
Chapter One

Orientation to the topic

I.1. Introduction: Modernity - Postmodernity?

What does postmodern or postmodernity mean? Is it a simple idea of change? Is it the alternation of cultural identity through experiences? Is it an appeal for a different social sensibility in a changed social condition? Whatever stance or meaning, or even uncertainty of its meaning we take,¹ it is clear that the phenomenon is present in the life of most of the societies, communities. The plain fact is that the idea of postmodernity is increasingly influential in Central-Eastern Europe as well, and has become something like a key word for change. It affects everybody. It is present in thinking, acting and evaluating. It concerns not only one part of the society, or a certain understanding of it, but means an overall change. It is not only the change of the circumstances of life which is on the agenda, but also the understanding of the human situation itself, which is a subject of change. This is where the concept of postmodernity plays an increasing role.

Towards the end of the 20th century the Eastern bloc collapsed. This meant and still means a process in which democratic ideas, market economy, and new political attitudes have to be developed. However, after many years of totalitarian rule it seems to be more complicated than one would think. The postmodern idea of life presents itself not only on the level of small communities but touches the life of the society as such. It poses the challenge of evaluating its helpfulness and validity to finding a viable way for Central-Eastern Europe, *specifically for Hungary*, of answering serious questions pertaining to the process of democratization, to the social

¹ The term postmodernity is highly debated. The debate results from the fact that there is no certain definition of what this term should cover. However, some concrete features can be identified. Our interest in this chapter is to identify some of these features.

condition, and the role of Christian churches in forming the public opinion just to mention a few.

As we try to answer these emerging questions and grasp the meaning of postmodernity, it is essential to describe the difference between modernity and postmodernity as those tend to influence the life of the society and of the individual as well. The expression 'modernity' is first used by Hegel in a historical context. As we look back to the 17th century, where modernity starts, it becomes clear that it is as early as at that point where the secular and religious understandings of communal and individual life begin to diverge from each other. This means that crucial religious ideas receive less attention as people try to express their life. At this point the distinction between the secular and the religious, per definitionem, begins to bear influence on common thinking. It is rationality (*ratio*) as such, which interests people more and more, and gains more emphasis in human life and in evaluating the human condition as well. Also, the person who makes himself/herself independent of his/her environment, comes to the fore. However, it does not mean that religious ideas stop making their impact on the life of the society or that of the individual. The rich history of Europe, in the 17-18th centuries, yields ample evidence (for instance the fights for religious freedom in many parts of Central-Eastern Europe). Nevertheless, modernity leads to great developments in many fields of human life. In this process the individual is seen as a shaper of his or her environment, as one who is able to form the world around him/her according to his or her own need and thereby contributing to processes of disintegration of both personal and communal identity. So in modernity there is a constant need on behalf of the individual to form his or her own identity and to take part in forming human conditions in the life of the society.

In our time people have become very skeptical about advocating the inevitability of personal engagement in forming the life of communities. It is precisely because of

this attitude that we just tend to look at modernity with its integrating universal ideas as if it were over, even if our concepts of thinking still bear characteristics of it. The modern (Kant, Hegel) idea of the superiority of rationality according to which the question is not about if there is such a thing as universal truths, but rather how it is possible to have them in common has its influence even today. This can be seen as a critique for present-day thinking in so far as it rejects the idea of reducing human condition to pure egoism. For this reason, it is the critique of postmodernity as well, and this critique is what postmodern thinking does not want to hear. The individual can hardly find his/her place in the life of society. Constantly posing questions to it, the individual becomes even more suspicious about the whole program of modernity by saying, that there is no such a thing as a “common story”. According to Jürgen Habermas this stream already started earlier with Nietzsche’s intention to fundamentally question the modern idea of rationality.²

As a consequence of such new approaches the paradigm of postmodernity developed in the 20th century. This paradigm encourages a way of thinking in which the individual ceases to see it as essential not only to pursue individual happiness but also engage in forming the life of the society. The notion of “no place for me to take part in it besides what pertains to personal life”, becomes the basis of thinking. So it is not the common story but the story of the individual that is fostered. Terms and understandings, which were essential in describing the idea of modernity, turn to be senseless, and by this, the individual loses the sense of the necessity to be engaged in matters of society. In this postmodern view there is no need for universal truths to be part of both the life of the society and the individual. So what turns to be common is the sense of questioning foundations, structures, and the validity of ideas, including religious ideas. This way, postmodernity, by saying that the main point is to find the

² Jürgen Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1988), p.106ff.

reasons for what happens on a personal level and putting any universal ideas under suspicion, describes a way which leads only to local solutions regardless of what the larger context demands. It might even be better to say that countries in Central-Eastern-Europe live basically in what we would call “post-world”. Post-world designates a time in which people feel what they had before is now gone, so that they have to start everything all over again. This is what influences the formation of democratic society in Central-Eastern-Europe.

In the theological investigation which we intend to undertake, we will not only to reflect on this current state of affairs but will try to offer from its own source a relevant approach to current debates. For this reason in the first chapter we will shortly show how postmodernity as an idea is present in our thinking today. In the second chapter we intend to reflect on what postmodern-postmodernity in itself means by giving a wider outlook on its history and its idea. The third chapter will pay special attention to the appearance of postmodern idea in theological thinking. In turning to the appearance of the idea in theology, we will introduce a method that intends to apply elements of postmodern thinking to theology in order to answer questions that arise in theological thinking. In the next chapter we will turn to the doctrine of justification which, we believe, with its emphasis on restoring relationships is a possible source for public theology. By giving a review of the historical development of this doctrine we will look for ideas which would help us to articulate a clear position with regard to the idea of postmodernity. We will do it from a special perspective which helps us in our purpose. It means that we will not treat every detail of the doctrine but will take them into account. In the last chapter our intention is to formulate the public theological relevance of the doctrine of justification for theological thinking, and trying to create a basis of unfolding it.

