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THE PAULINE SOURCES
OF
LUTHER'S CONCEPT OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

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To

My Wife--Goldie

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INTRODUCTION

THE PAULINE SOURCES
OF
LUTHER'S CONCEPT OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

INTRODUCTION

A. The Subject

The subject of this study will be stated and explained, justified, and delimited for clarification in presentation.

1. The Subject Stated and Explained.

Liberty in its barest essence can be a rather nebulous concept because of the variety of interpretations. Changing times and changing governments continue to affect the meaning of the idea for the lives of individuals. Patrick Henry's cry of, "Give me liberty or give me death," has stirred the hearts of many in remembrance of the times in which he lived. No less did Martin Luther live under the conviction of such a need. Yet his concept was first and foremost that of an inner freedom, a freedom from guilt and from fear in relation to a holy and a fearful God. What he sought was the liberty of a man in Christ, or in other words, the liberty of the Christian man. This is, in a sense, first a personal liberty within the individual in relation to God, without regard to outward fetters. Secondly, this Christian liberty manifests itself in social service.

The Apostle Paul spoke strongly of the freedom he had in Christ, though many of his letters were written while he was a prisoner of the Roman State.

The subject, then, of this work is the Pauline sources of Luther's teachings concerning the liberty of the Christian man.

2. The Subject Justified.

To this date there are over 200 complete bibliographies of Martin Luther.¹ In fact, more has been written about him than any other person on earth, with the exception of Jesus Christ. With these hosts of authors bending their efforts to the life and activities of one man, one would immediately want to know why he received so much attention. What was it that warranted this devoted interest? The more one delves into his work, the more one sees his infinitely close kinship to the primary subject of biographers--Jesus Christ.

In his literary efforts, Martin Luther did not write "books" as professors do today with great detail and outline. Rather he expressed himself easily and freely "contributing to the questions at issue and to problems of the day."² He wrote short and long articles, sermons, tracts, and the like. His works were a "self-revelation" or "collection of confidences"³ which he warmly and abundantly shared with the world.

Desiring to make religion similarly living and vital for others, Luther wrote of the personal problems of religion in his own life, which he experienced in the face of intense opposition. Yet Luther did not find his freedom through fightings and strugglings, but in the richness of the Word of God.

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1. E. M. Plass: This is Luther, a Character Study, p. 4.
2. Heinrich Böhmer: Luther in Light of Recent Research, p. 42.
3. Ibid., p. 43.

Today as in no other day there is a crying need for a new grasp of the meaning of liberty, and its responsibilities. Liberty alone is not the answer, but liberty rooted in Christ. Luther experienced this and sought to lead others into it. The Apostle Paul also sought to lead others into this freedom. If one can re-discover the Scriptural sources of Luther's convictions on this issue, one would have the mainsprings of his life. This then should prove to be enlightening for the preaching, teaching, and living of the Word which was so rich in the life of Martin Luther.

3. The Subject Delimited.

Few writers have been more prolific in their published writings than Martin Luther. St. Augustine is credited with 232 works in his literary career, while Cotton Mather, a writer of colonial America, wrote 382. Neither obtained the quantity of work nor the popularity of Luther. He published in all some 350 works which include a number of pamphlets. At present the Weimar edition of Luther's works, which are still incomplete, contains approximately 100 volumes averaging 700 pages each.¹ With this volume of material available much selection is necessary, not only in the subject, but also in the sources.

Since the aspects of Christian liberty could include a wide variety of experiences and relationships, this study has been limited primarily to the liberty of the individual Christian man. This liberty pertains to freedom of conscience and of action, with the necessary requisites for such a freedom. The Pauline sources form the Scriptural background for the analysis of this concept.

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1. Plass, op. cit., p. 4.

This freedom is primarily the relationship of the individual man to his Maker and to the society in which he lives. It includes both privileges and responsibilities which are inherent in this concept of Christian liberty.

B. The Sources for the Study

Because of the abundance of works that came from the pen of Martin Luther, definite limitation is necessary. As with few other versatile men, Luther was not a "jack of all trades and master of none," but excelled in many fields. His contributions to Protestantism, and particularly to Lutheran Protestantism, include his translation of the Bible, his Hymnbook, and his Catechism. A few of these contributions will be studied for background. The core of Martin Luther's teaching on Christian liberty will be taken from his treatise by the same name. The Holman Edition of the Works of Martin Luther will be a basic source of reference. Both old and new biographies and character studies will be referred to for the historical setting of this struggle through which Luther formulated his theology.

The Pauline Epistles of the American Standard Version of the New Testament will be a basic source also. The Greek New Testament by Nestle will be used in parallel with the English translation. Commentaries will be consulted for interpretations of the passages studied in these Epistles.

C. The Method of Development

In order to grasp adequately the setting of the life and experiences of the Reformer, a presentation of the historical back-

ground is necessary. The primary teaching of Luther as found in the Treatise on Christian Liberty will be presented in the second chapter. The contributions found in other writings of Luther will be considered together with the evaluation of later writers. The third chapter will include a study and evaluation of the Pauline teachings on Christian liberty. The general summary and final conclusion will be included in the fourth chapter.

An effort is made, in relation to Martin Luther, to show that his life experiences contributed to this knowledge and understanding of Christian liberty. Only he who has known real oppression can know true freedom.

Interest in this question arose from the consideration of the practical aspects of liberty facing sincere Christians. The preaching of the Word of God undergirds their grasp of liberty in Christ. Often this is not clear, because the Word is not rightly preached. This led to the present consideration of Luther and the Pauline Epistles on Christian Liberty.

CHAPTER I

THE REFORMATION SETTING OF LUTHER'S VIEWS

ON CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

CHAPTER I

THE REFORMATION SETTING OF LUTHER'S VIEWS ON CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

A. Introduction

Before the time of Martin Luther, men had risen up in opposition to the abuse of the Word of God and of the common man by the Roman Church. Until this time, the Papacy had been able to control the evidences of uprising and to crush them ruthlessly. The bloody inquisition in Spain engineered by Thomas of Torquemada during the fifteenth century¹ against both Islam and Judaism was a terrible testimony to the world of the ethics of the Church.² The state and the church were partners in this venture. The loss of liberty, personal rights, and life witnessed during this period leave little new for present day despots. Every means was used to get the desired answer from the victims accused.³

Germany, as yet, was not suffering from such an oppression, but the abuses of the Church and the corruption of it were points of rising difficulty.

There was also unrest in the international situation. The Papacy was striving to consolidate its power in the German provinces

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1. Williston Walker: A History of the Christian Church, p. 324.
2. R. H. Bainton: The Travail of Religious Liberty, p. 45.
3. Ibid.

because of the menace of the Islamic Turks from the East.¹ The church in Germany desperately needed internal reformation, for there was growing dissatisfaction and deepening conviction that the Roman Catholic Church was far different from the church preached by Paul and the other apostles.² A few leaders had been striving for this reformation, this return to liberty for the individual in matters of faith.

Some, like Erasmus, lacked the courage of their convictions. Others, like John Hus, died for their beliefs because the world was not ready. In Martin Luther the propitious moment and qualities of leadership combined to produce the much needed Reformation.³

B. Luther in his Formative Years

A study of the formative years of Luther's life at home, during his formal education, and in his early years as a university professor will give perspective in viewing his understanding of Christian liberty.

1. His Childhood and Youth.

On November 10, 1483, in the mining town of Eisleben, Germany, a boy was born to the pious peasant family of Hans Luther. He was named Martin after the saint of the day he was born.⁴ He grew up in this peasant home under strict discipline and "grinding, squalid poverty." His father was industrious and aggressive, rising to a position of respect in the community. He was determined to give his son the

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1. E. G. Schwiebert: Luther and His Times, p. 64.

2. Ibid., p. 10.

3. Ibid., p. 11.

4. Preserved Smith: The Life and Letters of Martin Luther, p. 1.

educational opportunities that he himself had been denied.¹

Martin spent his early youth amidst the gloomy mythology of the northland. There were witches, good and evil spirits, and other survivals of heathen times.²

During his first years of school, he experienced the strict disciplinary measures of the classroom. He learned his grammar lessons, but recitations were more like military drills than class work. Often they would result in beatings for those who did inadequate work.³

At the early age of thirteen, Martin Luther left his home and entered the school of a religious brotherhood--the "Nüllbrudren" at Magdeburg. While attending school here he earned his support by begging, which was a recognized means for a poor lad to acquire an education then, as scholarships are today. His father was encouraged by the results of his work, and sent him to the University of Erfurt in 1501.⁴ During the studies there he delved deeply into the works of Aristotle, who was considered to be inerrant.

Luther received his degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1502 and Master of Arts in 1505.⁵ Following this, he began to study jurisprudence, or law, in accord with the wishes of his father. However, he stayed here only two months. Yet even this brief tenure proved helpful in later days when he studied papal claims and decretals.⁶

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1. Ibid., p. 2.
2. R. H. Bainton: Here I Stand, A Life of Martin Luther, p. 26.
3. Ibid., p. 25.
4. Schwiebert, op. cit., p. 5.
5. Bainton: Here I Stand, p. 17.
6. A. C. McGiffert: Martin Luther, The Man and His Work, p. 16,17.

His change of course came when he suddenly decided to enter a monastery. This happened one day in July, 1505, as he was approaching the Saxon village of Stotternheim, when a storm was brewing. A bolt of lightning struck near him, knocking him to the ground. In a rush of sudden fear, he vowed to St. Anne that he would become a monk if she would save him.¹

2. His Monastic Experience.

Hans Luther bitterly opposed the entrance into a monastery, for he felt it destroyed all chance to a successful career. Because of his father's attitude, and for other reasons, Martin hurried his entrance into the monastery, lest temptation overtake him and he weaken. On July 16, 1505, he had a farewell party, and entered the "Black Cloister" in Erfurt, the chapter house of the Hermits of St. Augustine,² and was ordained in the spring of 1507.³

Later in life, Luther said of his entrance into the monastery:

To those, however, he left behind he said: "Today you see me for the last time and then no more." In tears they led me away; and my father was very angry about my vow, yet I persisted in my determination. It never occurred to me to leave the monastery. I had died completely to the world until God's proper time and Junker Tetzel forced me to leave it and Dr. Staupitz incited me against the pope.⁴

Luther did not long remain away from his studies, but attended to them diligently. Yet all during this time he suffered from unrest of soul and made a constant search for inner peace. The physical "martyrdom"

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1. Bainton: Here I Stand, p. 21.
2. Schwiëbert, op. cit., p. 136.
3. Ibid., p. 148.
4. Ibid., p. 138.

to which he subjected himself is clear evidence of his earnest desire to please a holy God. He fasted, abused his body, and slept without covers during cold nights. He would go out into the city streets to beg for his stout brothers who felt that they received a physical blessing by the food he brought, and he a spiritual blessing. Many times he would go to confession, and immediately after he had confessed all the sins he knew, he would recall some others and return again. Dr. John Staupitz, vicar of the German province of the Augustinians, was a great help to him. He told Luther that God was not angry with him but that it was his duty to believe in the forgiveness of sins.¹

In his search for the answers of philosophy and religion to his problem, he studied mostly the work of William of Occam. Occam's fundamental thesis was that man can do anything he wills. He could keep the "Ten Commandments to the letter or persuade his reason that white is black." The cloister adopted this view for they believed that man by his own works, asceticisms, and prayers could "prepare his soul for union with God."² This drove Luther to his extreme physical abuses and privations, and yet these deep despairs kept attacking him again and again after each attempt to earn forgiveness by asceticism.

The second doctrine Luther grasped defined God as pure arbitrary will. Man could attain favor with God by performing certain acts. Yet Luther found he could not bring himself to love God as was demanded. In fact he said, "When I looked for Christ, it seemed to me as if I saw

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1. Smith, op. cit., p. 14.

2. Ibid., p. 12.

the devil."¹

Preserved Smith sums up Luther's relationship to the Occamist philosophy in this paragraph:

Luther's development is largely a history of his enfranchisement from the Occamist theology. But even after he had freed himself from the oppressive doctrines he bore lasting marks of the apprenticeship in Occam's school. In 1515 we find him calling these scholastics the "hog-doctors," but throughout life he carried certain of these teachings with him. Occam--the "modernist"--was the sharpest critic of the medieval Church, and especially of the hierarchy. He said flatly that popes and councils could err, and remembering this doubtless made the break with Rome easier for Luther.²

Luther found that he received most of his help from the Bible, although he had never seen a whole Bible until he was twenty years of age.³ This was before his entrance into the monastery. Next to the Bible he found aid in the works of Augustine.⁴

No authors know for certain when Luther was awakened to the truth of the Gospel. Some disagree on the time of this first realization, but it was evidently a process for Luther, even after the first glimpse of light broke through into his tortured soul. Romans 1:17 offered the key to his problem, as Smith observes:

It was one day at Wittenberg in 1508 or 1509, as he was sitting in his cell in a little tower, that his life message came to him, and with it the first assurance of permanent comfort and peace. He was reading Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and came to the verse (1:17) "The just shall live by faith." Pondering over this it came to him that it was not, as he had been taught, by man's own work that he had been redeemed, but by faith in God and the Savior. Justification by faith has been rightly

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1. Ibid., p. 13.
2. Ibid.
3. McGiffert, op. cit., p. 35.
4. Smith, op. cit., p. 13.

selected as the cardinal doctrine of the Lutheran theology; he himself recognized in it the cornerstone of his life.¹

Luther had entered the monastery to save his soul, and it took him twelve years to find the truth. However, there was great value for the Reformer in those years in the monastery, for there he developed habits of meditation, study, and perseverance that he needed for the years ahead.² Luther continued in the monastery for some years after this first illumination.

His trip to Rome in 1510 on behalf of his order to try to help settle a dispute added disillusionment to his growing concern about the condition of the church. He saw corruption, laziness, and greed among high church officials. Despite this, he went to many shrines to earn indulgences.³ He even wished his parents were dead so that he might earn their way out of purgatory.⁴

This tracing of Martin Luther's monastic experiences helps to picture the inner struggles he faced as he grew into freedom in Christ. This background is necessary for an understanding of Luther's concept of Christian liberty.

3. His Professorship.

Luther was a man of scholastic abilities. His recognition and rapid advancement indicated this. It was in 1508, only eighteen months after he said his first mass, that he was called to teach Aris-

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1. Ibid., p. 15.

2. Ibid.

3. Bainton: Here I Stand, p. 50.

4. Ibid.

totelian Ethics in the newly founded University of Wittenberg.¹

After some years of study and teaching, Luther received the degree of Doctor of Theology on October 18, 1512, from the University of Wittenberg.² He began soon to lecture on the Bible and continued this lecturing the rest of his life. Lectures on the Psalms, Romans, and Galatians indicate the thoroughness and intensity of his work.³

The study, up to this point, has traced Luther during his formative years. The great inner strife and the outer struggle for this inner peace, characterize this period, and lay a foundation for that which follows in his life.

