

Sanctification as it Relates to Death and Life in Luther's Theology of The Lord's Supper

By

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## Introduction

The Stanza della Segnatura is a room in the Vatican where official letters were signed. Between 1509 and 1511 Raphael painted two amazing frescoes on its walls: *The School of Athens* and *The Disputa*. The first one shows the ancient Greek philosophers surrounding Plato and Aristotle; the second shows a discussion of the miraculous nature of the Lord's Supper. The two frescoes stand next to each other, opposing each other, just as the Law and Gospel oppose each other.

Within the very same decade, Martin Luther posted the *Ninety-five Theses* on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. This spark grew into a brilliant flame. As this flame was held forth, it revealed God's *most* brilliant word (2 Cor 3:7): The Gospel. This meant freedom, peace, and life, but also cataclysmic warfare.

Without realizing it, Raphael graphically depicted powerful forces at work in the Church, already beginning their catastrophic collision which was to be consumed in a cosmic spiritual battle. In fact, Luther was in Rome in 1510 as Raphael was painting. He became a professor in Wittenberg the year Raphael finished the frescoes.

The purpose of this paper is to journey through that catastrophic collision and view the outcome. Of particular interest is this theme: Death and Life in the Lord's Supper as it applies to Sanctification.

## I. Plato and Aristotle

*The School of Athens* shows Plato pointing his finger toward the sky, emphasizing ideas. Aristotle's fingers are spread out, pointing toward the earth, emphasizing particulars. Both of these Greek philosophers had a powerful influence upon the Church of the Middle Ages: Plato through Augustine (A.D. 354-430) and Aristotle through Aquinas (A.D. 1225-1274). The impact of these philosophers through the theologians was felt in the area of Sanctification. Augustine's view of the Lord's Supper is crucial in this discussion.

Augustine called the Lord's Supper *Sacramentum*, by which he meant a holy sign (*signum*). The bread/body and wine/blood are the *signum*. When there is a *signum*, there is a similitude. There is no *signum* without a similitude. The similitude is the *res signata*, the thing that is signified by the *signum*. The *res signata* is the real substance behind the *signum*, behind the sign. In other words, Augustine confessed that Christ's body and blood were really present in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, but according to his Platonic form of thought they are not the *res signata*. The body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper are not the real substance, but merely a sign that points to the real substance.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This Platonic view of Augustine appears to have had a significant influence upon Zwingli and Calvin who are discussed below. An interesting difference between them is that Augustine confessed the real presence and the latter two denied it. If one views the Lord's Supper with Platonic glasses, there is a sense in which it doesn't really matter if the real presence is confessed or denied.

Augustine could say that the body and blood of Christ are not the *res signata* because of the Platonic glasses he was wearing. As *The School of Athens* shows, Plato emphasized ideals. Plato's reasoning went something like this: a physical object like a person's body is not the real substance since it is subject to the most drastic change, including complete destruction (e.g. by fire). If, then, a person's body is completely destroyed, or all peoples' bodies are destroyed, does that mean that there is no longer such a thing as a body? No, because the idea of a body is the true source of the body and the idea is unchangeable, thus indestructible. The idea or source of every physical object resides in heaven, in the mind of God. That is why Plato is pointing up to heaven in *The School of Athens*. The real substance resides above as an ideal; the physical is only an image, reflection or sign of the real substance. The physical is not the real substance in itself. However, the physical is a means by which a person can comprehend the true substance, the ideal. It happens in a stair-step process: a person first beholds the physical thing without understanding the ideal; then, through beholding the physical thing that person is lifted, drawn by the eyes of his soul up to the higher level of grasping, comprehending, understanding the ideal. When the ideal is grasped, true knowledge (**gnwsij**) is present. This **gnwsij** is the goal. Through **gnwsij** one has salvation according to Plato.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, as Augustine viewed the Lord's Supper in a Platonic sort of way, the sole purpose of the *signum* (bread/body and wine/blood) was to draw one to the *res signata*, the real substance above. For Augustine, this real substance was the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the people who comprised the church. This *res signata* was, in a word, LOVE. The highest expression

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<sup>2</sup>So, in relation to footnote 1, with the mind of Plato as the filter it doesn't ultimately matter if one confesses or denies the real presence in the Lord's Supper since the physical is not the real substance (be it Christ's body and blood or merely bread and wine).

of this love is found at the cross. Thus, the cross of Christ is the ultimate idea. As the people of the church are more and more conformed to the death of Christ on the cross, they are more and more grasping the ultimate idea (or ideal). They are then, finding salvation. The *signum* draws one to the *res signata* which is love in the church from the cross of Christ.