In elaborating the public relevance of theology our intention is not primarily to defend the basic teaching of the protestant tradition but to articulate what it has to offer from its own source in order to understand human reality.

I feel compelled to share that it is not my intention to appear to be hiding behind the curtain of modernity's intention simply to formulate a stance on some sort of fundamentalism. On the other hand, looking at the doctrine of justification as a source we will try to avoid sticking merely to a false rediscovery of the meaning of tradition. The purpose of this work is not simply to present the only true position theology can take, but to bring into conversation the dubious disagreement of postmodernity over modernity and theology.

I.2. Is it a relevant to talk about postmodernity in our time?

Many would say, that talking about postmodernity in our setting today does not mean anything because we are either too far from being postmodern or we are very postmodern. In the first case we are so much away from experiencing the idea itself that we do not have to think of it; in the second case, we are so close that we do not have to talk about it, only need to experience it. But the question is more complex, many-sided. Both ideas clearly present the unavoidability of facing the questions postmodernity poses since both recognize the phenomena.

Talking about Hungary in terms of postmodernity, we are facing a crisis, even in describing the circumstances. Different arguments are given by those who advocate the relevance of postmodernity, and also by those who are not so convinced about the presence of postmodernity as such. But they all agree that our time of transition started some time ago.

István Bujalos dates it back to 1968. He believes that from this time on universality has been more and more in crisis, which, of course, gives a correct view of our

time today as being postmodern. He believes that our crisis is the crisis of universality which has been the theme of Hungarian writings since 1980s. His main theses is that socialism can be interpreted on an epistemological basis in such a way that for the sake of social justice it implemented the political practice of overall economic planning, which has now collapsed.³ He argues that the idea of socialism has perfectly fitted into the grand narrative of modernity, as a source for universal understanding of the human condition, which is not valid any more. This would mean that our status was conditioned by modernity, so that now the idea of modernity has collapsed. He admits, however, that this does not explain our situation, only enables us to localize the problem. Thus the crisis for Bujalos is the advocacy of universality, so that modernity's end is to be seen as a proof that people do not accept modernity any more. This provides sound basis for irrationalities and contradictions. For him, "universality is the minimum of modernity, and minimum is a moral definition", about which since Kant we know that the question is not if we can dismiss it, but whether or not this conditions our acts. So for him the only way to solve the growing inequality, marked by the boundaries of modernity, is to adhere to communitarianism. Thus for him, to be able to take a stance against postmodernity is to take the line of communitarianism. However, two points in this argument seem to be problematic. The one is that socialism, in Central-Eastern Europe, was not a true interpretation of human condition. It is true that it conditioned human lives through a universal force, but an idea which was false cannot be fitted into the line of modernity's intention. Second, he does not show how communitarianism would prevent a human being from being interpreted in uniformity.

³ Bujalos István, A magyar posztmodernről, in: *Poszt-posztmodern. A kilencvenes évek: Vélemények és filozófiai vizsgálódások korszakváltásunk ügyében*. Válogatta és szerkesztette Pethő Bertalan, (Budapest: Platon, 1997), pp. 520-522. 521.

Post-postmodern, The Nineties: opinions and philosophical investigations concerning our change of era, A Hungarian-language anthology with Theses for a postmodernology, edited by Bertalan Pethő, (Budapest: Platon, 1997)

According to Endre Kiss, there is a Hungarian postmodern.⁴ He even describes those sharp lines which separates Hungarian postmodernity from those of its western appearance. He thinks that while postmodernity in its western form is the definition of a new era grasped by deconstruction, in Hungary it is a way protecting human reality from socialist cultural influence.⁵ In my view, this means that postmodernity comes alive in a vacuum created by totalitarian culture. Kiss sees postmodernity as very alive in three directions: particular individualism, selective consume-orientation, overall antitotalitarianism.

In László Halász opinion, even if we take it as evidence that postmodernity is present in Hungary, the problem is not really postmodernity itself. His main concern is the rather post-communist state of affairs. His idea is that what we experience now in terms of the human condition, is a human, who is overcome by the past. While the postmodern self tells many stories of himself/herself, the post-communist self has only one story, which is always told differently. He believes that the postmodern self can accept many standards, and that the post-communist self thinks there is no need for norms at all, which is manifested in its political representatives.⁶ In my interpretation, this seems to be the articulation of the notion of a losing identity.

With respect to the issue, others would say that there is no reason to talk about postmodernity in Hungary. Ákos Moravánszky explicitly says that there is no such a thing as Hungarian postmodern,⁷ which means that one cannot recognize any specific sign which would refer to the unique character of postmodernity in Hungary as such. According to him, it is all taken over from western culture. It is more a question of cultural identification of a special group. His concern is that the dissolution of the bipolar socialist countries did not bring about improvement, more differentiation.

⁴ Kiss Endre, Válasz a kérdésre, van-e magyar posztmodern? (Answer to the question, is there a hungarian postmodern?), *Ibid.*, pp. 560-562.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 560.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Halász László, pp. 537-538. 538.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Moravánszky Ákos, Kedves Pethő Bertalan! pp. 590-592. 590.

