

# A Tale of Two Simultaneities: Justification and Sanctification in Calvin and Barth<sup>1</sup>

George Hunsinger  
Barth Project  
*Princeton Theological Seminary*

*In memoriam Heiko A. Oberman*

In a telling remark Hans Urs von Balthasar once observed that Karl Barth rejected all talk of growth or progress in the Christian life. Barth rejected “all discussion of anything in the realm of the relative and temporal,” von Balthasar claimed, but that is the realm in which we must look for “a real and vibrant history” of human beings with their redeeming Lord and God.<sup>2</sup> Although this remark is sweeping and would need to be refined before it could be accepted, von Balthasar raises an important question and points us in the right direction. As we shall see, it is false to state that Barth allows no place for growth or progress in the Christian life, but it is not false to observe that he has very little to say about it. Why should that be? What is it about Barth’s soteriology that militates against the ideas of growth or progress? How does Barth propose that we understand the doctrine of sanctification, for example, if not by means of healing, growth, or gradual progress? If we examine such questions carefully, we will not only enter into the heart of Christian soteriology, but also into very deep problems that the Reformation left unsettled in its own ranks. A satisfactory resolution of these problems, which are still outstanding, is of the greatest importance for ecumenical theology today.

## A Tale of One Simultaneity: John Calvin

No one would ever think of accusing John Calvin of the liability that von Balthasar found in Barth. No one would ever accuse Calvin, that is, of rejecting

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<sup>1</sup>I would like to express my gratitude for the help I received on the Calvin section of this essay from Rinse Reeling Brouwer, Anthony N. S. Lane, and the late Heiko A. Oberman.

<sup>2</sup>Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), p. 371.

all talk of growth or progress in the Christian life. Calvin was of course familiar with such accusations. They were, in one form or another, a standard item in Roman Catholic attacks on the Reformation, especially as exemplified by Luther. The message of justification by faith alone, Catholic critics charged, evacuated the Christian life of its significance. Justification as taught by the Reformation made all efforts at progress in the Christian life superfluous. It led to quietism, lethargy and weak resignation. Evidently Calvin felt that Reformation soteriology as he had inherited it was not invulnerable to this line of attack. Roman Catholic polemics were assaulting an unguarded flank. The strategy of Calvin's remedy was to reverse the customary order of presentation. Instead of beginning with justification and moving only from there to sanctification (or "regeneration," Calvin's preferred term), he began with sanctification instead, postponing all detailed consideration of justification until the discussion of sanctification was complete. He thereby hoped to show "how little devoid of good works is the faith" (*Instit.* III.11.1),<sup>3</sup> and thus that sanctification or "real sanctity of life" was actually inseparable from justification or "the gratuitous imputation of righteousness" (III.3.1).<sup>4</sup> Far from making growth and progress in the Christian life superfluous, sanctification followed from union with Christ no less than did justification. The two were inseparable and concomitant.<sup>5</sup>

Calvin's strategy of reversal was based on a logical point. Justification and sanctification, he argued, were given to faith "simultaneously" (*simul*). Since the one was never given without the other, the order in which theology presented them was flexible. It made no essential difference whether one moved from justification to sanctification, or else from sanctification to justification, as long as one realized that both followed together from union with Christ by

<sup>3</sup>Quotations will be from the Battles translation unless otherwise indicated. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., ed. John T. McNeill, tr. Ford Lewis Battles (Phila.: Westminster, 1960).

<sup>4</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 2 vols., tr. John Allen (Phila.: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1928). (Cited hereafter as Allen.)

<sup>5</sup>As Brouwer has helpfully pointed out to me, Calvin had another reason for treating sanctification first before he turned to justification. Although parrying Roman Catholic polemics undoubtedly played a role in this arrangement (III.16.1-4), another important reason seems to have been a difference with certain colleagues. Unlike Luther, Melancthon and Bucer, Calvin wanted to show that repentance was a consequence of faith, not a condition for its possibility. "Repentance," he urged, "not only immediately follows faith but is produced by it. . . . Those who imagine that repentance precedes faith, instead of being produced by it, have never been acquainted with its power" (III.3.1, Allen rev.). Compare this, for example, with Melancthon's contrary though irenic comment: Apology, art. 12, 45 in *Book of Concord*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Phila.: Fortress Press, 1959), pp. 187-88. Unlike his colleagues, Calvin redefines "repentance" significantly to include "the whole of conversion to God" (*totam ad Deum conversionem*) (III.3.5). Nevertheless, the material point remains that for Calvin justification and sanctification were given to faith simultaneously and inseparably, though also variously, so that the order of their presentation was discretionary.

faith. The order of presentation could be chosen to meet the needs of the situation. If, as seemed actually the case, justification was being emphasized at the expense of sanctification by attacker and defender alike, there was every reason to redress the imbalance by considering sanctification first. Since the two were given to faith simultaneously, the strategy of reversal would only serve to underscore the essential point that there was no justification without sanctification, and no sanctification without justification.

Calvin's *simul* can be illustrated by a few characteristic statements. "The Lord freely justifies his own," wrote Calvin, "in order that he may at the same time [*simul*] restore them to true righteousness by sanctification of his Spirit" (III.3.19). Those who belong to Christ, it seems, are restored to righteousness in two ways at the same time. On the one hand, Christ freely justifies them so that in him they are completely righteous before God. On the other hand, they are also restored to righteousness gradually in themselves "by sanctification of his Spirit." Righteousness is a free gift that is given at once categorically (justification) and yet also as a process of growth in the Christian life (sanctification). In Christ we are completely righteous by faith. In ourselves we are also set in the process of becoming righteous. Note that for Calvin our righteousness in Christ is no less actual than the righteousness that develops gradually and indeed slowly within us. The distinction between being righteous in Christ (*in Christo*) and being righteous in ourselves (*in nobis*) is not a distinction between a "legal fiction" and a true state of affairs. It is a distinction between two aspects of a single reality within the context of a complex christocentric eschatology. In Christ we are already as perfectly righteous as we will ever need to be *coram Deo*; we are not yet righteous as we shall be on the Last Day, and we are in process of becoming righteous existentially here and now.

Sanctification, like justification, is for Calvin always the free gift of God. It is not a human work, and it has no basis in human merit. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life. It is the Spirit's gradual impartation to the believer of Christ's own righteousness (sanctification) — a righteousness that has already been imputed to the believer both instantaneously (*statim*) and totally (*totus*) upon the believer's transition from lack of faith to faith. The operative distinctions for this peculiar relation are thus: in Christ/in us, completely/partially, instantaneously /gradually, by imputation/by impartation, by grace alone without works (justification)/by grace alone yet not without works (sanctification). When justification and sanctification are said to be given to faith *simultaneously*, it is this complex — or, perhaps better, duplex — soteriological relation with its various aspects and distinctions that is meant.

Here is another instance of Calvin's use of *simul* for this double phenomenon:

Do you wish . . . to attain righteousness in Christ? You must first possess Christ; but you cannot possess him without being made a partaker in his sanctification, because he cannot be divided into pieces. Since, therefore, it is solely by expending himself that the Lord gives us these benefits to enjoy,

he bestows both of them at the same time [*simul*], the one never without the other. Thus it is clear how true it is that we are justified not without works yet not through works, since in our sharing in Christ, which justifies us, sanctification is no less included [*non minus continentur*] than justification (III.16.1, rev.).

