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Holiness and the Christian Life in the Theology
of

Martin Luther and John Calvin

A Thesis

presented to

the Faculty of the School of Theology

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by

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Introduction

Among the teachings that emanated from the work of the Protestant Reformers was a group of themes concerning the doctrine of sanctification. Included in those aspects of holiness that pertain to the Christian holy life, the doctrine of sanctification gave a renewed emphasis to a theme that was present in the Apostolic witness of the Church and the Christian community as a whole. In the course of the Reformation there developed an emphasis upon this theme. Although there were many figures who contributed in special ways to this great renewal in the Church, that was generally limited to groups of monks and Christian mystics, there are two who emerge as key figures for our discussion, Martin Luther and John Calvin. They made great individual contributions to the spiritual renewal as well as the revival of the spiritual doctrines within the Church. The basis for this can be found in their concepts of *Holiness* and *Sanctification*.

The connecting element to the contemporary church may be located in the Holiness Movement of the nineteenth century. Its spiritual leaders brought forward and highlighted these themes for modern Protestantism. A key representative of this movement would be Phoebe Palmer, who set the agenda for the pace of holiness theology leading into the twentieth century. For her, there can be noted one of the more systematic developments of thought on the concept of holiness in the life of the individual as they walk through a life with Jesus Christ. Within her writings, especially *The Way of Holiness (1843)* and *Entire Devotion to God (1845)*, there are crucial points that can be noted in association with the key figures and the topic of holiness and its link to the historical theological picture. When looking at the theology of Palmer in light of the doctrine of Holiness, there can be seen a definite reflection of Wesley's doctrine of holiness, but also, it can be noted that there is much more. Palmer, in her book, *Entire Devotion to God*, extends and further develops key aspects of that doctrine. There are also aspects of her doctrine

that had previously been set forth in different forms in the thought of Luther and Calvin. The primary concern of this study is to demonstrate how significant aspects of the holiness movement are grounded in concerns of the Protestant Reformers. When looking at her idea of Gospel Holiness or Sanctification, Palmer says that,

Gospel holiness is that state which is attained by the believer when, through faith in the infinite merit of the Savior, body and soul, with every ransomed faculty, are ceaselessly presented, a living sacrifice, to God; the purpose of the soul being steadily bent to know nothing among men, save Christ and Him crucified, and the eye of faith fixed on "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." In obedience to the requirement of God, the sacrifice is presented through Christ, and the soul at once proves that "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him."¹

There can be noted some related points that indicate the reflection of the thought of the Reformers to that of Palmer. First, the whole idea that only through faith in the merits of the Savior can the body and soul be presented before God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-3). Second, the faith of the believer should be fixed on the cross and sacrifice of Christ and therefore living out the Christian life in complete obedience to that faith. So, the concept of justification by grace through faith alone is a theme that develops in both the Reformers as well as those in the holiness movement such as Palmer. In the last chapter, the entire work will be concluded by interrelating the figures dealt with throughout and assessing their significance for the church.

In order to understand the importance of the theological concept of holiness to the beginnings of the Protestant Reformation, there must be an investigation into the theological positions of the leading reformers. The doctrine of sanctification during this period of time should be viewed in terms of their idea of God. Later interpreters of Luther and Calvin tend to under emphasize this doctrine within the treatment of their thought as a whole, despite the fact that it played a crucial and integrative role in their theology. For Luther, the concept of the *theologia*

¹ Phoebe Palmer: selected writings, edited by Thomas C. Oden. *Entire Devotion to God (1845)*. Taken from section II. What is Gospel Holiness, or Sanctification? 187-88.

crucis or the “theology of the Cross” became the center of focus for all other issues and that eventually began to set him free of “*Anfechtung*” or the “Deep distress of the soul.” Calvin seemed to place as the pivotal point in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* the whole doctrine of *Mystical Union* with Christ. He places this at the beginning of Book Three which situates it between his discussion of the Knowledge of God and the Trinity and the following chapters in Books Three and Four which deal with doctrines of the relationship of God and humanity.

The basic framework of the research that will be used as the foundation for the text will be theological. Through a process of systematic investigation of the thought of those figures, who regardless of their theological presuppositions, have a historical theological context that influences how their life and thought developed. It is important with this method to understand the context in which a theological position is developed. For example, Martin Luther grew up in a very strict and harsh environment where God was considered to be wrathful, judgmental and distant. This whole idea of God formed much of the way he believed, even in his most fruitful periods ministry. The effect of this idea of God truly directed the way Luther thought. Even when he came to the realization of the cross, there still remained the suspicious and curious lingering of questions that aimed at the heart of what formed Reformation thought for the Church. How could a wrathful and judgmental God be at the same time just, merciful and loving toward such a depraved creation?

One concern is to show what contributions they made to the formation of the doctrine of sanctification in light of its prominence in the modern holiness movement. Phoebe Palmer is widely recognized as a leading representative of that movement. The concept of holiness has developed over the past two thousand years. In every generation of believers, there are those who contribute to the understanding of the concept of a holy walk with God.

As the Church came to the end of the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, the individual laity became more insignificant to the overall function of the Church. During this time, the Roman Catholic Church remained the dominant religious influence in the social and political spheres. The intellectualism of scholastic thought was manifested within the institutions of the Church from whence it cried out for change to take place. There became a need for the people to understand the meaning and purpose of their faith. Until that time, the faith of the common person was also influenced by the superstitious and legalistic structures of the day. Hence, Martin Luther and John Calvin enunciated their positions at an opportune moment in history. When the Church was in theological decline, these men had a vision for the true nature of the Church that had implications for a renewed concept of holiness based on *sola gratia*. This was a concept which developed over the entire history of the Church. The influences of ancient church Fathers, such as Gregory of Nyssa and later Fathers like St. Augustine, provided the background for the doctrine of holiness as it developed within the Protestant Church from its beginnings.

Other great spiritual leaders, such as the German Mystics, Meister Eckhart and Johannes Tauler, contributed greatly to the cause of the holy life. The most definitive spiritual writer of the Medieval period to make an impact on the development of the doctrine of holiness was Thomas á Kempis and his work, *Imitatio Christi*. This work made a significant impact on the reformers and their thought concerning this topic discussed. Throughout this study, these spiritual leaders of the Church and their influence will be alluded to, but not explicitly developed. This is not to diminish their importance but to enhance the credibility of the reformers that will be dealt with in the paper as a whole.

Review of Literature

The review of literature is important in the selection of sources that are crucial to the topic as a whole. The historical contexts will come from secondary sources along with some dictionary and encyclopedia references. Jarslov Pelikan's English translation of the Luther's Works² will be the primary text for this study of Luther. This work is crucial to the understanding of Luther because it is a compilation of his works throughout his life and intimately linked together to form his theological framework. This particular work by Pelikan made access to the writings of Martin Luther more practical for modern laity. This work is in fifty-five volumes along with a comprehensive index develops it into a very useful tool for the study of Luther.

Alister E. McGrath's book Luther's Theology of the Cross³ is very useful for the purposes of this study. He develops various components of Luther's theology of the cross and shows their relevance to the overall scheme of his theology. For the purposes of this paper, it can be noted that McGrath gives many points of reference to key elements of Luther's theology and the significance of his theology of the cross along with the world view from which he functioned. This book is useful in terms of a key secondary reference source for understanding Luther in light of the central concepts of his theology.

Roland Bainton's book about the life of Luther, Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther,⁴ gives crucial insight into his life. He shows, very colorfully, the real Luther and his theology in its development despite his struggles. This book is good for the purpose of foundational structures into his life and experiences. By understanding the person of Martin Luther, the Luther student may then understand the theologian, teacher and pastor Luther. Bainton breathes life into the

² Jarslov Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 55 vols. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958.

³ Alister E. McGrath. *Luther's Theology of the Cross*. 4th edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994.

⁴ Roland H. Bainton. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978.

Martin Luther that is only read about in history books and heard by word of mouth which makes this book an essential source to serve as the historical backdrop to knowing the person of Martin Luther.

John Calvin's definitive work Institutes of the Christian Religion⁵ contributes an essential core of his theology. This work provides, for Calvin, the basis for his overall belief system. For the purposes of this paper, it serves as a crucial primary source for his theology of Mystical Union. The organization of the work also should be noted in light of the structure of his theology overall. It gives a foundation to the fact of Calvin as a Biblical Theologian and shows the delicate work that he strived for in developing his whole theology. This two-volume work is fundamental to understanding Calvin and his thought.

Leroy Nixon translated a particular book by John Calvin that was helpful to the study of the topic. Calvin's compilation of sermons on the his Christology named, The Deity of Christ and other Sermons⁶, was useful in looking at his theology that he presented from the pulpit. He gave many fundamental points in his sermons that are essential in understanding his doctrine of Mystical Union. Thus, this became a valuable text for the present study of Calvin's theology.

Another book of selected sermons by John Calvin, The Mystery of Godliness: and Other Selected Sermons⁷, begins to deal directly with the issue of Mystical Union. Calvin preached on many occasions concerning holiness of the individual. This compilation of sermons is a unique source for this particular doctrine. When dealing with Calvin in the area of holiness, there needs to be investigation into his pastoral encounters and this source is a good one seeing him in this light.

⁵ John Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 2 vols. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960.

⁶ John Calvin. *The Deity of Christ and other Sermons*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950.

⁷ John Calvin. *The Mystery of Godliness: and other Selected Sermons*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950.

John Dillenberger edited an excellent compilation of writings by Luther, Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings⁸ This is a concise work that gives the reader a condensed version as well as a workable text to view Luther's works. He gives some insights into Luther's thought that is helpful in understanding the situation surrounding and the occasion of each individual work of Luther's being presented. This book was helpful in the research of this study.

In Calvin's work, Golden Booklet of the True Christian Religion,⁹ he forms the foundation for the basis of the Christian life. He separates it into five major sections that demonstrates the way which a person is able to achieve the True Christian life. This booklet summarizes his whole idea of the Christian life. He looks at the holy life in terms of humble obedience, self denial, patience in bearing the cross, future hope, and the right use of the present life. This booklet was helpful when looking at the Christian life as Calvin saw it in simplified form.

As an addition to the previous work, Calvin's work, Instructions in Faith (1537),¹⁰ he developed the whole notion of faith in the Christian life. He looks at the beginnings of creation and how the depraved state of man was the occasion for the faith established. He lays out the concepts of sin and death as well as free will and develops them in relation to his own development of theology. This is an excellent book for the study of holiness.

Heinrich Quistorp's book, Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things,¹¹ is an excellent work for the study of Calvin's view of eschatology. It was good for drawing the connections between his doctrine of eschatology and holiness. He develops the notion of the elect having the assurance of the final resurrection and focusing that in the fact of the idea of a Christian life. Calvin saw that

⁸ John Dillenberger (ed.) *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*. New York: DoubleDay Anchor Books, 1962.

⁹ John Calvin. *Golden Booklet of the True Christian Religion*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1952

¹⁰ John Calvin. *Instructions in Faith (1537)*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1949.

¹¹ Quistorp, Heinrich. *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*. Harold Knight trans. Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1955.

the hope given through the promise to the elect was crucial in understanding why the elect were able to endure the sufferings of this life.

Robin Leaver and his book, Luther on Justification¹² illustrates the crucial doctrine of justification for Martin Luther. He breaks down the components of this part of his theology and develops it according to way Luther understood the concept of the holy life. This was a useful book in understanding the basic structures of the doctrine of justification for Luther.

I. John Hesselink's book Calvin's Concept of the Law¹³ was crucial in understanding the importance of the law to Calvin and his theology. The way in which the structure was laid out became somewhat confusing but it lended itself to a challenging view of the law as Calvin viewed it. The understanding of the law was interesting in the writings of Calvin and Hesselink brings this idea of law to the forefront. The notion of law and Gospel coming together and functioning together for salvation and sanctification is truly an intreguing concept and Hesselink challenges the reader to explore it.

Thomas M. McDonough, in his book, The Law and The Gospel in Luther¹⁴, studies Luther's understanding of the Law and Gospel. He develops this idea from a study of Luther's Confessional writings and he goes through each one carefully in order to see how Luther was able to develop these ideas over the span of his career. Law and Gospel serve distinct functions as crucial elements in the process of the life of the individual. McDonough laid out his arguments affectively and concisely in order to deliver the true message that Luther intended, especially for the individual elect.

¹² Robin A. Leaver. *Luther on Justification*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975.

¹³ I. John Hesselink. *Calvin's Concept of the Law*. Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1992.

¹⁴ Thomas M. McDonough. *The Law and The Gospel in Luther*. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.

Edward A. Dowey, Jr., in his book, The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology,¹⁵ developed the elements of Calvin's theology that established the foundation for what he believed in terms of Mystical Union and holiness. He drew his arguments from the Institutes of the Christian Religion, Calvin's work and this was helpful because it gave the work affective structure in order to follow the arguments proposed. This work established adequate understanding of the knowledge of God as laid out by Calvin in his work.

Dr. M. Reu, in his work, Luther and the Scriptures,¹⁶ establishes for the Luther the importance that he placed on the Word of God and proclamation of that Word. When looking at Law and Gospel in Luther, there can be seen the crucial departure of Gospel from the law. Reu seems to bring out the importance of the Word of God and how essential it is in justification and further growth from salvation to the eternal life. This is an important work for the study of Luther's biblical understanding of truth and how he approaches it.

Paul Althaus, in his book, The Theology of Martin Luther,¹⁷ gave a thorough development of Luther's whole theological structure. He reveals about Luther in that he shows Luther's motivations and true intent of his theological understandings concerning the work of the Trinity. This book was helpful in providing secondary insight into the mind of Luther and how he viewed Christian life in light of the work of Christ and the cross.

While looking at the possible connection of the reformers to the holiness movement of the nineteenth century, Phoebe Palmer became the more obvious figure of that period to research for a comparison. Thomas C. Oden edited the works of Phoebe Palmer in the book entitled, Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings¹⁸ Within this compilation, Oden put together some of the most

¹⁵ Edward A. Dowey. *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1952.

¹⁶ Dr. M. Reu. *Luther and the Scriptures*. Columbus, OH: The Wartburg Press, 1980.

¹⁷ Paul Althaus. *The Theology of Martin Luther*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966.

¹⁸ Thomas C. Oden (ed.). *Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988.

definitive of Palmer's writings on holiness. This was helpful in taking a bird's eye view of the works of Palmer. There were several connections that were reflected in the writings, but this will be developed in the concluding chapter.

Statements concerning the Paper

The search for Holiness in the life of the individual is a quest that is as old as religion itself. The understanding of this concept is in process, but with every growing experience within the Church throughout its history, the people of God seem to come closer to the point. This study goes into some detail concerning two figures who made an impact on the Christian religious world and how, as engaging in this quest, they came to the conclusions, and in some situations not, concerning the search for the holy life with God.

From the Protestant Reformation came a new renewal within the Church that it had not experienced since the days of Thomas Aquinas. The whole idea that the laity along with the Church Leadership could know a closer walk with God through a focus on the cross of Christ and not the judgment of a wrathful God was a concept that was as old as the Church itself. Over the previous millennia, the Church martyred their own for such teachings, John Huss for example one-hundred years prior to Luther and Calvin. Both of these figures are misunderstood by their opponents as well as their interpreters. The study presented will illumine both Martin Luther and John Calvin's theology on the union of Christ and the believer. It will also clarify certain issues that are central to both of their theologies as a whole and will bring to the reader a clearer understanding of both Martin and John Calvin as men of God.

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Chapter 1

Martin Luther, the Sanctified Augustinian

Historical Background

Early Life of Martin Luther

The beginnings of the Protestant Reformation found its roots in the vision of one simple Augustinian monk named Martin Luther. He lived in a time of great upheaval in the Roman Catholic Church. Born at the end of the Middle Ages, Luther was to be put into a position within the History of the Church that was a harvest white for reaping. In that day, people of scholasticism had left little room for personal religious faith that would edify the laity. Scholastic thought within the Church had begun drawn away from the primitive intention of the Apostles as well as Christ himself. The people lived in fear of God and not in love with Him. This schism within the Church grew as the years went by and the Church grew more and more into its own government unto itself where the people were merely spectators to the show of intellectual “Pharisee” types in the priests and pope that became judge and jury over them apart from any consideration of God and His role.

There are many examples of those who were against the work and message of Luther and would pursue him throughout the remainder of his life. For example, Pope Leo X, who was Supreme Holiness for the universal Catholic Church, went to great pains to quench the movement of the Reformation and Martin Luther. Luther’s work attempts to resolve tyranny and corruption within the Church. The Pope responded, usually harshly toward Luther, by invoking his authority in the Church and with the Emperor while promoting sanctions against Luther’s teaching. Another figure who became a thorn in the flesh of Luther was a professor at Ingolstadt named Johannes

Eck. Eck debated with him solely with the purpose of discrediting ideas of reform and returning the teachings in the Bible and the Apostles. He was a true adversary and performed deceptively against Luther at the Leipzig Debate. Luther was able to stand firm in what he affirmed as truth and thus he overcame his deceptive arguments. There were many others who stood against Luther on different occasions and in various contexts but it remained clear that Luther was articulating a biblical understanding of righteousness and justice.

For centuries, the Church was corrupt and harsh in approach to the common people before Luther. As a reaction to the harsh hypocrisy within the Church, many lay people and non-believers looked to various cultic practices to satisfy their desire to know the unknown. Luther grew up among these times. This formed his thinking in his early years and was a nagging thorn in his flesh for many decades to follow. He was not immune to these practices in the subsequent years to come. The God that Luther was led to follow was a wrathful judge who ultimately will judge everybody on the precept that they are guilty until proven innocent. This God was one who would seem to rather condemn than to forgive. The whole concept of a wrathful and merciless God was depressing for the young Luther and he pondered this through his early years. This would later come back on him and he would refute the teachings of the Church and eventually strike the match that would burn a refining fire through the Church for the next four hundred and fifty years.

Martin Luther was born in the town of Eisleben, Germany, on November 10, 1483. He led a life typical of most young Germans of the day, but his father Hans wanted the highest achievements and the best life for his son. The young Luther was sent from school to school over the next few years and he did much of what father desired for his life. His father wanted Martin to become a lawyer so he entered the University at Erfurt. This was prestigious for the day and he

excelled proudly through the ranks. He received the Bachelor of Arts on September 29, 1502 and three years later he received the Master of Arts on January 7, 1505.

The Vow: the beginning of a paradoxical life

Luther was involved in a spiritual struggle to knowing a gracious God. He struggled continually while attempting to satisfy a reluctant and wrathful God. On a stormy day in July of the year 1505, Luther was faced with his own mortality and made a vow that would change his whole perspective on the way that he would pursue his religious quest. Roland Bainton made note of this account,

On a sultry day in July of the year 1505 a lonely traveler was trudging over a parched road on the outskirts of the Saxon village of Stotternheim. He was a young man, short but sturdy, and wore the dress of a university student. As he approached the village, the sky became overcast. Suddenly there was a shower, then a crashing storm. A bolt of lightning rived the gloom and knocked the man to the ground. Struggling to rise, he cried in terror, "St. Anne help me! I will become a monk."¹

He would later refute the monastic life as well as his call to be a monk. Many questioned whether his vow was genuine. His inner conflict would continue through his days as a monk. He entered the Augustinian Cloister at Erfurt only two weeks following his taking of the vow along the road on July 17, 1505.² Upon hearing of his son's decision of entering the monastic life, Hans, Martin's father, was outraged because he had sent his son to be educated in order to take care of his parents in his old age. His rage was later reconciled of this discouragement when he saw two of his other sons die. Hans believed this to be a chastisement for his rebellion.³

As he entered the Cloister at Erfurt, his thoughts were centered on the fact that he would never exit those doors again. In reference to his first year at the monastery, Luther later remarked

¹ Roland H. Bainton. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. 15.

² *Ibid.*, 25.

³ *Ibid.*, 26.

that the Devil is very quiet.⁴ There can be seen in his early life the effects of his beliefs concerning the Devil and the judgment of Christ. He lived in a state of what he termed as *Anfechtung*. This term refers to the state of utter melancholy. He also considered this as a way of referring to the “spiritual assaults upon man and the resulting doubt and anxiety which they occasion. Luther frequently uses the term to emphasise the existential aspect of the Christian Faith.”⁵

Theology of the Cross

One of the more profound and yet prolific aspects of Martin Luther’s theology is found within what he would call his “*theologia crucis*” or the “theology of the cross.” The central portion of not only his knowledge of God but also his entire theology, the theology of the cross tends to pose a crucial issue for the young Luther that he will come to grips with in later life. While in his youth, he had to deal with dysfunction within the family and a bad father figure as well as an ever-present demonic cultic activity prevalent within the society and times in which he lived. Luther is to be looked upon as the pastoral theologian and in this way it will be easier to see his view of the life of the true Christian found in his *theologia crucis*. Another way in which to read it, as Luther put it, would be *Crux sola est nostra theologia*, which literally means “The Cross alone is our theology.”

