A Long Arduous Process:

A Discussion of Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough as a Gradual Development

Rather Than a Moment of Sudden Insight

By:

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Abstract

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Abstract: Martin Luther struggled with the problem of how an individual could stand before God. He believed that there was nothing that an individual could do to achieve salvation. This caused Luther much torment. He remained in this troubled state until he rediscovered the meaning of God's righteousness. Some scholars argue that this theological breakthrough occurred in a moment of dramatic illumination at an event known as the Tower Experience. The primary purpose of this thesis is to show that Luther's theological development occurred as a gradual process. Thus, this thesis argues that this breakthrough was not formed instantaneously. This thesis examines Martin Luther's views on salvation and discusses their gradual evolution to further this view.

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Introduction

1. Purpose

Martin Luther struggled with the problem of how an individual could stand before a righteous and demanding God. At first, he believed that God would punish those who failed to meet the requirements of salvation. Luther[1] was unable to believe that his efforts could meet this standard. He believed that there was nothing that an individual could do to please God. Due to this, God's righteousness had become a threat. This caused him torment. Luther remained troubled until he rediscovered the meaning of God's righteousness. Some scholars argue that this rediscovery suddenly occurred at an event known as the 'Tower Experience' (Brecht 227; Kuntz 93; MacColloch, "House Divided" 119; Steinmetz 61). Further, they argue that it was at this precise moment while he studied Romans (1.17) that his theology drastically changed.

The primary purpose of this thesis is to show that Martin Luther's theological insight occurred as a process. The secondary purpose is to argue against the notion that this theological development was formed instantaneously. I have chosen this topic because it is more likely that Luther's theological change occurred as a process rather than as a sudden flash of insight. Although this seems more probable, some scholars continue to make reference to the Tower Experience.

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[1] A distinction must be made here between 'Luther studies' and 'Lutheran studies' as they are not the same thing. The topic of this thesis focuses on 'Luther studies' and thus discusses Martin Luther as an individual; his own personal theological development. It does not focus on 'Lutheran studies' which examines Lutheranism; a branch of Christianity and overall movement in theology. While I very briefly consider the implications of his thought for Reformation theology, the focus is on Luther and his complexities; as he was a key historical figure.

Scholars maintain a variety of perspectives on this topic. For this thesis, I have chosen sources from a number of backgrounds in order to show the variety of opinions and nuances that exist towards the complexities of Luther's development. There are a few main categories of scholars that I have chosen to discuss. First, there is a group of scholars who briefly touch upon the surface of Luther's development. This theological change is usually presented by these scholars in more general terms. Despite this, these scholars often provide references to, but no discussion regarding Luther's experience as a type of conversion[2] or theological breakthrough. Diarmaid MacColloch and Alister McGrath would be examples of such generalist scholars. Although they do provide a good example of the type of popular views that are presented at the undergraduate level, they do not provide sufficient depth for advanced scholarship (MacColloch, "House Divided" 119; McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 73).

Maintaining a similar generalist view, other scholars discuss Luther's theological shift, but do not provide any details on its development. Many of these scholars, such as Martin Brecht, maintain that Luther came to his conclusions[3] about God's righteousness in a sudden flash of insight (227). Apart from its sudden occurrence, these generalists discuss no developmental details whether prior to or after the experience.

Second, there are scholars who provide more than a general view and do in fact discuss Luther's theological development in more detail. Although these scholars, such as Richard Marius, provide some nuance, they continue to overlook major developmental

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[2] It is an interesting point to note that the emphasis on an 'instantaneous conversion experience,' seems to be of primary interest to Anglo-Saxon scholars, particularly American evangelical scholars. Teutonic scholarship does not maintain this same emphasis.

[3] However, Luther would never attribute this discovery to his own personal achievements, but would have insisted that these insights came from God.

complexities (195). Charles Mee and Jonathan Trigg, may emphasize the significance of the Tower Experience as the moment of a theological shift, but also maintain that this insight took time to develop (Mee 118; Trigg 113). In this way, these scholars provide a more nuanced explanation than the mere generalists view, but still do not completely explore the series of complex theological developments.

There is a third group of scholars who in fact provide a much detailed account. For example, Heiko Oberman and Jaroslav Pelikan provide a much more detailed explanation of Luther's developmental complexities. These gradualist scholars take Luther's experience into context and consider his theological change as a series of elaborate stages.

This thesis does not focus on the gradualist scholars that provide such a detailed account as they support a developmental approach and are obviously aware of a complex theological evolution. Rather, this thesis focuses on generalists and the slightly more nuanced scholars. Unlike the scholars who hold to a gradualist view of a theological change, these other scholars have a tendency to miss the complexities. This thesis argues that these nuances need to be discussed further in order to show the overall complexities of Luther's theological evolution. These complexities are important for understanding Luther as a key figure in the history of Western Protestantism. Further, this thesis argues that these complexities should be explored even at an undergraduate level.

I argue that Luther's theological change cannot be located in a specific time nor a place and that it evolved steadily from one stage to the next. This view is valuable because it discusses the complexities of this theological change in terms of a process.

Therefore, it provides more depth to the research that has been conducted on this subject.

The 'Tower Experience,' is a phrase that is used to summarize this theological shift.

Simplifying this shift misses these complexities. It ignores that this doctrine was

developed in light of Luther's own theological and personal struggles. This phrase: 'the

Tower Experience,' provides a superficial way of glossing over a more complicated

event.

Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to take these complexities into account. I will

accomplish this by showing that a gradual process occurred in Luther's theological

change. This change will be shown by observing the evolution of his views on salvation.

This will demonstrate that, because Martin Luther's theology shifted from one position to

another, his understanding of salvation was not formed all at one time. Therefore, it must

have occurred as a process.

1.1 Overview of Chapter One and Two

The first chapter will provide context for the more detailed work to follow. Chapter

one begins with a discussion of the underlying themes of justification. This section begins

with a description of theological themes that underlie justification. Unless otherwise

stated, it should be understood that the themes and biblical interpretations referenced are

representative of the Western, Reformed Protestant tradition. The first theme is the Fall

of humanity. Even before Luther, the traditional Christian understanding of the biblical

narrative was that the result Fall included many consequences specifically the emergence

of sin (Augustine, "Nature of Grace" 3**;** *New Revised Standard Version*, Rom. 5.12).[4]

These consequences disrupted the relationship between God and humanity. This caused

alienation. In order to patch this relationship, grace was needed. Therefore, grace is the

second theme addressed. In the tradition that I am discussing, grace is understood as a

free gift that is given through Christ for redemption (Rom. 5.8). As the redemption

through Christ is another important theme, I also discuss it. These themes are important

to note as they are foundational to justification itself.

However, justification has not always been a topic of agreement. This chapter will

then provide a historical example of such contention. Specifically, I discuss the Pelagian

Controversy. This debate was primarily about how an individual could obtain salvation

(Braaten, "Mother Church" 68; Pelikan, "The Christian Tradition" 314). Pelagius argued

that individuals were capable of achieving their own salvation through their works. In

contrast, Augustine of Hippo argued that individuals were unable to meet these standards

and therefore required divine intervention (Augustine, "Nature of Grace" 3; Gristch and

Jensen 46; Pelikan, "The Christian Tradition" 308; Pelagius, "Letter to Demetrias*"*

1110). Luther derived pieces of his soteriological views from these understandings

(Erikson 90; Pelikan, "Christian Intellectual" 95). Thus, this controversy is important to

discuss because it provides a deeper explanation of some of the soteriological views that

Luther once held (Braaten, "Principles of Lutheran Theology" 52; Oberman,

"Forerunners of the Reformation" 21; Pelikan, "History the Development of Doctrine"

35).

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[4] All biblical references are from the New Revised Standard Version.

This chapter further provides a definition of justification by examining its terminology, as well as the nature and history of the doctrine. Luther developed much of his theology in light of Paul and Augustine's thought. Considering this, this section details how these two writers understood justification (Gristch and Jensen 40; McKim 508; Richardson and Bowden 507). Paul emphasized a free justification (Braaten, "Principles of Lutheran Theology" 77; McFarland, "Justification"; Romans 3:24; 5:1-9). Augustine maintained a similar approach. These writers argued that it is not through works, but it is by God's grace that an individual becomes justified (Augustine, "On Spirit and the Letter" 45; Eph. 2.8; Vanhoozer 417).

Chapter one will have provided a brief understanding of the terms needed to comprehend Luther's theological development, it moves to consider historical context. This chapter further focuses on the historical confusion surrounding the doctrine of justification. The rise of humanism and Universities led to the emergence of number of new soteriological questions (Braaten, "Mother Church" 21; Dixon 53; Gritsch, "History of Lutheranism" 88; Pelikan, "History of the Development of Doctrine" 68; Jensen, "Systematic Theology" 232). However, the Church was unable to answer these questions (Dixon 53; McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 91). This had created much doctrinal pluralism (Dixon 53; Gritsch, "History of Lutheranism" 88). What was Catholic dogma and what was considered theological opinion was unclear (McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 22; Pelikan, "History of the Development of Doctrine" 11; Jensen, "Systematic Theology" 232). This caused confusion. It was within this context of confusion and

uncertainty that Luther emerged and developed his own theology (Pelikan, "History of the Development of Doctrine" 12; 68).

The purpose of Chapter two is to discuss the evolution of Luther's view. This will show that his theological development occurred as a gradual process. To show Luther's early views, chapter two begins with a discussion of his nominalist influences (Bagchi 24; Oberman, "Forerunners of the Reformation" 21). Chapter two provides a brief discussion of his academic and priestly career as it was during this time that Luther was exposed to this theological opinion (Cameron 173; Erikson 87; Gristch 5; Marius 35; Mullet 33). Despite this exposure, Luther questioned the nominalist understanding of salvation (Atkinson 71; Cameron 170; Erikson 37; Lindberg 65; McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 96; Mee 115; Pelikan, "Christian Intellectual" 94). This compelled him to reconsider how an individual achieves salvation (Cameron 170; Erikson 24; Janz 11; Oberman, "Luther" 112). Luther believed that it was impossible for an individual to please God (Lindberg 69; LW 26: 173; Erikson 202; Pelikan, "Christian Intellectual" 94). This caused him to hate the demanding, righteous God (LW 34: 336; McKim 5; Mee 110). For Luther, God had become a threat and Christ had become a stern judge. This caused him much terror (Erikson 24; Gritsch 11; LW 8: 188; Mee 110). The terror and anxiety that surrounded Luther as he tried to discover how an individual achieves salvation redirected his theology. Importantly, it led Luther to seek help (Atkinson 67; Lindberg 65). Help had first come from Johann von Staupitz. The conversations and the consolation that Luther received from Staupitz had ultimately encouraged him to reformulate his theology. This, once again, redirected Luther's theological development

and had provided him with a new theological perspective (Chadwick 84; Erikson 17;

Levine 371; Lindberg 69; LW 48: 65-66; Mee 114; Pettegree 17). However, this new

perspective had not completely eased Luther's anxieties (Lindberg 65; Luther, "Preface

to Latin Works" 1545; Mee 115). He required further confirmation (Luther, "Preface to

Latin Works" 1545; Mee 116). Luther found this confirmation throughout Augustine's

writings since he had shared this perspective as well (Fitzgerald and Cavadini 482;

Luther, "Preface to Latin Works" 1545; McCormack 57). This confirmation rejuvenated

Luther's confidence (LW 22: 9). This compelled him to continue to formulate his

theology (Dosenrode 150; Trigg 129). This led Luther to believe that individuals were

unable to please God (LW 26: 173; Pelikan, "Christian Intellectual" 95). Therefore, God

had to provide what was necessary for salvation (Hill 185; Luther, "Treatise on Christian

Liberty" 332). It was through redemption and a faith in Christ that an individual could

become justified (Greengrass 235; Lindberg 71; Luther, "On Translating an Open Letter"

15-22; McFarland, "Justification"). This new theology had been drastically different from

Luther's earlier soteriological views (Dosenrode 150; Luther, "Preface to Latin Works"

1545). This thesis intends to show the complexities and length of his theological

development. While some scholars maintain that this happened suddenly, I contend that

Luther's theological development occurred slowly, as a process, and not all at one time.

Chapter One

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the doctrine of justification. I also provide a brief examination of the historical context from which Martin Luther emerged. Luther's theological development will be expanded upon in later chapters. The purpose of this chapter is merely to lay a foundation for the more detailed work to follow. This chapter then will discuss the underlying theological themes of justification. These biblical explanations will be presented within the context of the Reformed Protestant tradition and do not reflect universal interpretations. As these themes are foundational, it is best to start with a discussion of these themes. I will then continue with an explanation of justification by discussing its brief history. This section begins with a discussion of the Fall.

1.1 The Fall of Humanity

According to the western Christian tradition, the 'Fall,' is understood to have originated from the story in the third chapter of the book of Genesis (Gen. 3.1-24). This narrative is built upon the creation story that is found in the second chapter of Genesis. This story describes Adam and Eve as the first of the human race and thus the ancestors of all humanity. Genesis explains that Adam and Eve were tempted to eat from the Tree of Knowledge despite having been warned against it (Gen. 3.1-7). Thus, in the traditional Christian understanding, the Fall is also a term used to describe this first act of disobedience to God's commands (Rom. 5.12).

