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# Martin Luther's *The Freedom of a Christian* Revisited

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Among Luther scholars this tract has ordinarily received high marks. Thus Thomas M. Lindsay has noted: "Nothing that Luther has written more clearly manifests that combination of revolutionary daring and wise conservatism which was characteristic of the man."<sup>1</sup> Dietrich von Oppen acknowledges its wide influence:

*The Freedom of a Christian* belongs to Luther's early work which had decisive influence on the whole Protestant movement, before it split into Lutheranism, Calvinism and the other particular groups. As such it is one of the great documents of world history, a work which opened doors to the future, first in Luther's time and still in our own.<sup>2</sup>

Martin Brecht speaks of the tract as "one of Luther's most famous writings".<sup>3</sup> And re-stating Wilhelm Maurer, Eberhard Jüngel proclaims the tract to be "the most perfect expression" of Luther's "Reformation understanding of the mystery of Christ".<sup>4</sup>

Even Luther's preecumenical opponents were not totally negative. Hartmann Grisar, S.J., first quoted Th. Kolde, a Protestant, who described the tract as "perhaps the most beautiful publication that Luther has ever written, more the result of religious contemplation than theological reflection." But Grisar also added: "It often indeed offers its false ideas under the cloak of a mysterious manner of speech which appeals to the heart."<sup>5</sup> A generation later, Joseph Lortz was more mellow, although still critical: "Among Luther's writings there is hardly any other which makes a Catholic more melancholy—because it can be seen very clearly what the totally unusual Christian strength of Luther could have accomplished for the reform of the church *in the church*."<sup>6</sup>

*The Freedom of a Christian* may be seen as a conclusion of Luther's resounding reformation statements from 1520. *Treatise on Good Works* (*Von den guten Werken*) was published in early June 1520.<sup>7</sup> *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*<sup>8</sup> (*An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation*) was printed in August 1520, and followed by *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*<sup>9</sup> (*De Captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae praeludium*), published in October 1520. Earlier research of Wilhelm Maurer<sup>10</sup> had established that the German version of *The Freedom of a Christian*<sup>11</sup> (*Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen*) had been written first, then revised and translated by Luther himself into Latin (*Tractatus de libertate Christiana*). In a most careful study Birgit Stolt has argued for the priority of the Latin text.<sup>12</sup>

## I

While in celebrating conscience and courage Luther may have contributed to the rise of the definition of freedom as affirmed in the Age of Enlightenment, his definition of liberty was distinctively religious, the effect of *sola gratia*. This was not, as Gerhard Ebeling reminds us, a secular concern with freedom as "a declaration of the independence of man who does what he pleases."<sup>13</sup> Indeed, notes Erwin Mülhaupt, "What Luther meant by freedom and what he understood freedom to be is of little interest for most of our contemporaries."<sup>14</sup> Otto Hermann Pesch evaluates the situation as follows:

Of course, contemporary Christians believe they know Luther as a hero of freedom: didn't he successfully fight to set the Christians free from the "tyranny" of ecclesiastical hierarchy? Didn't he struggle for the freedom of conscience from the tutelage by the priests? Hasn't he dissolved the illegitimate marriage of church and state, church and worldly power, church and society? Hasn't he liberated the Christian theology from philosophical alienation and precisely thereby, vice versa, freed philosophical reason from the illicit control of theological guidance, particularly in the area of social and political life, the field of professions, economy, and law? Isn't Luther, in the final analysis, the father of the Enlightenment, of the secular state, of human rights? Isn't he after all, the spiritual and theological grandfather of the United States with their guarantee of religious toleration both by the government and even by church leaders?<sup>15</sup>

Otto Hermann Pesch came to criticize such marginal views of Luther as they present an "almost entirely false" image of

Luther, precisely because Pesch had discovered Luther's religious centre. Namely, Luther's "freedom by faith" is not a mere human accomplishment, but describes saved existence *coram Deo*.<sup>16</sup> In this presence there is both judgment and redemption as the believer discovers what it means to be a *simul iustus et peccator*.

## II

*The Freedom of a Christian* is prefaced by "An Open Letter to Pope Leo X". It is a complex statement with many nuances. While on the whole Luther writes quite politely, even humbly, he does distance himself from traditional Catholicism. Insofar as that was his own religious past, the account taking had to be painful. In any case, there is an uneasy mix of stiff politeness, biting irony and blunt rejection. Luther scholarship has noted these several aspects. Thus Roland H. Bainton<sup>17</sup> has observed that the letter is "deferential", and "couched in conciliatory terms" as noted by V.H.H. Green.<sup>18</sup> Heinrich Böhmer is correct that Luther "no longer deals with pope as a superior, but as a Christian brother who is in a very difficult situation."<sup>19</sup> Did Luther really expect the pope to accept this obviously new relationship? Roland H. Bainton has mused:

If Luther supposed that this letter and tract would mollify the pope, he was exceedingly naive. The deferential letter itself denied the primacy of the pope over councils, and the treatise asserted the priesthood of all believers. The pretense that the attack was directed, not against the pope, but against the *curia* is the device commonly employed by constitutionally-minded revolutionaries who do not like to admit to themselves that they are rebelling against the head of a government. The English Puritans similarly for some time claimed that they were not fighting Charles I but only the "Malignants" by whom he was surrounded. As conflicts continue, such fictions soon become too transparent to be useful. Luther was early driven to abandon the distinction, for the bull had been issued in the name of the pope and had never been disclaimed from the Vatican. It demanded recantation. That Luther would never accord.<sup>20</sup>

If one is to search for Luther's deeper motivation—which Luther himself does not spell out—the interpreter's hermeneutical presuppositions will be decisive but need not necessarily be misleading. Hartmann Grisar, S.J. quickly noticed that the letter to Pope Leo X was pre-dated to September 6, 1520, and written *after* the publication of the bull *Exsurge Domine*



on September 21, 1520. Grisar suspected that Luther had sought to avoid the perception that he was writing under the pressure of condemnation and therefore seeking personal advantage. At the same time, the vigorous denunciation of the Catholic Church, if perceived to be objective, would automatically lessen the public force of the ban. And the high personal praise of Leo X would either establish the pope's lack of gratitude (since he is condemning a person who has spoken so well of him) or would place the blame on the curia from acting apart from the pope, indeed against a friend of the pope. Finally, the critique of Johannes Eck and Luther's claim to be a stalwart defender of God's Word would further enhance Luther's standing.<sup>21</sup>

E.G. Schwiebert<sup>22</sup> interpreted the situation in terms of the advice which was being offered to Luther, and Luther's own half-hearted acceptance of such advice. Namely, Carl von Miltitz, a young German nobleman who sought to enhance his career through the mediating efforts between Rome and Luther, had heard that Johannes Eck was returning to Germany with a papal bull, threatening Luther's excommunication. During the meeting of the Augustinian order at Eisleben, August 28, 1520, Miltitz persuaded Johannes von Staupitz, the retiring Vicar General of the German Congregation of the Augustinians, and his successor Wenceslaus Link, to visit Luther. Their meeting took place on September 6, 1520.<sup>23</sup> Luther expressed his doubts whether a conciliatory letter would be useful, yet agreed to accept the advice and to write the letter. Further pressure on Luther came in a meeting with Miltitz on October 1, 1520. Luther again promised to write to the pope.<sup>24</sup> The result was hardly conciliatory. Richard Marius is probably correct: "Luther's partisans have always wanted to see this letter as conciliatory, evidence of the graciousness of their hero and his willingness to compromise, and they have used it to make the Pope seem obstinate and wicked. It was the effect Luther probably intended. In fact his letter is about as conciliatory as a knife in the ribs."<sup>25</sup> Even if this might be an overstatement, the fact remains that at least on four points Luther spoke to the pope as was not appropriate according to the ordinary understanding of the 16th century ecclesial decorum.