Rather, what happens is that these countries become part of the grand process of globalization as they tend to create the “same culture” all over the world, which definitely will help fragmentation, multi-meaning to grow. So for him postmodernity is alive because it is the only stream which takes a stand against globalization as a counter concept.⁸

Similarly, Áron Kibédi Varga thinks that we cannot talk about Hungarian postmodernity.⁹ Postmodernity, he argues, is an intellectual stance which does not accept that the world is oriented in time. For this reason, postmodernity is a worldview, a sort of behaviour, so that it is not possible to designate a specifically Hungarian one.

The recent reformed theological reflections on postmodernity also strengthen the presence of the idea in common thinking. It was only in the last few years that reformed theological thinking started a dialogue with postmodernity.¹⁰ They all agree that postmodernity cannot be regarded as irrelevant in conditioning common thinking, and find the radicalization of pluralism to be essential. The basic circumstances in which postmodernity appears, is the plurality of society and plurality of religions.

These considerations make a very complex picture of the position which postmodernity takes. Despite the differences they articulate, few remarks should be made:

1. They are all aware of the fact that we are facing not merely a changed climate but a changing climate in Central-Eastern Europe. We can take seriously the consideration that the socialist regime should be understood epistemologically, so we

⁸ Pethő makes the same remark. *Ibid.*, PethőBertalan, *Magyar posztmodern*, p. 471.

⁹ Kibédi Varga Áron, *Posztmodern/magyar posztmodern*, *Ibid.*, pp. 558-559.

¹⁰ Bölcskei Gusztáv, *Hit és értelem új szövetsége a XXI. században* in: *Collegium Doctorum I.1.* pp. 15-29. Németh Dávid, *A posztmodern jelenség teológus szemmel* in: *Református Egyház LVIII.* 7-8. szám pp. 154-159.; Adorjáni Zoltán, *A lekipásztor, mint az Ige szolgálója és közéleti személyiség a posztmodern korban*, in: *Református Szemle*, 99.évf., no. 4. sz. (2006) pp. 374-386; Fodorné Nagy Sarolta, *„Igehirdetés a posztmodern korban – szószéken és katedrán”* in: *Református Szemle*, 99.évf., no. 4. sz. (2006) pp. 387-400. Jakab Sándor, *Az igaz hit megvallása. A Barmeni Hitvallás egyházépítő szerepe a posztmodern korban* in: *Református Szemle*, 99.évf., no. 4. sz. (2006) pp. 410-431.; Borsi Attila, *Új kor! Új paradigma? – Gondolatok a „posztmodern”-ről* in: *Református Egyház LVI.* Évf. 11. sz. pp. 255-257. It will be necessary to investigate János Pásztor’s work in this respect.

can say that our society, culture and church are experiencing a reluctant disappointment in a grand narrative. The lack of employing norms in and for evaluating the human condition strengthens this, which can also be experienced through the political attitudes that of today. This insight is very important for the church and for theology as well, since it leads to three consequences: **a)** Theology should decide if it can be an idea-centered theology (for example: Revelation) or if its topics should take as much meaning as possible; **b)** If theology is to be idea-centered, it should reformulate its central message as it is to describe human reality appropriately; **c)** The church is to envision anew her place in society as to show the relevance of the Christian message in its fullness and in its particularity.

2. Postmodernity is present in any form of life as all areas of intellectual life reflect it (architecture, literature, philosophy, music).

3. Even if postmodernity seems present and influential, it is not easy to show its country-specific marks except for the fact that the whole phenomenon is closely linked to the cultural vacuum which the socialist culture has created. For theology it is the same, since despite its close relation to western theology, it was coerced to express its content in this vacuum, not to mention its public opinion. If we take the phenomenon of postmodernity seriously, that means that theology is still elaborated in this vacuum, so to say it is defending its truth and position instead of articulating its heritage clearly to the public. So the message of theology is seen not as part of pluralism but considered as part of relativism.

4. Postmodernity as the heartbeat of fragmentation does offer a way as opposed to globalization.¹¹ However, along with this, every fragmentation creates a closed system where norms accepted by others do not carry any meaning. As the result of this we need to search for an open system in which commonly accepted un-

¹¹ Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, Public theology and global economy. Ecumenical social thinking between fundamental criticism and reform. in: *Teologiese Tydskrif*, Deel 48. Nommers 1 & 2 Maart & Junie 2007. pp. 8-24.

derstanding carries along meaning for everyone, and which has its purpose set ahead. Postmodernity's interest thus is not preserving the human condition in its tradition but to integrate the self into postmodernity's purpose. Christian theology has a lot to offer in this respect as it articulates a human reality embedded in the openness of Christ's ever relevant saving act.

5. Postmodernity is a very harsh stance against modernity. At some point, as we will see later, it overemphasizes modernity's claim for universality just in order to be able to present its truth over against modernity's achievement.

