

Justification as Death and Gift

by VÍTOR WESTHELLE

The “article” of justification is both quite simple and at the same time highly complicated. It is as simple as Christ saying, “Stay close to me, I am your rock and castle.” And it is more complicated than a learned dogmatics of several volumes.¹

These words by Klaus Schwarzwallner in the Foreword to a comprehensive study of the role of justification in major contemporary theologians say it all. In other words, justification is as simple as receiving a gift out of the sheer generosity of the giver, but as complex as the phenomenon of a gift is in its workings and operations.² Can we really evade the inescapable logic of the economic principle of *do ut des*, I give so that you give (in return)? The complexity of it is that the simplicity of purely receiving a gift cannot even be *expressed* if not in the very denial of what it is supposed to entail, which is: pure receptivity. In the moment one even tries to acknowledge the gift one is already destroying it, because it then enters into an economy of reciprocity. Jacques Derrida phrased it sharply: “If the gift appears or signifies itself, if it exists or if it is presented *as gift*, as what it is, then it is not, it annuls itself. Let us go to the limit: The truth of the gift (. . .) suffices to annul the gift.”³ Yet justification is about an “exchange” (and a happy one at that) which is radically one-sided, all for nothing, nothing for all. But how can this nothing be maintained as an element in the exchange? It would mean the cessation of all barter, even the attempt to acknowledge it. Even a discourse about it is in itself a contravention of what it stands for. In other words, can there be an explanation, a “justification,” offered as an “exchange” for the justifying gift? Nothing could be more paradoxical or aporetic. How are we actively to present that which is given without annulling the gift and inserting it into an economic transaction? How can a gift not produce a debt by which it is annulled?

How can we understand this incongruity? An analogy that best describes this predicament is the attempt to describe leisure or

playfulness. Such an enterprise is no play and no leisure. In other words, the discourse and practice of playfulness becomes a self-contradiction in the moment it becomes a serious business. The discourse of describing playfulness or the practice of playing for a prize engages in the very negation of leisure itself; it becomes a negotiation: *nec-otium*, as the Latin etymology of negotiation has it, is the very denial (*nec-*) of leisure (*otium*). Purposeless playfulness itself eventually calls for toil, in competition and in the commercialization of sports, and thus it enters the commercial cycle that rule the industry of entertainment. What might be an enjoyable leisure time for those entertained is toil for the athletes and actors producing it. Even for the individual who does engage in play for fun, a certain amount of mental and physical deftness is required. Leisure itself is often not an end in itself, but a means to restore mind and body from fatigue, for the sake of returning afresh and rejuvenated for the work at hand. This is then the core of the conundrum: leisure (*otium*) requires its opposite (*nec-otium*); playfulness needs a body as a playground. The same with the gift of grace which paradoxically is costly in order to be a gift; the body that plays toils. The pure gift, the unconditional gift, the consummate leisure, would be death itself,⁴ as any playfulness is always a rendezvous of a lively body with death, because in aiming at respite it courts radical rest; it dates death.

The Gift of Death

Only a god in mythical or philosophical impassibility can be otiose, radically idle, a god without creation, without passion. In his reflections on the “end of philosophy,” the Russian immigrant Alexander Kojève with poignant wit remarked thus:

It is true that philosophical discourse, like history, is closed. That idea irritates. That is perhaps why the sages – those who succeed the philosophers of whom Hegel was the first – are so rare, not to say inexistent. It is true that you may not adhere to wisdom unless you are able to believe in your divinity. Well, people with a healthy spirit are very rare. To be divine – what does that mean? It might be stoic wisdom or even play. Who plays? The gods – they do not need to react, therefore they play. They are the do-nothing gods. I am a do-nothing. Yes, I am a do-nothing and I like to play. like at this moment, for example.⁵