1.2 Consequence of the Fall, Disrupted Relationship and Sin

This disobedience had its consequences (Gen. 3.3-13; 14-19). It was because of this

disobedience that Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden. This meant that

they forfeited the ideal existence that was provided to them (Gen. 3.23). The Western

Reform tradition taught that as Adam and Eve were the ancestors of humanity, the

narrative of the Fall also details the descent of the entire human race into a corrupt

condition (Braaten, "Principles of Lutheranism" 118; Bromiley 135; Cameron 112;

Gritsch, "Fortress Introduction to Lutheranism" 98; O'Collins 88; Pelikan, "Melody of

Theology" 16; Richardson and Bowden 208). This corrupt condition is understood as sin

(Rom. 5.12). Therefore, sin is not a result of God's design, but rather a result of human

frailty (Kittel, Friedrich, and Bromiley 485; O'Collins 87; Richardson and Bowden 209).

Early Christian interpretations of the Fall focused on this descent into sin. These

interpretations noted that this descent meant that sin could not have been inherent to

humanity (LW 37: 161-372; Pelikan, "Melody of Theology" 16). For example, the

writings of Paul focus on this very notion. Specifically, he points to the act of

disobedience to explain the origins of sin (Rom. 5.12-14).

Many early Christian writers did not go beyond this interpretation (Bomiley 135). It

was not until Augustine and the Pelagius Controversy that the theology of the Fall had

become focused on more centrally (McFarland, "Fall"). Augustine argued that the effects

of the Fall were serious. It was not a simple weakening of human capacities. Rather, sin

turned the individual away from God (Augustine, "Nature of Grace" 3). According to

Augustine, this made individuals unable to enter into a relationship with God (Bromiley

135; Eph. 2.1-3; Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling 50; McKim, "Westminster Dictionary" 101; Rom. 3.23). For example, Adam and Eve were originally intended to have a relationship with God, but sin caused them to turn away. This caused alienation and a loss of relationship (Gen. 3.24; Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling 50; McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 89; McFarland, "Fall"; McKim, "Westminster Dictionary" 101; Rom. 5.10). Something then was required to be brought back into a relationship with God. Furthermore, something was needed to rescue sinners from their hopelessly corrupt condition (Eph. 2.4-10; Gal. 5.17-21). That 'something,' was grace which was given through Jesus' death, which redeems and justifies (Braaten, "Justification" 87; McFarland, "Grace").

1.3 Grace

There are many theological interpretations of grace, but I will only touch upon the ones that are relevant for my discussion on Martin Luther. As previously mentioned, the Reformed Protestant tradition is the interpretation on which this thesis focuses.

Some biblical scholarship supports a contention that the word 'grace,' appears in the Bible with connotations of divine favour (Gassmann, Larson, and Oldenburg 131; Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling 56; Luke 1.28; McKim 121; O'Collins 98). It can also be seen to refer specifically to a free and unmerited gift (Braaten, "Mother Church" 21; 1 Cor. 2.12; Kittel, Friedrich, and Bromiley 175; McKim 120; Richardson and Bowden 224; Rom. 8.32; Jensen, "Systematic Theology" 227; Pelikan, "History of the Development of Doctrine" 227). This interpretation of grace is found in many of Paul's writings (Braaten,

"Justification" 87; Gassmann, Larson, and Oldenburg 131; Pelikan, "Acts" 138). Paul wrote that God has given grace as a free gift: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2.8). It is not a type of reward that is earned. For Paul, this gift is given out of favour (2 Cor. 6.1-2; Eph. 1.6; 27; McFarland, "Grace"; Rom. 5.8).

Understanding grace as a free gift is also the interpretation that is found in Augustine's writings (Espín 505; Gassmann, Larson, and Oldenburg 131; Pelikan, "Growth of Medieval Theology" 25): "What then is the merit of man before grace by which merit he should receive grace? Since only grace makes every good merit of ours, and when God crowns our merits, He crowns nothing else but His own gifts" (Augustine, "Nature of Grace" 15).

In other selections of Augustine's writings this also becomes clear: "How, moreover, could these things now be awarded … unless the other had been before given as a free gift?" (Augustine, "Nature of Grace" 14).

Augustine emphasized that this free gift is a type of promise (Pelikan, "Growth of Medieval Theology" 25). Augustine used the parable of the workers in the vineyard to further this point.[5] He compared the story of the workers to the promise that God has made to humanity. For Augustine, sinners had no claim to salvation. However, through the promises of God, they received it as a gift. Like the workers, not all had equal claim to the same wage. Despite this, the promises of God provided them with it.

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5 Reference to Matthew 20.1-16.

Luther used both Paul and Augustine's teachings. Thus, he maintained a similar understanding: "Grace signifies that favour with which God embraces us" (LW 12).

Early Christian interpretations described that this favour rests on Jesus. It was through Jesus that grace was transferred to all of humanity. This enacted the process of salvation (Acts 15.11; Eph. 1.7; Luke 2.40-52; McKim 121; O'Collins 98). Paul emphasized this point further: "The grace of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ" (Rom. 6.23). Although corrupted by the Fall, Paul believed that God's intentions for humanity were being carried out through Christ (Gal. 1.6-9). Paul wrote:

> Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (2 Tim. 1.8-9)

Using the same scripture, Augustine maintained that salvation through Christ was an act of God's grace. Luther also shared this interpretation. He eventually argued that grace was given as a free gift through Jesus (Braaten, "Mother Church" 21): "Grace signifies that favour with which God embraces us in remitting our sins, and justifying us freely

through Christ … The gifts, or free grants are those gifts which are freely bestowed on the believing, by a reconciled God through Christ" (LW 12).

This interpretation of grace is shared by Paul, Augustine and Luther. All three argued that grace is a free, unmerited gift that was given to humanity. For them, this gift of grace was given through Jesus in order for the redemption to occur (Rom. 8.32; Augustine, "Nature of Grace" 24:12; LW 12).

1.4 Redemption Through Christ

Within the Reformed Protestant tradition, redemption through Christ refers to when sinners are 'bought back,' from the bondage of sin and brought back into a relationship with God (Gal. 3.13; Gassmann, Larson, and Oldenburg 283; Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling 100; Kittel, Friedrich, and Bromiley 546; McKim 20). Sinners are 'bought back,' by the 'payment,' of Jesus' death on the cross (Eph. 1.7-8; Kittel, Friedrich, and Bromiley 546; Luke 27-28; Jensen, "Systematic Theology" 73; O'Collins 21).

In the tradition that I am discussing, the word 'redemption,' is often used as a financial metaphor meaning to 'buy back,' or 'to be delivered from bondage,' especially by the payment of a ransom. This word also derives from the Latin meaning 'to redeem' (Bromiley 355; 1 Cor. 6.20; Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling 100; Mark 10.45; McKim 235; Richardson and Bowden 487; Rom. 6.18).

Theologically, it refers to the release from the bondage of sin (Braaten, "Who is Jesus?" 99; Gal. 3.13; Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling 100). This 'release' took place through the payment of Jesus' death, which is one of the traditional Christian metaphors

explaining what happened during 'Holy Week' (Matthew 20.28; McKim 235; Richardson and Bowden 487). This 'payment,' ensures that sinners are brought back into a relationship with God (Gassmann, Larson, and Oldenburg 283; Gal. 1.13; McKim 235; O'Collins 21). This relationship redeems the sinner. This explains why the word 'redemption,' is often used synonymously with: 'salvation,' 'atonement,' forgiveness,' and 'justification' (Gassmann, Larson, and Oldenburg 283; McFarland, "Justification"; O'Collins 21).

This metaphor is found in the New Testament and refers to when Christian believers are understood to have been redeemed from the slavery of sin (DeMoss and Miller, "Redemption"; Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling 100). This has occurred through the payment of Jesus' death on the Cross, according to traditional Christian teachings (Col. 1.14; Eph. 1.7; Kittel, Friedrich, and Bromiley 546; 1 Pet. 1.14-18; Richardson and Bowden 487).

Specifically, this metaphor is found in Paul's letters: "And that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness" (Rom. 6.18; Jensen, "Systematic Theology" 73). Paul further wrote: "And all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3.24).

Augustine also made reference to this financial metaphor. Augustine emphasized the need for redemption and stressed the price of Jesus' death (Pelikan, "History of Development of Doctrine" 47):

Men were held captive under the devil and served the demons, but they were

redeemed from captivity. For they could not sell themselves. The Redeemer came,

and gave the price; He poured forth his blood and bought the whole world. Do you

ask what He bought? See what He gave, and find what He bought. The blood of

Christ is the price. How much is it worth? What but the whole world? What but all

nations? (Augustine, "Exposition on Psalm 95" 5)

As with Paul and Augustine, Luther also carried the metaphor through (Lindberg 95):

Because an eternal, unchangeable sentence of condemnation has passed upon sin—

for God cannot and will not regard sin with favor, but his wrath abides upon it

eternally and irrevocably—redemption was not possible without a ransom of such

precious worth as to atone for sin, to assume the guilt, pay the price of wrath and

thus abolish sin. This no creature was able to do […] and make his own body and

blood a sacrifice for sin. And so he did, out of the immeasurably great mercy and

love towards us, giving himself up and bearing the sentence of unending wrath and

death. (Luther, "Epistle Sermon; Twenty–fourth Sunday After Trinity" 9, 43–45)

Although the ransom metaphor was not a model that Luther often used, he maintained

and affirmed the price of redemption (Pelikan, "Obedient Rebels" 21). Further, Luther

emphasized a joyful exchange which was similar to a marriage (Pelikan, "Obedient

Rebels" 21):

So infinitely precious to God is this sacrifice and atonement of his only begotten

Son who is one with him in divinity and majesty, that God is reconciled thereby

and receives into grace and forgiveness of sins all who believe in his Son. Only by

believing may we enjoy the precious atonement of Christ, the forgiveness obtained

for us and given us out of profound, inexpressible love. We have nothing to boast

of for ourselves, but must ever joyfully thank and praise him who at such priceless

cost redeemed us condemned and lost sinners. (Luther, "Epistle Sermon; Twenty–

fourth Sunday After Trinity" 9, 43–45)

Redemption through Christ is the process by which sinners are 'bought back.'

Reformed Protestant interpretations maintain that this means that Jesus paid the ransom

and would set free sinners from their bondage to sin. This payment would allow sinners

to be brought back into a relationship with God (Rom. 5.12). With this relationship

corrected, the process of salvation could begin. What needed to occur for this process of

salvation was a topic of debate, however. This can be seen with regards to the Pelagian

Controversy.

1.5 Pelagian Controversy

The Pelagian Controversy emerged in the early fifth century (McKim, "Theological

Turning Points" 85). The debate centered on Pelagius and Augustine (Gritsch and Jensen

46; McGrath, "Christianity" 153). The topic of this debate was salvation (Braaten,

"Mother Church" 68; Pelikan, "History of Development of Doctrine" 18). However, the

main point of contention was the role of grace (Braaten, "Mother Church" 68; Pelikan, "Christian Tradition" 314).

Luther held a semi-Pelagian soteriological understanding. Pelagius influenced Ockham who later influenced Luther (Erikson 90; Oberman, "Forerunners of the Reformation" 21; Pelikan, "History of the Development of Doctrine" 35). Luther also adopted an Augustinian framework later in his life (Braaten, "Principles of Lutheranism" 52; Pelikan, "Christian Intellectual" 95). Thus, this debate is important to discuss.

1.6 Pelagius

Pelagius argued that grace was given to humanity at birth (Braaten and Jenson 335). This instilled humanity with an inherent free choice (Gritsch and Jensen 46; Gonzalez 32): "We have within us a free will which is so strong and steadfast to resist sin, a free will which the Creator implanted in human nature universally" (Augustine, "On the Grace of Christ" 29; 2, 14). This free choice meant that the individual was responsible to exercise this choice towards the good:

> Everything good and everything evil, in respect of which we are either worthy of praise or of blame, is *done by us*, not *born with us*. We are not born in full development, but with a capacity for good and evil; we are begotten as well without virtue as without vice, and before the activity of our own personal will there is nothing in man but what God has stored in him. (Augustine, "On the Grace of Christ" 29; 2, 14)

Human responsibility was central for Pelagius and his theology (Pelikan, "Christian Tradition" 313). Every sinful act was a result of individual free choice and a deliberate act of the will (Gritsch and Jensen 46; McFarland, "Pelagianism"). Pelagius even rejected the idea that the Fall had created a corrupt condition of sin (Braaten and Jenson 32): "There is no congenital evil in us, and we are begotten without fault; and before the exercise of a man's own will there is nothing in him except what God has created" (Augustine, "On the Grace of Christ" 29; 2, 14).

Pelagius further denied the connection between Adam's sin and the sinful actions of his descendents: "That Adam was made mortal, and that he would have died, whether he sinned or did not sin; that Adam's sin injured himself alone, and not the human race […] the entire human race does not die on account of Adam's death and transgression" (Augustine, "On the Grace of Christ" 12, 9).

Pelagius maintained that it was only Adam's sin. This meant that it did not affect or condemn other generations (Bromiley 924). Rather, individuals are faced with the same choice that Adam faced; between sin and perfection (Pelikan, "Christian Tradition" 308). In this way, Adam merely transferred to his descendants the tendency to sin. Pelagius used Romans to further support this view (McFarland, "Pelagianism"): "Just as sin came into the world through one man […]" (Rom. 5.12).