Christ dying on the cross is the *exemplum*, example. Augustine then speaks a very important word: *exemplar*. *Exemplar* means paradigm. Augustine meant by this that Christ provided the paradigm for people in His suffering and death upon the cross. Therefore people are drawn by His love in dying on the cross to follow in His footsteps and do the same. As people are drawn by the *signum* (bread/body & wine/blood) towards the *res signata* (love of Christ), they are focusing on the *exemplum* (example of Christ's death) and in turn following it as an *exemplar* (paradigm). However, they are not doing this by their own power. God is working it in them. Augustine was a monergist. God works it in them by drawing them to the cross love through the *signum*. God draws people, continually working on them sufferings and death like Christ. When the process has been complete, when He has worked enough suffering and death upon a person, that person is completely righteous and able to enter His presence with the saints and angels in heaven.

Augustine could say, *crede et manucavisti* ('believe and you have eaten') because Platonically speaking, the physical things are on the lower level (*signum*) and only help one grasp the things of real substance on the higher level (*res signata*). So, the true substance in the Lord's Supper to Augustine was the way in which a person could focus upon the sufferings of Christ in such a way as to contemplate/grasp/understand the sufferings God is working upon that person. Those sufferings, when complete, render a person completely righteous before God and able to

enter His presence. If they have not been completed on this earth, purgatory is available for the completion of the process.

The words of institution can also be spoken of as *signum*. According to Augustine, *vis* (power) is in the words. They are powerful, drawing one from the outward (*verbum externum*) to the higher level of the inward (*verbum internum*). This is also Platonic. The physically written and heard words draw people to the spiritual. The words work in a radioactive sort of way, doing their work on people, conforming people to the cross of Christ. Here applies in strongest manner the *sensus tropologicus* as the words work themselves on a person. Beginning with the Fathers and running up to the Reformation, the *sensus tropologicus* was what could be called the moral sense of a passage of scripture. *Sensus tropologicus* comes from the Greek **τροπος** which means ‘way, manner, life, way of life’. This tropological sense or application of scripture was what Augustine leaned upon in this theology of his. The interesting thing was that this ‘way of life’ was a way of death.

This all relates to death and life regarding Sanctification in the following ways. God is working upon humans through *signum* → *res signata*, *exemplum* → *exemplar* in a death sort of way in order to give life. He is working the sufferings and death upon people which He did to Christ. Once He completes that process and the person finally loves this death, the person is completely righteous and fit for eternal life. He draws people into this through the *signum* and *res signata*, through the *exemplum* of Christ’s death, through Christ’s love as revealed upon the cross. Sanctification, growing in the Christian life, is indeed a process. With Platonic glasses, Augustine turned Sanctification into Justification. For Augustine, the phenomenon of Sanctification became the process by which a person is made righteous before God. But make no mistake: this process is

not a human work, but a work of God which God accomplishes in a person. The best thing a person can do is focus upon the cross of Christ and appreciate the death work that God is working in that person. The result in the end is life.

Aquinas wore Aristotelian glasses. In *The School of Athens* Aristotle opposes Plato. Plato has his finger pointed toward the heavens and Aristotle has his hand down, with fingers pointed toward the earth. Aristotle emphasized particulars, the world of experience, categories. Aquinas did theology the Aristotelian way. He categorized. Aquinas, a Scholastic theologian, examined the particular attributes of God, categorized them, and defined God from them. God was defined from His attributes as perfectly righteous and unchangeable. Thus, the Scholastics were forced to the conclusion that a change in the human was necessary in order to bridge the gap between God and humans.

In one sense, the theology of the Scholastics fit together with Augustinian theology: a change in the human was needed before the human could enter the presence of God. The human must become righteous. This Platonic theology on the one hand and Aristotelian theology on the other hand was alive and well in the European church when Luther posted his *Ninety-five Theses*.

