

CURRENT THEOLOGY

CHANGES IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF LUTHER: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUNG LUTHER

Is Luther a Lutheran? Is there such a thing as *a* Lutheran theology or *a* Lutheran interpretation of Luther? The evaluation and re-evaluation of Martin Luther is an old yet current and urgent problem.

It has always been urgent for Protestants to know the Reformers in order to know their tradition. Today it is especially important for both Protestants and Roman Catholics to understand the Reformation. On the Protestant side, contemporary theology has been influenced extensively by the Reformers. Thus one must be sure historically that the sixteenth century has not been distorted by contemporary interests, and systematically that the riches and relevance of Reformation theology have been fully realized. Traditionally, Roman Catholics have been interested in the Reformation more to attack it than to understand it. This is changing. Today Roman Catholics seek to understand the Reformation in order to achieve a theological *rapprochement* with its heirs. Christian theologians of all traditions must understand the Reformation in order to understand theology. Theology as the many-splendored experience of the Church must appropriate the decisive product and critique of the Middle Ages.

Actually, the task of understanding the Reformers is very complex. The search for the historical Luther has never yielded many permanent conclusions. The interpretation of the "real" Luther has changed from generation to generation. Today there is a re-evaluation of Luther going on—but historically this has always been the case, in varying degrees.

One of the critical questions of modern Luther studies is the development of the young Luther. When did he "break" with Rome? Why? When does Luther become Protestant? When does he cease theologically to be Roman Catholic? At the heart of the young-Luther research is a theological and ecumenical effort to determine what is genuinely and distinctly Lutheran, what is Protestant, what is catholic, what is Roman Catholic.¹ By studying the origins of Luther's theology one deals with the roots of the difference between Rome and Reformation.

The very specific problem that has occupied the majority of contemporary Luther scholars is Luther's reported "conversion" experience—his evangelical discovery of justification by faith. This break-through of Luther's is

¹ Gottfried Edel, *Das gemeinkatholische mittelalterliche Erbe beim jungen Luther (Oekumenische Texte und Studien 21; Marburg, 1962)* pp. 1-6.

generally referred to as Luther's *Turmerlebnis* (tower experience), because it supposedly took place in the tower of the Wittenberg monastery. This problem will give us a good example of the evaluation and re-evaluation of Luther in our century. But first we must look at the general changes in the understanding of Luther from the sixteenth century to the early twentieth.

SIXTEENTH CENTURY TO WORLD WAR I

Luther has been variously interpreted throughout the past 450 years. He has been studied from almost every possible angle. He has been put into the framework of political science, economics, sociology, psychology, intellectual history, and theology. Every generation has been compelled to deal with Luther—which only testifies to his greatness. In fact, the history of Protestantism could be read as a history of Luther research.

The first generation of Luther interpreters saw him as a *Wundermann*, as one standing in a long tradition of great men sent by God. With fresh memories of his personality, Luther was regarded as a prophet who had ushered in a new evangelical age.²

The next generation of Lutherans, fighting for their ecclesiastical existence, underwent something of an identity crisis. Under pressure from without and torn by theological controversy from within, the followers of Luther concerned themselves with defining and defending Lutheran doctrine. And so the age of Lutheran orthodoxy arrived, also called Lutheran Scholasticism, concerned with confessional formulations and pure doctrine.

The orthodoxists of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw Luther as a professor of dogmatic theology. Neglecting his writings in general, they pictured Luther systematically spinning out pure doctrine.³ Justification, for example, was considered to be a doctrine that had a proper and logical "place" in the dogmatic system—actually, a rather belated position in the system.⁴ Luther was seen by the orthodox theologians through their own rational and confessional eyeglasses.

In reaction to orthodoxy, with its rationalism, dogmatism, and confessionalism, the movement of pietism developed in the latter part of the seventeenth century. The pietists emphasized personal experience and holiness, pure faith and Bible study. Concerned for a subjective encounter

² Ernst Zeeden, *The Legacy of Luther* (tr. Ruth Bethell; London, 1954) pp. 10-17.

³ Theodore Tappert, "Orthodoxism, Pietism and Rationalism, 1580-1830," *The Lutheran Heritage* 2 (ed. Harold Letts; Philadelphia, 1957) pp. 47-48.

⁴ Carl E. Braaten, "The Correlation between Justification and Faith in Classical Lutheran Dogmatics," *The Symposium on Seventeenth Century Lutheranism* 1 (St. Louis, 1962) p. 85.

with the Scriptures, the pietists had little regard for tradition, Roman Catholic or Lutheran.

The pietists regarded Luther as one evangelical among many, important only because of his witness to the Scriptures. Seen as human, Luther was commended and criticized as the pietists saw fit. They had empathy with Luther's preoccupation with the Word and *Anfechtung*. Among other things, they were critical of his boldness, occasional violence and cursing, and his concern about doctrine.⁵ All postbiblical theologizing was considered by the pietists to be unimportant. Most important for the history of Luther research is, I think, the pietists' distinction between the "young" and "old" Luther, a distinction now commonplace in Luther studies. They were generally attracted to the young Luther, regarded as a warm evangelical, but were critical of the "old" Luther, seen as a dogmatician and encrusted institutionalist.⁶

The rationalists of the eighteenth century shared the generally negative attitude of the pietists toward tradition, but for entirely different reasons. Whereas the pietists desired a direct biblicism, the rationalists sought truth in the present, convinced that man had come of age. Reason was considered to be the judge of all revelation.

Luther was seen by the rationalists as the one who brought not the gospel of forgiveness but the gospel of pure reason. Luther was the hero of freedom from dogma and ecclesiastical traditionalism.⁷ He was commended for his humanity and enjoyment of life as well as his critical attitude towards parts of Scripture. But he was criticized by the rationalists for his conservative and polemical doctrinal position.⁸ The architect of liberty, Luther was an individual who thought for himself.

In the nineteenth century we have many philosophical, historical, and theological pictures of Luther, and through it all one can discover the rise and the fall of Luther research.⁹ Of the idealists, Hegel, in the first half of the nineteenth century, mapped out a new way to understand Luther. The essence of Luther's thought, for Hegel, is the freedom of the spirit from any human mediation in man's relation to God. The romantics sympathized with Luther's emphasis on the individual, his freedom and integrity.

The picture of Luther in the second half of the nineteenth century is formed by a clash and mixing of the idealist and romantic traditions, par-

⁵ Tappert, p. 68.

⁶ Zeeden, pp. 56, 90-91.

⁷ Zeeden, pp. 136-37.

⁸ Tappert, p. 82.

⁹ Heinrich Bornkamm, "Zum Lutherbild des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 79 (1954) 425-30; Walter von Löwenich, *Luther und der Neuprotestantismus* (Witten, 1963) pp. 42-143.

ticularly in the work of von Ranke. Von Ranke combines a romantic empathy with Luther's inner struggles with an idealist faith in the "inner life of the spirit." Rather than superimpose a philosophical structure on Luther's thought, he sought the roots of the Reformation in Luther's new experience of God.

The leading historian after von Ranke, i.e., von Treitschke, at the end of the nineteenth century, produced a very naturalistic and nationalistic picture of Luther. For von Treitschke, Luther is the German Luther who embodied and "unleashed the native power of German defiance." This is the Luther of German nationalism.