Pelagius emphasized this rejection further by asserting that humanity had been given the tools by God to assure its own salvation (Espín 1018):

We ascribe to the God of knowledge the guilt of twofold ignorance; ignorance of his own creation and of his own commands. As if, forgetting the weakness of men, his own creation, he had laid upon men commands which they were unable to bear. And at the same time (God forgive us!) we ascribe to the Just One unrighteousness and cruelty to the Holy One; the first, by complaining that he has commanded by him for what he could not help; so that (the blasphemy of it!) God is thought of as seeking our punishment rather than our salvation … No one knows the extent of our strength better than he who gave us that strength … He has not willed to command anything impossible, for he is righteous; and he will not condemn a man for what he could not help, for he is holy. (Pelagius, "Letter to Demetrias" 16; 33, 1110)

Pelagius gave no excuse to those who argued that there is an inherent weakness in humanity and argued that God would not have made salvation an impossible task:

… Instead of regarding the commands of our illustrious King as a privilege … we cry out at God, in the scornful sloth of our hearts, and say, 'This is too hard and difficult. We cannot do it. We are only human, and hindered by the weakness of the flesh.' Blind folly and presumptuous blasphemy! (Pelagius, "Letter to Demetrias" 16; 33, 1110)

Due to this, individuals could have an effect on their own salvation and could choose to be saved by their actions (Espín 1018; Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling 89; Pelikan, "Christian Tradition" 308; Richardson and Bowden 245):

> We distinguish three things and arrange them in a definite order. We put in the first place '*posse*' [possibility]; in the second, '*velle*' [volition]; in the third, '*esse*' [existence, actuality]. The *posse* we assign to nature, the *velle* to will, the *esse* to actual realization. The first of these, *posse*, is properly ascribed to God, who conferred it on his creatures; while the other two, *velle* and *esse*, are to be referred to the human agent, since they have their source in his will. (Augustine, "The Grace of Christ and On Original Sin, 418)

Therefore, human actions are the result of the free will. They carried with them the ability to achieve salvation without God's grace (Pelikan, "Development of Christian Doctrine" 74):

> Therefore man's praise lies in his willing and doing a good work; or rather this praise belongs both to man and to God who has granted the passivity of willing and working, and who by the help of his grace ever assists this very possibility. That a man has this possibility of willing and effecting any good work is due to God alone … Therefore (and this must be often repeated because of your calumnies), when we say that it is possible for a man to be without sin, we are even then praising God by

acknowledging the gift of possibility which we have received. He it is that

bestowed this *posse* on us, and there is no occasion for praising the human agent

when we are treating of God alone; for the question is not about *velle* or *esse*, but

solely about the possible. (Augustine, "The Grace of Christ and On Original Sin,

418)

The central problem for Pelagius was that Augustine's theology relied too heavily on

God's grace. For Pelagius, this threatened human responsibility and the freedom of

choice (Pelagius, "Letter to Demetrias" 16; 33, 1110). Augustine formed his theology in

opposition to Pelagius' ideas (Espín 1018; McFarland, "Pelagianism"; Pelikan, "Christian

Tradition" 308).

1.7 Augustine

Augustine argued that the effects of the Fall were more extreme. It did not simply

increase the susceptibility to sin, but resulted in every action becoming inherently sinful

(Gritsch and Jensen 46; Forde, "On Being a Theologian" 54; McFarland, "Fall"):

A man's free choice avails only to lead him to sin, if the way of truth be hidden

from him. And when it is plain to him what he should do and to what he should

aspire, even then, unless he feel delight and live therein, he does not perform his

duty, not undertake it, nor attain to the good life. (Augustine, "On the Spirit and the

Letter" 412)

Augustine argued that individuals were rendered incapable of redeeming themselves because they were trapped by sin: "Truly the nature of man was created blameless and without any vice; but that nature of man, with which each is born of Adam, now needs a physician because it is not healthy…" (Augustine, "Nature of Grace" 3, 3).

On account of this, it was impossible to enter into a relationship with God (Bromiley 135; Eph. 2.1-3; Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling 50; McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 89). Humanity was unable to do so through its own resources (McKim, "Westminster Dictionary" 101; Rom. 3.23). Augustine believed that grace was a needed resource to help humanity take the necessary steps towards sanctification (Augustine, "On the Spirit and the Letter" 15; Pelikan, "Christian Tradition" 308): "Well, then, they come short of the glory of God; […] they are justified freely by His grace […] that grace may heal its infirmity; and that our healed will may fulfill the law" (Augustine, "On the Spirit and the Letter" 15, 11).

Augustine believed that humanity required God's grace because it could not achieve salvation without it (Gritsch and Jensen 46; McFarland, "Grace"): "This grace of Christ, without which neither infants nor aged can be made whole" (Augustine, "The Nature of Grace" 3-4).

From this it is clear that Augustine denied Pelagius' theology. He argued against the idea of achieving salvation through one's free choice and the ability to do so without God's resources (Pelikan, "Christian Tradition" 313): "But to the end that we may feel this affection 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts' not 'through the free choice

which springs from ourselves,' but 'through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us"

(Augustine, "On the Spirit and the Letter" 412).

Therefore, Augustine emphasized that grace was necessary for salvation:

> But this grace of Christ, […] is not paid for merits, but is given gratis [out of
> kindness]; and for this reason is termed 'grace'. As the apostle says, 'Being
> justified freely through his blood, wherefore those who are not by this means set
> free (either because they have not yet been able to hear, or because they refused to
> obey, or even because, when by reason of age they could not hear, they received
> not the washing of regeneration which the might have received and been saved), are
> certainly righteously condemned; since they are not without sin, either that which
> they derived from their birth, or that which they added by their evil lived. 'For all
> have sinned' (either in Adam or in themselves), and need the glory of God.
> (Augustine, "The Nature of Grace" 4)

1.8 Faith Versus Works

From the discussion above, it can be seen that the Pelagian Controversy had one main

point of disagreement. Pelagius argued that good works are what is required for an

individual to become righteous, thus becoming justified – salvation by merit. Augustine's

stance was that faith alone is what was needed to become justified – salvation by grace.

The previous section discussed the consequence of the Fall. Paul, Augustine and

Luther argued that grace was required to correct this broken relationship (Augustine,

"The Nature of Grace" 14; 2 Cor. 6.1-2; LW 12). Out of favour, God's grace was given to humanity as a free gift. This gift was given through Christ by the process of redemption.

However, the role of grace and the process of redemption was a subject of debate. One point of contention between Pelagius and Augustine was how an individual could become justified. Pelagius argued that individuals were capable of achieving their own salvation. By contrast, Augustine argued that individuals were so engulfed by sin that they needed God's resources.

The previous section of the chapter alluded to the definition of justification, but it will be in this next section that it will be more closely defined.

1.9 Justification

The doctrine of justification by faith was considered to be a main hinge on which religion turned. Luther placed much emphasis on this doctrine calling it the, "Master and prince, the Lord, the ruler and judge over all kinds of doctrines" (LW 2: 32). Jaroslav Pelikan expanded the idea that it is, "the doctrine by which the Church stands or falls," by noting that it was considered by both Protestant and their Catholic adversaries as the core point of separation[6] between them (Braaten, "Mother Church" 21; Gritsch and Jensen 36; Rusch and Lindbeck, "Justification" 15; Pelikan, "Melody of Theology" 143). The basis of the doctrine of justification is, of course, Biblical (McFarland, "Justification").

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[6] On October 31st, 1990, after long ecumenical dialogue, the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification was signed by the Catholic Church's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation to signify that a common ground had been reached (Rusch and Lindbeck 16).

The word 'justification,' stems from the Greek verb: 'to justify.' It is also similar to the Hebrew word meaning primarily: 'to acquit,' or 'to declare righteous' (Gritsch and Jensen 59; Kittel, Friedrich, and Bromiley 175; Vanhoozer 416). Pelikan noted that apart from a single appearance[7] in the Gospels, the verb: 'to justify,' is mainly found in Paul's writings (Gassmann, Larson, and Oldenburg 164; Pelikan, "Melody of Theology" 143). The theme of justification is specifically developed in two of Paul's letters: Romans and Galatians (Erhman 514; Gassman, Larson, and Oldenburg 164; McFarland, "Justification"; Pelikan, "Melody of Theology" 143; Rom. 1.16; 5; 21).

In these letters, Paul addressed the situation in history when Christianity expanded beyond its original Jewish origins. In this case, the act of circumcision as obedience to the law was questioned. Paul emphasized a free justification that was not based on the works of the law (Braaten, "Principles of Lutheranism" 77). Rather, it was based on trust in God's promises to reckon an individual righteous through their faith (Gal. 2.16-17; McFarland, "Justification"; Rom. 3.24).

Interpretations within the Reformed Protestant tradition maintain that the type of justification that is found in Paul's writings refers to an action of God (Gassman, Larson, and Oldenburg 164). It is God who justifies and it is humanity that is the recipient of this act (Espín 695; McFarland, "Justification"). For Luther, justification did two things. First, it referred to the remission of sins whereby the guilt of the sin is removed. Second, it involved the imputation of Christ's righteousness (Luther, "Commentary on Galatians" 149-150).

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[7] Reference to Luke 18.14.

Luther's understanding reflected Paul's thoughts since he also spoke of imputed righteousness (Gal. 3.6; Gritsch and Jensen 40; McKim 508; Richardson and Bowden 507). Imputation means to attribute to someone the righteousness of another (O'Collins 117). The imputation of Christ's righteousness is considered to be God's action by which the righteousness of Christ is bestowed on individual sinners through their faith (Bagchi and Steinmetz 239; Luther, "Commentary on Galatians" 129-132; McKim 140; O'Collins 117). Sharing this view, Luther wrote: "Through faith in Christ, therefore, Christ's righteousness becomes our righteousness and all that he has becomes ours; rather, he himself becomes ours" (Luther, "Two Kinds of Righteousness" 156–158).

Luther maintained that this righteousness belongs to Christ alone. The sinner in no way can claim possession or credit for this righteousness (O'Collins 117). In his later years, Luther maintained that righteousness was given to sinners apart from works and was received by faith alone (Braaten, "Mother Church" 21; Gritsch, "History of Lutheranism" 112; Luther, "Commentary on Galatians" 149-150; McKim 140). This was to contrast the Catholic view that righteousness could be obtained elsewhere; through works (Braaten, "Justification" 106). Luther's understanding opposed the type of justification that held humanity accountable for its own salvation through fulfillment of the law (Erhman 514).

Since righteousness is bestowed it is considered to be an external or alien righteousness, according to Luther (McKim 140). This is given to sinners by God's grace (Luther, "Two Kinds of Righteousness" 156-158). For Luther, the doctrine of justification linked together God, humanity and Christ (Pelikan, "Obedient Rebels" 48).

Since God's righteousness is attributed to the sinner through Christ, the individual is able to stand before God 'acquitted,' with the status of righteous (Braaten, "Mother Church" 90; McKim 508; O'Collins 117; Richardson and Bowden 507).

Therefore, the word 'justification,' refers to when God makes an individual acceptable by removing their sins, according to the Reform Protestant tradition. These individuals are then made righteous through the imputation of Christ's righteousness on account of their faith alone (Bagchi and Steinmetz 239; McFarland, "Justification"; O'Collins 130).

However, this overall theme of justification gathered little attention from the early Church, especially during the second to the fourth century. It was not until the fourth century, when Augustine debated with Pelagius that it became more prevalent (Vanhoozer 417). Augustine understood that justification did not simply refer to a 'not guilty,' verdict. Rather it referred to the declaration that would make a person righteous by God's grace, not by works of the law:

> Now he [Paul] could not mean to contradict himself in saying, "The doers of the law shall be justified," as if their justification came through their works, and not through grace; since he declares that a man is justified freely by His grace without the works of the law, intending by the term " freely" nothing else than that works do not precede justification. (Augustine, "On the Spirit and Letter" 45)

This is further shown when Augustine discussed one of the key passages of Romans: "For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the

law who will be justified" (Rom. 2.13). Further, Romans states: "For 'no human being will be justified in his sight' by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3.20).

Augustine recognized that 'justified,' here meant to 'held to be righteous,' or to be 'accounted righteous.' Augustine wrote (Vanhoozer 417):

> For in another passage he expressly says, "If by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace."[Rom. 11.6] But the statement that "the doers of the law shall be justified" must be so understood, as that we may know that they are not otherwise doers of the law, unless they are justified, so that justification does not subsequently accrue to them as doers of the law, but justification precedes them as doers of the law. For what else does the phrase "being justified" signify than being made righteous—by Him […] But when the allegation is, "The doers of the law shall be justified," what else does it mean than that the just shall be justified? (Augustine, "On the Spirit and the Letter" 45)

Luther developed much of his theology in light of Augustine's framework. Due to this, he embraced a similar understanding of justification (Braaten, "Mother Church" 3). Luther understood that justification made individuals 'justified,' or 'accepted,' as righteous by God (Luther, "Preface to Latin Works" 1545). For Luther, this occurred because of the righteousness of Christ which had been reckoned through his death

(McFarland, "Justification"). It was thereby attributed to humanity which occurred apart from works (LW 54: 442; Vanhoozer 417).

