effectively, an ostracizing of oneself from the
giver and the failure to recognize the gift as a gift. A second, extremely important point
for Chauvet, is that the return-gift need not be given back to the original giver. In fact, in
many circumstances, the return-gift is given by the recipient to a third party, a way of
passing on the graciousness of the original giver.144

These two aspects closely parallel Melanchthon’s argument regarding sacrifice.
In the first place, the sacraments evoke thanksgiving, praise, and other good works—the
return-gift for the grace of the Holy Spirit and righteousness of Christ. Secondly, these
good works need not be directed toward God. They could be, in the form of prayer,
thanksgiving and praise; or they could also be directed toward others in the form of
service, charity, mercy, and standing with someone in affliction.

Melanchthon concludes his argument by noting that the eucharist may also be
called an offering, for prayers and thanksgiving are offered in it.145 All along,
Melanchthon is careful to iterate that, in the eucharist, no one is offering Christ’s body
or blood as an atoning sacrifice, nor is Christ being re-sacrificed as an atonement.146 The
character of the eucharistic sacrifice is thanksgiving (which he says should be obvious in
just reflecting on the term), not atonement.

In Apology 24, Melanchthon addresses through the notion of sacrifice the
fullness of a worship ethic. Christian ethics are not only actions, nor are they developed

144 Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 99-109, 277-86.
146 Ap 24.22-24, 52-63, 88
only through theory, principles (alone), and practicing these principles. The ethical stance or perspective is instilled and nurtured in worship itself, and Melanchthon explains one part of that ethical stance or perspective, that of sacrifice. The Apology shows that an ethic begins in and with worship. The eucharist is already a sacrifice, that is, a work which is pleasing to God, and therefore a good work. Such a good work is the beginning of Christian ethics, which finds its flowering in love and service to the neighbor. The sacrificial attitude of Christians grows out of the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, beginning with Christ’s own sacrifice for sin and granted to faithful people in worship. The thankful attitude of sacrifice is nourished in eucharistic worship, while acts of sacrifice, like prayers of thanksgiving, are practiced. This sacrificial character demonstrates at least one aspect of the particularity of Christian ethics. In the next and final chapter I will bring together the themes of this dissertation to present in summary fashion the Christian character of ethics which begins in and grows out of Christian worship.
CHAPTER SIX:

THE HOLY SPIRIT, VIRTUE, AND THE LAW IN THE ETHICAL LIFE OF THE BELIEVER

6.1 Introduction - Sketching Christian Ethics

Based on the arguments offered in this study, Christian ethics is formed uniquely out of Christian worship, not only as habits which grow out of an ethos, but as a new life which is formed by grace, through Word and sacraments. The Holy Spirit forms this new life by grounding the believer’s existence in Christ, a grounding which occurs through faith and brings about a union with Christ. In union with Christ, the believer has available perichoretically the powers of Christ, which are imparted to the believer in a mystical attribution. Most fundamentally, the believer has access to the righteousness of Christ in order to do good works, a righteousness which is also imputed to the person through the judgment of God and received through faith.

This new life given by the Holy Spirit has been described in two ways. Anthropologically, philosophically, and theologically it has been described as regeneration—a new creation through faith by the power of God’s justification. From this perspective it is a newness, a departure from the old nature of sin which was oriented toward the world. Yet this new nature may also be described as a new character. Without denying the transformation of the person from death to life, from
oldness to newness, this label of “new character” is an ethical description, a way of noting the newness of the believer’s will, mind, and inclinations with respect to action in the world. The theological and anthropological description we considered in chapter four. In this final chapter, I want to tie together the eclectic points of this study by offering an ethical description of the newness of the believer, that is, the distinctiveness of the new character. As this is a concluding chapter, I will be working primarily to integrate points made in earlier chapters, while only offering a schematic of what the Christian ethical life could look like in the Lutheran tradition. I will suggest that a Christian ethic is characterized at least in a general sense by the virtues of self-sacrifice and charity. Furthermore, I will offer a solution to the problem of the law which was outlined in the first chapter, arguing in summary that my understanding of Christian ethics addresses the contemporary weaknesses of ethics in the Lutheran tradition.

First, however, there is more to say about how the Spirit imprints or engraves this new character in a believer in filling out all the points with respect to narrative formation, especially as conceived by Hauerwas, and with respect to the symbolic order as described in chapter five. In the last chapter we described the power of the Holy Spirit especially in relation to the means of grace; in this chapter I say a little more about how a believer’s character is changed by the Spirit and how she does good works through the Spirit.
6.2 The Holy Spirit and New Character

6.2.1 Grace and Narrative in Formation

The previous chapters have shown that Christian character formation must include at least two parts: 1) the gift of the new character, nature, or heart, which is a spiritual, gracious act of God, actually bringing the person from spiritual death into life; 2) the formation over time of this character to grow into the form of life, to learn the narrative of the Christian life and to act according to it. Without the former, there can be no formation. A heart that is spiritually dead cannot comprehend or respond to a spiritual narrative or form of life. The heart has to be given life by the power of the Spirit. This account of grace is what is lacking, at least explicitly, in Hauerwas. For Hauerwas, narrative alone is responsible for formation, and Hauerwas does not explain how grace might be operative in his scheme. But Christian transformation is not just the expansion of imagination to perceive various and multivalent connections between events and relationships. It includes the spiritual power of grace.

It is also for this reason that the justification/sanctification correlation remains. The dialectical aspect need not be emphasized, if this leads to an emphasis of one and a neglect of the other, or a perceived irreconcilable duality. For, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, especially through the explanation of the twofold righteousness, justification leads into and anticipates sanctification, while sanctification necessarily follows from justification. Because both are grounded in the single righteousness of Christ which is bestowed to the believer in a twofold way, they cannot be separated from each other. Luther’s notion of grace as both operative and
cooperative is clearly applicable here. The dialogue is a journey, as Hauerwas says, but both begin with the regenerating call of God’s justification.

Yet the new heart, nature, or character of the believer, once made alive, works with the gracious power of the Spirit in Christ, and is challenged, developed, and transformed into a member of the church. The forms of life and language games in Wannenwetsch, the symbolic order and illocutionary effect in Chauvet, and the narrative of Hauerwas all fundamentally provide the community ritual life, expectations, and qualifications of actions which structure and orient the moral life of the believer. The rituals, symbols, or linguistic forms of life serve as an encompassing narrative for the Christian, training him in actions that are good and expected, and making other bad actions distasteful and eventually unthinkable. This narrative formation works in tandem with the continued gracious power of the Holy Spirit and the constant presence of Christ and his qualities.

6.2.2 “The Transposing Power of the Spirit”

The Christian ethic which grows out of worship is an ethic of interconnection with other people, of identifying with the neighbor and even becoming the neighbor in order to serve and to love the person. The Christian narrative occurs in the Christian community. Such a community identification is not a psychological or sympathetic identification, both of which are limited in their intimacy with the neighbor, and neither of which necessitate the empowering of the Holy Spirit. A person limits psychological and emotional sympathy by filtering the neighbor’s experience through her own stance. Rather than entering into the neighbor’s experience, the self-orienting stance tries to fit
the neighbor into oneself, overlooking or collapsing the real difference between the subject and the neighbor. Rather than the neighbor’s experience being brought into the experience of the person and sympathized with, the subject’s thoughts, feelings, judgments and perspectives are transferred onto the neighbor’s. In this, the ethical need can be lost, distanced, or made secondary.¹

But the Holy Spirit brings about a “transposing” of the believer with the neighbor. The “transposing” that occurs for the Christian is the transposing of oneself into another “as Christ.” Because the believer is in unity with Christ, she now addresses and engages the neighbor as Christ would. This union with the neighbor—ideally—is not filtered or corrupted by the person’s perspective (although, in practice, it will be flawed if the persisting old nature interferes), but the believer has now put on the mind of Christ and sees the neighbor from Christ’s perspective. In this renewed stance, the neighbor does not remain at a distance, nor is her experience subsumed or collapsed into the other. The Christian, in this instance, has become a “little Christ” to the neighbor.²

The crucial difference from psychological sympathy is that when a person comes from the stance of being Christ to her neighbor, she does not present herself to her neighbor to help while being concerned over limits to her time, energy, and resources. The care offered to the neighbor comes out of her having received all good things in Christ, and in so having all good things, is able to offer these good things to the neighbor.