Once again, the believer is said to enjoy two distinct benefits, or better, a single twofold benefit. They represent two complementary and mutually necessary ways of attaining righteousness in Christ. The one is “to possess Christ;” the other is to be made a “partaker in his sanctification.” To possess Christ (*possidere*) corresponds to justification, for to possess Christ by faith is to possess his righteousness. Partaking of Christ (*participare*) then corresponds to sanctification, for possessing his righteousness by faith cannot occur without that righteousness also becoming ever more fully our own at the existential level. Possessing and partaking (or partaking with a twofold blessing) are bestowed simultaneously, and never the one without the other.

Therefore, both the categorical and the relative, the instantaneous and the gradual —righteousness in both senses (total/partial), or in both aspects (in Christ/in us) — are gifts of the one Lord Jesus Christ, and both are essentially gifts of himself. He bestows them solely by bestowing or “expending” (*erogare*) himself. The believer receives these gifts, or this one twofold gift, and “enjoys” (*frui*) them, but does not earn or merit them. Although we are not justified *through* works, we are not justified *without* them. That is, the good works consequent upon justification are the fruits of faith’s union with Christ. They are the work of Christ by his Spirit within our hearts and lives. They presuppose, but do not effect, our reconciliation with God. It is not our own existential or actual righteousness, but Christ’s righteousness as enacted for our sakes, and grasped only by faith, “by which alone we are reconciled to God” (III.16.1).

In short, justification is the free gift of righteousness in Christ, perfect and indivisible, even as sanctification is the gradual impartation of this righteousness existentially here and now. It is Christ himself and Christ alone who holds these two benefits together. “Christ contains both of them inseparably in himself” (III.16.1). The one (sanctification) can no more be divided from the other (justification) than Christ can be “divided into pieces.” Giving us himself by grace through faith, he also gives us his righteousness, for he himself just *is* our righteousness (I Cor. 1:30) — in two distinct but inseparable modes (justification and sanctification), which for all their distinctness are bestowed, as we have seen, in and with one another. “Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time [*simul*] sanctify. These benefits are joined together by an everlasting and indissoluble bond” (III.16.1). “Just as Christ cannot be divided into parts, so also these two blessings, which we receive in him [*percipimus*] at the same time [*simul*], are inseparable: justification and sanctification. To those whom God receives into grace, therefore, he at the same time [*simul*] gives the Spirit of adoption, by whose power he re-forms them in his own image” (III.11.6,

Allen rev.).<sup>6</sup> Just as being received into divine grace here alludes to justification, so being given the re-forming power of the Spirit alludes to sanctification, and both are not only inseparable through our union with Christ, but are given and received at the same time.

This double gift of salvation (justification and sanctification) is famously described by Calvin as a double grace (*duplex gratia*). Christ was given to us by God's generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's Spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life. (III.11.1)

Note that Christ is again central, and that our relation to Christ is again one of possession and participation. The double grace is said to be received through participation in Christ (*cuius participatione*), and this participation takes place through faith. Everything depends on our partaking of Christ by faith. "As long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us" (III.1.1). Christ cannot share with us what he has received from the Father unless us he becomes ours by grace, so that we partake of him by faith (III.1.1).

Union and communion with Christ thus sets the immediate relevant context within which justification and sanctification are divinely bestowed and humanly received. This union can be described as a *koinonia*-relation of mutual indwelling. By grace through faith, the believer dwells in Christ even as Christ dwells in the believer. Dwelling in Christ, the believer possesses Christ and so also the reconciliation with God accomplished by Christ's blameless obedience [*innocentia*] as it climaxed in his death on the cross. The believer can therefore stand before God without anxiety as before a gracious Father as opposed to a hostile Judge. Dwelling in the believer, Christ breaks the dominion of sin in the human heart by bestowing the gift of his Spirit. Sanctified by the Spirit's indwelling, the believer is freed to cultivate [*meditari*] that blamelessness [*innocentia*] and purity of life [*puritatem vitae*] which had otherwise been forfeited by sin (III.11.1).

It is noteworthy, however, and also unexpected, that the two-fold gift of grace correlates for Calvin not with a single, but with a double, divine acceptance. Against those who would interpret certain scripture passages to mean that we may gain God's favor for ourselves not by God's gift alone but by means of our own right efforts, Calvin retorts: "But you can in no way make the Scriptures

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<sup>6</sup>Note that Calvin can speak of sanctification from two distinct though complementary vantage points. On the one hand, it is the communication of Christ's righteousness to us (III.2.24), while on the other, it is our being drawn into conformity with Christ (III.6.3), and in particular with his death and resurrection (through *mortificatio* and *vivificatio*).

agree unless you recognize a double acceptance of man before God (*duplicem hominis apud Deum acceptionem*)" (III.17.4). The one acceptance is based on Christ's work apart from us (justification), while the second acceptance is based on Christ's work in us by his Spirit (sanctification). The first acceptance presupposes that although in ourselves we are wholly unrighteous as sinners, in Christ and clothed in his righteousness, we are nonetheless wholly righteous before God.

The second acceptance, however, depends on our becoming righteous at the existential level. The actual righteousness that God works in us by his Spirit also makes us acceptable to God. At this level God does indeed, states Calvin, accept believers by reason of their works, but only because those works are effected in them by his Spirit. "This is the acceptance . . . in which even the works of believers after their vocation are approved by God; for the Lord cannot but love and accept those good effects which are produced in them by his Spirit" (III.17.5, Allen). Because "regeneration is a reparation of the Divine image in us," the second mode of acceptance, related to human works, occurs because God accepts and beholds in his children "the marks and lineaments of his own countenance" (III.17.5, Allen). "But it must always be remembered that they are accepted by God in consequence of their works, only because, for their sakes and the favor which he bears to them, he deigns to accept whatever goodness he has liberally communicated to their works" (III.17.5, Allen).

This teaching of a second mode or basis of acceptance would seem to place Calvin on thin ice. For to make it plausible, he has to adopt lines of argument that come perilously close to the Roman Catholic ideas that the Reformation had set out to overcome. Note well that Calvin is not just saying that sanctification is the concomitant of justification in the Christian life. He is also saying that our acceptance before God does not rest on justification alone, potentially a momentous assertion. He insists that a second, complementary basis for our acceptance lies in the actual righteousness of our own lives, in our sanctification. Does this mean that justification in itself is not enough? Does it mean that sanctification is also in some sense necessary if the believer is to be rendered acceptable before God? Is sanctification not just a fruit of union with Christ, but a condition for the possibility of divine acceptance? The idea that sanctification is at once a human work and yet also a gift of grace is of course familiar in Roman Catholic soteriology, appearing in both Augustinian-Thomistic and Franciscan forms.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the worry that justification is not enough in itself to make us acceptable before God is a standard Roman Catholic objection to Reformation soteriology. With this idea of a twofold acceptance — which would have been unthinkable to Luther — has Calvin sold the Reformation down the river?

