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To my family who waited patiently for me to finish this dissertation, to the memory of my mother, my tutor Arnolds Kalniņš, and my father-confessor Rev. Dr. Roberts Feldmanis, to my *doktorvater* Robert Kolb, to Luther Academy, in Rīga, Latvia, to my congregation, Rīga Resurrection, who prayed for me through this project, and to all my friends whose prayers and support have helped me to complete it.

“The words OUR, US, FOR US, ought to be written in golden letters; the man who does not believe them is not a Christian.”

Martin Luther, WA 31, II, 432, 17.

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Guntis Kalme
Saint Louis, MO, USA
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S. D. G.

ABBREVIATIONS

Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
Ep	Epitome of the Formula of Concord
FC	Formula of Concord
LC	Large Catechism
<i>LW</i>	<i>Luther's Works</i> , American ed. 55 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress; St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–1986.
MPL	J. P. Migne, <i>Pastrologia cursus completus, Series latina</i> (Paris, 1844-1890)
SA	Smalcald Articles
SC	Small Catechism
SD	Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord
WA	Luther, Martin. <i>Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> . 65 Bd. Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–1993.

ABSTRACT

Kalme, Guntis “‘Words Written in Gold Letters’: A Lutheran Anthropological Reading of the Ecumenical Creeds – ‘For Us’ as the Constitutive Factor of What It Means to be Human.” Ph.D. Diss., St. Louis, MO: Concordia Seminary, 2005. 386 pp.

After briefly introducing several possibilities for understanding man, the author – touching upon the traditional compositional and the relational definitions of man – turns his attention to the Creedal approach. Since Nicea, Christians have confessed that God in Christ acted “for us men and for our salvation.” The author argues that the Nicene Creed actually centers around the “for us,” which both permeates and unifies the Creed. Although this ecumenical creed confesses the Christian faith in the Triune God, it also has significant anthropological implications. The author explores how the creedal phrase “for us,” which is explicitly mentioned only in the Second Article, exerts its influence upon the definition of the human creature also in the First, Third, and in the First Article Revisited (the return of the Christian to the First Article in a sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit).

In each of the articles of the creed God’s “for-usness” establishes, constitutes, and sustains the human person in a very concrete and specific way. This “for-usness” is the concrete expression of God’s agape, i.e., His welcoming attitude and action of goodness, openness, care, giving, and self-sacrifice. It may even be said that the message that God is God “for us” is the central message of the Christian faith. Luther says as much when he writes: “The words OUR, US, FOR US, ought to be written in golden letters. The man who does not believe them is not a Christian.”¹ These words actually made the title of this dissertation.

Although Luther uses the phrase “for me” to describe the nature and actions of God, he implicitly at the same time sketches an anthropology which defines the human creature as one who enjoys the fullness of life because of God’s giving a variety of gifts “for us.” The author takes as his springboard Luther’s catechetical anthropology which is centered on the “for me” approach as it can be seen in Luther’s personal creed, which can be pulled together from his commentaries on the respective articles of the creed from the Small Catechism. For the sake of academic dialogue, the anthropological views of the notable Russian Eastern Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky are brought to the reader’s attention. The author brings together both theologians by comparing their views via the prism of the particular Articles of the ecumenical creeds and makes conclusions regarding their respective anthropological applications. Out of the contrast between Luther and Lossky emerges a description of humanity based on the consistent application of the “for us” approach.

This dissertation argues that creedal anthropology as based upon the “for us” approach is gift-centered anthropology. Man is the continuous recipient of God’s gifts of care, love, sustenance, and support. Man receives God’s “for-usness” via his four constitutive relationships of *coram Deo*, *coram hominibus*, *coram natura*, and *coram meipso*, of which the *coram Deo* is the most significant relationship. As these relationships are charged with God’s “for-usness,”

¹ “The words OUR, US, FOR US, ought to be written in golden letters. The man who does not believe them is not a Christian.” WA 31, II, 432, 17.

together they make God's care-sustenance-safety net for man. While man inhabits each of the articles of the creed, he is also faced in each of them with questions of meaning by which God challenges us to be all that we can be. The questions are as follows: Who am I? Where do I come from? What is going on with/within me? Of what I am a part? What is the purpose of my life? Where am I going? The answers to these questions point to the fact that man as God's child and "God's own" is His responsible partner and co-creator of values. The author provides possible answers for these questions of meaning in a format applicable for confirmation and catechetical purposes.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem of the Dissertation

This dissertation answers the question: how does the creedal phrase “for us” taken as a theological term constitute the identity of the human person? The goal of this dissertation is to arrive at the comprehensive understanding of the role of the “for us” in the five divisions of the creed: First Article, First Article after the Fall, Second Article, Third Article, and First Article Revisited (where the action of the Holy Spirit in the Third Article restores, at least in part, the believer’s ability to fulfill his vocation).¹

Although Christians generally believe that they are confessing who God is and what He does when they recite the Apostles or Nicene Creeds, in fact the words of these confessions of faith have strong anthropological implications. What it means to be human is treated implicitly in each of the articles of these so-called ecumenical creeds. This dissertation proposes that humanity can be primarily defined by the creedal phrase that describes God as One Who acts “for us.”²

The goal of this dissertation is to provide a Biblical and confessional understanding of what it means to be human through the use of the creedal phrase that describes God as being “for us,” extending its significance from its explicit use in the Second Article to the First, Third and First Articles Revisited. This work will interpret the implications and applications of such an understanding for human living within the framework provided by Luther’s insights into the

¹ As American Evangelical theologian Thomas Oden says, “‘He died’ is a fact. ‘For us’ is the meaning of that fact.” *The Word of Life: Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 1989), 345. This study extrapolates the meaning of this “for us” from the Second Article of the creed to the other articles as well.

² This phrase explicitly appears in the Nicean and Athanasian Creeds.

concept of God's being "for us." This work will explicate the creedal "for us"³ as the determining factor for constituting the human person. In the tradition of Martin Luther and through an investigation of his writings, the phrase "for us" will be addressed as a theological term to help us discover how the creed defines the human person. The goal of the thesis is to explicate the specificity of "for us" in each article of the creed and to articulate its significance for human existence as it not merely constitutes the human person but, in fact, encompasses his whole being.

Because of the importance of Orthodox theology for dialogue in our contemporary world, this dissertation compares Luther's thought pattern with that of the notable Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky as the conversation partner. This study will go on demonstrating the anthropological implications of each of these Christian systems of thought.

B. The Contribution to the Field of Discipline

The contributions of this investigation may be summarized in the following theses.

1) Through analyzing the text of Luther's commentary on the creedal text in the Small Catechism, this dissertation argues that by putting together the three commentary parts which corresponds respectively to the three articles of the creed, we receive Luther's own creed of the "for me." This creed clearly shows Luther's predisposition towards the "for-usness" of the creed in general and each of its articles specifically. His approach will be explicated in chapter 4.

2) By comparing Luther's and Lossky's anthropological approaches, this investigation demonstrates the anthropological consequences to which Luther's presentation of God "for me" and Lossky's "me in God" lead. The former leads God's people into becoming active citizens of the world and the latter into the hesychast monastery.

³ Unfortunately, so far this author has not found a better and more comprehensive term than "for us" and "for-usness" in order to express the content of this term.

3) Following Luther's line of thinking, the author argues that God has revealed Himself in His "for-usness," that is, in His initiative, welcoming attitudes and actions of goodness, openness to the world, and His *revelandus* nature, His care, giving, and agape (self-sacrificial love). In each of the articles of the creed God is presented as giving Himself up for man in selflessness, even to the self-sacrifice revealed on the cross. Thus, God's "for-usness" has a clearly anthropological focus. This focus is the heart of the creed, and therefore, of this study as well.

4) This focus on "for us" permeates and unifies the creed as it describes the human being in each of the articles specifically. This concept is present implicitly even where the phrase is not explicitly employed. The credal phrase "for us" (and its derivatives – "for you," "for me" etc.) establishes, constitutes and sustains a human person in a very concrete way. Therefore, the "for us" term helps us to see God's goodness extended in all three articles and appropriated to the constitution of human identity in each one of them. The Christ's sacrifice "for us" of the Second Article reflects the essence of the whole God. The same God Who "for me and my salvation" has gone to the cross has also shown His self-giving attitude in the Second Article, providing for me on a daily basis and delivering the gifts of salvation in the Third Article. Besides that, He has also called me into particular walks of life as an inhabitant of the First Article Revisited and provided me with the definite purpose for my life. Thus, God has defined me throughout the whole creed.

5) Because God is man's Creator, He is the sole author of man's identity. God as the Creator and the Sustainer delivers man's identity to him by His attitude of "for-usness," using particular instruments (for instance, means of grace, the call, the urgency for the fulfillment of the purpose of life etc.). Thus, man's identity does not come out of himself.

6) Rather, man's identity is *extra nos*, that is, it is an identity that comes from outside himself. It is given to him by God. Thus, man has been given to himself, which means that man's personal identity finally lies in his ultimate origin, which is beyond whatever he himself is or does.

Therefore, he has a personal identity that is bestowed upon him from his Creator, Savior, and Sanctifier; thus, in the Latin terminology of the Christian tradition, it is an “alien” identity. The fact that our human identity is essentially derived from our identity with God penetrates and affects all the dimensions of man’s existence, as American lutheran systematician Robert Kolb says: “Being fully human is first of all to recognize that God is the fundamental point of orientation for humanity.”⁴ This identity is being given and communicated to us by God in/with/under/through the gifts of the three articles of the creed.

7) The creedal phrase “for us” implies a very specific gift-centered anthropology. Man is a being always at the receiving end, always being given to. He is a passive recipient in regards to the giving activity of God. The creedal phrase “for us” establishes, constitutes and sustains a human person in a very particular way as we receive God’s real and concrete gifts.

8) The gifts God grants us are always concrete ones—there are no abstract gifts. God’s gifts are designed either to create or sustain man and his physical environment (First Article), or procure the gift of redemption and salvation (Second Article), or to deliver it (Third Article), or to generate his vocations in every walk of life (First Article Revisited) as well as to fulfill his purpose in life altogether in order to execute the concrete will of God for the particular believer in the world. These gifts approach man collectively and individually.

9) The gifts of His being “for us” are collective in the First Article (man is considered the human creature for whom God cares independently of man’s morals and religious attitudes), but are individual in the other two articles. They engage man at the personal and even intimate levels, that is, at the very heart of his being. Thus, God approaches man from each of the three articles of the creed.

⁴ Robert Kolb, “Luther on the Theology of the Cross,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 16 (2002): 459.

10) Although God is the same in all three articles, in each of them the “for us” dimension of God’s gift is revealed specifically, depending on the action of the particular Person of the Trinity. The First Article exposes the initiative of God the Father “for us” as the One who creates and sustains us by means of His channels and actions. The Second Article exhibits the “for us” initiative of God the Son as the One who redeems and re-creates (kills and makes alive) as the Personal Word made flesh, while the Third Article exposes the “for us” initiative of the Holy Spirit in the means of grace. The First Article Revisited exhibits how the whole Trinitarian “for us” galvanizes and initiates the reception of the new life of man so that he himself via his vocation becomes God’s instrument of being “for you” to his neighbor. Thus, human identity involves the teamwork of the whole Trinity, for all three Persons actually determine the reality of our present existence and of all our lives. Therefore, taking into consideration the contribution of each of the persons of the Trinity, we can say that man has a clearly Trinitarian identity (but not in the Augustinian, psychological sense) as he inhabits the articles of the Trinitarian creed.

11) In each of the three articles of the Trinitarian creed, God stands in relationship to His human creatures and they are ever in His presence, a concept Luther expressed with the Latin preposition *coram*.⁵ Luther saw that God created not only the relationship between Himself and the individual human being (*coram Deo*), but also before other people (*coram hominibus*), before himself (*coram meipso*), and before nature (*coram natura*). The author of this dissertation argues that these *coram* positions are fundamental for establishing and sustaining the human identity, the *coram Deo* position being the critical one among the others. For this dissertation man is understood as the human creature, that is, the components of the human nature (body, mind, will, soul, spirit) in the four above mentioned relationships and endowed with the self-consciousness of the “I” which makes man into the human personality.

12) The other side of *coram Deo* relationship is Christ's relationship "for us." It is more than just dialogical or conversational (as a Buberian "I–Thou"). It goes further and deeper, for it is sacrificial. This demonstrates that in Christ the Creator God redeems us and subsequently God the Holy Spirit delivers the gifts of salvation which re-create our identity. Christ's attitude of "for us" culminating on the cross has revealed to us His identity, as Luther says, "we confess that everything which that Man is and does, has happened to us, as He for our comfort was born, suffered, arose, that He might be our Lord."⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer comments, "His being Christ is his being *pro me*."⁷ In the words of French Roman Catholic Luther scholar Daniel Olivier, Luther "linked salvation to Christ and elucidated the rich principle that the mystery of the Son of God made man is only revealed to us because it is a matter *for us*."⁸ Christ is God's "for us" *par excellence*. And this Christ's "for-usness" we receive as delivered to us via the means of grace as the basis and the nourishment of our restored human identity.

13) Once God has brought the restoration of our person by the sanctifying gifts of the Third Article, He wants to lead us as new, regenerated persons in the created order, which ought to be distinguished as a separate topic, particularly for catechesis and confirmation.⁹ In this dissertation the life of the regenerated believer is separated as a distinct realm of God's action and man's existence and is referred to as the First Article Revisited. This produces, instead of the traditional three-article reading of the creed (creation, redemption, sanctification) a five-division reading

⁵ Before, in the face of, in relationship to.

⁶ WA 37, 49.

⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 47.

⁸ Daniel Olivier, *Luther's Faith: The Cause of the Gospel in the Church*, trans. John Tonkin (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 108.

⁹ Usually these different stages of the Second Article are mixed together. Creation before and after the Fall are logically linked. For clarity in teaching it is desirable to separate them. This is even more apparent concerning the significance of the Creation for the regenerate, which is better taught after the Third Article as a separate article—the Second Article Revisited.

(creation, fall, redemption, sanctification, vocation). Man is put in the creedal chart under these respective divisions.

14) The five creedal divisions of man are supplemented by the classic anthropological questions of meaning, such as: Who am I? Where do I come from? What is going on with/within me? Of what I am a part? What is the purpose of my life? Where am I going? Answers to these questions are placed in the respective boxes of the creedal chart.

15) Meaning in man's life is his God-given identity lived, worked out, implemented. When this meaning is objectified (materialized in artifacts, experiences, actions and attitudes), it constitutes a concrete value. One of the most important tasks of man's life as God's agent's is to co-create, to sustain and to enjoy instrumental and intrinsic values according to God's design "for us."

16) The creedal phrase "for us" implicitly includes the essence of the Christian message. The creedal phrase "for us" implicitly includes the essence of the Christian message. If John 3:16 may be considered the "Gospel in a nutshell," then the creedal "for us" may be seen as "creed in a nutshell." During the distribution of the Lord's Supper the minister says "given for you" and "shed for you." Thus, we have a "for us" kind of Creator God, Who is always anthropocentrically delivering His gifts "for us" by leading and returning the sinner into his proper fundamental relationships of four *corams*.

C. Previous Research in the Field

Anthropology as the study of man has been a subject of interest of many disciplines in the last century. Man has been studied from many different approaches, angle and viewpoints with many valuable insights gained. In the field of theological anthropology man has been traditionally looked upon as the bearer of the image of God, as the sinner-saint, and as the member of Christ's church who lives out the faith he confesses in the creed. Although there has been a significant

amount of literature concerning the creed, unfortunately there has not been much done in the field of creedal anthropology and even less concerning the explication of the significance of the particular creedal phraseology. In order to bridge this gap in a small measure, the author of this dissertation will try to explicate the anthropological significance of the particular creedal phrase from the Second Article of the creed regarding Christ, that is, “who for us and for our salvation.”

Although Luther himself devoted a fair amount of time toward addressing the “for me” phrase in his writings (explicated in chapter 4), contemporary scholarship has not devoted much attention to it. In the extensive, almost limitless, research into aspects of Luther's theology in the twentieth century the perspective of God acting “for us” has been noted by several prominent theologians, but none of them used it as a hermeneutical tool—as a lens through which they might discover a biblical definition of what it means to be human.

A quick overview of a number of prominent authors reveals that they recognized the place of Luther's concept of “for us.” Hamburg Lutheran systematician Helmut Thielicke stresses the importance of relationships for the human person and ethics. In this context he analyzes man's relationship to himself, the “I-Thou”, and the “I-World” relationship.¹⁰ He emphasizes that man's identity is not to be searched for in man himself; rather it is, resides in and originates from outside the human creature. It is to be found in relationship to God.¹¹ Thielicke mentions two possible ways in which man can relate to God, saying that “the term ‘man’ or ‘humanity’ . . . can derive its significance . . . from the *imago Dei*, or from the fact that Christ died for me.”¹² In Thielicke's view God as the Creator is the source of human identity as well as being the foundation of man's meaning in life. Therefore also, the fulfillment of man's life is rightly comprehended only against

¹⁰ Helmut Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, vol. 1: *Foundations*, ed. William H. Lazareth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 465-470.

¹¹ Helmut Thielicke, *Christ and the Meaning of Life*, trans. John Doberstein (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 100.

the background of realization of “what I was created and meant to be.”¹³ The fact that man was created by God paradoxically endows him with both an alien and an inherent dignity. Thus, Thieliicke binds together the ontological aspect (man as God’s creature) of man’s identity with the axiological aspect, which is not inherent in him but is delivered to him.¹⁴

German systematician Oswald Bayer stresses the relationship to the Creator as fundamental for man, demonstrating that God’s calling man into existence by addressing him establishes his human person.¹⁵ He also stresses that human identity lies outside of man¹⁶ in the divine and creative Word, which constitutes man.¹⁷ The question of man’s identity cannot be answered consistently by man himself relying on his resources alone, nor can it be solved by social institutions or derivatives of it, for instance, the advice of socially established conscience. Therefore, theological anthropology is legitimately skeptical of every kind of collectivism and every kind of individualism. Bayer points out that even combination of the human-centered social sciences cannot provide us with a coherent and comprehensive definition of humanity. Psychology, sociology, and educational theories are unable to provide a satisfactory answer. Bayer believes that theological anthropology is the only discipline that can lead man to the answers he seeks and to the God “who can be invoked in complaint and praise, plea and thanks, full of trust and certitude of being heard,” and about whom we can say, “Whoever I am, thou knowest, O God, I am thine!”¹⁸

¹² Thieliicke, *Theological Ethics*, 468.

¹³ Thieliicke, *Christ and the Meaning of Life*, 99.

¹⁴ Thieliicke, *Theological Ethics*, 89-90.

¹⁵ Oswald Bayer, “God As Author of My Life-History,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 2 (1988): 439-40, 450; “I Believe That God Has Created Me With All That Exists: An Example of Catechetical-Systematics,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 8 (1994): 132, 137, 139.

¹⁶ “The Word of the Cross,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 9 (1995): 47; “The Being of Christ in Faith,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 10 (1996): 145.

¹⁷ Oswald Bayer, “Justification As the Basis and Boundary of Theology,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 15 (2001): 277.

¹⁸ Bayer, “God As Author of My Life-History,” 439.

German Luther scholar Gerhard Ebeling¹⁹ in his exposition of Luther stresses the *coram* approach as characteristic of Luther's thought: "This *coram*-relationship, in which man finds himself, is in fact the characteristic human situation, without which he would not be a man at all."²⁰ These relationships are significant for man because they face him as a human person. "What is decisive in this relationship is that there is a countenance which fixes its eye upon something, looks at it, perceives it and gives existence to it as such. What is 'before' me is present to me and exists for me."²¹ The knowledge that we exist in another's presence is important for being human: "in the presence of another I am in some way claimed by him, while he is also claimed by me. . . . he is in my presence and I am in his presence."²² Ebeling notes that Luther describes several of these *corams*: *coram meipso*, *coram hominibus*, and *coram mundo*.²³ This understanding of the significance of the *coram*-relationships helps to comprehend what it means to be a human person. Luther understands person as *persona*, as *larva Dei*, and as God's instrument to carry out His will. (203)

Australian Church historian Ian Siggins²⁴ mentions "*pro nobis*" in treating Luther's understanding of Christ's sacrificial death and His resurrection. The "*pro me*" is not a hermeneutical principle, but a declaration of the Gospel itself.²⁵ Siggins points out the meaning and the critical role of the "for us" by drawing our attention to Luther's thought that devil can preach the facts, but only the Holy Spirit preaches that Christ died for us. Here the distinction between the

¹⁹ Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought*, trans. R. A. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 196.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 194.

²² *Ibid.*, 195.

²³ *Ibid.*, 199.

²⁴ Ian Siggins, *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

fides historica and *usus passionis* breaks down, since the man who does not know what this event accomplished ultimately does not know the facts themselves; that it was accomplished for us is one of the facts.²⁶ Siggins points out that what Christ did is one thing and it is quite another that it was done for our benefit, that is, “for us.”²⁷ Siggins stresses that preaching brings Christ’s “for-usness” to us. Therefore, the preacher “must faithfully portray the man Christ as the unique and sufficient revelation of the Father, and in such a way that the *pro nobis* of this history is always heard.”²⁸ Siggins warns against turning “for us” into another theory of atonement, which would eclipse the uniqueness of Christ’s accomplishment.²⁹ Siggins stresses that it is Luther’s “discovery that God the Son, in His very essence, is for us.”³⁰ Unfortunately, Siggins, like other contemporary scholars, does not draw these elements together into a unified theme. The phrase “for us” in the works of these scholars is not seen in its anthropological significance and is not used as a unifying point for interpreting the work of Christ.

The phrase is more prominent in the lectures of Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer.³¹ He poses the question: “By virtue of what personal structure is Christ present to the church?” His answer is: “His being Christ is his being *pro me*.”³² Christ *per se* does not mean anything to man; only His being *pro me* brings Him to me. This “*pro me*” structure means three things for the relationship of Christ to the new humanity: 1) Christ *pro me* is pioneer, head and firstborn of the brethren who follow him; 2) Christ is “for” his brethren by standing in their place before God as a new humanity by virtue of his *pro me* structure, and therefore consequently also acts for it by

²⁶ Ibid., 110-1.

²⁷ Ibid., 138.

²⁸ Ibid., 269.

²⁹ Ibid., 111.

³⁰ Ibid., 243.

³¹ Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 41-68.

³² Ibid., 47.

dying; thus mankind is crucified in him; 3) because now Christ represents this new humanity, God is gracious towards it in Him.³³

Heidelberg systematician Albrecht Peters has called attention to the use of the “for us” concept and its centrality in the sixteenth century Lutheran argument, both in the Augsburg Confession and in Luther’s Catechisms. His very brief comments on the reinterpretation of the early Christian “rule of faith” through the focus of the concept of God’s acting “for us” in the *Confessio Augustana*³⁴ do not present his thoughts in the detail found in his comments on the Second Article in the Catechisms.³⁵ He does not extend the significance of this phrase to the whole creed.

German exegete Harald Riesenfeld in the article³⁶ on ὑπέρ in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament describes its several meanings, such as: “for,” “on behalf of” and “instead of.” In Heb 5:1 the high priest is appointed “for” man (to serve them, to be for their benefit) and offers the blood for himself and for the offenses of the people (Heb 9:7). Here υπερ denotes the offering of life, suffering and death “in favor of” or “for someone.” Regarding Gal 3:13 and 2 Cor 5:21, the author points to the atoning significance of the death of Jesus, Who vicariously took upon Himself the mortal curse of the Law. He did it ὑπέρ ημῶν (“in our favor” and “in our place or stead”). Besides that, the author demonstrates the bond between the Second and the Third Articles: “the

³³ Ibid., 48-9.

³⁴ Albrecht Peters, “Zur Aktualität der geistlichen Intention und theologischen Struktur der Confessio Augustana,” in *Zur bleibenden Aktualität des Augsburgs Bekenntnisses* (Hamburg: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1981), 161-4.

³⁵ Albrecht Peters, *Kommentar zur Luthers Katechismen*, Bd. 2, *Der Glaube* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 116-70.

³⁶ Harald Riesenfeld, “ὑπέρ,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friederich, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 507-16.

parallelism of christology (ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν) and discipleship (ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν) is intentional in 1 John 3:6.”³⁷

Roman Catholic theologian Daniel Olivier³⁸ argues that Luther “linked salvation to Christ and elucidated the rich principle that the mystery of the Son of God made man is only revealed to us because it is a matter *for us*.”³⁹ The “for us” aspect is the key for Luther to having the saving and sanctifying faith: “‘If we believe. . . that he has done this for us, then he dwells within us by our faith, and because of it, and daily by his own work continues to purify us.’ Luther finds in this gift a meaning which can only make the Christian long to have within him, and for his own benefit, the very deed of Calvary, by faith anchored in God’s promise.”⁴⁰ Thus, Olivier comes close to seeing the significance of the phrase “for us” to Luther, but he does not explore it further.

Among the theologians seeking to involve themselves in the ongoing ecumenical discussions regarding what it means to be human are the Eastern Orthodox. Because Eastern Orthodoxy has become a significant contributor to ecumenical discussion following the Soviet Revolution of 1917, dialogue between Orthodox theologians and Lutheran theologians has become ever more necessary. As an important theological statement in this ecumenical dialogue, notable Orthodox theologian John Meyendorff’s ecumenical report, “Christ ‘In Us’ and Christ ‘For Us’ in Lutheran and Orthodox Theology”⁴¹ must be considered. He says that Lutherans have emphasized the language of vicarious atonement, imputation, and forensic justification, rather than the language of participation or communion, and that “Lutherans have more often spoken of Christ ‘for us’ than they have of Christ ‘in us.’” Meyendorff quotes Luther, Arndt and the Confessions as speaking of

³⁷ Ibid., 511.

³⁸ Olivier, *Luther’s Faith*, 105-13.

³⁹ Ibid., 108.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 108.

Christ “in us,” and offers this phrase as an ecumenical bridge between the two parties. This invitation has been picked up by so called “Finnish School” created by Tuoma Mannermaa.⁴² For more in-depth research Rainer Flogaus’ comparison of the theology of Luther and Gregory of Palamas, the fourteenth century Byzantine theologian who has exercised significant influence in modern Eastern Orthodox thought, is important.⁴³ This dissertation focuses on one of those who have attempted to bring Palamas to the contemporary world, Vladimir Lossky.⁴⁴

Thus, although the phrase “for us” (and its derivatives) has appeared in discussions of Luther’s thought, such as these and others, it has not provided the focus for an extensive investigation of how Luther’s anthropological insights proceed from this concept and provide help for a Christian anthropology in the twenty-first century. This author has seen in this fact a challenge to explore the anthropological significance of this particular creedal phrase.

⁴¹ *Salvation in Christ: A Lutheran – Orthodox Dialogue*, eds. John Meyendorff and Robert Tobias (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992), 17-33.

⁴² See, for instance, Tuoma Mannermaa, *Der im Glauben gegenwärtige Christus, Rechtfertigung und Vergottung: Zum ökumenischen Dialog* (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1989); Simo Peura, *Mehr als ein Mensch? Die Vergöttlichung als Thema der Theologie Martin Luthers von 1513 bis 1519* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1994); *Luther und Theosis: Vergöttlichung als Thema der abendländischen Theologie*, ed. Simo Peura and Antti Raunio (Helsinki and Erlangen: Luther Agricola Gesellschaft and Martin Luther Verlag, 1990); *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

⁴³ Rainer Flogaus, *Theosis bei Palamas und Luther: Ein Beitrag zum ökumenischen Gespräch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997).

⁴⁴ For discussion of the Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky his main representative works are chosen, that is, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, trans. members of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius (Cambridge and London: James Clarke, 1957; reprint, 1968), *In the Image and Likeness of God*, trans. A. M. Alchin (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1974), and *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, trans. Ian and Ihita Kesarcodi-Watson (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978). In the United States John Meyendorff has been the foremost in articulating various Orthodox teachings, including anthropology. In his *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), Meyendorff is continuing the thought pattern of Russian thinkers in Russia, such as Pavel Florenskii, *Iconostasis* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996). Russian Orthodox theologian Andrey Pozov should also be considered. See his *Osnovi Drevne-Cerkovnoi Antropologii: Sin Chelovecheskii* (The Foundations of the Anthropology of the Ancient Church: The Son of Man) (Madrid, 1965).

D. Sources of the Study

This study is drawn particularly from Luther's *Corpus Catecheticum*:⁴⁵ Brief Explanation of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer 1520, Personal Prayer Book 1522, Ten Sermons on the Catechism 1528, Small and Large Catechisms 1529, Concerning Jesus Christ, a Sermon preached at the Court at Torgau (three sermons) 1533, and The Three Symbols or Creeds of the Christian Faith 1538. These texts have been chosen as the writings most focused on an explanation of the creed and as a hermeneutical prism through which we will look at the human person. Luther's other writings have been considered as far as they reflect the trajectory of his thought consistent with the "*pro me*" approach.

Only those writings of Vladimir Lossky are consulted which bear his anthropological insights, that is, specifically: *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, and *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*.

E. Limitations

In this dissertation the term "the creed" will designate the text of the Apostolic and/or Nicene Creed. The Apostolic creed is extensively treated by Luther (and he explicitly mentions its "for me" character) and the Nicene Creed explicitly contains the phrase "who for us and for our salvation" in its Second Article. The author is not investigating the creed historically but rather systematically in order to elucidate its anthropological consequences. Therefore, the textual particularities of the three ecumenical creeds will be much less important than the common doctrinal/confessional content contained in all three. Thus, this study is limited in that it explores the role of "for us" merely from the systematic viewpoint without relating how this phrase

⁴⁵ Interestingly, in Luther's *Corpus Catecheticum* we see "for us" frequently (after this particular period in his career, it recedes into the background). Therefore, we can state that it is of the backbone of Luther's teaching.

appeared throughout the history of the creedal writings. It looks at the creed as a united text, as a kind of *textus receptus*.

Not only does this study limit itself to a creedal view of understanding “for us,” but it also tries to abstain from exploring how this phrase functions in other parts of the Catechism. Sources are limited as well. This study is not intended to be an exhaustive examination of all of Luther’s writings from the viewpoint of the usage of the “for us” phrase. It limits itself to the above mentioned materials which explicate the “for us” character of the creed. Other theologians are used insofar as their trajectory of thought coincides with the mainstream of this study. The use of them does not necessarily mean that this author supports their overall theological stance.

F. Method of the Dissertation

The method of the dissertation is systematic analysis of the given data from the Scripture, the ecumenical creeds, confessions, and Luther’s and Lossky’s appropriate writings. It looks at the place and role of the phrase “for us” throughout the whole creed and in the writings of the above mentioned authors, searching for its implicit and explicit significance regarding what it means to be human in the creedal anthropology. The received data are summarized in the subchapters “Creedal Analysis of Humanity” according to Luther, Lossky or the author of this dissertation. For the sake of lucidity the results are presented in the creedal chart, which allows finding a brief but comprehensive enough answer to the main questions of the matrix of the human meaning. Luther’s and Lossky’s concepts are also mutually compared and conclusions are drawn.

G. Definition of the Terms

Several terms used in this dissertation necessitate explanation here: “for-usness,” “extra-nosness,” and “man” or “human being.”

In this study the noun “for-usness” has been created because God’s disposition and activities in behalf of His chosen people is being treated as the concept in itself. This noun

designates what the prepositional phrase “for us” (and its equivalents “for me,” “for you”) convey when they are used to describe this disposition and these activities of God, His initiative, welcoming attitude and action of goodness, His openness to the world, His nature as One Who reveals Himself, His care, giving, and *agape* (self-sacrificial love), and His selflessness, even to the self-sacrifice revealed on the cross. In all the articles this phrase is implicitly used with the meaning “for our benefit” (that is, favorably disposed to us, giving us) but in the Second Article its fundamental meaning is explicitly that of “instead of us” (that is, substituting), *υπερ*. Still this term can be read as a single concept, for there is a theological connection between these two meanings. The same God who is acting “for our benefit,” is sacrificing His Son “instead of us.”

“Extra-nosness” is also an artificially created noun, here used to designate the external, outward character of God, and His means (for instance, *externum verbum*) and actions. This term serves to point out the objective character of God’s actions in relationship to man and thus, to create certainty of faith. “For us” and “*extra nos*” are closely linked together, for God’s “for-usness” depends on His being “*extra nos*.”

In this dissertation “man” or “human being” is understood as the human creature, who has the components of the human nature (body, mind, will, soul, spirit etc.) and exists in the four fundamental relationships of *coram Deo*, *coram natura*, *coram hominibus*, and *coram meipso*. He is endowed with the self-consciousness of the “I,” which makes man into the human personality.

CHAPTER TWO

FIELDS OF INQUIRY FOR A THEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

In the following chapter the author will explore several ways of defining man looking at the fact of man's being (the ontological dimension), his value (the axiological dimension) and his cognitive capacities (the epistemological dimension). This will serve to bring us further into the creedal use of "for us."

The human being is very complex, for he inhabits several dimensions at the same time. It has become customary in the field of the humanities to look at man from different viewpoints, each having its specific worth and insights. For instance, metaphysics looks at the ontological dimension and therefore emphasizes the aspect of man's existence as such, while axiology demonstrates the value of the human being as God's creature. Epistemology covers the cognitive aspects of the human being. This dissertation assesses the implications of the creed for theological anthropology with each of these dimensions in mind.

The connection between these three dimensions may be seen in the logic of Lutheran theology, in which there is no need for a separate locus on God and another on man (although they have been distinguished for teaching purposes), for God and man are inseparably linked as a pair¹ ontologically, axiologically and epistemologically.

¹ As American church historian John Loeschen says in his *Wrestling with Luther: An Introduction to the Study of His Thought* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1976), 20; "Luther exemplifies a rule which brooks no exceptions, i.e., that man and God always be considered together. The two sides of this most basic dialectic are not meant to be taken as supplemental. The relationship is given classic expression by Calvin in the opening pages of the *Institutes*: true knowledge of man depends on true knowledge of God and *vice versa*." Man is defined by his God (i.e., by the "term for that to which we are looking for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need." LC, I, 1). Thus, we cannot speak of man as a religiously autonomous being; he is substantially and relationally subject to God's plan and design for humanity. If we speak of man, we must take into consideration his God, and when we
(continued next page)

The ontological relationship is established by the fact of God's having created human beings as his special creatures: God has brought man into existence, and by this very fact man has received his identity, too for once one is, one is somebody. There is no undefined being by definition (one cannot live in a general way). Having being means having concrete being, i.e., having identity. There are no abstract beings, only concrete ones. This ontological relationship is fundamental; it never ceases, nor is it transformed into something other than itself. This relationship provides the principal avenues for the other two.

The axiological relationship is grounded in God's divine nature and His principal relationship to the world as caring, loving and nurturing. Out of His goodness and love He created us; therefore, He saved us, i.e., reclaimed us for Himself. For the same reason He sanctifies and leads us too. All these actions "for us" simply mean that we are highly valued by God.

The epistemological relationship man has with God is found in this correlation: knowing the author, you can know and judge the work he does. Knowing the work he has done, you can have at least some idea about the author. Man has been created in his Author's image and likeness. In a way, man and God match each other. They meet each other on a basis of God's gift of man's capacity to communicate via words. This way has been defined most fundamentally by the event of the Incarnation when God became man, when He assumed humanity even unto suffering, humiliation and death. God became man, and besides everything else, that meant that He conversed with us in a way that we could understand in order that His actions would make sense for us.

speak of God, we are interested mainly and ultimately in God as He relates to his human creatures, i.e., in God "for us."

A. The Ontological Dimension

The ontological dimension of humanity emphasizes the aspect of man's existence as such and investigates the dimensions of man's being in his fundamental, constituting relationships, as well as his constituting components, emphasizing the fact that we have been given to ourselves as existing entities. As a human creature, man is limited and dependent on his Creator in his origin, purpose, personhood, and identity.

1) From the viewpoint of his origins, man is God's masterpiece. Together with all of creation, man is the primary achievement between the Creator's command of: "Let there be!" and God's approval of His last and best creature as "good!" The former brings man into existence while the latter recognizes him as a human creature brought into being by the Creator God. It is more than recognition of the fact that this particular piece of creation—man—was successfully made according to the original design. The creation work of man was certainly finished and God's goal achieved, but God's declaration of man as "good" is more than just an approval; it is the assertion of man's ontological significance, and thus it is a fundamental axiological statement as well. God's gift of "goodness" in man is so strong that it cannot be completely negated by the ontological catastrophe of the Fall.

2) From the viewpoint of man's teleology, he is designed for more than just mere existence. Man's goal is to live a meaningful and purposeful life in order to implement his God-given identity creatively. This has to be worked out in God-given mission towards the world -- "to take care of" the Eden garden (Gen 2:15). Therefore, immediately after his creation man was given dominion over the world (Gen 1:26). Dominion and the task of caring for the world has to be taken in the widest possible sense as a cultural mandate to create (i.e., co-create with God) and to cultivate the meaning and values of a life conformed to God's will.

3) If we consider man's composition it is clear that he was not made in some mechanical fashion: a human spirit was not merely added to dust. The *ruah* of God enlivened the matter and transformed it into a principally different kind of being than the rest of the creation—a human *person*.² Man was made into a human person from the very beginning, and he is not just a mechanical sum of his attributes and components. Man did not need to develop his personhood on his own; it was the greatest among his other God-given gifts and was of another kind than the rest of them. Man is a totality. He cannot be reduced to merely his component parts or relationships. This totality of man is presupposed by hamartology: sin has spread throughout the whole man and man is entirely corrupt.³ After the Fall, ontologically man is still the human creature, but now he is also a sinner. Both of these ontological facts define the entirety of his existence. Consequently, the unity of man is also the anthropological presupposition of soteriology. Christ has come to save the whole person (not just some of his components), for man is a total (a “complete”) sinner. Also in the realm of pneumatology the Holy Spirit blesses and guides the whole person; nothing of man is left outside of His activity.

4) It has often been the case that theology looks for man's identity in his image and likeness to God (Gen 1:26-7). Theology identifies this ontological foundation of man—his axiological reference and his epistemological link with God. The image of God (whatever the content of it is presumed to be) is foundational for man, claims American Lutheran systematician Philip Hefner: it “presents a fundamental image of human being as being-with-a-destiny.”⁴ Unfortunately, although the concept of the image of God is theoretically promising, in fact it suggests more than it explains. This expression is not clearly explained in Scripture, and it has

² The matter of human person will be explored more in the chapter 6, under the exposition of the First Article.

³ Thus by definition there is no “divine spark” in man.

⁴ Philip Hefner, “The Creation,” in *Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 330.

aroused many competing interpretations. As American evangelical theologian Millard Erickson says, “The existence of a wide variety of interpretations [regarding what it means to be made ‘in the image of God’] is an indication that there are no direct statements in Scripture to resolve the issue.”⁵ However, there is a consensus that “the image and likeness of God” in some way defines the identity of our very humanness, that it gives us the direction, orientation, sense of our origin, belonging and calling. German systematician Wolfhart Pannenberg says that the expression “image of God” designates a human destination to communion with God and closeness with God.⁶ We are God’s; we are His, from Him and to Him. With differing metaphysical presuppositions, different schools of Christian thought have proceeded to define what it means to be human around the components of humanity or on the basis of human relationships (which God gives to us), with himself and with other creatures.⁷

Man’s origin, purpose, personhood, and identity have been established in God, so we will now move on to develop a definition for man. There are at least three possible methods of defining man that have been used historically. The first of these methods is to see man as a composite construction made from definite, particular components. This is known as a “compositional definition.” A second approach to seeing man is to define him through his critical relationships to other entities and nature. This is called a “relational definition.” A final definition of man can be achieved by combining the compositional and relational approaches into a “complementary” or “personal definition” so that the weaknesses of the two contributing definitions are ameliorated.

⁵ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 532. See Appendix I for a brief discussion of the concept.

⁶ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 74.

⁷ See more in Appendix I.

1. The Compositional Definition of Man

The compositional approach to defining man identifies the human person with his distinguishable psychosomatic components and their activities (or with some combination or the entire sum of them) as distinct gifts of God, who uses them to constitute man's identity.

Compositionally, man is seen as having anywhere from a two- to nine- fold⁸ componential structure of body, mind, reason, soul, will, spirit, etc. Dichotomism looks upon man as having the body as the physical and temporal part, which is the seat and means of our present life and which dies. Besides that, man also has a soul or spirit as the spiritual and eternal, which survives death and is the true representative of the human person (Matt 6:25; 10:28; Luke 12:4; Eccl 12:7; 1 Cor 5:3,5; 15:50; 2 Cor 4:11; 5:8, 10 etc). Dichotomism often tends to diminish the significance of the body in favor of the soul/spirit.⁹ Trichotomism¹⁰ sees man's physical body as a frame or shell for the soul as psychological element and the spirit as the religious element (1 Thess 5:23; Heb 4:12; 1 Cor 2:14-3:4).

⁸ As Greek American theologian Constantine Callinicos suggests there is a "double composition of man, who, made up of a destructible body and an indestructible spirit, stands between the visible and the invisible world." *The Greek Orthodox Catechism* (New York: Greek Archdiocese of No. and So. America, 1960), 21.; "To the formation of man out of three essences, body, soul, and spirit, the great fathers of the Church bear witness" says Greek Orthodox theologian Apostolos Makrakis, referring to Basil the Great, Athanasius, Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, God-bearing Maximus, and Gregory Palamas. Apostolos Makrakis, *Divine and Sacred Catechism* (Chicago: Hellenic Christian Educational Society, 1946), 61-5. See also his *The Tricompositeness of Man/ The Paramount Doctrines of Orthodoxy by Apostolos Makrakis*, part I (Chicago: The Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1954). The scriptural reference for the fourfold composition is Luke 10:27.; Andrey Pozov, *Osnovi Drevne-Cerkovnoi Antropologii: Sin Chelovecheskii* (The Foundations of the Ancient Church's Anthropology: the Son of Man) (Madrid, 1965), 23. Pozov explains it in detail with the references to the Eastern Orthodox Church fathers, 29-137. He views man as a three-fold componential structure, each component consisting of three sub-components.

⁹ For example, as American theologian William Clarke suggests in *An Outline of Christian Theology* (New York: Scribner, 1901), 182-3: "the person, the self-conscious moral agent, is not the body, rather it inhabits and rules the body."

¹⁰ It was popular among the Alexandrian fathers—Clement of Alexandria, and Gregory of Nyssa. After having been used by Appolinarius it fell into disrepute. In our days it is represented by Franz Delitzsch, *A System of Biblical Psychology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), 116-7 and Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 191-2.

Monism¹¹ argues that man as a human creature is a holistic entity, that a human person is a “self” and therefore indivisible.¹² For this reason the different terms used throughout the Scripture are to be taken synonymously or as aspects of a single being.¹³ To be a man means to have or to be a body or, better said, to be a body-soul unit. Thus, we can say that man has “body *and* soul” but more precisely that he is a human soul in/with/under/and through the human body—that he is an embodied soul and enlivened body. As British Old Testament scholar Henry Wheeler Robinson says: “Man is a unity, and [this] unity is the body as a complex of parts, drawing their life and activity from a breath-soul, which has no existence apart from the body.” Robinson notes that Hebrew has no explicit word for the body: “It never needed one so long as the body was the man.”¹⁴ Man is flesh animated by soul, a psychophysical unity: “The Hebrew idea of personality is an animated body, and not an incarnated soul.”¹⁵ Thus, in monism’s view man is a unitary being, a human person that can be referred to as “I,” “you” and “man” and can be communicated by human means of perception. In contrast to dichotomism, in monism’s view the human body is the critical component of man’s identity and overall existence.

A critique of the componential concept of what it means to be human must begin with the following observation. If we conceive of “the image of God” merely as man having received God-given components and attributes, this can lead to the idea that man is a static entity which can be dissected, taken apart, and then re-constructed according to God’s original design. In other words, man could be “repaired” and even developed further. Another hidden

¹¹ Nowadays represented by John Robinson, *The Body* (London: SCM, 1952) and Henry Wheeler Robinson, “Hebrew Psychology,” in *The People and the Book*, ed. Arthur Peake (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925), 353-382.

¹² The only contradictory Scriptural passage is Matt 10:28: “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

¹³ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 543.

¹⁴ Wheeler Robinson, “Hebrew Psychology,” 366.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 362.

presupposition of the componential approach is that it often looks for something good in man that survives the Fall into sin intact (e.g., the concept of a divine *scintilla*). Components of man that are often considered to be “untouched” by sin include the gifts of the reason, soul, spirit etc. In this framework, salvation may be seen as the restoration of the *imago Dei* in terms of renewal of man’s component parts (or even their improvement beyond their status at the original creation). This way of thinking can sometimes lead to an unintentional anthropocentric consequence suggesting we might be able to work toward restoring these components to their original condition and that through such an effort, we might be saved. Such an approach or misconception draws attention to what happens *in us* and not to what happens *to us* in and with God. If we take this idea to its logical end, then the New Testament message of Christ being sacrificed for us is not absolutely necessary. God as the Creator could simply re-create the *imago Dei* again, with or without our participation, and with or without Christ’s vicarious atonement. Thus we could lose Christ’s redemption of us for our salvation, substituting changes in ourselves for it. But this is not true. Our salvation is first of all by the Lord’s initiative and doing—Christ died *for us*. We are saved by Christ’s deed and gifts, not by some componential changes in us. Everything happens *extra nos* and forensically. Thus, the matter is not so much about some inner componential changes in us, but about a change of who we are before God. We are still sinners, but in Christ we are justified ones. Indeed, some componential changes in us may happen as a result of Christ’s deeds and gifts to and for us. We may be grateful for such changes, but they are not causal factors in the overall salvific action. Because of Christ’s sacrifice in our place, the death sentence of the Law is changed into the Gospel’s re-creative verdict of “Innocent!” Thus, the restoration of humanity does not consist in gradual componential salvific changes in us, but a salvific, one-time event with Christ and the bestowal of its gifts on us by the means of grace. For this reason, without our relationship to Christ’s incarnation and His cross, there is not much

sense in concentrating on the concept of man's components. Biblical anthropology is ultimately theocentric or christocentric anthropology, not anthropocentric. The center of our understanding of ourselves is Christ's person and work, not ours.

Overall, the compositional definition of man tends to look upon man as a static object consisting structurally of particular components. The unintended anthropocentric focus of this approach may lead to neglect of the simple fact that man's life and status is determined not so much by his inner structural changes but by changes in his relationship with his God.

2. The Relational Definition of Man

Man was created in relationship, he is sustained by relationships and he exists for relationships. This means that relationships are both the channels for receiving the particular gifts of our sustenance (supporting our physical needs) and they are gifts in themselves (relationships of friendship, love etc., which are ends in themselves). From the beginning of his existence, man exists in a system of vertical and horizontal coordinates representing of his interactions. The vertical axis is his relationship with God (*coram Deo*) for God is the God of relationships and our relationship with Him is that of "for-usness." This He has manifested in particular by sending Christ "for us." The horizontal axis of man's relational identity consists of relationships with other men, with himself and with the rest of creation (*coram hominibus, coram meipso, coram natura*). Because man exists in these fundamental relationships, they determine everything else in his life. These relationships are concrete relationships of personal involvement in the otherness of the outer world by trust and faith or by doubt and mistrust. Thus, the human creature is fundamentally defined by his relationality, i.e., by the trust which is an existential clinging to something or someone for his existence and survival.

As Luther explains this matter in his comment on the First Commandment, man is always either dependent on God or on a self-made idol. Faith is the trusting relationship to God

while sin is the breaking of it, turning this faith into unfaithfulness and distrust. Human creatures stand before God as creatures “without any merit or worthiness,” solely dependent as creatures upon God’s mercy and grace. God gives us gifts up to and including ourselves as a life-long gift, task and a challenge. In relationships with God we stand before Him as totally passive recipients, as Luther says:

We are vessels of God, formed by God himself, and he himself is our potter, but we his clay, as Isaiah 64 [:8] says. And this holds good not only for our origin but throughout our whole life; until our death and in the grave we remain the clay of this potter . . . in a state of merely passive potentiality, not active potentiality. For there we do not choose, we do not do anything; but we are chosen, we are equipped, we are born again, we accept, as Isaiah says: ‘Thou art the potter, we thy clay.’¹⁶

Human creatures before their creation were not asked or consulted, and they were not given probation period to demonstrate their worthiness for the reward of being human. They were created already as fully human, with all the consequences of being immediately engaged in the relationships with the world around them. That is the nature of being a creature—being given to, being dependent (and inter-dependent) on God’s gifts and being thrown into the world of relationships. The human creature is never closed within himself, for man is not a self-sustaining entity. He is open to the outer world, for he is existentially dependent on it. This expression of dependence, faith and trust in the Creator is not something human beings have outside themselves and then incorporate it into their understanding of self, but it is actually constitutive of human identity. It is the state of being thrown totally upon God’s resources, of having no other foundation on which to rely and no base on which one can ground one’s life.¹⁷ This dependency on God is at the very heart of what it means to be human. Therefore, Kolb says, “‘Human’ means trusting God above all else. Being fully human is first of all to

¹⁶ WA 42:64.22-26; LW 1:84.

¹⁷ Oswald Bayer, *Rechtfertigung* (Neuendettelsau: Freimund Verlag, 1991), 8-9.

recognize that God is the fundamental point of orientation for humanity.”¹⁸ In accordance with the Small Catechism, to be human means to “fear, love and trust God” above all things. It is a receptive relationship of dependence towards God’s “for-usness” that sustains the human creature in his system of coordinating vertical (dependent) and horizontal (interdependent) relationships. Therefore, the pairing of faith/sin is looked upon as relational. Faith is living in a trusting relationship to God while sin is breaking the relationship with God and turning the faith into unfaithfulness or distrust. From the broken relationship with God come broken relationships with neighbors. In light of this Luther showed his definition of sinfulness with a focus on the actual sins that flow from original sin, the doubt and defiance of God:

When we must deal with our neighbor we yield to our desires and are robbers, thieves, adulterers, murderers, cruel, inhuman, merciless, etc. The passion of lust is indeed some part of original sin. But greater are the defects of the soul: unbelief, ignorance of God, despair, hate, blasphemy.¹⁹

Thus, as Kolb says:

The root of sin is this doubt of the Word of God which created and shaped the relationship of love and trust between God and his human creatures. Breaking the contact, going deaf on God, destroyed the relationship that stood at the heart of what it meant to be human.”²⁰

Overall, the relational approach pays most attention to the fundamental relationships in which the whole man is engaged, i.e., to the dynamics of man’s existence. In doing so, however, it may tend to overlook the simple fact that there is something in man himself (his components) which are engaged in these internal and external relationships, as well. Thus, this approach may downplay the role of the inner dynamics of man.

¹⁸ Robert Kolb, “Luther on the Theology of the Cross,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 16 (2002): 459.

¹⁹ WA 42, 86; LW 1, 114.

²⁰ Robert Kolb, “Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness; Reflections on His Two-Dimensional Definition of Humanity at the Heart of His Theology,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 13 (1999): 461.

3. The Complementary or Personal Definition of Man

There is an alternative to looking at man through exclusively compositional or relational lenses that remedies the disadvantages inherent to both previous approaches. We can use each approach in a complementary fashion so that they counterbalance each other's disadvantages. For an example of just such a complementary definition of man we go to Luther. Speaking about the First Article gifts for man, Luther goes straight to the list of the human components: "God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties."²¹ Thus, Luther's theology takes into consideration the particular components of the human creature. On the other hand, when speaking on the subject of the image of God, Luther says:

My understanding of the image of God is this: that Adam had it in his being and that he not only knew God and believed that He was good, but that he also lived in a life that was wholly godly; that is, he was without the fear of death or of any other danger, and was content with God's favor.²²

This awareness of man's constitutional relationships with God corresponds well with the Augsburg Confession's Article 2 stress on the significance of the vertical relationships with God when it speaks on original sin: "Since the fall of Adam all men who are propagated according to nature are born in sin. That is to say, they are without fear of God, are without trust in God, and are concupiscent."

Thus, without neglecting God's precious gifts of particular components, it may be said that Luther uses a complementary approach and focuses upon man holistically. This approach sees man in his entirety, seeing his entity as a person²³ who definitely has several important

²¹ SC, II, 2.

²² WA 42, 47; LW 1, 62-3.

²³ Without the benefits of modern research into Hebraic ways of thinking Luther sensed what modern scholars such as Wheeler Robinson (see note in the subchapter "Compositional definition of man") have argued regarding the unity of the human person.

components, but cannot be reduced to them. If this approach uses the language of *imago Dei*, then it is used as a formula for the whole, total human being having a fundamental relationship with God.

The ontological considerations mentioned above establish man's existence as a human creature. But there is more to man than just his existing. In his essence he possesses²⁴ innate, irrevocable, intrinsic value, both in God's eyes and in the eyes of other men. This is the axiological aspect of man's existence.

B. The Axiological Dimension

This dimension concerns the question of how God and we human beings value ourselves. Man has great value in the sight of God as His human creature. The psalmist rhetorically asks: "What is man that you are mindful of him? . . . You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor" (Ps 8:4-5). Already at the very beginning of the creation story man is being seen by God as a pinnacle of the creation, a "crown" of it. Indirectly we can judge this from the fact that man was created last, when everything he ought to govern (Gen 1:28), to work and to take care of (Gen 2:15) and enjoy was ready for him and "all . . . was very good" (Gen 1:31). Moreover, two individual representatives of this species Adam and Eve were created, not multitudes as with other creatures. But the main argument for man's dignity lies in the fact that he and he alone has been created after God's image and likeness. As Erlangen systematician Reinhard Slenczka says, "In the beginning, God created man in His own likeness (Genesis 1:26-27). In this consists his dignity, which is not the result of development and

²⁴ It is difficult to convey in English the deliberate tension that this author is trying to express. In Latvian it is legitimate to say, "Man is a value," which stands in sharp opposition to the much softer statement, "Man has a value," for if somebody just "has" something, it can (in principle) be taken away from him. This is the lesson humanity has learned from authoritarian regimes that try to take away man's humanness. The author basically tries to convey the idea of "to be" v. just "to have," i.e., "to be" man v. "to have," or "to possess" personhood.

behavior, but God's act."²⁵ It means that axiologically, man receives his worth from his ontological origin—from God's creative action and pronouncement. As Thieliicke says:

[The theological research] is no longer an ontological search for the marks or qualities. . . . When we regard the history with God as the basis of human identity and meaning in this sense, then this understanding of what it means to be human is established by the creative fiat of God.²⁶

This history man has with God creates definite axiological and ethical consequences. Man is supposed to honor every individual as God's own masterstroke, as a bearer of the image of God and God's ambassador to others. As Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the author of *The Little Prince* and *Flight to Arras*, says:

I understand the origin of the respect of men for one another. The scientist owed respect to the stoker, for what he respected in the stoker was God; and the stoker, no less than the scientist, was an ambassador of God. However great one man may be, however insignificant another, no man may claim the power to enslave another. One does not humble an ambassador. And yet this respect for man involved no degrading prostration before the insignificance of the individual, before brutishness or ignorance - since what was honored was not the individual himself but his status as ambassador of God. Thus, the love of God founded relations of dignity between men, relations between ambassadors and not between mere individuals.²⁷

Thus, human dignity is not man's own, and it does not come from within him. It comes from outside himself. It is bestowed, granted, as Thieliicke argues:

Once again it is evident how important is the concept of 'alien dignity' in fixing human identity. Since the basis of this dignity is to be found in God's promise, it does not lie in the sphere of what is ontically present. It is not a quality of us human or our human state. It does not lie in the term 'human.' The basis of this dignity is to be found in him who has called me by 'my' name. . . . The one who calls, and the call, grant the alien dignity and make those to whom it is given inviolable.²⁸

²⁵ Reinhard Slenczka, "Luther's Care of Souls for Our Times," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 67 (2003): 56.

²⁶ Helmut Thieliicke, *Being Human . . . Becoming Human: An Essay in Christian Anthropology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 85.

²⁷ Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Flight to Arras*, trans. Lewis Galantière (New York and London: A Harvest/HBJ Book, 1942), 142.

²⁸ Thieliicke, *Being Human*, 89-90.

Christ's call is what gives us our worth and value, for "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you" (John 15, 16). Now, after the event of the cross, when God has "invested" Christ in man's salvific well-being, his value in God's sight has tremendously increased. God will not abandon us, for He has already given Christ into death "for us." Instead, God continues to "invest" in our value, continuously providing "for us" the gifts of the First and Third Articles.

Thus, the axiological approach sees man as having great value in God's sight and consequently also in the sight of other human beings. It is the result of man's origin in God. Man as God's human creature has been granted many gifts, his cognitive capacities being among the most significant.

C. The Epistemological Dimension

In this dimension man is viewed as a cognitive entity, as an epistemological agent who tries to find out how he himself knows and experiences the gift of himself, the world and God.

In Creation, man was given the unique gift of reason to see the essential dimensions (1 Cor 2:14) of being, which he used to name the animals (Gen 2:20). In the Fall, he lost the sight that allowed him to see the essence of things immediately. Thereafter, he has to put much effort forth in order to accurately perceive the essence of things. The Fall negatively influenced man's reason. The beginning of sin is doubt, which stems from pride. "Knowledge puffs up" (1 Cor 1:8), for it creates epistemic pride and optimism ("There are no incomprehensible things, there are merely things which are not yet researched."). These promise to provide the answers in the future, but are unable to deliver them here and now, or where and when they are most needed.

Even though our ability to perceive the truth of reality is severely handicapped after the Fall, man still has a broader and deeper view of God's creation than other creatures because his *ratio* and other cognitive abilities (e.g., intuition) give him the capability of generalizing and

provide him with a ‘bird’s eye view’ of the world over which he has been given dominion. As Erasmus in his *Handbook of the Christian Soldier (Enchiridion)* said, “In man reason plays the role of the king.”²⁹ These are man’s cognitive capacities, which he uses to explore the world and to orient himself in it.

But besides these cognitive capacities which man uses for his investigation of the outer world, man also possesses other faculties that he uses to understand his life-situation and himself (his self-consciousness, self-comprehension, introspection etc.). After the Fall, man comprehends himself as being torn between two tendencies. On one side, man is very privileged by having been able to receive the revelation of God through His holy Word, and he is still the object of God’s affection. On the other hand, however, as a sinner, ignorance accompanies the condemnation he has earned as rebel against God. He has fallen into the temptation to be like God, autonomously trying to know good and evil, and thus has lost true knowledge of God.

Nonetheless, man has retained the capacity to have direct contact and conversation with God. This is what his innermost being longs for: “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God” (Ps. 42:1). But his guilt and shame for breaking God’s commandments, his fear of being punished, and his pride as an ungodly self-defense of his self-esteem do not allow him to repent and return to his God. Being torn between these two tendencies can create despair and unrest. Thus, man has been given the cognitive capacity to understand (at least partly) his own wretched condition.

In addition to the cognitive capacities mentioned above, man has also been given faith as another cognitive gift. Faith is the existential knowledge of man himself in relationship to God. It is an existential knowledge (“I *know* that my Redeemer lives.” [Job 19:25]; “Now we *know* that

²⁹ *Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. J. W. O’Malley, vol. 66, *Spiritualia, Enchiridion, De Contemptu Mundi, De Vidua Christiana* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 42.

if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands” [2 Cor 5:1]) versus an intellectual knowledge as a knowledge for guiding human life. When the relationship of love between man and God was re-initiated by Christ incarnate, it was not something that the human mind could comprehend on its own. As Luther says:

It is a marvel, a marvel, to see how discerning minds have fairly writhed here in their attempt to avoid believing in Christ as a real, true God! They have always wanted to measure, grasp, and master this article and the Scriptures with their reason. But it has stood firm, and they have all passed away.³⁰

There is a great difference between our reaching toward God with our own cognition and what we receive from God and work into the overall teaching of faith. As Swiss reformed systematician Emil Brunner says, “The first thing that must be said of the Christian doctrine of man is that it is not a ‘theory’ or a *philosophoumenon*, but a *statement of faith*”³¹ (and therefore a confession of the faith, or credal statement). Theology openly declares that it takes for granted the presuppositions of the Scripture on man as its only reference points instead of everything else. It takes them not just as a different set of axioms but also receives them as the life-giving words of God that define man and his destiny. Theology receives God’s Word existentially, as subjectively and personally vital and trustworthy. Theology is more than just one of the sciences. More properly, it can be described as a way of life that embraces God’s gift of a restored relationship with Him and cherishes His gifts “for us.”

God’s relationship of “for us” is mainly of a salvific rather than merely of an epistemic character. A Christian’s knowledge of God is first of all, of Him as his Savior. Second, his knowledge of God comes from different sources than the world’s, and therefore it has a different

³⁰ WA 50, 267; LW 34, 208 [emphasis mine].

³¹ Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), 49.

character: his knowledge is one of personal trust and faith. In the epistemic relationships of this world, subject-object relationships dominate and give the illusion of the world being a non-participative, “objective” reality. The main subject of any epistemological operation, human reason, tries to detach itself as much as possible from everything subjective and personal. Faith in God works differently; it attaches itself to its object in an existential manner, for it knows that its survival depends on its object of trust. Faith tries to see the world through God’s eyes by being accepted as a cognitive entity in God’s “for-usness.” God’s “for-usness” evokes faith in man by the Word of promise, and that faith clings to the Word. The Word is delivered and received as a gift, and the gift received through the Word is faith that responds to God’s “for-usness” by saying “Amen.”

Faith and reason are different cognitive gifts. Faith receives from God, while reason produces from itself. By faith we know truths in a different manner, i.e., by faith we receive what has been delivered to us by God. Therefore, to argue for the logical correctness of the Christian faith would be a contradiction in terms, for faith by its very nature is not subject to the compulsion or dominance of human reason; it does not submit to the “necessities” of rational procedures or to anything else except what is given by God.³² For this reason faith is not a “work” to perform, as any other human endeavor might be. Initially, faith is simply receiving the gifts our Lord bestows. Once a person has received the gift of faith and has moved into a life of sanctification or the daily renewal of the gift of faith, his life may seem quite heroic (as a hard work, effort, suffering etc.) as they persevere in their faith, but even their perseverance is a gift received from God. Enlivened by God’s gifts of faith, a person trusts His promises and therefore acts, proclaims, and suffers. God keeps His promises. Man is *homo credans*, who finds joy in his

³² But epistemological presuppositions and conclusions do. Cf. Robert Kolb, *The Christian Faith* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993): 15, 22, 23-4.

dependence on the One “who for us and for our salvation” has come to us. The difficulty in faith is that man does not know the “hows?” that is, the “technology” of God’s actions. But we are not the ones to judge or to evaluate His actions (“But who are you, O man, to talk back to God?” Rom 9:20). We are at the receiving end and sometimes we must simply wait. If in doubt, we usually ask: “God, how long will you take to achieve the results you desire?” and then we may even try to judge the correctness of His choices of means as He works in our lives. We wonder whether His ways will lead to our expected results. In relationships with God, faith is the substitute for the answers to our questions. God’s care and concern for us is not dictated or influenced by our degree of trust in his plans for our lives. His care for us is part of his identity as our Father, Savior, and Sanctifier. Whatever is uncertain in our relationship with God is uncertain in us, not in Him. Faith confesses that He knows how to lead us through the complications of life and therefore faith puts its trust in Him.

But all this counts only for the believer who with these considerations justifies his faith *post factum*. *A priori*, man stands empty-handed before God, as a beggar, a waiting recipient. As man stands *a priori* before God, there is only the promise, proclamation, and testimony of God’s Word. There is no other hope for man than the hope of faith that tells him God is merciful, forgiving and “for us.” Doubts, biases, unanswered questions and remorse may arise in us as we live by faith. Nevertheless, faith is not so much a matter of information in our minds (although we cannot discount this ingredient, for how can you trust and believe in somebody you do not know?) as of being “born of water and the Spirit” (Jn 3:5). Faith transforms of the whole of our existence— our hearts, our minds and our souls. If the task of science is to conform our searching mind to the fundamental rules of the world, then faith is the transformation of all our being to be prepared to stand before and to exist in a relationship with God. As Paul urges, “Do not conform but be transformed” (Rom 13:1-2).

As a human creature, man is altogether limited and dependent on his Creator for his origin, purpose, personhood, and identity. In his ontological dimension he possesses a composite human nature, and he lives in the vertical and horizontal axis of his constitutional relationships (*coram Deo, coram hominibus, coram meipso, coram natura*). The axiological dimension affirms that man is of great value both in relationship to God and therefore also in relationship to men. Because of his origin he is a valuable being in God's eyes and therefore also in his neighbor's eyes. The epistemological dimension reveals that man has been given with several important cognitive gifts such as reason, self-comprehension, and faith.

These are important guidelines which will help us when, in the next chapter, we approach man creedally, reading the creed anthropologically. We will look to it for an explanation of how God addresses man in His "for-usness" and we will explore how the creed can provide the matrix for assessing the question of what it means to be human.

CHAPTER THREE

APPROACHING MAN CREEDALLY

Having considered different dimensions of man's existence in the previous chapter (the ontological, axiological and epistemological dimensions), this study narrows its focus. The most significant among these three dimensions of man is the ontological, for obvious reasons. The existence of anything (in this case, the existence of man) always comes before its value and its cognition. In the ontological dimension there are three possible definitions of man, the compositional, the relational, and the complementary or personal. In this study we will apply the complementary or personal approach to the creed. Within that approach, we will stress the relational side of man's existence as we examine how the human person lives in the creed.¹ The relational dimension of the complementary definition of man seems to be the most promising approach, for it demonstrates how God deals with His creatures on a regular basis. God is in constant relationship with us, His human creatures. The creed shows that we relate to God through the relationships He provides "for us."

A. God Addresses Man in a Language of Relationship "For Us"

God addresses us as humans, as living persons who need to be rescued from the bondage of sin. Therefore, He does not speak the language of abstractions, but He puts His name on us.

¹ The relational side of the complementary or personal approach has a sounder biblical basis than the compositional approach, which is often speculative. Although this author has chosen to stress the complementary or personal approach, in this particular section he emphasizes the relational dimension for at least two reasons. First, the creed is obviously relational: it speaks in "for us" language. Second, Lutheran anthropology has not yet developed an adequate theology of personhood.

He calls us by name,² not by number, which is implicit humiliation and degradation through abstraction of the person. Therefore, I know myself by the way God addresses me. It is significant that in Baptism—in rebirth—man receives a new, so-called “Christian” name. If somebody is called by name, it is not abstract talk but very concrete. God does not save an abstract humanity but concrete human persons.

Because God is *Deus locutus*, He is revealed to us by His words; every one of them tells us of some aspect of Him. These are not just another revelation like a theophany, but the Lord has spoken. It is decisive in every respect. Without His words we are merely left in fear and trembling before His power and majesty.

His speaking is “I-Thou” communication, a dialogue, a conversation between two persons. His omnipotence guarantees that He is able to do this with a specific personal focus. His omniscience guarantees that He knows where He can find me. His omnipresence guarantees that He is always near to me to address me in a very personal and intimate way. His calling me by name demonstrates both His omnipotence (He is powerful enough to reach every person where he is) and His omniscience (He knows each of us deeply and intimately). Jewish theologian Martin Buber’s discovery of the “I-Thou” dialogical approach,³ on the other hand, has reminded

² Only man in all of Creation has the privilege of having a God-given name and thus to be addressed by it. This personal approach is essential in God-to-man relationships. This is pointed out in several Bible verses. In order to express kindness and support, Scripture testifies: “You have said, ‘I know you by name and you have found favor with me’ (Ex 33:12). To comfort His people, God addresses them: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by your name; you are mine” (Is 43:1). Sometimes for the sake of mission God renames the one He chooses: “No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations” (Gen 17:3), or “I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church” (Matt 16:18).

³ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald G. Smith (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958). Buber’s slogan is, “In the beginning is relation” (18). Relationship is the key to the human being: “I become through my relation to the *Thou*; as I become *I*, I say *Thou*” (11). “If *Thou* is said, the *I* of the combination *I–Thou* is said along with it” (3). Buber’s man lives a life of a dialogue, constantly choosing either the modality of relating to a person (*I–Thou*) or a modality relating to a thing (*I–It*). The former indicates the immediate, mutual, and dialogical while the latter is the objectifying and monological attitude. In *Martin Buber’s I and Thou, Practicing Living Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 16, American religious scholar Kenneth Kramer says, “According to Buber, one becomes *human* only in *I–Thou* relationships.” Cf. another American Buber scholar Robert Wood, *Martin Buber’s Ontology: An Analysis of I and Thou* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 44.

us of the aspect of the personal conversation between us and God; on the other hand, we need to admit that dialogue with God does not exhaust our relationship with Him. God's addressing a human being individually, even by name, is not yet a Gospel. It is still a conversation of Buber's "I-Thou" kind. Dialogue is not a purpose in itself. There is a purpose that drives it.

"For us" language takes our relation with Christ much further—all the way to the cross. "For us" has Christ's sacrificial death behind it. God's addressing me is a Gospel when Christ's benefits are given through God's address. He is the specific benefit of the Gospel to be delivered. It happens when God's language changes from "You!" imperatives to "for me," "for you" and "for us."⁴ What God does in the Gospel of Jesus Christ who acts "for us" is to show us a human model of all His gracious action toward mankind.

"For us" is not just a piece of God's revelation; it is not a trivial fragment of His speech, but it is His proper speech. Without "for us" words and works, revelation has no meaning. At best, revelation without "for us" is God's self-affirmation. But "for us" is gift talk, and to receive a gift is to exercise faith. Faith confesses God by the creed. Now the legitimate question can be asked, "How do we read and understand the creed and ourselves as confessors of it?"

B. The Hermeneutics of the Creed

To claim the creed as the bases for the study of what it means to be human requires a treatment of the way in which the creedal texts are put to use. We learn about man from the creed "backwards," for the function of the creed is to confess God, not man. To find man and his purpose in the creed, we must employ this logic: "Tell me who your God is and I will tell you who you are!" The creed is not merely data for Christian anthropology, but it is a word spoken

⁴ "*Pro me*" and "*pro tibi*" differ fundamentally in ontological, epistemological, axiological, and other consequences from just "me" and "you." The prefix "*pro*" indicates that there is someone who is giving me something. "Me" and "you" do not point to any outside giver but remain self-centered.

by a human who speaks what he has been given to speak as his own faith—his God, his God’s deeds, and his God’s gifts.

Creed is not words about the faith. Rather, faith itself speaks what it has been given by God to speak. Therefore, we do not speak *about* our identity when we recite the creed, but we proclaim the creed’s eternal truths about us and our God’s work in the world, and we tell forth from the creed the identity that we have come to understand through them.⁵

In the “story” of the creed we repeat⁶ what God has told us regarding who we are—His creatures and His adopted and sanctified children. Thus, creed is the product of faith. As the North American theologian Theodore Schmauk says, “Creeds are born, not made.”⁷ This speech is not just words in the wind, but faith-speech: our words that reflect what God’s words have produced in us.

⁵ The confession of the creed is not just an expression of faith as I recite the text of the creed in an ecclesial environment. The words of the creed embrace and orient my whole being both as individual and as a representative of a Christian community. My confessing the creed constitutes, forms, and defines my personality, for it concretizes the object of my faith. It provides me with the surest word about who I am and provides my life with meaning, security and fulfillment, opening me to wider horizons than my own limited and self-centered view would otherwise allow. It sustains my sense of identity and gives me the ability to acknowledge my identity as God’s child before other Christians and those outside the Church. The creed unites me with previous generations of believers: with contemporary Christians in all places, and with future believers. My confession of the creed serves to express the unifying bond of the one tradition, the *Una Sancta*, that draws together different traditions. The creed provides a ground of faith, the general orientation and concrete norms for the life of faith, and guidelines for adoration and mission—that is, for the Church’s task in general. In the creed is found the accumulation of the Church’s experience. Furthermore, the creed evaluates that history of experience by the criterion of *sola Scriptura*, conceptualizes it in the formulae *fidei*, and canonizes the only legitimate experiences for the Church. Charles Arand says in “Toward a Hermeneutics of the Lutheran Confessions,” *Concordia Journal* 2 (2002): 16 and Charles Arand and James Voelz, “The Lutheran Confessions as Normative Guides for Reading Scripture” *Concordia Journal* 21 [1995]: 367: “The Creed serves as the teaching and catechetical material in particular for initiation into the Church, and it serves as an apologetical tool. The Creed provides the foundation of human doxology. Thus, these general descriptions of the use of the Creed apply to our specific employment of their model and orientation for defining what it means to be human, just as they express the Church’s self-consciousness and self-understanding.”

⁶ “A confession repeats what God said, and as such, it involves a speaking that is congruent with the Scriptures, which are God’s Word. To say that it is congruent does not mean that it simply either parrots or reprintinates but rather that its content corresponds to the content of Scripture and in no way does violence to the total thought.” Arand and James Voelz, “The Lutheran Confessions as Normative Guides for Reading Scripture,” 366.

⁷ Theodore Schmauk and Theodore Benze, *The confessional Principle and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church as Embodying the Evangelical Confessions of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: General council Publication Board, 1911), 22.

The very first word of the Apostles' Creed is: "*credo*" ("I believe"). Belief is only a counterpart of the gift being delivered and received through the creed. It is not abstract knowledge about remote divinity. Abstract knowledge creates, at best, intellectual curiosity, not personal, salvific faith. Man's response to God's Words of gift is best expressed in a credal confession. God is the One doing the giving, and we are at the receiving end. We are just "suffering" the gifts: we are being "given to." Grammatically, "we" are in the passive voice. "God," Who is in the active voice, initiates the action of giving.

Thus, when we confess the creed, we do not speak as if we get acquainted with God by using the creed as an introductory information sheet. We speak as persons who have already received all the gifts the creed speaks about. We do not say one word as indifferent, detached persons, but rather speak as people who give a testimony to what has happened to us through God's Word. We do not talk as outside, "objective" interpreters or observers, for we are God's insiders, His own, His adopted sons and daughters. We speak in personal terms of what He has given to us to speak. And although we can legitimately claim that these words are ours, really they are the echoes of what God has said, done, and given to us.⁸ We say back to Him what He has said to us. We confess His being, actions and words "for us." We tell about what we have been given. His gifts, not our investigations, bring God to us and us to Him. Thus we get to the core of God's salvific activities, not by objective investigation, but by being taken there in His Word, by being given to in the Sacraments, and by being gifted with a sanctified life. This all occurs in the passive voice, with us being passive recipients of God's gifts. We are not constituted by what we have (on our own), but by what we are given (1 Cor 4:7).

The first and primary gift I receive from God is the very existence of me, myself (i.e., the ontological aspect); to this God adds the gifts of sustenance immediately and inseparably. If I do

not acknowledge my very being as an ontological the gift from my Creator I ultimately cannot know who I am, for the gifts of sustenance only indirectly and ambiguously tell me who I am. Only when I acknowledge that I have been delivered as a gift to myself by my Creator am I able to comprehend myself as belonging to Him, thus acknowledging that my identity, meaning, security and fulfillment ultimately lie in Him and in His actions “for me.” The creed provide us with the appropriate words to acknowledge the profound and manifold blessings of God “for us.”

C. The “For-usness” of the Creed

The sense that all of God’s work has been done “for us” and only for our benefit permeates the creed. Although this phrase itself is used only once in each of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, the freight of the phrase “for us” is woven into each article, as each demonstrates God’s initiative, His openness to the world, His generosity, His welcoming attitude, and *revelandus* nature. (He is *Deus qui locutus est et Deus qui loquitur*—He reveals Himself by addressing His Word’s words to us, i.e., by/through Christ speaking to us.) Basically, all His revelation is about “for us”—in content as well as in the address. Revelation is not merely God’s self-exhibition. Revelation is purposeful, and it is intended to be “for us”—to reveal God to man. God’s revelatory “for us” serves as the ontological basis of all saving relations with God. From this angle everything else in the creed can be seen as commentary on this phrase.

God has done *everything* “for us,” and the creed reflects this fact in its “for-usness” fashion. As Luther says, “The Creed tells us what God does for us and gives to us.”⁹ He summarizes the “for-usness” of the Apostle’s Creed in the following statement:

In all three articles God himself has revealed and opened to us the most profound depths of his fatherly heart and his pure, unutterable love. For this very purpose he created us, so that he might redeem us and make us holy, and moreover, having granted and bestowed

⁸ Thus we may say that it is not a “reader-response” reaction but a “believer-response” reaction.

⁹ LC, II, 67.

upon us everything in heaven and on earth, he has also given us his Son and His Holy Spirit, through whom he brings us to himself. For . . . we could never come to recognize the Father's favor and grace were it not for the Lord Christ, who is a mirror of the Father's heart. Apart from him we see nothing but an angry and terrible judge. But neither could we know anything of Christ, had it not been revealed by the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

“For us” is given, demonstrated, and received differently in each of the three articles of the creed. Each reveals what we may call the different aspects of the human person, for each of the articles presents a different Person of the Trinity, Who, in turn, defines and shapes particular aspects of the human person.

In the First Article of the creed, we confess the Creator, the Father. In the Second Article, we confess His most precious gift, His only begotten Son. In the Third Article, we receive gifts in the Spirit—in the delivery of the Word, the Sacraments and Christian fellowship.¹¹ Thus God creates us, restores our identity, and enables us to live in human fashion by His gifts. The general logic of constituting the human person moves as follows. Our relationships with God as His creatures who receive His creation gifts in the First Article serve as an ontological basis for the relationship of the Second Article, in which the saving benefits of Christ have been acquired for us. These saving gifts have, in turn, been delivered to us in the Third Article. Each one of the articles defines us in a very particular way. Each is necessary in its own way. To refuse or neglect even one of the articles or to try to reduce any of them to the others is a mistake and a refusal of God's specific gifts, for as Luther says, “To receive God's [gifts] . . . in many ways is so much better.”¹² God is not a minimalist but a maximalist in procuring gifts for us. In the gospel of John (10:10), Christ tells us, “I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.”

¹⁰ LC, II, 64-6.

¹¹ Thus “The Father gives us all creation, Christ all his works, the Holy Spirit delivers all his gifts.” LC, II, 69.

¹² WA 30, I, 345; LW 53, 118.

After the Fall, the picture of man changed. Man, dependent on the Creator by virtue of his creation, was never capable of saving himself from the consequences of sin. Through the sin of the Fall, man has defined himself as a sinner, but God graciously re-defines him as “saved:” a saint for Christ’s sake. The Holy Spirit delivers this newly acquired identity. The Holy Spirit has been sent by the Father and the Son to distribute God’s salvation gifts and to draw man to Himself. Thus, man is now defined as a sanctified person, a “Spirit-ed” being.

All three creedal articles enable us to define man from the standpoint of God’s giving. Our existence both as members of the human species and as individuals is gift-filled. Man is a creaturely gift of the Creator God to man himself. Man’s re-definition as an adopted child of God is more than just another ordinary gift (if God’s gifts can be spoken in this way!), for it has taken place by virtue of Christ’s vicarious satisfaction. The Spirit hastens to deliver the precious gift of salvation to man “in many ways.” The delivery of our salvation through the Spirit may be looked at as a gift in itself, for what good is a gift if it lies on a shelf undelivered?

Man lives in the tension among the articles of the creed. Because man does not cease being a creature, he needs to be reminded of his Creator. Even as God declares man to be a “saint” in Christ, man is still a sinner as well, and he must recall that he needs and has received a Savior. And although man has already received many gifts of sanctification, he always needs to be re-filled or “re-charged” by God’s gracious gifts.

All three articles posit concrete realities, practical spheres of human inhabitation and *loci* of man’s existence where he receives and lives out his gifts from God. My “I-ness” has been given to me from outside myself, and from outside it has been sustained by the gifts spoken of and given through all three articles. In all three articles of the creed we are placed at the receiving end (“What do you have that you did not receive?” [1 Cor 4:7]), and we will never outgrow this position because we will always remain who we are—God’s creatures. The very fact that we are creatures of the Almighty One defines

our status as receivers of His gifts on a permanent basis. His attributes of omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience guarantee the ceaseless flow of the gifts of sustenance. This continuous outpouring of gifts awaits us when we receive the status of God's adopted children through Baptism.

Thus, as God's children we have been richly gifted. What is the significance of this fact? What do we do with all these gifts and toward what ends do we employ them? Further, what is the meaning not merely of the gifts themselves but of life altogether? In order to explore these questions of man's existence, we now turn to charting a matrix of the meaning of man based on our investigation of the creed.