1. Luther expresses his compassion for the pope who must live "among monsters of this age",<sup>26</sup> and "sit as a lamb in the

midst of wolves".<sup>27</sup> The implication seems to be that these evils have not only surrounded but also have overwhelmed the pope. Therefore Luther commiserates: "I have always been sorry...that you were made pope in these times."<sup>28</sup>

2. The praise which Luther offers to the pope is distinctively qualified. Luther notes that he joins in this act since "all people praise" the pope.<sup>29</sup> The next comment qualifies and thereby limits: "I have never thought ill of you personally."<sup>30</sup> As Luther had repeatedly made clear, this was not the issue which was at stake: not the person, but the office was to be considered!

3. That Luther is in an attacking mode is clearly indicated by Luther's sharp advice to the pope: "Do not listen to those sirens who pretend that you are no mere man but a demigod so that you may command and require whatever you wish."<sup>31</sup> It is here that Luther recalls the pope's ancient title "servant of servants".<sup>32</sup> Immediately Luther thunders forth: "Be not deceived by those who pretend that you are lord of the world, allow no one to be considered a Christian unless he accepts your authority, and prate that you have power over heaven, hell, and purgatory."<sup>33</sup> Here the outrageous title "vicar of Christ" is of no help: "A man is a vicar only when his superior is absent."<sup>34</sup> Hence Luther's conclusion and criticism: if the pope desires to insist on being a vicar, he necessarily denies the present Lordship of Christ; however, if the Lordship of Christ in the church is affirmed, then there is no need for a vicar! And in the latter case, Luther thinks that it is appropriate to ask: "Indeed, what is such a vicar but an antichrist and an idol?"<sup>35</sup>

4. Finally, as if the previous statements had not been sufficiently critical of the pope, Luther assails the office of the pope in an even more outspoken way. Luther clearly does not any longer view the papacy as authoritative, since he has appealed "to a future council, despite the decrees of your predecessors Pius and Julius, who with a foolish tyranny forbade such an appeal."<sup>36</sup> Also, Luther admits that he has "sharply attacked ungodly doctrines",<sup>37</sup> and criticized his papal opponents "not because of their bad morals, but because of their ungodliness."<sup>38</sup> As Luther explains it, the key point at issue is not his own inflexibility, but the ultimate and unchangeable authority of the Bible: "In all other matters I will yield to any man whatsoever; but I have neither the power nor will to deny the Word of God."<sup>39</sup> Luther's verdict is scathing:

As you well know, there has been flowing from Rome these many years—like a flood covering the world—nothing but a devastation of men's bodies and souls and possessions, the worst examples of the worst of all things. All this is clearer than day to all, and the Roman church, once the holiest of all, has become the most licentious den of thieves [Matthew 21:13], the most shameless of all brothels, the kingdom of sin, death, and hell. It is so bad that even Antichrist himself, if he should come, could think of nothing to add to its wickedness.<sup>40</sup>

Admittedly, Luther immediately offers a distinction: pope Leo X is not included in this account! Yet since Luther does not spell out how to separate the pope from the curia, it remains a distinction without a real difference. In the meantime, the curia is being assailed head on: "The Roman Curia is already lost, for God's wrath has relentlessly fallen upon it."<sup>41</sup> And after a short comparison between the curia and the ancient Babylon, Luther offers one more violent and total denunciation:

Is it not true that under the vast expanse of heaven there is nothing more corrupt, more pestilent, more offensive than the Roman Curia? It surpasses beyond all comparison the godlessness of the Turks so that, indeed, although it was once a gate of heaven, it is now an open mouth of hell, such a mouth that it cannot be shut because of the wrath of God.<sup>42</sup>

In a more recent reflection on Luther's letter to pope Leo X, Scott H. Hendrix once more sums up the situation and returns to the crucial question: "From the letter itself there is little reason to assume that Luther truly expected Leo to change his mind. Why, then, did he write the letter?" Wisely, Hendrix does not concentrate on the internal reasons of Luther's mind, but turns his attention to the external factors. First, Hendrix interprets the pre-dating of the letter to Leo X as a considerable political move, potentially useful to both Luther and the electoral court at Wittenberg in order "to claim that they had done all they could for the sake of peace." The papal bull *Exsurge Domine* had been completed on 15 June and reached Luther on 10 October. Luther pre-dated his letter to Leo X as of 6 September. It was printed together with the tract on freedom before 4 November 1520. Second, Hendrix points to Eck's bitter attack on Luther's *Address to the Christian Nobility* with the charge that Luther had misrepresented pope Leo X as an impious man: "The charge of Eck in all likelihood spurred Luther to construct his letter on the distinction between the person of Leo and the papal office"<sup>43</sup>—and to defend



the former. Third, regardless of political considerations, notes Hendrix, "the uncompromising tone of the letter is genuine".<sup>44</sup> As such, it places *The Freedom of a Christian* into a distinctive framework.

Some scholars, however, in commenting on *The Freedom of a Christian*, isolate it from Luther's introductory letter.<sup>45</sup> Then Luther's tract appears pleasantly, albeit inaccurately, conciliatory, e.g., "Here he expressed with uncongenial moderation his basic doctrine—that faith alone, not good works, makes the true Christian and saves him from hell."<sup>46</sup> Although contemporary theological goals can be ecumenical and even celebrate convergence, a de-clawed Luther is a misunderstood Luther. Only when it is understood what Luther actually taught, it is possible to discuss his authentic relevance for today.