<sup>7</sup>For qualified but still Augustinian-Thomistic sounding phraseology in Calvin, see for example III. 14.20, 21. For phraseology more reminiscent of Scotus and Ockham, see III.17.15, where Calvin approves though critically transcends the Franciscan idea of "accepting grace."

It would be unfair if we failed to note that Calvin surrounds his teaching of a second acceptance with heavy qualifications. He is after all trying to make sense of certain scriptural passages — seized upon by the Reformation's opponents — that are not easy to align with the doctrine of justification by faith alone. He rejects every suggestion that good works bring merit.

It is beyond a doubt that whatever is praiseworthy in our works proceeds from the grace of God; and that we cannot ascribe the least portion of it to ourselves. If we truly and seriously acknowledge this truth, not only all confidence in merit, but likewise all idea of merit immediately vanishes. (III.15.3, Allen rev.)

Where remission of sins has been previously received [*justification*], the good works which succeed [*sanctification*] are estimated far beyond their intrinsic merit; for all their imperfections are covered by the perfection of Christ, and all their blemishes are removed by his purity, that they may not be scrutinized by the Divine judgment.

The guilt, therefore, of all transgressions, by which men are prevented from offering anything acceptable to God, being obliterated, and the imperfection, which universally deforms even the good works of believers, being buried in oblivion, their works are accounted righteous, or, which is the same thing, imputed for righteousness. (III.17.8, Allen)

With statements like these Calvin seems well within the bounds of Reformation soteriology. Neither Thomas nor Scotus could have suggested, for example, that *absolutely nothing* praiseworthy in our works proceeds from us, since they both subscribed to the idea of merit in various ways. Calvin by contrast seems to hold that in doing good works the believer, while consenting to the operation of grace, does nothing that essentially contributes to it. The believer cooperates with the operation of grace without effecting the praiseworthy result. Moreover, since all one's good works are still unacceptable to God by virtue of their deformation by sin, even the believer's best works can be rendered acceptable only by the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Clearly, for Calvin the free grace of justification prevails over the imperfections of sanctification at every point. In a way foreign to standard Catholic soteriology, sanctification is completely merit-free, while even the best of good works (being marred by sin) is still unacceptable apart from the threefold basis of Christ, grace, and faith alone — but on that basis the believer's works are acceptable indeed.

Nevertheless, doubts and ambiguities remain. Not only Calvin's rejection of merit, but also his careful regulation of sanctification by justification would both seem to militate powerfully against his curious suggestion of a second ground or mode of acceptance. We might muse that not all his soteriological ideas were formulated with sufficient care, so that sometimes his *duplex*-complex got the better of him! Unfortunate, stray remarks would sometimes seem to occur one or two standard deviations out from the bulge at the middle of the bell-shaped curve. Among the most perplexing of these atypical ideas is the

discussion that goes so far as to make good works into “inferior causes” (*causas inferiores*) of our salvation (!) (III.14.21). Even with Calvin’s tortured qualifications, it is hard to see how this statement can be retrieved, or why it should have been ventured at all.

More serious, however, is a matter that underlies these worries, for it concerns Calvin’s basic soteriological orientation. “For Luther,” writes Heiko Oberman, “the *locus* of the *gloria dei* is the *iustificatio impii*, while for Calvin it is the *iustificatio iusti*.”<sup>8</sup> Luther insisted repeatedly that God’s grace really comes to lost sinners. For him this word was our only hope, the abiding good news, something we needed to hear afresh each day. We could never outgrow our need for this news, for even after baptism we still remained sinners in ourselves. Grace was God’s abiding *Nevertheless!* that depended on nothing other than itself, and certainly on nothing in us, to bring us mercy, light and life.

None of this was of course denied by Calvin, but as Oberman suggests matters could sometimes go off in a curiously different direction.

When we hear mention of our union with God, let us remember that holiness must be its bond; not because we come into communion with him by virtue of our holiness. Rather, we ought first to cleave unto him so that, infused with his holiness, we may follow whither he calls. (III.6.2)

Not only do we not come into communion with God by virtue of our holiness, Luther might have objected, but neither do we remain there by any such precarious bond. Calvin here speaks of our holiness, Luther might have continued, where he ought properly to speak only of Christ as received by faith alone. Christ himself is and remains the only bond of our union with God. We do not remain in communion with God because of our holiness, so Luther would have insisted, but despite our actual unholiness, by sheer grace. Nor, he might have added, does our ability to do good works depend on our being “infused” (*perfusi*) with Christ’s holiness, but again on the grace that breaks in anew each day upon our really persisting lack of holiness. It was Thomas Aquinas who wrote that “God gives grace only to the worthy, but he himself makes them worthy by grace.”<sup>9</sup> In these admittedly odd passages (offset by the bulk of Calvin’s teaching), does not Calvin seem to approximate something all-too-similar — that “God gives grace only to the holy, but he himself makes them holy by grace”? Does the God of “double acceptance” actually give grace only to the holy, Luther might ask, once they have first been justified by faith? Does God really regard the works of the saints as “inferior causes” of their own salvation? Or does grace rather come only to lost sinners, even after their baptism, but, by the

<sup>8</sup>Heiko A. Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986), p. 238n.

<sup>9</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (1a2ae, Question 114, 5.2), vol. 30, *The Gospel of Grace*, ed. Cornelius Ernst (New York: MacGraw-Hill, 1972), p. 215 (translation revised).



promises of God, to them it really does come? Can the assurance of faith that was rightly so important to Calvin really rest secure if our position before God depends finally not on a single but a double acceptance?<sup>10</sup>

### A Tale of Another Simultaneity: Martin Luther

Markedly different from Calvin's *simul*, the simultaneity-relation that impressed itself so indelibly upon Luther was that of *simul iustus et peccator*. It cannot be insignificant that, as Richard Wevers' exhaustive concordance shows, the phrase *simul iustus et peccator* does not appear in Calvin's *Institutes*.<sup>11</sup> Calvin's *simul*, as we have seen, led him to develop a form of soteriological gradualism. "Christ is not outside us but dwells within us," he wrote. "Not only does he cleave to us by an invisible bond of fellowship, but with a wonderful communion, day by day, he grows more and more into one body with us, until he becomes completely one with us" (III.2.24). Calvin saw the existential aspect of salvation primarily as a matter of growth, healing and gradual progress by degrees.