Chapter Two

Postmodernity: historical approach

II.1. The history

As we are looking for historical data to recall where postmodernity¹² is rooted, the most appropriate starting point is modernity, i.e. Enlightenment. However, it is better to trace it a little further back to the well-known religious understanding of how God cares for the created world as it appears in the doctrine of providence, as David Lyon suggests.¹³ The providential work of God was very important in thinking about the life of the created world. The assertion that God cares for the world, and for all who are in it meant great security against self-centered human striving for self-assurance. This sense of security was important not only in individual life but in communal life as well. It rejects the idea that history was only a set of accidental events. This doctrine does not allow a view which leaves no room for hope in the future. Rather, it makes determinism unacceptable for those who believe in God. It does not simply reject pessimism but provides a secure basis for acting in the life of the world. Even Adam Smith believed that there was no such thing as general licence to do anything we wanted according to our personal interests. He believed that the “invisible hand” played an important role in economic life. This basically meant that history was in the hands of God with all its possibilities and knowledge sprang from understanding God’s work in the world. According to Lyon, this brings about the first definite change in thinking of human possibilities. He argues that:

“...the emphasis on history’s forward movement was easily combined with the conviction that things were generally improving, especially under the impact of early Enlightenment thought. The wrestling of reason from medievalism and tradition prompted many to believe that further and more rapid advance was within human powers to achieve. But by em-

¹² We have to make clear at the beginning what is meant by the term ‘post-modernity. It is the idea that nothing can be known for sure, that there is no certainty in anything whatsoever, because former foundations are seen to be unreliable.

¹³ David Lyon, *Postmodernity* Second Edition, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), p. 7.

phasizing the role of reason and downplaying divine intervention, the seeds were sown for a secular variance of Providence, the idea of Progress.”¹⁴

This means that the role of providence was allocated to reason, so knowledge could be obtained through using reason. From this time on, it is reason which has the power to determine what should happen in the world, serving as the basis of human reality. However firm it is, it appears at this point that if the idea of providence was so easy to “dethrone”, so could it be with reason as well. From the beginning of its predominating role, reason has carried with it the possibility of being substituted by something essential to human endeavour, which seems to be at issue in the case of postmodernity. In Lyon’s account what follows the idea of progress is inevitably nihilism. This seems a rather harsh consequence. It is easy to follow this train of thought because the idea of progress is also considered to be an invention of modernity and in this way it might well be that providence, as part of the religious understanding of world history, turns into the secular idea of progress. But the next step seems to be problematic. To say that the Enlightenment project of reason has become the evaluating factor of the human condition and is simply turning into nihilism seems vague. Lyon gives no detailed account of it whatsoever. But to agree with him is even more difficult, when we take into consideration the categorical imperative of Kant, which points to one possible way of avoiding nihilism. It provides a sound basis in order to avoid ambiguity and ambivalence. This means that Nietzsche’s intention cannot be regarded as where modernity runs. Taking this step would be moving to one of the extremes.

In order to locate and understand Nietzsche’s thought and to be able to follow our discussion of postmodernity, it is necessary to take a short look at modernity. ‘*Cogito ergo sum*’ – spoke René Descartes as he was pleading for certainty and

¹⁴ Lyon thinks that this idea of progress later turned into nihilism. Lyon, *Ibid.*, p. 7. Lyon here refers to Antony Giddens, who thinks that the idea of nihilism was in itself presented in the Enlightenment. Later Lyon explains that when he shows the way from providence to nihilism, nihilism „does not necessarily mean that people believe in nothing” p. 9. See: Antony Giddens, *The Consequence of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p. 48.

searching for a method “that would prove the same for all thinking, rational persons”.¹⁵ The term from which modernity originates appears already in the fifth century to make a distinction between the presence of the Christians and the Roman world that was considered to be “ungodly”.¹⁶ From this time on, the term has referred less to the Christian anticipation of the future than to the social reality which came to birth in the time of the Enlightenment. It was Hegel who first made it clear what the word *modernity* should be defined in order to give clarity in that time’s thought. He was the first who used the term in historical context as we noted above. In the 16th century, when the whole world was changing because of the very influential events: discovery of the “New World”, the revival of humanism and, of course, the reformation period, it was necessary to find an answer to all these changes.¹⁷ Instead of referring to the Christian anticipation of the future that is yet to come, all this starts to point out that the future has begun, so that human beings must be open to it.¹⁸ This is what Hegel identifies as the beginning of the new era.¹⁹ The great overturns, such as humanism of the Renaissance, promote this idea by giving emphasis to human capabilities, which attempt to construct the individual’s free will and insights based on this, so that “the given humanity would he grow fully ‘human’”.²⁰ Human beings become and end in themselves, and the goal of being human is fading away. To be open to the future means that every moment refers to a new possibility of the reason to go *one step further*. This openness indicates that human beings are in correspon-

¹⁵ David Tracy, *Theology and the Many Faces of Postmodernity* in: *Theology Today* Vol. 51. 1994 (April), p. 104.

¹⁶ Barry Smart, ‘Modernity, Postmodernity and the Present’ in Bryan Turner (ed.), *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*, (London and Newbury Park, CA: Sage. 1990), p. 17. Jürgen Habermas, *Egy befejezetlen projektum – a modern kor in: Horror Metaphysicae, A Posztmodern állapot*, (Budapest: Századvég-Gond, 1993), pp. 151-177.153.

¹⁷ Jürgen Moltman refers to the effects of the discovery of the „New World” as very dominant. Jürgen Moltman, *Theologie im Projekt der Moderne*, in: *Evangelische Theologie*, 55 Jg., Heft 5-1995. pp. 402-415.

¹⁸ Habermas refers to R. Koselleck, in Jürgen Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1988), p.14.

¹⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, *A szellem fenomenológiája*, Budapest, 1961., p. 14.