B. Luther in the Rising Storm

Whenever men of strong convictions arise, they face opposition and conflict. That was Luther's portion when he voiced his disapproval of the abuses of the Roman Church.

1. The Early Conflict--The Indulgences.

Indulgences first came into use through the Crusades, when forgiveness of sins and freedom from punishment of sins were granted to Christians who died in battle.⁴ As the Crusades continued, indulgences were given to all who fought against the Mohammedans. Eventually this privilege was granted anyone contributing the amount of money required to send one soldier on a Crusade.⁵ After the Crusades, this practice

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1. Smith, op. cit., p. 11.

2. Schwiebert, op. cit., pp. 195, 196.

3. Philip Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol. II, p. 138.

4. Schwiebert, op. cit., p. 303.

5. Ibid., pp. 303, 304.

of selling indulgences was increased considerably. People without sufficient good works to escape purgatory could purchase indulgences for this deficit from the "Thesaurus Meritorium," or treasury of heaven.¹ Later impressively embossed letters were added as visible evidence of heavenly forgiveness.²

As the effectiveness of the indulgence sales became increasingly evident, the Papacy began devising new ways of retailing them.³ Because of this attitude, much financial intrigue arose. The House of Fugger in Augsburg practically controlled that section of the world by its financing of the elections of emperors and church officials. Even the Roman Papacy was under advice of the Fuggers.⁴ In order to meet the obligations to the Fuggers, the sale of indulgences was pushed heavily.⁵

John Tetzel, a Dominican monk from Leipsig, became one of the best indulgence salesmen and claimed he had saved more souls from hell through the sale of indulgences than St. Peter had through the Gospel.⁶

Opposition was accumulating against this unholy trade. Luther began preaching sermons against the indulgences as early as 1516⁷ even though Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony and patron of the Castle Church of Wittenberg, prided himself on the collection of over 5,000 sacred relics in the church. These relics gave prestige and income to the Castle Church because of the merits they possessed for indulgences

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1. Ibid., p. 305.
2. Ibid., p. 305.
3. Ibid., p. 304.
4. Ibid., p. 307.
5. Ibid., p. 308.
6. Ibid., p. 309.
7. McGiffert, op. cit., p. 76.

seekers.¹ Although Tetzel and his fellow salesmen were not allowed to enter Saxony, Luther nevertheless spoke his thoughts concerning this practice.²

On October 31, 1517, Luther hammered his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church.³ In these statements he gave a summary of his convictions on the abuses of the Roman Church.⁴ However, he was not speaking for himself only in this act, as E. G. Schwiebert indicates:

When, therefore, Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, it was not as an isolated individual, but with the firm conviction that the entire university faculty wanted the matter of indulgence abuses clarified so as to establish a common principle of action in their midst. This concerted action by the whole group caused the University of Paris to conclude a few years later that they were dealing not with one "viper, but a whole nest of vipers." The German Reformation was, then, an educational movement centered in the University of Wittenberg.⁵

Luther was not seeking a conflict when he nailed up his theses, for he desired debate on the issues, feeling certain that corrections would be made as soon as these abuses were brought to light.⁶

Reactions to the Ninety-Five Theses came quickly. Tetzel reacted immediately in anger. Johann Maier of Eck, (also known as John Eck) a professor of theology, proved more formidable than Tetzel, denouncing Luther as a heretic.⁷ Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz, who served to lose much by prevention of indulgence sales, reported Luther

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1. Bainton: Here I Stand, pp. 69, 71.
2. Ibid., p. 76.
3. Walker, op. cit., p. 340.
4. Bainton: Here I Stand, p. 79.
5. Schwiebert, op. cit., p. 2.
6. Walker, op. cit., p. 341.
7. McGiffert, op. cit., p. 135.

to Rome. Before Luther realized how involved he had become, he was the leader in the fight of those who wanted reform.¹

Pope Leo called Luther to Rome, but later had his case transferred to Germany. Cardinal Cajetan was sent as a papal legate to give Luther a personal hearing before he was heard at the diet at Augsburg. Cajetan was anxious to heal the breach and to weld the Christian forces together because the Turks from the East were threatening all of Europe.²

During these difficulties, Elector Frederick did not desert Luther, nor did he give him open support. He gave neither side much satisfaction as to his position, though he did refuse to give Luther over to the authorities.³

The stage had been set for the conflict. Luther found his previous experience and training was of great help to him in the trying days that faced him.

2. The Growing Tension--The Leipsig Debate.

Johann Maier of Eck had been needling Luther and setting the stage for this debate. Duke George invited them to Leipsig. Carlstadt, a co-worker of Luther's at Wittenberg, was to speak for the Reformers along with Luther and Melanchthon.⁴

Prior to the time of this debate, Karl von Miltitz had been sent as a papal nuncio by Leo X to reconcile Luther peacefully. Luther

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1. Walker, op. cit., p. 341.
2. Bainton: Here I Stand, pp. 92, 93.
3. Ibid., p. 99.
4. Ibid., p. 111.

had promised to remain silent, and to let the dispute go before a group of German bishops.¹ However, Eck's attacks brought Luther out into the open again, and forced him into the publicity of the Leipzig Debate.

Eck was easily the victor over Carlstadt who was slow and dry, being accused of reading the audience to sleep.² Even Luther had difficulty before Eck. This stimulated Luther to re-think and to deepen his own position. Before the end of the debate, Luther had been led to commit himself to accept teachings of John Hus who had been burned as a heretic, and to deny the infallibility of councils and the primacy of the Pope.³

By February, 1520, Eck was in Rome informing the Pope of the "Saxon Hus" in Germany.⁴

3. The Break with Rome--The Papal Bull.

On July 15, 1520, the papal bull, Exsurge Domine,⁵ excommunicating and condemning Luther as a heretic, was signed. It did not reach him until October 10, of the same year, almost three months later. There was a delay of nearly three years from Luther's publishing of his Ninety-Five Theses until the reception of the papal bull.⁶ This continuing delay gave Luther time to crystallize his own convictions and to win a following among the people.

Despite Luther's receiving the papal bull, his friends stood

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1. Walker, op. cit., p. 343.
2. Bainton: Here I Stand, p. 112.
3. Ibid., p. 113.
4. Ibid., p. 120.
5. Schwiebert, op. cit., p. 484ff.
6. Schaff, op. cit., p. 228.

firm around him. Many of Luther's books were burned publicly in different cities.¹ In retaliation he publicly burned the bull, some papal decrees, writings of opponents, and similar articles in Wittenberg, December 10, 1520.²

During these tempestuous days Luther was formulating his theology and writing to meet the needs of the day. Among these writings are his three great manifestoes.

An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, completed July 20, 1520, was written in answer to the spiritual-temporal claims of the Papacy.³ This is a stirring appeal to the nobility of Germany who had recently offered Luther armed support. He called on them to reform the church, not by armed force, but by legal right in a godly manner.⁴ Luther attacks the claims of supremacy of the papacy,⁵ its carnal pomp and ceremony,⁶ and then suggests needed reforms.⁷

In his second manifesto, The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, written by October 6, 1520, Luther denies the validity of the Roman sacramental system, thus striking at the heart of the Papacy.⁸ This work represents the high point of Luther's views in relation to reformation of theology.⁹

The last of these three manifestoes, A Treatise on Christian

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1. McGiffert, op. cit., p. 215.
2. Ibid., p. 220.
3. Martin Luther: Works, Vol. II, pp. 57, 58.
4. Schaff, op. cit., p. 206.
5. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 65ff.
6. Ibid., p. 80ff.
7. Ibid., p. 99ff.
8. Schaff, op. cit., pp. 213, 214.
9. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 168.

Liberty, written in October, 1520,¹ emphasizes the religious possibilities of the individual man whether layman or theologian.² It is written in a positive tone, extolling man's freedom in and through Jesus Christ.

The purpose and effect of these three letters has been summarized by Albert T. W. Stienhaeuser:

In the Open Letter to the Christian Nobility Luther overthrew the three walls behind which Rome sat entrenched in her spiritual-temporal power; in the Babylonian Captivity of the Church he enters and takes her central stronghold and sanctuary--the sacramental system by which she accompanied and controlled her members from the cradle to the grave; only then could he set forth, in language of almost lyrical rapture, the Liberty of a Christian Man.³

D. Summary

With this survey of the formative years of Luther's life, there is opportunity to evaluate the contributing factors in his life that served to temper his convictions.

Luther's early life was lived in a constant search for freedom and release, not a release from physical restrictions but from spiritual bondage. During his school days near his home he lived in the gloomy mythology of the northland with its witches and spirits, and under the strict, often harsh, discipline of his parents and teachers. As a young man, the bolt of lightning that sent him hurrying into the Augustinian monastery betrayed his fear and superstition. During his life as a monk, he had one burning desire--to find peace with a righteous God.

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1. Ibid., p. 220.
2. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 169.
3. Ibid., p. 167.

This grew out of a deep sense of guilt for sin, driving him to perform many works of penance in his search for release. Yet he found neither this peace nor release from guilt.

Luther's one question was always, "How am I to render God gracious to me?"¹ He searched desperately until, through the Word of God, he came to see the redemptive work of Christ freely given for him. This gift was his by faith. Consequently, in his expression of the freedom of the Christian man, his spirit soars to the heights in Christ and yet remains bound in love's service to others. All through life Luther leaned heavily on the Pauline Epistles for his spiritual needs. Like Paul, Luther wrote out of the fulness of his own experience with Christ and sought to lead others to share in this rich prize of freedom in Him.

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1. Schwiebert, op. cit., p. 166.

CHAPTER II

THE CONCEPT OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AS SET FORTH
IN THE "TREATISE ON CHRISTIAN LIBERTY" BY LUTHER

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A. Introduction

Freedom, which is exemption from necessity in choice and action, is the longing of every heart, yet only those who have experienced this freedom can write of it. The previous chapter outlined the experiences that contributed to Luther's understanding of true freedom in Christ and enabled him to write of the Christian's liberty.¹ Faith is the foundation and instrument of this liberty.² In this treatise Luther sets forth his concept of Christian liberty, as is summarized by James MacKinnon:

The title, "The Freedom of a Christian Man," aptly conveys the scope of its contents. It sets forth his cardinal doctrine of justification by faith as alike an emancipation through faith, of the individual Christian from the bondage of external works, and a limitation of this freedom in virtue of the obligation of individual self-discipline and service to others.³

Thus the picture Luther presents in this treatise is the freedom of the Christian man from all manner of work-righteousness because of his faith, and yet of his need of Christ-like love to discipline himself to better serve others.

Protestants consider this book "perhaps the most beautiful of Luther's writings the result of religious contemplation rather than

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1. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 312.

2. Ibid.

3. James MacKinnon: Luther and the Reformation, Vol. II, p. 263.

theological labor."¹ Luther himself did not fail to catch the import of its message to the Christian church.²

This chapter is intended to be a detailed analysis of Luther's views on Christian liberty as found in this treatise. The analysis will be the basic framework also for the next chapter where the Pauline sources of his views on Christian liberty will be considered. Footnotes through the chapter indicate Luther's references to the Pauline Epistles.

B. The Occasion for Writing

In his second treatise, The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, treating of the sacrament of ordination and the "indelible character" of the priests, Luther states that he desires to write more fully on the subject of "our joyous liberty" as soon as he sees the effect of this letter upon the Papists.³ This opportunity came to him much earlier than he expected when he was asked to write another letter to the Pope.⁴

1. For Reconciliation with the Papacy.

Even though Rome had already condemned Luther, Carl von Miltitz, the papal delegate sent to bring Luther to Rome, still thought there was hope for reconciliation.⁵ Miltitz heard that John Eck was on the way from Rome with the papal bull, Exsurge Domine, and realized that immediate action was needed if the difficulties were to be resolved peacefully.⁶

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1. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 300.
2. Ibid., p. 311.
3. Ibid., p. 284.
4. Ibid., p. 298.
5. Schaff, op. cit., p. 221.
6. Schwiebert, op. cit., p. 477.

On August 28, 1520, there was a meeting of the Augustinian monks at Eisleben, which Miltitz attended. He persuaded John Staupitz, then retiring as General Vicar of the German Congregation of the Augustinians, and Wenceslaus Lenk, the new vicar, to visit Luther.¹ They were to ask him to write a conciliatory letter assuring Pope Leo X that his (Luther's) attacks were against the abuses and not against the Pope personally.

All except Miltitz were doubtful of the value of the effort, but Luther agreed to write. These two men met at Lichtenberg² October 12, 1520, and reached an understanding whereby Luther was to write a conciliatory letter to Leo X along with a booklet containing historical material showing how Luther had been forced to take his stand.³ Luther was to write the letter within twelve days, and then to date it back to September 6, 1520, so that it would avoid the appearance of being precipitated by the papal bull.⁴ However, the letter Luther wrote to Pope Leo X contained the historical material. The booklet became the Treatise on Christian Liberty, which was of a much different nature than that originally intended by Miltitz.⁵

It is questioned by some whether the Pope ever received this letter or not, and if he did, what his reactions were.⁶ The Pope was a humanist and not spiritually minded enough to respond to the moral appeal of this letter even if he had read it.⁷

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1. Ibid., pp. 477, 478.
2. Luther: Works, Vol. II., p. 298.
3. Schwiebert, op. cit., p. 478.
4. Luther: Works, Vol. II., p. 298.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 299.

Because of the repeated rebuffs of previous efforts for reconciliation, Luther was pessimistic about the outcome of such an appeal. He had gone much further in earlier efforts than he was willing to go this time.¹

2. For Clarification of the True Characteristics of the Christian Life.

Nevertheless, Luther was confident of his own faith and doctrine, for he himself said of this treatise, "It is a small thing if thou regard its bulk, but, unless I am deceived, it is the whole of Christian living in brief form, if thou wilt but grasp its meaning."² It is worthy of note that there is nothing basically new from Luther in this treatise, that had not been voiced earlier in his sermons and writings, but there is a rich summary combination of his insights into the Christian life.³

Despite the heavy threat of the papal bull over him, and of the physical danger around him, Luther gave a joyous tone to this treatise. He wrote as one who was already the victor and who wanted to share this knowledge.⁴

Luther did not write for the learned and the noble, but for the common people, that they could have the way of knowledge open to them.⁵ The concluding paragraph of the letter to Pope Leo X summarizes Luther's attitude and convictions:

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1. Ibid., p. 298.

2. Ibid., p. 311.

3. Julius K stlin: The Theology of Luther in its Historical Development and Inner Harmony, Vol. I, p. 411.

4. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 312.