Luther’s theology of the cross began to make its emergence early in his career from sermons and minor devotionals. The real emergence of this particular theology for Luther came in 1518 with the *Heidelberg Disputation*. The theology of the cross takes Luther past his superstitious medieval mindset that saw a totally wrathful and judgmental God to an inward

⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵ Alister E. McGrath. *Luther’s Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther’s Theological Breakthrough*. This definition was taken from the glossary of terms in the back of the book and was useful for clarifying terms.

reliability on the passion of Christ as the gift of a merciful God that provides strength to endure the crises of faith. It is true that the Christian will suffer, so for Luther the cross is central to his understanding of who God is in relation to His creation and particularly to humanity. A merciful and loving God begins to emerge from the depths of his *Anfechtung*. Just as the believer is *simul iustus et peccator*, so one is caught up in the dialectic between faith and *Anfechtung*, which can never be resolved in this life. McGrath states that, “For Luther, the sole authentic locus of man’s knowledge of God is the cross of Christ, in which God is to be found revealed, and yet paradoxically hidden in that revelation.”⁶ Thus this concept for Luther becomes a central concern to the understanding of his Theology of the Cross. Through this concept, he sees that apart from the humility and shame of the cross, an individual can not witness God as revealed. True knowledge of God is found in the passion and suffering of the crucified Christ and faith is given in the discerning of the hiddenness of God in that revelation. The whole paradoxical conception for Luther of *Deus absconditus* versus *Deus revelatus* has to be addressed. McGrath states that,

The theology of the cross, as we have emphasised, is a theology of revelation, and, as such, cannot be divorced from the question of the preconditions of revelation. According to Luther, it is natural that man may have preconceptions of God, through which divine revelation may be appropriated: nevertheless, the effect of that revelation is to destroy such preconceptions, and replace them with the “crucified God.”⁷

The year 1518 was the turning point year for Luther and the development of the *theologia crucis*. Following the posting of the infamous *Ninety-five Theses* in 1517, he began to seriously work out the whole notion of a merciful and just God in relation to a totally reprobate sinner such as himself. The *theologia crucis* is reflected very clearly in the *Explanations of the Ninety-five Theses* in 1518. He says concerning the theologian of the cross,

A theologian of the cross (that is, one who speaks of the crucified and hidden God), teaches that punishments, crosses, and death are the most precious treasury of all and the most sacred relics

⁶ A. McGrath. *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*. 149.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 163.

which the Lord of this theology himself has consecrated and blessed, not alone by the touch of his most holy flesh but also by the embrace of his exceedingly holy and divine will, and he has left these relics here to be kissed, sought after, and embraced.⁸

He is making reference here to the relics that are sacred to the Catholic Church of his time and those who were collecting them. This treatise was written to Pope Leo X as a follow up to his *Ninety-five Theses* as the result of the indulgences that were swarming the country-side during this time. The theses in a sense attacked the authority of the Pope in a subtle way. So, his subsequent explanation was to clarify things better. Instead, it made the Pope more agitated at Luther and his arrogance.

Again in 1518, Luther became even more clear on his doctrine of the theology of the cross in the *Heidelberg Disputation*. Theses numbers 18 through 25 show that he had become truly aware of the importance that the cross has in God's revelation to his people. In the twenty-first theses of the *Heidelberg Disputation*, Luther draws the comparison between the theology of glory (or the present state of the Catholic Church of his day) and the theology of the cross (where he sees the new church aiming toward). He states that "A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is."⁹ The theology of glory for Luther is an antithesis to the theology of the cross or the inner work of God with the believer through the works of Christ and his sufferings.

In 1530, Luther wrote a work called *That a Christian should Bear his Cross with Patience*, which it was among his later devotional writings. Here his theology of praxis is integrated around the theme of the cross. In this writing, he drew from the church fathers, especially Augustine, and it is reflected in the subjective manner in which he writes and faces his *Anfechtung*. He says concerning the *Causa* or the "Source of the cross" that,

⁸ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 31, 225.

⁹ Taken from the Heidelberg Disputation of 1518 in *Luther's Works*. 31, 40-41.

Because the devil, a mighty, evil, deceitful spirit, hates the children of God. For them the holy cross serves for learning the faith, for learning the power of the word, and for subduing whatever sin and pride remain. Indeed, a Christian can no more do without the cross than without food or drink.¹⁰

The holy cross should be the center of life for Christians in all that they do or say. The cross is essential for growth in the grace of God and to conform to the image of God. In his *Precium* or the Entreaty to the cross he says that “The touch of Christ sanctifies all the sufferings and sorrows of those who believe in him.”¹¹ So, the Christian must suffer in order for Christ to be affective in their life for Luther. This as well seems to be a reflection on the strong sense of *Anfechtung* that he had to deal with throughout his life.

Luther introduced his theology of the cross in a fragment of a sermon given on St. Martin’s Day, November 11, 1515, when he stated: *Unum praedica: sapientiam crucis!* — “Preach one thing: the wisdom of the cross!”¹² Luther delivered a similar sermon in the parish church at Wittenberg in the early phases of a sermon series preached by Luther on the ten commandments. The sermon on the tenth Sunday after Trinity, July 27, 1516, made some distinct implications to the whole idea of the holy life of the cross and humility. He says concerning the humble person that,

... no matter how humiliating and difficult it may be for the rich man to put himself on the same level with any beggar who comes along, for the virgin to identify herself with a harlot, the chaste woman with an adulteress, the wise man with a fool, the strong man with a weakling, the living person with a dead one, the beautiful with an ugly one, the superior with an inferior one.¹³

From his commentary on *Romans*, his reflection on Romans 1:1 gives the qualities of a true Christian that is shown in the theology of the cross and the holy Christian life. He states that,

A true Christian must have no glory of his own and must to such an extent be stripped of everything he calls his own that in honor and in dishonor he can always remain the same in the knowledge that the honor that has been bestowed on him has been given not to him but to Christ,

¹⁰ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 43, 184.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² WA 1, 52

¹³ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 51, 14-15.

whose righteousness and gifts are shining in him, and that the dishonor inflicted on him is inflicted both on him and on Christ.¹⁴

He goes on to say, “Even though a person with all his natural and spiritual gifts may be wise before men and righteous and good, God will not on that account look upon him as such, especially if he regards himself so.”¹⁵

From the notion of God revealed and God hidden, comes also a concern for Luther, with the whole differences between the theology of the cross and theology of glory. The idea of works righteousness for Luther was absurd in the life of the true believer. The disagreements with the Catholic Church for Luther was rooted in the thought of having to do works to achieve your righteousness before God. This form of works righteousness was what he referred to as the theology of glory. It reflects that the person had control of the situation and the passion and cross of Christ was practically irrelevant. As can be seen, how God reveals Himself is crucial to the understanding of how the believer is to live in relation to Him.

Law and Gospel

The paradoxical workings of the ideas of Law and Gospel seem to have practical implications for Luther in light of his core theology of justification by faith through grace alone. The distinction between Law and Gospel is one of a flow from the acceptance of justification to that of sanctification. Luther has an implicit view of sanctification that is a work of the Holy Spirit. Thomas McDonough states concerning this intrinsic work of the Holy Spirit, “ . . . the Holy Ghost is necessary for our faith and our holiness. It brings to mind, also, the question of how the recipient of grace is physically and inwardly, and not merely forensically or imputatively,

¹⁴ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 25, 137

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

transformed -- divinized so to speak -- by God's work,"¹⁶ There can be seen where the Holy Spirit functions within the understanding of sanctification for Luther.

When looking at Luther's understanding of sanctification, it should be viewed in light of his understanding Law and Gospel. The law was given to lead people to Christ, but when they received the righteousness of Christ they then follow the Gospel or the proclaimed Word of God. The work of the Spirit becomes a crucial link between Law and Gospel. Luther states in his work "Answer to the Hyperchristian Book" concerning the law and its function,

It remains law, and does no yield more than that, because no man improves through the law; he only becomes worse. The law orders something done which man is neither able nor willing to do. But the Spirit (gospel), the divine grace, grants strength and power to the heart; indeed, he creates a new man who takes pleasure in obeying God's commandments and does everything he should with joy.¹⁷

God inscribes the law upon the hearts of humanity through the proclamation of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the way by which one obeys and meets the demands of the law. The purpose or function of the law is simply for Luther to reveal sins, convict with sorrow, and to lead into hell. This appears to be rather harsh, but one who follows the law is not grasping what Jesus said to his disciples when he said that he came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it. So, for Luther, the law assists the individual in realizing the consequences of sin.

For Luther, there are two uses of the Law. The first is the *Civil* use of the law. This is found within the human laws ordained by God to punish transgressions. God has given laws to humanity in order for them to be governed in a just manner. The works of humanity work the law for their good or yields it to the evil desires of the flesh. The law guides those who have not been given the Gospel of God and have the workings of the Holy Spirit within them. If repentance is

¹⁶ Thomas McDonough. *The Law and the Gospel in Luther*. A note from Appendix II concerning Luther's understanding of sanctification as an act of the Holy Spirit and the work of the Gospel. 164.

¹⁷ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 39, 182.

not present, then the law will lead to eternal damnation and hell. The second use of the law, for Luther, is the theological or spiritual use of the law. This use is to reveal to an individual his or her sin, misery, blindness, impiety, ignorance, hatred and contempt of God as well as death, hell, the judgment and deserved wrath of God. Luther states in his *Commentary on Galatians* that,

Now, when a man is humbled by the law, and brought to knowledge of himself, then followeth true repentance (for true repentance beginneth at the fear and judgment of God), and he seeth himself to be so great a sinner that he can find no means how he may be delivered from his sin by his own strength, endeavor, and works. Here now he beginneth to sigh, and siath in this wise: Who then can give succor? For he being thus terrified with the law, utterly despaireth of his own strength: he looketh about, and sigheth for the help of a mediator and savior. Here then cometh in good time the healthful word of the Gospel, and saith: "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." [Matt. 9:2]¹⁸

The works of the law are to be seen in stark contrast to the proclamation of the Word of God or the Gospel. Luther believed that as Christ came to fulfill the law, he also died to that law in the grave. So, it is with the individual who dies with Christ, the law also dies with him or her. He states that,

As the grave in which Christ lay dead, after that he was risen again was void and empty, and Christ vanished away; so when I believe in Christ, I rise again with him, and die to my grave, that is void, and I am escaped out of my prison and grave, that is to say, the law. Wherefore the law hath no right to accuse me, or to hold me any longer, for I am risen again.¹⁹

The law, for Luther, acts as the prison for the soul and only the grace of God through the proclamation of the Gospel can a person be sanctified and reconciled to God. This is the work of the Holy Spirit and the function of the Gospel as a result of the actions of the law to the individual.

Deus absconditus vs. Deus revelatus

That which Luther called the theology of the cross had altered the way he viewed God and his knowledge of God. He draws a distinction between *Deus revelatus* (God revealed) and

¹⁸ Dillenberger (ed.) *Martin Luther*. 109-110. Taken from his commentary on Galatians.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 119.

Deus absconditus (God hidden). According to Erasmus, God does not desire the death of a sinner, but for Luther this may be true for the revealed God but not for the hidden God. Man's natural conception of God is confused and this must be replaced by God's revelation of Himself in the cross of Christ. It is through this that true theology and the true knowledge of God come about. There is no hiddenness of God for Luther other than the hiddenness of His revelation.

Luther states concerning this issue,

With regard to God, insofar as He has not been revealed, there is no faith, no knowledge, and no understanding. And here one must hold to the statement that what is above us is none of our concern.²⁰ For thoughts of this kind, which investigate something more sublime above or outside the revelation of God, are altogether devilish. With them nothing more is achieved than that we plunge ourselves into destruction; for they present an object that is inscrutable, namely, the unrevealed God.²¹

For Luther, the hidden God is one that should not be pursued and the believer should strive after God as He is revealed to them. The revealed God is seen and lived out in the example of the cross of Christ. When he reflects on Moses' inquiring into the identity of God, Luther states that,

For this inquisitiveness is original sin itself, by which we are impelled to strive for a way to God through natural speculation. But this is a great sin and a useless and futile attempt; for this is what Christ says in John 6:65 (cf. John 14:6): "No one comes to the Father but by Me." Therefore when we approach the unrevealed God, then there is no faith, no Word, and no knowledge; for He is an invisible God, and you will not make Him visible.²²

The inquisitiveness of the individual appears to be infringing upon God in His hiddenness and mystery. God will not reveal Himself at the demand of an individual, but has on occasion revealed Himself in cases where He willed to do so, such as to the people of Israel on Mount Sinai. Luther believed that it was at the core of the fallen state of humanity and original sin that this question was raised. While raising the question of *Deus absconditus* or the hiddenness of

²⁰ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 5, taken from Luther's Lectures on Genesis chapters 26-30; reflecting on Minucius Felix, *Octavian*, XIII, 1. Within the context of the lecture on Genesis 26:9, 44.

²¹ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 5, taken from Luther's Lectures on Genesis chapters 26-30; the lecture on Genesis 26:9, 44.

²² *Ibid*.

God, there is an underlying manipulation involved on the part of the individual. In his work on *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther, dialoging with Diatribe, shows the tension and significance between the God revealed and the God hidden. The distinction can be drawn that the God revealed is manifested through the Word of God and it preached. Whereas, God hidden suggests the understanding of God Himself. He states that,

God does many things that he does not disclose to us in his word; he also wills many things which he does not disclose himself as willing in his word. Thus he does not will the death of a sinner, according to his word; but he wills it according to that inscrutable will of his. It is our business, however, to pay attention to the word and leave that inscrutable will alone, for we must be guided by the word and not by that inscrutable will.²³

In this way, they would properly know God and the mystery of His greatness and sovereignty would be of minimal importance. Therefore, God Himself would become minimal in importance to the believer. As the believer grows closer to the revealed God, He begins to bring to the front more of the hidden God. This is an act of the divine will of God. Luther states that,

If you believe in the revealed God and accept His Word, He will gradually also reveal the hidden God; for "He who sees Me also sees the Father," as John 14:9 says. He who rejects the Son also loses the unrevealed God along with the revealed God. But if you cling to the revealed God with a firm faith, so that your heart is so minded that you will not lose Christ even if you are deprived of everything, then you are most assuredly predestined, and you will understand the hidden God.²⁴

In the development of the whole concept of the believer's relationship to the revealed God and how that grows into a relationship with the hidden God, the doctrine of theology of the cross begins become crucial in its formation. So, when looking at this theology of the cross as a whole all of the above aspects should be kept in consideration for understanding this concept in its entirety.

²³ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 53, taken from Luther's *The Bondage of the Will*. 140.

²⁴ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 5, taken from Luther's Lectures on Genesis chapters 26-30; the lecture on Genesis 26:9, 45.

The knowledge of God found within the whole concept of the revelation of God is, in effect, the way in which the believer is able to see the face of God. He says that,

The knowledge of the Gospel is the face of God, the message that we have grace and truth through the death of Christ. Whoever does not have Christ, will not be saved -- whether it be Moses, pope, cardinal, Mass, purgatory, vigils, and requiem -- all this is nothing but death, death, yes, the devil himself. For God has placed His grace solely in the only Son. If we are without Him, we can fast ourselves to death, confess, observe vigils; but for all that we will never have a good and cheerful conscience.²⁵

Without the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ salvation does not exist. God's hiddenness is revealed through the proclamation of the Gospel and the reading of the Word of God. Therefore the revealed God is to be acknowledged through the proclamation of the spoken Word of God. Luther uses the argument for the pre-existent Christ through whom God was revealed to His people. God can only be seen properly through the person of Christ, which is the occasion for the incarnation. But to appeal to the true knowledge of God one must completely look to Christ. Luther says that, "God is seen properly only in Christ. There we learn that all who wish to be saved must confess that they are damnable sinners, and that they must rely on Him who is full of grace and truth. Thus they also attain grace and truth; this is the true mind of God. We must depend on Christ; this is the true knowledge of God."²⁶ Luther brings out the point of total dependence on Christ and his work. He then appeals to the believer to look at Scripture when he states, "Look at Holy Scripture. From the days of Adam, Christ has always revealed God to mankind. He never ceased proclaiming such a knowledge of God: that through Him we derive grace and truth, that is life eternal. it was to poor, fallen mankind that Christ wished to preach, not to cows and pigs."²⁷ The God of eternity, who is hidden, can be revealed and has been revealed by Christ and his work of salvation history.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 22. Sermons of the Gospel of St. John chapters 1-4. 158.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 157.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 157.

Justification

Humility is the key to the doctrine concerning the theology of the cross. The person standing in the shadow of the cross is to be considered one who is standing in light of God's love. Although Luther's view of God at this time was clouded by *Anfechtung*, he became more open to the notion of a merciful God whose judgment was based on love and not revenge. Justification becomes crucial to the understanding of Luther's doctrine of the cross. The ways in which he dealt with this particular doctrine were based out of his lectures on Paul's letter to the Romans. This is where he developed his theology of the biblical phase that became his hallmark for the Reformation of the Church, "justification by faith alone." Within this whole concept, there is the underlining sense that he is promoting, as he will say later in his writings, *simul iustus et peccator*.

With reference to Luther's doctrine of justification, there is to be noted a consistency in the way God functions within the structure of the theologia crucis. God is in control of the situation and the recipient merely needs to respond to God's beckoning call. How can a person be both a sinner and righteous as well as retain a faith relationship with God in His Word? How can a person be justified before such a righteous and holy God? This is the issue at work within the theology of the cross and especially within the doctrine of justification for Luther. He says "for he is at the same time both a sinner and a righteous man; a sinner in fact, but a righteous man by the sure imputation and promise of God that He will continue to deliver him from sin until He has completely cured him."²⁸ God does the work within the person, according to Luther, and the result of that working is a living faith that produces works. He is careful to encounter the teachings of works righteousness prevalent in that time.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 25, 260. Taken from Luther's lectures on Romans 4:7.

Within Luther's understanding of justification, there needs to be noted the manner in which he distinguishes two kinds of righteousness. He separates justification into active and passive righteousness which places the responsibility between the two depending upon the receptiveness of the individual. Concerning the concepts of passive and active righteousness he states that, "the fact that we declare His words righteous is His gift, and because of the same gift He Himself The passive and active justification of God and the faith or belief in Him are the same thing. For he regards us as righteous, that is, He justifies us."²⁹ Because of this work of God and the response on the part of the individual, there seems to be a concern for the person in how he/she is to be intentionally related to the call of God. This call being one to that of holiness and purity before God the loving Father and not the wrathful judge as he had believed and feared early in his life. Luther seemed to struggle with the whole issue of works righteousness and from this problem came much of what he wrote and taught from the letter to the Romans. He saw that Paul was having the same struggles that he was encountering. Luther divided works of the Law from works of faith. In the early chapters of Romans, he saw Paul dealing with this issue explicitly. He does not lessen the importance of works that came from a genuine faith, but he does stand with Paul in defending the faith against those who were caught in the web of deceptiveness of works righteousness and what he called works of the Law.

Luther does see that the role of the Law in the life of the believer reminds them of how far they have fallen from the cross and love of God. As Paul does in Romans, Luther seems to see the Law to serve the pedagogical role in the life of the believer, aiding them in staying on the path of righteousness before God. For Luther says that "the works of the Law are accomplished as a

²⁹ Ibid., 212 - From lecture on Romans 3:7

result of justification and righteousness.”³⁰ He makes a comparison with the works of the Law and the works of faith, he says,

The works of the Law are those, he says, which take place outside of faith and grace and are done at the urging of the Law But the works of faith, he says, are those which are done out of the spirit of liberty and solely for the love of God. And the latter cannot be accomplished except by those who have been justified by faith, to which justification the works of the Law add nothing.³¹

The works of the Law are futile in themselves because the individual is unable to fulfill the Law out of their own efforts. Luther saw that this was the direction that the Church was traveling and he knew it needed to turn around for God to become a part of the life of the individual. The Law served a purpose or function within God’s plan in that it was a tool for urging the believer to travel the right path, but it did not have a salvific purpose. The aid of the Law is an important in the justification of the individual because “. . . without the aid of the Law and its works, the righteousness of God, by which God justifies us, has been manifested, through the Gospel which is preached.”³² The Word of God or Scripture is the open door to the Law of God and how it is delivered and received is essential to the justification process.

Concerning the Law of God and how it functions in justification, there is a distinction that he makes with the Law of God in mind. The active participation of the person is important to this concept and he gives some distinctives on the “doers of the Law.” He states two ways or purposes served as doers of the Law, “First in this way: the doers of the Law will be justified means that through justification they will become, or be made, what they were not before, doers. Second, and in a better way, will be justified means that they will be looked upon and thought of as righteous.”³³ The whole idea of justification is the process by which one becomes righteous and

³⁰ Ibid., 25, 30. Reflections on Romans 3:20.

³¹ Ibid., 234. Romans 3:20.

³² Ibid., 30-31. Romans 3:21.