Kojève's droll description sets the terms of the paradox: if justification has to be taken as the pure gift, it would have to be as in radical playfulness, but this implies "nothingness" as the only possibility. And this is death itself. And any attempt at describing or comprehending it discursively is already its very betrayal. So the option for engaging the "doctrine" of justification seems to be an unqualified apophatic, silent withdrawal from discourse itself; *kataphasis*, discourse, destroys the gift. Yet the very philosopher who announced the end of philosophy continued to philosophize and likely got something in return for the interview he gave, books he published or seminars he held. Kojève played with the gift, but the play was no different than the one of Sisyphus, who, by fooling the gods, imprisoned Death. In the version that Homer presents of the myth, Pluto, seeing the underworld, his domain, deserted, frees Death who, in turn, seizes Sisyphus and condemns him to the underworld to carry a rock uphill that rolls back in an unceasing toil. Sisyphus has no rest because he was not put to rest. In the Greek myth, before being seized by Death, Sisyphus made his wife promise not to bury him, but to leave his body in public display. As long as the body is present no pure gift can be realized. Albert Camus, in his rendition of this myth concludes with this playful remark: "Sisyphus teaches a higher fidelity that denied the gods and carries rocks. . . . We must imagine Sisyphus happy."⁶ The myth is about the denial of gift in a sort of celebration of its incoming triumph. Death, the radical idleness, is the objective of play, but also its end and termination. Therefore we have the dodging of it in its luring proximity. A classic example is when Goethe's Faust, at the approach of death, brought to him by Mephistopheles, attempts one last bargain: "*Verweile doch, du bist so schön!*" ("Stay a while, you are so beautiful!")⁷

The language of justification by which the church stands or falls entails such paradox. This is the reason for Luther's seemingly hyperbolic language in which justification can only be received in *vita passiva*, "destroying," annihilating, "killing" all the presumptuousness of the *vita activa*, which does not bring about any hope.⁸ And this hope is a "hoping against hope," as Paul described the justifying faith of Abraham in Romans 4—not least because it required the killing of Isaac, the only hope he had of inheriting the promise of

being a great nation. For his faith, Abraham surrendered perennial survival through his descendants by sacrificing the promise. And that “was reckoned to him as righteousness” (Rom 4:3).

Justification kills, and this is the only unconditional act of ultimate mercy; it kills the presumptuous self of the *vita activa*, kills the modes by which one pretends to create an enduring presence that is nothing but the lifeless leftovers of a gift not received, but somehow transacted, negotiated. Yet, even for that to be asserted, life *counts*; life calculates, negotiates, and hustles. In the case of Abraham, an ironic turn, the sacrifice was saved, Isaac lived on. In any case, life plays and frolics, and in this playing the paradox is embraced and the toiling body is engaged. Justification thus expresses itself in finitude and frailty, with its immeasurable dimensions which only a joyful heart can indeed have a glimpse of, and experience.⁹

The Shabbat

In his exposition of the creation story in the Genesis Lectures,¹⁰ Luther offers us a frame for engaging this conundrum. Contrary to the do-nothing gods of Kojève, the God of the biblical narrative is engaged, not impassible. This God is the “author” of the world or the “poet”/maker of heaven and earth (*poiētēn ouranou kai gēs*) as the Nicene Creed has it in the original Greek.¹¹ It is only after the work of creation that God rests and in this resting the Shabbat is instituted.

However, while God rested at the end of creative labor, humans by virtue of having just been created, begin their existence on the Shabbat. On their first day they join God in resting. Humans do not have a pre-existence of toil from which they have to rest. They begin their existence by doing nothing. And this is the experience of pure reception; this is the *vita passiva* that precedes the *vita activa*. And if this rest was a radical rest, the pathos of passivity was death itself. Humans begin their existence in dying.

This Shabbat was for Luther a day not of creation but of instituting the first estate, the *ecclesia*, the state of communion of humans among themselves and with their God; and this is the church radically universal, for it is the church of Adam and all his children. But calling it “church” is inappropriate here, because nothing of human doing

and making structured or shaped this, not even were sacraments administered nor a sermon delivered for proclamation; it was pure event instituted by God for nothing: an apophatic church! For Luther, that church was the tree God planted in Paradise, which was “Adam’s church, altar and pulpit.”¹² So there was nothing of human doing, nothing instituted by *ius humanum* when the “church” God instituted happened.

On May 12 of 1530, when Melanchthon was at the imperial diet in Augsburg presenting the confession of the reformers, Luther counseled him in a letter with this elegy of leisure: “God is indeed served by leisure [*otio*]. There is nothing greater than pure leisure. This is why he wanted the Shabbat to be so rigidly observed.”¹³ In the beginning of biblical narrative, human experience in the world starts in a radical otiosity. This means that it starts by dying and it is in that death that God’s work is finally accomplished and God also becomes otiose.¹⁴