To further emphasize the distinction between faith and works the phrase: 'by faith alone,' was added (Braaten, "Mother Church" 21; Lindberg 71). This phrase refers to the idea that sinners are 'made acceptable' through God's righteousness (Erhman 514). This occurs when they trust in the effects of Christ's death rather than by solely completing the works of the law (Luther, "Treatise on Christian Liberty" 2, 332; O'Collins 130; Vanhoozer 417). However, this does not mean that works are unnecessary. Rather they do not begin justification. It is not by good works, yet is not without good works (Luther, "Treatise on Christian Liberty" 344; Vanhoozer 417). Luther insisted that even the greatest works would fall short of the glory of God and that a Christian would then remain at the same time righteous and a sinner (LW 25: 260; Rom. 3.23).

The last section provided a brief description of the terms interpreted within the Reform Protestant tradition that were needed in order to understand Luther's development of the doctrine of justification. I also provided some historical context. In the next section, I will discuss why there was confusion at this point in time surrounding the doctrine as it is relevant to the historical context in which Luther developed his own theology.

2. Doctrinal Pluralism and Justification

The theme of justification gathered little attention from the early Church (Vanhoozer 417). However, the rise of humanism led to the emergence of new questions regarding

salvation (Braaten, "Mother Church" 21; McGrath, "Christianity" 154). Humanism emerged from the Renaissance period and strove to re-order society (Espín 592). It was during this time that a tension began between the demand to be faithful to God and to affirm the secular human life (Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling 61; McKim 134; O'Collins 111; Taylor 80). Human agency, apart from God, was also emphasized by this rise (McKim 134; Taylor 80; O'Collins 111). As well, personal salvation became a central question for the individual – one example of the questions that emerged in regards to salvation at the 16th century (Braaten, "Mother Church" 21).

However, the institution of the Church was unable or hesitated to choose an answer. This is not to suggest that the Church had been satisfied with statements made prior on the matter. As early as 418, the Church attempted to evaluate similar questions with the Council of Carthage, but was unsuccessful. In 529, the Second Council of Orange discussed more detailed proposals; however, it remained unsuccessful (McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 91). Therefore, there was a lack of an authoritative statement from the Church on the subject for over a thousand years. It was unclear what the teachings of the Church were concerning what an individual must do in order to be saved (Dixon 53; McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 91).

This was more of a problem during the medieval period because it was a time of growth, especially for universities (McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 22). This growth allowed for more academic debate (Pelikan, "History of the Development of Doctrine" 68). Since there were no definitive teachings of the Church, the subject of justification became such a topic of debate (Dixon 53; Gritsch, "History of Lutheranism" 88; Jensen,

"Systematic Theology" 232). In other words, what was theological opinion and what was considered Catholic dogma? Everyone had their own interpretation and no one agreed with anyone enough to have a clearly defined doctrine (McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 91; Pelikan, "History of the Development of Doctrine" 11-12). Due to this, this period experienced much doctrinal pluralism (Pelikan, "History of the Development of Doctrine" 68).

It was this historical context of confusion from which Luther emerged with his own confusion and uncertainty. This was a catalyst for his own formulation of Christian thought and doctrine (Pelikan, "History of the Development of Doctrine" 68). Thus, this doctrinal pluralism would set the stage for the Reformation (Pelikan, "History of the Development of Doctrine" 12).

2.1 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter first began with a discussion of the underlying themes of the doctrine of justification to lay some foundation work for the more detailed work to follow. The first theme I discussed was the Fall. The consequence of this was sin. God's grace was needed to begin the process of redemption (Augustine, "Nature of Grace"14; 2 Cor. 6.1-2; LW 12; Richardson and Bowden 487). However, this was a subject of much debate as seen with the Pelagian Controversy.

This chapter also examined the doctrine of justification by discussing the Reformed Protestant interpretation of the terminology, as well as the nature and history of the doctrine. As well, the rise of humanism along with the rise of universities, brought with it

new questions regarding salvation. This also brought doctrinal pluralism. The Church

was unable to confidently answer these questions and this led to a situation of doctrinal

confusion. The next chapter will expand further on Luther's reflections and the

consequences of their expansion.

Chapter Two

1. Introduction

This chapter will first focus on the Augustinian and Nominalist elements that influenced Martin Luther and his early views on salvation. Since Luther's early views on salvation fit into these frameworks they are important to discuss. An examination of these views will show that there was a gradual theological change from this earlier position to another. This will show that Luther's theological development did not occur during a moment of dramatic illumination, as many scholars maintain. Rather, this theological change likely evolved steadily over time.

To answer why this theological change occurred, it is important to discuss both the key historical events during Luther's life and to also examine what influenced him. Although Luther was influenced by other factors such as his friendships, it is mainly through his academic career that Luther was affected by these frameworks. Therefore, I refer to Luther's academic and priestly career as it is mainly through these avenues that he was exposed to a great deal of thinkers. This discussion will provide a background as to how Luther was influenced by nominalism and Augustine's thought. Having been exposed to these traditions, Luther developed his theology mainly within these frameworks (Cameron 173; Marius 35).

1.1 Luther's Career

Although obvious it is still worth mentioning that throughout Luther's academic career he was exposed to and influenced by a number of mainstream intellectual positions of the

day, such as nominalist and Augustinian thought (Oberman, "Luther" 122). A brief

outline of this career will show how and where he came into contact with those ideas.

Luther's academic career began at the age of eighteen (Cameron 168). Despite his

religious vocation, he remained in the academy throughout much of his life (Erikson 24;

80-86; Hill 175; Marius 33). In 1501, Luther entered into the University of Erfurt where

he studied arts in order to prepare himself for law school (Erikson 24; Mullet 25). In

1502, he was awarded his Bachelors degree. In 1505, Luther experienced a frightening

moment during a lightening storm and vowed that if he lived through it, he would

become a monk (Hill 175; Mullet 27). In that same year, Luther became a monk in the

Augustinian[8] order (Gritsch 6). At this same time, he also obtained a Masters degree at

Erfurt (Mullet 26; 33). In 1507, Luther was ordained as a priest and began to teach and

study theology as his friend Johann von Staupitz had suggested (Cameron 170; Chadwick

88; McKim 7). In 1512, Luther obtained a Doctorate of Theology, and permanently

moved to the University of Wittenberg to teach (Cameron 170; Chadwick 89; Erikson 24;

McKim 24).

Luther's immersion in the academy exposed him to nominalism; a theory which he

embraced at an early stage of his career (Wicks 20). Luther was educated at the

University of Erfurt and it was here that he first encountered nominalism (Bagchi 34;

Cameron 173; Oberman, "Luther" 118). The university was then dominated by this

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[8] According to Dennis Janz, Gorden Rupp and Heiko Oberman, there is no doubt that Luther was exposed and trained as a nominalist in Erfurt, but the implications of this training are contested and still under much debate (Janz 11; Rupp 90; Oberman, "Luther" 120). Furthermore, scholars question whether there was a link between Luther's academic training and his decision for monastic life. Specifically, Roman Catholic Luther scholars have seen a connection here and argue that it was because of Erfurt nominalism that Luther became a member of the Augustinian order so quickly. However, Oberman argues that there was nothing about nominalism itself that directed him towards the monastic life. (Oberman, "Luther" 122).

method of teaching (Erikson 87; Gristch 5; Janz 7; Marius 35; Oberman, "Luther" 118).

Luther studied under the influence of many professors who were committed to

nominalism, specifically at the University of Erfurt (Gristch 5; Holmes 431; Oberman,

"Luther" 118; Rupp 87). For example, Luther's professors Bartholomaeus Arnoldi von

Usingen and Jodocus Trutvetter were both strong followers of the nominalist tradition

(Cameron 170; Erikson 88; Mullet 33; Oberman, "Luther" 118). This influence led

Luther to have an education that was thoroughly nominalist and this made him, 'an eager

student of the tradition shaped by Ockham' (Bagchi 34; Oberman, "Forerunners of the

Reformation" 21). This probably explains why Luther proudly gave Ockham the status of

Master (Bagchi 34; Cameron 170; Oberman, "Luther" 120): "My master Ockham was the

greatest dialectician" (LW 48: 162; Mullet 33; Ozment 238; Thompson 65). However, as

Oberman states: "He [Luther] showed himself to be a child of the new times," by adding:

"But it must be admitted that he could not formulate elegantly" (LW 48: 162; Oberman,

"Luther" 120). Despite this, Eric Erikson argues that in Luther's early years, he was

exposed to nominalism so much that: "Occamism was all that Luther had" (90).

Many scholars[9] have argued that aspects of Luther's thought arose specifically from

being rooted in the nominalist tradition. Heiko Oberman takes this view even further. He

argues that Luther had not only been a nominalist, but that it was this influence[10] that had

also directed him to his later insights about the righteousness of God. According to

Oberman, from this exposure Luther was provided with the concepts that were essential

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[9] For example: Bengt Hägglund, Leif Grane and Gerhard Ebeling all investigated the roots of Luther's theology in medieval nominalism (Brady 15).

[10] Other scholars argue that nominalism was a significant positive influence on Luther's theology (Brady 18).

to the Reformation (Oberman, "Luther" 120). These were such principles as the subordination of reason to experience. For nominalists, the experienced reality itself becomes the focus on which to perceive the world. Nominalists also made a distinction between God's Word and human reason. With regards to revelation, matters concerning salvation found its sole foundation in God's Word. Luther's concept of God and his understanding of imputation were affected by these principles and would have stemmed from it. Therefore, these principles had a great significance in the context of Reformation theology. In this way, Oberman argues in favour of the gradualist view maintaining that Luther owed a great debt to nominalism as it greatly formulated[11] his theology towards his later insights.

Despite his substantial debt to nominalism, around 1508 to 1519, Luther reformulated some of these earlier principles when he fell into doubt concerning salvation (Erikson 24).

1.2 Nominalism

In the Middle Ages, nominalism was the preferred method of teaching logic. This method is best described as a set of related, but not necessarily coherent beliefs (McFarland, "Nominalism"; Marius 35; Oberman, "Luther" 118). Nominalists held a variety of theories many of which were even in conflict with other nominalists (Marius 35; Oberman, "Luther" 118; Pelikan, Hotchkiss, and Price 7). Due to this, there are

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[11] Heiko Oberman affirms the continuity of Luther with his medieval influences and further identifies the elements that set Luther apart from them. For Oberman, Luther did not reject the medieval tradition, but rather reformed it by providing it with new aspects. Identifying these aspects against the medieval context, Oberman traces how they directed Luther towards other theological insights and ultimately to the Reformation (Brady 12-13).

different opinions among scholars on how to define it (Bagchi and Steinmetz 11; Pelikan, Hotchkiss, and Price 7). Despite this, there are a number of characteristics of nominalism that seem to provide a general definition (McFarland, "Nominalism"). First, as mentioned above nominalism occupied a place in medieval philosophy and theology (Marius 35; Oberman, "Luther" 118). Second, there are two variations of nominalism. One rejects abstract objects and the other rejects universals. In this way, nominalism held that abstract concepts only existed as names (Braaten and Jensen 35; Oberman, "Luther" 117; Rodriguez-Pereyra, "Nominalism in Metaphysics"). For example, nominalists held that no universal concepts such as 'truth' exist rather they exist only as a name (Oberman, "Luther" 117).

This was a source of contention[12] and debate between *nominalists* and their rivals, the *realists* (Oberman, "Luther" 118). At the root of this debate was an argument about epistemology and how we use words to express knowledge (Steup, "Epistemology"). The realists believed that general concepts used to describe or define things have an objective existence apart from the objects to which they refer. For example, Richard Marius explains stating, "If I employ words like 'man,' 'table, 'food,' or 'beauty,' I use concepts that may be applied to many men or tables or foods and to beautiful objects as diverse as starry skies and curly-haired dogs" (35). When realists, like Duns Scotus, spoke of things like God, truth, beauty, righteousness, they believed that these words reflected an absolute reality that existed apart from the name itself. It would be as though these words

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[12] Another critique of nominalism came specifically from the *via antiqua* (the old way) which showed disappointment that the nominalists were interested in conceptual terms, but not interested in the reality that these terms represented. However, as Oberman counters: "The nominalists did, in fact, question traditional concepts in order to determine their factual validity" (Oberman, "Luther" 117).

reflected reality like mirrors which reflected objects outside them (Marius 36). Realists argued that to confirm an understanding of the world, the concepts that are used should have a relation to the perception of the senses. Many realist theologians wanted to believe that there was such a reality of terms or universals because this made the world more comprehensible (Marius 36).

In the 14th century, William of Ockham an English Franciscan, contested these notions and the very reasoning that informed realism by introducing what came to be known as "nominalism" (Bagchi and Steinmetz 11; Marius 26; Oberman, "Luther" 118). Although Ockham is considered to be the founding father of nominalism, he did not obtain as much prominence in his own school of thought as some authorities in the *via antiqua* such as Thomas Aquinas, despite his contribution (Oberman, "Luther" 118). Ockham was first of all a theologian with one major argument: God is all powerful (Bagchi and Steinmetz 11; Pelikan, "History of the Development of Doctrine" 14). This was central to Ockham's definition of salvation. If God is all powerful then God has the ability to do anything God wants (Pelikan, "History of the Development of Doctrine" 14; Bagchi and Steinmetz 11). According to Ockham it followed that human standards of morality or ideas of God's actions did not come from God's essence or nature. Therefore, Ockham argued against the idea that God is bound by universal ideas such as justice, good or evil (Bagchi and Steinmetz 11). Furthermore, Ockham argued that concepts are not universal and that they had no reality beyond how they are used by humans. Nominalists then saw universals as empty terms, which did have an independent existence apart from its name (Bagchi and Steinmetz 11).