¹ Wannenwetsch, Political Worship, 328-29.
² Ibid., 330-31.
neighbor. She serves the neighbor out of the neighbor’s peculiar, manifest needs, not
out of an imagined or imposed perception of the person.

Furthermore, because the person serves out of the abundance of Christ, she is
not seeking for something in return, nor is there fear over competition for scarce goods.

For where the question about justice is seen as a problem about the distribution
of goods or opportunities...the fundamental point of departure is the deficiency. But deficiency makes the other in a threateningly primary way a competitor for
restricted goods, and someone who can therefore only in a secondary way become a partner (or accomplice). It is only where abundance ‘rules’ (in the
literal sense) that the other is not a threat.3

In the realm of Christian abundance, justice is not concerned with the equity of limited
resources, but with offering all that is good. When Christians have received everything
from Christ, as they do in worship—the Word and sacraments—they have abundance to
offer. There is no fear of the loss of self, but only the confidence that all will be brought
into the great fellowship of Jesus Christ, who gives without qualification.4

6.3 Particular Christian Virtues: Faith, Self-Sacrifice & Charity

We have spoken extensively of faith throughout this dissertation. Here, I
reiterate that faith itself is a work of God called forth by his Word and empowered by
the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, in the last chapter, we already highlighted the virtues of
mutual love and self-sacrifice in our consideration of Luther’s writings on the Lord’s
Supper and Melanchthon’s explanation of sacrifice in Apology Article 24. At this point I
want to develop in more detail the claim that the particular virtues of a Christian,

3 Ibid., 332-33.
established and empowered by union with Christ through Christian worship, include these of faith, self-sacrifice, and charity.

6.3.1 Faith: Fear, Trust, Love, and Knowledge of God

In the *Augsburg Confession* and *The Apology*, the distinction between civil righteousness—or the outward, first kind of righteousness of which all people, whether believer or unbeliever, are capable—and spiritual righteousness—the active, imparted righteousness of a Christian—is defined basically as the inner work of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of the regenerate. Both civil and spiritual righteousness produce “good” external works—works which are beneficial to other people and to the order of society—but only spiritual righteousness has the Holy Spirit.\(^5\)

From the discussion in the previous section, one may get the impression that such inner spirituality is merely a motive. If the Holy Spirit inspires sympathy and love for others, then this spirituality might be called only a different kind of motivation for good works, but contributes nothing different to the content of good works. And the Lutheran confessors may sound, in some places, as if they mean this, conceding to the unregenerate “the freedom and power to perform external works of the law.”\(^6\)

Furthermore, as noted in chapter one, this is one of Benne’s basic criticisms of Lutheran ethics—that Christian love is merely a motive for good works. However, the inner work of the Holy Spirit produces more than motive. It is a shaping of the heart of a person to include new virtues and desires. This power includes not just a new reason or motive for

\(^5\) *Ap* 18.9-10; *CA* 18.8.

\(^6\) *Ap* 18.7.
acting, but an inclining power to different kinds of good works. Some good works will remain consistent with the good works of civil righteousness, but other, new good works will be different from civil righteousness.

These new virtues and desires are described as “spiritual capacities, namely, true fear of God, true faith in God, the conviction and knowledge that God cares for us, hears us, and forgives us, etc. These are the real works of the first table, which the human heart cannot produce without the Holy Spirit....” Melanchthon does not just call these motives, as if they were only one part of a human act, but he refers to the fear, faith, and knowledge themselves as “good works.” They remain spiritual and emphasize inner virtues, which is why some may confuse them with mere motives. However, as actual virtues, they direct toward particular actions. The new, spiritual capacities of the regenerate differ in content from civil righteousness by the orientation toward God. The fear, trust, and knowledge of God incline to different acts from those of an unbeliever because they present a different scope and range of actions that are good from those of a person who looks simply to love another as oneself. Faith and worship of God change the very understanding of what is loving, because they provide the perspective of creation in relation to a creator who loved so greatly that he gave his own life to redeem his creation.

Such an attitude of faith and worship also inclines a person to acts of worship which do not fit into the ethical matrix of an unbeliever. Luther describes further:

7 *Apology* “Free Will” 18.7. See also CA 18.8.
To have a God, as you can well imagine, does not mean to grasp him with your fingers, or to put him into a purse, or to shut him up in a box. Rather, you lay hold of God when your heart grasps him and clings to him. To cling to him with your heart is nothing else than to entrust yourself to him completely. He wishes to turn us away from everything else apart from him, and to draw us to himself, because he is the one, eternal good. It is as if he said: “What you formerly sought from the saints, or what you hoped to receive from mammon or from anything else, turn to me for all of this; look on me as the one who will help you and lavish all good things upon you richly.”

As Luther depicts it, faith in God is not just a virtue, but includes the action of an inner, spiritual turning toward God to receive everything that he has to offer. It is a kind of spiritual holding or grasping.

Such faith certainly inclines a person to other works, most notably worship. It is for this reason that Luther connects faith so intimately to the First Commandment. Indeed, faith does more than merely incline to worship, it is the most foundational act of worship, for it is the movement toward, the reaching out toward, the laying hold of, God. Out of faith also grow other acts of worship, both internal and external: prayer, praise and thanksgiving to God, receiving what God does to the heart, and the outward ceremonies that give external expression to these acts, centered on preaching, baptism, and the Holy Communion.

From this we can refer to faith in Christ as a unique virtue of Christians which inclines a Christian to the works of fear, love, trust, and knowledge of God, and other works of worship. It is not a mere motive. More broadly, faith already is a good work, because it is the act of receiving God and his gifts, and holding fast to them.

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9 LC "The Ten Commandments" 1.2-4, 16-23.
6.3.2 Self-Sacrifice

6.3.2.1 Recent Research on Christian Sacrifice

Melanchthon’s treatment of the distinction between propitiatory and eucharistic sacrifices anticipated the scholarly treatments of sacrifice from the latter part of the twentieth century. These more recent works confirm the general argument made by Melanchthon, while providing groundbreaking insights into the meaning of sacrifice for early Christians. I will briefly summarize these insights most relevant to this dissertation, and then argue that this understanding of sacrifice can be conceptualized as a virtue of self-sacrifice unique to the Christian.

While the term sacrifice may refer to the act of giving up something of value in order to attain a greater benefit for oneself or for another, it may also refer to the thing sacrificed, and to the ritual action surrounding the sacrifice. In early Christian usage, including the New Testament up to about the time of Origen, sacrifice usually referred to Christ’s offering of himself as a sacrifice for sin, to the sacrifices of the Old Covenant which anticipated this sacrifice of Christ, or to the spiritual sacrifice of the Christian in praise or thanksgiving to God, or in service to others. Interpreting the Old Covenant

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11 Stevenson, 3-4.

12 Moll, Die Lehre von der Eucharistie als Opfer, 183-84; Daly, The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice, 60-64; Young, The Use of Sacrificial Ideas, 77; Stevenson, Eucharist and Offering, 14-20. The spiritual sacrifices of the Christian life included the liturgy of the Eucharist, and, according to Young, a
sacrifices as anticipatory of Christ and now fulfilled, the two broad kinds of sacrifices with continued operative significance in the Church are Christ’s sacrifice for sin and the Christian spiritual sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving, and ethics. ¹³ This twofold distinction compares with Melanchthon’s distinction between propitiatory and eucharistic sacrifices.

Furthermore, it should be noted that Christians are the beneficiaries of the former sacrifice, Christ’s sacrifice for sin, receiving the benefit earned by him in handing over himself to be crucified, while Christians are the one’s offering the latter sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving and ethics: performing these sacrifices in response to the love they have received from God. As Christ offered himself up to earn forgiveness of sins and new life for the world, so believers offer themselves to God on the basis of Christ’s merit, new life and power, and example. The sacrifice of Christians is caught up in and grows out of the sacrifice of Christ. ¹⁴ The Eucharist serves as link by which the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice are received by the Christian, and as the Christian is caught up in these benefits by eating and drinking the very body and blood of Christ, the Christian then also acts in a way commensurate to what she has received: she gives thanks and praise to God for the benefits of forgiveness and life, and she goes forth and offers herself to others, to support them in their needs.