D. Charting the Matrix of the Meaning of Man

1. The Quest for and Specificity of the Meaning

Among the many categories into which human beings try to place the elements of their experience is the category of the meaning or significance of life. The pursuit of the meaning of human life provides an effective way to organize and interpret the results of this study of what it means to be human through the creed and Luther's notion that human existence stems from God's acting "for us." The need for people to recognize meaning in life is postulated as an axiom by notable Jewish theologian Abraham Heschel:

Imbedded in the mind is a certainty that the state of existence and the state of meaning stand in a relation to each other, that life is assessable in terms of meaning. The will to meaning and the certainty of the legitimacy of our striving to ascertain it are as intrinsically human as the will to live and the certainty of being alive.¹³

The need for humans to find or create meaning is so fundamental that following the classical definition of man as the "animal who (is or does this or that)," we can state that man is a living being producing and living from and for meaning(s).¹⁴ Meaning constitutively penetrates all of human life. As Russian scientist Vladimir Nalimov says, "The architecture of personhood

¹³ Abraham Heschel, *Who Is Man?* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), 54.

is the architecture of meanings, embodied in the personhood—the demiurgical bearer of meanings.”¹⁵

God created the world as a meaningful place. Man, who “arrived in existence” by the *fiat* of God, is on one the hand a discoverer of the meaning God has given to human life. On the other hand, meaning is also the constitutive element of consciousness, that is, meaning is always brought into the world by conscious entities—men and God. Man was created by God as a co-creative person capable of creating meanings and recognizing and implementing those created by others (other men and God). Since meaning is so important in the life of man, we need to take a closer look at the many dimensions that “meaning” can take on.

2. Dimensions of the Meaning of humanity

Generation after generation of human beings have asked difficult questions concerning their existence, including: “Who is man?” “Of what is he a part?” “What is going on with, and within him?” “Where does man comes from, and where does he go?” Of all of the great questions in life, however, the most difficult question man asks about his life is, “What is life’s purpose?”¹⁶ This question has received diverse answers from numerous fields of inquiry throughout the ages. Almost any discipline that deals with humanity has something to say to the question of life’s purpose. Classical philosophy has engaged these so-called “eternal questions” intensively. This author has a strong conviction that theological anthropology is capable of

¹⁴ It is legitimate to speak of meaning both in singular and in plural, for speaking of it in the singular represents the whole dimension of meaning while speaking in plural demonstrates that meaning actually exists as a web, as a great system or multitude of single meanings.

¹⁵ Vladimir Nalimov, *Spontannostj soznaniija* (The Spontaneity of Consciousness) (Moscow: Prometey, 1989), 120.

¹⁶ Certainly, there are also other questions which in many ways pertain to the human existence such as: “Why does evil exist? What is right and wrong? What is the purpose of corporate humanity?” etc. In the author’s view, these questions are, in one way or another, sub-questions to those already mentioned.

answering these questions through mining the theological treasures of the creed. First, however, let us more closely examine the questions themselves.¹⁷

a) “Who am I?” What does it mean to be a human creature, a human person? There is a strong connection between the identity of the human person and the significance or meaning of his life; the identity of the human person is implemented in his meaning. Thus, ultimately the quest for the “meaning”¹⁸ of the human person is the quest for an “authentic” existence.¹⁹

b) “Of what am I a part?” Man is part of something “greater” than himself. As Heschel says, “Man cannot be understood in his own terms. He can only be understood . . . in terms of a larger context. Our question now is, “What is the context of man, in terms of which he can be ultimately understood?”²⁰

c) “What is going on with/within me?” What are the processes in which my whole being is involved? What are my main components, and how do they interrelate? Where do the connections between the body, mind, soul, will, spirit, and mind occur in the human person?

d) “Where do I come from?” This is a question about man’s beginnings, his origins.

e) “What is the purpose of my life?” This answer defines the ultimate *telos* of man. Man’s teleology is set by God’s creative fiat. Teleologically man is defined by his genesis as well as by the understanding, realization and implementation of his “givens,” which answer the questions about the “why?” and to “what end?” man has come into being. Thus, the justification of his being depends on his self-understanding and his awareness of his life-long mission. His *telos* as

¹⁷ Although this scheme is my own there is a partial parallel in Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 538: “When we ask what the human is, we are asking several different questions. One . . . is the question of origin. We are also asking about the human function or purpose. That might lead us to the question of the human’s ultimate destiny. The human makeup is yet another issue raised by the question of what human beings are.”

¹⁸ Here the meaning of the human person is understood as the existential significance of his existence. The search for meaning is the search for significant being marked with the implemented values.

¹⁹ To be a real human being, that is, to be “authentic,” is to be what God designed a human being to be and to do.

the objective purpose of his existence is always outside his present status and conditions. Therefore there is a definite tension between the present status of man and his greater purpose. To live meaningful life is to be in the constant tension between being fulfilled and striving for more: between being content in one's present state (which is filled with already implemented meanings), and the dynamics of the meanings and values one implements as one proceeds into the future. The question of life's purpose inescapably leads every human being to confront the very personal issue of his overall productivity; each person is ultimately forced to evaluate the efficacy and value²¹ of his life.

f) "Where am I going?" What is the ultimate destiny of man (that is, What is his eschatological lot?)

The six aspects mentioned above are interrelated. "Who am I?" can be answered when man's genesis is clear. This in turn defines his present place in the larger context and leads to an understanding of his future as well. Thus, past (represented by genesis), present (represented by man's self-awareness and knowing who he is), and future (as having principal aims) are bound together both logically and historically. Meaning can be expressed by criteria of contextuality and intentionality (teleology). Man's identity can be implemented fully if man as a unit is in agreement with himself (i.e., his components work harmoniously). These aspects of the meaning of man each help him to inhabit the world, to orientate himself in it, to comprehend the world as

²⁰ Heschel, *Who Is Man?* 67.

²¹ For example, by asking what have God and the other people around me expected from my life? What have I expected of myself? What I have really, factually achieved during my lifetime and in each stage of my life? What is the proportion of what God or my fellow man has given me, and what I have been able to produce in return? Here the statement that, "The human identity implemented in meaning and the meaning is objectified, materialized into specific, concrete values (which can be very practically pointed out and sometimes even measured)," is helpful. This criterion helps separate the simulated lives which are just "lived out" (also those which have exploited others for their own ends, and those who intentionally have lived merely as consumers of life) from those whose lives have benefited themselves and their neighbors, for such lives have been lived according to God's will. These are the lives about which God can finally say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matt 25:21, 23)

a whole, to see the world the arena and context of his activities, to assist him in seeing how the world has been made “for us” and to implement his vocation and mission in life.

This study draws some material from the articles of the creed in a five-fold division and assessing the anthropological implications through the use of the six key questions in one chart.

Thus we have the following matrix or Creedal Chart of the Meaning of Man:

Table 1. Creedal Chart of the Meaning of Man

Dimension	First Article	First Article after the fall	Second Article	Third Article	First Article Revisited
a. Who am I?					
b. Of what am I a part?					
c. What is going on with/within me?					
d. Where do I come from?					
e. What is the purpose of my life?					
f. Where am I going?					

3. Meaning and Value

If implemented identity provides meaning for human life, then meaning (objectified, embodied, materialized, put in the form of artifacts, or found in the experiences and attitudes of the individual or group) constitutes a value which exists concretely here and now. Without the search for meaning and the cultivation of values in his life, man becomes just a thing a social or psychological object for someone else (socio-political regimes, peer groups, or even his own sinful desires) to manipulate. Man’s universal calling is a meaningful inhabitation, development,

and transformation of the world beginning with his own self by the cultivation of particular values. In this way he fulfils the cultural mandate given by God in Gen 2:15 to be a steward over all creation including himself.

4. Meaning As the Definition of Life

Man's most important concern is not just existing, but cultivating a meaningful existence—an existence that corresponds to his high ontological status and honors the privilege of being human. As Heschel says, "Man may, indeed, be characterized as a subject in quest of a predicate, as a being in quest of a meaning of life, of all of life, not only of particular actions or single episodes which happen now and then."²² Speaking from Scripture, God gives meaning to human life by putting it into relationship with Himself and with the world over which man has been commanded to exercise his dominion. Man implements the meaning of his life as he exercises his God-given authority. There is no intrinsic meaning in just existing or in reproducing existence outside God's purview. To look for and to implement meaning means to truly and fully "live," not just to exist, for it is the very consciousness and intentionality with which we live and pursue meaning in our lives that make them worth living. It is a fact that man needs something to live for, a meaning in life. But this begs the question, "What kind of life means so much that we can find human fulfillment in its pursuit?" Further, is there any system of meaning in this life that is so precious that a person would rather die within the context of that meaning than live outside it?

5. Creedal Aspects of the Meaning of Life

Neither Scriptures nor the creed speak directly to the issue of human identity and meaning, nor do they use many of the terms we use today in the discussion of man. This is partly because

²² Heschel, *Who Is Man?* 54.

the matter of salvation dominates the Scripture. The best we can do to address man's meaning, then is simply to observe the Lord's way of approaching humanity and then follow the examples of His words and deeds. For this approach, the creed is wonderful summary of Christ's life and of what He has done "for us". "The [Apostles'] Creed tells us what God does for us and gives to us."²³

Methodologically, we will follow the pattern of the *Nicaenum*, using its trinitarian structure to discover its description of God being "for us" in the each particular article. We will then analyze how God "for us" answers the six questions of meaning mentioned above: a) Who am I? b) Of what am I a part? c) What is going on with/within me? d) Where do I come from? e) What is the purpose of my life? and f) Where am I going?

The First Article speaks of the creative activities of God the Father. The first intentions of God for man were those of Gen 2:15: "to work and take care of [Eden]," and to "subdue" and "rule over" it (Gen 1:28). In order to fulfill this task, it is man's calling to explore and cultivate the world.

Man is a very special creature of God and is an inherently "meaningful" being. This meaning is realized and implemented in a very concrete way. Man has been placed in a web of relationships with other creatures and his Creator. Man receives his meaning from his particular place in this web of these relations. In the context of this "relational web," the relationships we experience are of the "for you, for us" kind—they link us to God and thereby benefit ourselves, our families and our neighbors.

The most significant relationships in this web are those in the triangle connecting God, man, and other creatures. These relationships are established on a personal premise. God says to us, "I have summoned you by name, you are mine" (Is 43:1)! For a Christian, the meaning of life

²³ LC, II, 67.

is to live in accordance with the will of His Creator, Savior, and Sanctifier. Thus, meaning is found in life-giving connection with the Triune God. This is realized and implemented by a personal invocation of a personal God, asking Him to, “Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths” (Ps 24:5). The believer’s answer is that of Eli and Samuel: “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (1 Sam 3:9)!

This chapter has noted that God addresses man by acting “for us” in a way that is consistently self-sacrificing and beneficial for us as we carry out His cultural mandate. This chapter has also begun to show us how to read the creed in such a way that a biblical anthropology emerges from it. We have seen how a matrix can be constructed to assess creedal insights into the question of what it means to be human.

This study continues with a review of Luther’s development of God’s actions “for us.” On a basis of Luther’s interpretation of the creedal confession of who God is, a clear picture of his understanding of what it means to be human emerges. The questions presented in Chapter 4 will provide the framework for examining Luther’s views. In the Chapter 5 the question of man’s meaning will be addressed by this study’s Orthodox representative, Vladimir Lossky. Lossky’s insights will be followed by a comparison of the two theologians and some concluding comments.

CHAPTER FOUR

LUTHER'S VIEW OF THE CREEDAL "FOR US" AS THE DETERMINING FACTOR OF MAN'S IDENTITY

This dissertation proceeds with the examination of how two prominent theologians from different church traditions committed to the ecumenical creeds have dealt with the anthropology that emerges from them. In this chapter, we will explore how Dr. Martin Luther dealt with the "for us" character of the creed. In the next chapter, we will take up Eastern Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky's anthropological thoughts to see how he answers the same questions that we put to Luther. We will then compare and contrast their anthropological concepts to generate some conclusions regarding the meaning of man.

When the ancient church confessed its faith in creedal form, it focused on answering questions about God's being and activities in the world. The early fathers answered questions about Who God is, how He came to take on human flesh, what He has done for sinners, and how He acts in His church. One aspect of early confessions is that they all assert that God acts "for us." Albrecht Peters claims that Luther renewed and existentialized the knowledge that God's activities are "for us."¹ When Luther formulated his brief elucidation of the Creed for his contemporaries in the Small Catechism, he focused on the centrality of relationships between God and His human creatures. This focus actually summarized Luther's understanding of what it means to be human. From his declaration that, "God has made me together with all creatures" in

¹ Albrecht Peters, *Kommentar zur Luthers Katechismen*, Bd. 2, *Der Glaube* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 117.

the First Article to “[He] will give me and all believers in Christ everlasting life” in the Third Article, Luther tells the human story of living in relation to God.

If we look at Luther’s catechetical writings and his Catechisms in particular, the idea of “for us” (“for me” etc.) is implicitly and explicitly present in all he writes. Particularly significant in this regard are Luther’s explanations of the Creed in his Small Catechism and in related catechetical writings. In order to be consistent, let us first explore how Luther perceived the “for us” character of the Creed as a whole, and then we will analyze each of the articles of the Creed separately. As we delve deeper into the insights of the creeds in developing a God-based anthropology, we will come to see that Luther’s comments on the three Articles as a unit constitute his own “for us” creed. We will also take into account Luther’s treatment of the First Article Revisited.

A. Luther on the “For-Usness” of the Whole Creed

Luther begins his explanation of the Creed by exploring the meaning of the word “faith.” In his view faith has two definitions. The first is the faith “about” (*fides quae*) God and everything divine. This definition of faith pertains mainly to intellectual assent to the truth of biblical facts. Because this kind of faith requires no more than a nod to the notion that God exists, its subjects can keep a safe distance from its object (God). This kind of faith, however, is little more than a shadow of the second kind of faith, which describes human identity by relationally connecting people with God. This second kind of faith is personal and intimate, even existential. It is faith “in” God (*fides qua*): “I put my trust in [God], . . . I make the venture and take the risk of dealing with him, believing beyond doubt that what he will be toward me or do with me will be just as [the Scriptures] say.”¹ Only God is the proper object of ultimate human trust:

I do not believe in this manner regarding any person, no matter how highly he be praised. It is easy for me to believe that a certain man is outstandingly religious, but

that is no reason for me to build [my life] upon him. Only a faith that ventures everything in life and in death on what is said of God [in Scripture] makes a person a Christian.²

The fact that Luther defines this faith as trust in the promises of God leads inevitably to his viewing God as a God “for us.” Both the work of Creation and the act of redemption become channels and instruments “in, with, and under which the Triune God comes near to us, is recognized by us, and wants our trust to grasp Him. In this way the Father, Son and Spirit take centre place and become(s) the actual subject in the explanation of each article.”³

To help form and sustain such a trusting faith, Luther recast the structure of medieval catechisms and built a new catechism to lead a pupil from repentance (Law) to trust in Christ (Gospel). The parts of Luther’s Small Catechism are arranged in the following order: The Ten Commandments, The [Apostles’] Creed and The Lord’s Prayer. Logically, Luther puts the power of the Law to work in the Commandments, moves the convicted catechumen to discover his saving relationship to God in the Creed, and then moves him to praise God and demonstrate his trusting faith in the Gospel of Christ as he prays “Thy will be done” in the Lord’s Prayer. The genius of Luther’s Catechism is that it creates a framework for understanding the doctrine of justification by faith. The faith Luther speaks about is the one that the First Commandment requires⁴ and it that which no man is able to himself produce: “This [faith that justifies] is a living faith as the First Commandment demands. . . . And this faith is given only by God Himself.”⁵ Luther demonstrates that the God-given faith expressed through the form of the Creed is given:

² WA 10, II, 389; LW 43, 24.

³ Peters, *Kommentar zur Luthers Katechismen*, Bd. 2, 34.

⁴ LC, II, 10. “The Creed is nothing else than a response and confession of Christians based on the First Commandment.”

⁵ WA 10, II, 389; AE, 43, 25.

. . . to enable us do what the Ten Commandments require of us. For . . . [their moral standards] are set so high that all human ability is far too puny and weak to keep them. Therefore, it is just as necessary to learn this part as it is the other so that we may know where and how to obtain the power to do this. If we were able by our own strength to keep the Ten Commandments as they ought to be kept, we would need nothing else, neither the Creed nor the Lord's Prayer.⁶

Moreover, Luther claims that only such faith as a personal trust in God identifies man as a Christian and grasps his intimate connection with God: "This faith, which in life or death dares to believe that God is what He is said to be, is the only faith that makes a man a Christian and obtains from God whatever it will."⁷ Thus, the Creed does not provide merely the religious facts "about" God, but rather it "sets forth all that we must expect and receive from God; in short, it teaches us to know him perfectly."⁸

Thus, Luther has identified two distinctive kinds of faith and has established that only faith "in God" is faith in the proper sense. In light of this definition of faith proper as faith in the true God, Luther interprets the content of the Creed. For teaching purposes, he begins succinctly. Luther says, "The Creed could be briefly condensed to these few words: 'I believe in God the Father, who created me; I believe in God the Son, who has redeemed me; I believe in the Holy Spirit, who makes me holy.'"⁹ For Luther, the Creed has two personal poles: "God" and "me." The whole purpose of the Creed is to discover who God is "for me" as an individual and "for us" as members of the human family. That is clearly seen in his hymned paraphrase of the Apostolic Creed.¹⁰ Thus, although it may not be readily apparent in the language of the Creed that the whole of it is dedicated to defining a specific anthropology, Luther demonstrates how human

⁶ LC, II, 2-3.

⁷ WA 7, 215; *Works by Martin Luther*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman, 1915), 368.

⁸ LC, II, 1.

⁹ LC, II, 7.

¹⁰ See Appendix II. It is also called the *German Patrem*.

beings are the only creatures who benefit from the actions of God that the Creed confesses. As Luther explains it:

. . . the First Article teaches creation, the second redemption, the third sanctification. The first, how we are created together with all creatures; the second, how we are redeemed; the third, how we are to become holy and pure and live and continue to be pure.”¹¹

In the following words Luther paints an overall picture of the “for us” action of the Trinitarian God:

For in all three articles God himself has revealed and opened to us the most profound depths of his fatherly heart and his pure, unutterable love. For this very purpose he created us, so that he might redeem us and make us holy, and moreover, having granted and bestowed upon us everything in heaven and on earth, he has also given us his Son and His Holy Spirit, through whom he brings us to himself. For . . . we could never come to recognize the Father’s favor and grace were it not for the Lord Christ, who is a mirror of the Father’s heart. Apart from him we see nothing but an angry and terrible judge. But neither could we know anything of Christ, had it not been revealed by the Holy Spirit.¹²

In short, “the Father gives us all creation, Christ all his works, the Holy Spirit delivers all his gifts.”¹³ We are recipients of God’s gifts of “for us.” Luther stresses that:

All three articles must be truly believed, namely, that he is God, further, that he is man, further, that he became man for us. . . . If one article is lacking, then all are lacking, for the faith is supposed to be and must be whole and complete.¹⁴

Faith is complete when it has received all the “for us” gifts of the Trinitarian God.

Thus in Luther’s view the Creed has two main centers of theological attention: “God” and “me.” Luther points out that although technically the Creed speaks of God, men are the ones who are benefiting from Him. The Creed is in fact the description of the Gift-Giver, the God who is

¹¹ WA 30, I, 86; LW 51, 162.

¹² LC, II, 64-66.

¹³ Ibid., 69.

¹⁴ WA 50, 269; LW 34, 210.

“for us.” Thus, the Trinitarian God (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is the same as our Creator, our Redeemer and our Sanctifier, each of them delivering His specific gifts “for us.”

B. Luther on the “For-Usness” of the First Article

In Luther’s explanation of the First Article of the Creed the “for-usness” is located in the designation of God as the Father, the Almighty and the Creator. “For-usness” is the quality of the titles that brings them together in the person of God. God is a Father for all people, he is Almighty to save us from our sins, and he is the Creator of all that we have and need. The human person as a believer is the recipient of God’s gifts “for us.” These gifts God provides on a regular basis via the established sustenance-care-security net, channeling them through the creatures His goodness “for us.” To see how Luther plays it all out, we turn to the center of the First Article, God the Father.

1. God the Father, Almighty Creator

Luther starts the explanation of the creed with wording that is reminiscent of the academic mode of thinking: “This is the shortest possible way of describing and illustrating the nature, will, acts, and work of God the Father.”¹⁵ However, Luther continues in his own fashion, not speaking in complex, theoretical concepts that need to be analytically dissected to be useful, but rather candidly and personally about the Person of a God who relates to man as his Father and loving Creator.¹⁶ Both of these titles provide Luther with ample evidence to argue that these are the titles of the “for us” kind of God. For Luther, the grammatical sequence of “God, the Father almighty, Creator” does not mark a progression or evolution from one title of God to another.

¹⁵ LC, II, 9-10.

¹⁶ As Albrecht Peters *Kommentar zur Luthers Katechismen*, Bd. 2, 71-7 has pointed out in his earlier writings (1522 Prayer book) Luther concentrated his entire treatment of the First Article on the words “Father” and “almighty” explaining them separately and together. In the process, he almost ignored the word “Creator.” In his Catechisms, the opposite is the case. The “Father almighty” almost recedes into the background as “Creator” moves front and center.

God, as He reveals Himself to man, is “all in one.” Therefore, Luther does not analyze each one of the titles of God separately, but rather takes them all as one name or title, each describing a certain facet of His “personality,” but each of them being decidedly “for-us” in their expressions. Because these are different titles referring to the same basic characteristics of a generous God, the realms of the respective titles (Father, Almighty and Creator) frequently overlap.

One of the reasons why man perceives Him who is the majestic Lord of the heaven and earth as his own Father and himself as God’s human creature (His child) is the uniquely personal nature of God’s “for-usness.” Luther claims that even “a young child . . . could say: ‘my God is the Father, who made heaven and earth. Aside from this one alone I regard nothing as God, for there is no one else who could create heaven and earth.’”¹⁷ This God whom the believer has a great privilege to call his Father is doing everything “for us.” He has given us

. . . not only all that we have and what we see before our eyes, but also that he daily guards and defends us against every evil and misfortune, warding off all sorts of danger and disaster. All this he does out of pure love and goodness, without our merit, as a kind father who cares for us so that no evil may befall us.”¹⁸

This fatherly God lovingly and embraces man through His “for-usness.” Luther is eager to point out how God has “given to us himself with all creation and has abundantly provided for us in this life, apart from the fact that he has also showered us with inexpressible eternal blessings through his Son and the Holy Spirit, as we shall hear.”¹⁹ Here Luther, with the help of “for us,” is building a bridge to the Second and the Third Articles of the creed.

¹⁷ LC, II, 11.

¹⁸ LC, II, 17-18.

¹⁹ LC, II, 24.

This God the Father is the almighty One, who is the Creator.²⁰ Luther says, “Everything that exists is comprehended in that little word ‘creator.’”²¹ The acknowledgment of this title of God puts us in a humbled position: God will “not let us think that we have created ourselves.”²² Accepting God as Creator accepts that we do not have a life that we can legitimately call our own. In his frequently colorful fashion, Luther puts his position as created being this way: “This article teaches that you do not have your life of yourself, not even a hair. I would not even have a pig’s ear, if God had not created it for me.”²³ God is the sole author of everything that exists, for He is the only Creator: “None of us has life—or anything else that has been mentioned here or can be mentioned—from ourselves, nor can we by ourselves preserve any of them, however small and unimportant. All this is comprehended in the word ‘Creator.’”²⁴ Peters states that the human being does not put himself in the middle of the cosmos. He is there by God’s created order.²⁵ Peters also notes that in Luther’s catechetical writings, the idea that God’s work is *creatio ex nihilo* is put forth as not just an abstract truth about the beginning of the cosmos, but is focused here and now upon my own existence. To believe in God means “to be serious about the fact that God, and no one else, is the Lord of my life and of the entire world in which I live. In

²⁰ American Lutheran systematician William Schumacher says, “The starting point for anthropology is not *homo creatus* but rather *Deus creator*. God reveals himself to be the maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. In the explanation of the First Article of the Creed, Luther teaches the believer to take the short but crucial step to conclude that God is thus *my* maker, the maker and source of everything that makes and keeps me as the creature I am, and thus the source of my being and my identity. The human creature does not, in fact, live as a self-existent and autonomous being, but only as one who is made by Another and is always dependent on Another, i.e., as a creature of the Creator. And as human existence is dependent on God as the Source, so also the human being cannot arrive at proper and accurate self-understanding from a vantage point of autonomy and self-existence.” “Who Do I Say That You Are?” Anthropology and the Theology of *Theosis* in the Finnish School of Tuomo Mannermaa.” Ph. D. diss., St. Louis, Concordia Seminary, 2003, 215-6.

²¹ WA 30, I, 87; LW 51, 163.

²² WA 30, I, 87; LW 51, 163.

²³ WA 30, I, 87; LW 51, 163.

²⁴ LC, II, 16.

²⁵ Peters, *Kommentar zur Luthers Katechismen*, Bd. 2, 76.

this way the Reformer brings the *pro nobis* into the First Article.”²⁶ Thus, only God is capable of being “for us;” we cannot be “for ourselves” as God is for us.²⁷ We are totally dependent on Him and His “for-usness.” The Christian recognizes and confesses the undeserved goodness of the Creator, the mercy of God the Father. Therefore, the world and all created life is based on the faithfulness of the Creator towards His creatures.²⁸

Being “for us,” Luther assures readers, means that the Creator is the Giver. “God has given everything”²⁹ for us. Speaking of the necessity of understanding that everything that gives and sustains this life is gift, Luther says, “[All] these things I have not of myself, that I may not become proud. I cannot either give them to myself or keep them by myself.”³⁰ Therefore, Luther poses the question: what do we mean when we say, “I believe in God, the Father almighty, *creator*?” The Christian’s answer is: I believe that I am God’s creature, that is, that he has given me and constantly sustains my body, soul, and life and all that I have and use in this world. He makes all creation to help provide the benefits and necessities of life. Moreover, he gives all physical and temporal blessings—good government, peace, and security.³¹ After the lengthy list of gifts, Luther reminds that this “for us” kind of God who is “the creator, the Father almighty, has still more [gifts for us] in store [than are enumerated here].”³² Thus, God’s “for-usness” is rooted in His being Father almighty, the Creator who has organized the whole universe into the human environment as a sustenance, care and safety net so that it would serve our every need.

²⁶ Peters, *Kommentar zur Luthers Katechismen*, Bd. 2, 63.

²⁷ Our “for-usness” (if we can speak of such at all) is merely a derived one and is incorporated in God’s greater goal of using human beings and other “means” to carry out His own grand plan of “for us.”

²⁸ Peters, *Kommentar zur Luthers Katechismen*, Bd. 2, 77.

²⁹ WA 30, I, 87; LW 51, 163.

³⁰ WA 30, I, 88; LW 51, 163.

³¹ LC, II, 13-15.

³² WA 30, I, 87; LW 51, 163.

The Large Catechism tells us that “all this [care and nurture] he does out of pure love and goodness, without reason of our merit, as a kind father who cares for us.”³³ God is not indifferent to us. He “still preserves [the] body and soul,” He “daily and abundantly provides, . . . [and] God protects [his people] against all danger.”³⁴ This confession of the Lord God Who is Creator and Preserver in the midst of our daily life, according to Peters, means that we are continually encountering the creator God “in the ever present secret of life in all its dimensions.” In earth and air and in love between two people we encounter the giving character of God. Peters further argues that God is not merely the *elan vital*, the fundamental, dynamic impetus of all living things, but He is also the guardian and protector of this life against satanic opposition which wants to destroy human beings.³⁵ Human creatures are made to be God’s channels of His goodness “for us.”

2. The Human Creature As Believer in God the Father, Almighty Creator

The creed, and each one of its articles is the believer’s response to the First Commandment³⁶ by which God announces Himself: “I am the Lord, your God!” To this Luther responds, “I put my trust in no person on earth, not in myself, my power, my skill, my

³³ LC, II, 17.

³⁴ SC, II, 2.

³⁵ Peters, *Kommentar zur Luthers Katechismen*, Bd. 2, 76.

³⁶ Luther’s explanations of the Lord’s Prayer also describe the nature of God as Creator, particularly in the Fourth Petition. The Creed is the believer’s response to God’s self-announcement, while the Lord’s Prayer is the proper relationship to God. Luther in his *Brief Explanation of the Ten Commandments, Creed, and Lord’s Prayer (1520)* has bound together the three main parts of the Catechism (namely the Decalogue, the Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer) following this logic: diagnosis, knowledge of the medicine and practical application of it. The Decalogue speaks in terms of spiritual judgment. Luther says that the Decalogue helps a sinner “to know his illness so that he may know and understand what he can and cannot leave undone, and thus knows himself to be a sinner and a wicked man.” Instead, the Creed speaks in terms of an actual power source. Luther says, “The Creed shows him and teaches him where he can find the remedy—the grace which will help him become a righteous man so that he may keep the Commandments; it shows him God and the mercy which He has revealed and offered in Christ.” Prayer, in turn, speaks in terms of practical application, of the “how?” of faith. Luther says that Lord’s Prayer teaches man “how to ask for this grace, get it, and take it to himself, to wit, by habitual, humble, comforting prayer; then grace is given.” WA 7, 204-5; *Works by Martin Luther*, 354-5. Thus, the Creed is in the middle between the Decalogue and the Lord’s Prayer and causally gravitates towards the Decalogue. This is the reason why this author has chosen in this dissertation to refer to the Decalogue (i.e., First Commandment) rather than to the Lord’s Prayer.

possessions, my piety, nor in anything else I may have. I place my trust in no creature, whether in heaven or on earth.”³⁷ There are two ways of confessing God, both positively and negatively. To confess the Creed “positively” means to risk entrusting oneself unconditionally to this First Commandment God. Luther said, “I take the risk of placing my confidence only in the one, invisible, inscrutable, and only God, who created heaven and earth and who alone is superior to all creation.”³⁸

In this “positive” confession, the personal relationship of trust and faith with God the Father and His “for-usness” is established and man is assured of his identity and his status before God: “Since I do not doubt . . . but place my trust in him, I am assuredly his child, servant, and eternal heir, and it will be with me as I believe.”³⁹ Convinced of his child–Father relationship (*coram Deo*) with God, its personal consequences, and the paternal character of God, Luther went further, declaring his unreserved reliance on God’s caring “for-usness”: “If he is God, he can and wishes to do what is best with me. Since he is Father, he will do all this and do it gladly.”⁴⁰ Luther is able to enjoy the benefits of the connections with the “for us” Father because He is also the Creator and the almighty Lord:

If he is the Creator of heaven and earth and Lord over everything, who, then, could deprive me of anything, or work me harm (Rom. 8: 31)? Yes, how can it be otherwise than that all things work for good for me (Rom. 8:28) if the God, whom all creation obeys and depends upon, is well intentioned toward me?⁴¹

³⁷ WA 10, II, 390; LW 43, 25. It must be noted that Luther’s concept of passive righteousness within his distinction of two kinds of righteousness (a concept that will not be employed in this dissertation), is a functional equivalent of God’s being “for His human creatures.”

³⁸ WA 10, II, 390; LW 43, 25.

³⁹ WA 10, II, 391; LW 43, 26.

⁴⁰ WA 10, II, 391; LW 43, 26.

⁴¹ WA 10, II, 390; LW 43, 25.

He sums up God's care for man in the "for us" fashion saying: "If he is almighty, what could I lack that God could not give or do for me?"⁴² The "positive" confession enjoys the gift-relationship with God, but there is more to it. The "positive" confession as understanding of this overwhelming "for us" gift-relation with God evokes men's response of service.

Man has a desire to serve God when he is at the receiving end of God's gift delivery: "If everything is the gift of God, then you owe it to him to serve him with all these things and praise and thank him."⁴³ What man has is what has been given to him. Man returns these gifts in thankfulness to their Author by using them for God's purposes. Luther states it this way:

Hence, because everything we possess, and everything in heaven and on earth besides, is daily given, sustained, and protected by God, it inevitably follows that we are duty bound to love, praise, and thank him without ceasing, and, in short, to devote all these things to his service,⁴⁴ as he has required and enjoined in the Ten Commandments.⁴⁵

Therefore, "we ought daily to practice this article, impress it upon our minds, and remember it in everything we see and in every blessing that comes our way."⁴⁶

On the other hand, to confess the Creed "negatively" means not merely to put one's ultimate trust in God, but to close also every possible loophole to contrary, competitive beliefs and trusts: "this means: I renounce the evil spirit, all idolatry, all sorcery, and all false belief."⁴⁷ God is a jealous God; He excludes all competition for the ultimate trust of human creatures. The God of Abraham is not an inclusive God as are some of the gods of the heathen, who would

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ WA 30, I, 87; LW 51, 163.

⁴⁴ Implicitly, this "service" involves an early understanding of Luther's notion of Christian vocation.

⁴⁵ LC, II, 19.

⁴⁶ LC, II, 23.

⁴⁷ WA 10, II, 389; LW 43, 25.

accept other divine beings alongside themselves. Naturally, because we are selfish sinners, God's jealousy for us can be a source of internal conflict in a believer's life.

The conflicts that may arise are between our desires to serve the God who is "for us" and the devil, world, and flesh that seem attractive but lead us away from the gifts of life. Because God has become God "for us," and man became a believer in God's "for us," the world, flesh and sin become "against us," waging a constant battle for the annihilation of God's work in our lives. Luther comprehends what kind of forces he is provoking by his renunciation of alternatives to the true God. Therefore, he encourages himself, confessing the almightiness of God: "I am not terrified by all the wickedness of the devil and his cohorts because God is superior to them all."⁴⁸ But besides the devil there is also the world, which would like to impose itself on men. Luther addresses this as well, repeating his confession in the same fashion: "I would believe in God not a bit less if everyone were to forsake me and persecute me."⁴⁹ There is also the temptation of the flesh of which Luther says, "I would believe in God no less if I were poor, unintelligent, uneducated, despised, or lacking in everything."⁵⁰ The flesh is a person's own inner companion—the sin, which works guilt, remorse, shame and fear of God or even worse—temptations to try to subdue or to manipulate God by man's own piety. But Luther knows his God as majestic Lord, so he does not "ask for any sign from God to put him to the test;" rather "[He] trust[s] in him steadfastly, no matter how long he may delay, prescribing neither a goal, nor a time, nor a measure, nor a way [for God to respond to him], but leaving all to his divine will in a free, honest, and genuine faith."⁵¹ Thus, although He is God "for us," His "for us-ness" is not at our free disposal. Men cannot impose on Him a "for-usness" fashioned after their wishes. Thus,

⁴⁸ WA 10, II, 390; LW 43, 25.

⁴⁹ WA 10, II, 390; LW 43, 25.

⁵⁰ WA 10, II, 390; LW 43, 25.

although God is God “for-us” and usually reveals that He is “for us” by coming to man in the form of gifts, it is not the gifts but the Giver who defines the relationship with man.

Luther does not believe in God simply because God showers him with gifts. Luther believes in Him because He is God. There is no other reason to believe in God besides His Godness. God is caring for man, not bribing him, with His “for-usness,” which can sometimes come to man as a shower of gifts and sometimes as a lack of the gifts man feels he deserves. God is God—with or without His gifts. As Luther says, “This faith of mine must and shall soar above everything that is and everything that is not . . . so that it may remain simply as purely a faith in God, as the First Commandment constrains me.”⁵² Thus, even when we live without gifts that we particularly desire, God still retains His “for-usness.” He does not cease to be our Father, and we do not cease to be His children who trust Him and cling to Him.

Thus, Luther’s God of the First Article is the One in whom almightiness, fatherhood, and nature as Creator are united in His “for-usness.” Because He is the “for us” God, trusting and belonging to Him evokes the adversarial reaction of the devil, flesh, world and sin. God is the “for us,” caring kind of God who is not manipulated according to man’s wishes. His “for-usness” is that of a Father, who establishes man’s identity as His own creature and child. The character of God as Creator reminds man that God is the sole Author of all that exists. Therefore, men are totally dependent on His “for-usness,” by which He has organized the created order into a sustenance-care-security net, channeling through his creatures His goodness “for us.” This in turn evokes man’s thankful reaction of service and ministry to God.

⁵¹ WA 10, II, 390; LW 43, 25.

⁵² WA 7, 216; *Works of Martin Luther*, 369.

C. Luther on the “For-usness” of the Second Article

Now we turn to the Second Article of the Creed which, for Luther, is the main and critical article of the Christian faith. It does not originate with man but it is another gift *extra nos* that comes from God who is “for us.” Luther contracts this article to the theological formula: “Our Lord.” This article expresses that God the Father’s “for-usness” is the same as Christ’s “for-usness” which He embodied and exhibited in His birth, life, death, and resurrection. In Luther’s mind Christ is “my Lord” because He selflessly did everything “for us,” up to His death on the cross. In Christ’s mission, His conception through the Holy Spirit and his redemptory death “for us” were decisive for humanity. Christ’s people possess His “for-usness,” which defines the entirety of their lives, their deaths and their resurrection.

1. The Origin of the Second Article

This human knowledge of salvation and particularly of Christ’s “for-usness” does not originate with man, for it is too unbelievable for him. Christian faith is a God-given active and personal faith as another gift of “for us.” As Luther says:

“I believe and trust on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was born, suffered, died and rose again for my sake, indeed for the sake of the world and all sinners,” that is a knowledge which the Holy Spirit alone must also give. For no human heart can imagine that He should have to do all that for my sake.”⁵³

The fact that faith can only be given demonstrates that God’s truth is something outside us. It is always *extra nos*, which simply means that He is in charge as Lord. Man as a creature and a sinner is not Lord. God’s “for-usness” already by its very definition declares that help for us does not come from within us. Knowing this is helpful, for then the truth of Christ cannot be mixed with our own illusions, religious daydreams, etc. We are forced to turn to Christ because “no purity or holiness comes from us, but will be found and achieved outside and above us and far

⁵³ WA 37, 45-6.

from us, indeed, above all our senses, . . . in Christ.”⁵⁴ Thus, our whole life of discipleship consists of “being made holy [which] is . . . bringing us to the Lord Christ to receive this blessing, to which we could not have come by ourselves.”⁵⁵ In other words, the center of our faith lies not in us but in Him, more precisely—in His “for-usness”: “We do not want to dispute about ourselves, what we have and have not done . . . but . . . walk and learn outside of ourselves . . . in . . . what the Man has done for us.”⁵⁶ Thus, the *extra-nos* nature of the faith lies in the gift of Christ’s “for-usness.” Therefore, men may not look to themselves to generate religious meaning and significance, but they must look to Christ in his “for-usness.” Luther emphatically says that it “is indeed still no high Christian skill if one talk about what one should or should not do . . . Rather . . . that one knows what Christ is and does”⁵⁷ “for us.” Luther can speak so because he knows the self-sacrificial content of this particular “for us.” It belongs exclusively to Christ, therefore Luther claims: “I believe only in Jesus Christ; for neither I, nor any man has suffered for me, nor has died.”⁵⁸ It becomes even more significant if we understand that the “for-usness” with which we are blessed is not merely Christ’s but that it is also His (and ours) Father’s gift. Luther expresses the bond of the Father and the Son in the creed in the following: “We could never come to recognize the Father’s favor and grace were it not for the Lord Christ, who is a mirror of the Father’s heart.”⁵⁹ Thus, Christ’s “for us” is the Father’s “for us,” for in Him the Father “has given himself completely to us, withholding nothing.”⁶⁰ Therefore, to speak

⁵⁴ WA 37, 57.

⁵⁵ LC, II, 39.

⁵⁶ WA 37, 48.

⁵⁷ WA 37, 48.

⁵⁸ WA 37, 48.

⁵⁹ LC, II, 65.

⁶⁰ LC, II, 26.

of Christ is ultimately to speak of His and our Father as well. This is an important statement of faith which brings us to the significance of the Second Article.

2. The Centrality and Importance of the Second Article: Christ's Lordship as its Essence

Luther in very straight—forward language argues that the Second Article with its explicit “for-usness” is critical, for it contains the essence of the Christian faith: “Indeed, the entire gospel that we preach depends on the proper understanding of this article. Upon it all our salvation and blessedness are based.”⁶¹ The Second Article in Luther’s understanding is the centre piece of the Creed and, indeed, of the whole Catechism. Therefore, the other articles are in a way “auxiliary” to it, for “Whoever stands correctly and firmly in the belief that Jesus Christ is true God and man, that he died and has risen again for us, such a person has all other articles added to him and they firmly stand by him.”⁶² But Luther goes even further to emphasize the centrality of the Second Article of the creed.

In order to explore the “for-usness” of the Second Article fully, Luther proposes that “we shall concentrate on these words, ‘in Jesus Christ, our LORD.’”⁶³ In Luther’s mind “our” expresses the “for us” which permeates the whole Creed (the Second Article in particular) and is its driving force. He suggests that we read “our” (equaling “for us”) into the entire creed and apply it for ourselves as a way of seeing God’s great gifts. Luther asserts that it is the central idea of this article is

that He is called ‘our Lord.’ What follows is credited to our account.⁶⁴ Therefore, accustom yourself to so look at the words that you always see the word ‘Our’ being pulled through the rest of the Creed, that everything is credited to us, that I believe

⁶¹ LC, II, 33.

⁶² WA 50, 266; LW 34, 207.

⁶³ LC, II, 26.

⁶⁴ It needs to be mentioned that in the other writings of Luther’s *Corpus Catecheticum*, e.g., his catechisms, the language of forensic justification is not as prominent as it is here in the Torgau sermons.

on Christ, and become mine against my sin and evil conscience, That is now stated in summary fashion what Christ benefits us.⁶⁵

Thus, the creed is the storehouse of the benefits “for us.” Therefore, Luther is eager to point out the “for-usness” of the Second Article everywhere it may be present explicitly or merely implicitly:⁶⁶ “Although these words . . . ‘for us born, suffered, etc.’ are not stated there expressly, one must nevertheless take up all others in this piece and apply them here [in the Apostolic Creed] because it shows how Christ is ‘ours, mine.’”⁶⁷

In the formula, “our Lord” the part “our” is the equivalent of “for us” and it is related to man’s salvation. Albrecht Peter notes the inseparable connection between the confession itself, “I believe,” and the “*pro me*”⁶⁸ which means that Christ’s lordship which I confess, coincides with His mission of being and acting “for me.” The very beginning of the Second Article is the statement of Christ’s mission, as reformer says, “‘Our Lord.’ With that we confess that everything which that Man is and does has happened to us, as He therefore for our comfort was born, suffered, arose, that He might be our Lord,”⁶⁹ and “to you He is a Lord, for your benefit born, suffered, died and risen.”⁷⁰ The term “my Lord” is therefore the key to Luther’s confession regarding the relationship and his human creatures. In the following statement Luther points out that besides the divine characteristics of Christ, the fact that He is my Lord is of great importance: “Christ is the one true Son of God, begotten of him in eternity with one eternal

⁶⁵ WA 37, 53.

⁶⁶ For an example of this see Appendix III.

⁶⁷ WA 37, 49.

⁶⁸ Peters, *Kommentar zur Luthers Katechismen*, Bd. 2, 29.

⁶⁹ WA 37, 49.

⁷⁰ WA 37, 51.

divine nature and essence—but I also believe that the Father has made all things subject to him, that . . . he has been made one Lord over me and all things.”⁷¹

Thus, Christ is our Lord, but it needs to be mentioned immediately that Christ’s lordship is a unique one, for He is a Lord in a completely different way than the earthly lords. Implicit in Luther’s understanding of “Lord” is Jesus’ explanation in Mark 10:42-45. He is the Lord “for us,” the Lord for our benefit. His whole earthly biography reflects that. Luther explains it, relating Jesus’ to ours through the title “Lord”: “For this He has become man, suffered, arisen, etc. that one only learns to so imagine Him, that he for our benefit is a Lord of help and comfort that we do not tremble before Him, as if He would damn us. But He has said, ‘who believes in my Son, will not be judged.’”⁷² Luther notes that the title “Lord” contains not merely God’s power but rather His favor to and for us. Luther is explicit about that, saying that:

The word ‘Lord’ here means unlimited mercy. It is a tender, comforting word, namely, that we have such a Man in Him, who can help us and save through forgiveness of sins and resurrection of the dead, . . . in all needs and against all enemies. For He has not done all such things and been so active to redeem us, that He wants to be that kind of a Lord who wrestles with us, as a tyrant, who compels, plagues, and terrifies the people, but rather that we should have a friendly, helping master, under which we may be safe and free from violence and affliction.⁷³

God looks on His own with favor, but “against the murderers, rascals and knaves, who do not want peace, he must be a judge, not for your sake, that you suffer, but for the sake of those that they will be punished and you will be saved.”⁷⁴ To such a Lord His people willingly entrust themselves. Thus, in Luther’s view Christ is the Lord of trust: “for this reason they call him a Lord, not that he strikes them dead or will strike them with a club, but that they be permitted to

⁷¹ WA 10, II, 391; LW 43, 26.

⁷² WA 37, 52.

⁷³ WA 37, 49.

⁷⁴ WA 37, 52.

entrust themselves to him.”⁷⁵ One reason why His people trust their Lord is because His actions are “for us” and not for Himself.

Moreover, Christ’s as Lord’s action “for us” is not merely selfless but completely self-sacrificial. There is nothing in His actions for self gain. Everything He does is ultimately designed to be “for us,” to benefit us. As Luther says:

[Christ] has broken [the power of death etc.] down by His almighty, divine power, but not for Himself, but rather for us poor, wretched people who must be eternally imprisoned by death and the devil. For He was previously very safe from death and all misfortune as far as He was concerned. He did not have to die or go to hell.⁷⁶

Only the desire to act “for us” was driving this Lord for as He Himself said, “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (Matt 20:28). Nothing in the sinner’s condition or performance invites God to help him as a reward to his achievements, virtue or good works. God does it on the one hand because of Christ and His “for us” character, and on the other hand because of the wretchedness of sinners’ condition. Luther says, “The Son of God, in his unfathomable goodness, had mercy on us because of our misery and distress and came from heaven to help us.”⁷⁷

Christ’s “for-usness” becomes clearer to us as we proceed in understanding of man’s miserable conditions after the Fall. Before Christ’s Incarnation, men’s destiny was the “loss of the eternal life,” “destruction,” “death,” “jaws of hell” and the “power of the devil.”⁷⁸ Thus, the overall human situation was completely desperate, for man on his own could not find an escape from the impasse in which he had trapped himself. The road out of this overall miserable condition was completely out of reach of human powers. Luther recognizes that in our state of

⁷⁵ WA 37, 52.

⁷⁶ WA 37, 67.

⁷⁷ LC, II, 29.

⁷⁸ WA 37, 36.

total depravity, we needed another to atone for our sins, another “who suffered for us a pardoning death and has paid God with it, that this wrath and punishment would be taken from us.”⁷⁹ This “another” is Christ, Who is “for us” in all respects. He not merely conformed himself to the limitations of the human condition, but He also paid the cost which we had to pay.

Once Luther has explained how Christ is “for us,” in his view the rest of the Second Article serves the purpose of emphasizing the cost of His “for us” kind of lordship. Luther says, “The remaining parts of this article simply serve to clarify and express how and by what means this redemption was accomplished -- that is, how much it cost Christ and what he paid and risked in order to win us and bring us under his dominion.”⁸⁰ In Luther’s understanding, this cost is all-inclusive of Christ’s life. Christ became “a human creature, conceived and born without sin, of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin, so that he might become Lord over sin; moreover, he suffered, died, and was buried so that he might make satisfaction for me and pay what was owed, not with silver and gold but with his own precious blood.”⁸¹ Elsewhere Luther is even more succinct: “These points show . . . what he paid in order that I might come under his lordship, namely, his own body.”⁸²

3. Christ’s Birth, Life, Death and Resurrection As Expressions of His “For-usness”

In Luther’s view in the life of Christ there are two events of utmost importance that encapsulate Christ’s life and give significance to it. They are His conception (and birth) and His death. Each in its own way expresses Christ’s “for-usness” and contributes to our salvation.

⁷⁹ WA 37, 59.

⁸⁰ LC, II, 31.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² WA 30, I, 90; LW 51, 165.

The first event—Christ’s birth, is not merely His entrance into the human life and becoming like one of us. His birth is not a matter of mere compassionate solidarity with suffering humanity. Through His birth, Christ came to possess a body through which He would exercise His lordship and gain the victory over the powers that enslaved man. Albrecht Peters notes that Luther does not fix his message in doctrinal form at this point. Instead, like the biblical writers, he unfolds it as narrative, as dramatic battle action, and in this manner applies Christ’s work “for us.” The central question becomes, “Through which deeds does Jesus become my Lord?”⁸³ Luther answers: “He was conceived by the Holy Spirit [His lordship started as early as this!] without any sin whatsoever in order that he might become my Lord . . . he must be so holy that the devil could have no claim upon him.”⁸⁴ Thus, in order that Christ’s lordship would be capable of exercising the “for-usness” effectively, it had to be grounded in His heavenly genealogy, that is, in conception from the Holy Spirit, for it is the only power that can withstand even Satan’s attacks. This is one of the reasons why Christ’s “for-usness” has become a powerful authority for Christians dealing with Satan. It also means that Christ has become “our Lord,” who, as Luther says, “helps, protects, and saves us as long as we live. This he does not only in all sorts of outward danger and need, but against the gates of hell and the insufferable devil, who attacks the believing.”⁸⁵

Luther uncovers the meaning of Christ’s life “for us” not by way of analysis but by the way of telling Christ’s story, His biography. Christ’s entire outward life was intentionally human in all respects, for He “was born as another child, and lives as another child, and leads no other

⁸³ Peters, *Kommentar zur Luthers Katechismen*, Bd. 2, 123. Peters also notes that in the Torgau sermons on the Second Article, Luther expanded on the Large Catechism where he focuses primarily on God’s activities in the midst of human life rather than on His message itself. In that way “Luther follows the lead of the *Apostolicum* and depicts Jesus’ life on earth neither chronologically nor psychographically but instead he describes what He has done *pro nobis*” (141).

⁸⁴ WA 30, I, 90; LW 51, 165.

existence, work, behavior, than another man; that no man ever at anytime could conceive in his heart, that the creature should himself be the Creator.”⁸⁶ Besides this observation, Luther’s catechetical writings, similar to the text of the creed itself, do not go much further into the details of Christ’s life and His public ministry.

Luther explains that the reason why Christ came into human existence by the natural means of Mary’s body was to purify “for us” human existence. Luther makes Christ to say the following: “You are impure and conceived and born in sin, therefore I have taken the same conception and birth for your sakes, yet completely pure and without sin, that you should become pure through my purity.”⁸⁷ This has immediate consequences for human life. Luther concludes that “our birth, and what we here live, have also been purified through Him. For although we have been damned from birth through our entire life He is pure and gives us that purity. For this reason He has been born and gone through our entire life.”⁸⁸ Luther concretizes this statement about the sanctification of man’s life, saying that Christ’s presence in human life has sanctified the everyday routine of it as well: “Since He himself experienced it, by it consecrated and sanctified everything, so that no food, no eating or drinking, no clothing, no sleeping, waking, walking, standing can make us unclean.”⁸⁹

The second defining event of Christ’s life, His death, is also given very short attention in the Reformer’s view. Luther is brief as he says about Christ’s death, “He suffered.”⁹⁰ In the Reformer’s view everything about Christ’s life, especially His death, is meaningful only when

⁸⁵ WA 37, 50.

⁸⁶ WA 37, 43.

⁸⁷ WA 37, 56.

⁸⁸ WA 37, 59.

⁸⁹ WA 37, 59.

⁹⁰ LC, II, 31.

seen from the perspective of “for us.” In fact, it is not the fact that Christ died but rather that He died “for us” that really matters. Luther says that Christ “suffered death in order that I might be free from death and become His child and be led to righteousness and to life.”⁹¹ Luther sums up the whole human condition of a saved person: “He has redeemed me. . . . He has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil.”⁹² Therefore, in the Second Article the title “Lord” can be equated with the title “Redeemer”: “‘LORD’ simply means . . . Redeemer, that is, he who has brought us back from the devil to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness, and keeps us there.”⁹³ Christ is our Lord for He has fought “for us,” His people, and He has won. Thus, the complete answer to the above mentioned Luther’s question, “Through which deeds did Jesus become my Lord?” is a concise one. Christ is my Lord “by [way of Him] freeing me from death, sin, hell an all evil.”⁹⁴ This answer brings us to the fuller explanation of the matter of Christ’s life “for us.”

The fight for our spiritual allegiance to Christ as Lord has consequences not merely for Christ but also for His people. Albrecht Peters claims that this opposition of Christ to the believer’s enemies translates itself into their own opposition to Satan and his cohorts. He says, “The confessing ‘I’ is drawn into the protological and eschatological dimensions of that struggle between the Lord and the satanic foes.”⁹⁵ But man is not left to stand alone against the dreaded dark forces. Christ not only fights “for us,” but His “for-usness” also provides His people with the strength to withstand Satan’s attacks and grant us victory over them. Luther says that “through Christ [the believers] have torn hell apart and destroyed completely the devil’s

⁹¹ WA 30, I, 89; LW 51, 165.

⁹² SC, II, 4.

⁹³ LC, II, 31.

⁹⁴ WA 30, I, 89; LW 51, 164.

⁹⁵ Peters, *Kommentar zur Luthers Katechismen*, Bd. 2, 126.

kingdom and power. That is why He died, was buried and descended, that they should no longer harm nor overpower us.”⁹⁶

As Christ’s birth and life sanctifies men’s birth and life, so also Christ’s death sanctifies man’s death as well. Luther describes those who die in faith in Christ and in His death “for us” as sanctified and glorified, as bodily saints because of their faith in Christ and His “for-usness”: “Since He . . . is buried, so now all Christian graves must be hallowed, and where a Christian lies, there is a bodily saint. . . . This happens not because of his own conduct and for the sake of his own holiness . . . but for this reason, that he has died in faith on the holy, crucified, dead, and buried Son of God.”⁹⁷ Christ has died for the whole world. There is no more division of the reality into holy and unholy, therefore Luther concludes his thought, extending Christ’s redeeming and sanctifying effect to the entire world: “Christ makes all the world full, complete and pure holiness, that also death and grave, gallows, sword, fire, water etc., become holy; yet only through faith.”⁹⁸ But there is more to the effects of Christ’s “for-usness.” His resurrection brings to and “for us” another dimension of existence in view—that of eternal life.

The “for-usness” of Christ led Him out of death and hell to His resurrection because only in this way men can benefit from Him. Luther says, “He . . . was not . . . allowed to remain there [in hell] . . . Since by that we would not finally be helped. . . . He has arisen . . . That is the end and the best part about it, by which we have everything.”⁹⁹ His people will have the same that He has—a resurrection. Christ arose “not for Himself, but for our sakes that His resurrection is ours, and we should arise in Him and . . . celebrate with Him, also bodily, an eternal Easter day.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ WA 37, 66.

⁹⁷ WA 37, 61.

⁹⁸ WA 37, 61.

⁹⁹ WA 37, 56.

¹⁰⁰ WA 37, 70-1.

Once joined with Christ, His people already have their resurrection, although yet in a hidden manner. Luther testifies that men are:

included in the *Resurrexit*, and because of or through the same, we must also arise and live with Him eternally, that our resurrection and life . . . has already begun in Christ and [it is] as certain as if it should already have occurred; only that it is still concealed and not public.”¹⁰¹

Now Christ’s life, as well as His death is sanctifying His people and bringing them to the final glory:

Christ’s life and death are our treasure, by which we become holy through and through. In death we are not dead before Him, but must again become alive from the dead, not as this wretched, temporal life, but a glorious eternal life, as he has come out and through death to eternal majesty.”¹⁰²

Thus, in His resurrection the believers are assured of having their triumph over death and their own resurrection as well. It means that Christ’s resurrection is of the “for us” kind and in His resurrection we are directly and bodily involved: “We must . . . be reached and touched through His resurrection, and even participate in [His death and resurrection], as having happened for our sake.”¹⁰³ If Christ has assumed human flesh in order to be as close as possible to man, then His resurrection directly affects human bodies. Luther put it this way:

Since . . . He has placed Himself into our flesh and blood and taken upon Himself all our sin, punishment . . . so He must also help us out, so that He became alive again and bodily, too, . . . so that we, also, in Him and through Him, finally come out of death.”¹⁰⁴

The effects of Christ’s resurrection should not be regarded as lacking until the Last Day, for in many ways they are available “for us” already in this life.

¹⁰¹ WA 37, 68.

¹⁰² WA 37 60.

¹⁰³ WA 37 68.

¹⁰⁴ WA 37, 67.

Christ's resurrection refashions men's lives, transforming and purifying them while they are still here on earth. Luther, speaking of man's sanctification, notes that among the promises of God that allow man to be sanctified in this life (in addition to the forgiveness of sins) are the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.¹⁰⁵ Christ's resurrection also affects men's ministry and discipleship. Jesus was resurrected "to give a new life to me and all believers, thus awakening us with him by his grace . . . to sin no more . . . but to serve him only with every grace and virtue."¹⁰⁶

Thus, the Second Article is the central article in the believer's faith. This article demonstrates that God the Father's "for us" is Christ's "for us." Luther's abbreviation of the Second Article into the Creedal formula "Our Lord" expresses the "for-usness" of Christ. Luther argues that the object of the faith is always outside of us; it lies in Christ's "for-usness." Christ the Lord in the Second Article means "my" and "for us" kind of the Lord who did everything "for us" in an unselfish manner, up to His own death. His unselfishness, which He exhibited in His birth, life, death and resurrection, provide the means of purification for the believer. In Christ's death, its redemptive "for-usness" is what matters for men's salvation. Christ's death sanctifies those who die in faith. Faith in Christ's "for-usness" overcomes Satan and hell. His people already possesses Christ's resurrection, although yet in a concealed manner. Christ's resurrection fashions His people's lives and ministries.

D. Luther on the "For-usness" of the Third Article

The Third Article confesses the practical gift-delivery of the gifts which were acquired "for us" in the context of the Second Article. Luther unpacks the gift-delivery activity of the Holy Spirit as He comes to us through the Church. God the Holy Spirit performs His actions,

¹⁰⁵ WA 30, I, 91; LW 51, 166.

creating the Church by calling people through the means of the oral, written, and sacramental Word.

1. The Holy Spirit's Actions "For Us"

In Luther's view, the Third Article is the place where the gifts "for us" acquired in the Second Article are delivered. Without the Holy Spirit, no one can "appropriate any of [these gifts] to himself."¹⁰⁷ The Holy Spirit provides access into the Second Article for the believer in his actual experience. By way of the Second Article, the Spirit also leads the believer into the First Article. Although the usual order of the creed is First—Second—Third Article,¹⁰⁸ Luther argues that practically speaking, it takes the reverse sequence in the individual's life (Third—Second—First Article), as "except through the Holy Spirit's work no one can come in and to the Father through Christ."¹⁰⁹

Luther labels the Third Article as the one that directly procures the gifts "for us." He names it "Being Made Holy." Luther says, "in it are expressed and portrayed the Holy Spirit and his office, which is that he makes us holy,"¹¹⁰ and "the Holy Spirit makes me holy, as his name states."¹¹¹ The activities of the Father and the Son are mainly in the past. Luther argues: "the creation we had long since and Christ has fulfilled his office; but the Holy Spirit continues his work without ceasing until the Last Day."¹¹² In contrast, the sanctifying activity of the Holy Spirit

¹⁰⁶ WA 10, II, 392; LW 43, 27.

¹⁰⁷ WA 10, II, 393; LW 43, 28.

¹⁰⁸ This order is effective for the Church at large; it provides the main guidelines for explaining how the world and the Church came about. The individual believer is brought already in the existing structure of the world and of the Christian faith; therefore he learns the reality of his life through the different sequence of the articles, i.e., Third—Second—First Revisited.

¹⁰⁹ WA 10, II, 393; LW 43, 28.

¹¹⁰ LC, II, 35.

¹¹¹ LC, II, 40.

¹¹² LC, II, 61.

takes place in the here and now. It is not a one-time action, but His continuous work: “[The Holy Spirit] has made us holy and still makes us holy.”¹¹³ In addition to the temporal dimension of the sanctification the Holy Spirit provides, there is an eschatological dimension of our as well:

“When his work has been finished and we abide in it, having died to the world and all misfortune, he will finally make us perfectly and eternally holy. Now we wait in faith for this to be accomplished through the Word.”¹¹⁴ Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together “for us,” for man’s spiritual well-being:

. . . working through the Spirit, Father and Son stir, awaken, call, and beget new life in me and in all who are his. Thus, the Spirit in and through Christ quickens, sanctifies, and awakens the spirit in us and brings us to the Father, by whom the Spirit is active and life—giving everywhere.¹¹⁵

Thus, the Holy Spirit’s work completes the framework of man’s existence in Trinitarian mode. Luther compresses this idea into the following formula: “As the Father is my creator and Christ is my Lord, so the Holy Spirit is my sanctifier.”¹¹⁶

2. The Holy Spirit Acts “For Us” through the Church

Now Luther comes to clarifying the means through which man is brought into the realm of the activity of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit creates the Church “in which all his gifts are to be found”¹¹⁷ and works through the Church as His instrument: “Through the Christian church, that is, through its ministry [*officium*], you were sanctified; for the Holy Spirit uses its ministry in order to sanctify you. Otherwise you would never know and hear Christ.”¹¹⁸ By way of the

¹¹³ LC, II, 36. Also: “The Third Article, therefore, is that I believe in the Holy Spirit, that is, that the Holy Spirit will sanctify me and is sanctifying me.” WA 30, I, 93; LW, 51, 168.

¹¹⁴ LC, II, 62.

¹¹⁵ WA 10, II, 393; LW 43, 28.

¹¹⁶ WA 30, I, 91; LW 51, 166.

¹¹⁷ WA 30, I, 94; LW 51, 168.

¹¹⁸ WA 30, I, 92; LW 51, 167.

activity of the Church, the Holy Spirit “creates and increases holiness, causing it daily to grow and become strong in the faith and in its fruits, which the Spirit produces.”¹¹⁹ Luther names the concrete instruments that the Holy Spirit uses “for us” and for our sanctification: “The Holy Spirit sanctifies me through his Word and the sacraments, which are in the church.”¹²⁰ In an all-encompassing statement Luther lists the following tools of sanctification that the Holy Spirit is daily and continuously applying “for us.” The tools of the Spirit are “the community of saints or Christian church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.”¹²¹ Luther unpacks his thought by confessing that it is the Church that brings Christ “for us” and to us through preaching. He says that the Holy Spirit “first leads us into his holy community [and then places] us in the church’s lap, where he [the Spirit] preaches to us and brings us to Christ,”¹²² and “for this purpose he has appointed a community on earth, through which he speaks and does all his work.”¹²³ The Church is the mediator of the Holy Spirit to us and “for us”: “Through [the Church] He [the Holy Spirit] preaches, calls you and makes Christ known to you.”¹²⁴ Thus, the Church is the main instrument of the Holy Spirit because the Church is the agency for the application and distribution of the means of grace.

Luther argues that without the preaching of Christ (a situation that has characterized the church in the past), the efforts of the Spirit are useless. Peters argues:

¹¹⁹ LC, II, 53.

¹²⁰ WA 30, I, 94; LW 51, 169.

¹²¹ LC, II, 37.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ LC, II, 61.

¹²⁴ WA 30, I, 94; LW 51, 168.

. . . if we lose the ‘for us’ of the proclamation, Christ remains only an executed criminal on the gallows; if He were crucified a thousand times, it would not help us. Without the preaching of the cross we remain under judgment.”¹²⁵

Therefore, Christ calls the Holy Spirit “the Paraclete” because He stands by us and is working “for us” to apply the fruits of Christ’s death to our lives. In Luther’s words, Christ’s

. . . work is finished and completed; Christ has acquired and won the treasure for us by his sufferings, death, and resurrection. But if His work remained hidden so that no one knew of it, it would have been all in vain, all lost. In order that this treasure might not remain buried but be put to use and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to be published and proclaimed. In it he has given the Holy Spirit to offer and apply to us this treasure, this redemption. Therefore, being made holy is nothing else than bringing us to the Lord Christ to receive this blessing, to which we could not have come by ourselves.”¹²⁶

The preaching of the Gospel is critical. Preaching creates the Church, which brings the message of Christ to sinners; “For where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Spirit to create, call, and gather the Christian church, apart from which no one can come to the Lord Christ.”¹²⁷ As the world was created through the Word (Genesis 1 and John 1), so is the Church.

Thus, in Luther’s understanding, “God’s Word . . . is the beginning point for entering”¹²⁸ the Church. The Word is the effective instrument of the Holy Spirit to bring the people into the Church: “We believe in him who daily brings us into this community through the Word, and imparts, increases, and strengthens faith through the same Word and the forgiveness of sins.”¹²⁹ The Word of the Holy Spirit is the Word of His Church; they are the same both in content and in effectiveness: “The Holy Spirit, however, sanctifies by leading you into the holy church and proclaiming to you the Word which the Christian church proclaims.”¹³⁰

¹²⁵ Peters, *Kommentar zur Luthers Katechismen*, Bd. 2, 197.

¹²⁶ LC, II, 38.

¹²⁷ LC, II, 45.

¹²⁸ LC, II, 52.

¹²⁹ LC, II, 62.

¹³⁰ WA 30, I, 92; LW 51, 166.

Luther explains, that besides the Church and the preached Word, there are also other means at the Holy Spirit's disposal in order to quicken our sanctification the Word in its sacramental forms. In Luther's Works, he explains that the Word we receive in Scripture is "the same he gives to you in your heart through the sacraments, that you may believe the Word and become a member of the church."¹³¹ As a member of a congregation Luther confesses the efficacy and the fruits of work of the Holy Spirit using the Word as the instrument: "Of this community I also am a part and member, a participant and co-partner in all the blessings it possesses. I was brought into it by the Holy Spirit and incorporated into it through the fact that I have heard and still hear God's Word."¹³² The Holy Spirit uses many tools and means, but the result, the content of the received blessings in the Church, the essence of the preaching of the Word and the fruit of the sacraments are all the same—the forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness of sins is the primary achievement of all of God's work "for us," and this forgiveness "takes place through the holy sacraments and absolution as well as through all the comforting words of the entire gospel."¹³³ The forgiveness of sins is God's special gift to His Church to administer to His people:

To this [community] Christ gave the power of the keys, saying in Matthew 18[:18], 'Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.' He said the same to Peter as an individual, representing one and only one church, '[I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and] whatever you bind on earth,' etc., Matthew 16[:18-9].¹³⁴

¹³¹ WA 30, I, 93; LW 51, 168.

¹³² LC, II, 52.

¹³³ LC, II, 54.

¹³⁴ WA 10, II, 394; AE, 43, 29.

The forgiveness of sins “includes baptism, consolation upon a deathbed, the sacrament of the altar, absolution, and all the comforting passages [of the gospel]. In this term are included all the ministrations through which the church forgives sins.”¹³⁵

Luther writes exhaustively on the subject of forgiveness, telling us that the work of the Holy Spirit is continuous and “for us” because men are in permanent need of forgiveness for the reason of their unceasing sinful nature. Luther knows that:

Forgiveness is constantly needed, for although God’s grace has been acquired by Christ, and holiness has been wrought by the Holy Spirit through God’s Word in the unity of the Christian church, yet we are never without sin because we carry our flesh around our neck.¹³⁶

Therefore, even though we are baptized into the forgiveness of our sins, “The Holy Spirit is still at work, because the forgiveness of sins is still not fully accomplished. We are not yet freed from death.”¹³⁷ In our temporal death “we will be interred and buried ‘in dishonor,’ as 1 Cor 15 [:43] says, but will be raised ‘in glory.’”¹³⁸ Luther is certain of the consequences of eternal existence in two alternatives—eternal life and eternal death. He says this about death, “I believe in an eternal life for the saints after the resurrection and in an eternal dying for the sinners. And I haven’t a doubt about all this, that the Father through his Son Jesus Christ our Lord and with the Holy Spirit will let all this happen to me.”¹³⁹ Only with the death of our sinful body we will be freed from the need of forgiveness, so Luther says, “Now, however, we remain only halfway pure and holy. The Holy Spirit must always work in us through the Word, granting

¹³⁵ WA 30, I, 92-3; LW 51, 167.

¹³⁶ LC, II, 54.

¹³⁷ WA 30, I, 94; LW 51, 168.

¹³⁸ WA 30, I, 94; LW 51, 168.

¹³⁹ WA 10, II, 395; LW 43, 29.

us daily forgiveness until we attain to that life where there will be no more forgiveness.”¹⁴⁰ There sanctification will be granted in full, for “when you die, remaining in the church, then he will raise you up and sanctify you wholly.”¹⁴¹ Therefore, Luther is sure that “after death sin will have completely passed away and then the Holy Spirit will complete his work and then my sanctification will be complete. Therefore, it will also be life and nothing but life.”¹⁴²

After this extensive explanation of forgiveness, the only thing left for Luther to conclude is that “outside of this church and these sacraments and [ministrations] there is no sanctification.”¹⁴³ The administration of the power of the keys for the forgiveness that brings the Gospel to the people is the unique privilege of the Church. Nowhere else are such gifts and blessings attainable. In the church “there is full forgiveness of sins, both in that God forgives us and that we forgive, bear with, and aid one another. Outside this Christian community, however, where there is no gospel, there is also no forgiveness, and hence there also can be no holiness.”¹⁴⁴

3. The “For Us” in the Sacrament of Baptism

In Luther’s view Baptism is fundamental for the Christian’s life, for it marks him as the property of Christ, providing “for us” the concrete gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation.

a) The Definition of Baptism

Luther uses a four-part¹⁴⁵ definition of the Sacraments in the Small Catechism. First, the sacrament is defined as Christ’s benefits comprehended in water with the Word, or in His body

¹⁴⁰ LC, II, 58.

¹⁴¹ WA 30, I, 94; LW 51, 168.

¹⁴² WA 30, I, 93; LW 51, 168.

¹⁴³ WA 30, I, 93; LW 51, 167.

¹⁴⁴ LC, II, 55-56.

¹⁴⁵ Ulrich Nembach has explored Luther’s style of rhetoric and pattern of constructing definitions in his *Predigt des Evangeliums: Luther als Prediger, Pädagoge und Rhetor* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), 117-74.

and blood placed in bread and wine comprehended in the Word. Second, the benefit of both Sacraments is the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Third, Luther explains how physical elements work, that is, only through the Word. Fourth, he brings the sacraments into the daily life, the life of the repentance patterned in baptism and the life that has its worth through faith in the words “for you.”¹⁴⁶

The Sacraments, like other forms of the Word, are the means by which the Holy Spirit brings His “for-usness” to men. The Sacraments provide many spiritual blessings with the forgiveness of sins being the most important among them. Luther declares that “without [the sacraments] no one can be a Christian.”¹⁴⁷ There is a good reason for that. Although the following quote may not be formally regarded as belonging to Luther’s catechetical writings, it reveals his thought pattern of “for us.” It demonstrates how in Luther’s thought the idea of “for us” shapes the Sacrament. A Sacrament, in Luther’s understanding, is a very practical way through which God, who in His majesty might seem to be unapproachable, makes Himself available here, now and “for us.” Luther says that:

It is one thing if God is present, and another if He is present for you. He is there for you when he adds his Word and binds himself, saying, ‘Here you are to find me.’ Now when you have the Word, you can grasp and have him with certainty and say, ‘Here I have thee, according to thy Word.’ Just as I say of the right hand of God: although this is everywhere, as we may not deny, still because it is also nowhere . . . you can actually grasp it nowhere, unless for your benefit it binds itself to you and summons to a definite place. This God’s right hand does, however, when it enters into the humanity of Christ and dwells there. There you surely find it, otherwise you will run back and forth throughout all the creation, groping here and groping there yet never finding, even though it is actually there; for it is not there for you.¹⁴⁸

Thus, the Sacrament has been instituted as an external and practical means that makes God’s Word with all its blessings tangible “for us.” This is nothing exceptional in God’s

¹⁴⁶ SC, IV, VI.

¹⁴⁷ LC, IV, 1.

practices of dealing with man; the Sacraments are typical of the ways through which God has communicated Himself to mankind in the past: “Whatever God does and effects in us he desires to accomplish through such an external ordinance.”¹⁴⁸ God’s Word enters man through his temporal senses and perceptions and Luther argues that it must be external so that the sacraments “can be perceived and grasped by the senses and thus brought into the heart, just as the entire gospel is an external, oral proclamation.”¹⁵⁰ This is what faith is looking for. Faith actively searches for those means through which God encounters man, means where He is “for us.” Luther continues his argument: “No matter where he speaks . . . or through what means he speaks—there faith must look and to it faith must hold on.”¹⁵¹ Luther says that we should view the Christian sacraments “and all external things ordained and instituted by God not according to the crude, external mask (as we see the shell of a nut) but as that in which God’s Word is enclosed.”¹⁵² Luther argues that faith is looking for something to which to attach itself, something to which it can belong: “Faith must have something to believe—something to which it may cling and upon which it may stand. Thus, faith clings to the water and believes it to be baptism, in which there is sheer salvation and life.”¹⁵³ God has incorporated “for us” in “his Word in baptism and has offered us this external thing within which we can grasp this treasure.”¹⁵⁴

b) The Word-Character of Baptism

Luther finds the words of institution of the Sacrament of Baptism in Matthew 28:19: “Go into all the world, teach all the nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son

¹⁴⁸ WA 33, 150; LW 37, 68-9.

¹⁴⁹ LC, IV, 30.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² LC, IV, 19.

¹⁵³ LC, IV, 29.

and of the Holy Spirit.” Luther also justified his position on Baptism through the words of Mark 16:16: “The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned.” Luther says, “These words contain God’s commandment and institution, so that no one may doubt that baptism is of divine origin.”¹⁵⁵ Baptism is not optional, for “it is solemnly and strictly commanded that we must be baptized or we shall not be saved.”¹⁵⁶ Therefore, “if a person wants to be saved, let him be baptized; otherwise he is in God’s disfavor.”¹⁵⁷

Instituted by God Himself, the Sacrament of Baptism is also executed on His behalf. It is “performed in his name. So the words read, ‘Go, baptize’ not ‘in your name’ but ‘in God’s name.’”¹⁵⁸ It means that God Himself is the Baptizer and the act of baptizing extends His “for-usness.” Therefore, “to be baptized in God’s name is to be baptized not by human beings but by God himself. Although it is performed by human hands, it is nevertheless truly God’s own act.”¹⁵⁹

Luther defines Baptism as: “Water and God’s command comprehended in one.”¹⁶⁰ He continues, “It is water enclosed in God’s command and connected with God’s Word.”¹⁶¹ The Reformer goes further: “Baptism is natural, physical water connected with the Word of God. When these two come together, water and the Word of God, then it is baptism.”¹⁶² In his Large

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ LC, IV, 6.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ WA 30, I, 110; LW 51, 183.

¹⁵⁸ LC, IV, 9.

¹⁵⁹ LC, IV, 10.

¹⁶⁰ WA 30, I, 112; LW 51, 184.

¹⁶¹ SC, IV, 2.

¹⁶² WA 30, I, 112; LW 51, 184-5.

Catechism Luther utilizes the literary form of the question and answer to draw the catechumen in. For Baptism, he asks the question, “What is baptism?” His answer:

It is not simply plain water, but water placed in the setting of God’s Word and commandment and made holy by them. It is nothing else than God’s water, not that the water itself is nobler than other water but that God’s Word and commandment are added to it.¹⁶³

He explains that the critical difference between mere water and the water of Baptism is pointing to God’s Word, which has and delivers the gifts through the water and Word “for us”:

Baptism is a very different thing from all other water, not by virtue of the natural substance but because here something nobler is added, for God himself stakes his honor, his power, and his might on it. Therefore it is not simply a natural water, but a divine, heavenly, holy, and blessed water -- praise it in any other terms you can—all by virtue of the Word, which is a heavenly, holy Word that no one can sufficiently extol, for it contains and conveys all that is God’s.¹⁶⁴

Thus, the constitutive element of Baptism is the Word, which is God’s means for executing His will to baptize: “For the real significance of the water lies in God’s Word or commandment and God’s name, and this treasure is greater and nobler than heaven and earth.”¹⁶⁵ Therefore, “you should give honor and glory to baptism on account of the Word.”¹⁶⁶ The Word of God joining the physical element sanctifies the water in Baptism. God claims the water as His own and uses it for His own purpose (just as He claims human beings as His own when He sanctifies them). When “water and God’s Word are conjoined, it must necessarily be a holy and divine water, for as the Word is, so the water becomes also.”¹⁶⁷ The power of God’s Word alone sanctifies the water, turning it into the Sacrament of Baptism: “Baptism is water comprehended and sanctified in God’s command and Word, that is, a divine and holy water because of God’s

¹⁶³ LC, IV, 14.

¹⁶⁴ LC, IV, 17.

¹⁶⁵ LC, IV, 16.

¹⁶⁶ LC, IV, 21.

¹⁶⁷ WA 30, I, 112; LW 51, 185.

commandment.”¹⁶⁸ Luther advises believers not to focus primarily on the physical bearer of the God’s Word, but on the Word itself which is the main and only foundation of Baptism. Luther says, “Don’t look at the water and see that it is wet, but rather that it has with it the Word of God. It is a holy, living, heavenly, blessed water because of command of God, which is holy.”¹⁶⁹

c) The Function of the God’s Word in Baptism

God’s Word is performative. It is a verbal noun. It does what it says; “the Word does it, and this shows also . . . that God’s name is in it.”¹⁷⁰ Therefore, Baptism is capable of granting us spiritual blessings. Baptism promises and brings “victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, God’s grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with his gifts.”¹⁷¹ Baptism is the rebirth and entrance into the heritage of eternal life. It is:

A grace-filled water of life and a “bath of the new birth in the Holy Spirit;” as St. Paul says to Titus in chapter 3[:5-8], “through the bath of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit,” which he richly poured out over us through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that through that very grace we may be righteous and heirs in hope of eternal life. This is surely most certainly true.¹⁷²

Luther enumerates the benefits and gifts of Baptism: “It brings about forgiveness of sins, redeems from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe it, as the words and promise of God declare.”¹⁷³ These benefits and gifts are His actions of forgiving, redeeming and opening up the eternal life “for us.”

Here Luther provides some valuable insight into the problem of the body and soul in light of the conflicts with his contemporary Spiritualists, who claimed that the water is useless in

¹⁶⁸ WA 30, I, 110; LW 51, 183.

¹⁶⁹ WA 30, I, 111; LW 51, 183.

¹⁷⁰ LC, IV, 26.

¹⁷¹ LC, IV, 41.

¹⁷² SC, IV, 10.

¹⁷³ LC, IV, 6.

spiritual matters. Because both body and soul have received baptismal blessing accordingly to their capacities to accept it, both of them will enjoy the life eternal: “The body has water poured over it, because all it can receive is the water, and in addition the Word is spoken so that the soul may receive it. Because the water and the Word together constitute one baptism, both body and soul shall be saved and live forever: the soul through the Word in which it believes the body because it is united with the soul and apprehends baptism in the only way it can.”¹⁷⁴ Neither soul nor body will be left out of salvation.

In short, Baptism contains and imparts salvation “for us.” Therefore, “he who considers the words: ‘will be saved’ (Mark 16:16) will find it [salvation]; for with his words ‘will be saved,’ Christ puts salvation into baptism.”¹⁷⁵ For this reason, Baptism brings salvation, for “the power, effect, benefit, fruit, and purpose of baptism is that it saves. For no one is baptized in order to become a prince, but rather, as the words say, ‘to be saved.’ To be saved . . . is to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil, to enter into Christ’s kingdom, and to live with him forever.”¹⁷⁶ Because of this, Luther has every reason to exalt Baptism and assert that Baptism changes the ownership of man from Satan’s to Christ’s. Baptism creates man’s identity in Christ, provides victory over sin and evil, and gives spiritual strength to men in need: “There you have the transcendent excellence of baptism. . . . When you see a baptism remember that the heavens are opened.”¹⁷⁷ Luther exclaims, “What a great and excellent thing baptism is, which snatches us from the jaws of the devil and makes us God’s own, overcomes and takes away sin and daily

¹⁷⁴ LC, IV, 44-46.

¹⁷⁵ WA 30, I, 112; LW 51, 184.

¹⁷⁶ LC, IV, 24-5.

¹⁷⁷ WA 30, I, 113; LW 51, 185.

strengthens the new person, and always endures and remains until we pass out of this misery into eternal glory.”¹⁷⁸

Luther particularly stresses that Baptism provides the means to fight the “old man” of sin and to strengthen the new, sanctified one: “In baptism we are given the grace, Spirit, and strength to suppress the old creature so that the new may come forth and grow strong.”¹⁷⁹ Baptism has the power to enable believers to withstand even the assault of man’s conscience and the remorse that accuses man of his sins: “We must regard baptism and put it to use in such a way that we may draw strength and comfort from it when our sins or conscience oppress us, and say: ‘But I am baptized! And if I have been baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body.’”¹⁸⁰ From one side, Baptism is a wonderful medicine that helps a man as he struggles against his sinful nature and daily shortcomings. From the other side, Baptism doesn’t simply bolster a man who is ailing, but it creates an entirely new man:

What then is the significance of such a baptism with water? Answer: It signifies that the old creature in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily contrition and repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. Where is this written? Answer: Paul says in Romans 6[:4], ‘We were buried with Christ through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we, too, are to walk in a new life.’¹⁸¹

Regarding the final outcome of the Christian, Luther is an “eschatological optimist”:
“When we become Christians, the old creature daily decreases until finally destroyed. This is what it means truly to plunge into baptism and daily to come forth again.”¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ LC, IV, 83.

¹⁷⁹ LC, IV, 76.