5. Ibid., p. 313.

Finally, that I may not approach thee empty-handed, blessed Father, I bring with me this little treatise published under thy name as an omen of peace and of good hope. From this book thou mayest judge with what studies I would prefer to be more profitably engaged, as I could be if your godless flatterers would permit, and had hitherto permitted me. It is a small thing if thou regard its bulk, but, unless I am deceived, it is the whole of Christian living in brief form, if thou wilt grasp its meaning. I am a poor man, and have no other gift to offer, and thou hast no need to be made rich by any other than a spiritual gift. With this I commend myself to thy Fatherhood and Blessedness. May the Lord Jesus preserve thee forever. Amen.¹

C. Luther's Procedure in Presentation

An analysis of Luther's procedure in presentation aids in understanding his message in this treatise on Christian freedom.

1. The Parallels in the Nature of the Christian Man.

Luther states two propositions in this writing--Christian liberty and Christian servitude.² In order to analyze this parallel, he discusses the twofold nature of the Christian man.³ The inner, new, spiritual nature, called the inward man, comes into being through faith in Christ.⁴ Thus only a Christian can have this inward spiritual nature. This inward man is perfectly free in all things and subject to no man, because of his faith relationship to Christ.⁵ If the Christian man were only spiritual, there would be no limitations of this liberty.⁶ However, because he is both spiritual and physical, Christian servitude in love is necessary. The physical or "flesh" does not willingly subject itself

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1. Ibid., p. 311.
2. K stlin, Vol. I, p. 411; Cf. 1 Cor. 9:19, Romans 13:8.
3. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 311.
4. Ibid.: Cf. 2 Cor. 4:16.
5. Ibid., p. 316.
6. Martin Luther: Christ-Given Liberty, Ed. Edgar Carlson, p. 23.

to the spiritual or "spirit," causing disharmony.¹ For this reason the spiritual must rule and discipline the physical, and work through the physical or outward man in social relationships.² The Christian man is freely justified before God needing no works to merit this justification. Nevertheless, he must do works for the discipline of his own body.³ Thus the inward and the outward natures are bound together in one Christian man, so that the liberty and bondage of the spirit is expressed in this relationship. The Pauline sources of these words and pictures used here by Luther will be considered in the following chapter.

2. Mystical Tendencies.

Luther was influenced, according to his own indications,⁴ by the teachings of Johann Tauler (1300-1361), a Dominican mystic whose sermons stressed the practical aspect of Christianity. This attracted Luther, and caused him to consider Tauler one of the forerunners of the Reformation.⁵ Tauler emphasized direct communion with God as primary in the Christian life, but this communion was dependent on personal faith. Luther favored this thought of mysticism in relation to the mystical union with Christ.⁶ Yet he disliked the mysticism of the monastics with their negative type of morality which consisted of renunciation rather than consecration.⁷

Staupitz influenced Luther by giving him the practical and

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1. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 311; Cf. Gal. 5:17.
2. Luther: Christ-Given Liberty, p. 28.
3. Ibid., p. 23.
4. S. M. Jackson: The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol. XI, p. 276.
5. Ibid.
6. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 320.
7. K stlin, Vol. I, p. 185.

Catholic type of mysticism. The writings of St. Augustine and others materially contributed to this education also.¹

What impressed Luther about the teachings of Augustine, Staupitz, and others was the value of the individual and the equality of individuals before God in the unity of the Christian experience.²

3. The Centrality of the Word and Faith.

Luther continually placed strong emphasis on the Word of God as the revelation of God to man and the only way man can come to know God in Christ.³ Only in faith and by faith can man receive the power of the Word.⁴ The centrality of the Word and faith in this treatise is evident.

4. Use of Words and Structure.

It is well to remember that Luther uses the words "just," "righteous," and "pious" as synonyms. Sometimes the words vary in different translations, but there is no fundamental difference.⁵

The basic structure of this treatise is centered around the relationships of the inward and the outward man in contrast and comparison, with the Word and faith being the controlling factors in these relationships. Luther uses a cumulative argument, stating the primary point, and then developing the implications of it down to personal practical applications.

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1. Schaff, op. cit., p. 142.
2. K8stlin, Vol. I., p. 184.
3. Ibid., p. 412.
4. Ibid., p. 413.
5. Ibid., p. 411.

D. The Content of the Treatise

The following discussion of the content of this treatise is divided into three sections: the source, the meaning, and the effect of Christian liberty. These divisions are not final, but they serve as a method of getting into the heart of Luther's teaching on the liberty of the Christian man.

1. The Source of Christian Liberty.

a. The Word of God.

The Word of God tells a man what he must know in order to be saved, as Luther mentions in a discussion of the Ten Commandments:

First, he must know what he ought to do and what he ought not to do. Second, when he finds that by his own strength he can neither do the things he ought, nor leave undone the things he ought to do, he must know where to seek and find and get the strength he needs. Third, he must know how to seek and find and get this strength.¹

The fulfillment of these three needs is found in Scripture, the Word of God.²

(1) Nature of the Word

In this writing Luther does not deal so much with the negative aspect of the Word, that of revealing sin and impotence in the human heart, but rather with the empowering of the soul by the Word to live unto God.³ "The Word is the Gospel of God concerning His Son, who was made flesh, suffered, rose from the dead, and was glorified through the Spirit who sanctifies."⁴

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1. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 355.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 314; Cf. 2 Tim. 1:9, Rom. 3:21.

4. Ibid., p. 315.

Obviously, then, if this is the nature of the Word for Luther, his understanding of grace is different from the traditional concept of the Roman Church, as Heinrich Böhmer indicates:

Grace ceases for Luther to be a supernatural force or remedy which through the sacrament is poured into man, but is nevertheless meant to bring about in him spiritual and ethical effects. It has become a 'sentiment of God,' which is made known in the 'Word of God,' and operates through this medium as otherwise an attitude is made manifest and operates by means of the Word.¹

The gracious attitude of God toward repentant sinners is made known through the Word.²

(2) The Necessity of the Word.

Thus, the Word of God is necessary for the well-being of every soul.³ "One thing, and one alone, is necessary for life, justification, and Christian liberty; and that is the most holy Word of God, the Gospel of Christ."⁴ All else can and should be cast aside for the Word of Life.

Luther writes further of his convictions concerning the Word.

But if it (the soul) has the Word it is rich and lacks nothing, since this Word is the Word of life, of truth, of light, of peace, of righteousness, of salvation, of joy, of liberty, of wisdom, of power, of grace, of glory and of every blessing beyond our power to estimate.⁵

The greatest privation for man is to be deprived of God's Word, while the greatest mercy is to receive it.⁶ In this way Luther points out

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1. Böhmer, op. cit., p. 284.
2. Cf. Rom. 1:1-5, 17.
3. Cf. Rom. 10:17.
4. Luther: Christ-Given Liberty, p. 9.
5. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 314.
6. Ibid.

that the Word of God is necessary for every human being if he is to have hope in the world and peace with God.

(3) The Ministry of the Word.

Just as Christ's ministry in the world was that of the Word, so the "whole spiritual estate, apostles, bishops, and all the priests, has been called and instituted only for the ministry of the Word."¹ The two elements of the Word in this ministry are the precept and the promise. The precept is the law whereby man can learn of his own impotence, and despair of his own strength.² The precepts are the law of God that cut and wound unto death itself. The promises bind and heal the sin-burdened soul of the one who believes them.³ Luther clearly states the benefits of the Word:

Now, since these promises of God are words of holiness, truth, righteousness, liberty, and peace, and are full of universal goodness; the soul, which cleaves to them with a firm faith, is so united to them, nay, thoroughly absorbed by them, that it not only partakes in, but is penetrated and saturated by, all their virtues. For if the touch of Christ was healing, how much more does that most tender spiritual touch, nay, absorption of the Word, communicate to the soul all that belongs to the Word.⁴

Thus the ministry of the Word is one of revealing and healing; of revealing the hurt of sin, and of healing this eternal hurt. It is a ministry of mercy unto salvation.

(4) The Preaching of the Word.

The preaching of the Word is man's part as an instrument in the healing ministry of the Word.⁵ The content of preaching should always

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1. Ibid., pp. 314, 315.

2. Luther: Christ-Given Liberty, p. 12.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Luther: Works, Vol. II, pp. 314, 315.

be Jesus Christ, but not only in relation to the historical facts of his life and works, since knowledge alone is not enough. Rather Christ ought to be preached as One satisfying the needs of the sinner, for the purpose of preaching the Word is to establish a personal faith in Him as Savior.¹

b. Faith.

(1) The Nature of Faith.

Faith is that which lays hold of the promises of God.² In his "Preface to the Epistle to the Romans" Luther has a definition of faith that is classic.

Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a man would stake his life on it a thousand times. This confidence in God's grace and knowledge of it makes men glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and with all His creatures; and this is the work of the Holy Ghost in faith.³

This faith is received by man and not generated by him. This faith establishes a relationship between two persons, God and the sinner.

(2) The Object of Faith.

The object of the "living, daring" faith is Jesus Christ, who is the content of saving preaching.⁴ Christ, who is the Living Word, is the foundation of the Christian life of those who received Him by faith.

2. The Meaning of Christian Liberty in Relation to the Twofold Nature of the Christian Man.

The core of the teaching on Christian liberty is found in the two propositions that Luther states at the outset of his booklet.

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1. Ibid., pp. 326, 327; Cf. 1 Cor. 1:21.
2. Cf. Rom. 1:17, 10:10.
3. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 452.
4. Ibid., p. 315.

A Christian is a perfectly free Lord of all, and subject to none.

A Christian man is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.

Although these two theses seem to contradict each other, yet if they should be found to fit together they would serve our purpose beautifully.¹

These propositions of Christian liberty and Christian servitude are the basis of this analysis of liberty, since liberty must be related to service in the life of the Christian man. The meaning of Christian liberty is seen in the living relationship of the inward and the outward man.²

a. The Inward Man--Freedom of Conscience, Freedom from Works.

(1) Definition of the Inward Man.

As was mentioned earlier, Luther uses the picture of a two-fold nature in man, the spiritual and the physical. The spiritual man is the inner, new man,³ which only the Christian has. The inward man is above his environment. Nothing in his association or life can be credited with producing righteousness or unrighteousness in his soul.⁴ Bodily discomfort or bodily limitations do not "hurt the soul," neither do sacred adornments or outward actions "benefit the soul."⁵ Here Luther is speaking clearly of the theological or ethical aspects of environment and bodily privations, and not of the psychological. That which matters is the soul, which is not affected by outward activities

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1. Ibid., p. 312.

2. Cf. 1 Cor. 9:19, Rom. 13:8; Ante, p. 22ff.

3. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 313; Ante, p. 22ff.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

alone. Luther is primarily concerned with the inward or spiritually regenerate man in his treatment of Christian liberty.¹

(2) The Basic Need of the Inward Man for this Liberty.

"First, let us contemplate the inward man, to see how a righteous, free and truly Christian man, that is a new, spiritual, man, comes into being."² This new, inward man came into being through the Word and faith, and is sustained daily in his new existence of freedom in Christ, through the Word.

(a) The Word.

The Word is God's revelation to man, God's promise in Jesus Christ, as was mentioned previously. The commands of the Word "teach those things that are good. . . but do not give us the power" to do them. The commands reveal weakness, while the promises of God bring strength to overcome.³ More than anything else in the whole world, man needs the Word of God, in order that he may be brought to faith in Him and that he may be sustained in this faith.⁴

(b) Faith--And Its Virtues, or Freedoms.

Faith is that which is given man whereby he accepts and believes that the promises of God are trustworthy and are for him personally. But what are the benefits or "virtues" or "powers" of such a faith, and how do they relate to the freedom of the Christian man? Luther lists three virtues in his survey of the benefits of faith.

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1. K stlin, Vol. I, p. 411.

2. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 313.

3. Ibid., p. 317.

4. Luther: Christ-Given Liberty, p. 9; Cf. Rom. 1:1-5, 10:7.

1' Justification--The First Virtue,¹ Freedom from
Bondage to the Law and Sin.

The first virtue of faith is justification, or righteousness, whereby the sinner is made free from the demands of the law, as Luther states:

It is clear then that a Christian man has in his faith all that he needs, and needs no works to justify him. And if he had no need of works, neither does he need the law; and if he has no need of the law, surely he is free from the law, and it is true, "the law is not made for a righteous man." And this is that Christian liberty, even our faith, which does not indeed cause us to live in idleness or in wickedness, but makes the law and works unnecessary for any man's righteousness and salvation.²

The inner man is free and so is no longer dependent on the law and works, for he is solely dependent upon God. Because of this dependence he is declared righteous. This declaration of righteousness is a forensic act, a pronouncement by God upon the one who accepts Christ.³ So also this righteousness is a state in which the believer exists through faith alone.

The Augsburg Confession states clearly the traditional position of Luther on justification:

. . . men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight.⁴

Thus faith in Christ justifies the believer so that he is not only forgiven of all his sins, but is also declared righteous, as if he had

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1. Luther: Works, Vol. II, pp. 318, 319.
2. Cf. Rom. 10:10, 4:3.
3. H. E. Jacobs: A Summary of the Christian Faith, p. 206.
4. Concordia, or Book of Concord; The Symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Concordia Publishing House, "The Augsburg Confession," Art. IV, p. 13.

never sinned. God is the subject in this action, and the believing sinner is the recipient. The believer has received the very righteousness of Christ. The inward man by faith is the new man who has this holiness before God. Luther stresses the fact that the virtue of justification is of God from beginning to end.¹ By God's activity the Christian man is free through faith from the condemnation of sin.

2' Fulfillment of the Law--Glorification of God,
Freedom from Bondage to Unbelief and Wrath of God.

The second virtue of faith is that it fulfills the law, and thus glorifies God.² Faith honors God because it ascribes to Him all that He is, by honoring Him as perfectly true, righteous, trustworthy, and good.³ Faith honors God by declaring Him to be truthful in what He does and promises to do.⁴ Thus faith puts God first in the life of a person and so fulfills the first commandment, as Luther explains:

(To fulfill this commandment is) To fear and love God in true faith, and always, in all our works, to trust Him firmly, and be wholly, completely, altogether resigned in all things, whether they be evil or good.

Here belongs whatever is written in all the Scriptures concerning faith, hope and love of God, all of which is briefly comprehended in this commandment.⁵

The demand of the first commandment, "Thou shalt worship one God,"⁶ is satisfied by faith, because "that. . . upon which you set your heart and put your trust is properly your God."⁷

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1. MacKinnon, Vol. I, p. 210.
2. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 319.
3. Ibid.
4. Cf. Rom. 4:3.
5. Ibid., pp. 364, 365.
6. Ibid., p. 322.
7. Concordia, op. cit., "Large Catechism," p. 169.