### III

What Luther wrote was no sudden and superficial emotional response. He had anticipated the events and prepared his theological response. The ideas contained in *The Freedom of a Christian* he had carefully worked out during his second series of lectures on the Psalms, the *Operationes in Psalmos*, 1 to 21(22), begun in 1518. In March 1520 Luther paid special attention to Psalm 13 (14):1.<sup>47</sup> Now in the tract on freedom Luther undertook to integrate these ideas into devotional life.<sup>48</sup> Hence the sharp contrast: Luther's opponents indeed have analyzed faith, but have "never tasted the great strength there is in faith". Here the contemporary setting, and hence experience, was of great relevance. Luther is convinced that in order to understand this "strength" of faith,<sup>49</sup> it is necessary at some time to have "experienced the courage which faith gives a man when trials oppress him."<sup>50</sup> On the basis of this empowerment Luther now identifies the new condition of the believer which he designates with a variety of biblical synonyms, such as "Spirit", "spiritual nature", "soul", and the "inner or new man". George W. Forell clarifies the meaning of these terms through a contrast:

At first glance this may appear to be the same kind of argument that allowed Plato's Socrates to speak of the body as the prison of the soul and to think of human liberation as liberation from the world of shadows, the material world, into the world of ideas, the spiritual world...But nothing could be further from Luther's intention...The



difference is not "matter" and "spirit" in the customary philosophical and religious sense but the person without Christ and the person with Christ.<sup>51</sup>

It is in such a perspective that Luther offers the famous paradox of freedom: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."<sup>52</sup> The source for this insight, as Luther immediately acknowledges, is Apostle Paul, I Corinthians 9:19, Romans 13:8, Galatians 4:4 and Philippians 2:6-7. Indeed, as Wolfhart Pannenberg has observed, liberty is not a mere marginal affirmation for Luther. Pannenberg is in fact convinced that even today "the language of freedom and liberty" is a superior way to articulate the meaning of justification!<sup>53</sup> Eberhard Jüngel notes the particular flavour of the Pauline-Lutheran approach. Here Aristotle may serve as a helpful contrast. He wrote: "If there is a lord, then there is (also) a servant. And if there is a servant, then there is also a lord."<sup>54</sup> In a Christian perspective, which Luther represents, the very same person is both lord and servant. And "This is a concept of a free lord which radically alters the notion of lordship."<sup>55</sup> Oswald Bayer offers a further clarification: "For Luther the servanthood of love is exclusively the servanthood of the lover, but not of the loved one to whom freedom is granted through such a servanthood."<sup>56</sup> Here the possibility to proffer love in authentic freedom which liberates as it redeems does not originate with mere human good-will, but only from God's grace. In other words, Luther continues to use the terms of "spirit" and "flesh" in a soteriological rather than an anthropological perspective. Wilhelm Maurer explains the approach as follows: "The spiritual inward man [Mensch] is the *new* man, the man with Christ; and the bodily, the outward man is the *old* man, the man without Christ."<sup>57</sup> And while these two modes of existence can be distinguished, they cannot be separated. As Luther puts it: "these two men in the same man contradict each other."<sup>58</sup> Such an appeal to the *simul iustus et peccator* conceptuality serves to underscore that the initiative to redemption and freedom cannot come from "the flesh", the sinful and unredeemed self. The illustration which Luther immediately provides makes clear that the church as an institution does not offer a holy domain, somehow exempt from the grace-sin dialectic. Luther writes: "It does not help the

soul if the body is adorned with the sacred robes of priests or dwells in sacred places or is occupied with sacred duties or prays, fasts, abstains from certain kinds of food, or does any work that can be done by the body and in the body.”<sup>59</sup> Gerhard Ebeling notes that what Luther is basically offering is not an analysis of individual sins, but the identification of the sinner.<sup>60</sup> Yet the focus on the sinner does not exclude a concern with grace: the soul can never be in a situation which would be so unholy as to be beyond the reach of God’s grace. Concretely this takes place through the presence of God’s Word, and “where the Word of God is missing, there is no help at all for the soul.”<sup>61</sup> At the same time, insists Luther, “If it has the Word of God it is rich and lacks nothing since it has the World of life, truth, light, peace, righteousness, salvation, joy, liberty, wisdom, power, grace, glory, and of every incalculable blessing.” Tuomo Mannermaa appeals to this text as one of the occasions where Luther spells out the new relationship between God and the believer: “The Word of the Gospel joins God with the sinful man.”<sup>62</sup> Here, while generally pointing to the Bible, Luther refers specifically to its very centre, namely to Jesus Christ as the Redeemer. With precision and power, Luther sums up: “The Word is the gospel of God concerning his Son, who was made flesh, suffered, rose from the dead, and was glorified through the Spirit who sanctifies.”<sup>63</sup> Of course, this gospel does not reach people effortlessly and automatically. Preaching is required. And, Luther subsumes, authentic preaching takes place in the very context of faith. In this way Luther is not pointing either to mere word events or to subjective devotion in listening, but to the dynamic of faith which sustains both the preacher and the listener. Hence Luther can say: “Faith alone is the saving and efficacious use of the Word of God...”<sup>64</sup> In other words, Luther is pointing to the creative circle of faith: it is by faith that the Word is truly heard and it is by the Word that faith is awakened.<sup>65</sup> The situation is as profound as it is complex. And, according to Wolfhart Pannenberg, here we may see that “Luther’s new concept of faith was in fact his most important and imperishable contribution to theology.”<sup>66</sup> Luther’s own emphatic concern is explicit: “Therefore it is clear that, as the soul needs only the Word of God for its life and righteousness, so it is justified by faith alone and not any works...”<sup>67</sup> Faith, then, is

an eye-opener to the truth. Only in faith is it possible to recognize one's own sinfulness: "the moment you begin to have faith you learn that all things in you are altogether blameworthy, sinful, and damnable..."<sup>68</sup> Only then there arises the awareness for the need of Christ the Redeemer. Then, "if you believe in him," continues Luther, "you may through this faith become a new man."<sup>69</sup> In one sense this is a new status before God: "Your sins are forgiven and you are justified by the merits of another, namely, of Christ alone."<sup>70</sup> In another perspective faith can be understood in terms of the Law and Gospel dialectic. Namely, the details of personal sinfulness are recognized as God, through the Law, demands specific obedience in particulars. Here pride and false piety crumble as they are confronted by God's eternal commandments, which "show us what we ought to do but do not give us the power to do it". Yet they are by no means useless. "They are intended to teach man to know himself, that through them he may recognize his inability to do good and may despair of his own ability."<sup>71</sup> Of course, despair is only the initial response to the divine demand and hence only a stage in the process of faith. Subsequently, in the next, the promise-stage, God gives "what the commandments of God demand and fulfil what the law prescribes..."<sup>72</sup> This giving, as Luther describes it, is personal, intimate, and redemptive. Here an authentic union takes place and the believer is liberated from the power of sin. Luther writes: "Since these promises of God are holy, true, righteous, free, and peaceful words, full of goodness, the soul which clings to them with a firm faith will be so closely united with them and altogether absorbed by them that it not only will share in all their power but will be saturated and intoxicated by them."<sup>73</sup> Thus what has changed is not only a man's status but also his personality. Here several facets may be considered. According to Wolfhart Pannenberg, from the mystical tradition Luther has absorbed an experiential sense:

There is an element of "ecstasy" in the act of faith. We literally leave ourselves to the one to whom we completely entrust ourselves. This ecstatic nature of faith is presupposed in Luther's recurrent affirmations that through faith we participate in Christ and, indeed, in God—in the divine life and spirit and grace.<sup>74</sup>