²⁰ Louis Dupre, *The modern idea of culture: its opposition to its classical and Christian origin in: Modernity and Religion*, (London: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1994), p. 1.

dence with their reality carried out by reason, and because of this “sie muß ihre Normativität aus sich selber schöpfen”.²¹ This normative control cannot come from another place than from the human being. Here the idea of subjectivity as the determining factor becomes dominant. In this process it is clear that religion and religious practice also become the issue of subjectivity. Being part of the Christian story is only possible because of the decision of the subject, the ego. So for modern thinking it is the inside which rules over human life and the human condition in the sense that something is only valid so far as it fits into the understanding of human reality seen from this inside description, and religion is not regarded as such because, for many Enlightenment thinkers, religion disappeared as the formative power of life. The “First Cause” does not need to have impact on the individual since he/she has the capacity to create. Objectivity, which had been the category *par excellence* for God, did not help either. Finally, it ended up in defining itself through negative relational statements as it is the case even today.²² To this we usually refer as secularization.²³ According to Béla Pokol this was the most distinctive element of modernity in the

²¹ Jürgen Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*, Ibid., p.16.

²² Louis Dupre, *The modern idea of culture*, Ibid., p. 15. He argues that it is interesting to see that even despite the sometimes harsh stand against religion, it was only in the nineteenth century that theoretical principals such as the anti-theism of scientific positivism appeared.

²³ It is worth considering whether this term can properly express this radical shift. Secularization, on the one hand, can refer to what people have in mind as they argue for the irrelevance of religion in defining human condition. This would be a descriptive approach. On the other hand, it can mean that human beings are not even concerned about dealing with this radical shift in human condition so that he/she has the possibility to choose. This presents a prescriptive understanding of secularization. One example of this would be the way how Reformation explains the radicality of the corruptness of the human condition, thus maintaining the distance between the human and divine realm. But let me refer to one definition of secularism which I find the most appropriate for today: „There is, however, a distinct difference between secular humanism as the defender of humanity, and secularism and scientism, two related ideologies that emerged in the process. While all three are premised on atheism, secularism has replaced God with the self and its own interest, and scientism has replaced God with technology unchecked by moral constraint...Secularism is rampant in contemporary Western society. Driven by individual self-interest, it promotes a life-style that has lost any sense of moral value; an individualism that rides rough shod over the global common good and the interest of others, and a cynicism that has no concern for future generation.” John W. de Gruchy, *Christian Humanism: Reclaiming a Tradition; Affirming an Identity in: Reflections*, CTI, Princeton New Jersey, Spring 2006. Vol 8. pp. 38-65. 42. Barth takes a similar approach arguing that „Secularism is surely reigns where interest in the divine revelation has been lost or bartered away for the interest of man.” in: Karl Barth, *God in Action. Theological Addresses*, (New York: Round Table Press Inc., 1936), p. 15.

last five to six hundred years as religion is set back and the political arena is detached from the individual realm.²⁴

In the historical context it is Nietzsche who follows. In Lyon's account Nietzsche is one of those three (Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Georg Simmel), who anticipated postmodernity.²⁵ The famous idea about the death of God, besides representing anti-theism, confirms that the sound basis on which we could measure what is true and what is false has disappeared. This becomes the "rule of the game", so if someone wants to play the rule must first be accepted.²⁶ The intention present here is the idea that in accepting the "rule of the game", reality may be as totally vague and fluid as it could. This means that employing reason is only for doubting the legitimacy of reason. If this is the case, then nothing is left for human beings except nihilism.²⁷ There is no corresponding reality, so it is time to live without self-deception. Modernity's corresponding reality, such as the categorical imperative, ceases to be unquestionable.²⁸ Relativity becomes permanent even when it is applied to the human condition. This idea is further developed in order for postmodernity to be able to appear.²⁹

²⁴ Béla Pokol, *Posztmodern és modernizáció* in: *Post-postmodern*, *Ibid.*, pp. 606-612. 609.

²⁵ David Lyon, *Postmodernity*. Second Edition, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), p. 11-15.

²⁶ This is what Lyotard thinks is the case with Nietzsche's thought of nihilism.

Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Das postmoderne Wissen: Ein Bericht*, Hrsg. Peter Engelmann, (Graz-Wien: Edition Passagen, 1986), p. 115.

²⁷ Lyon thinks that to Nietzsche's theoretical nihilism there is a practical one as it is well described in Marx's thinking. "...under capitalism people allow the market to organize life, including our inner lives. By equating everything with its market value – commodifying – we end up seeking answers to questions about what is worthwhile, honourable, and even what is real, in the market place." David Lyon, *Postmodernity*. Second Edition. *Ibid.*, p.12. Giddens thinks that despite the differences between Nietzsche and Heidegger, in one respect they are close to each other, namely, they both connect the idea of progress as the rational foundation of knowledge with the idea of modernity. „According to them, this is expressed in the notion of 'overcoming': the formation of new understandings serves to identify what is of value, and what is not, in the culminative stock of knowledge. Each finds it necessary to distance himself from the foundational claims of Enlightenment." See. Antony, Giddens, *The Consequence of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p. 47.

²⁸ We have to reject that claim by agreeing with David Tracy when he insists: "...modern values, however transformed, cannot be rejected by anyone understanding the ethical-political as well as intellectual stakes in modernity's classical drive for intellectual and political-economic emancipation.", David Tracy, *Theology and the Many Faces of Postmodernity* in: *Theology Today* Vol.51. 1994 (April), p. 105. This is what Lyotard denies as opposed to Habermas.

²⁹ Habermas thinks that it is with Nietzsche that postmodernity introduces itself. See: Jürgen Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*, *Ibid.*, pp.104-130.