Unbelief, on the other hand, dishonors God, for it, in effect, is to call Him a liar and to deny the truth that exists in Him.¹ "In doing this (unbelief) is not a man denying God and setting himself up as an idol in his own heart?"² He is a rebel against God, designating himself as his god, in self-righteousness, as if he were the only one to determine the truth. Luther describes God's reaction to man's unbelief:

Rightly hath God shut up all--not in wrath nor in lust--but in unbelief; in order that those who pretend that they are fulfilling the law by works of purity and benevolence (which are social and human virtues), may not presume that they will therefore be saved; but being included in the sin of unbelief, may either seek mercy, or be justly condemned.³

Man's greatest affront to God is that of unbelief, which justly results in his condemnation. Through faith man is freed from bondage to unbelief with its condemnation.

Faith gives God glory by honoring Him as just and true, and He in turn honors the believer by giving His righteousness to him. "It is a true and righteous thing, that God is true and righteous; and to confess this, and ascribe these attributes to Him, is to be ourselves true and righteous."⁴

3' Union with Christ, Freedom from Bondage to Carnal Nature.

The third virtue of faith is union with Christ whereby the Christian is freed from bondage to his carnal self and his soul becomes one with Christ. Luther compares this union with that of husband and

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1. Cf. Rom. 11:32.
2. Luther: Christ-Given Liberty, p. 14.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

wife, where they become one flesh,¹ and so have all things in common that previously belonged to each separately.² All the sin and guilt that belongs to the believer becomes Christ's, Luther declares, and all the righteousness and purity of Christ becomes the believer's:³

If we compare these possessions, we shall see how inestimable is the gain. Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation; the soul is full of sin, death, and condemnation. Let faith step in, and then sin, death, and hell will belong to Christ, and grace, life, and salvation to the soul.⁴

Christ and the believer are bound together in this relationship by the "wedding-ring of faith," since faith alone is the foundation for this union, and is the only basis on which this living relationship can be maintained.⁵

By His birthright as the Son of God, Christ has obtained the two dignities or prerogatives which He imparts to every believer in the pattern of the marital relationship.⁶ In reference to the prerogative of kingship Luther writes:

First, as regards kingship, every Christian is by faith so exalted above all things, that, in spiritual power, he is completely lord of all things; so that nothing whatever can do him any hurt; yea, all things are subject to him, and are compelled to be subservient to his salvation.⁷

This kingship is not physical or political, but is spiritual, so that all things work for good,⁸ even as did Christ's seeming defeat at Cal-

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1. Cf. Eph. 5:31.
2. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 320.
3. Cf. Gal. 2:20.
4. Luther: Christ-Given Liberty, p. 15.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 18.
7. Ibid.
8. Cf. Rom. 8:38, 1 Cor. 3:22, 23, 2 Cor. 12:9.

vary. Thus by his dependence upon God the inward man is a free king with all things under him.

By the second prerogative the believer is a priest, since he is able to carry on the priestly functions of intercessory prayer and instruction in the faith. This priesthood is even a higher prerogative than kingship, "because by that priesthood we are worthy to appear before God" for the benefit of others.² Thus the believer's freedom also consists in free access to God. Luther stresses the fact that this priesthood belongs to all Christians, and those called to be teachers, ministers, and priests are only stewards with no special prerogatives above other believers.³

Through his kingly power he (the believer) rules over all things, death, life and sin, and through his priestly glory is all powerful with God, because God does the things he asks and desires.⁴

Thus it is evident that the new inward man arises through faith in the trustworthiness of God's promises in His Word. Freedom of conscience of the inward man is seen in this faith relationship to God. The believer is justified by faith and freed from bondage to sin and the demands of the law. By faith he fulfills the law, honoring God, and is thus free from bondage to unbelief and God's wrath. Through this faith the new man also has freedom from his carnal "old nature" and is brought into "wedlock" with Christ. By this union he is a king and a priest in the eyes of God, and his conscience is bound to Christ in true freedom.

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1. Ibid., p. 19.
2. Ibid.; Cf. Heb. 10:19.
3. Luther: Works, Vol. II, pp. 325, 326; Cf. 1 Cor. 4:1.
4. Ibid., p. 325.

In his treatment of the inward man, Luther seems to echo the Apostle Paul's repeated call to spiritual freedom in Christ through faith. Not only is this new man in Christ free from old bondages, but he is free in a positive growing way, that can be seen only through service.¹ In this service the spiritual and the physical are united and find expression.

b. The Outward Man--Freedom to Serve, Need of Works.

The second aspect of the life of the Christian man is the outward or the physical. Luther does not believe in the separation of the spiritual and physical natures, but discusses them in this arrangement for convenience.

(1) Definition of the Outward Man.

The outward man refers to the personal needs elemental in maintaining life, and the expression of needs and desires in social relationships.² The Christian is always a human being and must cope with the problem of maintaining himself in this situation.³ He is free in all things, and yet subject to all men.⁴ With this relationship comes the problem of balance between the physical and the spiritual. The physical must not bind the spiritual, but the spiritual which sees with deeper penetration must guide the physical throughout this earthly life.⁵

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1. Küstlin, Vol. I, p. 414ff.
2. Ibid., p. 415ff.
3. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 328ff.
4. Ibid., p. 312.
5. Ibid., p. 328; Cf. Rom. 8:23.

(2) Discipline of the Outward Man.

The discipline or training of the outward man is a necessary result of the need to find the proper balance and relationship between the inward and the outward man. Luther emphasizes the fact that the outward man is to be guided and directed by the inward man, speaking of it as of a warfare between the spirit and the flesh.¹

(a) Works of Self-discipline.

The works of self-discipline are not necessary nor useful for salvation, but since a man lives his mortal life on earth, he must seek to govern his own body.² Luther is emphatic on this point:

Here the works begin; here a man cannot take his ease; here he must, indeed, take care to discipline his body by fastings, watchings, labors and other reasonable discipline, and to make it subject to the spirit so that it will obey and conform to the inward man and to faith, and not revolt against faith and hinder the inward man, as it is the body's nature to do if it be not held in check.³

Thus these works are not for salvation. In pressing this point Luther refers to Adam working in the Garden of Eden prior to the fall. Adam was created righteous by God and had no need of being justified. For these reasons it is clearly seen that works were not for his salvation, yet he worked freely so as not to be idle, and in order to please God.⁴

Luther also uses the example of a bishop. A bishop does the work of a bishop, as consecrating churches and confirming children, not to become a bishop, but because he is a bishop. So a Christian does

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1. Ibid., pp. 458, 459; Cf. Rom. 7:22, 23, 1 Cor. 9:27, Gal. 5:24.
2. Ibid., p. 328.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 330.

good works because of his faith and his being justified, but not in order to be justified and to become a Christian.¹

These works, then, being non-meritorious for salvation, are for the disciplining and subjection of the body. They are to continue as long as man lives, looking toward perfection in the future life.²

(b) Works of Love.

A second kind of works are works of love, for it is evident that the faith of the Christian becomes effective only through love, whereby he puts his faith into service for others. Luther says:

A man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body, so as to work for it alone, but he lives also for all men on earth, nay, rather, he lives only for others and not for himself. . . . Therefore, it is impossible that he should ever in this life be idle and without works toward his neighbors.³

These works of love grow out of a deep desire to please God, because of what God has done for the believer. As Christ, who, being Lord of all, emptied Himself; so the Christian should be willing to empty himself and to become a servant for all, seeking not the approval of men for his actions, but the approval of God.⁴ Here lies the glory of the Christian life, that the Christian will in love freely and joyfully give himself as a Christ to his neighbors just as Christ offered Himself for him.⁵ For this reason this service is in no way to put men under obligation to him, but to glorify his Heavenly Father, Who has given

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1. Ibid., pp. 330, 331.

2. Luther: Christ-Given Liberty, p. 23; Cf. 2 Tim. 3:5, 7, Titus 3:5, 2 Cor. 10:3.

3. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 335; Cf. Rom. 14:7.

4. Ibid., p. 337; Cf. Phil. 2:5-8.

5. Ibid.

all things without measure and without cost.¹ God gives in mercy to the needy believer; so the believer in mercy serves the needs of his neighbor.²

(c) Understanding the Limits of Liberty.

As with the works of love for the neighbor, the limits of man's liberty are governed also by the needs of the neighbor. The Christian is above laws and should fight against the laws of the law-givers, yet at the same time he should keep the laws with those weaker, lest they be hindered by misunderstanding.³ Luther, in one of his sermons, voiced his convictions concerning the limits of liberty and their guiding principle:

Faith must always remain pure and immovable in the heart, never wavering; but love moves and is guided, according as our neighbors may grasp it or follow us. There are some who can run, others must walk, still others can hardly creep. Therefore we must not look upon our own, but upon our brother's powers, so that he who is weak in faith, and attempts to follow the strong, may not be destroyed of the devil.⁴

The Christian man is the servant of all his neighbors. Since a servant cannot be greater than those he serves, Luther stresses the fact that a Christian should guide his use of liberty by the spiritual insight of his neighbors.

(d) Place of Rules and Ceremonies.

Rules and ceremonies are needed in this world for many reasons. They serve to guide and protect the youth as they grow to maturity. However, keeping these rules and ceremonies is no means of

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1. Ibid., p. 338; Cf. Gal. 5:6.

2. Ibid., p. 31; Cf. Gal. 6:2.

3. Ibid., p. 37; Cf. Gal. 2:3-5, Rom. 15:1, 14-15, 1 Cor. 8:13.

4. Luther: Works, Vol. II, pp. 393, 394.

justification.¹ They are similar to preparatory structure used by workmen erecting a building. The scaffolds and forms are only temporary and are removed when the building is complete. They have no worth in themselves, except for the temporary service they render.² Luther emphasizes the danger of regarding these ceremonies as the end. Some can make elaborate preparations but never do any building. These preparations are then kept for outward show and not for the inward disciplining and development necessary for a Christian.³

The outward man with all his potential grows to perfection when he is disciplined and subjected to the inner man. The nature of the inward man is seen by the concern for one's neighbor manifested in living relationships.

3. The Effect of Christian Liberty.

Up to this point in this study, the source and the meaning of Luther's concept of Christian liberty have been considered. The source is the Word of God and faith that relies on the Word. The meaning is seen in the relation of the inward and the outward, or the spiritual and the physical man for the Christian. The effects of Christian liberty are seen for the individual Christian in relation to Christ, and the individual in relation to others.

a. The Individual in Relation to Christ.

The effect of Christian liberty in the relationship of Christ

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1. Luther: Christ-Given Liberty, p. 38.
2. Ibid.; Cf. 2 Tim. 3:5,7.
3. Ibid., p. 39; Cf. Heb. 12:15.

and the Christian man may be called the "in-reach" of this liberty, being evidenced in various ways.

(1) Righteousness.

The believer is justified, or declared righteous, because of his faith in the promises of God.¹ This is the divine righteousness bestowed upon the believer, and is, in a sense, a passive righteousness which is received.² There is also a second or active righteousness which is received daily, involving a process of growth called "sanctification." The first is an act and the second is a process, but both are present.³ Thus the effect of justification is not only righteousness, but a growing continuing righteousness by a life of conscious decision. So works are not done to obtain righteousness, but because of the righteousness already present.⁴ The basic declared righteousness of the believer by God, becomes an increasing living righteousness in the life of the Christian.

(2) Transformation.

The justified sinner undergoes a moral transformation or regeneration whereby he is free from bondage to sin. It is often referred to as the "new birth."⁵ In spite of the transformation, there is the continual battle with the "old nature," and the "fleshly" desires that must take place.⁶ Through this struggle, the believer grows in

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1. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 318; Cf. Rom. 4:3.
2. Jacobs, op. cit., pp. 207, 208.
3. K stlin, Vol. II, p. 386.
4. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 333.
5. K stlin, Vol. II, pp. 439, 440; Cf. Gal. 2:20.
6. Concordia, op. cit., "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," Art. III, p. 66.

grace and thus is being continually transformed into greater Christ-likeness.¹

(3) Communion with Christ.

The communion of the believer with Christ is rooted in the union of Christ and the believer as Luther mentions as the third virtue of faith. It is a communion of sharing in fellowship between two persons who are intimately and mystically united.² Luther's use of the marriage illustration is helpful in clarifying this union. The sacrament of Holy Communion is a visible intimacy with Christ to which the believer is invited and entitled.³

(4) Lordship and Kingship.

The further effect of this is lordship of all, for the Christian is not bound to observe any laws, requirements, or persons for the sake of his own conscience. He is free in Christ. He is a king in his own conscience and spirit, being bound to no one.⁴ In Christ he has conquered even sin and death, so that all things work for his good.⁵

(5) Priesthood.

The Christian is a fellow-priest with Christ whose prayers are effective before God. He has every right and privilege to approach God through Christ, laying hold by faith on the promises of the Word. He speaks for himself before God, and needs no earthly priest or intercessor.⁶

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1. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 313.
2. Küstlin, Vol. I, p. 417; Cf. Gal. 2:20.
3. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 218.
4. Ibid., p. 312.
5. Luther: Christ-Given Liberty, p. 18.
6. Luther: Works, Vol. II, pp. 324, 325; Cf. Heb. 10:15-19, 1 Cor. 4:1.

The effects of the liberty of the Christian glorify God, for these effects witness to the faithfulness of the Father in His Word, and to the sufficiency of the redemptive work of the Son.¹ Every sincere Christian is a tribute to the trustworthiness of God.

b. The Individual in Relation to Others.

The "out-reach" of Christian liberty is the social impact of the believer upon others, for the sphere of the Christian is in the world and not apart from it.²

(1) Servant and Subject to All.

The Christian man is always concerned about the welfare of his neighbor, and governs his liberty according to the needs of his neighbor.³ Luther makes it clear that because of his liberty, man is free from a false opinion about good works, namely, that they are justifying before God.⁴ Nevertheless, he is bound by love to do good works in the service of his neighbor.

(2) Fellowship.

In this service to others there is a fellowship of sharing both to those within the fellowship of Christ and those without. This fellowship of faith is within the church as the fellowship of all believers, where each is concerned about the other.⁵ However, the Christian does not exclude those outside this circle from his concern, for he feels a kinship to all men. He cannot help but have compassion on his fellow men

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1. Ibid., p. 322.

2. MacKinnon, Vol. II, p. 270.

3. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 312; Cf. 1 Cor. 13:4, 5.

4. Ibid., p. 344.

5. Ibid., p. 373; Cf. Rom. 14:7, 8.

because of the motive of love in his heart.¹

(3) Priestly Function.

Closely related to the aspect of fellowship is the priestly function of the Christian. He is able to intercede before God for his fellow men, for he can "venture with confidence through the spirit of faith, to the presence of God."² The Christian can and should also witness to others concerning the faith. This witness must be such that it will lead others into a similar close relationship with God.³

Thus it is evident that the effect of Christian liberty can and must be seen in the lives of those of the Christian faith.