¹³ These two very general kinds of sacrifices are examined and further classified by the scholars referred. Their works are recommended for a comprehensive explanation of the characteristic of Christian sacrifice.

¹⁴ Moll, Die Lehre von der Eucharistie als Opfer, 184, 193-94.
As the Christian receives the benefits and inspiration of the sacrifice of Christ, what characterizes the sacrificial nature of her life? Such spiritual sacrifices according to the early Christian tradition include prayers of praise, thanksgiving, and supplication, martyrdom, and doing concretely good acts for others, such as almsgiving or caring for bodily needs. Indeed, the New Testament refers significantly to the sacrificial character of the new, regenerate Christian life. The most prominent passages include Romans 12, Hebrews 13, and 1 Peter 2.

6.3.2.2 Romans 12

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

On the basis of all that Paul has said in his letter to the Romans prior to chapter twelve, but especially on the inclusion of the Gentiles in the elect by the grace of God (Romans 9-11), Paul transitions to the question of how the church at Rome should live their lives. They are exhorted to offer themselves in spiritual (logikēn) worship. Logikēn is more literally translated “reasonable,” yet the full power of Paul’s exhortation is recognized best when we integrate the bodily, intellectual, and spiritual, as he is in fact doing. The spiritual or reasonable worship is to offer their bodies, not over to death, but as a living sacrifice. As a living sacrifice, the body is offered to do the good, acceptable, and perfect


will of God, not for a moment of sacrifice which ends in death, but in a life of sacrifice which is continuously able to be offered over for such goodness. The Christian sacrifice has the duration of the life of the Christian, and its purpose is to serve the good will of God.

This sacrifice is made as an act of worship, by which the mind is renewed. By offering over the mind and body to God, the mind is renewed by the Spirit of God to know what is good, and then to act on this knowledge in a transformed life of goodness. This goodness manifests both in works toward God and in works toward others, as Paul explains through the rest of the epistle, especially in chapter twelve. While much could be said in examining each of Paul’s exhortations, the good works generally have the character of putting the needs of others before oneself—seeing the church as a community, showing patience, even in persecution, assisting others in their bodily needs, expressing sympathy with others, demonstrating humility and longsuffering while allowing for God’s action (Romans 12:6-18). These traits can be connected to self-sacrifice in one way or another—each believer is to offer up her own feelings, abilities, and resources for the benefit of others. Thus, what begins in sacrifice, the spiritual sacrifice of oneself to God for renewal and goodness, results in action that is sacrificial on behalf of others.

6.3.2.3 Hebrews 13

We have an altar from which those who officiate in the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured.
For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.\(^{17}\)

The obvious reference to a Christian’s sacrifice is the “sacrifice of praise,” the “fruit of lips that confess” Jesus. This, in turn, evokes Psalm 116, in which the Psalmist offers a “sacrifice of thanksgiving/praise” to God in response to all the benefits God has given him. This serves as a foundation for Melanchthon’s understanding of eucharistic sacrifices, those acts of worship—praise, thanks, or prayer—offered by Christians in response to God’s saving work in Jesus Christ.

Yet the writer to the Hebrews intends even more than this, for he goes on to refer to doing good and sharing as sacrifices pleasing to God. Not only praise, thanksgiving, and prayer are sacrifices, but the good works of the Christian life are sacrifices—sacrifices of one’s own person and property for the sake of others. Again, what do these sacrifices look like? The writer refers to a number of good works, in this case, just prior to the explicit reference to sacrifice, in Hebrews 13:1-9. Some are similar to those in Romans 12: mutual love, showing hospitality, remembering those in prison and those being tortured. There are also exhortations to remain pure, such as with respect to the marriage bed, to money, to the imitation of good leaders, and to right teachings. So besides offering oneself for the benefit of others, the Christian is also to give up immediate indulgences—to sacrifice the desires of the flesh, so to speak—in order to remain steadfast in integrity and attain the end of a good life.

\(^{17}\) Hebrews 13:10-16.
Finally, the sacrifice of praise and the sacrifices of good works clearly grow out of Jesus’ sacrifice for sin. Jesus suffered as a fulfillment of the sin offerings, and Christians are called to go to Jesus and “bear the abuse he endured.” This statement itself is enigmatic, but whatever the specific suffering the Christian bears in going to Jesus, Jesus himself becomes the way through which she offers sacrifices (v. 15). By becoming like him through some kind of participation in his suffering and sacrifice, the Christian also then offers pleasing sacrifices of praise and good works to God.

6.3.2.4 1 Peter 2

Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.... You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Peter packs together paraphrases and references to the Hebrew Scriptures in chapter two in order to build his argument that the priestly and sacrificial work of the church is established, enlivened and built by Jesus and the suffering of Jesus. All of the formation of being built into a spiritual house and priesthood in order to offer spiritual sacrifices comes through Jesus Christ, who fulfills the prophecies that the nations would come to the light and become God’s people. Peter goes on to explain how Jesus

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18 To bear the abuse Jesus endured theoretically could refer to several things: to suffer for sin, to suffer persecution for being a Christian, or to share in the benefits of his sufferings through being a member of the Christian community.

19 1 Peter 2:5, 9-10.

20 Cf. not only Psalm 118:22 and Exodus 19:5-6, but also Psalm 145:4 ("mighty acts"), Isaiah 9:2 ("great/marvelous light"), and Hosea 1:9-10 and 2:23 ("my people").
accomplishes this in verses 21-24. He left an example of suffering, so that those who follow him would also persevere through suffering and persecution, especially in cases when they suffer for doing what is right. Furthermore, he “bore our sins in his body on the cross”—another connection to the sin offering—so that those who follow him are “free from sin.” In freedom from sin, the Christian follows the example of persevering and patient suffering, and offers the spiritual sacrifices, again, sacrifices “acceptable” to God.

The content of these sacrifices is similar in some ways to what we saw in Romans and Hebrews, yet includes a distinctive emphasis on praise and proclamation of the work of God. In verse five, the recipients of the epistle are to let themselves “be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, [in order] to offer (eis hierateuma hagion anenengkai [indicating purpose]) spiritual sacrifices.” After verse five Peter goes into a brief excursus in interpreting supporting scriptures, after which he continues in verse nine the thought about being a priesthood “[in order] that you may proclaim the mighty acts (hopōs tas aretas exangeilēte)” of God. A similar construction indicating purpose is used here, so that the proclamation of the mighty acts of God parallels the offering of acceptable, spiritual sacrifices in verse five. This suggests that the general kind of sacrificial action for the Christian is to proclaim the virtues of God who mercifully saves. Worship, praise, thanksgiving are the foundational sacrifices of Christians, according to Peter.

Yet such proclamation includes, in a wider sense, the example of good behavior, living “honorably among the Gentiles” so that they would, upon observing these good
deeds, “glorify God when he comes to judge” (v. 12). Good deeds includes “abstain[ing]
from the desires of the flesh” (v. 11), similar to the exhortations in Hebrews to live in
purity. And Christians are to honor everyone, putting aside their own honor for the sake
of others (v. 16-17).

In summary, the Christian virtue of self-sacrifice which is granted through faith,
by the means of grace in worship, in union with Christ, includes acts of worship and
good deeds. The acts of worship are to bring praise to God, offer him thanksgiving, and
to proclaim his good deeds to the world. In the broad sense, worship itself is a good
deed. It comes from a regenerate heart, manifests in actions like singing, praying,
preaching, confessing, and witnessing, and it is acceptable to God.

The good deeds of self-sacrifice, in turn, appear to be linked to the proclamation
of God’s mighty works, in that the good deeds themselves serve to proclaim God’s glory
among unbelievers. And while the good deeds of self-sacrifice broadly include all deeds
which serve and help others, they do retain a notion of sacrifice in that they give up
those things that can be perceived to be enjoyable, such as comfort, property, or even
desires of the flesh, in order to obtain a benefit for another person. Such self-sacrifice is,
following the example of Christ, the offering up of the church on behalf of the world.