## **II. Luther**

Raphael's fresco portraying the Lord's Supper is called *Disputa*. However, "The name of this fresco is derived from a mistaken interpretation of a passage by Giorgio Vasari, and the figures

depicted are *discussing* rather than *disputing* the miraculous nature of the Blessed Sacrament. To emphasize the importance of this fundamental article of faith, Raphael places it at the convergence point of the perspective lines shown by the paving in the foreground.”<sup>3</sup>

Luther, indeed, confessed the Lord’s Supper as one of the primary articles of faith. He highlighted its importance by including it as one of the six chief parts of the catechism. In the words of Jesus by which the Lord’s Supper was established he saw something far above *The School of Athens*: Luther saw a special revelation from the Almighty God, a communication filled with grace and a salutary gift. The content of this biblical revelation cataclysmically collided with the human made theology of the European church in the 1520s. This conflict reached its highest proportions through Luther’s intensive study and confession of God’s Word, the Bible.

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<sup>3</sup>*Raphael* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1995), 17.



Luther easily rejected the Aristotelian Scholastic way of thinking. The Platonic Augustinian glasses were not shed so quickly. In his *Lectures on Romans* of 1516-17 he reveals his belief in justification as a process: A man who is spiritually sick because of his sin “Is sick in fact, but he is well because of the promise of the doctor, whom he trusts and who has reckoned (*reputat*) him already cured because (*quia*) he is sure that he will cure him; for he has already begun to cure him and no longer reckons to him a sickness unto death.”<sup>4</sup> Augustine’s “drawing” effect can be seen in Luther’s 1517-18 *Lectures on Hebrews*: “In this mighty drama of the enacted gospel, he inspires all those he has pre-determined to save and draws them to him by love. . . . It pleased God to make Christ the perfect author of salvation, and he used suffering as a means of fulfilling this work. For if there had been no suffering we would never have had a perfect example by which he could inspire us and draw us even to the point of loving death and suffering.”<sup>5</sup> Regarding *sacramentum* in the Augustinian way, he says, “The passion of Christ’s flesh, his death and exaltation are a divine sign (*sacramentum*) of our having to die the same death.”<sup>6</sup>

Before he broke with him, Luther emphasized Augustine’s “death” work that God does on us: “Therefore God kills in order to make alive; He humiliates in order to exalt . . .”<sup>7</sup> Further, “Without sufferings the perfection of the example would have been lacking - the example by which He would move and draw us to the point of loving death and suffering.”<sup>8</sup> Finally, “It should be the

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<sup>4</sup>1516-17: AE 25, 260; WA 56, 272.

<sup>5</sup>1517-18: AE 29, 109-241; WA 57.III, 1-238; LCC, 56.

<sup>6</sup>1517-18: AE 29, 109-241; WA 57.III, 1-238; LCC, 196.

<sup>7</sup>1517-18: AE 29, 130; WA 57.III, 1-238.

<sup>8</sup>1517-18: AE 29, 133; WA 57.III, 1-238.

one desire of Christians to die to this life more and more every day and, because they are weary of it, to hasten to the life to come.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>1517-18: AE 29, 163; WA 57.III, 1-238.

Luther also continued to speak of process: “Paul also calls Christians righteous, holy, and free from sin, not because they are, but because they have begun to be and should become people of this kind by making constant progress.”<sup>10</sup> He says, “He who fears death or is unwilling to die is not a Christian to a sufficient degree . . .”<sup>11</sup>

As Luther studies the Word of God more and more he pulls away from Augustine. In 1520 he wrote the *Treatise on the New Testament* in which he sees two things in a new and significant way: the words and Testament. In the midst of his battle with Rome, Luther came to emphasize the Word of God in contrast to the traditions, Popes, and councils which had gained a place of strong authority in the European church by Luther’s day. This elevation of human wisdom to the level of God’s Word and sometimes above it was also the problem with the Platonic and Aristotelian theology that emanated from Augustine and Aquinas. So this process of cataclysmic collision was meeting one of its major breaking points, one in which a major outbreak of fire and smoke continues even to the present day: the Word of God versus the word of man. Martin Luther’s study of God’s Word and trust in it above all other words marks a clear break with *The School of Athens* driven theologies. This *Sola Scriptura* break was of paramount importance since *Gratia* in Jesus Christ is revealed by God in the scriptures. This was to have a profound impact upon Luther’s view of the life of Sanctification.