In addition to the philosophical and historical interest in Luther, the second half of the nineteenth century is marked by significant theological studies of Luther.¹⁰ The first is that of Theodosius Harnack, who read Luther's theology with an eye to the doctrine of atonement and dealt with an important distinction in Luther research. Against J. C. K. von Hofmann, Harnack defended the orthodox interpretation of Luther. For Harnack, the traditional Lutheran interpretation of Luther's atonement theory had been correct, i.e., an Anselmian theory of forensic satisfaction. Von Hofmann had argued that one must distinguish between Luther and Lutheranism on the matter of atonement. For von Hofmann, Luther taught a dynamic, dramatic, salvation-history theory, whereas Lutheranism taught an Anselmian theory.¹¹

The distinction between Luther and Lutheranism, as well as the one between the young and old Luther, are current and critical questions in Luther research. A third figure entered the debate between Harnack and von Hofmann, using the distinction between the young and old Luther. He is the second significant Luther scholar in the nineteenth century, Albrecht Ritschl.¹² Ritschl argued that Harnack's interpretation of Luther is true only for the old Luther, whereas the young Luther emphasizes love and gives an ethical interpretation of justification by grace. For Ritschl, the kernel of Luther's theology is to be found in its early expression, and that is that man is a free moral person who is superior to the mechanistic process of nature.

¹⁰ Cf. Walter von Löwenich, "Zehn Jahr Lutherforschung in Deutschland, 1938-48," *Von Augustin zu Luther* (Witten, 1959) pp. 337-39.

¹¹ Robert C. Schultz, *Gesetz und Evangelium in der lutherischen Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts* (*Arbeiten zur Geschichte und Theologie des Luthertums* 4; Berlin, 1958) pp. 133-48. Cf. Gerhard O. Forde, *The Law/Gospel Debate in German Theology from Hofmann to Ebeling* (Dissertation, Harvard University, 1966).

¹² Schultz, pp. 168-78.

The interest in Luther and the positive evaluation of him by the idealists and romantics, by von Ranke and von Treitschke, gradually declined in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The historian Jacob Burckhardt and the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche hated Luther.¹³ So also the positive theological evaluation of Theodosius Harnack and Ritschl was qualified by the negative criticisms of Adolf von Harnack, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Ernst Troeltsch at the turn of the century.

Adolf, the son of Theodosius Harnack, presented Luther as the end of the history of dogma, the end of the Hellenization of Christianity. He criticized Luther because he found many outdated medieval notions in his theology. Although Dilthey and Troeltsch differed on the relation of the Reformation to the Renaissance and their influence on the rise of modern culture, both affirmed the medieval element in Luther's theology, Troeltsch more than Dilthey.

Thus by the beginning of World War I the Luther image of the nineteenth century had been destroyed. Interest in Luther had waned and judgment of him was generally negative. Luther was dead.

THE LUTHER RENAISSANCE

The state of Luther research, however, changed radically after World War I; for then interest in Luther became so intense and extensive that our century enjoys what is called a "Luther renaissance."

There are at least four causes of this revival of Luther studies: (1) Heinrich Denifle and Hartmann Grisar, (2) Troeltsch, (3) Karl Holl, and (4) dialectical theology. Troeltsch has already been mentioned as one who placed Luther back in the Middle Ages, both theologically and in respect to the cultural effect of the Reformation. This negative critique of Luther challenged the common assumption that Wittenberg and Rome were polar opposites and thus forced a re-examination of the Reformation.

An even more devastating attack on Luther came at the hands of two Roman Catholic Luther scholars. At the turn of the century, Denifle¹⁴ and Grisar¹⁵ leveled a character assassination at Luther that thoroughly undermined his integrity. Actually, this approach to Luther had been standard in Catholic Luther studies since the time of John Cochlaeus in the mid-sixteenth century.¹⁶ Cochlaeus imputed the basest motives to Luther's actions,

¹³ Bornkamm, "Zum Lutherbild des 19. Jahrhunderts," p. 428.

¹⁴ Heinrich Denifle, O.P., *Luther und Luthertum in der ersten Entwicklung* (2nd ed.; Mainz, 1904).

¹⁵ Hartmann Grisar, S.J., *Luther* 1 (Freiburg, 1911).

¹⁶ Adolf Herte, *Das katholische Lutherbild im Bann der Lutherkommentare des Cochlaeus* 1 (Münster, 1943) pp. ix-x.

arguing that Luther had all the immoral prerequisites for a heretic. The reason Denifle and Grisar caused such a stir is that their attack on Luther was scholarly, based on Luther's writings. Denifle, the Vatican archivist, even had the advantage of using the unpublished lectures of Luther on Romans. The upshot of Denifle's arguments is that Luther's attack on the Church was a projection of his own diseased, oversexed soul. Grisar, while qualifying some of Denifle's character assassination, argued that Luther's heresy was due to his hatred of good works and that his Reformation discovery of justification by faith took place on the toilet. The effect of Denifle and Grisar's attacks was explosive and sent Protestants scurrying back to the sources to find the "real" Luther.

Karl Holl was the single most important impetus to the rise of the Luther renaissance. His fresh analysis of Luther in 1921 became the focus of modern Luther research.¹⁷ He, first of all, researched the newly-discovered writings of the young Luther and showed what new insights they yielded in understanding the development of Luther's theology. Furthermore, he offered a systematic interpretation of Luther's theology, with the important result that Luther has been taken seriously by contemporary theologians. Against Troeltsch, he argued for the uniqueness of Luther and his creative influence on modern culture. Against Denifle and Grisar, he stressed the ethical motives in Luther's search for a gracious God.

The positive appreciation of Luther in the Protestant camp has been echoed in the Catholic camp. The Luther renaissance has reached ecumenical proportions. Beginning with Joseph Lortz,¹⁸ Catholics have generally upheld the moral integrity of Luther and tried to discover the genius and originality of his thought.

A fourth cause of the Luther renaissance is the rise of dialectical theology; vice versa, the revival of Reformation studies contributed to the development of dialectical theology. Theology after World War I, frustrated with Liberal theology, turned to the sources of classical Protestantism in search for new directions and thus discovered the relevance of the Reformers. Dialectical theology became a revival of Reformation theology, creeds, and orthodoxy.

The revival of Luther studies in our century has produced a great quantity of work. The general approach has varied according to "school." The Holl school has concentrated on the young Luther and the "new" elements in his theology and has minimized the continuity of Luther with Lutheran orthodoxy. The older Lutheran school, in reaction to Holl and the young/old

¹⁷ Karl Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte 1: Luther* (6th ed.; Tübingen, 1932).

¹⁸ Joseph Lortz, *Die Reformation in Deutschland 1* (4th ed.; Freiburg, 1962).

distinction, has minimized the development of Luther and emphasized the consistency of the whole Luther as well as the continuity of Luther and Lutheran orthodoxy. The dialectical school concurs with the method of the older Lutheran school, with the addition of emphasizing the effect of Luther on contemporary theology and the continuity of the two.

The study of Luther's theology has become increasingly specialized and concentrated. Many areas have been researched, such as Luther's theology of the cross, Christology, ecclesiology, law/gospel, two kingdoms, hermeneutics, and sacraments. Perhaps the most important issue in contemporary Luther research is the question of Luther's *Turmerlebnis* and the origins of his doctrine of justification.