The chronological outlook leads us further to the 20th century where postmodernity shows up with the necessity and need of age shift. It is in 1959 that the term as such first appears in a literature-critical context. There is some earlier reference to the term, too.³⁰ It is art and literature through which postmodernity was introduced. Postmodernity later appears to be identified with art, architecture, literature, language, sociology and politics, too. Later the idea developed into a concept in the work of Jean-François Lyotard (*La condition postmoderne. Rapport sur le savoir*. Minuit, Paris, 1979) in which postmodernity both as an expression and an idea appears. Lyotard's work involves the whole span of postmodernity. However, he was very much impressed himself by what a great acceptance this term received. He uses the term to describe not a new era but to accent an element within modernity – as Béla Pokol also pays attention to this.³¹

This short overview of historical data shows that in historical terms postmodernity does not have a long history. However, it somehow received more attention in the last decades than the history of it would justify. It is probably because of the idea which is behind the history. For the idea seems to me to be very influential in most regions of the world by now. So the existence of it becomes a real historical fact even if we are to investigate whether this idea is useful, valid and permanent, or whether it is simply temporal even short lived. To be able to assess this, we need to turn our attention to what lies behind the history: the idea itself.

³⁰Pethő lists some earlier reference to the term: in 1870 the program of postmodern painting as the progressive critique of impressionism, the beginning of 1910's Spanish-American postmodernismo, in 1917 Rudolf Pannwitz under the influence of Nietzsche's Übermensch talks about the postmodern human, in 1930's such as Nabakov's *Despair*, in 1945 Joseph Hudnut's writing 'The postmodern House' just to mention a few. For more see: Pethő Bertalan, *A posztmodern (The Postmodern)* (Budapest: Platon, 1996), pp. 25-26. 167-170.

³¹Béla Pokol, *Posztmodern és modernizáció* in: *Poszt-posztmodern*. Ibid., pp. 606-612. 606.

II. 2. The Idea

II.2.1. “The postmodern condition”

Looking back to the historical development one might think that postmodernity can be simplified in a way that it is either the loss of providential thinking or the end of Progress, or even the most expressive form of nihilism. However, neither of these really explains what postmodernity is, even if we find some of these elements in what people usually and at some point in a simplified way call postmodern. For a better understanding of postmodernity we must turn our attention to Lyotard and others.

In his famous book ‘*The postmodern condition*’, Lyotard starts off with the premise that confidence in metanarratives (*grande recits*) has disappeared. This does not mean that there are no discourses with relative validity, but that to take them as the basis for discourses is not legitimate. This, according to him, originates in the improvement of the sciences and at the same time is the prerequisite of that progress.³² He firmly believes that science is in collision with the *grande recit* because the latter can no longer legitimize what science achieves so that it needs to look for its own source of legitimacy. It is not vital dialogues through which legitimacy as a common understanding can be achieved. Metanarratives lose their function of supporting the direction and goal of knowledge, which is concentrated in informational data banks. This way knowledge can be sold, and power is a question of how much information a person possesses. So knowledge and obtaining knowledge as a personal struggle for truth has split.³³ This has its effect in the life of society in a way that society is able to improve only if that information is easily decoded, to which the state as such has no access. It gives rise to a serious question, namely, if the traditional role of the state comes to an end in this way then what is the relationship between knowledge

³² Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Das postmoderne Wissen*, Ibid., pp. 14-15.

³³ Ibid., p. 24.

and power as the key question of state stability.³⁴ If metanarratives do not work any more in this process, then what replaces them as a meaning-constitutive element in the discourse? Lyotard thinks that it all has to do with language as an act of power, which depends on who talks and by what authority he/she does so. It appears already at this point that what he thinks as the substitute of metanarrative is simply a local determinism expressed in language games. He even thinks that social relatedness is intrinsically the question of the nature of language.³⁵ It gives me the blurred idea of atomization of the society in which human beings do not justify themselves in relation to grand narratives, to which modern knowledge strives, but in relation to language games, local needs or even 'personal management'. Universal norms cannot be applied through discourses, because those are only for securing personal positions and in this way 'personal norms'. Truth lies in the process of language games, so it can be very fluid. In this way it is not possible to build on a firm basis in both personal and communal terms. On the other hand, Lyotard's idea is certainly would not be the 'Anything goes' (Paul Feyerabend). Rather, it is the local context which shapes life as it is detached from the grand context. This means that a sort of subnarrative validates human reality.³⁶ For Lyotard even this narrative is valid only if language games, which are, of course not narratives, cannot in themselves legitimate the truth for which they strive.³⁷ In this way it is even more problematic, because local narrative seems to serve only as a means to the legitimacy of the language game however uncertain it may be. So legitimacy really results from the knowledge-language game itself and this creates its narrative. The local narrative appears as if it were the product of this legitimacy which gives authenticity to reality. If the narra-

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 27-28.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 56.

³⁶ It is interesting to listen to Jürgen Moltmann's insight: „Nicht nur Pluralismus der Moderne ist das Problem der Postmoderne, sondern auch die Polarisierung der moderne zur Submoderne." Jürgen Moltmann, *Gott im Projekt der Modernen Welt*, (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser, 1997), p. 15.

³⁷ Lyotard, *Das postmoderne Wissen*, Ibid., p. 88.

tive (this is the problem with the grand narrative) is not the result of language games describing reality it is not valid. In my view this is the reason why Lyotard excludes the possibility of a meta-language³⁸ even if he is so eager to focus on language games.