6.3.2.5 Sacrifice for Creation and for the Neighbor

If God’s work in worship is declaring and making His people righteous by His
grace, then the work of the people in a life of worship is to serve creation righteously
and to carry out the mission of reconciliation in the world. Spiritual sacrifices give way to
the living sacrifice (Rom 12:1), so that this new life of the church is one long liturgy (1 Peter 2:4, Hebrews 13:15). In this framework, Christian ethics is the universal priesthood of the people of God, who stand in the world relative to the nations as the Old Testament priests stood in relation to Israel. This is to say, priesthood and sacrifice, as Christ’s work, are now found in the people of God as the body of Christ, so that “sacred work” is now carried out among and by the people, in confession of faith and works of mercy. And, therefore, the ritual memory of Christ—the celebration of the Eucharist—is verified in an “existential memory whose place is none other than the believers’ bodies.” Christ is present in the Sacrament for the unity of the church; he is also present in the merciful life of the church for the reconciliation of the world.

Furthermore, this biblical and early Christian understanding of sacrifice harmonizes with Chauvet’s appropriation of the return-gift, and his concept of dispossession. Christians have nothing that is absolutely their own to offer to God or to the neighbor. All that they receive is in Christ through the Spirit, yet this reception, this sharing in the sacrifice of Christ, grants to them the benefits of the sacrifice of sin and the new life to offer gifts back to God and to others. These offerings both to God in praise and thanksgiving, and also to others in charity, are return-gifts, symbolic acknowledgements of the grace they have received. Chauvet further speaks of Christian sacrifice clearly within the realm of dispossession and thanksgiving, in contrast

21 Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 254.

22 Ibid., 260-61.

23 Ibid., 277-80.
to propitiation or reconciliation: Christians need not cling to that which they have, but freely offer it to others, as they themselves freely received all things from God.²⁴

In creation, then, the Christian continues to serve other creatures. Although the creation groans as it waits for release from human sin, creation and matter of themselves are not sinful or evil.²⁵ Matter, like spirit, can be profaned and abused by human sin. But because creation itself is good, it is not abandoned by God, nor is it abandoned by the church. Thus ethical action in the Christian tradition emphasizes bodily action. Christian ethics is care, fundamentally, for the body and life of others. Such an understanding flows naturally from the celebration of the Eucharist which is a bodily celebration, a receiving, welcoming, and thanksgiving of the body of Jesus Christ into the midst. God establishes the importance of the body in the Eucharist, by giving his own body, shaping the Christian ethical stance toward the body.²⁶

God’s care for the body, furthermore, is manifest in the act of resurrection. Christ is resurrected; the promise for Christians is that they too will be resurrected (1 Cor. 15). God is concerned with the living body; it is in the created body that life has its fullness. So much is God concerned with the body that he takes a body for himself in Jesus Christ. Yet not wishing to remain absent from the world, the church now becomes the place where this body is given, so that the body is established among believers. In this way, the body of Christ still remains present in creation, and ethics bears witness to

²⁴ Ibid., 310-316; cf. Matthew 10:8, a record of Jesus’ commissioning of his apostles: “Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You have received without payment, give without payment.”

²⁵ Romans 8:19-22.

²⁶ Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 261.
the presence of God and his love for the body and life.²⁷ God is love; the life of the Christian in response is also a life of love. Thus the third virtue distinctly granted by worship in Christ is the virtue of love, or charity.

6.3.3 Charity and Love Prevail

In one way, the liturgy accomplishes the “impossible,” for, in the symbolic order, Christ is really present, His Spirit is really poured out, the called and baptized people of God are united in this gathering and in the sacrament of his body and blood, and are reconciled to the Father. What creation could not do under the bondage of sin, Christ did and makes effective in worship. But in another way what is being accomplished in a hidden and spiritual way still appears weak and unsuccessful. The liturgy attempts the unification and reconciliation of all people. It gives a picture of the way things ought to be, of individuals freed, reconciled, and living together in charity, even when, externally, this is not the case.²⁸ Thus while the gospel offers great freedom, God in his Word continues to call for growth and improvement. Those who relish the freedom of the Gospel are not to forget that “solidarity” goes with freedom. Liberty and unity go together in the church.²⁹ In fact, neighborliness, even more than solidarity, describes the unconditional nature with which the Church identifies with the one in need. Whereas solidarity may suggest the establishment of boundaries and limitations of a group over against another group, such as one holding political power, neighborliness, as narrated

²⁷ Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 264-65.
²⁹ Ibid., 443.
by Jesus in Luke 10:25ff., seeks to expand the bonds of love and service as far as possible. The church is not for an individual alone, but for human persons in relationship to each other, as neighbors. And in the church the person is freed from what binds him to himself and his own sin, so that he can be united with other people in true love. This life of freedom and unity continues after the final benediction. The dismissal is not a dispersal of individuals back into their own unconnected and separate lives, but a sending of reconciled and forgiven people of God to serve and reconcile the world.

6.3.3.1 Divine Love

Luther explains the relationship between faith—granted by God and exercised in worship—and love—exercised in worship and in worldly life—analogically, like the relationship between Christ’s sonship and his incarnation. Christ the Logos is born eternally of the Father, and, as eternally, continuously. He is always begotten of his Father as Son; this is their defining relationship. Faith compares to this in that the believer is evermore born in faith as a new, righteous person. Then, just as the eternal Son of God took on flesh, so that he could enter into the world of sinners and save them, so the Christian puts on love and enters into the world of her neighbor in order to serve and provide for her. The Son receives everything of his divinity from the Father, and is always and eternally divine; so the believer receives all gifts from her Father in

\[\text{Ref} \quad \text{Wannenwetsch, Political Worship, 222. Here Wannenwetsch is criticizing Rorty's understanding of solidarity, which is explicitly distinguished from a Christian perspective. The notion of solidarity in Roman Catholic theology would be much more akin to neighborliness as described here.}\]

\[\text{Ref} \quad \text{Hovda, "Reconciliation," 446.}\]
heaven who gives her the new birth of faith. Just as Christ became human and used these gifts on behalf of humanity, so the Christian uses the divine gifts she receives on behalf of the neighbor. And just as the Son is God perfectly and fully before becoming incarnate, on the basis of his sonship, so the Christian is perfectly and fully righteous before entering in love into her neighbor’s world, on account of her becoming a child of God through faith. Out of her faith, she becomes one who loves, just as Christ, out of his eternal begottenness, became the preeminent lover of humankind in the incarnation, suffering, death, and resurrection.  

Love is the power that unites the lover and the beloved to each other. The corrupt, sinful person is unable to love God, yet still places his love and trust in something or things, thereby establishing and uniting himself to these things, which, theologically speaking, could be called idols. This impure, misdirected idolatry can only be broken by the love of God breaking off the old bond with idols, and establishing the new bond with the person through faith. God loves people and gives love to them, to be received by faith. True love is an attribute of God, so that in the believer’s union with God the believer receives this attribute. Those who receive this love through faith also become lovers in the proper sense, loving God, and loving others with a proper love in view of God.  

Furthermore, in the Christian tradition, the Holy Spirit himself is sometimes spoken of as the love of God. This love, like other attributes, exists in the

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32 Mannermaa, “Why is Luther Research so Fascinating?” 13-14.

person if the giver is present. Only with Christ’s presence does a person have true Christian love.  

As Christ descends by his Spirit to offer his love, so all true love is a descending, a humbling and giving to others. Participation with or union with Christ is not a rising upward into heaven, dependent in some way on attaining heaven before one is present with him, but a descending of Christ to the believer. Thus this love is not the kind of eros, in which union between God and the human person occurs through the person’s ascent to God. And this does not mean that agape love is rejected or outside of this description of love. Rather, love, understood as agape and charity, occurs through God’s descent in Christ and pouring out of himself on the cross into all believers for their own vivification.

