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Devastating grace: *Justificatio impii* and I-dentity¹

ABSTRACT

It is argued that personal identity and Christian identity are intimately related. Personal identity is fundamentally a forensic issue, which is dealt with in the doctrine of justification as the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*. Christian identity is located *extra nos* in Christ. In his cross the idolatrous self is shattered and simultaneously re-centred and thus liberated from sinful self-love and self-hate. Our true identity remains an eschatological reality, which will be revealed as part of the cosmic new creation.

INTRODUCTION

In the Western mind personal identity has become increasingly complicated. Lately the three-dimensional view, which maintains that a person can be wholly present at a given moment, has been replaced by a four-dimensional perception, which claims that ‘persons are aggregates of momentary person-stages ... including every person-stage between origin and end.’² Gilles Deleuze even suggests ‘to stop thinking oneself as an “I” in order to live as a current, as a bundle of currents in relation to other currents inside and outside oneself.’³ In reaction against the Cartesian ‘I’ of modernity, it would appear that in certain postmodern circles the self as such is in danger of dissolving.

From the perspective of the Reformation personal identity is first and foremost defined by Christian identity. This, at least, is the basic proposal of this paper. It is argued that personal identity is fundamentally a forensic issue, which is dealt with in the doctrine of justification. As the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*, justification is crucial for Christian identity. It should, however, not be reduced to the saving of souls, since it involves nothing less than a radically new creation.

WHO AM I?

In a comprehensive volume dealing with *Identity and Anxiety*, Rollo May⁴ pays attention to the ‘centrality of anxiety in our day’ as reflected in literature, psychology, sociological studies,

1 Paper prepared for 6th conference of the International Reformed Theological Institute on “Faith and Identity” during July 2005.

2 Ramond Martin and John Barresi ‘Introduction: Personal identity and what matters in survival: an historical overview,’ in: Raymond Martin, John Barresi (eds.), *Personal Identity*, Malden, Oxford, Berlin 2003, 3.

3 Quoted by M. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: a theological exploration of identity, otherness and reconciliation*, Nashville 1996, 289.

4 Rollo May, ‘Centrality of anxiety in our day,’ in: Maurice R. Stein, Arthur J. Vidich, David Manning White (eds.), *Identity and Anxiety. Survival of the person in mass society*, Illinois 1960, 120-128.

philosophy, religion, and politics. W. H. Auden wrote a poem and Leonard Bernstein composed a symphony entitled *Age of Anxiety*.

The pervasiveness of the question, *Who am I?* seems to insinuate that something is seriously amiss. Apparently we have a nagging feeling that we are not ourselves. The search for my *self* is a sign of the so-called *identity crisis*, which refers to an acute form of confusion and disorientation⁵ that affects individuals, peoples, nations and institutions.⁶

The question, *who am I?* is closely related to the question, *Why am I?* in the sense of, *what are the meaning, value and purpose of my life?* This quest for *I amness*⁷ involves a yearning to know not merely who I am but rather who I ought to be in order to be myself.

Knowing ourselves entails judging our *selves*. This self-assessment is largely informed by the judgment of others and our assessment of their judgment. As John Locke already pointedly put it in a chapter entitled 'Of identity and diversity', *person* is a forensic term.⁸

According to Calvin knowing our *selves* is beyond our pale.⁹ My core identity is a mystery that must be revealed. Encountering God we concurrently encounter ourselves. In his commentary on Jeremiah 9:23f¹⁰ Calvin comments that 'we cannot know God without knowing ourselves. These two things are connected.' This encounter makes the reply, 'pleased to meet you' neither possible nor appropriate. Meeting my Maker I am at the same time confronted by my own miserable self. 'Woe to me!', cries Isaiah (6:5). 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips.'¹¹

In this regard Calvin closely echoes the views of Martin Luther.¹² In his *Disputatio de homine* Luther holds that knowing God coincides with knowing ourselves.¹³ He is convinced that this knowledge is the only appropriate theme of theology. In his Preface to Psalm 51 he submits that 'the proper subject of theology is man guilty of sin and condemned, and God the justifier and Saviour of man the sinner.'¹⁴

This view of the Reformers is at variance with the Greek injunction, *gnwqi seauton* (know thyself) and the advice of Alexander Pope¹⁵ in his *An essay on Man* during the time of the Enlightenment: 'Know then thy-self, presume not God to scan,/The proper study of Mankind is Man.' They are however in full accord with the counsel given by Pascal¹⁶ in the previous (17th)

5 Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The making of the modern identity*, Cambridge, Melbourne 1989, 27.

6 Dick Keyes, *Beyond Identity. Finding yourself in the image and character of God*, London, Sydney, Auckland, Toronto 1984, 5f.