¹⁸⁰ LC, IV, 44-6.

¹⁸¹ SC, V, 12-4.

¹⁸² LC, IV, 71.

Baptism, because it is constituted by both water and Word, contains, disperses and bestows infallible hope for every sinner. This hope is grounded in the Word component of the Baptism. We may falter in our lives of sanctification, but “Baptism remains forever. Even though someone falls from it and sins, we always have access to it so that we may again subdue the old creature.”¹⁸³ Sinners, falling from the Baptism always have a possibility to return to it and its proper use: “Repentance, therefore, is nothing else than a return and approach to baptism, to resume and practice what has earlier been begun but abandoned.”¹⁸⁴ Though Baptism is forever, man can reject its benefits and find himself “adrift” in an ocean of sin. Though man may jump ship by rejecting his Baptism, “The ship does not break up because . . . it is God’s ordinance and not something that is ours. But it does happen that we slip and fall out of the ship. However, those who do fall out should immediately see to it that they swim to the ship and hold fast to it, until they can climb aboard again and sail on in it as before.”¹⁸⁵ Repentance is the daily use of what God has given in Baptism. Repentance is the believer’s living out of Baptism and its blessings. Therefore, it may be legitimately said that “Christian life is nothing else than a daily baptism, begun once and continuing ever after.”¹⁸⁶ Baptism contains so many gifts “for us” that “in baptism . . . every Christian has enough to study and practice all his or her life.”¹⁸⁷

d) The Baptismal Word Creates Faith

Men practice their Baptism daily by faith in Christ, that is, in His “for-usness.” Baptism is not something subjective which man’s own faith would make for him. Luther clarifies the matter, saying that the faith is the receptacle of the baptismal blessings “for us”: “Baptism is water with

¹⁸³ LC, IV, 77.

¹⁸⁴ LC, IV, 79.

¹⁸⁵ LC, IV, 82.

¹⁸⁶ LC, IV, 65.

¹⁸⁷ LC, IV, 41.

the word of God, not water and my faith. My faith does not make the baptism but rather receives the baptism, no matter whether the person being baptized believes or not; for baptism is not dependent upon my faith but upon God's Word."¹⁸⁸ Faith extracts the benefits from Baptism that are designed "for us": "Where faith is present with its fruits, there baptism is no empty symbol, but the effect accompanies it; but where faith is lacking, it remains a mere unfruitful sign."¹⁸⁹ For this reason, "We insist on faith alone as so necessary that without it nothing can be received or enjoyed."¹⁹⁰

The person who has faith as a receptacle of baptismal grace is "worthy of baptism."¹⁹¹ Faith and the Sacrament coincide because Baptism, as a form of the Word of God, makes a promise that creates faith: "Faith alone makes the person worthy to receive the saving, divine water profitably. Because such blessings are offered and promised in the words that accompany the water, they cannot be received unless we believe them from the heart. Without faith baptism is of no use, although in itself it is an infinite, divine treasure."¹⁹² Luther explains himself: "[Baptism] becomes beneficial to you if you accept it as God's command and ordinance, so that, baptized in God's name, you may receive in the water the promised salvation. Neither the hand nor the body can do this, but rather the heart must believe it."¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ WA 30, I, 114; LW 51, 186.

¹⁸⁹ LC, IV, 72-3.

¹⁹⁰ LC, IV, 37.

¹⁹¹ WA 30, I, 113; LW 51, 185.

¹⁹² LC, IV, 31.

¹⁹³ LC, IV, 36.

4. The “For Us” in the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper

In addition to Baptism, the Lord’s Supper is another means of the Holy Spirit’s gift-delivery. It strengthens and preserves man in faith. The Lord’s Supper explicitly proclaims and delivers the gifts of salvation “for us.”

a) Luther’s Short Definition of the Lord’s Supper, Its Benefits and Who Is Worthy to Receive It

Luther is a master of saying and defining things in a very condensed manner. This is how he covers the entire reality of the Lord’s Supper: “First, the sacrament is Christ’s body and blood in bread and wine comprehended in the Word. Secondly, the benefit is forgiveness of sins. This includes the need and the benefit. Thirdly, those who believe should come.”¹⁹⁴

b) The Word Character of the Lord’s Supper

Luther does not look for some abstract definition of the Sacrament and does not try to fit it into his own understanding. Instead, he goes straight to the words and commands of Jesus Himself. In the trademark question-answer format of his Small Catechism, Luther asks, “What is the Sacrament of the Altar? Answer: It is the true body and blood of the LORD Christ, in and under the bread and wine, which we Christians are commanded by Christ’s word to eat and drink.”¹⁹⁵ Because it has been ordered and instituted by Lord Himself, there cannot be any doubt about what the Sacrament of the Altar really is, and thus there is no need to go elsewhere to assure oneself about it. The Lord’s Supper is what the words of Christ say it is. Therefore, “When you hear this word ‘is,’ then do not doubt. Thus the sacrament is bread and body, wine and blood, as the words say and to which they are connected. If, therefore, God speaks these

¹⁹⁴ WA 30, I, 122; LW 51, 193.

¹⁹⁵ LC, V, 8.

words, then don't search any higher."¹⁹⁶ Christ's words establish the Sacrament and make it what it is: "If the words remain, as is right and necessary, then by virtue of them the elements are truly the body and blood of Christ. For as Christ's lips speak and say, so it is; he cannot lie or deceive."¹⁹⁷ The words of Christ are God's Word and they determine what the Lord's Supper is: "The Word must make the element a sacrament."¹⁹⁸ Luther establishes this formula for understanding the connection between the elements and the Word: "It is bread and wine set within God's Word and bound to it."¹⁹⁹ Luther is straightforward about the role of Christ's words at the Last Supper: "Take hold of the words; they tell you what the sacrament is."²⁰⁰ Without the words only the temporal elements are left so "If you take away the words, you have only bread and wine."²⁰¹ Here Luther's readers are reminded of Augustine's definition of the term "Sacrament": "It is the Word, I say, that makes this a sacrament and distinguishes it from ordinary bread and wine, so that it is called and truly is Christ's body and blood. For it is said, '*Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum,*' that is, "When the Word is joined to the external element, it becomes a sacrament."²⁰² Therefore, Luther everywhere goes after the words of God, which define the reality: "In the sacraments, the Ten Commandments, and the Creed, God's Word is the chief thing. Therefore, do not look upon water, the bread and the wine, but rather connect with them the words, 'Take, eat'; 'Do this in remembrance of me,' and 'Drink of it, all of you.'"²⁰³ The words are the ones which unambiguously tell what the thing is: "Yet,

¹⁹⁶ WA 30, I, 117; LW 51, 189.

¹⁹⁷ LC, V, 14.

¹⁹⁸ LC, V, 10.

¹⁹⁹ LC, V, 9.

²⁰⁰ WA 30, I, 118; LW 51, 189.

²⁰¹ WA 30, I, 118; LW 51, 189.

²⁰² LC, V, 10.

²⁰³ WA 30, I, 117; LW 51, 188.

however great the treasure may be in itself, it must be set within the Word and offered to us through the Word, otherwise we could never know of it or seek it.”²⁰⁴ Albrecht Peters calls “for you” “the bridge between the ‘bodily eating and drinking’ and the faithful hearing of the Word. . . . The words ‘Christ’s body for you’ reveal the treasure to us and at the same time bestow upon us a guarantee which was set in place for us on the cross of Golgotha, on which the Lord won the forgiveness of the sins for us.”²⁰⁵

The Word is the thing that delivers the message of the “for us” event of the cross, which happened far away and long ago. The proclamation of the “for us” of the Sacrament therefore precedes the actual reception of it, for before knowing what it is, what it does and who is worthy to receive it, there is not much sense of it: “Although the work took place on the cross and forgiveness of sins has been acquired, yet it cannot come to us in any other way than through the Word. How should we know that this took place or was to be given to us if it were not proclaimed by preaching, by the oral Word?”²⁰⁶

But the “for us” aspects of the Lord’s Supper are granted even more significance in Luther’s theology than “for us” just as a form of address to those for whom the sacrament has been designed. “For us” is at the heart of the Sacrament because these words are the kernel of the words of institution. The Gospel is not the advent of Christ on earth, but the delivery of Him and His benefits to man, and the “for us” makes this delivery. As Luther says, “This treasure is conveyed and communicated to us in no other way than through the words ‘given and shed for you.’”²⁰⁷ Thus, the words “for us” are the Gospel—they are words of a promise that should “most

²⁰⁴ LC, V, 30.

²⁰⁵ Albrecht Peters, *Kommentar zur Luther’s Katechismen*, Bd. 4: *Die Taufe. Das Abendmal* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 160.

²⁰⁶ LC, V, 31.

²⁰⁷ LC, V, 29.

powerfully draw and impel us. Here stand the gracious and lovely words, ‘This is my body, given FOR YOU,’ ‘This is my blood, shed FOR YOU for the forgiveness of sins.’”²⁰⁸ In the Supper, we have the Gospel in full operation—Christ in His body and blood and the delivery of it “for us”: “Here you have both—that it is Christ's body and blood and that they are yours as a treasure and gift.”²⁰⁹ In Luther’s view the whole Third Article is embedded in the Lord’s Supper: “The whole gospel and the article of the Creed, ‘I believe in one holy Christian church. . . . [and] the forgiveness of sins’ are embodied in this sacrament and offered to us through the Word.”²¹⁰ The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper encompasses all of Christ’s gifts “for us,” “For in this sacrament he offers us all the treasures he brought from heaven for us, to which he most graciously invites us in other places, as when he says in Matthew 11[:28]: ‘Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.’”²¹¹

c) The Functions of God’s Word in the Lord’s Supper

How do mortal, finite men receive such heavenly gifts given in the Lord’s Supper? Luther explains that it is not the body but rather faith that receives the benefits of the Sacrament: “The body cannot grasp and appropriate what is given in and with the sacrament. This is done by the faith of the heart that discerns and desires such a treasure.”²¹² Only faith is capable of appropriating the gifts of the Lord’s Supper: “All those who let these words [the words, “for you”] be addressed to them and believe that they are true have what the words declare.”²¹³ Again,

²⁰⁸ LC, V, 64.

²⁰⁹ LC, V, 29.

²¹⁰ LC, V, 32.

²¹¹ LC, V, 66.

²¹² LC, V, 37.

²¹³ LC, V, 35.

faith is concrete. It is faith in Christ's words: "It saves those who believe, as the words say."²¹⁴ Christ's words of institution in the Last Supper are the words "for us." Luther reflects on Christ's words, "given/shed for you" and declares that "he who believes that the body, which he receives, is given for him, has the fruit of this sacrament."²¹⁵ Christ offers His promise, and a promise can be received in no other way than by faith that the promise evokes. Luther says that "because [Christ] offers and promises forgiveness of sins, it can be received in no other way than by faith. This faith he himself demands in the Word when he says, 'given FOR YOU' and 'shed FOR YOU' as if he said, 'This is why I give it and bid you eat and drink, that you may take it as your own and enjoy it.'"²¹⁶

It is clear that faith alone can obtain the benefits of the Lord's Supper celebrated "for you," but who exactly is meant by "you" in the sacrament? Luther says that "you" refers to all "those who today hear the words 'for you.'"²¹⁷ The "for us" is a very personal address. Luther implores the faithful to "include yourself in this 'for you.'"²¹⁸ Without this inclusive attitude towards the words of "for us," man's faith is futile: "Include yourself personally in the 'YOU' so that [Christ] may not speak to you in vain."²¹⁹

Luther also speaks of the benefits of the Sacrament marked by the same "for-usness." He asks, "What is the use or fruit of the sacrament? Listen to this: 'given for you'; 'shed.' I go to the sacrament in order to take and use Christ's body and blood, given and shed for me."²²⁰ The Lord's Supper is an incomparable event, for it is in a way an event of the *Ecce Deus*, who gives

²¹⁴ WA 30, I, 113; LW 51, 185.

²¹⁵ WA 30, I, 119; LW 51, 190.

²¹⁶ LC, V, 34-5.

²¹⁷ WA 30, I, 119; LW 51, 190.

²¹⁸ WA 30, I, 120; LW 51, 191.

²¹⁹ LC, V, 65.

²²⁰ WA 30, I, 118; LW 51, 190.

over Himself completely to us. Luther says, “There stands your God; he offers you his body and blood, broken and shed for you.”²²¹ Luther makes the connection between Baptism and the Lord’s Supper saying, that the benefits and their character as pure gifts “for us” are the underlying principles of both of them: “It is this ‘you’ that makes it our concern, just as in baptism: ‘He who believes and is baptized will be saved.’ So here it is: ‘for you.’ . . . The benefit is that it is ‘given for you, shed for you.’ Why do you go to the sacrament? I go because it is a body and blood which is given and shed for me; that’s why I go.”²²²

The benefits of the Lord’s Supper are bestowed by the words of “for us” and received by faith. Luther says, “Eating and drinking certainly do not [receive the benefits], but rather the words that are recorded: ‘given for you’ and ‘shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.’ These words, when accompanied by the physical eating and drinking, are the essential thing in the sacrament, and whoever believes these very words has what they declare and state, namely, ‘forgiveness of sins.’”²²³ The Reformer asks and answers the question of the benefit of the Eucharist: “What is the benefit of such eating and drinking? Answer: The words ‘given for you’ and ‘shed for you for the forgiveness of sins’ show us that forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation are given to us in the sacrament through these words, because where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation.”²²⁴

The central benefit of the Lord’s Supper is the forgiveness of sins, therefore Luther claims, “I use the sacrament for the forgiveness of my sins; I say: I will go and take the body and the blood; it is a sure sign that it was instituted for me and against my death. ‘Which is given for

²²¹ WA 30, I, 120; LW 51, 191.

²²² WA 30, I, 119; LW 51, 190.

²²³ SC, V, 8.

²²⁴ SC, V, 5-6.

you.’ There is the benefit.”²²⁵ Men need to know beforehand what they are going to receive and how the gift received will benefit them. Luther tells us that Christ’s “for us” of the forgiveness of sins protects man’s spiritual well-being and we should realize what it is we receive. He continues by saying, “. . . it is most necessary that we know what we should seek and obtain [in the Lord’s Supper]. This is clear and easily understood from the words . . . ‘This is my body and blood, given and poured out FOR YOU for the forgiveness of sins.’ . . . He bids me eat and drink, that it may be mine and do me good as a sure pledge and sign—indeed, as the very gift he has provided for me against my sins, death, and all evils.”²²⁶ The Lord’s Supper is “an antidote, which means salvation, blessedness, life, forgiveness of sin.”²²⁷ Luther concludes, “Therefore, it is appropriately called food of the soul, for it nourishes and strengthens the new creature.”²²⁸

There is a clear need for the Lord’s Supper and its benefits (particularly of the forgiveness of sins) because of man’s sinful nature, which is always present with him. This sinful nature provokes all kinds of attacks from Satan and the world. Receiving the Sacrament regularly alerts us to the reality that “sin, devil, and death are always present,” and this drives us back to the Lord’s Supper to “receive [its] forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit. . . . [in the Sacrament,] a remedy and salvation is given.”²²⁹ The Lord’s Supper is daily nourishment and it gives the comfort of the faith for the “new man” as he struggles against the direct assaults and tricks of the master of the world, the devil:

Our human flesh and blood . . . have not lost their old skin. There are so many hindrances and attacks of the devil and the world that we often grow weary and faint and at times even stumble. Therefore, the Lord’s Supper is given as a daily food and sustenance so that our faith may be refreshed and strengthened and that it may not

²²⁵ WA 30, I, 118; LW 51, 190.

²²⁶ LC, V, 20-22.

²²⁷ WA 30, I, 121; LW 51, 192.

²²⁸ LC, V, 23.

²²⁹ WA 30, I, 122; LW 51, 192.

succumb in the struggle but become stronger and stronger. For the new life should be one that continually develops and progresses. But it has to suffer a great deal of opposition. The devil is a furious enemy; when he sees that we resist him and attack the old creature, and when he cannot rout us by force, he sneaks and skulks about at every turn, trying all kinds of tricks, and does not stop until he has finally worn us out so that we either renounce our faith or lose heart and become indifferent or impatient. For times like these, when our heart feels too sorely pressed, this comfort of the Lord's Supper is given to bring us new strength.²³⁰

Thus, the Lord's Supper is a practical help for every Christian who takes his faith and the need for his spiritual defense seriously:

Those who feel their weakness, who are anxious to be rid of it and desire help, should regard and use the sacrament as a precious antidote against the poison in their systems. For here in the sacrament you are to receive from Christ's lips the forgiveness of sins, which contains and brings with it God's grace and Spirit with all his gifts, protection, defense, and power against death, the devil, and every trouble. Thus, you have on God's part both the commandment and the promise of the Lord Christ. Meanwhile, on your part, you ought to be induced by your own need, which hangs around your neck and which is the very reason for this command, invitation, and promise.²³¹

Because Luther was so aware of the negative power of the flesh, the devil, and the world, he recognized very clearly the value of the Lord's Supper as a resource for the war against opposing spiritual forces: "The sacrament is given . . . as a remedy. See to it, then, that you seek the sacrament for your betterment when you find yourself in an hour of peril of life, when the flesh drives you, the world entices you, and Satan assails you."²³² Peters suggests that, "As food for the soul of the new human creature the Lord's Supper claims a central function. It serves to strengthen us each day in the eschatological battle against the forces what would drag us down (old man, world, flesh and devil). To make everything clear the reformer goes back again and

²³⁰ LC, V, 23-27.

²³¹ LC, V, 70-1.

²³² WA 30, I, 121; LW 51, 192.

again to the distinction between the winning of the forgiveness of sins and the distribution of the forgiveness.’²³³

d) The Usage of the Lord’s Supper

Regarding the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, Luther is particularly concerned about those who are careless in their faith and those who have not examined themselves (and therefore do not see the immediate need for the Sacrament). Luther uses every argument to encourage the frequent and regular practice of attending the Lord’s Supper. If somebody does not see the need for the Sacrament, it is a clear sign of an even greater need for it. As Luther says, “The less you feel your sins and infirmities, the more reason you have to go to the sacrament and seek its help and remedy.”²³⁴ Luther fights against the error of evaluating one’s own spiritual condition, admonishing, “If you cannot feel the need, at least believe the Scriptures. They will not lie to you, since they know your flesh better than you yourself do. Yes, and St. Paul concludes in Romans 7[:18], ‘For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh.’²³⁵ The Reformer also warns that avoiding the Sacrament creates a miserable spiritual life in which the benefits of the Lord’s Supper are obscured and “this misery, unfortunately, you do not see, unless God grants his grace so that you may become more sensitive to it and hungrier for the sacrament.”²³⁶ The pastor in Luther tells those who hold the false opinion that only the pure and sinless may come to this treasure that they have not grasped its “for us” nature: “If you wait until you are rid of your burden in order to come to the sacrament purely and worthily, you will have to stay away from it forever. In such a case [God] pronounces the verdict, ‘If you are pure and

²³³ Peters, *Kommentar zur Luther’s Katechismen*, Bd. 4, 160.

²³⁴ LC, V, 78.

²³⁵ LC, V, 76.

²³⁶ LC, V, 84.

upright, you have no need of me and I also have no need of you.’ Therefore, the only ones who are unworthy are those who do not feel their burdens nor admit to being sinners.”²³⁷

Luther has no illusions about those who wait for the proper mood or spirit to receive the Lord’s Supper. He says of them, “If you choose to fix your eye on how good and pure you are, to wait until nothing torments you, you will never go.”²³⁸

Luther argues that worthiness to receive the Lord’s Supper is not based on man’s own capacity, but is the acceptance of the gift, the “for-usness” of it, by faith. Peters traces the origin of the question of the proper use and salutary reception of the Supper to the understanding that it is “for us.”²³⁹ Luther asks, “Who, then, receives this sacrament worthily?” His reply: “A person who has faith in these words, ‘given for you’ and ‘shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,’ is really worthy and well prepared. However, a person who does not believe these words or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, because the words ‘for you’ require truly believing hearts.”²⁴⁰ Luther explains that according to the gift-character of the sacrament, its usefulness or legitimacy “does not depend upon our worthiness. For we are not baptized because we are worthy and holy, nor do we come to confession as if we were pure and without sin; on the contrary, we come as poor, miserable people, precisely because we are unworthy.”²⁴¹ Luther confesses, “I would really like to be worthy, but I come not on account of any worthiness of mine, but on account of your Word, because you have commanded it and I want to be your disciple, regardless of my worthiness.”²⁴²

²³⁷ LC, V, 73-74.

²³⁸ LC, V, 57.

²³⁹ Peters, *Kommentar zur Luther’s Katechismen*, Bd. 4, 153.

²⁴⁰ SC, V, 9-10.

²⁴¹ LC, V, 61.

²⁴² LC, V, 62.

All gifts, even God's best, can be refused. God's gifts accepted work faith; God's gifts refused work damnation. Luther warns that in the latter case, "He invites and incites you, and if you want to show contempt for his sacrament, you must answer for it yourself,"²⁴³ and "if you despise this [Sacrament], then you see to it!"²⁴⁴ The Sacrament thus is not conditioned by human effort. The proper use of it merely shows that men honor it rightly, but the sacrament is not impaired by the improper use. "This blessed sacrament remains unimpaired and inviolate even if we use and handle it unworthily"²⁴⁵ because "Christ does not found this sacrament upon our use of it. What he says or ordains remains, no matter whether one uses it rightly or wrongly. The sacrament is body and blood, as the words say, whether it is received by one who is worthy or unworthy."²⁴⁶ Even our unbelief does not "alter God's Word. . . . [Nor does misuse] change God's Word"²⁴⁷ regarding the Lord's Supper because:

It is not founded on human holiness but on the Word of God. As no saint on earth, yes, no angel in heaven can make bread and wine into Christ's body and blood, so likewise can no one change or alter the sacrament, even through misuse. For the Word by which it was constituted a sacrament is not rendered false because of an individual's unworthiness or unbelief. Christ does not say, "If you believe or if you are worthy, you have my body and blood," but rather, 'Take, eat and drink, this is my body and blood.'²⁴⁸

The Holy Spirit delivers the "for us" gifts of the Second Article to the believer and leads him into the Second and First Articles of the Creed. The Third Article procures the sanctifying gifts of "for us" through the continuing work of the Holy Spirit. This work of sanctification is implemented through the concrete instruments of the Holy Spirit—the Church, the Word and the

²⁴³ LC, V, 52.

²⁴⁴ WA 30, I, 120; LW 51, 191.

²⁴⁵ LC, V, 5.

²⁴⁶ WA 30, I, 119; LW 51, 189.

²⁴⁷ WA 30, I, 118; LW 51, 189.

²⁴⁸ LC, V, 16-17.

Sacraments (which are particular forms of that Word). The Holy Spirit uses them in His “for us” way. Thus, by the preaching of the Word, Christ’s “for us” is applied to men, and they are brought into the Church.

Thus, in Luther’s view sanctification in the Church is provided by the means of the sacramental forms of the Word, which bring the gift of the forgiveness “for us” to bear against man’s continuing sinful condition. The sacraments are the way in which God makes His “for-usness” available to men through faith.

E. Luther’s “For Us” Creed

Luther’s explanations of the Creed in the Small Catechism form the basis of his personal, “for me” creed.²⁴⁹ The following is an anthropological reading of his creed as a unified document. It is clearly marked by his “for me” approach.

1. Luther’s “For Us” Creed in Conversation with the Ecumenical Creeds: Luther’s Creed As the Creed of Trinitarian Gifts Received²⁵⁰

Luther’s personal creed is the anthropological counterpart of the ecumenical creeds.²⁵¹ The texts of the ecumenical creeds concentrate on God while Luther speaks about the human creature.²⁵² The ecumenical creeds speak in the active voice: God is acting. Luther’s “for us” creed confesses his core belief in the passive voice: man is receiving. Luther’s is clearly the recipient’s creed. Therefore, Luther follows the Trinitarian creeds although his emphasis is not so much on each Person of the Trinity but rather on their particular gifts “for me.” Man is at the

²⁴⁹ See Appendix IV for the text.

²⁵⁰ Here by the ecumenical creeds the author means Apostolic, Nicean and Athanasian creeds.

²⁵¹ Particularly the Nicean and Athanasian Creeds because they explicitly contain the phrase, “for us.”

²⁵² The creeds were written in the midst of controversies over the divinity of Christ or the person of Christ in general, and also in a time when Gnostic denials of the personal God of the Bible had to be met. In Luther’s time the focus was on the human creature and whether human creatures could merit salvation, a question of the human relationship to God.

receiving end of the three Persons' caring activities. He "suffers" the gifts of the Trinitarian "for us" God. Thus, Luther's creed may be called the creed of the Trinitarian gifts received. Luther's creed is a catalogue of God's gifts, and its articles are the storehouses of the particular gifts. Thus, the First Article has delivered to man the gifts of creation, the Second the gifts of salvation and the Third, the gifts of sanctification.

2. The First Article of Luther's Creed

Luther's creed is a reflective response to both the gifts "for us" and also to their Trinitarian Giver, whose nature Luther briefly describes in the beginning of the First Article of his creed: "All [of God's gifts are given to us] out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy."²⁵³ The matter of "pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy" pertains not merely to the First Article alone—it also underlies the Second and the Third Articles. For the purpose of anthropological clarity, that is, describing the recipient of God's "for-usness," Luther deliberately contrasts man to the outpouring of God's gracious nature which comes "Without any merit or worthiness of mine at all!" After such a comparison, what is left for the human recipient is thankfulness, praise, service and obedience: "For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him."²⁵⁴

The First Article of Luther's Creed describes the gifts received in universal ("all that exists," "all danger" and "all evil") and practical ("shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock") categories. The term "all" in Luther's Creed serves as a counterpart of the wording in the Ecumenical Creeds, "God the Father almighty, Creator," thus describing both God's goodness and His power.

²⁵³ SC, II, 2.

²⁵⁴ SC, II, 2.

In the First Article of his creed Luther's emphasis lies not so much on the traditional distinction between Creator and creature but rather on the distinction between the good and merciful Father and His beloved creature. This is clearly expressed in Luther's usage of "me" in the First Article and his enumeration of the particular gifts man receives, which basically serves to express that man has been given much—everything he needs and even more. Man is God's special creature in all respects, and he is literally showered with gifts. He is rich in God. He has been granted everything for his life.

The measure of God's love for man as His beloved creature in the First Article of Luther's creed is the entirety of the created order, which has been organized as a sustenance-care-safety net "for us." Created order is the order designed especially "for us": it is not just stuff without application to us. Everything in the world is charged with God's love and care for us—His beloved human creatures. Besides that, man has been given both the abilities and responsibilities to exercise the dominion over it. This aspect should also be seen as a part of God's care, for men are participants (stewards, co-authors, and co-creators) in God's work, not just consumers of His gifts.

3. The Second Article of Luther's Creed

If the First Article primarily deals with man's needs, then the Second Article focuses on man's troubles and the divine solution to them. The first line of the Second Article of Luther's creed resembles the Nicene Creed. When he uses the phrase, "begotten of the Father in eternity, and also a true human being, born of the Virgin Mary," Luther establishes the foundation of the human-divine nature of Christ from which he concludes that Christ "is my LORD." Only such a Lord is capable of helping man in his disastrous condition.

Thus, in the Second Article, Luther deliberately sets the contrast between the Lord—"begotten of the Father in eternity, and also a true human being, born of the Virgin Mary" and

man, “the lost and condemned human being.” The one who is lost did not get to this situation just by mere chance or a kind of natural disaster. It is a result of man’s own deliberate action, intentional rebellion executed by “sin,” “death” and “devil” from which man is purchased and freed by Christ’s “holy, precious blood with his innocent suffering and death.” The heavens have come down to earth and even hell in order to save “me.”

The measure of God’s love in the Second Article is emphasized by deliberately contrasting it to the First Article, which speaks of the temporal realm and is summed up and represented in the expression of “silver or gold.” “Silver or gold” traditionally and biblically²⁵⁵ serves to express the notion of great material success and wealth that, to God, is perishable. Thus, the Second Article is far greater than the First. The phrase “not with gold or silver” shows that Christ’s blood shed “for us and our salvation” is far greater than perishable riches. All the riches of the First Article are incomparable to the riches of the Second Article—salvation in Christ. The word “acquire,” which can designate a money or property transaction, denotes the transfer of the human identity, meaning, and security from the reign of sin, death and devil to the reign of Christ because of the victory He obtained through His death and resurrection. Again Luther speaks in contrasts: “Not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.” In this short sentence Luther puts side by side “gold and silver” with “holy, precious blood,” “gold and silver” (which are often used together with greed as a representative of sin) with “his innocent suffering and death,” thus demonstrating again God’s “pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all!”²⁵⁶

Man’s destiny is described in Luther’s Creed in terms of spiritual welfare in daily life (“freed me from all sins . . . and from the power of the devil”) and in eschatological terms

²⁵⁵ “For you know that it was not with the perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed . . . but with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet 1:18).

(“eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness”) as well. The same wording applies also for the solution of the liberation of man. Luther describes both the “freedom from” and the “freedom for.” The former asserts negatively that man must be extracted from “all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil,” while the latter positively assigns man to his proper place: “That I may belong to him,²⁵⁷ live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.” Thus, once liberated from the forces of sin, death and the power of the devil, man is not left alone wondering what to do with the gift of his freedom. Speaking of man’s release from the jaws of sin, hell and devil, the words from the First Article still apply that God is the One who has done it “out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all”²⁵⁸ with the new destiny of man in mind.

4. The Third Article of Luther’s Creed

The Third Article of Luther’s creed again confesses the human condition. Instead of the “lost and condemned human being”²⁵⁹ of the Second Article, it is the man who by his “own understanding or strength . . . cannot believe in Jesus Christ [his] LORD or come to him.”²⁶⁰ This statement uncovers man’s plight even more than the Second Article’s statement regarding the “lost and condemned human being.” Man is not capable on his own of getting the gifts that are procured by Christ “for him.” He needs someone to deliver them to him on a constant, daily basis. This is the job of the Holy Spirit.

²⁵⁶ SC, II, 2.

²⁵⁷ Or “that I may be [wholly] His own” (SC, II, 4) as the *Triglote Concordia. The Symbolic Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church, German-Latin-English*. (Minneapolis: The Mott Press, 1955), 545 translate it.

²⁵⁸ SC, II, 2.

²⁵⁹ SC, II, 4.

²⁶⁰ SC, II, 6.

In one breath Luther confesses, “The Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith;”²⁶¹ that is, He has re-created, sanctified, and preserved me in trust toward God. His “for me” has enabled me to live a different life, a life “for Christ” (as the counterpart of “for me”).

In explaining the Third Article, Luther switches from the first person singular to the third person plural. Besides calling, enlightening and sanctifying me, the Holy Spirit has also led me to the others who have experienced the same. “We” have been guided by the Word to the place where it abides—the Church and its Sacraments. Here “we” on a daily basis receive the forgiveness of sins. From such a state of personal giftedness (being “called . . . through the gospel, enlightened . . . with his gifts, made . . . holy and [being] kept . . . in the true faith,” being abundantly forgiven of all my sins) and from our common ecclesial giftedness (“just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith. Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins . . . of all believers.”) my individual and our eschatological destinies will proceed: “On the Last Day the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life.”²⁶²

5. Luther’s Use of the First Person Singular is Not Individualistic, but Personal and Relational

The twenty-first century western reader may be tempted to believe that Luther’s use of the first person singular in his creed foreshadows the individualistic and humanistic approach of our own time, but this is not the case. Luther’s understanding of the creed focuses on the “person,” not on the autonomous individual. Luther emphasizes the creature of God fashioned to live in

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² SC, II, 6.

relationship to God his Creator, in relationship to other human creatures and to the rest of creation. Luther's "me" speaks out of the fullness of being gifted with all kinds of God's "for us" gifts. With this approach Luther reaches everyone, for no one can avoid being the God-gifted kind of "me." All humanity is comprehended in this "me," for it is both personal and trans-personal. Everybody is invited to join the fellowship of God's gifts "for us."

Thus, Luther's "for us" creed reflects and parallels the ecumenical creeds but it is distinctive in its focus on man as the recipient of the Trinitarian God's gifts "for us." Luther describes the gifts in universal and pragmatic categories. Luther places particular emphasis on the merciful Father-beloved creature distinction.

The measure of God's love for man in the First Article is the whole created order, which God has deliberately organized to exhibit his care "for us." The Second Article deals with man's main trouble, sin, and points out the divine solution, Christ the Lord, who is described in Nicean terms as possessing divine-human personhood. The Second Article reveals God's love in a more significant way than the First by virtue of Christ's sacrifice. The value of the lost and condemned "me" has been established by God making "me" His own through Christ.

Christ provides man with both the "freedom from" all the enemies of the human creature and the "freedom for" living out God's plan for humanity. The Third Article describes man as being unable to procure the gifts of the Second Article for himself. Therefore, the Holy Spirit re-creates, sanctifies and preserves man, enabling him to live a life "for Christ." By shifting from the first person singular to the first person plural in this passage, Luther exhibits the entrance of man into the community of the other believers, the Church, which is operated by the Holy Spirit using the Word and the Sacraments. Luther's use of the first person singular is not individualistic, but rather personal and relational.

F. Luther on the “For Us” of the First Article Revisited

1. The Realm of the First Article Revisited

The believer, whom the Holy Spirit has made holy, lives in the world that God the Creator has made. In the Small Catechism Luther does not return to the First Article as such even though his treatment of the sacraments presumes that the created order and God’s use of particular elements in the sacraments were for saving purposes. Luther does explicitly address God’s structure for human life in his so-called Household Chart (*Haustafel*).²⁶³ It provides guidelines for the daily Christian life in the communal setting, a living out of the gifts “for us” received in all the articles of the creed. In fact, the Household Chart constitutes a new creedal article– it is the “First Article Revisited.” Moreover, it unifies the Catechism for the *Haustafel*, by describing the actions appropriate to implement these gifts, bringing the believer full-circle, back to the beginning of the Catechism. Peters says, “Thus, the [Household Chart] refers to the Decalogue after the Creed and the Our Father and thereby unifies the Catechism. It develops the lived-out love of the Christian faith and moves the created community to live in the light of the ‘practical use of the Gospel.’”²⁶⁴

In the First Article, the human creature experiences the Father’s love “for us” in the gifts of creation and continual sustenance. After Christ has acquired for us the gift of salvation (Second Article), and the Holy Spirit has delivered the gifts of forgiveness and sanctification “for us” (Third Article), we have become truly new creatures. We are disciples of Christ and

²⁶³ The task of this project is to explore how God’s “for-usness” in the Creed forms man’s identity. Therefore, the other parts of the Catechism such as the Lord’s Prayer or the Daily prayers are deliberately left out of this study although it needs to be mentioned that they are loaded with as much “for me,” and “for us” language as Luther’s explanation of the Creed. For example, the First petition of the Lord’s Prayer asks that God’s name which is holy in itself may become holy “in and among us” (SC, IV, 4), that is, that we use it properly as God’s children that He receives from us honor and praise. All of the petitions ask for God’s benefits, which exist in and of themselves, to become our possessions and to be delivered as gifts “for us”: “We ask that what otherwise must be done without us may also be done in us” (LC, IV, 68).

²⁶⁴ Albrecht Peters, *Kommentar zur Luthers Katechismen*, Bd. 5: *Die Beichte, Die Haustafel, Das* (continued next page)

members of His Church. How do we respond to God's call to apply to our lives all the richness of the "for us" gifts we have received and are receiving continuously? How do we live out our new identities in the community of our brothers and sisters in faith in the paths of our lives? This way of living is the content of the First Article Revisited.

Out of a medieval tradition of instruction for daily life, probably conveyed to him in the writings of Jean Gerson,²⁶⁵ Luther fashioned his "Household Chart of Some Bible Passages for all kinds of holy orders and walks of life, through which they may be admonished, as through lessons particularly pertinent to their office and duty." These are the guidelines for application of the received gifts "for us" in the creed. They are to be used to help the Christian fulfill his earthly vocation.

2. The Scriptural Character of the Household Chart

Textually, the *Haustafel* is just a small compendium of Scripture quotations. Luther does not even provide a short commentary, probably presuming that the Scriptural texts speak for themselves. His brevity may be due to pedagogical reasons as well. Albrecht Peters says that Luther's "deliberately intentional and cautiously worked out structure . . . forms from the biblical material an original portion of a Catechism with a genuine Lutheran stamp."²⁶⁶ Thus, here the reader must guide himself merely by the fact that the *Haustafel* itself has been included in the Catechism. The Scriptural verses of the Household Chart are intended to be read against the broader context and background of Luther's thoughts in the catechism so that we get a holistic view of vocation.

Traubüchlein, Das Taufbüchlein (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck und Ruprecht, 1994), 98.

²⁶⁵ Peters, *Kommentar zur Luthers Katechismen*, Bd. 5, 101-4.

²⁶⁶ Peters, *Kommentar zur Luthers Katechismen*, Bd. 5, 104.

The fact that Luther has chosen the Scripture quotes as the only content of the *Haustafel* speaks for itself. First, by this Luther exhibits his attitude towards the Scripture. It possesses the primary claim of authority for any Christian, not merely on the issues of faith but also in matters of practical living. Second, Luther has chosen the Scripture quotations to illustrate his thought regarding Christians' earthly callings. In this way he declares that the vocations that believers may occupy have divine sanctions that are not dependent on man's approval and may or may not be sanctioned by the socio-political realities of the day. Thus, man is firmly grounded in the walk of life²⁶⁷ to which God calls him.

3. Luther's New Definition of Sanctity Defines the Household Chart

Luther has divided the network of God's care and sustenance into the three basic "estates" or "hierarchies," usually listed as household, state, and church. From this division we see that man's vocation is not confined to an occupation alone, but it includes biological and reproductive concerns and matters of society and Church too. Household includes marriage, dealing with parents, children, servants, widows, unmarried, etc. and serves as the foundation of society. Luther is consistent in putting the importance of the family structure as the top priority for the benefit of the whole society. He says, "Out of the authority of parents, all other authority is derived and developed."²⁶⁸ In the domain of the secular authority responsibilities include those of rulers and their subjects. In the domain of the Church the responsibilities include those of ministers and laymen.

²⁶⁷ Unfortunately, there is still no fixed terminology concerning Luther's concept of vocation. "Stand" or "Status" has been rendered in English as "stations," "orders," "paths of life," and "estates" with assigned offices (*Ämter*) or responsibilities within it. In the new translation of the Book of Concord (2000), it has been called "the walks of life." Luther's ideas do not fit neatly into today's very complex social systems although they provide good basic structures to frame modern discussions of vocation. It is helpful to distinguish the structure of human life as God has shaped it in the specific walks of life (family and occupation, society, church) from the concrete historic forms of the walks of life. Although Luther did not use specific terminology to designate them, he does speak of both roles and functions of those roles when he speaks of offices or responsibilities.

²⁶⁸ LC, I, 141.

Luther clarifies his view on two points. First, he has taken the word “holy orders,” formerly used to designate the monastic order, and has applied it to the walks of life of the ordinary Christian. American Lutheran ethicist Mark Kolden summarizes Luther’s view in the following: “The call to follow Christ leads not to any religious vocation removed from daily life, but instead it transforms the attitude and understanding one has of the situation in which one already is.”²⁶⁹ Thus, Luther has sanctified the ordinary Christian life, demonstrating that there is no special holiness in the monastic path of life. As catechetical scholar Charles Arand says, “With the table of Christian callings or responsibilities, Luther provides an evangelical alternative to medieval piety that was based on ascribing holiness of living to certain structures and not to others. Luther’s teaching on faith placed everyone on an equal footing and opened the door for a reevaluation of daily life.”²⁷⁰ Arand continues his argument saying that Luther’s approach to faith “overthrows the distinction between the works of the religious orders and the tasks of secular walks of life.”²⁷¹ If God has issued the call and instituted the order of each walk of life, each vocation is “holy” by the fact that God has given them. Luther introduces the Household chart as designed “for all kinds of holy orders and walks of life” because God has established them in the Bible. God has instituted vocations as interrelated structures. They all have the same validity and deserve the same respect. To be a mayor of a city is no more respectable than to be a father, mother, son or daughter because all are servants of God in their individual callings.

Thus, Luther has abandoned the medieval division of the society into the sacred and profane. Luther designated both religious and “non-religious” vocations as godly if done in faith

²⁶⁹ Mark Kolden, “Luther on Vocation,” *Word and World* 3 (1983): 386.

²⁷⁰ Charles Arand, *That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 2000), 176.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 177.

in Christ. Religious vocations are ungodly if conducted apart from trusting Christ, so there is no more mechanical and simplistic division into the “holy religious professionals,” who by definition of their orders alone (monks, nuns etc.) formerly stood in a special and meritorious relation before God, and the laymen, who were some sort of “second class” citizens before God. Luther says, “All Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of the office. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12[:12-13] that we are all one body, yet every member has its own work by which it serves the others. This is because we are all Christians alike; for baptism, gospel, and faith alone makes us spiritual and Christian people.”²⁷² In Luther’s mind the distinction between the godly and ungodly is not mechanical but organic. It does not coincide with the holy responsibilities or offices, but it is determined by trust/mistrust in God, that is, along the lines of the First Commandment which is by faith alone. Therefore, something is not sacred in itself (as having some immanent holy features, for instance, the indelible character of the priestly office) or because men have designed it to be so (even for the most pious reasons), but because God has instituted it in order to carry out His plans of redemption. Household, state and church vocations may all be sanctified realms of society because they each pursue God’s plans for the sustenance and development of God’s people at large. Thus, Kolb says:

Against the most sacred works of the medieval church Luther set forth the godliness of the activities of the profane realm, when performed by the person of faith. Godliness, Luther asserted, flows from a right relationship with God, and this relationship is marked by the human being’s recognition that God is Lord and that God is good. It is marked by human faith, a trust in God, reliance upon His power, and a dependence on His goodness, which marks the original relationship which God created His human creatures to have with Him.²⁷³

²⁷² WA VI, 407; LW 44, 127.

²⁷³ Robert Kolb, “God Calling, ‘Take Care of My People’: Luther’s Concept of Vocation in the Augsburg Confession and Its Apology,” *Concordia Journal* 8 (1982): 5.

Luther goes even further and explains the relationships between the walks of life and salvation. The works humans perform in their vocations are designed to benefit earth and its inhabitants. Righteousness before God does not consist of fulfilling vocation but of receiving the gifts He gives “for us.” Salvation does not come from our works. God is pleased with us as His children, not because of the works that we perform in our walks of life. Because God accepts us as His children, He also accepts our works. Because God has ordained each particular walk of life and work, each of them performed dutifully certainly pleases Him. But at the same time, men are still sinners and they cannot help but sin when they exercise their vocations. Therefore, the work that they do in their walks of life cannot be acceptable to God apart from the certainty that the workers’ sins (as children of God by faith) are forgiven. Nevertheless, the walks of life as instituted by God remain holy. Therefore, men are to live, work and serve in their walks of life as justified sinners. As Kolb says, “Believers who trust in Christ are holy and therefore their activities are holy whenever they act within God’s design.”²⁷⁴ Therefore, there are neither especially holy walks of life, nor holy works that men can choose to do to make themselves holy. Each walk of life by its very “job description” has duties and requirements more than enough to keep man from inventing “especially holy” and meritorious works to please God.

Vocation belongs only to this world, not to heaven. It is man’s neighbor, not God, who needs what vocations provide. As Swedish systematician Gustaf Wingren says, “In his vocation one is not reaching up to God, but rather bends oneself down toward the world. When one does that, God’s creative work is carried on. God’s work of love takes form on earth, and that which is external witnesses to God’s love.”²⁷⁵ Walks of life do not count for eternity, for they have been designed by God to sustain us in the temporal sphere. Luther rejects vocation as a means to

²⁷⁴ Robert Kolb, *Teaching God’s Children His Teaching: A Guide for the Study of Luther’s Catechism* (Hutchinson, MN: Crown Publishing, 1992), 8-4.

man's salvation. In heaven, vocation contributes as little as good works do. Therefore, Wingren says, "The sin of the person himself is judged and forgiven in heaven, where there is no question of walks of life, office and vocation, but only about the heart. On earth, on the other hand, one must give thought to office and walks of life, not to the sin of the heart."²⁷⁶ Wingren continues, "As soon as any outward quality of life claims a place in conscience or in heaven, the immateriality of vocation must be emphasized."²⁷⁷ Vocation, walks of life and responsibility ought to claim the earth, not heaven. Although faith is vital for daily life, it ultimately impels the believer toward heaven. Wingren concludes that "Faith's realm is a future kingdom, a kingdom after death; but vocation's realm is in present, and will come to an end. Faith's kingdom is a realm in which all are alike; but vocation's world is full of grades and differences."²⁷⁸

4. Luther's View of the Walks of Life as God's Instituted Foundation of Human Existence and Mutual Care

The societal value of the works of vocation must be seen within this context of God's giving salvation apart from them. The basic structure of the walks of life is present in every society and constitutes the core of human societal existence. As Kolb says, "The Table of responsibilities describes and prescribes actions appropriate for God's horizontal government of our lives by presenting not general commands for human living but God's scheme or form for human life."²⁷⁹ The walks of life that God has established are the invariables²⁸⁰ of human social existence, even when a culture or society merges two of them.²⁸¹ They guarantee the continuing

²⁷⁵ Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 10.

²⁷⁶ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 4.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 12-3.

²⁷⁹ Kolb, *Teaching God's Children His Teaching*. 8-2.

²⁸⁰ Luther points out that the walks of life remain unchanged in all times. cf. WA 31, I, 409-10; LW 13, 369.

²⁸¹ As was the case in medieval society, when family life and occupational life were considered a single walks
(continued next page)

existence of the human community in any given socio-political system because they are the product of God's creative design. Socio-political regimes and systems may come and go, but the foundation of human society remains. Therefore, Luther is justified in declaring that the walks of life are the basis for human earthly living. In fact, the walks of life are the foundations for civilization: "These stations must remain if the world is to stand"²⁸² because through the walks of life the elementary social order, justice, peace, and safety are preserved. Moreover, the whole human race as such is procreated and sustained by way of them, for instance through marriage and household (and the assistance given them by state and church). Thus, the concrete "responsibilities [of particular walks of life] are simply God's structure for human living."²⁸³

In the earthly realm man always stands in relationships. By way of the walks of life, man is placed into definite and particular relationships to others. These relationships are not empty but are filled with practical content—care and love for another. Luther says that "all stations are so oriented that they serve others."²⁸⁴ They are some of the means that God uses as He sustains and preserves human life. Luther continues, "Everyone must benefit and serve every other by means of his own work or office so that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, just as all the members of the body serve one another [1 Cor 12:14-26]."²⁸⁵ Man serves God by participating in the walks of life and assisting His grand plan to care for a baby, for the needy and for the man across the street of whom a person may not know anything at all. In the specific walks of life God's creative work moves into creating works for those who exercise their responsibilities within them. Wingren says that

of life, or in modern totalitarian societies, which try to incorporate the religious walks of life into the political walks of life.

²⁸² WA 31, I, 400.

²⁸³ Kolb, *Teaching God's Children His Teaching*, 8-4.

²⁸⁴ WA 15, 625.

“there is a direct connection between God’s work in creation and his work in these offices,”²⁸⁶ Luther provides an example of the relationship between God’s efforts in Creation and his continuing work of “creating” vocations. He says that God himself will milk the cows through him whose vocation it is.²⁸⁷ God has tied all men together in a care-sustenance-safety net so that, as Luther says, everything we do in our vocation is to “serve God and the world.”²⁸⁸ This is God’s overall framework “for us,” which prescribes the duties and responsibilities for each walk of life so that the whole human populace is covered by God’s “for-usness”: “These responsibilities consist of whatever actions are necessary for the proper care and the supporting, sustaining love and concern which is vital for human life, for the well-being of the whole creation. In exercising them we are the hands or feet or mouth of God.”²⁸⁹ Thus, in short, there is no human life possible outside the network of the walks of life. All of human life is comprehended by the walks of life that bring and deliver God’s “for-usness” right to each person’s door. Man is situated on both ends of the walks of life care net, so that on one occasion he is the receiver, and on another occasion he is the “giver”—the mediator of God’s “for-usness” to his neighbor.

Everybody has a definite vocation within each particular walk of life by virtue of the fact that he has been born into society. Luther says, “You have always been in some state or station; you have always been a husband or wife, or boy or girl, or servant.”²⁹⁰ Thus, vocation refers not merely to someone’s occupation but to all his responsibilities and relationships through which he

²⁸⁵ WA VI, 409; LW 44, 130.

²⁸⁶ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 9.

²⁸⁷ WA 44, 6.

²⁸⁸ WA 30, II, 578.

²⁸⁹ Kolb, *Teaching God’s Children His Teaching*, 8-3.

²⁹⁰ WA 10, I, 308; *The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther*, ed. John Lenker, vol. 10 (Minneapolis: Lutherans in All Lands Co., 1905), 242.

is involved in society. Walks of life provide concrete stations where men are to obey God in order to participate in His plan of “for us” so that through his efforts and God’s blessing, he might sustain and further God’s work in the world. There are many walks of life for as Luther says, “God is a great Lord and has many kinds of servants.”²⁹¹ Because of these differences, walks of life are interdependent. Moreover, each person finds his place and belongs to the variety of walks of life simultaneously, for every man stands in several relationships to other people at the same time for everyone is called to a particular set of walks of life.

The walks of life are not limited to our lawful duties and obligations to one another by virtue of our common identity as God’s most beloved creatures. There is another aspect of vocation that Luther discerns in the Scripture of the *Haustafel*. Walks of life are, as Kolb says, “The law of God, His structure for human living, [which] reveals itself in more than the Ten Commandments.”²⁹² God’s commandment of love is made possible through our human relationships. Besides the fact that God has covered humanity with the care-sustenance-security net of the “for us” which works by means of the walks of life, Luther crowns the *Haustafel* with the Scriptural admonition of universal, all-inclusive, Christian love “for all in the community” (Rom 13:9; 1 Tim 2:1). Arand calls this love the “fourth” estate of the Household Chart, for it includes the other three and transcends them.²⁹³ Love, as Luther says, “Serves every needy person in general with all kinds of benevolent deeds, such as feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, forgiving enemies, praying for all men on earth, suffering all kinds of evil on earth, etc.”²⁹⁴ Thus, while every walk of life has its responsibilities and duties prescribed by its specific function, Christian love is not fully carried out in any one of them. The “common order of

²⁹¹ WA 30, II, 570.

²⁹² Kolb, *Teaching God’s Children His Teaching*, 8-1.

²⁹³ Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 178.

Christian love” stands above the walks of life. Wingren explains Luther’s view: “Love aims at what is good for others and therefore rises above all laws (whose very aim is to extract something that is good for others). And since vocation involves my relation with others, love for others is *eo ipso* the fulfillment of my vocation.”²⁹⁵

The walks of life concretize and particularize the universal order “to love your neighbor.” The same works are not required of everyone—rather, each has different works according to the functions of his walk of life. But people in all walks of life are called to be motivated in their service to one another by Christian love for the neighbor. In this way God’s “for-usness” has the potential to enter into each interaction we have with our neighbor. Love and service to one’s neighbor go far beyond the regular duties of man’s particular vocations. For this reason no one has an excuse to isolate himself from his neighbors’ needs by arguing that their particular need lies outside the obligation of one’s formal calling. As Wingren says, “In anything that involves action, anything that concerns the world or my relationship with my neighbor, there is nothing, Luther holds, that falls in a private sphere lying outside of the walks of life, office, or vocation.”²⁹⁶ There is no room for a present day unscrupulous salesman-client relationship to exist in Luther’s understanding of the Christian vocation. One cannot be a used car salesman selling defective vehicles to unsuspecting customers throughout the week and then claim to have a clear conscience in church on Sunday. Such a person has failed to love his neighbor throughout the week as he was dishonest in his vocational dealings. Duplicity like this may be regarded by some as “good business practice” according to today’s relativized moral practices, but for Luther this kind of conduct proves the spiritual bankruptcy of the offending person. Luther says, “There

²⁹⁴ WA 26, 505; LW 37, 365.

²⁹⁵ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 120.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

is no need for you to take up or leave a [particular] walk of life in order to be saved . . . It is all free, free,²⁹⁷ but without Christian love commanding the actions of a given vocation, that vocation is made invalid.

The framework of God's network of caring "for us" is hierarchically structured, both in its horizontal and vertical dimensions. Horizontally, men relate to each other as fellow citizens, colleagues etc. Vertically, we are arranged as masters and their subjects with God as the chief authority or "master." As Luther says, "the emperor, when he turns to God, is not emperor but a single person, like any other human being before God. But if he turns to his subjects, he is emperor as many times as he has subjects. Thus, we must speak about all authorities. When they turn themselves toward the authority that is above them, they themselves have no authority. But when they turn to those who are under them, they are therein clad with authority."²⁹⁸

In man's relationship with God there is only a vertical line, which runs only in one direction. Wingren argues, "God dispenses all walks of life and offices that they may operate downward; but he confers no authority over against himself."²⁹⁹ In relation to God man stands alone, for before God he is without the human support that comes with his ordained walk of life.

The sheer necessity of exercising their given walks of life has the power to subdue men's sinful, egocentric tendencies. This works for the welfare of the neighbor and community, that is, "for us." Therefore, as Wingren says, "It is the 'station' itself which is an ethical agent of God, for it is God who is active through law on earth."³⁰⁰ Because following God's leading into proper vocations can greatly assist us in maintaining God-pleasing vertical and horizontal relationships,

²⁹⁷ WA 12, 126.

²⁹⁸ WA 19, 652-3.

²⁹⁹ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 12.

³⁰⁰ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 6.

Christians should only accept appointments to such walks of life and occupations that have been instituted by God.

Walks of life as God's instruments are effective in themselves regardless of the personal qualities of their occupants. That which the office accomplishes is not part of man's account, but of God's.³⁰¹ Therefore, one needs to discern between the office and the person who exercises it. As Luther says, "The offices, both of rulers and officials are godly and right. But those who occupy them are usually of the devil."³⁰² The issue is not whether the person who occupies the office is sinful or not, but whether the walks of life themselves are sinful or not.

Luther's Household Chart uses Scripture to describe the concrete ways of living out some of God's gifts "for us" in the community. The Chart brings man back to the First Article and creates the First Article Revisited. Luther divides the walks of life into the household, state and Church and renounces the medieval division of society into the sacred and the profane. In Luther's view all walks of life are holy by God's institution, and any activity is "holy" if done in faith in Christ. Men's works in their walks of life are accepted because of the fact that they are ordered by God's plan "for us," and men themselves are accepted because they are God's children. Walks of life are designed exclusively to benefit the earth and its inhabitants, so they do not "count" toward the eternal reward of heaven.

Thus, walks of life are invariables of human existence and they are the foundations of human civilization. Admonition to universal Christian love crowns and fulfills all walks of life; they in turn concretize the admonition to universal Christian love.

Luther describes the horizontal and vertical structures of God's "for us" design in the walks of life, and demonstrates that through the walks of life that prescribe concrete

³⁰¹ WA 19, 655-6.

³⁰² WA 51, 254.

responsibilities to the believers, God exercises effective care for all people. Everyone is involved in relationships of participation in God's "for us" design of care by the fact that each has his own distinctive walk of life. The particular walks of life partly subdue men's selfishness and thus serve as moral agents of God. Walks of life are effective not on account of the persons who occupy them, but on account of God who designed them.

G. A Creedal Analysis of Humanity According to Luther

The anthropological data of Luther's "for us" approach can be gathered into a matrix of human meaning, answering the questions regarding man's existence, which are posed in Chapter 3.

1. The First Article

a) Who am I? Man is special among God's creatures, he is a *human* creature. Luther stresses that man is special in several respects. In addition to the particular aspects of man mentioned in Scholastic theologies of his time (that is, man created in the image of God, made in a separate act and day of Creation, provided with spiritual and physical components of the human nature, etc.), Luther focuses on the relationships between man and God. Man is the child of God the almighty, Creator and Father. Man has been granted the gift of conscience and the ability to communicate with God. The most significant aspect of the relationship from man's side is that he can possess a personal trust in God, which Luther understands as "faith in" rather than "faith about" God. Man is unique in his ability to understand and value his total dependence on God's "for-usness."³⁰³

³⁰³ "For-usness" indicates that God's fundamental attitude, relationship, and disposition toward human creatures is centered on them, not Himself. The Creed reveals that God is always giving, even when He is giving the requirements of the Law, that is, His plan for human performance. It is a good gift to be required to live in the bounds of our humanity. The "for-usness" is God's nature to be in relationships with His human creatures and it is a fatherly relationship as the Creed defines it, one expressed in the Biblical concept of "agape."

b) Of what am I a part? Man is at the center of the created order, which was designed by God's "for-usness" and exhibited in God's care-sustenance-safety net for man's well-being. As Luther says, "Adam as the most beautiful creature is well provided for so far as his own person is concerned."³⁰⁴ Man is supposed to exercise responsible dominion over the created order. The Reformer continues, "After God had equipped the entire world in various ways, He also made ready the Garden of Eden, which He intended to be the dwelling place and royal headquarters of man, to whom He had assigned the rule over the beasts."³⁰⁵

c) What is going on with/within me? In Luther's Genesis Commentary we read the following about the composite constitution of man: "Although [God] created [man] for physical life and bodily activity, He nevertheless added intellectual power, which is also in the angels, with the result that man is a living being compounded of the natures of the brute and of the angels."³⁰⁶ Although there is no particular mention in Luther's catechetical writings on this subject, we can argue that, "for all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him" exhibits man's satisfaction over his own harmony between the spiritual and physical components of his nature. Man was in the state of original righteousness, meaning "that man was righteous, truthful, and upright not only in his body but especially in his soul, that he knew God, that he obeyed God with the utmost joy, and that he understood the works of God even without prompting."³⁰⁷ Luther continues: "It is a part of this original righteousness that Adam loved God and His works with an outstanding and very pure attachment; that he lived among creatures of God in peace, without fear of death, and without any fear of sickness; and that he had a very

³⁰⁴ WA 42, 88; LW 1, 116. In his catechetical writings Luther was not attempting to provide the full picture of man's destiny. Therefore in order to answer this and some other particular questions dealing with man's origins and his eschatology, we go to the Genesis Commentary.

³⁰⁵ WA 42, 77; LW 1, 101.

³⁰⁶ WA 42, 85; LW 1, 112.

³⁰⁷ WA 42, 86; LW 1, 113.

obedient body, without evil inclinations and the hideous lust.”³⁰⁸ This man, Adam, was designed for eternal life: “If Adam had obeyed this command [to not eat from the tree], he would never have died.”³⁰⁹ Luther states that before the Fall, man occupied some kind of a middle condition between the possibility of sinning (and thus, of death) and immortality: “He was in a state in which he could become immortal (for he was without sin) and be translated from his glory befitting a child to the deathless life in which there would be no further opportunity of sinning. From that innocence of a child he could also plunge into a curse, sin, and death. . . . this immortality had not been made so sure for him that it was impossible for him to fall into mortality.”³¹⁰ Here Luther goes beyond his often-expressed opinion that the origin of sin is a terrible mystery.³¹¹

Man was certainly designed to be in a state of communion with God, and this was ruined by sin, but he was also designed to live in harmony with his fellow man: we were meant to have fellowship with God and with our neighbor.

d) Where do I come from? We come from God’s creative work. God as Father almighty, Creator has revealed Himself in the act of delivering us to ourselves. He did so by taking the dust and breathed into it the breath of life. Luther continuously stresses the creative and the fatherly character of God. He is astounded to consider that we were born “out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of [ours] at all!”³¹² Thus, man comes from God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

³⁰⁸ WA 42, 86; LW 1, 113.

³⁰⁹ WA 42, 83; LW 1, 110.

³¹⁰ WA 42, 84-5; LW 1, 111.

³¹¹ WA 18, 783-5; LW 33, 289-92.

³¹² SC, II, 2.

e) What is the purpose of my life? We are made to be in fellowship with God and to enjoy His love and care, to take care of His entrusted creation and to be in fellowship with fellow human beings. Man as a recipient of God's gifts "for us" was supposed to bring them to reality and to fulfill his potential in order to glorify God and to be a blessing to his neighbor through God's grace. Luther describes this virginal state of man's existence as "a world, which in the state of innocence would have been play and joy."³¹³ Still, paradise is not about relaxation: "Man was created not for leisure but for work, even in the state of innocence."³¹⁴ But work prior to the Fall was the source of man's happiness: "If, then, Adam had remained in the state of innocence, he would have tilled the earth and planted . . . in play and with the greatest delight."³¹⁵ Even in his fallen state, now that work is difficult, man's delight is still in doing the work God gives him to do. It is God's work given to us and "for us" that gives us purpose and keeps us connected and dependent on God for all that we need.

f) Where am I going (eschatologically)? Luther rarely spoke on this subject, but he once commented, "Man was created for an immortal and spiritual life, to which he would have been carried off or translated without death after living in Eden and on the rest of the earth without inconvenience as long as he wished."³¹⁶ In paradise death for man would have been just a transition to the angelic kind of life. Luther conjectures,

In the state of innocence that intermediate vent [death] would have been a most delightful one; by it Adam would have been translated to the spiritual life or, as Christ calls it in the Gospel, to the angelic life (Matt. 22:30), in which physical activities come to an end. . . . This present physical stage would have come to an end, and the spiritual life would have followed, just as we also believe that it will follow, thanks to Christ. Adam would have been divested of the child and invested

³¹³ WA 42, 78; LW 1, 103.

³¹⁴ WA 42, 78; LW 1, 103.

³¹⁵ WA 42, 78; LW 1, 102.

³¹⁶ WA 42, 79; LW 1, 104.

with heavenly glory; he would have been divested of his lower activities, which nevertheless would have been pure and not burdensome.³¹⁷

The content of this conclusion has been rendered moot by the Fall. But Luther nonetheless makes an important anthropological observation in this statement.

2. The First Article After the Fall

a) Who am I? As Luther says, man is a “lost and condemned creature.”³¹⁸ He is a rebel against God and a sinner who breaks relationships with God.

b) Of what am I a part? Man is subjected to slavery under the power of the world, sin, flesh, death, devil and the Law. Thus, he is subject to the power of all these.

c) What is going on with/within me? Luther’s description of the condition of man under the reign of the devil could be expressed in just one word, which he uses as the synonym for “sin,” that is, “corruption.” In this case it may express the disharmony of man’s inner life, the crippling effect, as Luther says, “Through sin man fell in his spirit, so also in his body he fell into punishment.”³¹⁹ Luther goes on in more detail as he speaks about the impact of sin on the particular components of man, like his intellect, will and conscience. He tells us that:

Original sin really means that human nature has completely fallen; that the intellect has become darkened, so that we no longer know God and His will and no longer perceive the works of God; furthermore, that the will is extraordinarily depraved, so that we do not trust the mercy of God and do not fear God but are unconcerned, disregard the Word and will of God, and follow the desire and impulses of the flesh; likewise, that our conscience is no longer quiet but, when it thinks of God’s judgment, despairs and adopts illicit defenses and remedies.³²⁰

In Luther’s view, man’s total condition is tragic as it stands in opposition to the First Commandment:

³¹⁷ WA 42, 84; LW 1, 110-1.

³¹⁸ SC, II, 4.

³¹⁹ WA 42, 78; LW 1, 103.

³²⁰ WA 42, 86; LW 1, 114.

The knowledge of God has been lost; that we do not everywhere and always give thanks to Him; that we do not delight in His works and deeds; that we do not trust Him; that when He inflicts deserved punishments, we begin to hate God and to blaspheme Him; that when we must deal with our neighbor, we yield to our desires and are robbers, thieves, adulterers, murderers, cruel, inhuman, merciless, etc. The passion of lust is indeed some part of original sin. But greater are the defects of the soul: unbelief, ignorance of God, despair, hate, blasphemy.³²¹

d) Where do I come from? We come from the Fall with all the consequences it brings.

Man tried to become autonomous—to “know good and evil” for himself. Instead of gaining knowledge, he lost himself, his orientation of what he is (that is, his true identity, purpose of life and security), and he inherited sin, death and condemnation of the Law. By the Fall man has redefined his relationships with God, the rest of creation, the neighbor, and himself.

e) What is my purpose of life? There is no explicit answer to this in Luther. The closest one comes to a response to this question is Luther saying that we are “lost and condemned human being[s].” “Lost” implies the loss of the purpose of life, but it does not imply the complete loss of all purpose in life. Rather, “lost” marks a sinful perversion of life’s purpose toward self-centeredness, *incurvatus in se*.

f) Where am I going? Luther is very straightforward here; the sinner goes to the hell, eternal death and perdition.

3. The Second Article

a) Who am I? In Christ, man is a rescued and saved child of God who has been restored to the Father’s favor by Christ’s sacrifice. Man has become a brother in Christ to his fellow human beings.

b) Of what am I a part? Man is a subject of Christ’s kingdom; he is a participant in Christ’s victory “for us” over death and in His resurrection.

³²¹ WA 42, 86; LW 1, 114.

c) What is going on with/within me? Again, Luther does not exhibit any interest in this kind of introspection. We can only presume that the salvation and faith as trust in God should have some internal consequences for man. Luther says that Christ “made us acceptable to the Father,”³²² which means that Luther is interested in the external relations, and these change man’s status before God. Everything else for Luther is subjected to our relationship to God in Christ, and therefore the answer to this question (of what goes on within me) is of little interest to him at all.

d) Where do I come from? Man comes from Christ’s sacrifice “for us,” which snatches him away from the reign of death, hell, devil and the condemnation of the Law.

e) What is the purpose of my life? “That I may be His own,” that is, to live the sanctified life of ministry to the Gospel of Christ.

f) Where am I going? Through the sanctified death and resurrection, I go to life eternal and to enjoy fellowship with Christ in heaven.

4. The Third Article

a) Who am I? I am the recipient of Christ’s saving benefits “for us” applied by the action of the Holy Spirit³²³ to my body and soul. I am the heir of life eternal.

b) Of what am I a part? Man is the member of the Christ’s Church, which brings him into the participation of the fellowship with Christ—other members of the Church become our family.

c) What is going on with/within me? Again, Luther persistently avoids any kind of introspective rhetoric and does not mention any components of man. He says that the Holy Spirit stirs, begets, and awakens the new life while the old man dies. The new man lives out his

³²² LC, II, 43.

Baptism daily as “baptism signifies that the old creature in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily contrition and repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person has to come forth and raise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”³²⁴

d) Where do I come from? I come from Christ’s sacrifice “for us” which has been applied to me personally through the means of grace. Thus, I come from God’s re-creative Word, from Baptism, which was performed once and kills my old man, and creates and re-creates daily the new man. I come also from the Lord’s Supper, which I continue to receive often for the “forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.”³²⁵ The Holy Spirit “made us holy and still makes us holy through the following: the community of saints or Christian church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.”³²⁶ I come from all the blessings³²⁷ I have received and I am receiving. Christ’s redemption is applied to me.

e) What is the purpose of my life? To live out the new identity received in the Baptism. “The main goal . . . to which Scripture points is that man is created according to the likeness of God; in eternity, therefore, he is to live with God, and while he is here on earth, he is to preach God, thank Him, and patiently obey His Word.”³²⁸ Now, sanctification, new life, awakening and quickening of the spirit, enlightenment by the Spirit, preservation of the faith, the practice of love toward God and neighbor, joy of confession, forgiveness of sins, strengthening of the spiritual forces for the spiritual warfare, salvation, confirmation in the hope for the resurrection and

³²³ God “has given the Holy Spirit to offer and apply to us this treasure, this redemption.” LC, II, 38.

³²⁴ SC, IV, 12.

³²⁵ SC, V, 6.

³²⁶ LC, II, 36-37.

³²⁷ Many of them interpenetrate and overlap.

³²⁸ WA 42, 98; LW 1, 131.

eternal life—all of these are gifts of my inheritance. In addition to these, the gifts of Baptism are to be implemented in my service to my neighbors both in society and in the Church.

f) Where am I going? I go to the completion of the sanctification of body and soul in the life eternal, which is the restoration of my humanity in God's new creation.

5. The First Article Revisited

a) Who am I? I am an occupant of the concrete walks of life. Men respond to God's plan of vocation "for us" which calls men into particular offices to perform specific professional responsibilities.

b) Of what am I a part? I am a part of God's plan for providing sustenance, care, and safety for His people. As I am a recipient of such service, I am also called to mediate God's gifts to others within the walks of life in which I occupy particular offices.

c) What is going on with/within me? Luther does not explicitly speak to this issue in detail, but implicitly he suggests that man is responding to God's calling him into particular walks of life.

d) Where do I come from? I come from God's calling me into particular walks of life.

e) What is the purpose of my life? My purpose of life is to work out the received calling of God in particular walks of life performing my professional responsibilities dutifully and implementing universal Christian love. God's "for us" becomes my "for you" in relationship to my neighbor.

f) Where am I going? Luther explicitly says that the walks of life are meant for the earth, not for heaven. Therefore, there is no eschatological value attached to the walks of life, not even to the ones that pertain to the ministry in the Church.

H. Summary of Luther's "For Us" Anthropology in the Creedal³²⁹ Chart

Table 2. Creedal Chart of Luther Understanding of Man's Meaning

Dimension	First Article	First Article after the Fall	Second Article	Third Article	First Article Revisited
a. Who am I?	Totally dependent on God's "for-usness" human creature, His responsible and trusting in His "for-usness" child	A "lost and condemned creature," a rebel against God, a sinner	Father's child who is rescued, saved, and restored to His favor	Recipient of Christ's saving benefits "for us" applied by the action of the Holy Spirit to me. The heir of life eternal	An occupant of the concrete walks of life
b. Of what I am a part?	Centre of the created order of "for us" designed for man's well-being	A subject of the kingdom of the world, sin, death, flesh, law and devil	Subject of Christ's kingdom, participant of Christ's victories "for us"	Man is the member of the Christ's Church, which brings him into the participation of the fellowship with Christ and members of the Church	A recipient-mediator part of God's plan of the sustenance-care-safety net, partly implemented through the walks of life
c. What is going on with/with in me?	Harmony between the spiritual and physical components of man, fellowship with God and men	Sin as corruption of the original harmony	Justification, that is a return to the original relationship with God expressed through trust in Him	Daily death of the old man and daily renewal of the new man	Man responds to God Calling him into the particular walks of life

³²⁹ Luther does not go into detail in developing the anthropological assessment of the catechetical content, but within six years of writing the Catechisms he was lecturing on Genesis 1 and 2, where he developed his views on anthropology in detail. This is true particularly in regard to the human creature before the Fall. Using this material permits us to expand upon themes that remain only implicitly in his catechetical writings of 1528-9.

d. Where do I come from?	From God almighty, Creator, Father who has revealed Himself as God "for us"	From the Fall	From Christ's sacrifice "for us," from liberation from the kingdom of the world, sin, death, flesh, law and devil	From Christ's sacrifice of "for us" applied to me personally through the means of grace	From God's call to me into a particular walks of life
e. What is the purpose of my life?	To be in fellowship with God and neighbor, to exercise the dominion over the created order	Purpose of the life perverted	To live the sanctified life of ministry to Christ	To live out the new identity received in the Baptism and to serve the neighbor both in society and Church	To implement the received calling of God in particular walks of life performing professional responsibilities and universal Christian love
f. Where am I going?	To remain in the existing fellowship with God and neighbor	Hell, eternal death, perdition	Through the sanctified death and resurrection to the life eternal and fellowship with Christ in heaven	To the completion of the sanctification of body and soul in the life eternal	Does not apply

CHAPTER FIVE
THE EASTERN ORTHODOX VIEW OF MAN AS REPRESENTED BY
VLADIMIR LOSSKY

A. Vladimir Nikolajevich Lossky (1903-58)—Who and Why?

I have chosen a notable Russian Orthodox layman, Vladimir Nikolajevich Lossky, to represent a significant alternate interpretation of what it means to be human. He is one of the best representatives of Eastern Orthodoxy's spirit and letter in the twentieth century, and Eastern Orthodoxy represents a significant challenge to Lutheran thought not only in Central and Eastern Europe, but also in ecumenical discussions around the world. Lossky is well known both in the West and in the post-Soviet countries. Lossky continues to be a very influential figure in Orthodox scholarship and his ideas are being used today as they were fifty years ago.

Vladimir Nikolajevich Lossky was born on 25 May 1903, to the notable Russian philosopher Nikolai Onufrievich Lossky, in Göttingen, where his father briefly stayed with his family to consult with other scholars in his field. Vladimir was brought up in a vigorous intellectual environment, and it was only natural for him to pursue an academic career. From his youth, his interests lay in the history of philosophy, patristics, and Western medieval thought. In 1919 he became a student at St. Petersburg's University and was influenced by I.M. Grevs and L.P. Karsavin, historians of ideas, who encouraged him to pursue the study of Patristics. In November 1923 the Soviet government expelled him from Russia in the so called "Second Deportation,"¹ and he settled in Prague, at that time a major center of the Russian diaspora. There

¹ The first large expulsion of non-Marxist intellectuals was in 1922. After 1923, those expelled were unfortunate enough to be sent to Siberian camps.

There he continued his education in the Czech division of Charles University and at the Russian “academy” of N.P. Kondakov,² but he soon decided that Paris offered better prospects. In 1924 he enrolled at the Sorbonne and studied medieval history, focusing on the works of Meister Eckhart. His teachers there included Ferdinand Lot and Etienne Gilson. Further studies turned his interest to Pseudo-Dionysius, on whom he wrote his first scholarly article.³ The theme of negative theology became his dominant research interest. In Paris he joined the Confraternity of St. Photius, which was established in order to encourage exiled Eastern Orthodox Russians to keep their confessional identity. In 1931 Lossky declined to withdraw from his canonical allegiance to the Moscow patriarchate—a decision that aroused bitterness against him and alienation from his friends and colleagues, for the patriarchate was rightly perceived as being completely subjugated under Soviet power.⁴ This tension, increased by his participation in so called sophiological controversy (debate on the wisdom of God), turned Lossky against the notable Russian theologian Sergey Bulgakov. He regarded Bulgakov’s thought as an attempt to combine Christianity with pantheism.

In World War II, Lossky participated in the French Resistance movement⁵ without interrupting his theological studies and professorship. In 1944, he published *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, the only single work to be printed in Lossky’s lifetime. In December 1944 the French Orthodox Saint-Denis Institute was established, and Lossky took a

² An informal institution promoting Byzantine studies.

³ Vladimir Lossky, “Otritsatelnoe bogoslovie v uchenii Dionissiiia Areopagita,” [Negative Theology in the Teaching of Dionysius Areopagitus] in *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 3 (1929): 133-44.

⁴ Rowen Williams explains this with theological reasons, saying that Lossky’s “faithfulness to the jurisdiction of Moscow was bound to his faithfulness to the historical Church and its strict canonical ordering, and his faith in the capacity of this Church to transcend the tragedies and ambiguities of any particular historical or canonical situation by virtue of its catholicity.” Rowan Williams, “The Theology of Vladimir Nikolaevich Lossky: an Exposition and Critique” (Ph. Diss., University of Oxford, 1975), 10.

⁵ The author has not found a description of what Lossky did exactly as a participant in the Resistance Movement.

position there teaching dogmatics and church history for several years. In 1947 he began to play a major part in the ecumenical movement as a member of the St. Alban and St. Sergius fellowship, which promoted mutual understanding between the Anglicans and Eastern Orthodox, and he began to participate in Orthodox-Anglican conversations. In 1952 Lossky wrote a lengthy essay on icons, and in the same year, together with the iconographer Leonid Ouspensky, he published *The Meaning of Icons*. His lectures on church history and dogmatics gave him intellectual respectability. In 1956 he visited Russia. In the last days of his life he was planning to take up the comparative study of the thought of Gregory of Palamas (the 14th Century Greek theologian) and the Rhineland mystics. Vladimir Nikolajevich Lossky died suddenly on February 7th, 1958 in Paris on the festival of St. Gregory the Theologian. At the time, he was little known outside the Russian Orthodox community of Paris.

His doctoral dissertation on Meister Eckhart, *Theologie Negative et Connaissance de dieu chez Maitre Eckhart* was not completed. It was finished by V.O. Clement, and the Sorbonne posthumously awarded the *doctorat es-lettres* to Lossky. The work appeared in French in 1960 with a preface by Etienne Gilson; there are no translations.

Two other significant theological works by Lossky have appeared posthumously: *Vision de Dieu⁶ A l'Image et a la Ressemblance de Dieu⁷* a collection of articles. His lectures on dogmatics were published under the title, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction* (New York: St. Vladimir's Press, 1978), and a Russian translation in 1991.⁸

⁶ Paris: Editions Dealachaux et Niestle, 1962.

⁷ Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1967.

⁸ He belongs to the guild of writers who made their names posthumously. Lossky's bibliography is published in his *In the Image and Likeness* (New York: St. Vladimir's Press, 1974), 229-32.

Lossky can be legitimately regarded as one of the most prominent representatives of the Eastern theological renaissance of the Russian Orthodox Church in exile, which “represents Orthodoxy at its best.”⁹ Rowan Williams, the foremost living authority on Lossky’s work, says that he was “The most creative theological mind among the younger generation of Russian Orthodox *émigré* writers who made such an impact on Western European religious thought in the years before and after the Second World War.”¹⁰ As American Orthodox systematician John Meyendorff said, “Lossky’s uncompromising faithfulness to Scriptural and patristic tradition, coupled with his constant concern for an articulate Orthodox witness in the West, makes his works indispensable to any contemporary educated Orthodox Christian who wants to take his faith seriously and to be able to speak about it to others.”¹¹ Although Lossky was not a cleric, his works are regarded as a standard for theological studies for many in Eastern Orthodoxy today because he consistently follows the Eastern Orthodox line of thought.¹² He does not try to be an original thinker—rather he is faithful compiler and reporter of Eastern Orthodox theology, particularly of its Palamistic trend. In American theologian Donald Fairbairn’s recent book, Lossky is the first among the most referenced notable Russian and non-Russian theologians. Meyendorff points out that Lossky “showed to the West that Orthodoxy is not the historical form of Eastern Christianity but [that it is a tradition of theology that holds to] non-transient and

⁹ Donald Fairbairn, *Eastern Orthodoxy through Western Eyes* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 4.

¹⁰ Rowan Williams, “The *Via Negativa* and the Foundations of Theology: An Introduction to the Thought of V.N. Lossky,” in *New Studies in Theology*, ed. Stephen Sykes and Derek Holmes (London: Duckworth, 1980), 95. The recent PhD dissertation of Russian theologian Eugene Zaitsev also regards Lossky as “the leading spokesman for Orthodox theology in the contemporary Christian Church.” Eugene Zaitsev, “Analysis and Evaluation of Vladimir Lossky’s Doctrine of *Theosis*,” (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 1998), 279.

¹¹ John Meyendorff, *Foreword to In the Image and Likeness of God*, by Vladimir Lossky, trans. A. M. Alchin (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1974), 9.

¹² Almost every serious book on Eastern Orthodoxy has Lossky at least referenced.

catholic truth.”¹³ Thus in some sense, to argue against Lossky is to argue against the whole of Eastern Orthodoxy theology.¹⁴

B. Specific Teachings and Their Anthropological Consequences in the Teaching of Vladimir Lossky

Lossky legitimately can be regarded as a mystical theologian. For Lossky, it was important to establish the primacy of the mystical experience over theology so that: 1) Theology would be guided by living, mystical experience; 2) The mystical experience would apophatically encourage the refusal of all human concepts and rationality and accept God on His terms; 3) The incommunicable/unknowable essence and communicable/knowable energies of God would be better understood and appreciated; 4) The classical Christian teaching on the image and likeness of God would be developed to form a specific understanding of the relationship between the person and individual. 5) An human individual uses ascetic monastic techniques and thus struggles to turn himself into a proper spiritual instrument to reach God; 6) This individual may achieve a complete mystical union with God; and 7) Man must accept and embrace the truth that his calling here on earth is played out on the cosmic scale—man’s composite nature serves him in his task as microcosm and mediator.

1. Man Between Religious Experience and Theology—The Primacy of the Mystical Experience over the Theology

Lossky opens his *Mystical Theology* trying to solve the problem of the relationship between religious experience and theology. To do this, he first equates religious experience with mysticism: “The term ‘mystical theology’ denotes no more than a spirituality which expresses a

¹³ “From the Editors.” Preface to Lossky’s *Ocherk Misticheskogo Bogosloviya Vostochnoi Cerkvi. Dogmaticheskoye Bogosloviye*. [The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church. Dogmatic Theology] Moskva: Centr SEI, 1991), 7.

¹⁴ References to similar views of other Orthodox theologians throughout this chapter are made to demonstrate that Lossky is a faithful representative of Orthodox theology.

doctrinal attitude”¹⁵ and affirms the authority of primary spiritual/religious experience (“spirituality which expresses a doctrinal attitude”) over the authority of human reason.