Luther lays out the difference and newness of divine love in contrast to human love most radically in Thesis 28 of his Heidelberg Disputation. There Luther says, “The love of God does not find, but creates, what is pleasing to it. The love of a human person is made by what is pleasing to it.” While Luther does not deny that there is a kind of human love, this love is subject to desire. Human love is made by what pleases the

34 Peura, ”Christ as Favor and Gift,” 48-49.
35 Mannermaa, Christ Present in Faith, 28.
36 Mannermaa, ”Why is Luther Research so Fascinating?” 17.
38 WA 1, 365, 2-3, emphasis mine. ”Amor Dei non invenit sed creat suum diligibile, Amor hominis fit a suo diligibili.”
person in her natural and sinful condition. Thus there is no way to love someone or something that does not stimulate some kind of pleasure or desire in the person.\textsuperscript{39}

Divine love, however, creates what is appealing; it creates what is good. Luther argues this from the standpoint of sin—Christ calls sinner and dies for them. Scripture supports this notion of divine love with other examples as well. For example, Deuteronomy 7:7-8 states that the Lord did not love Israel because of their greatness, but loved them in order to rescue and redeem them. Even the logical relationship of love here compares to Luther’s aphorism: God’s love was not stirred up because of Israel, but he loved them first in order to improve their situation and make them great.\textsuperscript{40}

Christians who have received divine love also love in this new way: giving life and goodness to others whom they love. The divine aspect of their love values others not because of anything which can be given by another—or even anything that can be gained through the act of love—but they love in order to give life to the other person. Divine love, or charity, seeks the benefit for the recipient, not any benefit that may be received by the lover. This does not preclude Christians from also loving someone or something because of desire or appeal. Indeed, the Song of Songs suggests that God also loves in this way. A Christian may love in a combination of ways, both because of

\textsuperscript{39} This notion of human love does not deny that a natural human being can train herself to some extent to love things or people which are not instinctively desirable, and even repulsive at some kind of basic level. However, such training always relies on finding something pleasing in the act of loving or in the thing/person to be loved, and suppressing those things which are unappealing. In other words, there is always a measure of appeal in the first place, which one develops to surpass what is unappealing. The basic point is that natural love can only come into being and respond to a person or a thing, and Luther appeals to Aristotle for support in this case (\textit{LW} 31:57.)

\textsuperscript{40} See also Hosea 3:1, which likens the Lord’s love for Israel to a man loving an adulterous wife who is unremorseful. In spite of this unfaithfulness, the Lord promises eventually to love Israel “freely,” and to be as the "dew" in order to bring new life to Israel (Hosea 14:4-7).
desire and in order to give life to another, or for only one reason or the other. The significance of this argument is simply to say that only those who experience divine love are able to love in a way which does not depend on the appeal of the subject loved, but rather loves in order to serve, to give life, and to uphold another. Again, in this understanding, Christian love is not a mere motive, but a unique virtue aiming at selfless, creative acts.

6.3.3.2 Love in Light of the Two-fold Righteousness

The second kind of righteousness takes as a model this humility and love of Christ. Drawing from Philippians 2, Luther argues that Christ took the form of a servant, taking on the sins and weaknesses of humankind in order to forgive, thereby offering new life to people. The Christian, in his own acts of righteousness, seeks to do the same. Taking the form of a servant in relation to others, she does not contrast her good deeds with those of others, or bring out the failings and faults of others, nor does she seek to judge and punish others for what they have done wrong. Rather, she makes the sins and faults of others her own, striving to bring restitution and reconciliation for the sins of others by her own actions. Where some are weak, the others in the body of Christ serve to strengthen.  

The Christian does this even with reference to unbelievers and enemies. When mistreated, abused, or sinned against by unbelievers, the Christian does not seek revenge, nor even to obtain back what was taken, but mourns for the sin of the evildoer more than for the loss of her own possession or dignity.

41 Luther, "Two Kinds of Righteousness," 302-03.
Therefore they put off the form of their own righteousness and put on the form of those others, praying for their persecutors, blessing those who curse, doing good to evil-doers, prepared to pay the penalty and make satisfaction for their very enemies that they may be saved [Matt. 5:44]. This is the gospel and the example of Christ [Luke 23:34].

All this effort for the persecutor is the gospel in the sense that it is a kind of “preaching” of the first kind of righteousness to the unbeliever through the example of good works. It is the gospel because it does not seek punishment, but lays the punishment of the enemy aside and willingly takes it on in order to bring forgiveness and freedom to the persecutor. It is a preaching of the gospel in that it is a picture or earthly example of Christ’s forgiveness for the world on the cross. It is a silent preaching which communicates the true gospel to the one who observes.

6.3.3.3 The Golden Rule

How, then, is the Golden Rule understood to be the standard of love, according to Jesus, when the Golden Rule appears to measure love from the perspective of the self? A modern social-contract mentality might understand this in a manner of strict reciprocity: a person should care for another with the expectation of direct return. Another way to understand it is to keep the neighbor’s needs in view as much as one’s

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42 Ibid., 306.

43 "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12), and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39).
own, striving for strict fairness. In this perspective, it is a method for working, as much as possible, toward objective justice.

However, Luther understood the Golden Rule to be directed against an attitude of entitlement or expectation. The Rule commands a contrary motivation and perspective from that of sin. That is, it takes the inclinations and temptations of sin and uses them against sin. Whenever one is tempted to think of oneself, that temptation is to be shifted to a question about how to help the neighbor. This kind of love eliminates the attitude of entitlement and expectation in a radical shift from selfishness to looking out for the needs of others. The Christian is to let God be God—providing whatever God deems is necessary and sufficient for life, while the Christian busies herself with providing for others. When God is actually seen and worshiped as the God he is, then he becomes the provider of all things. With respect to God, the Golden Rule actually relieves the burden and demand from God, because faith trusts that God will give whatever is needed, while one’s attention can be turned to the needs of others. As a consequence, when addressing the neighbor, a person can do all good things for the other person, without consideration of his own good, knowing that God will provide for his good.


45 Ibid., 106-07
6.3.3.4 *Unity in love*

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

See, according to this rule the good things we have from God should flow from one to the other and be common to all, so that everyone should “put on” his neighbor and so conduct himself toward him as if he himself were in the other’s place. From Christ the good things have flowed and are flowing into us. He has so “put on” us and acted for us as if he had been what we are. From us they flow on to those who have need of them so that I should lay before God my faith and my righteousness that they may cover and intercede for the sins of my neighbor which I take upon myself and so labor and serve in them as if they were my very own. That is what Christ did for us. This is true love and the genuine rule of a Christian life. Love is true and genuine where there is true and genuine faith. Hence the Apostle says of love in I Cor. 13[:5] that “it does not seek its own.”

The unity of love is an ontological unity, a bearing of one another’s burdens in a real sense, as all are members of Christ. It remains an object of faith, a hidden reality that is not seen in the world except when actually manifest in all kinds of good works. In many cases, perhaps usually, there seems to be nothing different about the good works of a Christian in comparison to the good works of unbelievers, for the connection of good works to the bond of love and the unlimited resources of Christ is overlooked

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apart from faith. A lack of faith also does not recognize acts of worship, praise, thanksgiving, and prayer as good works, even though these acts serve also to nourish the concrete acts of love and service to the neighbor. Nevertheless, where faith is ignited through the encounter with love which proclaims the mighty acts of God, the sacrificial and loving character of these works is perceived again. And the glorification of God as a purpose of Christian ethics is fulfilled. In worship, this truth is realized by the strengthening of faith, and Christians are again inspired and strengthened for these works of love. “The liturgy makes comprehensible that the Christian ethic seeks the glorification of God by the edification of the community.”

Love, or charity, then, is the third of the new virtues imprinted upon the believer by the Holy Spirit in worship. What are the acts associated with this virtue? All acts inspired out of the divine love of God which serve the good of others. For Luther, love is the foundation of all other virtues and encompasses all good works:

Love is the common virtue of all virtues, their fulfillment and source. Love feeds, gives drink, clothes, consoles, prays, makes free, helps, and saves. What do we say then? It gives itself, body and life, possessions and honor and all its power internally and externally to meet the desperate need of the neighbor for his benefit. It does not hold back anything either from a friend or fiend with which it can serve other people. Therefore, no virtue can be compared to it, neither is it possible to describe or name any specific work for it as with regard to other virtues, which are actually partial virtues, such as purity, charity, patience, and goodwill, etc. Love does all kinds of things and suffers also death and life and all kinds of things even for the enemy, that rightly Saint Paul says that all commandments are included in this summa: love your neighbor.

48 Xavier Thévenot, Repères Éthique pour une Monde Nouveau, 3rd ed. (Éditions Salvator Mulhouse, 1982), 159, emphasis in original. “La liturgie fait donc comprendre que l'éthique chrétienne cherche la glorification de Dieu par l'édification de la communauté.”

