

## Sanctification in Lutheran Theology

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Lutheran theology certainly requires that sanctification be put in proper perspective, at least in regard to justification. A preliminary step would require taking a look at sanctification in the fundamental writings of the Lutheran Church, i.e., the Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism of Martin Luther, since it is especially with the latter document that even today Lutherans are formally introduced to Lutheran teachings on sanctification. Sanctification is defined in this essay as the Christian's life in the world, i.e., good works. This is the definition of dogmatic theology and not the common Biblical use of the word, which describes the entire activity of the Spirit in the Church, e.g., sacraments, conversion, faith, and good works.<sup>1</sup>

The first reference to good works in the Augustana is made in the article on original sin where the Pelagian opinion is condemned that good works in some way contribute to the justification of sinners before God. Letting good works play any part in justification is said to be an affront to Christ as it detracts from and extinguishes the glory of His merits and benefits.<sup>2</sup> What is striking about the Lutheran approach from the start is that the role of good works in the matter of salvation will not merely be resolved from Biblical citations and not even from the narrower subject of justification except as part of the larger question of Christology.<sup>3</sup> The next article, the one dealing with Christology, which takes and combines statements from the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and connects these revised credal formulations with justification, makes a reference to Christ's sanctifying those who believe in Him. This is accomplished by Christ's sending of the Holy Spirit into their hearts. The Spirit is said to rule, comfort, and bring believers to life. He also defends against the devil and the power of sin. It is clear that good works or sanctification here in the Augsburg Confession is defined not as the work of men, but as the total work of the Spirit upon Christians.<sup>4</sup> It is the Holy Spirit and not Christians who confronts and fights against sin. What is striking is that the life of the Christian here is not understood as "third article Christianity;" if we dare use that phrase, but sanctification is seen as an extension of Christology. The Spirit belongs to Christ and the Spirit's working is Christ's. Christ's struggle against Satan, the central theme of the Christus Victor theory of the atonement, now is being fought by the Spirit within Christians. The article on justification states unequivocally that works have no role in the justification of the sinner

before God.<sup>5</sup> The article on the ministry avoids the question of sanctification altogether and simply states that the ministry's major role-really only role-is to make justification effective in the lives of sinners.<sup>6</sup> This contrasts with Calvinism where the ministry is instituted for disciplining the congregation for good works.<sup>7</sup>

The article on the new obedience specifically discusses the topic of good works or what is called sanctification in the narrower sense.<sup>8</sup> Good works are called the fruits of faith. Not only should the good works be performed by faith, but they must. Good works are not optional as they are commanded by God and are to conform to God's will. With this said, this article immediately says that good works have no validity in the question of justification, i.e., how the sinner stands before God and that the remission of sins is apprehended through faith and not works. In one of the few Scriptural citations in the Augsburg Confession, Luke 17:10 is quoted to show that even after we have done all things we are still useless servants. Then Ambrose is cited: "This has been established by God, so that whoever believes in Christ is saved without works, alone by faith, as he freely receives the forgiveness of sins."

Augustana XIII again briefly takes up the topic of good works. The Roman Catholic system of penance consisted in oracular confession, absolution, and penance.<sup>9</sup> In place of the three part penance of the Roman Catholics, the Lutherans have two parts, contrition or pangs of conscience and faith in the Gospel. Good works are seen as the fruits of penance, but not as part of the penitential process itself.

The founders of Lutheranism were so concerned with a proper understanding of justification that they wanted to leave no doubt that works had nothing to do with it.<sup>10</sup> This does not mean, however, that even in such a fundamental document as the Augsburg Confession no specific directives for good works would be given. In the matter of churchly rites it is made clear that they cannot be made a matter of conscience for Christians and they cannot enter into the question of the sinner's justification.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the article on liturgical rites disqualifying them as good works, loses its full force unless it is read with the next article, the one on the works of the civil sphere, where specific good works are listed.<sup>12</sup> Listed as good works are civil service, serving as a judge in a civil court, engaging in just wars and soldiering, commerce, taking required oaths, possessing property, and getting married. What is striking is that, in taking the articles on liturgical and civil service together, it is apparent that Lutherans have taken good works out of the area of the sacred and secularized them. Good works are not those performed within the walls of the church, but what is done out in the world. In its time the Lutheran doctrine of

sanctification must have been quite revolutionary; but in another sense this theme was already set forth by Luke in the parable of the good Samaritan, where the one who pleases God does the menial secular service and where the ones who attend to their religious duties fail to gain divine favor. The one held up as example is the one who assists the stricken traveler and not those intent on performing the required temple rituals.<sup>13</sup> More must be said about the Lutheran understanding of good works as secular works, since the impression may be given to our people even today that works done specifically for the church have a higher quality than those done in the world. Properly understood, Lutheranism offered a secular Christianity in its time.<sup>14</sup>