THE "TURMERLEBNIS" PROBLEM

The occasion for all the discussion and controversy about Luther's theological development is his autobiographical statement in 1545. Here he gives a résumé of his early activities and describes how and when he arrived at a new evangelical understanding of justification. The occasion for all the speculation about the place of this discovery is the Table Talk. It is reported to have been a "tower experience" (*Turmerlebnis*)—in the tower of the Black Augustinian monastery in Wittenberg. Though this aspect of the young-Luther research is of minor importance, the term *Turmerlebnis* is generally used to designate the whole problem of Luther's development.

The Table Talk does not mention or infer a date for Luther's *Turmerlebnis*. The information concerning the place is confusing. There are different versions of what Luther said. The reports from two, Cordatus and Lauterbach, refer to the place as a "warm room" (*hypocaustum*) or "secret place" (*secretus locus*).¹⁹ However, Schlaginhaufen reports that Luther said that it occurred in or on a "Cl." (*auff diss Cl.*).²⁰

The abbreviation "Cl.," as the place where the Holy Spirit revealed to Luther a new understanding of Rom 1:17, has caused much speculation and some embarrassment. Some later editors of the Table Talk have suggested that "Cl." means *cloaca* (toilet). Hartmann Grisar argues that *cloaca* is the only possible reading.²¹ Other suggestions have been that "Cl."

¹⁹ *Dokumente zu Luthers Entwicklung* (ed. Otto Scheel; 2nd ed.; Tübingen, 1929) p. 91.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 94: "Vocabula 'Iustus et Misericordia.' Haec vocabula Iustus et Misericordia erant mihi fulmen in conscientia. Mox reddebar pavidus auditis: Iustus, ergo puniet. 'Iustus ex fide.' Iustus ex fide vivit, iustitia Dei revelatur sine lege [Hb 2:4; Rom 1:17]. Mox cogitabam: Si vivere debemus ex fide, et si iustitia Dei debet esse ad salutem omni credenti [Rom 3:21 f.], mox erigebatur mihi animus: Ergo iustitia Dei est, qua nos iustificat et salvat. Et facta sunt mihi haec verba iucundiora. Dise kunst hatt mir der Spiritus Sanctus auff diss Cl eingeben."

²¹ *Luther* 1, 323.

means *cella* (chamber), *claustrum* (a confined place), *capitulum* (chapter), *c(apite) 1* (chapter one) or *clarissimum* (very clear).²² The last three suggestions refer to Scripture. According to Gordon Rupp, "Most scholars now believe it to have been a warmed room in which Luther studied."²³

The Table Talk itself gives no conclusive evidence for the date or exact place of Luther's discovery. Furthermore, the details of the Table Talk must always be questioned, because the authenticity of the "reports" is always a matter of dispute. The main thrust of the Table Talk regarding Luther's *Turmerlebnis* is that it involved Rom 1:17 and the understanding of "righteousness" (*iustitia*).

The principal source from Luther concerning the date and nature of his evangelical discovery is the *Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings* (1545).²⁴ In this autobiographical "Preface" Luther discusses some of his thoughts and activities up to the year 1521. The *textus classicus* for the *Turmerlebnis* problem is Luther's account of his discovery of the true meaning of Rom 1:17. After rehearsing the events in his life up to 1519, he writes:

Meanwhile, I had already during that year returned to interpret the Psalter anew. I had confidence in the fact that I was more skilful, after I had lectured in the university on St. Paul's epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, and the one to the Hebrews. I had indeed been captivated with an extraordinary ardor for understanding Paul in the Epistle to the Romans. But up till then it was not the cold blood about the heart, but a single word in Chapter 1:17, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed," that had stood in my way. For I hated that word "righteousness of God," which, according to the use and custom of all the teachers, I had been taught to understand philosophically regarding the formal or active righteousness, as they called it, with which God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner.

Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God, and said, "As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and also by the general gospel threatening us with his righteousness and wrath!" Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience. Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted.

²² Ernst Stracke, *Luthers grosses Selbstzeugnis 1545 über seine Entwicklung zum Reformator* (Leipzig, 1926) p. 121.

²³ *The Righteousness of God* (New York, 1953) p. 129.

²⁴ *Luther's Works* 34 (ed. Lewis Spitz; Philadelphia, 1960) 327-38.

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, He who through faith is righteous shall live." There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by the gift of God, namely, by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me. Thereupon I ran through the Scriptures from memory. I also found in other terms an analogy, as, the work of God, that is, what God does in us, the wisdom of God, with which he makes us wise, the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God.²⁶

The problematic of this passage as evidence for a particular date of Luther's discovery is threefold. The first question is whether Luther in his old age, some twenty-five to thirty-five years after the event, had an accurate recollection of the exact time and sequence of events. Ficker, Loofs, Scheel, and Holl hold that Luther's dating (of 1519) in 1545 is erroneous and his

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 336-37. Scheel, *Dokumente*, pp. 191-92: "Interim eo anno iam redieram ad psalterium denuo interpretandum, fretus eo, quod exercitator essem, postquam S. Pauli epistolas ad Romanos, ad Galatas, et eam, quae est ad Ebraeos, tractassem in scholis. Miro certe ardore captus fueram cognoscendi Pauli in epistola ad Rom., sed obstiterat hactenus non frigidus circum praecordia sanguis, sed unicum vocabulum, quod est cap. 1: 'Iustitia Dei revelatur in illo' [Rom 1:17]. Oderam enim vocabulum istud 'Iustitia Dei,' quod usu et consuetudine omnium doctorum doctus eram philosophice intelligere de iustitia (ut vocant) formali seu activa, qua Deus est iustus, et peccatores iniustosque punit.

"Ego autem, qui me, utcumque irreprehensibilis monachus vivebam, sentirem coram Deo esse peccatorem inquietissimae conscientiae, nec mea satisfactione placatum confidere possem, non amabam, imo odiebam iustum et punientem peccatores Deum, tacitaque si non blasphemia, certe ingenti murmuratione indignabar Deo dicens: quasi vero non satis sit, miseros peccatores et aeternaliter perditos peccato originali omni genere calamitatis oppressos esse per legem decalogi, nisi Deus per evangelium dolorem dolori adderet, et etiam per evangelium nobis iustitiam et iram suam intentaret. Furebam ita saeva et perturbata conscientia, pulsabam tamen importunus eo loco Paulum, ardentissime sitiens scire, quid S. Paulus vellet.

"Donec miserente Deo meditabundus dies et noctes connexionem verborum attenderem, nempe: 'Iustitia Dei revelatur in illo, sicut scriptum est: Iustus ex fide vivit,' ibi iustitiam Dei coepi intelligere eam, qua iustus dono Dei vivit, nempe ex fide, et esse hanc sententiam, revelari per evangelium iustitiam Dei, scilicet passivam, qua nos Deus misericors justificat per fidem, sicut scriptum est: 'Iustus ex fide vivit.' Hic me prorsus renatum esse sensi et apertis portis in ipsam paradisum intrasse. Ibi continuo alia mihi facies totius scripturae apparuit. Discurrebam deinde per scripturas, ut habebat memoria, et colligebam etiam in aliis vocabulis analogiam, ut opus Dei, i.e., quod operatur in nobis Deus, virtus Dei, qua nos potentes facit, sapientia Dei, qua nos sapientes facit, fortitudo Dei, salus Dei, gloria Dei."

memory faulty.²⁶ Grisar, however, thinks that Luther's dating and memory are accurate.²⁷ Some think that Luther confused his first and second lectures on the Psalms, and that he really meant the *Dictata* (1513–15) rather than the *Operationes* (1518–21).²⁸

The second question is whether Luther is in fact referring to 1519. Ritschl, von Schubert, and Seeberg hold that he is not.²⁹ The key phrase is "captus fueram," a double pluperfect. Again the context:

Meanwhile, I had already during that year [1519] returned (*redieram*) to interpret the Psalter anew. I had confidence in the fact that I was more skilful, after I had lectured in the university on St. Paul's epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, and the one to the Hebrews. I had indeed been captivated (*caplus fueram*) with an extraordinary ardor for understanding Paul in the Epistle to the Romans.