This is the first of the only two times in the narrative of the scriptures that radical leisure and emptiness is registered with such sharp resolution. The other will be on the Friday afternoon, after the work of redemption had been done and God dies on a cross to be mourned in a Shabbat of idle lament, prayer, and rest. That Friday God totally rests and no activity is left; creation is set free from law, work, and obligation because it dies with God, and comes to rest in God. This is what justification means: to be at rest with and in God when God is definitely at rest. This is how the “work” of redemption is consummated and why we die with Christ, in God laying in a tomb as Paul so emphatically formulated it: “Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death” (Rom 6:4). Luther’s affirmation of Christ’s third mode of presence by which he is “as deep in and as near to all created things as God is in them”¹⁵ is an attestation of the paradoxical nature of justification. It is a radical confirmation of the fact that the God who brings us and all that exists into life does it by joining us, by being present there where we cannot but receive the gift without even a gesture of returning it, without even pretending any presence, which means death. To express it in the words of Luther’s commentary on the Magnificat, “God dwells in the darkness of faith, where no light is.”¹⁶

Justification can be therefore conceived only as an eschatological event; it meets us at the “end.” And the end is death itself and meets us at the beginning, at the end and in the very middle of our existence, wherever and whenever there is an impossibility of pretending a presence. This is the promise of the Shabbat.

When Søren Kierkegaard purports that “the work of love in remembering one who is dead is a work of the most unselfish love,” because it “eliminates every possibility of repayment,”¹⁷ he is implying also its reverse. The gift the dead receive in remembrance is a pure gift, because it cannot be repaid. This is the deeper meaning of the Shabbat, both in the first account of creation in Genesis and at the end of the gospels. God is at rest both times, following the work of creation and the work of redemption. Both are symmetrically presented within the same template. The Book of Genesis only tells us that God rested (2:2-3), closing the “Priestly” account of creation. From the Gospels we know almost as little. Luke cryptically refers to the practice of the women after having witnessed the body of the beloved being laid to rest: “on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment” (23:56b).¹⁸ So, as much as the old Adam starts in pure rest, the first day of his existence, the new Adam starts the first day as the eternal Christ with and for us resting in a tomb. That is the work of justification that God does to us and to God’s own self; it is to declare that all has been accomplished. If in Genesis we find that “God rested . . . from all the work that he had done” (Gen 2:2), in the gospel it is proclaimed in a single word, *tetelestai*, “It is finished” (Jn 19:30). Justification is at the end, and at the very beginning of life itself. And because it is the end, it is also the beginning, and vice-versa. But this “end-beginning” meets us in the middle of our existence in the dark depth of faith. Faith can say what reason cannot grasp: death is at the beginning as much as creation is at the end, and through and in the two God abides.

The Wrappings of the Gift in Law and Work

The template that is symmetrically reproduced in the beginning of Genesis and at the end of the Gospels has the Shabbat at the center. In Genesis it is between God’s new creation (*ex nihilo*) and

human activity, which Luther called human cooperation (*cooperatio*) with God.¹⁹ In the Gospels it is between human activity of the truly human God and new creation (resurrection²⁰). This Shabbat in which we rest with God is the point of contact between the heavenly and the earthly in reverse order. This is the experience of immediacy, that which happens without mediation, without discourse and negotiation. Yet, to express this, even if in a single word (as in *tetelestai*), already implies mediation. It is to make present something that is absent, to re-present something. The present, the gift, is concealed by its wrappings, the body needs protection (Gen 3:21), and the tomb is sealed (Mt 27:66). This wrapping, this clothing, are masks,²¹ which display existence (from *ex-sistere*, to stand outside). This is what we call life, which is an artful disguise of the gift. Yet this disguise entails promises, as a wrapping of a present entails the gift hidden by it.

In the meantime there is mediation, life lingers and is a play, a rendezvous with justification, a dodging of death in its presence. Justification is already accomplished, but we are not used to it, playing around it, trying to show and pretend that we have not been put to death, or feign that we are not dead yet. Thus we live in this pretense of being present when we are not, and we dodge the consummate fact by this posturing of presence. We play this game in trying to get used to what already is the case. In other words, we *re-present* ourselves, by regulating our existence through the law, and by striving presence through work. It is pretense, or pretending presence.

However, the efforts to pretend presence, through law and work, entail two promises in and through which we are invited and inducted by God into the playground of creation. Our freedom can lead us to live either a life of acceptance of the gift or one of denial of it as we pretend to construe a life that lasts. This is why the Abraham story is so central to the monotheistic faiths. He forfeited the pretense of being present, *re-presented*, by his lineage, and that was reckoned to him as righteousness. He accepted the consequences of the play, surrendering the gain.