The article "Faith and Good Works" brands as "childish and foolish works" such acts of religious devotion as "rosaries, the cult of the saints, monasticism, pilgrimages, appointed fasts, holy days, brotherhoods." Though good works are to be preached, they can never be preached in such a way that the Christian conscience ever relies on them. "It is also taught among us that good works should and must be done, not that we rely on them to earn grace but that we may do God's will and glorify him."<sup>15</sup> Even in the performing of the good works, the Lutheran principle of total divine monergism is maintained, since faith is only the instrument through which the Holy Spirit performs the works. As Augustana XX calls attention to the writings of the Lutheran reformers on the Ten Commandments, it must have in mind, at least in some sense, the explanations of them in Luther's Small Catechism. Ideally there should be no Lutheran who has learned of sanctification without this catechism.

Luther's explanation of the commandments have their focus in laying out the life of the Christian regardless of his or her station in life. It is neither a parochial nor provincial document and can serve in any time or place. Its purview is both catholic and ecumenical. His explanation of the First Commandment as fearing, loving, and trusting in God above all things is an invitation of faith.<sup>16</sup> Justification of the sinner is thus made fundamental to good works. Luther's explanations of the second through the tenth commandments are what would later commonly be called the third use of the law, referring to the relationship of the law to the Christian qua Christian. It would be difficult to show that Luther intended his explanations to serve the first or the civil use of the law. His explanations would have no place in the secular instruction of a public school. Luther's use of the law for Christians as exemplified in the commandments' explanations should be carefully distinguished from Calvin's understanding. Cal-

vin, as we shall later see, saw the Christian life and the third use of the law primarily in God's good pleasure over the sinner's restraint from sin. Good works in this sense are avoiding what the commandments prohibit.<sup>17</sup> More must be said about Calvin's view of good works and sanctification, since it is easily and disastrously confused with Luther's views.

To be sure, Luther not only keeps the commandments' negative prohibitions but intensifies them in his explanations. Thus, the commandment about not taking God's name in vain prohibits cursing, swearing, sorcery, lying, and deception. Here the commandment condemns the sinner, but it does not do this to teach him that God hates him but to bring him to an awareness of his condition. Thus, the commandment serves the Christian in making his confession of sins. Even making the sinner aware of his condition still is not the final goal of Luther's explanations. The meaning of the commandment is not exhausted by intensifying its condemnation of the sinner. For Luther the commandment serves its ultimate purpose when the negative prohibition is transformed into positive description of the life of the Christian. Note what Luther does with the second commandment. It becomes an invitation to prayer. The Sabbath prohibition of the third commandment is transformed into a description of posture of the Christian as he hears the preaching of God's Word. The prohibition against killing lays on the Christian the necessity of helping the endangered neighbor, and the one against stealing sees the Christian actually providing funds for the impoverished neighbor. Thus the prohibition against stealing becomes the opportunity for giving. The comparative lesser significance of the negative prohibition in regard to the greater significance for doing good can be seen in that in two of his explanations, the first and the sixth, Luther totally omits the prohibitions. What this means is that for Luther the law can stand without its condemnations and still be the law in some sense. This is in no way suggesting that Luther was antinomian in any sense. He held very strongly to the civil use of the law with his concept of the two kingdoms. In addition, for Luther the law also always condemns the sinner as he is sinner. Luther can see the believer in Christ untroubled by sin. In this ideal state, the sinner has been transformed by Christ and now is in Christ. The Christian sees the law from an entirely different perspective. As Christian he is free from the civil and accusing functions of the law. The law functioning for the Christian as Christian is not law in the sense of prohibition and condemnation. This is the content of the Lutheran understanding of the third use of the law.<sup>18</sup> True, the phrase "third use of the law" can be slightly misleading and may have given rise to misunderstandings simply because the word

"law" is used.