The question is whether "captus fueram" changes the time sequence and thus refers to a date earlier than 1519, or whether the double pluperfect was the usual late medieval form of the imperfect. Ernst Stracke claims that Luther's use of the double pluperfect shows that he has gone back in his reflection to an earlier, yet unspecified time.³⁰

The third question and really the crux of the whole problem is the meaning of Luther's new understanding of justification. Luther says that everything became clear to him once he understood that the "righteousness of God" is "passive" (*iustitia Dei passiva*) and is "faith." The problem is that Luther does not actually use the phrase "the passive righteousness of God" until 1525 (in his *De servo arbitrio*).³¹ And so scholars have been forced to interpret the meaning of the phrase in connection with Luther's early theological development. Once interpretation enters the picture, so does much discussion and disagreement among the interpreters.

Development Theses

The question of Luther's evangelical discovery has occupied many Luther scholars since the beginning of the Luther renaissance. Luther scholars have defended datings anywhere from 1508 to 1519. Eleven years

²⁶ Johannes Ficker, *Luthers Vorlesung über den Römerbrief 1515/16 (Anfänge reformatorischer Bibelauslegung 1; Leipzig, 1908) lxxi-lxxii*; Friedrich Loofs, *Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengeschichte* (4th ed.; Halle, 1906) pp. 688–89; Otto Scheel, *Martin Luther: Vom Katholizismus zur Reformation 2* (3rd–4th ed.; Tübingen, 1930) 664; Karl Holl, "Der Neubau der Sittlichkeit," *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte 1* (6th ed.; Tübingen, 1932) 195–96.

²⁷ *Luther 1*, 320.

²⁸ For example, Loofs, p. 689, and Ficker, p. lxxi.

²⁹ Stracke, p. 122.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 122–23.

³¹ WA 18.768.36 ff.

may seem inconsequential, but Luther produced a great deal of work and controversy in this span of time. If Luther is not "Lutheran" by Oct. 31, 1517, we are perhaps inappropriately celebrating the 450th anniversary of the Reformation.

One way to deal with the mass of literature is to ask a methodological question: Is there any pattern in the approach of contemporary scholars? Is there any trend or general consensus? A helpful way to categorize the various theories might be to group the Luther scholars according to the conclusion they reach regarding the date of Luther's break-through. Five such groups are discernible.

1508-12

Luther scholars in the early part of the century tended to think that Luther's *Turmerlebnis* occurred at the beginning of his theological career, 1508-12. During this time Luther glossed some of the works of Augustine, Anselm, and Lombard. Those who argued for this earliest possible dating include (in order of publication) O. Ritschl,³² Holl, R. Seeberg, and Böhmer (in the earlier editions of his work).³³ The positions of Holl and Seeberg are the most important in this group, in so far as they have received the most attention and been the most influential.

For Karl Holl, Luther's theological development is a new understanding of justification by faith. This new doctrine is sanative in character. Justification for the young Luther is not as Melancthon and orthodox Lutheranism would have it—the forensic imputation of righteousness—but rather the healing impartation of righteousness. For Holl, justification in Luther's theology means renewal. God makes the sinner righteous and he becomes righteous.³⁴ Holl holds that there were two stages in Luther's development.³⁵ The first was an inner "ethical" struggle, occurring between 1509 and 1511. The second was a "religious" theological break-through, whereby he came

³² Otto Ritschl, *Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus* 2 (Leipzig, 1912) 11 ff.

³³ Heinrich Böhmer, *Luthers erste Vorlesung* (Leipzig, 1924) p. 52; *Der junge Luther* (Gotha, 1925) pp. 110-11.

³⁴ Karl Holl, "Die Rechtfertigungslehre in Luthers Vorlesung über den Römerbrief mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Frage der Heilsgewissheit," *Gesammelte Aufsätze* 1, 122-29.

³⁵ "Der Neubau der Sittlichkeit," *Gesammelte Aufsätze* 1, 187: "Es ist ohne weiteres klar, dass das Auftauchen der neuen sittlichen Erkenntnis und die Wiederentdeckung der Rechtfertigungslehre nicht gleichzeitig bei Luther erfolgt sein können. Die Rechtfertigungsfrage konnte für Luther ihre volle Schärfe erst gewinnen, nachdem ihm die Höhe der sittlichen Forderung aufgegangen war. Darnach heben sich zwei Stufen der inneren Entwicklung Luthers voneinander ab; die eine, auf der er zu der neuen *sittlichen*, die andere, auf der er zu der neuen *religiösen* Erkenntnis vordringt."

to his "sanative doctrine" of justification. His new theological development took place between the summer of 1511 and early 1513.³⁶

Reinhold Seeberg holds that the "starting point" for all of Luther's Reformation theology is a new discovery of "evangelical repentance":

Luther's decisive religious experiences were gained in connection with the sacrament of repentance, under the stress of a false conception of repentance for which he struggled to find a substitute. This was the starting point from which his fundamental religious ideas were developed. The latter may, therefore, be comprehended under the conception of *Evangelical Repentance, constituting a Substitute for the observance of the Sacrament of Repentance*. This is the point of view from which the work of Luther must be considered in the History of Doctrines. All his ideas in regard to penitence and faith, faith and works, sin and grace, law and gospel, God and Christ, together with his new ideal of life, constitute a complex of religious conceptions which were developed under the pressure of and in opposition to the sacrament of repentance.³⁷

Seeberg explains that the influence of Johann von Staupitz, head of Luther's order, was decisive for Luther's development during the winter of 1508-1509.³⁸ Staupitz taught Luther that repentance begins with love towards God, that one comes to such repentance by turning to the work of Christ, and that his own temptations concerning predestination could be solved by turning to the wounds of Christ.³⁹ The date of Luther's evangelical discovery, according to Seeberg, is the summer of 1509.⁴⁰

1512-13

Some Luther scholars around the second quarter of the century claimed that Luther's *Turmerlebnis* occurred during the time that he was preparing for his first lectures on the Psalms, late 1512 to the summer of 1513. Luther became a doctor of theology on October 19, 1512, and a member of the theological faculty at Wittenberg on Oct. 22, 1512.⁴¹ He assumed the chair of biblical theology at Wittenberg previously occupied by Staupitz, and began his *lectura in Biblia* in August, 1513.