By contrast, Luther saw the existential aspect of salvation rather differently. For him it was subject to a process that was not so much as gradual as perpetual. In other words, where Calvin posited a process of "more and more," Luther posited one of "again and again." Luther wrote:

Forgiveness of sins is not a matter of a passing work or action, but of perpetual duration. For the forgiveness of sins begins in baptism and remains with us all the way to death, until we rise from the dead, and leads us to life eternal. So we live continually under the forgiveness of sins. Christ is truly and constantly the liberator from our sins, is called our Savior, and saves us by taking away our sins. If, however, he saves us always and continually, then we are constantly sinners.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>As Brouwer has suggested to me, a favorable interpretation of Calvin might still be possible despite the ambiguities and uncertainties in the odd passages I have cited. Perhaps an asymmetry may be discerned within both the *duplex gratia* and the *duplex acceptio*. In the case of double grace, the imputation of righteousness (justification) would not be on the same level nor serve the same function in salvation as righteousness' existential impartation (sanctification), so that the former would take precedence over the latter. A similar pattern could then be posited for double acceptance. Precedence would be granted to acceptance on the basis of the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Divine acceptance on the basis of sanctification would then again have a different status. As Calvin suggests at one point, good works serve to praise God insofar as they come from God and go back to God despite their manifest shortcomings. In this way "the generosity of God . . . bestows unearned rewards upon works that merit no such thing" (III.15.3). Acceptance on the basis of sanctification could be interpreted in light of this divine generosity. While I find this suggestion to be attractive, I think it best not to let it obscure the very real ambiguities. The openings that Calvin unwittingly left to moralism were not without significance as the Reformed tradition subsequently developed.

<sup>11</sup>See Richard F. Wevers, *A Concordance to Calvin's Institutio 1559* (Grand Rapids:Diagramma, 1992).

<sup>12</sup>Martin Luther, "The Disputation Concerning Justification" (1536) in *Luther's Works*, vol. 34 (Phila: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), p. 164. (Hereafter LW 34.)

Christ comes daily, continually and without interruption, every day and every hour, to sinners. "Daily we sin, daily we are continually justified" (LW 34, 191). Although Luther, like Calvin, also knows of salvation as a gradual process, unlike Calvin, he subordinates all gradualism to the perpetual advent of grace, which confronts sin continually afresh, and continually overcomes it *as a whole*.

Sin and righteousness, for Luther, are categorical terms. Although in themselves they admit of degrees, they are mutually exclusive in relation to one another. *Coram Deo* where there is sin, there is no righteousness; and where there is righteousness, there is no sin. "Partial righteousness does not justify" (LW 34, 127). Slight gradual improvements in sinners avail for nothing before God. Luther's *simul* is inseparable from Luther's *totus*. The great doctrine of *simul iustus et peccator* describes a *totus/totus* relation. The baptized believer who is still completely a sinner is also at the same time completely righteous in Christ. The relationship between the two predications is not static, as in a frozen paradox, but eschatological. *Peccator* refers to the old sinful humanity. It lives on in the present as the past that was crucified with Christ. *Iustus* refers to the new redeemed humanity. It breaks in on the present continually as the future that was risen with Christ. The Christian life is a constant turning from the past to the future, from oneself as sinner to oneself as righteous, in the form of a constant turning to Christ — who exchanged his righteousness for our sin, that we might exchange our sin for his righteousness. We participate in this great exchange once for all through faith, and thereafter continually again and again, and always *totus/totus*, not *partim/partim* (or more precisely, the latter always only in the context of the former).

Therefore, the relationship "in Christ /in us" is not for Luther what it was for Calvin. It is not primarily a relationship between the categorical and the relative. It is primarily a relationship between the categorical truth about us in one form (*totus*) and that same categorical truth in another (*totus*). It signifies that what is already perfectly true for us in Christ is also perpetually true for us ever anew in a very different form here and now. Sin's *total* abolition by the righteousness of the crucified Christ is true for us at once perfectly "in Christ" and then also perpetually "in us" through the whole course of the eschatological interim. The perpetual advent of grace to baptized sinners, continually forgiving and counteracting their sin, is a kind of permanent revolution or perpetual resurrection from the dead; in other words, as Luther liked to say, a daily baptism — until at last, at the final consummation, Christ will come to dwell as perfectly *in nobis* as we already dwell perfectly in him. "You have died," as Luther liked to quote Paul at this point, "and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).

#### A Tale of Two Simultaneities: Karl Barth

Karl Barth's soteriology cannot be well understood if it is not seen that he makes a bold and innovative attempt to combine the two "simultaneities" we have been considering — Calvin's *simul* and Luther's *simul*. What Barth attempts to combine, in other words, is the simultaneity of justification and

sanctification, on the one hand, along with *simul iustus et peccator*, on the other. This enterprise is enormously ambitious, and it is no less complex. Only the outlines can be presented here. Barth makes essentially three moves. First, he reconsiders the meaning of our participation in Christ. Second, he reconsiders the meaning of Christ's presence to faith. Finally, he reconsiders the meaning of sanctification. This first move gives him Calvin's *simul*, and the last move gives him Luther's, while the middle move mediates between the two. The overall effect is to create a new framework for the meaning of salvation that incorporates Calvin's *simul* into Luther's. Barth agrees with Luther, in other words, that *simul iustus et peccator* is, so to speak, a grammatical remark in Wittgenstein's sense. It is not just one soteriological truth among others. It rather constitutes the framework of sense and nonsense for soteriology as a whole. It makes explicit the norms that are implicit in God's revelation and enactment of our salvation in the history of the covenant as fulfilled in Jesus Christ. By granting primacy to Luther's *simul*, however, and incorporating Calvin's *simul* into its frame, Barth incurs certain losses. Whether these losses are irretrievable will be touched on in the conclusion.

### The First Move: Reconsidering Our Participation in Christ

Our participation in Christ, Barth proposes, can be considered in two ways. First, in the sense of active participation, everything depends on faith. Without faith there can be no active participation in Christ, nor can there be a true acknowledgement and reception of his benefits, nor can there be the thanks and praise proper to him, nor can there be repentance and newness of life. When Luther and Calvin speak of participation in Christ, it is this active sense that is usually meant. Barth calls it being in Christ in the strict and proper sense (IV/2, 555). Unlike Luther and Calvin, however, and unlike much of the Catholic tradition both before and after them, Barth does not believe that faith itself effects our participation in Christ or, more precisely, that without faith we fail to participate in Christ in any sense at all.

Secondly, therefore, in the sense of objective participation, everything depends on grace, and in particular on the operation of grace apart from us prior to faith. Because of the prior operation of grace, Barth believes, our objective participation in Christ precedes our active participation through faith. Jesus Christ is the one great inclusive human being. We are not outsiders to participation in Christ until we happen to become insiders by faith. We are rather all insiders by grace whether we recognize it yet or not. Faith does not transfer us from the outside to the inside, but rather enables us to see the staggering fact that by the prevenient grace of God we were inside all along without knowing it.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Calvin's famous statement at the beginning of *Institutes*, Book III, as quoted earlier, is therefore from Barth's standpoint at best a half truth: "As long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains

Barth describes the objective participation of all humanity in Christ:

"In Christ" means that in him we are reconciled to God, in him we are elect from eternity, in him we are called, in him we are justified and sanctified, in him our sin is carried to the grave, in his resurrection our death is overcome, with him our life is hid with Christ in God, in him everything that has to be done for us has already been done, has previously been removed and put in its place, in him we are children in the Father's house, just as he is by nature. All that has to be said about us can be said only by describing and explaining our existence in him; not by describing and explaining it as an existence we might have in and for itself. . . . For by Christ we will never be anything else than just what we are in Christ. And when the Holy Spirit draws and takes us right into the reality of revelation by doing what we cannot do, by opening our eyes and ears and hearts, he does not tell us anything except that we are in Christ by Christ. (I/2, 240)