Lossky establishes the mutual interdependence of mysticism and theology by stating: “Far from being mutually opposed, theology and mysticism support and complete each other.”¹⁶ The mediator and the criterion of truth here is the Church: “Outside the truth kept by the whole Church personal experience would be deprived of all certainty, of all objectivity. . . . On the other hand, the teaching of the Church would have no hold on souls if it did not in some degree express an inner experience of truth, granted in different measure to each one of the faithful.”¹⁷ There is no specific mention of the topic of Scripture in such matters; experience and theology influence each other directly and equally. Lossky concludes: “The eastern tradition has never made a sharp distinction between mysticism and theology.”¹⁸ In a subtle way he subordinates theology to the mystical experience. Although he has phrases such as “There is . . . no Christian mysticism without theology,” which would lead us to think us of some kind of a balance of the two, he concludes the very same sentence with:

But, above all, there is no theology without mysticism. It is not by chance that the tradition of the Eastern Church has reserved the name of ‘theologian’ peculiarly for three sacred writers of whom the first is St. John, most ‘mystical’ of the four Evangelists; the second St. Gregory Nazianzus, writer of contemplative poetry; and the third St. Symeon, called ‘the New Theologian,’ the singer of union with God. . . . mysticism is . . . the perfecting and crown of all theology . . . theology *par excellence*.¹⁹

¹⁵ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, trans. members of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius (Cambridge & London: James Clarke, 1968), 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8. In another place he says: “We have already remarked that [Eastern Orthodoxy] makes no sharp distinction between theology and mysticism, between the realm of the common faith and that of personal experience” (14).

¹⁹ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 9. The subordination of theology to the mystical experience is inconsistent with his proposal that he is speaking merely about the “dogmas which constitute the foundation of mysticism.” Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 11.

He argues for the subordination of theology to the mystical experience, saying that “Christian theory should have an eminently practical significance; and that the more mystical it is, the more directly it aspires to the supreme end of union with God.”²⁰ Because Lossky equates religious experience with mysticism, he feels it legitimate to affirm that theology is practical, that it leads to the mystical experience and ultimately to *theosis*, the deification of man²¹ and his union with God. Straightforwardly, “Trinitarian theology is . . . a mystical theology which appeals to experience.”²² Other scholars have also noted the experiential character of the Eastern Orthodoxy. American Church historian Jaroslav Pelikan says that, “From the charting of [the] subjective stage in its comings and goings there came an experimental theology [in Eastern Orthodoxy], where, in accordance with the patristic axiom, practice was the basis of theory and knowledge of doctrine came through mystical union.”²³

Lossky solidifies his argument in a page-long explanation from early church sources which depicts (in his opinion) the dogmatic struggle as pursuing the goal of mystical theology, which is union with God: “All the development of the dogmatic battles which the Church has waged down the centuries appears to us, if we regard it from the purely spiritual standpoint, as dominated by the constant preoccupation which the Church has had to safeguard, at each

²⁰ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 9.

²¹ Prominent Russian Orthodox theologian Alexandr Brilliantov says that “the essence of the relationships between the divine and human elements in the religion of the East are understood as the penetration of the human element by the divine” *Vlijanije Vostochnogo Bogoslovija na Zapadnoye v Proizvedeniyah Ioanna Skota Erigeni* [The Influence of Orthodox Theology Upon the Western in the Works of John Scotus Erigena] (Moscow: Martis, 1998), 242.

²² Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 67.

²³ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600 – 1700)*, vol. 2: The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of the Doctrine (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 259.

moment of her history, for all Christians, the possibility of attaining to the fullness of the mystical union.”²⁴

Thus the matter of *theosis* as the ultimate mystical experience of the mystical union with God is *the* article (or better, *the* reality) of the Christian faith. Lossky concludes: “All the history of Christian dogma unfolds itself about this mystical center, guarded by different weapons against its many and diverse assailants in the course of successive ages.”²⁵ Therefore, “the more mystical [theology] is, the more directly it aspires to the supreme end of union with God.”²⁶ Theology is theology only in the measure it is able to attain its chief goal: “Only such elements of theology [that lead to spiritual experience] . . . are indispensable for the understanding of spirituality: the dogmas, which constitute the foundation of mysticism.”²⁷ Because mystical theology is theology *par excellence* in the Eastern tradition, mystical theology’s goal of mystical union with God is also the goal *par excellence*, and it would be only natural for theology to embrace it.

Once the primacy of mystical experience over theology is established, and it has accordingly produced a *mystical* theology, mystical theology in turn reproduces the mystical

²⁴ He goes on at length: “So the Church struggled against the Gnostics in defense of this same idea of deification as the universal end: ‘God became man that men might become gods.’ She affirmed, against the Arians, the dogma of the consubstantial Trinity; for it is the Word, the Logos, who opens to us the way to union with the Godhead; and if the incarnate Word has not the same substance with the Father, if he be not truly God, our deification is impossible. The Church condemned the Nestorians that she might overthrow the middle wall of partition, whereby, in the person of the Christ himself, they would have separated God from man. She rose up against the Apollinarians and Monophysites to show that, since the fullness of true human nature has been assumed by the Word, it is our whole humanity that must enter into union with God. She warred with the Monothelites because, apart from the union of the two wills, divine and human, there could be no attaining to deification—‘God created man by his will alone, but He cannot save him without the co-operation of the human will.’ The Church emerged triumphant from the iconoclastic controversy, affirming the possibility of the expression through a material medium of the divine realities—symbol and pledge of our sanctification. The main preoccupation, the issue at stake, in the questions which successively arise respecting the Holy Spirit, grace and the Church herself—this last the dogmatic question of our own time—is always the possibility, the manner, or the means of our union with God.” Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 10.

²⁵ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 8-10.

²⁶ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 9.

²⁷ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 11.

experience: “We should then be able to give an account of the close link which always exists between the dogma which the Church confesses and the spiritual fruit which it bears. For the inner experience of the Christian develops within the circle delineated by the teaching of the Church: within the dogmatic framework which moulds his person.”²⁸

The dogma of mystical theology “gives place to another spirituality.”²⁹ Lossky summarizes: “Theology must be not so much a quest of positive notions about the divine being as an experience, which surpasses all understanding.”³⁰ In Lossky’s understanding, mystical theology is a practical, applicable theology, one which personally unites the individual believer with God. It is not about mystical psychology, although there are more than enough descriptions of such mystical experiences in Eastern Orthodoxy. Rather, it is about the personal use of the collective ecclesial mystical experience. Theology is not an academic exercise but “an existential attitude which involves the whole man: there is no theology apart from experience; it is necessary to change, to become a new man.”³¹ Without personal experience there is no trustworthy theology, for “to know God one must draw near to Him. No one who does not follow the path of union with God can be a theologian.”³² The way of the knowledge of God is necessarily the way of deification.”³³

Thus Lossky establishes (or demonstrates) the principal line of thinking in Eastern Orthodoxy: religious experience—mysticism—mystical theology—theology—mystical

²⁸ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 21.

²⁹ In a subtle remark speaking of the authority of the Scripture and writings of Dionysius he says, “What is true of Holy Scriptures is also true of the theological tradition of Church.” Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 25. Thus he makes both equal in authority.

³⁰ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 38.

³¹ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 39.

³² As Russian Orthodox theologian Hillarion Alfeyev says, referring to Symeon the New Theologian, “Only those who are pure and similar to God can touch the Pure.” *St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press), 156.

³³ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 39.

experience, with the Church (as the bearer of ecclesial tradition) as the criterion and the safeguard of the truth.³⁴ Readers note the circular character of Lossky's reasoning. In this line of thinking, man to Lossky is a man of a deliberate, direct, first—hand personal mystical experience. That is the only religious experience he acknowledges as truly valid. The individual finds support and guidance for his search in the church (in its tradition) and its (mystical) theology. This theology, in turn, is predominantly based on collective and individual religious experiences rather than on the Scripture. Man in Lossky's view's criterion for religious truth is the content of his mystical experience. It may contradict neither the Church's experience nor its teaching, for his religious personality and perception have been molded by the Church's authority beforehand. Therefore, Pelikan is justified in describing "personal religious experience as an epistemological principle in [Eastern Orthodoxy] theology."³⁵ Thus man in Lossky's view essentially and necessarily is the ecclesial mystic.

2. Man Approaching God—Apophaticism as a "Perfect Way" to Come to God

Lossky states: "Apophaticism . . . constitutes the fundamental characteristic of the whole theologian tradition of the Eastern Church."³⁶ Fairbairn comments, "The purpose of apophatic theology in general is . . . to protect the Orthodox understanding of God from reduction to a philosophical idea."³⁷ Historically, Eastern Orthodoxy emerged against the background of a Hellenistic mindset with Neoplatonism at its zenith. In order to deal with this, Eastern Orthodoxy

³⁴ Alfeyev in his *St. Symeon* notes that, "The true mystic is not he who places his personal experience above tradition, but, on the contrary, he whose experience is in agreement with the experience of the Church in general and its greatest representatives in particular" (274). He also points out that "it is conformity to tradition that has always been regarded in the Church as the first criterion for making a distinction between 'true' and 'heretical' mysticism" (275, footnote).

³⁵ Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 259.

³⁶ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 26.

³⁷ Fairbairn, *Eastern Orthodoxy through Western Eyes*, 55.

used the apophatic approach as well as other Neoplatonic terminology, which was familiar to the proponents of Neoplatonism and to his contemporary audience.³⁸

In Lossky's mind there are two basic ways to God: *episteme* and *gnosis*. *Episteme* is our human analytical and conceptual reasoning, employing scientific and analytical capacities for earthly use. *Episteme* applied to God ultimately produces merely empty concepts and intellectual illusions, for it is an inadequate way to speak about God, who by definition, cannot be approached as an object of scientific endeavor. Thus *episteme* has an inherent "radical lack of correspondence between our mind and the reality it wishes to attain."³⁹

Because its subject matter is God, Lossky says theology should choose another way, the way of *gnosis*. *Gnosis* principally refuses to form a conceptual framework and to organize the received knowledge into a system in order to approach God. *Gnosis* is existential knowledge based on personal encounters with God. If *episteme* has an "earthly" approach, *gnosis* is different; it is "an exit to the state of a future age, a vision of what is beyond history."⁴⁰ It is an entrance into the transcendent. Although the personal encounter with God is of a dialogical and reciprocal ("I—Thou") character, it is of a gift character too. "Authentic *gnosis* is inseparable from a charisma, an illumination by grace which transforms our intelligence,"⁴¹ for God is the One who graciously reveals Himself to us. The ultimate aim of *gnosis* is not theological knowledge as such, but a very practical knowledge, a union with God. For Lossky, this

³⁸ The matter is not merely about the terminology, as Lossky would like us to think in order to limit the influence of Neoplatonism on Eastern Orthodoxy. It is wider and deeper. For instance, Alfeyev states that "the anthropology of the church Fathers has its roots in both the Bible and Greek philosophy. In particular, the patristic doctrines of the creation of man, of man's fall and redemption are totally based on biblical revelation. On the other hand, such concepts as that of man as microcosm, of the four elements of the human body, or of the three parts of the soul, are borrowed from ancient Greek philosophy and medicine" *St. Symeon*, 175.

³⁹ Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 13.

⁴⁰ Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: an Introduction*, trans. Ian and Ihita Kesarcodi-Watson (New York: St. Vladimir's Press, 1978), 14.

⁴¹ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 13.

knowledge or union is *theosis* or “divinization.” On the basis of the distinction between these two approaches, Lossky distinguishes also two kinds of theologies—cataphatic (positive) and apophatic (negative).

Lossky starts his explanation with cataphatic theology, remarking that it is the human way of trying to understand God—creating theological concepts and rational terms to comprehend the reality of God. Cataphatic theology is a theology of affirmations about God and it leads us to an imperfect knowledge of Him. Defining God by what we affirm of Him has many risks and problems, and the list of most serious of these will follow.

Lossky explains these risks. He points out that, intentionally or unintentionally, following the Hellenistic maxim that man is the measure of all things, we define everything according to our limited, human understanding. Thus God as perceived by humans at the end turns out to be the God of philosophers, that is, an intellectual idol, instead of revealing to us Himself. Thus we again return to the notion that God cannot be approached like any other object of investigation. He simply is beyond us and beyond every notion of the created order. Thus human epistemology principally fails to speak adequately about God.

This does not mean that Lossky would completely discard the cataphatic way of defining God, however. In his view, cataphatic theology is “the theology of *the* ‘divine names’ which we find made manifest in the order of creation. . . . This is a way which comes down towards us: a ladder of ‘theophanies’ or manifestations of God in creation.”⁴² These ‘divine names’ are the pointers leading us to a direct encounter with God:

The ladder of cataphatic theology, which discloses the divine names drawn, above all, from Holy Scripture, is a series of steps up which the soul can mount to contemplation. These are not the rational notions which we formulate, the concepts with which our intellect constructs a positive science of the divine nature. They are

⁴² Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 39.

rather images or ideas intended to guide us and to fit our faculties for the contemplation of that which transcends all understanding.⁴³

Thus cataphatic theology is required to provide these ‘images’ and ‘ideas’ for leading us into the direct encounter with God.⁴⁴

While Lossky mainly emphasizes the apophatic⁴⁵ way over the cataphatic⁴⁶ way, in a particular sense he sees both ways also as complementary: “It may even be said to be one and the same way which can be followed in two different directions: God condescends towards us in the ‘energies’ in which He is manifested; we mount towards Him in the ‘unions’ in which He remains incomprehensible by nature.”⁴⁷

Lossky is not very clear on the role of cataphatic theology. He seems to be arguing that because God descends in creation, the created order is permeated by His “energies,” which bear witness to Him and challenge man in his religious search. In order to meet God, we need to

⁴³ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 40.

⁴⁴ Brilliantov sums up St. Maximus’ view on man’s epistemology, saying that the Divine Logos (by revealing Himself in different sensible phenomena) seems to play with men or gives them a toy conforming to their weak, childish understanding. Parents give their child a toy to occupy him and to get his attention and interest in order to aid his development. In the same way the divine Logos plays with the beauty and variety of the sensible world in order that man gradually probe into the covert meaning of things and thus come to the Logos Himself *Vlijanije*, 215. St. Gregory Nazianzen comments on the same subject, saying that God does this “in order to attract us to God by something that is attainable, since what is totally unattainable cannot be the object of hope and attention, and in order to precipitate an admiration by what is unattainable, and to cause greater desire by being admired, and to purify by the desire, and to make divine by purification.” As quoted in Alfeyev, *St. Symeon*, 158. Alfeyev continues the line of thought saying that, “The way by which the intellect approaches to the comprehension of the divine . . . consists of several steps: admiration, desire, purification, enlightening, deification, knowledge of God as He is” (158).

⁴⁵ Alfeyev notes that terminologically apophatism is usually expressed in four different ways: 1) through direct negation, that is, using terms with the prefixes non-, in-, -less; 2) using the superlative degree, especially terms with the prefix super-; 3) using oxymorons—statements in which one notion opposes and contradicts another; 4) using paradoxical assertions, the meaning of which would seem to be the opposite of what is actually said, 166. Lossky himself nowhere uses these distinctions.

⁴⁶ Brilliantov, explaining St. Maximus’ understanding, says that “man can know only that there is God but not what is He. The most appropriate description of God as infinite, without beginning etc. expresses merely what God is not but not what He is. Man can attribute to God both positive as well as the negative expressions: everything bears testimony to His existence but He is not anything from what is available to man’s cognition. He is everything, and nothing and above everything.” *Vlijanije*, 219.

⁴⁷ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 39.

climb up the apophatic way by negating all the positive knowledge we have gained so far, acknowledging that “God is not the stone, the intellectual idea, etc.” Lossky says:

On the lower steps, especially, these images are fashioned from the material objects least calculated to lead spirits inexperienced in contemplation into error. It is, indeed, more difficult to identify God with stone or with fire than with intelligence, unity, being or goodness. What seemed evident at the beginning of the ascent—‘God is not stone, He is not fire’—is less and less so as we attain to the heights of contemplation, impelled by that same apophatic spirit which now causes us to say: ‘God is not being, He is not the good.’ At each step of this ascent as one comes upon loftier images or ideas, it is necessary to guard against making of them a concept, ‘an idol of God.’⁴⁸

If we stop somewhere in our search before reaching God, we have an idol, material or intellectual: a god of the heathen or the philosopher. Gradually negating cataphatic knowledge, we are led further and closer in to a direct relationship with God. Speculation gradually gives place to contemplation, contemplation leads to knowledge and knowledge leads to experience. In casting off the concepts and thoughts that shackle the spirit, the apophatic disposition reveals boundless horizons of contemplation at each step of positive theology⁴⁹ until there is nothing more to deny and man “has access [to and] a face to face encounter with God.”⁵⁰

Thus cataphatic theology here is employed as the negative means for apophatic theology.⁵¹ We negate all the things that separate us and alienate us from God until nothing creaturely or human stands between us and we reach Him directly. In fact, it means that man, in his apophatic search, should transcend the creaturely realm and exit it, for apophasis “is a refusal to accept being (existing as a physical creature) as such, in so far as it conceals the divine non-being: it is a

⁴⁸ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 40.

⁴⁹ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 40.

⁵⁰ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 32.

⁵¹ Brilliantov explains the relationship between these two kinds of theology, saying that “everything finite points to the Infinite as to the absolute cause and aim (cataphatic theology); but the ultimate Itself not merely stays above everything finite but also completely differs from it (apophatic theology).” *Vlijanije*, 236.

renunciation of the realm of created things in order to gain access to that of the uncreated.”⁵² We can state that ultimately cataphatic theology serves the same purpose as apophatic: bringing man into a mystical relation with God at the price of rejecting God’s created order.

Apophatism is something different from just another approach to the problem of God. In Lossky’s understanding apophasis is not just another concept but a particular religious attitude towards the incomprehensibility of God. It holds that God (by his very definition) is beyond the grasp of the human mind and all definition so that what we reach for is “a religious attitude towards the incomprehensibility of God [that] enables us to transcend all concepts, every sphere of philosophical enquiry.”⁵³ The apophatical approach, by negating any positive statement about God, guarantees that no obstacle, that is, nothing creaturely or human has entered into our communication with God and thus we can meet Him on His terms. It is “an ascendant undertaking of the mind that progressively eliminates all positive attributes of the object it wishes to attain, in order to culminate finally in a kind of apprehension by supreme ignorance of Him who cannot be an object of knowledge.”⁵⁴ Therefore, “There is only one name by which the divine nature can be expressed: the wonder which seizes the soul when it thinks of God.”⁵⁵ The most we can come up with is: “even though we attain to the highest peaks accessible to created beings, the only rational notion which we can have of God will still be that of His incomprehensibility.”⁵⁶

At first, one gets impression that Eastern Orthodoxy is still fighting its old battles against Greek philosophy, but John Zizioulas says, “The principal object of this theology is to remove

⁵² Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 38.

⁵³ Quoted from Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 259.

⁵⁴ Gregory of Nyssa’s thoughts expressed in Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 13.

⁵⁵ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 34.

⁵⁶ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 38.

the question of truth and knowledge from the domain of Greek theories of ontology. . . to situate it within that of *love* and communion.”⁵⁷ Thus apophatism is meant to be more than just honest negative claims that we need to abandon what we can know (or claim to know) about God, honestly to confess our ignorance, and (at best) to arrive at the conclusion that He is the Unknowable. Apophatism has a positive counterpart as well.

Apophatism claims that negation is the only adequate way to reach for God because it is only by “proceeding by negations [that] one ascends from the inferior degrees of being to the highest, by progressively setting aside all that can be known in order to draw near to the Unknown in the darkness of absolute ignorance.”⁵⁸ Therefore, negative theology “is an expression of that fundamental attitude which transforms the whole of theology into a contemplation of the mysteries of revelation.”⁵⁹ Thus Orthodox apophatism claims that it is not agnosticism but a preparatory, preliminary step before entering into communion with the unknowable God: “The apophatism of Orthodox Church is a prostration before the living God, radically unobjectifiable, and unknowable,”⁶⁰ and is “a more existential liberation involving the whole being of him who would know God.”⁶¹ At this point, when man is standing before the unknowable God completely naked, Lossky tries to link the unknowable God with the personal one stating: “This awareness of the incomprehensibility of the divine nature thus corresponds to an experience: of meeting with the personal God of revelation.”⁶² Lossky is assured of the Christian outcome of apophasis, that is, that the Unknowable God will necessarily reveal

⁵⁷ John Zizioulas, *Being As Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 10.

⁵⁸ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 25.

⁵⁹ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 42.

⁶⁰ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 24.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 34.

Himself as the Trinitarian God. He says, “The apophatic way does not lead to an absence, to an utter emptiness; for the unknowable God of the Christian is not the impersonal God of the philosophers. It is to the Holy Trinity.”⁶³

Apophatism is a particular religious attitude that denies man the human way of knowing God, claiming that it is inadequate to comprehend the reality of God. It says that God is principally unknowable and is far beyond us, but still we seek a personal union with Him. By the religious action of active passivity, apophatism places man before God as He is, thus denying to man any human ambition but preparing him to meet God on His own terms.

Thus according to Lossky, man’s intellectual capacities are not trustworthy in matters of pursuing God. At best, via the cataphatic approach they, can serve as a negative tool for the apophatic approach. Man essentially is an existential being, and the apophatic approach demonstrates that. In Lossky’s mind, apophatical theology is the most appropriate approach to lead man into the close, personal union with God by casting away all creaturely and human obstacles.

Lossky’s theology may sound promising, but unanswered key questions remain. If apophasis requires denying everything creaturely, how far does it go? Should one also deny his own creatureliness, that is, his humanness?⁶⁴ How far should we go in applying apophatism before it logically and consistently denies itself? If so, what are the practical and theological implications of that? How may one be sure that the apophatical Unknowable God is really the same as the Trinitarian God? One troubling aspect of Lossky’s approach is that there is no

⁶³ Ibid., 43.

⁶⁴ In fact, speaking later of man as a mediator, Lossky *de facto* comes to the conclusion that in order to fulfill this function man needs to overcome creatureliness. He refers to St. Maximus who points to “the limited character of the creation which is indeed the very condition of its existence; at the same time they are problems to be resolved, obstacles to be surmounted on the ways towards union with God.” Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 110.

explicit link between the Unknowable God and the God of the Trinity. He simply declares them to be the same God. Moreover, there is another inherent problem in the apophatic approach.

Fairbairn asks:

Can we really be confident that the way God has revealed himself to us is the way he really is in himself? In intention, apophaticism seeks to enable us to bow before the unknowable, mysterious God, so as to be united to him. But in actuality, I fear that sometimes this approach to Christian life leads people to see God not merely as unknowable, but also as distant, aloof, and unpredictable. Simply because God has shown himself to be merciful in the past does not necessarily mean he will be merciful now, unless mercy is an aspect of his inner being of which we can be assured. . . . How often does a respectful awe of the God one knows turn into an unhealthy fear of an unknown Being because of a lack of confidence in God's character?⁶⁵

Instead, Fairbairn says, "Western Christians, especially Protestants, think of God as one who is familiar, one whom we can describe, one of whose mercy we can be confident, and even one who is a close friend. Eastern Christians are much more likely to come before God with fear and awe, to plead for God's mercy rather than to consider it certain, to see him as a judge rather than a friend."⁶⁶

3. Man in Communication with the Inaccessible God—A Distinction between God's Essence and Energies

Eastern Orthodoxy distinguishes between the energies and the essence of God. The energies are the "mode of the existence of the Trinity which is outside of its inaccessible existence."⁶⁷ Thus from the very beginning Trinity outside its essence has received an impersonal designation. In Lossky's view the essence/energy concept has a primarily ontological

⁶⁵ Fairbairn, *Eastern Orthodoxy through Western Eyes*, 115-6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁶⁷ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 73. British Orthodox theologian Timothy Ware explains it in a following way: "These energies are not something that exists apart from God, not a gift which God confers upon men: they are God Himself in His action and revelation to the world. God exists complete and entire in each of His energies. The world . . . is charged with the grandeur of God; all creation is a gigantic Burning Bush, permeated but not consumed by the inflammable and wondrous fire of God's energies." *The Orthodox Church* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964), 77-8.

significance. Without it, in his mind, there would not be a clear borderline between the procession of the divine Persons and the creation of the world; otherwise both would be equally acts of the divine nature. In such case the being and the action of God would appear to be identical and as having the same character of necessity.⁶⁸ For this reason, energies⁶⁹ have an important role in the existence of the universe: they caused the universe to come into being, they penetrate and sustain the created order by the will of God. Energies are the mediators between God and the creature. They unify creatures and their God.

So far apophatism has effectively asserted the principal unknowability of God, that is, it has safeguarded God's epistemological sovereignty. God has remained untouched by man's epistemological ambitions. But it is exactly here that the problem arises. How is it possible to communicate with a not merely an unknowable but also an inaccessible God?⁷⁰ How is it possible to be "partakers of the divine nature?"⁷¹ Lossky says that "it was the need to establish a dogmatic basis for union with God which impelled the Eastern Church to formulate her teaching on the distinction between God's essence and His energies."⁷² Eastern Orthodoxy's teaching about the essence/energy distinction was formulated to explain the antinomy between the unknowable and the knowable, the incommunicable and the communicable. The distinction between the essence and the energies is fundamental for the Orthodox doctrine of grace, for by it Eastern Orthodoxy tries also to explain the meaning of its central tenet, that we are "partakers of

⁶⁸ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 73-4.

⁶⁹ Lossky refers to Areopagite who taught that "the energies manifest the innumerable names of God . . . Wisdom, Life, Power, Justice, Love." Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 80, which in Western theology are usually regarded as attributes of God.

⁷⁰ Symeon the New Theologian says that "the name of God Himself is not known to us, apart from the name . . . 'God the inexpressible one,'" as quoted in Alfeyev, *St. Symeon*, 162. Although, as Symeon thought, "love as the mystical essence of God is totally incomprehensible, but when being 'personified,' it 'communicates itself' and is comprehensible" (165).

⁷¹ 2 Peter 1:4.

⁷² Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 71

the divine nature.” In order to establish the dogmatic basis for *theosis* doctrine it was necessary to introduce a new kind of union in addition to the hypostatic (as in the case of the human nature of Christ) and substantial union (as in that of the three divine Persons)—a union by grace.

Theosis is a union with God in His energies, God indwelling in man by His energies, or union by grace making men participate in the divine nature, without their essence becoming thereby the essence of God. In deification, men are by grace (in the divine energies) all that God is by nature, save only in identity of nature. We remain creatures while becoming gods by grace.⁷³

In the same way this doctrine explains the antinomy of the communicability/incommunicability of God, that is, how the Trinity can remain incommunicable in essence and at the same time come and dwell within us. Lossky says that the presence of the Trinity is not a causal presence, such as the divine omnipresence in creation; nor is it a presence according to the very essence, which is by definition incommunicable. Rather, it is a mode of presence according to which the Trinity dwells in us by the energies which are common to the three hypostases, or, in other words, by grace.⁷⁴ These distinctions are the dogmatic fundamentals for the eastern church’s conception of mystical life: “The doctrine of the energies, ineffably distinct from the essence, is the dogmatic basis of the real character of all mystical experience. . . . Wholly unknowable in His essence, God wholly reveals Himself in His energies, which yet in no way divide His nature into two parts—knowable and unknowable—but signify two different modes of the divine existence, in the essence and outside of the essence.”⁷⁵

⁷³ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 87.

⁷⁴ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 86.

⁷⁵ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 86.

Thus the divine nature is at the same time both exclusive of, and on the other hand, open to, participation. Preservation of this antinomy (as many others) is seen as the “criterion of right devotion.”⁷⁶

By means of His energies, God is omnipresent in the created world; they are means for Him to operate in the world. In Eastern Orthodoxy, God’s energies are also called the “glory of God,” “divinities,” “uncreated light,” “the Tabor light”⁷⁷ or “grace.”

Thus the energies ontologically bridge the gap between the unknowable/inaccessible and knowable/accessible modes of God’s existence. Energies “hold a middle place: on the one hand, they belong to theology, as eternal and inseparable forces of the Trinity existing independently of the creative act; on the other, they also belong to the domain of ‘economy,’ for it is in His energies that God manifests Himself to His creatures.”⁷⁸ Fairbairn expresses this dogma: “Thus although God’s inner life is thoroughly unknown to us, God makes himself known by showing us his outward life, his loving communion as directed toward his creation.”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Ibid., 69.

⁷⁷ St. Gregory Nazianzen created a special term for divine light that served to describe God as light, Alfeyev, 169. Alfeyev reports that St. Symeon the New Theologian compares “God with the sun, recalling the analogy which became traditional in patristic usage, and before that in Greek philosophy. The whole of the history of the world is one unceasing revelation of God as light. The Son of God became man, so that we, through our conformity to and participation in Him as light, become ‘second lights’ who are similar to the first light. God is light for righteous and fire for sinners. The divine light shines in deified persons ‘in proportion’ to their purification and love” *St. Symeon*, (171-2). At the same time Alfeyev notes that besides this branch represented by Gregory Nazianzen and Symeon that uses the symbolism of sun regards to God, there is also another branch of Eastern Orthodoxy that employs the symbolism of darkness, represented by Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and Dionysios (173).

⁷⁸ Ibid., 82.

⁷⁹ Fairbairn, *Eastern Orthodoxy through Western Eyes*, 55.

The essence/energy dogma⁸⁰ is central to Eastern Orthodox theology and plays a significant role for its anthropology. It explains how man can be god without becoming God, thus linking together the “You are ‘gods’” of Psalm 81/82:6 and John 10:34 with the possibility “to participate in the divine nature” described in 2 Peter 1:4. This anthropological assertion is still the most disputable among Eastern Orthodoxy’s dogmas. Thus man in Lossky’s view is a human creature who by communion with the divine energies is becoming “God.” Fairbairn points out the same problem in the apophatic approach which leads to the divinization of man: “The sharp distinction that the Orthodox draw between the essence and energies of God could lead to a crisis of confidence in God’s character. If we insist that we can know nothing of God’s inner life (of God as he exists in his communion between Father, Son, and Spirit), then can we really be confident that God’s outer life (his energy by which he makes himself known to us) is consistent with his inner life?”⁸¹ He continues: “One can fairly say that the essence/energies distinction at least opens the door to a lack of confidence in God’s character.”⁸²

4. Man’s Ontological Basis—The Image and Likeness of God

In the Eastern Orthodox view, “The perfection of man does not consist in that which assimilates him to the whole of creation, but in that which distinguishes him from the created order and assimilates him to his Creator. Revelation teaches us that man was made in the image and likeness of God.”⁸³ This is the basic notion for the concept of image and likeness of God *in*

⁸⁰ It seems to me that the essence/energy dogma can become self-contradictory. If we ask the question, “Are the energies impersonal?” we would receive the answer, “No,” because they are the Personal God in His outer manifestation. If we would ask the question, “Does man become a God by *theosis*?” we would say, “No,” because *theosis* is being communicated merely by uncreated energies (and in this case God’s personal aspect is never pointed out). Eastern Orthodoxy cannot provide a satisfactory answer to the question why a personal God in His outer action should bear the sign of impersonality through his powers or, in the plural, his “energies,” as if God in His outer actions would be less important than in His essence.

⁸¹ Fairbairn, *Eastern Orthodoxy through Western Eyes*, 115.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 116.

⁸³ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 114.

man.⁸⁴ Although man was created perfect, the concept of “the image of God” in him implies merely that man has a definite ontological basis with a definite teleological function, to reach a complete union with God: “As the image of God, the ordering of the human person was towards its Archetype.”⁸⁵ This is a dynamic concept which presupposes a progressive unfolding of man’s character and purpose, based on the given ontological foundation of man, from which the perfected human creature was to evolve.

Eastern Orthodoxy understands the words translated as “image” and “likeness” (*eikon* and *homoïoma*) as referring to the different dimensions of man’s being. *Eikon* is identified as substance and structure and it is a feature of humanity that man retained after the Fall. By taking on human substance, man moves towards his true destiny, divinization: “Before the fall, Adam was neither a ‘pure nature’ nor a deified man. . . . man was created ‘for deification,’ moving towards union with God.”⁸⁶ The *homoïoma* was understood as a form of a spiritual *habitus* which was lost through the Fall. Russian Orthodox theologian Pavel Florenskii explains:

Long ago the Holy Tradition of the Church explained that the *image of God* must be understood as the ontologically actual gift of God, as the spiritual background of each created person; whereas the *likeness of God* must be understood as the potentiality to attain spiritual perfection: that is, to construct the likeness of God in ourselves from the totality of our empirical personalities called the *image of God*, to

⁸⁴ While there is a great variety of different ideas about what divinely given faculties remain in man after the Fall (mind, higher faculties of the intellect, soul, spirit, freedom, etc.) , Lossky himself proposes that the image of God is man’s lordship over the earth (Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 124). It seems that Eastern Orthodox theologians are unanimous that it is something in man himself—a particular component, function or state of his being (i.e., perfection, divinization) (115).

⁸⁵ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 13. Because the human person reflects its archetype, he ultimately has the same unknowable character of the divine being (118). As Estonian systematician Alar Laats points out, Man in Lossky’s view “is unique and irreducible to the [human] nature and therefore unconceptualizable. . . . Together with its prototype it eludes all rational definitions. About the human person one can speak only apophatically.” Alar Laats, *Doctrines of the Trinity of Eastern and Western Theologies: A Study with Special Reference to K. Barth and V. Lossky*, Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity, vol. 114 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999), 118.

⁸⁶ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 125-7.

incarnate in the flesh of our personality the hidden inheritance of our sacred likeness to God: and to reveal this inheritance in our *face (litza)*.⁸⁷

Thus the deifying movement (also perceived as a transfiguration of man) proceeds ontologically as the unfolding of the image into the likeness.⁸⁸ “A person becomes the perfect image of God by discovering His likeness, which is the perfection of the nature common to all men.”⁸⁹

In Lossky’s mind this image of God is deeply embedded in man. It is his ultimate defining factor. Man always is and will always remain a man, and even if man removes himself as far as possible from God, he remains a person because the image of God in man is indestructible.⁹⁰ But even given this, Lossky does not start his research with the investigation of the actual (that is, fallen) state of human being. Lossky demonstrates on the basis of Chalcedonian Christology that the human person is analogical to the divine person; that is, as Laats says, “for Lossky Christian anthropology is an application of the doctrine of Trinity.”⁹¹ Thus Lossky begins his anthropological investigation starting from God’s person and moving to the human person who is the image of the former.

The image of God in man is his personhood because man is communicated into being by the person of God with whom man has personal relationship.⁹² For man, having the image of God means to have the same kind of distinction between nature and person that exists in the Trinity. It

⁸⁷ Pavel Florenskii, *Iconostasis*, trans. Donald Scheehan and Olga Andrejeva (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), 52. Cf. Alfeyev, *St. Symeon*, 182. Alfeyev repeats the view of St. Symeon the New Theologian that when one is purified by one’s good deeds, one becomes godlike and the ‘perfect image of the Prototype’ (183).

⁸⁸ Alfeyev summarizes Symeon’s notion, saying “The final likeness of God in man is . . . deification, the climax of one’s spiritual advance.” *St. Symeon*, 184.

⁸⁹ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 128.

⁹⁰ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 124.

⁹¹ Laats, *Doctrines of the Trinity of Eastern and Western Theologies*, 118.

⁹² Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 124 & 127.

is “the basis of all Christian anthropology,” because according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa, “Christianity is the imitation of God’s nature.”⁹³

The individual human being is not to be equated with human nature in general, although that nature is the ground of being for each human person. Therefore, the image of God that ontologically constitutes a person does not refer to one particular component or a specific function but to the totality, the whole human being. “Man’s person is not a part of man’s being, just as the persons of the Holy Trinity are not parts of God. That is why the character of God’s image does not refer to one element of man’s composition, but refers to all of human nature.”⁹⁴ This holistic aspect is important when we consider that as an individual human nature-bearer, a man is a part of a whole. He is one of the component elements of the world; but as a person he is not a part of anything but contains everything in himself: “The [human] nature is the content of the person; the person is the image of his nature’s existence.”⁹⁵

Man as a human person resembles the divine person of God in that he is distinct⁹⁶ and free from necessity and nature and that he is, in fact, capable of ruling over both his own inner nature and the outer natural world: “God’s image grants man a personal being who is not to be ruled by nature, but who can himself rule nature, likening it to his divine prototype.”⁹⁷ Therefore, “Freedom is . . . the ‘formal’ image, the necessary condition for the attainment of perfect assimilation to God.”⁹⁸ It is also a prerequisite in order to fulfill man’s task of “assimilating it

⁹³ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 128.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁹⁶ As Laats summarizes Lossky’s teaching on this matter, “The image of God in a human being is the human person, or to put it more exactly: the distinction between human person and human nature and the irreducibility of the former to the latter.” *Doctrines of the Trinity of Eastern and Western Theologies*, 116.

⁹⁷ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 124.

⁹⁸ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 119-120.

[his human nature] to its divine Archetype.”⁹⁹ This again asserts the notion that man is at the top of Creation’s hierarchy—he is “another” god. Lossky declares that “personal beings constitute the peak of creation, since they can become God¹⁰⁰ by free choice and grace.”¹⁰¹

But even by Lossky’s account, human freedom inherently possesses a risk. The creation of man was accomplished by a calling forth of a principal of ontological newness, which is not just another substratum of human nature, but a being which is other-than-God (that is, a creature) and who is even more than a simple creature - he is another god. This “god” is created with some of the same attributes that his Creator possesses, for instance, freedom, self-determination, etc. (although in a limited fashion). Therefore, creation is pregnant with something more than just novelty; that is, the creation of man is the creation of another free subject. Lossky explains that it is “a risk of newness. When God raises, outside of Himself, a new subject, a free subject, that is the peak of His creative act. Divine freedom is accomplished through creating the supreme risk: another freedom.”¹⁰² Freedom is programmed not merely to follow unfailingly its proper course but also with the possibility of failure simply because it is freedom. Lossky points out that man as a free subject may even deny God’s will, because “as a personal being, man can accept the will of God; he can also reject it.”¹⁰³ God so respects man’s person with its fundamental and constitutive feature, freedom, that He does not forcefully bind man to Himself.

In Lossky’s understanding freedom, is an attribute of the person, and the will is a faculty of human nature. The will tends towards that which is conformed to corrupted human nature. This Lossky calls man’s “natural will” over and against the “choosing will” of the person: “This

⁹⁹ Ibid., 120.

¹⁰⁰ Lossky’s usage of capitalization of the word “God” for the divinized human being is inconsistent. Lossky may either write “God” or “god.”

¹⁰¹ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 72.

¹⁰² Ibid., 54.

nature wills and acts, the person chooses, accepting or rejecting that which the nature wills.”¹⁰⁴

But because the human person in reality is not separated from his own human nature, every error, every imperfection on the nature’s side limits the person and obscures the image of God in him.

In Lossky’s understanding, the very fact of the existence of freedom of choice already betrays the imperfection of the fallen human nature, the loss of the divine likeness. He provides such a description of man’s fallen state:

The person called to union with God, called to realize by grace the perfect assimilation of its nature to the divine nature, is bound to a mutilated nature, defaced by sin and torn apart by conflicting desires. It knows and wills by means of this imperfect nature and is in practice blind and powerless. It can no longer choose well and too often yields to the impulses of a nature which has become a slave to sin. So it is that that in us which is made in the image of God is dragged into the abyss, though always retaining its freedom of choice, and the possibility of turning anew to God.¹⁰⁵

After the Fall, that is, after the false exercise of his freedom, man turned from a person into an individual. A person subjugates his nature to his freedom;¹⁰⁶ an individual subjects his person to the wishes and inclinations of his nature, thus becoming a *samost*,¹⁰⁷ a self-asserting autonomous entity. He isolates himself in his own nature and it now works against him. The end result is such that man “shuts himself up in the limits of his particular nature and, far from realizing himself fully, [he] becomes impoverished.”¹⁰⁸ Lossky thinks that when man’s nature takes over, asceticism can serve as a means to rescue man by renouncing his self and his own will, and in this way he can rediscover the image of God in him. As Laats summarizes Lossky’s

¹⁰³ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 124.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 125-6.

¹⁰⁶ Laats mentions that in Lossky’s anthropology the “freedom from necessity, i.e., freedom from nature is a necessary condition for the existence of personhood. The freedom from nature makes a human being capable of loving someone more than himself.” *Doctrines of the Trinity of Eastern and Western Theologies*, 117.

¹⁰⁷ Lossky says that it can be translated as egoism or, creating a Latin barbarism, ‘*ipseity*.’ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 122.

¹⁰⁸ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 123.

teaching on this point: “The human person renounces his own possession, his individual part of the nature, and ceases to exist for himself only. In giving up his own special good, he expands indefinitely, and is enriched by everything which belongs to all.”¹⁰⁹

Thus Lossky’s understanding of man is created out of raw materials from classical Christian vocabulary. Lossky has a theological, Trinitarian and teleological understanding of man as a person, pointing to the same distinctions of nature/person in man as they exist in His creator, the Trinity. Man in Lossky’s view bears ontological resemblance to his Creator by being created in His image and likeness. The image of God in man (also understood as his “person”), as the indestructible foundation of the human being, preserves the identity of the human species against all opposition. In the Fall, man’s person became subjugated to his nature, and thus man turned into merely an individual. The only way out of this subjugation is by way of asceticism—to renounce the sinful will and thus to recover to the image of God. Thus man in Lossky’s view is an ascetic individual struggling to recover his person out of his individuality, out of his fallen and imperfect human nature. Altogether, this is among the most sound and well-reasoned of Lossky’s teachings.

5. Man as the Instrument of Mysticism—Monastic Asceticism

In Eastern Orthodox mystical theology there is no distant, impersonal way of approaching God. Man himself, his body and all his faculties, become the very instrument through which he reaches for God. This calls for a rejection of all emotions, mental activities, all things sensible and intellectual, everything which has or has not being. This leads to apophatic “complete ignorance” to attain the unification with the One Who surpasses any being and any cognition.

¹⁰⁹ Laats, *Doctrines of the Trinity of Eastern and Western Theologies*, 117. Williams says something very similar in his “The Via Negativa and the Foundation of Theology,” 108: “The renunciation of existing-for-oneself is man’s most personal act and so man’s most Godlike act.”

Lossky nowhere provides a description of the practices of his theology. He seems to take for granted the existing monastic practice. His practical approach “of a change of heart and mind [enables] us to attain to the contemplation of the reality which reveals itself to us as it raises us to God, and unites us, according to our several capacities, to Him.”¹¹⁰ This is not some kind of intellectual procedure, but it is the ascetic self-cleansing, the catharsis after which man is required to attain the heights of the holiness, leaving behind even all divine revelations. Thus apophatism on the human side is essentially asceticism. Lossky says, “the apophatic way is not merely an intellectual quest. It is something more than a spinning of abstractions. . . . it is a question of . . . an inward purification.”¹¹¹ Only when purification has taken place does man go into the darkness in which God lives: “This way of ascent in the course of which we are gradually delivered from the hold of all that can be known, is compared by Dionysus to Moses’ ascent of Mount Sinai to meet with God. Moses begins by purifying himself. Then he separated himself from what is unclean.”¹¹² Moreover, “one must be raised above created being and abandon all contact with creatures in order to attain to union with ‘the rays of the Godhead.’”¹¹³ But ascetic demands are being put also on the way man’s very basic epistemological capacities are functioning: “Once [he has] arrived at the extreme height of the knowable, one must be freed from that which perceives as much as from that which can be perceived, that is to say, from the subject, as well as from the object of perception.”¹¹⁴

Having arrived at the desired theological result, providing a basis for this ascetic endeavor and the mystical union that results from it, we would expect that the method of asceticism and

¹¹⁰ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 43.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹¹² Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 27.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

catharsis would be discarded. Not so. What the apophatical theology achieves *de facto* is that its very instrument, which was designed to arrive at the sovereign God, is retained permanently as the adequate and proper self-preparation, attitude and stand to deal with the reality of God on a continuing basis. Therefore, asceticism is an unalienable feature of the mystical theology which is practical, leading man straight to the motivation and skills required to meet God face to face, and for this it looks “for a profound change, an inner transformation of spirit, enabling us to experience [God] mystically.”¹¹⁵

Lossky states, “If the mystical experience is a personal working out of the content of the common faith, theology is an expression, for the profit of all, of that which can be experienced by everyone.”¹¹⁶ Here the thing which is worth pointing out is his phrase, “That which can be experienced by everyone.” At the same time Lossky refers to St. Palamas who said: “This experience of the divine is given to each according to his capacity, and can be greater or less according to the worthiness of him who experiences it.”¹¹⁷ There is no mention in Lossky of lay people having the same specific, extraordinary experiences as monks had.¹¹⁸ The only exception (which has become a regular textbook case) is to be found in “The Revelations” of St. Seraphim of Sarov. In it the layman is only passively involved. During a conversation about the certainty of being in the Spirit of God Seraphim finally asked the layman Motovilov to look at him so that he would see that both of them (at Seraphim’s will) were suddenly surrounded by a heavenly light.¹¹⁹ Lossky completes his comment, “There is a great richness of the spiritual life to be found

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 8.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 8-9.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 220.

¹¹⁸ Thus Lossky in a subtle way advocates spiritual elitism although he explicitly denies it.

¹¹⁹ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 227-9.

within the bounds of Orthodoxy, but monasticism remains the most classical of all.”¹²⁰ With such a remark, Lossky subtly implies that the spiritual life can best be achieved through the monastic experience.

Pelikan demonstrates that in Eastern Orthodoxy the role of monastic piety in the shaping of specific doctrines was paramount: “In its setting as well as in its style, Byzantine mystical theology was largely the product of monastic community.”¹²¹ He refers to Simeon the New Theologian who “Expanding the metaphor of the church as the body of Christ . . . assigned various functions to the ‘limbs’ or ‘members.’ Of these, the ‘thighs’ were ‘those who bear within themselves the generative power of the divine ideas of mystical theology and who give birth to the Spirit of salvation to the earth.’”¹²² Particularly influential in Orthodox monastic circles was the “method of theologizing called ‘Hesychasm,’ which found in its practices of devotion and prayer a new resource for Christian doctrine.”¹²³ It worked out a specific way of psycho-physical method of continuous praying, the so called “prayer of Jesus” (“Lord Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me”).¹²⁴ This prayer brought together the address of God with a particular physical components of prayer including a specific posture, the fixing of one’s eyes on one point of the body, proper breathing and collecting the mind to make the Spirit descend into the heart.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Ibid., 17.

¹²¹ Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 255.

¹²² Ibid., 256.

¹²³ Ibid., 254.

¹²⁴ The standard form of this prayer is attributed to Abba Philimon, an Egyptian monk of the sixth or seventh century. It is available in *A Discourse on Abba Philimon in The Philokalia*, trans. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware vol. 2 (London & Boston: Faber & Faber, 1981), 348.

¹²⁵ “In this psycho-physiological process, breathing and the position of the body had a large part to play, as had also psychological dispositions and ascetic exercises” says John Meyendorff, in *A Study of Gregory Palamas*. Trans. George Lawrence (London: The Faith Press, 1964), 147, cf. 140. The *Three Methods of Prayer*, a work attributed to St. Symeon the New Theologian, proposes the following psychosomatic technique for the preparation to the prayer: “Close your door, and withdraw your intellect from everything worthless and transient. Rest your beard on your chest, and focus your physical gaze, together with the whole of your intellect, upon the centre of your belly, or your navel. Restrain the drawing-in of breath through your nostrils, so as not to breathe easily, and search
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Pelikan concludes that the primary concern lies in “the doctrinal implication of such devotional practice: not how the Christian mystic prayed, but what his way of praying meant for Christian teaching about God and about God’s saving revelation of himself to the eyes of faith.”¹²⁶

Thus asceticism is a practical tool of apophatic theology, designed to turn man into the instrument of the mystical approach to God. Man gradually renounces his epistemological claims and other capacities in order to enter communion with God. This said, Lossky’s ideal man basically is a ‘hesychast’ monk who, with ascetic effort and specific spiritual techniques, tries to reach out for a mystical experience with God. But the problem of self-doubt on the part of man may creep in, for man never can be assured that on his part his ascetic efforts, his synergistic cooperation, has been sufficient. As Fairbairn says, “The Eastern emphasis on *theosis* as a cooperative effort involving both divine and human action makes Easterners much less prone than Westerners to assert that the end result is something of which one can be confident from the beginning”¹²⁷ because we never can be confident about our parts in a synergistic cooperation toward salvation/vocation. He continues: “But if we believe that we must achieve such perfection before God will accept us, then even if we know that God wants us to follow the path to union, even if we are assured that he will accompany us and help us along the road, it is unlikely that we will be able to walk the path of *theosis* with confidence.”¹²⁸ Besides that, reading Lossky, one is left with the constant impression that mystical theology is so fascinated with the possibility of experiencing God immediately that, outside the monastic experience, there is no significant kind of spiritual human activity whatsoever.

inside yourself with your intellect so as to find the place of the heart, where all the powers of the soul reside.” *Ibid.*, 72-3.

¹²⁶ Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 255.

¹²⁷ Fairbairn, *Eastern Orthodoxy through Western Eyes*, 122.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 125.

6. Man's Ultimate Aim—Mystical Union with God

The ultimate aim of mystical theology is man's mystical union with God, which in Lossky's case may be expressed (although he himself does not use it) by the theological formula, "me within God." By definition such a union can be only personal and existential: "To know God one must draw near to Him. No one who does not follow the path of union with God can be a theologian. The way of the knowledge of God is necessarily the way of deification."¹²⁹ This is no longer talk of knowledge *about* God, but rather knowledge *of* God. Actually, it is even difficult to speak about knowledge here, for all the regular features of knowledge are left behind. Man apophatically and ascetically has renounced his own epistemological efforts, activity, criteria (there is no more subject-object distinction), and willingness to achieve supreme knowledge. Man freely gives himself up to God, prostrating himself before Him. There is a high price to pay for gaining the mystical union. Man needs to renounce everything creaturely. For Lossky, the key to achieving transcendence is "a refusal to accept [creaturely] being as such, in so far as it conceals the divine non-being. It is a renunciation of the realm of created things in order to gain access to that of the uncreated; a more existential liberation involving the whole being of him who would know God."¹³⁰

The end result of Lossky's "formula of mystical union" is that man "has access to a face to face encounter with God, [which is] a union without confusion according to a grace."¹³¹ It means that man, even when he draws near to God, neither turns into God, nor dissolves into Him, nor

¹²⁹ Ibid., 39. Alfeyev comments on St. Symeon the New Theologian saying that "Symeon understands God as a paradoxical mystery, which is totally incomprehensible for human thought, yet at the same time can be revealed to those who are deified: however even in its revelation it still remains beyond comprehension" *St. Symeon* (161).

¹³⁰ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 38.

¹³¹ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 32.

becomes another God.¹³² Only “grace” or “energies” are deifying man into a god, and at the same time these same energies are holding him back from being turned into God.¹³³ This man’s becoming a god by grace and not by nature is the whole goal of Christ’s incarnation¹³⁴ as Eastern Orthodoxy has understood the mission of Christ’s incarnation and life: “God became man in order that man might become God.”¹³⁵

The desired mystical experience¹³⁶ is a direct, immediate, one to one, face-to-face experience.¹³⁷ The paradigm for the mystical experience is the Transfiguration of Christ on

¹³² Brilliantov sums up Maximus’ understanding on mystic union, saying that “When man gets to the last boundary of the knowable, uniting in himself everything that exists, he has nothing else before him than God. In love man gives over to God everything, himself including in order instead God would give to man Himself and man would become everything God is, except the identity in nature.” *Ibid.*, 226.

¹³³ Greek Orthodox theologian Georgios Mantzaridis, commenting on Palamas’ view on deification, says that it is the “ontological regeneration of human nature in the hypostasis of the incarnate Logos of God.” *The Deification of Man: St. Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition*, trans. Liadain Sherrard (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), 31.

¹³⁴ Nellas Panayiotis explains Maximus’ view on this, saying that man’s task was to unify the whole world in himself, but because of the Fall man was incapacitated. In order to fulfill this task, it was necessary for the Logos to become incarnate (*The Deification of Man*, 229), and to unify in human nature the whole world (231). Christ brings to the world God’s kingdom that is delivery from the slavery to matter (230). Judging objectively, Christ’s incarnation had its own meaning even independently from man’s Fall: through the incarnation the positive aims of creation of the world and man are implemented (241).

¹³⁵ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 134. Gregory Nazianzen developed this formula further, saying: “in order that I may become god so far as He has become man” (as quoted in Alfeyev, 258). Cf 259, where Alfeyev refers to Efreem of Nisibis who speaks of the exchange between God and man: “He gave us divinity, we gave Him humanity” (as quoted in Alfeyev, *St. Symeon*, 259).

¹³⁶ Alfeyev goes into detail, describing from the patristic sources the following parts of it: Tears and repentance, the vision of God, illumination by divine light, ecstasy, dispassion, and deification *St. Symeon*, (209-270).

¹³⁷ This is the so-called vision of God. Lossky mentions that there are two groups of Bible verses for and against the vision of God. Supporting the concept are Gen 32:24-30; Ex 33:11; Deut 34:10; Job 19:25-7; 1 John 3:2; and 1 Cor 13:12. Against it are: Ex 33: 20-3; 1 Tim 6:16; and John 1:18 (Vladimir Lossky, *The Vision of God*, trans. Asheleign Moorhouse [Clayton, Wisconsin: The Faith Press, 1963] 25). As Alfeyev points out, “The vision of God, the likeness to God [which is implementation by good deeds the image of God in man’s life] and deification are . . . the same. . . . The fullness of God’s image, which is given to humans as a pledge at the moment of creation, is also achieved in the final deification, when the entire man becomes ‘the true icon of the Creator’” *St. Symeon*, (184). Brilliantov states that only angels see God immediately; this vision is promised as the reward to men in the future life. But the saints by complete self-renunciation and impassivity deserve the vision of God already in this life; he refers to the story of the transfiguration (216). For the regular people the truth or Logos is covered under the letter of the Scripture and under the phenomena of the nature in order no one unworthy would come close to the truth (217). Alfeyev explains that this paradox of ‘visibility-invisibility’ of God is approached in patristic literature in four (overlapping) ways. 1. God is invisible by His nature but may be seen in His energies, glory, goodness, revelations etc. (as represented by Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostom). 2. God is invisible in His essence but He reveals Himself in the human flesh of the Son (Ignatios of Antioch, John Chrysostom, and Theodore the Studite). 3. God is invisible in the present life but will be seen by the righteous in the future kingdom of heaven (Isaac the Syrian and
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Mount Tabor. Mystical experience¹³⁸ tries to get behind everything in order to get straight to the nature, to the essence, of God,¹³⁹ bypassing even the text of the Scripture.¹⁴⁰ Here Lossky refers to two important spiritual authorities, St. Gregory of Nyssa, who speaks of getting behind “the Holy Scriptures in which God hides Himself, as it were behind a screen, beneath the words which express the revelation”¹⁴¹ and to St. Gregory Nazianzus, who reported his mystical experience of looking behind even Christ, who in this case was just a “shelter” of God: “I scarce saw the back parts of God; although I was sheltered by the Rock, the Word that was made flesh for us. And when I looked a little closer, I saw, not the first and unmingled nature, known to itself, to the Trinity, I mean; not that which abides within the first veil, and is hidden by the Cherubim; but only that nature, which at last even reaches to us. And that . . . is the majesty.”¹⁴²

Lossky characterizes and summarizes the ultimate aim of man’s deification as his transition from the created to the uncreated: “The acquiring of something which man did not hitherto possess by nature.”¹⁴³ These changes are of a gradual character; man is struggling to attain them in order to be united more and more with the fullness of the Godhead.¹⁴⁴

Theodore the Studite). 4. Purification of the soul leads to deification. God is invisible for man in his fallen state but is seen by those who are purified and deified (Theophilus of Antioch, Gregory of Nyssa, and John of Dalyatha). (216-8). Vision includes more than merely personal religious experience, for Alfeyev concludes that Symeon “asserts that tradition itself is nothing else but product and fruit of vision of God by the divinely inspired Fathers: it is after they saw God as light that they spoke and wrote about God, expressing the church dogmas” *St. Symeon*, (219). Lossky himself seems to share the first and second option (*The Vision of God*, 137).

¹³⁸ As St. Symeon the New Theologian says, the faithful receive the knowledge of God by “enigmas, by mirrors, by mystical and inexpressible energies, by divine revelations, by veiled illumination, by the contemplation of the principles of creation.” Alfeyev, *St. Symeon*, 159.

¹³⁹ Although Lossky himself does not acknowledge such an intent of mysticism (literal seeing the essence of God), the upcoming quote from Gregory Nazianzes he refers to is clear enough.

¹⁴⁰ Scripture in Orthodoxy does not have such a high standing as in Lutheranism. For instance, St. Symeon the New Theologian says that, “Scripture does not reveal to us what God is, but only testifies that He eternally exists.” Alfeyev, *St. Symeon*, 158.

¹⁴¹ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 41.

¹⁴² Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 35-6.

¹⁴³ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 38.

¹⁴⁴ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 126; cf. *Ibid.*, 180, 244.

There are several problems inherent in the Orthodox concept of the mystical union. One of them is an unintended slide into an impersonal absorption into God that destroys human uniqueness. Lossky himself unintentionally provides a basis for this suspicion by claiming that in the mystical union, one is no longer aware of the distinction between the subject (the theologian) and the object (God). This implies that the believer's personality is lost.

Another problem of a different character lies in the mystical union's being the main purpose of mystical theology, of its apophatical method, and of its ascetic disciplines. Having apophatically refused human epistemological efforts and procedures, man consistently follows the line he has taken by renouncing his being and creatureliness. He is acquiring "something which man did not hitherto possess by nature." This "something" of a "new condition" is not even an angelic-like being, a created spiritual being without physical matter. Man is overstepping the boundary of the created and uncreated. Therefore, the least that is possible to say is that this overstepping ends the possibility of defining man's "new condition." If he is not a creature any more and is not a God, then who is he? What kind of ontological being is this god?

Here we can observe a theological contradiction between the idea that man is god by grace (that is, not by nature) and the idea that he has renounced his creatureliness and exited from being as such. If one of the main differences between the creature and God is the fact

that they are divided by the ontological gap of created/uncreated, then in Lossky's case, this gap is being overstepped by man. As Zaitsev points out that,

salvation is pictured here in ontological terms as escaping from one kind of reality (the perishable being of this world) in order to participate in another kind of reality (the imperishable nature of God). Such an ontological conception of salvation was quite common in the religious movements of the Hellenistic world, especially those influenced by Platonism, but it stands in stark contrast to the overall teaching of the Bible, according to which salvation is not a liberation from this created world but rather a liberation from the bondage of sin.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Zaitsev, "Analysis and Evaluation of Vladimir Lossky's Doctrine of *Theosis*," 220-1.

7. Man's Cosmic Calling—Microcosm and the Mediator

In Eastern Orthodoxy's view man has a very specific position and particular calling in this world. He is a microcosm,¹⁴⁶ a point argued particularly by St. Maximus the Confessor, to whom Lossky makes frequent references. Being a microcosm means that in man both the multiplicity and the unity of the world are brought together. Man "bears within himself the elements of all creation."¹⁴⁷ He himself is a unity of distinctive elements, intellectual, spiritual, material and limited. Man is a microcosm because constitutionally he possesses the composite nature of both body and soul in one being.¹⁴⁸ They do not form the unity of the human nature because of their natural inclination towards each other, but because of God's ordinance. They co-exist initially and continually in a mutual, perichoretic¹⁴⁹ interdependence and in an indissoluble relationship to each other at the same time. Their unity is not of an accidental but of a natural character and is indissoluble. As Swedish Lutheran patristics scholar Lars Thunberg points it out that, "There is no soul which is without relation to its body, a relationship which is preserved even after death when the soul is separated from the body. This is illustrated . . . by the fact that one does not simply call a certain body 'body' after death but a human body or the body of this or that person."¹⁵⁰

Lossky argues that although human nature has been described by Eastern Orthodox fathers either in a dichotomous (soul-body) or in a trichotomous (spirit-soul-body) manner, the

¹⁴⁶ Alfeyev in his *St. Symeon* points out that "notion of man as 'microcosm' derives from Greek philosophy and is commonplace in patristic anthropology. In Gregory, however, as later in Symeon, it has been deliberately reversed: man is not a small world within the great universe, but on the contrary, 'the great within the small' (179). Lossky does not make such reverses.

¹⁴⁷ Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theologian Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Lund: Gleerup; Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1965), 140. In this subchapter we will use this research for guidance through the Lossky's patristic background in the person of Maximus.

¹⁴⁸ Maximus the Confessor spoke of man as a 'composite being' (Alfeyev, *St. Symeon*, 177).

¹⁴⁹ Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 109.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 105-6.

differences are mainly due to terminology. What is more important is the definite order of the proper functioning of the components: “The spirit must find its sustenance in God, must live from God; the soul must feed on the spirit; the body must live on the soul. This was the original ordering of our immortal nature.”¹⁵¹ What happened in the Fall is therefore the distortion of this inner order into a chaos:

But turning back from God, the spirit, instead of providing food for the soul, begins to live at the expense of the soul, feeding itself on its substance (what we usually call ‘spiritual values’). The soul in turn begins to live with the life of the body, and this is the origin of the passions. Finally, the body is forced to seek its nourishment outside, in inanimate matter, and in the end comes on death. The human complex finally disintegrates.¹⁵²

Man is related to God as a whole, total being. This totality that transcends human nature is expressed by the category of the hypostasis or person. “The concept of hypostasis transcends what is naturally differentiated,”¹⁵³ and “the human person or hypostasis contains the parts of this natural complex and finds expression in the totality of the human being, which exists in and through it.”¹⁵⁴ The totality of the natural complex which transcends the sum of its parts is essential for man’s existence because man is connected to and participates in God as a whole, total being: “The divine factor in man concerns not only his spiritual aspect . . . but the whole man, soul and body. This last point is the reason why a majority of Byzantine theologians describe man in terms of a trichotomist scheme: spirit (or mind), soul and body. Their trichotomism is very directly connected with the notion of participation in God as the basis of

¹⁵¹ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 128.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁵³ Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 111.

¹⁵⁴ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 127.

anthropology.”¹⁵⁵ Here Meyendorff expresses a critical point. Compositism, the definition of humanity as the sum of its component ontological parts, is related to *theosis* and mystical union.

Thunberg also points out that man’s inner unity as well as his relationship with God is mediated via the human hypostasis.¹⁵⁶ “Thanks to the trichotomy of mind, soul and body . . . [Maximus teaches] that there is a personal aspect in man’s life, which goes . . . beyond his nature, and represents his inner unity as well as his relationship to God.”¹⁵⁷ Man as a composite nature of body and soul possesses an inner unity because these components are “co-hypostasized” and form one hypostasis. This human hypostasis is transcending human nature into God. The transcending character of the person is not manifested within the relationships of body and soul because they form one human nature, but rather in relation to something, which itself transcends the human nature, that is, in relation to the divinity. This means that human nature has its hypostasis in the Logos, and thus itself is enhypostasized.¹⁵⁸

The Eastern Orthodox in general and Lossky in particular hold even more specific and nuanced notions about the relationship of the human nature with God, asserting that “the spirit (*nous*) in human nature corresponds to the person.”¹⁵⁹ Meyendorff explains this by saying that man participates in God “through the intermediary of the superior elements of the human composite, essentially the intellect.”¹⁶⁰ This “is the contemplative part of man, and its highest

¹⁵⁵ John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 141.

¹⁵⁶ Thunberg defines hypostasis as following: “an individual human being, separated as person from other human beings.” Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 111-2.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁵⁸ Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 111-2.

¹⁵⁹ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 201.

¹⁶⁰ John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1987), 116.

function is to contemplate the divine realities, and particularly the Holy Trinity.”¹⁶¹ But the *nous* is understood not so much as a “part” of man as his transcending ability to participate in God, as the unity of man’s composite nature, as his spiritual subject¹⁶² and intuition.

Thus man’s composite character is the foundation that makes him a microcosm. Because of that he is “the bearer of an ‘iconological’ purpose in relations to God within the created order.”¹⁶³ Man by his very constitution (created in God’s image) reflects God to the world and the world to God. Human beings are “representatives in all respects: microcosmically representative in relation to the rest of creation, individually representative of humanity, and representative of the created order in its relationship to God.”¹⁶⁴

Man’s status as microcosm is closely related to his function as a mediator.¹⁶⁵ Their “composite nature invites human beings to function in relation to creation as fulfillers of a higher purpose, and this means that the character of microcosm is linked to a task of mediation.”¹⁶⁶ In the function of the mediator, man, as a free self-determining microcosm, defines the ultimate destiny of the universe,¹⁶⁷ for as a microcosm man is endowed with the task of uniting the opposite elements of the world in order to link the world to the Creator in a worshipful perfection.¹⁶⁸ In this unification of the entire creation with God the ontological differences

¹⁶¹ Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 115.

¹⁶² Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, 142; Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 119.

¹⁶³ Lars Thunberg, “The Human Person As Image of God,” in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, vol. 1. ed. Bernard Mc Ginn and John Meyendorff, (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 291-2.

¹⁶⁴ Thunberg, “The Human Person As Image of God,” 299.

¹⁶⁵ The idea of man as mediator in Orthodox theology has been developed particularly by St. Gregor the Theologian, Philo and Maximus.

¹⁶⁶ Thunberg, “The Human Person As Image of God,” 297.

¹⁶⁷ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 138.

¹⁶⁸ Thunberg, “The Human Person As Image of God,” 297. Brilliantov in his *Vlijanije*, explains Maximus, saying that in his view man has two aims—*theosis* and *hegnosis*. *Theosis* is man’s divinization while *hegnosis* is
(continued next page)

between them are overcome. The creation has reached its ultimate stage of *apokatastasis*—reunification.

Man is expected to act as the mediator between God and the world due to his proper relationship to his own different parts, mediating between the extremes of the world through the elements of his own nature. Therefore, proper compositional order and functioning of his own human nature is essential.

In his mediating function man is supposed to overcome the last obstacle from “the triple barrier which separates us from God—death, sin and nature.”¹⁶⁹ Nature in Eastern Orthodoxy is perceived as separating man from God both individually and cosmically. Lossky refers to Maximus’ teaching about the five kinds of the mutually related divisions¹⁷⁰ of the created order, which form a chain. Man’s task as the mediator is to overcome¹⁷¹ them.¹⁷² As Lossky says, “these divisions of St. Maximus express the limited character of the creation which is indeed the very condition of its existence; at the same time they are problems to be resolved, obstacles to be surmounted on the way towards union with God.”¹⁷³ This does not imply any kind of violation of the differentiated natures (because none of them are evil in themselves, nor are they directly caused by the Fall or by sin), but their perfection. This perfection must be restored: 1) between

man’s clinging to the Logos by taking into himself and unifying into himself the whole outer world that in an ideal way already exists in Logos (224). Lossky nowhere uses term *hegnosis*.

¹⁶⁹ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 136.

¹⁷⁰ Usually these five divisions are mentioned in a very brief way for example, one paragraph in Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 142. Even Lossky himself does not pay much attention to them—*The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, devotes only part of page 137, to this important teaching which pertains to the cosmic vocation of man, probably because of the highly speculative character of this teaching. Therefore we turn to Lars Thunberg who examines it in detail in *Microcosm and Mediator*, 396-453.

¹⁷¹ Brilliantov even uses the term “to destroy.” *Vlijanije.*, 225.

¹⁷² Lossky here refers to St. Maximus in whose view these divisions “express the limited character of the creation which is indeed the very condition of its existence; at the same time they are problems to be resolved, obstacles to be surmounted on the way towards union with God.” *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 110.

¹⁷³ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 110.

created and uncreated nature; 2) between the intelligible and sensible; 3) within sensible creation—between heaven and earth; 4) within the sphere of the earth—between paradise and the world inhabited by men and 5) within humanity—between man and woman.¹⁷⁴ Adam’s task was to reunite them cosmically in himself with the world. As Greek Orthodox theologian Panayiotis Nellas points out, “Man is called ‘through the right use of his natural faculties’ [Maximus] to transform . . . potential unity¹⁷⁵ into a full unity of himself and the world in God realized in actuality.”¹⁷⁶ After the Fall Christ was the first who carried out the cosmic task of mediation. Man, following Christ, must start his task of mediation with himself by overcoming divisions within his own species—that is, he must first mediate the division that exists between man and woman.¹⁷⁷

The Fall happened due to fleshly lust, which is the expression of self-love as a love for the body. Maximus considers it to be a root-sin, for instead of directing man’s desires to God, who alone can satisfy man with true pleasure, natural man concentrates his attention on his own selfish desires. The Fall was punished by God by linking pleasure with the consequences of pain, corruption, and continuing destruction, although man as a species was destined to live on. For Maximus the “male” and “female” of Gal 3:28 after the Fall became the symbols of anger and concupiscence, and consequently the sexual relationship became the symbol for the life of passions.

¹⁷⁴ Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 152.

¹⁷⁵ That is, the unity between the material world and the human body, between the body and soul, between the soul and God. Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ: The Nature of the Human Person* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1987), 54.

¹⁷⁶ Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 54.

¹⁷⁷ Here I rely on Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 396-405 and his *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 80-3. For the sake of brevity, only the one, the fifth division will be explored in a brief way. All the others have the same kind of highly speculative character.

Instead of granting immortality after the Fall, a gift that would have forever condemned man, God safeguarded the continuation of mankind¹⁷⁸ in a way which did not renounce the pleasure-pain dialectic but used it for the propagation of mankind although man still had to suffer the inevitable punishment of pain and corruption for this pleasure. Thus one vital element of humanity, procreation, traps man in this pain-pleasure dialectic. In such a way man's lust now (according to God's new order) both reproduces the human race and is the justification of the punishment of his bodily desires.

From this vicious circle of enslavement Christ liberated mankind by being born in a sinless way as a man. By this kind of birth, He destroyed man's slavery to bodily lust and consequent death. Through His birth apart from sexual intercourse Christ freed mankind from the sinful division of desire between the sexes. Thus He broke the sinful law of procreation altogether.

Christ carried out the mediation between the sexes by integrating them into the higher unity of the common human nature and by avoiding the misuse of his passable faculties. This mediation was not the elimination of anything that is human and which therefore pertains to sexes, nor was it the elimination of the passable faculties themselves. In fact, mediation means that these faculties are pressed into their right and proper use: a transformation into a positive and spiritual use of man's generative power and in support of his higher functions to direct and strengthen the mind and the whole of man in his relationship to God. "Anger" and "concupiscence" are now to support man in his higher effort, according to Maximus.

Maximus describes man's cosmic communion with Christ the Logos in mystical terms. Man communicates with the body of Christ through its different parts, and none of these parts is excluded. One of them is a communion with Christ's belly, making spiritual and positive use of

¹⁷⁸ The sexuality of procreation was brought in by God because of the Fall. In Maximus' view, before the Fall another form of procreation would have been provided for man.

man's generative power. The soul becomes "pregnant" with spiritual contemplations and inflames itself with desirous love for God. Thus ultimately even the sexual experience for Maximus represents an aspect of man's relationship to God, which in his view is the proper use of man's sexuality.

After Christ's death and resurrection the door for eternal life was opened for mankind. Through baptism as a second birth man was transferred from just *being* into *well-being*, which is the anticipation of *ever-being*. The existence in well-being is marked by the Christian life and exercise of the *vita practica*, which transforms the passions into virtues, supporting the spiritual communion of the mind with God and the *vita contemplativa* with its spiritual contemplations. Practical exercise of these virtues is the mediation between the sexes. Man must overcome sexual separation¹⁷⁹ and to reconcile its differentiation in a sexual synthesis by a chaste life. As Lossky says, "It was . . . necessary that he should suppress in his own nature the division into two sexes, in his following of the impassible life according to the divine archetype."¹⁸⁰

Thus because of his composite nature, man according to Lossky's is a Microcosm. By the proper use of his own components and his person, he is called to reach the full unity of himself and of the world in God, that is, he is called to realize the function of the mediator. As such, he has to perform his task on a cosmic scale, overcoming the natural divisions between the primordial separations. This is expressed as man's mystical communion with different parts of Christ's body making use of man's spiritually transformed powers.

¹⁷⁹ In Gregory of Nyssa's view the distinction between male and female is superadded to the original creation of man, for in Christ there is "neither male nor female." Therefore marriage did not exist in paradise. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 399.

¹⁸⁰ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 109.

C. A Creedal Analysis of Humanity According to Lossky

Because Vladimir Lossky belongs to a church that professes the ecumenical creeds, it is fair to set his thoughts on man in the paradigm of the Trinitarian creed by asking “his version of man” the same questions of meaning that we put to Luther’s man. Unfortunately, Lossky’s anthropology does not easily fit into this ecumenically—minded matrix of meaning. Some of the questions he answers in depth while he barely touches others, leaving them to be understood implicitly rather than explicitly. Some dimensions of the matrix do not correspond to his theological anthropology at all, e.g., First Article Revisited.

1. Man in Lossky’s view in the First Article

a) Who am I?¹⁸¹ Man is the centre of the created order: “At the center of the universe beats the heart of man.”¹⁸² In Lossky’s view each of the biblical accounts of creation communicates a significant aspect of man’s being. The first places him in the context of all creation, and the second places him at its summit and center: “Whereas the first narrative assimilates man to other creatures on the earth in a common blessing and at the level of nature, the second narrative clearly defines the place of man. Its perspective is totally different in fact: man appears there not only as the summit, but also as the *principle* of creation.”¹⁸³ In the second narrative of creation, man appears to be “the hypostasis of the terrestrial cosmos: the terrestrial nature continues his body.”¹⁸⁴

Man is fundamentally a person, and his personhood it has been guaranteed by the specific congruence between him and his creator. He has been created in the image of God. This makes

¹⁸¹ Because Lossky draws a distinct line between the human nature and the human person in the Creedal Chart, the question “Who am I?” is subdivided into: “What am I?” (for the human nature) and “Who am I?” (for the human person).

¹⁸² Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 64.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 68.

man capable of manifesting God on a very broad scale. This manifestation is at the same time man's inner transfiguration: "Man created 'in the image' is the person capable of manifesting God to the extent to which his nature allows itself to be penetrated by deifying grace. Thus the image—which is alienable—can become similar or dissimilar, to extreme limits."¹⁸⁵ Thus man in Lossky's view is the personal center of the created order.

b) Of what am I a part? Although Lossky himself does not explicitly use the term "microcosm" for man, the concept is present: "For man is the hypostasis of the whole cosmos, which participates in his nature. And the earth finds its personal meaning, hypostatic in man."¹⁸⁶ Man is part of the hierarchical being of the created order, but at the same time he has a very particular connection to his Lord by being made in His image, and it is in God that man's true identity lies: "The true greatness of man is not in his incontestable kinship with the universe, but in his participation in divine plenitude, in the mystery within himself of the 'image' and 'likeness.'" "Man's perfection lies not in that which likens him to the rest of creation, but in that which distinguishes him from the cosmos and likens him to his Creator. Divine revelation teaches that man was made in the image and likeness of God."¹⁸⁷

Man is a microcosm of the world, but at the same time he has an ontological bond with God as being a creature created in the image of God.

c) What is going on with/within me? Man had an inherent capacity as a person to exercise control over his nature in order to fulfill himself rightly. "His dignity consists in being able to liberate himself from his nature, not by consuming it or abandoning it to itself, . . . but by

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 69.

¹⁸⁵ Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 139.

¹⁸⁶ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 71.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 119.

transfiguring it in God.”¹⁸⁸ Man was created free, which for Lossky means as an ontologically ambivalent being. That was his greatness (as a potentiality to be fulfilled) and a risk at the same time. Man has both possibilities in himself: that of love for God and that of opposition to God. Lossky explains that God respected man’s original freedom even if though led to undesirable consequences: “Union without love would be automatic, and love implies freedom, the possibility of choice and refusal.”¹⁸⁹ God takes a risk, the risk of freedom, with man: “The resistance of freedom alone gives sense to that union. The love that God claims is not physical magnetism, but the living tension of opposites.”¹⁹⁰

Compositionally, man is a hierarchical being. His components are in mutual functional harmony, but he has the above-mentioned risk-filled gift of freedom: “The human spirit should live from God, the soul from the spirit, the body from the soul.”¹⁹¹

d) Where do I come from? Man comes from Christ the Logos (as the Archetype according to Whom man was created; thus man is the image of Christ’s image Who is the image of the Father). The Logos is perceived as a prototype, which God used to create man in His image. Christ is perceived as an archetype of what it is to be human. Because Christ is also a person, the reflection of this archetype is supposed to be also personal. Thus man’s genesis lies in the divine Logos.

e) What is the purpose of my life? Man’s mission¹⁹² can be expressed in two mutually related tasks: deification of the self and of the world. Humanity was originally separated from

¹⁸⁸ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 72.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 83.

¹⁹² Alfeyev points out that in Maximus’ view, deification was the goal of the creation of the human being, for God “made us so that we might become ‘partakers of the divine nature’ [2 Pet 1:4] and sharers of His eternity, and so that we might come to be like Him [cf. 1 John 3:2] through deification by grace” (*St. Symeon*, 185). It is still in force nowadays as Greek Orthodox theologian Christoforos Stavropoulos states: “This is the purpose of your life; (continued next page)

God, not merely by the distance between creator and creature, but also by not having yet a complete communion with God. Lossky says that, “Man was made perfect. Yet it does not mean that his original state coincided with the ultimate aim that he was in union with God from the moment of creation. . . . The perfection of our first nature was primarily expressed in this capacity to unite with God, to cling ever more to the plenitude of the divine being.”¹⁹³ Lossky continues: “Creatures, from the moment of their first condition, are separate from God; and their end and final fulfillment lies in union with Him or deification. Thus the primitive beatitude was not a state of deification, but a condition of order, a perfection of the creature which was ordained and tending towards its end.”¹⁹⁴ He concludes that in “this supreme synthesis, through man, of God and the created cosmos. . . . rests the meaning of all Christian anthropology.”¹⁹⁵ Even before the Fall, Adam was supposed to strive for a union with God—to mature in communion with God. This was his vocation in his life-long journey. By a conscious choice (that is, passing the divine test¹⁹⁶ of using his freedom rightly), he needed to define himself: “Adam was to emerge from an infantile unawareness by agreeing, through love, to obey God.”¹⁹⁷ This implied man’s conscious inner development from the image (which was a created characteristic) to the likeness of God (to be acquired in a synergistic gradual process of growth towards God). Lossky teaches that man needs “a single will to raise up the image, but two to make the image into likeness.”¹⁹⁸

that you be a participant of divine energy—to become just like God, a true God.” *Partakers of Divine Nature* (Minneapolis: Light and Life, 1976), 18.

¹⁹³ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 130.

¹⁹⁴ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 99.

¹⁹⁵ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 75.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 72. The Hebrew *selem* and *demut* convey the same idea—man is to rule, to summarize, and to keep together the universe under God. Lars Thunberg notes that in the Hellenistic context the Septuagint “rendering of (continued next page)

In other words, *theosis* can be called a process of becoming god according to Psalm 82:6 and 2 Peter 1:4.¹⁹⁹ Lossky explains that man does not become god by his nature but merely by grace, participating in God's energies. Thus *theosis* does not blur the line between God and creation: "The union to which we are called is neither hypostatic, as in the case of the human nature of Christ, nor substantial, as in that of three divine Persons. It is union with God in His energies, or union by grace, making us participate in the divine nature, without our essence becoming thereby the essence of God."²⁰⁰

In the Eastern Orthodox view, man has such a position in the world that man no longer saves himself through the universe (as in antiquity), but the universe is saved through man because of his microcosmic nature. "The world follows man since it is like him in nature, 'the anthroposphere' . . . and this anthropocosmic link is accomplished when that of the human image is accomplished, with God its prototype."²⁰¹ Man, now being a center of the created world, has to exhibit a particular concern towards the world because "we are . . . responsible for the world. We are the word, the logos, through which it bespeaks itself, and it depends solely on us whether it blasphemes or prays. Only through us can the cosmos, like the body that it prolongs, receive grace."²⁰²

Gen 1:26 seems more explicitly distinctive: the human is created not only "in the image of God" (*kat' eikon*) but also "into his likeness" (*kat' homoiouin*), and this seems to imply a distance between what is given at the outset and what could be realized within the category of time. And if this is combined with the concept of humanity's fall and sinfulness, it might lead to an understanding of humans as in tension between their "ontological" image character and their "moral" similitude." Thunberg, "The Human Person As Image of God," 293.

¹⁹⁹ Lossky himself admits that the expression of this passage, "become partakers of the divine nature," "appears to be in conflict with so many other passages in Holy Scripture." Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 68. Nevertheless, he comes up with such a statement: "It would be childish, not to say impious, to see in these words [2 Pet 1:4] only a rhetorical expression or metaphor (67)," and he continues: "The distinction between the essence and the energies . . . makes it possible to preserve the real meaning of St. Peter's words 'partakers of the divine nature'" (87, cf. 56).

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 87.

²⁰¹ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 71.

²⁰² Ibid.