Those who pinpoint Luther's break-through somewhere between late 1512 and mid-1513 include (in order of publication) Scheel (in the first

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

³⁷ Reinhold Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* 4, 1 (4th ed.; Darmstadt, 1959) 78; tr. Charles Hay, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines* 2 (Grand Rapids, 1958) 224-25.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁴¹ Karl Bauer, *Die Wittenberger Universitäts-theologie und die Anfänge der deutschen Reformation* (Tübingen, 1928) p. 14.

edition of his *Martin Luther*⁴²), Loofs,⁴³ Mackinnon,⁴⁴ Wendorf,⁴⁵ Böhmer (in the later editions of his work), Hamel,⁴⁶ Pauck,⁴⁷ Lortz, Prenter,⁴⁸ and Lilje.⁴⁹ The arguments of Böhmer and Lortz have received much attention.

Heinrich Böhmer argues that Luther's development is really Luther's search for the certainty of forgiveness.⁵⁰ The crux of Luther's *Turmerlebnis* was his struggle with understanding Psalm 30 ("in iustitia tua libera me").⁵¹ His break-through meant a new insight and a new feeling for life⁵²—the "Dawn of the Reformation Consciousness."⁵³ It occurred in April–May, 1513, while he was working on Psalm 30.⁵⁴

The clue to Luther's development, for Joseph Lortz, is Luther's own experience, his subjectivism.⁵⁵ All of Luther's theology developed from his personal understanding of righteousness. The exegetical discovery of Luther's *Turmerlebnis* was really nothing new in comparison with medieval exegesis. It was only new for Luther. "Er entdeckte die heilende Gerechtigkeit Gottes als neu. Neu für sich."⁵⁶ The *Turmerlebnis* occurred in 1512, between his return from Rome and the beginning of his lectures.⁵⁷

⁴² Otto Scheel, *Martin Luther 2* (Tübingen, 1917) 321.

⁴³ Friedrich Loofs, "Luthers Rechtfertigungslehre," *Luther*, 1924, p. 84.

⁴⁴ James Mackinnon, *Luther and the Reformation 1* (London, 1925) 151.

⁴⁵ Herman Wendorf, "Der Durchbruch der neuen Erkenntnis Luthers im Lichte der handschriftlichen Überlieferung," *Historische Vierteljahrschrift* 27 (1932) 315–16.

⁴⁶ Adolf Hamel, *Der junge Luther und Augustin 1* (Gütersloh, 1934) 197.

⁴⁷ Wilhelm Pauck, "The Historiography of the German Reformation during the Last Twenty Years," *Church History*, 1940, p. 325; "General Introduction," *Luther: Lectures on Romans* (*Library of Christian Classics* 15; Philadelphia, 1961) pp. xxiv–lxi.

⁴⁸ Regin Prenter, *Der barmherzige Richter* (Aarhus, 1961) p. 48.

⁴⁹ Hanns Lilje, *Martin Luther in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Hamburg, 1965) pp. 69–70.

⁵⁰ Heinrich Böhmer, *Der junge Luther* (ed. Heinrich Bornkamm; 4th ed.; Stuttgart, 1951) pp. 86, 100.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 99.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁵³ *Martin Luther: Road to Reformation* (tr. Doberstein and Tappert; New York, 1957) p. 87.

⁵⁴ *Der junge Luther*, p. 99.

⁵⁵ Lortz, p. 171: "Vorher wollen wir nochmals dies ganz klar feststellen: nicht die Erringung einer neuen Lehre gibt Luthers Entwicklung die weltgeschichtliche Bedeutung. Die lieft vielmehr darin, dass er einen innern Vernichtungskampf bestand. Luther hätte immerhin auf irgend einem Wege zu theologischen Erkenntnissen kommen können, die denen, die wir als reformatorisch bezeichnen nahegekommen wären; manche Theologen vor ihm waren zu ähnlichen Resultaten gelangt. Ohne jenen innern Kampf und die allein in ihm entbundene Kraft wäre Luther nie der Reformator geworden. Erst die geheimnisvolle Einheit der reformatorischen *Persönlichkeit* mit den aus ihr entspringenden theologischen Erkenntnissen gab die Möglichkeit weltweiten Wirkens."

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 185, 171.

1513-15

The majority of Luther scholars from the twenties to ca. 1950 held that Luther's *Turnerlebnis* happened during the period of his first lectures on the Psalms (*Dictata super Psalterium*). Luther's first exegetical course as professor of biblical theology began on August 16, 1513, and ended before Easter, 1515.⁶⁸ In the thirties and forties there was almost a consensus among scholars that Luther's evangelical break-through took place in connection with his *Dictata*, either during their preparation or the period of their delivery. This early dating was seriously challenged in the fifties (see below). Now once again, with the re-editing of the *Dictata*, scholars are interested in the uniqueness of Luther's first exegetical endeavor.

Those who belong to this third group include Denifle,⁶⁹ Ficker,⁶⁰ Hirsch, von Walter,⁶¹ Fife,⁶² Vogelsang, Scheel (in the later editions of his *Martin Luther*), Reu,⁶³ Bornkamm, Pinomaa,⁶⁴ Watson,⁶⁵ Bainton,⁶⁶ Schwiebert,⁶⁷ Rupp,⁶⁸ Ebeling, Pfeiffer,⁶⁹ Green,⁷⁰ Lohse,⁷¹ Todd,⁷² and Boendermaker.⁷³ The work of Hirsch, Vogelsang, Scheel, Bornkamm, and Ebeling has figured most prominently in the discussion of Luther's development.

The title of Hirsch's famous article on the young Luther is telling: "The

⁶⁸ Böhmer, pp. 105-8.

⁶⁹ Denifle, p. 397.

⁶⁰ Ficker, p. lxxi.

⁶¹ Johannes von Walter, "Der Abschluss der Entwicklung des jungen Luther," *Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie* 1 (1923) 423-44.

⁶² Robert Fife, *Young Luther: The Intellectual and Religious Development of Martin Luther to 1518* (New York, 1928) p. 202.

⁶³ J. M. Reu, *Luther's German Bible* (Columbus, 1934) pp. 106 ff.

⁶⁴ Lennart Pinomaa, *Der existentielle Charakter der Theologie Luthers* (Helsinki, 1940) p. 134.

⁶⁵ Philip Watson, *Let God be God!* (London, 1947) p. 28, n. 19.

⁶⁶ Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand* (New York, 1950) p. 68.

⁶⁷ E. G. Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times* (St. Louis, 1950) p. 288.

⁶⁸ Gordon Rupp, *Luther's Progress to the Diet of Worms, 1521* (London, 1951) p. 38; *The Righteousness of God* (New York, 1953) pp. 136-37. Cf. his review of Ernst Bizer's *Fides ex auditu* in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 71 (1960) 353.

⁶⁹ Gerhard Pfeiffer, "Das Ringen des jungen Luther um die Gerechtigkeit Gottes," *Luther-Jahrbuch* 26 (1959) 45-51.

⁷⁰ Lowell Green, "Luther and Melancthon," *The Mature Luther* (Decorah, 1959) p. 114.

⁷¹ Bernhard Lohse, *Mönchtum und Reformation: Luthers Auseinandersetzung mit dem Mönchsideal des Mittelalters* (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 12; Göttingen, 1963) p. 378; "Die Bedeutung Augustins für den jungen Luther," *Kerygma und Dogma* 11 (1965) 132.

⁷² John M. Todd, *Martin Luther: A Biographical Study* (New York, 1964) pp. 87-88.

⁷³ J. P. Boendermaker, *Luthers Commentaar op de Brief aan de Hebreëen 1517-1518* (Assen, 1965) p. 14.