³³ Ibid., 25, 184. Taken from lecture on Romans 2:13.

holy. Luther saw justification as a process that was gradual and that the believer does not attain for righteousness or purity status within this life because of the fallen nature of the world and humanity. As a process, justification and more crucial to this argument, holiness can be lived but not fully achieved in the life. He states, “For God had not yet justified us, that is, He has not made us perfectly righteous or declared our righteousness perfect, but He had made a beginning in order that He might make us perfect.”³⁴ The individual must be willing to live their life according to God’s ultimate plan and open themselves to growth in the process of justification. In this point, there can be an argument, and Luther tends to agree, that for him sanctification is the same as the process of justification. The process of justification for the individual is a growing encounter of the gift of faith to that person and is a testimony to God’s mercy and grace for Luther. The center of the issue for justification is in the acceptance of the individual by God. Luther states, “. . . it is not a matter of him who works but of God who accepts his faith as righteousness. Therefore he is justified by the grace of God.”³⁵

The concept of propitiation is basic to the theology of the cross for Luther. Because it is not the work of the individual that merits them righteous, but the merits won by Christ’s work on the cross. He states that, “. . . as many as are justified, are not justified except freely, by His, God’s, grace, without merits or works.”³⁶ The work of Christ on the cross is essential to understanding what the purpose of all that God did and why. Luther states that, “. . . our place of propitiation is not won by our merits, but in His, Christ’s, blood, that is, in His suffering, whereby He made satisfaction and merited propitiation for those who believe in Him.”³⁷ There is no justification nor even redemption apart from the work of Christ and his propitiation through

³⁴ Ibid., 245. From Romans 3:21.

³⁵ Ibid., 35. From lecture on Romans 4:3.

³⁶ Ibid., 31. Romans 3:24.

³⁷ Ibid., 32. Romans 3:25.

the shedding of his blood on the cross. It is not an act of the individual, because of their sinful nature and tendency to be follow the ways of the flesh, but it is on account of the action and merits of Christ that the person is justified. Through this act, God is justified and reconciled.

“Alien” righteousness vs. “Proper” righteousness

On December 21, 1516, St. Thomas’ Day, Luther preached a sermon from the text of Psalm 19:1, in which he gave a more detailed exposition of his theology of the cross. Within this text he deals with the idea of the glory and work of God. In relation to this, the ones who seek God must be open to the alien work of God. He reflects that, “... they who deem themselves just and wise and think they are somebody are most violently hostile to this alien work, which is the cross of Christ and our Adam.”³⁸ With the concern of Luther and God’s alien work, he begins to draw distinctions between it and God’s proper work. He states that,

God’s alien work, therefore, is the suffering of Christ and sufferings in Christ, the crucifixion of the old man and the mortification of Adam. God’s proper work, however, is the resurrection of Christ, justification in the Spirit, and the vivification of the new man, as Rom. 4 [:25] says: Christ died for our sins and was raised for our justification. Thus, conformity with the image of the Son of God [cf. Rom. 8:29] includes both of these works.³⁹

The proper works of God are essential to understanding the cross because it focuses on the reason for the death and resurrection of Christ. The work of God in the life of the believer is a work that was accomplished through the cross of Christ. While looking at the proper and alien works of God, the mortification of the flesh or the old man or Adam is evident as well as the vivification of the new man as Luther points out. In understanding the work of God in the believer, one can see how God clearly becomes an intimate part of His creation. By the

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 51, 19.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

mortification of the old man, the person can see the true light of God's righteousness at work in their life. This is realized with the vivification of the new man. It is only through this process that one can truly see God. Luther says that, "Through the only-begotten Son and through the Gospel one learns to look directly into God's face. And when this happens, then everything in man dies; man must then confess that he is a blind and ignorant sinner who must forthwith appeal to Christ."⁴⁰ The important aspect to note here is that it is God's work that is the key element not the works of the individual. Until they realize that their salvation is beyond their own power they will never know God as redeemer. Luther notes that, "no man can be thoroughly humbled until he knows that his salvation is utterly beyond his own powers, devices, endeavors, will, and works, and depends entirely on the choice, will, and work of another, namely, God alone."⁴¹ The point at which an individual reaches that they have no doubt concerning the work of God, then they will draw close to God and thus can be saved according to Luther.⁴²

The only way by which alien righteousness can be achieved or acquired is through Christ. It is evident here that the closer one gets to God, the closer the death of everything in man becomes immanent. This great work and gift of God makes the individual aware of his/her own wretchedness and come to a point of confession and then profession. Luther then brings into the picture his own experience as a monk and reflects on this saying, "When a monk clearly realizes in his heart that an alien righteousness, the righteousness accorded us by grace for Christ's sake, must save him, he will ask: 'What am I to do now with my cowl, my monastic order, my rule?' Cowl and rule will be cast aside."⁴³ He sees those things that developed in his life now as dead. The formerly sacred areas of his or her life were now no longer important to who they were as a

⁴⁰ Ibid., 22, 157.

⁴¹ Ibid., 33. Career of the Reformer III. From the selection of *The Bondage of the Will*. 62.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 22. Taken from the sermons on the Gospel of St. John. 157-158

person. Christ and his work becomes the focal point. He says again that “His own righteousness and holiness, whatever has its origin in human power, all must die, be committed to the grave, and interred.”⁴⁴ There is no desire in the person that they will rely any longer on his own, but to that of Christ. This righteousness is founded in the grace and truth of Christ. The whole concept of alien righteousness for Luther is understood in terms of the righteousness that comes from outside the individual. The proper righteousness is that which can be seen in the person. If it is developed in the correct manner, aided by the alien righteousness of God, then it naturally flows from that as a result of the work of God. God has to take the initiative. Luther states that, “God does not want to redeem us through our own, but through external, righteousness and wisdom; not through one that comes from us and grows in us, but through one that comes to us from the outside; not through one that originates here on earth, but through one that comes from heaven.”⁴⁵

Predestination and Election

The Protestant Reformation period of the early sixteenth century brought to the surface many new and old doctrines. The issues were being addressed by the church as a whole but in particular opposition to the Catholic ruling church of the day. The doctrine of *predestination* was one of the old doctrines that came to the forefront as early as St. Augustine. The doctrine of predestination will be investigated within the context of Luther’s commentary to the *Epistle to the Romans* circa 1521. His lectures on this truly theological letter of St. Paul proved to be the final assurance of God’s graciousness toward humanity and this is somewhat reflected in the way that Luther interprets various passages concerning *predestination* and *election*.

Also, Luther brings out some assumptions in his treatise on the *Bondage of the Will* (1525). Luther considered this book to be his mega theological work. Within this work, Luther is

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 25. Lectures on Romans: Romans 1:1. 136.

in debate with Erasmus for the most part concerning his writing on the *Freedom of the Will*.

God's will is intimately linked to His works and how or when or why He chooses to do something for Luther. Caught up in this idea of God's will is the distinctives between *Deus absconditus* (God hidden) and *Deus revelatus* (God revealed). Knowing that God is gracious and just, there must be a reason for the reprobate in the world. Do they go to hell by God's hand or their own? God truly created everything necessary for His glory.

In his book the *Bondage of the Will*, Luther says concerning the importance of knowing God and why it necessitates all things that,

To lack this knowledge is really to be ignorant of God -- and salvation is notoriously incompatible with such ignorance. For if you hesitate to believe, or are too proud to acknowledge, that God foreknows and wills all things, not contingently, but necessarily and immutably, how can you believe, trust and rely on His promises? When he makes promises, you ought to be out of doubt that He knows, and can and will perform, what he promises; otherwise, you will be accounting Him neither true nor faithful, which is unbelief, and the height of irreverence, and a denial of the most high God!⁴⁶

God, within the whole scheme of the spiritual creative process, a knowledge of God is essential to understanding where one positioned in the design of all created existence. According to Luther, giving the responsibility to God for the redemption of those who are predestined seems to follow logically. Those who respond to God's work and calling are to be named as elect of God. Those who have heard the call and rejected it are the reprobate and are condemned to hell and the devil. The worst sin a believer can account to is to be neither true nor faithful to the God and His call. This, he says, is unbelief and is at the height of irreverence as well as a denial of God. Within the section on faith in the justice of God in His dealings with men, he ends the book with a note on God's foreknowledge and predestination saying,

For if we believe it to be true that God foreknows and foreordains all things; that He cannot be deceived or obstructed in His foreknowledge and predestination; and that nothing happens but at

⁴⁶ Dillenberger (ed.). Selection on the *Bondage of the Will*. 184.

His will (which reason itself is compelled to grant): then, on reason's own testimony, there can be no "free-will" in man, or angel, or in any creature.⁴⁷

It is evident with this statement that Luther tends to pull away the concept of free will and point more toward the essential providence of God found in the doctrine of predestination. If this be true, then he is promoting a deterministic view of God's providence.

The life of the person is determined by God, even as a Christian who is focused on God. Luther seems to believe that a person is either bound by Satan or by God. Free will is non-existent in the life of the believer. In the following paragraph, Luther elaborates on this point. He says that,

So, if we believe that Satan is the prince of this world, ever ensnaring and opposing the kingdom of Christ with all his strength, and that he does not let his prisoners go unless he is driven out by the power of the Divine Spirit, it is apparent that there can be no free-will.⁴⁸

With no free will, everything and everyone is determined by the works and will of God (even of Satan) according to Luther. Without free will, the believer is bound harshly to the mercy of both God and Satan almost set at a dualistic antithesis to one another. This could possibly be due to his condition of *Anfechtung* that he struggled with throughout his life, especially in the young Luther.

Luther believes that the beginning of the Christian life is to be found in forgiveness and justification. In understanding these two in relation to the Christian life, there must be a realization of predestination or election, as Luther more commonly refers to it. His doctrine is not an abstract concept, rather it is an expression of faith in the constancy and consistency of God. It is also an expression of his confidence that salvation is only from God and not from any works on the part of the individual. Simply, it is an expression of spiritual confidence in the fact of the faithfulness of God. Christ's righteousness is imputed to the Christian. Luther believed that a Christian is not elect because of faith, but they believe because they are elect.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Dillenberger (ed.). Selection on the *Bondage of the Will*. 203.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Luther does not deal in great detail with this doctrine of predestination in any of his works, but he does treat it in portions of Lectures on the *Epistle to the Romans*. Beginning in chapter one, he emphasizes the separateness of the elect people of God. He reflects on that which was promised beforehand by God and that it was not the result of human merits or wisdom but predestined by God alone for His glorification. He writes,

This is the greatest power and the proof of the Gospel, that it has the witness of the old Law and Prophets that it would be so in the future. For the Gospel proclaims only what prophecy has said it would proclaim, so that we may say that it has been ordained by God's previous decision to be so before it should happen, and thus God alone should receive the glory for this doctrine and not our own merits and endeavors, obviously because this Gospel was ordained before we existed.⁴⁹

The Gospel of God is a reflection of the true glory of God as seen through the eyes of the Law and the Prophets in the Old Testament and through the witness and fulfillment of Jesus Christ and his sufferings on the cross. God's holy and just grace is truly evident for Luther in this understanding. In the second part of verse two of chapter one, he reflects on predestination delivered by the prophets and their essential proof to the Gospel. He says that,

through the prophets the promise is given in time and in human speech. This is a wonderful proof of the grace of God, that above and beyond the eternal promises He gives the promise also in human words, not only in spoken words but also in written ones. All this has been fulfilled, it should in these words be apparent that it was His plan to act thus, so that we might recognize that the Christian religion is not the result of a blind accident or of a fate determined by stars, as many empty-headed people have arrogantly assumed, but that it was by God's definite plan and deliberate predetermination that it should turn out so.⁵⁰

When referring to God's timing in Romans 5:6, time is not of importance to God but He timed it right for the redemption of humanity to take place according to His purposes. Luther says that "When we were weak according to time, even though before God we were already righteous through His predestination. For in the predestination of God all things have already taken place,

⁴⁹ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 25. 145.

⁵⁰ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 25. 145.

even things which in our reality still lie in the future.”⁵¹ The hope revealed to humanity, especially to the Christian, is that they have the assurance that they are among the elect of God. All things, according to Luther, are predestined by God in perfect harmony with the time and space of humanity. God knows who everybody was, is, and will be as well as what they will be and do. Because the bondage of the will is so great for the Christian, predestination or a form of determinism, for Luther, seems to be the only alternative.

The eighth chapter of Romans gives the believer the definitive establishment of the doctrine of predestination for Luther. Especially, the general proof text seen by many as the decisive text for the doctrine of predestination being Romans 8:28. The verse reads that “We know that to those who love God, who according to His Purpose.” Luther writes,

Here we are shown that neither chance nor wonderfully strong resistance against so many evils impede our salvation. Indeed He saves us in this way and exposes His elect to as many rapacious forces as are mentioned here, all of which are striving to pull the elect down into damnation so that they might be lost, in order to show that He saves us not by our own merits, but purely by His own election and immutable will, in the very face of so many rapacious and terrifying adversaries who try in vain to harm us.⁵²

The elect will come against many attempts to pull them down to failure, but the life of the Christian believer is predestined by God that they may live in fullness of life with God as His chosen people.

The whole notion of the elect of God for Luther seems to be those who are following the life and are guided by the cross and the sufferings of Christ. This is evidenced, not through works righteousness as with those of the reigning Catholics of the time, but who live the life focusing not on the self-will controlled life but on the cross-of-God-controlled life. He believed that those who are elect were chosen to be so, this would seem to fulfill the fullness of the hidden image of God

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 296.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 371.

in humanity. There is nothing that will separate the elect from the love of God because according to Luther “He shows that we are saved by His immutable love. And thereby He gives approval not to our will but to His own unchanging and firm will of predestination.”⁵³ He suggests that all are under the “prudence of the flesh” and those who hate sin are already beyond sin and belong to the elect. It does not seem that Luther holds to a harsh double-predestination as John Calvin but he does consider that there are those who God gives voluntarily to remain in sin.⁵⁴ The person attempting to understand the doctrine of predestination for Martin Luther needs to above all understand the environment in which he lived. His condition of *Anfechtung* and his belief in the gracious loving God in his later life attributed to the development of the doctrine of predestination for Dr. Martin Luther and his followers.

Summary of Luther’s Thought

In summary, it can be seen that the *theologia crucis* or theology of the cross has developed over a period of years that were both challenging and rewarding for Luther. He grew very much in his faith over these years and it is evident in the writings that were presented in this paper. Luther influenced many groups of believers with the doctrine of the theology of the cross and in this doctrine set forth a reforming movement that has made a world wide impact even into today. Luther’s student Philip Melanchthon set the pace for those to follow such as the Pietists whose focus was on the inner work of the Spirit of God on the individual. It is evident that there were many influences on Luther’s idea of the holiness of God as opposed to the wrathful God. Those like Johannes Tauler, Thomas á Kempis, and the anonymous work *Theologia Deutsch*

⁵³ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 25. 371.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 376.

made a crucial impact on the subjectivity found within this particular portion of his theology.

Martin Luther made a definite contribution to the development of the wholeness of the Christian in relation to a loving, just and merciful God through the sufferings of Christ on the Cross of Calvary.

It can be noted that the theology of the cross is the definitive doctrinal work for Luther and develops at the core of his theology as a whole. The way to understand a God who is hidden there must be a vehicle through He can be revealed. the theology of the cross gives the believer the true way, that is through the death and resurrection of Christ. One must stand in the shadow of the cross in order to approach the hidden God face to face as Moses did at the burning bush in Exodus. The tension that exists between God revealed and God hidden is the crucial point in viewing the nature of why Christ in the form of earthly humanity and, more specifically, as a poor man. God wanted to be revealed at the lowest level because He knew that they would be the most open to the revelation of God through His Son.

Luther contributed much to the development of the doctrine of holiness. His understanding of the cross of Christ, and its importance to the life of the believer, gave himself a degree of freedom, especially in light of the spiritual state of affairs, under which he created much opposition. His state of *Anfechtung* or the deep distress of the soul, dictated much of the direction to which he traveled throughout his spiritual life. Luther seems to be spiritual in his approach and throughout his theological development of this doctrine he takes the most of the responsibility on God, but the essential choice is in the hands of the individual. There seems to be much truth in Luther's teaching that needs to be considered. As will be seen in later years, he attempts to put his holiness doctrine into practice by setting up a small group ministry. This concept would be realized until the coming of the Pietists of the seventeenth century. He had all of the theology for

the doctrine of true holiness for the individual, but failed carry it to the full completion. The Pietists not only began to develop his idea for small group, but they also carried his ideas on holiness to the next logical steps. Luther gave many things to the understanding of holiness, but the real connection is to be found in how he began to introduce this doctrine and creation within the Church as a whole that all people who are called out by God to be holy before His throne are to be come children of God, namely found in the Protestant Church.

Chapter 2

John Calvin, The Biblical Disciple

The doctrine of holiness for Calvin, to most achievement in followers of his teaching, is not developed adequately. He has been misinterpreted in light of this doctrine which takes away the significance that he shared for the cause of the Reformation with figures such as Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli. The definition that he gives for holiness is personal and focused on relationships, between God and man and man to man. He says in his sermon *The Character of the Faithful* that,

Holiness consisteth principally in obedience to God: that is, we must do no harm to our neighbors, but live chastely, devoting ourselves entirely to the service of God; we must attend strictly to prayer and supplication we must withdraw ourselves from the world, and not be given to vanity; we must lead a dissolute life, but live in humbleness and submission to the will of God: this is the holiness here spoken of.¹

In this particular passage from the sermon it can be noted that he has a real concern for the holiness of the individual and the understanding of that concept in relationship to the will of God. He sees that there must be an obedience to the will of God in order for the elect to achieve their full potential in their walk with God. It will be developed within this chapter the concept of holiness in light of the doctrine of sanctification within the context of his doctrines of predestination and election as well as his understanding of eschatology for the elect and reprobate. The first task is to establish the base for understanding Calvin within a historical sketch of his life.

¹ John Calvin. *The Mystery of Godliness; and Other Selected Sermons*. This was a selection from his sermon on *The Character of the Faithful*. 161.

A Brief Life Sketch of John Calvin

John Calvin, born July 10, 1509, was another character that was at the heart of the movement. Born and raised in Noyon, Picardy in France, he received much of his early training educationally in the best schools because of his Father's status and ambition. At the age of twelve, on May 19, 1521, he received the chaplaincy attached to the altar of La Gésine in the cathedral at Noyon, this gave him a regular income. He was, at the age of fourteen, in 1523, sent to Paris in order to begin training for the priesthood.

Following this training, he read works of Christian humanists, who contributed to the rise of the Reformation within the Church. He was a witness to the works of the Catholic Church and was growing tired of the authorities that tended to attempt theology at the expense of the laity. Between 1523 and 1533, there was no information that was crucial to knowing Calvin and his life. On November 1, 1533, his friend Nicholas Cop was given the rector position at the University. At that time, the waves of the Reformation of the Church were crashing through the strongholds of traditional Catholicism and Calvin was implicated in a rectoral address given on that day. A new phase of Calvin's life had begun and the religious world would never be the same. Now that Calvin had become a reformer, he began writing theological works that built the movement that is known today as Protestantism.

While in Basel, in 1535, Calvin was working on his most definitive work. In 1536, the first Protestant systematic theology was completed and published by Calvin called The Institutes of the Christian Religion. He later became involved in the political life of Geneva. A city he was reluctant to be a part of, but in the address he gave to the elders of the Church at Geneva in his home, as he lay dying, he exalted them and shared with them the fact that the church there would thrive under the power and leadership of God. He weakened further and on May 27, 1564, he

died. May 28, he was buried in an unmarked grave in the common cemetery in Geneva. This man was a true reformer and fought many battles with the Church and the Pagan enemies and heretics of the day. He died at the age of 55, but the legacy of John Calvin has stood tall and proud for the past four-hundred and thirty years alive in his theology and all the works that are available. The purpose of this study is to recapture a portion of Calvin's theology that has been under emphasized in the Church. The doctrine of mystical union of Christ with the believer.

The Emergence of the Doctrine of Mystical Union

Knowledge of God

Calvin viewed his theology of holiness, more precisely his doctrine of sanctification, in light of how humanity can be reconciled to God. The union of Christ and humanity seems to promote the only way through which they may achieve the highest goal for the soul to focus on God. He grounds much of his thought on the relationship of God to His creation. The knowledge of God, for Calvin, is the beginnings of the formation of that relationship. Once an individual comes to a recognition of the sinfulness of their life, then they will be open to the reception of God's mercy and grace to save them. Foundational to Calvin's doctrine of sanctification is his understanding of the importance of mystical union, that entails the willingness of the person to submit to God's redemptive grace.

In the Institutes of the Christian Religion, Calvin begins at creation. The relationship of the knowledge of God and humanity is important as a precursor to the reason for the mystical union to take place. For Calvin, it was not as much the freedom of the will, but a corruption of the nature. Through this creation event with the fall, there can be seen that at the root of the fall was disobedience on the part of the two participants. Calvin saw that obedience to the true knowledge of God is where reconciliation begins to take shape. He says that "not only faith,

perfect in every complete, but all right knowledge of God is born of obedience. And surely in this respect God has, by his singular providence, taken thought for mortals through all ages.”² The creation of the world and especially humanity occurred as the result of the spoken Word of a good and perfect God. Therefore, the creation itself, from its beginnings, was good. God was not acting against His nature as a good and perfect God to create an imperfect creation. Otherwise, if He would have created something as perfect and good as He was, it would also be a god.