7 Ian Kent, William Nicholls, *I AMness. The Discovery of the self beyond the ego*, New York 1972.

8 Oswald Bayer, *Living by Faith. Justification and sanctification*, Michigan 2003, 4.

9 J. Calvin, *Institutes* 1. 1, Translated by H. Beveridge, Grand Rapids 1962. Cf. T. F. Torrance, *Calvin's doctrine of Man*, Westport 1977, Chapter 1: 'Man's knowledge of himself'.

10 J. Calvin, *Jeremiah* Vol 1, in: Calvin's Commentaries, Edinburgh 1850, 500.

11 This coincidence of knowing God and knowing ourselves, is according to Tom Torrance the essential direction of all Christian theology from which Calvin never deviates. T. F. Torrance, *Calvin's doctrine of Man*, 14.

12 For Luther's view see Hans Joachim Iwand, 'Gotteserkenntnis und Sündenerkenntnis,' in: *Glaubensgerechtigkeit*, München 1980, 27-41.

13 See Hans Joachim Iwand, 'Sed originale per hominem unum. Ein Beitrag zur Lehre vom Menschen,' in: *Glaubensgerechtigkeit*, München 1980, 179f.: 'nec spes est, hominem in hac praecipua parte sese posse cognoscere quid sit, donec in fonte ipso, qui Deus est, sese viderit.'

14 Hans Iwand, *Glaubensgerechtigkeit*, 175. Cf. Paul O'Callaghan, *Fides Christi: The Justification Debate*, Dublin, Portland 1997, 20.

15 *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Volume 1, New York, London 1993, 2270.

16 Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin Classics 1980, fragment 131, 64.

century: 'Know then, proud man, what a paradox you are to yourself. Be humble, impotent reason! Be silent, feeble nature! Learn that man infinitely transcends man. Hear from your master your true condition, which is unknown to you. Listen to God.'

WHO ARE WE?

The isolated 'I' is a figment of modern imagination that is far removed from biblical thought in which societal factors play a major role in defining the individual person.¹⁷ The inquiry, *Who am I?* is interconnected with the question, *Who are we?* According to Erikson 'the term identity expresses ... both a persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others.'¹⁸ Consequently personal identity has a composite character, which comprises many identities¹⁹ including in my case, being an Afrikaner.

During the 17th century our ancestors emigrated from Europe and settled at the southern tip of Africa. By and large the Afrikaners share the same history, the same culture, the same language (Afrikaans), and the same (reformed) religion.²⁰ As a result we also share the sin and shame associated with *apartheid*. This political system was invented to safeguard our identity and continued existence as a separate people. The failure of this experiment in social engineering, and the subsequent breakdown of apartheid, shattered our self-assurance and caused great uncertainty.

In post-apartheid South Africa the issue of identity is at present again furiously debated among the Afrikaners. Many fear that our existence as a people is in jeopardy. What has recently happened in our neighbouring state, Zimbabwe, is not conducive to a sense of security. 'Affirmative action' has caused many of our children to leave the country to eke out an existence elsewhere. Farmers are afraid they might lose their land. The predominance of English in public life and education is cause for concern for the future of our culture.

Given the history of apartheid some would argue that it is unwise and insensitive to emphasise our own identity and that we should rather cooperate to create a national identity encompassing all the peoples of our country. *Adapt or die*, is their advice. Others remain uncertain what this adaptation would involve. They are afraid this amounts to saving ourselves by committing suicide.

Since the demise of apartheid the focus has shifted from Christian identity to religious tolerance. Concurrently there is a strong tendency within our own ranks to consider our Reformed roots expendable in favour of a (misunderstood) form of ecumenicity. Also a number of theologians seemingly feel our reformed character is 'for sale'. Some have performed a remarkable feat by jumping from what they consider to be a sinking ship, straight onto the bandwagon.

The theological justification of apartheid contributed to a large extent to the lukewarm and even hostile attitude towards the reformed faith. Calvinism has become in many people's minds closely associated with self-righteousness and smugness. The Afrikaners were considered to be God's chosen people and therefore apartheid was of paramount importance. Such an ideology of election can only transpire when this doctrine is fundamentally misconstrued, and the unity of *election* and the *justification of the wicked* not clearly understood.

17 Cf. Klaus Berger, *Identity and Experience in the New Testament*, Minneapolis 2003, 28f; also 35f.

18 E. H. Erikson, 'The Problem of ego identity,' in: Maurice R. Stein, Arthur J. Vidich and David Manning White (eds), *Identity and Anxiety. Survival of the person in mass society*, Illinois 1960, 38.