Beginning of Luther's Theology."⁷⁴ The "beginning," according to Hirsch, occurred when Luther reached a new understanding of the distinction between the law and the gospel—essentially a new understanding of Rom 1:17. There are three aspects to Luther's new discovery: the "righteousness of God" is not a retributory but a donated righteousness; it is a righteousness of faith; and it is a righteousness before God, not before man.⁷⁵ Hirsch specified the moment of Luther's *Turmerlebnis* to be while Luther was working on Ps 31:2.⁷⁶

Eric Vogelsang holds that Luther's evangelical discovery came about through a tropological exegesis of the work of Christ.⁷⁷ Luther's *Turmerlebnis* was a hermeneutical discovery of tropological exegesis. Tropological exegesis is the application and appropriation of the work of Christ for the individual believer—as in Christ, so in me (*wie . . . so*).⁷⁸ The work of Christ was that He achieved the most profound humility on the cross—for me. Luther's theology is a theology of the cross.⁷⁹ According to Vogelsang, Luther shows in his exegesis of Ps 71:2 (fall of 1514) that he had made his discovery.⁸⁰

Otto Scheel distinguishes between Luther's *Turmerlebnis*, which was a personal-religious experience, and his subsequent theological development.⁸¹ Both involve justification. Both are evident in the *Dictata*. The heart of Luther's experience and doctrine of justification is the sanative renewal of the believer.⁸² According to the first and second editions of Scheel's *Martin Luther*, the *Turmerlebnis* occurred during the winter of 1512, whereas according to the third and fourth editions it occurred between the fall of 1513 and the fall of 1514.⁸³

Heinrich Bornkamm argues that the essence of Luther's theological development is his Christological interpretation of the "righteousness of God" (*iustitia Dei*). The *iustitia Dei* is bound up with the *fides Christi*. Bornkamm accepts Vogelsang's thesis about Psalm 71.⁸⁴ In opposition to Ernst Bizer,⁸⁵ who has presented a most serious challenge to an early dating,

⁷⁴ Emanuel Hirsch, "Initium theologiae Lutheri," *Festgabe für Julius Kaftan* (Tübingen, 1920) p. 150. ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 166. ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁷⁷ Erich Vogelsang, *Die Anfänge von Luthers Christologie nach der ersten Psalmenvorlesungen* (Berlin, 1929) p. 55: "Ich formuliere zusammenfassend den Vollsinn der Entdeckung Luthers: *Opus dei: iustitia dei, iudicium dei, etc. est Christus* (literaliter) id est fides Christi (tropologic), *qua—iudicati—iustificamur, pacificamur, per quam in nobis regnat.*"

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 63–64. ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 48 ff. ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 57–61.

⁸¹ Otto Scheel, *Die Entwicklung Luthers bis zum Abschluss der Vorlesung über den Römerbrief* (*Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte* 100; Halle, 1910) p. 93.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 181–82. ⁸³ *Martin Luther* (3rd–4th ed.; Tübingen, 1930) pp. 572, 664.

⁸⁴ Heinrich Bornkamm, "Iustitia Dei in der Scholastik und bei Luther," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 39 (1942) 38 ff.

⁸⁵ See below for a discussion of Bizer's *Fides ex auditu*.

Bornkamm holds that Luther does not equate and confuse "righteousness" (*iustitia*) and "judgment" (*iudicium*) in the *Dictata*, as Bizer claims. At one point particularly, argues Bornkamm, Luther clearly distinguishes between "humility" (*iudicium*) and "faith" (*iustitia*).⁸⁶ Since at least 1940, Bornkamm has claimed that Luther's evangelical insight can be seen in the *Dictata*.⁸⁷

The clue to Luther's development, according to Gerhard Ebeling, is hermeneutics.⁸⁸ Luther's discovery is a methodological revolution in biblical exegesis. In his *Dictata* Luther still employs the medieval *quadriga*, the fourfold sense of Scripture (literal-historical, spiritual-allegorical, moral-tropological, eschatological-anagogical). However, he uses the *quadriga* and the distinction between the letter and the spirit in a very new way. He does not understand the literal and spiritual to be formal principles and methods of exegesis, but rather to be principles of existence.⁸⁹ One lives according to either the spirit or the flesh (letter). The literal and the spiritual is an existential-anthropological alternative confronting each and every man.⁹⁰ Luther's existential hermeneutic, holds Ebeling, is already operative in the *Dictata*.⁹¹

1515-16

A small group of Luther scholars holds that Luther's *Turmerlebnis* occurred during the period immediately following the *Dictata*. After lecturing on the Psalms, Luther turned to Paul and his letter to the Romans. He lectured on Romans from the summer of 1515 to September, 1516. Those who hold that Luther's new understanding of Rom 1:17 came during this time are definitely in the minority and without much influence. They include Buchwald,⁹² Müller,⁹³ Smith,⁹⁴ Rossi,⁹⁵ Kurz,⁹⁶ and Bellucci.⁹⁷

⁸⁶ In *Blätter* 103 and 104: "Zur Frage der *Iustitia Dei* beim jungen Luther. Teil I," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 52 (1961) 23.

⁸⁷ "Luthers Bericht über seine Entdeckung der *iustitia dei*," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 37 (1940) 127-28.

⁸⁸ Gerhard Ebeling, "Die Anfänge von Luthers Hermeneutik," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 48 (1951) 72 ff.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 195: "Ein Gegensatz zweier Existenzmöglichkeiten ein und desselben ganzen Menschen gemeint ist."

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 216, 230.

⁹² Georg Buchwald, *Doctor Martin Luther* (Berlin, 1902) pp. 73 ff.

⁹³ Alphons Victor Müller, *Luthers Werdegang bis zum Turmerlebnis* (Gotha, 1920) pp. 122, 136.

⁹⁴ Preserved Smith, "A Decade of Luther Study," *Harvard Theological Review* 14 (1921) 112.

1517-19

Several important Luther scholars have recently challenged an early dating of the *Turmerlebnis*. In the fifties and sixties many voices were raised, in Finland, Denmark, Germany, and America, to oppose the dominant opinion of the thirties and forties that the mature Luther is evident in the *Dictata*. The relevant documents for those who argue for a later dating are Luther's work on the Seven Penitential Psalms, 1517, his lectures on Hebrews, April 21, 1517 to March 26, 1518, his sermons on Twofold and Threefold Righteousness, 1518, the *Acta Augustana*, 1518, and the first part of Luther's second lectures on the Psalms (*Operationes in Psalmos*), 1518-21.

Those who hold that Luther's *Turmerlebnis* occurred sometime between 1517 and 1519 include (in order of publication) Grisar,⁹⁸ Reiter,⁹⁹ Saarnivaara, Gyllenkrok, Stange,¹⁰⁰ Bizer, Jedin,¹⁰¹ Wolf,¹⁰² Cranz, Pohlmann,¹⁰³ Peters,¹⁰⁴ Dillenberger,¹⁰⁵ Seils,¹⁰⁶ Nembach,¹⁰⁷ Aland,¹⁰⁸ Pesch,¹⁰⁹

⁹⁶ Mario Rossi, *Lutero e Roma* (Rome, 1923), noted by Gerhard Pfeiffer, "Das Ringen des jungen Luther um die Gerechtigkeit Gottes," *Luther-Jahrbuch* 26 (1959) 32.