But let it be immediately said that the Christian is never completely Christian. As sinner-and he never escapes his sin-he is subject to the civil and accusatory functions of the law, since the old man does not believe, has never believed, and will never believe. He is finally destroyed only in death. The unregenerate part, the Old Adam, is an enemy of God and must be threatened by the law to conform to outward standards. He must be reminded that he has offended God continually. Such outward conformity to the law by unbelievers or by the unbelieving part of Christians has nothing to do with sanctification. Fear of penalty or the fear of God's wrath can never be a motivation for performing works which are pleasing to God as signs of faith and flowing from the Holy Spirit. Works performed in the civil sphere are called good works because they contribute to the well-being and outward serenity of society.<sup>19</sup> Their quality of being good comes from what they accomplish in the world and not from their motivation. These works should, however, not be confused with those flowing from faith and belonging to sanctification.

Sanctification for Luther in the Small Catechism certainly includes the overcoming of sin in Christian life, but this hardly encompasses its full dimensions. The positive requirements placed on the Christian are clearly Christlike qualities. The Christian fears, loves, and trusts God. He calls upon Him in every need. He gladly hears the preaching of God's Word. He holds his parents in highest esteem. He helps the neighbor in his physical distress. He loves his spouse. He works to improve the financial condition of his neighbor and refuses to believe evil of him. What Luther is describing is not life lived under the law, but the life of Christ Himself. Luther is frequently cited as saying that every Christian is a Christ to his neighbor. I am not so sure that all those who speak in this way fully understand what this means. Frequently it may be an excuse for an existential Christianity to treat the historical Jesus without any real significance. It is, however, a valuable distinction if it means that the life flowing from faith is, in fact, a practicing Christology in the world.

Even Luther's conclusion to the commandments with its threat of visiting the father's iniquity upon the children is only but an expression of his law gospel principle. The Christian as unbeliever sees God's wrath but as a Christian sees an entirely different God. At the very end of his explanation to the Ten Commandments, Luther concludes with almost the same kind of gospel statement with which he began, "We should therefore love Him, trust Him, and cheerfully do what He has commanded."<sup>20</sup> A more accurate translation of the German would be "and gladly act according to His commandments."<sup>21</sup>

Here the dilemma of the Christian's life can be noted. How is it in Luther's theology that the law threatens the Christian and then it is something which he gladly does because he trusts in God? Does the contradiction between being threatened by God and loving Him lie in God, in the law, or in the Christian? The contradiction cannot lie in God. Seeing subterfuge in God as mystery is too easy a solution and really no solution at all. The law-gospel dialectic, regardless of how we interpret it, can never mean that God is condemning in the same way that He is loving. The dialectic does not lie in God. Such a concept is recognizable as Manichaeism, where two principles, a good and a bad one, fight within God for supremacy.<sup>22</sup> Manichaeism is condemned by the Augsburg Confession. Condemning law and saving gospel cannot have equal value in describing God. Neither can the dilemma or contradiction belong to the nature or the essence of the law itself; since if it is God's word, it must reflect the unity of God. God's word cannot be opposed to itself. The contradiction lies not in God or in His law but in the dual moral nature of the regenerate man.<sup>23</sup> The law in its earliest expression is a positive statement of God's relationship to the world and the world's relationship to God. In this form the law is more indicative than imperative. It is more description than it is requirement. To say it better, in this form the law's imperative nature and the indicative of God's and man's relationship to each other are perfectly harmonized. Man does not need to be told how he is to be related to God or to other men, because he is by nature accomplishing all these things. The distinction between indicative and imperative is theologically unjustifiable for saints as saints.

The law begins to function only as negative imperative with prohibition when man no longer maintains his relationship to God. When Melancthon says in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession that the Law always accuses, this citation must be understood as referring only to the law's functioning in the realm of sinful humanity.<sup>24</sup> The law's first function (not its first use) and its nature is positive and descriptive, not demanding and condemning. Man stepping out of a positive relationship with God sees the law as a cruel taskmaster requiring him to do what he knows he cannot do. In a sense man is responsible for this new turn of events. When man knows the law in this way, he hates the law and also hates the God who gave the law. Here Luther's and Paul's experiences are similar.

In Christ the believer is again being restored to the pristine relationship that the first parents had with God. The condemning law now serves for him as a description of his positive relationship with God. The dilemma of the law as both negative and condemning pro-

hibition and positive Christological statement does not rest in God or in the law but in the Christian who is *simul justus et peccator*, believer and unbeliever. The man outside of Christ knows the law only as prohibition and condemnation. The man in Christ sees the law as a Christological activity in his own life. The Christian in this life is both in and outside of Christ. He is in the Spirit, i.e., he belongs to God; and he is in the flesh, i.e., he is opposed to God. The one word of God, without any contradiction in it at all, is seen as opposed to itself, because of man's dual moral nature as saint and sinner. Works done from fear of God's condemnation by the old man do not flow from faith and are not part of sanctification. Works done by faith, i.e., works performed because the believer is in Christ and has the Spirit, are part of sanctification. They are pleasing to God.