E. Summary

For Luther, faith was the only way to know God, and faith is the only way to worship Him.⁴ Faith in the Word of God is the foundation for the liberty of the Christian whose life is then in Christ. Faith also gives meaning to the Christian's existence for then he transcends himself, and his own desires become spiritual and Christ-centered. Faith in God's promises makes this liberty effective in the relation of the believer to Christ and to his fellow men. Luther himself states the core of Christian liberty in a brief paragraph:

We conclude, therefore, that a Christian man lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love; by faith he is caught up beyond himself into God, but love he sinks down beneath himself

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1. Schwiebert, op. cit., p. 480.
2. Luther: Christ-Given Liberty, p. 19.
3. Ibid.; Cf. Gal. 6:2.
4. Böhmer, op. cit., p. 280.

into his neighbor; yet always he remains in God and
His love, . . . ¹

In this chapter, Luther's Treatise on Christian Liberty has been analyzed in detail to determine the basic elements in Luther's concept of Christian liberty. This analysis will also serve as a guide in the following chapter for the study of the Pauline sources for Luther's concept of this freedom.

A survey of the immediate historical setting of this treatise revealed the stress under which Luther wrote this joyous testimony to Christian freedom.

In his procedure in presentation Luther used parallels in reference to man's nature that will be considered in the following chapter for their Pauline origin. These parallels are the inward man or nature and the outward man, the spiritual and the physical, and the spirit and the flesh. Only the Christian has the God-given inward spiritual nature which is opposed by the physical or old nature. Luther emphasizes the relationship of these two natures. The other aspects of his procedure such as his mystical tendencies, the centrality of the Word and faith, and his use of words and over-all structure enhance the effectiveness of his presentation.

The analysis of the content of the treatise was divided into three divisions; namely, the source, the meaning, and the effect of this liberty.

The source of Christian liberty is the Word of God and faith. This faith personally appropriates the promises of the Word. Through

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1. Luther: Works, Vol. II, pp. 342, 343.

this personal relationship that follows upon this act of faith, the believer enters into a new experience. He is a new man in Christ.

The study of the meaning of this freedom was discussed in relation to the new inward spiritual man, and the old outward physical man. The inward man is independent of physical disturbances, for his basic needs are the Word and faith. Faith accepts the promises of God in the Word, and brings three virtues or freedoms to the Christian. He is free from bondage to sin and the condemnation of the law because he is justified by faith. He is free from bondage to unbelief and God's wrath because he fulfills the First Commandment by placing God first in his life, and thus judging Him to be true. By faith he is free from bondage to his carnal "old nature," for he has been regenerated and lives united in "wedlock" with Christ. Thus the Christian man is not only freed from bondage to sin and from the condemnation of sin, but is also empowered positively by a new nature in his union with Christ to use this freedom.

The outward physical man is free to serve only when he is subjected and controlled by the inward man. These two are in opposition to each other within the Christian man. By works of self-discipline the outward man can gradually be subjected and governed until perfection is attained in the future life. These works are not for justification before God, for the believer is already justified by faith.

Works of love are indications of the Christians' concern for his fellow men, and are the perfect display of harmony between the inward and the outward man. The Christian acts in love and mercy toward his fellow men as Christ does toward him. The limits of liberty

are always the limits of love in concern for the spiritual and physical welfare of others.

Ceremonies and rules play a part in the discipline of the outward man, but they are only of a temporary nature as a means and are not to be mistaken for the end. They help guide the outward man into subordination and direction by the inward man.

The third division of the analysis of the content is the effect of Christian liberty as seen for the individual Christian man in relation to Christ, and the individual in relation to others. The effect of this freedom upon the individual in relation to Christ is righteousness before God, transformation of the old nature, and communion with Christ. The individual Christian is a lord and king in his own right, and stands in the priestly line of all believers.

The effect of liberty for this individual in relation to his neighbors is also evident. The Christian man is subject to all men and servant to all that he may lead them to Christ. This is the impact of the individual upon the society in which he lives. By his priestly office as a Christian he is free to intercede before God for others and to instruct them in the faith.

Though this analysis of the treatise given in this chapter does not cover all the details of Luther's argument, it is an endeavor to determine the basic structure. This structure will be analyzed in the following chapter in an effort to evaluate Luther's use of insights of the Apostle Paul, and to also determine the fundamental Pauline sources from which Luther gained these insights.

CHAPTER III

AN ANALYSIS OF THE PAULINE SOURCES OF LUTHER'S CONCEPT
OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

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A. Introduction

In the first chapter, the Reformation setting of Luther's Treatise on Christian Liberty was considered. This was necessary for an adequate understanding of the historical background affecting the writing of this treatise. In the study of Scripture, the historical setting adds meaning and depth, and is more likely to lead to the correct interpretation. So it is with this treatise by Luther.

The treatise itself was analyzed in detail in the second chapter, considering the basic tenets of the liberty of the Christian man. In this chapter the Pauline sources of Luther's concept of this liberty will be considered by interpreting and exegeting the passages Luther used.

Since there are numerous Pauline passages that apply either directly or indirectly, some selection is necessary. The references indicated in the marginal notes of the Holman Edition of Works of Martin Luther, Volume II, are the basis for the study in this chapter. However, only the passages that seem to be most important will be considered.

It is not considered necessary to show that these Pauline passages are relevant. The passages quoted directly by Luther need no defense. Those indicated in thought only are accepted, for the

most part, by translators of his treatise.¹ Thus, the questions to be considered in effect are: does Luther use these passages correctly? Is his interpretation of them adequate? How does a study of these passages help to clarify and enlarge his concept of Christian liberty? In this chapter the analysis of the Pauline references used by Luther should answer these questions. The passages will be studied both in the original and the English. Commentaries will be consulted, and evaluations made in relation to the new insights gained.

B. Parallels Relating to the Nature of the Christian Man

In his treatise, Luther speaks of the twofold nature of the Christian man, and the importance of the relationship of these two aspects. He uses the parallels of the inward man and the outward man, and the spirit and the flesh.² These two men existing together within the one man imply diversity and contradiction within his personality. The problem to be faced is whether or not it was the Apostle Paul's intention to express such an existing contradiction in this relationship of the inward and the outward, and the spirit and the flesh in the Christian. The relationship of the inward and outward man to the spirit and the flesh also need consideration.

1. The Inward and the Outward.

Luther centers the meaning of Christian liberty around the relationship of the inward and the outward man. He equates the inward

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1. Luther: Works, Vol. II; Luther: Christ-Given Liberty; Cf., Köstlin, Vol. I, p. 409ff.
2. Ante, pp. 22, 23.

man with the new spiritual nature, and the outward with the physical, carnal, old nature. Luther quotes 2 Corinthians 4:16: "Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day."

What does Paul mean by the "inward" and the "outward" man? According to R. C. H. Lenski, by the inner man Paul is referring to man's regenerate spiritual existence which is renewed day by day.¹ "This (renewal) involves the body as well as the soul, for the renewal extends to the use which we make of the body and its members in our new life."² The outer man refers to the Christian's existence in the world or his natural life on earth with all that is related.³ This outward man can waste away and be destroyed. These designations of the inward and the outward man apply only to the Christian who alone has the "inner, spiritual, renewable life."⁴

John Calvin and Lenski concur in saying that the outward man does not refer to the old carnal man, since there is a different relationship involved. Calvin expresses his opinion: "As he (Paul) here sets before us two men, so you must place before your view two kinds of life--the earthly and the heavenly."⁵ The outward man is the maintenance of the earthly life with such benefits as prosperity and health. As this man diminishes, the inner man grows stronger through renewal by God. As the worldly or earthly decreases in worth, the

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1. R. C. H. Lenski: The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Corinthians, p. 989.
2. Ibid., p. 990.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. John Calvin: Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, Vol. II, p. 211; Cf. Lenski: First and Second Corinthians, p. 990.

believer leans more heavily on God, and so is renewed constantly in the inner man.¹ Thus these two commentators, Lenski and Calvin, agree that the inner man refers to the new life that can belong only to a Christian, and the outer to the earthly existence, but not to the old carnal nature.

Since $\epsilon\epsilon\omega$ simply means "outer" or "outward,"² and $\epsilon\sigma\omega$, "within" or "inward,"³ there is little to be learned from the words themselves. The immediate context of this chapter indicates that Paul was speaking of the ministry or service of his fellow workers and himself for the Corinthians. Though they wear out their bodies in the service of the Lord, He is daily renewing them inwardly and giving them courage to press on by the hope of that which is to come.⁴ Paul reminds the Corinthians that they also may have a similar experience.

Luther correctly interprets Paul in saying that only the Christian can and does have the new inward man. Luther does equate the outward and the old man by his definition.⁵ If this equation were to be made on the basis of 2 Corinthians 4:16, Luther would be in error. Consideration of other passages used by Luther is necessary to determine validity of his supposition.

2. The Spirit and the Flesh.

The basic passage mentioned by Luther for his consideration of the conflict of the spirit and the flesh within man is Galatians 5:17.

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1. Ibid.
2. J. H. Thayer: A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 226.
3. Ibid., p. 254.
4. 1 Cor. 4:17, 18.
5. Ante, p. 22ff.

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to the other; that ye may not do the things ye would."

In the analysis of this passage the meaning of "spirit" and "flesh" must be considered as well as their relationship to each other. It is also necessary to view the relationship of the spirit and the flesh to the inward and the outward man.

E. D. Burton believes that in Galatians 5:17 Paul is referring to the Spirit of God, as he does in 5:5 and 5:16.¹ J. B. Lightfoot states that "through this passage the $\piνευμα$ is evidently the Divine Spirit, for the human spirit in itself and unaided does not stand in direct antagonism to the flesh."² However, Lenski is of a different opinion. He is convinced that this reference is to the spirit of the new man in Christ, rather than the Divine Spirit. The Spirit of God is never used as a means as in 5:5, but man's own spirit is. Likewise, he feels that Spirit and flesh would not be an acceptable contrast. Therefore, Lenski concludes, the reference is "spirit" rather than "Spirit."³ It is evident from the views stated that the Spirit of God is involved in this conflict between spirit and flesh. Since the spiritual man does not come into being apart from the Holy Spirit, he must continue to depend on Him for his power to resist the flesh. Therefore Luther's use of "spirit" in conflict with "flesh" in his treatise is an accepted interpretation of Galatians 5:17, with the

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1. E. D. Burton: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, p. 300.
2. J. B. Lightfoot: Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, p. 210.
3. R. C. H. Lenski: The Interpretations of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians to the Ephesians and to the Philippians, pp. 281-283.

spirit of man dependent upon God's Spirit.

The term "flesh" has several meanings in New Testament usage.¹ In Galatians 5:17 the reference to flesh means "that force which makes for sin."² Paul did associate the tendency to sin with the body, for he used *σάρξ* as the power which induced evil. He did not use *σάρξ* in reference to the physical body as the origin of moral evil. "Flesh" and "spirit" were used purely ethically and not to denote the world of matter as evil.³ In the life of faith there is a force to overcome that evil, and even "flesh" in the bad sense.⁴

Thus it seems that the term *σάρξ* as used in Galatians 5:17 by Paul refers to the natural evil moral influence within man. This force is diametrically opposed to the spirit, or the new inner man, who is present in and through the Spirit. Paul is speaking to Christians, or at least to those who had been taught the Christian message, for in 5:1 he exhorts them "to stand fast" in their freedom in Christ. No doubt some had fallen away from the truth as indicated in 5:4. Others were using their Christian liberty in a most un-Christian way, as seen in 4:13-15. Paul reminds them in 4:16-17 that the fight with the old carnal desires is not finished when Christ is accepted but continues through life. There is within the regenerate man this struggle between his natural inclinations and his new nature through the Spirit.⁵

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1. Cf. Burton, op. cit., pp. 492-495.
2. Ibid., p. 495.
3. Ibid., p. 493.
4. Ibid., p. 494; Cf. Rom. 6:1-2, Gal. 5:16.
5. H. A. W. Meyer: Handbook to the Epistle to the Galatians, p. 236.

In his treatise Luther refers to the inward new man as the spiritual man. He uses the term "spirit" when speaking of the conflict between the spirit and the flesh.¹ Since he is speaking directly of the Christian man, Luther speaks of the spirit of the new man received of the Holy Spirit.

3. Relationships.

Thus far definitions have been determined for the inward and the outward man, and for the spirit and the flesh.

The next question arising is the relation of the inward and the outward to the spirit and the flesh. In Romans 7:22-23 Paul's reference to the inner conflict he experienced casts light on this question:

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members.²

From the context Paul is speaking in the present tense concerning his own religious experience in 7:14-24. There are differences of opinion as to whether or not this experience was before or after Paul's conversion.³ Lenski has summarized his position in this issue:

Regeneration and renewing begin in the inner man, and Paul's delight in the law is evidence that he is regenerated. It is not correct to state that the inner man also delights in the law of God while he is still in the unregenerate state. To say that the sin is only in the flesh is to overlook the fact that the whole inner man is flesh until regeneration is wrought,

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1. Ante, p. 22ff.
2. Rom. 7:22-23.
3. Cf. William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam: The Epistle to the Romans; Anders Nygren: Commentary on Romans; R. C. H. Lenski: The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, ad loc.

and that even after regeneration the inner man needs constant renewal and cleansing from what remains of the old flesh.¹

Thus Paul, according to Lenski and Luther,² spoke of the inner conflict that he faced as a Christian whereby he needed constant cleansing and renewing. In Romans 7:25 Paul expresses his confidence in Christ who has given him hope in the midst of this struggle. Using this interpretation of Romans 7, Luther's position is acceptable when he speaks of the opposing aspects in the twofold nature of the Christian man.³ Luther also seems to be supported by Paul in his reference to the relationship of the inward and outward man to the spirit and the flesh. In Romans 7:22-23 Paul equates the inward man to the spirit or new man, and the outward to the flesh or physical man.⁴

In his "Preface to the Book of Romans" Luther has made clear the importance of understanding what "flesh" and "spirit" are, and what their relation is to the inward and the outward man:

"The flesh" is a man who lives and works, inwardly and outwardly, in the service of the flesh's profit and of this temporal life; "the spirit" is the man who lives and works, inwardly and outwardly, in the service of the Spirit and the future life.⁵

In understanding "flesh" and "spirit" in relation to the Christian man, the flesh is that which characterizes the outward or natural man, while the spirit characterizes the new inward man. When the flesh is in control it rules both the inward and the outward man. When the spirit is in control it rules both the inward and the outward man. Thus a

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1. Lenski: Romans, p. 485.
2. Luther: Works, Vol. VI, pp. 458, 459.
3. Ante, pp. 22, 23.
4. Cf. Lenski: Romans, p. 485.
5. Luther: Works, Vol. VI, p. 453.

man is considered spiritual when he is controlled by the spirit or inward man, and fleshly when controlled by the flesh or outward man.¹

Although there are differences of opinion on the Pauline sources considered, there is satisfactory support for use of the inferences Luther drew from them. Therefore, Luther's postulate that the inward spiritual new man and the outward physical old man make up the twofold nature of the Christian man is acceptable.

B. The Source of Christian Liberty

As with every other aspect of man's experience, Christian liberty has an origin. It is not rooted in man's native intellectual ability and achievements, but in the Word of God and faith.