1.3 Nominalism, the Doctrine of Salvation and Covenant

According to nominalist theology, the central theme of the doctrine of salvation was a type of promise between God and humanity (Keiper 207; McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 58). Similar to a contract, nominalism understood that this pact between God and humanity made demands from both parties and was conditional (Elazar 83).

This belief stemmed from a fusion of medieval economic theory with the language of a business contract. Nominalists believed that because of the Fall, human virtues had become worthless. However, nominalists argued that these virtues could be treated like worthless coinage which was issued by monarchs in the time of an emergency (MacCulloch, "Christianity"). These temporary coins maintained no value apart from the worth by which the ruler has decreed. In this case, the ruler made an agreement with the people that the worthless coinage maintained the fictitious value for the common good. Here, nominalists argued that the Fall had been the emergency. In theological terms, they argued that God with God's mercy sustains a fictitious value to human worth. This created an agreement with humanity to adhere to the consequences and the ability to 'do its best' to obtain salvation (MacCulloch, "Christianity"). Oberman states that, "In the nominalist view man has become the appointed representation and partner of God responsible for his own life, society and world, on the basis and within the limits of the treaty or *pactum* stipulated by God" (Oberman, "Forerunners of the Reformation" 15). In short, this promise articulated that humanity was then responsible for its own salvation (Gillespie 19). From this, nominalism provided an explanation of how human beings could have a primary and direct role in their own salvation (Braaten and Jensen 35;

Gillespie 19). This contrasted with Augustine's pessimistic view on the human ability (Augustine, "On the Spirit and the Letter" 412; MacColloch, "Christianity"; McFarland, "Grace"). One aspect of this promise was that an individual could have a direct role in their own salvation as God had commanded that the individual be justified based on their accomplishments (Keiper 208: McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 58). These demands consisted of the Latin phrase: *facienti quod in se est*, which literally means, 'doing what lies within you,' or 'doing your best' (Bagchi and Steinmetz 12; Lindberg 67). Gabriel Biel, the last of the great medieval scholastics, explained that 'doing your best,' meant that the individual rejected evil and tried to do good. Nominalists pointed to passages in the book of Matthew which states, "Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find; knock and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives" (Matthew 7.7-8). Nominalist pointed to this passage to argue that God gives grace that is necessary for salvation to those who do what lies within them, as Biel also explained.

If the individual was able to fulfill these demands then God was obliged to justify (Elazar 83; McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 58). God would be obligated to justify the individual because of the terms of the promise (Elazar 83). In addition to the phrase *facienti quod in se est*, the phrase *deus non denegat gratiam*, meaning that 'God will not deny his grace to whoever does what lies within him,' further illustrates this obligation (Whitford, "Luther" 59). The promise therefore between God and humanity laid down a foundation upon which good human works or merit resulted in reward from God (R. Smith, "Eternal Covenant" 63; McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 71). This promise between God and humanity also established the necessary conditions for justification

(Keiper 208). This relationship was a theme that was central to Luther's early understandings of justification and eventually his theological change, as he worked within this nominalist framework (Pelikan, "Christian Intellectual" 93).

   In the previous section, I discussed that Luther was exposed to nominalist thought in university. In Luther's earlier period, scholars argue that he held a nominalist position (LW 1: 31; Oberman, "Luther" 122). In *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil,* Heiko Oberman makes the statement that: "Martin Luther was a nominalist, there is no doubt about that" (122). However, some Luther scholarship appears to credit this view because Luther's earlier, pre-formed theology reflected the nominalist belief: *facere guod in se est* (Brady 16; LW 8: 188). This meant that God, being a judge, would show no leniency and would judge solely on this basis which meant that each individual would receive exactly what they deserve (McKim 88; LW 26: 178).

   When I discuss the events in the next section, it should be kept in mind that there is no scholarly consensus on when Luther developed his theology. Due to this, I will not provide dates for each event as I would then also be subsequently providing a date when this theological development occurred. From my research, it seems as though the following events range anywhere from 1508 to 1519 (Haight 85; Levine 371). However these dates should be considered loosely. This thesis is not interested in the precise dates of these events, but rather that these events happened and that they formed Luther's theology gradually. I will now turn to the next evolution of Luther's thoughts on salvation and nominalism.

1.4 Entertaining Doubts

As early as 1509, Luther had already begun to distance himself from the nominalist tradition with regards to its position on faith and reason. Despite this, he continued to maintain the nominalist view that an individual could obtain salvation through 'doing what lies within you.' (Oberman, "Dawn of the Reformation" 96; "Luther" 121-122).

However, it is clear that Luther began to entertain doubts regarding this nominalist position (Cameron 170; Erikson 24; Janz 11; Luther, "Treatise on Christian Liberty" 344; Oberman, "Luther" 120). Thus, Luther was unsure of the role of God's righteousness and reconsidered how an individual obtained salvation (Cameron 170). Scholars believe that there are several reasons for this occurrence.

In 1512 after obtaining his doctorate, Luther was invited to lecture at the University of Wittenberg where he worked more intimately with the Bible (Lindberg 65; McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 70; Mullet 48). Luther's previous theological education at Erfurt concentrated more on teaching about Aquinas and Church doctrine rather than focusing on studying scripture, as he did now (Mullet 32). Luther was to give lectures several times a week (Cameron 169; Gritsch 15; Lindberg 66; Mullet 50-51). While other professors simply provided students with approved commentary, Luther prepared for such lectures by diligently reading and memorizing whole sections of the Bible (Gritsch 8; LW 54: 14; McKim 7). Specifically, he gave lectures on the Psalms from the years 1513 to 1515, on Romans in 1515, on Galatians in 1516 to 1517, and Hebrews in 1517 to 1518 (Cameron 169; Gritsch 15; Lindberg 66; McKim 7).

It is important that Luther worked intimately with the Bible. Like many other scholars, Luther tackled his concerns in part while composing his lectures (Gritsch 15; Mee 117): "I am telling you all this, dear reader, so that, if you are going to read my little works, you should remember that I am one of those … who … makes progress by writing and teaching" (Luther, "Preface to Latin Works" 1545).

From his increased study of the Bible, Luther found many of his answers through forming his lectures and this eventually changed his understanding of salvation (Gritsch 8; Lindberg 66; Mullet 50). These texts led Luther to increasingly find himself faced with difficulties over the idea of the righteousness of God. Mainly, these texts had dealt with the theme of God's righteousness and they called into question his nominalist understanding of salvation (Lindberg 66; McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 93). Secondly, from preparing these lectures and working with the Bible, Luther wrestled with its passages in order to find answers to his own spiritual questions (Gritsch 8). Therefore, Luther's immersion into the Bible at this late stage of his theological training was key to his doubting the doctrines that he had once previously embraced.

When Luther prepared for his first lectures series on Paul, he discovered that the main theme of the Letters to the Romans (4.6) had opposed his nominalist understandings. The main idea was in opposition to the righteousness that humanity can achieve on its own and the foreign or alien righteousness given to humanity by God (LW 25: 136-138; Wicks 66). The message in Paul's letters argues that a person is caught in sin and arrogantly believes that they are able to obtain salvation themselves (Rom. 3.23). Paul

further argued that God must effect the declaration of justification, specifically through

believing in Christ (Rom. 3.26; Wicks 66).

   Luther's understanding of salvation took on a new aspect after reading Paul's writings.

Specifically, the passage in Romans which states, "While we were living in the flesh, our

sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death"

(Rom. 7.5) in order to further explain another reference to sin which states: "Blessed are

those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered" (Rom. 4.7). In these

passages Paul referred to sin, not as a choice or act, but rather as an infection or a malady

of humanity that is a lasting infection that struggles for healing from God (Wicks 67).

Luther wrote:

> In my foolishness I could not understand how I should regard myself a sinner like
>
> others and thus prepare myself to no one, even though I was contrite and had made
>
> confession; for I then felt that all my sins had been taken away and entirely
>
> removed, even inwardly ...God has promised that they are forgiven to those who
>
> confess them. Thus I was at war with myself, not knowing that it was a true
>
> forgiveness indeed, but that this is nevertheless not a taking away of sin except in
>
> hope, that is, that the taking away is still to be done, and that by the gift of grace,
>
> which begins to take sin away, so that it is not imputed as sin. (LW 25: 261)

   Around 1515 to 1616, Luther increasingly began to criticize nominalism, especially

with regards to its teachings on grace and justification (Oberman, "Luther" 120). Luther

countered the nominalist notion of 'doing what lies within you,' by emphasizing that the gift of grace was required for sin to be removed. Although these attacks on the school were harsh, they did not imply that Luther had now completely rejected[13] nominalism. In other words, he had not fully distanced himself from what he had learned in Erfurt (Oberman, "Luther" 120). However, looking at later examples of his writings from around this time, it shows that Luther started to think of salvation in a different way:

> Now, is one perfectly righteous? No, or one is at the same time both a sinner and a righteous person (*simul peccator et iustus*): a sinner in fact, but righteous by the sure imputation and promise of God that He will continue to deliver and believer from sin until He has completely cured him. And thus one is entirely healthy in hope, but in fact still a sinner; but one as the beginning of righteousness, so that he continues more and more always to seek it, yet ever realizing he is unrighteous. (LW 25: 260)

Luther referred to the notion that an individual humbling themselves before God is at the same time a sinner and righteous (Pelikan, "Christian Intellectual" 95). Euan Cameron also observed that Luther used Paul's language to criticize nominalism. Paul described his notion of the individual as dominated by sin, but still righteous because they affirm the truth about this condition and God's ability to eradicate this sin (170;

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[13] Heiko Oberman argues that the interpretation that these attack on nominalism implied that Luther now totally rejected this school would contradict his own statements. Furthermore, Oberman argues that believing that Luther had now totally distanced himself from nominalism would ignore the distinction that Luther himself made between the realms of reason and revelation (Oberman, "Luther" 120).

Rom. 6.14). Luther understood that if sinfulness was malady of humanity then it would be arrogance to think that an individual could even become justified by themselves, as Pelagius held through 'doing what lies within you' (Luther, "Treatise on Christian Liberty" 344; Wicks 69).

As Luther re-examined his own views on salvation, several questions emerged: Does righteousness belong to God rather than to humanity? Is righteousness something that a human can obtain through good works? These were the questions that Luther pondered (Atkinson 101; Braaten and Jensen 17; Gritsch 15; Luther, "Preface to Latin Works" 1545).

1.5 Serious Difficulties

These questions combined with the criticisms that he showed in his own writings led Luther to conclude that there were serious difficulties with taking a nominalist approach (Atkinson 70; Cameron 170). One such difficulty was the question of what happened if sinners were incapable of meeting the requirements for justification. Further, what happens if sinners were so trapped by sin that they cannot fulfill the demands which God has made of them? (McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 96). When working with the idea of the righteousness of God, followers of nominalism assumed that humans were able to meet this requirement without any difficulties (MacCulloch, "Christianity"; McFarland, "Nominalism"; McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 76). Luther no longer felt comfortable with this understanding. This led him to further criticize nominalism (Oberman, 120). Specifically, he became highly critical of Biel's theology and radically revised his own

position (Brady 16). Luther began to share Augustine's view that humanity was so

trapped by its sinfulness that it could not save itself except for some sort of divine

intervention (Augustine, "Nature of Grace" 4). Humanity was unable to meet this

standard because of the Fall. Thus, it was condemned by its very nature. In 1545, Luther

reflected on his own difficulties with his earlier nominalist approach:

> Although I lived an irreproachable life as a monk, I felt that I was a sinner with
>
> uneasy conscience before God; nor was I able to believe that I had pleased him
>
> with my satisfaction. I did not love (in fact, I hated) that righteous God who
>
> punished sinners, if not with silent blasphemy, then certainly with great
>
> murmuring. I was angry with God, saying 'As if it were not enough that miserable
>
> sinners should be eternally damned through original sin, with all kinds of
>
> misfortunes laid upon them by the Old Testament law, and yet God adds sorrow
>
> upon sorrow through the gospel, and even brings wrath and righteousness to bear
>
> through it!' Thus I drove myself mad, with a desperate disturbed conscience
>
> persistently pounding upon Paul in this passage, thirsting most ardently to know
>
> what he meant. (LW 34: 336-337)

It increasingly was clear to Luther that individuals were unable to achieve salvation by

their own ability (Pelikan, "Christian Intellectual" 94). Further, Luther did not believe

that his efforts to do his best as an individual would please God and meet this standard

(Lindberg 69). He later reflected on his own efforts to 'do what lies within him,' and

focused on his time, around 1505, when he was in the Augustinian monastery: "I tortured myself, with prayers, fasting, vigils, and freezing the frost alone might have killed me" (LW 24: 24), and "I almost fasted myself to death, for again and again I went for three days without taking a drop of water or a morsel of food. I was very serious about it" (LW 54: 339-340). When Luther was a young monk, he was so serious about perfecting himself in order to gain God's acceptance that he continuously worried about if he had done his best for God (Lindberg 65):

> When I was a monk, I made great effort to live according to the requirements of the monastic rule. I made a practice of confessing and reciting all my sins, but always with prior contrition; I went to confession frequently, and I performed the assigned penances faithfully. Nevertheless, my conscience could never achieve certainty but was always in doubt and said: 'You could have done this correctly. You were not contrite enough. You omitted this in your confession. (LW 27: 13)

From this, Luther believed that individuals simply did not have the innate ability to be saved. Due to this, the righteousness of God became a threat to Luther (Erikson 202; Lindberg 69; McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 96): "The words 'righteous' and 'righteousness of God' struck my conscience like lightning. When I heard them I was exceedingly terrified. If God is righteous [I thought], He must punish" (Luther, "Description of Luther's Tower Experience"). This threat developed into hate and Luther

murmured against God (Mee 110): "I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punished sinners" (LW 34: 336-337).