The Christian's dual comprehension of the law as prohibition in regard to the Old Adam and positive description and suggestion in regard to the new man is never resolved in this life. Condemnation and description are always simultaneously occurring phenomena. Luther taught it correctly in his explanations to the Ten Commandments by first stating the law with its prohibitions and condemnations and then by stating the commandments as Christlike activities in the Christian's life. One outward work can and does flow out of a dual motivation. What is an expression of Christ's work in a Christian's life can also be motivated before the work is completed by selfish and grudging motives.

This dialectic and contradiction is a necessary theological conclusion from the Lutheran doctrine of justification. Luther's concept of *simul justus et peccator* is fundamental for a Lutheran understanding not only of justification but also of sanctification. Before God the person is totally justified and the same person is in himself and sees himself as a sinner. What is important in this understanding is the Latin word *simul*, at the same time, and not in a sequential sense as if one followed the other in point of time. Historically this distinction was lost in Lutheranism, as in the case of Pietism, where man is first justified and rescued from sin and then the work of sanctification begins. The end result is perfectionism or at least a mild form of it. The matter is viewed in this way: After a person is justified by faith, the new life of obedience sets in and progresses. Justification is seen as a past event in the Christian life and sanctification as a temporal result, separate and distinct from justification as the cause. Wherever justification and sanctification are separated from each other with this kind of temporal understanding, Lutheran theology is brought to ruin.<sup>25</sup> Such a distinction common in Pietism was picked up by Wesley and characterizes the charismatic movement as its chief flaw. In Luth-

eran theology justification describes the believer's relationship with God. Sanctification describes the same reality as does justification but describes the justified Christian's relationship to the world and society. Justification and sanctification are not two separate realities, but the same reality viewed from the different perspectives of God and man. From the perspective of God the reality of the Christian is totally passive and non-contributory as it receives Christ only. From the perspective of the world, the same reality never ceases in its activity and tirelessly performs all good works. In this scheme the justification of the sinner never becomes a past event. In the phrase *simul justus et peccator* the *simul* carries the weight. This scheme resolves the often alleged contradiction between Paul on one side and Jesus, James, and the writer of the Book of Revelation on the other. Therefore, before God it is no works and pure grace, but before the world it is only works. As James says, "And I will show you my faith by my works." This scheme can be reversed only with the most disastrous results. Works have no standing before God and faith has no standing before the world. Activism before God is an affront to Him and makes Christology meaningless. Passivism in the world prevents God from acting Christologically in the world and thus thwarts His purposes.

If Luther's understanding of sanctification in his explanations to the Ten Commandments are, in fact, the description of Christological activity in the life of the Christian, is there any place else where his catechism demonstrates this? In the oft-quoted explanation of the Second Article, he concludes that because of Christ's work we are to "serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness."<sup>26</sup> This is clearly a description of what is commonly called the life of sanctification. Strangely, Luther makes no mention of the activity of the life of sanctification, i.e., understood in the narrow sense, in the explanation of the Third Article, where it could ordinarily be expected to be found. Here the Christian passively receives the gifts of the Spirit. This is sanctification understood in the wider sense, its more usual Biblical use. This might demonstrate that not only in the article on redemption, but more so in the article on sanctification, Lutheran theology is thoroughly monergistic. Sanctification, understood as God's work in Christian life, is placed in the article on Christian life. What the Christian does is essentially Christ's work in the world today. The concept that sanctification deals with secular works, i.e., works carried out in society, is reinforced by the catechism's ninth section, "Table of Duties;" where the roles of Christians are defined by each's place in society.<sup>27</sup>

The full import of Luther's secular concept of good works could



be appreciated more in his time, when the religious life of a priest or monk was considered of higher merit, than in ours.<sup>28</sup> Today "secular" means without God. For Luther "secular" included the presence of God in the world. A good work is performed when one fulfils his calling in life. God is served in the world. Thus, sin which is to be confessed before the pastor is the failure to carry out one's obligations to the neighbor.<sup>29</sup> This does not mean that Christians with their good works do not speak of Christ to the neighbor and support the preaching of the Gospel. It is, however, not the religious content of good works that makes them good.