Adam, by his mental abilities, had an open capacity to learn. The knowledge he would obtain from his experience and relationships would eventually effect the way in which he obeyed God. Calvin reflects on Adams corruption and says that:

Adam so corrupted himself that the infection spread from him to all his descendants. Christ himself, our heavenly judge, clearly enough proclaims that all men are born wicked and depraved when he says that “whatever is born of flesh is flesh” [John 3:6], and therefore the door of life is closed to all until they have been reborn [John 3:5].³

With this understanding, in the thought of Calvin, there can be noted the emergence of the knowledge of God the redeemer in the person of Christ. Adam as the first man and the seed of the corruption and disobedience that was born in creation gives Calvin a focal point to which address the source of the problem. The original falseness of humanity came through the emergence of sin in one man and through one man the redemption of humanity has taken place. For Calvin, original sin is hereditary. With the knowledge of God that humanity has received through natural encounters with God, such as the whole of creation and the Word of God, there is no excuse for the depravity present in the world, which points to the depravity of sin. Calvin states that, “Original sin, therefore, seems to be a heredity depravity and corruption of our nature, diffused into all parts of the soul, which first makes us liable to God’s wrath, then also brings

² Inst. I. 6. 2.

³ Inst. II. 1. 6.

forth in us those works which Scripture calls “works of the flesh” [Gal. 5:19].”⁴ Depravity is at the center of concern for Calvin. He viewed the depravity of sinful humanity as a true obstacle to the sanctified life. The yielded life is what becomes crucial to bring a person closer to a union with Christ. The works of the flesh are found within the diffused parts of the soul at a point which makes the person liable to God’s wrath. Calvin understands not only that sinful desires and actions are hereditary, but also the holiness of the parents are influenced upon their children. The environment contributes to the holiness of the individual. Paul wrote in his letters that the body has many parts and they all work together to form a unified body. So, it is with the work within the life of the individual. It can be passed down through influences and enhancements in environment.

Calvin draws some distinctions that guides his thinking on sanctification as a work of grace. The irresistible grace of the Holy Spirit comes to a person and he/she has to follow. This becomes the connection to God because this grace comes supernaturally. He says that, “Now, it is a special blessing of God’s people that they partake in some degree of their parents holiness. This does not gainsay the fact that the universal curse of the human race preceded. For guilt is of nature, but sanctification of supernatural graces.”⁵ At least to a degree, the work of sanctification is placed on the shoulders of the individual. The person begins forming what influences them at an early age. Calvin viewed Christ the Savior as one who comes to save and, being the only way to the Father, should be given full power over the person. When looking at the knowledge of God in relation to God as Redeemer, there comes to the forefront a true revelation of God’s truth in opposition to the self centered nature that is life according to the flesh. The Spirit suffers as a result of this unwillful submission. The knowledge of God assists the believer in stripping them of

⁴ Inst. II. 1. 8.

⁵ Inst. II. 1. 7.

confidence and ability and gives the person a sense of the full dependence on God. Therefore, the relationship becomes that of a deeper covenant between God and man.

The confidence that is within the person, many times, causes the truth of God to become trivial in their thoughts concerning Christ at which point their walk suffers. When the person develops a confidence in his or her own abilities and believes the need for their own achievement is above the things of God, then the activity of the individual becomes the work of the flesh. But, God's truth has as its greatest element power to stir up the vain confidence of the flesh. Calvin states that "[God's truth] it requires the kind of knowledge that will strip us of all confidence in our own ability, deprives us of all confidence in our own ability, deprive us all occasion for boasting, and lead us to submission."⁶ Therefore, the power of God as Redeemer has the ability to disarm the confidence of the flesh and make it into something positive for the work of God. Christ on the Cross of Calvary and the sacrifice he made for the elect is important in realizing the role of the spirit of the individual in the union that takes place with God. God Himself has taken the initiative and the believer [elect] should make the decision whether or not to receive the grace and blessing given.

The work of Christ on the cross is of crucial importance to Calvin. This concept plays a role that is at the center of how a person should receive the grace of God, beginning in book three of the Institutes. The importance of than event as the turning point in salvation history of God and the realization of how it unfolded was something that amazed Calvin. He reflects in summary,

In short, since neither as God alone could feel death, nor as man alone could he overcome it, he coupled human nature with divine that to atone for sin he might submit the weakness of one to death; and that wrestling with death by the power of the other nature, he might win victory for us.⁷

⁶ Inst. II. 1. 2.

⁷ Inst. II 12. 3.

The understanding of the purpose for the death of Christ on the cross has been one of debate for centuries. It seems that Calvin gives an intriguing summary to the telling testimony of Christ and the cross. Even the paradox of Christ and the cross can be seen as the overwhelming grace of the love of God toward the life of the individual in that God's love in sending Christ precedes our reconciliation. Through this pivotal event, one may note the real paradox of life emerging out of death. A person must die before he or she can live as Jesus had taught and modeled by his life and death. Jesus the Christ took upon himself the nature of the common working peasant man and lived the life of a servant. Calvin says that "Ungrudgingly he took our nature upon himself to impart to us what was his, and to become both Son of God and Son of Man in common with us."⁸ Without reservation, Christ took the sins and nature of the individuals and carried onto the cross and they were nailed to him with every stroke of the mallet. Calvin elaborates further concerning Christ the redeemer. "Since our iniquities, like a cloud cast between us and him, had completely estranged us from the Kingdom of Heaven [cf. Isaiah 59:2], no man, unless he belonged to God, could serve as the intermediary to restore peace."⁹ In other words, no one except God Himself in the form of Jesus Christ the Son of God could have possibly made such a sacrifice that reconcile God to His people once again.

The work and power of the Holy Spirit is important to Calvin in the process of mystical union or sanctification. The mind is the portion of the person that he believes needs to be altered for true repentance to occur. The illumination of the mind is the light that shines on the heart and spirit. The true encounter with the Holy Spirit brings about an illumination of the mind and therefore confronts the individual with the necessary tools for change. When dealing with the spiritual concerns of the individual, it is understood by Calvin, that all parts of the soul are

⁸ Inst. II. 12. 2.

⁹ Inst. II. 12. 1.

possessed by sin in one form or another. He states that, “I have said that all parts of the soul were possessed by sin after Adam deserted the fountain of righteousness. For not only did a lower appetite reduce him, but unspeakable impiety occupies the very citadel of his mind, and pride penetrate to the depths of his heart.”¹⁰ Original sin, for Calvin, was formed in Adam when he deserted God’s prevision and care. This led to the whole person and soul of Adam to be polluted with the cruel stench of sin. “It therefore remains for us to understand that the way to the kingdom of God is open only to him whose mind has been made new by illumination of the Holy Spirit.”¹¹ This not only effected Adam and Eve, but their descendants as well. Cain murdered Abel and the descendants that followed carried their sinful nature and tendencies of the flesh with them. With Christ, or the second Adam as Paul refers to him, God had to have come in the form of earthly man in order for the acceptance of the gift to be maintained and realized. The Holy Spirit became the instrument of grace for God to the individual as well as the pedagogue or teacher.

Calvin addresses an issue of significance to the understanding of God the Redeemer. The concern for the real Jesus and, more crucial, Christ seems to be an issue of lower importance to Calvin’s Christology and Doctrine of God. The importance for Calvin is not whether the Christ was real, but whether the divinity and humanity was in harmony and working together for a salvific purpose. He reflects that,

Surely God does not have blood, does not suffer, cannot be touched with hands. But since Christ, who was true God and also true man, was crucified and shed his blood for us, the things that he carried out in his human nature are transferred improperly, although not without reason, to his divinity.¹²

¹⁰ Inst. II 1. 9.

¹¹ Inst. II. 2. 20.

¹² Inst. II. 14. 2.

He is showing here the intimate relationship that is evident between the two nature of Christ in his humanity and divinity. For Calvin, both natures of Christ act in perfect harmony and functions as one Person. If this was not true, then Christ would have been warring violently within himself and the truth within him would be dimly light, as in the human nature. Therefore, with this harmony in perfect oneness, Christ becomes the Mediator between God and man. Sharing in both natures only he is worthy and able to make the union possible. God cannot look upon the evil and unrighteousness of the nature of humanity and the human race cannot look into the face of God, so Christ becomes that Mediator, for Calvin. He says, concerning God's desire to love his people despite of the depraved condition of their soul,

For God who is the highest righteousness, cannot love the unrighteousness that he seems in us all. All of us, therefore, have in ourselves something deserving of God's hatred. With regard to our corrupt nature and the wicked life that follows it, all of us surely displease God, are guilty in his sight, and are born to the damnation of hell. But because the Lord wills not to lose what is his in us, out of his own kindness he still finds something to love.¹³

God looks deep into the person in order to love and receive them unto Himself as holy children. The doctrine of Mystical Union in light of the knowledge of God as redeemer opens that concept for the person to receive that grace available from God. In order for the believer to be able to look into the "face of God," he or she must be willing to submit to the fact that the sinfulness of their nature is something the Lord hates. But because of His love for them, He gives grace to them through His Son. This love is pure and freely given by Him despite of the unworthiness of the recipient. The deserving aims of the life eternally for all persons is the damnation of hell, but God, through His Son, reached into the pit of hell and pulled up with the arm of love and mercy of loving God and saved the elect of God for eternal salvation and happiness. He did this in order for the elect to know that they are chosen by God as His child to be holy in His sight. Thus Calvin states that,

¹³ Inst. II. 16. 3.

Thus he is moved by pure and freely given love of us to receive us into grace. Since there is a perpetual and irreconcilable disagreement between righteousness and unrighteousness, so long as we remain sinners he cannot receive us completely. Therefore, to take away all cause for enmity and to reconcile us utterly to himself, he wipes out all evil in us by the expiation set forth in the death of Christ, that we, who were previously unclean and impure, may show ourselves righteous and holy in his sight.¹⁴

Christ, through his act of obedience to the Father wipes out all evil in us by the expiation centered upon his death. As the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 12:1 that you should “offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God” For Calvin, this would mean that Christ’s work wipes away the evil within the person in order for the sacrifice of the body and soul to take place. The selfish tendency is for the individual to attempt righteousness in his or her own power or in the flesh. This leads to nothing more than vain uncleanness, and God turns His face away from such hypocrisy. But through the grace of God and the merits of Christ this work can be achieved. Calvin says that “inasmuch as Christ’s merit depends upon God’s grace alone, which has ordained this manner of salvation for us, it is just as properly opposed to all human righteousness as God’s grace is.”¹⁵ The works righteousness present in the Church seems encourage Calvin in his pursuit of truth in the knowledge of God

In the following section, the whole doctrine of mystical union began to unfold and take shape. In books three and four of his Institutes, Calvin begins to explain the soteriological aspects of the doctrine, including its relation to Eschatology. Within the context of mystical union proper, there is the element found in Calvin’s doctrine of predestination and election. The manner in which this doctrine seems to flow is more temporal. The knowledge of God is the past or the provision of God for humanity. The way that God’s grace is received or the mystical union being the present reality of that provision and hope of the eternity and future, that is the capstone and

¹⁴ Inst. II. 16. 3.

¹⁵ Inst. II 17. 1.

future reality of the Christian life for Calvin. Mystical union proper will be dealt with in the following section as his Theology begins to unfold further.

Mystical Union Proper: How the Grace of Christ is Received

The doctrine of mystical union in the writings of John Calvin become evidently clear in the last two books of the Institutes. As in the Reformers, Calvin found that scripture was the basis for all theological thought. Scripture, for him, was the vehicle through which God spoke to His creation. When thinking about the union of Christ and the believer, one must look at not only the eternal consequences or rewards of this act, but also the present reality and how it will effect the person today. The whole umbrella under which the concept of union rests is that of holiness. The doctrine of Holiness for Calvin is at the center of his thought. He even positions the study of this union, properly speaking, in the center of his systematic work The Institutes of the Christian Religion. The importance of this is that it forms the context for understanding of Justification by grace through faith.

In the Institutes, books one and two, he deals with the idea of Knowledge of God as creator and redeemer. This portion shows the significance of the events and understandings in the thoughts leading to conversion and sanctification. This particular section presents the basics of what happens at the point of reception of the Grace of Christ and how that effects the growth and ministry of the individual.

At this point, there needs to be noted the concern of Calvin with the function of the law in his concept of sanctification. He views the law in terms of three uses of the law, as opposed to Luther's two uses. The law, for Calvin, serves as a guide not only for the potential believer or elect, but for the elect as believer. The law serves a purpose of sanctifying power as used by the

Holy Spirit. He believed that the three uses of the moral law were given for the purpose of convicting, establishing fear of punishment, and to admonish believers. He stated that the law, “warns, informs, convicts and lastly condemns, every man of his own righteousness. For man, blinded and drunk with self-love, must be compelled to know and to confess his own feebleness and impurity.”¹⁶ The moral law, for Calvin, is a mirror for the depravity of man. Through the law, humanity is able to see their sinfulness before conversion and be guided into the sanctified life following conversion by revealing their unworthiness in relation to the power of God.

In reference to the *nuda lex*, or bare law, it holds a strict maintenance to the letter which cannot be truly achieved apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. This is the popular view of most Protestants according to I. John Hesselink in his book Calvin’s Concept of the Law. He states that “This law requires perfection; where that is lacking, it curses, condemns, and kills. It demands what only the Gospel can give.”¹⁷ This civil use of the law is used to guide the person so that they may know right and wrong in the world. The evangelical use of the law is used to convict and lead a person to redemption. In this use of the law, there is an element of condemnation to those who receive it apart from the Gospel.

The Gospel plays a crucial role in the way that the law functions within the life of the elect. It is what convicts within the law as it is presented through Christ and the Holy Spirit. The law emerges into the life of the person with the Gospel. Without the Gospel, Calvin’s concepts of law are unimportant to the work of God. Both law and Gospel are different manifestations leading to the same goal. When looking at the comparison, he saw that the law of the Old Testament was a precursor to the Gospel. As a corollary, the Gospel becomes the fulfillment of the promises of

¹⁶ Calvin. *Institutes*. II.7.6.

¹⁷ I. John Hesselink. *Calvin’s Concept of the Law*. 188.

the law and thus becomes a crucial element in the Christian's life of sanctification. Calvin states that,

I recognize of course that since Paul calls the Gospel 'the doctrine of Faith' all those promises of free remission of sins which commonly occur in the law, whereby God reconciles men to himself, are counted as parts of it. For he contrasts faith with the terrors that would trouble and vex the conscience if salvation were to be sought in works.¹⁸

Because of this third use of the law, it is apparent that works are not the basis of the righteousness and salvation of the individual. There are two basic things concerning the law that the Gospel affects in the individual. Calvin saw that the Gospel makes the individual and his or her gifts acceptable to God and it provides freedom from the curse of the law. The point that can be made for the function in the life of the individual of both law and Gospel is that the law gives God's ordinances and commands, then the Gospel prepares the person to be guided into the presence of God as well as giving freedom to the elect by the fulfillment of the promises and the reception of hope.

Calvin's concern for true holiness was remarkable in that he was searching the heart and mind of Christ. He believed, despite of his political and social involvements, that the Christian who was truly elect would not absorb themselves in ways and means of the world, but would work within that context as an example of true holiness. In his sermon on "The character of the Faithful" Calvin says,

Let us therefore endeavor to govern ourselves in such a manner that the world may see there is true holiness in us: let us implore God to separate us from all the pollutions of this world, that we may be brought up in His house, and governed by His Holy Spirit.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Inst.* II.9.2.

¹⁹ Calvin, John *The Mystery of Godliness: and Other Selected sermons.* 166.

The Holy Spirit is an essential element to the doctrine of mystical union. The spirit makes the individual aware of their condition and their relation to God. Through that work of the Holy Spirit, obedience to God becomes an affect and faith from obedience is the result. This binds the believer to the work of Christ. Calvin asks that the elect separate themselves from the pollutions of the world in order to raised up in the house of God. The Spirit works mightily in the actions of the person to accomplish this goal.

The state of humanity was incomplete before the sacrifice of Christ. Sanctification was a full reality until Christ atoned for the sins of the elect. He ways that, “We have in his death the complete fulfillment of salvation, for through it we are reconciled to God, his righteous judgment is satisfied, the curse is removed, and the penalty paid in full.”²⁰ How does a person react to this statement as humans and His creation? He shows that through the holy Christian life, a person is able to work toward the final goal that is eternal joy with the Father. Mystical Union is the connection that draws man and God into one unified body, but holiness is the way by which this is accomplished. He says that, “When we hear any mention of our mystical union with Christ, we should remember that holiness is the channel to it”.²¹ This not achieved by our own merit, but is received as a gift from God. Calvin goes on to say, “Holiness is not a merit by which we can attain communion with God, but a gift of Christ, which enables us to cling to him, and to follow him.”²² Holiness that Calvin speaks of here is that which is inclusive of the whole sacrifice of life and self. This would mean a total commitment to the risen Savior through the power and work of the Holy Spirit.

²⁰ *Inst.* II. 16. 13.

²¹ Calvin, John. *Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life*. 15.

²² *Ibid.*

Through this work of God's grace, the elect become partakers in the divine promises given to the Israelites from the beginning. He says that, "we are called to be partakers of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be made one with Him to dwell in Him, and He in us, and that we be joined together by an inseparable bond."²³ That bond he calls faith is the union that comes from the work of the grace of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. The external evidence of the union secures the bond of Christ and the believer as well as the believer and other believers. As long as Christ is unable to be intimately unified with the believer they are left to their own workings of the flesh which lead down the path away from God. For the elect, this is not an option because they have been chosen and the sacrifice was made for them. Apart from the sacrifice of Christ the salvation of humanity is dead to God. Calvin urges that, "we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us."²⁴

The whole concept of mystical union infers a union that is beyond that of the marriage of man and wife. Even though, Calvin seems to use this analogy to describe it. Because the marriage of man and wife is a bond made of the flesh, but wedlock of the Savior is made as one of the Spirit. He states that,

This union alone ensures that, as far as we are concerned, he has not unprofitably come with the name of Savior. The same purpose is served by that sacred wedlock through which we are made flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone [Eph. 5:30], and thus one with him. But he unites himself to us by the Spirit alone. By the grace and power of the same Spirit we are made his members, to keep us under himself and in turn to possess him.²⁵

As he unites himself to us and us to him, there is an intimacy formed by the union that is the direct function of the Spirit. "The Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to

²³ Calvin, John. *The Mystery of Godliness: and Other Selected sermons*. p. 167.

²⁴ Inst. III. 1. 1.

²⁵ Inst. III. 1. 3.

himself.”²⁶ But later he goes on to say concerning faith that “faith is the principal work of the holy Spirit.”²⁷ This places at the forefront for Calvin the Reformation doctrine of Justification by grace through faith alone. Realizing that the bond between Christ and the believer is a work of The Holy Spirit through faith and not by the works of the Law is an understanding that Paul expressed in several of his letters, especially Galatians and Romans. Calvin saw that the faith of the believer was crucial between more essential was the faithfulness of Christ. He reflects that,

We have said that perfect salvation is found in the person of Christ. Accordingly, that we may become partakers of it “he baptizes us in the Holy Spirit and fire” [Luke 3:16], bringing us into the light of faith in his gospel and so regenerating us that we become new creatures [cf. II Cor. 5:17]; and he consecrates us, purged of worldly uncleanness, as temples holy to God [cf. I Cor 3:16-17, 6:19; II Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21]²⁸

Through faith, the regenerating process of the individual is something being worked out in the individual’s life.

Calvin’s understanding of salvation and within that work, his discussion of faith, repentance, and regeneration, become essential for experiencing union with Christ. In his work Instruction in Faith, Calvin writes concerning repentance, “For repentance means conversion, turning over to, whereby, having left the perversity of this world, we return to and in the way of the Lord.”²⁹ When the person realizes their status with God, repentance becomes inevitable. This can’t be understood in terms of a complete turning from past life and commitments. It is a response on the part of the elect to take their rightful position among the chosen. The effect of repentance is a striving toward a life of regeneration or the process of a development in holy living until death. Calvin writes that, “For repentance means conversion, turning over to, whereby, having left the perversity of this world, we return to and in the way of the Lord.”³⁰

²⁶ Inst. III. 1. 1.

²⁷ Inst. III. 1. 4.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Inst. III. 4. 4.

³⁰ Calvin, John. *Instructions in Faith* (1537). p. 44.

The integrity of the spirit of the individual can be restored as a result of this regeneration process. The point that needs to be noted is that the flesh found in the inborn corruption is destroyed and the spirit is surfaced to life as it strives for the closer walk with Christ. The interesting point is that the process of which the person is involved is a uniting and strengthening event with the work of the Holy Spirit. Calvin notes,

let us come and submit ourselves to Him who is appointed our head; knowing there is no other way for us to be kept in obedience to God, and to live according to His will, only to be united to our Lord Jesus Christ: for then are we strengthened by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost which is the fountain of all holiness, of all righteousness, and of all perfection.³¹

He makes this appeal to the depraved world that is even the elect. This is the call to holiness.