In attaining deification and becoming a god, man by his ascetic efforts becomes capable of both perceiving divine glory (the divine, uncreated energies such as the “Tabor light”), and he also becomes transparent so that the energies shine or radiate through him to the rest of the world. Man performs the mission of the deification of the world. Therefore, as a creaturely god, man becomes a channel of God’s grace to the rest of the created order: “The perfection of our first nature lay above all in this capacity to communicate with God, to be united more and more with the fullness of the Godhead, which was to penetrate and transfigure created nature.”²⁰³ Man becomes the vehicle of God’s grace: “To the universe, man is the hope of receiving grace and uniting with God, and also the danger of failure and fallenness.”²⁰⁴

Thus man is a creaturely god, a deified human being who uses his microcosmic nature to serve as a channel of God’s grace to the rest of the world.

f) Where am I going (eschatologically)? Generally, Lossky sees man’s task as the eschatological perfecter of the world: “The world is made by God so as to be perfected by man.”²⁰⁵ Speaking in ultimate categories, this has to be done by reunification of the different ontological strata. This is the cosmic mission of man: “To the successive divisions that constitute creation there must correspond unions or synthesis accomplished by man.”²⁰⁶ Lossky affirms that by performing this cosmic task, man also becomes deified as well: “Adam must overcome these [five previously mentioned] divisions by a conscious action to reunite in himself the whole of the created cosmos and become deified with it.”²⁰⁷

²⁰³ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 126.

²⁰⁴ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 71.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

In the grand scheme of the universe the fact of the unification of these divisions means the divinization of the whole created order: “Thus *in the overcoming of the primordial separation of the created and uncreated*, there would be accomplished man’s deification, and by him, of the whole universe.”²⁰⁸

Thus man is the eschatological unifier of the world, exhibiting his divinity by overcoming the primordial divisions between the different ontological strata of the universe.

2. Man in Lossky’s view in the First Article after the Fall

a) Who am I? The human being is now locked in cosmic self-isolation estranged from life and separated from God. He is in the unnatural condition²⁰⁹ of being unable to fulfill his vocation: “From the Fall until the day of Pentecost, divine energy, uncreated and deifying grace, remained foreign to human nature and acted upon it only from outside. . . . Deification, union with God through grace, had become impossible.”²¹⁰ Thus man is a self-isolated being, unable to pursue his ultimate goal.

b) Of what am I a part? Man as a fallen person is the center of the fallen created order.

c) What is going on with/within me? Man’s undertaking was not simply to continue a complete and perfect fellowship with God. The created order in paradise was not such a fellowship. Eastern Orthodoxy teaches that man was to continue on his journey to God in order to reach perfect and complete communion with God. Therefore, man’s Fall is perceived as a “departure from a path” and a “failure to achieve his vocation.” The Fall simply uncovered the inherent limitations of the created order but did not bring man into a completely new state of being. John Zizioulas claims that “for the Greek Fathers, the fall of man—and for that matter,

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 74 (emphasis mine).

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 113.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 137.

sin—is not to be understood as bringing about something new [that is, a new, different condition or state] . . . but as *revealing and actualizing the limitations and potential dangers inherent in creaturehood, if creation is left to itself.*”²¹¹ The created universe was not yet perfected.

Therefore, risks and dangers of taking an independent path against God were inherent in it. Zizioulas’ words “if creation is left to itself” expresses that. The main consequence of the Fall was that man now was unable to fulfill his original vocation, to become united to God. Lossky says, “The infinite distance between the created and uncreated, the natural separation of man from God, which ought to have been overcome by deification, became an impassable abyss for man after he had willed himself into a new state, that of sin and death, which was near a state of non-being.”²¹² By saying that man becomes a slave to death, Lossky means that he is unable to participate in the divine life. Since partaking of the divine life (*theosis*) in Eastern Orthodoxy’s understanding means incorruption and immortality, this was a literal death-sentence for mankind. Men were created mortal, but in the fall they lost the ability to transcend their mortality.

In Eastern Orthodoxy there is no idea of the Fall as a drastic change of human condition. Still, the advent of sin was a significant event. Abnormal, unnatural and destructive processes took possession of man, resulting in his death. Lossky says that since the Fall, man’s:

. . . nature, having become detached from God, becomes non-natural, anti-natural. The human spirit should live from God, the soul from the spirit, the body from the soul. But the spirit begins to live off the soul, nurturing itself upon non-divine values, such as autonomous goodness and beauty that the serpent revealed to the woman drawing her attention to the tree. In its turn, the soul lives off the body, passions are born. The body finally lives off the earthly universe, kills to eat and thus finds death.²¹³

²¹¹ Zizioulas, *Being As Communion*, 101-2, italics his.

²¹² Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 135.

²¹³ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 83.

Lossky continues this thought in following:

The fall of human nature is the direct consequence of the free self-determination of man, who voluntarily subjected himself to this condition. The anti-natural condition must lead to the disintegration of human nature; this disintegration finds its conclusion in death, which is the final stage in distorted nature's falling away from God. In this distorted nature there is no longer place for uncreated grace; in it . . . the mind, like the obverse of the mirror, instead of reflecting God, takes into itself the image of formless matter, where the passions violate the original hierarchical structure of the human being. The loss of grace is not therefore the cause, but rather the consequence of the fall into sin. Man has obstructed in himself the capacity for communion with God, has closed the path of grace, which should have poured through him into all of creation.²¹⁴

Thus man is a sinner, which means that destructive processes of every kind have come to take hold of man, but moreover it means that death now has rule over him.

d) Where do I come from? Man comes from his Fall: "As a personal being, man can accept or reject God's will. He will remain a person, however far he may stray from God and lose His likeness in his nature. This means that God's image in man is indestructible."²¹⁵ Thus despite the Fall and its consequences, man is still a man, for the image of God in man remains indestructible. It makes and maintains him essentially and irrevocably a man.

e) What is the purpose of my life? Man has failed in his vocation. Lossky asserts, "Adam did not fulfill his vocation. He was unable to attain to union with God, and the deification of the created order."²¹⁶ Thus man is a religious "loser."

f) Where am I going (ecshatologically)? Man's death is not merely his individual death. Because he is the representative of the whole cosmos, he dies cosmically. Lossky explains that, "After the Fall two obstacles intervene to [bridge the gap between the creature and Creator]: sin itself, which makes human nature incapable of receiving grace, and death, the outcome of that

²¹⁴ Ibid., 135.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 128.

²¹⁶ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 133.

fallenness which precipitates man into an anti-natural state where the will of man, contaminating the cosmos, gives non-being a paradoxical and tragic reality.”²¹⁷ Thus as a consequence of sin, man has become a channel of death for himself and for the cosmos.

3. Man in Lossky’s view in the Second Article

a) Who am I? The incarnated Christ as *Christus Victor* has defeated man’s enemy, death. Thus He has saved man from slavery to death. He puts man on the path toward *theosis*, toward God: “The Fall has rendered man inferior to his vocation. But the divine plan has not changed. The mission of the first Adam accordingly must be fulfilled by the celestial Adam, namely Christ: not that He substitutes Himself for man, for the infinite love of God would not replace the bond of human freedom, but in order to return to man the possibility of accomplishing his task, to reopen for him the path to deification.”²¹⁸ On this path, “It is necessary to grow to be rooted more and more in the unity of nature which has Christ Himself for its hypostasis.”²¹⁹ Thus man is a fallen human creature who is being gradually restored to his vocation by Christ’s victory over man’s main enemy, death.

b) Of what am I a part? God the Father intended Christ’s incarnation first, as the means for bringing man to complete union with Him. Therefore, man’s Fall was just an additional, second reason for Christ’s coming in flesh.

c) What is going on with/within me? In the incarnation, Christ assumed human nature in His person and thus achieved a perfect unity between the deity and humanity (a hypostatic union).²²⁰ Once this has been achieved in Christ, the significance and the benefit of Christ’s

²¹⁷ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 84.

²¹⁸ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 75.

²¹⁹ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 180.

²²⁰ In the Orthodox tradition (starting from Irenaeus) there is the concept of “recapitulation,” which is that Christ had to pass through all stages of human life in order to allow for man to later achieve deification through
(continued next page)

hypostatic union was extended to man, too. Christ's incarnation and death for the forgiveness of sins opened the way for people to pursue their ultimate aim—*theosis*. Lossky says it this way:

The descent of the divine person of Christ makes human persons capable of an ascent in the Holy Spirit. . . . Thus the redeeming work of Christ . . . is seen to be directly related to the ultimate goal of creatures: to know union with God. If this union has been accomplished in the divine person of the Son, who is God become man, it is necessary that each human person, in turn, should become god by grace.²²¹

The Orthodox theologian continues: "The descent of God . . . opens to man a path to ascent, the unlimited vistas of the union of created beings with the Divinity."²²² Now Lossky tries to explain how this opening of the upward path was and is accomplished.

Redemption in Eastern Orthodoxy is perceived as a union of the processes of salvation and vocation (as Fairbairn calls it) or redemption and deification (as Lossky describes it).²²³ Lossky explains: "Considered from the point of view of our fallen state, the aim of the Divine dispensation can be termed salvation or redemption. This is the negative aspect of our ultimate goal, which is considered from the perspective of our sin. Considered from the point of view of the ultimate vocation of created beings, the aim of the divine dispensation can be termed deification."²²⁴ Therefore, Lossky understands salvation as merely the negative side of the redemption process, as destroying the dominion of sin and the removal of the human captivity to death and sin that prevents people from reaching their goal of *theosis*. Lossky refers to St. Gregory of Nazianzus, who said that, "God Himself had to free us, triumphing over the tyrant by

them. Symeon even uses the words "to restore" in order to emphasize the total transformation of the whole of human nature through the incarnation of God. Alfeyev, *St. Symeon*, 188-9.

²²¹ Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 98.

²²² *Ibid.*, 97.

²²³ This is synergism, which is a common view for Orthodox theology. For instance, Alfeyev, *St. Symeon*, (189) points out that Symeon followed this tradition, teaching the synergism of God and man in accomplishing the salvation and deification of man.

²²⁴ Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 110.

His Own strength.”²²⁵ By His victory over death, Christ restores human nature: “In Christ’s resurrection human nature triumphs over an anti-natural condition. For it is in its entirety gathered up in Christ, ‘recapitulated’ by Him.”²²⁶ This is the positive side of redemption that “resides in this physical and metaphysical vision of nature metamorphosed by grace, in this restoration henceforth acquired by human nature, in this breach opened through the opaqueness of death that leads to deification.”²²⁷ Redemption allowed for the recovery of the human capacities needed for the deification of man’s nature.²²⁸ Thus man is a human creature saved by being restored in his vocation and capacities to reach for *theosis*.

d) Where do I come from? Man comes from Christ’s victory over death and human destruction, out of slavery and from his liberation by Christ: “At the moment of redemption, the demonic powers are dispossessed, and the change occurs in the relationships of man and God. . . . [Christ] takes from Satan the right to dominate humanity. Sin is banished, and the dominion of the Evil one crumbles.”²²⁹ Thus man is the recipient of the consequences of Christ’s victory over death.

e) What is the purpose of my life? Christ has restored to man the ability to journey toward full communion with God. For man, this means that he can resume his duties as mediator between the creator and creature—a duty he was unable to perform after the Fall.

f) Where am I going (eschatologically)? “Everything converges towards the . . . complete restoration of all that is destroyed by death, [and] towards the embracing of the whole cosmos by

²²⁵ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 115.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 92.

²²⁸ “The redeeming work of the Son is related to our nature. The deifying work of the Holy Spirit concerns our persons.” Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 109.

²²⁹ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 113.

the glory of God become all in all things.”²³⁰ Thus man is a partaker in the great event of the eschatological restoration of the universe.

4. Man in Lossky’s view in the Third Article

a) Who am I? Christ became incarnate to expiate sin and to sanctify the sinner. He became man to “introduce all the moments of our fallen state into that true life which never knows death.” Through Christ’s resurrection, “the fullness of life is inserted into the dry tree of humanity.”²³¹ Man is returned to the fully human life by the sanctifying action of Christ; by which man becomes Christ-like. “The Son has become like us through the incarnation; we become like Him by deification, by partaking of the divinity in the Holy Spirit.”²³² Thus man is a sanctified human being, who has become Christ-like by receiving the Holy Spirit.

b) Of what am I a part? Man is an organic part of the ecclesial, liturgical, and sacramental cosmos, the Church. The Church is first and foremost a sacramental community used by the Holy Spirit to transform the people into sanctified beings. The Church is the realm of the activity of the Holy Spirit among human beings, and therefore the Spirit is the one who validates its actions.

Man as a new creature is born, grows, and finally reaches his ultimate goal of divinization through and in the Church, for that is where he regularly receives the life-giving Spirit. Man receives the Holy Spirit at Baptism and chrismation and receives Him continuously throughout his life. Therefore, Lossky is optimistic concerning the overall situation of man in the Church.

²³⁰ Ibid., 116.

²³¹ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 115-6.

²³² Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 109.

He says, “Our situation is incomparably superior to the paradisiacal state: in fact, we no longer risk losing grace; we can always participate in the theandric fullness of the Church.”²³³

Another means that Holy Spirit may use to lead man toward *theosis* is the performance of holy works by the human will. But, Lossky himself admits that here man is on shaky ground. God’s grace in the Sacraments remains objectively present, but the vacillation of the human will between the obedience and disobedience keeps the individual’s salvation in doubt: “The sacramental life—‘the life in Christ’—is thus seen to be an unceasing struggle for the acquisition of that grace which must transfigure nature; a struggle in which victories alternate with falls, without man ever being deprived of the objective conditions of salvation. In Eastern spirituality ‘a state of grace’ has no absolute or static sense. It is a dynamic and shifting reality which varies according to the fluctuation of the infirmities of the human will.”²³⁴ Lossky goes into detail: “As for the fasts, vigils, prayers, alms, and other good works done in the name of Christ—these are the means whereby we acquire the Holy Spirit.”²³⁵ Thus the reception of grace is a constant, continual, and active process in which one’s own ascetic efforts are critical. This is God’s established order. “Certainly, man was created by the will of God alone; but he cannot be deified by it alone,”²³⁶ for God respects human freedom, of which He Himself is the author. Thus man is the part of the ecclesial, liturgical and sacramental cosmos, the Church, which is the life-giving source of grace for him, but it is also the means through which he must work out his own deification.

²³³ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 85. Cf. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 179-80: “This presence of the Holy Spirit in us, which is the condition of our deification, cannot be lost.”

²³⁴ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 180.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 196-7.

²³⁶ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 72.

c) What is going on with/within me? This question can be answered with the one word—“deification.” It is the goal and aim of man as: “Human persons, supported by the Holy Spirit, must freely acquire . . . the deification that their natures have received, once and for all, in Christ.”²³⁷ To say that man is saved by grace in Eastern Orthodoxy’s understanding means that he is transformed by God communicating His energies through the Holy Spirit to man. They are the light of grace (the “Tabor light”) that shines forth from God’s essence. By the transfiguration of man’s nature and person, he is enabled to see this divine light and become increasingly deified, that is, more united with God.²³⁸ Divinization is the result of synergism between the Holy Spirit procuring grace and man striving to acquire virtue and grace. Thus through the synergistic efforts of man and the Holy Spirit, man gradually becomes a deified human being.

d) Where do I come from? Man comes from the redemption of human nature in the Second Article to the deification of the human person in the Third Article.

For Lossky the ecclesial form of man’s existence is of paramount importance in the process of deification. Here he introduces the relational problems that exist between “human nature,” “the human person” and “the human individual.” First, he takes up the problem of human nature and the human person. Christ and the Holy Spirit cooperate to form the Church and so the Church is a tool that the Lord and the Spirit now use to form a new, deified man.

In the Church, the unity of human nature is realized by incorporating man into the body of Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. Lossky refers to St. Irenaeus, who said that Christ is the Head, the principle, the hypostasis of the renewed human nature which is His body.²³⁹ Human

²³⁷ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 85.

²³⁸ Ontologically, the possibility of transformation of man’s nature was prepared by the incarnation of Christ. As Evangelical theologian Daniel Clendenedin states: “To paraphrase Athanasius, when God descended, assumed humanity, and was ‘in-carnated,’ he opened the way for people to ascend to him, assume divinity, and become ‘in-godded.’” *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: A Western Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 121.

²³⁹ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 164.

nature is 'enhypositized' in Christ. It becomes consubstantial with the deified humanity. The human person in Christ does not become something like a portion of His Person, nor is he included in Him as in a super-person. The human nature is no longer represented by the old Adam, but is renewed and recapitulated in Christ: "We are *one* in Christ by virtue of our nature, in that He is the Head of our nature, forming in Himself one sole body."²⁴⁰

The Church provides the necessary conditions for a spiritual life and union with God. It is through the Church and sacraments that "our nature enters into union with the divine nature in the hypostasis of the Son, the Head of His mystical body."²⁴¹ Lossky describes the relationship between man, Christ, and the Church as follows: "The Church is our nature recapitulated by Christ and contained within His hypostasis."²⁴²

Lossky goes on to distinguish the functions of the Son and the Spirit in relationship to man: "The redeeming work of the Son is related to our nature. The deifying work of the Holy Spirit concerns our persons"²⁴³ because in Lossky's opinion, "the Holy Spirit does not contain within Himself the human hypostases—as Christ contains the nature—but gives Himself separately to each person."²⁴⁴ We are, "One in Christ, multiple through the Spirit, *a single human nature* in the hypostasis of Christ, *many human hypostases* in the grace of the Holy Spirit."²⁴⁵ This is unity in diversity, for Christ "lends His hypostasis to the nature, [and] the [Spirit] gives His divinity to the persons. Thus the work of Christ unifies; the work of the Holy Spirit diversifies."²⁴⁶

²⁴⁰ Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 107-8.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 181.

²⁴² Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 184.

²⁴³ Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 109.

²⁴⁴ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 193.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 183.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

The next problem that comes into play in our discussion of the interplay of human nature and the issues of personhood and individualism in relation to God is that of the human person and the human individual. For Lossky, the Church is not an aggregation of individuals, but “in ecclesial reality, in the becoming of the new creation, the many personal consciousnesses are consciousnesses of the Church insofar as they cease to be ‘self-consciousnesses’ and put in the place of their own ‘self’ the single subject of the multiple consciousnesses of the Church.”²⁴⁷ In Lossky’s opinion, the old-Adamic individual establishes his sense of identity on the basis of the opposition of the “Not-I” as a part of the common human nature. Therefore, the only way to free the person from the oppression of individuality is by way of asceticism, of self-renunciation: “The perfection of each person is fulfilled in total abandonment and in the renunciation of self.”²⁴⁸ Thus the same asceticism that was needed for achieving mystical unity also applies here (though for a different reason, as we shall see).

Thus man as an individual representative of human nature has been deified by Christ, and in the realm of the Third Article by the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit is becoming a person. In order to realize his human personhood, this man is called to exercise the ascetic effort to fight the individual in him; he is encouraged to renounce his selfishness. Thus a deified man must necessarily be an ascetic, ideally a monk.

e) What is the purpose of my life? In the realm of the Third Article the purpose of man’s life can be expressed both individually and collectively. For an individual as Lossky says, “Christian life . . . is the acquisition of grace.”²⁴⁹ For man as a collective being, his purpose of life can be summarized as the development of a churchly consciousness. It is the common memory

²⁴⁷ Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 193.

²⁴⁸ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 182.

²⁴⁹ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 197. The acquisition of grace is supplemented by ecstasies for novices and the “constant experience of the divine reality” for mature saints (208-9).

of what was “from the beginning” or simply, “tradition.” There is but a single tradition, but it does not mean that there is one single Church consciousness uniformly imposed on all. The Church exists with a multiplicity of consciousnesses, with different degrees of actualization in different persons. One person is freer if he is more open to the truth of the Church, that is, the consciousness of the churchly person is not “self-consciousness” but the possession of the catholic truth. Lossky believes that:

The mystery of the catholicity of the Church is realized in the plurality of personal consciousness as an accord of unity and multiplicity. . . . In ecclesial reality, in the becoming of the new creation, the many personal consciousnesses are consciousnesses of the Church only insofar as they cease to be ‘self-consciousnesses’ and put in the place of their own ‘self’ the single subject of the multiple consciousnesses of the Church.²⁵⁰

The fathers of the Church are “the champions of the catholicity. . . . who possess the consciousness of the unity of the Body of Christ, of the apostolic tradition common to all, those who struggle unremittingly that catholic Truth triumph in all consciousnesses.”²⁵¹ They speak not in their own name but on behalf of the Church, which contains many personal consciousnesses but has only one subject of consciousness—that of the Church itself.

Thus man is a bearer of the tradition as the consciousness of the Church; the more he acquires it and the more he leaves his own self-consciousness, the closer he is to the truth. Thus in this respect the ideal man is a father of the Church.

f) Where am I going (ecshatologically)? Eschatologically, man is going to face the end of this world and the final triumph of the Church. Men’s individual fates will depend on their being deified by the energies of God. In Lossky’s mind the eschatological downfall of the world and the triumph of the Church “belong to the age to come, when the Church will be perfected in the

²⁵⁰ Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 192-3.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 193.

Holy Spirit, when created nature and uncreated fullness will be united in human persons who will become deified human hypostases, in the face of Christ, the incarnate divine Hypostasis.”²⁵²

He writes:

The world grows old and falls into decay while the Church is constantly rejuvenated and renewed by the Holy Spirit, who is the source of its life. At a given moment, when the Church has attained to the fullness of growth determined by the will of God, the external world, having used up its vital resources, will perish. As for the Church, it will appear in its eternal glory as the Kingdom of God. It will then stand revealed as the true foundation of the creatures raised up in incorruptibility to be united to God, who will be all in all. But some will be united by grace . . . others apart from grace . . . Some will be deified by the energies which they have acquired in the interior of their being; others will remain without, and for them the deifying fire of the Spirit will be an external flame, intolerable to all those whose will is opposed to God.²⁵³

Before the “Age to Come,” no one will be sure of his fate, for no one has yet reached perfection in the union with God except Mary, Mother of God. She gave her human nature to the Word and freely became the instrument of His Incarnation; her nature is therefore purified by the Holy Spirit. On Pentecost, the Spirit once again descended on her, but then He descended in order to become the means of her deification. Thus the most pure human nature that contained the Word entered into perfect union with the deity in the person of the Mother of God. Reproducing the voluntary *kenosis* of her Son, she submitted to the conditions of human life, even to the acceptance of death, which (because of her perfect union with God) had no more dominion over her. Like her Son, Mary was raised from the dead and borne up to heaven. Thus she was the first human hypostasis in whom was fulfilled the final end for which the world was created. Thenceforth, the Church and the entire universe have their crown, their example of personal achievement, who throws open the way of deification for the whole creation.

²⁵² Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 192.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 178-9.

In a further description of the Virgin Mary as the ultimate example of deified man, Lossky cites Saint Gregory Palamas, who sees in the Mother of God a created person bringing together in herself all perfections of both the created and the Uncreated. She “is the boundary of created and uncreated nature.” Palamas endows her with divine attributes and functions. Because she has crossed the frontier that separates us from the age to come, she is freed from the limitations of time and thus is capable of watching over the destinies of the Church and of the universe. Through her, men and angels receive grace. No gift is received in the Church without the assistance of the Mother of God, who is herself the first-fruits of the glorified Church.²⁵⁴

Thus man is a personal participant in the grand eschatological drama where his spiritual condition of being deified by the uncreated energies of God’s grace will play the critical role. No human being apart from Mary has gained perfect union with God. Therefore, she has been endowed with divine attributes and functions.

5. Man in Lossky’s view in the First Article Revisited

The absence of a discussion of First Article Revisited concerns in Lossky highlights his focus on the ascetic, monastic ideal and his model of a mystical ascent out of the strictures of earthly existence into union with God. Although there is a rich tradition of social theology in Russian Orthodoxy, Lossky’s anthropology does not come any closer than this quite abstract and at the same time compassionate, touching, and heartwarming address, which offers little or no basis for concrete action in daily life. Lossky does not go further in discussing First Article concerns than in his reference to St. Isaac Sirin, who asked and responded:

“What is a charitable heart?”—“It is a heart which is burning with charity for the whole of creation, for men, for the birds, for the beasts, for the demons—for all creatures. He who has such a heart cannot see or call to mind a creature without his eyes becoming filled with tears by reason of the immense compassion which seizes

²⁵⁴ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 192-5.

his heart; a heart which is softened and can no longer bear to see or learn from others of any suffering, even the smallest pain, being inflicted upon a creature. This is why such a man never ceases to pray also for the animals, for the enemies of Truth, and for those who do him evil, that they may be preserved and purified. He will pray even for the reptiles, moved by the infinite pity which reigns in the hearts of those who are becoming united to God. In his way to union with God, man in no way leaves creatures aside, but gathers together in his love the whole cosmos disordered by sin, that it may at last be transfigured by grace.”²⁵⁵

This is the way of a spiritual man, a hesychast monk who fulfils the role of the cosmic mediator. “The Christian mystic . . . entering into himself, and enclosing himself in the ‘inner chamber’ of his heart, finds there, deeper even than sin, the beginning of an ascent in the course of which the universe appears more and more unified, more and more coherent, penetrated with spiritual forces and forming one whole within the hand of God.”²⁵⁶ Such an approach is just a logical extension of Lossky’s anthropology of man as a microcosm and mediator, who is cosmically aware and feels himself eschatologically responsible for the whole of creation, but has practically no clue about how to fulfill this grand task. In his inward, contemplative activity, man remains a self-isolated, spiritualized individual. He does his good works, not aiming them toward fulfilling his neighbor’s needs, but as the requisites for his own salvation.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 111.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 106.

D. A Summary of Lossky's Anthropology in the Creedal Chart

Once we have done the creedal analysis of humanity according to Lossky, we are able to fill in the matrix of man's meaning. It is as follows:

Table 3. Creedal Chart of Lossky's Understanding of Man's Meaning

Dimension	First Article	First Article after the Fall	Second article	Third Article	First Article revisited ²⁵⁷
a. 1. What am I?	The unifying centre of the primordial differences in the created order	The self-isolated center of the fallen created order	The redeemed human nature		
a. 2. Who am I?	The person, functionally (not ontologically) relatively free subject of his own actions etc.	The distracted person (person in conflict with himself)		The deified human person	
b. Of what am I a part?	Of the terrestrial and celestial hierarchy	Of the terrestrial and celestial hierarchy which went astray from God	A partial reason for Christ's incarnation	Of the ecclesial, liturgical and sacramental cosmos	
c. What is going on with/within me?	Ambivalence—a living tension of possibility to love and to be in opposition to God	Destruction resulting in death	Salvation as the restoration of man's capacities needed for the deification of his human nature; synergism	Divine transformation, transfiguration—deification of the human person	

²⁵⁷ In essence, Lossky does not return to the First Article. His ideal of a mystic is an ascetic hesychast monk who has little or no place for a focus on the gifts of creation, but instead endeavors to lift the self above them and unite with God through contemplative inner striving.

d. Where do I come from?	From Christ the Logos	From Christ the Logos as from the primordial genealogical archetype	From the Christ's victory over the death and human destruction	From the deification of the human nature to the deification of the human person	
e. What is the purpose of my life?	To mature in communion with God in order progressively to acquire the true humanness in the movement from image to likeness	Man has failed his vocation	Christ restores man's capacity to be a mediator	Individually it is an acquisition of the Holy Spirit while collectively it is acquisition of the churchly consciousness	
f. Where am I going (eschatologically)?	To the perfection of the whole being—reunification of the primordial separation and deification of the Cosmos and of man himself	To the cosmic death	To the eschatological restoration of the universe	To the personal participation in the grand eschatological drama of salvation or perdition	

E. Comparison and Conclusions Regarding the Lutheran and Eastern Orthodox Understandings of Man

The anthropological differences²⁵⁸ between Martin Luther and Vladimir Lossky result from their different theological presuppositions. Although Lossky denies the use of Neoplatonic concepts and ways of thinking, his theology is, in fact, a kind of subspecies of the Neoplatonic schema.²⁵⁹ For Lossky, speaking of God and the world, the ontological talk of hypostasis, the

²⁵⁸ Lossky's theological anthropology may be summarized in formula: "me within God," while Luther's is: "God 'for me.'"

²⁵⁹ The question about the mutual influence of Neoplatonism and mysticism of Eastern Orthodoxy is a complex one. Definitely, Eastern Orthodoxy has borrowed much from Neoplatonism. Meyendorff speaks of Orthodox fathers who, "without avoiding those elements whose non-Christian origin could not be in doubt, adapted them—as reflections of natural mysticism—to the unique reality of the Christian mystery." (*A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 140). Speaking of the "Prayer of Jesus," Meyendorff mentions that in contrast to an "intellectual mysticism" based on a Neo-Platonic, dualistic doctrine of man, the "'mysticism of the heart' . . . is more Biblical and, sometimes, Stoic" (147). Brilliantov in his *Vlijanije* states in a straightforward manner that the theology of Eastern Orthodoxy
(continued next page)

divine nature, and the distinction between God's essence and energies (expressed in terms of the impersonal "mechanics" or better, "energetics" of God and the world, that is, the components of and the relationships between the Logos and the *logoi*,²⁶⁰ and also as "thought-will,"²⁶¹ degrees of materiality,²⁶² etc.) is predominant. In this way of thinking, Christ is merely a divine Logos²⁶³—His historic actions are irrelevant to Lossky. Even more, Lossky does not perceive the Bible as the narrative of God's actions told in a human vernacular. Rather, it is for him a collection of cataphatic pointers to an apophatic reality. Thus for Lossky God speaks "over," not "through" Holy Scripture. Lossky uses the text of the Scripture very selectively according to the paradigm of mystical,²⁶⁴ monastic, hesychast theology. Lossky's theology has a very narrow Biblical

"starts with the clarification of the term 'God' grounding on the results of Greek philosophy" (Alexandrian school and Platonism) (170). Such an approach may lead to the oversimplified suggestion that, as Père Feastugière says: "When the Fathers 'think' their mysticism, they platonize. There is nothing original in the edifice" (As quoted in Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Mystical Tradition* [Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1981], 191). Feastugière finds the origin of this "philosophical spirituality" in the Alexandrine school, Clement and Origen, which is not necessarily anti-Christian but is essentially independent of Christianity, for mysticism excludes Christian love or *agape* (Louth, 193). Louth tries to prove the point that the fathers have "modified and rethought" Platonism (Ibid., 197) and that "Patristic mysticism transforms Platonist mysticism while finding its language and forms convenient to use" (Ibid., 198). He does this by contrasting Platonist and Orthodox mysticism's teachings on God (impersonal or supra-personal versus personal), the soul's relationship to God (mystical experience as something that comes upon the soul versus grace as God's gift to the soul), and understanding of moral virtues (moral virtues are the ways in which the soul controls the body versus virtues as evidence of divinization, of indwelling of Christ in man [while retaining their purificatory significance]) (Ibid., 194-8). One can easily find the features Louth ascribes to Platonism also in Orthodox thought (for instance, energies of God are spoken as impersonal forces, asceticism as the controlling force of the body and soul, etc.).

²⁶⁰ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 98-9.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 101.

²⁶² Ibid., 103.

²⁶³ This author agrees with Zaitsev who says that "The ontological essence/energy distinction diminishes the soteriological function of the divine persons, precluding them from direct communion with man." "Analysis and Evaluation of Vladimir Lossky's Doctrine of *Theosis*," 278.

²⁶⁴ Zaitsev says in this regard that "a theologian must be willing to ask whether he is actually emphasizing the ideas most central to Scripture or is neglecting important scriptural emphases" (285). Although Lossky has a chapter on redemption in his *Orthodox Theology* (110-5), in which he formally acknowledges the importance of the sacrificial and redemptive factors, in his overall theology it does not play any significant role. It is possible to read his whole theology without this chapter in mind. This is no accident. Clendenedin states, "In the history of Orthodox theology . . . it is startling to observe the near total absence of any mention of the idea of justification by faith. Justification by faith has received 'short shrift' in Orthodoxy; in fact, the most important text of Orthodox theology, John of Damascus's *Orthodox Faith*, never even mentions the idea" (123). Orthodox theologian James Stamboulis in his *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today* (New York: Orbis, 1986), states that the emphasis on legal concepts, (continued next page)

source; it is based mainly on Psalm 82:6 and 2 Peter 1:4, the words of which are (unjustifiably) used as technical theological terms and even as formal concepts.²⁶⁵ Nowhere does Lossky offer an exegesis of these verses or discuss their Scriptural context. The reader is left with the impression that he is dealing with some kind of religious philosophy and speculation that is overstepping a responsible explication of the revelatory givens. There is no balance in Lossky's theology between the material taken from the Scripture and that from his church tradition.

Luther departed from parts of his Ockhamist heritage (for instance, the view that sinners must earn grace by doing "what is in them"), but he did make use of its view of the absolute power and majesty of God, as well as His personal character, the personal nature of the relationship between God and His human creatures, and man's dependence upon God's revelation of Himself and His approach through His Word.²⁶⁶ Luther frames his approach to Scripture within his understanding of God as the One who creates by speaking, and whose revelation of Himself culminates in the Word made flesh. Scripture conveys to its readers and hearers the voice of the living God who brings His people into conversation with Himself. Speaking in Lossky's terms, Luther acknowledges the overall cataphatic orientation of the Scripture. Therefore, for him, the Scripture as God's Word is the source where he looks for propositional and existential certainty of faith. God Himself in Scripture speaks to his child

in contrast to the idea of mystical union recognized in the East, is perceived by Orthodoxy as the "real issue that unites the West theologically and divides it from the East" (7).

²⁶⁵ This author agrees with Zaitsev who says that Lossky "takes for granted the Patristic metaphysical interpretation of certain biblical words without analyzing them in their biblical context. The most prominent example of reading the biblical text primarily in terms of its philosophical tradition is Lossky's interpretation of 2 Pet 1:4. In defending the reality of *theosis*, Lossky imposes the essence/energy distinction of God, which author of this text hardly had in mind. Such philosophico-theological interpretation of the Bible, and a dogmatic pre-condition with the idea of *theosis*, leads Lossky to selective use of the biblical material and, actually, to the exclusion of the covenantal, sacrificial, and substitutive language from his vocabulary." "Analysis and Evaluation of Vladimir Lossky's Doctrine of *Theosis*," 276. He also says that "the extrabiblical word *theosis* overshadowed the . . . sacrificial, and substitutionary notions of the Bible" (225).

²⁶⁶ Robert Kolb, *Bound Choice, Election, and Wittenberg Theological Method From Luther to the Formula of Concord* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 28-31.

Martin Luther the words of the Gospel, which brings about the certainty of forgiveness. Luther is not looking for extraordinary experiences but for the certainty of his faith and salvation.

Experiences may come and go (and there is no certainty in them, for what was or seemed certain yesterday or in particular conditions may not be such today or tomorrow), while God's Word with all its benefits remains even if we do not receive them immediately or in some extraordinary way.

Luther affirms the notion of *Deus absconditus* but, being Gospel-motivated, points away from that aspect of God's character and concentrates on God as the personal divine being who reveals Himself within history and through humanly understandable means of communication. Luther always argues for God as a person (and therefore, for the very personal, "organic" communication of God in relationship to His creatures). Luther's God is a person of God the Father, who has sent His only begotten Son "for us" in the midst of the human life, into their history, to save His dear children (notice the "dear Father"—"child" talk in Luther), and who communicates with His human creatures through His Holy Spirit. This God engages man in conversation, dialogue, and partnership by a relationship constituted in the exchange of words—written, oral and sacramental. These words are creative and performative and bestow human identity upon man.

Lossky, according to his Neoplatonic paradigm, sees God mainly as an unknown God who communicates with the creation and human beings via the impersonal energies generated from His being and projected into creation. Lossky denies man's God-given capacities to understand the Father²⁶⁷ who addresses the human through His Word and His actions. Man's way to a knowledge of God is mainly apophatical²⁶⁸ and by way of a personal mystical experience²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ Thus contradicting 1 Cor 2:12, 15-6.

²⁶⁸ It is a paradox that Lossky's theology is apophatic in content but inescapably cataphatic in form.

(supported by tradition). Man in Lossky's view communicates with God via the energies that divinize and transfigure him into a god by grace, drawing him into mystical union, *theosis*, with God. It is a supraverbal and immediate approach to God, which requires from man concerted ascetic efforts. Man, consistently and gradually working out his divinization, is almost dissolved into a mystical union with God; man deliberately and purposefully leaves behind his creatureliness. God's gifts (received as indwelling energies in man) make man more divine, and this enables him to live within the life of God.

The guiding motif that drives the idea of mystical union, *theosis*, can be put into the formula: "me within God." Therefore, for man in Lossky's view, faith "is an ontological relationship²⁷⁰ between man and God, an internally objective relationship,"²⁷¹ and an "ontological participation included in a personal meeting"²⁷² in order that man may become god.²⁷³ Thus man in Lossky's view is required to become what he was not originally designed to be.²⁷⁴ This is

²⁶⁹ Lossky's overall mystical approach has an inherent problem of bringing upon itself undesired parallels with other religions. The editor of his *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction* regards the following as praise for Lossky: "Indeed, an interesting study could be made listing parallels between the Lossky's expression of the Orthodox tradition and the 'orthodoxy' of Hinduism, at least. I would naturally not care to underrate the differences presented by the status of Christ in the former, but I nonetheless am ever more convinced that, in their truest *mysticisms*, much that is central to these two great traditions is largely shared. Perhaps this is true of all mysticisms, in their very nature." Ian Kesarcodi-Watson, Foreword to Lossky's *Orthodox Theology*, 9.

²⁷⁰ Here the legitimate objection may be raised against Lossky that if ontological union were enough for our salvation, then the cross would not be necessary. The incarnation alone would suffice. But if salvation is the satisfaction of God's wrath and the new creation effected by Christ's resurrection, then it is finished only with the cross and His rising. The wrath of God has to be directed toward the substitutionary sufferer.

²⁷¹ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 16.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Here American Lutheran systematician William Schumacher rightly objects, saying: "If the value of the human being lies exclusively in union with God which transcends ordinary creaturely existence (thus making me '*mehr als ein Mensch*'), then what the human is as creature has no real significance at all." "'Who Do I Say That You Are?' Anthropology and the Theology of *Theosis* in the Finnish School of Tuomo Mannermaa." Ph. D. diss., St. Louis, Concordia Seminary, 2003, 234-5.

²⁷⁴ Even Luther's "superman," *vir heroicus*, who, impelled by God, is able to change an entire world, still remains a man, with all his human weakness and sinfulness. WA 51, 207-8; 212-3; Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl Rasmussen (Evansville: Ballast Press, 1999), 92-3, 157-160, 198, 214-5, 230.

expressed in an Orthodox slogan which is very appealing to man's religious and spiritual ambitions—"God became man in order that man might become god."

The Lutheran answer to this Orthodox slogan is, "God became man so that man would become again truly man," (that is, he is to return to his genuine and full humanity). The reception of God's gifts makes man more human;²⁷⁵ he is fully human by becoming, being, and remaining God's child who joyfully implements his Father's will and lives out His gifts. Kolb comments on Luther's anthropology, "Recognizing that we are no more and no less than creatures frees us from the need to assume the impossible burden of being the God who orders and frees our lives. Luther's 'let God be God' let us be us, creatures who can be all that he made us to be."²⁷⁶ Luther's man was created by God for life on earth and for life eternal; neither one is excluded on account of the other. Even after the Fall man's task is to work and toil within its structures as the place which has been given by God "for us" as our home until man enters life everlasting. God as Savior does not deliver man out of creation, but man is rescued from the power of sin. Luther, once a monk himself, is calling men back, inviting men to return to the world, for God as the creator and re-creator is at work there. Thus Luther's approach is practical and down-to-earth. Luther's man remains on earth where Christ came to serve. It is deliberately affirmative of and is engaged with the ordinary, common and everyday life.

As a redeemed sinner, Luther's man is driven by Christ's "for-usness" into the world of the needs of his neighbor to serve him and to be with him in fellowship. Man has been created as a human creature (a body-soul unit), and it is only as such that he exercises his vocation. Luther's "for us" anthropology motivates man not merely to pray for his neighbor but also to

²⁷⁵ Luther in Small Catechism's explanation of the Creed stresses "me"— "God has created me," Christ "has redeemed me," and the Holy Spirit "has called me."

²⁷⁶ Robert Kolb, "Luther on the Theology of the Cross," *Lutheran Quarterly* 16 (2002): 461.

help him practically. Luther's man is actively participating in the world as God's "mouth" and "hands" in order to take care of his neighbor near and far.

On the contrary, Lossky's anthropological scheme, which is based upon Neoplatonic concepts, does not regard man as an organic entity. His creatureliness is a condition against which he struggles. Earthly life as a whole in Neoplatonism possesses the lesser reality than that of the spirit and mind. In order to get from the lesser (that is, the earthly) reality to the higher (spiritual, heavenly) reality, one needs to apply ascetic efforts. Lossky, a layman, is calling men out of created life, because in his view their creatureliness conceals the true (mystical) reality of their existence. The everyday life is perceived almost as a distraction from the liturgy—ecclesial or cosmic (when the man's whole life is perceived as liturgy). Thus the world is not appreciated for what it is as God's gift, but rather it is a state to be endured. Therefore, the goal of piety and asceticism is the exit from this creaturely world: from this-worldliness into the other-worldliness, as typified by the hesychast monastery (which is the closest approximation of the earthly life to the heaven). This is religious escapism.

Lossky finds the ultimate solution of the creatureliness in *apokatastasis*—the reunification of the entire creature with God, thus overcoming his ontological differences with God. Man's cosmic task is to be a mediator who overcomes these differences and unites them in himself for the whole cosmos. Unfortunately, man in Lossky's view is given these grand duties without having been granted the means for that task.²⁷⁷

Luther's approach is not a polar opposite of Lossky's. Luther's answer is not a denial of experience, nor is it a denial of union with Christ. Rather, it is the experience which is shaped by the address of God's Word, and union with God through His Word (as a means of grace) that

²⁷⁷ The author, himself a pastor, cannot imagine how an Orthodox priest would explain and motivate his parishioner to execute his mediating tasks on a regular, day-to-day basis.

completes or fulfills humanity. Luther's man is the one who is being spoken to by God in words of Scripture, who is engaged by it, because there God speaks to him in a "for me" way. For Luther, neither human speculation (as in Scholasticism), nor the extraordinary experience²⁷⁸ (as in mysticism) is the ultimate criterion (although both of them has their legitimate place and role in the life of Christian) of faith. Neither one of them is able to provide the ultimate nor certain answer of the Gospel for sinner who stands *coram Deo*.

Luther's man has already received his salvation. He is certain of it and of his vocation not because of his subjective experience but because God (via His external Word) tells him and does it to him. Man's care for his neighbor is a sign that his salvation is assured. Vocation for Luther is not derived from man's salvific concerns, but it is his ministry to his neighbor, which is a sign

²⁷⁸ Luther does not deny religious experience. On the contrary, he criticizes abuses of both Scholasticism and mysticism. He had first-hand experience of both. In some regards these trends of the Christian faith are overreactions to each other. Mysticism is an overreaction to Scholasticism's sterility, as it tries to "free" God from the chains of dogmatical categories. Scholasticism, in turn, may be seen as an overreaction to mysticism's subjectivity. Scholasticism tries to objectify God to the extent that man may try to manipulate Him by rational categories. The fact that man is involved in a relationship with God does not matter much, and therefore there is no room for a transcendental fear of God. The Scholastic God evokes neither terror nor comfort for the soul. What is important is to put everything into a logical, cohesive system that is rationally understandable and controllable. Mysticism, on the other hand, by exaggerating the subjective element on account of the objective, tries to subdue God to man's subjective experiences, leaving out or trying to take over the objective means by which God comes to and interrelates with man and world. It tries to push aside God's own ways of communicating Himself. Mysticism emphasizes the subjective experience to the point that it becomes universally obligatory for every believer. Luther's approach is rather motivated by his attitude of "let God be God." God as the almighty Creator is the One Who initiates relationships with His human creatures. In this way man has his legitimate and correct place in the world, which is assigned to him by God. Luther's theology, without denying man's religious experience, keeps the right balance between the religious cause and its consequence. They are not to be reversed. The cause is God as He presents Himself in His Word (as Christ) and in oral, written, and sacramental words. Man's experience of them is always a consequence, a subjective effect and subjective response, the propriety of which is to be measured by the same God's Word and words. Even Swedish Church historian Bengt R. Hoffman, who tries to portray Luther as a mystic in *Luther and the Mystics: A Re-examination of Luther's Spiritual Experience and his Relationship to the Mystics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976), is forced to acknowledge that "mysticism as a conceptual system to be accepted or rejected was of little interest to [Luther]. He spoke of the mystical as the inner side of the external creed, personally appropriated and felt, and this to him was not a system called mysticism but rather mystical theology. . . . Mystical theology is experience of God. . . . Mystical theology, then, is the inner, spiritual side of the Christian faith on Luther's accounting" (15). He also admits that, "Luther placed a limit on Christian mysticism by his emphasis on 'the external word.' . . . Luther employed terms reflecting his desire to anchor the gospel firmly in history and in Holy Writ. He used expressions like 'righteousness outside us,' 'Christ for us' and . . . 'the external word,' which point away from the human person to something objective. . . . This objective . . . vocabulary is the summation of Luther's attempts to bring out the imputative character of faith. Since righteousness is imputed the individual Christian has done nothing about himself. The Christian is advised to take hold of the
(continued next page)

of thankfulness to God for salvation delivered as well as obedience to God's commands. Man exercises his ministry to the neighbor via the concrete walks of life, which God uses in order to bring concrete gifts "for us," which grounds man in the world. In Luther's view God's "for-usness," His *beneficium* exists on as a constant flow of His gifts through man to his neighbors near and far. In Luther's view man is invited to offer himself as an active channel to God's "for-usness"; in such a way man becomes God's instrument for His goodness and *agape*. The neighbor, with his daily needs, is set before man in order that man may express to him that very love which he himself has received from God, in practical, day-to day terms.

Man in Lossky's view is busy with himself because for him, salvation as his vocation still lies ahead, and it needs to be worked out by hard ascetic efforts in a gradual, life-long process. Salvation in this paradigm is a continual, life-long acquisition of the Holy Spirit and its transfiguration of man's human nature. Therefore, man in Lossky's view cannot be certain of his salvation, for only his (or his Church's) mystical experience may tell him this. Man in Lossky's view is asked and expected to follow very individual spiritual experiences by prominent ascetics whose experiences has been preserved in Orthodox hagiography. Only very few of them have reached the pure, genuine spiritual experiences. Thus Lossky's anthropology unintentionally suggests spiritual elitism. But even then, there is no certainty of salvation, for mystical experience extends infinitely, becoming more complicated, refined, and risky. One is constantly warned to be aware of the wrong mystical experiences influenced by devil or by ones own "ego." Thus man in Lossky's view is a religious, self-alienated man, who needs to work out his salvation in a high-profile ascetic effort. This makes him into a self-centered individual who dedicates all his efforts to his striving to acquire the Holy Spirit. Therefore, ideally man (as a

promise of forgiveness given in the word but think nothing of the movements of his soul which, because they fluctuate are not reliable guides to God" (13).

contemplative monk) is disengaged from sociality²⁷⁹ and only passively involved in it, praying for it but not practically participating in it. Lossky's theology does not motivate man to become interested in the world of other men. The most he can compassionately say is, "Pray for the entire world."

Because the two theologians do not present the person and the communication of God in the same way, and because they define the human problem differently, they do not share similar views regarding the act of salvation and the result or goal of salvation.

Man in Lossky's view's problem is death. God's outpouring of the divine energies lift man above death and thus immortalize him. For man in Lossky's view, salvation takes away the human capacity to sin and to die, a particular captivity which prevents man from achieving *theosis*. Salvation is the removal of obstacles on the way to divinization. Man in Lossky's view does not become deified because of Christ's sacrifice; rather it provides man with another possibility, with the restored capacity, to achieve his God-given task.²⁸⁰ Salvation is communion with Christ, participation in divine life, and sanctification by the energies of God.

Luther's man's problem is sin, death being a consequence of sin. Christ's death and resurrection deals with sin and death, and through His substitution and satisfaction, He restores our humanity through forgiving our sins.

The end result of this brief comparison is seen in different appraisals of the Christian life on earth. Lossky's men constitute the spiritual elite who are concentrated in the hesychast monasteries, while Luther's men are dispersed into the entire world. Man in Lossky's view spends his life in the monastery, finding "me within God"—a pursuit that has not been required

²⁷⁹ Because of the very intimate and subjective character of the personal mystical experience, there is an inherent problem of delivering it via public ecclesial communication, for instance, in preaching, teaching etc. There is also a problem with the proper ecclesial and dogmatic legitimization of such subjective mystical experience.

²⁸⁰ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 75.

by Christ. Luther's man, on the other hand, is actively engaged with the world. Following the Savior's Great Commission, he brings the Word of God "for us" into it.

If we would like to sum up the views of both theologians regarding the "for-usness" of God, we may come up with the following conclusion. Luther's God is the Person of God who exhibits fatherly characteristics, acting "for us" in every respect. The "for-usness" of God determines Luther's concept of reality, which is fundamentally relational, that is, Luther puts the main emphasis on the *coram* relationships man lives in. The "for-usness" of God is crucial in the realm of the Second Article, where "for us" acts salvifically. God's "for-usness" delivered and received in Christ restores man to his original relationships with God. Thus, the "for-usness" of God's person, and consequently of all of His gifts, is an essential characteristic of Luther's theological endeavor.

Lossky's God, on the other hand, is apophatic, unspeakable divine Being, the God of eternal attributes *whose* majesty absorbs His personality. The reception of these attributes delivered to man via the energies of God is essential for man's salvation/sanctification/vocation. Man is drawn into God by the action of these divine energies, and as the result of that, is deified. God's "for us" is of secondary importance for Lossky because it is limited merely to a being a resource of divine energies.

Having considered Luther's and Lossky's anthropological insights, the final chapter builds on Luther's ideas regarding the "for us" in order to define what it means to be human in terms of the creeds. Lossky's anthropological concepts shape this discussion in a secondary way. For the purpose of a clearer reading, this chapter will follow the same pattern of the explication of the role of "for us" as the previous one, namely First Article, First Article after the Fall, Second Article, Third Article, and First Article Revisited. Following the pattern of previous chapters on Luther and Lossky, it will end with the creedal analysis of humanity and the summary of

anthropological findings regarding “for us” in the credal chart. Thus this study will present its findings alongside the views of Luther and Lossky.

CHAPTER SIX

ANTHROPOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF GOD'S ACTING "FOR US"

This chapter leads into the further discussion of the significance and importance of the theological concept of God being "for us" in terms of man's identity. It develops the previously mentioned insights of Luther into a conceptual framework for Christian anthropology. The following chapter surveys all articles of the creed, gathering the data in order to answer the same questions of meaning that were put to Luther and Lossky. The collected data is summarized and reflected in the creedal chart.

A. Anthropological Implications of the "For Us" Approach for the First Article

1. Providing the Gift

a) The "For Us" God

God's title, "the Father," implies and consolidates in itself His other titles of "Almighty" and "Creator." Both titles effectively reveal aspects of God being man's heavenly Father, that is, they reveal His anthropocentric focus.¹ In the title "Father," God's "for-usness" culminates in the realm of the First Article. If man says, "I am a child," he presumes that there is a Father for him. If he exclaims to God, "Abba! Father!," this presumes that he is God's child. This acknowledgement is not needed for God's sake but for the human creature. With it the creature recognizes more than the simple fact that he has some ultimate source of physical existence and sustenance. He acknowledges that God is more than just a Creator God; he states that He is the Father—"our Father." As Swedish

¹ As William Schumacher says, "The first thing to be said about human existence is in fact a statement about God." "Who Do I Say That You Are?" Anthropology and the Theology of *Theosis* in the Finnish School of Tuomo Mannermaa." Ph. D. diss., St. Louis, Concordia Seminary, 2003, 215.

scholar of German literature Birgit Stolt points out, “A father not principally awe-inspiring but a source of trust and joy.”² Therefore, the next part of the catechism after the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, starts with the recognition of that fact: “Our Father who art in heaven. . . .” Luther explains this connection. He says, “With these words God wants to entice us, so that we come to believe he is truly our Father and we are truly his children, in order that we may ask him boldly and with complete confidence, just as loving children ask their loving father.”³ To have God as a Father (who is God “for us”) does not mean that we will be always showered with His gifts. God’s “for-usness” is exemplified in His being our Father, that is, in His loving and caring attitude toward His human creatures.⁴ To confess “I believe in God the Father” is, first of all, a statement of faith. It is not a description of a permanent experience of beneficial empirical facts. God continues to be our Father even through the difficult times, disasters, and calamities of life when there are no pleasing “for us” kind of signs and gifts from God to be found. To confess God as our Father first of all means to look for His Person rather than for His gifts. Gifts will follow certainly, but in their own time and in the manner of delivery that He ordains. Even as God the Father’s children, we are not in a position to expect or demand gifts. We only receive them with thankfulness. Therefore, to recognize God as Almighty, Creator and Father is the *satis est* of the faith in First Article for everything else (gifts as well) follow from this.

² Birgit Stolt, “Martin Luther on God As a Father,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 8 (1994): 392.

³ LC, III, 1.

⁴ Schumacher, “‘Who Do I Say That You Are?’” says: “The catechism explains the First Article of the creed by confessing that God does all his (present and ongoing) creative work ‘without any merit or worthiness of mine at all.’ Human creatures stand before their Creator utterly without merit or worthiness, entirely dependent on God’s unearned love and goodness, not only because they are sinners but already because they are *creatures*. One might say that the ‘*ex nihilo*’ is the ‘*sola gratia*’ of the doctrine of creation” (216). Oswald Bayer says the same even more succinctly: “I Believe That God Has Created Me With All That Exists. An Example of Catechetical-Systematics.” *Lutheran Quarterly* 8 (1994): 157.

The titles for God that follow “Almighty” and “Creator” provide more detailed insight into Him and more evidence of His “for us” nature. They imply His capacity for all-powerful action. Therefore for Luther, God’s revelation is as Danish theologian Ragnar Bring says, “not primarily an impartation of knowledge, but an action. It is an intervention of God . . . Revelation is God’s presence in action, deed, and conflict.”⁵ God is continually acting. God makes things happen again and again. This is more than just disclosing some religious knowledge to us in revelation. As Dutch Reformation scholar Heiko Oberman says, “For the Scholastics, revelation meant primarily a means of knowledge, an unveiling of a higher truth.⁶ Even though it cannot be known by means of reason, it implies a theoretical knowledge, though of a higher order. For Luther, however, revelation meant God’s powerful action, in which God accomplishes his purpose.”⁷ Because God is a “for us” kind of God, His purposes and actions are also actions “for us.” God does not manifest himself only for Himself but for the sustenance of the created order and for the salvific purposes of man, that is, “for us.” Thus, revelation is not so much cognitive but rather active, and it is not so much a matter of God delivering new divine information, as His actual “for us” relationship with His human creatures.

The biblical God is not the deistic god of philosophers who created the world and then left His creatures on their own. God does not leave us at the point of creation, but constantly watches over us. There is a continuous creation going on, a *creatio continuata*. Heidelberg systematician Edmund Schlink explains: “God once was the Creator, and he daily is the Creator. In fact, God not only ‘is’ the Creator, but he actually once did and daily does the work of the Creator. Therefore, in the term

⁵ Ragnar Bring, *How God Speaks to Us: The Dynamics of the Living Word* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 26.

⁶ Heiko Oberman reports Gabriel Biel saying: “On the one hand God provides man throughout the course of the history of salvation, in the Old and the New Testament, with sufficient information to overcome the difficulties arising out of the fact that the Christian creed in principle exceeds the capacities of the intellect. On the other hand, God’s self-humiliation in his Son exercises our will to all good and fills us with love; where the intellect still hesitates, the will grasps what it acknowledges as its highest good. But again, this highest good has to be presented by the intellect.” *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Durkham: The Labyrinth Press, 1983), 70.

“Creator,” the creation *ex nihilo seu immediate* at the beginning of the world and the *creatio continuata* day by day are summarized and unified.”⁸ Gustaf Wingren reiterates the point: “The Old Testament itself . . . thinks of the work of Creation as continuing in the present time, and, as it were, personalized, in such a way that birth is seen to be the same act of formation as the work of Creation itself.”⁹ In other words, God’s creating is not a function that stops when something is made. Although there was one “Creation,” God continues to care for His creation as its Creator. Thus, He continues to be “for us” actively.

Here is where God’s title “Almighty” comes in once more. The “Almighty” of the First Article expresses something more than just God’s omnipotence. It calls forth His ongoing, unceasing lordship, that is, it is His divine power applied continuously to the world as God is directing and sustaining it. God the “Almighty” guards what God the “Creator” has made. Thus, already here, although in a limited and general fashion, we see that God Almighty is God “for us” as God the Creator. As Luther says, “The creature could not continue in existence unless the Holy Spirit delighted in it and preserved the work through this delight of God in His work. God did not create things with the idea of abandoning them after they had been created, but He loves them and expresses His approval of them. Therefore He is together with them,”¹⁰ sustaining them. God exercises continuous caring activity for our sustenance and “this he does out of pure love and goodness, without our merit, as a kind father who cares for us”¹¹ which is just another way to say

⁷ Bring, *How God Speaks to Us*, 24-5.

⁸ Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), 38.

⁹ Gustaf Wingren, *Creation and Law*, trans. Ross Mackenzie (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1961), 26.

¹⁰ WA 42, 38; LW 1, 50-1.

¹¹ LC, II, 17.

that He is not indifferent to us. He “still preserves my body and soul,” “provides” and “protects.”¹²

The first revelation of God is the act of Creation. In his Genesis commentary Luther helps readers understand the creation account and its consequences as he addresses the cause of it, that is, the mystery of the Trinity. Luther explores the relations between the Father and the Son: “The uncreated Word is a divine thought, an inner command which abides in God, the same as God and yet a distinct Person. Thus, God reveals Himself to us as the Speaker who has with Him the uncreated Word.”¹³ Thus, the Second Person as the Word is God’s inner speech. This Word through whom all things were made (John 1:3) “has in Himself not only the image of the Divine majesty but also the image of all created things. Therefore, He bestows existence on things.”¹⁴ God reveals Himself by speaking. He speaks the whole universe into reality. Thus, as Luther says:

The words “Let there be light” are the words of God, not of Moses; this means that they are realities themselves. For God calls into existence the things (Ps 33: 6, 9) which do not exist (Rom 4:17). He does not speak grammatical words; He speaks existent realities. Accordingly, that which among us has the sound of a word is a reality with God. Thus everything around us—sun, moon, heaven, earth, Peter, Paul, you, etc.—we are all words of God. . . . We, too, speak, but only according to the rules of language; that is, we assign names to objects which have been already created. But the divine rule of language is different, namely: when He says: “Sun, shine,” the sun is there at once and shines. Thus the words of God are realities, not bare words.¹⁵

God is a speaking God; He commands everything and everybody into existence by His speech, thus initiating communication in words between his creatures. All things and all creatures are “words” or “utterances” of God. Their primary message is, “We are here for you, to serve you!”

b) The “For Us” World

Every creature, once created by the Word, retains its character as a being bound to

¹² SC, II, 2.

¹³ WA 42, 17; LW 1, 22.

¹⁴ WA 42, 37; LW 1, 50.

communicate. By its very being it testifies to its Maker and communicates the glory of God to other creatures. Thus, the whole universe is the web of created “words.” It is a speaking, chatting universe. The created world is engaged in ongoing mutual communication and relationships. It is dialoguing with its Creator and speaking with many voices on many levels within itself. Creatures are not just objects or pieces of dead matter. The world is not just “nature,” “resources” or “elements,” for “the heavens declare the glory of God; the sky proclaims the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech” (Ps 19:1-2). “The heavens declare his righteousness” (Ps 97:6). Word-creatures praise and thank the Word-Creator, first of all, for just existing. Even apart from His specific revelation through Scripture, on the basis of the revelation that is found in nature, they recognize that the source of their being is not in them but is *extra nos*, and that their ultimate identity therefore is found not in them but is alien to them and is constantly being given by the sustaining activity of God the Preserver. Therefore, the world is an ongoing liturgy, a doxology for the Word. The world has been created “very good” (Gen 1, 31), and it reflects the goodness of its Creator. Creatures are echoing back what they have received from God the almighty Creator and what they enjoy being given by God’s goodness. By the fact of its sheer existence every creature in its own way “declares” that it is God’s creature. This possessive, “God’s,” bestows on each of them an abiding value. Because nothing is outside the attention of the Creator God, there are no outsiders in God’s world.

For the same reason, there is no meaninglessness in the universe. It was created “very good,” that is, it possesses meaning as God’s created order. Thus, the lifeline of everything and everyone is the living connection to God, to His “for-usness.” Everything and everyone has its/his assigned place in the structure of the universe. That structure makes and sustains the cosmos and does not allow it to disintegrate into chaos. The Word, once pronounced and commanded (“Let there be!”), brought both *creatio prima* and *creatio continuata* to the world in order to make it into an inhabitable place

¹⁵ WA 42, 17; LW 1, 21-2.

“for us” to live. Besides the fact that His creatures, whom Luther calls His “words,” give praise to their Maker as the primary cause of their existence, they also mutually communicate regarding the secondary cause of their existence—to live “for others” and to make the earthly home an inhabitable space for the neighbor.

God’s caring, sustaining, and preserving, that is, His “for us” actions, are first of all but not exclusively centered on man. Therefore, the world takes on an anthropocentric look from the viewpoint of God’s care and sustenance. As Luther says, “Creature[s] are . . . the hands, channels, and means through which God bestows all blessings.”¹⁶ God’s goodness is mediated to man via the other creatures who are put here to serve him. Luther exalts in the anthropocentric character of God’s care “for us,” and therefore he switches to self-centered confessing from the viewpoint of the first person singular: “God has created me, . . . God has given me, God protects me.”¹⁷ Indeed, God has given us to ourselves. Practically, this has been carried out through God’s created order—the created universe as the concrete and ongoing structure of being which exists here and now. Both nature (through what humans call the natural law), and human social structures (Luther’s *Ämter* and *Berufe*), are agents of God’s creative or providential care. Therefore, as Charles Arand says, “The Catechism begins not with the creation of the Christian life, but with the creation of life itself. It emphasizes that our first relationship to God does not begin at Baptism, but begins at birth. Our first relationship with God is one of creature to Creator.”¹⁸ The world was made and prepared before man’s coming into existence. It was not an accidental invention, but it was created “for us.” The world was created as the context for a Creator-creature relationship in which God continuously demonstrates Himself as acting in a definite “for us” manner.

¹⁶ LC, I, 26.

¹⁷ LC, II, 2.

¹⁸ Charles Arand, *That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 2000), 153.

Humans, as creatures, are born into a life that is set and defined by our Creator. Thus, it is given to us and exists *extra nos*, outside us. We are engrafted into the world. What is left for us is simply to accept life on His terms, which are terms of a “for us” kind. God’s relationship of Father to His human creatures, described in the First Article, is a relationship that is mediated by/through elements of His created order that He selects for this purpose. The Father is providing “for us,” for our existence and well-being, via the whole of the created and the social order which works for man’s sustenance as his care and support net. As Arand says:

As a creature of God, a human being is by definition a dependent being. At the most basic level, every person is dependent upon creation (air, water, food, and so forth) for life itself. People are also dependent upon neighbors (parents, spouse, employer, society, and so forth) for community and the sustenance of life. In addition to these needs, human beings ultimately need a foundation for security, meaning, identity, and a framework for making sense of life. All this is to say that life cannot be lived without faith . . .¹⁹

Indeed, life cannot be lived without “faith” or trust, which bind human creatures to God as the ultimate source of all the above mentioned. Faith allows us to see creation as the multitude of gifts procured by God for us. German instructor of practical theology, Herbert Girgensohn, says:

What a man has is the gift of the Creator for the maintenance of life. God makes us rich by putting the surrounding world in our service. It includes orders of life, such as the order of the family, the order of society and the state. Their function is to minister to the preservation of earthly life. . . . Gifts are the means by which God gives us the possibility of living; if he takes them away from us we perish. My life, no matter how wretched and poor it be, bears witness to the goodness of the Creator God who desires my life for his own. It bears witness to the omnipotence of God even at the point we think of as our accomplishments.²⁰

But being gifted in the larger framework of “for-usness” presupposes that the gifts received turn the gifted ones into channels or masks for the further release or bestowal of gifts. In this way the

¹⁹ Ibid., 154.

²⁰ Herbert Girgensohn, *Teaching Luther’s Catechism*, trans. John Doberstein, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 142.

already existing gift-delivery network is further enriched and developed. Thus, God's "for-me-ness" turns into my "for-other-ness." I am God's partner in His large-scale operation of working "for us."

Because a human creature occupies a mediating position between God and the rest of his creation, according to the gift of dominion in Genesis 1, non-human creatures are employed to serve as instruments for governing and preserving the world of which they are a part. Thus, creatures are not pushed aside when speaking of God, because Christianity is not a spiritualistic view of the world. As English apologist C. S. Lewis notes, "God loves matter. He invented it."²¹ Once creatures are created, they exist in both passive and active voices. They are either being acted upon, or they act in accordance to God's command upon other creatures. They serve one another and humanity by being gifts and gift-recipients at the same time. Thus the whole created order is involved in mutual interaction for its own sustenance in order to serve "for us." Once God has made creatures, they assume their active and passive roles as the channels, the means, by which God reaches men on a daily, regular and routine basis. Every created thing outside humanity can become a channel for God's care, sustenance and safety "for us," but there is no particular divine promise attached to them.²²

c) The Man

By virtue of its place as the First Article, the article regarding creation addresses man's very being. The sheer fact of man's being and the fact that he is God's child is primary to everything that comes after this fact. By being created, man is already defined theocentrically, which means that man is not to expect everything from himself, but from the One Who has created him by His Word. Thus, being created by God has also defined his identity. As Ebeling says, "The word decides about

²¹ C.S.Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), 50.

²² This is true except for the words, bread, wine and water which are used as the physical elements for the means of grace in the realm of the Third Article. These particular things are attached to the promise in a particular
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the human being's existence as human."²³ Schumacher continues the argument: "To be, and to be human, is to be addressed by God's Word. For the Word does not merely communicate divinely accurate information, but actually brings about the reality it speaks."²⁴ That is the most important fact of man's existence in the realm of the First Article before the Fall. Man has been defined *extra nos*, and his identity is not in Him but in His Creator; that is, it is alien to man himself.²⁵ In the very act of Creation man has been gifted to himself. Acknowledgement of man's creatureliness (as belonging to God and as a piece of His craftsmanship) also frees man from perceived threats to his being such as remorse and depression, as well as from illusions of grandeur and power trips. Is his identity affected if he does not measure up to the "standards" of Christian life? Man may even wonder, "Am I still God's child?" But it is the privilege of the Christian to know that his status *coram Deo* is not of his own merit and making, but is rather granted, as is everything else he has and is. Man's identity is given to him by God's favor alone. As Edmund Schlink says, "Man is altogether a creature of God and this is purely out of divine goodness."²⁶ Man is not working his identity out by himself as his own product, for he has received it as a gift.

Men have been given everything: "What do you have that you did not receive?"²⁷

The recognition of the Creator's "for-usness" expresses itself in the two-fold connection between man and God: God gives, man receives. Man receives and recognizes a "duty to love,

context, and not in a general way. Thus, the First Article does not sacramentalize the creation, for as a whole it has not been designed for salvific purposes.

²³ "Das Problem des Natürlichen bei Luther" in *Lutherstudien*, Band. I (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1971), 284.

²⁴ Schumacher, "Who Do I Say That You Are?" 214.

²⁵ As Schumacher says, "The centrality of faith and the first-person voice of Luther's catechisms provide a foundational anthropological insight, namely that our knowledge of ourselves and our understanding of what it means to be human are never self-referential or autonomous. Understanding anthropology from a Lutheran perspective means to chart our knowledge of human existence in the service of faith." *Ibid.*, 213.

²⁶ Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, 38.

²⁷ 1 Cor 4:7.

praise, and thank him without ceasing and devote all these things to his service,”²⁸ for “if everything is the gift of God, then you owe it to him to serve him with all these things and praise and thank him, since he has given them and still preserves them.”²⁹ This is more than just a matter of propriety in relationships with God. To thank means to recognize the value being given and the Giver Himself, too.

From God’s gift of Himself as Creator flows all the other gifting-actions of God “for us.” His very personal care, goodness and intimate love for human beings can be seen in the fact that man was created individually (not as animals were in groups) by God’s personal effort and special attention (not as other creatures by God’s command “Let there be!”). As Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, “Yahweh shapes man with his own hands. This expresses . . . the bodily nearness of the Creator to the creature, that it is really he who makes me—man—with his own hands; his concern, his thought for me, his design for me, and his nearness to me.”³⁰

The very fact that man is created in God’s image and likeness expresses His “for-usness.” For the lack of clear biblical data, there is an ongoing discussion of what is the exact meaning of “created in God’s image and likeness” (for more on this, see Appendix I). Nevertheless, the majority of scholars agree that the fact that man was created in the image and likeness of God constitutes the uniqueness of the human being.³¹ Creation in the image of God stresses the fact that man’s identity is determined from the outside. Although God has created the whole universe through His mercy and goodness, He has exhibited His particular welcoming attitude of “for us” in creating man alone in

²⁸ LC, II, 19.

²⁹ WA 30, I, 88; AE, 51, 163.

³⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall / Temptation: Two Biblical Studies*, trans. John C. Fletcher and Kathleen Downbaum (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 50.

³¹ Luther in his “Disputation Concerning Man” in thesis 20-21 says, “20. Theology . . . defines man as whole and perfect: 21. Namely, that man is a creature of God consisting of body and a living soul, made in the beginning after the image of God, without sin, so that he should procreate and rule over the created things, and never die.” WA 39, I, 176; LW 34, 138.

His own image. Thus, man bears something very personal, even intimate, from God. Man is “God’s own.” By the very fact of being created in God’s image, man is the closest and the most privileged of God’s creatures.³² This fact is one of several that fundamentally distinguish man from the rest of the created order. What it means to be human has been described through three different approaches in chapter 2. First, we discussed the compositional approach to defining what it means to be human. This approach sees in the statement that man has been created in the image of God the fact that man has been granted certain ontological elements. The specificity of this approach is achieved through its static view of humanity, which may be of advantage or disadvantage depending on the how we choose to assess it.

The second approach to defining humanity that we addressed in the second chapter was the relational approach that states that man is definable as he inhabits the four fundamental relationships of *coram Deo*, *coram hominibus*, *coram naturae* and *coram meipso*. The strength of this approach is that it reflects the dynamics of human existence.

The third definition of humanity from the second chapter is the complementary or personal approach. The complementary approach brings the advantages of the two previous approaches together and explains that man is not created just as soul, spirit, mind, and will added to the body, but that by God’s fiat, all of them are brought together in an instantaneous and total creation of a human person endowed with the self-consciousness and conscience. This study argues that each of the three approaches describes a specific aspect of what it means to be human.

The God Who has created us in His image, with component parts and relationships as persons, is the God Whom the Creed confesses as the “Father, almighty.” Because God’s “for-usness”

³² As the consequence of the fact that man has been created in the image of God, there is another specific privilege belonging to man, that is, his capacity to converse with God. As Erlangen systematician Reinhard Slenzka says (referring to Ex 20:4-5): “. . . man, created by God in the image and likeness of God, shall not make for himself an image of God out of things created by God. Rather, the relationship between God and man lies in the word of
(continued next page)

culminates in God the Father, His fatherliness exhibits itself in Him as the acting Creator, Who is continuously Creator “for us.” Similarly, God the “Almighty” preserves for us what God the “Creator” has made. God creates by His speech, His orders, which bring into existence a kind of reality that is constituted by mutual relationships of service; that is, the world is “for us.” Creatures respond to their Creator in praise and by dutifully performing their ministry “for us.” The world was deliberately created anthropocentric, “for us.” God the Father provides “for us” via the network of the created and social order which man receives by faith as gifts from God for his existence. In this care-sustenance-safety network, the creatures occupies the middle ground between man and God and serve as the channel for His care, sustenance, and safeguarding of all creation.

As a creature man is defined theocentrically, that is, he is God’s gift-being. Thus, his identity lies not in him but in the “*extra-nosness*” of God. It is being given to man. Therefore, ultimately, his identity is alien to him, for he is not its author, but the recipient of it. God has exhibited His “for-usness” by personally creating man. This God’s “for-usness” is detailed in the fact of creating man in His image. The compositional, relational, and complementary and personal approaches try to explain man’s creation in the image of God.

2. The First Article—Receiving and Exploring the Gift

a) The Identity of the Man—the Compositional Approach

Presuming that man is the recipient of God’s gifts of God’s “for-usness,” how should he comprehend himself in light of them? What does human life mean if God is its Giver? The main question, “Who am I?” can be answered: Man is a human creature who has been created in the image of God (Gen 1: 26). Thus, the image of God is man’s *proprium*.

The compositional approach allows us to look at the human creature created in God’s image as

God and in speaking to God thus made possible (Deuteronomy 4).” “Luther’s Care of Souls for Our Times,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 67 (2003): 56-7.

man having been endowed through the act of creation with the composite nature of the human being.³³ Scripture demonstrates that man has particular components, such as a soul, a mind, a will, and a spirit³⁴ which, with the human body, are all integral to the human person. All of them are regarded as God's excellent gifts "for us," as the Creation account tells us. Man has been given superb epistemological capacities. One of them was some kind of capacity to see the essence of things in order to name them, that is, to define them (Gen 1: 19), and in this way to exercise dominion over them (Gen. 1:26). Eden shows us that man exercises his dominion first of all linguistically and cognitively by naming the creatures (Gen. 1:19-20). He knows them in a way that they do not know themselves. Naming means describing, defining, and having insight into the nature of things, and therefore being able to make reliable predictions. This knowledge helps man to master the world semiotically or conceptually even if he is not immediately exercising his dominion physically. Each of these gifts in its own way (although limited) reflects the image of God "for us." That is, man's reason reflects God's omniscience in a limited fashion (this capacity properly exercised represents man's intellectual endeavors). As God is omnipresent by His divine nature, man can also be such to some degree through his intellect (understood as the capability to comprehend reality).³⁵

³³ The Lutheran Confessions do not explore the compositism of the human creature. Rather, as Schumacher says, they points out, that "The 'nature' of human creatures consists in that reality and structure called into being by the Creator's word: we are what and who he says we are." "Who Do I Say That You Are?" 220. He explains, saying that "The Lutheran Confessions do not offer a precise definition of human nature, nor do they specify some kind of change to that nature in Christians after conversion. They do not answer all the philosophical or scientific questions that arise about human existence. They provide a theological framework for knowing ourselves which revolves around these two related, paradoxical assertions: that we are creatures and yet sinners, and that we are sinners yet justified, all at the same time." *Ibid.*, 258.

³⁴ For example, "He answered: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'" (Luke 10:27).

³⁵ Luther in his "Disputation Concerning Man," thesis 4 says, "Reason is the most important and the highest in rank among all things and, in comparison with other things of this life, the best and something divine." Thesis 7 and 8 say, "Holy Scripture also makes [reason] lord over the earth, . . . saying, 'Have dominion'; it is a sun and a kind of god appointed to administer these things in this life." WA 39, I, 175; LW 34, 137.

The personal unity of the Creator God is reflected in man's personal unity.³⁶ In the compositional character of human nature it is reflected in the fact that every one of the components permeates, determines and sustains one another. Thus, each exists for the sake of the other components and for the unity and wholeness of them all. Man, as he is approached by the personal God, is one single human being, whose components are working together harmoniously "for me": that is, for the unity and the wholeness of the human person. None of the components alone constitutes and represents the human being; all of them together in a harmonious unity contribute to the whole of the human person. Therefore, Bonhoeffer says, "Man's body is not his prison, his shell, his exterior, but man himself. Man does not 'have' a body; he does not 'have' a soul; rather, he 'is' body and soul."³⁷ Bonhoeffer argues that the mutual interpenetration of body and soul essentially constitutes man:

To live *as man* means to live as body in Spirit. Escape from the body is escape from being man and escape from the spirit as well. Body is existence-form of spirit, as spirit is the existence-form of body. . . . The human body is distinguished from all non-human bodies by being the existence-form of God's Spirit on earth, as it is wholly undifferentiated from all other life by being of this earth. The human body really lives by God's Spirit; this is indeed its essential nature.³⁸

Thus, we can argue that man is not just the "body and the soul" (something like a mathematical equation of body + soul = man) but that the human soul exists in/with/under/through the human body. In such a way body and soul each provide in a "for you" manner for each other. Body and soul (as all the other components of man) do not just stand alongside the other components. They mutually interpenetrate each other to the extent that they can be merely distinguished but not separated. Man was not made in some mechanical fashion as if spirit were

³⁶ The unity, or totality of man is also the presupposition of the hamartology and the soteriology of man.

³⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall / Temptation*, 51.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

added to matter, to dust. Instead, the *ruah* of God enlivened the matter and transformed it into a principally different kind of reality—a human person.

God breathed into man His Spirit, but that did not mean that man became another God. Man is a very special creature. He is created in God's image, which distinguishes him from the rest of Creation and makes him closer to God. At the same time, man physically consists of the same matter as the other living beings around him. This is the basis for his irrevocable bond with the earth and with the rest of the Creation. Thus, man's formation from out of the dust was also accomplished in a "for us" way, providing his life-line to his natural environment. As Bonhoeffer says, "Man's origin is in a piece of earth. His bond with the earth belongs to his essential being."³⁹

This approach can be called "biblical wholism." God granted to man his own nature, the unity of the components, which has been regarded in extra-biblical thought as "earthly" (physical body) and "heavenly" (soul, mind, will, spirit). In the act of man's creation the earthly and heavenly were united "for us" in such a way that they make a harmonious unit—a human being. Therefore, from God's point of view, man exists everywhere as a whole, as an entity. Because of this we speak of the salvation of the whole man, not just of his psychosomatic components. Therefore, we confess in the Creed the resurrection of the (whole) body, that is, the whole man, not merely his soul.

b) The Identity of Man—The Relational Approach

The relational approach to defining man stresses the fact that man is a sum of interrelated component parts, and that he also as a whole stands in relationship to God and to various parts of His creation. All of these relationships, each in its own way, are "for us" relationships as well.

These relationships are "for us" because they bring the world around man into the midst of his existence and into the midst of the world's existence as well. Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes the

³⁹ Ibid., 50.

impact of the fact of man being created in God's image in purely relational terms. He rejects the idea that being created in the image of God bestows upon man any specific component or attribute. He says: "The likeness, the analogy, of man to God, is not *analogia entis* but *analogia relationis*. This means that even the relation between man and God is not a part of man; it is not a capacity, a possibility, or a structure of his being but a given, set relationship."⁴⁰ Bonhoeffer is consistent in his relational approach. It can be seen in his extending relationality to man's bodiliness. Because of the body, man is capable of having existential relationships, which make him "for others" and others "for him." Man "is the image of God not in spite of but just because of his bodiliness. For in his bodiliness he is related to the earth and to other bodies. He is there for others. He is dependent upon others. In his bodiliness he finds his brother and the earth. As such a creature, man of earth and spirit is in the likeness of his creator, God."⁴¹

The relational approach emphasizes that man's position in the world is expressed by his relationships. Man is placed in the world by four relationships (*coram Deo, coram hominibus, coram meipso, coram natura*) that work toward man by their inherent "for-usness" as his life-lines, providing him with his basic sustenance-care-safety net. Man is not a self-sufficient unit who just happens to be in some kind of relationship with the outer world. Man's inner resources are not independent; they are constantly being provided from the outside—from these four constitutive human relationships. Therefore, man is in a way a "waterfall" created by the streams from those outside sources that exist "for us." Thus, we can argue that man is positioned in the world hierarchically by the following relationships:

⁴⁰ Ibid., 41-2.

⁴¹ Ibid., 52.

- 1) He is *under* his Creator (*coram Deo*);
- 2) He has his consciousness (as self-reflection), and conscience *in* him (*coram meipso*);
- 3) He is *beside* his fellow man (*coram hominibus*); and
- 4) He is *above* and also *beside* the rest of the created order (*coram natura*).

Man is a unique creature, for there is no other creature in the whole universe which exists in these particular relationships. These relationships place man in the center of the created universe. Everything turns around him because everything was created by God in order to be “for us.” The universe has acquired an anthropocentric character,⁴² that is, it exists “for us” as a gift.

Among these relationships the *coram Deo* relationship, man’s relationship before his Creator, is the most significant. Man is God’s special creature. The Scripture testifies, “What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor” (Ps 8:4-6). “I said, ‘You are ‘gods’; you are all sons of the Most High’” (Ps 82:6).

Besides the fact, that man is a special creature, he is endowed with a particular position—only he is defined as God’s beloved⁴³ child. God grants man his core or primary identity. He receives it *extra nos*. It comes from outside him. He is not the author but only the recipient of it. Thus, man is defined by who he is *coram Deo*. Man’s relationship to God *coram Deo* is his primary relationship for at least two reasons. First, it is definitive of human existence because it constantly delivers “for me” God’s “for-usness”; second, in every aspect it determines man’s relationships. As Danish Lutheran theologian Regin Prenter says, “Only through this human relationship to God-listening to his command does man enter into a human relationship with the cosmos. In this relationship with

⁴² This anthropocentric character of the universe does not contradict God’s omnipotence, for God is transcendent in relation to the universe.

⁴³ In the First Article man is beloved as a piece of His craftsmanship, while in the Second Article man is beloved in the blood of the sacrifice of Christ.