Apology XXVII specifically handles the question of the value of good works performed by those who have taken religious vows.<sup>30</sup> Taking and performing the vows do not qualify as good works. The poverty, chastity, and obedience of the monks are called hypocrisy and sham. Religious ceremonies should not be identified as good works that merit salvation. Still, a further question is whether the same error appears when it is assumed that a church-related occupation has a higher intrinsic value. Measuring a person's sanctification by his or her performance of religion-related works, is not allowed by Apology XXVII. The whole matter of good works or sanctification came to a head with the controversy over whether good works were necessary for salvation. One party, associated with Philip Melancthon and George Major, asserted the "good works are necessary for salvation" and the other, associated with Nicholas von Amsdorf, went so far as to say "that good works are detrimental to salvation." The controversy over good works and their necessity was inevitable for Luther's disciples since their primary doctrine of justification by grace through faith with its explicit exclusion of the deeds of the law could easily suggest antinomianism, if not properly understood. The seeds of the controversy were present in the chief characteristic principle of Lutheran theology. As with many controversies of this type, it would be wrong to question the motives of the combatants. Isolating principles, setting them off as autonomous principles, is always dangerous. This was no exception. The slogan cliches of each party were valid expressions of the Lutheran faith; but at the same time they were invalid.<sup>31</sup> What is true in one context is not necessarily true in another.

While on the surface it might appear that the seeds of antinomianism are present in Lutheran theology, it would be difficult to demonstrate a practical example of it ever leading to this. It must be added that some Roman Catholicism and Fundamentalist Protestants point out that a certain amoral streak exists in Lutheranism.<sup>32</sup> I am not going to belabor this point, since historically Lutherans have been anything but antinomian. The truthfulness of a religion is not ultimately

judged by the moral conduct of its adherents, though the lack of morality can curtail its influence.

Let us first take the statement of Amsdorf that good works are detrimental to salvation. If good works are understood in the sense of Roman Catholic works of supererogation, performed above and beyond the call of duty, then such good works are detrimental. If the performance of good works becomes the object of one's devotion and concern in which we trust over which we have what we think is a justifiable pride, then such good works are detrimental to salvation. Then let it be immediately said that these are not the works flowing from faith and cannot be called good in a dogmatic definition of sanctification. The Majoristic statement that good works are necessary for salvation is also capable of a double understanding.<sup>33</sup> It is completely true when viewed from the perspective of the judgment day. As in any court of law, evidence concerning the guilt or innocence of the accused is required. What Christians do indicate what they are. If, however, salvation is understood in the sense of justification in reference to whether the sinner finds himself acceptable to God now, then it is completely wrong to suggest that works have anything to do with this present justification. The problem lies in how the word "salvation" is interpreted. In the Scriptures themselves, it can refer to the present rescue of the sinner or the final deliverance on judgment day. Though they are related meanings, they must be distinguished. The Lutherans resolved the problem by simply saying that good works were necessary, but they omitted the modifying clause "for salvation."

The doctrine of sanctification in Lutheran theology can be presented with more clarity when it is placed into juxtaposition with another theology. While the Roman Catholic historical dependence on good works may have allowed the Lutherans to set forth their position on justification which does not allow any human participation, I am not so sure that a simple restatement of that position is adequate for today. Simply repeating the concerns of the Formula of Concord also does not answer today's issues. Merely to distinguish the sense in which good works are necessary and detrimental does not really begin to penetrate the issues that are at stake today in the question of sanctification. For this reason Calvin's position, as it has permeated all of non-Lutheran and much of Lutheran Protestantism through Pietism, should be evaluated.

In Calvin's theology sanctification or regeneration is discussed before justification.<sup>34</sup> This is not simply a matter of order, but reveals a different theology. In Lutheran theology justification and sanctification are inseparable, i.e., the one is logically but not temporarily sequential to the other. If in Lutheran theology, sanctification is the

manifestation of the life of Christ in the world, in Calvin's theology the sinner is justified chiefly in order that he may be enabled to honor God through the activity which springs from regeneration. For Luther God loves the sinner for Christ's sake. It is not a question of what God will get for Himself out of His expenditure of redemptive love. For Calvin God moves from the motive of divine sovereignty. God redeems not for the sake of the sinner but for Himself. The question is no longer Luther's, what God can do for man, but what man can do for God. For God there is a type of internal satisfaction in having the sinner turn and repent. Of course, there is also a type of satisfaction when the reprobate are consigned to hell. Damnation and salvation are both satisfying to God. The doctrine of the double predestination is the classical expression of the sovereignty of God. None of this is true for Luther.<sup>35</sup>