Luther hated the righteous God, but also came to see Christ as none other than a stern judge from whom he could not escape (McKim 5; Mee 110; Whitford, "Luther" 61):

> For I thought that He had been represented as my Judge, not as my Saviour. I admired and respected a priest arrayed in his long vestment or bringing a sacrifice for the living and the dead more than I admired and respected the doctrine concerning Christ together with the promises and the sacraments. I thought that this doctrine was of no concern whatever to me. (LW 8: 188)

Luther was even terrified by the very name of Christ (Mee 110):

> It is very hard for me, even in the great light of the gospel and after my extensive experience and practice in this study, to define Christ as Paul does here. That is how much this teaching and noxious idea of Christ as the lawgiver [*de Christo legislatore*] has penetrated into my bones like oil. On this score you younger men [the students who are listening to his lectures] are much more fortunate than we older ones. You have not been imbued with these ideas with which I was imbued from boyhood, so that even that the mention of the name of Christ I would be terrified and grow pale, because I was persuaded that he was a judge. (LW 26: 178)

The term 'righteous,' as Luther believed it, referred to a stern judge. This caused him much terror and anxiety (Erikson 24; Gritsch 11; Mee 15). However as a lecturer, Luther would have to face the theme of 'righteousness,' again and again (Erikson 202; Mee 113). During his lectures on the Psalms, whenever he came upon the phrase, "Deliver me in thy righteousness," he would quickly write: 'Not in mine, which is nothing,' and would continue on. He wrote:

> When I first read and sang in the Psalms ... in *iustitia tua libera me*, I was horror-stricken and felt deep hostility towards these words, God's righteousness, God's judgment, God's work. For I knew only that *iustitia dei* meant a harsh punishment. Well, was he supposed to save me by judging me harshly? If so, I was lost forever. (TR 5: 5247)

Luther shared the view of Paul and Augustine that humanity was so engulfed by sin that it could not save itself. Due to this, it made the fulfillment of the promise impossible. Confronted with this, he became pessimistic (McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 73; TR 5: 5247). For Luther, this question was not just an issue of academic interest, but also a personal theological problem (Rusch and Lindbeck, "Justification" 15). This problem caused Luther much anxiety because his own salvation was on the line (Gritsch 11; Mee 15).

1.6 Advice from Staupitz

These anxieties led Luther to seek help. It is well known that Luther sought out spiritual guidance and confessors more often than most (Lindberg 65). It seemed as though Luther's constant persistence to seek out spiritual advice led some to become weary of this practice. Luther observed: "Sometimes my confessor said to me when I repeatedly discussed silly sins with him, 'You are a fool ... God is not angry with you, but you are angry with God" (LW 54: 15). Because his anxieties were not lifted, he was again in need of spiritual help (Atkinson 67). He turned to his close friend, Johann von Staupitz (Mee 114; Pettegree 17). Staupitz was his monastic superior, spiritual mentor and even considered to be a father figure (Chadwick 84; Erikson 17; Levine 371; Lindberg 69). He was eager to listen and was open to advice from Staupitz.

Staupitz attempted to help console Luther's anxieties (Gritsch 11; Oberman, "Luther" 139). When Luther asked him: 'Why does God seem to unjust?' Staupitz answered: "Dear fellow, learn to think of God differently. If He did not treat them [people] this way, how could God restrain … blockheads? God strikes us for our own good, in order that He might free us who otherwise would be crushed" (LW 54: 11).

When Luther told Staupitz of his horrifying doubts, he said, "You know, Martin, how useful this temptation is to you, for God is teaching you not to be afraid" (LW 1: 54). Staupitz told Luther that anxiety and terror were not signs that he was condemned, but rather it was a way that God prepared humanity to depend on the God's righteousness which brought humanity closer to Christ (Chadwick 85; Mee 115; Oberman, "Luther" 181). Staupitz told Luther when he asserted that it was Christ who terrified him that

Christ consoles, to which he responded: "Therefore I have to make a double effort; first, to unlearn, condemn and resist this ingrown opinion of Christ as a lawgiver and a judge, which constantly returns and drags me back; secondly, to acquire a new idea, namely trust in Christ" (LW 26: 178).

Staupitz helped relieve Luther's anxieties (Wicks 57). When he went to Staupitz crying, 'My sins! My sins! My sins!' he found comfort in Staupitz's words (TR 6: 106, 33). Luther wrote, "If Dr. Staupitz had not helped me out ... I should have been swallowed up and left in hell" (LW 8). In particular Staupitz emphasized a personal faith and understanding in the redemption of sins through Christ (Chadwick 85; Gritsch 11; Mee 114). Staupitz explained to Luther:

> Start with the wounds of Christ … set Christ carefully before the mind's eye … God foresaw the suffering of His Son for sinners. He who believes in Him is saved … he who does not believe is not saved … We are justified by the blood of Christ, for that innocent blood was shed for the remission of our sins. (TR 2: 1490)

Staupitz taught Luther that an individual must only have faith in Christ. It was then that Christ's death could atone for sins and then that repentance could begin (Mee 114-115; Oberman, "Luther" 182).

Staupitz had likely redirected Luther not to focus on the torment with seeking peace with God or for his own deeds which would never be good enough. He taught him that there are no good works that humanity could do to earn salvation from God (Atkinson 75;

Mee 115; Wicks 57). However, he argued that Luther should focus on God's forgiving

mercy (Atkinson 75; Wicks 57). Staupitz further taught him that the word *justitia* did not

refer to the righteousness of a harsh judge who decided whether or not his law was

fulfilled, as Luther thought. Rather, it referred to the righteousness of God that God gives

to humanity (Mee 115):

> I remember, dear Father, that once, among those pleasant and wholesome talks of
>
> thine, with which the Lord Jesus of times gives me wondrous consolation […] We
>
> were moved with pity for many consciences, and for those tormentors who teach,
>
> with rules innumerable and unbearable, what they call a *modus confitendi*. Then we
>
> heard thee say as with a voice from heaven, that … which does not begin with love
>
> of righteousness and of God, and that this love, which others think to be the end …
>
> is rather its beginning. (Luther, "Letter to John Staupitz" 1, 30-43)

For Luther, this was both a therapeutic and a theological revelation (Erikson 37).

Thus, he was very grateful for these conversations with Staupitz: "If I didn't praise

Staupitz I should be a damned, ungrateful, papistical ass, for he was my very first father

in this teaching, and he bore me in Christ" (Luther, "Letter to John Staupitz" 3, 155-156)

and "I cannot forget or be ungrateful, for it was through you [Staupitz] that the light of

the Gospel began first to shine out of the darkness of my heart" (Luther, "Letter to John

Staupitz" 3, 155-156).

These conversations with Staupitz provided Luther with a new approach towards salvation:

> I accepted you [Staupitz] like a messenger from heaven … Your words pierced me like a sharp arrow of the Mighty [Psalm 120:4]. As a result, I began to compare your statements with the passages of Scripture … And behold – what a most pleasant scene! Biblical words came leaping toward me from all sides, clearly smiling and nodding assent to your statement. They so supported your opinion … now no word sounds sweeter or more pleasant to me … The commandments of God become sweet when they are read not only in books but also in the wounds of the sweetest Saviour. (LW 48: 65-66)

Thus, Staupitz offered Luther consolation, but this consolation also began to have the effect of encouraging him to reformulate his theology by offering him a different perspective. However, even though this seemed to have liberated Luther from some doubts and provided him with a new approach to God's righteousness it is apparent that many of his questions remained unanswered (Lindberg 65; Mee 115). This is apparent in his later writings which he reflected on his troubles:

> I had begun interpreting the Psalms once again. I felt confident that I was now more experienced, since I had dealt in university courses with St. Paul's Letters to the Romans, to the Galatians, and the Letter to the Hebrews. I had conceived a

burning desire to understand what Paul meant in his Letter to the Romans, but thus far there had stood in my way, not the cold blood around my heart, but that one word which is in chapter one: "The justice of God is revealed in it." I hated that word, "justice of God," which, by the use and custom of all my teachers, I had been taught to understand philosophically as referring to formal or active justice, as they call it, i.e., that justice by which God is just and by which he punishes sinners and the unjust. (Luther, "Preface to Latin Works" 1545)

Although Luther gained new insights from Staupitz, some questions about righteousness and justification remained unanswered. Due to this, he reexamined the writings of Augustine (Mee 116).

1.7 Confirmation from Augustine

With new insights from Staupitz in mind, Luther reconsidered Augustine and found this perspective of God's righteousness in Augustine's treatise *On the Spirit and the Letter*. Luther referred to Augustine's comments on Romans 3:21 and wrote:

Afterward I read Augustine's "On the Spirit and the Letter," in which […] I discovered that he too interpreted "the justice of God" in a similar way, namely, as that with which God clothes us when he justifies us. Although Augustine had said it imperfectly and did not explain in detail how God imputes justice to us, still it

pleased me that he taught the justice of God by which we are justified. (Luther,

"Preface to Latin Work" 1545)

According to Augustine, the passages in Romans (3.21) which refer to righteousness

did not refer to human righteousness, but rather the righteousness *of* God (Fitzgerald and

Cavadini 482; McCormack 57):

Here, perhaps, it may be said by that presumption of man, which is ignorant of the

righteousness of God, and wishes to establish one of its own, that the apostle quite

properly said, "For by the law shall no man be justified," [Rom. 3.20] inasmuch as

the law merely shows what one ought to do, and what one ought to guard against,

in order that what the law thus points out may be accomplished by the will, and so

man be justified, not indeed by the power of the law, but by his free determination.

But I ask your attention, O man, to what follows. "But now the righteousness of

God," says he, "without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the

prophets." [Rom. 3.21] Does this then sound a light thing in deaf ears? He says,

"The righteousness of God is manifested." Now this righteousness they are ignorant

of, who wish to establish one of their own; they will not submit themselves to it.

[Rom. 10.3] His words are, " The righteousness of God is manifested:" he does not

say, the righteousness of man, or the righteousness of his own will, but the

"righteousness of God,"— not that whereby He is Himself righteous, but that with

which He endows man when He justifies the ungodly. (Augustine, "On the Spirit and the Letter" 15)

As Luther read Augustine's writings, he found that what Staupitz had taught was also held by Augustine. Augustine argued that an individual was not justified by the law, but rather the law points to salvation through faith in Christ (Dupont 165; Fitzgerald and Cavadini 622; McCormack 65):

The law, indeed, by issuing its commands and threats, and by justifying no man, sufficiently shows that it is by God's gift, through the help of the Spirit, that a man is justified; and the prophets, because it was what they predicted that Christ at His coming accomplished. (Augustine, "On the Spirit and the Letter" 15)

However, Augustine also argued that God's righteousness was without the law, but was not manifested without the law (McCormack 62). Luther came to share in this view, as well (Luther, "Treatise on Christian Liberty" 2; 344). For Augustine and for Luther, the law was still required. Augustine further argued that the individual could not be justified by their will. Although an individual cannot be justified by their will, nevertheless the will was still required for justification to take place. The will of humanity was shown to be weak by the law; however, Augustine argued that God's grace would heal its weakness and being healed it then would be able to fulfill the law (McCormack 58; Rom. 3.23):

Accordingly he advances a step further, and adds, "But righteousness of God by

faith of Jesus Christ," [Rom. 3.22] that is by the faith wherewith one believes in

Christ for just as there is not meant the faith with which Christ Himself believes, so

also there is not meant the righteousness whereby God is Himself righteous. Both

no doubt are ours, but yet they are called God's, and Christ's, because it is by their

bounty that these gifts are bestowed upon us. The righteousness of God then is

without the law, but not manifested without the law; for if it were manifested

without the law, how could it be witnessed by the law? That righteousness of God,

however, is without the law, which God by the Spirit of grace bestows on the

believer without the help of the law— that is, when not helped by the law. When,

indeed, He by the law discovers to a man his weakness, it is in order that by faith

he may flee for refuge to His mercy, and be healed. (Augustine, "On the Spirit and

the Letter" 15)

Augustine emphasized that individuals are freely justified by God's grace (Kang 34;