Love is the basis for all good works; it is also the expression and activity of the good work itself, for “love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10). And with this we are finally treating the enigma of the law which we uncovered in chapter one: how does one relate to the law as a Christian? Is there a satisfactory way to discuss the law as it both accuses and as it can be fulfilled in love? This verse from Romans claims that the law and the commandment remain for the Christian, but in a way that they can be fulfilled. In this next section we consider how this happens for the regenerate person. As part of this consideration, I will also discuss briefly how the regenerate person uses the grace offered in worship to strengthen himself for good works and to develop his proper righteousness.

6.4 “Love is the Fulfilling of the Law”

Worship is not just a place of people acting, but it is the theological location of them being acted upon, of “suffering,” of being “enacted.” It is not just the beginning of Christian ethics, but it is the ethos of the Christian existence. The grace and power of God enacts, yet there is further ethical development to be taken up and acted upon by the subject. The imprinting of the Spirit and bestowing of a new character is vital yet not sufficient for the full manifestation of this Christian ethic:

“Sacramental-liturgical life does not respond to all the subject’s needs for ethical formation—far from it! The actors of the liturgy must consent to other formative practices as well.” As we have noted several times, ethics requires a specific formation of freedom, of conscience, of the sense of the norm and of the moral universal, of the aptitude to aim for the good and to resist evil, thanks to the

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exercise of the virtues. Ethics also needs communitarian places where subjects torn apart between worlds by ethos competition can train themselves for evangelical discernment.  

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

Such an approach to the commandments is not merely to give heed to the commandments in a given moment, as the situation calls for, and then to lay them aside until needed again. Rather, the commandments are to be embraced as part of the formative way of life for the Christian. Such an approach is very distinct from the post-Enlightenment Kantian method of moral norms, even though Luther has often been interpreted through such a method. It is true that Luther emphasizes the Ten Commandments in teaching ethics, probably giving them the first priority in this area. Yet it would be a mistake to see the main difference between a modern, purely rational ethic and Luther’s commandment ethic as merely one of secularization. Modern theories of norms may claim to be based on pure reason, but the commandment of God


51 Wannenwetsch, Political Worship, 59.
for Luther is never a decontextualized command appealing to pure reason. The divine command comes through the act of hearing the Word of God, meaning the command comes in the context of worship and is received through faith.\(^5^2\) Furthermore, the sense of the command is given meaning by the life, traditions, and relationships in which the Christian lives.

For Luther, this is most clear in the way all commands are particular ways of obeying the first commandment, and only by obeying the first commandment can the others be fulfilled. The stance a person takes towards killing, adultery, lying, stealing, and coveting depends on his stance toward God and the worship of God. Worship is the greatest work of the commandments: “in [hearing and learning his Word], one gives to him his greatest and highest service [Gottesdienst].”\(^5^3\) Luther is not hesitant to describe attending the divine service, listening to the sermon, and receiving the sacraments in faith, as work that pleases God and gives him honor, glory, and pleasure.\(^5^4\)

Worship is tied together with good works not simply because it is commanded, however, but because through worship comes the promise of the gospel. The Word of God, as the one true holy thing, makes those who hear it forgiven and holy, faithful to receive it. This good work of worship is greater than all others, because it is the first good work, it is the activity by which people are made holy and good, and can go forth

\(^{5^2}\) Wannenwetsch, *Political Worship*, 61.

\(^{5^3}\) WA 36, 353, 11-12; LW 51, 260.

\(^{5^4}\) WA 36, 352-56; LW 51, 260-65. Cf. the confessions, *BOC* 262, 25-26; 399, 91-94, which speak in a similar way, with the activity of worship being the first good works of the saints, acceptable to God when performed in faith.
and do other good works.\textsuperscript{55} All good works give honor to God, not just as obedience, but as furthering goodness in the estates of life, thereby speaking forth in word and deed the goodness, mercy, love, and care of God.\textsuperscript{56} All of these give God his glory, and in a broad sense are also worship.

In worship, the intertwining of God’s gracious forgiveness and gifts of life with the good works of faithful people is clearly seen. To be sure, forgiveness is utterly an act of grace and mercy, in which God takes away sin and makes holy the person he forgives. Yet such forgiveness occurs within the human activity of worship: preaching the Word of God, listening to the Word of God, praying, giving thanks, and communing on the body and blood of Christ.

At whatever time God’s word is taught, preached, heard, read, or pondered, there the person, the day, and the work is hallowed, not on account of the external work but on account of the Word that makes us all saints....Other work and business are really not designated holy activities unless the person doing them is first holy. In this case, however, a work must take place through which a person becomes holy. This work, as we have heard, takes place through God’s Word.\textsuperscript{57}

Commandment ethics, for Luther, then, cannot be isolated to the pure commandment or universal norm issued outside of the church’s life of worship in which the commandment is heard alongside the promise of life in the gospel. In fact, the Reformation polemic against the phrase \textit{ex opere operato} is related to this position. Simply observing the commandment in a literal, external fashion was not truly to hear

\textsuperscript{55} WA 45, 682, 22-34; LW 24, 242-43

\textsuperscript{56} WA 36, 352-54; LW 51, 260-62.

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{BOC} 399, 92, 94.
and obey the Word of God. Obedience, in this case, meant taking hold of the Word in faith so that it could engage and inspire the person to live in continued faith and obedience as a Christian.

The old nature is dying under the law, yet the new nature, enlivened through faith, embraces, delights in, and begins to fulfill the law, because the doer and fulfiller of the law, Jesus Christ, is present and active. The righteousness that is Christ’s alone through his work, suffering, and merit, is shared and given to each believer, so that believers also work and act righteousness, specifically to live according to the structure and direction of the law.\textsuperscript{58} After justification, the heart is changed to see the law no longer as a prison, tutor, or slave driver, but as a palace, or a light for the path which leads to eternal life. \textsuperscript{59}

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

\textsuperscript{58} Cf. Romans 7:22, 8:2-10, Galatians 2:19-20,

come. This understanding is a living and growing embrace of the commandments, in contrast to the stifling, basic, prohibitive way they are understood apart from faith.\(^{60}\)

Yet, not only are the commandments understood in light of God’s gracious care for creation and gracious judgment of forgiveness, the commandments also lead believers further in their understanding of this gracious nature of God. By learning, reflecting on, and practicing the commandments, God’s loving nature is better understood and more firmly established in the minds and hearts of believers. The commandments, then, reveal further the gracious, merciful and sacrificial nature of God, after his gracious, merciful, and sacrificial nature has begun to be understood and believed in the gospel of Jesus Christ through faith. “The church, then, becomes the politics—the dominion—that makes the exhibition of the morality God desires for all people a material reality. To be part of such a politics is to be provided with the means to live the way God created and intended all humans to live.”\(^{61}\) The giving of the Spirit means that the Church is the community or the politics to live as God expects of all humankind. This inscription of the Spirit calls Christians to pursue goodness as expressed in the commandments not only so that others experience the goodness God intends for humanity, but also to present a glimpse of God’s hope for humanity as an invitation to all people to enter into it.\(^{62}\)

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\(^{61}\) Ibid., 57.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 57-59.
Thus the law can be seen to be in harmony with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit carries out the work of Jesus Christ in the world; he fulfills the will of God in the world.

Whatever fruits of the Spirit he brings forth in Christians are thoughts, words, and deeds in harmony with the will of God, or the law, as it is understood in the Lutheran tradition. \(^63\) Luther explains this in his preaching for the eighteenth Sunday after Trinity, 1537:

Thereafter [God] also promises to give the Holy Spirit, by which the heart looks to love God and keep his commandments. For God is not gracious and merciful to sinners because they do not keep the Law, nor so that they should remain as they are. Rather, he endows them and forgives both sin and death for the sake of Christ, who has fulfilled the whole Law. He thereby makes the heart sweet and through the Holy Spirit enkindles and drives the heart that it begins, in contrast to its old way, to love more and more from day to day. \(^64\)

The contrast between the effect of the law on the old nature and its being embraced by the new nature is even more clearly articulated by Luther elsewhere: “Our empty law is ended by Christ who fills the vacuum first by being outside of us, because he himself fulfills the law for us; then he also fills it with the Holy Spirit who begins this new and eternal obedience within us.” \(^65\)

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\(^64\) Darnach verheisset er auch den heiligen geist zu geben, damit das herz ansahe Gott zu lieben und sein Gebot zu halten, Denn Gott ist nicht darumb den sundern gnedig und barmhertzig, das sie das Gesetz nicht halten, noch das sie also sollen bleiben, wie sie sind, Sondern schencket und vergibt beide, sunde und tod, umb Christus willen, der das gantz Gesetz erfüllet hat, das er dadurch das hertz also süss mache und durch den heiligen Geist entzunde unde treibe, das es beginne in wider zu lieben von tage zu tage mehr und mehr.WA 45.149.25-32.