Luther's famous "for us," so central in his Christology, is ultimately replaced by Calvin by "for God." The real goal is not reinstatement of fallen mankind for its own sake, but for the praise of God. Since the sovereignty of God is the final goal of all of His acts, including redemption, the works have value, not because of their Christological association as in Lutheran theology, but because they are in themselves pleasing to God. In fact, the works have a higher value than the persons performing them. It is a matter of what God can get out of man for Himself. Thus, prayer is particularly important for Calvin since God is glorified by the praises of believers.<sup>36</sup> For Luther prayer is the Christian's recognition of his faith's own helplessness and by prayer he throws himself upon the mercy of God.<sup>37</sup> Consider the phrase "saved to serve." It is proper if it refers to the result of God's redemptive work. If it is understood as His purpose, then this is Calvin's view.

Important for Calvin as for Luther is the threefold use of the law, but each puts the thrust in a different place. Though the change in emphasis is subtle, the theological change is significant. Where for Luther the second use of the law in its role of accuser was the predominating use of the law, since even the Christian in this world is always more unbeliever than he is a believing Christian, in Calvin's theology the third use predominates. In addition, in Calvin's theology the third use of the law is understood differently. As mentioned above, in Luther's theology the third use means that the negative prohibitions of the law are transferred into positive indicatives and descriptions of the life lived with Christ. In Calvin's theology, the third use of the law has two parts. It makes the Christian more certain of the will of God and it prompts to obedience.<sup>38</sup> It is right at this point, with Calvin's understanding of Christian life as obe-

dience to the law, that his theology demonstrates its non-Christological content.

Against Calvin's view that Christian life is obedience to the law, the Lutheran view must be set forth. First of all, the law with its negative prohibitions cannot properly be understood as the predominating will of God. Though from our perspective God is described as without sin, His nature and will cannot ultimately be described in negative terminology. Even if, with the advent of sin into the world, God's holiness can be described only in negative terms as opposed to sin, certainly His holiness has an existence not dependent on sin for definition. In the same vein the law for man in pristine bliss was positive and not negative. Man's fall is responsible for viewing God and His will in negative terms. The advent of sin puts a negative cast on God's will, but with the coming of Christ, Christ and salvation now comprise God's will to the world. When Luther and Calvin both understand God as desiring that men should live by His will, they understand by God's will two different things. Luther understands God's will as conformity to Christ as the expression of divine mercy in the world; and Calvin understands God's will as refraining from evil, i.e., the moral life. Secondly, for Calvin the will of God as prohibitive law is seen as motivation for Christian living.<sup>39</sup> To be sure, Luther sees the Christian obeying the law out of fear, but this he does not as Christian but as unbeliever. The unbelieving part of the Christian must be threatened into obeying the law as any person who has never believed in Christ.<sup>40</sup> Such works performed from threats, even when done by Christians, are necessary for the welfare of society, but they should never be understood as belonging to sanctification, flowing from faith, or fulfilling the law's third use. Calvin's view of the third use of the law as conforming to the law of God as prohibition and as instigation and motivation for holy living has given Puritanism its peculiar character and through Puritanism is responsible for the particular hue of American religion.<sup>41</sup> The law as prohibition in the life of the Christian as Christian also accounts for his stress on moral discipline in the congregation to the point of making it one of the necessary signs whereby the church is recognized as church.<sup>42</sup> For Luther the signs of the church are simply the word and sacraments. Luther's understanding of the law as God's foreign or alien work and of the Gospel as His real or proper work is reversed in Calvin's theology. If for Luther the preaching of the Gospel is God's final and ultimate work, for Calvin Christian performance of good works pleasing to God is the final and real goal.

Calvin's understanding of sanctification as external works pleasing to God expresses itself in his understanding of the civil law which

is constituted to bring about the promotion of the true faith and outward obedience.<sup>43</sup> This would account in part for the traditional blue laws in some parts of the United States and for such a phenomenon as the Moral Majority whose leader specifically calls himself a preacher of the Gospel and his followers his congregation, even though his program is one solely of civil law.<sup>44</sup> The uproar about prayer in public schools can be traced through Puritanism back to Calvinism, where the Christian life is viewed as a discipline under the law.