1. The Word of God.

The origin of Christian liberty is rooted in the Word of God.

a. The Nature of the Word.

In consideration of the nature of the Word, Luther referred to several Pauline passages. In Romans 1:17 Paul wrote: "For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith." The Word is the revealed "righteousness of God" in all its fullness. Sanday states that the righteousness of God is conceived as a "going forth" or a projection from His Being, working itself to fruition among men.² For Paul also,

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1. Ibid.

2. Sanday, op. cit., pp. 34-35.

Sanday says, the righteousness of God had power: "To him too it seems a necessity that the righteousness of God should be not only inherent but energizing, that it should impress and diffuse itself as an active force in the world."¹ Though there may be several manifestations of of God's righteousness, the reference in Romans 1:16,17 is to the righteousness of God linked to the death of Christ at Calvary.² This is the righteousness which God reveals and permits man to share,³ so that the "righteousness of God" becomes the "righteousness of faith."⁴ Thus the "righteousness of God" is the Gospel. "Therein" in 1:17 refers back to "the gospel" of 1:16, which in turn refers back to 1:1. This revelation is of Jesus Christ and His place in God's plan.

The law is also a part of the revelation of God's righteousness, where God's holiness and wrath against sin are seen.⁵ In its work the Word comes to reveal the righteousness of God that convicts men of sin, and to reveal the righteousness by faith available for sinners. The Word is God's revelation of Himself as seen in Jesus Christ.

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1. Ibid., p. 35.
2. Ibid. According to the Apostle Paul the manifestations of righteousness take a number of different forms. (1) God's righteousness is seen in the fidelity with which He fulfills His promises. (Rom. 3:3, 4). (2) God's righteousness is the punishment upon sin, especially the great final punishment. (Rom. 2:5). When Divine righteousness collides with sin, wrath is the only reaction. (3) God's righteousness is also seen in the death of Christ, but this is more difficult to grasp. It is a righteousness that satisfies God's justice and love in regard to sin and the sinner. (4) God's righteousness is closely bound to Christ's death on the cross, which is the leading thought in Rom. 1:16, 17. It can be said to be the righteousness that is diffused for all men and is received by faith. It is the great "going forth" of Divine Righteousness to meet the needs of men.
3. Anders Nygren: Romans, p. 75.
4. Ibid., p. 77.
5. Sanday, op. cit., p. 35.

b. The Necessity of the Word.

Romans 10:17 indicates that "belief cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Lenski says there must be a "receptive hearing" of the Word in order that faith that brings righteousness may arise out of that which is heard.¹ The preliminary condition necessary for faith is to have heard, and to have heard infers a message. This message is the message about Christ,² Who is able to satisfy man's greatest need.³

c. The Ministry of the Word.

The ministry of the Word is a ministry of healing.⁴ The Word is both precept and promise, law and Gospel. The law is righteousness that can only wound and leave helpless, while the Gospel is righteousness that heals and binds this hurt of law and sin.

d. The Preaching of the Word.

The proclaiming of the Word is man's part, Luther emphasizes, in the ministry of spiritual healing.⁵ He refers to 1 Corinthians 1:21: "For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe." The world by itself through its own efforts could not seek out God's wisdom, for the cross was foolishness to the unbelieving.⁶ The world through its own wisdom failed to find God; so God used the foolishness of *κηρύγματος*, or preaching,

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1. Lenski: Romans, p. 667.
2. Sanday, op. cit., p. 298.
3. Ante, p. 26.
4. Ante, p. 27.
5. Ibid.
6. 1 Cor. 1:18.

to proclaim His wisdom.¹ It is the foolishness of expecting an announcement to do what all the wisdom of the world could not do. Lenski notes that it is not an argument confounding the world, but simply an announcement that is intended to save those who believe.² Thus, as Luther indicates, Christ is not to be preached for the purpose of giving the historical facts of His life, but to the end that faith may be established in Him.³

2. Faith.

The Word and faith must be as vitally related to the lives of all men as they were for the Apostle Paul.

a. The Nature of Faith.

For Luther faith was that "living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a man would stake his life on it a thousand times."⁴ The reference to Romans 1:17 made earlier in the chapter brings out the nature of faith: "A righteousness of God from faith to faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith." Faith is the heart of man's receiving the Gospel, for it is *ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν*. *πίστεως* is genitive, that which comes "out of faith". *πίστιν* is accusative, "unto or into faith." Thus the revelation of God's righteousness is first received by faith and grows into greater faith. This faith is not only, as J. H. Thayer indicates, "the conviction that God exists and is the

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1. Lenski: First and Second Corinthians, pp. 61, 62.
2. Ibid., pp. 62, 63.
3. Ante, p. 28.
4. Ante, p. 28.

creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ,"¹ but is living and continually growing. It is living and growing because it is a relation of complete confidence and trust between two persons, Christ and the believer.

Faith, as Luther came to understand it from Paul's Epistles, was the only element necessary for salvation. This faith was God's activity in the heart of the believer.²

b. The Object of Faith.

To believe means to place whole-hearted trust in God's work in Christ. Christ, the object of this faith, is the content of saving preaching.³ Thus the Word and faith belong together as do Christ, the Living Word, and the believer. The source of Christian liberty is in the Word and faith, for through these means the new inward man comes into being.

D. The Meaning of Christian Liberty

Christian liberty has meaning only for the individual Christian, since those who have not appropriated Christ for themselves cannot live in His freedom. Luther relates the understanding of this liberty to passages from Paul's letters during the course of his treatise.

1. The Liberty and Bondage of the Christian Man.

This unique situation of liberty and bondage is the paradox

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1. Thayer, op. cit., p. 513.
2. Nygren, op. cit., p. 67ff.
3. Ante, p. 29.

in which the Christian lives.

a. Freedom and Servitude.

In 1 Corinthians 9:19, Paul states the paradox: "For though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more." In 1 Corinthians 9:13-14, Paul is speaking of his apostolic liberty which entitled him to privileges including financial support. He denied himself these privileges that he should be under moral obligation to no man, and thus not hinder his preaching of the Gospel.¹ Both $\pi \acute{\alpha} \nu \tau \omega \nu$ and $\pi \alpha \sigma \omega \nu$ may be translated either masculine or neuter. However, "all men" is preferred above "all things," since that which Paul desired to gain for the Gospel was not things but men. Paul was free from all men, yet he "brought himself under bondage to all." $\epsilon \delta \omicron \upsilon \lambda \omega \sigma \alpha$ is aorist active indicating a punctiliar act with continuing implications. Paul is the subject of this action. It is a free voluntary act performed upon himself.² Luther grasped the core of Paul's burden for the Corinthians. Paul was free in Christ, but burdened himself for their sakes and the Gospel's.

b. The Debt of Love.

In emphasizing this liberty and bondage of the Christian, Luther referred to Romans 13:8: "Owe no man anything, save to love one another." Sanday comments on the meaning of this debt:

There is one debt which the Christian must always be paying but can never discharge, that of love. All particular

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1. Lenski: First and Second Corinthians, p. 374.
2. Cf. J. A. Beet: A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians; Calvin: Corinthians; Marcus Dods: The First Epistle to the Corinthians; Lenski: First and Second Corinthians; ad loc.

precepts are summed up in that of love, which makes injury to any man impossible.¹

Paul is telling the Christian in Rome to pay debts when they are due, but the debt of love is always due and never paid in full. *ἀγάπη* has the highest New Testament concept of love, for it denotes esteem and compassion.² The Christian knows and understands this love through Jesus Christ. Paul continues to relate in Romans 13:9-10 the principle that love is the fulfilling of the law. Love puts the Christian freely into service of others. Though the Christian is free in Christ and "subject to none," he is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.³

2. The Twofold Nature of the Christian Man in Relation to Christian Liberty.

For the individual Christian, the meaning of Christian liberty is considered in relation to the inward man and the outward man.

a. The Inward Man--Freedom of Conscience, Needs No Works.

(1) Definition of the Inward Man.

In the discussion of 2 Corinthians 4:16, Galatians 5:17, and Romans 7:22-23, Luther's interpretation of Paul's references to the

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1. Sanday, op. cit., p. 373.
2. Ibid., pp. 376, 377. Three principles are important in understanding the Christian concept of love. (1) The Christian doctrine of love is universal, for it applies to all, even one's enemies. This universalism is basic in the teachings of Jesus. (2) The Christian doctrine of love is substituted for the universal principle of law. Love fulfills the law, for it is a "principle and a passion." (3) The Christian doctrine of love is intimately bound up with the Godhead. The characteristic of the Godhead is that "God is love." This love is shown mankind in Christ, and in Him made available to all men.
3. Ante, p. 29.

inward and the outward man, and to the spirit and the flesh, were clarified.¹ The inward man is the new spiritual man present only in a regenerate man who through this relationship to Christ receives new freedoms for his life.

(2) Basic Needs of the Inward Man for This Liberty.

(a) The Word.

As was indicated in the study of Romans 10:17, man needs to hear the Word before he can believe it.² Through faith he accepts the Word as true, and has all his needs filled.³ Only through the Word can man come to the knowledge of God and enter into personal fellowship with Him. Only through the Word, God's revelation to him, can he remain in this relationship.⁴

(b) Faith--And Its Virtues, or Freedoms.

By his faith the Christian is made free from bondage to the law and to sin. Luther referred to the righteousness of Abraham described by Paul in Romans 4:3, "What saith the Scripture? And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." Abraham's faith, Bengel indicates, was in God's promise of the numerous seed, and especially in the promise of the seed of Christ.⁵ The result of this faith was to be "reckoned" righteous. *ἐλογίσθη* is the aorist passive of *λογίζομαι*. The aorist indicates a punctiliar act, completed in an instant, with continuing results.⁶ The word

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1. Ante, pp. 52-56.

2. Ante, pp. 58-59.

3. Rom. 1:17; Cf. Ante, pp. 57-59.

4. Ante, p. 30.

5. J. A. Bengel: Gnomon of the New Testament, p. 53.

6. Thayer, op. cit., p. 379.

λογίζομαι is used frequently in the Septuagint with the legal sense of imputation or non-imputation of guilt. The picture behind the word is that of debit and credit accounts in a ledger kept on the life on an individual. His merits are balanced against his demerits to determine what his judgment shall be. He has nothing to offer of himself for his demerits, and so must look to God in faith. This faith in God's promise of forgiveness is credited to him so that his account is cleared.¹ In this way justification becomes a legal or forensic act that is completed once, but has continuing implications.² Thus Abraham had a righteousness of faith, as Calvin indicates briefly:

Abraham, by believing, embraced nothing but the favor offered to him, being persuaded that it would not be void. Since this was imputed to him for righteousness, it follows that he was not otherwise just, than as one trusting in God's goodness, and venturing to hope for all things from him.³

Paul's argument is founded on Abraham's justification by faith which establishes a principle that applies to all men. Nygren has concisely stated Paul's understanding of justification:

For Paul the essence of justification is the forgiveness of sins. When God lays sin to one's account, that means that he stands under the wrath of God and the dominion of death. But when sin is forgiven and not laid to one's account, that means he is delivered from the wrath of God and placed under His righteousness.⁴

It is evident that through faith a man is justified and so freed from bondage to sin and to the law which provokes sin. This freedom, as Paul states in Romans 4:24-25, is "reckoned" to those "who believe on him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead."

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1. Sanday, op. cit., p. 100.
2. Ibid.
3. Calvin: Romans, p. 156.
4. Nygren, op. cit., p. 171.

Following Paul's understanding of the freedom of justification, Luther states in his treatise that justification is a work of God in men's hearts.¹

2' Fulfillment of the Law--Glorification of God,
Freedom from Unbelief and God's Wrath.

In referring to the second virtue of faith, Luther declared that faith honors God, and so fulfills the first commandment.² Paul's words concerning Abraham's actions in Romans 4:20 reflect this view also. In 4:3 Paul states that Abraham was declared righteous by faith. In Romans 4:20-21 Paul relates Abraham's reaction to God's promise in the humanly impossible situation when both Abraham and Sarah were too old to produce children:

Yet, looking unto the promise of God, he wavered not in unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving God the glory, and being fully assured that what he had promised he was able also to perform.

Abraham glorified God by his faith in His promise. Thus the believer fulfills the law, for faith fulfills the first commandment by declaring God to be true.³

The opposite of belief, unbelief, dishonors God. Unbelief is disobedience of the law and is worthy of condemnation. All sin is included under this disobedience, as Paul writes in Romans 11:30, "For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all." Ἀπειθεῖα refers to "obstinate disobedience," "unwillingness to be persuaded," or "unbelief."⁴ God has shut up all things

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1. Ante, p. 32.
2. Ibid.
3. Ante, p. 32.
4. Thayer, op. cit., p. 55.

under obstinate unwillingness to believe, in order that all people, both Jew and Gentile, should stand in the same position of need. For this reason all people are in the need of the mercy which God abundantly provides. Salvation is without works, but is of grace through faith.¹

Man by his unbelief dishonors God, by declaring His promise of mercy untrue. Man honors God as just and true by believing His Word. God, in turn, honors the believer with His mercy and His righteousness.²

3' Union with Christ³--Freedom from Bondage to
Carnal Nature.

The third virtue of faith is union with Christ. This union frees the Christian from bond service to his old nature.

a' Close Union as in Wedlock.

In Ephesians 5 the Apostle Paul likens the union of Christ and the church to that of the union of husband and wife. Luther refers to Ephesians 5:31, applying it to the believer's relationship to Christ: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall be one flesh." The verse pertains to the marriage relationship and to the relationship of Christ and the believer, as 5:32 indicates. The husband "cleaves to"⁴ his wife so that they become, in a sense, one organism. Lenski states

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1. Calvin, op. cit., p. 443.

2. Ante, p. 33.

3. Cf. Elias Andrews: The Meaning of Christ for Paul, pp. 79-84. This contains reference to "in Christ" passages, and the meaning of this experience for Paul.

4. Thayer, op. cit., p. 547.

that God created the two sexes for the sake of this intimate union in marriage.¹ Similarly, this union is an imperfect reflection of Christ's relationship to His Church.²

Luther enlarges on this picture of the marriage relationship where husband and wife share all their possessions. In the union of Christ and the believer, all the righteousness of Christ belongs to the believer, and all the sins of the believer belong to Christ.³

b' Prerogatives of This Union.

Christ, who is the Son of God, by virtue of His office, has given the two prerogatives of kingship and priesthood to believers.⁴

1" Kingship.