Lyotard's whole account of postmodernity presents an ongoing suspicion about grand narratives as the true and authentic source of human reality. This results in all the unexpected possibilities of the future. It becomes not the question of understanding itself, but of overcoming reality from which a human being is already detached. In this way human beings must be open to create ideas, to shape the "rule of the game". The purpose is to present an anti-model against the grand narrative in order to make its claim relative or even invalid.³⁹ Even the consensus which results may be neglected. Humans must be sensitive to differences and in this way create "not what we know, but what is unknown".⁴⁰ Briefly: metanarratives, which give legitimacy to the achievement of Modernity, are gone.

II.2.2. Is it an unfinished project of modernity?

The struggle for understanding what postmodernity means continues in Habermas' thought, namely: it has not even arrived yet. For Habermas it is not evident at all that the shift, which those who advocate postmodernity emphasize, has happened. He is convinced that we should not talk about postmodernity since modernity is not even at its end. In his argumentation he starts out from the definition of cultural modernity as it is presented by Hans Robert Jauss on the one hand,⁴¹ and refers to

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 118-122.

³⁹ Foucault formulates it this way: "...I have been seeking to stress that the thread that connects us with Enlightenment is not faithfulness to doctrinal elements, but rather the permanent reactivation of an attitude-that is, of philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era." in: *The Foucault Reader*, (ed.) Paul Rabinow, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 'What is Enlightenment', pp. 32-50. 42.

⁴⁰ Pethő Bertalan, *A posztmodern*, Ibid., p. 64.

⁴¹ Jürgen Habermas, *Egy befejezetlen projektum – a modern kor* in: *Horror Metaphysicae, A Posztmodern állapot*, (Budapest: Századvég-Gond, 1993), pp. 151-177. 153.

Adorno's work on the other. He points out that one of the most distinctive characteristics is that people felt they were modern at every turning point when a new era started. Being modern meant the disposition of being in touch with what had already existed. The real difference is only when the idea of progress starts to operate. At this point it is necessary to seek the roots of modernity in contrast to romanticism in the ideal picture of the Middle Ages. It is essential to preserve the connection with classical ideas. This connection is challenged by the avant-garde as it penetrates to the value centers of every day life and it reveals that modernity only liberates to free self-indulgent feelings so that human being can no longer be goal-conscious, goal-oriented.⁴² In terms of politics it was at the end of the 1970's that people began to turn against the stream of cultural modernity in the form of neoconservatism. Whatever the goal of this change may have been, Habermas thinks that it put the inconvenient burden of making society ready for cultural modernity, even if at some point he does see the connection between the ruin of values and consumerism.⁴³ If Habermas is right, it is not modernity itself causing this problem. It is the way in which modernity is used to implant deeper and deeper into individuals' life the set system of life-long values which result in a consumeristic-based society. So for Habermas the problem with modernity is that it has created a system by which people's environment, the place of every day life, is confined. The system is the one through which people interact with each other. This system, according to Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, is coordinated by money and power.⁴⁴ Modernity should not only be part of how we attain knowledge (as we progress), but it should pervade other spheres of human existence as well. So the problem here is that the idea of modernity

⁴² Ibid., p. 158.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 160.

⁴⁴ Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, „The Church as a Community of Interpretation: Political Theology between Discourse Ethics and Hermeneutical Reconstruction.” Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology, Don S. Browning and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (ed), (New York: Crossroads, 1992), p.68.

does not yet pervade with its ongoing quest for continuity, everyday life, only the field of knowledge. Therefore, the next step can only be to oppose it⁴⁵ by saying that if this is modernity with its democratic intention we prefer not to be part of it. What comes to the fore in this is that it is necessary for tradition and practice to lead towards each other if we do not want to belong to those who fundamentally criticize the project of modernity. For Habermas religion does not play any role in building a democratic society, it is only a discourse through which consensus can be achieved. It is only later that Habermas seems to accept that religion is essential in building and preserving democratic intentions.⁴⁶

Habermas distinguishes between three types of conservatives:⁴⁷ young conservatives as anti-modern, old conservatives as pre-modern and neoconservatives as post-modern. The young modernists take the de-centered subject and break the boundaries of modernity. One of its major representatives is Derrida, whom we will discuss later. The old conservatives do not let themselves be poisoned by cultural modernity, so they rather stick with positions held before modernity. A very significant representative of this position is Alasdair MacIntyre.⁴⁸ Finally, the young conservatives are those who favour the ideas of modernity as long as it transcends its boundaries in order to make technical development possible.

Knowing the position Habermas takes, we have to ask ourselves: is there such a thing as a narrative⁴⁹ for him after all? We would say yes, there is. In this narrative

⁴⁵ This might be seen as one of the most important and urgent concern to deal with in Central-Eastern Europe's democratic development.

⁴⁶ Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, *Geschenkte Freiheit. Von welchen Voraussetzungen lebt der demokratische Staat* in: *Zeitschrift für Evangelische Ethik*, 49. Jg., Heft 4, Oktober bis December 2005. pp. 248-265. 253-254. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm in 'Nurturing Reason. The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State' refers to Michael Welker's harsh critique of Habermas concerning the deficiencies of Habermas' discourse model. See: Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, *Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State*, in: *Teologiese Tydskrif*, Deel 48. Nommers 1 & 2 Maart & Junie 2007. pp. 25-41.

⁴⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *Egy befejezetlen projektum – a modern kor*, *Ibid.*, pp. 175-178.