What has been said so far can easily be misconstrued as flirting with Gnosticism if it were not the case that this earthly existence is God's creation—the mask, the clothing, and the wrapping of God's

own doing. Irenaeus' response to the Gnostics lies at the core of creation theology: "The glory of God is a living human being."²² But the genitive in the expression is double. The human being, fully alive, not only is God's glory but also manifests who God is. And this can only be apprehended indirectly, in the flesh, in the masks, in the transience of life. What was described as the experience (*ex-pati*, out of pure receptivity) of justification, that which is immediate, can only be apprehended in its hidden and masked form, for no one can see the glory of God and live (Ex 33:17-23²³). That is, no one can be justified except by dying. But life shall be lived to render glory to whom glory is due, not only because we wait for its manifestation, but also because we have been and are being born out of its depth. Meanwhile, whilst life endures in this playground of God's glory we live by the promise, in the double sense of *pro-mitto*: that from which we have been ousted and that to which we are being sent.

Playground of Promises

The promises by which we live are housed in the orders of creation instituted by God. To explain this Luther uses medieval categories that operate with the Aristotelian distinction between human production or *poiesis* and human communicative interaction or *praxis*. *Poiesis* pertains to the human metabolic relation to nature (including human nature, as in sexuality and reproduction), and belongs to the sphere called the household or economy (*oeconomia*). *Praxis* pertains to inter-subjective relations through which social relations are construed and regulated, and belongs to the sphere of political and civil government and legal regulations (*politia*).²⁴

These two are the playgrounds of God to which we are invited to exercise in freedom the glorifying of the one to whom all glory is due. This is the point about sanctification: amusing ourselves in the playgrounds of God in the firm conviction that all is well, that we are sanctified and redeemed. However, such play turns into a dead-serious game of our own pretense (original sin originating) in which the economy of the game and the rules that legislate it become ends in themselves. The work demanded by the game, or by its regulations, turns the play into a ploy and the playing becomes a means to

achieve it. The play is spoiled when competition ensues and success at the expense of others. When work toils its way to inequality and oppression, when law is used to alienate and discriminate, playfulness ends, and justification is forgotten. Injustice, prejudice, and oppression are not the results of the failure of our efforts to *achieve* justice and live fairly with one another. They happen precisely because we strive so much in being the best at the game, and thus destroying the gift that is freely given, forgetting where we come from and denying that to which we are destined. This is the reason why Luther in shocking candor calls “good works” mortal sins, the end of playfulness. But we need to examine this further, lest we condemn the world, the playground of God, in a Manichean or Gnostic fashion.

At work in these two spheres of promise where we are invited to re-present ourselves playfully, the *oeconomia* and the *politia*, are different human drives or wills. One is impelled by *desire*, while the other is ruled by *interest*. Guided by these, human beings come to re-present themselves, children are born, the land is cultivated, artifacts are produced, codes for behavior are devised, laws are made, theological books are written, constitutions are drawn, habits and mores are acquired, and so forth. Patterns for living are created and guided by the twin pairings of desire and labor at the home front, the *oeconomia*, on the one hand, and by interest and human interaction in the civil or political arena, on the other. Let us briefly examine these two mechanisms, always aware that they are conspicuously embedded in each other, creating a myriad of hybrid forms of representation. However, their distinction is important for analytical reasons even as they overlap, which makes the recognition of the distinction at times elusive. But losing awareness of the distinction is part and parcel of the reason why we forget that we are not whole in our existence, but pretend to be; we forget that it is in the depth of death that we are whole and justified.

Desire and Interest

In the *oeconomia* we represent ourselves; we posit reality that we shape, reshape, and consume, and in the process we divest ourselves in it. However, what we want is always immediate satisfaction, a

fullness of the self unencumbered by the claim of otherness. And this is the role and lure of *desire*.

Hegel (who incidentally regarded himself a Lutheran and who would “ever remain as such”²⁵) in his celebrated elucidation of the relation of “Lordship and Bondage” in his *Phenomenology*, avidly describes the role of desire and its relationship to labor.