19 For the composite character of personal identity cf. A. van de Beek, 'In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek – or both Jew and Greek?,' in: A. J. G. Van der Borgh, Dirk van Keulen, Martien E. Brinkman (eds.), *Faith and Ethnicity* (Volume 1), Studies in Reformed Theology 6, 2002, 21-36.

20 See Herman Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: biography of a people*, Cape Town 2003.

Hans Mol²¹ refers to the 'fragile frame of identity' and defines it as follows: 'Identity on the personal level is the stable niche that man occupies in a potentially chaotic environment which he is prepared vigorously to defend.' On the social level he describes it as a 'stable aggregate of basic and commonly held beliefs, patterns, and values (that) maintains itself over against the potential threat of its environment and its members.'

The need for identity is related to Spinoza's *conatus essendi*²² (the craving to be) and has been called 'the most powerful and the most pervasive among all species'.²³ This urge is revealed in the intensity with which an animal will protect its territory, but also in the tenacity with which the Afrikaners clung to the policy of apartheid. This drive to be something or someone and to be recognised as such, involves a never-ending endeavour to justify our existence. Oswald Bayer correctly claims that 'humankind is in a battle of justifications' which involves a 'striving and struggling for mutual recognition'.²⁴ This fight for justification is manifested on the level of personal history, the histories of the many peoples that comprise world history, as well as the history of nature.

The autonomous 'I' of liberalism, which fostered what Paul Vitz has described as a 'selfist psychology' and a 'cult of self-worship',²⁵ has also resulted in much loneliness, anxiety, self-loss and shame. After all, sinful self-love and equally sinful self-hate are two sides of the same coin.²⁶ Both are symptoms of slavery to *self*.

Personal identity is extremely precious and at the same time exceedingly precarious. The attempt to secure my *I amness* can be dangerous and idolatrous. In the development of the *sense of self* in the Western World, the *cogito* of Descartes, in which the self was placed at the very center of the universe,²⁷ played an important and influential role.²⁸ Although it was not Descartes' intention, his choice was basically atheistic in character. The autonomous Cartesian *I am*, whose advent was announced during the Renaissance but was temporarily delayed by the Reformation, would in due course displace the *I AM* of Exodus 3:14.

In the process Man replaced God, historical progress divine providence, and human reason biblical revelation. What Otto Rank²⁹ has termed 'the apotheosis of man as a creative personality',

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- 21 Hans Mol, *Identity and the Sacred. A sketch for a new social-scientific theory of religion*, Oxford 1976, 65.
- 22 Theo de Boer, *De God van de filosofen en de God van Pascal. Op het grensgebied van filosofie en theologie*, 's-Gravenhage 1989, 41.
- 23 Robert Ardrey, *The Territorial Imperative*, London 1969, 361, quoted by Hans Mol, *Identity and the Sacred*, 2.
- 24 Oswald Bayer, 'The doctrine of justification and ontology,' in: *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 43 Heft 1 (2001), 49f. See also Oswald Bayer, *Living by Faith. Justification and sanctification*, Michigan 2003, chapter 1: 'In the dispute of "justifications"'.²⁵
- 25 Terry D. Cooper, *Sin, Pride and Self-acceptance. The problem of identity in theology and psychology*, Illinois 2003, 14.
- 26 Terry Cooper, *Sin, Pride and Self-acceptance*, chapter 6: 'Pride and self-hate: two sides of the same coin?' See in this regard also Judith Plaskow on the sin of self-denial, self-abnegation, in *Sex, Sin and Grace. Women's experience and theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich*, Lanham, New York, London, 1980.
- 27 Jean A. Perkins, *The Concept of the Self in the French Enlightenment*, Genève 1969, 13.
- 28 Charles Taylor has traced this development in his comprehensive study, *Sources of the Self. The making of modern identity*.
- 29 Otto Rank, *Art and Artist: Creative urge and personality development*, New York 1932, 24, quoted by Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity*, London, New York, 2004, xxvi note 4.

involved a superhuman task, namely the creation of a perfectly structured world and society in order to keep the threatening chaos at bay. This, however, proved to be a superhuman task. The euphoria over the much vaunted freedom celebrated in Pico della Mirandola's *De dignitate hominis*,³⁰ did not last. Zygmunt Bauman has brilliantly described how this enterprise of man's freedom turned out to be 'a long march to prison'.³¹ In *post-modernism* the chickens of *modernism* are coming home to roost.

Bauman depicts the postmodern mind as 'marked above all by its all-deriding, all-eroding, all-dissolving destructiveness.'³² This has profound and chaotic consequences within the sphere of morality. 'The deposition of universal reason did not reinstate a universal God. Instead, morality has been privatised; like everything else that share this fate, ethics has become a matter of individual discretion ...'³³ Amidst a plurality of available moral choices, the individual is deprived of all moral resources.