The way Luther describes this experience makes clear that it is not self-originating, but a gift from God through Jesus



Christ: "If a touch of Christ healed, how much more will this most tender spiritual touch, this absorbing of the Word, communicate to the soul all things that belong to the Word."<sup>75</sup> At the same time, while an evoked experience and a personal act, it does not remain an isolated moment. Here in trust, as Pannenberg puts it, "the trusting person surrenders to the one in whom such confidence is entrusted."<sup>76</sup> Of course, Luther knows that faith has its subjective, human side: it is the believer who believes, trusts, and loves! Yet such activity is not merely a human "work". That is to say, while personally real and necessarily a subjective experience, faith does not remain an independent, autonomous act. Faith is essentially the joining of the believer to Jesus Christ. To affirm this insight, Luther makes use of the ancient illustration for mystical union: "Just as the heated iron glows like fire because of the union of fire with it, so the Word imparts its qualities to the soul."<sup>77</sup> The illustration, as made use of in the Early Church, vividly accents the effects of Christ's divinity on the believer. The divinity/fire so engulfs and irradiates the iron/humanity, that while the latter can continue to be discerned abstractly, in concrete encounters first noticed is the divinity/fire.

Wilhelm Maurer,<sup>78</sup> with many others, has observed that ordinarily Luther has emphasized the human side. That is to say, in contrasting the theology of the cross with the theology of glory, the way to the divinity of Christ is only through the suffering on the cross, hence through Christ's humanity. Without denying the significance of this motif, in this tract Luther obviously makes use of several facets of the motif of deification. Speaking of the believer in Pauline terms as "the soul", Luther portrays redemption as a unitive transformation, experienced in joyous receptivity. Consequently, the "Christian...needs no works to justify him."<sup>79</sup> Participatory unity has reshaped the believer's total existence. At the same time Luther does not disregard the significant role of the believer's humanity. Here we may once more return to the motif of trust, specifically the act of trusting. Luther writes: "There is no other honor equal to the estimate of truthfulness and righteousness with which we honor him whom we trust."<sup>80</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg observes:

In medieval theology, faith meant assent to the doctrine of the church, an assent, to be sure, that must be motivated by love of God in order to have salvific effect. Luther not only added the



notion of trust, but he wanted to emphasize that the personal center itself changes in the act of trust, because the trusting person surrenders to the one in whom such confidence is entrusted.<sup>81</sup>

In other words, the acknowledged trustworthiness of God, in analogy to a person praised for trustworthiness, is both the highest human expression of praise and personal reliance at the very same time. Similarly, if we do not trust another person, we attribute to her/him the worst of all human qualities. Thus trust accounts most centrally for the quality of relationships between people as well as between people and God. Luther underscores: "So when the soul firmly trusts God's promises, it regards him as trustful and righteous."<sup>82</sup> This is "the very highest worship of God."<sup>83</sup> And it has a clear and concrete route of actualization, as the trusting person obeys God: "the soul consents to his will".<sup>84</sup> And the very centre of this consent is within faith: "This obedience... is not rendered by works, but by faith alone."<sup>85</sup> When misunderstood, Luther is thought to teach an inactive inwardness, where a mere presence of faith automatically accounts for a condition (of justification) which has not occurred in the actual existence of the believer. Luther's account, however, points to fact and not to pious fiction. Trust in God consists of a faithful, actual, and active obedience. Here in trusting God the power of faith comes to fruition. Such an emphasis on the centrality of trust, notes Wolfhart Pannenberg, so "crucial in Luther's argument", has not always been fully appreciated. Pannenberg continues:

Melanchthon appropriated the interpretation of faith in terms of personal trust, and he often argued that trust is the only adequate way of responding to a promise. But Melanchthon did not grasp Luther's profound insight that faith by way of ecstasis participates in the reality of Christ himself and *therefore* transforms the faithful into Christ's image. Consequently, in Melanchthon's theology justification remained a somewhat wooden, juridical matter, while in Luther's language it had a mystical flavor.<sup>86</sup>

Of course, there were times when Luther himself made good use of juridical language since it is scriptural. Thus Luther writes: "So Paul says in Romans 4[:3] that Abraham's faith 'was reckoned to him as righteousness' because by it he gave glory most perfectly to God, and that for the same reason our faith shall be reckoned to us as righteousness if we believe."<sup>87</sup> Indeed, it was in faith that Abraham obeyed. But his obedient

trust was not merely an attitude, but also a courageous act which occurred and was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness. And since it was not only a God-oriented venture, but also a participatory experience, a unitive grasp of God's presence at the closest range, Luther turns further attention to this motif of mystical unity. He writes: "The third incomparable benefit of faith is that it unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom. By this mystery, as the Apostle teaches, Christ and the soul become one flesh [Ephesians 5:31-32]." <sup>88</sup>

Quoting Luther's tract on freedom at this point, Bengt R. Hoffman adds the following overview:

From Luther's remarks on participation in God we draw the conclusion that one does not do justice to his view of sharing in divine life by concentration on the "for you" of redemption or by a reduction of redemption to the ethical. On Luther's view the freedom engendered by the gospel was not simply a declaration of grace, but an experience of joy and inner change. <sup>89</sup>

At the same time, two further observations are in order. On the one hand, Luther does indeed make use of the language of mysticism with particular attention to the analogy of marriage which he explains as follows: "And if they are one flesh and there is between them a true marriage—indeed the most perfect of all marriages, since human marriages are but poor examples of this one true marriage—it follows that everything they have they hold in common, the good as well as the evil." <sup>90</sup> On the other hand, it should not be overlooked that Luther does not at this time go on to explore the exact nature of this unitive experience analogous to a marriage but instead shifts his attention to the so-called "joyous exchange": "Accordingly the believing soul can boast of and glory in whatever Christ has as though it were its own, and whatever the soul has Christ claims as his own." <sup>91</sup> Here then the truth of the atonement is expressed by a continuous assertion of the *simul iustus et peccator* theme, retained in the midst of a unitive experience, and described with special attention of the human appropriation of salvation. In Luther's words:

Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation. The soul is full of sins, death, and damnation. Now let faith come between them and sins, death, and damnation will be Christ's, while grace, life, and salvation will be the soul's; for if Christ is a bridegroom, he must take upon himself the things which are his bride's and bestow upon her the things that are his. <sup>92</sup>

Here, without denying the experiential dimension of the redemptive event, Luther's main attention continues to be on the gift of faith, even when expressed in terminology which echoes the mystical tradition: Jesus Christ, "by the wedding ring of faith... shares in the sins, death, and pains of hell which are his bride's."<sup>93</sup> Clearly enough, an understanding of the atonement presupposes the affirmation of incarnation. As the incarnate Lord, Christ gains victory and thus redemption through the route of suffering: "he suffered, died, and descended into hell that he might overcome them all."<sup>94</sup> Without at this time subscribing to a detailed theory of atonement, it is already here that the Christus Victor motif has emerged with some clarity ("death and hell could not swallow him up, these were necessarily swallowed up by him in a mighty duel...").<sup>95</sup>