⁹⁸ Alfred Kurz, *Die Heilsgewissheit bei Luther* (Gütersloh, 1933) pp. 172, 180.

⁹⁷ Dino Bellucci, S.J., *Fede e giustificazione in Lutero* (*Analecta Gregoriana* 135; Rome, 1963), noted by Francis Clark, *Heythrop Journal* 6 (1963) 93-96.

⁹⁸ Grisar, *Luther* 1, 50.

⁹⁹ Paul J. Reiter, *Martin Luthers Umwelt, Charakter und Psychose* 2 (Copenhagen, 1941) 316.

¹⁰⁰ Carl Stange, *Die Anfänge der Theologie Luthers* (Berlin, 1957) pp. 10 ff.

¹⁰¹ Hubert Jedin, "Luthers *Turmerlebnis* in neuer Sicht: Bericht über Ernst Bizer, 'Fides ex auditu' (1958)," *Catholica* 12 (1958) 136.

¹⁰² Ernst Wolf, "Luther, Martin," *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon* 2 (Göttingen, 1959) 1166.

¹⁰³ Hans Pohlmann, *Hat Luther Paulus entdeckt?* (Berlin, 1959) p. 146.

¹⁰⁴ Albrecht Peters, "Luthers *Turmerlebnis*," *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie* 3 (1961) 211.

¹⁰⁵ John Dillenberger, "Major Volumes and Selected Periodical Literature in Luther Studies, 1956-59," *Church History* 30 (1961) 72.

¹⁰⁶ Martin Seils, *Der Gedanke vom Zusammenwirken Gottes und des Menschen in Luthers Theologie* (Gütersloh, 1962) pp. 26-27. Seils's book was written in 1959 and received as "Habilitationarbeit" by the Martin Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg; it was published three years later.

¹⁰⁷ Ulrich Nembach, "Zur Problematik von Luthers *Turmerlebnis*," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 19 (1963) 111-12.

¹⁰⁸ Kurt Aland, *Der Weg zur Reformation: Zeitpunkt und Charakter des reformatorischen Erlebnisses Martin Luthers* (*Theologische Existenz heute* 123; Munich, 1965) p. 104.

¹⁰⁹ Otto Pesch, O.P., "Zur Frage nach Luthers reformatorischer Wende," *Catholica* 20 (1966) 276.

Bluhm,¹¹⁰ and Hacker.¹¹¹ The studies of Saarnivaara, Gyllenkrok, Bizer, and Cranz have received extensive and critical evaluation from the world of Luther scholarship.

According to Uuras Saarnivaara, a Finnish scholar, the turning point in Luther's theological development is a forensic concept of justification.¹¹² He argues that Luther is "Augustinian" from 1513-18 and "Lutheran" only after 1518. Justification for the "Augustinian" Luther means, first of all, sanative renewal, and secondly, the nonimputation of sins. But for the "Lutheran" Luther, justification means, first of all, the nonimputation of sins and the forensic imputation of righteousness, and secondly, renewal.¹¹³ Luther's theological reversal, for Saarnivaara, occurred in the autumn or winter of 1518, while he was preparing for his second lectures on the Psalms.¹¹⁴

Luther's discovery, for Axel Gyllenkrok, a Danish scholar, is the discovery of the certitude of salvation (*Heilsgewissheit*).¹¹⁵ Gyllenkrok argues that in the lectures on the Psalms and Romans Luther is working with a humility-theology which is Augustinian.¹¹⁶ In his comment on Rom 8:16, a beginning of a break between his humility-theology and an evangelical theology is evident.¹¹⁷ Luther works out the problem of *Heilsgewissheit*, according to Gyllenkrok, in his lectures on Hebrews and in a sermon preached during the Leipzig disputation.¹¹⁸ Luther comes to see that certitude is possible only when the promise and the gospel are identical, only when faith comes by hearing and the Word brings salvation.¹¹⁹

Ernst Bizer is usually credited with reopening the whole *Turmerlebnis* problem in 1958 with the first edition of his *Fides ex auditu*. There were others who preceded Bizer, notably Gyllenkrok, but Bizer has received most of the attention.¹²⁰ Bizer's position is that Luther's discovery is a

¹¹⁰ Heinz Bluhm, "The Idea of Justice in Luther's First Publication," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 37 (1966) 565-66.

¹¹¹ Paul Hacker, *Das Ich im Glauben bei Martin Luther* (Graz, 1966) pp. 345-46.

¹¹² Uuras Saarnivaara, *Luther Discovers the Gospel* (St. Louis, 1951; first published in Finnish, 1947) p. 46.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 14. ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹¹⁵ Axel Gyllenkrok, *Rechtfertigung und Heiligung in der frühen evangelischen Theologie Luthers* (Uppsala, 1952) p. 72.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4. ¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-74. ¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹²⁰ *Fides ex auditu* (2nd ed.; Neukirchen, 1961; 1st ed., 1958). It has received extensive review—e.g., Jedin, *Catholica* 12 (1958) 129; Bainton, *JTS* 10 (1959) 191; Lau, *LuJ* 26 (1959) 154-56; Weijenborg, *RHE* 54 (1959) 228; Kinder, *TZ* 15 (1959) 66; Löfgren, *LR* 8 (1958-59) 494-97; Rupp, *ZKG* 71 (1960) 351; Walty, *RSPT* 45 (1961) 337; Rost, *Luth Rdblick* 9 (1961) 52-54; Nembach, *TZ* 19 (1963) 105; Beintker, *TLZ* 88 (1963) 52.

theology of the Word that teaches that the Word itself is the means of grace.¹²¹ Luther's Reformation theology is that faith as a direct response to the Word and as a substitute for humility justifies.¹²² The Word is not a moral, legal encouragement to appropriate Christ's humility, but is the means of grace whereby man is justified.¹²³ Faith which comes from hearing the Word brings the certitude of salvation.¹²⁴

Bizer's argument is that in his lectures on the Psalms and Romans Luther is immersed in the humility-theology of the Middle Ages whereby faith is the basis for humility.¹²⁵ Humility justifies. However, in his comments on Heb 5:1, 7:1, 7:12, 9:17, and 9:24, Luther has come to a new understanding of law and gospel, faith, certitude of salvation, and the sacraments.¹²⁶ In the *Acta Augustana* and parallel literature of 1518-19 there are self-conscious and clear theological statements about the understanding and implications of *fides ex auditu*.¹²⁷ The date of Luther's *Turmerlebnis*, therefore, according to Bizer, is the spring or summer of 1518.¹²⁸

F. Edward Cranz, an American scholar, holds that the "crucial turning-point in Luther's general development" involves basically a doctrine of the two kingdoms.¹²⁹ His argument is that Luther's "reorientation" occurs when he begins to recognize two realms of Christian existence which are simultaneous and yet distinct: existence in Christ and in the world. The Christian is totally just in Christ and simultaneously only partially just in the world where he is in the process of sanctification. Total justification is primary and antecedent; gradual sanctification is secondary and subsequent.¹³⁰ Luther's distinction between the two kingdoms provides the basis for rethinking his old ideas of justice, law, and society. The "reorientation" period is 1518-19.¹³¹

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the foregoing analysis of development theses, I think three conclusions can be drawn. One is that there has been a trend in our century to date the *Turmerlebnis* progressively later and later. Scholars in the first quarter of the century (group 1) generally defended a very early dating (1508-12). Then, in the second quarter, some (group 2) argued for the time when Luther was preparing, but not formally giving, his *Dictata* (1512-13). Perhaps the largest group of scholars (group 3), perpetuating

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 80-81.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 164, 167.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 51.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-92.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 115 ff.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹²⁹ F. Edward Cranz, *An Essay on the Development of Luther's Thought on Justice, Law and Society* (Cambridge, 1959) pp. 41 ff.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. xvi ff.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. xvi.

something of a consensus in the thirties and forties, dated the *Turmerlebnis* during the period of the *Dictata* (1513–15). In the fifties and sixties there has been a considerable effort (group 5) to update the *Turmerlebnis* to around 1517–19.