The isolated individual is faced with the *fear of the void* that modernity tried in vain to dispel by social organisation and personality formation. This attempt was discarded by postmodernity. Bauman blames postmodernity for doing 'next to nothing to support its defiance of past pretence with a new practical antidote to old poison.'³⁴ In its 'imagined communities',³⁵ which lack stability and institutionalised continuity, postmodernity has privatised fear.

In reaction against Descartes the *self* as such is in danger of being destroyed. Postmodernity reminds one of the demon-possessed man from the region of the Gerasenes. To Jesus' question: 'What is your name?', he replied: 'My name is Legion ... for we are many.' (Mk 5:9). According to Kenny³⁶ 'the self is a mythical entity...It is a philosophical muddle to allow the space which differentiates "my self" from "myself" to generate the illusion of a mysterious entity distinct from ... the human being.' In a never-ending process of self-constitution the human body is 'seen as the sole constant factor among the protean and fickle identities: the material, tangible substratum, container, carrier and executor of all past, present and future identities.'³⁷ Postmodernity's deconstruction has indeed been devastating, but one can hardly call it gracious. In this regard it differs fundamentally from the critical character of the Reformation.

ARTICULUS STANTIS ET CADENTIS ECCLESIAE

It comes as no surprise that the doctrine of justification plays such a pivotal part in the theology of the Reformation. It deals with God's judgment, his opinion, his estimation of us. It is the focal point of the Christian faith in which the *sola Scriptura*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *solo Christo*, and *soli Deo Gloria* all merge. In each instance the *sola* has an extremely critical character. It proclaims the justification of the *ungodly*, which entails that the idolatrous self is shattered and simultaneously re-centred and saved *extra nos* in Christ. In God's devastating judgment we are

30 Cf H. G. Geertsema, *Van Boven naar Voren, wijsgerige achtergronden en problemen van het theologische denken over geschiedenis bij Jürgen Moltmann*, Kampen 1980, 29.

31 Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity*, xvii

32 *Intimations of Postmodernity*, vii

33 *Intimations of Postmodernity*, xxiii.

34 *Intimations of Postmodernity*, xvii.

35 Bauman *Intimations of Postmodernity* xviii. He borrows the concept from Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London, 1983.

36 A. Kenny, *The Self*, Milwaukee 1988, 4, quoted by Galen Strawson, 'The Self,' in: Raymond Martin and John Barresi (eds.), *Personal Identity*, Malden, Oxford, Berlin 2003, 335. See also 364.

37 Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity*, 194.

crucified with Christ and liberated from self-centredness in the shape of sinful self-love and self-hate.

Although Luther and Calvin did not use the exact words, the formula *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* most certainly reflects their feeling.³⁸ Luther perceived it as the ‘only solid rock’³⁹ on which the church can repose. Accordingly the *Augsburg Confession* describes it as ‘the chief article in the Christian faith’.⁴⁰ In spite of the noticeable fact that in his *Institutes* Calvin deals with sanctification before justification, he calls the latter the *cardo praecipuus sustinendae religionis* (the principle ground on which religion must be supported).⁴¹ Even if the doctrine of justification as such does not occupy central stage in Calvin’s theology, he most certainly considers it to be decisive.⁴²

Surely, the object of the Christian faith is not a doctrine – that would be idolatrous – but the grace of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Unquestionably, as Barth⁴³ reminds us, the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* is not the doctrine of justification by itself, but rather the confession of Christ, our Saviour. However, in giving content to this confession, the doctrine of justification is critical. Paul O’Callaghan rightly contends that for Luther it ‘acts as a kind of global criteriological principle which serves to interpret the entire gamut of doctrines and practices that go to make up the Christian whole.’⁴⁴ The numerous dialogues in the ecumenical debate over the previous decades, testify to the centrality of this theological theme.⁴⁵ Also the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church describes this doctrine as ‘an indispensable criterion’.⁴⁶

38 K Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 4, 1, Edinburgh 1961, 522: ‘The well-known description of the doctrine as the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* does not seem to derive from Luther himself, but it is an exact statement of his view. He found in it the one point which involved the whole. The precise expression is used by J. H. Alsted in the 17th century and by V. E. Löschner in the 18th century. In his commentary on Ps 130: 4 Luther writes: ‘quia isto articulo stante et stat Ecclesia, ruente ruit Ecclesia’. Paul O’Callaghan, *Fides Christi: The Justification Debate*, Dublin, Portland 1997, 19. According to Calvin the doctrine of justification is ‘the main hinge on which religion turns’ Inst. 3, 2, 1. See also Klaas Runia, ‘Justification and Roman Catholicism,’ in: D. A. Carson (ed), *Right with God. Justification in the Bible and the World*, London 1992, 197.