Desire (*Begierde*) has reserved to itself the pure negating of the object and thereby its unalloyed feeling of self. But that is the reason why this satisfaction is itself only a fleeting one, for it lacks the side of objectivity and permanence. Work (*Arbeit*), on the other hand, is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off, in other words, work forms and shapes the thing.²⁶

This relationship between desire and labor is what Luther’s use of *oekonomia* refers to (not in the modern sense of “economy,” but in the sense of what is “domestic,” the playground of the *dominus*, the lord, but also the primary place where labor was performed and endured). This is one dimension through which we pretend presence, where work and labor are in a tense relation with desire for immediate enjoyment; this describes a dialectic between sacrifice and satisfaction. Labor is triggered by desire, and sacrifice is endured by the expectation and deferment of enjoyment.

Desire is one way of negotiating justification. Desire consumes, enjoys that which it kills. It is the logic of the anthropophagic lure, the yearning to have the other for oneself. And this can encompass a loving relationship dominated by erotic passion or by annihilation. The words of God to Cain insightfully suggest it: “Desire is for you, but you must master it” (Gen 4:7).

In the *politia*, the civil dimension of cultural formation, cultural representation unfolds a different dynamic. In Luther’s reading of Genesis the political play is introduced thus: Cain is a wanderer, and in his wandering he becomes the first builder of a city. He was not murdered (as wanderers often were) because the first piece of “written” legislation for life together that the Bible presents us with, the first policy for *politia*, was engraved on Cain’s forehead. “And the Lord put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him” (Gen 4:15). Reason that grounds legislation, curbs the crude and instinctive interest of annihilating the other, as long as

reason plays. Otherwise, *homo homini lupus* (“man is wolf to man”), as the old Romans (after Plautus) decried it. The use of reason for the sake of equity (*Billigkeit*) was Luther’s criteria for a fair government, as much as generosity for the sake of justice was for the household. However, interest always trumps equity. Again I return to Hegel’s *Phenomenology*. In the section on “Reason” (which closely follows “Lordship and Bondage”), he addresses interest, saying that reason is lured by interest very much in the same way that labor is enticed by desire:

Reason now has, therefore, a universal *interest* [*Interesse*] in the world, because it is certain of its presence in the world, or that the world present to it is rational. It seeks its “other” [*ihr Anderes*], knowing that therein it possesses nothing else but itself [*nichts anderes als sich selbst*]: it seeks only its own infinitude.²⁷

As much as desire triggers labor in the human play of representation, interest performs a similar function. Its negotiation with justification, unlike desire, is not an assumption, but a trade. It does not aim at canceling it but deferring it by careful calculation and projections. If desire is to bring the other into the domain of the self, interest is to regulate it.

Desire is to labor what interest is to reasonable inter-subjective relations. What was incipient already in the Heidelberg Disputation’s parallel use of work and of law, as metonymies for the two spheres of representation, became explicitly elaborated in Luther’s writings from the 1530s onwards, particularly in the Genesis lectures. Neither one of these two dimensions, work represented by the *oeconomia* or law by the *politia*, can bring us to justification. In fact they are ways by which we dodge the awareness of its immediacy, because they are infested by desire and interest, respectively. Nevertheless, both spheres, along with *ecclesia*, were divinely instituted so that labor may hold desire in check, and reason will curb interest’s infinite ambitions. However, there is also no frolicking and divinely sanctioned amusement in the playgrounds of God and for God’s glory without the endowed human drives of desire and interest.

Desire and interest, although they are God-given drives, are also conduits through which sin manifests itself. While desire through its

pretense of suspending death consumes justification, interest by negotiating with death legislates justification into a well-behaved doctrine among an array of others. These are then two basic manifestations of sin. Desire, in striving for satisfaction, leads to the human labor of producing idols, fetishes of human confection through which death is denied, and justification forgotten. The sacrifice is made in the urge to possess, dominate, and produce a god of our own making and design. Interest, on the other hand, in its striving for gain turns human relationships into a dispute for recognition. It becomes the way in and through which we shape the others in our image, impose our language, and legislate ourselves into immortality. As desire can lead to idolatry, interest steers headlong toward the demonic.²⁸ Idolatry and demonry are the expressions of our incessant attempt at forgetting and denying the reality of justification and thus are the instruments by which we condemn ourselves.

Coming to an Offing

Justification is not a doctrine among others. It is not even a doctrine. It is not a teaching that we engage in our theological endeavors, either in construing systems to ground the church or in devising policies to legislate and administer it. It is the habit of learning, of receiving what has already been given; it is an event grounded in sheer conviction and trust (*fiducia*). But this sheer conviction, its event that is received by us with the unconditional features that correspond to receiving death, takes place in the midst of life itself. The end and the beginning are in the midst of our existence, in the playground we are inducted into. This existence is at the same time the joyful display or expression of this conviction as much as it is also its evasion.