A further facet to be noted is that the faith Luther is speaking about is above all an undeserved gift. The analogy of "marriage" is therefore now upgraded to a "royal marriage", and as such here it is not a marriage between equals: "Here this rich and divine bridegroom Christ marries this poor, wicked harlot, redeems her from all her evil, and adorns her with all his goodness. Her sins cannot now destroy her, since they are laid upon Christ and swallowed up by him."<sup>96</sup> And repeatedly Luther notes that "good works" cannot fulfil the demands of the Law, and thereby obtain justification. The activities of the self are after all motivated by the "heart". Only when the self, in its core, has been transformed and elevated to a new, authentic status of redeemed existence, can there emerge works which are acceptable to God. This insight has not only personal but also corporate ramifications for a new understanding of ecclesiology and government. Here Luther makes use of the concept of the priesthood of all believers. Namely, sharing through faith in the being of Christ, all believers participate in the priesthood and in the kingship. Luther puts it this way: "Hence all of us who believe in Christ are priests and kings in Christ, as I Peter 2[:9] says: 'You are a chosen race, God's own people, a royal priesthood, a priestly kingdom, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into this marvelous light.'"<sup>97</sup> Clearly, Christian freedom is then applicable both to church and state. Dietrich von Oppen sums up with poetic clarity:

Now the ideas in *The Freedom of a Christian* broke down all the retaining walls; all institutions and relationships were declared to



be of fundamentally secondary significance; the driving force of the gospel was brought without restriction to all men in the same way; all spheres of life were bathed in the one, brilliant light and measured by the same ultimate norms.<sup>98</sup>

Luther's text allows for such—and even more exuberant—generalizations. Clearly, Luther's central concern of this tract is not political but soteriological. His more detailed expositions are concerned with the soteriological themes. Yet on occasions Luther offers insights which could be seen as celebrating freedom without boundaries. For example, according to Luther, the Christian "by virtue of his royal power...rules over all things, death, life, and sin, and through his priestly glory is omnipotent with God because he does the things which God asks and desires..."<sup>99</sup>

But then, as if having second thoughts, Luther quickly begins to clarify the meaning of priesthood. First, in principle priests do not differ from laymen; the various clerical titles, insofar as they suggest superiority, are wrongly applied to one class of people. Second, realistically, there has to be a division of labour as a matter of good order and efficiency. Luther knows: "Although we are all equally priests, we cannot all publicly minister and teach."<sup>100</sup> Third, in Roman Catholicism common sense had been changed into manipulative exercise of power—indeed, it had "developed into so great a display of power and so terrible a tyranny that no heathen empire or other earthly power can be compared with it, just as if laymen were not also Christians."<sup>101</sup>

Yet, as may be readily recognized, Luther's critique of what he regarded as a decadent church was not being offered in administrative categories. Here Luther has not attempted to draw a profile of the Lutheran pastor, and to spell out the role of a Lutheran prince or a Lutheran city council. Luther is only recording what it means to be a Christian. Here, appropriately, the central significance belongs to Christ and the proclamation of Christ. The latter Luther perceives in intensely existentialist terms: it is necessary not only to proclaim Christ in general, but to experience this reality in one's own personal life—that He "be Christ for you and me".<sup>102</sup> Finally, Luther also turns his attention to what he has called "the outer man".<sup>103</sup> Namely, in seeking to live one's faith, the believer encounters grave difficulties: "he meets a contrary will in his own flesh which strives to



serve the world and seeks its own advantage.”<sup>104</sup> Since Luther is not a Platonic dualist, the distinction, as already noted, is not between soul and body, but between faith and sin. And yet Luther here does attribute a certain negative role to the physical body. It tends to be rebellious, “if not held in check”.<sup>105</sup> Hence the believer needs “to discipline his body by fasting, watchings, labors, and other reasonable discipline...”<sup>106</sup> And since temptations come relentlessly, “a man cannot be idle, for the need of his body drives him and he is compelled to do many good works to reduce it to subjection.”<sup>107</sup> Still, there is no possibility to gain righteousness by such ascetic and good works. Faith, not works, justifies; here Luther is inflexible. Subsequently, the believer “does the works out of spontaneous love in obedience to God...”<sup>108</sup> In this way asceticism is retained, but removed from the context of merit and placed in the setting of gratitude as well as common sense. Consequently, the “bodily castigations” have to be adjusted to individual needs. After all, only the individual can know what is “sufficient to repress the lasciviousness and lust of his body”.<sup>109</sup> But this is not merely subjective and exclusively personal knowledge alone. Turning attention to the source of good works, Luther appeals to Matthew 7:18, and notes that as a good tree bears good fruit, so a “good man does good works”.<sup>110</sup> Aware that he is charged with rejecting good works,<sup>111</sup> he regards the charge as erroneous, as it overlooks that faith does not remain idle; it is from faith that good works flow. But this is not an automatic process. The larger context here, as already earlier in the tract, is the dialectic between Law and Gospel. Within the penitential self-understanding and redemptive restoration insights abound. Intriguingly, Luther does not seek to develop any sort of casuistry, but concludes his great treatise with attention to love as the essence and source of good works. Such love, authentic and challenging, is continuously other-directed. The basic principle is the following: “A man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body to work for it alone, but he lives also for all men on earth; rather, he lives only for others and not for himself.”<sup>112</sup> As the result, the outworking of Christian obedience will be oriented to the needs of the neighbour in mind: “he should be guided in all his works by this thought and contemplate this one thing alone, that he may serve and benefit others in all that he does, considering nothing except

the need and the advantage of his neighbor.”<sup>113</sup> This, then, is no wooden performance of duty: “Here faith is truly active through love [Galatians 5:6].”<sup>114</sup> Yet how one is to discern the needs of the neighbour in a serious in-depth manner, Luther does not state. In a way this is a serious lacuna; but the discovery of lacunae at the beginning stages of one’s theology is no rarity. At the same time, precisely this vaguely structured but intense affirmation of love for the neighbour has also turned out to be a creative contribution. Wolfhart Pannenberg discerns that as follows:

The Lutheran insistence on pure doctrine was as monolithic as anything at that time. There was no room for doctrinal pluralism. And yet, it was not by chance that the principle of Christian freedom favored in the long run a more pluralistic and tolerant attitude even in questions of doctrine. The reason is that the principle of Christian freedom embodies the spirit of immediacy to Christ on the part of the individual believer, and therefore it entails a necessity for personal judgment on matters of authoritative doctrine. Such a critical judgment of the individual conscience may not enjoy the public authority in the church that belongs to its special ministry. Nevertheless, the principle of Christian freedom entitles Christians to their own personal judgment in matters of faith. This entails a pluralistic situation within the church concerning questions of doctrine on the local level of the life of the church as well as on the regional and university level.<sup>115</sup>