39 ‘... unicum hanc et solidam petram ...’ Preface to Luther’s commentary on Galatians. See Hans Joachim Iwand, *Glaubensgerechtigkeit*, 14.

40 Cf Michael Root, ‘The implications of the *Joint Declaration on Justification* and its wider impact for Lutheran participation in the ecumenical movement,’ in: William C. Rusc (ed.), *Justification and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement. The Joint Declaration of Justification*, Minnesota 2003, 48.

41 Inst. 3, 11, 1. See Klaas Runia, ‘Justification and Roman Catholicism,’ in: D. A. Carson (ed), *Right with God. Justification in the Bible and the World*, London 1992, 197. Also Gabriel Fackre, ‘The Joint Declaration and the Reformed Tradition,’ in: William G. Rusc (ed), *Justification and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement. The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, Minnesota 2003, 64.

42 Before focusing on sanctification and justification separately, he has already dealt extensively with the character of faith, which for the Reformers is intrinsically related to justification.

43 C D 4, 1, 527

44 Paul O’Callaghan, *Fides Christi*, 19.

45 Outside the Lutheran-Reformed/Catholic dialogue, Paul O’Callaghan, pays attention to Lutheran/Reformed, Lutheran/Anglican, Lutheran/Methodist, Lutheran/Baptist, Lutheran/Orthodox, Evangelical/Old Catholic, Methodist/Roman Catholic and Anglican/Roman Catholic dialogues. *Fides Christi: The Justification Debate*, chapter 4.

46 *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, Grand Rapids 2000, 18. It is noteworthy that the Declaration adds that whilst Lutherans emphasise the unique significance of this criterion, Catholics see themselves as bound by several criteria. That gives one pause to ponder.

Its hermeneutical function is to safeguard the gospel from distortion. It has been called a ‘metalinguistic stipulation’⁴⁷ or ‘metatheological rule’.⁴⁸ Lindbeck⁴⁹ compares it to the grammatical rules of a language. One may know the grammar without being able to communicate properly in a particular language. On the other hand it is possible to be proficient in a language without knowing the grammatical rules. Although justification is predominantly associated with the time of the Reformation, Thomas Oden is convinced that there is a basic, classic consensus in this regard.⁵⁰ Clearly, not the letter of this article but the spirit is crucial. This, however, does not render hermeneutical rules and the criteriological function of this article of faith redundant for church and theology.

THE CRITICAL CHARACTER OF THE WORD

There is a close connection between the criteriological significance of this doctrine and the critical character of the Word. The dogma of justification deals with the judgment of God as proclaimed in his Word, on the entire creation. Hebrews 4:12f.: ‘The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges (*kritiko*)’ the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.’

Krinein, to judge (*krisi* = judgment), means to separate. A judge distinguishes and separates between good and bad, right and wrong, guilt and innocence, life and death. The Word of God is *kritiko* because it plunges this world into a permanent crisis. It judges and reveals ‘the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.’ Not for nothing the final book of the Bible is called *Revelation*.

The critical Word of God is not merely informative but performative and creative. ‘It is living and active.’ In Genesis 1 it separates the light from the menacing darkness, and the inhabitable land from the intimidating waters of the deep where the chaotic powers like Rahab (Is 51:9) and the Leviathan (Ps 74:13) lurk. It is the same Word that in the final judgment (Mt 25:32) ‘will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats’. This living, active, creative Word separates being from not being, life from death, the old man from the new, ‘the present evil age’ (Gal 1:3) from the world to come.

This has already occurred in the Cross of Christ in which God’s judgment has been executed. Romans 4:25: ‘He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.’ In God’s active, creative judgment, the forensic and ontological dimensions coincide. Word and sacrament proclaim ‘the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were’ (Rom 4:17). In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther declares: ‘Baptism thus signifies two things – death and resurrection, that is, full and complete justification ... This death and resurrection we call the new creation, regeneration, and spiritual birth. This should not be understood allegorically as the death of sin and the life of grace, as many understand it, but as actual death and resurrection.’⁵¹

47 Paul O’Callaghan, *Fides Christi*, 200 refers to Robert Jenson’s use of the concept.

48 Lindbeck in an article dealing with ‘The limits of diversity in the Understanding of Justification,’ in: George A Lindbeck (edited by James J. Buckley) *The Church in a Postliberal Age*, Grand Rapids, Cambridge 2002, 42.