Of course many questions arise at this point. What of those who never make the transition from objective to active participation? Moreover, if our participation is objective before it becomes active, doesn't our active participation become inevitable or unnecessary or trivial? These and similar questions are important, but they would take us too far afield. Barth's doctrine of universal objective participation breaks with almost the entire Latin theological tradi-

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useless and of no value for us" (III.1.1). Christ's relationship to us, Barth would counter, does not so entirely depend on our relationship to him. We may be separated from him, but he is not separated from us, not even as long as he remains outside of us. For the salvation of the human race, he has indeed suffered and done many things, indeed all that is necessary. And what he has suffered and done is fulfilled only when we acknowledge, receive and participate in it actively by faith. Nonetheless, what he has suffered and done for human salvation is not merely *sufficient* for our salvation until we receive it, nor (even worse) is it merely *potentially* sufficient, subject to our continual fulfillment of certain conditions. In some strong eschatological sense it is already *efficacious*—not just for some but for all. In that strong prevenient sense it does *not* remain useless and of no value for us before it finally moves us to faith. For it continually overcomes, or is disposed to overcome, our lack of faith. Even in the best of cases our faith is very weak. Who is there who does not have to say each day, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief"? Who is there who does not have to ask each day for forgiveness? Those lost sinners who come to participate in Christ by faith are, for Barth, a sign of hope for the whole sorry human race. Although we do not know exactly what form the fulfillment of this hope will take (and in particular *whether or how* it will exclude all final tragedy and loss), the universal efficacy of Christ for human salvation may under no circumstances be gainsaid. The inordinately restrictive, and inadequately christocentric, logic of the Augustinian tradition to the contrary, which Calvin here and elsewhere notoriously exemplifies, represents not only a failure to think through with full consistency the christocentric eschatology of the Reformation, but also to do real justice to the great breadth and fullness of New Testament hope. "After this I looked, and behold, *a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb'*" (Rev. 7:9-10, emphasis added). Who can doubt that the prevailing Augustinian tradition, in Protestant no less than Catholic circles, has put a great damper on the church's joyful reception and witness to so great a hope?

tion, including perhaps especially the ever dominant Augustinian tradition. One has to go all the way back to early Greek fathers like Athanasius to find relatively comparable associations of the phrase *in Christ* with the word *all*. Barth boldly allots certain New Testament passages, such as I Cor. 15, II Cor. 5, Rom. 5 and Rom. 11, where similar universalistic associations occur, a weight of significance that they have not enjoyed for centuries. It should not be surprising if for many conscientious believers Barth's position, at least initially, should seem implausible or counter-intuitive or fraught with unfortunate consequences.<sup>14</sup>

The simultaneity of justification and sanctification, Barth thinks, takes place at the level of our objective participation in Christ before it ever takes place at the level of our active participation. He thereby forcibly shifts the whole axis of salvation (justification and sanctification) away from what takes place in us existentially (*in nobis*) to what has taken place apart from us preveniently in Christ (*extra nos*). This shift is one of the most striking and momentous moves in his soteriology. It can be regarded as the logical fulfillment of a general, though still somewhat unsteady, move in this direction by Reformation soteriology in general. The very idea of justification by faith alone, as we have seen, involved a strong emphasis on the unequivocal perfection of our righteousness in Christ. The idea of free imputation, articulated as vigorously by Calvin as by Luther, entailed that our perfect righteousness in Christ was the stable basis, and not the uncertain goal, of whatever might or might not take place in us existentially between the times. Reformation soteriology, in other words, had shifted the decisive locus of salvation, in principle, from the existential to the christological level. Peter Martyr Vermigli got the Reformation's massive soteriological shift, whose significance can scarcely be exaggerated, exactly right when he said: "We are more perfectly in Christ than he is in us."<sup>15</sup> To speak about our reality in Christ was not just another way of speaking about his reality in us. We had died and our life was hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). Christ himself was our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (I Cor. 1:30). Reformation soteriology represented a sea change in which the eschatology of our salvation was grounded, focused and centered no longer in ourselves but in Christ alone.

Reformation soteriology, however, was clearer about how our being in Christ pertained to justification than about how it might pertain also to sanctification. Calvin, as we have seen, tended to situate sanctification very strongly in the gradualistic relativities of the existential level, whereas Luther for his part had tended to absorb sanctification into justification without keeping them properly dis-

<sup>14</sup>See my essay "Hellfire and Damnation; Four Ancient and Modern Views," in *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 236-49.

<sup>15</sup>Quoted in Joseph C. McLellend, *The Visible Words of God: An Exposition of the Sacramental Theology of Peter Martyr Vermigli* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), p. 148.

tinct. That was roughly the state of the question as Barth faced it. Little had been done to resolve these matters in any truly fundamental way since the Reformation. It was in this situation, as it were, that Barth stepped into the breach. Like Calvin but unlike Luther, he kept justification and sanctification distinct. More nearly like Luther but unlike Calvin, however, he did so only while also re-locating sanctification primarily away from the *in nobis* to the *in Christo* level so that the precise form of sanctification now matched that of justification very closely. It was precisely in Christ that our sanctification took place "simultaneously" with our justification so that, as Calvin had rightly said, there was never any justification without sanctification, nor sanctification without justification.

Justification and sanctification were, for Barth, two ways of describing reconciliation as a whole. Although they took place in Christ simultaneously, we cannot apprehend them simultaneously, but only sequentially. Nevertheless, in itself "the *simul* of the one redemptive act of God in Jesus Christ," Barth states, "cannot be split up into a temporal sequence" (IV/2, 507). In no sense do justification and sanctification constitute two *parts* of a larger whole, because each is itself the whole — Christ's one work of reconciliation — seen from a particular vantage point (IV/2, 499-500). In the one life history of Jesus Christ as fulfilled in his cross, the humiliation of the eternal Son of God had taken place for our justification in and with the exaltation of the earthly Son of man for our sanctification. Humiliation and exaltation were not two different stages of his life history, but two different aspects of it that had occurred continuously and simultaneously (in various ways) throughout its course from beginning to end. The appropriate mode of descriptive adequacy for the two countervailing aspects of this one reconciling occurrence was dialectical. It was not a matter of one truth in two parts, but of the whole truth of reconciliation coinhering simultaneously in two forms that were mutually necessary but also apparently diametrically opposite in operation and movement.

The central theme of Reformation soteriology, as Luther repeatedly urged, was that Christ alone is our righteousness and life. Barth then developed that theme as follows. Through our Lord's humiliation as the Son of God, and at the level of our universal objective participation in it, the great exchange took place whereby he assumed the full abysmal guilt and burden of human sin, even to the point of dying on the cross condemned in our place, in order that, by his sinless obedience, he might give us his perfect righteousness before God. This humiliation grounds and constitutes our justification.