Of course, Pannenberg was not merely guessing what might be the future development of Luther’s theology—he already knew the results. Yet his observation is not insignificant. Luther’s unfortunate outbursts of intolerance, his anti-Semitism, his theological self-righteousness, need to be balanced not only with his authentic humility, but also with this intense concern for loving one’s neighbour. Indeed, as Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach puts it, “Luther can masterfully derive love from the life in faith.”<sup>116</sup>

The concluding section of *The Freedom of a Christian* repeatedly—and powerfully—celebrates the meaning of faith active in love. Generally it is a christocentrically understood love. Namely, the Christian, “free from all works...ought in this liberty to empty himself, take upon himself the form of a servant, be made in the likeness of men, be found in human form, and to serve, help, and in every way deal with his neighbor as he sees that God through Christ has dealt and still deals with

him.”<sup>117</sup> This must not be viewed as a mere imitation. After all, here we are not on the level of works, making the effort to be like Christ. Instead of an imitation, Luther prefers to speak of an identification: “I will therefore give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself to me.”<sup>118</sup> Mannermaa comments: “Thus when the idea of deification and the conception of God are mutually connected, it becomes clear, how it is from the deepest roots of Luther’s theology that there arises his view of the Christian as a Christ to the neighbor.”<sup>119</sup>

And when Luther subsequently celebrates the life of Christian love, he is not merely reflecting on what Christians can do, but above all observing what they really are in the deepest core of their being: “Behold, from faith thus flow forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a joyful, willing, and free mind that serves one’s neighbor willingly and takes no account of gratitude or ingratitude, of praise or blame, of gain or loss.”<sup>120</sup> The exuberance is almost overwhelming, as Luther sets forth the profile of Christian existence. Of course, the reality of *simul iustus et peccator* is thereby not rejected. Luther has not slipped into idealism! At the same time, Luther has offered a precise definition of what it means to be a *iustus* and to live in *agape*. In a subsequent passage Luther puts it this way:

Just as our neighbor is in need and lacks that in which we abound, so we were in need before God and lacked his mercy. Hence, as our heavenly Father has in Christ freely come to our aid, we also ought freely to help our neighbor through our body and its works, and each one should become as it were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all, that is, that we may be truly Christian.<sup>121</sup>

Roland H. Bainton saw in the assertion that “a Christian must be a Christ to his neighbor” the very “epitome of Luther’s ethic”.<sup>122</sup> Tuomo Mannermaa suggests more. Mannermaa recognizes that this quotation “expresses the essence of the conception of theosis”.<sup>123</sup> Mannermaa observes that “the Christians were called Christians by Luther, because Christ lives in them and they are continuously Christs to each other.” He then points to Luther’s statement:

But alas in our day this life is unknown throughout the world; it is neither preached about nor sought after; we are altogether ignorant of our own name and do not know why we are Christians or bear the



name of Christians. Surely we are named after Christ, not because he is absent from us, but because he dwells in us, that is, because we believe in him and are Christs one to another and do to our neighbors as Christ does to us.<sup>124</sup>

Luther's examples for such a life-style are scriptural. The New Testament's concern with the injunctions of the Old Testament provide Luther with concrete cases where obedience and freedom have coexisted and love has flourished. Thus Virgin Mary, even when submitting to the Mosaic law of purification [Luke 2:22], did so "out of free and willing love".<sup>125</sup> Apostle Paul circumcised Timothy for the sake of the "weak", but refused to circumcise Titus at the demand of the work-righteous.<sup>126</sup> Both Christ's example of willingly paying the tax money<sup>127</sup> (Matthew 17:24-27) and Paul's teaching in Romans 13:1-7<sup>128</sup> spell out for Luther that, justified by faith, "Christians should be subject to the governing authorities", not in order to earn salvation, "but that in the liberty of the Spirit they shall by so doing serve others and the authorities themselves and obey their will freely and out of love."<sup>129</sup>

Now while such instances are a very long distance from a coherent application of Luther's ethical theory—and may, in fact raise questions about the viability of his theory itself—one may also appreciate Luther's limited accomplishment. Luther has portrayed Christian freedom with primary attention to the inner liberation and spontaneous creativity which is the result of redemption and faithful love. In previous writings and subsequent elaboration Luther is able to develop ethics for society. On the basis of this tract alone it is unfair to attribute to Luther a mere subjective inwardness, oblivious to societal problems and responsibilities.<sup>130</sup>

Moreover, the struggle for reform in the Roman Catholic Church draws Luther's attention to some issues which today may appear somewhat peripheral. Particularly this may be the case in regard to Luther's impassioned comments on the role of ecclesial ceremonies. He sees in their rigid defense an unbiblical practice of work-righteousness—hence his eagerness to criticize "the unyielding, stubborn ceremonialists who like deaf adders are not willing to hear the truth of liberty."<sup>131</sup> Thus the tract ends on a quasi-Erasman note. The eventual conflict with Erasmus ought not to lead us to disregard his influence on contemporaries, Luther included! Of course, Erasmus was one-sided and failed to celebrate the positive dimensions of liturgy



and the sacramental means of grace. But with Luther he rightly rejected the workrighteousness element in ceremonies. Accordingly, Erasmus scorned the shortsightedness which "embraced the shadows and neglected the substance".<sup>132</sup> Luther, at this point similarly, could write of ceremonies in analogy to builders' "models and plans": "They are prepared, not as permanent structure, but because without them nothing could be built or made. When the structure is complete, the models and plans are laid aside."<sup>133</sup>

In conclusion, we shall reiterate that Luther's concern with freedom is thoroughly soteriological. In its essence liberation consists of redemption. That Luther as a biblical theologian would be concerned about salvation, of course, offers no surprise. Rather, the ultimate significance of the tract on Christian freedom may be seen in its contextuality balancing role. While as a reformer Luther indeed contributed to the new understanding of the structure of the church as a realm of redemption, he, as a prophet in his time, challenged his contemporaries to correlate their ecclesial renewal with the foundational Word of God. Luther saw that this endeavour presupposed personal renewal, yet in such a way that it would not remain self-centered and personal effort-oriented, but would be grasped as participatory and unitive. In faith and in courageous living of faith, experiencing the presence of Christ through the Word, Luther outlined the reciprocity of preaching and hearing, of delivering and receiving, and of loving and being loved: this was the context where the reality of Christ would be grasped both personally and corporately.

Not the denial of the need of activity in religion, but the prioritizing of responsibilities is what earmarked Luther's efforts: the authentic human being in Luther's view emerged only under the impact of God's Word and in faith, enabling the becoming of Christ for others as well as the acceptance of the Christ in others for one's own life. At times Luther seemed to succeed in following his own theology. At other times the success eluded him. In both settings Luther continued to look for grace. Without denying that at times Luther's steady foot slipped badly and he turned away from Christian freedom, it is not true that "battered in later years by onslaughts from the right and the left, [Luther] was to settle back onto the reliable old forms of religious expression like a sea lion finding a

rock in a storming ocean, where he might sit and roar back at the tempest.”<sup>134</sup> Even in old age Luther dared to go into the storming ocean of active life, and knew that *sola gratia* was the route to Christ and redemption.