\(^65\) "Second Disputation against the Antinomians," WA 39 I, 435, 18. See also WA 39 I, 438, 2; 383, 8; 388, 4.
6.5 Living by the Spirit: Practicing the Law and Exercising Virtue

Now that we have made the connection between the new nature of the believer, the imprinting of the new character and spiritual virtues, and the practicing of the law, we have reached the point where we can return to Joel Biermann’s conclusion that “Christian people need to be trained in virtue. A noble character does not simply happen.”66 Biermann proposes instruction in the commandments and in virtue, and the cultivation of the church community as ways to train Christians in virtue.67 When we place these aspects of training in the context of a congregation with a vibrant and active worship life where the Spirit is imprinted on the people, and of Christians who listen to the Word and take hold of the spiritual power granted through worship to actively practice what they are taught, we are beginning to fill out all of the factors of formation in Christian ethics. I reiterate here from the previous section and as a development from Biermann, that, for explicitly Christian formation, the foundation for instruction and community cultivation must be a worship life centered around Word and sacraments, in which the people are united to Christ, marked and empowered by the Spirit, and use this spiritual power through reflection, prayer, and practice to engage the instruction and community cultivation.

6.5.1 Instruction in the Law

The importance of instruction is clear in the Lutheran tradition. Luther wrote his Small Catechism as a basic text for instructing children and young people. The subject of

67 Ibid., 255.
the preface is pedagogical method, including the consistency of the material taught, the
methodical explanation of primary catechetical texts, such as the Ten Commandments,
Apostles’ Creed, and Lord’s Prayer, and the expanded instruction of these texts with
Biblical examples and application to the people’s daily life. In his 1530 preface to the
Large Catechism, Luther not only emphasized the importance of instruction, but
condemned the ministers who failed both in their regular review of instructional books
like the Catechism and in their duty to teach their parishes.

In the preface to the Large Catechism, we also see the passion with which Luther
embraces instruction of the Scripture. Reading the catechisms and Scripture is not
enough; they are to learn them by heart, recite them regularly, meditate on them, and
discuss them with others. Instruction is a regular, repetitive, encompassing activity
which bears true spiritual fruit:

[I]t is highly profitable and fruitful to read [the catechism] daily and to make it
the subject of meditation and conversation. In such reading, conversation, and
meditation the Holy Spirit is present and bestows ever new and greater light and
devotion....

Nothing is so powerfully effective against the devil, the world, the flesh,
and all evil thoughts as to occupy one’s self with God’s Word, to speak about it
and meditate upon it, in the way that Psalm 1 calls those blessed who “meditate
on God’s law day and night.” Without doubt, you will offer up no more powerful
incense or savor against the devil than to occupy yourself with God’s
commandments and words and to speak, sing, or think about them....

For this reason alone you should gladly read, recite, ponder, and practice
the catechism, even if the only advantage and benefit you obtain from it is to
drive away the devil and evil thoughts.

68 SC, Preface.
69 LC, Martin Luther’s Preface 1-3, 8.
70 LC, Martin Luther’s Preface 9-11.
A few paragraphs later he supports this argument from Scripture: “For God solemnly enjoins us in Deuteronomy 6 that we should meditate on his precepts while sitting, walking, standing, lying down, and rising, and should keep them as an ever-present emblem and sign before our eyes and on our hands.”

Instruction for Luther is not merely teaching information, but it is the repetitive recitation, reflection, and discussion of the Word of God. Furthermore, the repetition is not mere rote repetition (although it includes this, especially for young people), but includes the deepening of one’s knowledge on a topic by continually returning to a topic with further Scriptural examples and application of knowledge to one’s daily life and occupation. This kind of applied repetition is a method of teaching virtue and character. Therefore Luther’s pedagogical understanding recognizes, approves of, and endorses training in character and virtue.

Also significant are Luther’s comments a few paragraphs later:

[T]hose who know the Ten Commandments perfectly know the entire Scriptures and in all affairs and circumstances are able to counsel, help, comfort, judge, and make decisions in both spiritual and temporal matters. They are qualified to be a judge over all doctrines, walks of life, spirits, legal matters, and everything else in the world.

In spite of the importance and centrality of the gospel for Luther, he nevertheless regards perfect knowledge of the Ten Commandments as perfect knowledge of the “entire Scriptures.” This is really a remarkable statement for the man who valued the

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71 LC, Martin Luther’s Preface 14. While Luther refers to protection from the devil as the primary benefit of instruction and meditation on Scripture, this corresponds to an understanding of sanctification in which the new nature battles against the old nature. As the power and temptations of the devil are reduced or driven away, the old nature is weakened further in its resistance to the acts of the new nature, leading to good works and the development of the new character.

72 LC, Martin Luther’s Preface 17.
forgiveness of sins above everything. Rather than pit an understanding of the
Commandments against the forgiveness of sins, this suggests that Luther recognized the
relationship of the Commandments to the Gospel and the inseparability of the
Commandments from faith in the forgiveness of sins. Truly to understand the
Commandments means also to understand and believe that one’s sins are forgiven by
Christ. With this confidence of faith, a believer can begin to have no other Gods and to
fulfill these Commandments according to his renewed nature, by the Spirit of God.\textsuperscript{73}

In other words, according to Luther, the Commandments teach not only that a
person is guilty due to sin, but also give the ability to decide and to act with regard to all
aspects of life, both temporal and eternal. Thus, a person who views the
Commandments only as condemning does not yet truly know the Commandments and
the Scriptures. To put this in Lutheran terms, to see in the Commandments only the first
and second functions of the law is yet not to know them perfectly. There is a “third
function” of the Law, the function of instructing the believer in virtuous living. Yet this
third function is truly embraced and properly used when a person lives confidently in
their life with Christ, guilt and punishment removed, empowered by the Spirit, and
actively pursuing instruction in the Commandments and all of the Scriptures.

In fact, to include the second and third functions together in the understanding
of the law ultimately serves the gospel. When the third function of the law is neglected,
instruction in support of character formation is also neglected. And when the second

\textsuperscript{73} This is clear in Luther’s explanation of the First Commandment in the \textit{Large Catechism}, in
which he repeatedly emphasizes that the First Commandment teaches trust, or faith. See, e.g., \textit{LC}, The
Ten Commandments 2-4, 16, 24.
function of the law is neglected, the Christian may slip into self-righteousness, forgetting that his righteousness is not his own, but given from God. A healthy submission to the law as accusing hedges against self-righteousness and the sins and temptations of the old nature. An accusing law drives the believer to the gospel of Christ which reiterates forgiveness and strengthens the life of the believer. The law and the gospel are not opponents, measuring extremes on one pole of measure, but they work in tandem to benefit the Christian. In this way, faith and works are not separated, but they are connected. The law kills unbelief and sin in the old nature; faith in the gospel of Christ forgives and empowers the believer to live free from guilt and to exert himself in doing good, a goodness which receives its form in part by instruction in the law. When works are disconnected from faith, however, only the alternatives of legalism or antinomianism seem possible.