There is no consensus in the sixties among those who try to date the *Turmerlebnis*. While the majority of those who have published in the sixties seem to argue for a later dating (Peters, Dillenberger, Seils, Nembach, Aland, Pesch, Bluhm, Hacker), some argue for the 1512–13 dating (Prenter, Lilje), some for 1513–15 (Lohse, Todd, Boendermaker), and some for 1515–16 (Bellucci). In August, 1966, at the seminar on the development of the young Luther held during the Third International Congress for Luther Research in Järvenpää, Finland, the majority of participants who spoke out did so in favor of an early dating. Yet, called upon for a summary of the seminar, Gerhard Ebeling concluded that there was nothing to conclude.¹²³

A second conclusion I would draw is that Luther scholars who have dealt with the *Turmerlebnis* problem have generally used a “key” method. Their method has been to operate with a single key doctrine or aspect of Luther’s thought. They have generally approached the young Luther with some formulation of the essence of his evangelical theology. For Holl and Scheel, the “key” is a sanative theory of justification; for Böhmer, the certainty of forgiveness; for Lortz, subjectivism; for Hirsch, the distinction between law and gospel; for Vogelsang, tropological exegesis; for Bornkamm, a Christological interpretation of the *iusiitia Dei*; for Ebeling, hermeneutics; for Saarnivaara, a forensic theory of justification; for Gyllenkrok, the certitude of salvation; for Bizer, a theology of the Word; and for Cranz, a doctrine of the two kingdoms.

With their key to the mature Luther, scholars read the young Luther to find the first evidence of his mature theology. When these are found, they figure that a revolutionary change has taken place in Luther’s development: everything that was written before is considered medieval, everything after is Reformation. The concern in all the *Turmerlebnis* theses has been to specify the date Luther ceases to be Roman Catholic and becomes Lutheran. This is in part based on the assumption that there is such a neat category as Catholic doctrine and Lutheran doctrine and that by a conversion experience one changes his theological baggage completely. First of all, there are no standards for Catholic doctrine in the Late Middle Ages prior to Trent, but only several late medieval theologies. Secondly, the definition of Lutheran theology or Luther’s “mature” theology has varied considerably through the centuries. Various definitions of Catholicity and mature

¹²³ Pesch, “Zur Frage nach Luthers reformatorischer Wende,” p. 264.

Luther(an) theology have yielded various results. Different keys have opened up different doors to the later Luther. The world of Luther scholarship has reached no agreement or come to any decisive conclusions as to the date of Luther's so-called *Turmerlebnis*.

A final conclusion I would draw is that the one-level, "key" approach to the early Luther has led to complete frustration and, hopefully, the death of the *Turmerlebnis* problem. Although some continue with the one-level approach to date the *Turmerlebnis*, several have recently studied the development of the young Luther without reference to the *Turmerlebnis* problem (Oberman,¹³³ Schwartz,¹³⁴ Grane,¹³⁵ Rogge,¹³⁶ Metzger,¹³⁷ Tüchle,¹³⁸ Kantzenbach,¹³⁹ and Hagen¹⁴⁰). Oberman, for example, treats the relation of Luther to nominalism. He concludes that Luther broke with the nominalist tradition on the relation of faith and reason in 1509 and on the relation of will and grace in 1515-16. However, Oberman does not claim to have solved the *Turmerlebnis* problem, but only to have "led us to a decisive transition between two stages in Luther's development." Hopefully, scholars have come to see that a single key to the later Luther opens up only a single door. Scholars have come up with different datings depending on what doctrine is used. Different keys open different doors.

A more fruitful approach to the young Luther would be to see Luther as developing on many levels concerning several theological doctrines and religious issues. Rather than trying to find in Luther an abrupt reversal from a "Catholic" position to a "Lutheran" one, it would be better to say that Luther develops in a more organic way on particular issues as the occasion and his exegetical work demand. There is always a complex interrelation

¹³³ Heiko A. Oberman, "Facientibus quod in se est Deus non denegat gratiam: Robert Holcot, O.P., and the Beginnings of Luther's Theology," *Harvard Theological Review* 55 (1962) 317-42.

¹³⁴ Reinhard Schwarz, *Fides, Spes und Caritas beim jungen Luther (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte* 34; Berlin, 1962).

¹³⁵ Leif Grane, *Contra Gabrielem: Luther Auseinandersetzung mit Gabriel Biel in der Disputatio contra scholasticam theologiam 1517 (Acta theologica Danica* 4; Gyldendal, 1962).

¹³⁶ Joachim Rogge, "Die Initia Zwinglis und Luthers," *Luther-Jahrbuch* 30 (1963) 107-30.

¹³⁷ Günther Metzger, *Gelebter Glaube: Die Formierung reformatorischen Denkens in Luthers erster Psalmenvorlesung (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte* 14; Göttingen, 1964).

¹³⁸ Hermann Tüchle, *Reformation und Gegenreformation (Geschichte der Kirche*, ed. Rogier et al., 3; Einsiedeln, 1965).

¹³⁹ Friedrich W. Kantzenbach, *Martin Luther und die Anfänge der Reformation (Evangelische Enzyklopädie* 7/8; Gütersloh, 1965).

¹⁴⁰ Kenneth G. Hagen, *Luther's Lectures on Hebrews in the Light of Medieval Commentaries on Hebrews* (Dissertation, Harvard University, 1966).

between one's faith and one's theology, and between the various elements of theological understanding. These are perhaps many keys to Luther, but they are on the same chain; they open many doors, but doors of the same house.

And so the search for the real Luther continues as it has for 450 years. Luther has served in various capacities and has been used in various movements through the centuries. The developments and changes in Luther studies in general parallel the historical and theological development of Lutheranism. The history of Luther research as an index to the history of Lutheran theology shows that there is no single Lutheran theology or Lutheran interpretation of Luther. As there is a plurality of Luther images, so there is a plurality of Lutheran theologies. By virtue of the development and diversity in Lutheran theology, the ecumenical stance of Lutheran theology is not so much one that stands over against other traditions as one that stands within the Christian tradition offering many of the same alternatives and presenting many of the same differences that one finds in other traditions. Using the history, for example, of Calvin studies and Trent studies as an index to the historical and theological development in the Reformed tradition and Roman Catholic tradition, one would find that there is no such thing as *a* Reformed theology or *a* Roman Catholic theology. Many divergent theological positions, past and present, are not so much differences between traditions as among traditions. While there always have been and, hopefully, always will be theological differences among the various traditions, perhaps the man who precipitated the division of Western Christendom can be a guide to the establishment of the real goal of the Reformation: the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

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