49 Lindbeck, *The Church in a Postliberal Age*, 43f.

50 Thomas C Oden, *The Justification Reader*, Michigan, Cambridge, 2002.

51 LW 36, 67-68. See also Gerhard O. Forde, *Justification by Faith – A Matter of Death and Life*, Philadelphia 1982, 16.

That explains the “realism” displayed in Kohlbrugge’s Easter sermons.⁵² He proclaims that Jesus, who was made sin for us (2 Cor 5:21), took with him to the grave the old Adam with everything he was including his flesh, skin, bones, heart, head, mind, desires, works; in short: the ‘whole disgusting carcass’, and buried him for good. This old Adam never again rose from the grave. Having justified everything in heaven, on earth and under the earth, Jesus re-appeared from the grave with a new creation, a new man with skin, flesh, bones, heart, head, mind, feet and all his limbs. In the old Adam himself there is nothing that survives this devastating judgment. This tallies with Luther’s view that justification is a matter of ‘death and life’.⁵³ *Diakrима* (condemnation) denotes death; *diakaiwma* (justification) spells life (Rom 5:16).⁵⁴

In this destruction, sinful man is destroyed. This did not happen, as Barth put it, ‘out of any desire for vengeance and retribution on the part of God, but because of the radical nature of divine love which could “satisfy” itself only in the outworking of its wrath against the man of sin, only by killing him, extinguishing him, removing him. Here is the place for the doubtful concept that in the passion of Jesus Christ, in the giving of His Son to death, God has done that which is “satisfactory” or sufficient in the victorious fighting of sin to make this victory radical and total.’⁵⁵

As judgment proclaimed on the old, the Word is at the same time a promise of the new. In the judgment of the old, the coming of the new is already announced. In this passing world the eschatological resurrection takes the form of the cross. All God’s promises have been confirmed in the cross of Christ in whom God has graciously given us everything (Rom 8:31). As Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 1:20: ‘For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ.’

Consequently, as far as human judgment is concerned, Paul could not care less. 1 Corinthians 4:3: ‘I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court.’ That also applies to his own judgment as he continues: ‘Indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.’⁵⁶ Therefore we should refrain from judging in advance but should rather ‘wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts’ (1 Cor 4:3-5).

THE CRUCIFORMITY OF FAITH⁵⁷

The unity of knowing God and knowing ourselves is reflected in Luther’s view concerning *deum justificare*⁵⁸ in which the human subject concedes to God’s judgment. Consequently there obtains conformity between God’s judging Word and man’s faith. ‘Similis forma in verbo et in credente’, as Luther pronounces in his commentary on Romans 3:4: ‘... Let God be true and every

52 See O. Noordmans, ‘Kohlbrugge. Festpredigen,’ in *Verzamelde Werken* 3, Kampen 1981, 317-320.

53 Cf. Gerhard O. Forde, *Justification by Faith – A Matter of Death and Life*.

54 J. M. Hasselaar, *Erfzonde en Vrijheid*, ‘s-Gravenhage 1953, 317.

55 K. Barth *CD IV/1*, Edinburgh 1961, 254.

56 That corresponds with the consolation given by 1 John 3: 19f. i. e. that we can ‘set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.’

57 This phrase was coined by Michael J Gorman, *Cruciformity. Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross*, Chapter 6 (‘Cruciform Faith’) Grand Rapids, Cambridge 2001

58 In his commentary on Romans 3: 4 Luther writes: ‘Et justificatio illa Dei passiva, qua a nobis iustificatur, est ipsa iustificatio nostri activa a Deo.’ H. J. Iwand, *Glaubensgerechtigkeit*, 21.

59 Iwand, *Glaubensgerechtigkeit*, 21.

man a liar. As it is written: “So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge”.

Not our faith but God’s Word of judgment and promise, is the foundation of our justification. Kohlbrugge contends that we are justified not by our faith, but by the faith of Christ the only ‘Righteous One’ (1Jn 2:2).⁶⁰ In Christ crucified God has identified Himself with us to such an extent that his Word and our faith became one.