God's creation as it takes place displays and plays with the drives of desire and interest, grounding the conviction of having been made right. What remains is in the left hand of God where desire can be for enjoyment and interest for the welfare of the neighbor. Creation, which is simultaneously from nothing (*ex nihilo*), continuous (*continua*) and consummated (*consummata*), can only be known and

enjoyed because it takes place. And what takes place is a reenactment, a re-presentation of what is pure presence, the present, the gift.

Justification should be addressed as one would in writing an obituary to oneself, saying that it is neither what one wanted or desired, nor what one's interest bargained for, only that a single word would convey, and yet would already be a word too long to account for justification: *tetelestai*, finished.

NOTES

1. In Mark Mattes, *The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), ix-x.
2. See Bo Holm, "Luther's Theology of the Gift," in Niels Henrik Gregersen et al., eds., *The Gift of Grace The Future of Lutheran Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 78-88. Holm gives also a good overview of the subject and its complexity in recent theology, anthropology, and philosophy
3. Jacques Derrida, *Given Time I Counterfeit Money*, Peggy Kamuf, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 26f.
4. This is the daring statement that underscores Jacques Derrida's *The Gift of Death*, David Willis, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
5. Cited by Stanley Rosen, *Hermeneutics as Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 106.
6. Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and other Essays* (New York: Vintage, 1955), 88-91.
7. Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust. Eine Tragodie* (München: DTV, 1972), 335.
8. "Activa sane vita, in qua multi satis temere confidunt, quam intelligent quoque per merita, non producit nec operatur spem, sed presumptionem . . . Ideo addenda est vita passiva, quae mortificet et destruat totam vitam activam . . ." WA 5:165.33-37.
9. See Birgit Stolt, "Luther's Faith of 'the Heart'. Experience, Emotion, and Reason," in Christine Helmer, ed., *The Global Luther A Theologian for Modern Times* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 137-150.
10. See LW, vol 1.
11. The expression is from Oswald Bayer, *Gott als Autor Zu einer poetologischen Theologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).
12. LW 1.95
13. "Deo etiam servitur otio, imo nulla re magis quam otio. Ideo enim sabbatum voluit tam rigide prae caeteris servari" WA Br 5:317 40f. (#1516)
14. But this paradoxical statement of beginning existence in death is curiously as-suaged by Luther himself when he suggests that the human being conceivably "fell on the seventh day," which leads to a curious attenuation of the paradox. If original sin implies disobeying the third commandment then it makes sense that *vita activa* is an inevitable condition of existence. LW 1:81
15. LW 37:223

- 16 LW 21:304.
- 17 Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans Howard and Edna Hong (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 320.
18. The only other reference to that Shabbat we find in Matthew 27:62-66 tells the story of the religious and political leaders working to secure the tomb so that the body would not be stolen and claimed to have been resurrected.
- 19 LW 33:241-45.
20. The affirmation of the *ex nihilo*, both in 2 Maccabees 7:28, where the expression comes from and in St. Paul, occurs in the context of resurrection faith.
- 21 Luther used these three notions, *involuturum* (wrapping), *vestitus* (clothing), and *larva* (mask) to speak about creation in general. See my "Cross, Creation, and Ecology: The Meeting Point Between the Theology of the Cross and Creation Theology in Luther," in *Concern for Creation Voices on the Theology of Creation*, Viggo Mortensen, ed. (Uppsala: Tro & Tanke, 1995). 159-167.
22. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book IV, XX, 7 (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994]), 490
23. Immediately after the quoted passage by Irenaeus, there is a discussion of precisely this text of Exodus, on which Luther also offered insightful commentaries.
24. The church (*ecclesia*) as an empirical institution is an hybrid reality that borrows from the other two for its formation. See Vitor Westhelle, *The Church Event Call and Challenge of a Church Protestant* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 9.
25. G.W.F Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Banden* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971), 18: 94. But see M. Mattes, "Hegel's Lutheran Claim" *Lutheran Quarterly* 14 (2000). 249-279.
26. G WF Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 118; *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), 153f
27. *Phenomenology of Spirit* 145f.; *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 186 (emphasis in the original).
- 28 See my article "Idols and Demons On Discerning the Spirits," *Dialog* 41/1 (2002) 9-15.



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