## Notes

[Unless indicated otherwise, all translations are my own. E.G.]

- 1 Thomas M. Lindsey, *A History of the Reformation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950) 1:241.
- 2 Dietrich von Oppen in *Lutheran World: Publication of the Lutheran World Federation*, 14,3(1967):44.
- 3 Martin Brecht, *Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483-1521*, trans. James L. Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 406.
- 4 Eberhard Jüngel, *The Freedom of a Christian: Luther's Significance for Contemporary Theology*, trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988) 20; original title *Zur Freiheit eines Christenmenschen: Eine Erinnerung an Luthers Schrift* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1981).
- 5 Hartmann Grisar, *Luther: Luthers Werden* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1911) 1:351.
- 6 Joseph Lortz, *Die Reformation in Deutschland* (Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder, 1962, 4th ed.) 1:233.
- 7 *D. Martin Luthers Werke* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus, 1883 ff.) [subsequently abbreviated as W A], 6:202-276; *Luther's Works* (Saint Louis: Concordia) [subsequently abbreviated as L W], 44:21-44.
- 8 W A 6:904-469; L W 44:123-217.
- 9 W A 6:497-573; L W 36:11-126.
- 10 Wilhelm Maurer, *Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen: Zwei Untersuchungen zu Luthers Reformationsschriften 1520/21* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949) 65-71. Birgit Stolt, *Studien zu Luthers Freiheitstraktat. Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis*, 6 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1969) 24, 90-117.
- 11 W A 7:20-38; English trans. Bertram Lee Wolf, *Reformation Writings of Martin Luther* (London, 1952) 1:349-379.
- 12 W A 7:42-73; L W 31:333-377.
- 13 Gerhard Ebeling, "Der kontroverse Grund der Freiheit," p. 17, in Bernd Moeller, ed., *Luther in der Neuzeit: Wissenschaftliches Symposium des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1983). Cf. Kurt Leese, "Der idealistische und der reformatorische Freiheitsgedanke," *Logos* (Tübingen), 18 (1929):185-203. Lewis W. Spitz, "Ideas of Liberty in German Humanism," *Church History*, 31,3 (1962):336-349.
- 14 Erwin Mülhaupt, "Was verstand Luther unter Freiheit?" *Martin Luther* (Wien, Austria), 12(1978):34.

- 15 Otto Pesch, "Free by Faith," p. 23, in Manfred Hoffmann, ed., *Martin Luther and the Modern Mind: Freedom, Conscience, Toleration, Rights* (New York and Toronto: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1985).
- 16 Ibid. 24.
- 17 Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1950) 163.
- 18 V.H.H. Green, *Luther and the Reformation* (London: New English Library, 1964) 94.
- 19 Heinrich Böhmer, *Der junge Luther* (Stuttgart: K.F. Koehler, 1951) 294.
- 20 Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 164. A lesser degree of situational awareness is suggested by Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 129.
- 21 Grisar, *Luther*, 1:343-344.
- 22 E.G. Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1950) 477-478.
- 23 W A, *Briefe*, 2:186, 190-193.
- 24 W A, *Briefe*, 2:197.
- 25 Richard Marius, *Luther* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1974) 136.
- 26 W A 7:42:6; L W 31:334.
- 27 W A 7:44:19; L W 31:336.
- 28 W A 7:44:28-30; L W 31:337.
- 29 W A 7:43:16; L W 31:335.
- 30 W A 7:43:34-35; L W 31:335.
- 31 W A 7:47:36-37; L W 31:341.
- 32 W A 7:48:1; L W 31:341.
- 33 W A 7:48:2-4; L W 31:341-342.
- 34 W A 7:48:14; L W 31:342.
- 35 W A 7:48:16-17; L W 31:342.
- 36 W A 7:42:11-13; L W 31:334.
- 37 W A 7:42:20; L W 31:335.
- 38 W A 7:43:21; L W 31:335.
- 39 W A 7:43:37, 44:1; L W 31:335.
- 40 W A 7:44:12-18; L W 31:336.
- 41 W A 7:44:23-24; L W 31:336.
- 42 W A 7:45:6-10; L W 31:337.
- 43 Scott H. Hendrix, *Luther and the Papacy: Stages in a Reformation Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981) 114-115.
- 44 Ibid. 116.
- 45 Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach, *Martin Luther und die Anfänge der Reformation* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlaghaus Gerd Mohn, 1965) 102-104.
- 46 Will Durant, *The Reformation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957) 356.

- 47 W A 5:392-408; L W 12:3-144.
- 48 Cf. Wilhelm Maurer, *Von der Freiheit*, 8.
- 49 W A 7:49:9-10; L W 31:343.
- 50 W A 7:49:11-12; L W 31:343.
- 51 George W. Forell, "Luther and Christian Liberty," 4:102-103, in Eric W. Gritsch, ed., *Encounters with Luther* (Gettysburg, PA: Institute for Luther Studies, Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary, 1990).
- 52 W A 7:49:22-25; L W 31:344.
- 53 Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Freedom and the Lutheran Reformation," *Theology Today*, 38(1981):288.
- 54 Eberhard Jüngel, *The Freedom of a Christian*, 47, quoting from *The Categories of Interpretation*, 7, trans. Harold P. Cook, Loeb classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press and London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1962) 55.
- 55 Jüngel, *The Freedom of a Christian*, 48.
- 56 Oswald Bayer, "Marcuses Kritik an Luthers Freiheitsbegriff," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 67(1970),470.
- 57 Wilhelm Maurer, *Von der Freiheit*, 50.
- 58 W A 7:50:11; L W 31:344; cf. Galatians 5:17.
- 59 W A 7:50:18-27; L W 31:345.
- 60 Gerhard Ebeling, "Der kontroverse Grund," 23.
- 61 W A 7:50:39; L W 31:345.
- 62 W A 7:51:1-3; L W 31:345. Tuomo Mannermaa, *Der im Glauben gegenwärtige Christus: Rechtfertigung und Vergottung: Zum ökumenischen Dialog* (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1989) 160. It is under Mannermaa's leadership that the Finnish Luther scholars have paid in-depth attention to *theosis* or deification, in Luther's view by way of the World through faith. Cf. also Joachim Heubach, ed., *Luther und Theosis*. Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie e. V. Ratzeburg, 16 (Erlangen: Martin Luther Verlag, 1960) 93-94. Anja Ghiselli, Kari Kopperi and Rainer Vinke, eds., *Luther und Ontologie: Das Sein Christi im Glauben als strukturierendes Prinzip der Theologie Luthers*. Schriften der Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft, 31, and Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg, 21 (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft and Erlangen: Martin Luther Verlag, 1993).
- 63 W A 7:51:14-15; L W 31:346.
- 64 W A 7:51:17; L W 31:346.
- 65 For a modern concern with the circle of faith, cf. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951) 1:8-11, 23.
- 66 Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Freedom," 291.
- 67 W A 7:51:21-23; L W 31:346. Tuomo Mannermaa, *Der im Glauben gegenwärtige Christus*, 160-161, introduces W A 7:51:20-23 with the comment, "Here we are dealing with the central content of Luther's reformation."