It is not surprising that, with Calvin's view of the law's role in sanctification, he must move in the direction of perfectionism, even though he would deny it. He does say that Christians "regenerated by God's Spirit. . . make true holiness their concern."<sup>45</sup> Sanctification is thus separated from Christology as a separate theological enterprise. While, on the one hand, Calvin with Luther is totally committed to the concept of the imputed righteousness God given the sinner in faith, it is also true that for Calvin God takes a certain amount of pleasure in seeing the contrite sinner weeping before God.<sup>46</sup> In Evangelical Protestantism the conversion experience becomes a necessary sign. Unlike Luther, for whom the Christian performs good works out of faith, Calvin sees the Christian as Christian performing his good works in the presence of God the righteous judge, who will punish all wickedness. Fear of God's wrath becomes a motivation in performing good works.

Unless a position like Calvin's is brought in as a foil for Luther's it is difficult to understand the characteristically unique Lutheran view on sanctification. For Calvin Christology is only a prelude to sanctification; Christ is set forth by God as the means to bring about the sanctified life. Historically Calvinism is not recognized as Christological to the extent that Lutheranism is. In Lutheran theology every article of faith is Christological. This simply is not so in Calvinism. God's majesty is so overwhelming for Calvin that not all of God is incarnated in Christ. Hence the famous Lutheran jibe of the *extra Calvinisticum*. Consider, for example, Calvin's view of wrath as an eternal attribute of God. This wrath is manifested in the atonement without the atonement's exhausting this wrath.<sup>47</sup> The all-embracing Christology of Luther simply does not belong to Calvinism or for that matter to any of its contemporary manifestations. Also, in Calvinism all of the parts of theology, e.g., Baptism and the Lord's Supper, have their purpose in promoting good works among believers. In Lutheran theology Christology is a total manifestation of theology and Christology alone gives meaning to Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and sanctification. Merely stating that in Lutheran theology faith expresses itself in good works out of necessity does not do justice

to the Lutheran view that the life of the Christian is the life of Christ in the world, that is, it tells us what Christ is doing now.

From this it follows that there are certain items that do not belong to a Lutheran understanding of justification, at least as it is viewed differently from Calvinism. Thus, in Lutheran theology the Gospel cannot be preached in such a way that the Gospel's real purpose is the production of good works. Good works are preaching's result. Justification remains its only purpose. The Gospel is a complete message in itself. Good works result from the preaching of the Gospel, to be sure, but there can be no suggestion that the Gospel is to be preached as if its ultimate and essential purpose were to bring them about. The Gospel declares a completed atonement in Christ and shapes good works in the life of the Christian as a necessary reflection of God's love in Christ. The Gospel is not an opportunity for reinstating the religion of the law. The works produced by the Gospel conform to God's love in Christ and are not those of the law. People, identified as Christian or not, should not be viewed as living sanctified lives if they merely refrain from sin and evil. The sanctified life will eschew evil, but its characteristic mark is seen in that it adopts Christlike activities.

The Lutheran doctrine of sanctification, which came to its classical expression in the Confessions vis-a-vis the Roman Catholic position, found the distinction between religious and secular works, as if the former were greater than the later, invalid and defined good works as those actions whereby one fulfilled the requirements of his calling. Whether Lutheranism has adequately defined its doctrine of sanctification over against Calvinism in a thoroughly adequate statement, especially in the United States, whose religions are predominantly Reformed, is another question. Any attempt to make Christology preliminary to theology, or even only its most important part, but not its only part, is a denial of Luther's doctrine and effectively destroys the Gospel as the message of a completed atonement.

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#### Endnotes

1. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, III (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1983), pp. 3-4. Defining sanctification in the narrower and wider sense is a distinction commonly made in Lutheran theology. This paper deals with what Dr. Pieper calls "the internal spiritual transformation of the believer," i.e., the narrower sense.