McCormack 65). He argued that it is grace alone that separates the redeemed from the

lost and allowed the redeemed, through the act of repentance and good works, to achieve

their salvation:

Well, then, they come short of the glory of God; now observe what follows: "Being

justified freely by His grace." [Rom. 3.24] It is not, therefore, by the law, nor is it

by their own will, that they are justified; but they are justified freely by His grace—

not that it is wrought without our will; but our will is by the law shown to be weak,

that grace may heal its infirmity; and that our healed will may fulfil the law, not by

compact under the law, nor yet in the absence of law. (Augustine, "On the Spirit

and the Letter" 15)

From reading Augustine, Luther realized the distinction that Augustine made between

the law and the righteousness of God, having also drawn upon Paul's writings. Luther

focused specifically on Romans 1.17, which itself contains a passage from Habbakuk

(2.4) which states, "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith;

as it is written, 'The one who is righteous' will live by faith"(Rom. 1.17). Luther

commented:

For a long time I went astray … and didn't know what I was about. To be sure, I

knew something, but I didn't know what it was until I came to the text in Romans 1

[:17], 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.' That text helped me. There I

saw what righteousness Paul was talking about. Earlier in the text I read

'righteousness.' I related the abstract ['righteousness'] with the concrete ['the

righteous One'] and became sure of my cause. I learned to distinguish between the

righteousness of the law and the righteousness of the gospel. I lacked nothing

before this except that I made no distinction between the law and the gospel. I

regarded both as the same thing and held that there was no difference between

Christ and Moses except the times in which they lived and their degrees of

perfection. But when I discovered the proper distinction—namely, that the law is one thing and the gospel is another—I made myself free. (LW 54: 442)

Luther's conversation with Staupitz and his study of Augustine seemed to have revived his confidence in his own understanding of righteousness (Trigg 129):

> We are always sinning […] We are always impure … Wherefore we who are righteous are constantly on the move, always being justified … The starting point is sin, from which we must constantly depart. The goal is righteousness, toward which we must move unceasingly. (LW 22: 9)

The previous section discussed how an anxious Luther sought help from Staupitz. This advice from Staupitz emphasized that Christ should not be a cause of terror for Luther, but rather a sign of consolation. This spiritual guidance from Staupitz lifted some of Luther's anxieties and provided him with a new perspective on salvation. The writings of Augustine also confirmed Staupitz's ideas. With this advice from Staupitz and Luther's study of Augustine, he gained a sense of confidence and a new perspective (Trigg 129).

1.8 Further Development

Luther combined the insights from Paul, Staupitz and Augustine and discovered that something cheered his spirit; something that Luther considered to be a 'breakthrough' from his spiritual anxieties (Dosenrode 150; LW 54: 442):

I meditated night and day on those words until at last, by the mercy of God, I paid

attention to their context: "The justice of God is revealed in it, as it is written: 'The

just person lives by faith.' I began to understand that in this verse the justice of God

is that by which the just person lives by a gift of God, that is by faith. I began to

understand that this verse means that the justice of God is revealed through the

Gospel, but it is a passive justice, i.e. that by which the merciful God justifies us by

faith, as it is written: 'The just person lives by faith.' All at once I felt that I had

been born again and entered into paradise itself through open gates […] I saw the

whole of Scripture in a different light. (Luther, "Preface to Latin Works" 1545)

From the quotation above and from Luther's early views, it is clear that his belief of

the phrase 'the righteousness of God' changed (Dosenrode 150):

But when by God's grace I pondered … over the words, 'He who through faith is

righteous shall live [Rom. 1.17] and 'the righteousness of God' [Rom. 3.21], I soon

came to the conclusion that if we, as righteous men, out to live from faith and if the

righteousness of God should contribute to the salvation of all who believe, then

salvation wont be our merit but God's mercy … For it's by the righteousness of God

that we're justified and saved through Christ. (Luther, "Description of Tower

Experience")

In these quotations, Luther referred to how he once understood justification and commented on this change in his theology. In the beginning, he believed that an individual had to 'do what lies within you,' and in return God would justify (LW 1: 31). Essentially, there was something that the sinner had to do or perform before the individual could become justified.

However, through Luther's conversation with Staupitz and his reading of Augustine, he was convinced that this was an impossible task. Luther began to share the view of Augustine that humanity was unable to overcome sin; as it was a type of malady that needed to be cured (Augustine, "Nature of Grace" 3; 3-4). Being trapped by sin, Luther believed that humanity could not do anything to achieve salvation (Pelikan, "Christian Intellectual" 95). For example, Luther quoted a verse to represent this: "God does not require of any man / that he do more than he really can" (LW 26: 173). This led him to challenge the nominalist assumption that humanity was able to achieve salvation themselves and become justified through their works. At one point, Luther addressed nominalist theologians as, "O fools, O pig-theologians!" (LW 25: 26) and argued that it is a "foolish presumption that justification is acquired by works," and that, "righteousness does not consist in works" (Luther, "Treatise on Christian Liberty" 2; 344).

Furthermore, Luther believed that God provided justification since the individual was unable to obtain it through their own works as they were trapped by sin (Hill 185):

> For the person is justified and saved not by works nor laws, but by the Word of
> God, that is, by the promise of His grace, and by faith, that the glory may remain

God's, Who saved us not by works of righteousness which we have done, but

according to His mercy by the word of His grace, when we believe. (Luther,

"Treatise on Christian Liberty" 332)

It is important to note that Luther did not completely reject works. Luther wrote that,

"Our faith in Christ does not free us from works, but from false opinions concerning

works … For faith redeems, corrects and preserves our consciences" (Luther, "Treatise

on Christian Liberty" 344).

For Luther, faith alone was central to his new beliefs about justification. He argued

that faith should be personal and not a purely historical reference (Lindberg 71;

McFarland, "Justification"):

We should note that there are two ways of believing. One way is to believe *about*

God, as I do when I believe that what is said of God is true […] This faith is

knowledge or observation rather than faith. The other way is to believe *in* God, as I

do when I not only believe that what is said about Him is true, but put my trust in

Him, surrender myself to Him and make bold to deal with Him, believing without

doubt that He will be to me and do to me just what is said of Him. (Luther, "Brief

Explanation of the Ten Commandments" 2, 369)

According to Luther, a faith that relied on historical reliability of doctrine was not a

faith that could justify an individual. A faith that justifies as Luther argued was one that

believed and trusted that Christ died for the sinners personally and has achieved for

sinners what is required for salvation (Grtisch, "History of Lutheranism" 16; Hill 186;

Lindberg 71):

> We are justified by faith in Christ, without any works of the law, and he [St. Paul]
>
> cuts away all works so completely, as even to say that the works of the law, though
>
> it is God's law and His Word, do not help us to righteousness … he [Abraham] was
>
> justified by faith, without circumcision and without any works at all …But when
>
> works are so completely cut away, the meaning of it must be that faith alone
>
> justifies, and one who would speak plainly and clearly about this cutting away of
>
> all works, must say, 'Faith alone justifies us, and not works.' (Luther, "On
>
> Translating an Open Letter" 5, 15-22)

Furthermore, Luther emphasized that this relationship was not only based on faith

(Greengrass 235). Rather, it was based on a faith that places trust in God's promises of

salvation without works through Christ (Lindberg 71; McGrath, "Reformation Thought"

98):

> Faith is a living, bold trust in God's grace, so certain of God's favor that it would
>
> risk death a thousand times trusting in it. Such confidence and knowledge of God's
>
> grace makes you happy, joyful and bold in your relationship to God and all

creatures. The Holy Spirit makes this happen through faith. (Luther, "Introduction

to St. Paul's Letter to the Romans" 124-135)

For Luther, the result of this faith was that it united believers together with Christ and

also created a relationship with God (Lindberg 71):

> Faith does not merely mean that the soul realizes that the divine word is full of
>
> grace, free and holy; it also unites the soul with Christ, as a bride is united with her
>
> bridegroom […] Christ, the rich, noble, holy bridegroom, takes in marriage this
>
> poor, contemptible and sinful little prostitute, takes away all her evil, and bestows
>
> all his goodness upon her! It is no longer possible for sin to overwhelm her, for she
>
> is now found in Christ and is swallowed up by Him. (LW 25: 26)

As this salvation comes from Christ, it did not come from within an individual (Gray

27; McKim, "Theological Turning Points" 189). Thus, Luther argued that it should be

considered a type of alien, foreign or external righteousness that originates outside the

sinner (Trigg 168; Pelikan, "History of the Development of Doctrine" 150; LW 34: 153):

> God does not want to redeem us through our own, but through external,
>
> righteousness and wisdom, not through one that comes from us and grows in us,
>
> but through one that comes from outside; not through one that originates here on
>
> earth, but through one that comes from heaven. Therefore, we must be taught a

righteousness that comes from the outside and is foreign." [LW 25:136]. Further,

Luther states, "To be outside of us means not to be derived from our powers.

Righteousness is our possession, to be sure, since it was given to us out of mercy.

Nevertheless, it is alien to us, because we have not merited it. (Luther, "Disputation

Concerning Justification" 391, 109)

This section showed that Luther's earlier views were different from his later views on

salvation between the years 1505 to 1519. This was shown through examining Luther's

works and the development from one view to the next. How Luther understood salvation

previously was developed into a new way of thinking about the righteousness of God.[14]

This way of thinking was fundamentally different from his earlier theology. I have

shown Luther's change in theology to be gradual. However, there are other scholars who

would argue that the change was not gradual, but instantaneous.

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[14] Although this understanding of God's righteousness relieved Luther from his anxieties surrounding how an individual is justified, it was not by the 'Tower Experience' that he would have believed to have been justified. Rather, Luther would have believed that it was at his baptism (in conjunction with faith) that brought renewal and salvation. He wrote: "I can boast that Baptism is no human trifle, but instituted by God Himself, moreover, that it is most solemnly and strictly commanded that we must be baptized or we cannot be saved" (Luther, "Large Catechism" 4: 6) Further, Luther wrote: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. That is, faith alone makes the person worthy to receive profitably the saving, divine water" (Luther, "Large Catechism" 4: 32). Therefore, Luther would not have confused his new understanding of God's righteousness with his reception of it at his baptism as an infant (Methuen 90; Oberman, "Luther" 230-231; Wengert 37).

1.9 Tower Experience

When Luther's early views are compared with his later views there was an obvious

change that took place. In his writings, Luther himself noted[15] that a theological change

occurred:

> But when by God's grace I pondered, *in the tower* and heated room of this building,
>
> over the words, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live' [Rom. 1.17] and 'the
>
> righteousness of God' [Rom. 3.21], I soon came to the conclusion that if we, as
>
> righteous men, ought to live from faith and if the righteousness of God contribute
>
> to the salvation of all who believe, then salvation won't be our merit but God's
>
> mercy. My spirit was thereby cheered. For it's by the righteousness of God that
>
> we're justified and saved through Christ. These words [which had before terrified
>
> me] now became more pleasing to me. The Holy Spirit unveiled the Scriptures for
>
> me *in this tower.* (Luther, "Description of Tower Experience")

In this literary reference, Luther mentioned that it was 'in this tower,' where he came

to his conclusions about righteousness. Although it is not explicit in his writings where

this tower was located, scholars try to pinpoint the location of this theological change by

examining where he spent most of his time. A weight of scholarly opinion leans towards

the argument that it must have occurred in the tower of the Augustinian monastery in

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[15] Some scholars argue that Luther's reference to his experience at the Tower is merely hyperbolic. Luther had a tendency to over dramatize his experiences; for example, the call to be a monk and his confrontation with the Devil. This has led some scholars to argue that his brief literary references to the Tower Experience are exactly that; an exaggeration and that it should really be interpreted within a larger context (Atkinson 101).

Wittenberg (Cameron 171; Dosenrode 150; Erikson 204; Gritsch and Jensen 45; McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 73; McKim 24; Skinner 7).

Some scholars have also tried to place the exact date of this theological change by tracing certain life events; for example, when Luther was relieved of his anxieties. This is a subject of much criticism and debate (Atkinson 101; Hopper 113-115). It is unclear the precise date when this theological shift may have occurred, as Luther himself was unable to provide a date (Dragseth 5).

This uncertainty has led some scholars to avoid placing emphasis on the Tower Experience. Scholars such as Carter Lindberg and Michael Mullet do not make reference to the experience, but mention that a shift has obviously taken place. For the same reason others like W.N. Pittenger mention Luther's theological breakthrough, but do not mention any events that occurred at the tower (69). Roland Bainton discusses the tower, but makes no reference to any type of 'experience,' that may have occurred there (44). Scholars like Daniel Oliver, David Bagchi and David Steinmetz have even adopted other ways of describing the experience, some calling it a 'Reformation discovery,' in order to avoid placing it at a location and a specific date, as it is a subject of much contention (Oliver 63; Bagchi and Steinmetz 42).

Despite this uncertainty, this small fragment of Luther's writings has led other scholars to adopt a variety of interpretations on how this experience occurred. Some scholars, like Alister McGrath, take a more generalist view. These scholars discuss the very surface of Luther's developments. Although scholars like McGrath, provide some

detail and are useful for the undergraduate level, they do not discuss the topic in much depth.