- 68 W A 7:51:27-29; L W 31:346-347.
- 69 W A 7:51:32-33; L W 31:347.
- 70 W A 7:51:33-34; L W 31:347.
- 71 W A 7:52:26-29; L W 31:348.
- 72 W A 7:53:11-12; L W 31:349.
- 73 W A 7:53:15-18; L W 31:349.
- 74 Pannenberg, "Freedom," 291.
- 75 W A 7:53:18-20; L W 31:349.
- 76 Pannenberg, "Freedom," 291-292.
- 77 W A 7:53:26-28; L W 31:349. In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* Luther had used the analogy in order to emphasize the completeness of Christ's eucharistic presence, W A 6:510:4-6; L W 46:32. The imagery is borrowed from the Early Church, notably Origen, *De Principiis*, 2.6.6, Herwig Görgemanns and Heinrich Karpp, eds., *Origenes Vier Bücher von den Prinzipien*. Texte zur Forschung, 24 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976) 368-369; *Origen on First Principles*, trans. G.W. Butterworth (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) 113. Cf. also *The Book of Concord*, Solid Declaration 8:18. Some of the older scholarship flatly rejected that Luther might have thought of mystical unity, e.g., Friedrich Theophil Ruhland, *Luther und die Brautmystik nach Luthers Schriften bis 1521* (Giessen: Münchowsche Universitäts-Druckerei Otto Kindt, 1938) 116, 136. For the modern Finnish approach, cf. above, note 62.
- 78 "Luther emphasizes the human side. In such accenting one finds the central meaning of his theology of the cross, in contrast to the theology of glory. One must first encounter the human Christ, only then one can become aware of his divinity" (*Von der Freiheit*, 37, cf. also 55-56).
- 79 W A 7:53:28-29; L W 31:349.
- 80 W A 7:53:37-38; L W 31:350.
- 81 Pannenberg, "Freedom," 291-292.
- 82 W A 7:54:1-2; L W 31:350.
- 83 W A 7:54:3; L W 31:350.
- 84 W A 7:54:4-5; L W 31:350.
- 85 W A 7:54:10-11; L W 31:350.
- 86 Pannenberg, "Freedom," 292.
- 87 W A 7:54:28-30; L W 31:351.
- 88 W A 7:54:31-33; L W 31:351.
- 89 Bengt R. Hoffman, *Luther and the Mystics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976) 173.
- 90 W A 7:54:33-36; L W 31:351.
- 91 W A 7:54:36-38; L W 31:351. Cf. Walter Allgaier, *Der "fröhliche Wechsel" bei Martin Luther* (Dr. Theol. dissertation at the Evangelical Theological Faculty of the Friedrich Alexander University in Erlangen-Nürnberg, 1966) helpfully summarizes Luther's views in this tract, 155, while Theobald Beer, *Der fröhliche Wechsel und Streit: Grundzüge der*

*Theologic Luthers* (Leipzig: St. Benno Verlag, 1974) offers a general overview, 164.

- 92 W A 7:54:39, 55:1-4; LW 31:351.  
 93 W A 7:55:11-12; L W 31:352.  
 94 W A 7:55:13-14; L W 31:352.  
 95 W A 7:55:15-16; L W 31:352. Cf. Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor*, trans. A.G. Hebert (London: S.P.C.K., 1950) 117-138.  
 96 W A 7:55:25-29;; L W 31:352.  
 97 W A 7:56:37-39, 57:1-2; L W 31:354.  
 98 von Oppen, *Lutheran World*, 47.  
 99 W A 7:57:37-39, 58:1; L W 31:355.  
 100 W A 7:58:19-21; L W 31:356. Cf. Robert Kolb, "The Doctrine of Ministry in Martin Luther and the Lutheran Confessions," pp. 49-66, in Todd Nichol and Marc Kolden, eds., *Called and Ordained: Lutheran Perspectives on the Office of the Ministry* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).  
 101 W A 7:58:23-25; L W 31:356.  
 102 W A 7:58:39-40; L W 31:357.  
 103 W A 7:59:24; L W 31:358.  
 104 W A 7:60:10-11; L W 31:359.  
 105 W A 7:60:6; L W 31:358-359.  
 106 W A 7:60:3-4; L W 31:358.  
 107 W A 7:60:25-27; L W 31:359.  
 108 W A 7:60:28; L W 31:359.  
 109 W A 7:60:31-33; L W 31:359.  
 110 W A 7:61:27; L W 31:361.  
 111 W A 7:63:16-17; L W 31:363.  
 112 W A 7:64:15-17; L W 31:364.  
 113 W A 7:64:24-27; L W 31:365.  
 114 W A 7:64:24-27; L W 31:365.  
 115 Pannenberg, "Freedom," 296.  
 116 Kantzenbach, *Martin Luther*, 104.  
 117 W A 7:65:32-35; L W 31:366.  
 118 W A 7:66:3-4; L W 31:367.  
 119 "Wenn also der Gedanke der Vergöttlichung und die Auffassung von Gott als gebendem Gott miteinander verbunden werden, wird verständlich, wie Luthers Anschauung über den Christen als Christus des Nächsten aus den tiefsten Wurzeln seiner Theologie ersteht" (Mannermaa, *Der im Glauben*, 163).  
 120 W A 7:66:7-10; L W 31:367.  
 121 W A 7:66:23-28; L W 31:367-368.  
 122 Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 231.  
 123 Mannermaa, *Der im Glauben*, 163.  
 124 Ibid. 164, ftn. 18; W A 7:66:32-36; L W 31:368; and cf. W A 7:69:12-13; L W 31:371.  
 125 W A 7:67:2; L W 31:368.  
 126 W A 7:67:7-9; L W 31:368.

- 127 Cf. W A 7:67:19-23; L W 31:369.
- 128 W A 7:67:29-30; L W 31:369.
- 129 W A 7:67:31-32; L W 31:369.
- 130 Nevertheless, this tract does touch upon political theory. There do arise questions which need to be answered, although not within the framework of this paper. For additional dialogue with Herbert Marcuse, *Studies in Critical Philosophy*, trans. Joris de Bres (London: N L B, 1972) 51-77, cf. Wilhelm Maurer, *Authorität und Freiheit: Zu Marcuses Angriff auf Luthers Freiheitslehre* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1970). In defense of Marcuse, cf. Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Avon, 1965).
- 131 W A 7:70:29-30; L W 31:373-374.
- 132 *The Colloquium*, trans. Craig R. Thompson (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1965) 61, cf. 352 and *The Enchiridion*, trans. Raymond Himelick (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1970) 109, 114-115.
- 133 W A 7:72:15-19; L W 31:375-376.
- 134 Richard Marius, *Luther*, 139.