2. All quotations of the Lutheran Confessions are taken from *The Book of Concord*, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 29. Hereafter this source is cited simply as Tappert, The Augsburg Confessions is abbreviated CA, the Formula of Concord as FC with the Epitome as Ep. and Solid Declaration as SD.
3. Pieper's introductory discussion of sanctification centers around its relationship to justification, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-14.
4. Tappert, pp. 29-30, CA III.
5. Tappert, p. 30, CA IV.
6. Tappert, p. 31, CA V.
7. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Win. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), II, pp. 317, 453-454.
8. Tappert, pp. 31-32, CA VI.
9. Tappert, pp. 34-35, CA XII.
10. Egil Grislis calls attention to some Luther scholars who went so far as to say that the reformer had no effective doctrine of sanctification. "Luther on Sanctification," *Consensus*, 10 (January 1984): 4, especially n. 1. There is no foundation to the charge of Anabapists that Luther's doctrine of justification lead to a less than acceptable moral life among Lutherans. What is true is Grislis' understanding that Luther's concept of human depravity did temper his view of the grandeur of the Christian life. Luther found a continued life in sin intolerable for a Christian.
11. Tappert, p. 36, CA XV.
12. Tappert, pp. 37-38, CA XVI. .
13. Luke 10:29-37.
14. Today secular Christianity means a religion centering on Jesus without any prior objective transcendental reality. Religion only has meaning within the dimensions of this world and only within these boundaries does theology function. Secular Christianity as a separate movement was popularized by Harvey Cox in the 1960's. Pannenberg and Moltmann could be cited as more moderate examples of this approach. Applied to Luther's theology, "secular" means God's involvement with the world at every point and is a natural consequence of his Christology.
15. Tappert, pp. 41-46, CA XX.
16. Tappert, p 342. In Apology XII: 38 Melanchthon describes fear as faith. Thus the presupposition for Luther's explanation to the commandments is the Gospel and faith.
17. For a fuller discussion of this matter see Burnell F. Eckardt Jr., "The Wrath of God in the Theology. of John Calvin-A Lutheran Perspective;" S.T.M. dissertation, Concordia Theological Seminary, 1984, pp. 21-22.
18. Tappert, pp. 564-565, FC-SD VI: 5-6.
19. Tappert, p. 37, CA XVI (Latin version).

20. Tappert, p. 344.
21. "Er verheisset aber Gnade und alles Guts alien, die solche Gebot halten, darumb sollen wir ihn auch lieben and vertrauen und gerne tun nach seinen Geboten.'
22. Tappert, p. 28, CA I.
23. Tappert, p. 566. FC-SD VI: 15-16.
24. Tappert, p. 112, Apology IV.
25. Lowell Greene, *How Melancthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel* (Fallbrook, California: Verdict Publications, 1980), p.264. The concern with progressive sanctification has its roots for Protestant theology in Calvin.
26. Tappert, p. 345.
27. Tappert, pp. 354-356.
28. "It may be that Anthony and other hermits were saintly men; but you are committing a grave sin if you abandon your calling and follow their example by secluding yourself in a hiding place; for what the Lord has commanded you to do is something else, namely, to obey your parents, the government, and your teachers." *LW*3:131.
29. Tappert, p. 350.
30. "Monastic Vows," Tappert, pp. 268-281.
31. See my "Article IV. Good Works," *A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord*, ed. Robert D. Preus (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), pp. 163-170.
32. John S. Oyer, *Lutheran Reformers Against Anabaptists*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964). p. 219. Oyer claims that the necessity of good works is not prominent in Luther's theology.
33. FC-SD VI is the classical Lutheran expression of the necessity of good works.  
Tappert, pp. 551-558.
34. In Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* regeneration is discussed in Book III, Chapters VI-X, and justification in Chapter XI.
35. For a fuller treatment of this matter see Eckardt.
36. Calvin, II, pp. 183-184.
37. Cf. my "Luther on Prayer;" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 47 (October 1983), pp. 305-315.
38. For a discussion of this in regard to Calvinism in general see Ulrich Asendorf, "Luther's Small Catechism and the Heidelberg Catechism;" *Luther's Catechisms-450 Years*, ed. David P Scaer (Fort Wayne, Indiana: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1979), p. 2.
39. Calvin, I, pp. 488-489.
40. Tappert, p. 568. FC-SD VI.
41. Asendorf, p. 2.
42. Calvin, II, p. 453. Calvin calls discipline the sinews which keep the body of the church together.
43. Calvin, II, pp. 657-659.



44. Cf. my "Lutheran Viewpoints on the Challenge of Fundamentalism: Eschatology," *Concordia Journal* 10 (January 1984), pp. 4-11.
45. Calvin II, p. 74.
46. Calvin II, pp. 463-464.
47. The limited atonement in Calvin's theology necessarily means that God's wrath against the unbeliever remains unsatisfied. See Eckardt, pp. 63-64.