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<sup>10</sup>1517-18: AE 29, 139; WA 57.III, 1-238.

<sup>11</sup>1517-18: AE 29, 137; WA 57.III, 1-238.

The second new development focused upon *testamentum*. Christ says, “This is the new testament in my blood.” A testament is written and put in place, but only releases its benefits to the heirs upon the death of the testator (Gal 3). Thus, Luther began to see the essential nature of Christ’s death. Christ’s death was needed. His death then begins to stand alone for Luther. It should no longer be mixed with the sufferings and death of Christians. Christ’s death alone paid the complete payment for all sins. Suffering and death is not necessary for Christians in order to become righteous before God. Christ did it all. Luther writes that it is as if Christ were saying, “Behold, man, in these words I promise and bequeath thee forgiveness of all of thy sin and eternal life in order that thou mayest be certain and know that such promise remains irrevocably thine - I will die for it, and I will give My body and blood for it and I will leave them both to thee as sign and seal, that by them thou mayest remember me.”<sup>12</sup> Consequently, Luther begins to shed his Augustinian death talk, the talk in which God is working all the death in Christians to process them into being righteous enough for life.

After breaking with the Platonic Augustinian theology as authorized by Rome, Luther broke with the Platonic Augustinian theology of other Protestant Reformers. The Word of God was important in this battle. From the Word of God, the body and blood of Christ became a key point of cleavage in this continuing collision.

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<sup>12</sup>1520: AE 1, 300.

In *Against the Fanatics* Luther says that Zwingli and his friends “would bind God by their laws.”<sup>13</sup> He recognizes that they are trying to do their theology of the Lord’s Supper by human philosophy rather than God’s Word. He writes: “This is the devil’s sole aim, to tear people out of it [God’s Word] and to cause them to measure God’s will and work by human reason.”<sup>14</sup> Luther simply and clearly exhorts, “Here is God’s will and Word, adhere to it, and let your opinions go.”<sup>15</sup>

In *Against the Fanatics* Luther also gives his clear understanding of the complete sufficiency of the death of Christ: “When he forgives, he forgives everything completely and leaves nothing unforgiven. When I am free of sin, I am also free from death, devil, and hell.”<sup>16</sup> Zwingli and his friends assented to Luther’s position on the sufficiency of Christ’s death upon the cross in the sense that it did everything necessary for complete forgiveness, makes “free of sin” and “free from death”. In this respect, Zwingli and his friends did make a partial break with Augustinian Platonic theology. They would not accept Augustine’s teaching that a person is gradually made righteous in standing before God by the process of God working sufferings and death upon the person. However, they retained part of Augustine’s Platonic theology in regard to seeing the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper as merely signs (*signum*) rather than substance (*res signata*).

In his final break with Platonic theology, Luther emphasizes the presence and substantial benefit of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper. He writes of “Christ’s body, which in

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<sup>13</sup>1526: AE 36, 345; WA 23, 64-283.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>1526: AE 36, 349-350; WA 23, 64-283.

itself is pure life and salvation, and full of God . . .”<sup>17</sup> Luther states most significantly:

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<sup>17</sup>1526: AE 36, 134; WA 23, 64-283.

We who believe, however, know that the body does avail for us, wherever it is. If it is in the bread and is physically eaten with faith, it strengthens the soul by virtue of the fact that it believes it is Christ's body which the mouth eats, and so faith clings to the body which is in the bread. Now that which lifts, bears, and binds faith is not useless but salutary. Similarly, the mouth, the throat, the body which eats Christ's body, will also have its benefit in that it will live forever and arise on the Last Day to eternal salvation. This is the secret power and benefit which flows from the body of Christ in the Supper into our body, for it must be useful, and cannot be present in vain. Therefore it must bestow life and salvation upon our bodies, as is its nature.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, Luther's break with the Platonic theology of human reason was finalized.

In such a way Luther embraced a theology which centered upon the gifts of God as given in Christ, God's Word, and the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Humans, in their finite reason, have the privilege of receiving the infinitely complete gifts of God. But if finite human philosophy is exalted above the infinite gifts of God, theology begins to be run in a Law sort of way and the gifts of the Gospel are obscured.