It so happens that the expression *pisti*” (*Ihsou*) *Cristou* (or *ui(ou tou Qeou)*) is used on seven occasions in the letters of Paul⁶¹ in contexts that deal with the foundation of justification. In Bible translations it was traditionally understood as an objective genitive and rendered as ‘faith in Jesus Christ’. Lately there has been a growing consensus to see it as a subjective genitive. In that case it does not refer to the faith of the believer, but to the ‘faith (respectively: faithfulness⁶²) of Christ’.⁶³ The available space does not allow going into the exegetical arguments, but I do find them rather compelling.⁶⁴

Apart from the ‘faith of Christ’ these texts also make mention of the faith of the believers. According to Galatians 2: 16 we believe (literally:) ‘into (*ei*)” Christ⁶⁵ that we may be justified by the *faith of Christ*.’ Christ’s faith(fulness) has an incorporative character⁶⁶ in which we participate by being *in* Him. From Galatians 2:20 it is clear that the ‘faith(fulness) of Christ refers to his ‘giving himself for me’ on the cross. Our faith is no independent imitation of Christ’s faith, but is founded on his faith (respectively his cross), which according to Romans 3:21 is the manifestation of God’s righteousness (respectively: faithfulness). Our faith is not excluded but ‘the accent is placed, however, on the faithfulness of God manifested in the faithful death of Jesus.’⁶⁷ Through his ‘inclusive substitution’⁶⁸ Christ lived, died (respectively: believed) in our stead. Participating in his faith involves dying with Him.

That Christ died *for us* was possible because we were *in Christ* and therefore died *with Him* (cf. 2 Cor 5:14). Consequently his vicarious life and death is far removed from forensic fiction. In this regard Galatians 2:20 is especially illuminating. That Christ ‘gave himself for me’ involves that ‘I have been crucified with Christ.’ This entails that ‘I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.’ This does not imply that ‘I’ have been eliminated, for Paul adds that ‘the life I live in the body, I live by the (literally:) *faith of Christ*.’ The subject of my faith is no independent ‘I’, but my faith is participating in the faith(fulness) of Christ manifested on the Cross. The reverse side of my being crucified *in*, and therefore *with* Christ, is Christ’s living in me. ‘He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.’ (2 Cor 5:5).

60 J. H. Grolle, *De boodschap van Kohlbrugge nú!* Wageningen 1946, 45. For a comprehensive study of the Kohlbrugge’s understanding of faith, see A de Reuver, ‘*Bedelen bij de Bron*’. Kohlbrugge’s geloofsofpvatting vergeleken met Reformatie en Nadere Reformatie, Zoetermeer 1992.

61 Romans 3: 22, 26; twice in Galatians 2: 16; Galatians 2: 20; 3: 22; Philippians 3: 9.

62 *Pistis* can have both meanings.

63 The *NET Bible* or *New English Translation*, a recent electronic translation, has already opted to translate this phrase as ‘faith of Christ’.

64 See amongst others Morna D. Hooker, ‘*Pistis Christou*,’ in her volume *From Adam to Christ. Essays on Paul*, Cambridge etc. 1990; Richard B. Hays, *The faith of Jesus Christ. The narrative substructure of Galatians 3: 1-4:11*, Grand Rapids, Cambridge 2002; Michael J Gorman, *Cruciformity. Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross*, Chapter 6 (‘Cruciform Faith’).

65 The same expression is used in Galatians 3:27: ‘For all of you who were baptised into (*ei*)” Christ.’

66 Richard B. Hays, *The faith of Jesus Christ*, xxix.

67 Michael J Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 118.

68 Hartmuth Gese, ‘The Atonement,’ in *Essays on Biblical Theology*, Minneapolis, Augsburg, p 93-116.

In the mind of Luther (not necessarily the Lutherans) and Calvin (not necessarily the Calvinists) justification and sanctification were inseparable. That is the reason why Calvin can treat sanctification before justification, and Luther can state that the Christian 'is righteous and holy by an alien or foreign holiness'.⁶⁹

In discussing the work of the Holy Spirit one could make a distinction between justification and sanctification, but it is also possible to include the latter within the former.⁷⁰ The Greek words for 'justification' (*dikaiwsi*) and 'righteousness' (*dikaio sunh*) derive from the same root. To 'justify' means to 'rightwise' (Grobel, Sanders)⁷¹ and involves a creative act of God, which He has already performed in the crucified and resurrected Christ. Since Christ is the 'inclusive anthropos', his death and resurrection are inclusive, eschatological events in which the 'old man', and the 'body of sin' were destroyed and the coming of the new age was announced.⁷² This involves a 'new creation' (2 Cor 5:17) including Jews and Gentiles (Gal 4:16) encompassing the 'whole creation' that 'has been groaning as in pains of childbirth right up to the present time' (Rom 8:22).