The Christian is king over all things, as Luther indicates in his reference to Romans 8:28, "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose." In this passage, Paul uses ἀγαπᾶν in the sense of the highest love of God. Lenski referred to this love as the loving of God through experiential knowledge. Those who are bound in union with God through this love can count on everything working toward their best welfare even to the completion of their redemption.⁵ This kingship of the Christian is not physical or political, but is spiritual, and can rule even in the midst of suffering and oppression.⁶ Sanday summarizes by saying, "The Christian's career

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1. Lenski: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, p. 642.
2. Eph. 5:32.
3. Ante, p. 34.
4. Ibid.
5. Lenski: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, p. 550.
6. Ante, p. 34.

must have a good ending, because at every step in it he is in the hands of God and is carrying out the Divine purpose."¹ All things work for good to them that are in God's love, for even death itself will work for their redemption.²

2" Priesthood.

Not only does union with Christ make the believer a king, but it also makes him a priest.³ Luther referred to the rights of this priesthood in Hebrews 10:19, 22:

Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus. . . let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and having our body washed with pure water.

Paul refers to the Old Testament ritual of the priest, and applies it to the man in Christ. The believer can approach God through the "blood of Christ" and have fellowship with Him.⁴ In this relationship he can function as a priest to intercede for others and to instruct them in the faith by word and action.

In 1 Corinthians 4:1 Paul makes a practical observation of the implications of this priesthood for all, when he refers to the ministry he and his fellow workers are performing. "Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." ὑπηρετῶν in the earlier Greek usage referred to the "underrower" in a galley, but in New Testament usage, it refers rather

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1. Sanday, op. cit., p. 215.
2. Ante, p. 35.
3. Cf. 1 Pet. 2:9.
4. Bengel, op. cit., p. 649.

to an attendant or helper who gives assistance to a superior.¹

οἰκονόμους refers to "stewards" who were often slaves that the masters trusted as property administrators.² In this passage God is the Master, and Paul and his associates are the "helpers" or "administrators." They were entrusted with the "mysteries of God," the Gospel of salvation.³ On this basis, Luther adds that ministers of the Gospel are servants and stewards of the Lord and have no special prerogatives above other Christians.⁴

Through union with Christ, the Christian is free from the limits of the Old Covenant and is invited to appear before the Father for himself and others.

Up to this point the discussion of the meaning of Christian liberty has been related to the freedom of the inward man. The study of the Pauline passages referred to by Luther deepen the understanding of his insights into Christian freedom. In the following section, the outward man in relation to the meaning of this liberty is considered, interpreting the related passages from the Epistles of Paul.

b. The Outward Man--Freedom to Serve, Need of Works.

The outward man, the other aspect of the twofold nature of the Christian, needs to be under the guidance of the inward man. A view of several Pauline passages reveal the practical nature of his suggestions, which Luther recommends.

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1. Lenski: First and Second Corinthians, p. 161.
2. Ibid., p. 162.
3. Lenski: First and Second Corinthians, p. 162.
4. Ante, p. 35.

(1) The Definition of the Outward Man.

According to the previous definition the outward man is that aspect of the Christian man's existence relating to the physical old carnal nature. The spiritual inward man is free in Christ, and bound to no one. If the Christian were only spiritual and not human or physical, there would be no problem. Since he is both spiritual and physical, the two must be knit together.

(2) The Discipline of the Outward Man in This Liberty.

In Christian living the outward man must be under the direction of the inward man. For this reason the discipline of the outward man is considered in relation to the Pauline references in Luther's treatise that speak of this discipline.

(a) Works of Self-Discipline.

Works of self-discipline are necessary for the discipline of the outward man, but these works do not merit God's grace.¹

In 1 Corinthians 9:27 Paul refers to the self-discipline he used when he desired to keep in the race of Christian life, and to win the "incorruptible crown:" "But I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected." ὅπως ἵνα ἑμὲ ὑποτάξω refers to "hit under the eye." Paul speaks of giving a severe blow to his body, so that he may subdue it and keep it under discipline.² He delivers this severe blow to his body that he may make it his slave, lest it gain control and he

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1. Ante, p. 37.

2. Bengel, op. cit., p. 214.

himself lose the crown of life he was proclaiming to others.¹ With Paul, Luther maintains that the physical outward man must be disciplined and subjected to the inward man. Through this means the body is disciplined toward perfection in the future life.² If works of self-discipline are not practiced, the spiritual may not dominate, and the Christian may lose his faith in Christ.³

(b) Works of Love.

Works of love are necessary, for through them the Christian reaches out and embraces his fellow men.⁴ Faith works through love as is written in Galatians 5:6: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love." Burton's evaluation of this passage is worthy of note: "For the disclosure of the apostle's fundamental idea of the nature of religion, there is no more important sentence in the whole epistle, if, indeed, in any of Paul's epistles."⁵ *ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* means "on the basis which is created by Jesus," or "in Christianity."⁶ What is needed to fill out faith is love.⁷ Love is the means through which faith works and becomes effective.

In his commentary on Galatians, Luther gives a practical reason why works of love are necessary:

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1. Lenski: First and Second Corinthians, pp. 385-387.
2. Ante, p. 37.
3. Cf. Gal. 5:24; Ante, p. 37.
4. Ante, p. 38.
5. Burton, op. cit., p. 279.
6. Ibid.
7. Lenski: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, p. 262.

A man is a perfect Christian inwardly through faith before God, who hath no need of our works; and outwardly before men, whom our faith profiteth nothing, but our charity or our works.¹

Other people cannot benefit from a man's faith unless they benefit through his works. In the service of love the outward man is in the service and direction of the inward man.

The believer does works of love out of the fulness of his own relationship to Christ. Christ gave Himself for all men; so the believer gives himself for others,² as St. Paul admonishes in Philippians 2:5-8:

Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.

Ellicott states that Paul is reminding the Philippians that they should forget their own rights for others, as Christ did for them.³

In summarizing the meaning of this passage, Ellicott writes:

He (Christ) did not insist on His own eternal prerogatives, but, on the contrary, humbled Himself to the conditions and sufferings of mortal man.⁴

Luther expresses the same opinion in his treatise where he comments on this passage, referring to Christ's giving up His eternal prerogatives: "But He did all this for our sake, that He might serve us, and that all things He accomplished in this form of a servant might

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1. Luther: Galatians, p. 544.
2. Ante, p. 38.
3. C. J. Ellicott: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon, p. 53.
4. Ibid., p. 56.

become ours."¹ Thus works of love spring from faith, teaching Christians to serve others as Christ served them.

The outward man needs works of self-discipline and works of love that he may be subservient to the inward man.

(c) Understanding the Limits of Liberty.

The Apostle Paul limited his liberty by the needs of those he served, remembering that love must guide the use of liberty.² In his admonitions to the Christians in Rome, in Romans 14:1-3, Paul warns them of the need for mutual love in their relationships:

But him that is weak in faith receive ye, yet not for decision of scruples. One man hath faith to eat all things: but he that is weak eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth set at nought him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

Those who are "weak in faith," or have an immature grasp of the Gospel and its freedom, may desire that certain rules and customs be followed. For this reason the weak judge and condemn the strong for not conforming.³ Those who are strong in faith may ridicule the weak and so drive them out of the fellowship. Paul commends patience and love to them, that each may seek to understand the other.⁴ The strong in faith should be patient with the weak. The weak should remember that God has received the strong who use their liberty, and that no requirements should be made that God Himself does not demand.⁵

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1. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 337.
2. Ante, p. 39.
3. Sanday, op. cit., p. 384ff.
4. Nygren, op. cit., p. 443.
5. Lenski: Romans, pp. 816, 817.

In Galatians 2:3-5 Luther referred to Paul's refusal to have Titus circumcized. "False brethren" had come saying circumcision was necessary, but Paul withstood them openly to show that circumcision was adiaphorous in relation to salvation.¹ Defending his Christian liberty, Paul refuted the legalists who would make an adiaphoron an essential for the Christian life.² Luther expressed similar convictions concerning those who would return Christians to the law.³

(d) The Place of Rules and Ceremonies.

The outward man is involved in the use of rules and ceremonies for his discipline by the inward man. These rules and ceremonies guide and direct growing Christians, but serve only as temporary aids.⁴ Luther refers to 2 Timothy 3:5-7 where Paul speaks of the corrupted use of outward aids: "Holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof; from these also turn away. . . ever learning, and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth." Paul is speaking of the troublesome times impending, and of the utter hypocritical depravity that shall characterize those times.⁵ The men designated in this passage possess the externals of religion, which may include even a creed and a form of worship, but never attain the true power. Only a change of heart can give them that power of "true piety."⁶ The outward form is made a shame over inward corruption, rather than the outward being the

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1. Lenski: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, p. 75.

2. Ibid.

3. Ante, p. 39.

4. Ante, pp. 39, 40.

5. Cf. Eph. 3:1,2.

6. Walter Lock: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, pp. 106, 107.

result of inner motivation. Thus when rules and ceremonies become the end rather than the means, a kind of "heathen Christianity" results that has much knowledge and form, but no truth and power.¹

Paul's pastoral admonitions and warnings are foundational for Luther's views on the discipline of the outward man. This discipline must result from an inner motivation and be for inner strengthening. It is a discipline of love which can conquer the whole man.

E. The Effect of Christian Liberty.

Thus far the Pauline sources of Luther's concept of Christian liberty have been considered in relation to the source and the meaning of this liberty. Paul indicates in Romans 1:17 that the source of this liberty is the "righteousness of God" revealed in His Word and appropriated through faith. The meaning of Christian liberty for the individual Christian is seen in the relation of this righteousness of faith to the inward and the outward man. The effect of liberty is the impact of this new relationship to Christ upon the whole man, emphasizing the unity of the spiritual and the physical in the human personality. These effects are considered for the individual in relation to Christ and for the individual in relation to others.²

1. The Individual in Relation to Christ.

The insights gained from the Pauline references of Luther add new meaning to the relationship of Christ and the Christian man.

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1. C. J. Ellicott: A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, pp. 135-138.
2. Ante, p. 40.

a. Righteousness.

From Romans 4:3 and its context, Paul indicates that righteousness belongs to God. God bestows this righteousness upon those who believe His promises. The believer is declared just, or is "reckoned" righteous solely on the basis of his accepting God's righteousness.¹ Forgiveness of sins is the heart of Paul's teaching on justification, freeing the believer from the wrath of God known through the law, and from the bondage to sin.² The righteousness imparted to the believer is not only an idea, but is an actual righteousness that brings with it the benefits of freedom.³ The initial declaration of righteousness ushers the Christian into a new relationship to Christ. The Christian must continue to grow in this new relationship, for justification and sanctification are closely bound together.⁴

b. Transformation.

In justification there is a moral transformation of the sinner, which is the birth of the new inward man.⁵ This transformation enables the Christian to overcome his old nature and to become more and more transformed into the image of Christ.⁶ This was the experience of Paul in his Christian life as indicated in Romans when he spoke of his own inner struggle.⁷

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1. Nygren, op. cit., p. 171; Cf. Ante, pp. 64-66.
2. Nygren, op. cit., p. 171; Cf. Ante, pp. 65-66.
3. Sanday, op. cit., p. 36; Cf. Ante, pp. 64-65.
4. Sanday, op. cit., p. 38; Cf. Ante, p. 41.
5. Cf. Ante, pp. 64-67.
6. Cf. Ante, pp. 41-42.
7. Cf. Ante, pp. 55-56.

c. Communion with Christ.

Communion with Christ is the dominant note of Paul's writings.¹ In his letters to the different churches Paul was seeking to draw them more closely into union and communion with Christ. If this could be done, their problems, such as church fellowship and discipline, would be resolved. Paul refers to the union of husband and wife, which he uses to give a limited picture of the union of Christ and the believer.² However, this union and communion with Christ cannot be fully comprehended by man.³

d. Lordship and Kingship.

A Christian is a lord and a king of all, for he is free in his own conscience. He is free in relation to external difficulties, for "all things work together for his good."⁴ All things must work out for his good, for he is under the guidance of God in his life and activities.⁵ His lordship and kingship over all is certain for he is in Christ.⁶

e. Priesthood.

In the book of Hebrews, Paul uses Old Testament symbolism in referring to Christ and His work for men. Because of His sacrifice, every believer can enter into the "holy place" as a priest in his own right. The Christian can approach God directly through Jesus Christ,

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1. Cf. Ante, p. 67, Footnote 1.
2. Cf. Ante, pp. 67-68.
3. Cf. Eph. 5:32.
4. Rom. 8:28.
5. Sanday, op. cit., p. 215.
6. Cf. Ante, p. 42.

with no need of another mediator. Anyone who is in Christ already has access to God.¹

The life of the individual is affected by Christian liberty, for his motivation is changed. He is free from serving self-interests to serve the interests of Christ, because he is in Christ. His disobedience and unbelief is changed to obedience and belief. He is a new creature through the mercy of God, and gives Him the glory.²

2. The Individual in Relation to Others.

Since the faith of the Christian man is of no avail for others, but only faith working through love, there should be no inactive Christian. The Christian must exercise his faith through love for other men.³

a. Servant and Subject to All.

Luther states that the Christian man must always live in service to others, subjecting and limiting his own liberty to their needs.⁴ Paul says that this voluntary subjection is for the purpose of winning others for Christ and for strengthening fellow Christians in their faith.⁵ A Christian foregoes his own entitlements in the deep concern for his neighbor, since for the Christian freedom consists in no longer serving himself alone, but in serving Christ.

b. Fellowship.

No man can live effectively apart from the fellowship of

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1. Ibid.
2. Cf. Ante, pp. 54-56.
3. Cf. Ante, p. 43.
4. Cf. Ante, p. 43.
5. Cf. Ante, pp. 72-74.

other people. This is particularly true for the Christian.¹ He is in fellowship with Christ, and, as Christ, he is also in the fellowship of loving service to his neighbors. Paul admonished the Galatians to bear one another's burdens and so to "fulfill the law of Christ."² The sharing of burdens is a sharing of sympathy, understanding, and love so that faith is mutually strengthened.³

c. Priestly Function.

The priestly function of the Christian is exercised within the sphere of the world, embracing both Christians and non-Christians. The believer is free to be a priestly intercessor for all men. Thus a Christian can not only bring his own needs before God through Christ, but can bring the needs of his fellow men also. The priestly function of the Christian includes witnessing to others, that they may be instructed in the faith.⁴

The effects of Christian liberty are dependent upon the character of the relationship of the individual Christian to Christ and to his neighbor. The believer's life is changed by faith, and his actions by love. He lives in Christ, and walks with man in the service of Christ.

F. Summary

In this chapter the Pauline sources of Luther's concept of Christian liberty were analyzed. The most relevant Pauline

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1. Gal. 6:2.
2. Cf. Ante, p. 43.
3. Cf. Ante, p. 44.
4. Cf. Ante, p. 35.

references were selected from those indicated in the marginal notes of the Holman Edition of the Works of Martin Luther and studied for their contributions.

The basis for Luther's consideration of Christian liberty was the twofold nature of the Christian man, involving the two parallels of the inward and the outward man, and the spirit and the flesh. Pauline references to these parallels were considered.