Regeneration is a part of this process. The process of regeneration is a lifelong one that continues until death. The concern of Calvin is that “since this regeneration is never accomplished as long as we are in the prison of this mortal body, it is necessary that the cure of repentance continues until we die.”³² So, in the life of the faithful elect, there is a striving toward the end which is glorification at death.

In order to understand what is meant by the elect of God, there must be a clarification of terms. Calvin looks at predestination and election as interchanging related terms. These terms are distinctive in their meaning for both the elect as well as the reprobate. He defines them by stating,

For, the seed of the word of God takes root and brings forth fruit only in those whom the Lord, by his eternal election, has predestined to be children and heirs of the heavenly kingdom. To all others (who by the same counsel of God are rejected before the foundation of the world) the clear and evident preaching of truth can be nothing but an odor of death unto death.³³

He presents a harsh look at the doctrine of the providence of God. If God is perfectly good and just, then why would He create a portion of humanity that was destined from the start to the damnation of hell? It makes a point of emphasizing the good by the presence of the evil in the

³¹ Calvin, John. *The Mystery of Godliness: and Other Selected Sermons*. 167.

³² Calvin, John. *Instructions in Faith (1537)*. 44.

³³ *Ibid.*, 38

world. This opens the philosophical question of the problem of evil and it does not seem that Calvin is prepared to address this issue. What happens to those who are to be reprobate? Do they have an opportunity at salvation? This will be dealt with in the next section on eschatology.

Calvin defines holiness in terms of the dying of the flesh and the life of the spirit. Within this understanding, as the elect draw closer to Christ in the union, this concept of holiness becomes more of a reality. He says that, “When we hear mention of our union with God, let us remember that holiness must be its bond; not because we come into communion with him by virtue of our holiness! Rather, we ought first to cleave unto him so that, infused with his holiness, we may follow whither he calls.”³⁴ The mortification of the flesh and the vivification of the spirit gives the occasion for the call of Jesus to a life of self denial. Calvin notes that there is a distinction that reveals the separate conditions of the soul. He defines the mortification of the flesh as the “sorrow of soul and dread conceived from the recognition of sin and the awareness of divine judgment.”³⁵ In other words, when one recognizes the sin present within their soul, he or she realizes their unworthiness in the presence of a perfectly good and just God. The next and more positive effects of regeneration is the vivification of the spirit. Calvin defines this act of the Holy Spirit as “the consolation that arises out of faith. When a man is laid low by the consciousness of sin and stricken by the fear of God, and afterwards looks to the goodness of God -- to his mercy, grace, salvation, which is through Christ.”³⁶ The total commitment to the goodness and mercy of God and a recognition of this condition is at the heart of this state.

As a clear understanding of holiness in terms of its foundational portions, one must look at the concept of faith. What is true faith as Calvin defines it? Faith is a “firm and solid confidence of

³⁴ *Institutes*. III.6.2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, III.3.3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

the heart, by means of which we rest surely in the mercy of God which is promised to us through the Gospel.”³⁷ The idea of faith for Calvin is found within the context of hope and love of God. Through the special love shared between lovers of God, a relational faith becomes the bond. Holiness is to be looked upon as the covering for all of the doctrines encompassing it. He writes concerning faith, “As faith is not without hope, yet faith and hope are different things, so repentance and faith, although they are held together by a permanent bond, require to be joined rather than confused.”³⁸

The bond that is evident in the relationship between the basic elements of holiness are, it appears, molded into the same picture of an understanding of God’s mercy and just actions with the foundations rooted in love. The great anticipation that the heart and soul of the elect person feels is indescribable closeness to the loving embrace of the Father in heaven. For the salvation that the person awaits for is to be found far removed from them, but when it is realized, then one is able to reap the benefits of the grace of God in that occasion. He notes that, “For we await salvation from him not because he appears to us afar off, but because he makes us, engrafted into his body, participants not only in all his benefits but also in himself.”³⁹ The whole analogy of “engrafting” the believer into the body of Christ is a deeper reflection of the relationship that is shared between Christ and the individual. Calvin relates that, “Christ, when he illumines us into faith by the power of his Spirit, at the same time so engrafts us into his body that we become partakers of every good.”⁴⁰ The elect believer becomes heir with Jesus and therefore bound to the security of the life in Christ and he in them through the power of the Holy Spirit.

³⁷ John Calvin. *Instructions in Faith* (1537). 40.

³⁸ *Institutes*. III.3.5.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, III.2.24.

⁴⁰ *Institutes*. III.2.35.

Eschatology: Future Hope

The understanding of eschatology as found within theological history is truly astounding. It is woven throughout Christian thought and usually stands as key to realizing God's ultimate plan for humanity. Throughout the centuries, eschatology has played a crucial role, but with many thinkers it was more deliberate than in others. The study of the "Last Things" or "End Times" is the study concerning the hope that rests within the whole of all humanity. When understanding the historical and theological flow of thought, this particular vein of thought becomes truly anchored in how humanity views God, or in many ancient pagan cultures, a god.

The connection that should be drawn between eschatology and Calvin's doctrine of holiness is that a hope of the eternity of a life with God is assured. Eschatology, for Calvin, plays a key role in understanding the logical result of a life following the union with Christ. Within this portion of Calvin's doctrine of holiness and sanctification, one should not that salvation and the works of God extend through time and one's reception of the grace of God needs to be viewed in light of his concept of eschatology.

Hope is central to aiming toward the goal that has been set for us to endeavor. Rooted in that hope, for the Christian, according to the Reformer John Calvin, is faith. Calvin does a very detailed exegetical study of Scripture concerning the whole doctrine of eschatology. Even though he does not dedicate any one book or section to the study of eschatology, it appears that he has woven his understanding of the *Last Things* throughout the whole of his work, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* as well as over half of his commentaries on the books of the Bible of which he has written on all except the book of *Revelation*. So, even though it is not explicitly expressed, as other doctrines such "justification" and "regeneration," eschatology seems to take a central role in Calvin's theology.

Calvin's eschatology will be separated into three major areas of focus: *Hope, Immortality of the Soul, and Final Resurrection*. This basic structure is based on the format of Heinrich Quistorp's book, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, from which it will be noted that some helpful quotes from Quistorp's study of Calvin be used. Calvin gives a great hope to the elect and great condemnation to the reprobate. His exposition of Scripture truly needs to be considered for a working understanding of how he sees Christ in relation to God and humanity as a whole. In this line of thought we must view Calvin's eschatology as Christology. Heinrich Quistorp says that,

... the centering of the hope in the communion of Christ, the emphasis on the second coming as the decisive eschatological event, the stress on the saving significance of judgment as the final salvation of the elect; hence the interpretation of the interval after death as pointing to the general resurrection and the consummation of the divine society in Christ. Thus Calvin's eschatology is essentially Christology.⁴¹

Through this doctrine of eschatology, the understanding of Christ and the purpose concerning his Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, and Second Coming come more into focus and may be considered more seriously.

Hope

When looking at eschatology for John Calvin, the first item to be considered should be that of *HOPE*. Hope seems to be rooted in most eschatological thought, but for Calvin it is based on the understanding he has of the Word of God and faith. His notion of hope should be considered in coordination with that of Mystical Union because of its reliability on the spiritual condition of the elect. This hope is to be found within Scripture and to have as its companion the faith of the elect. Quistorp says,

His word is the Word of the Gospel. Hope flows from faith in this joyful message, for from it radiates the goal of our hope, which is eternal glory. But the sum of the heart of the gospel shines upon us in Christ. He Himself is our hope. It lives through Him, through the expectation of His future advent, and is therefore wholly related to the word which bears witness to Him.⁴²

⁴¹ Heinrich Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, 192.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 16.

Through this hope, faith is encouraged and renewed in the person of the believer. Faith is that which flows from hope because hope feeds faith and therefore strengthens and refreshes it throughout the life of the believer and their relationship to Christ. Calvin points out concerning the relation between hope and faith that,

Hope strengthens faith, that it may not waver in God's promises, or begin to doubt concerning their truth. Hope refreshes faith, that it may not become weary. It sustains faith to the final goal, that it may not fail in midcourse, or even at the starting gate. In short, by unremitting renewing and restoring, it invigorates faith again and again with perseverance.⁴³

The importance of hope is evident to Calvin because it awaits the time when the truth of God shall be fully manifested. Calvin says further that "hope is nothing else than the expectation of those things which faith has believed to have been truly promised by God."⁴⁴ The things that faith has believed in is based in the truth of God found within His Word which was incarnated in Christ. What can be seen as genuine to Calvin's Christian eschatology is that he does not speak of the ultimate in general terms but in obedience to the Word of God, it bears witness to Christ's return which is that event hoped for through faith. In this hope, the Christian must then despise but live out the earthly life in expectation of the future life to come. Calvin says,

... it is for God to determine what best conduces to his glory. Therefore, if it befits us to live and die to the Lord, let us leave to his decision the hour of our death and life. but in such a way that we may both burn with the zeal for death and be constant in meditation. But in comparison with the immortality to come, let us despise this life and long to renounce it, on account of bondage of sin, whenever it shall please the Lord.⁴⁵

Hope within this ideal of life for a Christian has a sense of striving for the future mark. He continues,

To be sure, I agree; and so I maintain that we must have regard for the immortality to come, where a firm condition will be ours which nowhere appears on earth. For Paul very well teaches

⁴³ Calvin. Institutes of the Christian Religion. III.2.42

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Calvin. Institutes of the Christian Religion. III.9.4

that believers eagerly hasten to death not because they want to be unclothed but because they long to be more fully clothed [II Cor. 5:2-3].⁴⁶

As a reaction to the earthly persecutions of the day, Calvin focuses a little more within the overall vein of hope and the future life. He says concerning endurance of the Christian,

-- if, moreover, believers are troubled by the wickedness of these men, bear their arrogant insults, are robbed through their greed, or harried by any other sort or inordinate desire on their part-- they will without difficulty bear up under such evils also. For before their eyes will be that day when the Lord will receive his faithful people into the peace of His Kingdom, "will wipe away every tear from their eyes" [Rev. 7:17; cf. Isaiah 25:8], will clothe them with "a robe of glory and rejoicing" [Ecclus. 6:31 EV], will feed them with the unspeakable sweetness of his delights, will elevate them to his sublime fellowship -- in fine, will deign to make them sharers in his happiness.⁴⁷

Quistorp reflects on this whole idea that Calvin introduces concerning his *meditatio vitae futurae* or *meditations on future life*. He writes,

..., *meditatio vitae futurae* is for Calvin nothing other than hopeful faith itself, which directs its confidence to the Christ of God who has brought us eternal life and will at some future date disclose its full glory. The man who stands firm in the *meditatio futurae vitae* lives, here in this world already the life of eternity in proportion as he dies to the life of earth.⁴⁸

Calvin stands firm in his belief that a large part of hope for the Christian is the future incorruptibility of both body and soul. Through the consolation given by God in the work of Christ on the cross, the believer has security in one's faith because God is faithful and just. He says that "since for honorable natures to suffer disgrace is harsher than a hundred deaths, Paul specifically warns us we shall suffer not only persecutions but also reproaches because we hope in the living God [1 Tim. 4:10]."⁴⁹ Because the believer hopes in the living God, regardless of what may come their way, that particular hope is bound in what is revealed in the eternal hope for the body and soul. Calvin believed that both are to become incorruptible. Because of this belief, he

⁴⁶ Ibid.; III.9.5

⁴⁷ Ibid.; III.9.6

⁴⁸ Heinrich Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, p. 49

⁴⁹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III.8.8

says that, “Ever since both our souls and bodies were destined for heavenly incorruption and an unfading pure and uncorrupted until the Day of the Lord [1 Thess. 5:23; cf. Phil. 1:10].⁵⁰

The hope that the believer has for Calvin is found within the belief that whatever may come against them, God is truth and because of Christ’s sufferings and atonement, they will, in the end, finish victorious. He says that,

Therefore, the apostle teaches that God has destined all his children to the end that they be conformed to Christ [Rom. 8:29]. Hence also in harsh and difficult conditions, regarded as adverse and evil, a great comfort comes to us: we share Christ’s sufferings in order that as he has passed from a labyrinth of all evils into heavenly glory, we may in like manner be led through various tribulations to the same glory [Acts 14:22].⁵¹

The glory to which humanity seeks is centered in the hope that finds its manifestation in faith of the believer in the living God. The whole concept of hope and the idea of eschatology is noted by Calvin as being central for the believer. The knowledge that God is in control and knows what is best for the elect believer rings true here and is carried to the surface for Calvin’s line of thinking.

He states that,

Whatever kind of tribulation presses upon us, we must ever look to this end: to accustom ourselves to contempt for the present life and to be aroused thereby to meditate upon the future life. For since God knows best how much we are inclined by nature to a brutish love of this world, he uses the fittest means to draw us back and to shake off sluggishness, lest we cleave too tenaciously to that love.⁵²

Our hope, as Christians, is blinded by the fact of the sluggishness of our own nature which in and of itself can be classified as sin. This sluggishness tends to leave the Christian with a very distorted view of God as well as a confused hope that seems to turn into despair for the believer. Hope is crucial for understanding Calvin’s doctrine of eschatology and is the life force within the believer that keeps the *Parousia* or Second Coming of Christ alive for them. So, in relating the doctrine of eschatology to the whole notion of Christology, it must be understood that the knowledge of the

⁵⁰ Ibid. III.6.3

⁵¹ Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion. III.8.1

⁵² Ibid., III.9.1

Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, and Second Coming of Jesus Christ is rooted in the hope found within the Christian that is evidenced in faith and is lived out throughout the life of the individual Christian. When Jesus ascended into the heavens, he told the people to be watchful for the day when he will return in all His glory. This is the hope that is expressed in Calvin. The next two issues that are parts of this structure of eschatology, immortality of the soul and final resurrection, work together but are also distinct in their function for Calvin.

Immortality of the Soul

The next of the basic structures of the doctrine of eschatology for Calvin is that of the immortality of the soul. He believed that, at death, the body and soul are separated and when the resurrection of the dead would occur, the body would be reunited with the soul, but it will be made incorruptible and therefore the old man will become new [1 Cor. 15]. He seems to follow somewhat in the line of Thomas Aquinas and the Catholic church with the idea of the separation of soul and body. By this it is meant that the soul needs the body and the body needs the soul in order to be complete. There is a diversity between the body and the soul in that the soul is where the image of God is seated and the body is the seat of the sinful nature. Calvin seems to be almost platonic in his view of the relationship between the body and the soul. He sees the body as evil and the soul, being the image of God in the person, reflects the goodness of God and is spiritual by nature. Because of this, he believes that souls can transcend the body and so they long for the time in which they can escape the bodily prison. Calvin states that,

Now the very knowledge of God sufficiently proves that souls, which transcend the world, are immortal, for no transient energy could penetrate to the fountain of life. In short, the many pre-eminent gifts with which the human mind is endowed proclaim that something divine has been engraved upon it: all these are testimonies of an immortal essence.⁵³

⁵³ Calvin. Institutes of the Christian Religion. I.15.2

Calvin appears to be introducing the idea of a soul that has direct connection with the divine source, namely God. He deals with this whole topic in much more detail in his work, *Psychopannychia*, which means not the sleep of the soul but the watchfulness of the soul. This returns the focus back and connects it with hope in that the hope that the Christian has in faith inflames a watchfulness for the Lord's return. So it is with the soul in that it is not asleep but is in a mode of continual watchfulness with eagerness for the coming resurrection of all people and the call of the Lord of His people unto Himself. Through this special understanding found within the theology of Calvin, it is crucial for viewing his eschatology. Heinrich Quistorp says that,

He feels that any denial of the continued existence of the immortal soul in death -- hence the title of his polemical study *Psychopannychia* -- call in question the truth of eternal life generally. Hence the doctrine of the immortality of the soul has special significance for Calvin and his eschatology.⁵⁴

The immortality of the soul cannot be understood, for Calvin, apart from the body being rejoined to it in the resurrection of the dead upon the return of the Lord. This seems to be a crucial issue for Calvin. He truly takes a stand concerning this issue. He argues that, "For it would be utterly absurd that the bodies which God has dedicated to himself as temples [1 Cor. 3:16] should fall away into filth without hope of resurrection!"⁵⁵ He goes on to say concerning Paul and the Scriptures,

Similarly, Paul, when he exhorts us to obey the Lord both in body and soul, for both are of God [1Cor. 6:20], surely does not allow that what he has, so to speak, claimed as sacred to God should be condemned to eternal corruption! Nor does Scripture define anything more clearly than the resurrection of the flesh that we now bear. "For this perishable nature," says Paul, "must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality." [1 Cor. 15:53]⁵⁶

So, in Calvin's line of thought, there seems to exist a connection between the immortal soul of a person and the nature of that person. If this is true for Calvin, how does total depravity fit into the

⁵⁴ Heinrich Quistorp. *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*. p.56

⁵⁵ Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. III.25.7

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

picture? If the soul is suppose to be the image or reflection of God in the human person, then does that depravity reflect in a distortion of that image. For the soul of the human being strives toward the ultimate good which is God [Aquinas is echoed here] and it sees into the darkened mirror more clearly when this point is reached. How does this effect the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Calvin says that “ . . . it would not profit us much if the body which had been offered as an atoning sacrifice had been destroyed and replaced by a new one.”⁵⁷ How effective would it have been ? Calvin would say, not very effective and it would make Christianity a worthless religion or sect.

Death is the bridge, so to speak, as well as the pathway to eternal blessedness. Through death the soul is released from the prison of the body and it will be reunited with the same body being made incorruptible at the resurrection of the dead. It is, for Calvin, a dividing line between the present and future heavenly life. Quistorp says that,

. . . for Calvin the endeavor to reach eternal life is primarily an aiming at death. And this is so because death is for him the dividing line between present and future (heavenly) life; less an end of this wretched life than a beginning of that blessed life beyond.⁵⁸

He goes on to say,

death is for Calvin the end of the struggle between spirit and flesh -- a struggle which lies at the root of our life in regeneration and sanctification, the life of the mortification and vivification in the *communio cum Christi*, the life of the *tolerantio crucis*.⁵⁹

The aiming toward eternal life has made many seek death particularly in the persecution periods of the early church with fathers such as: Justin and Origen. Searching for the transcendence of the soul within one’s own being is even evident today in movements like the “New Age” movement. The Christian must be cautious of this and I believe Calvin sees this and that is why it can be seen within his eschatology, because that is where it fits for Calvin.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Heinrich Quistorp. Calvin’s Doctrine of the Last Things. p.56

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.57

For, while the whole man is called mortal, the soul is not thereby subjected to death; nor does reason or intelligence belong to the body merely because man is called a "rational animal." Therefore, although the soul is not man, yet it is not absurd for man, in respect to his soul, to be called God's image; even though I retain the principle I just now set forward, that the likeness of God extends to the whole excellence by which man's nature towers over all the kinds of living creatures.⁶⁰

Calvin does seem to give the reader a confusing twist in his theology here. Earlier he was stating that the soul is the image of God expressed in the person and now he questions this very premise.

Why? He goes on to elaborate,

... although the primary seat of the divine image was in the mind and heart, or in the soul and its powers, yet there was no part of man, not even the body itself, in which some sparks did not glow. It is sure that even in the several parts of the world some traces of God's glory shine. From this we may gather that when his image is placed in man a tacit antithesis is introduced which raises man above all other creatures and, as it were, separates him from the common mass.⁶¹

Humanity, having the honor of obtaining the image of God as the soul, esteems a great privilege in that they are given dominion over the remainder of the created order. Concerning this tainted image of God Calvin says, "Therefore all of us, who have descended from the impure seed, are born infected with the contagion of sin. In fact, before we saw the light of this life we were soiled and spotted in God's sight."⁶² So, it can be seen in Calvin that the total depravity of the carnal nature of humanity is still evident but once the image of God comes to its full fruition then the evil nature is put aside. This occurs for Calvin at death.

According to the previous discussion and in light of what has just been reflected on, separation of soul and body is imperative for Calvin as well as the reuniting of the body and soul at the resurrection. Calvin says that,

... unless the soul were something essential, separate from the body, Scripture would not teach that we dwell in houses of clay [Job 4:19] and at death leave the tabernacle of the flesh, putting off what is corruptible so that at the Last Day we may finally receive our reward, according as each of us has done in the body.⁶³

⁶⁰ Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. . I.15.3

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.* II.1.5

⁶³ *Ibid.* I.15.2

The soul for Calvin is constantly seeking and stretching toward the final end which is truly the resurrection of the body in order for it to be reunited to the soul, which is considered immortal, and itself longs to be joined once again to the body.

The immortality of the soul is truly important, especially to Calvin's understanding of eschatology. The soul is seeking for escape from the corrupted body, but at the resurrection, it seeks to be rejoined with body in the incorruptible state. This second key part of Calvin's eschatology gives the roots to the way a person may view God as creator as well as judge. The immortality of the soul is intimately linked to the third and final section. This was made evident throughout this section. Final resurrection, for Calvin, is the final goal of the soul within the Christian. This is because it establishes the final state of the second Adam and Humanity in the harmonious relationship that was intended for God and His creation to enjoy.