*Against the Fanatics* completed the essential elements of cataclysmic collision. Luther's writings on these subjects following *Against the Fanatics* do not add any more essential elements, but continue to highlight, clarify and exhort. The essential elements in this discussion are three: 1) Christ's death, 2) God's Word, 3) Body & Blood. The infinitely complete sufficiency of Christ's death for the forgiveness of sins enabled Luther to confess that a person is completely righteous before God the moment that gift of forgiveness is received through faith. This confession was a declaration of war against the gradual process theology which was inspired by Platonic thought. Faith in God's Word as the sole authority assaulted the theology of trust in the finite human word. The presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper as a significant, substantial, life giving gift in itself was a powerful fortress against the shallow theology of mere *signum*. This

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

powerful stand of Luther on the Lord's Supper affected his theology of death and life in relation to Sanctification in some notable ways.

First, a notable change is seen in the fact that he drops the death talk. In other words, he no longer focuses upon death and suffering that God is doing to people. Instead, he emphasizes the forgiveness that God gives, noting with significance that forgiveness means life: in the *Small Catechism* Luther proclaims that "By these words the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given to us in the sacrament, for where there is forgiveness of sins, there are also life and salvation."<sup>19</sup>

Second, he repeatedly draws attention to the truth that Christ died "for you" against death, and that gift is given in the Lord's Supper: in the *Large Catechism* he says, "Christ bids me eat and drink . . . the very gift he has provided for me against my sins, death, and all evils."<sup>20</sup> Further, "For here in the sacrament you receive from Christ's lips the forgiveness of sins, which contains and conveys God's grace and Spirit with all his gifts, protection, defense, and power against death . . ."<sup>21</sup> The significance of this emphases is that the Lord's Supper is no longer something that is causing a person's death (as in Augustine), but rather something that is against a person's death, something delivering from death.

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<sup>19</sup>1529: Tappert 352, 6.

<sup>20</sup>1538: Tappert 449, 22.

<sup>21</sup>1538: Tappert 454, 70.



Third, Luther saw something substantial and significant in the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper: "The mouth, the throat, the body which eats Christ's body, will also have its benefit in that it will live forever and arise on the Last Day to eternal salvation. This is the secret power and benefit which flows from the body of Christ in the Supper into our body, for it must be useful, and cannot be present in vain. Therefore it must bestow life and salvation upon our bodies, as is its nature."<sup>22</sup> The body and blood of Christ themselves are something significant. Christ and His body and blood are sacred in themselves. God gives something that is not run of the mill in the Lord's Supper, but something that is most sacred: the body and blood of Christ. The body and blood have a purpose. As Luther says, they "bestow life and salvation upon our bodies". He says of the body of Christ that this "is its nature". This articulation is significant in the break with Zwingli and his friends since they were still functioning with some Platonic residue in this area. Plato de-emphasized the physical, teaching that physical things are not true substance, but only useful in pointing to the spiritual ideas which are the true substance. Thus, the physical is degraded in Plato's thought, just as it is in Zwingli's thought regarding the Lord's Supper. In Luther, after he threw away the Augustinian Platonic glasses, a value for the physical (along with the spiritual) is present. Even as Christ came in the physical and is still physical, and even as there will be a resurrection of the flesh, and even as human bodies do have an important significance on this earth, so Christ died to save the whole person. This includes physical salvation. Physical appearance, pain, pleasure, and completeness do have a profound significance to people. This significance cannot be spiritualized away. Therefore Christ suffered great physical punishment and death upon the cross for the redemption of people's bodies along

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<sup>22</sup>1526: AE 36, 134; WA 23, 64-283.

with their souls. This redemption is then delivered to people through the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Luther saw this and it represents a sharp break away from Plato in a place where Zwingli was still holding onto some Plato as he denied the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper.