Although there is no consensus on a definitive date, other generalist scholars have accepted that this theological shift must have occurred as a sudden flash[16] of dramatic illumination at the tower (Skinner 7). This is sometimes referred to as a conversion[17] experience. These scholars and others like Martin Brecht do not go beyond this assertion. Thus, these scholars do not see the shift as gradual and do not take a nuanced approached.

The more nuanced scholars, such as Richard Marius, present Luther's theological change in terms of a gradual development, but still overlook some complexities.

2. Not a Sudden Flash

The purpose of this thesis is to show that this theological development occurred as a gradual process rather than a sudden flash of dramatic illumination. Therefore, Luther's theological shift cannot be limited to a time nor a place.[18] Rather, I contend that this shift evolved steadily from one stage of development to the next. This thesis has shown this by observing Luther's early to later views on salvation, which show that it was not fully formed all at one time.

However, why do scholars continue to make reference to the Tower Experience as *the moment* when Luther's theology changed when there is evidence to suggest the contrary?

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[16] As though it came in one flash of light, similar to Paul's experience on the road to Damascus (Hill 178).

[17] It would be interesting for future research to further examine which scholars emphasize Luther's 'conversion' experience. As briefly mentioned, it seems as though this 'instantaneous' experience is of primary interest to American evangelical scholars. Future research could examine why such emphasis is placed on this event and why it is of interest to this particular group.

[18] This thesis does not discredit any type of 'experience,' Luther may have had 'at the tower,' but rather suggests that it was not the precise moment when his theology developed.

With this thesis, I argue that scholars should reconsider such emphasis on the Tower Experience as the moment when Luther's theology suddenly changed as it is more likely that he developed his theology slowly, through a process, and not all at one time.

It seems as though Luther developed his theology slowly and he acknowledged this about himself: "I did not learn my theology all at one time. I had to meditate on it more deeply … for one can learn nothing without practice" (Luther, "Table Talks" 352). This quotation suggests that Luther tended to think more deeply on a question before coming to an answer. Scholars like Scott Hendrix argue that Luther emphasized how long and hard he worked at understanding scripture before finding an answer. This has led some scholars such as Own Chadwick and Donald McKim to argue that one characteristic of Luther was that he was a conservative (Chadwick 86; McKim 222). As such, scholars like Chadwick and De Lamar Jensen argue that Luther prolonged his study and therefore would not have quickly assumed any conclusions (Chadwick 86; D. L. Jensen 46).

Since Luther did not reach conclusions quickly, he developed his theology slowly. James Atkinson and Gordon Smith argue that this theological change was protracted (Atkinson 101; G. Smith 77). Likewise, Euan Cameron and Chadwick maintain this viewpoint (Cameron 172-173; Chadwick 87). To further this, Jonathan Hill argues that this theological shift most likely occurred slowly and therefore was likely to have taken a number of years before it became fully developed (Hill 178).

Luther's theology not only developed slowly, but it would have also occurred as a process. Heiko Oberman supports this view (Oberman, "Luther" 158). Oberman argues that no clear line can be drawn between Luther's development before and after the

'Tower Experience,' as it is a process of development (Oberman, "Reformation" 94).

James Atkinson argues that this theological shift was more likely to have occurred in

terms of a formation; a line, rather than a singular point (102). Other scholars like

Cameron, Hill, Robert Kolb, Daniel Oliver, and Smith also argue that it is more likely

that this occurred as a series of developments (Cameron 169; Hill 178; Kolb 42; Oliver

69; G. Smith 77). Chadwick and McKim also argue that Luther would have advanced

step by step to develop his position (Chadwick 86; McKim 222). Cameron further argues

that this step by step method can be shown because there is evidence that Luther moved

from one position to another; as he shed the assumptions and vocabulary of his earlier

period[19] (173). Scholars like Hendrix and Jensen, Kolb argue that Luther could not have

discovered the meaning of the righteousness of God in a sudden flash of insight (Hendrix;

D.L. Jensen 46; Kolb 42). Mark Greengrass, Jensen, and Kolb, argue that it is unlikely

that Luther's theological problems were resolved in this moment of dramatic illumination

(Greengrass 44; D.L. Jensen 46; Kolb 42).

Since Luther did not discover this meaning in a flash of insight, scholars like Jennifer

Dragseth, David Levine and Oberman, argue that there was no single moment of

transformation (Dragseth 5; Levine 373; Oberman, "Reformation" 94). Smith also

maintains this view and argues that it cannot be reduced to a singular moment because it

did not occur all at one time (G. Smith 77). Greengrass further argues that it is unlikely

that the complexities of Luther's theology resulted from one precise moment (44). Kolb

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[19] From a nominalism approach to Augustinian thought.

argues that there is no single 'experience,' which determined Luther's way of thinking about the righteousness of God (42).

This theological shift cannot be reduced to one singular moment, therefore it should be considered as a gradual development. Jaroslav Pelikan and Hill also maintain that Luther's theological conversion was more of a gradual process (Hill 178; Pelikan, "Acts" 122). De Lemar Jensen argues that this theological shift was the result of a gradual process of prolonged study and reflection which shaped and developed Luther's theology (46). Other scholars like Atkinson, Cameron, and Oliver maintain this view and also argue that it is more likely that this shift occurred gradually over a period of time (Atkinson 102; Cameron 169; Oliver 69). As this theological shift occurred gradually, some scholars like Cameron, refer to it as occurring through a piecemeal process (Cameron 173).

2.1 Complexities

Thus, as previously discussed, there are some scholars that share my view that Luther's theological shift occurred slowly, as a development, and not all at one time. Yet, there are still many scholars that continue to place much emphasis on the 'Tower Experience.' This thesis then calls for scholars to enter into a conversation to reconsider this emphasis as there is a clear theological development, as my chapters have shown.

Using the phrase: the 'Tower Experience,' provides scholars with an attractive way of summarizing a complex situation (Atkinson 101). In two-words, this phrase summarizes Luther's spiritual and personal struggles, and the entirety of a series of theological

developments (Atkinson 101). Simplifying these struggles and developments into a simple catch-phrase is very superficial. It underestimates and ignores the complexities of the whole situation[20] and reduces it to a fleeting moment in Luther's life. It is unlikely that the complexities of Luther's theological developments resulted from a precise moment (Greengrass 44). Instead of using the 'Tower Experience,' as a quick catch-all term, scholars should discuss these complexities in more detail; to see the bigger picture. Assuming that Luther suddenly stumbled upon this doctrine also provides no depth to the doctrine itself. It ignores the fact that the doctrine had been developed in light of Luther's own struggles and different theologies. Scholars who maintain this position perpetuate a cycle of glossing over major developments of the doctrine as such a simplistic view boils down an entire series of events into one singular moment. Thus, it is important for scholars to reconsider this over emphasis[21] as it ignores important personal and theological developments and replaces them with a simple superficial phrase.

2.2 Chapter Conclusion

The overall focus of this chapter was to show that Luther's theology changed from an earlier to a later understanding gradually, rather than in a sudden flash. In order to discuss this, I first focused on aspects that had influenced Luther. These influences were examined to show that his early theology had been shaped within these frameworks. As

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[20] Bagchi and Steinmetz argue that this experience should be seen within a larger context that developed Luther's theology, rather than as the sole moment of his theological change (42).
[21] Euan Cameron also argues that there has been too much emphasis on the Tower Experience as an event to explain Luther's theological development (172).

Luther moved out of these frameworks, his theology changed. Breaking with nominalism, Luther was met with anxiety.

This anxiety led Luther to seek spiritual advice from Staupitz. Staupitz calmed Luther and provided him with a new perspective. With this advice, he reconsidered Augustine. It was through Augustine's writings that Luther found conformation of Staupitz's assertions. This sense of confidence encouraged Luther to reformulate his theology.

This theological change is often referred to as occurring in a sudden flash at an event known as the 'Tower Experience.' However, this chapter has argued that it is unlikely that his theological change occurred at such a precise moment. I have argued that Luther's theology changed over a series of time; from one stage of development to the next. With this thesis, I argue that scholars should reconsider such emphasis on this singular event as it seems more likely that this changed developed through a series of stages.

Summary and Conclusion

This thesis has argued that Martin Luther's theological development occurred as a gradual evolution. This thesis argued against the idea that his theology was fully formed instantaneously. This topic was chosen because I contend that it is more likely that this shift would have occurred as a process, rather than a flash of insight. However, scholars continue to place emphasis on the 'Tower Experience,' as the moment of Luther's theological change. I have shown this to be an inaccurate view.

This thesis has shown that this theological shift should be understood in terms of a progression and has demonstrated this by observing Luther's early to later views on salvation. These views show that his theology changed over time. This thesis has shown this by first examining Luther's influences. In his early stages, Luther was influenced by nominalist thought. In this framework, he believed that salvation could be obtained by the individual through works, without the help of God. Thus, the onus was on the individual to do what was required in order to achieve salvation.

However, Luther questioned this position and discovered that there were serious difficulties with taking this approach. At this point, he shed the assumptions of nominalism. Luther believed the view that an individual would always fall short in the eyes of God. Having no framework on which to base his views, Luther was unsure how he can obtain salvation and this caused him much terror. He came to see a righteous God that punished sinners and felt condemned

This anxiety led him to seek spiritual help from his friend, Johann von Staupitz. Feeling lost, Luther was eager to listen to his advice. This conversation with Staupitz

provided Luther with a new theological perspective. Staupitz redirected Luther to not think of a righteous God that punished sinners, but rather the righteousness *of* God which saved sinners through Christ. This conversation redirected Luther to reformulate his own theology. As Luther adopted this new perspective, he moved away from his earlier theological view that saw a righteous God that punished. This released Luther from some of his anxieties.

Requiring more reassurance, Luther returned to the writings of Augustine. It was in these writings that he discovered that Augustine also emphasized the righteousness *of* God. Thus, Luther moved away from his previous understanding and adopted an Augustinian framework. This confirmation from Augustine revived Luther's confidence in his new understanding of salvation. Luther formulated his theology in light of the advice from Staupitz and his return to Augustine's writings. He came to believe in the process of salvation differently. For Luther, God provided what was necessary for salvation and that it was through 'faith alone,' that an individual became justified in the eyes of God (LW 31).

This was drastically different from Luther's earlier theological stance when he worked within the nominalist framework. Thus, this shows that Luther moved from one position to another; shedding the assumptions and adopting new theological perspectives at each stage. Therefore, it should not be maintained that Martin Luther's theological development occurred instantaneously, as this thesis has provided evidence to the contrary. Rather, this theological development should be understood and presented as occurring as a gradual process.

This topic is important to discuss as Luther's theological development had many implications for Christianity (Dixon 46; Lindberg 70; McGrath, "Christianity's Dangerous Ideas" 45; Trigg 113). In part, his new way of thinking about salvation led him to challenge indulgences (Lindberg 104; Mullet 76; McGrath, "Reformation Thought" 104). For if a person was given by God that which was required to reach salvation then indulgences were unnecessary. Individuals in this scenario would have the only thing required to reach salvation – faith. Faith became a crucial aspect of Reformation theology and it was important for the doctrine of justification, as it replaced active works (Dixon 46). This undermined the soteriology of the medieval Church and thus the system the Church had put into place (Lindberg 70). A culture which was based on the idea that an individual must participate in order to achieve righteousness was no longer necessary because of the belief that there was nothing that an individual could do to achieve salvation. There were no conditions that needed to be met to merit salvation. As a consequence, the belief that the Church was the only source of God's grace was cast aside (McGrath, "Christianity's Dangerous Ideas" 45). The individual no longer needed to rely on the institutions of the Church in order to engage in a relationship with God.

This understanding was a radical break[22] from the Roman Catholic past (Dixon 46). It was a break because it had presented a promise of unconditional salvation. There were no preconditions for salvation and no means by which God's grace was acquired, which was contrary to what the medieval Roman Catholic Church had taught. As Luther taught,

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[22] Article IV of the *Augsburg Confession* was presented by Philipp Melanchthon as self-evident. The Roman Catholic Church rejected this view, however. The *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* was written by Melanchthon in response to this denial and was intended to be a defense for the *Augsburg Confession* (Gritsch and Jenson, "Lutheranism" 23).

'justification,' was through faith alone. The sinner was already given the promise of unconditional salvation from God, particularly through the death of Christ. This became a matter of much contention between Luther and the Church hierarchy and this critique was eventually instrumental in his excommunication.

This thesis has impacted the field as it has observed Luther's theological shift in terms of a process to further show the developmental complexities that would have otherwise been missed. I have argued that summarizing this theological change into one moment provides scholars with a simplified phrase. However, this catch-phrase glosses over the complexities of the whole situation and provides a very surface level approach. Therefore, it is valuable to discuss these complexities in more detail in order to provide more depth to this area of research. The implications of this to future research then are that these developments should be taken into account and researched in more depth; the complexities should no longer be missed. Future research can take my ideas further by examining in depth each stage of Luther's development to further show these complexities and to obtain a better understanding of how each stage led to the next.

In conclusion, this thesis has argued that Martin Luther's theological shift occurred gradually. This thesis has shown this by observing Luther's theological development from one stage to the next. Second, this thesis has countered the argument that his theology was fully formed all at once at an event known as the 'Tower Experience.' I have shown this not to be the case. I have shown that Martin Luther's theology developed through a long arduous process and did not occur all at one time.

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