Final Resurrection

The final part to the structure of the eschatology of John Calvin is that of Final Resurrection. By this, it is meant, in a general sense, that all will be involved in the resurrection of the dead, but some will be the elect and some the reprobate. Both are initially called out of their tombs by Christ on the Lord's Day and they will be judged accordingly. This is the only portion of Calvin's eschatology that is singled out specifically to a section of its own. In Book three and chapter twenty-five he deals with this topic. But like all of his other sections of this doctrine as well as all others, it is "peppered" throughout the whole of the work.

The Last Day, for Calvin, is an actual day in time that will be a real event and is the new beginning of all that is in the world. He is not to be viewed as a *millenialist*. In fact, he reacted in the Institutes against the *chiliasts* of his day. These were the people who believed in the actual

thousand year reign of Christ. For all practical purposes, they are to be equated with the millennialists. According to Calvin, only God knows the hour and the day of his return. He tends to not want to preoccupy himself with matters that are beyond human knowledge and control.

Quistorp states that,

Thus the last day is for Calvin indeed a day in time, but as the last day of this time world it is also the dawn of quite another aeon, of the new world and time of God to which our time measurements are no longer applicable and which is essentially beyond all human calculation.⁶⁴

So, Calvin is fully aware of the dangers of attempting to “second guess” God. There have been many examples of this before his time and since through the present. What he did seem to be an advocate of is being one who is always alert and waiting, but actively, on the Lord’s triumphant return. Death, as was mentioned earlier, seems to be the focal point. Without a good theology of death you really can not have a good theology of the resurrection. His understanding of death was the pivotal point for present life and resurrection to the future life to come. Quistorp says concerning death for Calvin, “ For Calvin the characteristic note is rather one of longing for visional personal salvation in death. . . death is always for Calvin the gate through which we pass into future glory as a whole.”⁶⁵ He seems to have a high view of death as the gateway to eternal life or death whatever is appropriate. Because of this future resurrection, the Christian carries within himself or herself the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may be manifested within them, as Calvin reflects on II Corinthians 4:10. Calvin says that “In the nature he took from us he so completed the course of mortal life that now, having obtained immortality, he is the pledge of our coming resurrection.”⁶⁶ He stands in our stead in order that we may be fit for reception into the Kingdom through resurrection.

⁶⁴ Heinrich Quistorp. Calvin’s Doctrine of the Last Things. p.111

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Calvin. Institutes of the Christian Religion. III.25.3

Calvin draws his attention briefly but pointedly to the chiliasts, who limited the reign of Christ to a thousand years. He stands in great opposition to their view because they are limiting the ability and power of God to rule. That is dangerous and needs to be labeled as such, a heresy.

Calvin states,

Now their fiction is too childish either to need or to be worth a refutation. And the Apocalypse, from which they undoubtedly drew a pretext for their error, does not support them. For the number "one thousand" [Rev. 20:4] does not apply to the eternal blessedness of the church but only to the various disturbances that awaited the church, while still toiling on earth. On the contrary, all Scripture proclaims that there will be no end to the blessedness of the elect or the punishment of the wicked [Matt. 25:41,46] Those who assign the children of God a thousand years in which to enjoy the inheritance of the life to come do not realize how much reproach they are casting upon Christ and his Kingdom. For if they do not put on immortality, then Christ himself, to whose glory they shall be transformed, has not been received into undying glory [1 Cor. 15:13ff.]. If their blessedness is to have an end, then Christ's Kingdom, on whose firmness it depends, is but temporary. In short, either such persons are utterly ignorant of everything divine or they are trying by a devious malice to bring to nought all the grace of God and power of Christ, the fulfillment of which is realized only when sin is blotted out, death swallowed up, and everlasting fully restored!⁶⁷

The argument is clear that if Christ is limited on the reign of his Kingdom, then the earth has a finite and "Olympian god" rather than a God whose Kingdom is everlasting. "How will he come?"

This seems to be another question that was raised very much and Calvin is pointed in his approach to this question as well. He states that,

Christ gives to his own people clear testimonies of his very present power. Yet his Kingdom lies hidden in the earth, so to speak, under the lowness of the flesh. It is right, therefore, that faith be called to ponder that visible presence of Christ which he will manifest on the Last Day. For he will come down from heaven in the same visible form in which he was seen to ascend [Acts 1:11; Matt. 24:30]. And he will appear to all with the ineffable majesty of his Kingdom, with the glow of immortality, with the boundless power of divinity, with a guard of angels.⁶⁸

The glorious return will be glorious indeed! But how does Calvin understand the term

"resurrection?" He says that,

Children, even, understand in this way the words "resurrection" and "to rise again." For we do not say of something just created that it "rises again." And that saying of Christ would not stand: "Whatever the Father has given me will not perish, but I shall raise it up on the Last Day" [John

⁶⁷ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III.25.5

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* II.16.17

6:39 p.] The word “to sleep” has the same implication, since it is applicable only to bodies. Hence also the name given to “cemeteries.”⁶⁹

So, it seems, for Calvin, that the whole concept of death lies in the idea of sleep or rest until the appointed time of the final resurrection. But, How does this satisfy the questions raised in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man or even Jesus’ own promise to the thief on the cross beside him that he will be with him in paradise, on that day! Does this imply a lengthy stay in the ground? Maybe for Calvin in terms of the body, but not the soul. Jesus was possibly talking about the soul and not the body for Calvin.

The understanding of eschatology for John Calvin can be viewed within the three categories mentioned in the study. Calvin gives a very challenging and integrative approach to his notion of Last Things. He approaches it from a very Scriptural standpoint. This whole doctrine of Last Things, for Calvin is woven throughout his writings, but is not explicit anywhere. Every portion of his theology hinges on each other and they rely on one another in the interpretation of Calvin in his entirety. When looking at the study and thought of the doctrine of eschatology, many people view it as something that should be thoroughly dissected and put under a microscope, but for Calvin it is at the core of Christology. Eschatology for him is the summation of the Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, and *Parousia* combined into one eternal event than in its scope is everlasting and without end. Calvin, for his eschatological views, is to be considered more as an “amillennialist” than any other. Basically, he does not want to spend much time on technical jargon concerning the Last Things, but he does believe in the Kingdom of God being an everlasting Kingdom and in this way he does not believe God’s Kingdom should be limited to a literal thousand year reign. After reading his arguments, I tend to agree with his assumptions and

⁶⁹ Ibid. III.25.8. Also a note by McNeill that Calvin reminds us that the etymology of “cemetery” is a “sleeping place.”

through this insight I see where this particular study would be very beneficial in understanding the overall theology of John Calvin.

Summary

When looking at the theology of John Calvin, the concern for the holy life was an issue that he was dealing with throughout his life. He was confronted with this particularly in terms of his ministry. The holy life was a life that had its total dependence on God and His work in the individual. Calvin developed this concept not through a sense of deep despair as with Luther, but with a desire to seek the righteousness of God that would be personal to such a depraved person.

Within the context of the mystical union for Calvin, the work of God with the elect is emphasized in three areas. The first area that Calvin deals with in the Institutes of the Christian Religion was that of the knowledge of God. He separates the knowledge of God into Creator and Redeemer. Within this understanding, one should note that his view of God was one that seemed personal but distant. The knowledge of God the Creator was based in the knowing a God who creates and functions within that creation. He works within the context of the life of the individual and determines their ultimate end.

The next areas within the context of mystical union was that of the doctrines of justification and sanctification. These, for the achievement of the holy life, play significant roles, for Calvin. Justification is what God does for the person in light of the work of the Christ and his righteousness done on the cross. The righteousness of Christ and his work on the cross is the foundation for the salvation of the elect. Sanctification is the process by which a person strives for holiness and closeness with God. It is a process that is continual throughout the life of the elect until death. Death, for Calvin, is the point at which the elect becomes holy in the sight of God.

The reprobate, on the other hand, are condemned to hell as determined by God from the beginning.

The last element of Calvin's doctrine of holiness was that of his doctrine of eschatology. The study of the last days are important in understanding the reasons for salvation. It was known that the afterlife was an important issue. Not knowing whether a person would go to heaven or hell was a threatening issue. Calvin dealt with three primary points within his doctrine of eschatology. The first point was that of hope. Hope, for Calvin, seemed to stand at the base of the concept of mystical union. If there was no hope in the coming heavenly life then the present life would not have much significance. The future hope was what drove the soul of a person who was being persecuted for their faith. The part of eschatology for Calvin was that of the immortality of the soul. This was an encouragement for believers to know with assurance that their souls would be preserved as elect. The final resurrection is the last portion dealt with in conjunction with mystical union. Within this concept, Calvin included a resurrection of the body as found in I Corinthians 15. This was a sense of hope for the elect, especially for those who were sick and crippled. The sick and crippled would be given a new body and live forever in the presence of God. For mystical union, it made this concept personal and desirable for the elect.

The idea of the mystical union of Christ with the believer develops an important concept for the doctrine of holiness. This had great implications for the Church, especially in Calvin's day. The holy life as a personal experience was something that was rare and sought after. Calvin gave the people a plan and the encouragement to follow and complete the task set before them. For Calvin, the Mystical union was a life long commitment and a witness to the loving, gracious, and merciful God whom he served.

Chapter 3

The Comparison

Our task will be to compare and contrast of the views of Luther and Calvin on the doctrine of sanctification. What are the points of separation that are significant? Where do Luther and Calvin show agreement? Particular points of reference will be made to what appears to be the most important portions of their concept of holiness and how it relates to living the Christian life. As the chapter progresses, one should note, that they are similar in significant respects. It should also be noted the manner in which their theological understandings of the topic had implication for the churches of their day. This will be the interest of the topic for the summary and conclusion in the last chapter.

The study of Martin Luther and John Calvin is intriguing because of the complexity of their understanding of theological matters. Their view of Salvation and Sanctification developed from an understanding that growth in the Christian life is a process that continues until death. This does not seem to agree with the Wesleyan - Arminian view that there are points of total surrender to the call of God, namely entire sanctification. There are various aspects of both Luther and Calvin's theology that tend not to do away with this notion completely. For both Reformers, the doctrine of justification plays a crucial role in surrendering to and living a fully consecrated in the presence of God. So, for the purpose of this chapter, the roles of the knowledge of God, justification, and sanctification will be addressed. The interesting point, for both Luther and Calvin, is that when they discovered the doctrines of Justification by grace through faith alone they were active in the Catholic Church. This became the occasion for their thought.

Knowledge of God

The first major point of comparison for Luther and Calvin in light of their doctrines of holiness and the Christian life is that of the knowledge of God. They both view God in two aspects that reflect two different sides of their understanding of God. The terminologies may be different but the meanings are similar. Luther sees God in terms of God hidden and God revealed. Whereas, Calvin views the knowledge of God in terms of God the Creator and God the Redeemer. The understanding of these will help the reader see how the whole of God's salvation history was effected by their view of God in relation to humanity.

Luther understands the knowledge of God in terms of a tension between God hidden and revealed, or *Deus absconditus* and *Deus revelatus*. God would choose to reveal Himself to humanity at particular points in time for a particular purpose. Luther says in his lecture on Genesis 26:9, "And it is true that God wanted to counteract this curiosity at the very beginning; for this is how He set forth His will and counsel . . ." ¹ Luther explicated the work of Christ throughout his life. More important is the fact that he is demonstrating how God was revealed through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Son is the reflection of the Father on Earth and it should be understood that Christ's work and righteousness is God's work and righteousness. He seems to be following the structure of the Gospel of John in the depth of Genesis.

He demonstrates several ways that God is revealed where the hiddenness of God is the opposite. Taken from his work on the Bondage of the Will, Luther states that,

. . . we have to argue in one way about God or the will of God as preached, revealed, offered, and worshipped, and in another way about God as he is not preached, not revealed, not offered, not worshipped. To the extent, therefore, that God hides himself and will to be unknown to us, it is no business of ours. ²

¹ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 5, 44.

² *Ibid.*, 33, 139.

He classified God as revealed in relation to His work in humanity. They flow from the will of God shown and acknowledged through the work of both Christ and the Holy Spirit. The opposite is true of the God who is hidden. The point being is that God reveals only what He wants His people to know. Luther felt that should be the end of it. If God chooses not to be known to humanity, then it is of no human concern. When a person begins to look into the mystery of God, it angers God because that is what He has to Himself and is His own. Luther continues, “God must therefore be left to himself in his own majesty, for in this regard we have nothing to do with him, has he willed that we should have anything to do with him.”³ In other words, to leave God to His own majesty is respect for His privacy - just like when a person has areas in their life that are private and personal to them usually people leave them alone. The important point to remember about God is that He is revealed, as said by Jesus himself, in the Son. When you have seen the Son, then you have seen God. The focus on the cross is essentially God’s revelation. Alister McGrath says that, “man’s natural conception of God is highly confused and unreliable, and must be replaced by God’s revelation of himself in the cross of Christ.”⁴ Who is seen hanging on the tree; not just Jesus, but God. The hidden God, on the other hand, hid Himself from the sin of the cross. Luther makes a point of saying that he is not promoting two gods, but they are one and the same God.

God’s revelation is revealed to its full extent in the event of the cross. This is the one time where God is revealed both as wrathful and judgmental, as well as merciful and just. God, on the cross as His Son, carried the weight of the sin of the world on Him. As God the Father, He gave up His most beloved possession to sin and death, that which He could not look upon. Luther states that,

³ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 33, 139.

⁴ Alister McGrath. *Luther's Theology of the Cross*. 163.

In the one unitary event of revelation in the cross, God's wrath and mercy are revealed simultaneously - but only faith is able to recognize the *opus proprium* as it lies hidden under the *opus obiectum*; only faith discerns the merciful intention which underlies the revealed wrath; only faith perceives the real situation which underlies the apparent situation.⁵

Apart from faith, the meaning of the cross has no purpose for humanity and, in turn, for God.

The reason for this being that faith and receptiveness of the individual and the love received is the purpose for the cross. If there was no cross, there would be no redemption. God could have easily given humanity up to these sinful ways, but God's good and wonderful creation would have been destroyed two thousand years ago. Through the death and resurrection of the revealed God, the hidden God was able fulfill the ultimate purpose He had planned. Even in defeating sin and death on the cross, He did not take away death. This takes one into the area of the problem of evil. Luther seems to make provision for evil in the world when he states that, "But God hidden in his majesty neither deploras nor takes away death, but works life, death, and all in all. For there he has not bound himself by his word, but has kept himself free over all things."⁶

The ones who are "puffed" up and think they are mighty in their holy ways are appalling to God. He remains hidden from those who have all the answers because there is no room for Him to enter into the conversation. Those who think they are wise are the personification of foolishness for God. Luther says that, "The Law is not understood apart from faith, but they do not want to believe, they only want to pat themselves on the back, and therefore God hides His face from them, because they are ungodly and do not want to look upon Him as merciful but as hostile."⁷ So, for Luther, the understanding of God revealed is that of the word preached and proclaimed as well as personified in Christ Jesus. God hidden is God Himself in His own where no one needs to pursue Him. When He is hidden, He is so, for a reason and should not be

⁵ Alister McGrath. *Luther's Theology of the Cross*. 165.

⁶ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 33,140.

⁷ *Ibid.* 16, 93.

encountered. How does this work within Luther's theology of the cross? As was mentioned earlier, through Christ, He was revealed and through Christ's death and resurrection He came even closer to His creation and became intimately involved. If it not for the cross, then there would be no true intimate knowledge of God and no redemption.

Calvin is more systematized in his approach to the knowledge of God than Luther. Books one and two deal specifically with this topic for Calvin. He divides it into two sections -- Book One is The Knowledge of God the Creator and Book Two is The Knowledge of God the Redeemer. There can be noted within these two categories, a God hidden and revealed similar to Luther. God the Creator is the hidden God, but He still reveals Himself in the heart of the person. As a result, He appears to be God the Redeemer or the revealed God. Calvin makes a distinction between the two, "as much in the fashioning of the universe as in the general teaching of Scripture the Lord shows himself to be simply the Creator. Then in the face of Christ [cf. II Cor. 4:6] he shows himself the Redeemer."⁸ There is a certain sense of the revelation of God in both incidences. The knowledge of God as Creator is a testimony to the sovereign God being the sole cause of all that was created.

God as Creator is not only the creator of all creation but He is also Lord over the creation and thus has complete control over the creation. Calvin states that, "Let us therefore remember, whenever each of us contemplates his own nature, that there is one God who so governs all natures that he would have us look unto him, direct our faith to him, and worship and call upon him."⁹ So, God as Creator is also a personal God that is to be called upon and can have a part of the faith of the individual. Calvin also views that concept of God in terms of the implication to New Testament theology. Through His works, the person should be able to contemplate God and

⁸ *Inst.* I. 2. 1.

⁹ *Inst.* I. 5. 6.

should seek after Him in His goodness and not try to look to other places for the knowledge of God. He states that “ we ought to observe that we are called to a knowledge of God: not that knowledge which, content with empty speculation, merely flits in the brain, but that which will be sound and fruitful if we duly perceive it, and if it takes root in the heart.”¹⁰ He goes on to say that, “we know the most perfect way of seeking God, and the most suitable order, is not for us to attempt with bold curiosity to penetrate to the investigation of his essence.”¹¹ God the Creator has put the knowledge of Himself within the hearts of humanity. Through this knowledge, there is an ability to act on the call of the elect.

God the Redeemer, for Calvin, is seen in the face of Christ. Particularly, Christ the Redeemer on the cross as he bore the sins of the world. Man’s corruption as noted in Romans 3 is the condemnation of the heart which is the occasion for Christ as Redeemer. “That condemnation of the heart when it is called deceitful and corrupt above all else [Jer. 17:9p.] is not less severe. But because I am striving for brevity, I shall be content with but one passage; yet it will be like the clearest of mirrors in which we may contemplate the whole image of our nature.”¹² So, the knowledge of God does not need contemplation for it is clear to the one, who is striving toward a goal or the end of life, to focus on God. The law, for Calvin, is a way toward the means of a goal. The purpose for the law is for the individual to have the guidance of the knowledge of God. Calvin’s understanding of God does reflect the thought of Luther except for the differing terminology, but the meaning is essentially the same. The only exception for Calvin would be that his view of God, whether it be as Creator or Redeemer, both interact with the order of creation. Whereas with Luther, his view of God that is both social and private.

¹⁰ *Inst.* I.5.9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Inst.* II. 3. 2.

Justification

When looking at the process of holy living and intentionally living a life with God, Luther and Calvin agree that there is a progressive nature of growth that is involved. Both see that sin is at the core of the disobedience to the call of God. Also, both of them see that humanity is totally depraved of their own capabilities to lead a holy life apart from the grace of God. So, the doctrine of justification plays a crucial role for both of them in their understanding of the holiness of the individual as well as reconciliation to God. The Christian life is one with a focus solely on the works and merits of God through Christ. Within this section, it will be shown that this is the central component to the doctrine of justification and, more important for the flow of the paper, the concept of holy life beyond that work of God.

The conceptions of Luther and Calvin in their theology of holiness is rooted in three basic elements. Faith, Hope, and Love. Justification has as its central focus love. The process of Justification was summed up by Luther's colleague Philip Melanchthon in his work *Loci communes rerum theologicorum* (1521) or "Basic Theological Doctrines, when he states that,

We are justified when, put to death by the Law, we are made alive again by the word of grace promised in Christ; the Gospel forgives our sins, and we cling to Christ in faith, not doubting in the least that the righteousness of Christ is our righteousness, that the satisfaction Christ wrought for our expiation and that the resurrection of Christ is ours.¹³

The gift of God to the human race was the work of His Son and the righteousness that was imputed to them. That God mercy and love is at work in order humanity to be justified to God. Calvin is in full agreement of this definition. What should defined at this point is the term "imputed" righteousness of Christ. For Luther, this concept is called *iustitia Christi aliena* or the "alien righteousness of Christ" given as a mark as to the holistic understanding of man. He sees justification as it relate to the entire person both flesh and spirit. The imputation of the

¹³ Robin A. Leaver. *Luther on Justification*. p. 57-58.

righteousness of Christ is a righteousness that is not in any way achieved by the actions of the person but as a covering of God through the work and righteousness of Christ. McGrath states that,

As the *'totushomo'* cannot be partially righteous *'Coram Deo'*, his righteousness must be alien and extrinsic to him - it is a righteousness which is in no sense part of his person, or which can in any way be said to belong to him.¹⁴

This alien work of Christ remains on the outside of the person and they have to respond to it and receive it. In the working of justification, for Luther, this seems to be the focus of the doctrine that is at work here. He sees that, through the imputation of this righteousness, God covers the sinner or “clothes” this individual in righteousness, but it does not appear to penetrate at this stage. The person remains, on the inside a sinner. Which is where Luther’s famous saying applies, that we are “*sumul iustus et peccator*” or “at the same time righteous and sinner” or “simultaneously righteous and sinner.” Considering the image of covering, McGrath reflects on Luther’s usage,

Luther uses images such as Boaz covering Ruth with his cloak, or a mother hen covering her chicks with her wing, to illustrate how God clothes the sinner with the alien righteousness of Christ. Extrinsically, the believer is righteous, through the alien righteousness of Christ; intrinsically he is - and will remain - a sinner.¹⁵

So, what can be noted here is that the alien work of God, for Luther, is essential to the justification of the individual.