Finally, as has been recorded, Luther pointed to the reality that the forgiveness given in the Lord's Supper is the gift of life. Therefore, just as the forgiveness is complete and immediate when received through faith, so also is the life. It is actual life, being alive spiritually to God, eternally, beginning at the moment of faith. There is nothing gradual about this life. It is present immediately. The presence of this life is spiritual and invisible, yet it finds expression externally in the life of Sanctification. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit. A forgiven person is, by analogy, a good tree. In the *Smalcald Articles* Luther confesses, "By faith (as St. Peter says) we get a new and clean heart and . . . God will and does account us altogether righteous and holy for the sake of Christ, our mediator."<sup>23</sup> Further, "Good works follow such faith, renewal, and forgiveness."<sup>24</sup> Finally, "To this we must add that if good works do not follow, our faith is false and not true."<sup>25</sup> The *Augsburg Confession* reflects Luther's theology as it states, "It is only by faith that forgiveness of sins and grace are apprehended, and because through faith the Holy spirit is received, hearts are so renewed and endowed with new affections as to be able to bring forth good works."<sup>26</sup> Luther

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<sup>23</sup>1536: Tappert, 315.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>1530: Tappert 45, 29 (Latin text).

preached in his *6th Invocavit Sermon*: “We shall now speak of the fruit of the sacrament, which is love; that is, that we should treat our neighbor as God has treated us.”, and “Love, I say, is a fruit of the sacrament . . . . This is the chief thing, which is the only business of the Christian man.”<sup>27</sup> It is the “new man” that lives out Sanctification, so Luther can write of the Lord’s Supper that “It is appropriately called the food of the soul since it nourishes and strengthens the new man.”<sup>28</sup>

In summary, Luther’s understanding and application of three things represent the substance of his break with Platonic theology: 1) Christ’s death, 2) God’s Word, 3) Body & Blood. The practical effects of this break on his theology are fourfold:

- 1 - Death talk (in the way of causing a person’s death) drops out of the discussion.
- 2 - Lord’s Supper is viewed as “against death” (rather than causing death).
- 3 - The body and blood are substantial and essential, and they give life.
- 4 - The Lord’s Supper nourishes the “new man” to bear good fruit (Sanctification).

By the forgiveness that is given in the Lord’s supper, the death of Christ effects new life in people who believe. Sanctification is the fruit of this life. The Lord’s Supper continues to nourish and strengthen this new life.

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<sup>27</sup>1522: AE 51, 95; WA 10.III, 48-53.

<sup>28</sup>1538: Tappert 449, 23.

### III. The Outcome

Imagine Martin Luther on his pilgrimage in Rome in 1510, visiting the relics and climbing the stairs of Pilate, living out the deeds that proceeded from the Augustinian Platonic theology at work within him. According to Augustine, Luther viewed God working on him in a Law sort of way, moving him to embrace suffering and death in order to move through the gradual process to reach the goal of righteousness before God. At the very same time, in the very same city, Raphael was painting *Disputa* which exalted the gift of the Lord's Supper and *The School of Athens* which exalted Plato and Aristotle. Little did either of them know that within two short decades, God would bring forth a cataclysmic collision through Martin Luther. This collision was to highlight the difference between the gracious gift of God (the Lord's Supper) and the dominance of human reason (the philosophers) which leads to the way of the Law. This collision has been followed by an immense fallout. This chapter will examine that fallout as it relates to Christian Sanctification.

Augustine turned the phenomenon of Sanctification into Justification. This followed good Platonic reasoning: a person gradually comprehends until they have the full thing. This went well an aspect of Aquinas and Aristotelian Scholastic theology. Drawing up a definition of God from His attributes, Scholasticism said that a change must happen to bridge the gap between the righteous God and unrighteous people. According to their carefully categorized definition of God, He could not change so the change had to be in people. Therefore, the gradual process of becoming righteous was acceptable to those who thought in a Platonic way and to those who thought in an Aristotelian way. The Roman Catholic church still has this type of theology.

In contrast, Luther confessed the Word of God as ultimate authority above human reason.

Against the theology of a gradual change in a person until that person is righteous enough to enter God's presence, Luther confessed the *extra nos* and completely sufficient character of Christ's death upon the cross for the forgiveness of sins. At the moment of faith, a person has the whole thing and is completely righteous before God. Sanctification is then a fruit of this Justification by grace through faith. Justification by grace through faith is the cause of Sanctification in a believer's life. It is never the reverse. That grace of God in Christ Jesus by which God declares us completely righteous in His sight is the gift which continually empowers a believer to bring forth good fruit. It is the ongoing cause of good fruit in a believer. And that grace comes to believers in an ongoing way through the Lord's Supper.