At the same time (*simul*), through our Lord's exaltation as the Son of man, and again at the level of our universal objective participation in it, that same great exchange occurred in another aspect. The God who had validated our Lord's entry into the death of godless sinners (as God had continuously validated him throughout the entire course of his faithful obedience on earth) was also the God who had exalted him, and us with him, into the freedom of eternal life, which is communion with God. This elevation grounds and constitutes our sanctification. In him, in his one saving history of reconciliation as

fulfilled on the cross and made manifest by his resurrection, our justification has taken place in and with our sanctification, even as our sanctification has taken place in and with our justification. Having assumed our sin and death, he has at the same time given us his righteousness and life. When he died, we died; when he rose again, we rose with him. When he died our death as sinners, he at the same time clothed us with his righteousness; and when God validated his obedience unto death, he at the same time exalted us with him from our bondage to sin and decay to the glory of eternal life.

In short, that is how Barth appropriated Calvin's *simul*. By reconsidering our participation in Christ, by regarding it as objective before it ever becomes active, Barth could affirm Calvin's simultaneity of justification and sanctification — while avoiding any such precarious equivocations as “double acceptance.” Though subsisting simultaneously as a whole in two forms, there is only one ground of our reconciliation with God (and therefore only one ground of our acceptance by God), and that ground is the humiliation of the Son of God as it took place in and with the exaltation of the Son of man.

### The Second Move: Reconsidering Christ's Presence to Faith

Christ's presence to faith, Barth averred, must not be conceived abstractly. It must not be conceived in disconnection from his life history there and then, in which our salvation was enacted, and in which we were objectively included. Nor may his presence be conceived in disconnection from his universal future in which what has been hidden to the ages will at last be revealed, and he will be manifest to all things as what he has been all along — the world's Savior, the Lord of heaven and earth. Above all, however, the work of reconciliation, which he accomplished for us there and then, must not be conceived as less than it is. It must not be conceived as though it were somehow unfinished, insufficient, repeatable, or in need of repetition. It must not be conceived as though in any sense imperfectly accomplished. The reconciliation achieved in and by Jesus Christ, Barth states, stands forever as an “unsurpassable action” and an “intrinsically perfect” work (IV/3, 7; cf. 327). In him, in his life, death and resurrection, the world's reconciliation with God has taken place “once for all, totally, universally, radically, and with definitive newness” (IV/3, 323). Only God incarnate, only Jesus Christ, could save us from our sins, and only on that basis might we participate in and with him in eternal life. Once he has accomplished his unique and perfect work, it needs no repetition, no supplementation, no synthesis with some other (or supposedly other) saving (or supposedly saving) work. Whatever our relationship at the existential level to this reconciliation may be, it cannot possibly involve any of these things. The presence of the Risen Christ can only mean his self-presentation to us in the once-for-all perfection of his finished and saving work.

In short, for Barth, Christ's presence to faith cannot be considered apart from its profound interconnection with his life history in the past and also his future glorious manifestation. Nor can it be considered, even more impor-

tantly, apart from the intrinsic perfection of his one saving work, as accomplished in his life history, and in which we have already been included in advance before ever we come actively to partake of it. "One has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (II Cor. 5:14b-15 RSV). Barth takes the perfect tense of such New Testament statements — here "one *has died* for all" and "all *have died*," such that *all have died in the one* — very seriously.

Christ's presence, therefore, cannot be separated from his past and his future.<sup>16</sup> The *Christus praesens*, we might say, cannot be separated from the *Christus adventus*, the Christ who lived and died there and then, nor from the *Christus futurus*, the Christ who will return in glory at the end of all things. No soteriology, Barth proposes, can be adequate which separates the *Christus praesens* from either the *Christus adventus* or the *Christus futurus*. The *Christus praesens* is so related to the *Christus adventus* and the *Christus futurus* as to constitute a complex unity-in-distinction. These are finally three forms of one and the same Lord Jesus Christ, who in each form of his presence to faith is present as a whole. The three mutually coinherent forms are related without separation or division, and without confusion or change. At the same time, an asymmetrical ordering principle obtains. The *Christus praesens* and the *Christus futurus* are both fully grounded and determined by the *Christus adventus*. It is the *Christus adventus* — the Jesus Christ who in his life history has perfectly accomplished our salvation — who defines and constitutes the identity of his other two forms. This asymmetry means that the order from *Christus adventus* to *Christus praesens et futurus* is irreversible. To be sure, the Christ of ecclesial encounter and experience is the *Christus praesens* in his coinherence with the *Christus adventus* and the *Christus futurus*. The order of encounter and experience (*ordo congressendi et experientiae*), however, must be distinguished from the orders of being and knowledge (*ordo essendi* and *ordo cognoscendi*). The *Christus adventus* — Jesus Christ in his life history and its saving significance — is ontically and noetically prior to and determinative of the other two coinherent forms of his post-resurrection manifestation and impartation. So ordered, they comprise the one threefold form in which he lives and moves and has his being.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup>In Barth's eschatology the relation between the perfect tense, the present tense, and the future tense is a *totus/totus/totus* relation. The one *parousia* of Jesus Christ may be said to be totally past, totally present, and yet also totally future. Its substance, scope and content remain constant in the midst of its three basic and very different forms: (i) resurrection, (ii) outpouring of the Holy Spirit, (iii) final consummation and universal revelation (IV/3, 292-96, 910-15).

<sup>17</sup>Cf. Hans W. Frei: "His identity and his presence are given together in indissoluble unity. But the proper order for understanding this fact is to begin with his identity. . . ." (Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975], p. 149). To this we might add that with his identity and presence, Christ's future is also indissolubly given. "The future mode of his presence will be a significant, incorporative summing up of history" (Ibid., p. 160). Again, the order for



The *Christus praesens* is the Risen Christ. It is Christ's resurrection that makes him our Contemporary, and not ours only, Barth thinks, but the Contemporary of all times and places, whether before his life history or after it. What needs to happen — and in Christ's resurrection and ascension what does happen — is for the reconciliation he accomplished to be made contemporaneous with the rest of history. Easter involves Christ's "transition to a presence which is eternal and therefore embraces all times" (IV/1, 318). "His history did not become dead history. It was history in his time to become as such eternal history — the history of God with the human beings of all times, and therefore taking place here and now as it did then" (IV/1, 313-14 rev.). "He is present here and now for us in the full efficacy of what . . . he was and did then and there" (IV/1, 291). The resurrection means Christ's "real presence" to us now, and "our contemporaneity to him" in what he perfectly accomplished there and then in our stead (IV/1, 348). It means "the contemporaneity of Jesus Christ with us and of us with him" (IV/2, 291). It makes him "the Contemporary of all human beings" (III/2, 440 rev.).

In and with its real historicity — which means his actual life and death — the history of Jesus Christ is a self-transcending event. By the power of his resurrection, it "bursts through its isolations. It transcends its temporal and spatial limits" (IV/3, 324). It fills and controls all times and places. What our Lord accomplished in his life history "is too great to be limited to the one event which took place there and then." It is "too high, too deep, too comprehensive" to be enclosed in history like any other transient event (IV/3, 324). Because Christ is risen from the dead, no time or place, no human life, is bereft of his real presence (in whatever form or forms it may take, whether general or particular, manifest or hidden, incognito for the time being or openly known). Christ does not save us by his mere abstract presence. He saves us by his presence as the Crucified in whom we have been and are reconciled to God, as the one who lived, died and rose again there and then for our sakes.