God man speaks to God, he believes and he confesses his faith. In this relationship he speaks to his fellow man; he loves him and holds conversation with him. In this relationship man also speaks to the rest of creation; he knows it and calls it by name.”⁴⁴ This primary relationship *coram Deo* is based on God’s openness to man, exhibited in His “for us” kind of attitude, which creates trust (and thankfulness) on the human side. This faith does not merely build a personal relationship but also provides man with insight into God and His “for-usness.” God opens Himself “for us,” that is, to our faith. In this case faith and trust works as the ear for the voice of the authority of God. Thus, we can say, “Speak, for your servant is listening” (1 Sam 3:10).

Although man’s relationship *coram Deo* is the primary, ultimate one for his identity, we ought not to overlook the importance of the rest of man’s relationships.⁴⁵ They play the role of secondary, penultimate defining forces and values in matters of human identity. They are also *extra nos* and provide man with identity from outside. Man is brought into the world of relationships from the minute of his conception. It is important to distinguish properly between the core identity relationship (*coram Deo*) and the rest of them, which are functionally important for man’s existence in the world. It is necessary to see the proper value of each of them for the constitution of the human identity. Without all of these relationships, human beings would be tempted to shape their own core identities with disastrous results; ultimate and penultimate values could be discarded as non-essential, or God’s gift of our identity could be relativized.

The rest of the relationships in the realm of the First Article describe man’s world, the context of his existence. This context has been created particularly “for us” (as the Garden of Eden demonstrates). Therefore, man’s relationships with the created, natural, social, cultural contexts

⁴⁴ Regin Prenter, *Creation and Redemption* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 252.

⁴⁵ Wingren in *Creation and Law* stresses that relationships between God, man and creation are tied together; “faith in God, dominion over Creation . . . and service of one’s neighbor are not disconnected concepts, but integrally related. No one of them can be realized independently of the others. Together they constitute a single reality, seen from three aspects. . . . *the relation to God is the source and starting-point of all three.*” 130, cf. 50, 98.

reflect his relationship with His Creator and his own identity as well. These constitute the network of relationships in which he lives, and therefore they are vital to identity. The creatures of this relationship-network root man in the world. Thus, ultimately all the created order in one way or another is “for us.”⁴⁶ In the First Article man is given “the stuff” organized in time (man’s lifetime) and space (man’s homeland and home as his intimate meaningful space). These are God’s gifts that humanize men *coram hominibus* and *coram natura*. In these mutual relations men become co-authors of their identity. Men express their identity in small and great activities; they materialize it in particular artifacts, ordering them in a meaningful way. Their artifacts, the order they impose on human society, and the relationships within their lives in turn reflect what human beings do and these return to them what they have put into creating the artifacts, order, and relationships—their own care, attention, and personality. In such a way these created identifiers of natural, societal and cultural orders become very meaningful to man’s identity (“I come from such and such family, I lived in . . . , and I went to school in . . .” etc.). These identifiers resonate for men, challenging them to develop and to express their identity in more and more concrete and personal forms. Thus, the events and artifacts of daily life actually cultivate our identity as inhabitants of a particular place and citizens of a particular state.

God cares for man not merely by constantly providing, pouring out His good gifts, but also by placing man relationally into the center position of the universe. This puts requirements and demands on him. God has made men to be His representatives in the world, His regents, His stewards and His supervisors who care for creation on behalf of the Creator. God exercises His dominion over creation through the dominion of man. But the human creature functions in a

⁴⁶ The one created thing that is an exception to this rule of all things being created “for us” is hell. That is self-chosen imprisonment of the self and is for those who refuse the gifting “for us.” They are not lost until they say to God: “I don’t want your forgiveness!” This is the sin against the Holy Spirit who delivers the gift. Thus, for them, the refused “for us” turns into “against us.” In this way, it is not God’s wrath but man’s own rejection of God’s goodness that determines his fate.

different way as a mediator between God and the rest of creation than do the elements of the rest of creation. Other creatures (even the highly developed animals) function mainly as passive instruments of God's will because they are not endowed with a conscience (which binds together responsibility with accountability) and self-consciousness. Man serves God as a personal being gifted with a conscience and self-consciousness. Therefore, man may be called a creative instrument of God. As Jesus said, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know the master's business. Instead, I have called you friends" (John 15:15). Men are called to act as God's responsible co-workers, His own deputies, not in an exploitative way, but in caring lordship. As Panneberg says, "Human beings have not been given *carte blanche* for the selfish pillage and exploitation of nonhuman nature. Rather, their rule over creation as the creator's representative must take God's creative will as its norm."⁴⁷ Man can do this only by first being a human person, which is one of the three features (components, fundamental relationships, and self-consciousness) of what it means to be created in God's image.

c) The Identity of Man—The Complementary or Personal Approach

The complementary or personal approach stresses the importance of man's self-consciousness as crucial for man's being a human person, for it cannot be derived as an immediate consequence of the human nature, or of the four fundamental human relationships. Man merely has particular components, and he exists in particular relationships, but he himself is a human person. Luther confesses: "I believe that God has created *me* . . ." (SC, II, 2). It is an important acknowledgment—the Creator makes another *person*, a person who is capable of reflecting on his own existence in the first-person singular. Without this ability to be self-reflecting and conscious of his self, man would

⁴⁷ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 78.

be just a God's automaton, a robot. This gift includes man's capacity for comprehending himself as a human creature (as having specific components). As Prenter says:

Standing before God and being addressed by him, man is qualitatively different from every specimen of a species. He is an individual; he is a *person*. Man's humanity consists in his being a *personality*, in his being in communication with God and his fellow man. It is as person that man is man. And as person man not only *is* a definite nature, as the specimens of the lower natural species are of a definite nature, but as person man *has* his nature.⁴⁸

Thus, man was created as a person, as possessing selfhood, the awareness of "I," and being capable of reflecting upon himself and assessing his relationships in the first-person singular. The personal character of man's existence is a special gift "for us." It is a reflection of God's personal character in man. Man has been granted such retrospective and introspective capacities as memory, self-analysis, and self-comprehension. This leads to wisdom as personalized, intimate knowledge. In addition to having consciousness, man has also been granted the gift of conscience.

The complementary or personal approach to defining humanity recognizes the validity of definitions focusing on personality, relationships, and ontological component parts. Each of them can be viewed as expressions of God's "for-usness." Each of them has specific advantages. Therefore, it is best to use them in complementary fashion. This allows defining man as human person who has components of the human nature in the four fundamental relationships granted with the self-consciousness of "I."

d) The Purpose of Man's Life

It has been already noted that man is a creature put in the position of dominion and responsibility over the created order is made up of his four fundamental relationships (*coram Deo*, *coram natura*, *coram hominibus* and *coram meipso*) and which acts as God's sustenance-care-safety

⁴⁸ Prenter, *Creation and Redemption*, 261.

net of His “for-usness.” This net is the place where man reveals his purpose of life. Thus, God’s “for-usness” expressed in His sustenance-care-safety net is reciprocated by man’s purpose of life. Man is to participate in God’s plans, which are of a “for us” kind. German systematician Wolfhart Pannenberg remarks: “Man’s community with God directs him back into the world. In any case that is the thought involved in the biblical idea about man as the image of God. Man’s destiny for God manifests itself in his dominion over the world.”⁴⁹ We have been created in order to be a part of God’s “for us” as it is executed and carried out.⁵⁰ Thus, penultimately, we serve ourselves in a meaningful fashion, but we do so on God’s terms. This service to ourselves and to God includes: “to work” and “to take care of” the Garden of Eden—the world (Gen 2:15), that is, to exercise dominion over God’s network “for us” and to recognize His goodness. But it also presupposes the enjoyment of God’s “for-usness” in all the richness of His creation as well as taking pleasure in fellowship with God and our fellow human beings. Thus, the purpose of man’s life in the realm of the First Article can be formulated as simply as this: Man is to live out all the good gifts of God’s “for-usness,” to enjoy a normal meaningful human life (that is, lived in accordance with God’s will), to exercise his God-given tasks of managing the creation, to be in good relationships with man’s neighbors and to give thanks for life’s “for-usness” to its Author.⁵¹ Life as God’s gift has been created “good,” and so it is worth living. Thus, it is in God and in our participation of His gifts “for-us” that man finds his purpose in life.

⁴⁹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *What Is Man?* trans. Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 14.

⁵⁰ As Schumacher points out, “It is precisely this creatureliness that puts the human creature into a particular relationship vis a vis the Creator, and defines human purpose and responsibility.” “Who Do I Say That You Are?” 218.

⁵¹ Schumacher says, “To be a creature is to be placed into direct and indirect relationships with our Creator, and this implies that human creatures are not in any sense self-subsisting. Rather, the true existence and identity of human creatures does not reside in themselves, but properly outside of the self, in God (as the source and author of their being) and in the neighbor, through whom the Creator addresses and serves them, and toward whose good they are directed in their vocation.” *Ibid.*, 226.

There is no doubt concerning humanity's genesis. Our biography has been written (or better, executed) by our Creator "for us." By God's design we are His closest associates. Therefore, man is chosen to be God's representative for the rest of the created order. Man stands at the top of the hierarchy of the created order, not merely as the most effective of God's creatures, but also as the highest created value (Ps 8:4-6). Man is God's masterstroke. He is God's work "for us" *par excellence*. Together with the rest of the created order, God has pronounced man to be "very good" (Gen 1:31). That pronouncement is more than recognition of the fact that the particular piece of creation was successfully made according to the original design. It is more than just an approval. It is the assertion of man's significance for the world, and it is a fundamental value statement so strong that it cannot be repudiated even after the Fall. The verdict of "goodness" does not concern merely Adam as a particular individual. Man is equipped with the means necessary to continue his existence by perpetuating the species. Thus, God's "for-usness" exhibited in the goodness of the man was designed to continue its way throughout the whole human race. But it does not mean that man is "good" in and of himself. His goodness is always a marker of his Creator's "for-usness," and therefore his goodness is always *extra nos*, and alien to man himself. As Bonhoeffer says, "God views his work, and only this makes the work good. The goodness of the work is never in the work itself, but only in the Creator. The goodness of the work consists precisely in the fact that it very rigidly points away from itself towards the Creator alone and to His word which is good."⁵²

The assessment of man's origin provides him with the proper self-respect, self-awareness, and also with a sense of security, for "if God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31) As Bonhoeffer says: "There is his authority, the absolute superiority in which he shapes and creates me, in which I am his creature; the fatherliness in which he creates me and in which I worship him."⁵³

⁵² Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall / Temptation*, 36.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 50.

Thus, man receives his objective value and ultimate self-respect from his origin, God's "for-usness," which is outside man himself. This has also an immediate social consequence. God has created every individual and his neighbors by and with the same "for-usness." This means that man is to respect every individual as a bearer of the image of God. As Antoine de Saint-Exupéry says, "Man was created in the image of God. God was revered in man. Men were brothers in God. It was this reflection of God that conferred an inalienable dignity upon every man. The duties of each towards himself and towards his kind were evident from the fact of the relations between God and man. My civilization was the inheritor of Christian values."⁵⁴

Because of the lack of biblical data regarding man's identity had the Fall never occurred, speculation about man's eschatological destiny in the state of paradise is dangerous. Judging from the account of Eden in Genesis, it seems that man was to remain there and enjoy what he had been granted as God's gifts "for us." There was neither an objective need to look for something less or more for man. Nothing in the Eden account suggests that before her dialogue with Satan, Eve was dissatisfied with her position.⁵⁵

Thus, the fact that man was created in the image of God can be viewed from several different approaches—the compositional, the relational and the personal. The compositional approach states that man as a human creature has been granted the particular components of human nature, brought into a whole in a "for us" fashion, and exhibits close ties with the rest of the creation. The relational approach states that man exists in the four fundamental relationships *coram Deo*, *coram hominibus*, *coram naturae*, and *coram meipso*, all of them being "for us" relationships because as man's life-lines, they bring the world around man into him, and they lead man into the world. They create the

⁵⁴ Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Flight to Arras*, trans. Lewis Galantière (New York and London: Harvest/HBJ, 1942), 141; see also 139-44.

⁵⁵ Our culture is so heavily influenced by progressivism, it is often suggested that even in Eden man would have had to develop himself, to move, or to go somewhere else if he had not sinned, as if there would be no sufficient perfection in his paradisiacal condition to allow him to be content in it and enjoy it.

anthropocentric, that is, the “for us” character of the universe. The primary one among these relationships is *coram Deo*, which establishes man’s primary identity as God’s child. The rest of the relationships, though of secondary importance, contribute significantly to man’s identity. Relationally, man is at the center of the universe and has been appointed as God’s active representative to the created order. The complementary or personal approach to defining humanity states that man is a human creature capable of reflecting upon himself as “I,” and of understanding himself as the subject of his relationships. It defines man as the components of the composite human nature in the four fundamental relationships of *coram Deo*, *coram hominibus*, *coram naturae*, and *coram meipso*. That composite creature is specially endowed with a self-consciousness expressed in his use and understanding of the term, “I,” and this makes the human creature a person, the subject of relationships. The originator of man, God, provides him with a purpose in life that is to be a part of God’s “for us” work carried out. Thus, ultimately man’s purpose in life is found in God and His “for-usness,” which is *extra nos*, that is, from outside ourselves. Besides that, God also gives man objective individual and societal value and self-respect.

B. Anthropological Implications of the “For Us” Approach to the First Article after the Fall

1. Spoiling the Gift

The only source which can provide man with the proper understanding of the event of Fall is the Scripture. God’s prohibition of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil set in place the borderline of man’s existence, the limits of his niche of existence. Every niche of existence has its own structure, that is, qualitative limitations designed to preserve its identity. Every niche of existence has almost endless quantitative possibilities for necessary change and development, for “reaching more and more,” but it must remain within the limits God set for it in order to safeguard its identity.

The Fall of man is, and always will be, a mystery. There is no way for man to understand completely why Adam, under the entirely ideal conditions of “for us,” still mistrusted God. We will never know why he let himself fall into defying and denying his Creator. Man was able not to sin, but still he chose to try to become like God. Because man is the ultimate author and originator of neither his creatureliness nor his (original) sin (although man is fully responsible for it, it stems from Satan’s deception), he is unable to understand the depths of both his own humanity and the extent of the damage to his human nature done by sin. Without being able to entirely comprehend his overall situation, all his self-awareness and his results of self-inquiry through philosophy,⁵⁶ psychology, or other human disciplines are merely partial, limited, and superficial at best, and misleading and damning at worst. Therefore, man is helpless when facing the deepest reality of the sin and its consequences.

The text of the temptation account alludes to a possible motivation for the man falling into sin. Sin was the expression of doubt, dissatisfaction and dissonance with what he had, that is, with his overall situation, his place in the universe, and his ultimate purpose. Sin was not a matter of one or another particular prohibited action or wish, but it arose out of doubt of God’s Word and resulting ambition for a status to which man had no access. He wished to become that for which he was not designed. Man was seeking to go beyond his status as a human creature because he was not satisfied with who he was. He was tempted to be something or someone else. Here man’s urge for “always more” (at this time manipulated by Satan) drove him so far beyond the parameters of his original status that he fell from of it. Man overstepped the limits of his original status and attempted to grasp a new status which would give him more freedom and more possibilities for becoming like God. He

⁵⁶ As Luther says in his “Disputation Concerning Man,” theses 10, 11 and 17: “In spite of the fact that [reason] is of such majesty [in thesis 4 Luther called it ‘something divine’], it does not know itself *a priori*, but merely *a posteriori*” (10). “Therefore, if philosophy or reason itself is compared with theology, it will appear that we know almost nothing about man”(11). “Nor is there any hope that man in [soul] can himself know what he is until he sees himself in his origin which is God” (17). Cf. WA 39, I, 175; LW 34, 137.

thought he would replace God's "for-usness" with his own efforts, discarding God's gifts as unnecessary in view of the "for-himselfness" he hoped to gain. Thus, he would become independent; he would be a god. In the Fall, man exercises his God-given authority and autonomy outside the proper, relational contexts in which man's authority and autonomy were granted. Man tried to find all possible ways of stressing his own importance, significance, and greatness. Man dared to grant himself access to a reality for which he was not designed and could not fulfill.

To judge matters of good and evil independently and ultimately is God's prerogative alone. It is a matter of God's majesty and His omniscience. Man as a creature had no capability of bearing and exercising divine knowledge and its consequences. He was unable to bear the responsibility of such knowledge, and he could not carry the loneliness and solitude that accompanied the yoke of the knowledge of good and evil. Man had to be able to remain, to persevere in his particular niche, and to be able to use his knowledge for his own good, for the purpose of his life, and for the benefit of those whom he serves. In the Fall, man gained the desired divine knowledge without the proper back-up (only divine support would suffice for such knowledge and here Satan lied to men when he promised that they would become like God). They received divine knowledge, but not the divine capacity to bear it. As a result, man fell under the weight of the divine knowledge he had gained as a creature. That was man's real Fall. "The man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3: 22) was God's diagnosis of the new situation of man. As the result, man was expelled from Eden (Gen 3:23).

The sin in the Fall was nothing less than an ontological and existential catastrophe. Man overstepped the boundaries of his particular niche and so he "fell out" of it. That was the real tragedy, for there was no return. It could not be undone or repaired. Man did not receive another niche of existence that was blessed with the support of God's "for-usness"; instead he became a stranger to God (Ps 39:12; Ps 119:1), to His "for-usness," and to his own original status, which had

guaranteed that man would be the recipient of God's gifts for him. Thus, the prohibition of eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil set the limit and border of man's identity. There the "for-usness" of the creaturehood ended and the "against-usness" began: "Cursed is the ground because of you; . . . It will produce thorns and thistles for you" (Gen 3:17).

Although man wanted to be "more," because of the Fall, he became "less." Man lost what he had and he did not acquire what he had desired. As the consequence of the Fall man lost the place that God had prepared and secured for him by His "for-usness." Man became neither another God as he wished (he retained his human nature), nor did he become an animal (for the same reason). His own human nature (as a particular gift of the created order) was left him to remind him always of his Creator and God's design for him (Rom 1:19-20).

Today, a sense of inferiority haunts man and the need to excuse himself pushes him into a kind of hyper-compensation that drives him into all kinds of sinful perversion. In trying to regain the relationship with God that he lost through Adam's sin, man loses himself more and more. On the other hand, in God's eyes man is still His human creature (although damaged and lost), and therefore God does not withdraw His care for man: "He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt 5:45).

Thus, after the Fall man is both a human creature (he retains the human nature, for example, the components of man, although impaired and crippled by the sin) and a sinner. Therefore, as God's creature man still receives God's care and love from His "for-usness," but at the same time man receives God's judgment (as a sinner). Thus, after the Fall man is both the object of God's "for-usness" and the subject of God's "against-usness," which man himself produced and which brings God's wrath upon him. Each of these dimensions permeates man completely. Both of these facts define the entirety and the core of human existence. As American Lutheran theologian Edo Osterloh says: "This assertion will be rightly understood in the Christian sense when it is applied to the whole

of human existence in every situation. This is not a conclusion derived from psychological analysis nor is it to be understood, in the first instance, as a moral qualification. But it does describe man's *existential predicament* as seen in the light of God's revelation."⁵⁷ Our humanity is defined by God's stance towards us, that is, by our concrete relationships *coram Deo*. If God stands in wrath against the sinning individual, then this stance determines our identity as sinners, as objects of His wrath. God is lawfully and justifiably angered by sin and the sinner.

It is impossible to separate creatureliness and sinfulness in the concrete reality of man, for they reciprocally condition and conceal each other at the same time. Man *in status corruptionis* cannot be truly understood from the viewpoint of only one of these aspects but only from the perspective of both of them taken together. There is no way to describe quantitatively the relationship between the created being and the sin because both of them have their origins beyond the reach of man. Both of them are mysteries with which we learn to live. Neither one of these fundamental realities—creatureliness or sinfulness—are empirically discernable or measurable, for they act as the constituting principles in the fallen man. To be sure, there are some distinctive objective and subjective symptoms for each of them, but they in no way play the role of ultimate criteria for man's existence. Man has no innate capability to discern on his own whether his experiences are expressions of God's Law or His Gospel toward him. Thus, he is always totally dependent on God's Word (written, proclaimed and sacramental) that comes from outside and tells him his objective situation. Only God knows the dividing line in between these constituting beginnings of the human nature itself and the "corruption of our nature."⁵⁸ Human nature after the Fall is "without fear of God, without trust in God, and concupiscent."⁵⁹ The only way to distinguish these two beginnings (but not

⁵⁷ Edo Osterloh, "Anthropology," in *The Encyclopaedia of the Lutheran Church*, ed. Julius Bodensieck, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), 82.

⁵⁸ FC, Ep, I, 10.

⁵⁹ AC, II, 2.

to separate them in practice) is by the way of Formula of Concord 1. It affirms that human creatures in sin remain creatures of God, but at the same time also affirms the biblical judgment that sinners have become human corpses in the sight of God, in need of resurrection (Eph 2:1-7). It fundamentally distinguishes the spheres and responsibilities of God and Satan. God as the Creator is still in control of all of His created order, while Satan (and his activities against God) is only an unfortunate chapter in His divine plans.

Thus, by prohibiting eating from the tree of the knowledge, God guarded the “for-usness” of man’s niche in existence. Sin remains such a mystery that, on his own, man is unable to comprehend its cause or the extent of the damage it does him. The motivation for sin was dissatisfaction with man’s original status and a desire to become a god himself. In the Fall, man received divine knowledge without the capacity to bear it, for he was just a creature. Therefore, sin is the existential catastrophe by which man fell out of his niche of existence. Breaking God’s prohibition against eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil resulted in the “for-usness” of Creation being forever perceived as an “against-usness.” Through the Fall, man lost the original place designed for Him by God’s “for-usness” and became a self-lost sinner for whom God still cares.

2. Enduring the Consequences

Man is a complete (not just partial) sinner. As a result of sin, man is corrupted through and through. There is no part or aspect of the human creature untouched by sin⁶⁰ because man is a total being, a creature in whom all aspects, dimensions, and components interpenetrate. Therefore, we never sin in part, and we are never part-time sinners. Sin turns everything that God has given “for us”—man’s human nature, his relationships and his own person with all its capacities—“against us.” Sin has corrupted the composite human nature, the four *coram* relationships, and the human person.

⁶⁰ Thus, the idea of a “*scintilla*,” a divine spark in man untouched by sin, is nonsense.

He is caught in a vicious cycle of sin that he is unable to break. Man is a sinner because he has sinned, and he continues to sin because he is a sinner. Thus, sin has become cause and consequence at the same time.

Sin influences human nature with its entire composite content. This corruption contributes to man's inner confusion and to the disharmony between his inner components. The chaos of sin destroys the created relationships between his intellect, soul, will, conscience, and body. Chaos also infects each of man's component parts separately. For example, the will is deformed: "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing" (Rom 7:19). Conscience too is deformed. The human creature does not want to and is unable to bear responsibility for what he has done. Adam claimed that Eve was responsible, and she blamed the snake. The broken intellect looked for the wrong solution to sin and sought to hide from God. Man's need to worship God has moved from divine values to the secular, profane and pragmatic, trying to find man's identity, meaning and security there. They have become his real gods.

The losses of the human nature due to sin were catastrophic. For example, man has lost his capacity to see the essence of things. Man's epistemological capacities have been eclipsed, overshadowed, crippled and spoiled by sin to the extent that man does not even recognize the scope of his disaster although he retains some very limited knowledge of God (Rom 1:19). As Luther says, "Reason knows that God exists, but who and what he is who is rightly called God, that it does not know."⁶¹ But without God's help man is unable to come to God. Man needs to be told by God's Word that he is a sinner. Without being guided by God's Word regards his fallen reality to be the measure of what is "normal." Thus, he exchanges the normal (the paradisiacal state of affairs) for a

⁶¹ WA 19, 206.

pathology (the status of the affairs after the Fall),⁶² because he does not know any other condition than that. Thus, man's whole cognitive apparatus, perspective, vision, and criteria are completely changed. Sin has changed man so profoundly that man neither knows nor can imagine being without sin and its consequences. Life before the Fall sounds like a fairytale to him. Man does not know on his own what is right and wrong (although that was exactly he was looking to acquire by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), nor can he hope to acquire this knowledge through his own efforts because he (and the whole world with him since he was the center of it) has fallen of from his original niche of existence. By losing that, man lost also everything that came with it—man's original value and his cognitive capacities.

But sin has done even more damage. Usually it is stressed that the Fall made chaos and confusion out of the primal harmony. To be more precise, sin has done much worse. It has taken total control of man in a very specific manner. Man's *incurvatio in semet ipsum* prevents him from having true faith in God. Thus, sin has completely turned man's human nature against God and against man himself. Man has in fact become his own enemy and he experiences his own "against-usness." He is not just partly against God and partly for Him. Because sin has completely taken over his person, he bears enmity toward God.

In addition to the changes in human nature that sin created in man, sin also effected crucial changes in all of man's fundamental relationships. The main damage done is exhibited in his relationship *coram Deo*. Therefore, all the later history of human relations with God is marked not merely by sins of disobedience but particularly by those sins by which man tries "to storm heaven"—to gain power, to manipulate, to usurp God's authority and to subdue Him to serve man's

⁶² As Andrey Pozov points out, "Materialistic and semi-materialistic science and idealistic philosophy look at conditional existence, Nature, the Cosmos as the primordial and original. . . . The science does not know the *katastasis*, the Fall, it does not know the anti-natural and takes it for the natural." *Osnovi Drevne-Cerkovnoi Antropologi: Sin Chelovecheskii* (The Foundations of the Anthropology of the Ancient Church: The Son of Man) (Madrid, 1965), 23.

own needs.⁶³ If God has related to man in a “for you” kind of relationship exhibited in love, care, and sustenance, then man in return, by his sin, has rebelled and turned against God’s “for-usness.” The whole history of the relationship between mankind and God can be seen as the battle between God’s “for us” and man’s “against God.”

Thus, the Fall was in fact a denial of God and of His “for-usness” exhibited in His relationships defined by His gift-giving and the human repudiation of His gifts. Sin is not just disobedience. It is a conscious rebellion. Sin is not an act influenced by poor or insufficient knowledge, but it denies God; sin is an atheistic act. Man emancipated himself from dependency on God, consciously disobeying His command and doubting His Word; for after agreeing with Satan, he had his own mind to follow. Now he had an autonomous mind (but in fact, enslaved by sin) instead of a theonomous one. Sin was not just one single act of disobedience, the fact and the impact of which could be overlooked. The Fall was the critical event that introduced a completely new history into man’s relationship with God and His “for-usness.” Now man is a fallen creature. His irreversible action made him something he was not designed to be, a sinner. Sin was man’s suicide in all respects. After the Fall man has lost his source of meaning, identity, and security. He imagined that he was self-sufficient and was capable of providing for himself his own identity, meaning, and security from his own inner resources, that is he imagined that he would be his own “for me.” But man’s inner resources are not independent ones. They are constantly being fed from the outside, from God. Man is just a “waterfall” of the streams from the outside sources of “for us.” Once cut from them, man quickly “dries up.” Man became a crippled, impaired human creature in all respects by trying to become independent from his Creator. Man became *incurvatus in se*, a being isolated by

⁶³ It does not matter whether it is by way of witchcraft (manipulating God by spiritual power), mysticism (attempting to gain particularly close relationships with God), gnosticism (gaining esoteric knowledge geared toward manipulating God), Pharisaism (manipulating God by putting Him in debt to one’s “godly works”) or other, similar methods, all of these are the descendants of Adam’s sin.

and in himself. He did not realize that the Creator is also the Sustainer, that is, that He works as an immanent provider and not, in deist fashion, from afar.

The Fall into the sin means that man did not withstand Satan's attack because he did not possess the divine powers of the Creator and because he doubted the Word of God. Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, withstood the three temptations of Satan, remaining faithful to God through each one, exactly the opposite of what Satan wished Him to do. Satan did not tempt Him only with bread, power, glory and authority, but he also attacked His connection with God the Father, asking Him to do things on His own and break His relationship with God. Human doubt and disobedience was a catastrophe, for man turned away from God. He cut off his ties with Him and was left "free," "independent" and alone against the Tempter. Moreover, other tragic consequences followed. God knew that if man in his sinful condition continued to eat from the tree of life, he would become eternally evil. Therefore, God's decision was that man "must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever. So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden" (Gen 3:22-3).

Another change due to man's sin was a change in his relationship of *coram natura*. Man was thrown out into the world that he had spoiled through the Fall. Man as the under-manager of God had rebelled against his Master. By the same logic, the created order repudiates him. Creation, instead of being the care-sustenance-safety net of God's "for-usness," turned to be a hate-fight-dread trap for man. The original "for-usness" of his nature turns into "against-usness." Now man fights against other creatures and they take their revenge on him. Bonhoeffer says:

We also try to rule, but it is the same here as on Walpurgis Night: we think we are pushing, and we are being pushed. We do not rule, we are ruled. The thing, the world, rules man. Man is a prisoner, a slave of the world, and his rule is illusion. Technology is the power with which the earth grips man and subdues him. And because we rule no more, we lose the ground, and then the earth is no longer *our* earth, and then we become strangers on earth. We do not rule because we do not know the world as God's creation, and because we do not receive our dominion as

God-given but grasp it for ourselves. . . . There is no dominion without serving God. With the one, man necessarily loses the other. Without God . . . man loses the earth.⁶⁴

Led by the order of sin (as cause and consequence) man was no longer in the position God had designed and established for him, the position of ruling over the created order. Instead, it was rebelling against him and ruling him through his own rebellious nature. What happened in nature, the cursing of the ground that brought forth thorns and thistles (Gen 3:18), reflected the disharmony grew in man's inner nature as well as the revolt of the elements of the world in natural disasters and the like.

Moreover, now subdued by the world, man from one side was desperately fighting against it; but on the other hand, he also started to adore it and idolize it, that is he began to use its original "for-usness" in improper way. Man needed a substitute for the lost *coram Deo* relationship that was his source of identity, meaning, and security. By repudiating His Creator, man was left with only one choice of divinizing the creature and its original "for-usness." But because no one single creature or artifact possesses the required divine attributes in full, man needed to add others. Thus, man became a polytheist. In order to deal with many problems in his life, he now needs many substitutes for the one true God. Man creates idols by directly worshiping nature or by making religious artifacts and by letting things from his secular life fill God's place (modern practical paganism or materialism). Another idolatrous choice man makes is to absolutize specific moral demands about life. In sum, after the Fall, man was unable to bear his own inadequacies, idiosyncrasies and insecurities, and needed a substitute for what he lost through the Fall by repudiating God and His "for-usness." Thus, fallen men turned into *fabricatores deorum*⁶⁵ ("manufacturers of gods"). Therefore, after the Fall man does not live in freedom, but he lives under the power of the pantheon of his self-created gods.

⁶⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall / Temptation*, 42-3.

Sin also profoundly influenced man's relation *coram meipso*. It changed man's person, his self-consciousness, and his conscience. After the Fall, man continued to doubt God's Word and defy His lordship. In his own imagination man himself was the Lord of the world. Then man needed to assess the new situation which he himself had chosen, to be the master of his own destiny. The chaos of the inner world under the burden of guilt, shame and fear began to work in him a deep-seated animosity toward God. Man's autonomous self-consciousness and false pride created the gods of "I," "me," and "myself." On the one side there is man's new autonomous situation and the need to justify it; on the other, there is also guilt, remorse and a sense of the loss of original relations with God. Man has enormous spiritual needs that can be satisfied by God alone, but on the other hand, he has rejected God denied Him as the only real source for providing those spiritual resources. Now the sinner is split apart between his needs and the impossibility of fulfilling them. Shallow pride does not allow man to repent; it rather drives man into defensiveness against God. Man's own accusing conscience invents different kinds of compensations, including perverse ones. Man more or less successfully tries to subdue and brainwash his own conscience by putting before it "more real" purposes of life to serve like state, party,⁶⁵ class, race and so forth. Another option is to lose himself in his own private world of everyday problems, small joys and worries. He avoids engaging "big subjects" or pushes them as far as possible into the periphery of his consciousness in such a way as to marginalize them. Thus, in one way or another man becomes *incurvatus in se*.

Sin has also influenced man's relationships *coram hominibus*. This we see already in Eden and immediately afterwards. Sin became the first ground of conflict when Adam blamed, not merely Eve, but God Himself who had given him such a wife. The first death of man was not natural but violent. Cain killed his brother Abel. This began the war of "all against all." Ambition, greed, lust,

⁶⁵ WA 13, 229.

and selfishness provoked more and more conflicts, and fights for power and influence. Scripture describes asks of this situation, “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight” (James 4:1-2).

Thus sin spoiled man totally and turned “against us” everything that God had given “for us,”—man’s human nature, his *coram* relationships and his own person with all its capacities. Sin spoiled man’s human nature. It created confusion and disharmony between its components and turned them “against us.” Sin also turned man’s human nature against God and against himself. Sin was the deliberate assertion of autonomy from and rebellion against God and His “for-usness.” Sin brought significant changes in man’s *coram* relationships. The main damage is exhibited in the *coram Deo* relationship, with man becoming easy prey for Satan. Sin also profoundly influences man’s relationship *coram naturae*. Instead of being care-sustenance-safety net of God’s “for-usness,” the created order becomes a hate-fight-dread trap for man. By repudiating His Creator man is left with the option of divinizing creatures and their original “for-usness” and he becomes a polytheist. Sin also corrupts man’s *coram meipso* relationship. Man is self-centered, and proudly autonomous. Internal conflicts create in him a strong, adversarial attitude toward God, and now he suffers the terrible consequences of sin. Sin also influences man’s relations *coram hominibus*, starting with creating a conflict-ridden life. This disintegration of human relationships and all the relationships affected by sin shattered man’s understanding of his purpose in life. Because of sin, he either had to abandon the issue of life’s purpose altogether, or he had to construct his own purpose in life.

⁶⁶ The famous Soviet writer Michael Scholohov once spoke in the regular writers’ council of the USSR, saying that he was free but his conscience belonged to the Communist party.

Thus, the First Article presents to us the God Who has created the world as a care-sustenance-safety net for man. Man himself as God's instrument is involved in governing and preserving the world. God has defined man theocentrically, which implies that man's identity lies in God's "for-usness," and particularly in the fact of being created in the image of God. This author has shown the compositional, relational and complementary or personal approaches to defining humanity which try to explain man's creation in the image of God.

The Fall was a catastrophe for man in every respect. Breaking God's prohibition to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil turned the "for-usness" of creaturehood into "against-usness." In the Fall man deliberately proclaimed his autonomy in relationship to God. Man's sin was rebellion against God and His "for-usness." The consequences of sin are devastating; sin has totally turned human nature against God and against man himself. The Fall has turned man into a sinner. Yet, the Creator continues His preserving and providing activity for his rebellious children. "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt 5:45).

C. The Anthropological Implications of "For Us" for the Second Article

1. Behind the Scenes of the Human Identity—Christ's "For-Usness"

That human identity is enclosed in God's and in Christ's "for-usness" is the argument of this dissertation. The exploration of Christ's being "for us," as confessed in the Second Article of the Creed, builds upon Christ's coming from outside human identity in its fallen state to determine what it means to be human.

God is the same God in all three articles of the Creed. In the First Article the Father graciously provides "for us" through creation, sustenance and care within the creation, addressing the human needs of his temporal existence. God the Savior is the same Creator God of the First Article who also liberates, redeems and justifies man in the realm of the Second Article. He has created human

beings apart from their own merit and worthiness, and He has restored and recreated them apart from their own capacities and abilities. God has dealt both with the identity of the old and new man. As Kolb says, “This laying aside of the identity of sinner and the reception of a new identity as God’s own elect child could only be accomplished by the Creator himself, who had arranged for this gift to be given through the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”⁶⁷ God’s “for-usness” is at work in both articles. Therefore, we can expect here the same characteristics of the God who acts “for us” to save humankind from sin that are present in the realm of the First Article. They include God’s revelation, His action, His “*extra-nosness*,” and His giving to man as the passive recipient. The reason for the continuity of the “for-usness” in all three articles of the Creed is that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one.

Although we know that the Father and the Son are to be distinguished in person, yet for our faith we hold them to be one God. Thus, to see Christ is to see the Father as well: “Who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Christ shows the Father “for us” and in Him the Father descends “for us.” There is no God apart from Christ; His words and works are the words and works of Father. What Christ says, the Father says; what He does, the Father does; what He gives, the Father gives; what He accepts is accepted by the Father, and as He is disposed, the Father also is disposed. As Christ spoke, acted, and died, so did God Himself.⁶⁸ So also, whoever adores Him adores God; whoever despises Him despises God.⁶⁹ Thus, the fact that “Christ is in the Father” is for Luther “the chief article and cardinal point” of Christian faith.⁷⁰ The fact that Christ and Father are one means that they share the same disposition of being and acting “for us” as well. Therefore, as Dietrich

⁶⁷ Robert Kolb, “God Kills to Make Alive: Romans 6 and Luther’s Understanding of Justification (1535),” *Lutheran Quarterly* 12 (1998): 35.

⁶⁸ WA 28, 117.

⁶⁹ WA 40, II, 504.

⁷⁰ WA 45, 589.

Bonhoeffer says, a theology “which does not put at the beginning the statement, ‘God is only God *pro me*, Christ is only Christ *pro me*,’ condemns itself.”⁷¹

When Christ is described as “the image of the Father,” we are dealing with an image that is not only a resemblance, but one that fully contains the whole substance and nature of God. “Here the Son is an image of the Father's substance such that the Father's substance is the image itself.”⁷² Luther points out that as a crucifix is a wooden image of Christ, Christ is a “godden” image of God.⁷³ He is the image and quintessence of God uncovered for us. Therefore God's Incarnate “Word is so exactly like Him that the Godhead is wholly in it, and he who has the Word has the whole Godhead.”⁷⁴ Jesus deliberately identifies Himself with the Father. As Robert Jensen points out: “The identification of Jesus and God can also be seen in Jesus' use of the term *ego eimi* (I am) and in his use of the term *abba*.”⁷⁵ Augustine goes even further in developing this thought and says that in Christ the Father's *alter ego* is being sent to us: “So God having deigned to send us the Son, we must not imagine that something less than the Father has been sent to us: the Father, in sending the Son, sent His other self.”⁷⁶ This Christ who is the image of God reveals not merely God's person but also specifically His favorable disposition “for us” towards us. It means that, “I can recognize the mind of God in Christ, for that is His will.” Indeed, Christ Himself may be called the Father's will and heart,⁷⁷ which means that in Christ we are enabled to look into the depths and see what the

⁷¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 48.

⁷² WA 10, I, 1, 155.

⁷³ WA 50, 277.

⁷⁴ WA 10, I, 1, 187.

⁷⁵ Robert Jensen, *Systematic Theology*. vol. 2 of *The Works of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 263.

⁷⁶ Augustine, In *Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, 14, 11, in MPL, 35; as quoted in Ian Siggins, *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), 96.

⁷⁷ WA 10, III, 221.

purposes and thoughts of the divine heart are.⁷⁸ Christ's words, "God so loved the world that He sent His only Son," are the means by which He leads us directly into the Father's heart, declaring that His love and the Father's are one love, and revealing that God's great, wonderful, and eternal plan is not to cast us out but to bring us aid and gift through His Son.⁷⁹ "Christ is the Father's gracious manifestation whereby our hearts are drawn to Himself."⁸⁰ It means that the following paradoxical statement is true: in Christ, the same but different "for us" has descended to us because as the Father's *alter Ego*, He exists and acts "for us."

If God's love in the First Article is caring and sustaining, then God's love in the Second Article is saving. The "for us" of the Second Article restores and recreates men that can live in the Father's favor, and therefore, the "for us" of the Second Article dominates the whole Creed. Without the "for-usness" of the Second Article we would still be sinners left to face the consequences of the Fall. Christ, the Father's Son, and His incarnate Word and will as the Savior dominates the realm of the Second Article and, through it, the whole Creed. The very existence of the Second Article already shows that man's problem lies not in his materiality or physicality but in his sin, that is, not in man as creature, but in man as sinner. Therefore, man's problem cannot be solved either in the realm of the First Article, or by the means of it. Another kind of creative act is required. In the Second Article we see how God has countered the reality of sin and all its terrible consequences. Here He is occupied with our rescue, and therefore, His "for-usness" becomes radical. Its anthropocentric focus becomes most intense as it moves to the cross. The Second Article's particular anthropological focus on man as sinner. Sin has affected human identity so deeply that apart from God's revelation in Christ we do not know who He is and therefore who we are. Sin is not just

⁷⁸ WA 21, 515.

⁷⁹ WA 17, I, 263.

⁸⁰ WA 45, 527.

another wrongdoing that can be undone by righteous actions; rather it is an ontological catastrophe from which we are fundamentally unable to extricate ourselves. The facts of our sinfulness and God's salvation fundamentally determine our and our Savior's identity as well. The Second Article exhibits Him as Savior. Bonhoeffer notes that Christ's "*pro me . . .* is his nature and his mode of existence,"⁸¹ which He ultimately implements on the cross. Therefore, the realm of the Second Article is critical. This is the realm of ours and our Savior's life and death. Without the Second Article there is only damnation and hell for man because man by his sin has turned God's "for-usness" into "against-usness," God's favor into wrath. In life after the Fall, man has alienated himself from the source of his identity and therefore is left with his own "for-himselfness." Therefore, the "for us" of the Second Article is the salvific and cruciform aspect of God's being in Christ "for us."

Although there are many ways to speculate about "God in His essence," there is only one way to have an informed discussion about God. To speak of God is to hold to His revelation "for us" because as Luther points out, "Whoever desires to be saved and to be safe when he deals with [God], let him simply hold to the form, the signs, and the coverings of the Godhead, such as His word and His works. For in His word and in His works God shows himself to us."⁸² It means to encounter His revelation in Christ, for in Him God's self-disclosure reaches its pinnacle and completes itself: "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son. . . . He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature" (Heb. 1:1-3). The Erlangen professor Paul Althaus commented on Luther's thesis that God "has designated

⁸¹ Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 62.

⁸² WA 42, 11; LW 1, 13.

a place and a person—showing us where and in what way he ought to be found,”⁸³ by observing that God:

. . . does not permit us to find him wherever we may happen to want to seek him. He is not a vagabond and wandering God but has definitely limited and bound himself to a specific place; for Israel, it was the tabernacle, the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant, the temple, and Jerusalem. . . . We, Christians, unlike the men of the Old Testament, are no longer directed to a geographical location. What Jerusalem and the temple once were for them, Christ is now for us.⁸⁴

Thus, by God’s mercy in the New Testament times, we have an identifiable God who confines Himself to a definite “place” “for us”—the Person of His Son. This is an indelible fact in the relationships between God and men. It cannot be revoked, avoided or bypassed. God has come to us and “for us” in Christ Jesus.

Luther paraphrases the Scripture verse, “In Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form” (Col. 2:9) in this way: “In this crucified God dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”⁸⁵ Jensen concludes that this “shows a much more intimate relationship between Jesus and God than could be expected to exist between God and a prophet. Jesus does not just bring a word from God; he brings the whole word and the total God.”⁸⁶ Thus, in Christ the whole God is embodied and delivered concretely and actively “for us.”

God’s revelation in Christ is not just another theophany. This revelation has a definite anthropological focus. It is inherently “for us.” In Christ the whole “for-usness” of God the Father has descended to man, opened Himself up to man, and welcomed man. Thus, “for-usness” defines

⁸³ WA 40, III, 338.

⁸⁴ Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1996), 22. Also Luther: “God wills that we should worship him at the place which he has chosen; he does this so that he may forbid all autonomous religion and worship.” WA 40, III, 52. Also, “He has freed us from the danger implicit in external places. Our place [of worship] is Jesus Christ, because God has decided that he will not be heard anywhere except through this Man.” WA 40, III, 53.

⁸⁵ WA 28, 486.

⁸⁶ Jensen, *Systematic Theology*, 263.

Christ, for He is known to us only and insofar as He is “for us.” Daniel Olivier says that Luther “linked salvation to Christ and elucidated the rich principle that the mystery of the Son of God made man is only revealed to us because it is a matter *for us*.”⁸⁷ “Christ for Himself” is a mere abstraction that does not help anybody. His very incarnation already means to be “for us,” as the Creed confesses: “. . . who for us and for our salvation . . .” As Bonhoeffer explains:

Christ is not Christ as Christ in himself, but in his relation to me. His being Christ is his being *pro me*. This being *pro me* is in turn not meant to be understood as an effect which emanates from him, or as an accident; it is meant to be understood as the essence, as the being of the person himself. This personal nucleus itself is the *pro me*. . . . Christ can never be thought of in his being in himself, but only in his relationship to me.⁸⁸

Christ’s mission is to be and to act “for me.” He is “the Anointed One,” the “Messiah;” that is his office. It demonstrates that He has a particular salvific mission to be “for us.” Thus, Christ already by His very name is the “purpose-driven” Christ; He only exists to be “for us.” Therefore, as American religious scholar John Philips summarizes Bonhoeffer’s thought on this subject:

The total orientation of the personal structure of Christ is *pro me*. This *pro me* is not some kind of impersonal power but rather the definition of His being. His determination *pro me* is the kernel of his personality, His mission, His purpose of His life, His everything. I know Christ only as He is *pro me*. The Second Person of the Immanent Trinity does not make any sense to me. Christ does not exist in and of himself, but only in his existential bearing *pro me*.⁸⁹

It means that Christ as Christ exists only with the preposition “for us.” Luther exclaims: “To believe in Christ does not mean that Christ is a person who is man and God, a fact that helps nobody; it means that this person is Christ, that is to say, that for us he came forth from God into the

⁸⁷ Daniel Olivier, *Luther’s Faith: The Cause of the Gospel in the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 108.

⁸⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 47.

⁸⁹ John Philips, *Christ for Us in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 80-1.

world; it is from this office that he takes his name.”⁹⁰ Christ is Christ when and where He is “for me,” when He is in relationship with me as giver. Luther declares, “Read with great emphasis these words, “me,” “for me,” and accustom yourself to accept and to apply to yourself this “me” with certain faith.”⁹¹ It means that only when we comprehend that that Christ is given *pro nobis* that we have realized the significance of Christ’s accomplishment. Thus, Christ’s death is not simply something that happens, but it is something that happens for us. Luther says:

Christ answers, ‘I am certainly not saying this to you for My own benefit. Do you not hear? It is meant for you. You must know and take comfort that I have overcome the world not for Myself, for I had no need to descend from heaven, since I was lord of all creation beforehand, so that the devil and the world could certainly not touch Me! But I have done this for your sake. For your sake I am speaking to you and want to comfort you. This is the reason to take it to heart and consider that I, Jesus Christ, have conquered and won the victory.’⁹²

God reveals Himself in Christ and is acting in and through this revelation. This revelation is God’s purposeful action of ultimate self-disclosure toward and “for us.” In the Second Article we see most clearly that “God is what He does.”⁹³ We can know God only from His deeds. They are the ones that tell us who He is. Luther explains this idea, “How can one know God better than in the works in which He is most Himself?”⁹⁴ Therefore Luther scholar Dennis Ngien says that “‘The God-at-work’ is the God-revealed. If God can be known in His acts, that means He is to be found in the efficacious activity of Jesus Christ.”⁹⁵ In the Second Article He reveals Himself to the utmost in His saving deeds as the *Salvator mundi*. Thus, from what God does in Jesus Christ, we comprehend who God is: He God is “for us.” As American Lutheran systematician Gerhard Forde says: “The

⁹⁰ WA 16, 27; LW 22, 110.

⁹¹ WA 40, I, 448; LW 26, 288;

⁹² WA 46, 110.

⁹³ In this short saying “He” and “does” both are important. The first, “He” frees us from self-inventive speculations; the second, “does,” points to His actions and revelation instead of ours.

⁹⁴ WA 7, 577; LW 21, 331.

historical event itself, the cross and the resurrection, and the preaching of this event, *is* what God has elected to do for us. God has chosen to be a God of mercy, to come to us, to be for us.”⁹⁶ Christ is capable of performing this task because of His inherent “for-usness,” as Bonhoeffer points out:

This “*pro me*” structure means [the following] things for the relationship of Christ to the new humanity: 1) Jesus Christ *pro me* is pioneer, head and firstborn of the brethren who follow him. . . . 2) Jesus Christ is for his brethren by standing in their place. Christ stands for his new humanity before God. But if that is the case, he is the new humanity. He stands vicariously where mankind should stand, by virtue of his *pro me* structure.⁹⁷

The sacrifice of God in Christ consists not only of the events of Good Friday. Christ’s being Savior expressed His “for-usness” extended during His whole life. He has committed Himself to us by the very fact of the Incarnation. His teaching, preaching, healing, exorcisms, miracles, and rising from the dead were demonstrations of His “for-usness” and pointed to His ultimate sacrifice “for us.” His whole life had only one focus—saving the sinner. The whole life of Christ’s ministry shows that Christ does not have a “private” life of His own. Even when He is speaking with His Father His “for-usness” shines through, as John testifies (John 17). Christ’s way of the cross started with His birth when the Son of God took upon Himself to endure the misery and wretchedness that sin had brought upon fallen man (2 Cor 8:9; Luke 9:58; Phil 2:6-7; Matt 8:17). He voluntarily shared human weakness, poverty, and impotence. This was a deliberate realization of God’s “for-usness” in Christ. Luther comprehends Christ’s servanthood and thus His “for-usness” throughout His life as the only reason for His earthly life, “for it was for our sakes that He was born, circumcised, traveled, ate, drank, and slept and (as Paul says in Phil 2) ‘was found in fashion as a man.’”⁹⁸ Everything in His

⁹⁵ Dennis Ngien, *The Suffering of God According to Martin Luther's 'Theologia Crucis'* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 103.

⁹⁶ Gerhard Forde, “The Work of Christ,” in *Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 68.

⁹⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 48-9.

⁹⁸ WA 38, 468.

life was arranged that He might fulfill the divine plan that he suffer and die “for us” to make satisfaction for the law's demand for death because of our sins.

The whole life of Christ was focused on the cross and His cross-bearing. As Swedish church historian Gustaf Aulen says: “When Christian faith perceives the work of Christ as a sacrifice, the reference is not simply to the death on the cross. It refers rather to his whole life, since in him self-sacrificing love pours itself out in willing obedience (Phil 2:8). But this whole sacrifice is summarized and perfected in the sacrifice on the cross, since his whole life is there offered.”⁹⁹ The whole salvific route of Christ from Christmas to Good Friday was a way of temptation and suffering. God committed Himself “for us” on the cross—the culmination of His ministry “for us.” As German-Australian Lutheran theologian Herman Sasse says, “Obviously the ‘theology of the cross’ does not mean that for a theologian the church year shrinks together into nothing but Good Friday, rather it means that Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost cannot be understood without Good Friday.”¹⁰⁰

In realizing that Christ’s death is the ultimate manifestation of God’s work “for us,” the question begs to be asked, “What is in God that prompts Him do this?” What motivates Him to send His Son to death for us and motivates Christ to gladly give Life for us is God’s love “for us.” The passionate God of the Bible is in sharp contrast to the infinitely apathetic deity of metaphysics and mysticism. For Luther, what makes God God is the depth of His being as “love”; the Godness of God is “nothing but burning love and a glowing oven full of love.”¹⁰¹ God’s love demonstrates that emotions are part of His divine nature, which is just another expression of Him being a Person. The

⁹⁹ Gustaf Aulen, *The Faith of the Church*, trans. Eric H. Wahlstrom and G. Everett Arden (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1948), 233.

¹⁰⁰ Herman Sasse, *We Confess Jesus Christ*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 39; see also Canadian Presbyterian systematician Douglas Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness: Toward an Indigenous Theology of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 149.

¹⁰¹ WA 36, 425.

fact that He suffered does not contradict His immutability. Exactly the opposite is true: in His suffering, God as Person's love is manifested in a way that is understandable to us and demonstrably "for us." This is what is decidedly convincing and tangible about God being "for us." His personal being to us in the human Jesus who suffers and dies on the cross, reveals us the depth and certainty of His love. Paul Althaus explains this thought of Christ being God's gift "for us," saying, "Thus Christ and the fact that he is 'for us' is the greatest gift of God's love. In this gift God gives himself."¹⁰² Therefore the knowledge of God's metaphysical attributes is not ultimately decisive for a man who is seeking salvation; rather it is knowledge of God's personal nature and activity: "God is truly known not when we are aware of his power or wisdom which are terrible, but only when we know his goodness and love."¹⁰³ Thus the ultimate reason for the Incarnation, Passion and the cross is because God loves His wayward children. Christ is driven by this redemptive kind of love (that is, by His radical "for-usness"). The unconditional, radical character of God's love flows from His divine nature as self-sacrificial love.

We cannot take Christ's gift "for us" for granted because His sacrifice rested upon His decision; it did not develop as a natural process of His divine substance, nor was it an emanation of His divine nature. His decision to die "for us" did not happen automatically. Christ chose freely to go to the cross. He acted without any conditional or metaphysical necessity to do so. It was a personal commitment according to His will (Eph 1:9) and purpose. (Rom 8:28). Ngien explains that in the event of cross God disclosed Himself, "God reveals Himself in His alien work of suffering as an outflow and expression of God's self-sacrificial love which is ontologically constitutive of God's divine being. Christ thereby unveils historically that which is ontologically true of God's being as

¹⁰² Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 116.

¹⁰³ WA 2, 141.

love.”¹⁰⁴ God by His very nature is “for us” because his nature is *agape*, which is revealed to the utmost on the cross: “The nature of God’s love *pro nobis* is revealed in God’s redemptive act in the incarnate and crucified Christ. God’s way of being ‘most Himself’ is by being *pro nobis*, bearing and suffering the judgment of sin, and eventually dying on the cross.”¹⁰⁵ As Luther says, “God’s ‘boundless love’ is revealed in the fact that God wills to be *pro nobis* in the suffering of the Son on the cross. God is who He is in the life of the incarnate and crucified Christ. God in Christ chooses to meet us ‘who are in anguish, sin and death’ as the committed ‘lover,’ ‘the kind of lover who gives Himself for us’ in order to save us.”¹⁰⁶ God is most Godlike in His self-sacrificial act of the self-humiliation of His own Son, the act of the passion of God in human history, which is at the same time an act of God’s own life. In this way God reveals His real nature as a self-giving deity. “God is most Himself” when He is on the cross, not exhibiting His power and majesty. It means that Christ, while being in the form of God, assumed the form of a servant, which is act of His deepest self-revelation (Phil 2:6-8). As Ngien says, “He was under no necessity of bearing the servant form but willed to do so, showing the extent of His love. In this *forma servi*, he came concealing His majesty so that we do not apprehend him in power and glory but in humility and love. Nowhere else but here, in His own act of self-humiliation, is God truly to be found ‘for me.’”¹⁰⁷

Christ as God-man had full possession of all divine attributes, majesty, and glory

(John 1:14; 2:11; 5:17; Matt 11:27; Col 2:8, 9) but sometimes was moved by His love “for us” deliberately to refrain for a time from the full and constant use of His majesty and glory (Phil 2:6, John 10:18). Christ died because He did *not* use His power to live (Phil 2:6-8). Christ died because He humbled Himself, that is, He accepted human existence, outpouring Himself in order to realize

¹⁰⁴ Ngien, *The Suffering of God According to Martin Luther’s ‘Theologia Crucis,’* 106.

¹⁰⁵ Ngien, *The Suffering of God According to Martin Luther’s ‘Theologia Crucis,’* 103.

¹⁰⁶ WA 40, I, 288-9; LW 26, 178-9.

His “for-usness.” The same Christ, who was ineffably rich, was also poor (Matt 8:20; 2 Cor 8:9); He who is almighty God (John 6:68-9; Isa 9:6) was also weak (Luke 22:42-3); He who is the Creator and Lord of all things (John 1:1-4; Matt 8:27-9) was also subject to man (Luke 2:51-2). He who is the Prince of Life (Acts 3:15; Rev 1:18) was also captured and slain by men (Luke 22:54, 63; 23: 33-7, 46). He was crucified as a rebel, deceiver and blasphemer, and subjected to torture, scourging, reviling, mockery, and indescribable sorrow. He was so shamefully condemned that He was cast outside the gates for He was not held worthy to die with men. He was made into the curse of the whole world. Thus, God “offered up His beloved child for me in ignominy, shame, and death.”¹⁰⁸ He executed the work of the redemption through His vicarious satisfaction “for us” (Isa 53:1-6; 2 Cor 5:19-21), intentionally avoiding the use of His divine majesty. In this way He served as our substitute (Phil 2:6-8; Isa 53:1-6) and rendered perfect obedience (Gal 4, 4:5; 3:13) to His heavenly Father on our behalf. “For our sakes Christ freely and willingly subjected Himself to the ordinances of the law and finally to the curse of the law, even though, as the only man in all human history Who was holy, innocent, and free from sin, the law had no claim upon Him.”¹⁰⁹

The cross was the perfect expression of Christ’s emptying himself and the ultimate purpose of His mission. His emptying of Himself stands at the heart of Christology and reveals itself to the utmost on the cross. On the cross Christ’s desire and commitment to surrender Himself entirely manifested itself, completely outpouring the fullness of God’s love “for us.” He gave up Himself “for us” by standing in the place where we should have been standing: “‘Where does he stand?’ He stands *pro me*. He stands there at my place where I should and cannot stand.”¹¹⁰ His “for-usness” stands and therefore suffers instead of me.

¹⁰⁷ Ngien, *The Suffering of God According to Martin Luther’s ‘Theologia Crucis,’* 99.

¹⁰⁸ WA 10, III, 155.

¹⁰⁹ WA 10, III, 221.

God's love in Christ for the lost and condemned sinner is not powerless. On the contrary, it is fighting love. It compelled Christ to pour out His wrath against human sin, which is His alien work through which God's redeeming love as His proper work is expressed. Thus, God's jealousy becomes wrath in response to sin. The concreteness of God's suffering love cannot allow God to stand by idly as an objective observer, for He is the participant; He is deeply involved in the story because the fate of His beloved children is at stake. This "for-usness" has been concretely acted out in the sufferings of Christ, who suffers the divine wrath and through His death overcomes it.

Thus, God the Father's concrete love in the coming of Christ's "for-usness," by pouring itself out on the cross, has revealed itself in order to save us. Christ's "for-usness" comes to and works towards us in order to become a constitutive factor of our identity.

2. Onto the Stage – Christ's "For-Usness" in His Word As the Source of Man's Identity

In the context of Father sending His Son the Word emphasizes the particular way in which the Father communicates with us, by way of His speech (although He does it also by action as well). In the realm of the First Article the world was created through the Word. In the realm of the Second Article the very Person of the Word Himself is being sent out, the Person of God's Son. There is no possibility in principle of having a satisfactory expression or analogy to this mystery because Christ is "a class by Himself." Therefore, the best we can do is simply state that Christ is the Father's personal and embodied speech to us and "for us." Words express the person behind them. Human words materialize themselves merely in sound waves, whether they exercise influence upon hearers or not. Thus, a human word at best is merely the intermediate means to bring its content to reality. But Christ is the immediate embodiment of God's speech to us. In terms what it can accomplish, God speaking conveys God's power, whereas human speech accomplishes only what it can

¹¹⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 61.

according to God's design and no more (John 19:11). Therefore, Jesus can claim "I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father taught me" (John 8:28) and "all things have been delivered to me by my Father; . . . and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Matt 11:27). Because God Himself sent Christ to preach, what He says carried the authority of God: His words must be accepted in full and obeyed. Christ's own testimony to this mission is validated by the testimony of His Father. Thus Christ's mouth is the mouth of God.¹¹¹ Therefore, Christ is God's speech embodied and delivered to us. It means that God's "for-usness" which identifies and defines us as human beings is being brought into the world by Father communicating to men in the embodied Christ.

This self-disclosure of God brings us His ultimate will embodied (literally) in His Word. He descends and salvifically "tents" among us, men as a man and as a very concrete expression of God's Word (1 John 1:1). As American Lutheran systematician Joseph Sittler remarked, "By the concreteness of the Word of God Luther means that the Word, the action of God, the salvatory arrival at the door of man's prison of the releasing will of God, is not a mere announcement of the divine disposition or a mere declaration of the divine mercy. God himself has come, not in idea but in very fact. His coming is an event, a blunt piece of mortal history, a plain perceptible datum of time."¹¹² Christ is the Word incarnated "for us." God concretely comes to us to do something to and "for us."

Christ's verbal communication, which included plain, straight-forward teaching, and speech¹¹³—preaching, exhortations, consolation and admonition to the general public brought an identifying and constituting "for-usness" to men. (For instance, Jesus addressed his listeners,

¹¹¹ WA 28, 118.

¹¹² Joseph Sittler, *The Doctrine of the Word in the Structure of Lutheran Theology* (Philadelphia: The Board of Publications of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1948), 16.

declaring that “You are the salt of the earth.” [Matt 5:13]) He also used parables as a matter of rhetoric and illustration to convey His message of “for us.” Besides plain speech we can observe also the hard teachings (for instance, we hear the reaction such as, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?” [John 6:60]) of Christ—speeches and parables for disciples only with their postponed understanding (for instance, angels reminded women at the tomb of the resurrected Jesus that “‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’ Then they remembered his words.” [Lk 24:7-8]). All of them each in its own way served to proclaim the “for-usness” of Christ as the constitutive factor of the human being. Although people heard Him, it does not mean that they always understood Him on a level of comprehension. As He said, “Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?” (Mark 8:18). They (including the disciples) often misunderstood His words and intentions “for us.” Neither were Christ’s speeches always meant for immediate understanding. (For instance, we read about the effect of God’s Word on the listener: “Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how” [Mk 2:27].) His words were meant to be more than just religious information; they were pointed toward men’s inner transformation, *metanoia*, toward receiving a new identity in His “for-usness.” Christ’s words served as the pointers to the cross and to the sacrificial meaning of Jesus’ mission. At the same time they also delivered it so that a new identity would be bestowed on man. Thus His words were aimed to convey in different ways His “for-usness.” Hence the purpose of preaching Christ and Him crucified is that men discover that He lived, died and rose “for us” in order to procure for us a new identity.

Part of His preaching mission was to announce that He was sent to and “for us.” His ministry was to direct people to Himself as the content and source of their salvation and new identity. Jesus

¹¹³ For whatever reason, the Creed does not mention anything from Christ’s teaching, preaching and any other verbal encounter with men.

admonishes the people, “I am the good shepherd,” (John 10:11) and says “come to Me” (Matt 11:28). While the prophets, as mere men, directed the people away from themselves to God, Christ showed Himself as God by drawing people to Himself. Thus His message has a self-referential character, as seen in the “I” passages in the New Testament. Luther often shows Christ repeating, “Listen to Me, believe in Me, I point you to Myself: I am sent by My Father. Thus I preach to you: I come as a preacher to you and bring a word from the Father - do not doubt it, and you will discover Who I am and whence I am.”¹¹⁴ Jesus has said not only, “I am sent,” but also “I am He.” In the fact of His being sent His “for-usness” emerges, as Luther makes Christ to bring the testimony: “I, Christ, go to the Father, and he who believes in Me will be saved. For I, I have suffered for him.”¹¹⁵ Luther comments, “When he says . . . ‘I have overcome the world’ . . . We must consider the person who says it, not ourselves the hearers, and cling to Him Who says, ‘I, I have overcome the world.’”¹¹⁶ Luther concludes, “Thus, He draws us and holds us to Himself, for to this He was sent, that He should draw those who would believe in Him up to the Father, as He is in the Father. These bonds has He forged between Himself and us and the Father and enclosed us within them. Through such a union and fellowship our sin and death are abolished, and we have instead sheer life and blessedness.”¹¹⁷ Christ Himself is the message.

The preaching of Christ and particularly the message of the “for-usness” of the cross gives us insight into ourselves. Christ’s “for-usness” opens our own eyes to ourselves as the *Homo absconditus et revelatus*.¹¹⁸ Both the hidden and the revealed dimensions tell us about man’s corrupt state and about his human potential, each from its own aspect. *Homo absconditus* speaks about man

¹¹⁴ WA 10, I, 2, 434.

¹¹⁵ WA 47, 777.

¹¹⁶ WA 46, 105, 106.

¹¹⁷ WA 45, 587.

¹¹⁸ The idea is borrowed from Kolb’s article “Luther on the Theology of the Cross,” 459-60.

as sinner, his ultimate depths of sinfulness and evil, which God has hidden from man's own comprehension¹¹⁹ in order not to throw him into utter despair (for as sinners, we are capable of considerable evil, as history shows us). This evil cannot be repaired by cognitive, social and economic efforts; they all fall short before the task. At the same time the *homo absconditus* concept tells us also about the immense and still incomprehensible potential that we possess as human creatures for we are created in God's image. We are His partners, stewards and therefore co-creators.¹²⁰ We will not be able to comprehend or implement this fact fully, for ultimately the mystery of the human creature is the mystery of his Creator.¹²¹

Homo revelatus points to man as he is revealed by God in Christ, Whose death on the cross is the measure of man's sin. Man's sin was so gross that nothing less than Christ's sacrificial death was able to counteract it. At the same time, the *homo revelatus* concept points to the human potential which sinners do not fully experience but which in faith the elect do experience when they are redeemed and re-created by Christ. Christ has not merely revealed our objective condition of sinfulness but has dealt with it effectively so that we are freed *from* sin, evil and guilt *for* the meaningful exercise of our humanity according to God's design. This is provided on a day-to-day basis by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The extent to which man is *homo absconditus* or *homo*

¹¹⁹ As Luther says, "This inherited sin has caused such a deep, evil corruption of nature that reason does not comprehend it; rather, it must be believed on the basis of the revelation in the Scriptures." (SA III, 3)

¹²⁰ Man, as a limited and conditioned creature, is limited in his creativeness. G. K. Chesterton described this specificity of human existence in following terms: "God is that which can make something out of nothing. Man (it may truly be said) is that which can make something out of anything. In other words, while the joy of God be unlimited creation, the special joy of man is limited creation, the combination of creation with limits. Man's pleasure, therefore, is to possess conditions, but also to be partly possessed by them; to be half-controlled by the flute he plays or by the field he digs. The excitement is to get the utmost out of given conditions; the conditions will stretch, but not indefinitely. A man can write an immortal sonnet on an old envelope, or hack a hero out of a lump of rock. But hacking a sonnet out of a rock would be a laborious business, and making a hero out of an envelope is almost out of the sphere of practical politics." *What's Wrong with the World* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1910), 112.

¹²¹ Partly it may be explained as pair of paradoxes, that is, man as *simul iustus et peccator* and *simul creatus et peccator*. Cf. Schumacher, "Who Do I Say That You Are?" 242.

revelatus is not clear to human beings themselves. It is an open secret, a mystery of faith, which is proclaimed every time anew.

Christ's preaching was something more than dissemination of general religious knowledge. He engaged his hearers beyond their shallow, only here-and-now existence, addressing them at the core of their existence and particularly their sin, the permanent cause of their wretchedness, the source of their negative identity. As Charles Arand says, "The Second Article opens not with a discussion of my needs as a dependent creature, but of my needs as a fallen, trapped, and tyrannized sinner, as expressed by the confession that I am a "lost and condemned creature." Such need entails bondage to both the power of sin and the guilt of sin ("as a lost and condemned creature"). It addresses the fallen creature; the one who has failed to distinguish between the Creator and creation and now finds himself under the dominion of idols and Satan."¹²² Christ's preaching directed people's attention to His cross and to His sacrificial death for them as the salvific solution of their situation and the source of their identity in God.

God's greatness revealed in His humility of His sacrifice "for us" demonstrates the falsehood of man's self-imposed greatness and reveals his real condition of misery and corruptness. The Second Article is radical in its nature, for it voids all human ambitions to improve or to save the individual's own status *coram Deo* by his own efforts of any kind, to fashion for himself a new identity. As American lutheran church historian James Nestingen says,

The explanation of the Second Article and the opening 'I cannot' of the third identify two realities – the reality of the transfer effected by Christ and the reality of the powers of sin and death. Christ's fidelity to the first commandment shows my infidelity; his love of his enemies exposes my self-protection; his self-giving illuminates my desperate attempts to have myself.¹²³

God's omnipotence in Christ shows the nature and limits of human power. God's "for us" on

¹²² Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 161-2.

¹²³ James A. Nestingen, "The Catechism's *Simul*," *Word and World* 3 (1983): 370.

the human side can be translated as “there is nothing in me” (that is usable for salvation). There is nothing I can do about myself, about my sins. I experience my helplessness, my ultimate impotence *coram Deo*, and happily so. For this experience sets aside my false ambitions and teaches me to accept what is God’s. I cannot do anything, but God has already done and is doing everything “for me” and “for us” that his children may be saved.

The cross reveals both Christ and humanity. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was a complete and full sacrifice without any reservation or remnant, for He gave up Himself fully and completely. Thus, Christ’s “for-usness” on the cross is the measure of man’s sin. God gave up His only-begotten Son completely, on the cross as the ultimate expression of His love. Such was the depth of man’s sinfulness. Christ on the cross is the embodied “for-usness” of God.

God’s Word “for us” is the delivery of divine information about God’s gracious disposition toward the believers of His Word. It reports that they are accepted by God’s favor. Their identity as God’s children is re-established. At the same time God’s Word is also the immediate transformation of and the impact upon the hearer (although sometimes one must wait for consequences). God’s Word delivers what He speaks of because it contains the reality of which it speaks. As Lutheran dogmatician David Hollaz said, “The Word of God is here considered not as the source of knowledge, but as the means of practice or action, by whose intervention the sinner is led by God to eternal salvation.”¹²⁴ The “for us” of the Second Article does not merely speak about the historic event itself, but actually conveys the event and its benefits to the people, thus engaging them in salvific action.

The reason for this benefit delivery is because God’s Word (also in the form of its proclamation) is God’s creative agent. God’s view of things and His will in His Word determines

¹²⁴ Quoted in Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 3rd ed., trans. Charles Hay and Henry Jacobs (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 502-3.

reality “for us.” This is an axiom already in the First Article. In the Second Article, God’s Word is His instrument of redemption as He recreates man’s identity through the work and benefits of the Word made flesh. As Kolb says:

The cross and the Word that delivers it have created the new reality within God’s creation: a new reality for Satan (since God nailed the law’s accusations to the cross and rendered them illegible by soaking them in Christ’s blood); a new reality for death (since it was laid to eternal rest in Christ’s grave); a new reality for sinners (since they were buried, too, in Christ’s tomb and raised to new life through the death and resurrection of the Crucified One).¹²⁵

God’s Word, either in Scripture, or in its application, for instance, in absolution, creates a new reality “for us.” As Arand says, “Where in the First Article God created something out of nothing, here we see that he recreates something new out of sin. This he accomplishes by means of the Son’s incarnation . . . and with his work. . . . In death he achieves victory.”¹²⁶ God stands by his Word, His Word that forgives and recreates the sinner as God’s child. When God says: “Forgiven!” it *is* forgiven. By this Word He restores the identity, the original humanity of His chosen children. God’s Word *is* that unconditional word, the promise, the declaration of justification is that which makes us sinners new, that which puts in the grave the old man and brings forth the new man. Thus the Word of forgiveness acts as a promise, as a pledge from God that changes the reality of existence immediately, guaranteeing God’s favor forever,¹²⁷ as Bayer points out. That word of promise is a creative Word which establishes a new reality—that this child of God belongs to Him and is no longer a sinner because God no longer regards him as damned. As Schumacher says,

Into that predicament of human ignorance, powerlessness, and death, God speaks the new, re-creating word of the gospel. This word, like God’s first word of creation, is never simply a source of accurate information, but the voice of God addressing human creatures with his forgiveness. It is the performative *promissio* of God the

¹²⁵ Robert Kolb, “Luther on the Theology of the Cross,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 16 (2002): 449.

¹²⁶ Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 162.

¹²⁷ As is argued by Oswald Bayer, *Promissio: Geschichte der reformatorischen Wende in Luthers Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971).

Creator, which does not simply “define” human nature but actually brings about our new existence and makes us who and what we are. For human beings who are unable to discover or define their own identity, everything hangs on the command and promise of God.¹²⁸

God exercises this rule or power of the Gospel by promising: not only as a pledge of future delivery of the Good but above all as an assurance that rests upon the word of the king. And it has immediate effect and validity.¹²⁹

Thus, Christ as the embodied Word of the Father revealed man’s status as a sinner, and also as a *homo absconditus et revelatus*. Christ’s “for-usness” exhibited on the cross restored the human identity as God’s child.

3. The Attitude of the Theology of Glory Towards the “For-Usness” of God and the Consequences of It for the Identity of Man¹³⁰

There are two main attitudes towards the reality of the cross. One is to avoid its personal impact, to put safe distance between man and God and to search for God elsewhere. Another attitude is to receive the full impact of the cross upon ourselves with all its consequences. The two theologies emerging from these personal attitudes towards the cross are the theology of glory and the theology of cross respectively. The choice between them ultimately determines what kind of theologian an individual is going to be under the impact of the story of the cross, and what kind of relationship there will be between us and Christ’s “for-usness” exhibited on the cross.

For any theology, one of the most important questions regards the knowledge of God. Often, a theology of glory looks for God by tracing His footprints this creation, for this speaks powerfully.

¹²⁸ Schumacher, “Who Do I Say That You Are?” 246.

¹²⁹ Oswald Bayer, *Aus Glauben leben: über Rechtfertigung und Heiligung* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1984), 48-9.

¹³⁰ For this and the following sub-sections I am mostly indebted to the work of American systemtician Gerhard Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther’s Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1997).

The New Testament testifies that the invisible things of God, his power, wisdom, justice, and goodness, shine forth from creation (Rom 1:20). In the same way we can substitute concepts of nature, history, and personality for the phrase “through the things that are made.” Man often tries to achieve the knowledge of God through these things as the possible source of his identity. As Erlangen church historian Walther von Loewenich points out,

Whether one becomes aware of God’s glory by contemplating the eternal laws of nature or by quiet prayer and adoration in view of the inexhaustible riches of creaturely life; whether one sees history as the Eternal’s unconcealed revelation or whether because of the mystery of personality one is convinced of the certainty of the Uncaused, in every case the attempt is made to reach the knowledge of God by way of creation.¹³¹

This way of getting knowledge of God as Himself and as the source of our identity is very appealing to human reason, for it can actively engage in the active search for God and His attributes. The human mind can discover that God has reasonably constructed the world, that His power and wisdom is manifested in the creation, and that, although in limited fashion, similar attributes are present in ourselves and can be ascribed to our God-given identity. This is the way some forms of a theology of glory presume that we can see *through* the creation and the mighty acts of God manifested in the visible things. These theologies may claim that gradually, step by step we can climb and reach God Himself. Thus, the theology of glory is driven by the search to seek for transcendent meaning behind everything visible and creaturely to try to see into the invisible things of God’s “for-usness” as the source of our identity.

Such an approach to God often defines Him as merely an omnipotent ruler of the universe. It may produce a portrayal of Him as a severe or a gentle heavenly ruler. Such a God is simply a man’s extension of his own wishes into the realm of metaphysics, or, as German philosopher Ludwig

¹³¹ Walther von Loewenich, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, trans. Herbert J. Bouman (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976), 18-9.

Feuerbach said, the projection of man himself into the heavens.¹³² Therefore, in some theologies of glory, man himself is the ultimate source of his identity. The “for-usness” of such a God conforms to the human standards of effectively exercising power over His subjects by His omnipotence and omniscience. With such a God it is possible to negotiate terms of peaceful co-existence by smart maneuvering and productive collaboration to satisfy the needs of man. This God of glory provides His regulations in the form of the Law, and man tries to comply with them, expecting merit as reward. In the eyes of this theology, God’s Law promises to bestow life and in turn encourages man to do his best by fulfilling his religious duties. Eventually this will accumulate merit and bring man to God. Therefore, He is not the God of gifts “for us” but the God of requirements “from us.” This theology promotes human performance in the religious field; that is, it suggests capturing God’s “for-usness” and favor by the way of meritorious works and reasoning. This way is paved with human achievements, efforts, and works. It gives to this theology of glory a triumphalistic character, for it puts its emphasis on man himself, his self-affirmation, his capacities to cope with God and finally his achievement of salvation.

But once man has grasped this God, which is basically constructed according to man’s imaginations, there is an immediate thirst for more. This theology of glory tries to usurp the divine authority and places God in the role of merely augmenting man’s ambitions, manipulating Him into a role which is convenient for man. This God is “for us” after our own fashion. His “for-usness” is under human control. He is put under the restrictions of human reason. Therefore, this God is predictable, no surprises expected. He is just another force (almost similar with those of the nature) to be dealt with as skillfully as possible. As Kolb says, “For such a theology of glory reaches out for a manipulable God, a God who provides support for a human creature who seeks to master life on

¹³² Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper, 1957), 13-4, 22-43, 108.

his or her own, with just a touch of divine help.”¹³³ Thus a theology of glory tries to grasp the power of God but instead mishandles His majesty.

The cross too, can easily fit into this scheme of theology of glory when it is viewed as “making up” for failures along the glory road to the human religious achievements. The cross can seem as transparent to the inquisitive human reason as any other creaturely fact. Christ on the cross can become a symbol to be de-coded, a riddle to be solved. It is in line with the presupposition of looking always “behind.” Here American Lutheran systematician Gerhard Forde observes that, if we are looking behind the cross, we don’t have to look at it!¹³⁴ In that way we do not have to bother ourselves with the things which are seen, for it is presumed that the important “stuff” is not there; everything significant is behind the scenes where only the human reason and religious piety of good works can reach, which builds up human self-esteem and self-glory. This is a way of human speculation, to realize the essence of God apart from God’s revelatory acts in Christ. But precisely on the cross God refuses to be domesticated by signs, logic and rationality. He never fits into a system under the human control. Thus, a theology of glory misses the true God and with it also the true source of our identity.

In this theology of glory human reason is the instrument which attempts to capture God and His “for-usness.” It attempts to master Him by way of abstractions and speculations in order to better cope with Him. Thus, this theology of glory is fundamentally man’s self-affirmation and glorification, for we are the ones who are making God the object of research. We are discovering, analyzing, and dissecting Him and His actions. This theology of glory does not consider man’s sin seriously enough, regarding it as some deficiency which can be somehow overcome by human might even when grace from God must also be present. It builds on man’s self-sufficiency.

¹³³ Robert Kolb, “Luther on the Theology of the Cross,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 16 (2002): 448.

¹³⁴ Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, 76.

Therefore it requires the impossible from man. It looks optimistic and promising at the beginning (when it praises man and his achievements), but it turns to be a great disappointment at the end (when it faces the deepest realities of sin and the ultimate failure of man to achieve salvation by his own efforts). Moreover, it completely mistreats and misreads God's real "for-usness" and with it also the true human identity, for it perceives God from a purely human viewpoint. This has always been the stumbling block for men, today and in Jesus' time as well.

Men are accustomed to converse in earthly terms of power and influence. We can see that in the New Testament men, seeing that Jesus exerted certain power and influence on them, they tried to deal with Him in worldly terms. For example, "they intended to come and make him king by force" (John 6:15). They basically used the same approach as Satan did by tempting Jesus to solve human problems by the worldly means, expecting that He would reward them in the same terms of worldly power and influence. He was a disappointment for them because He did not meet these expectations. The Jews ignored the prediction that the Messiah must be rejected, suffer, and die shamefully, and that His coming would coincide with the extinction of the physical kingdom. They could not see the promised kingdom in a universal kingdom of peace and righteousness, and the fact that such a spiritual kingdom meant the end of their limited, carnal kingdom. They could not harmonize His status as King of kings with His suffering and death. They expected Him to be the world's lord and to fight for the liberation of the Israel from political oppression, not to suffer and to die for them in order to save His people from their sins. In the face of human expectations Christ's kingdom was neither of this world nor was its justice meant to be the juristic righteousness of the world. It was rather righteousness from God which is by faith. Christ's was not a new version of social justice but a conversion to the righteousness from above.

Thus, particularly the "for-usness" of Christ's cross was a scandal to the Jews, for He came into humanity, assuming human flesh; they believed that the holy God would never come into the

sinful human flesh and would not die shamefully at the hands of unjust men. He was foolishness to the Greeks, for they believed that a transcendent God would never descend to the imperfect world. Men were familiar with the demanding and punishing God; that was righteous and logical, consistent and natural to them. Such a God, while not always very pleasant, was acceptable to human reason and its understanding of justice. Although this God seemed to be understandable, predictable, and manageable by sacrifices and pleading, people were fearful of Him. Christ, Who renounced such a conception of God and proclaimed the self-sacrificing God “for us,” was puzzling and shocking to them. They rejected Him as the source of man’s identity.

Thus, this theology of glory portrays God as God “from us,” declaring man to be a master over his own life and a manipulator of God.