For Calvin, the imputation of righteousness to the individual is similar in content to that of Luther, but is placed second to his discussion of regeneration or sanctification in Book Three of the *Institutes*. He considers the “imputed righteousness” of Christ to be why one is justified. Calvin defines imputed righteousness of Christ as that which the individual is certified and covered by the righteousness of Christ. Because it is not from us it cannot be in us on account of the sin

¹⁴ Alister McGrath. *Luther's Theology of the Cross*. p. 134.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

feeling of the flesh. Calvin states, “You see that our righteousness is not in us but in Christ, that we possess it only because we are partakers in Christ; indeed, with him we possess all its riches.”¹⁶ In commenting on Romans 8:3-4 and that sin has been condemned in Christ’s flesh that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, Calvin says that, “The only fulfillment he alludes to this that which we obtain through imputation. For in such a way does the Lord Christ share his righteousness with us that, in some wonderful manner, he pours into us enough of his power to meet the judgment of God.”¹⁷ The work of justification belongs solely to Christ.

Calvin also established an order of justification that gave an organized understanding of the process involved. He begins with the idea that, “God designs to embrace the sinner with his pure and freely given goodness, finding nothing in him except his miserable condition to prompt Him to mercy, since he sees man utterly void and bare of good works; and so he seeks in himself the reason to benefit man.”¹⁸ God openly makes the attempt to bring fallen man to himself. Not be any work of their own, can they even be considered just before the eyes of God. God freely chooses to give this freely to a people that are totally sinful. He seeks out any ways toward which man can be justified. He sees that there is no way humanity can be justified of their own accord, so He takes the initiative and through grace and faith in Christ they are justified.

The next part of the process of justification, for Calvin, is the event that God touches the person with His goodness. In this experience, the person retains the faith of Christ and the sinner then possess their salvation entirely based in God’s mercy.¹⁹ He states that, “God touches the sinner with a sense of His goodness in order that he, despairing of his own works, may ground the whole of his salvation in God’s mercy.”²⁰ It also is evident, according to Calvin, that the sinner

¹⁶ Inst. III. 11. 23.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Inst. III. 11. 16.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

would obtain their salvation in this process from the teaching of the gospel. He acknowledges that this reconciles the sinner to God along with the intercession of Christ's righteousness and the forgiveness of sins.²¹ He bases this order on Scriptural accounts, through this he refers to this as faith righteousness. In other words, it is a faith that is formed solely and firmly justified in the faith that is found in God's mercy and the righteousness of Christ toward the sinner.

In looking at God's mercy toward a sinful humanity, sin needs to be defined in order to be able to fully understand to impact of this sort of justification. Calvin defines sin in this way.

We are told that sin is division between man and God, the turning of God's face away from the sinner; and it cannot happen otherwise, seeming that it is foreign to his righteousness to have any dealings with sin. For this reason, the apostle teaches that man is God's enemy until he is restored to grace through Christ [Rom 5:8-10].²²

In other words, sin is a very broad term for Calvin. It seems that sin can be defined as anything, action or thought, that diverts the person from the focus and word of God. This encompasses everything that is contrary to God and it does not categorize as willful and unintentional as iniquities. Calvin call a sin for what it is, a sin. With this in mind, there needs to be note how he develops that thought within the context of justification. He states,

Thus, him whom he receives into union with himself the Lord is said to justify, because he cannot receive him into grace nor join him to himself unless he turns him from a sinner into a righteous man. We add that this is done through forgiveness of sins; for if those whom the Lord has reconciled to himself be judged by works they will indeed still be found sinners, though they ought, nevertheless, to be freed and cleansed from sin.²³

Apart from sin, the person was in grace with the Lord and is reconciled to Him. Within justification for Calvin there can be noted the total desperate needful desire for humanity to be close to God. Through God's grace, love, and mercy, this is possible. For Calvin, justification is to be understood as a legal term. In other words, he sees justification "as the acceptance with which

²¹ *Inst.* III. 11. 16.

²² *Inst.* III. 11. 21.

²³ *Ibid.*

God receives us into his favor as righteous man.”²⁴ The acceptance of the sinner by God and the manner with which that happens. As was noted earlier, Calvin reflects Paul’s teaching in Romans when he calls justification “imputation” of righteousness” and included within that is the forgiveness of sins.

In Luther, there is a similar account of his definition of sin which he draws from Scripture. He says that, “Sin in the Scripture, means not only the outward works of the body but also all that happens to move men to do these works, namely, the inmost heart with all its powers,”²⁵ He continues saying that “scripture looks into the heart’ and there finds ‘in faith at the bottom of the heart’ as the ‘root and source of all sin.’”²⁶ For Luther, unfaith, the lack of the fear, trust and love of God, reflected in a rejection of the first commandment, is what is indicative of sin and it reveals itself as ingratitude. This seems to put Luther’s doctrine of justification in a wholly new light. One must look at the condition of the individual when determining the ultimate design of the justification by grace through faith to the person. In light of Christ’s alien righteousness, there can be noted an underlying intentional understanding of the wretchedness of humanity that makes the work of Christ even more overwhelming to the recipient.

Within this same understanding of justification and sin, the recognition and repentance of sin involves the humiliation of the individual by God. Through this humiliation, the person is humbled before God and his/her sins are forgiven. At this point, the person is justified and is able to lead an upright. For Luther, it is the recognition of standing in the shadow of the cross. Within his theology of the Cross, Luther’s understanding, through his experiences, the actual and real work of Christ. The cross of Christ overshadows or covers the unrighteousness or sinfulness

²⁴ *Inst.* III. 11. 2.

²⁵ Pelikan. *Luther's Works.* 35 . 369.

²⁶ Pelikan. *Luther's Works.* 14. 51.

so that they will be able to come before God where they are at that time. This is the encompassing work of justification and sanctification. The process of regeneration that involves both has as its focus the cross of Christ. He, as a part of his idea of humble humiliation, emphasizes the need for true believers to bear and carry their cross in order to focus on the Cross.

The doctrine of justification was similar in both Luther and Calvin. But the contrast between the two falls on the participation on the part of the individual. Luther saw that the person would also make a choice as to respond or not to the grace given. With Calvin, on the other hand, and his definition of predestination and election, there is no room for response and a choice of the will because justification is the sole action of God to the individual. The terminology for both Luther and Calvin are the same, but their understanding are different. This is true particularly in terms of their views on sanctification. At the core of their doctrine of sanctification, at the point they, is found within their individual understandings of Law and Gospel.

Sanctification

The doctrine of sanctification for Luther and Calvin is where distinct differences in terminology and understanding are evidenced. How is a person sanctified before a God who is totally good and just? How is this process realized in the individual? The doctrine of sanctification is at the theological outcome of a life that is led by the spirit of God. Regardless of the holy life that is lived, it is not reached until death and only then willful sanctification be realized. Both Luther and Calvin see sanctification as a process from justification to eternal life in the state of glorification, but Luther does not see it as sanctification but as justification revealed to the individual through the proclamation of the Word of God. Calvin saw sanctification in relation

to the third function of the law, the theological function or ceremonial function of the law, which he believed maintained the growth of the individual throughout their spiritual life.

For Calvin, the doctrine of sanctification view in relation to the degree of sinfulness that recognized by the individual. The action of God toward the individual is important to understanding the process that occurs. It is totally by the action of God that the process of sanctification begin and is carried to its fullest extent. The work of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Calvin says that,

When we hear mention of our union with God, let us remember that holiness must be its bond; not because we come into communion with him by virtue of our holiness! Rather, we ought first to cleave unto him so that, infused with his holiness, we may follow whither he calls.²⁷

The individual must be infused with the holiness of Christ by the Holy Spirit. The connection obedience that flows naturally to the submissive heart is one of total surrender and abandoned. The language that Calvin uses of cleaving to him so that the person may at his beckoned call. This is accomplished by the sanctification that occurs by the union of God and the believer.

Sanctification, for Calvin, is seen as a continued process that has for its aim eternal life with God. The practice of godliness is the center of the concern, particularly when looking at sanctification. Through this act of holiness, one is incensed and encouraged to holiness and innocence. He states that, “The whole life of Christians out to be a sort of practice of godliness, for we have been called to sanctification [I Thess. 4:7; cf. Eph. 1:4, I Thess. 4:3]. Here it is the function of the law, by warning men of their duty, to arouse them to a zeal of holiness and innocence.”²⁸ The law here serves a real function for sanctification. It makes the individual aware of their unfaithfulness. The whole life of the Christian is to be spent in pursuit of God and the goal in life now being the hope of life eternal. Sanctification is that process being guided by the

²⁷ Inst. III. 6. 2.

²⁸ Inst. III. 19. 2.

work of the Holy Spirit. Through this practice of godliness true sanctification can be achieved at death. The work of the Holy Spirit in the doctrine of sanctification plays a significant role for Calvin. It makes the wretched sinner consecrated and presentable before the Lord. Calvin notes that,

We confess that while through the intercession of Christ's righteousness God reconciles us to himself, and by free remission of sins accounts us righteous, his beneficence is at the same time joined with such a mercy that through his Holy Spirit he dwells in us and by his power the lusts of our flesh are each day more and more mortified; we are indeed sanctified, that is, consecrated to the Lord in true purity of life, with our hearts formed to obedience to the law.²⁹

As the individual is sanctified before the Lord and made ready by the Spirit, the person becomes joined with God in union that begins a new phase of growth toward God. The process of justification becomes evident as this process begins. The point at which God reconciles himself through the intercession of Christ's righteousness is also the point at which the mortification of the flesh takes place along with the free remission of sins.

The work of the Holy Spirit can be characterized also as a work of God. The work of the Holy Spirit is internal in that He works within the individual in order to bring about the change and the union that takes place. The purpose of the Spirit is to bring the person into an obedience to God's righteousness and to purge the body of its weakness toward sin. Calvin looks at these two stages, "First, he has been given to us sanctification in order that he may bring us, purged of uncleanness and defilement, into obedience to God's righteousness."³⁰ The Holy Spirit is given to the elect for the purpose of guiding the individual toward righteousness. The second work of the Spirit is that, "we are purged by his sanctification in such a way that we are besieged by many vices and much weakness so long as we are encumbered with our body."³¹ The Spirit purges the body of its guilt and sinfulness through the life of the person. Through it is a harsh experience, he or

²⁹ Inst. III. 14. 9.

³⁰ Inst. III. 3. 14.

³¹ Ibid.

she has a reward in the life eternal and a place before the throne of God. Because a person is elect does not mean that they are without weakness and sinfulness. The eternal purposes of God begins here in the present life and the temporal world, but comes to completion at death in glorification.

Without the benefit of sanctification, a person cannot know God completely. The knowledge of Christ is the key to knowing the Father and this is realized through faith by the grace of God. Sanctification is the process by which a person obtain the knowledge of Christ and lives according to that knowledge. Calvin says that, “no one can daily know him without at the same time apprehending the sanctification of the Spirit. Or, if anyone desires some plainer statement, faith rests upon the knowledge of Christ. And Christ cannot be known apart from the sanctification of his Spirit.”³² The Spirit opens the eyes and heart in order for the person to be able to see and know who God is in Christ. Christ is the center focus of concern for Calvin’s doctrine of sanctification because of the merits of his works and righteousness. He notes that as we become as he is we share in a double grace. He states, “By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ’s blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ’s spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.”³³ Through this double grace, the person may become blameless and be pure. The life of this individual will seem to take the form of the righteousness of Christ and they will live out their life in that manner. So, being reconciled to God and sanctified by His Spirit is the way in which purification becomes the work of the Spirit. This also takes the sting out of the sense that a person has of God as a wrathful, judgmental God, who only seeks to find fault. This is contrary to both Luther and Calvin. They see God as a just

³² *Inst.* II. 2. 8.

³³ *Inst.* III. 11. 1.

God who is merciful and seeks after the individual in order to find righteousness or even goodness. In doing this, He may find the availability of the person open to the righteousness of God.

While looking at the mortification of the flesh, one can think on the resurrection of Christ.

Through this even, sanctification can be advanced in the life of the person. Calvin states that,

If we share in this resurrection, through it we are raised up into newness of life to correspond with the righteousness of God. Therefore, in a word, I interpret repentance as regeneration, whose sole end is to restore in us the image of God that had been disfigured and all by obliterated through Adam's transgression.³⁴

Calvin sees the sanctification process as restoring the image of God in the person. The intent of repentance is regeneration through the process of sanctification is to realize this restoration to its logical end. The hindrance to this process is the possibility of, how he states it as, choking the Spirit. This is what most people refer to as falling away or back sliding from the faith. It was believed that Calvin, and his doctrine of eternal security, held firmly that a person could not possibly fall away. He states in the Institutes that,

When, therefore, he speaks of those who have lapsed after they have once been illumined, have tasted the heavenly gift, have been made sharers in the Holy Spirit, and also have tasted God's good Word and the powers of the age to come [Heb. 6:4-5], it must be understood that they who choke the light of the Spirit with deliberate impiety, and spew out the taste of the heavenly gift, will cut themselves off from the sanctification of the Spirit.³⁵

Those being regenerated and in the process of restoring the image of God are even subject to this and can be cut off from the sanctification of the Spirit. By experiencing the gift and knowing the Word of God, there should be no excuse concerning falling away. Because, this individual has heard and knows God's voice, to fall or turn away is unbelief and is a rejection of the righteousness of God. This, by all practical definition, is sin.

³⁴ *Inst.* III. 3. 9.

³⁵ *Inst.* III. 3. 23.

In Luther's view, he saw sanctification in terms of the service of love to the neighbor as the overflow of the gospel, grasped by faith. Holiness, for Luther, means to turn away from evil much like Calvin's concept of repentance. For Calvin, sanctification is related to the third use of the law. He states in his lectures on Psalm 96:6 concerning holiness and sanctification:

Holiness means to turn away from evil, not to touch what is polluted, to keep oneself unspotted from this age, and to avoid every uncleanness and defilement of the body. And properly this has to do with the lust of the flesh. So then sanctification means to be holy and clean from sins which can be committed by the body.³⁶

For Luther, holiness causes the person to turn away from evil that is a defilement of the body such as lust and the cause of this turning away is the work of the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the gospel. The process of sanctification, for Luther, is able to be encountered through the proclamation of the gospel and the benefits of the righteousness of Christ. Sanctification gives the intention of being holy and clean on the inside so that you may not commit the sins of the body. In this respect, they tend to work in union together despite the sinfulness of the body. Holiness, then, is external cleanness and purity of the body, whereas sanctification cleanness and purity of the mind, heart and soul. Because the body is to be presented to God as pure and clean, Luther did believe in the resurrection of the body. He also believed that the body is the temple of God. Luther states, "Our body is properly God's temple according to I Cor. 6:19, a sanctuary, and a sanctification, because it is itself properly sanctified, sacrificed, and offers, as Rom. 12:1 says: 'Present your bodies as a holy sacrifice.'"³⁷ As Paul most eloquently puts it in Romans 12:1, the person should consider themselves as the temple of God and therefore the body accordingly. Luther believed as Paul did that the person must come to the point of sacrifice in order for sanctification to begin in their life. But, for Luther, the person can not do this in their own power.

³⁶ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 11 p. 261.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

It is in the righteousness of Christ through power of the Holy Spirit that a person may become a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

In order for the bodies of the sinners to be holy, they must kill the old man and bring in the new man. Mortification of the flesh becomes an issue for Luther at this point. He says that, “Therefore sanctification is the flesh mortified,” as the apostle says [I Thess. 4:3-4]: “This is the will of God, your sanctification, that everyone know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor.”³⁸ The mortification of the flesh, but as a result the vivification of the spirit, becomes the turning point of the life of the individual. His understanding of the body and the sins of the flesh come out of sin basically from his surroundings verified in the test of Romans chapters 6 and 7. In looking at his lecture on Romans 6:22 he progresses the work of sanctification. He states that,

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves, through the righteousness of faith, of God, the return you get, that is, the merits and joy of a good conscience, is sanctification, that is, through purity and chastity of body and soul, and its end, reward, eternal life. [Romans 6:22]³⁹

One should keep a pure on clean conscience for the purity of the soul. The righteousness of the faith of God brings about sanctification or the merits, and joys of a good conscience. Through this process, a body and should becomes pure and chased in to progress toward eternal life.

Luther’s sermons on the Catechism brought some light to the understanding of sanctification for the elect. He introduces the process and the means by which sanctification is sought. He also includes the function of the church as crucial to the process, especially in terms of the Word preached and the revelation of God through that preaching. His doctrine of the church becomes a big part in the process. He believes the church contains the elect and those outside are the ones who not to receive God’s grace and are therefore condemned. The Church

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. 25. p. 55.

plays an important role in proclaiming the Word. The work of Spirit is to lead the person in the Church. Luther says that, “ just as the Son accepts and receives his lordship through his death, so the Holy Spirit sanctifies by leading you into the holy church and proclaiming to you the Word which the Christian church proclaims. ”⁴⁰ The Holy Spirit sanctifies the person in order to prepare them for being in the Lord’s presence. There is a three-fold work of the Holy Spirit in the believer, “I believe that the Holy Spirit sanctifies me. So, as the Father is my creator and Christ is my Lord, so the Holy Spirit is my sanctifier. For he sanctifies me through the following works: through ‘the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.’”⁴¹

This three-fold work of the Spirit reflects the process of sanctification that the person is engaged in as an ongoing work of sanctification. The forgiveness of sins is at justification and begins the process and it continues until death. At death, the resurrection of the body and the life eternal completes the process. This is possible only because Christ conquered death through his death and resurrection. Luther reflects on I Corinthians Chapter 15 where Paul speaks of taking off the corruptible body and putting in the incorruptible. Because of the condition of the person, there is no way they can be completely sanctified until the body is able to put on the incorruptible nature at death.

The way in which the Holy Spirit sanctifies a person is by leading them to the holy Church. God is revealed through the proclamation of the Word of God, therefore, sanctification is a result of hearing the word and responding to it. He states in his sermons on the Catechisms by asking a question, “How does he sanctify me? By causing me to believe that there is one, holy church through which he sanctifies me, through which the Holy Spirit speaks and causes the preachers to

⁴⁰ Dillenberger. *Sermons on the Catechism*. p. 211-212.

⁴¹ Dillenberger. *Sermons on the Catechism*. 212.

preach the gospel.”⁴² The Holy Spirit speaks through the word of the preaching and thus the person is sanctified through that process. The sanctification begins at the moment the person engages the Word of God. Luther says that “He begins to sanctify now; when we have died, he will complete this sanctification through both ‘the resurrection of the body’ and ‘the life everlasting’”⁴³ So, the end result is the resurrection of the body which is followed by life everlasting. Sanctification ends at this point and the body and soul of the individual should be pure and holy before God.

Summary

The concepts dealt with in this chapter are the overarching elements that are key components of the doctrine of holiness for both Calvin and Luther. In their view of the doctrine of God, they agreed on every point, but they differed on their understanding of their personal conception of God in relation to a fallen humanity. For Luther, it was a God who is revealed in Christ and, at the same time, the God who is hidden in obscurity away from interaction with any portion of creation. Calvin, on the other hand, saw God in terms of the way that He was revealed to His creation. The knowledge of God as Redeemer is seen in the eyes of Christ on the cross. The knowledge of God as Creator reveals God in light of the natural workings of the creation.

The doctrine of justification in light of the doctrine of holiness is crucial in understanding both Luther and Calvin’s concerns for the Christian life. For Luther and Calvin, the concept of justification is the point at which God makes contact with humanity and they are blessed with the grace of God. Justification contains within it the doctrines of repentance and regeneration. The holy life which is consistent in the doctrine of justification. Both figures are relatively similar in the

⁴² *Ibid.*, 213.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

ways they view this crucial topic. Justification is an event that begins at repentance or conversion and becomes a process in which begins their life in Christ.

Lastly, the doctrine of sanctification was discussed. This doctrine is key to understanding the logical progression of maturity in the holy life. The life of the believer is a life long process and a commitment of growth that leads eventually to death and the glorification and the resurrection of the body. The doctrine of sanctification for both Luther and Calvin differs in their views of Law and Gospel.

The knowledge of these three key components of the doctrine of holiness for Luther and Calvin dictated the flow of thought for the Reformation of the Church. The Church was ready for a change and God prepared Luther and Calvin for the task. When looking at these three doctrines within the context of the thought of Luther and Calvin, one must note that the idea of an actual holy life, apart from the works righteousness expressed in the Church of the day, should be lived. Luther and Calvin set the pace for the future of religious thought and became the pioneers of a movement that is prominent even into the present day.