In 2 Corinthians Paul speaks of his experience in his ministry to the Corinthians. His inward man was being renewed day by day, but his outward man was decaying. Commentators agree that in this passage, the inward man is the new inward man which exists only within the Christian. The outward man is the physical body, but does not refer to the carnal nature.

In Galatians 5:17 Paul refers to the second parallel, the spirit and the flesh, and to the conflict that exists between these two aspects of the Christian man. Luther indicates the $\piνεμα$ is "spirit," referring to the spiritual nature of the Christian man. $σαρξ$ is translated "flesh," referring to the morally evil influence within man. The flesh is the old nature, that is in opposition to the spirit.

The relation of these two parallels in the twofold nature of man was considered. In Romans 7:22-23 Paul speaks of his own inner conflict, with the inner man struggling against an opposing law in his members. The "law in my members" was interpreted to refer to the "Flesh," and the inner man to refer to the new spiritual man. This was a conflict within the person of Paul when he was a regenerate, Luther and others believe. From these three passages it was concluded that Paul did equate the spirit with the new inward man, and the flesh with

the old carnal outward man. Thus Luther was justified in using these parallels in relation to the twofold nature of the Christian man in his treatise.

The source of Christian liberty is the Word and faith. The Word of God is the righteousness of God that is revealed through Jesus Christ for all men. When the Word is preached, Christ is preached, for He is the content of saving preaching. Faith receives the righteousness of God by declaring His promises to be just and true. Faith places its trust in Jesus Christ, the Living Word. Thus through the Word and faith the man receives his liberty in Christ.

The meaning of this Christian liberty is considered in relation to the inward spiritual man and the outward physical old man.

The basic need of the new inward man is the Word of God and faith. Faith brings new freedoms into the experience of the believer. He is justified by faith and freed from bondage to the law and sin. Luther referred to Paul's argument for justification by faith summarized in Romans 4:3. Abraham was declared righteous because he believed God's promise of a son and of numerous descendants. For this faith, God reckoned Abraham to be righteous. It was an imputed righteousness, imparted by the declaration, with continuing results. This is a universal principle applying to all men. Those who believe God's promise are declared righteous and are no longer under the bondage of the law and sin. They are justified by faith and so need no works to effect their acceptance by God.

Paul stated that Abraham remained firm in faith giving God the glory. This faith of Abraham had fulfilled the law by declaring God to be just and true.

Through faith the believer fulfills the first commandment, as Luther states, for he places God first in his life. Unbelief dishonors God, by denying the validity and trustworthiness of His promise. According to Romans 11:32 all were included under disobedience and unbelief, that God might have mercy on all. Through faith the believer is free from bondage to unbelief and God's wrath, for he is under God's mercy.

Through faith, the inward man is united with Christ. Luther refers to Paul's use of the marriage relationship of husband and wife in Ephesians 5:31. This union is only a limited reflection of the union of Christ and the believer. All the righteousness of Christ belongs to the believer and all the sin of the believer belongs to Christ. The Christian is free from bondage to his own carnal nature, and so is able to serve God.

Two prerogatives of this union with Christ are kingship and priesthood. The Christian in the inward man is a king because he is free in his own conscience through his union with Christ. Paul stresses in Romans 8:28 that everything works to the good of those loving God.

By the second prerogative, the Christian is a spiritual priest, for he can approach the Father directly through Christ with no other mediator. Paul adds the Old Testament concept of priest in Hebrews 10:19, 22 and applies it to the man in Christ. Luther declares that for this reason there is no special mark of distinction for the clergy. They are all stewards of the Gospel, as Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 4:1.

Christ, who has given the new man his freedom, also has given him the pattern of service to follow. This service can be expressed through the outward man.

Since man is both spiritual and physical, he must live in this world and discipline himself. The discipline of the outward man is a discipline of love, because of the inward motivation. Luther's references to the Pauline Epistles bring out insights into the importance of these disciplinary works. In 1 Corinthians 9:27 Paul speaks of buffeting his body to keep it subdued, lest the flesh overcome the spirit and he lose the crown of life.

Works of love are essential for the outward man because love gives faith expression. Paul mentions in Galatians 5:6 that true Christianity involves faith working through love. A man cannot be a Christian inwardly without being one outwardly. Paul gives the perfect example of self-sacrificing love in Philippians 2:5-7 by pointing to what Christ did and recommending that attitude for his readers.

In expressing his liberty the Christian must remember that his freedom is limited by the needs of others. Paul refers, in Romans 14:1-3, to the need for understanding and patience between the weak and the strong in faith, lest they offend one another. In Galatians 2:3-5, Paul said he refused to have Titus circumcized because "false brethren" wanted to make circumcision necessary to salvation, which would hinder the truth of the gospel. Luther also encourages Christians to be thoughtful of the weak but to resist the lawgivers.

The outward man is involved in rules and ceremonies that are necessary for his protection and guidance. There is danger of

making rules and ceremonies an end in themselves rather than a means to greater Christian growth. In 2 Timothy 3:5,7 Paul warns against formalism and outward show which lack the power of true holiness. However, these rules and ceremonies are necessary for the inward man in guiding and disciplining the outward man.

The effect of Christian liberty is evident for the individual Christian in relation to Christ and for the individual in relation to others.

By faith the believer enters into a personal relationship to Christ. He is declared righteous because he believes the promises of God to be true and just. This justification brings righteousness that involves a moral transformation, by which the new inward man is born, enabling the Christian to grow in holiness. During this growth there is communion with Christ. As in the marriage union where husband and wife share all things, so Christ shares in the believer's sin, and the believer in Christ's righteousness.

By faith the believer becomes both lord and king over all things, for he is in Christ. The believer is a priest who can approach the Father on his own behalf through Christ.

Since a Christian's faith will not profit others, except through love, he puts his faith into service for all, becoming a servant of all. He lives in fellowship with all men and shares Christ's concern for them. Because of his concern, the Christian makes use of his priestly right to intercede for others before God, and to instruct them by Christian witness. Thus a Christian "lives in Christ through

faith and in his neighbor through love."¹

This chapter has been an analysis of the Pauline sources of Luther's concept of Christian liberty. The following chapter will contain the general summary and conclusion.

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1. Ante, pp. 44, 45.

CHAPTER IV

GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

CHAPTER IV

GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to determine the Pauline sources of Luther's concept of Christian liberty in his Treatise on Christian Liberty. The study was limited to the personal liberty of the individual Christian to determine the meaning of this freedom for him in relation to Jesus Christ and to his neighbor. Therefore, this thesis should be of value for understanding preaching, teaching, and living in the freedom of the Gospel.

The procedure was to limit the main study to an analysis of Luther's Treatise on Christian Liberty, after giving historical information to add perspective. The Pauline sources were considered in relation to the analysis of Luther's treatise. The first chapter dealt with the Reformation setting of this treatise, including a sketch of Luther's life up to the writing of this treatise. Luther's early life was not unusual for his time in any way. His sudden entrance into the monastery was the beginning of his ardent search for peace with God. The continued years of study and struggle in the monastery prepared him for the work that was to be his. The change came in his life when he found the answer to the one burning question, "How can I render God gracious to me?"¹ He found his answer through the Word of God and

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1. Schwiebert, op. cit., p. 166.

entered into this new freedom in Jesus Christ.

The second chapter dealt with a detailed analysis of Luther's treatise on Christian liberty. The first section dealt with the immediate historical occasion for the writing of Luther's treatise, showing the stress under which he wrote this confident testimony to Christian freedom. After a reference to Luther's procedure in presentation, the treatise itself was analyzed. The third chapter, containing analysis of the Pauline sources of Luther's concept of Christian liberty, followed the outline of the second chapter. Since the outline of the second and third chapters are parallel, these two chapters are summarized together. This combined summary is outlined under four main issues presented in the study: namely; the twofold nature of the Christian man, the source of Christian liberty, the meaning of Christian liberty, and the effect of Christian liberty.

The first issue is the twofold nature of the Christian man. This twofold nature was referred to as the inward new spiritual man and the outward old physical man. Luther referred to 2 Corinthians 4:16, which speaks of the inward and outward man, and Galatians 5:17, which speaks of the spirit and the flesh. Romans 7:22-23 is also implicated because of its use of "inward" and "members," which are in conflict with each other. The inward man is the new spiritual man that is received of Christ. Only a Christian has the new man. The outward man is the old fleshly physical natural man. These two men within the Christian man are opposed to each other. The inward spiritual man desires to please God, while the outward fleshly man does not. Thus the situation of conflict exists because of the twofold nature of the Christian.

The second main issue of the study is the source of Christian liberty, which gives the answer to the question of the origin of the inward man. The source of the inward new man of Christ, is the Word of God and faith. The Apostle Paul spoke of the "righteousness of God" that is revealed to man and received by faith. This righteousness of is both His judgment against sin, in the law, and His love and mercy through Christ. In Romans 1:17 Paul refers primarily to the righteousness of God revealed through Christ's death on the cross. By receiving Christ through faith, this righteousness of God becomes the believer's. This word is necessary, for only through the hearing of the Word can man come to faith, as Paul states in Romans 1:17. God has chosen the "foolishness of preaching," Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 1:21, to bring the Word to men.

Faith receives the Word of God as being trustworthy and just. This faith grows into greater faith through the personal relationship between Christ and the believer according to Paul in Romans 1:17. The object of faith is always Jesus Christ.

Thus the source of Christian liberty out of which the inward man arises and grows is the Word of God and faith.

The third main issue of this study is the meaning of Christian liberty. This liberty is viewed in relation to the twofold nature of the Christian man, the inward new man and the outward old man. The Christian man is both free and servant, as Paul states in 1 Corinthians 9:19. The debt he owes is one of constant love, as Romans 13:8 indicates. This dual relationship of Christian liberty and bondage can be best understood by discussing the inward and the outward man in the twofold nature of the Christian.

The new inward man is free inwardly in his conscience and has no need of works to justify himself before God. The new man needs the Word of God and faith to sustain him in this liberty. Through his faith in God's Word he receives three virtues or freedoms.

The first virtue of faith under the meaning of Christian liberty is justification, including freedom from bondage to the law and sin. Luther's reference is to Romans 4:3, where Paul argues for justification by faith on the basis of Abraham's faith in God's promise. This justification is a declared righteousness with continuing implication as the new man grows in faith.

The second virtue of faith is fulfillment of the law.. Faith fulfills the First Commandment, as Luther states, by placing God first in the believer's life. Unbelief dishonors God and leaves men under wrath, as Paul declares in Romans 11:32. Belief honors God and frees the believer from bondage to unbelief and God's wrath.

The third virtue of faith is union with Christ whereby the believer is made free from bondage to his own carnal nature. Luther mentions Ephesians 5:31, where Paul uses the union of husband and wife as an incomplete illustration of the union of Christ and the believer. Through this union the believer receives the prerogatives of Christ, Who is the Son of God. The Christian man becomes Lord of all, as Paul suggests in Romans 8:28. The Christian becomes a priest through Christ, as is mentioned in Hebrews 10:19, 22. In 1 Corinthians 4:1 Paul and Luther agree in declaring that Christ has left no "indelible character" for the clergy.

Thus the freedom of the inward man is first a freedom of conscience through faith in Christ. Since the Christian man is both spiritual and physical, he must live in the world and discipline his body, the outward man. In 1 Corinthians 9:23 Paul refers to the subduing of his own body so that he should not lose the crown of life. Through works of self-discipline the outward man can be ruled and guided by the inward man. However, these works are not for justification before God.

Works of love are necessary for a growing Christian, enabling the inward man to find expression through the outward man. Luther refers to Paul's evaluation of true Christianity in Galatians 5:6, and to the self-sacrificing example of the Christ in Philippians 2:5-7. A Christian who lives in love toward others knows that the limits of his liberty are the needs of others. Paul spoke of his concern for those in different levels of faith in Romans 14:1-3, suggesting patience and love. The concern of the Christian is always the spiritual and physical welfare of others. In Galatians 2:3-5 Paul openly disregarded the law-givers who would hinder the truth of the Gospel.

Luther realized the need of rules and ceremonies in the discipline of the outward man for the maturing growth of the Christian. He was aware of the danger of hypocrisy, for he referred to Paul's denunciation of vain formalism in 2 Timothy 3:5-7.

Thus the meaning of Christian liberty is seen in the relation to the inward man who is free in his conscience through Christ, and the individual in relation to the outward man who is subject to and guided by the inward man. This tension remains between these two aspects of

the Christian as long as life continues.

The fourth main issue of this study is the effect of Christian liberty for the whole man in relation to Christ, and the whole man in relation to his fellow men. The Christian is in a personal relationship to Christ by faith, being declared righteous by his acceptance of trustworthiness of God's promise. The believer also experiences a moral transformation, or regeneration, by which he is freed from bondage to his old nature. The Christian remains in union and communion with Christ so that Christ's righteousness is his and his sin is Christ's. This union with Christ is a living relationship illustrated by the union of husband and wife, though of a deeper mystery.

Not only is the Christian righteous, transformed, and in communion with Christ, but he is a lord and king of all things, for all must serve his good. This is a spiritual inward kingship that can rule in spite of suffering and oppression. By faith the Christian is also a priest who can approach the throne of grace through Christ on his own behalf. Thus the individual in relation to Christ is free by faith. In relation to his fellow men he is servant of all and subject to all out of love that he may point them to Christ. He lives in fellowship with all men and thus witnesses for Christ in the world. He is a priest who can intercede for others before the Father, and teach them the way of Christ by his Christian witness.

There are four basic concluding observations relating to the individual Christian's life that are apparent from this study of the Pauline sources of Luther's concept of Christian liberty. These concluding observations are drawn from the four major issues that have been summarized in this chapter.

The first observation is related to the nature of the Christian man. Both Paul and Luther agree that the Christian faces a continual inner struggle with his old natural desires. Becoming a Christian does not make the believer free from sin, but gives him the power to overcome sin. Thus, if this is the nature of the Christian man, struggles are inevitable. The Christian will always face a conflict and have inner tension against his old nature until final perfection is attained in the life to come.

The second observation relates to the source of Christian liberty. Only a Christian can experience liberty in Christ, for he alone has the ability. The new inner man, who is born of God, brings liberty to the believer. The new spiritual man is born of the Word and faith. Thus the Word needs to be preached that faith may be established in Christ, for He is the source of man's liberty.

The third observation is related to the meaning of Christian liberty. By faith the Christian is free from all things, even sin's condemnation. By love he is bound to all men. Thus the Christian has great potentiality in his life because of his faith in Christ and his love for his neighbor.

The fourth observation relates to the effect of Christian liberty. The Christian is a whole man, a total personality in whom the spiritual man reigns. Thus the Christian man lives and moves in society and makes his impact as a man of God.

The true Christian is a Christian both inwardly and outwardly, one who "lives in Christ through faith" and "in his neighbor through love."¹

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1. Luther: Works, Vol. II, pp. 342, 343.

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