4. Man’s Identity in Christ’s “For-Usness”—Moving from the Hidden God to the Revealed God

Thus, the approach of this theology of glory fails to understand God as He has revealed Himself in Jesus. God is beyond the grasp of human conceptualization. Even if the abstractions of a theology of glory were true, they would lead us into an impasse, for a human idea of God turns out to be a God of Law and of wrath, not of love and mercy. Moreover, as Forde says, “It is the very godness of God that causes all the difficulty in our thinking. For if those fearsome [human] abstractions convey truth, ‘God’ is the end of us. That is, should God be all those things, we are left with nothing—no significance, no freedom, no place to stand. God as sheer abstraction, as ‘the naked God,’ is an inescapable terror for us. God ‘not preached’ is a God of wrath.”¹³⁵ The divine majesty cannot be solved by abstractions. Therefore, Forde continues, showing that God Himself leads us from the hiddenness to revealedness, from abstract speculations to the concreteness of incarnation:

¹³⁵ Gerhard Forde, *Theology Is for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 15.

The general concepts and ideas such as almightiness, immutability, and even predestination do not in the first instance reveal God to us so much as they hide him from us. They do not at first comfort or console us so much as they frighten us or even repel us. They set us to wondering and perhaps fearing what such a God might have in store for us. But the point in saying that God is hidden is to lead us to recognize that this is exactly the way God intends it to be. He does not want to be known as he is “in heaven,” in his mere “almightiness” or even merely as “the God of predestination.” He wants to be known as the God in the manger or at his mother’s breasts, the God who suffered and died and rose again. His almightiness, his unchangeability, the threat of predestination. All these things are “masks” which God wears, so to speak, to drive us to look elsewhere, to look away from heaven and down to earth, to the manger and the cross, to preaching and the sacraments. For the point is that God simply does not want to be known and will not be known on any other level. He hides himself behind a mask which is intended to drive man away in fear to a place where he, as revealed God, wants to be known.¹³⁶

Thus, God is His own solution to His hiddenness. As Luther says, “God must therefore be left to himself in his own majesty, for in this regard we have nothing to do with him, nor has he willed that we should have anything to do with him. But we have something to do with him insofar as he is clothed and set forth in his Word, through which he offers himself to us.”¹³⁷ God as the hidden and the revealed directs us away from Himself when we seek to grasp Him “behind” His human life and cross, toward Himself as He defines Himself “for us” in the Word. This is where we should seek for our identity. Therefore, Martin Luther places in God’s mouth the following words, saying:

from an unrevealed God I will become a revealed God. Nevertheless, I will remain the same God. I will be made flesh, or send My Son. He shall die for your sins and shall rise again from the dead. . . . Behold, this is My Son; listen to Him (cf. Matt 17:5). Look at Him as He lies in the manger and on the lap of His mother, as He hangs on the cross. Observe what He does and what He says. There you will surely take hold of Me. For “He who sees Me,” says Christ, “also sees the Father Himself” (cf. John 14:9).¹³⁸

Thus, Christ bids us to let God be God. He Himself chooses where, when and how He will

¹³⁶ Gerhard Forde, *Where God Meets Man: Luther's "Down-to-Earth" Approach to the Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 27.

¹³⁷ WA 18, 685; LW 33, 139.

¹³⁸ WA 43, 459; LW 5, 45.

manifest Himself through His Word “for us.” God chose to reveal Himself in Christ hanging on the cross and in the Word from the cross. This is the end of human speculation and manipulation. God has made Himself available “from below,” that is, in Christ who is crucified and is suffering “for us” on the cross. This is God “for us.” He has come to us by His own initiative. By God’s own action He brings down from heaven the concrete and personal gift of Himself in the Person of Christ. After Christ’s incarnation there is no reason to look behind Him or His cross, for He, particularly on the cross, is the full and visible embodiment of the Father and His “for-usness.” God Himself comes to us in Christ. His “for-usness” exhibits itself in the fact that He becomes the concrete, “down-to-the-earth” God, not an abstract God who is to be found nowhere. Man begins where God Himself begins, in the Virgin’s womb, in the manger, at His mother’s breasts. God wills to “present Himself to our sight.” As Luther says, “For this purpose he came down, was born, lived among men, suffered, and was crucified, and died, so that in every possible way He might present Himself to our sight.”¹³⁹ Therefore, the source of my identity is not far away but here, close to me, in the embodied Son of Man.

Because Christ’s action on the cross was so radical that it passed normal human expectancy, it was executed by actions whose meaning was hidden under the appearance of the opposite. What happened on the cross was completely contradictory to our usual religious thinking (1 Cor 1:18-25). Therefore, precisely in the things men usually consider the opposite of the divine, the human nature in its weakness and foolishness (1 Cor 1:25), God has become visible. Because men misused the knowledge of God by relying on works, God wished again to be recognized as being “for us” in suffering. As Ebeling says, “Jesus, the crucified, allows us to believe in God as omnipotent in

¹³⁹ WA 40, I, 77-8; LW 26, 29.

impotence, and only in this way makes God really God for us at all.”¹⁴⁰ In such a way God put to shame the wisdom of invisible things by means of the wisdom concerning the visible things. As sinners, we are inveterate theologians of glory. For this reason God did not approach us through our religious aspirations, but His revelation took the form of the opposites. Thus, at first God does his “alien” work showing His wrath, and only afterwards He does his “proper” and loving work. First He kills, then makes alive. The way to God’s mercy is via His anger. No wonder that as Luther says,

outwardly . . . grace seems to be nothing but wrath . . . God’s faithfulness and truth always must first become a great lie before it becomes truth. . . . God cannot be God unless He first becomes a devil. All that God speaks and does the devil has to speak and do first. And our flesh agrees. . . . By the same token the lies of this world cannot become lies without first having become truth. The godless do not go to hell without first having gone to heaven. They do not become the devil’s children until they have first been the children of God.¹⁴¹

It simply means that a believer should not be discouraged by the outer signs of God’s weakness, foolishness, and so forth. On the contrary, they are the ones which encourage the Christian who knows well enough the human weakness to seek for his identity in the seeming weakness of God’s “for-usness.”

The cross is the epitome of the hiddenness and revealedness of God. Both the revelation of God’s love, of His “for-usness” and the ultimate expression of His hiddenness find their place on the cross. The cross did both. It hid and revealed God’s “for-usness” at the same time. The paradox of the *deus crucifixus* epitomizes the tension of faith which finds God’s “yes” hidden in His “no.” Therefore, as Kolb says, for a believer God’s hiddenness and revelation mysteriously coincide: “The hidden God has revealed Himself in human flesh. The revealed God is hidden in human flesh. The true God has hidden Himself in the crib and on the cross and in His crypt. He reveals Himself in a

¹⁴⁰ Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought*, trans. R. A. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 241.

¹⁴¹ WA 31, I, 249; LW 14, 31.

promise wrapped in swaddling cloths, in diapers, and nailed to a cross.”¹⁴² Thus, His revelation is hidden in the very means of His revelation. Here, in this mystery the believer should look for his identity.

When Christ emptied Himself, He was not playing hide and seek with men. He was not really hiding at all, trying to be invisible or unavailable for men, for He was there where He was – in the crib and on the cross. Those who believed in Him saw Him and His “for-usness” there, for they were attached not to the externalities but to Him, to His “for-usness,” and to His Word. Thus they were not offended by the insignificance of His appearance. For them He was not hidden because He was available for them all the time—in the human flesh, on the cross, in the bread and wine of the Last Supper. Thus, here “hidden” does not mean “invisible,” for the cross is visible to all. But only believers recognize that God has revealed Himself there. Siggins explains Luther’s thought on this matter, “It remains true that God is utterly incomprehensible in His essence and majesty; but in Christ, God is not hidden but revealed—revealed not *sub contraria* but as He truly is. Of course, to reason this revelation is still hidden *sub contraria*, but strictly speaking, the revelation is not offered or available to reason,”¹⁴³ specifically the rationality of the unbelievers. The Christian perceives his own identity by faith not by reason.

On the cross Christ not merely stands there and suffers my punishment. Here Christ’s “for-usness” takes from me my sinfulness, and He Himself becomes a sinner “for me.” In place of my sin He grants me His holiness and favor before God. Moreover, the concreteness of God’s “for us” on the cross is highlighted by the fact that Jesus not merely assumed human nature but also took on our sins. Thus, Christ traded our lives for His. He took *our* life, our place, in order to give us *his*. In this action we see the gift-character of the “for-usness” of the cross to the utmost. The “for-usness” of

¹⁴² Robert Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel Today: A Theology for Evangelism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 65.

the cross has the definite anthropological focus on the sinner and his salvation. Here God pushes man out of the deadly place where he belonged and puts there instead His Son “for us.” Thus, in the action of the “for-usness” of the cross, man is completely passive. He is put at the receiving end. The cross is not just the manifestation of God’s power. There everything is meant to be “for us.” Here Luther expresses himself in words similar to those of the church fathers: “Therefore, God becomes man in order that man may become God. Likewise strength becomes weak in order that weakness may become strength. He put on our form and figure, image and likeness, in order to clothe us in his image, form and likeness.”¹⁴⁴ This is exchange between me and Him, as Luther says, that there is indeed a real ‘exchange’: Christ becomes a sinner and a curse for us. The reformer goes on, saying, “Whatever sins I, you, and all of us have committed or may commit in the future, they are as much Christ’s own as if He Himself had committed them. In short, our sin must be Christ’s own, or we shall perish eternally.”¹⁴⁵ Luther orders the sinner to say, “Lord Jesus Christ, you are my righteousness, just as I am your sin. You have taken upon yourself what is mine and have given me what is yours. You have taken upon yourself what you were not and have given to me what I was not.”¹⁴⁶ Luther continues, “To be sure, Christ ‘in his own person’ as the Son of God does not commit sins, but by entering into our place he truly takes upon himself all our sins, and therefore makes himself a sinner, ‘not only adjectivally but substantively.’”¹⁴⁷ Being on the cross in our stead, Christ is “not acting in his own person now; now he is not the Son of God, born of the virgin, but he is a sinner,”¹⁴⁸ who has and bears the sins of the world. Luther explains:

¹⁴³ Siggins, *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ*, 81.

¹⁴⁴ WA 1, 28.

¹⁴⁵ WA 40, I, 434-5; LW 26, 278.

¹⁴⁶ WA BR 1, 35; LW 48, 12.

¹⁴⁷ WA 40, I, 448; LW 26, 288.

¹⁴⁸ WA 40, I, 432-4; LW 26, 277.

When the merciful Father saw that we were being oppressed through the Law, that we were being held under a curse, and that we should not be liberated from it by anything, He sent his Son into the world, heaped all the sins of all men upon him and said to him: “Be Peter the denier, Paul the persecutor, blasphemer and assaulter, David the adulterer, the sinner who ate the apple in Paradise; the thief on the cross. In short the person of all men, the one who has committed the sins of all men. And see to it that You pay and make satisfaction for them.” Now the Law comes and says: “I find Him a sinner, who takes upon Himself the sins of all men. I do not see any other sins than those in Him. Therefore let Him die on the cross.”¹⁴⁹

God’s “for-usness” exhibits itself in the “joyous exchange” via which man receives his new identity.

Thus, God’s hiddenness leads to His revelation in Christ’s “for usness,” which by the “joyous exchange” provides the sinner with his new identity as a redeemed and saved person, that is, as a Christian.

5. The Theology of the Cross As the Application of Christ’s “For Us” to Man

Besides the option of a theology of glory which avoids the personal approach by the “for-usness” of the cross, there is another option. The theology of the cross fully embraces the cross with all its consequences. The theology of the cross is not a separate subject of theology; it is not, for example, the doctrine of the vicarious atonement. It is rather a particular feature of the whole of theology. It is an integrating element for all Christian knowledge. The cross is the center that provides perspective for all theological statements. Hence it helps shape the concrete presentation of the doctrine of God, the doctrine of the work of Christ, and all other doctrines. Second, there is no way to speak or write *about* the theology of the cross in the same manner we would speak on any other theological subject because it is a matter of personal attitude and relation to the “for-usness” of the cross. Forde explains, “in fact, it is quite impossible to write ‘the’ or even ‘a’ theology of the cross. . . . We can only die *with him* and await God’s answer in him.”¹⁵⁰ Therefore, the theology of

¹⁴⁹ WA 40, I, 437-8; LW 26, 280.

cross is the delivery of the cross. The theology of the cross does not speak about the cross but speaks the cross itself into our very lives in order to initiate the new identity of man as child of God.

God's proclamation of the cross is not the invitation for a theological discussion or a dialogue. God speaks, and we become silent and listen to the message of and from the cross. There He delivers His crucified "for-usness." There is no "method" of the theology of the cross in a strict sense of the word, for there is no possibility of mastering the subject matter by oneself. We need simply to listen to the Word of "for us" from the cross, which confronts sinners with the Person of Christ. God does not justify Himself by some kind of explanations. He tells sinners what He has done "for us," but by His very telling He confronts them with the event itself. In the realm of the Second Article He relates them personally to the fact of the cross, and in the Third Article He delivers to them the benefits of the cross by His particular instruments, the means of grace. He literally draws us into the event, as Forde says, "You are the one who is torturing Christ. Thus, for your sins have surely wrought this. . . . Therefore, when you see the nails piercing Christ's hands, you can be certain that it is your work. When you behold his crown of thorns, you may rest assured that these are your evil thoughts, etc."¹⁵¹ In such a way the story of the cross becomes our story. We are participants, whether we like it or not. The cross does not allow us to be "objective" observers, for there is no objective analysis of the event of the cross possible. The cross comes at us and says: "There is a crucified Christ for you." It forces itself upon us so that it becomes inescapable because it claims us. By being drawn into and claimed by the story, we suffer the absolute and unconditional working of God upon us. Just as Jesus was crucified, so we also are crucified with Him. The cross makes us a part of its story. The cross becomes our story, which means that we are personally involved in it, that we bear responsibility for what happened there on the cross. As Forde says, "that

¹⁵⁰ Gerhard Forde, "The Work of Christ," in *Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 90.

Jesus bears our sins in his body is no abstract affair, no strange metaphysical transference; it is actual and public fact. We beat him, spit on him, mock him as a 'king,' crown him with thorns, torture him, forsake him, kill him. He bears our sins in his body – actually.”¹⁵² Thus, the theology of the cross is the actual doing of the cross to the hearers so that they are killed and made alive by the hearing of it. This is the way how it bestows the new identity on man. The apostle Paul does not clarify some theories about the atonement. He simply holds the actual cross in its horror before his hearers, thus shocking them into seeing. Therefore, the cross cannot be made into a principle for defining the world, as Oswald Bayer says, “‘The theology of the cross’ simply ‘tells it like it is,’ labels every break with God sin, demands the death of the sinner, and proclaims and pronounces the gift of new life in the person of faith whom God has chosen and claims as his own.”¹⁵³

Therefore, the theologian of the cross approaches the cross differently than the theologian of glory. He is not going to look *through* the cross to what is “behind” it, for nothing is there. Everything is in (or better, hangs on) the cross. On the cross, what we see is what we get. We are directly and personally confronted not merely with the message *about* something but with the very Person Himself who died “for us” and thus provided us with our new identity. His Word doesn’t coin itself in ready theological propositions that we can appropriate and still go on pretty much as usual. It is an incredibly simple message. Sinners look for something more complicated in order to find at least some kind of mastery over it. This message is inherently dangerous to sinners, and they know it. It kills the sinful self, and there is no escape from it.

The cross is not transparent but more like a mirror. It turns sinners back to what is “visible and manifest” of God among them. They come to understand it through suffering and the cross, which

¹⁵¹ Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, 8.

¹⁵² Forde, “The Work of Christ,” 90.

¹⁵³ Bayer, *Aus Glauben leben*, 23-27. Cf. Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, 71-7.

becomes the key to theological comprehension.¹⁵⁴ The cross and Christ's sufferings are not mere accidental problems to be solved by some metaphysical adjustment, but they are the tools of God's "for-usness" working doing on us in order to kill the old man in us so that the new man can rise. The word of the cross does the very suffering it talks about. The word of the cross does not just kill sinners. It first of all crucifies the pretension that sinners can be in control of God and their own lives. This notion is painful, for we do not like to be put out of control. Thus, God kills the sources of the old, sinful identity. Human creatures are rendered totally *passive* by the divine operation through the cross. Precisely because the sinner has taken up an active position in relation to God's activity on the basis of works, God's action over against the sinner can only result in his suffering when it deposes him from every position he has taken over against God. He is a spiritual corpse, and corpses do not control anything. The message of the cross is a concrete one. It confronts us in person, that is, it kills us personally.

First of all, the cross captures and crucifies the very instrument of the old man, of which the theologian of glory is so proud, his mind. This action of involves sacrificing our own ideas and thinking: "We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor 10:45). Human beings are thus led not by their own minds following abstract divine principles, but by the guidance of the Word from the cross, which conforms us to Christ. As Forde says, "The real and true work of Christ's Passion is to make man conformable to Christ, so that man's conscience is tormented by his sins in like measure as Christ was pitifully tormented in body and soul by our sins."¹⁵⁵ The theology of the cross is literally applied theology, for, as Forde says, "Knowledge of God comes when God happens to us, when God does himself to us. We are crucified with Christ (Gal 2:19). The sinner, the old being, neither knows nor speaks the truth about God and consequently can only be put to death

¹⁵⁴ Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, 78.

¹⁵⁵ Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, 7.

by the action of God. Such is the way one becomes a theologian of the cross, who can begin to speak and proclaim the truth of God, to ‘say what a thing is.’”¹⁵⁶ Thus, the cross is God’s attack on human sinfulness, revealing that the real seat of sin is not in the flesh but in our *spiritual* aspirations. Sinners find that the cross destroys their own attempts at setting the world aright through their own thinking, their metaphysics, or through their actions and their moral performance. Suffering reduces human works and merits to naught. God’s “for us” literally kills us. Everything we have counted on, our self-esteem based on our achievements and works, accounts for nothing before God. All of this is taken away:

The soul is taken hold of [by the pure Word of God] and does not take hold of anything itself; that is, it is stripped of its own garments, of its shoes, of all its possessions, and of all its imaginations, and is taken away by the Word . . . into the wilderness. . . . But this leading, this taking away, and this stripping, miserably tortures [the soul]. For it is a hard path to walk in, and a straight and narrow way, to leave all visible things, to be stripped of all natural senses and ideas, and to be led out of all those things to which we have been accustomed; this, indeed, is to die, and to descend into hell.¹⁵⁷

The sufferings leave us empty-handed, beggars before God. This is in accordance with the words of Bonhoeffer: “When Christ calls a person, he bids him come and die. Every command of Jesus is a call to die, with all our affections and lusts. But we do not want to die, and therefore Jesus Christ and his call are necessarily our death as well as our life. The call to discipleship, the Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, means both death and life.”¹⁵⁸ It means that God-inflicted sufferings are not aimless torture. God is bringing forth the new man; he is being born through these sufferings. The sufferings inflicted by the cross are the birth pains of the new man. We can do nothing about them, (as much as we were able to do about our own physical birth) but can only receive them. As

¹⁵⁶ Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, 90.

¹⁵⁷ WA 5, 176.

¹⁵⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 79.

Luther says, “Other virtues may be perfected by doing; *but faith, hope, and love, only by suffering, by suffering I say, that is, by being passive under the divine operation.*”¹⁵⁹

It means that the sinner needs a radical solution. Because sin and evil permeate all of human existence, there is no fixing, no superficial healing, for the patient. As Kolb says, “The children of God become his children not by recovering from serious illness but by being born anew, and that new birth presumes death to the old, sinful identity.”¹⁶⁰ Therefore, sinners must die at the hand of God’s good plan for human life, His Law. Forde reiterates, “It [Law] does not come to feed the religious desires of the Old Adam and Eve but to extinguish them. They are crucified with Christ to be made new.”¹⁶¹ No improvements, no optimistic encouragements, just straight talk: “You must be born anew.” That is not good news for the sinner, because be born again means first to die, to the addiction to the sin, to our ego. But this death is designed to lead to resurrection. As Luther says,

For whenever a carnal man is touched in a wholesome way by the Word of God, one thing is felt, but another actually happens. Thus it is written [1 Sam. 2:6-7]: ‘the Lord kills and brings to life; He brings down to hell and raises up; He brings low, He also exalts.’ Isaiah also beautifully portrays this allegorical working of God when he says [28:21], ‘He does His work - strange is His deed; and He works His work - alien is His work!’ It is as if he were saying: ‘Although He is the God of life and salvation and this is His proper work, yet, in order to accomplish this, He kills and destroys. These works are alien to Him, but through them He accomplishes His proper work. For He kills our will that His may be established in us. He subdues the flesh and its lusts that the spirit and its desires may come to life.’¹⁶²

Thus, in the theology of cross suffering proves to be the surest way to God, or rather, in suffering God meets us. In contrast to the suffering of the ungodly, the purpose of the sufferings of the Christian is not punishment and destruction but grace and cleansing. The word of the cross kills and makes alive. Thus, Christ’s “for-usness” both mortifies sinners and raises them up as new

¹⁵⁹ WA 5, 176.

¹⁶⁰ Kolb “*Luther on the Theology of the Cross*,” 461.

¹⁶¹ Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, 95.

¹⁶² WA 5, 63; LW 14, 335.

creatures. It crucifies the old being in anticipation of the resurrection of the new. *Crux sola est nostra theologia*, “The cross alone is our theology,” Luther says.¹⁶³ For this reason the Christian life is a discipleship of suffering. Christ’s suffering is still repeated daily in our lives. Therefore, our sufferings are a work of the Holy Spirit. When our will is not done, then God’s will can be done. But our suffering is God’s will. God does His alien work when He leads us into suffering. But thereby he aims at his proper work, even when we do not recognize it. Through suffering we shall arrive at the Sabbath of the soul.¹⁶⁴

Suffering means the concrete exhaustion of ourselves, of our old identity, for by God’s action of the cross we are reduced to nothing. “Whenever a human being stands in fear of death . . . then he feels the violence of real death to such an extent that he cannot hold up. Then he dies in the truest sense of the word, not when the separation of the soul from the body takes place.”¹⁶⁵ Luther here refers to the death of the soul and spirit of the sinner, the pangs of conscience, the terrors of temptation (*Anfechtungen*), which are always more agonizing and serious than the physical pain.¹⁶⁶ Actual physical death, even though sorrowful enough for loved ones, is in and of itself a much less serious matter. As Luther said, without fear, death is not death; it is a sleep.¹⁶⁷

The death of the sinner, the old man, and the old theologian humbles us and thus prepares us for the reception of the new identity. This death is being done to us, so we cannot take credit even for the death of our old man. Neither the dying nor the rising happens by human effort; it is not our work, for humans have no active capacity to humble themselves but only a passive capacity of being humbled. Our ambitions are cancelled, for they are idolatry:

¹⁶³ WA 5, 176; *The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther*, ed. John Lenker, vol. 1 (Sunbury, Penn.: Lutherans in All Lands Co., 1903), 289.

¹⁶⁴ Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 118-9.

¹⁶⁵ WA 43, 218; LW 4, 115.

¹⁶⁶ Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, 86.

When we have no fear of the Lord and we instead presume to come before the Lord bustling with self-confidence in our own accomplishments, enjoying ourselves in our works . . . our works are deadly sins even if we think they are done with the help of grace. For then our works stand between us and God; they usurp the honor belonging only to God. This is a transgression of the first commandment. The self sets itself as an idol. Piety is no protection. Fear of God on the contrary means precisely letting God be God.¹⁶⁸

Luther continues the thought: “Through the law comes knowledge of sin” [Rom 3:20]; through knowledge of sin, however, comes humility; and through humility grace is acquired.”¹⁶⁹ For God “gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet 5:5), and “whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matt 23:12). All of these actions are done to us. We are in passive voice; we are at the receiving end of humility and fear of God (Heidelberg Disputation, 1518, thesis 16).

The God’s “for-usness” in the cross and sufferings humbles us and gives the fear of God. It reduces our ambitions and us to nothing, to the spiritual corpse of the old man. Out of this nothing God’s “for-usness,” His love, creates the new being. “The love of God does not first discover but creates what is pleasing to it” (thesis 28),¹⁷⁰ for the love of God that lives in man loves sinners, evil persons, fools, and weaklings in order to make them righteous, good, wise, and strong. Rather than seeking its own good, the love of God flows forth and bestows good. Therefore, sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are not loved because they are attractive. Christ says: “For I came not to call the righteous but sinners” (Matt 9: 13).¹⁷¹ This is the outcome of the *theologia crucis*. This is the love of the cross, born of the cross, which turns in the direction where it may confer good upon the bad and needy person.¹⁷² Thus, God is not, as in the theology of glory, One

¹⁶⁷ WA 43, 218; LW 4, 115.

¹⁶⁸ Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, 42.

¹⁶⁹ WA 1, I, 361, LW 31, 51.

¹⁷⁰ WA 1, I, 354; LW 31, 41.

¹⁷¹ WA 1, 365; LW 31, 57.

¹⁷² WA 1, 365; LW 31, 57.

Who waits to commend those who have religiously and morally advanced themselves, made themselves acceptable, or merited approval of God. He is the One Who *confers* goodness on the bad and needy. Thus out of the spiritual corpse, God creates a new man.

Once we are emptied by God, there is nothing left but to wait upon His grace. Sinners must recognize that when all the supports have been cut away, they can only throw themselves on the mercy of God in Christ. They are made completely passive. As Forde says, “There is nothing to do now but wait, hope, pray, and trust in the promise of him who nevertheless conquers, the crucified and risen Jesus. By faith we are simply *in Christ*, waiting to see what will happen to and in us.”¹⁷³ Thus, faith as trust is total dependence and reliance on God. It is the life-line of man, the source of genuine human living, which sustains and constantly renews his new identity.¹⁷⁴ And Kolb says, “To recognize trust as the core of our humanity is to perceive the true form of being human as God created his human creature. That means that at the core of human life our own performance, accomplishment, behavior has no place.”¹⁷⁵ God has designed life to center upon trust in Him. The very fact of the existence of God’s “for-usness” in Christ reveals that it is hopeless to imagine that human performance of any kind can contribute to improving our status in God’s sight. Christ’s “for us” excludes our own “for ourselves.” If He has done His work through the cross, there is nothing else to do for us. We cannot neither supplement it nor revoke it. We can merely accept it or refuse it. “Take it or leave it.” Theologies of glory leave it; the theology of the cross takes it.

Thus, the theology of cross confronts man personally killing his identity of the old man, turning him into a spiritual corpse, and providing with the new identity, raising a new man who lives in faith, humbleness and fear of God

¹⁷³ Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, 80.

¹⁷⁴ Therefore Luther in his “Disputation Concerning Man” thesis 32 says that man is *homo iustificandus fidei*: “Paul in Romans 3 [:28], ‘We hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works,’ briefly sums up the definition of man, saying, ‘Man is justified by faith.’” WA 39, I, 176; LW 34, 139.

Thus in the Second Article God has revealed Himself “for us” in Christ. Christ’s “for-usness” culminated on the cross, revealing both man and Christ. The cross revealed the corrupted state of man and also Christ as the Father’s embodied speech, Who brings His will to and “for us.”

There are two ways to confess God’s “for-usness,” namely the way of a theology of glory and the way of the theology of cross. The theology of glory seeks God behind His manifestations. For this reason, when it looks at the cross, it seeks for God’s “for-usness” not in the cross but behind it. This theology conforms to human standards and encourages human works. In the view of a theology of glory, God and His “for-usness” is portrayed after man’s manner, and thus as manipulable.

The theology of cross stresses both the hiddenness of God as well as His revealedness. They are mutually bound to each other. God’s hiddenness guides to His “for-usness” revealed in His Word, Christ. God’s hiddenness and revealedness of “for us” coincides on the cross where Christ is revealed to faith but hidden to reason and unbelief. On the cross Christ’s “for-usness” is manifested to the utmost, for He hung there instead of us, thus implementing His “for-usness.”

The theology of the cross speaks not merely about the cross, but it actually delivers the crucified “for-usness” to us. Through preaching the listeners themselves are involved into the event of the cross. The cross is God’s instrument of His “for-usness” designed to kill the old man and to bring forth the new man that is conformable to Christ. This man lives by faith in Christ relying on God alone.

¹⁷⁵ Kolb, “Luther on the Theology of the Cross,” 450.

D. The Anthropological Implications of “For Us” for the Third Article

1. The Means of Grace Delivers the “For-Usness”

God’s Word in the realm of the First Article, that is, in human history and nature, creates, directs, and sustains the world “for us.” In the realm of the Second Article the personal, embodied Word shows His “for-usness” by redeeming and saving man. The Third Article is placed after the first two and thus receives from both of them. From the First Article it receives the particular earthly elements which are used to deliver the salvific gifts of forgiveness from the Second Article through the means of grace in order to sanctify man. Therefore, Luther calls this Article “being made holy.” The Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, is the One through whom we stand in regular contact with God: “Daily¹⁷⁶ . . . the Holy Spirit forgives all sins” (SC, II, 6). Thus, for the Christian, the Third Article is the “most used” article in the Creed because the “for us” gifts of the Holy Spirit sustain our newly acquired identity in Christ on an everyday basis.

The Holy Spirit takes the initiative of coming to us and actively engaging us in life-transforming conversation with God through His Son Jesus Christ. Thus God’s revelation in the Third Article is not merely cognitive but active. It is not so much a matter of receiving new divine information but rather a meeting, a conversation, with the divine Person of the Holy Spirit. As Luther expressed it, “I should be amazed that the Majesty in heaven Himself speaks with such a little worm, nay, as, Abraham says, with dust and ashes; for pride, because this sublime Majesty does not disdain to look at me, poor mud and filth, nay, even to speak with me, and to speak so kindly and comfortingly.”¹⁷⁷ God’s speech is revelatory personal address, that is,

¹⁷⁶ Therefore in his commentary on the Third Article Luther changes his language from the past tense: “The Holy Spirit has called me . . . enlightened with his gifts, made me holy . . .” to the present: “daily . . . the Holy Spirit forgives all sins” (SC, II, 6).

¹⁷⁷ WA 48, 181.

it is fundamentally meant to be “for us.” As Joseph Sittler says, “revelation is not a thing – but an action of God, an event involving two parties; it is a personal address. There is no such thing as revelation-in-itself, because revelation consists of the fact that something is revealed to *me*.”¹⁷⁸ In this personal address we are being told who we are, what our humanity is and where it lies. It provides us with the personal identity of the new man, for the Holy Spirit addresses us as human persons, and with this very address He delivers or revives our new identity.

The very fact of this revelation means that God the Holy Spirit in His “for-usness” comes to us *extra nos*, that is, that His coming is an objective event. The *extra nos* character of God’s revelation in His Word demonstrates and keeps the initiative on God’s side. It also points to the fact that all the sources and sustenance powers of our new identity are located in this “extra-nosness,” that is, in Him and Him alone. Moreover, the “for-usness” and “extra-nosness” of the Holy Spirit are intrinsically bound together; His “extra-nosness” is fully implemented in and by His “for-usness,” in His acts and ministry “for us.” The external Word presents and delivers Himself “for us” as a gift, as a promise, as the Word endowed with sacramental quality. The identity of the new man is one among the many gifts of the Holy Spirit. As Regin Prenter says,

For the outward Word is necessary in order that Christ, who is the content of the Word, can be presented to the individual as a gift. The gospel by which the Spirit makes Christ present must have sacramental quality. Otherwise, Christ is changed to an idea to which we are related as imitators of a pattern. Without such a sacramental Word, Christ is understood purely historically, and the gospel is a general story of something that has passed. But the gospel is not past history. It is sacramental, for it gives what it claims. This sacramental character of the gospel is expressed in the fact that the Word is an outward Word. Everything sacramental always contains an outward sign. The outward Word can and shall be the means of God’s sacramental message to man, while the absence of the outward Word leaves the man alone with himself and his own recollections and ideas.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Joseph Sittler, *The Doctrine of the Word in the Structure of Lutheran Theology* (Philadelphia: The Board of Publications of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1948), 33; italics original.

¹⁷⁹ Regin Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, trans. John M. Jensen (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 113.

Therefore, the outward Word with its gift of the new identity and its implementation as an identity over which we are not the masters will always be in fundamental opposition to any kind of self-righteousness which originates from man within himself. Either God delivers and we receive our identity, or we invent and construct it by ourselves. This is a matter of acknowledging or not acknowledging God as the Creator and His First Commandment.

The Holy Spirit commands the physical concreteness of the external means as his vehicle or carrier to deliver from outside ourselves (*extra nos*) used to deliver our new identity and to sustain it “for us.” Therefore, this outward Word comes to us not as an idea, but as a reality, as *res* having specific physical features. As Luther mentions, “God has always worked with something physical . . . Whenever He wanted to do something with us, He did it through the Word and matters physical. Nor can you give me an instance in which a person was made a Christian and received the Holy Spirit without something external.”¹⁸⁰ This “extra-nosness” means that every gift it brings does not originate in us and thus is the gift of the Holy Spirit. He saves us from being trapped in the confusion of our own endless inner dialogues, fruitless searches for our identity, and religious imaginations. This prevents the tendencies of enthusiasm. The fact that the Holy Spirit comes to us from outside of ourselves and our control, in physical means clearly distinct from our own spirit or soul, does not allow God’s Word to become the object of day-dreaming. The concrete meaning enclosed in the words, “Now you are my child!” does not allow this message, which establishes our status before God as His child, to be turned into something else. Once the sinner’s conversion and adoption into God’s family has happened, it has happened with certainty. The foundation of this certainty is the Word of God, that is, the Gospel. As Schumacher says, “It is very important for Lutheran anthropology (as for Luther’s theology) that the word of the gospel not be replaced by any other ground of confidence or

certainty; no other basis for being is possible.”¹⁸¹ God has ordained definite external and physical things in order they would serve as the concrete testimonies, pledges and signs of the actual conversation with God of which we are not the ultimate masters. They point to where the actual conversation or dialogue “for us” is going to happen. In these signs we have been told where God has arranged to meet us, that is, in His Word and words. Thus, our God is an identifiable God, who confines himself to a definite place by means of His Word, in its audible, written, and sacramental.

Through the physicality of the means of grace¹⁸² God addresses man with Christ’s “for-usness.” By using the created elements in the means of grace, God demonstrates that He respects man as a human creature, for He communicates with him using the creaturely means. This is a very practical way of God’s responding to man’s creaturely character. To this physical creature God comes through means which man is capable of grasping. God addresses man bodily, that is, using man’s natural channels of communication and organs of reception, such as ears, eyes, mouth, tactile capacities, and smell. For the same reason God uses the sound waves, and the most common elements for cleansing and food, that is, water, bread and wine.

¹⁸⁰ WA 27, 60.

¹⁸¹ Schumacher, “Who Do I Say That You Are?” 248. He goes in detail, saying: “This word, like God’s first word of creation, is never simply a source of accurate information, but the voice of God addressing human creatures with his forgiveness. It is the performative *promissio* of God the Creator, which does not simply “define” human nature but actually brings about our new existence and makes us who and what we are. For human beings who are unable to discover or define their own identity, everything hangs on the command and promise of God.” *Ibid.*, 246.

¹⁸² The fact that the means of grace have some common features which allow speaking of them as such does not mean that they are interchangeable and can substitute for each other. All of them are specific gifts for God’s children and “to receive God’s Word (that is, the gift) in many ways is so much better.” WA 30, I, 345; LW 53, 118. Actually, neither the Scriptures nor Luther derives the concrete Sacrament from an abstract definition of it. Rather Luther takes the biblical data and explores it exegetically showing its salvific consequences “for us.” As Kolb says: “The Scriptures do not link Baptism and the Lord’s Supper under one category; the church is certainly justified in linking the two, however, since both combine at Jesus’ command God’s Word of promise with physical elements from the creation, elements which He has specially selected to be the chosen vehicles for His word of power. Jesus instituted both sacraments to accomplish specific tasks in His church and placed His promise of new life in each. We
(continued next page)

God uses this multiplicity of delivery channels to make sure that man gets the message and His gifts “for us.” Therefore, the same gift of forgiveness (and many others) is being delivered richly through preaching, through the reading of the Scriptures, through Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. As Schlink explains,

one and the *same* name of Christ is proclaimed through Gospel, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. It is the *same* Crucified and Risen One whom the Gospel proclaims, in whose name Baptism is administered, and whose death is proclaimed in the Lord’s Supper. Proclamation, Baptism, and Lord’s Supper are based on the *same* victory of Jesus Christ on the cross, and this saving deed is their content. . . . Hence preaching, Baptism, and Lord’s Supper are to be recognized as different forms of the *same* saving activity of God.¹⁸³

God does everything so that the Gospel of forgiveness in one or another way finds its way to man. God does not care that the delivery channels and gifts duplicate each other. That better assures believers of God’s gracious disposition “for us.” As Schlink notes, “We would fail to appreciate these riches of God’s gracious activity if we would isolate the gifts from each other or even reduce them to a single one, since God grants participation in Jesus Christ also in the others.”¹⁸⁴ Someone might raise the objection that if somebody has already received God’s grace in His Word, then judging from the purely mathematical standpoint, he has received the necessary and sufficient amount of God’s blessing. Thus, there would not be the need to receive the same thing through the other means of grace once again. Such kind of reductionistic thinking is countered by Luther, who looks upon God as the Creator and the merciful, caring, and loving Father, who delivers His gifts, not as some bare salvific minimum but richly, as “grace upon grace” to His beloved children. They in turn look to their Father for more and more gifts. As

will note parallels between these two sacraments, but we should not press the concept of sacrament so far as to equate the two in terms of usage at every point.” Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel Today*, 191-2.

¹⁸³ Edmund Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, trans. Herbert J. Bouman (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), 111-2 [emphasis mine].

¹⁸⁴ Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 113.

Luther had the peasant say when the priest asked why he desired the Lord's Supper in addition to absolution, "I want to add the sign of God to His Word. To receive God's Word in many ways is so much better."¹⁸⁵

Besides the fact that the means of grace have in common their content of the delivery, the forgiveness of sins, they have also their specifics, which ultimately serve the same purpose, to make sure that man has received God's gift "for us." The means of grace in their multiplicity neither substitute for each other nor compete between themselves, for they have the same task, to deliver God's "for-usness" from all possible angles and approaches, through all the possible channels of delivery to man. Therefore, each means of grace prepares, presupposes, and reinforces the others. One means of grace cannot be valued higher than another in offering forgiveness, but there are certain distinctive characteristics of each. Each sacrament has a unique function, and one could not be replaced by another. As Schlink says,

in the sermon God acts through the Word alone, in Baptism through Word and water, in the Lord's Supper through Word, bread, and wine. To these differences corresponds the special manner in which man here receives grace: through the sermon by means of believing hearing, through Baptism by means of believing hearing and being immersed or having the water poured over him, through the Lord's Supper by means of hearing and oral eating and drinking. In the sermon God acts through the promise concerning Christ's death and resurrection, in Baptism through assignment to the name of Christ, and in the Lord's Supper through the gift of Christ's body and blood.¹⁸⁶

Thus, God comes to man with all His tools, his instruments of His presence and delivery of His blessings, that is, means of grace. The commonality of the means of grace in their content and their specificity ultimately serve the purpose of the assurance of the delivery of the forgiveness of sins "for us." As Schlink says, "Thus Baptism, Gospel, and Lord's Supper not

¹⁸⁵ WA 30, I, 345; LW 53, 118.

¹⁸⁶ Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 110.

only belong together, but they . . . must be understood as the *unity* of God's gracious activity."¹⁸⁷

In such a way God envelops man's existence with His love richly (almost wastefully) delivering His gifts of "for us" to the man.

God uses both common and specific features of the means of grace. He also uses the deliberate repetition of the same Gospel message over and over again. It shows that He takes into consideration that man is a fallen creature, who continues to need constant delivery of God's gifts of forgiveness and life. This means that man has been seriously impaired by the Fall. The consequences of this are seen in the fact that even Christ's disciples so often did not or even misunderstood Him. Christ's message "for us" of the Gospel is so extraordinary, so different from the Law, that it takes a while to "digest" it, to appropriate it (or better, to be appropriated by it). God patiently repeats and rehearses the same message over and over and makes sure that men get the needed gifts of "for-usness."

The different means of grace encounter man according to a certain chronological order as they deliver the "for-usness" of the Gospel. Thus, Baptism in the life of the Christian is an event of the past though its efficacy and benefits always remain present realities for the believer. By Baptism the Christian is rooted in and made a participant in the historical events of the past, that is, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. On the other hand, the Lord's Supper, which also has its foundation in the cross of Christ, projects the death of Christ and its atoning consequences into the life of the Church and points the recipient toward the eschatological banquet. Therefore, for the apostle Paul this eating and the drinking are the proclamation of Christ's death (1 Cor 11:26) and for our Lord a foreshadowing of the heavenly feast (Matt 8:11). Baptism anchors the believer in the past, while the Supper brings the atonement of Christ to him in present and makes it contemporary to him.

¹⁸⁷ Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 112 [emphasis mine].

Baptism by its single administration and marking the beginning of the new life points out the past of the believer as the foundational tense of his existence. As burial is a final declaration of death, so dying to sin in the death of Christ is also valid once and for all. By Baptism, believers have the death of sin behind them and life in the divine righteousness ahead. The perfect tense of the “having died into Christ” opens for believers the future tense of eternal life with Christ, which is delivered to him in the means of grace and which will be completed at the resurrection of the dead. Baptism also breaks the power of the past to destroy the future of the disciple of Christ. Thus, Baptism never ceases to deliver the message: “You are justified, forgiven and saved.” Baptism is a promise that the believer’s “life will be concluded and fulfilled in the eschatological fellowship of Christ and his saints; this *promise* of a sufficient reason for my life has been made irrevocable as a concluded *event*. The dialectic can work whichever way history and my life need; either way, baptism allows faith to be sure,”¹⁸⁸ as American Lutheran theologian Robert Jenson says.

Similarly, there is also the significant difference in the frequency of the reception of the different means of grace. As Schlink notes,

The Gospel must be preached to man again and again -- as assurance of the saving deed which God has done in Christ and will do one day, and as admonition to live in conformity with this saving deed. The congregation is to assemble again and again for the Lord’s Supper - for the reception of the body of Christ and for building up as His body especially through this reception. However, Baptism occupies a special position because of its single administration.¹⁸⁹

It is because the believer’s transfer from the kingdom of the world to the kingdom of the Son happens through one death in Baptism, which corresponds to one re-birth. Schlink explains, “since Baptism is assignment to Jesus Christ and thus the death of the old man and the start of

¹⁸⁸ Robert Jenson, “The Sacraments,” in *Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 331.

¹⁸⁹ Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 109.

the new life. . . . On this rests the one time administration of Baptism.”¹⁹⁰

Besides the fact that these external things are the “meeting points” with God “for us,” He has made them also the “delivery points,” and even the delivery vehicles of our newly acquired identity “for us.” Thus, the external means shows where God has made Himself available “for us” to deliver or to refresh our identity of the new man. In, with, and under these external signs He has made Himself available “for us” in order to bring His gifts of salvation, forgiveness and the new life to and in us. He has designed these external signs to be the actual vehicles of the delivery of His presence, His favor, and grace. Without reaching us in a concrete way God remains to us merely “God in and for Himself.” These external means (that is, means of grace) differ in the mode of their physicality. But the common feature for all of them is the fact that they communicate God “for us,” establishing a saving relationship with Him. Kolb explores this aspect in some length:

God has worked His re-creative work through selected elements of [the] created order. He did not merely talk about salvation in these elements, but He effects the new creation through specific elements of the material or created order and its visible or audible manifestations. First, He began with the flesh, blood, and bones of Jesus of Nazareth, the Word who is God, who came as God in the flesh with the power to restore human creatures to being children of God (John 1:1, 12-14). Second, the re-creating power of Jesus is conveyed by His Gospel, the human language which saves (Rom 1:16).¹⁹¹ Saving human language is found in the Scriptures, which God breathed through His chosen writers for the purpose of giving us what we need to know to be saved through trust in Christ Jesus (2 Tim 3:15). Saving human language is found in the living voice of the Gospel as we speak it out of the Scriptures into the lives of those in our society. Third, God has linked sacramental elements with His Word. In Baptism water and the Word save us (1 Pet 3:21), and in the Lord’s Supper bread-body and wine-blood with the Word are given to us for the forgiveness of sins (Mt 26:28). Finally, God has chosen reborn human creatures to take human language and sacramental elements to deliver the power of the incarnate God to others for

¹⁹⁰ Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 114.

¹⁹¹ As Luther says, “The Holy Spirit does not come without the Word. But He wants to come through the harp, that is, through meditation on the Word or voices of father, mother, or others. Otherwise the devil comes.” WA 43, 505.

their salvation. God acts to restore His fallen human creatures through these four material vehicles, all of which have to do with His Word.¹⁹²

Paul Althaus reiterates the point, stressing the delivery factor of the “for-usness”:

Christ himself is present to us in a very earthly way. Everywhere in the history of revelation God embodies himself for us. . . . And God still embodies himself for us. The Holy Spirit comes to us and brings Christ to us through the external, physical, sensible means of the word, of the human voice, and of the sacraments. All these words and sacraments are his veils and clothing, his masks and disguises with which he covers himself so that we may bear and comprehend him.¹⁹³

This truth of God’s “for-usness” coming, delivering, and renewing our identity as the new man through the means of grace is fundamental to the Lutheran Confessions as well: “We should and must insist that God does not want to deal with us human beings, except by means of His external word and sacraments. Everything that boasts of being of the Spirit apart from such as Word and sacrament is of the devil” (SA, III, 8, 10).

2. The Word Character of the “For-Usness” of the Holy Spirit

God demonstrates His “for-usness” by communicating to the world primarily by using His Word in human words. As Jensen says, “The word is the medium of God’s self-disclosure. The word discloses God and God’s will.”¹⁹⁴ It is difficult to rationalize why exactly God chose human speech to be the primary vehicle of the delivery of His will “for us,” but because of the first “Fiat!” by the Word (Gen. 1), communication by Word is constitutive of human existence. God the Creator and the created world are on speaking terms. God’s self-imposed dependence on human words is His concrete way to communicate, to establish relationships with us, to make

¹⁹² Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel Today*, 50.

¹⁹³ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 22.

¹⁹⁴ Jensen, *Systematic Theology*, 261.

Himself available to and “for us.” The primary way of His communication to us is His speech, which becomes concrete in proclamation, in the Scriptures, and in the Sacraments.

Therefore, in His Word we experience His “for-usness.” The Word is God’s self-chosen form of His communication of Himself to us. He has “dressed” Himself deliberately in His personal Word and use of human language in His communication, in bringing Himself with all of His gifts “for us.” Thus, there is no word from God by and in itself, for the “word” already expresses the notion of communication; it is always “for us.” “Who for us men and for our salvation” can be said not merely about Christ as God’s Word but also about the preached word, for it brings what it says. This “for-usness” of God’s Word sustains “for us” our identity as His children.

It is one thing that God has created the world by His personal Word and His “Let there be!” but still another that He continues to communicate with His human creatures on a regular basis, using their primary way of communication, human language, to tell and remind them who and whose they are. When God addresses the created order, His Word as a creative agent establishes the rules once and for all (Gen 1:11, 28), but when He addresses human beings, He delivers to them their identity, His re-creative Word needs to be proclaimed for each of them personally and always anew. For this reason God’s speaking to men is ongoing because God as the Father through His Holy Spirit has an ongoing caring and loving personal relationship with us. He does not leave us alone, as deistic conceptions of God suggest. God’s “for-usness,” which is demonstrated in His willingness to converse with men, shows that He deliberately accommodates Himself to men. He is not a “heavenly aristocrat,” Who only terrifies and mystifies His creatures. He is God, Who not merely comes down from heaven but also comes into the midst of the human life, expressing Himself in the “vernacular of the humans.” Everybody (at least in principle) can receive God’s word in his own native language.

By speaking with men in human language God the Holy Spirit provides men with religious certainty. Kolb points out that “God’s Word in human language is propositionally rational.”¹⁹⁵ Other forms of communication are much more available for mishandling. In communicating by words God makes Himself understandable “for us.” As Althaus says, “The fact that the Spirit works only through the words preserves the unequivocal meaning of God’s speaking in law and gospel. Spiritual speaking “without means” can mean many things; the word, however, is unequivocal.”¹⁹⁶ In this approach by God there is nothing esoteric. The very opposite is true; God uses every opportunity to be “for us,” He is purposefully open in His communication: “The word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it” (Deut. 30:14). As Jensen says, “God’s commanding word is not uttered in a distant land or in an esoteric language. It is accessible to everyone, so there is no excuse for not listening to it.”¹⁹⁷ Other means of communication such as writing and image-making are secondary, for they demand special skills and tools. But speech is naturally common to all people. Thus, the conversation with the Most Highest does not demand on the human part some kind of extraordinary gift or capacities. It also does not originate or result from intuitive insight or mystical experience which is shared by only a few. Rather, God tells us who we are in our own human language and we are capable of comprehending this, grasping it by our human minds.

As a God of action, the Third Person of the Trinity takes the initiative to address, to communicate with, and to establish relationships with His human creatures. As Luther says in his Small Catechism, “The Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel” (SC, II, 6). God’s

¹⁹⁵ Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel Today*, 58.

¹⁹⁶ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 37.

¹⁹⁷ Jensen, *Systematic Theology*, 262.

Gospel is His articulate speech and language “for us,” of addressing us and delivering the gift of who we are in His sight. It is articulated not merely in the sense of discernable human language but also in the theological sense of procuring the certainty of God’s being “for us” and of our new identity in God. Luther announced that “*Spiritus Sanctus non est Scepticus*,”¹⁹⁸ for God’s word is not just some general information about something divine, but the purposeful communication of His will and plan “for us.” It is fundamentally the announcement and the actual delivery of the new life and the new identity for the redeemed child of God. The Holy Spirit reveals and delivers the new status of man before God with unshakable certainty. When Luther, battling temptations, exclaimed: “*Baptizatus sum!*” he claimed “I am Christ’s!” It means that we are not seekers of God, but we can testify with great assurance that we are “His own,” that we are His disciples.

3. The Delivery of the “For-Usness” in the Proclamation

By the very nature of written communication, man engages one on one with the written text, but in oral conversation or in proclamation there can be many people involved immediately and directly in the reception of the “for-usness” of God’s Word. Through the living voice of the preacher, the *viva vox*,¹⁹⁹ the immediacy of the delivery gives certain advantages to the oral proclamation over against the other forms of Gospel delivery.²⁰⁰ God’s Word essentially is meant for proclamation. We perceive the world mainly by eyesight, but we communicate on a day-to-day basis mainly by oral means. Therefore, Luther says that “The gospel should not really be something written, but a spoken word which brought forth the Scriptures, as Christ and the

¹⁹⁸ WA 18, 605; LW 33, 24.

¹⁹⁹ As Finnish theologian Uuras Saarnivara says, “The living word requires its own dynamic medium, the living voice.” “Written and Spoken Word,” *The Lutheran Quarterly* 2 (1950): 178.

²⁰⁰ This primacy has been stressed by many authors. For example, Swedish confessional scholar Holsten Fagerberg in his *A New Look at the Lutheran Confessions (1529 – 1537)*, trans. Gene J. Lund (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House), 28 says, “The Gospel reaches us in various ways, above all in the oral Word.”

apostles have done. This is why Christ himself did not write anything but only spoke. He called his teaching, not Scripture but gospel, meaning good news or a proclamation that is spread not by pen, but by word of mouth.”²⁰¹ Therefore, Luther notes that the Church is a *Mundhaus*, the place of the mouth and salutary speech, not a *Federhaus*, the domain of the scribe.²⁰² The Word of God must be preached to be fully effective, for the Word “is not as fruitful or powerful as it is through a public preacher.”²⁰³ Luther indicates the power of preaching by saying, “Christ . . . is substantially God. But this [the spoken] Word is effectively God, not substantially. It is the power and the might of God, for it is characteristic of the man Christ or of His minister. Nonetheless it effects what it promises (*dicit*); for through this instrument God deals with us, does everything, and offers us all His treasures.”²⁰⁴ The same stress on the proclaimed word may be stated also otherwise, by saying that Christians do not live by their “eyes” in the mode of rationalists, who believe only what they see to be true (and “seeing,” in any case, avails nothing where Christ is concerned), but by their “ears,” in the posture of trust the God’s Word. As Luther says, “God no longer requires the feet or the hands or any other member; He requires only the ears. To such an extent has everything been reduced to an easy way of life. For if you ask a Christian what the work is by which he becomes worthy of the name “Christian,” he will be able to give . . . that it is the hearing of the Word of God, that is, faith. Therefore, the ears alone are the organs of a Christian man.”²⁰⁵ Luther stresses the primacy of the oral word over and over again: “The oral word must before anything else be present and be grasped with the ears; if the

²⁰¹ WA 10, I, 1, 17; LW 35, 123.

²⁰² WA 10, I, 2, 48.

²⁰³ WA 36, 220.

²⁰⁴ W-T, 4, 695, no. 5177.

²⁰⁵ WA 57, 222; LW 29, 224.

Holy Spirit is to come into the heart, who enlightens us through the word and works faith.”²⁰⁶

The life-giving message of the Gospel corresponds to the medium of the living word in proclamation. Therefore, “there is no other way to have sins forgiven than through the Word. . . . The Lord, our God, has not promised to forgive our sins through any work that we do, but He has connected it with the unique work of Christ who has suffered and risen from the dead. This work He has, through the word, placed in the mouth of the apostles and the ministers of the Church.”²⁰⁷ According to its nature, the most “native environment” for the Word is not the book but the open and living confession, and public preaching. Yet even God’s speaking and acting in Christ would remain meaningless and ineffectual without the oral witness to the Word, namely, the preaching of Christ as “God for us.” Hence the Incarnate Word cannot be considered apart from the spoken Word, “for if Christ’s life and suffering were not comprehended in the [preached] Word to which faith might cling, they would have availed nothing, for all those who were eyewitnesses received no benefit from their experience, or only very little.”²⁰⁸

This stress on the oral word in a way reflects its inner dynamics. For God’s Word, to say and to do is the same. Luther exclaims, “What appears to be more meaningless than a word? And yet when God speaks a word, the thing expressed by the word immediately leaps into existence”²⁰⁹ *Verbum Dei est opus Dei*. Therefore, the Word of God is also a Word from God, as Jensen says, “Though appropriated by human conceptuality, the word of God is not a word about God but a word from God and thereby a word through which God discloses himself to and ‘for us.’ Since it enacts history, God’s word is not separable from God’s actions.”²¹⁰ Kolb reiterates,

²⁰⁶ WA 29, 581.

²⁰⁷ WA 52, 273.

²⁰⁸ WA 10, I, 1, 131; LW 52, 34.

²⁰⁹ WA 40, III, 522; LW 13, 99.

²¹⁰ Jensen, *Systematic Theology*, 257.

“Proclamation is sacramental; it is pure gift. It announces God’s disposition and effects God’s action toward his children”²¹¹ – bestowal and renewal of their identity. God’s words are the salvation-bearing words; therefore, their proclamation is the action of promise and a mighty saving event. God is in action. He makes things happen. As Jensen points it out, “The word of God is a powerful agent that will bring results with the same certainty as the forces of nature (Is 55:10-1). It is a divine power that creatively accomplishes God’s work on earth. It executes God’s will, and does what it sets out to do.”²¹² With the same power, authority and certainty as the first men were created at first, now in the Third Article men are being re-created.

Preaching brings the Word of salvation to its hearers. Luther says that to people who “hear his Word and believe, Christ becomes present . . . justifies and saves them,”²¹³ for, as German theologian Heinrich Schmid says, “It is *effective*, because it not only shows the way of salvation, but saves souls,”²¹⁴ that is, re-defines their identities. As Bring says, the Holy Spirit “comes continually to the Christian through the Word, speaking to him, forgiving his sin, taking away his guilt, imparting to him divine love, grace, renewal, and sanctification.”²¹⁵ Besides delivering these salvific gifts that constitute new identity, God’s words also deliver gifts for the sustaining of man’s new identity. Luther says, “It always awakens new understanding, pleasure, and devotion and purifies the heart and thoughts. For these are not inert or dead but active and living words.”²¹⁶ American Lutheran systematician Adolf Hoenecke points out that God’s Word convinces man against all the empirical and rational evidence: “The Word of God has a

²¹¹ Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel Today*, 208.

²¹² Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 261.

²¹³ WA 40, I, 378; LW 26, 240.

²¹⁴ Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 504.

²¹⁵ Bring, *How God Speaks to Us*, 26.

²¹⁶ WA 30, I, 146.

particular power because it persuades the hearers to believe things that do not agree with human senses, nor with the intellect, which gets its knowledge through the senses, nor with the will, which measures what is desirable or undesirable by agreement with the senses.”²¹⁷ As Prenter states, it is the evidence of faith, which perceives the actions and the consequences of the Holy Spirit: “The Word brings Christ who is *really* present by the Spirit, but this reality is by faith. He does not permit this real presence to be comprehended by *sensus*, but only by the faith which relies on the *message* about his presence, the message which we are not to expect as a voice from heaven, but which meets us here and now in the spoken Word in the church.”²¹⁸

The proclamation implements the message of “for us and our salvation” because God’s Word displays His deep interest in what is going on with His human creatures. Therefore His Word is always coupled with His Spirit. He is personally present and active in His Word, effecting that which He sets out to do (Is 55:11; Jer 1:12). As Hoenecke says, God’s “words have such power as the Spirit has.”²¹⁹ It is because God Himself stands by His word, as Lutheran dogmatician Johannes Quenstedt says, “the Holy Spirit is operating in, with, and through it; for in this consists the difference between the divine and the human word.”²²⁰ The Augsburg Confession affirms, “Through the Word and sacraments, as through the instruments, the Holy Spirit is given who effects faith where and when it pleases God in those who hear the gospel.” (AC, V) Schmid states, “This power is inherent in the Word because the Holy Ghost attends it; from the moment that a Word of God is uttered, the Holy Ghost is inseparably and continually connected with it, so that the power and efficacy of the Word is fully identical with that of the

²¹⁷ Adolph Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, trans. Joel Fredrich, Paul Prange and Bill Tackmier, vol. 4 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1999), 17.

²¹⁸ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 119-20.

²¹⁹ Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, 8.

²²⁰ Quoted from Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 504.

Spirit.”²²¹ God gives Himself, that is, His Holy Spirit, through His word.²²² This is not the ordinary human word which can carry its author with it no more than he has implied in the meaning of the word(s). In human discourse, the author and the word are detached from each another. But God’s are not spirit-less words. Therefore, in God’s Word the information about man and his identity effect the transformation of human identity, as Hoenecke says, “For we are *not only instructed and taught* by the Word, but we are also regenerated, improved, and changed. The Word has the power *not only to admonish and persuade* but also to effect and do something in us, and it can do this because of the *perpetual influence of the Holy Spirit*.”²²³

Hoenecke grounds the proclamation which the Spirit brings to pass upon the Holy Scripture. The content of preaching arises out of the Spirit’s gift of the Scripture’s content. Hoenecke says, “Spirit not without Scripture, Scripture not without Spirit—that is sound teaching.”²²⁴ The text, the content of the Scripture, links together the past revelations and the present proclamation of the Word. The content of revelation is set by the Spirit, and therefore it is the rule and norm of the Church’s proclamation.²²⁵ Scripture ties together every successive action of God with what has gone before. The creation event, the prophetic proclamation, the

²²¹ Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 501.

²²²This statement is utterly important for the Lutheran Confessions for it has been repeated over again and again: “it must be firmly maintained that God gives no one his Spirit or grace apart from the External Word which goes before. We say this to protect ourselves from the enthusiasts” (SA, VIII, 3). Also “The Father does not intend to draw us apart from means. Instead, he has preordained his Word and sacraments as the regular means and instruments for drawing people to himself” (FC, SD, XI, 76). This point was strongly reiterated by Lutheran orthodoxy. David Hollaz thus sums up the doctrine on the subject: “The Word of God is the most efficacious means of salvation, for its power and efficacy are not only objective, but also effective; not consisting in moral suasion, but in supernatural operation; not external and coming to it when used by men, but intrinsic in the Word; not accidental, but necessary, by a divinely ordained necessity, and therefore not separable, but perpetual, inherent in the Word itself *extra usum*, as the *first act*. This efficacy is truly divine, producing the same effect as the Holy Spirit, who is perpetually united with the Word, which (effect) the Spirit influences together with the Word, by the divine power which belongs to the Holy Spirit originally and independently, but to the divine Word *communicatively* and dependently, on account of its mysterious, intimate, and individual union with the Spirit.” As quoted in Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 507.

²²³ Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, 28.

²²⁴ Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, 21.

Scriptures, and the incarnation refer to each other; none of them is excluded. Each is included in the next move of the revelation of God in the Scripture. The Holy Spirit will not reveal something radically new not found in the existing Word of the Scriptures. As Hoenecke reminds us, “Since Spirit and Word constantly work together, it follows that: *Scripture works nothing different than the Spirit does*. Scripture confirms this, since it knows of only one illumination, one rebirth, and one conversion. It ascribes these workings in their full range and in their essential completeness to the Spirit as well as to Scripture. . . . The workings of Scripture and Spirit are the same in their entirety.”²²⁶ Althaus reiterates the point: “The Spirit speaks nothing else except the external word . . . The content of the Spirit’s speaking is therefore also completely bound to the word.”²²⁷ Thus, both the external Word of the Scripture and the Holy Spirit delivers the same message of “for-usness,” which re-defines the human identity in the realm of the Third Article.

God’s Word functions as the instrument of His Spirit in acting “for us” in constituting the new identity of the child of God. The Holy Spirit is the agent by whom the salvation is made personal. God’s Word in the text of Scripture proclaimed or read addresses and transforms readers and hearers because the Holy Spirit is working in, with, and through the text of the Scripture or through its delivery by the living voice of the preacher. In this manner He delivers His gifts of new life and salvation, and He renews human identity as the new creature. The Spirit and the Word cannot be separated from each other in God’s dealing with sinners in His saving way. Both of them work together “for us.” Hoenecke says, “The relationship that the power of God himself has to the Word is that the Holy Spirit is the first cause of the effects produced by

²²⁵ FC, “Concerning the Binding Summary” Ep, 1, 2, 486; SD, 3, 527;

²²⁶ Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, 23.

²²⁷ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 37.

the divine Word, but the Word is the tool of the Holy Spirit.”²²⁸ Prenter comments further, “The Word may be without the Spirit, but not as the Word of God; and the Spirit may be without the Word, but not as the revealing Spirit,”²²⁹ for the Word without the Holy Spirit is lifeless, while the Holy Spirit without the text is lacks His tool. But He proceeds out of the text with the authority of the Gospel, His Word of re-creation through Christ’s death and resurrection. As the Author of life and its Re-creator the Holy Spirit exercises that authority in bestowing the identity of the new creation, the child of God. We need not merely be told who we are; this identification must be bestowed upon us by the work of the Holy Spirit as a reality.

The outer word alone, without the aid of the Holy Spirit, is unable to implement its “for-usness,” which is delivered only by the Holy Spirit. In that case the text becomes an object to be mastered by human resources alone. This puts particular demands on man; the object (the “letter”) requires something “from us.” Without the Holy Spirit there is no “inner word,” no access to the Scripture, for as American Lutheran exegete James Voelz says, “The Holy Spirit’s function has to do with the reception of the text of Scripture, whether that be congeniality with the text and thus a greater understanding of it, or belief that what the text asserts is, in fact true and applicable to the interpreter’s (and interpreter’s community’s) life.”²³⁰ Thus, in the relationship between the Word and the Spirit there is a distinct order: the Spirit accompanies the external delivery of the Word, and the internal effect of the conversion or renewal follows. This order and the balance between the two must be maintained in a dynamic tension which cannot be resolved but only asserted.

²²⁸ Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, 18.

²²⁹ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 124.

If the role of the outward Word is underestimated and reduced to a comparatively insignificant accompanying phenomenon of the free work of the Spirit, then one takes a direct path to enthusiasm. This has devastating effects for man's self-understanding, for it cripples the objective source of God's acting "for us." Therefore, there is no longer a objective criterion for man's identity. The person's own arbitrary perception of the Holy Spirit and His workings cripples man's identity and his relationships to the world. Man no longer perceives God as the caring Father "for us," but instead as the heavenly despot, who exercises His power in an arbitrary and unpredictable manner "against us."

But if there is an overemphasis on the connection of the Spirit to the outward Word, as if human language trapped the Spirit in its expressions, then the Spirit appears to become a mere attribute to the Word. This leads to the view that the responsibility for the insufficient effect of the Word must be placed on the man who hears it. Man will inevitably ascribe this to his sin or to God's wrath; he will not see himself as God's child of love but as an object of His wrath or even damnation. Thus, again God's "for-usness" is being falsely turned into His "against-usness."

Instead, the Holy Spirit works in such a way that He brings Christ's presence "for us" in the outward Word of the Scripture just as He was present in the flesh of Jesus. The outward Word is that body by which the risen Christ is here and now present among us.²³¹ It is connected with the fact of Christ's humanity, historicity, and thus ultimately with His authenticity. Here the temporality of His earthly existence is not an obstacle to God's actions as it would appear to be to the Greeks but vice versa. It becomes an instrument for the delivery of the eternal goods, as it

²³⁰ James Voelz, "The Holy Spirit and Scriptural Interpretation," Paper delivered at Concordia Seminary Fourteenth Annual Symposium, "Identifying Authorities: the Limits of Theological Diversities and Confessional Unity," St. Louis. September 23, 2003, TMsS (photocopy), 10.

²³¹ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 111.

is for the Hebrews.²³² The temporality, the historicity becomes an argument for the reality of God's doings, not speculation as for Greeks. Only the one who communicates through or possesses a body, that is, physicality, is real "for us," because only with such a being we can communicate fully. As Althaus says,

both Scripture and the spoken word however are external words; that is, they are not primarily a direct mystical communication from God's spirit to man's spirit but a word which comes to men from the outside and is brought and mediated to them by other men. This is closely connected to the fact that Christ in his humanity, that is, in his historicity, is God present with us. Just as he became man bodily, so he also comes to men through the human and historical means of the 'external word.' Through this human witness to him, Christ himself comes to men with his salvation; it is here that he is present with us and for us, and we are with him.²³³

The connection between the Spirit and the Word means that our newly acquired identity is bound to the historically concrete human life of Jesus Christ. Christ, as Prenter says, "In his humanity, is our only way to God. But in his humanity we meet him only in the outward Word . . . In this Word the risen Christ is present as God's gift to us and thereby directs the motion of faith from all self-righteousness to Christ as our alien righteousness."²³⁴ The Scripture itself brings the strongest testimony on Christ "for us" as coming and living in the midst of men in order to re-define them and their lives. The Scripture therefore has no particular interest in the otherworldliness of Christ, for the major stress is on the salvific activity of Christ, which has been exhibited here, on earth, in the midst of the human lives. As Jensen says, "In sharp contrast to Gnostic or Hellenistic thought, there is no speculation in John about the word apart from its historic incarnation."²³⁵ But at the same time while possessing this external, material, outer form,

²³² The principal matter of distinction between the two worldviews is whether the critical line should be drawn between the spiritual and material, as Greeks did, or whether it should be drawn between the Creator and the creature, as the Hebrews did.

²³³ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 35-6.

²³⁴ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 112.

²³⁵ Jensen, *Systematic Theology*, 265-6.

the Word does not lose its divine character. Kolb says, “The word of God comes in thoroughly human form, yet it remains totally divine. This is true of Jesus Christ, and it is true of the written and spoken human language which conveys God’s message for us.”²³⁶ Our human identity is bound to this Word. It means that while our identities have human form, they are constituted by this divine Word.

The Holy Spirit through the Word brings Christ to us and thus also His salvific “for us.” As Luther says, “The preaching of the gospel is nothing else than Christ coming to us, or we being brought to him.”²³⁷ On the basis of this thought, American Lutheran Church historian David Lotz points out that “the faithful preaching and hearing of the gospel constitute the present event of salvation, and the justification of the ungodly ever and again occurs when Word and faith meet, because Christ himself is truly present in the gospel and truly present in the faith that comes by hearing.”²³⁸ The proclamation delivers the living Word of the resurrected Christ, who lives, speaks, and gives himself “for us” in His Church. Thus, the proclamation “is the doing of the mighty act of God in the living present. It is not a recital of past acts, but the doing of the act itself now.”²³⁹ God’s Word in preaching is not a *then*; it is always a *now*, due to the inherent liveliness of the attending Holy Spirit. Therefore, as David Lotz says, “to say that the gospel is the real presence of the exalted Christ is to say that *salvation is a present event of preaching*, and is thus a ‘Word event.’”²⁴⁰ Forde comments, saying that the living voice in “the concrete moment of the proclamation (the absolution, the sermon, the baptism, the Supper; all given *for you*) is the divine act of God in the living present. Of course, that ‘for you’ cannot be

²³⁶ Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel Today*, 59.

²³⁷ WA 10, I, 1; 13-4; LW 35, 121.

²³⁸ David Lotz, “The Proclamation of the Word in Luther’s Thought,” *Word and World* 3 (1983): 349.

²³⁹ Forde, *Theology Is for Proclamation*, 35.

²⁴⁰ Lotz, “The Proclamation of the Word in Luther’s Thought,” 349.

spoken except in the proclamation. The moment of proclamation is the revealed will of God ‘for you.’ When you are there, when you are within earshot, you are the target,”²⁴¹ that is, our human identity is at the receiving end of God’s activity of killing the old and bringing forth the new human identity.

There are no abstract human identities, only very concrete ones. Therefore, the concrete preaching delivers the “for-usness” of the message by the “personalized” form of speech which presents Christ as God’s gift “for me.” Lotz calls it “kerygmatic discourse,” characterizing it as the one which “proclaims, announces, declares that God in Christ loves, forgives, accepts you, me, us; and it invites, even incites, the heart’s acceptance of this gift. Such speech takes the objective reality of ‘God in Christ’ and *makes (renders) it present and personal*: thereby it creates a new reality in my hearing, ‘God for me,’ which through faith (and thus through the Spirit working through that speech) becomes yet another new reality, ‘God in me.’”²⁴² It demonstrates that the preaching’s linguistic form is no less important than its content. Forde calls it the “primary discourse,” which is present-tense, first-to-second person proclamation of the Gospel as unconditional promise authorized by Jesus Christ. As Kolb summarizes Forde’s thought saying, “God’s Word is conveyed to our hearts in direct address, in ‘I – thou’ language, when we say, ‘I forgive you, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.’ That preposition packs power.”²⁴³ Forde himself explains the issue:

Proclamation is present tense: I here and now give the gift to you, Christ himself, the body and blood of the Savior. I do it in both Word and sacrament. This is God's present move, the current ‘mighty act’ of the living God. The only appropriate response to such primary discourse is likewise primary: confession, praise, prayer,

²⁴¹ Forde, *Theology Is for Proclamation*, 36.

²⁴² Lotz, “The Proclamation of the Word in Luther’s Thought,” 353.

²⁴³ Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel Today*, 58.

and worship. Proclamation as primary discourse demands an answer in like discourse be it positive or negative: 'I repent, I believe' or 'I don't, I won't, I can't.'²⁴⁴

In such kerygmatic preaching, in Luther's words, Christ is "a present that God has given you and that is your own," so that "when you see or hear Christ doing or suffering something, you do not doubt that Christ himself, with his deeds and suffering, belongs to you."²⁴⁵ Therefore, the proclamation looks for the "for-usness" of the Gospel message. The Reformer says that the preacher of the Christmas gospel "does not just say: 'Christ is born,' but he appropriates Christ's birth for us and says: 'Your Savior.' Thus, the gospel does not merely teach the story and accounts of Christ, but personalizes them to all who believe in it."²⁴⁶ The "for us" kind of preaching, as Lotz reminds us, takes a "form of a *personal word of address* that brings Christ home to the believing heart by including the auditor's reality in the reality it proclaims, by thus allowing Christ to announce, 'I am yours, and you are mine.'²⁴⁷ For as Luther rhetorically asks, "what good would it do me, if [Christ] were born a thousand times and if this were sung to me every day with the loveliest airs, if I should not hear that there was something in it for me and that it should be my own? When that voice sounds, no matter how furtively and imperfectly, my heart listens with joy, and the voice reaches through all the way and sounds splendidly."²⁴⁸ Therefore, Luther stresses the "for-usness" character of the proclamation, by saying that "Christ [is] to be preached to the end that faith in him may be established, that he may not only be Christ, but be Christ for you and me, and that what is said of him and is denoted in his name may

²⁴⁴ Forde, *Theology Is for Proclamation*, 2.

²⁴⁵ WA 10, I, 1, 11; LW 35.119

²⁴⁶ WA 19, I, 1, 79; LW 52.20

²⁴⁷ Lotz, "The Proclamation of the Word in Luther's Thought," 353.

²⁴⁸ WA 19, I, 1, 79; LW 52.21

be effectual in us. Such faith is produced and preserved in us by preaching why Christ came, what he brought and bestowed, what benefit it is to us to accept him.”²⁴⁹

But the very center of such kerygmatic, primary discourse preaching “for us” is and always will remain the cross, which is the essence of the “for us” message. This is what delivers the crucial transformation of our old identity into a new one. The kerygmatic preaching of the crucified Lord confessed in the Second Article of the Creed therefore is not a moralizing, or mere “Christ story-telling.” It requires, first of all, hard work from a preacher, asking questions like the following ones in the words of Lutheran clergyman Jonathan Strandjord:

*What does the text have to say about the cross? How does it point ahead or point back to that event? Where in the text do we see the God revealed in the incarnate, crucified Christ? What features of the incarnate God are brought out in high relief by this text? What does the cross have to say about the text? How does it speak to the text’s questions, contradict and fulfill the hopes expressed there, and transforms its message? What new dimensions and polarities are given the text by relating it to the cross?*²⁵⁰

The answers to these questions are what crucifies the identity of the old man in us and brings forth the new one and sustains him.

4. The Action of the Holy Spirit “For Us” in Baptism

a) Baptism As God’s Work “For Us”

Baptism is God’s work “for us,” by which He claims us, puts His name and Spirit on us individually, and provides us with our new identity. Without the Lord’s name being proclaimed over and “for us,” there is no Baptism. “in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit” pronounces the authority, the initiative, and the mandate of the Triune God upon the baptized. As American Lutheran systematician Norman Nagel says, “in Baptism, [Christ] gives his name,

²⁴⁹ WA 7, 58; LW 31, 357.

²⁵⁰ Jonathan Strandjord, “Preaching from a Theology of the Cross,” *Word and World* 3 (1983): 36; see also Gerhard Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther’s Heidelberg Disputation, 1518*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

put upon the one baptized with the water. With his name God commits himself with all that is in his name.”²⁵¹ This name being placed upon us effectively expresses the newly acquired identity, for as Nagel says, “name and identity go together. So we have the designation of a particular person by name, and upon that particular person the triune name of God is put with the water in the very act of baptizing. . . . *Who and whose we are is given with the name and water.*”²⁵²

Baptism is God’s monergistic and sovereign action. He is the One Who brings forth our new birth, not we ourselves. The Biblical message stresses the sovereignty of God’s activity and the passivity of the believer on whom God acts: “He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). As Luther says, “Baptism is not our work, but God’s” (LC, IV, 35). The “for-usness” of Baptism is exhibited not merely as the result,—the gift of Baptism,—but also during the process of the baptismal application—Christ Himself is the Baptizer. He is the One Who is doing this “for us” (although using pastor’s hands and mouth to deliver the gift). Baptism makes us Christ’s property, as Schlink says, “Just as Christian Baptism is not a self-Baptism but a being baptized, so the baptized does not become Christ’s property by placing *himself* under Christ, but rather he *becomes* Christ’s property through Baptism. This is God’s deed; this is acceptance by the Lord.”²⁵³ In the same way as we are unable to contribute anything to our physical birth, we are not capable to do anything concerning our spiritual re-birth. It is completely God’s gift to and “for us.”

Baptism provides man with the definite and clear self-conscious, self-reference point of his new identity. Luther’s “I am baptized!” is an identity claim. It can be extended to “I am

²⁵¹ Norman Nagel, “Holy Baptism,” in *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*, ed. Fred L. Precht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993), 282.

²⁵² Nagel, “Holy Baptism,” 283.

²⁵³ Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 44.

baptized, therefore I am,” or even further: “I am baptized, therefore I am who I am.” I am Christ’s, His own, for as Erlangen systematician Reinhard Slenczka says, “Our likeness with Christ is accomplished by being ‘grafted’ in him through baptism.”²⁵⁴

Thus, Baptism is God’s sovereign action “for us,” by which He claims us and puts His name and Spirit on us individually. He provides us with our new identity and with the clear consciousness of this new identity.

b) Baptism As Baptized Man’s Community with the Trinity and Sharing in the Death of Christ “For Us”

In Baptism, through the incorporation into Christ’s life-and-death event, man is also brought into community with the Trinity. Man now belongs to the whole of the Triune God and the Trinity is personalized “for us.” Kolb says, “We receive our names, and our new identities as God’s children, from him whose name is God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are incorporated into Christ’s death and resurrection, and thereby into the Father’s family . . . We confess the entire work of God when we baptize in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”²⁵⁵ Baptism as the work of applying redemption and the initiating of sanctification is the teamwork of the Trinity. From the moment of Baptism the Triune God for the believer becomes the personalized tri-unity of the Abba-Father Who “for us” sent His Son, our Savior, “who for us and for our salvation . . .” together with the Father has sent the Advocate to work “for us.”

²⁵⁴ Slenczka argues for this referring to Col 1:15; 2 Cor 4:4; Heb 1:3, saying that “Here the relation between the image and formation comes the full circle when we not only reenounter the origin of creation in the person of Jesus Christ, in His word and work, but when the salvific will of God is carried out through the renewing gift of the Spirit: ‘For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren’ (Romans 8:29). Thus, in the image of Christ what is formed anew and shaped in the Christian through the work of Christ becomes visible.” Reinhard Slenczka, “Luther’s Care of Souls for Our Times,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 67 (2003): 57.

²⁵⁵ Robert Kolb, *The Christian Faith: A Lutheran Exposition* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993), 219.

Baptism is incorporation into His life and death “for us,” and thus sharing them with all the consequences. As Schlink says, “Through Baptism our history has become so definitively interwoven with Christ’s history that it is no longer only our own history with Him and in Him. Being given into His death we have been received into His way through death to life.”²⁵⁶ Therefore, the baptized is bound, attached to Christ, to His very body and the death of it “for us” on the cross.

The death of Christ “for us” is the foundation of the baptismal “for-usness” because His death was a death to sin, which constituted the sinners’ identity. As Slenczka points out, “the foundation for such personal relation with Christ who has stood in the place of our ‘I and ‘self’ is the Baptism.”²⁵⁷ Christ’s death “for us” provides the opportunity for us to die a baptismal death. It is made possible because of the “for-usness” of Christ’s death, which by Baptism is attributed to us. As American Lutheran theologian David Scaer says: “Christ’s benefits are applied in Baptism, because in His death Christ had us in view. His death was in a very real sense our Baptism. Or, to reverse the sentence, we were baptized when He died.”²⁵⁸ Here the very fact of His death is primary to everything that is delivered to us afterwards, as Schlink says: “Antecedent to all statements about our having died *with* Christ in Baptism is the incomparable uniqueness of Christ’s death *for* us.”²⁵⁹

Baptism is Baptism into Christ’s death “for us.” Sinners must die, as Scripture says, “the soul who sins is the one who will die” (Ez 18:4) They will die anyway – either forever in hell, or with Christ in their Baptism (Rom 6:5-6). To be delivered from the death sinners deserve,

²⁵⁶ Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 52.

²⁵⁷ Reinhard Slenczka, *Par Identitāti Jēzū Kristū* (On the Identity in Jesus Christ), Report at the Conference “Religious Identity,” Rīga, May 28, 2002, 4. TMs, photocopied.

²⁵⁸ David Scaer, *Baptism* (St. Louis: The Luther Academy, 1999), 13.

²⁵⁹ Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 49 [emphasis author’s].

somebody has to pay a price, as American Lutheran church historian Martin Marty says, “This time newness comes not the easy way as the oldest story has it: by the breath of God, out of nothing. Instead, it comes the hard way: by the death of Christ, and out of the sinner.”²⁶⁰ Therefore, Bonhoeffer portrays the destiny of man in Baptism, saying, “When Christ calls a person, he bids him come and die” and: “Every command of Jesus is a call to die, with all our affections and lusts. But we do not want to die, and therefore Jesus Christ and his call are necessarily our death as well as our life. The call to discipleship, the Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, means both death and life.”²⁶¹ Thus, Baptism and death are equivalent terms. The identities of these deaths—Christ’s death and ours—are merged together by God’s “for-usness” and they result in the new identity of the new man.

Baptism is the death of our old identity and sin. Baptism is nothing less than death, for nothing less would free us from the power of death. It is the death of our death. Our baptismal death is all-inclusive, for it includes all of our old life, our old and heathen sources of identity, meaning, and security. Sin is not the dominant force in us any more. Its deadly force “against us” has been broken by Christ’s death “for us.” As American Lutheran exegete Martin Franzmann says, “Sin *cannot* be our life-element any longer; it cannot be the compelling impulse of our wills and the controlling bent of our desires as it once was (cf. Col 3:7), for dead men have no wills and no desires.”²⁶² Kolb reiterates, “Baptismal death and resurrection has freed the believer from the plagues of evil from within and without.”²⁶³ Baptism constantly invites the Holy Spirit to care for us by the other means of grace, which come *extra nos*.

²⁶⁰ Martin Marty, *Baptism* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 32.

²⁶¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 79.

²⁶² Martin Franzmann, *Romans* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), 109.