Chapter 4

Conclusion: A Possible Connection

The doctrine of Holiness, within its components of the knowledge of God, justification, and sanctification, builds the foundation for renewal in contemporary Christianity. The quest for the holy life has been one for the understanding of truth since the days Jesus Christ walked the earth. When looking at the Reformers of the sixteenth century such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, there seems to be an eagerness and deep desire for that holy zeal for life with God. The beginnings of the Protestant Reformation came because of such a vision. Luther, with his reappropriation of Pauline sola fideism, sought to bring the realization of the holy life and the understanding of Scripture out of the sole care of the leaders of the Church and give some of the care and knowledge of Scripture to the laity. Calvin also had the same concern as Luther, but he was also concerned with how that affected the civil issues of the day.

The purpose of this study was to demonstrate the contributions Luther and Calvin made to the development of the doctrine of holiness and its effect on the Church. As was noted in the introduction, the Holiness Movement and the theology of Phoebe Palmer locates the point to which this doctrine came in an extended form. When looking at the theology of holiness within her writings, one can see some points that reflect the views of the Reformers. In her writings, on the other hand, there seem to be the point at which she carried it further. Because neither Luther nor Calvin had a concern for the actions of the will except as a logical response to the beckoning call of God, Palmer carries this a step further and considers a free will decision in her theology. Within this final chapter, comparisons and contrasts are to be considered between Palmer and the Reformers. First, there will be a comparison of the theology of Phoebe Palmer to that of the Reformers, then a summary will explore implications of this for our day.

Phoebe Palmer and The Reformers on Holiness

The study of the doctrine of holiness historically has involved personal reflection and self examination on the part of the writer. But there were some who saw that the merits of Christ and the cross was the way to God. Phoebe Palmer was one who believed that a full commitment to the grace and righteousness of God through His Son Jesus Christ was the only way to achieve a holy standing in the presence of God. She viewed God in light of His power and love. This was exhibited thoroughly within her writings and set as an example in her life.

She revealed many points at which there are connections between her theology and that of the Reformers. When looking at her view of the roles and function of God in the salvation and sanctification of a lost humanity, she saw this process as a reflection of God's infinite love and mercy on his creation that was lost to sin. She did see that humanity is redeemable despite of the wretchedness of the nature of the human condition. Palmer reflects concerning God's role in this situation, in her writing "The Way of Holiness" when she said that,

God, in his infinite love, has provided a way by which lost, guilty men may be redeemed, justified, cleansed, and saved, with the power of an endless life. Provision has thus been made for the restoration of man, by availing himself of which, in the way designated in the Scriptures, he may regain that which was lost in Adam -- even the image of God re-ensamped upon the soul.¹

She was noting that the restoration of man is not only the restoration of the relationship of humanity to God, but also the restoration of the image of God on the soul. The terminology is interesting that she used within this context. The term "re-ensamped" appears to give the sense of the mark or reflection of something on an object that gives an exact representation of the thing being impressed. It goes beyond that definition to the understanding of something, within the soul of the individual. This shows that the image of God begins to totally encompass the life of the

¹ Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings. Thomas C. Oden (ed.). Taken from the selection on her writing called "The Way of Holiness (1843)" - This work was the account of the holiness walk of Palmer as written to emphasize the call to Holiness she experienced and desired to share with others. 178.

individual to a life that reflects the thinking and character of God. Through this understanding of restoration, one may see that God's infinite love and desire to have an intimate relationship with His Creation becomes crucial to His provision for the eternal life. God's vehicles for this restoration being the Scriptures and the work and merits of His Son Jesus Christ as reflected in the Scriptures.

The whole concept of holiness for Palmer seems to be grounded in the soul where the powers of the body and mind are willingly given either to sin or to God. Holiness is the point at which the soul gives all of its power within the body and mind to God with the strength of the witness of the Holy Spirit. Palmer said that,

Holiness is a state of soul in which all the powers of the body and mind are consciously given up to God; and the witness of holiness is that testimony which the Holy Spirit bears with our spirit that the offering is accepted through Christ. The work is accomplished the moment we lay our all upon the altar.²

The understanding of the doctrine was brought into the forefront by Palmer in her writing, "Entire Devotion to God" written in 1845. She writes in this work, a complete compilation of thought on the doctrine of holiness, but also she reflects intently the purposes for the holy life. The reader begins to see her view of total surrender to the beckoning call of God on the individual and the response to the call seen in laying all of the person on the altar of God as a sacrifice. The way in which she sees the altar of salvation is that the moment one lays one's all upon the altar that person is then cleansed by the blood of Christ and is sanctified. This idea gives the convert a sense of total commitment to God. To the individual, this is a total surrender of life itself and everything that is involved in it to God.

² Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings. Thomas Oden (ed.) Taken from her work intitled "Entire Devotion to God." 196.

For the Reformers, the picture is different, but the principle is the same. The altar for Palmer is the cross for the Reformers. This is not to say that Palmer did not have a concept of the cross, on the contrary, she had a real intimate focus on the work of the cross. But, her altar theology seemed to give the understanding of the Jewish sacrifice and its purpose with the comprehension of Paul's interpretation in Romans 12:1-3. The Reformers understood this passage in relating the total commitment of the body and soul of the individual to the merits and sacrifice of Christ on the cross as the one and only sacrifice for salvation and holiness in life. Palmer saw this as well, but she viewed this experience as a public commitment of surrender to the grace of God. She saw that when an individual laid their all upon the altar it was a gift to God and He reciprocated by sanctifying the gift and the Giver with His grace.

For Palmer, the salvation that is acquired through the sanctifying by God occurs as a present reality. The reason for the altar is to serve as a place of offering of the powers to God which continues to be a testimony to God's grace. She believed that it could be accomplished and was in the present which in turn affirms the sanctified life now. This differs from the Reformers notion of sanctification. They believed that sanctification was a process that never completes until death and the glorified state of the person. Palmer said that,

It is of great importance that you look at this great Salvation as a present Salvation, received momentarily from above. The blood of Jesus cleanseth [cf. 1 John 1:7]; not that it can or will cleanse at some future period, but it cleanseth now, while you lay your all upon that "altar that sanctifieth the gift." [Matt. 23:19] You keep your offering there, even all your redeemed powers -- body, soul, and spirit -- mind, memory, and will* -- time, talents, and influence.³

This act of God is one of immediate cleansing by the blood of Jesus. She also sees this as a process of deep inner cleansing, but at the moment of surrender, one is sanctified as the gifts and powers are sanctified. The Reformers understood justification as the act of God that begins the

³ Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings. Thomas Oden (ed.) Taken from her work intitled "Entire Devotion to God." 195. (* Note that she makes reference here to Augustine, *On the Trinity*, LCC, VIII; *Confessions*, LCC, VII.)

process of sanctification or inner cleansing. The connection involved in sanctification, for Palmer, was the second work of grace for the individual. At conversion, the person accepted the sacrifice of Christ and believed in Christ as Savior. But at the altar, one has tasted the gift of God's grace and chooses to totally submit all of who they are to the grace of God. The total surrender of the self at the altar of God became central to Palmer's theology of holiness. She said,

The only way to retain the grace of entire sanctification is by keeping all upon the altar. As the soul progresses, increased knowledge and strength involve higher responsibilities. Proportionate to the light are the responsibilities, bringing in to requisition yet more and more of the spirit of sacrifice. In order to retain a state of entire sanctification, these responsibilities must be met. And though Christ, who strengtheneth, [cf. Phil. 4:13] they can be met. The strength of Christ is imparted to the soul that relies wholly on Him.⁴

Entire sanctification, for Palmer, was the path of eternal life in the walk of the individual with Christ. It is the realization of the sacrifice made by Christ and reacting to that understanding in a moment of absolute surrender to the will of God. It is, also, the progression of the soul that is totally dependent on the strength of Christ.

The concepts of holiness, sanctification, and perfection in love that were developed by the likes of John and Charles Wesley and John Fletcher became integral to the thought of the holiness movement of the nineteenth century in Phoebe Palmer. She reflects that, "Holiness, sanctification, perfect love, were words no longer incomprehensible, or indefinite in nature or bearing, in relation to the individual experience of the Lord's redeemed ones."⁵ For the laity of the church, there were misunderstandings of the theological structures of these various doctrines. Because of the absolute nature of these terms in light of the holy life, problems began to arise within the church and questions are still raised even presently on the issue. The idea of perfection is a difficult concept to accept in human terms of the meaning of the word. These terms, for Palmer, seem to

⁴ Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings. Thomas Oden (ed.) Taken from her work intitled "Entire Devotion to God." 200.

⁵ *Ibid.*, from Palmer's work "The Way of Holiness." 175.

give the impression that one should live a life that is acting in God's grace and love. Because apart from the grace of God, there is no way a person, believer or not, can live in perfection of love. The sinful nature of humanity has been scarred with the marks of the Adamic curse, but it has been healed with the cross. Palmer believed that in order for the person to show they had been healed of the scars of sin, he or she has to lay it upon the altar of God and receive the promise of sanctification.

The Reformers believed that one could be reconciled to God for the sins they committed because of the cross. There can be seen a relation between their beliefs as well as that of Palmer. For Luther and Calvin, the union between Christ and the believer begins with justification and a realization of the merits and works of the righteousness of Christ on the cross. Within this concept, a focus on the cross of Christ was crucial for true union to be achieved. They believed that God desired to be with His creation. So, the Lord sent His Son to be the substitution for the sins of humanity. Thus there can be seen that apart from the atonement and the work Christ, salvation would have been impossible. Holiness as a key factor in salvation gives the penitent person the realization of the gift of grace bestowed by God. Palmer states, "Holiness implies Salvation from sin, a redemption from all iniquity. The soul, through faith, being laid upon the altar that sanctifieth the gift, experiences constantly the all-cleansing efficacy of the blood of Jesus."⁶ Luther and Calvin struggled with the concept of being completely cleansed and able to live a totally sanctified life because of the depravation of the sinful nature. They did, however, believe that a holy life was possible, but the person's life was not made holy without the influence of sin. God was aware of this depraved sinful nature, so He imputed His grace unto the individual in order that He may look upon the sinful person and give His grace.

⁶ Oden (ed). Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings. "Entire Devotion to God" 188.

Palmer makes another explicit distinction for the terms of holiness, sanctification, and perfect love that seemed to show both internal and external significance to the life of the person and how they related to others. She said that, “‘Holiness,’ ‘sanctification,’ and ‘perfect love’ are terms intimately related in meaning. The terms holiness and sanctification, being frequently used by Divine inspiration, we may presume to be most significantly expressive of the state to which it is the duty of every believer to attain.”⁷ It should be noted that holiness and sanctification are synonymous with one another. Both of these are revealing the will and nature of God within the individual. The third concept, perfect love, is an outward expression of that grace given by God at sanctification in order to live a holy and blameless life.

As was noted before, with the Reformers, there was an understanding of the love of God expressed through the individual, but they would not be as bold as to say that it would be “perfection” in love. The “absolute” terminology would be disputable because of the sinful nature. Because they believe that the elect are “simul et iustus et peccator” or “simultaneously both righteous and a sinner,” there appears to be no room for a person that can be perfect in love or even fully sanctified to God. This is more evident in Luther than in Calvin. But because of the cross of Christ, there is hope for the wretched depraved ones that they would be reconciled to Him and able to live a holy life in the eyes of God. Palmer stated that,

It is an important consideration, that the entire way to Heaven is narrow. [cf. Matt. 7:14] It is the way of the cross. We sometimes hear persons speak of going around the cross; but those who speak thus have not carefully acquainted themselves with the chart leading from earth to Heaven. The cross covers all the way to Heaven. He who would be a disciple begins to lift it, in the strength of Christ, the first step he takes in the Heavenward course.⁸

The entire focus of the disciple of Christ steps out heavenward and follows the narrow path of the cross and they realize the only way to heaven is in the strength of Christ. This idea is true as

⁷ Oden (ed). Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings. “Entire Devotion to God” 188.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 201.

well with the Reformers in their idea of the righteousness of Christ. Without this righteousness, there is no strength to come against strongholds and narrowness of the path to Heaven. Because of the cross of Christ, the way is made clear, without it the way is dimmed and cluttered.

The one aspect of the doctrine of holiness that needs to be noted for both Palmer and the Reformers is that they reveal the importance of the Trinity. The work of the Holy Spirit played a central role in the holy life of the individual. References to God the Father and God the Son have already been noted, but not much has been said concerning the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the vehicle by which God imputes, in the case of the Reformers, or imparts in the case of Palmer, His gifts on the believer. Palmer saw this happening within her own experience,

The Spirit then suggested, If it is a gift from God, God is not exclusive in the impartation of his gifts, and you will be required to declare it; to declare it as his gift, through our Lord Jesus Christ, ready for the acceptance of all, as his free gift; and thus, if you would regain the blessing, will not be left to your own choice.⁹

The natural reaction to the gift of God is the proclamation. The Spirit, as it agreed with one's spirit, is able to guide the person to the life of Holiness through the proclamation of the Word of God. Even for Palmer, the choice will not be that of the person, but the decision is with God who freely gives to those who love Him. For Palmer, the gift is a reciprocated action between God and the individual. It is not exclusive to God alone, as was the case with the Reformers. She believed that as God imparts the gifts on the person, he or she must declare it as an indication of the reception. Even though God takes the initiative, the person has to acknowledge the gift upon receipt of it. Found within the natural abilities of the person is the knowledge of God and His gift, so it must follow that even the natural abilities are gifts of God. Palmer said, in her testimony that "Natural abilities are as truly gifts from God as those termed by men gracious abilities."¹⁰ There is

⁹ Oden (ed). Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings. "The Way of Holiness" 176.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 177.

no power in the natural abilities of the individual apart from the Holy Spirit and His power. God gives the gifts of power, knowledge, and grace, but He empowers these gifts by the power of the Spirit. When the Spirit witnesses and agrees with the spirit of the individual, there is true union with God in the theologies of Palmer and the Reformers.

The doctrine of Holiness is a deeper searching of the soul for a closer walk with Christ as a result of the acknowledgment of God's gracious work. The tendency of Christians is to look outside of themselves and to divert the problem away from themselves to someone or something else. The whole concept of holiness, for all whom this study has investigated, is to make persons aware of the holy life that God intended for humanity in order for them to live a life in accordance with God. The awareness of the ideal for holy living should be the desire of every Christian as he or she shares in the gracious gifts of God as well as the promise of the blessing of a loving and merciful God. Palmer stated that,

Having become convinced that holiness is a state of soul which the Scriptures clearly set forth as an attainment which it is your duty and privilege to be living in the enjoyment of, it is necessary that the intention be fully fixed to live a holy life. . . This will require deep searchings of the heart,¹¹

Within this understanding, the searching of the heart is crucial to living the holy life. The Spirit of God makes the person aware of this need and guides their steps to achieving it. In order for one to have oneself fully fixed on the holy life one must truly be committed to the life, call and will of God as demonstrated by Christ on the cross and put in the heart by the Holy Spirit. With this understanding, the deep searching of the heart is required for one to acquire holiness and wholeness of life in accordance with the will of God.

The Reformers, Luther and Calvin, called for a total commitment of the individual to the will of God. Palmer saw this as essential to the achievement and maintenance of the holy life.

¹¹ Oden (ed). Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings. "Entire Devotion to God" 190.

Apart from God's blessing, one is lost, because He will not receive the gift from the hand of the one who is not repentant as given in the Word. Palmer said that,

Be assured that unless you are decided on making the entire sacrifice of all your powers to God, and are willing to be sanctified on the terms specified in the Word, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing," [2 Cor. 6:17] you have no proper foundation for your faith to rest upon. when you endeavour to believe that God will receive the offering at your hand.¹²

She claims that there is no foundation for the faith of one who acts on his or her own accord and not by the power of the Spirit. In doing this, they act apart from the will and power of God and therefore no blessing is imparted on them. There is an act of the person as the respondent to the gift of God. Whereas, with Luther and Calvin, it is the total initiative and act of God on the elect or the chosen ones. Through this receptiveness and responsiveness of the individual to God, there is an indication of the function of free will. This is not an aspect of Reformed theology that is accepted. If it is true, that free will is the key to the person's receptiveness, then it must be totally corrupt and sinful. Therefore, according to the Reformers, there was no sense of total surrender and complete sanctification in this life until death. The death of the individual separates the immortal soul from the body. Thus, when the body has been renewed in immortality, then the body and soul will reunite in the glorification.

The grace of God, attested to by the saints, was reflected in their actions. Luther and Calvin gave attention to particular Church Fathers such as St. Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa. From these witnesses, there was set in motion an understanding of the holy life that was built upon for the following twelve hundred years. In times of suffering, the witnesses of the holy life were the ones who paved the way for those who totally surrendered their lives to God. Those who followed them used their experiences as examples to a growing faith. Palmer wrote that,

¹² Oden (ed). Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings. "Entire Devotion to God" 191.

“The experience of a glorious number of living witnesses who have attested the excellency of the knowledge of this grace, proves that just so soon as they were willing in reality to count all things loss, just so soon they found it perfectly easy to believe.”¹³ The witnesses that were evident in the days preceding the Reformation gave their lives for the faith and in defense of it. John Huss, only one hundred years before Luther was burned at the stake for his stance against the Roman Catholic Church. Luther, under the same circumstances, was able to take the next step.

Summary: The Doctrine of Holiness in the Reformers as Significant

The idea of holiness, as seen in the Reformers and Phoebe Palmer, can be viewed in light of the situations and circumstances of their time. It appears that throughout the history of the Church certain ideas grow out of adverse conditions within the body. The eagerness to seek God in times of trial and hardship becomes the only way a person can see God. It is true that Luther and Calvin suffered for their beliefs and in Luther's case he had to be protected from the Emperor and the Pope. The call of the Reformation was a call back to the original teachings of the Church of the Apostles as well as to the Scriptures as they were to be relayed to the laity. Both Luther and Calvin held strongly to the inspired Word of God and everything they defended was strictly Biblical. Calvin, a Biblical theologian, saw that there was no other source of truth outside of the revealed Word of God. Luther stood by his fellow reformer, but he was concerned for the effectiveness of the Kingdom that was drifting away from the understanding of the Laity. The Apostle Paul said that the body has many parts and all those parts function together in unison to form a unified single body, that is the body of Christ.

That desire for the total commitment of the individual in response to the righteousness of Christ was seen as a common thread throughout Palmer as well. The concept of holiness in

¹³ Oden (ed). Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings. “Entire Devotion to God” 192.

Palmer was much the same as that of Luther and Calvin, but the manner was different. It was different because of their understandings of the will of the person. Their basic idea of justification was the same. They all understood justification as the act of God to justify that which was totally lost. The contrast being that their understanding of sanctification was different. Palmer saw sanctification as a single act of God to bring the justified and sanctified person to their point entire sanctification. While in a single act, it was also a process that the totally sanctified person would desire to live through a life of whole surrender to God or holiness. The Reformers saw the concept of sanctification in terms of a lifelong process that was the working of God imputing the righteousness of Christ to the individual. They determined that because Adam's sin and guilt was imputed to succeeding generations, so then Christ's righteousness was imputed to those who have faith.

It can be noted that similarities are present in the early Reformers as well as in that of more recent theologians such as Palmer. The reason she was chosen for such a study was that she displayed a clear and concise understanding of holiness in her written works and teachings. Her theology was more developed in ways that reflected the advantage of time and the experience of those who preceded her, such as Luther and Calvin. Palmer said concerning the importance of the sanctification of the whole person,

The pursuits, the equipage, and the whole exterior, serve as an index to the mind: and to the degree conformity to this world is practiced, is the default in regard to worldly renunciation evident: and to a proportionate degree would a profession of entire sanctification be questionable and uninfluential.¹⁴

The search for the holy person is the search for the equal to Christ. Palmer, Luther, and Calvin knew this was unattainable. But, the call was to be like Christ or to be "Holy because your Father

¹⁴ Oden (ed). Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings. "Entire Devotion to God" 201.

in Heaven is Holy.” Can this be attainable in this life? Is there any reason to believe that holiness can be acquired through faith?

This study has demonstrated the views of the two leading Reformers of the Protestant Reformation as well as made a comparison and contrast of their views on justification and sanctification to that of a more recent theologian, Phoebe Palmer. The common note to be understood with the Reformers was that they renewed the concept of holiness and sanctification in the life of the believer. Also, they planted the seed for the future growth of the Church with a focus in the Scriptures and a closer walk with Christ by the understanding of the union that takes place. Those who followed, such as the Pietists, Moravians, John and Charles Wesley, and then Phoebe Palmer were building on the understandings gleaned by these figures. In order to qualify these statements, one should consider that what these people believed may have had something in common with Luther and Calvin was that the Reformers paved the way for all people at all levels to hear and see the Word of God being lived to the fullest extent. Wesley’s idea of sanctification surely superseded that of the Reformers. But, the important issue that should be considered in defense of the Reformers was that they not only believed their understanding of Holiness, they lived it. For the Church of the present day, the doctrines of sanctification and holiness should not be viewed in terms of one person’s understanding, but should be viewed in terms of its roots, trunk, and branches, in order to see the fruit produced and how the Church is to function in the present day.

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