The conflict that often obtains in theology between justification and sanctification, should rather be seen as the eschatological tension between the 'already' in Christ, and the 'not yet' in ourselves. That is the intention of the adage, *simul iustus et peccator*.⁷³ It does not deny that there is progress in the Christian life, but that consists in a progressive dying - and therefore living - in and with Christ. For the post-Enlightenment mentality, which has sold its soul to the ideology of progress, this tension is intolerable. In Luther's *theologia crucis* it is essential. In his *De servo arbitrio* he explains:

'In order to make belief possible, everything that is believed must be hidden. It is, however, most hidden, precisely when confronted with perception, the senses and experience. So when God vivifies, He does so in killing; when he justifies, He does so in making us guilty; when He leads us into heaven, He does so in leading us to hell ... Thus God hides his eternal benevolence and mercy behind eternal wrath, his justice behind injustice.'⁷⁴

THE INNER MAN

This tension is reflected in the contrast between 'inner' and 'outer' man in the *Second Letter to the Corinthians*, and the *Letter to the Ephesians*.⁷⁵ According to 2 Corinthians 4:16 the 'outer man' is wasting away whilst the 'inner' (man) is being daily renewed. This distinction has nothing to do

69 LW 12: 328. Carter Lindberg, 'Do Lutherans Shout Justification but Whisper Sanctification,' in: *Justification and Sanctification in the Traditions of the Reformation*. Studies from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches 42, Geneva 1999, 98.

70 Cf. O. Noordmans, 'Herscheping,' in: *Verzamelde Werken* 2, Kampen 1979, 307.

71 Richard B. Hays, 'Justification,' in: *Anchor Bible*, 1129.

72 Robert C Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ. A Study in Pauline Theology*, Berlin 1966, 27-30.

73 For an excellent discussion of the *simul iustus et peccator*, see Theodor Dieter, 'Justification and Sanctification in Luther,' in: *Justification and Sanctification in the Traditions of the Reformation*, Studies from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches 42, Geneva 87-112.

74 Translated from the Latin text in WA 18, 633, 7 by Ulrich Kühn, 'The modern soteriological debate in the Lutheran Tradition,' in: Rienk Lanoooy (ed), *For Us and for Our Salvation. Seven Perspectives on Christian Soteriology*, Utrecht, Leiden 1995, 77.

75 Klaus Berger, *Identity and Experience in the New Testament*, Minneapolis 2003, 79.

with a dichotomy between body and soul but refers to the disparity between the present and the *parousia* that already impinges on it. Paul adds (vs.17): 'For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.'

Our true identity is, and remains, an eschatological reality. That is why the groaning creation is still waiting in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed (Rom 8:19). 'What we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is' (1 Jn 3:2). In the meantime Paul prays (Eph 3:16f:) that the Father 'out of his glorious riches...may strengthen you with power of his Spirit in your (literally:) "inner man" (*esw anqrwpon*), so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.'

In a moving meditation on this text entitled, *The Inner Man*⁷⁶, Noordmans portrays the poverty of this inward 'I'. One is never 'at home' with oneself. When I search for my *self* behind the fullness of my daily existence, I come across a void, an anxious emptiness. What remains of Elijah's inner being after the momentous events on Mount Carmel? And of Luther after Worms? Who will save their gasping souls? They saved others but cannot save themselves (cf. Mt 27:42). On several occasions Noordmans quotes P. A. de Genestet: 'Be yourself, I said to some one. But he could not: he was no one.'⁷⁷

Over against the poverty of the inner man, stands the 'glorious riches' of the Holy Spirit (Eph 3:16). He does not remove our poverty but strengthens us by comforting our quivering hearts. That is why the 'poor in spirit' is called 'blessed' in the first beatitude (Mt 5:3). The Holy Spirit creates the Christian 'inner man' by consoling our souls. This, according to Noordmans, is the only difference between the inwardness of the Christian, and of humanity at large.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. My identity is a mystery that must be revealed. Only in meeting our Maker we encounter our *selves*.
2. Encountering God involves facing his judgment. Galatians 4:8,9: 'Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now ... you know God – or rather are known by God ...'
3. My true identity forms part of an eschatological new creation. 1 Corinthians 13:12: 'now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.'
4. My true identity is located outside myself in Christ crucified and raised from death. I am not 'the master of my fate ... the captain of my soul' (W. E. Henley). 1 Corinthians 6:19f.: 'You are not your own; you were bought at a price.'
5. At the same time my 'only comfort in life and death' is 'that I, with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ who with his precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins ...' (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 1).

76 'De inwendige Mens,' in: *Zondaar en Bedelaar, Verzamelde Werken* 8, Kampen 1980, 88-90.

77 O. Noordmans, 'De idee der persoonlijkheid en de Heilige Geest,' in: *Verzamelde Werken* 4, Kampen 1988, 429; 'Heidegger en Augustinus,' in: *Verzamelde Werken* 4, 399; 'De achtergrond van de Bergrede,' in: *Verzamelde Werken* 2, Kampen 1979, 49.