Zwingli and Calvin and their heirs would accuse Luther of half-baked Reformation theology. They would say that he failed to part completely with Rome. A big reason that they would say this is that Luther retained the real presence in the Lord's Supper. However, it is truly the reverse. Luther made a clean and complete break from the Plato driven theology. Zwingli and Calvin made a partial break from the Platonic influence, but when it comes to the Lord's Supper, they retained the *signum* type of theology. This affects their theology of Sanctification in an interesting way. Since they have done away with the continual, objective, gifted, infinite assurance of the Lord's Supper, they end up gravitating to works for that assurance. In fact, this gravitation may be ever so slight as to be a confidence in their own faith, yet in many cases it is a gravitation toward a concrete point in time in which a decision was made or an act done by the believer. Humans as physical beings need a concrete, physical assurance. Luther and his heirs find this in the Lord's Supper. Luther and his heirs see the Lord's Supper as an ongoing tangible, objective act of God which gives assurance over and over again of their forgiveness and eternal life. Zwingli,

Calvin and their heirs teach a denigrated view of the Lord's Supper based upon Platonic thought rather than the Word of God. Therefore, since they have pulled the rug out from under people in regard to this substantial means of forgiveness and assurance, they have gravitated toward human works. That is one reason that so many Christians today who are heirs of Zwingli and Calvin in regard to the Lord's Supper emphasize the act of the human in regard to eternal life. It can come in the form of decision theology, a constant emphasis on giving one's heart to Jesus, one's own part in deciding to become baptized, micro-ethics as an emphases, etc. All and all, the fruit of Justification (Sanctification) becomes one's assurance of possessing eternal life since the substance has been extracted from the Lord's Supper in their teaching. Along with this is often a constant questioning and judging people's salvation. This doubt, questioning, and judging is a natural progression since any reliance upon human effort and evidence leads toward uncertainty due to the finite nature of humanity.

In contrast, Luther and his heirs have a solid and objective assurance and continuous gift of the forgiveness of sins in teaching the Lord's Supper the way Christ instituted and taught it. Sanctification, then, remains a fruit of Justification. It never needs to be turned into a basis for assurance of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. That assurance is found in the Lord's Supper since actual forgiveness of sins is given and since Christ's own body and blood are given in the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper remains a unique gift because "It is appropriately called the food of the soul since it nourishes and strengthens the new man."<sup>29</sup> It remains a unique gift because it is the only place in which we find the body and blood of Christ as directly received by people who eat and drink the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. This is the body and blood of

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

Christ Jesus! It is not of small significance: “This is the secret power and benefit which flows from the body of Christ in the Supper into our body, for it must be useful, and cannot be present in vain.

Therefore it must bestow life and salvation upon our bodies, as is its nature.”<sup>30</sup>

### **Conclusion**

When human reason has dominated theology against the Word of God, it has lead to

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<sup>30</sup>1526: AE 36, 134; WA 23, 64-283.

teaching Gospel gifts in Law sorts of ways. This has been true for Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Zwingli and their heirs. In one way or another they all turned Sanctification into Justification. Augustine, Calvin and Zwingli taught a theology of the Lord's Supper which was based upon the Platonic glasses they wore. Consequently, the gift of the Lord's Supper is not brought forth in the substantial way in which Christ instituted it.

Luther departed from each of them in respect to their limited way and Law way of working theology through the philosophers. He taught the Lord's Supper in all of its fullness, drawing upon the infinite truth of God's Word. He taught that the Lord's Supper is gift that works against our death to give life by the forgiveness given on account of Christ's death upon the cross. The fruit of this gift of life is the growth of good works called Sanctification. This life is continually nourished and strengthened by receiving the Lord's Supper on an ongoing basis. As that life is nourished, the fruit of Sanctification continues to pour forth. Trust is not put in the Sanctification, but in the body and blood of Christ and in the Words of Christ which are attached to them.

Thus, in Luther, Raphael's fresco portraying the Lord's Supper faced off with his opposing fresco, *The School of Athens*. The gift of God, the Lord's Supper, was revealed a gift of grace. The other was revealed as a "ministry of death" (2 Cor 3:7), a Law way of running things. Thanks be to God: the gift of grace "exceeds much more in glory" (2 Cor 3:9)! It is a gift of life!