When a believer repents, therefore, he is not starting over on his journey of sanctification. He is returning to his baptism in order again to drown spiritually the old nature. The persistent old nature has led the person into sin, raising the need for repentance. In this sense only—this return to baptism to drown again the old nature—is repentance starting over. Besides the old nature, the new nature that was given life when the person first believed and was converted also exists in the person. This new nature does not start over. The new nature did not need to be drowned again in baptism. The new nature has been formed and has grown to some extent since conversion, and this growth, this journey to perfect sanctification continues. This journey does not proceed in a predictable or constant ascent, because the person is
influenced by both natures, at times falling into temptation, at other times acting righteously. The notion of progress is theological and not empirical. In fact, from the perspective of senses and experience, progress may appear to be painfully slow, or even to backslide or fall at times. But what people experience as slow progress or failure, is endurance upheld by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not slow or ineffective in his work, and God views things from the perspective of the end. He sees the Christian continuing toward the goal, and repentance which weakens the power of the old nature is part of this progress. As the person takes advantage of grace offered in worship, makes the narrative of the church his own, and makes an effort to act in accordance with this community form of life, his character will continue to develop in accordance with the leading of the Holy Spirit.

6.5.2 Cultivation of Community

Besides instruction in the law and in virtue, Biermann argues that character may be cultivated in congregations by encouraging the kind of everyday practices which model goodness and prudence for the challenges and events of everyday life. The Church is to practice those things that are good, and expect its members also to practice such things, and expect its members to learn how to make these good practices part of their lives—how more easily and readily to do them. Furthermore, when teaching and modeling ethics, the church should focus on the everyday life, not the complicated

74 Mannermaa, Christ Present in Faith, 66.

moral problems which rarely befall people.\textsuperscript{76} Examples of such practices, according to Biermann, include daily prayer, liturgical services, making the sign of the cross, and using a liturgical calendar. The development of these spiritual habits contributes to the development of moral habits.\textsuperscript{77}

Such examples are certainly part of what makes an intentional, Christian community, and hearken to the rituals of worship which I discussed in the previous chapter. Luther, however, in \textit{On the Councils and the Church} (1539),\textsuperscript{78} offers a broader and more substantive series of attributes which mark the Christian community. Indeed, Luther ties these attributes explicitly to spiritual sanctification and to growth in virtue. The seven attributes are: 1) the possession and use of God’s Word, 2) baptism, 3) the sacrament of the altar, 4) the public exercise of the keys, that is, of the forgiveness of sins, 5) public ministers of the four aforementioned practices, 6) prayer and public worship, and 7) the suffering of trial and persecution.\textsuperscript{79}

All of Biermann’s explicitly suggested practices probably fall under 6) prayer and public worship, or even the other external practices which Luther refers to, but which he says have “no more than their natural effect.”\textsuperscript{80} A natural effect is important, to be sure, and is a significant part of the role of ritual. But the significance of Luther is that he recognizes several foundational practices of the Church which are served by the Holy

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 258-60.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 261.

\textsuperscript{78} WA 50, 509-653; LW 41:5-178.

\textsuperscript{79} LW 41:148-166.

\textsuperscript{80} LW 41:173.
Spirit in working true sanctification. It is in these practices that the Church is identified as a unique community, shapes its members to take on the habits and virtues of this community, and receives the power of the Holy Spirit as part of this shaping, forming activity. A few passages from Luther will demonstrate this:

These are the true seven principal parts of the great holy possession whereby the Holy Spirit effects (ubet) in us a daily sanctification and vivification in Christ, according to the first table of Moses. By this we obey it, albeit never as perfectly as Christ. But we constantly strive to attain the goal, under his redemption or remission of sin, until we too shall one day become perfectly holy and no longer stand in need of forgiveness.81

These “principal parts” of the Church are not merely natural practices set up to identify the Christian community and to which members are conformed through repetition, but these are practices established by God through which the Holy Spirit exercises growth and transformation to be a distinct, identifiable community. This sanctification is directly correlative to the Ten Commandments, specifically the first table, which relates to love of God. These seven practices, then, develop the Christian’s trust and love for God, and, as those who receive God’s love, stir up this divine love for others as well. The creative love of God works to sanctify the Christian, who then loves as one empowered by this divine love. Such a love expresses itself in discipline, attempts to obey the Commandments, and with a firm reliance on the forgiveness of sins and the hope of perfection in the eschaton.

The three theological virtues work in the Christian in this understanding, and Luther explains the place of these virtues:

81 LW 41:165-66; WA 50, 642-43.
[The Holy Spirit] imparts true knowledge of God, according to the first table, so that those whom he enlightens with true faith can resist all heresies, overcome all false ideas and errors, and thus remain pure in faith in opposition to the devil. He also bestows strength, and comforts timid, despondent, weak consciences against the accusation and turmoil of sin, so that the souls do not succumb or despair, and also do not become terrified of torment, pain, death, and the wrath and judgment of God, but rather, comforted and strengthened in hope, they cheerfully, boldly, and joyfully overcome the devil. He also imparts true fear and love of God, so that we do not despise God and become irritated and angry with his wondrous judgments, but love, praise, thank, and honor him for all that occurs, good or evil. This is called new holy life in the soul, in accordance with the first table of Moses. It is also called tres virtutes theologicas, “the three principal virtues of Christians,” namely faith, hope, and love.\textsuperscript{82}

Not only are the theological virtues directly linked to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, but they are specific fulfillments of the first table of the Ten Commandments, that a Christian have no other gods, call upon God with trust, hope, and love, and worship God in the same trust, love, and hope of salvation. At the same time, this is not a minimal compliance with the letter of the law, but an overflowing of confidence, peace, and love in embracing and fulfilling the law of God. Love, along with faith and hope, is the fulfilling of the law.

Luther does not connect sanctification only with the first table of the Law, but continues: “In accordance with the second table, [the Holy Spirit] also sanctifies the Christians in the body and induces them willingly to obey parents and rulers,” to be peaceful, friendly, chaste, pure, honest, hardworking, “and do whatever else the commandments of God prescribe.... This is what is called ‘Christian holiness.’”\textsuperscript{83} So, besides the seven principal parts of the church, the church also is marked by willing

\textsuperscript{82} LW 41:145-46.

\textsuperscript{83} LW 41:146-47.
pursuit of fulfillment of the whole Ten Commandments. In fact, Luther notes that he could have expounded on the particular marks of the Church in relation to the second table of the law: “Since the first table is greater and must be a holier possession, I have summarized everything in the second table. Otherwise, I could have divided it too into seven holy possessions or seven principal parts, according to the seven commandments.”

The significance of this, in light of the whole of this study, would be difficult to overstate. In this treatise, Luther expounds in detail the way that the Holy Spirit sanctifies Christians: beginning with the Word and sacraments, and continuing also with the public ministry who offer the Word and sacraments, the full public worship of the Church, and the suffering experienced by the Church. Sanctification occurs through the same core means as justification, as we have argued through this dissertation. Or, to say it in the terms of this dissertation, the righteousness of Christ is credited to the Christian through the means of grace, and it works in the Christian and gradually transforms the Christian into one who practices proper righteousness through the power of the Holy Spirit. This righteousness is manifested also in the works of love which correlate to the Ten Commandments. The commandments of God are not set aside, forgotten, or partitioned off as something needed only for the unbeliever and for the old nature. Again, Luther:

We need the Decalogue not only to apprise us of our lawful obligations, but we also need it to discern how far the Holy Spirit has advanced us in his work of sanctification and by how much we still fall short of the goal, lest we become

84 LW 41:167.
secure and imagine that we have now done all that is required. Thus we must constantly grow in sanctification and always become new creatures in Christ. This means “grow” and “do so more and more” [2 Peter 3:18].

The law not only teaches and instructs (as Luther emphasized in the catechisms), but it helps the Christian continually consider how far she has advanced in her formation, and for what she must still strive. It prevents false security, directing always to the power of the Spirit, and encourages continued work and growth in holiness. The righteousness of Christ does not free the Christian from the goodness of the law: it frees the believer from the punishment of the law, while enlivening the believer to embrace the law with the power of divine love and to work toward fulfilling the law—the good and perfect will of God—in the works of this life, with joy and peace, and in the faith, hope, and love bestowed by the Holy Spirit.

With this chapter, I have brought into conversation the foundational and poignant points of the previous chapters in order to suggest a structure for Christian ethical formation, especially as one compatible with the Lutheran tradition. While many of the suggestions I have offered in this chapter are only a starting point for further study, they do offer one way to conceive of Lutheran ethics that upholds justification, law and gospel, Christian anthropology, Word and sacraments, and the formative power of language and community.

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85 LW 41:166.
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