²⁶³ Robert Kolb, *Make Disciples Baptizing: God’s Gift of New Life and Christian Witness* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Publications, 1997), 39.

Thus, in Baptism man is brought into the community with the Trinity and Trinity is personalized “for us.” Baptism is sharing in Christ’s life and death “for us” and thus, it is the death of our old identity and sin.

c) Baptism As God’s Gift Delivery of Victory “For Us”

Baptism as a gift of salvation saves man from sin, death and devil so that he can live the joyful, free, and responsible life of discipleship with God, which begins at the very moment of Baptism and continues forever in eternity with God. Its delivering of salvation “for us” is its power, work, use, and fruit. Thus, Baptism is God’s gift of transfer from the kingdom of devil to the kingdom of Christ. We do not stand in some kind of neutral position in regard to the world and God. Man’s so called spiritual autonomy and self-determination is merely a humanistic illusion. We are spiritually fully immersed in the world. We are involved in the matters of the world as sinners. Before Baptism we were enslaved to sin and its consequences – guilt, shame, fear and death. But in regards to all this, Baptism is God’s effective “nevertheless.” Although I am a sinner, nevertheless Christ delivered His “for-usness” to me in Baptism. Therefore, I have been transferred from the dominion of the world to be placed under the rule of Christ and I have become a saint (Col 1:13; Mark 1:11). Thus, Baptism is first of all the process of our transfer “from and to,” that is, from the kingdom of devil to the kingdom of Christ (Col 1:12; 1 Thess 5:4). Therefore, Luther says that Baptism “delivers from the hand of the devil and brings to God.”²⁶⁴

In Baptism the believer becomes the temple of the Spirit, which cannot cohabit with the spirit of the Prince of the world; therefore, Baptism by definition is the renunciation of the devil or exorcism: “I adjure thee, thou impure spirit . . . that thou depart . . . and make room for

²⁶⁴ WA 43, 525; LW 5, 141.

the Holy Spirit.” By this the change of kingdoms is operative and made final.²⁶⁵ Baptism is the victory of Christ delivered “for us.” Scaer says, “Here in Baptism we receive the forgiveness of sins, not only as a divine reprieve from past crimes and misdemeanors, but as the victory over Satan which is ours due to our participation in the life of the Triune God.”²⁶⁶ Being baptized is a new status *coram Deo* but also *coram Sathana* as well. It is the real declaration of lifelong war with the Devil.

Baptism is God’s battle and victory “for us” and against the forces of evil. Baptism is to be used as weaponry against Satan when he attacks the conscience, for Luther reminds us, “Thus, we must regard baptism and put it to use in such a way that we may draw strength and comfort from it when our sins or conscience oppress us, and say: ‘But I am baptized! And if I have been baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in body and soul.’”²⁶⁷ Baptism is a sure victory over the forces of Satan, for the battle is unequal from the very beginning since we have on our side the three divine Persons of the Trinity. As Swedish confessional scholar Fagerberg says, “Since the command to baptize was given in the name of the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit come to us in Baptism to help us resist the evil powers.”²⁶⁸ We belong to the *Christus Victor* who has fought and won this battle “for us.” “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8). In Baptism we have been won over from the devil and we have received Christ’s victory and its fruits. Baptism is the Trinity’s battleground, the public victory parade (in the baptismal liturgy), and the delivery of the gains “for us.” In the baptismal liturgy, each newly baptized

²⁶⁵ As the baptismal liturgy reflects it: “Depart, you unclean spirit, and make room for the Holy Spirit,” (SC, Baptismal Booklet, 11) or in the contemporary baptismal liturgy: “Do you renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways?” The Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Worship: Agenda* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 94.

²⁶⁶ Scaer, *Baptism*, 50.

²⁶⁷ LC, IV, 44-5.

member of the Church *militans* eschatologically already enters the stage of Church *triumphans* of “now-not yet,” thus triumphing over the forces of devil.

Baptism is the instant and immediate shift of our position and status *coram Deo*, and as a consequence of it also effects a change in other *corams*, in this case *coram Sathana*. Baptism is real deliverance from the powers of darkness. Luther asks in his Small Catechism: “What gifts or benefits does Baptism bestow? Answer: It . . . delivers from death and the devil.”²⁶⁹ Baptism has very practical consequences, such as renouncing man’s “ministry” to Satan by ending His service to him, for example, in addictive sinning. Schlink points out, “Thus Baptism . . . [is] the liberation of the person from the compulsion to keep on sinning—the liberation to a life in purity, righteousness, and holiness.”²⁷⁰ By Baptism we are restored to our original position in God’s eyes as His human creatures. Schlink says, “Thus the Holy Spirit snatches man out of the transitory, out of death and corruption, and transfers him . . . into the eternal life with Christ in God. The Holy Spirit transports man into the life that had been promised him from the beginning but which he had forfeited.”²⁷¹ This transfer by Baptism has immediate eschatological consequences, for in Baptism the final Judgment has been passed on our sin and therefore we are going to meet Christ at His second coming as the rescued ones, as His people (Rom 8:34). Therefore a Christian can live and depart from this life in peace and comfort of the soul.

Comfort is one of the main gifts of Baptism “for us” as Luther says: “In baptism . . . it is said to us: ‘I am the Lord your God, do not be troubled.’”²⁷² The reason why Baptism is consoling for the stricken conscience is that it is God’s own work to and “for us.” Baptism

²⁶⁸ Fagerberg, *A New Look at the Lutheran Confessions (1529 – 1537)*, 182.

²⁶⁹ SC, IV, 5.

²⁷⁰ Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 45.

²⁷¹ Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 62.

²⁷² WA 44, 272; LW 6, 364.

provides peace of mind and heart in times of *Anfechtung* as well as physical suffering. Baptism by its “extra-nosness” takes man away from the shaky ground of his own thoughts and feelings to the solid ground of God’s actions “for us.” As American practical theologian John Pless says, Baptism “draws the believer outside of himself into Christ’s saving death. The fact that baptism is external provides faith with a reliable anchorage outside of human wavering emotions. The certainty of baptism is to be found in the trustworthiness of God’s promise and work”²⁷³ “for us.”

The comforting use of Baptism is universal, for the believer may meet all the religious doubts and temptations with the same response: “But I am baptized!” Satan can counter this by saying: “I have here in hell plenty of the baptized!” Here we need to take into consideration that Baptism is not a magical act but an effective sign and means of belonging to God in Christ through which God grants Himself and His gifts to and “for us,” which we are supposed to grasp and to live out. They are the weapons against Satan. By Baptism we belong to God. The devil cannot claim us any more, for Christ, not the devil, has died “for us.” In the same way Baptism aims at the conquest of all the hindrances which stand in God’s way, such as terrors of conscience, uncertainty of salvation, and fear of predestination to damnation. It is for this reason, Luther said, that God “instituted Baptism, the Word, and the Sacrament as signs to counteract”²⁷⁴ damnation. Those who were troubled by questions of divine election Luther counseled not to attempt to “climb into heaven” but to “begin at the bottom with the incarnate Son and with your terrible original sin.” He continued, “God did not come down from heaven to make you uncertain about predestination or cause you to despise the Sacraments. He instituted them to

²⁷³ John Pless, “Baptism as Consolation in Luther’s Pastoral Care,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 67 (2003): 30.

²⁷⁴ WA TR, 2, 562, no. 2631 b; Martin Luther: *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*. The Library of Christian Classics, vol. 18, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1945), 122.

make you more certain and to drive such speculations out of your mind.”²⁷⁵ Luther went on, “These speculations about predestination are of the devil. If they assault you, say: ‘I am a son of God. I have been baptized. I believe in Jesus Christ, Who was crucified for me.’”²⁷⁶

Thus, Baptism as a gift of salvation saves us *from* sin, devil and death *for* the life with God. It is a declaration of war on Satan and God’s battle and victory “for us” over against the forces of devil. As a result Baptism is a change of our position *coram Deo et Sathana*. Baptism has universal use against all perils of faith.

d) The Effects of Baptism “For Us”

Baptism must be understood in the light of the distinction of the Law and Gospel. Baptism is working as a Law “against us” when the baptized but secure sinner is delivered into Christ’s death “for us” by drowning him into baptismal water daily. Althaus says, “The same word of judgment which makes us innocent also puts us, that is, our old man increasingly to death so that we may become pure.”²⁷⁷ God gradually puts to death the sinful habits through daily struggle and discipline. The believer’s identity rests upon being buried with Christ through Baptism into death and being raised with Christ to live a new life.

Baptism is also and mainly the gospel. Baptism speaks the language of forgiveness and new life “for us.” As Gospel the baptismal Word cleanses us from all our sins. As such, Baptism is meant for broken sinners, and also for those who have uncertainty regarding God’s gracious disposition. For the latter the answer to the question regarding “safe sinning” must be,

²⁷⁵ WA TR, 5: 294, no. 5658a; *Luther: Letters*, 133.

²⁷⁶ *Luther: Letters*, 134. Luther sees Baptism, along with the preaching of the gospel and the Sacrament of the Altar, as the only sure defense and shield against the despair incited by predestination. Luther says: “We should rely on these and say: ‘I have been baptized. I believe in Jesus Christ. I have received the Sacrament. What do I care if I have been predestined or not?’ In Christ, God has furnished us with a foundation on which to stand and from which we can go up to heaven.” WA TR, 2, 562, no. 2631b; *Luther: Letters*, 122.

²⁷⁷ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 356.

as Kolb points out, “God promised in Baptism to be your God, and in the midst of every temptation to doubt and to defy, God is present, wanting to forgive, intent on strengthening you, determined that you shall not fall out of His hand.” Therefore, to put on Christ according to the Gospel is a matter of a new creation, namely that we put on Christ Himself, His innocence, righteousness, wisdom, power, salvation, life, and Spirit. In those who have been baptized a new light and flame arise; new and devout emotions come into being, such as fear and trust in God and hope; and a new will emerges. To put on Christ according to the Gospel, therefore, is to put on, not the law or works, but an inestimable gift, namely the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, peace, comfort, joy in the Holy Spirit, salvation, life, and Christ himself.²⁷⁸

Baptism, because of its inherent “for-usness,” brings the restoration of the original vertical and horizontal relationships in our lives.²⁷⁹ It is re-enactment of Eden. Baptism initiates not a *substantive* change but rather a *new relationship* with God. Baptism does not remove original sin, so that man now exists without the plague of sin; rather, it is the continued functioning of God’s promise “for us” to the baptized to be through his Baptism “for him” and to sustain his new identity. On the human side we are turned away from the other sources of identity, security and meaning in our lives and returned to the original sources of our very selves. God, because He is the one who holds the re-creative power and the initiative, maintains the relationship He has established through His baptismal Word independently of our changing, wavering human emotions and attitudes. He has turned us toward Himself and will never let us go.

²⁷⁸ These two paragraphs are summarized from Kolb’s books *The Christian Faith*, 222; *Make Disciples Baptizing*, 12-3; *Teaching God’s Children His Teaching*, 6-4; *Speaking the Gospel Today*, 200.

²⁷⁹ Our vertical relationships with God are conversely proportional with that we have with devil. In the linear model (see the appropriate paragraph in this subchapter) the “closer” we are to God who is “for us,” the “further” we are from devil who is “against us.” The horizontal relationships include our neighbors (inner mission) and also our distal (outer, foreign mission). Thus, Christian is expected to operate “for us” at home and also far way. The
(continued next page)

Baptism makes a change of the heart, a change in the fundamental orientation of life, refocusing of life on that which is above, the gift of faith in Christ, a change of object of our ultimate trust. “Baptism saves” (1 Pet 3:21) because now the baptized can appeal to God as his Father without hesitation or fear since our appeal is based upon the substitutionary sacrifice and the resurrection of Jesus “for us.” As a direct result of that, Baptism re-shapes our horizontal relationships as well. Kolb says, “[God] turns us around—He turns our world upside down, which is then right side up—so that we can reflect His image in our care and concern for others.”²⁸⁰ Here we need to take into consideration that the vertical relations are the primary ones and that the horizontal relationships depend on them. Our love for the neighbor is not stronger than our love for God “who for us and for our salvation” did everything (1 John 4:19-21). We reflect, and do not create, God’s care “for us” and our compassion for other humans.

Baptism is the main event of a Christian’s past and at the same time continually also the main event of the present. This is because in baptismal grammar the sacrament occupies both the past perfect and present perfect tenses. Although Baptism has been delivered “for us,” Baptism is and remains the most significant present reality “for us” as well. *Baptizatus sum*. As Luther says, “Baptism is not a matter of the moment, but something permanent.”²⁸¹ Once baptized, always baptized, that is, the baptized is experiencing the baptismal blessings of the ever present Christ, who addresses the believer through his Baptism. It continues to shape our identity by killing the old and raising the new man in us. Therefore, Baptism is not the memory of an act performed in the past, but a description of the believer’s current situation. The death of the old and the raising of the new is both the state of man as a result of Baptism and a continuous, permanent and life-

combination of vertical and horizontal can be seen as an axis of man’s coordinates, which locate man *coram Deo et coram Sathana* on the vertical axis and *coram hominibus* on the horizontal axis.

²⁸⁰ Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel Today*, 196.

²⁸¹ WA 6, 534; LW 36, 69.

long process. Luther says, “This significance of baptism—the dying or drowning of sin—is not fulfilled completely in this life . . . this does not happen until man passes through bodily death . . . the sacrament or sign of baptism is quickly over. But the spiritual baptism, the drowning of sin, which it signifies, lasts as long as we live and is completed only in death.”²⁸²

Baptism frames the whole²⁸³ of the Christian life; it embraces the entire life of the believer from font to grave and thus constitutes our new identity as a life-long process of living it out. Baptism is not a closed in-itself event but an opening for God’s “for-usness” in us. Baptism is a Christian life in a nutshell, therefore as Marty says: “Baptism is, in miniature, a complete picture and a decisive act of birth, of discipleship, of death, of resurrection. It is the Christian life.”²⁸⁴ It has definite consequences for man. Schlink points out, “Since in Baptism God has savingly embraced the whole life of man, the latter must now yield this entire life of his to the Savior.”²⁸⁵ In his Small Catechism Luther speaks of the daily drowning of the evil nature, which still remains in the baptized and of a new man coming forth to a God-pleasing life. Or in the Large Catechism Luther speaks about “the old man [who] daily decreases until finally destroyed.”²⁸⁶ Baptism, while performed merely once, determines the entire destiny of man, for it embraces and re-defines the whole life of man. Schlink says,

²⁸² WA 7, 728; LW 35, 30.

²⁸³ Here John Pless comes up with the interesting observation that Luther’s view of the baptismal impact upon the whole Christian life has revolutionized the understanding of Baptism, “While baptism was featured quite prominently in the early church, its place was diminished in the Middle Ages. . . . In fact, the chief feature of baptism seemed to be that of initiation. Baptism was the beginning point on the sacramental continuum, but it had little significance for the ongoing spiritual life, as the Eucharist and especially penance overshadowed baptism. By way of contrast, Luther did not limit baptism to the moment of the rite, but asserted the enduring benefits of baptism both for daily life and, finally, for the approach of death itself. For Luther, baptism was no mere rite of initiation on the spectrum of sacramental acts, but the basis and content of the Christian’s life that is brought to completion only in the resurrection of the body.” Pless, “Baptism as Consolation in Luther’s Pastoral Care,” 19-20. Thus, Baptism’s significance “for us” extended to the whole life of the Christian.

²⁸⁴ Martin Marty, *The Hidden Discipline* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1962), 88; Kolb, *Teaching God’s Children His Teaching*, 6-2.

²⁸⁵ Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 56.

²⁸⁶ LC, IV, 71.

Baptism is a onetime act as God's new-creating deed. Hence it is not unique in the sense of other events which disappeared in the past and which we recall as past events, but it is unique in the sense of a happening which determines and embraces the entire subsequent life. The same 'once for all' . . . applies to Baptism as to Jesus' death and resurrection. Just as Jesus died and rose again not only 'once' but 'once for all' so also through Baptism man is given into Jesus' death and resurrection once for all. But through Baptism the sinner is once for all made the property of the crucified and risen Lord in order to live by the Lord's strength henceforth. Just as the age following Jesus' death and resurrection is different from the preceding age because it is already bracketed by His victory on the cross and His return, so also the period of a man's life after his Baptism is different from the time before.²⁸⁷

For this reason, although Baptism initiates the Christian life only once, its renewing impact remains in place for the whole of the life-span. As Luther says, "thus a Christian life is nothing else than a daily Baptism, once begun and ever continued." (LC, IV, 65) Therefore, Baptism is the Christian's life, his whole and entire existence defined by baptismal "for-usness."

Baptism has eschatological ramifications for the identity of man. As English Church historian Jonathan Trigg says, "The regeneration of baptism is not a *momentaneum negotium*, but a *perpetuum*, whose *res* stretches out to the future life."²⁸⁸ Baptism presumes and includes not merely this life but also the coming life. Therefore, the entirety of the Christian life, both temporally and eschatologically, is located in the Baptism. While physically man is still moving to death, he has died already to death, for he has been given into Christ's death "for us." Because of this, man may be certain that he already shares the eternal life. For this reason believer's temporal succession of the earthly life in a peculiar way has been abrogated even though it continues to exist. It is "already—not yet" kind of life which shares the life of Christ; it impacts the entire life of man, as Prenter points it out: "Christ's real presence is not a momentary

²⁸⁷ Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 114.

²⁸⁸ Jonathan Trigg, *Baptism in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Boston, Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 81.

religious experience, but a total eschatological, historical act of salvation influencing our whole life.”²⁸⁹ In such a way Baptism defines man in both the temporal and the eschatological settings.

Thus, Baptism works as a Law against the secure sinner and as a Gospel for the insecure sinner. Baptism frames the whole Christian life, at the same time being the main event of Christian’s past and continually also the main event of his present. Baptism has eschatological ramifications for the identity of man.

5. The Holy Spirit “For Us” in the Lord’s Supper

God the Holy Spirit delivers His gifts of salvation, forgiveness and preservation of faith “for us” by the means of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper. It is a gift of embodied Gospel “for us.”

a) The “What” and “How” of the Lord’s Supper As a Gift

In the Lutheran understanding of the Lord’s Supper Christ Himself is the very author and the subject of the sacramental meal. As Luther says, “it was not dreamed up or invented by some mere human being but was instituted by Christ”²⁹⁰ and as the words of institution say, “It is true body and blood of the LORD Christ.”²⁹¹ Lutheran language regarding the Lord’s Supper was never intended to describe only the objective existence of the body and blood in the Sacrament, for it rests on the presupposition that He is truly present in His body and blood “for us.” This presence of Christ’s body and blood should be understood and used only together with the promise “for you,” because what the Lord’s Supper is and does, it is and does only “for us.” Thus, Christ as the subject of His Supper is here and now as Immanuel, as God-with-us and also “for us,” because for God to be with His people means to be there “for them,” to be theirs. Thus,

²⁸⁹ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 163-4.

²⁹⁰ LC, V, 4.

²⁹¹ LC, V, 8.

in the Lord's Supper the fact and purpose of the sacrament form, exist, and are delivered as a unity. Therefore, the words of consecration addressed to the elements and a word of promise addressed to the congregation should not be separated. This means that the "it" of the body and blood is Christ's presence "for us." It is the one and the only meaning of the Lord's Supper – to hand over, to deliver His "for-usness" in this very personal way by giving to us His own body and blood.

Christ's body and blood exist and are present (and presented) "for us" concretely here and now in, with, and under the signs of bread and wine, that is, where and when the institution and delivery of the Lord's Supper takes place. If He is there where and when He has promised to be, then there humans have access to His body and blood. Luther stressed the words "*it is*," speaking of Christ's words regarding His body and blood. Either He is there as He says, and then there are also gifts "for us;" or He is not there, and then consequently there are no gifts "for us" either. The value or worth of His being there "for us" is the presupposition on which His benefits, the gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation, rest.²⁹² Thus, no presence, no gifts delivered. Therefore, in Luther's statement the presence of Christ's body and blood and gift are stated together, "here you have both—that it is Christ's body and blood and that they are yours as treasure and gift."²⁹³

The presence of the body and blood "for us" also affirms their presence as the vehicle of God's gift delivery of forgiveness, life, and salvation. With the "for us" Lutherans insist on the very real value of God's sacramental gift for those who receive it. The words "for us" are the essence of the Sacrament; they demonstrate and deliver its gifts. "The words are there, and they

²⁹² Luther fought on the issue of the Lord's Supper on two fronts: against the Catholics who made out of the Lord's Supper a matter of mere performance, he pointed out the promise of "for you." Against the Sacramentarians, who denied Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, he pointed to Christ's words, "This is my body."

²⁹³ LC, V, 29.

impart it [forgiveness] to us!”²⁹⁴ Therefore, to trust these words, to cling to them in faith, is enough to be worthy to receive the sacrament itself: “the person who has faith in these words, ‘given for you’ and ‘shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,’ is really worthy and well prepared.”²⁹⁵ What benefits then do we receive? “The words ‘given for you’ and ‘shed for you for the forgiveness of sins’ show that forgiveness of sin, life and salvation are given to us in the sacraments through these words.”²⁹⁶

The Lord’s Supper is fundamentally a gift. Through it God gives forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. According to God’s design His grace is always moving toward the helpless sinner, toward everything we are and have. Therefore, His gift, promise, and testament in the Lord’s Supper move from Him to us, for in it Christ is serving, giving out His gifts. The gift character of the Lord’s Supper eliminates any thought of our own sacrifice or work. We are mere beggars before God, and we live only by what He gives. Nagel says, “What he [Christ] did counts as ours, and therefore we can rejoice in a salvation that is only his doing and ours only as gift.”²⁹⁷

The Lord’s Supper is not an abstract gift for humanity in general. It is very personal; it is “for me.” The words of institution say that the Lord’s Supper is given “for me,” which means that if the words say it, they do it as well. Nagel says, “Because the *Verba* say ‘for you’ it is a personal and individual imparting of the treasure.”²⁹⁸ It means that when the body of Christ in the Lord’s Supper becomes “mine,” the death of Christ as accomplished “for me” is applied to me. Luther says, “Christ bids me eat and drink in order that the sacrament may be *mine* and may be a source

²⁹⁴ LC, V, 22.

²⁹⁵ SC, V, 9-10.

²⁹⁶ SC, V, 5-6.

²⁹⁷ Norman Nagel, “Luther’s Understanding of Christ in Relation to His Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 1961), 297.

²⁹⁸ Nagel, “Luther’s Understanding of Christ in Relation to his Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper,” 447.

of blessing to *me* as a sure pledge and sign.”²⁹⁹ In the administration of the Lord’s Supper the Gospel is applied personally and individually to me. Thus, there is no place for doubt as to whether the grace that is proclaimed is “for me,” or whether it has been intended for somebody else except me. Luther explains that when Christ says, “‘Given *for you*’ and poured out *for you*,’ . . . he said, ‘This is why I give it and bid you eat and drink, that you may take it as your own and enjoy it.’”³⁰⁰

The Lord’s Supper is a clear expression of the Gospel. It is delivered to men without demanding from them any preceding work which would qualify them for God’s grace. Kolb says, “the Lord’s Supper effects the death of every human pretension and claim of activity in rebirth. It effects life without any contribution coming from the baby. It feeds the newborn children of God without sending them first into the field to do some harvesting.”³⁰¹ This would divert men’s religious attention from themselves to God in Christ, who has provided salvific gifts in the Lord’s Supper, “for us.” Nagel says, “the forgiveness of sins is promised in the words ‘for you.’ . . . The believer does not look to himself or his own worthiness, for he has none, but only to the word and mouth of Christ. Then he is within that ‘for you.’”³⁰² It is the Lord’s, not our, Supper, and as such it is a gift-provider, not a duty.

In the Lord’s Supper Christ Himself comes to and “for us.” This is not magic but a miracle. Fagerberg says, “Dimensions of time and space no longer apply. At the altar the treasures [of Christ] are accessible.”³⁰³ The Lord’s Supper, as God’s recreating Word, bridges the gap between the historical sacrifice of Christ on the cross and today’s recipient of it. The same body which was

²⁹⁹ LC, V, 22.

³⁰⁰ LC, V, 34.

³⁰¹ Kolb, *Christian Faith*, 236.

³⁰² Nagel, “Luther’s Understanding of Christ in Relation to his Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper,” 441.

³⁰³ Fagerberg, *A New Look at the Lutheran Confessions (1529 – 1537)*, 198.

then sacrificed on the cross is now given, delivered in the Lord's Supper for man's benefit. As Nagel paraphrases Luther, "If you want your sins forgiven, you do not go to Calvary, but to the Lord's Supper. At Calvary it was achieved but not given out. Here it is not achieved but it is given you."³⁰⁴

b) The Concrete Benefits of the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is the means which extend its effects "for us" to the entire man. Man as a whole is a creaturely entity. Therefore, he receives the salvific gifts also as a whole. For the same reason Luther says that the Lord's Supper is "a pure, wholesome, soothing medicine which aids and quickens us in both soul and body. For where the soul is healed, the body has benefited also."³⁰⁵ Thus, the Lord's Supper as the sacramental Word given "for us" affirms the wholeness of man. The Lord's Supper addresses man multidimensionally, coming to man via all his receptors. Schlink points out, "In the reception of the sacraments faith rests not only on the Word but also on the sign, and it is called forth not only by hearing but also by seeing, feeling, and tasting. The sacraments accordingly strengthen faith in that they make clear by signs that the promise of the Gospel is meant for the *whole* man."³⁰⁶

What are the overall benefits of both Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, "for us"? Luther says, "In this sacrament he [Christ] offers us all the treasure he brought from heaven for us."³⁰⁷ Luther mentions them as following: "the forgiveness of sins . . . life, and salvation."³⁰⁸ Moreover, it can be said that in all these gifts (and in others as well) Jesus Himself is present "for

³⁰⁴ Nagel, "Luther's Understanding of Christ in Relation to his Doctrine of the Lord's Supper," 305, cf. WA 18, 203; LW 40, 213.

³⁰⁵ LC, V, 68.

³⁰⁶ Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, 187, also Apology: "Through the Word and the rite God simultaneously moves the heart. . . . As the Word enters through the ears to strike the heart, so the rite itself enters through the eyes to move the heart. The Word and the rite have the same effect" (Ap, XIII, 5).

³⁰⁷ LC, V, 66.

us” because Christ the Savior is giver, gift, and benefit at the same time. Thus, in His Supper Jesus comes as close as possible to every recipient (actually not “to” but “into” the recipient by being received orally).

The “forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation” can be read as a theological formula as well, where the sequence³⁰⁹ of the acquisitions is as important as the benefits themselves. First of all, it speaks of forgiveness, which is not merely a negative effects “for us,” an effect of the non-imputation of sins, but also the positive effect of restoring man to his heavenly Father’s favor, whose acceptance means that we are aligned again with His Son, that is, with everything He is and does “for us.” As a consequence of that, as English American Methodist Luther scholar Philips Watson says, “Christ imparts to us a share in His own victorious life, pledging Himself to fight with us and for us and in us against sin and death and all evil.”³¹⁰

Second, including “life” in this triad expresses the kind of life the Christian receives. The life of Christ’s “for-usness” handed over to us is not just an inert state of being, but quite the contrary, the richness of the resources of life, the feast of life. It is the abundance of “for-usness.” “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). In the Lord’s Supper the fullness of the divine life residing in the body of Christ is imparted directly to our bodies. Kolb says, “In receiving the blood that was poured out on Calvary in our behalf, we sinners are received into the tomb into which his lifeless body was placed. . . . But this body and blood belong to the one who has risen from the dead. So, as we receive his body and blood in his Supper, we also receive the gift of life.”³¹¹ The sacramental Word pronounces and makes us dead as sinners and

³⁰⁸ SC, V, 6; cf. SC, IV, 5-6.

³⁰⁹ It may be read also from the viewpoint of different facets, or each gift implicitly comprehending the others.

³¹⁰ Philip Watson, *Let God Be God: An Interpretation of the Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1949), 165-6.

³¹¹ Kolb, *Christian Faith*, 236.

alive in Christ. The last word in this theological triad, describing the effects of the Lord's Supper, "salvation,"³¹² *Seeligkeit*, combines and brings "for us" the act of being saved with the blessedness which results from it. It is the height of man's spiritual well-being.

The "for-usness" of the Lord's Supper extends its effects also eschatologically. To call the Lord's Supper a "food of the soul since it nourishes and strengthens the new man" (LC, V, 23) means at the same time to point out the eschatological character of the new man who receives it. This new man is a recovering sinner, that is, one rising from the dead. But rising from the dead involves the gift of a new body. Thus, ultimately by extending Christ's body and blood "for me" the Lord's Supper provides man with eternal life for his whole person, that is, soul-and-body. That which will be realized fully then starts already now. As Luther says, "now, because this poor bag of worms, our body, also has the hope of the resurrection from the dead and of eternal life, this body must also become spiritual and digest and consume all that is carnal in it. And that is what this spiritual food accomplishes: if a man eats it bodily, it will digest his flesh and transform him, so that he too *becomes* spiritual, that is, eternally alive and blessed."³¹³ Thus, the reception of the Lord's Supper eschatologically separates creatureliness from corruption. By the power of the sacramental word of the Lord's Supper "for us," the old man dies, and the new man rises.

6. The Christian's Life As Lived in Between the "For-Usness" of the Two Sacraments

The Christian's whole life is lived in between the "for-usness" of each of the two sacraments. Thus, he is embraced by both. Baptism begins man's life in Christ and constantly re-establishes that identity through daily repentance. It provides "for him" the constant reminder of his identity, drawing his attention back to his past. Thus Baptism serves as man's personal

³¹² In Luther's German *Seeligkeit*, salvation, includes also the fruit of deliverance, i.e. the state of blessedness, *beatitudo* "for where there is forgiveness, there is life and salvation, *Seeligkeit*" (SC, V, 2).

³¹³ WA 23, 205.

reference point, where the Lord's "for-usness" has exhibited itself "for him." Baptism "brings about forgiveness of sins" (and Luther briefly explains in the following words that it "redeems from death and devil") "and gives eternal salvation."³¹⁴ The Lord's Supper is providing the nourishment for man's life-journey; therefore, it is called "the food of travelers" and draws man forward toward the eschatological banquet. It sets spiritual food before believers again and again. The new man faces the opposition of the flesh, sin, the world and the devil. Luther comments, "therefore, the Lord's Supper is given as a daily food and sustenance so that our faith may be refreshed and strengthened."³¹⁵ Speaking on the benefits of the Lord's Supper, Luther says that it provides forgiveness, and "where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation."³¹⁶ The reception of the sacrament of Baptism as man's spiritual birth takes place only once. Thereafter, man lives the spiritual life into which he was born. He lives by receiving spiritual food repeatedly in the Lord's Supper. Schlink says,

What does it mean, therefore, to live between the sacraments? It means to return daily to the once-for-all Baptism and to go forward daily to the Lord's Table, which is prepared for us again and again. Thus, the Christian's life at every moment is completely surrounded and embraced by the event of Christ's death on the cross. At every moment the Christian comes from Christ's death and hastens on to Christ's death.³¹⁷

Thus, both sacraments not merely embrace man by Christ's death but also make him a recipient of it daily and guide him to life eternal. Schlink continues,

In Baptism we receive Christ's eternal life, and in the Lord's Supper we receive Christ's vicarious death, his given body and his shed blood. Again, in Baptism we receive the death of our old man, and in the Lord's Supper we receive Christ's body and blood as the bread of life. In the believing reception of both sacraments the Christian's life on earth—his present life and even the remainder of his life on

³¹⁴ SC, IV, 5-6.

³¹⁵ LC, V, 24.

³¹⁶ SC, V, 5-6.

³¹⁷ Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, 183.

earth—proves to be so completely encircled and encompassed by Christ’s first and second Advent that the present and still prospective interval loses the power to lead him astray. In the reception of the two sacraments the believer is translated out of the problem area of his visible existence into the eternal life which will become visible at Christ’s return.³¹⁸

Thus, the sacramental Word, which delivers Christ’s sacrifice “for us,” is fundamental for the believer’s existence here and for the assurance of the life eternal.

Thus, the anthropological implications of the “for us” in the Third Article consist in the fact that the “for-usness” of God the Holy Spirit comes to man through the means of grace as the means of acquiring and sustaining man’s new identity. The “for-usness” of the Holy Spirit’s comes from outside of us by the means of oral, written and sacramental words as a gift, which delivers and strengthens our new identity. God converses with men in a human vernacular. Thus, in a propositional and rational way He is pointing out our new identity. God the Holy Spirit brings forth Christ’s presence “for us” in the outward Word of the Scripture to which our identity is bound. The preaching of the Word brings Christ and His gifts for our identity “for us” here and now. The preaching of the cross kills the old man and brings forth the identity of the new man.

In Baptism God claims us and puts His name and Spirit on us declaring us to be His. In Baptism the old man dies for man shares Christ’s death “for us.” But at the same time, Baptism is a gift of salvation which saves us *from* sin, devil and death *for* a continuous life with God. Baptism works both as the Law and as the Gospel. It acts as a Law “against me” when I as a secure sinner am delivered into Christ’s death “for us” by drowning me in baptismal water repeatedly. Baptism acts as a Gospel “for me” when I as an insecure sinner am washed from my sins by baptismal water. Baptism is the main event of Christian’s past and at the same time it continues to be also the main event of his present.

³¹⁸ Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, 183.

The Lord's Supper is Christ's gift "for us" by presenting us with His very body and very blood. The overall benefits of Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper "for us" are the triad of forgiveness, life and salvation. Both Sacraments envelope the whole of Christian's life so that he is living in between them.

E. Anthropological Implications of the "For Us" Approach for the First Article Revisited

The Holy Spirit returns us to God's creation to live out God's design as it is implied in the First Article, thus producing the First Article Revisited. This is the realm in which the believer is supposed to live out his new identity created by God's "for-usness" interacting with the whole creation as it is after the Fall. The new man inhabits God's creation as His beloved child, one who wishes to live in accordance with God's will. Man needs to orientate himself practically, for he is going to inhabit the earth for the whole of his lifetime. This is here where man needs to find out the answers to the questions of the purpose and meaning of human life (both for the species and for the individual) as it is designed by God.³¹⁹

After the Third Article, the purpose of life cannot be limited to just proclamation and the hearing of the Gospel, for that would take away the meaning and value of the First Article (taken as a whole). We are here to live in God's kingdom on earth, not to enter eternity immediately after being saved. Our task is to bring God's kingdom to fuller realization and implementation, not to flee into eternal life. To bring God's kingdom to pass does not necessarily mean to turn the earth into the realm of the church (for there is something else to do in life besides its cultic activity) but to fill life with the particular values which Christians recognize as of God's design and purpose for His world.

³¹⁹ This author is deliberately leaving out of the scope the questions pertaining to the subject area of "Christian life" such as sanctification etc., regarding them as the matter of the Third Article. The First Article Revisited deals with the Christian man as he interacts with God's creation in his vocation as a part of his purpose in life.

“Why I am here?” is not a question to be answered in terms of biophysics or biochemistry. It is a question of purpose: “For what reason has the Creator sent me here? Why did He want me to live my life here and now?” The purpose of man’s life is far greater than his own personal fulfillment or his private happiness. Without a purpose, life is motion without meaning, activity without direction, and events without reason. Such life is trivial, petty, and pointless; it becomes empty and shallow. An unexamined life is not worth living; such life is a waste of God’s and man’s resources. The need to understand his purpose of being is inherently human; none other among God’s earthly creatures struggles with this question. The struggle to find the answer to this question in itself is a demonstration of our humanness.

We cannot presume that our physical make-up or mere existence somehow will automatically explain clearly the purpose of life or will add up to the meaning of life. Our physical existence provides merely the material basis for the purpose of life. The purpose of life is not immanently inherent in our human nature (although the request or the urge for it is—as is the need for God: “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? Ps 42:2) but only in the wholeness of God’s design for human life. This urge for the implementation of the meaning of life is a God-given warning not to waste our lives on small and insignificant things, merely for self-enjoyment or just in existence (although all of these have a legitimate place in our lives) with the attitude of “squandering all we have in wild living” (Lk 15:13).

Focusing on ourselves does not reveal the purpose of our lives. Because man did not create himself, there is no way he can tell by himself for what he has been created. Man can choose many things in his life, such as a career, but he cannot choose his ultimate purpose. It is given and delivered to him. Man’s purpose fits into a much larger, cosmic purpose that God designed for eternity because “in his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind” (Job

12:10). Thus, if someone wants to know his purpose in life, he needs to start with the one who has placed him here. God has created us; therefore, there should be some greater purpose for our existence and life than just sustaining our own individual, communal, and species' existence, or working out our private ambitions. This purpose is measured against the larger context of God's doings in the creed (particularly in Christ). Thus, our purpose of life originally and ultimately possesses cosmic dimensions. It is about bringing God's will concretized in His attitude of "for us" into the world, thus turning it into God's kingdom.

God's "for-usness" demonstrates His openness to the world, His willingness to engage us every time anew, expecting that we search for new opportunities to bring out His "for-usness" again and again. Thus, God's love "for us" in Christ leads us more and more into the world, not out of it. We live in order to bring this love into the world as His model for living in the way of "for us." We are ambassadors of His being "for us" in the context of the whole creation. Our purpose is to maximize our channeling of God's "for-usness" into the lives of others so that they can be enriched by God's gifts, and in turn become God's gift channels for others as well.

Man's purpose and meaning rests upon the foundation of acknowledging that he is a human creature and God's child and that he exists in the interpersonal world of his four fundamental relationships (*coram Deo, coram natura, coram hominibus, and coram meipso*). These relationships are "for us," that is, they are man's life-lines of existence. Therefore, in following pages we are going to explore their significance for man's purpose of life one by one. Purpose for life comes *extra nos*, i.e. from these *corams*,³²⁰ and is worked out towards them. Previously it has been said that meaning is man's identity worked out. This meaning is always

³²⁰ As Helmut Thielicke, *Christ and the Meaning of Life*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1962), 100 says, "The mystery and the meaning of human life lies not in his inherited structure and his characteristic abilities, but rather in what comes from outside of himself, in his relationship to him from whom our life comes and to whom it is going."

worked out in relation to someone or to something. It is always reaching out for something or someone, that is, it is always concrete.³²¹ Meaning for human life lies in the fact that man implements his identity in meaningful actions, artifacts, and attitudes with God's "for-usness" as the framework or context for human life and actions. The purpose of man's life is to live out God's "for-usness," which he has been granted in conformity with God's plan. It is not an intellectual deduction from the general rule. The purpose of life for a believer is not found or constructed by man himself, but rather it is the response to God's "follow me!" and "You are my child!"³²² Therefore, the meaning of life is more like a path to follow, on which we are being led by God Himself, rather than a great picture to view on our own. Thus for a Christian, the meaning of life is not so much a theoretical question as a practical one; it is not his own problem to solve but rather God's challenge to perform a concrete God-given personal and unique life-long task which has been designed for man and he for it.

Therefore, for a believer the purpose of his life means to be included in the Creator's design "for us" and to live in conversation and in partnership with Him. I am "His own," to whom God has entrusted the care of His creation; therefore I want to be His trustworthy partner. Thus man's fundamental purpose of life is in his life *coram Deo*. Man's purpose of life is clarified and carried out in a continuous "for us" relationship with God, which is the most significant of his fundamental relationships and therefore determines the rest of them.

³²¹ Thus, even if the meaning is not always measurable, it is still possible to point it out as existing in relationship to something or somebody.

³²² As Thielicke (*Christ and the Meaning of Life*, 99-100) speaks of the prodigal son, "In all his wanderings, which were supposed to lead to himself, it was borne in upon him that the very time when he did *not* find himself was the time when he was seeking himself, but that he came to himself only when he came to the father. And the reason for this is that by nature man is *not* a cast form which needs only to develop in life, which has within it all the basic endowments that need only to grow. Man is rather a child of God who realizes himself only when he grows into this relationship of sonship to God, and this sonship to God fails of realization when he seeks to be an isolated self and acts like a soloist in the art of living."

This particular relationship—the *coram Deo* one—implies that God made man so that He could share His love and the fullness of divine life with the human creature. As American Evangelical clergyman Rick Warren says, “He wanted to make you in order to express his love.”³²³ On the other hand, we as His children “exist for his benefit, his glory, his purpose, and his delight.”³²⁴ We are to recognize, honor, declare, praise, reflect, and live for His glory (1 Chron 16:24; Ps 29:1; 66:2; 96:7; 2 Cor 3:18).

God does not merely save man and then leave man on his own. God is not a neutral observer like the deistic God. He is the Saviour Who puts everything at stake (His very life included) for the welfare of His children. Therefore, His attitude of “for-usness” is not impartial. It is charged with His zeal, with deep interest in us, His care and love (agape) for us. This (positively) predisposed attitude in turn charges man’s four constitutional and fundamental relationships with the same agape kind of zeal. God is actively and creatively engaged in His world because it is His very nature to love us, to be concerned about us, to care “for us.” God’s agape is not a one-time event; it is rather the character of God’s very nature. He cares for man all the way through his life leading man to meaningful aims in his life. Thus, because God is our Creator, He is also our Guide Who leads us: “The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me” (Ps 138:8).

The relationship *coram natura* explores man as he stands before God’s creation. Thus the content of the First Article Revisited is “How do I, as a human creature who has been endowed by God with certain gifts and as a saved child of God, live out my Christian life in a God-given world?” Man has been put into the world to perform certain tasks, to achieve definite goals. These same questions humanity has already faced in Adam, and the answer then was a definite

³²³ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 25.

one: “to till the garden,” to take care for Eden, the God-given world. This is the so-called “cultural mandate”³²⁵ of God.

Originally God created life in Eden as “good,” also there is a definite (although limited) intrinsic value to the First Article realm. The existence of the First Article Revisited demonstrates that God is interested in man’s physical, social, and cultural well-being. The earth was meant as a place to receive, to enjoy and to use responsibly God’s gifts of creation by way of meaningful exploration, discovery, and sustenance of God’s world. We were designed to be “gardeners”—care-takers of God’s creation—and to enjoy the activity of our service, not just the pragmatic result of it. We are meant to enjoy, not just to endure life. God’s initial design for man was that he delight in a purposeful, meaningful, value-filled, creative life, in co-creatorship with God. God did not need anyone else beside Himself, but out of the fullness of His agape, His divine nature, He wanted unselfishly to share it with someone who would be able to value and enjoy the flow of life, to take pleasure, contentment, and gratification from the beauty of God’s creation, and to delight in its aesthetic aspects. In spite of the Fall, this task has not been revoked. As Warren says, “God also gains pleasure in watching you *enjoy* his creation. He gave you eyes to enjoy beauty, ears to enjoy sounds, your nose and taste buds to enjoy smells and tastes, and the nerves under skin to enjoy touch. Every act of enjoyment becomes an act of worship when you thank God for it”³²⁶ (See also SC, II, 2; 1 Tim 6:17). Being *coram natura* means that we are there for the world, using, mastering, and enjoying it responsibly, wisely, not selfishly, that is, in accordance with God’s plan.

³²⁴ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, 63.

³²⁵ God’s command to man in Gen 2 to garden means to turn the environment a the human habitat in the widest sense of the word, that is, to cultivate certain values, to refine them into the system of culture which is the embodiment of God-given gifts in man’s vertical and horizontal relationships. One of the aims of this system of values (culture in the widest sense, that is, including civilization) is to serve as an active reminder and promoter of man’s God-given identity.

The *coram meipso* relationship involves the honest vision of who we are in light of God's Word. We are by our sinful nature defensive because we think we have to rely on ourselves to secure our lives and to protect ourselves from possible enemies. Therefore, we dare not stray from our own self-centered interests and the protective fortresses we build around ourselves. By becoming the Lord of our lives, God frees us from the domination of such self-centeredness and opens up our lives to the possibilities for imaginative support and encouragement of the development of other people's strategic vision. He challenges us, demanding a "leap of faith" in order to draw us ever further into the enjoyment and growth of ourselves as human beings.

Because we are created in God's image some of our characteristics reflect God, but they exist within a human framework and not as they exist in God. Human wisdom, for instance, reflects something of God's wisdom, but is not precisely what God's wisdom is in its entirety. Our goodness at its best cannot match His, even though it is patterned after His goodness. Our human characteristics are the reflection of the divine. As Psalm 8 says: "Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea" (5-8). By being God's human creatures, "His own," we have been endowed with the immense potential for personal growth. Through this very fact we are bound by God in order to purposefully develop it according to God's will and plan. Christ takes for granted that we love ourselves (Matt 22:39; Mk12:31). That godly love of self leads those who trust in Christ to make the most of the person God has created, to fulfill the unique potential that God has given them as completely as possible. It is a challenge to recognize and throw oneself into God's path and design for one. This challenge is misunderstood if and when it is used in a selfish way which serves merely the

³²⁶ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, 75.

private ego. It is also misunderstood when one lives out a self-hatred which ignores God and therefore is sinful as well. Just as Nietzsche missed the mark in asserting that God was dead, so he missed the mark in thinking that the best human life is that of the “superhuman.” In fact, there is nothing in all God’s creation which is above the status of being human.³²⁷ Thus, by the very fact of being a human creature created in the image of God, all human beings are called to the pinnacle of human performance and achievement, to the practice of agape in every sphere and calling of life. In the same way also Lossky misses the mark when he proclaims man to be a god. In so doing, he robs the human creature of God’s gift of humanity. To be a real human creature means to develop and to live from his God-given human potential and not to look for an alien potential elsewhere.

Being *coram meipso* means that as a Christian, I am not any more in the center of my own attention. Rather the center is Christ (Gal 2:20); His “for me” turns my attention to Him and fixes fundamentally upon His “for-usness.” This turning of my attention demands that I develop Christlike character, Christian personality. I am obliged, privileged and gifted to see and to handle myself as a gift of God. It means no abuse or mishandling in any way, but rather the development of my person in accordance with God’s will. We are granted to ourselves as a lifelong very personal and unique gift, task and a challenge, and we must to treat ourselves as a great value and make use of our lives in light of that fact.

The development of our Christian personality is measured by how significantly Christ’s “for-usness” has changed our relationships of trust to our heavenly Father. It means to transcend our private, little ego in such a way that God liberates us from slavery to ourselves. He frees us from our own mediocrity, philistinism, and the refusal to take up God’s challenges. It means not to look for excuses for my selfishness but rather to search for the specific and unique task God has

³²⁷ The same reference to Ps 8:4-8 serves this purpose.

set me in the world. I transcend my little world of “I,” “me,” and “myself” by serving others, by forgetting myself in them and not, as Lossky suggests, by closing myself into a monastery³²⁸ where the whole spiritual attention is brought to my own person again. Thus, my *coram meipso* is intimately linked with my *coram hominibus*.

The relationship *coram hominibus* is first of all expressed in man’s calling in which he serves his neighbor on a daily basis through his vocations. Thus man’s vocation is a concrete and very practical (although partial) expression of the meaning of life. Vocation is a meaningful implementation of man’s identity in a particular way of service to the neighbor. This is where man is supposed to bring forth a majority of his gifts, talents and powers. The motivation of bringing God’s “for-usness” into the world turns service to the neighbor also into service to God (Matt 25:40). Because my identity arises out of God’s “for-usness,” it connects me by way of service with my neighbor, for whom the Father sent His Son.

The bringing of God’s “for-usness” into the world, thus turning it into His kingdom, means serving the neighbor by God’s, not man’s, standards. Ministering to others does not mean to serve their human selfishness. On the contrary, as Saint-Exupéry says, it means to relate to the other as the bearer of the image of God in him, as God’s ambassador³²⁹ that is, to relate to the respect, responsibility, and greatness this image commands in every human person.

Because of the increasing complexities of life, there is always more need to deliver God’s

³²⁸ Luther explains that monasteries may stay if they perform their educational and upbringing functions, saying, “Monasteries, established in former times with good intentions for the education of learned people and decent women, should be returned to such use so that we may have pastors, preachers and other servants of the church, as well as other people necessary for earthly government in cities and states, and also well-trained young women to head households and manage them” (SA, III, 1).

³²⁹ As Saint-Exupéry says, “I understand the meaning of the duties of charity which were preached to me. Charity was the service of God performed through the individual. It was a thing owed to God, however insignificant the individual who was its recipient. Charity never humiliated him who profited from it nor ever bound him by the chains of gratitude since it was not to him but to God that the gift was made. And the practice of charity, meanwhile, was never at any time a kind of homage rendered to insignificance, to brutishness or to ignorance. The physician owed it to himself to risk his life in the care of a plague-infested nobody. He was serving God thereby. He was never a lesser man for having spent a sleepless night at the bedside of a thief” Saint-Exupéry, *Flight to Arras*, 142-3.

“for-usness” than there are vocations to cover this task. There will always be need for more love, compassion, empathy, justice, and help than the societal system of vocations will be ever able to deal with. There will never be enough rules to cover the increasing complications and problems of life. Thus, we need to be creative and responsible to “fill the blanks” by responding to the universal Christian call for love³³⁰ in a very practical way. It means being alert to God in every life’s situation even if it does not pertain to my specific occupation or status. Thus, my attitude should not be minimalistic, i.e., “I have done what I should have done, nobody can expect me to do more,” but on the contrary, maximalistic: “How can I serve most efficiently?” It means to be inventive and creative in the application of Christian love. This invites a dimension of personal character growth as taking up the initiative, the risk, the challenge for greater and more dynamic way of bringing God’s “for-usness” into our lives.³³¹

Trusting in Christ lifts us up so that we can have a strategic vision of God’s world near and far. As Christians we are bound to the details of the routine of everyday life and at the same time we share the vision from above that being of a child of heavenly Father gives us. This is the vision of God’s lordship which strives to fulfill the potential for His world and His human creatures. It is the vision of man that rightly perceives the potential of his own humanity and seeks to be all that God made him to be. As Thieliicke says, “I shall find [the meaning of life] only if I find the *fulfillment* of my life; in other words, only if I realize what I was created and meant to be.”³³² The Scripture testifies, “be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is -- his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom 12:2). This means that vocation is viewed not as the set of daily least requirements but as the occasion for creative

³³⁰ Arand calls it the “fourth estate,” *That I May Be His Own*, 178.

³³¹ This is what the parable about three servants is all about (Matt 25:14-30).

³³² Thieliicke, *Christ and the Meaning of Life*, 99.

thought and action and self-sacrificial love to enhance one's neighbors' enjoyment of their humanity in neighbors near and far. This imaginative love takes advantage of occasions to impact the lives of those in distant lands and in future decades.

Every Christian receives a challenge to take this wider vision or call to human greatness and excellence of character that translates into the action of self-sacrificial love for the sake of bringing God's "for-usness" into the world. But this calling and its implementation is not to be regarded as private property. Man is supposed to serve his neighbor to realize his calling for greatness and excellence as well, to open him up for comprehension of his uniqueness and particular task and mission in his life. Because God has not created every man as a uniformed psychorobot, but rather as a unique person, He has also designed for each person particular destinies and tasks to find, to carry out, and to strive for in his life. This specific mission, task, or undertaking (as a path of whole life) cannot be carried out by somebody else, for God in His creation has matched the uniqueness of each human person to the uniqueness of the mission.³³³

There is in fact no spiritual elite as Lossky subtly asserts. In the case of Lossky, man (as monk) denied the practical possibility of exercising this essential element of human existence and action for the other person and creature. This is a part of fullness of humanity for which God designed us and to which He calls us. Therefore, the proper way of exercising the task of theological anthropology is by doing it in a down-to-earth approach. It means to serve people here and now, that is, where they actually live their lives.

God is concrete about His expectations for man concerning the working out His "for-usness." He has established in the First Article the care-sustenance-safety net. This takes care

³³³ Here the popular slogan "everybody is special" suddenly takes a deeper meaning than just the acknowledgement that each man is a particular human creature. Now it tells us that every human person has his specific goal and mission in his life to perform and nothing can excuse him from not carrying it out because this mission is the reason of his very existence. Everybody has his special mission in regards to the service to his
(continued next page)

effectively of man's physical, economical, social and other needs. But all of them are the instrumental values for reaching something beyond them, that is, for intrinsic values (values in and for themselves). These constitute the core of our humanness. They are expressed in the values of Christ's commandment: "Love God and your neighbor." Thus, in speaking of God's care-sustenance-safety net these values add the last span into the net of His kingdom. They point to the very fact that men in their existence are linked together.³³⁴ It is for these values that man is living, which demonstrates the fact that man is supposed not merely to be a consumer of values but rather also a creator and cultivator of them. His task is to shape values out of the raw material of any kind of God-given resources (in the widest possible sense). Man's mission as co-creator³³⁵ is to generate Christian values and to bring them into the heart of the culture.

Thus the First Article Revisited shows that we are not in alien territory; it is still our Father's world. Therefore, this is also God's children's home, although a temporary one. We have important work to do here on earth; we have to bring His kingdom along by introducing Christian values into our societies. On the other hand, we remember that everything here on earth vanishes. As Ecclesiastes says, "I saw all the deeds that are done under the sun; and see, all is vanity and a chasing after wind" (1:14; cf. 1:2-12:8). For God's child this is not all there is to his life. The vanity of everything earthly gives us another dimension to the First Article Revisited, that of preparation for the life eternal.

neighbor near and far. Therefore, to take somebody's life means to take also the mission of his life as planned by God.

³³⁴ As British poet John Donne says, "no man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were. Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls: it tolls for thee." *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (Toronto: Ambassador Books, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1959), 108-9.

³³⁵ In this sense we share with God His divine activity in a limited way.

Although we inherit eternal life in the Third Article, we prepare for it in the First Article Revisited, for it is here where we start to live it out. God has a purpose for man's life on earth, but it does not end here. God's children have more than just the opportunity of their lifetimes; God offers them an opportunity *beyond* their lifetimes. Life on earth is important, but still a temporary assignment. Earth is not a permanent home or final destination for man. Men are just passing through. Therefore, the Bible calls man living on earth as alien, pilgrim, foreigner, stranger, and visitor. Moreover, many things in our earthly life are difficult, hard, tough, and unpleasant. As Warren says, they are to remind us of the other side of existence: "In order to keep us from becoming too attached to earth, God allows us to feel a significant amount of discontent and dissatisfaction in life—longings that will *never* be fulfilled on this side of eternity. We're not completely happy here because we're not supposed to be! Earth is not our final home; we are created for something much better."³³⁶ We are going to be in fellowship with our Father, our Savior, and our Sanctifier and with all the saints in our heavenly home for the rest of our lifetime. Therefore, at death man is not leaving home; rather he is going home.

Thus, after God the Holy Spirit has delivered to man the gifts of the Third Article, the Holy Spirit returns man to God's creation. Man still lives on earth but now as a Christian. Here on earth Christian is to live out his new identity in practical terms of everyday life relating with the whole creation as it exists after the event of the Fall. Man needs to orient himself by finding the purpose and meaning of his life. Man is supposed to bring into the world God's "for-usness," thus turning it into God's kingdom, which in practical terms means to fill life with the particular values in which Christians recognize God's design for His world. Man's purpose of life comes from his relationships *coram Deo*, *coram hominibus*, *coram natura*, and *coram meipso*. In these relationships man is to implement his God-given identity in meaningful attitudes, actions, artifacts,

³³⁶ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, 50.

and values which reflect God's "for-usness." It is man's task to implement God's "for-usness" inventively and creatively in all of four *corams* during his life-time on earth. Besides that, the First Article Revisited prepares man for eternal life as well.

F. Creedal Analysis of Humanity According to "For Us" Approach

1. The First Article

a) Who am I? I am the human person, that is, the components of the human nature (body, mind, will, soul, spirit) in the four relationships of *coram Deo*, *coram natura*, *coram meipso*, and *coram hominibus*. The human creature is endowed with the self-consciousness of the "I" which makes him into the human personality who can function in these relationships as God's agent for fulfilling God's plan for His world.

b) Of what I am a part? I am the core of the universe which God designed "for me." God gave the dominion over the creature for the care of His creation in order to turn it into a creation-sustenance-safety net for all human creatures.

c) What is going on with/within me? I am existing in the meaningful and productive relationships of the four *corams*, and there is a harmony between my spiritual and physical components.

d) Where do I come from? I come from the God Who created humankind and Who provides me with my individual and societal value and self-respect. In so doing He demonstrates that His very nature is to be "for me."

e) What is the purpose of my life? My purpose of life is to participate in and execute God's plans of "for us" by responsibly mastering and managing the creation and enjoying the normal, meaningful human life.

f) Where am I going (eschatologically)? I as the human creature am supposed to remain and to enjoy the existing fellowship and gifts of God's "for-usness."

2. The First Article after the Fall

a) Who am I? I am the lost sinner who doubted God's Word and broke my total relationship with Him. Nonetheless, I am one for whom God still cares as for His human creature.

b) Of what I am a part? I am the central part of the fallen world, which has turned from functioning "for us" to functioning "against us."

c) What is going on with/within me? I have lost the original relationships with God of the "for me" kind, and sin has seriously damaged the components of my human nature and person and the relationship among these components. It has further twisted (not destroyed) my relationships with nature and with other people.

d) Where do I come from? I come from the existential catastrophe as the autonomization from, and rebellion against, God and His "for-usness."

e) What is the purpose of my life? My original purpose of life is perverted, lost, abandoned, and I must construct a substitute for it.

f) Where am I going (eschatologically)? I am on my way to hell, eternal death, and perdition.

3. The Second Article

a) Who am I? I am redeemed from sin because Christ died "for me," putting my sinful self to death, and rose "for me," restoring my life as a child of God (1 John 3:1), a friend of Christ (John 15:15), and a minister of the Lord (Col 4:7). He has rescued me from slavery to false gods and false identity. I am indeed righteous and sinful at the same time, but God's promise assures me that my future lies in the righteousness Christ has won "for me." That future is hidden in the circumstances of my life and in my struggle with sin. Nonetheless because it comes from the outside of me, from God, it is secure.

b) Of what I am a part? I am a part of His kingdom: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" (1 Pet 2:9). This is so because I have been

literally transferred from the kingdom of sin and death into the kingdom of life. I am Christ's property, one of those whom Christ has purchased. Thus, I am a part of the Father's family and Christ's heir. The very fact that we call ourselves Christians demonstrates that we are His property, that He is our Lord and Master over us by virtue of His "for-usness."

c) What is going on with/in me? Christ by His death "for me" saves me from slavery to flesh, sin, world, devil and law. He restores me to the Father's favor and changes my relationships with neighbors. As a consequence there are inner changes which are described in the New Testament (Col 3; Gal 5). In short, salvation and re-creation are going on with and in me.

d) Where do I come from? I come from His death "for me," from the redeeming offer of Christ, from everything what has happened on the cross. Everything that happened there was "for me." To ask the question, "where do I come from?" means in fact to ask the question: "What is backing me up? What is the background of my existence, its context, and thus what is my support, my life-line?" The answer is the same to each question: Christ's "for-usness" as exhibited particularly on the cross.

e) What is the purpose of my life? After the cross of Christ has defined me, I am no longer in the center of my own attention. Rather, Christ is. His "for me" turns my attention to Him and fixes fundamentally upon His "for-usness." Therefore, the purpose of my life is to be "Christ's own," regardless of whatever happens. My purpose of life is not any longer autonomous, but it is rather christonomous. That is the meaning of the Luther's catechetical phrase "that I may be His own." I am freed from the necessity to manage my life on my own, for I follow His will for me. The question of the purpose of the life is now concretized in the sub-question: how can I be most effective in my ministry to Him? What is my particular response to Him and trust? We are Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor 5:20) in every time and place.

f) Where am I going? The God Who raised me up to my life in Baptism sends me on towards the perfection of my life into eternity. This new birth reshapes my earthly life, so that besides Christian ministry, I include in my vision also my life in eternity. The gift of eternity “for me” provided in my Baptism liberates me from the need to earn eternal life but instead frees me to serve my neighbor. Thus, actual preparation for departure does not consist in special kinds of spiritual exercises, but rather is simply trusting and following Christ. Because He has gone through death and resurrection, and joined me to His death and resurrection through my Baptism, I will follow Him into eternity, too. “If we died with him we believe that we will also live with him” (Rom 6:8.) I do not inquire about the further steps of the journey, for in my trust it is enough for me just to see the next step and know in faith the ultimate aim to which Christ is leading me—life eternal and fellowship with Him.

Thus, in the realm of the Second Article man is defined in terms of Christ’s “for-usness.” Man possesses a double identity of still being the old man but at the same time having a new, alien and given identity of being Christ’s own.

4. The Third Article

a) Who am I? I am one who has received his new identity as a child of God by God’s action “for us” in the different forms of His Word. I was born again in Baptism. I mature under the guidance of His Word as it is proclaimed from the pages of Scripture in my life. I am sustained by His feeding me His own body and blood.

b) Of what I am a part? I am a part of God’s saving design delivered “for us” in the Christian fellowship of the Church. In this fellowship the Holy Spirit continues to act “for us” through each other. We enjoy the fellowship that rests upon His forgiving action.

c) What is going on with/within me? I receive God's gifts given "for us" through different forms of His Word. They create a living trust in the God Who is "for us." That living trust fills my life with meaning by leading me to love God and my neighbor.

d) Where do I come from? I come from the re-creating Word of the Lord through which the Holy Spirit brings to me the Father's "for-usness." In baptismal form it gives me new birth. In its proclamation it empowers my life as God's child. In the Lord's Supper this Word sustains and nourishes me.

e) What is the purpose of my life? The purpose of my life is to live out His gifts "for us" of the new identity which the Holy Spirit has bestowed upon me through the means of grace. This life cannot be lived without or apart from the fellowship of believers. It finds its natural outlet in service to others within Church. The Holy Spirit also moves me to live as God's child in family and society.

f) Where do I go (eschatologically)? I am going to the fullness of life in eternity enjoying fellowship with the Lord of life and His sanctified people.

5. The First Article Revisited

a) Who am I? I am His co-creative partner in bringing along His design "for us," for all His creatures, by exploring, discovering, and sustaining God's creation. As His child I am also a conscious bearer of God-given human potential for His world and for His human creatures, seeking to be all that God made me to be, purposefully developing my human potential according to God's will and plan into a Christlike personality. I am "His own" in whom God has put His trust; therefore, I want to be His trustworthy partner.

b) Of what I am a part? I am an active inhabitant of my Father's world. Therefore, I am a creative participant of God's care-sustenance-safety-value net, a conscious participant in God's

design for human life by creating and sustaining its instrumental and intrinsic values. I am an active member of His kingdom by introducing Christian values in my society.

c) What is going on with/within me? A response to God's "follow me," to His ordinary and extraordinary challenges. These challenges are overcoming and transcending my ego limits, bringing my human potential to the maximum of performance, excellence and greatness. This happens in order to fulfill my particular vocations and also to respond to the challenges of the call for universal Christian love to practice the agape in every sphere and calling of life. This challenge I need to meet at the maximum of my creativity and inventiveness. This invites a dimension of personal character growth which takes up the initiative, the risk, and the challenge for greater and more dynamic ways of bringing God's "for-usness" into our lives.

d) Where do I come from? – I come from God's call to be ambassador of His "for-usness" to the whole creation and to maximize my channeling capacities of God's "for-usness" into the lives of others. I come from God's requirement to expand the use of the potential of my humanity in neighbors near and far.

e) What is the purpose of my life? – My purpose of life is to live out in my constitutional relationships of *coram Deo*, *coram natura*, *coram hominibus*, and *coram meipso* God's "for-usness" as effectively as possible. I am here also to enjoy God's good gifts of creation to have, fellowship with my neighbors and with my Creator here on earth, and to prepare myself for departure to eternal life. For all this I give glory and praise to Him.

f) Where am I going (eschatologically)? Man's earthly works do not apply to the eschaton.

G. Summary of “For Us” Anthropology in the Creedal Chart

Table 4. Creedal Chart of “For Us” Anthropological Understanding of the Meaning of Man

Dimension	First Article	First Article after the Fall	Second Article	Third Article	First Article Revisited
a. Who am I?	The human person-components of the human nature in the four relationships of <i>corams</i> , endowed with the self-consciousness of the “I”	The self-lost sinner for whom God still cares as for His human creature	I am a Christian, that is, I have died to sin in Christ and have been raised with Him to be the Father’s child, His servant, and friend; <i>simul iustus et peccator</i> , but nonetheless with my future secured by God’s promise in Christ	The one who has received his new identity as child of God’s by God’s action “for us” in the different forms of His Word	I am God’s co-creative partner in bringing along His “for us” design for His creatures by exploring, and sustaining God’s creation
b. Of what am I a part?	The core of the anthropocentric universe designed “for me”	I am the central part of the fallen world, which has turned from “for-usness” to “against-usness”	I am a part of Christ’s property, of those whom Christ has purchased, and thus I am a part of the Father’s family	I am a part of God’s saving design delivered “for us” in the Christian fellowship of the Church	I am an active inhabitant of my Father’s world. I am a creative participant of God’s care-sustenance-safety-value net

<p>c. What is going on with/ within me?</p>	<p>I am existing in the meaningful and productive relationships of the four <i>corams</i> and there is a harmony between the spiritual and physical components in me</p>	<p>I have lost the original relationships with God of the “for me” kind, and sin has seriously damaged the components of my human nature and person</p>	<p>Redemption; justification before God; restoration to the Father’s favor, salvation of the believer; liberation from the oppression of flesh, sin, world, devil and law, recreation of my human nature and person; positive changes in relationships with my neighbors</p>	<p>Reception of God’s gifts given “for us” through different forms of His Word creating a living trust in the God who is “for us”</p>	<p>A response to God’s ordinary and extraordinary challenges which are bringing my human potential to the maximum of performance. This will result in acts of love based upon my particular vocation or in a response of universal Christian love to particular needs</p>
<p>d. Where do I come from?</p>	<p>From the God “for us” who provides me with my individual and societal value and self-respect</p>	<p>From the existential catastrophe as the autonomization from, and rebellion against, God and His “for-usness”</p>	<p>From Christ’s death “for me,” from the redeeming sacrifice of Christ</p>	<p>I come from the re-creating Word of the Lord, through which the Holy Spirit brings to me the Father’s “for-usness”</p>	<p>I come from God’s call to be ambassador of His “for-usness” to the whole creation</p>

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation the creedal phrase from the Second Article of the Nicene Creed “for us” becomes the model not only for Christ’s action but also for the entire relationship of God with His human creatures in the First and Third Articles and in the First Article revisited. Such use of the “for us” in fact penetrates and unifies the whole creed. Understanding God’s actions “for us men” not only confesses who God is but also reveals much about the creature made in His image. The basis for this conclusion is laid out in Luther’s catechetical writings. By looking at the text of Luther’s commentary on the creedal text in the Small Catechism, this dissertation demonstrates that by placing together the three commentaries or explanation on the articles of the creed, we find Luther’s personal creed. This creed of his is anthropologically centered around his use of “for me.” His anthropology found there stands in contrast to that of the Eastern Orthodox interpretation of what it means to be human, as seen in the writings of Vladimir Lossky, who focuses not on God’s actions “for us” but on human striving to unite with God in an ontological way¹ (*theosis*). Comparison of Luther’s and Lossky’s anthropological concepts (God “for me” versus “me within God”) shows the anthropological consequences to which each of the theologians leads. The former leads into the world to serve the neighbor while the latter out of it into the monastery.

¹ Although Lossky rejects the idea that man becomes one with the essence with God, he affirms that man is transformed beyond the original humanity God gave to man in Eden through the divine energies which bring him into union with God.

This author argues that God's whole creating, salvific, and sanctifying action is driven by His mercy "for us." God's agape kind of love is embedded, revealed and given to men in His "for-usness." This agape love is translated into the specificity of each article of the creed as God's welcoming attitude and action of goodness, openness, care, giving, and self-sacrifice. Therefore, it is a basis for the statement that God's "for-usness" has a clearly anthropological focus. It may even be said that man has an identity which comes from all three persons of the Trinity, for he inhabits the respective articles of the Trinitarian creed.

The "for us" is located in the very heart and center of the creed. The disposition of God as the Creator (First Article) flows into the sacrifice of the Son and into His resurrection (Second Article); His sending of the Spirit (Third Article) flows into the restoration of the human creature as the child of God (First Article Revisited). Christ is the Father's "for us" *par excellence* because His sacrifice is the God's ultimate act "for us." This we receive as delivered to us by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace as the basis and the nourishment of our human identity.

For the sake of a more distinct presentation of the catechetical material in confirmation lessons, looking at the creed from the anthropological side requires refocusing the First Article into two parts, i.e., the First Article before and the First Article after the Fall. Also the Third Article needs to be divided in two: into the action of the Holy Spirit and the resulting restoration of the believer to the life designed by the Creator (the First Article Revisited).

This thesis explores the specificity of each article of the creed, demonstrating its significance for the human existence. It stresses that the credal framework not merely constitutes the human person but also encompasses his whole being. The "for us" approach orientates the reader towards the specific gift-centered anthropology of the Scripture and the creed. It argues that man as God's child is the object of His continuous care and love "for us," i.e., that he is a passive recipient in regards to the gifting activity of God. The credal phrase "for

us” implicitly includes the essence of the Christian message. If John 3:16 may be considered the “Gospel in a nutshell,” then the creedal “for us” may be seen as the “creed in a nutshell.” During the distribution of the Lord’s Supper the minister says “given for you” and “shed for you.” Thus, we have a “for us” kind of Creator God, who is always anthropocentrically delivering His gifts “for us” by leading and returning the sinner into his proper fundamental relationships of four *corams*.

This dissertation stresses that man exists in four constitutive relationships: *coram Deo*, *coram hominibus*, *coram natura*, and *coram meipso* of which the *coram Deo* is dominant. These relationships are fundamental for establishing and sustaining the human identity. In each one of the relationships God’s “for-usness” is active in a specific way to establish and to sustain the human identity.

For the sake of comparison of the anthropological concepts of Luther and Lossky, the author has created a chart of meaning based on the Trinitarian creed. The anthropological findings from the two theologians are compared article by article, answering the questions: who am I? Where do I come from? What is going on with/within me? Of what I am a part? What is the purpose of my life? Where am I going? After explicating the results, this author offers his particular anthropological reading of the creed, also summarizing the findings in the same kind of chart.

As for possible future studies, the author directs the researcher’s attention to the need to explore in depth the four human constitutive relationships of *coram Deo*, *coram hominibus*, *coram natura*, and *coram meipso*. The author also would like to point the need for the study of how we carry out this vision of God’s world near and far in the realm of the First Article Revisited. The larger project would be to explore the whole of Luther’s catechisms from the “for us” viewpoint.

APPENDIX ONE

THE ONGOING DISCUSSION ON MAN MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

The subject matter of the image of God and man made in it has been the subject of ongoing discussion.

American Lutheran ethicist James Childs suggests that historically there have been at least four main understandings of the image of God. First, as an ideal humanity (Gregory of Nyssa, Aquinas, and Schleiermacher); second, as a dualistic interpretation (Irenaeus and Aquinas); third, as ontological monism—image indicates an ontological communion between God and man which is constitutive of the man's being (Augustine, Tillich, and Reinhold Niebuhr), fourth, theological monism—relationship of the total human person to God (Luther, Calvin, Barth, Brunner).¹

Alternatively, Millard J. Erickson² divides these understandings three. The first is the substantive view. It is held by Thomism. In this view *imago Dei* is located in man as a resident capacity. Image is characterized by some definite quality or characteristic in man, e.g., reason and will, while likeness³ is something man grows into. Likeness is a *donum superaditum*, a divine gift added to basic human nature.⁴ The second is the relational view. It is held by Barth and Brunner. In this view the image of God is man's relationship with God

¹ James Childs, "The *Imago Dei* and Eschatology" (Th.D. diss., Lutheran School of Theology, 1974), 66.

² Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 520-9.

³ This is also the way of the Orthodox understanding, which has translated *eikon* and *homoioima* as referring to the different parts of man's being; *eikon* being substance and structure which man retained also after the Fall; *homoioima* being form of the spiritual *habitus* which is lost. "long ago the Holy Tradition of the Church explained that the *image of God* must be understood as the ontologically actual gift of God, as the spiritual background of each created person; whereas the *likeness of God* must be understood as the potentiality to attain spiritual perfection: that is, to construct the likeness of God in ourselves from the totality of our empirical personalities called the *image of God*, to incarnate in the flesh of our personality the hidden inheritance of our sacred likeness to God: and to reveal this inheritance in our *face (litzo)*." Pavel Florenskii, *Iconostasis*, trans. Donald Scheehan and Olga Andrejeva (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 52.

⁴ Which gets criticized for artificiality because "image" and "likeness" in Gen 1:26 do not have separate referents, they are used as parallelism in Hebrew.

and is paralleled by the relationship between humans. This view stresses that only humans have relations with God, that only they have a privilege of at least potentially staying consciously *coram Deo*. The third is the functional view. It was held by Socians⁵ and nowadays by Norwegian Old Testament scholar Sigmund Mowinckel,⁶ Norman Snaith,⁷ and Leonard Verduin.⁸ In this view, image is man's dominion over the world. This view is criticized on the grounds that dominion is the consequence, not the content of the image.⁹

Philip Heffner in turn divides the concepts of *imago Dei* into only two main groups: "Those interpretations of the *imago dei* which speak of it in terms of specific human attributes and those which speak of it as a fundamental relationship between God and the human."¹⁰ The following compositional and functional approaches, which we are going to explore next can be seen either as subdivisions of the image of God concept or looked upon as independent ones.

Scripture does not let us know exactly what is the image and likeness of God into which man was created. Scripture nowhere tells us that man actually possesses the image of God. It tells merely that man was made in the image and likeness of God. This puzzling phrase tells us nothing more than who (God), did what (created us), and how (after His image and likeness). As usually in the Bible, the "how?" part is left unanswered. It is image of *God*. This is the "hands on" of God which remains and must remain a mystery for us. God simply lets us know that we are His very special creature, endowed with special gifts and capacities and knowing this should be sufficient for us as His children to function and to implement our

⁵ *Racovian Catechism*, trans. Thomas S. Rees (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees Orme, & Brown, 1818; Lexington, Ky.: American Theological Library Association, 1962), section 2, chapter 1.

⁶ Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, vol. 1 (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 57.

⁷ Norman Snaith, "The Image of God," *Expository Times* 86, no. 1 (October 1974): 24.

⁸ Leonard Verduin, *Somewhat Less Than God: the Biblical View of Man* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 27.

⁹ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 530-1.

¹⁰ Philip Hefner, "Fourth Locus, The Creation" In *Christian Dogmatics*, eds. Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 1984, 331.

human identity according to God's purposes. It is clear that there is a definite link between us and God but this remains in shadow as other "technological" questions of God while salvific questions in Scriptures are stressed instead.

Ultimately, it is not important how we are being made but how we are being saved. Scripture, because of its salvific nature, provides more practical than theoretical answers. The language of "image" and "likeness" gives us nothing more than the notion about some possible similarity between the original and its reproduction. The Bible does not specify in which sense this similarity exists or functions except that it is fundamental for the human person. It does not tell us the exact extent of this likeness (except in mysterious phrases like "You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor" [Ps 8:5]). God simply states the ontological fact that "the man is made," and provides the gifts and the tasks for us to perform our life-long mission and everyday tasks, as Erickson says: "God endowed each of us with the powers of personality that make it possible for us to worship and serve him. When using those powers to those ends, we are most fully what God intended us to be, and then are most completely human."¹¹

The closest we can get to the proper understanding of the role of the image of God into which man was made is by remembering that the image of God is Christ. "Christ, . . . is the image of God" (2 Cor 4:6). This leads us into Christ and His "for-usness" (again, without answering the "technological" questions). Transferring our of theological attention from ourselves to Christ is a productive move, for it leads us to consider the vertical and horizontal relationships which Jesus had Himself. Scripture testifies that Jesus had a perfect fellowship with His heavenly Father (John 17), Jesus obeyed Father's will perfectly (Luke 22:42; John 4:34; John 5:30; John 6:38) and Jesus loved the human creatures (Matt 9:36; 10:6; Mark 1:41; Luke 7:13 etc.). Jesus as the image of the Father also suggests man's proper

¹¹ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 536.

commitment, devotion and loyalty to God.¹² His dedication to His Father (Matt. 26: 39), determination (John 9:4) and love (John 15:13) is also intended to characterize man. This suggests that we experience full humanity as designed originally by God and exhibited fully in Christ (true and sinless man) only when we are properly related to God and to our neighbor. For this Jesus is the perfect image and the practical means.

Even if in the end we cannot precisely define “image of God,” one thing is clear – theologically this concept can be used to try to provide the epistemic bridge over the ontological gap between the creator God and His creature, man. Ontologically man is a being in between God and the rest of creation, and therefore he represents and mediates creation to God and God to the creation; he in himself represents both together, being created *in* the image of God and being created *from* the dust. Ontologically man will never outgrow his definition as God’s creature. Nothing can bring him over this absolute gap¹³ between God and man. The contrast between man and his creator is unmistakably expressed in the Apostolic Creed. Once man tried to reach for more than he was given ... and that is why we are here and not in Eden any more.

¹² As American novelist Dorothy Sayers, *The Man Born to Be King* (New York: Harper, 1943), 225; and David Cairns, *The Image of God in Man* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), 30 suggests to interpret Mark 12: 13-17 (“give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s”) that Jesus gives the notion of man’s belonging to God, his life-long ministry to Him.

¹³ Although for example, mysticism tries to close this gap.

APPENDIX TWO

LUTHER'S GERMAN *PATREM*

Luther provides a following summary of his creedal confession in his famous hymn on the Apostles' Creed. This text is faithful to the text of the Apostolic Creed but clearly includes the notion of "for us" from Luther's Catechetical writings. It focuses on God's giving; the "for us" is implicit.

We all believe in one true God,
Who created earth and heaven,
The Father, who to us in love
Hath the right of children given.
He both soul and body feedeth,
All we need He doth provide us;
He through snares and perils leadeth,
Watching that no harm betide us.
He careth for us day and night,
All things are governed by His might.
We all believe in Jesus Christ,
His own Son, our Lord, possessing
An equal Godhead, throne, and might,
Source of ev'ry grace and blessing.
Born of Mary, virgin mother,
By the power of the Spirit,
Made true man, our elder Brother,
That the lost might life inherit;
Was crucified by sinful men
And raised by God to life again.

We all confess the Holy Ghost,
Who sweet grace and comfort giveth
And with the Father and the Son
In eternal glory liveth;
Who the Church, His own creation,
Keeps in unity of spirit.
Here forgiveness and salvation
Daily come—through Jesus' merit.
All flesh shall rise, and we shall be
In bliss with God eternally. Amen.¹⁴

¹⁴ WA 35, 451 f; Hymn no. 251 in the *Lutheran Worship*. Prepared by The Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982).

APPENDIX THREE

LUTHER'S PERSONAL PRAYER BOOK AS EXAMPLE OF HIS UNDERSTANDING OF CHRIST'S "FOR-USNESS"

Luther demonstrates that literally everything Christ did was designed "for us." In the following Luther demonstrates the benefits of "for me" in the Second Article:

I firmly believe that for my sake He was conceived . . . that so He might purify my sinful, fleshly, unclean, damnable conception, and the conception of all who believe in Him and make it spiritual. . . . I believe that for me He was born . . . in order that . . . He might make my sinful, damnable birth, and the birth of all who believe in Him, blessed and harmless and pure. . . . I believe that He bore His cross and passion for my sin and the sins of all believers, and thereby has consecrated all sufferings and every cross. . . . I believe that He died and was buried to slay entirely and to bury my sin and the sin of all who believe in Him and that He has destroyed bodily death and made it altogether harmless, nay profitable and salutary. . . . I believe that He descended into hell to overthrow and take captive the devil and all his power, guile and wickedness, for me and for all who believe in Him, so that henceforth the devil cannot harm me; and He has redeemed me from the pains of hell. . . . I believe that He rose on the third day . . . to give me and to all who believe in Him a new life; and that He has thereby quickened us with Him, in grace and in the Spirit, that we sin no more, but serve Him alone in every grace and virtue. . . . I believe that He ascended into heaven . . . He is King and Lord over all that is God's, in heaven and hell and earth. Therefore, He can help me and all believers in all our necessities against all our adversaries and enemies. . . . I believe that He will come from heaven . . . that He will come to redeem me and all who believe in Him from bodily death and all infirmities, to punish our enemies and adversaries eternally, and to redeem us eternally from their power.¹⁵

Thus, the whole life of Christ, as it is told in the Second Article, is perfect expression of His "for-usness."

¹⁵ Martin Luther, "Brief Explanation of the Ten Commandments, The Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, 1520," in *Works of Martin Luther*, vol. 2 (Holman: Philadelphia, 1915), 371-2.

APPENDIX FOUR

LUTHER'S "FOR US" CREED

Judging from its character, Luther's "for us" creed can be named man's creed as receiver of God's gifts. It reads as follows:

I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties. In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property - along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life. God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true (SC, II, 2).

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and also a true human being, born of the Virgin Mary, is my LORD. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned human being. He has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. He has done all this in order that I may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true (SC, II, 4).

I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my LORD or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith. Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins—mine and those of all believers. On the Last Day the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true (SC, II, 6).

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Current Memberships in Academic Societies

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