The Risen Christ is present in the perfection of his one reconciling work. His work of reconciliation is not the mere precondition for some new work other than itself, for some further saving work, for some supplemental work that supposedly enlarges and completes it. His one work of reconciliation continues to take place here and now, but only as that which has already taken place once for all and perfectly there and then. What takes place in and with his presence here and now is, as it were, analytic rather than synthetic. It is always a secondary and dependent form of his one saving work in its finished perfection. It is the outworking through time of what it already contains inherently in itself.

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understanding remains the same. His identity in all three forms is defined strictly by the *Christus adventus* — by his being in the saving act of his one life history, by his person as enacted in his work, and his work as incorporate in his person, by his self-enactment there and then of his identity and mission as the world's incarnate Savior and Lord.

What takes place in and through Christ's presence to faith is not the combination of Christ's reconciling work with some other work, some new and further work in us, some second and additional work, some sequel that completes and perfects it as though it were not already complete and perfect in itself. Certainly in its modes of self-presentation to us, it is ever new, endlessly engaging and inexhaustibly rich, and yet it is always also indivisibly one and the same. Because Christ's work is in his person and his person in his work, the presence of Christ is always the presence of his perfect reconciling work.

Therefore, just as Calvin emphasized that Christ cannot be divided into pieces (as Luther had done before him), so Barth also emphasizes that the Risen Christ is "whole and undivided" (IV/2, 502), that he is not present to faith in any partial or divisible way, and thus that his presence always means nothing less than the presence of "the one totality of the reconciling action of God" (IV/2, 502). Very unlike Calvin, however, Barth argues that Christ's perfection and indivisibility mean that reconciliation in Christ is never a matter of degree. Like Luther, Barth holds that the relation between salvation *in Christo* and salvation in *nobis* is not to be described as a relation between the perfect and the imperfect, but rather as a relation between salvation's perfection in one form (*in Christo*) and that same perfection as it comes to us in another (*in nobis*). In particular, although unlike Luther Barth upholds and appropriates Calvin's *simul* respecting justification and sanctification, he departs from Calvin's teaching that sanctification grows into us gradually by degrees. But what could possibly be the alternative?

That there is only one work of salvation, that it has been accomplished by Jesus Christ, that it is identical with his person, and that being perfect it needs no supplementation but only acknowledgement, reception, participation, anticipation, and proclamation for what it is — these are the great themes of Barth's soteriology. We have been made to participate in Christ by grace, Barth maintains, before we ever do so actively by faith. Our objective *participatio Christi* already involves us as whole persons. Otherwise we would not be totally righteous in Christ, as Reformation doctrine has significantly urged as the right reading of the New Testament. Otherwise we would not have died when he died — "we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed" (Rom. 6:6) — nor would we also have risen with him when he rose from the dead — "you have been raised with Christ" (Col. 3:1). What the Bible calls death, Barth contends, is not mere sickness. What it calls darkness is not simply twilight. What it calls incapacity is not merely weakness. What it calls ignorance is not just confusion (II/1, 105). The relation between what the Bible calls light and darkness, life and death, sin and righteousness, is not a matter of degree (IV/2, 497-98).

Christ's own active *koinonia* with us, in life and in death, precedes our active *koinonia* with him. His prior and total inclusion of us in himself and in his work by grace is precisely what we actively and properly acknowledge when he then dwells in us by faith. Faith does not receive Christ, Barth believes, without

receiving him in the perfection of his saving work, but in receiving him in the perfection of his work, faith enters into living communion with Christ. Faith thus acknowledges him for who he is, shares actively and rejoices in what had previously been shared only passively and objectively, eagerly anticipates the final revelation and impartation of his perfect work, even though it remains hidden here and now apart from faith, and so bears witness to Jesus Christ, the *Christus praesens*. For the *Christus praesens* is none other than the *Christus adventus*, in whom the world has been reconciled to God, and the *Christus futurus*, who will be unveiled at the end of all things for what he now is, always has been, and ever shall be — the ruler of all (*pantokrator*).

To sum up: Barth reconceives the presence of Christ to faith by seeing it as determined by two primary factors — *participatio Christi* and *perfectio Christi*. *Participatio Christi* means our prior inclusion in Christ by grace (objective *koinonia*) as then provisionally fulfilled by our subsequent inclusion by faith (active *koinonia*). *Perfectio Christi*, on the other hand, means the intrinsic and unsurpassable perfection of Christ's one reconciling work as it presents itself to faith in and with the *Christus praesens*. Our *participatio Christi*, in either form, is always determined by the *perfectio Christi* — the perfection of his work in his person, and the perfection of his person in his work, in whose enactment we were included by the election of grace. Precisely because the *Christus praesens* always means the presence of the *perfectio Christi* in whom our *participatio* has been secured graciously in advance, Barth can have Calvin's *simul* without his equivocations with respect to justification and sanctification. For our justification and sanctification are simultaneously present in Christ to faith as the two forms of Christ's one reconciling work. Those forms took place simultaneously in his one life history with equal perfection (and not the one less than the other, nor either by means of any contributing "inferior causality" from us). As it turns out, however, it is this same reconception of Christ's presence that also forms the basis which gives Barth Luther's *simul* as well.

### The Third Move: Reconsidering the Meaning of Sanctification

Sanctification takes place, for Barth, at two levels — in Christ and in us. In Christ, as we have seen, our sanctification has taken place perfectly, once for all. At the existential level (*n nobis*), as we have also seen, our relation to this perfect sanctification is one of acknowledgement, reception, participation, anticipation and proclamation. From the standpoint of the previous tradition, the pressing question will focus especially on the question of reception. What can it possibly mean to receive sanctification, if not to receive it by degrees? Barth's answer to this question is striking, and takes the same form as Luther's. It means to receive sanctification not more and more, by a process of gradual growth, but again and again, continually from without, and ever anew. It means to receive it by the perpetual inbreaking of grace to faith.

The sanctification that is ours in Christ (by objective *koinonia*), Barth maintains, comes as such to those who receive Christ by faith (by active *koinonia*),

even though those who receive Christ by faith remain sinners in themselves, not partially but categorically (*totus*). Like our objective participation, our active participation in sanctification is also totally the work of God. The holiness of the community that results from the sanctifying action of Christ is, Barth states, something that comes to it “not as an inherent quality but as the character he will give it in the fulfillment of this action” (IV/2, 512). Sanctification is thus a christocentric and eschatological event. It does not come by degrees, but it does come continually and provisionally here and now as what it will one day be openly and definitively — the liberation of the sinner from bondage to both sin and death. Sanctification exalts the sinner from bondage to freedom, and from death to life, as these have already occurred by way of objective *koinonia* in Christ. For as the exalted Son of man, Christ himself *is* our sanctification, and the sanctification that has taken place in him is ours continually by grace through faith (IV/2, 514). Through faith, through our active participation in Christ, it is ours, and so becomes ours ever anew. The sanctification that confronts us and includes us as Christ’s perfect work (*opus perfectus*) also comes to us from him again and again as the perpetual operation of grace in our lives (*operatione perpetua*).

Sanctification does not impart a new, non-sinful nature within us. Whatever regeneration may mean, it does not mean something like the implantation of a seed of holiness in us that grows ever more luxuriantly into good works. It means that even as sinners we are given the freedom to obey God despite our sinfulness (IV/2, 499). It means that a new form of life is given and made possible for the community of faith, and so also for each member within it, not because the community is gradually ceasing to be sinful, but precisely despite its remaining as sinful in and of itself. In the perpetual gift of new freedom, the community actually begins to do what it in itself it cannot do. It adopts new attitudes and practices that separate it from the surrounding culture. It breaks with the “irresistible and uncontested dominion” of various historical, cultural and spiritual forces (IV/2, 546). Bondage to material possessions, to social status, to reliance on coercion and force, to tribalism, nationalism and narrow family interests, to the self-justifications of religious piety — in relation to such concrete but elusive and life-sapping forces as these sanctification means freedom (IV/2, 546-53). This freedom is possible for those who in themselves remain sinners only as it is actually given, but by the grace of Christ it does not fail to be given, continually, again and again.

What Barth says about sanctification at the level of existential appropriation thus parallels very closely what Luther says about the existential appropriation of justification (or at least Luther’s dominant and most distinctive note). Barth states explicitly that he intends to construct his doctrine of sanctification in “direct analogy” to the doctrine of justification. He writes:

How much false teaching, and how many practical mistakes, would have been avoided in this matter of sanctification if in direct analogy to justification we had been bold or modest enough to give precedence and all glory

to the Holy One and not to the saints, . . . to the royal man Jesus, as the only One who is holy, but in whom the sanctification of all the saints is reality. (IV/2, 515)

On this basis Barth makes Luther's *simul* his own. "Luther's *simul (totus) iustus, simul (totus) peccator*," writes Barth, "has . . . to be applied strictly to sanctification and therefore conversion if we are to see deeply into what is denoted by these terms, and to understand them with the necessary seriousness" (IV/2, 572). Barth grants that this point is hard to grasp.

It is certainly hard to grasp that the same human being stands under two total determinations which are not merely opposed but mutually exclusive; that the same human being, in the *simul* of today, is both the old man of yesterday and the new man of tomorrow, the captive of yesterday and the free man of tomorrow, the slothful recumbent of yesterday and the erect man of tomorrow. (IV/2, 572)

It may seem much better to say that the believer is still partially old and already partially new. Nonetheless, we are badly advised, Barth states, if we abandon the *totus/totus* relation for a *partim/partim*, "because we fear the severity of the antithesis" (IV/2, 572). For from the perspective of a properly christocentric eschatology of participation, descriptive adequacy requires us to say that "the new human being is the whole human being; and so too is the old" (IV/2, 572). In a striking parallel to Luther, which leaves nothing to be desired in showing how thoroughly Barth assimilates Luther's *simul* into his doctrine of sanctification, Barth describes the believer's situation as nothing less than "*simul peccator et sanctus*" (IV/2, 575).

What sanctification under the sign of Luther's *simul* means in practice, Barth maintains, is attempting neither too little nor too much. On the one hand, "there is order and sequence in this *simul*. There is direction — the movement to a goal" (IV/2, 573). Sin persists in the life of faith, but by the perpetual operation of grace sin nonetheless has no dominion (cf. Rom. 6:14). In our conversion God frees us from sin's dominion once for all, and then continually again and again. The new form of life is possible as it is made actual. On the other hand, humility is still very much the order of the day. Sanctification is not the final state of redemption, but only its provisional anticipation. "Let us be honest," says Barth. ". . . What are we with our little conversion, our little repentance and reviving, our little ending and new beginning, our changed lives?" (IV/2, 582). How can we possibly apply the great categories of the New Testament directly to ourselves? How can we possibly say of ourselves that we have passed from death to life, from darkness to light, that our old humanity has died and that the new is risen from the dead? We cannot say these things of ourselves directly, Barth suggests, but only indirectly. We can say them because of who we are in him, because of our sanctification "as fulfilled and effectively realized in him" (IV/2, 583). We can say them because we have been included in his work by grace and actively partake of it by faith. For that reason, and

despite the sin in us that remains, "we are borne by the great movement by which he has fulfilled" (IV/2, 584).

To sum up: For Barth as for Luther, our *participatio Christi* is fully bound up with the *perfectio Christi*, on the one hand, and the *imperfectio peccati*, on the other. Barth applies this grammar to sanctification in a way that clearly departs from Calvin and echoes Luther, but in the end is distinctively his own. Because by definition sin and sanctity are mutually exclusive, and because even after baptism we still remain sinners in ourselves, we are sanctified not by the gradual growth of Christ into us, or of us into Christ, as Calvin supposed, but by the perpetual operation of grace in the life of faith, which breaks the dominion of sin. This perpetual operation is rooted in our active participation in Christ, who, in the strict and proper sense, is and remains our sanctification in himself. Just as sin's guilt was removed by the humiliation of the Son of God for our justification by the gift of our participation in his righteousness, so sin's bondage was removed by the exaltation of the Son of man by the gift of our participation in his new and unending life in communion with God. In either case the pattern is the same. Christ has included us in himself, in his person and work, as whole persons by grace. This inclusion reaches its fulfillment when we are moved to participate in it actively, first provisionally by faith, and then finally in the great consummation by sight.

### Conclusion

When Barth shifted his focus from Calvin's emphasis on the gradual to Luther's emphasis on the perpetual, he incurred certain losses. Calvin had seen the gradual operation of grace more clearly than the perpetual, and Luther had elevated the perpetual operation of grace over the gradual. But both Reformation theologians retained a definite place for the gradual in a way that Barth simply did not. Von Balthasar may or may not be correct to suggest that the "real and vibrant" history of humanity with God is to be sought at the existential level or directly in the life of faith. Barth would have disputed that aspect of Von Balthasar's point. He would have countered that the real and vibrant history Von Balthasar is seeking took place for our sakes in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, unlike both Calvin and Luther, Barth clearly devotes little attention to the possibility of growth and progress in the Christian life. It is important to see that Barth does not eliminate this possibility entirely. "To live a holy life," he wrote, "is to be raised and driven with increasing definiteness from the center of this revealed truth, and therefore to live in conversion with growing sincerity, depth and precision" (IV/2, 566). What is striking, however, is how seldom such statements appear in his dogmatics, and how underdeveloped they remain. Barth left a large logical space at this point that remains to be more adequately filled.

At the existential level Luther sees grace confronting faith in three ways: once for all, again and again, and more and more — in that diminishing order of significance. In Calvin (who also accepts the once-for-all), the again-and-again

aspect recedes from prominence in favor of a strong emphasis on the more-and-more. By contrast, in Barth (for whom the once-for-all is also strong), the retrieval of *simul iustus et peccator* entailed a corresponding re-emphasis on the again-and-again aspect so characteristic of Luther, while the more-and-more aspect in Calvin greatly recedes from view. For ecumenical theology, it is Luther's overall scheme that would seem to hold the most promise — not only for integrating the countervailing emphases of Calvin and Barth, but also for doing greater justice to the gradualism of non-Reformation soteriologies (e.g., as in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy) than the unsettled questions of the Reformation managed ever to do, and that still remain urgent after Barth.