⁴⁸ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984) He believes, that we need to choose between either nihilism of our age or the idea of virtue as Aristotle referred to it. According to him survival depends on the rediscovery of the meaning of virtue.

⁴⁹ Narrative is understood as a context that conditions human life.

two things belong together: the autonomous individual and the social content of community. So the narrative, which results from this, is the narrative of the heterogeneous community's autonomy that serves the common interest. Thus for Habermas our time is not the time of postmodernity but the time which is still marked by modernity, therefore, metanarratives have their validity in defining the human condition.

II.2.3. Lyotard versus Habermas? What does Postmodernity consist of?

In Lyotard's view Habermas does nothing, but creates another metanarrative by saying that there must be some sort of center to which the autonomous individual can turn. While for Habermas modernity which basically relies on narratives of not simply locally but commonly accepted resolutions is important, for Lyotard the time of such resolutions has already gone. It is interesting to see, however, that Lyotard has the same notion of modernity when he says:

"Wenn dieser Metadiskurs explizit auf diese oder jene große Erzählung zurückgreift wie die Dialektik des Geistes, die Hermeneutik des Sinnes, die Emanzipation des vernünftigen oder arbeitenden Subjekts, so beschließt man, "moderne" jene Wissenschaft zu nennen, die sich auf ihn bezieht, um sich zu legitimieren"⁵⁰

But the result is surely the opposite. What Habermas thinks to be necessary, any sort of theoretical basis is nothing but a metanarrative for Lyotard. On the contrary, an approach which does not take into account such a metanarrative is neoconservative in Habermas' view. This is why Habermas thinks it unavoidable to have some sort of consensus,⁵¹ which, for Lyotard, is not required. Lyotard by giving special attention to distinguish between scientific knowledge and narrative "turns out to be pretty much the traditional positivist contrast between "applying the scientific

⁵⁰ Lyotard, *Das postmoderne Wissen*, Ibid., pp. 13-14.

⁵¹ Lyotard criticises Habermas on that point. See: Lyotard, Ibid., p. 16

method” and “unscientific” political or religious or common-sensual discourse.”⁵²

The problem for Lyotard is why it is necessary for a statement to fulfill a certain condition in order to be true? For him it is impossible for the legitimacy of a certain condition to come from outside. This is why he thinks that the validity of metanarratives has gone. Instead, he places the source of claiming the truth to the realm of what I call ‘subnarratives’ which (in themselves) would claim to interpret themselves rather than being interpreted. Subnarratives are not something to be commonly agreed on, but they have the legitimacy of facilitating. Here again arises a question. If Lyotard is keen on stating that legitimacy of subnarratives comes out of the subnarrative itself, then what would be the context of this work? Or is it simply the case that these exist in a vacuum so it is very accidental what effect they really have? Are not these subnarratives really exclusive? In my view, the point is that these create inequality and are mutually exclusive. To me subnarratives to be able to work should have another narrative, basically a metanarrative. It is because we all have some sort of subnarratives, which must be in contact with that of others. However, in this it necessitates a commonly accepted frame in which these can work properly, otherwise what comes is human beings’ unbridled pursuit of self-interest. In my opinion, this is precisely what Habermas means. Otherwise those subnarratives cannot work and can have no legitimacy, which is the case with the idea of postmodernity. Again, if the work of these subnarratives, without any reference point, is equal in terms of the given message, then there is no reason to live a life in which people would have responsibility for each other. This is why postmodernity is so detached from the reality of the world and why the postmodern human being becomes self-centered and de-centered at same time. Our identity in and by the community cannot be properly secured if we are disconnected. It seems that the role of the postmodern human being is

⁵² Rotry, Richard, Habermas and Lyotard on postmodernity in: Richard J. Bernstein (ed.), *Habermas and Modernity*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), pp. 161-175. 163.

to escape rules, obligations, set practices, and to criticize everything. The intention is to fragment the person and reality by putting under scrutiny everything that was regarded as being part of the metanarrative. At this point the contrast between Lyotard and Habermas becomes very clear. While Lyotard asserts the relevance of partially recognized human reality, Habermas insists on the fact that the human conditions in fragmentation can be traced back to a common principle.⁵³ Postmodernity, even Lyotard, is not giving anything instead. Postmodernity maintains that it is not possible to give any coherence to human history,⁵⁴ to the human condition. If giving coherence to history is not possible through metanarratives, then to give coherence to personal identity is not possible, either. To find our place is just the issue of mere accident, so that every human activity can be labeled as 'more information later'. Family life, community life, political life is to be lived as one's periods of life require. For postmodernity as the end of foundationalism does not provide sound basis for human relations either even if, as in the case of feminism, this will be one starting point in finding a new female identity. It is not important to take a position in a certain case because 'I am only responsible for myself'. Habermas thinks that postmodernity simply wants to say farewell to modernity, which might rebelling against it once more.⁵⁵ What this produces is nothing but "what cannot be thought".⁵⁶

⁵³ Pokol Béla, *Posztmodern és modernizáció* in: *Poszt-posztmodern*. Ibid., pp. 607-608.

⁵⁴ For the differentiation between history and historicity see: Antony Giddens, *The Consequence of modernity*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p. 50. According to him historicity means „the use of knowledge about the past as a means of breaking with it-or at any rate, only sustaining what can be justified in a principled manner.”

⁵⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *Filozófia diskurzusa a moderniségről*. Tizenkét előadás (Budapest: Helikon, 1998), pp. 8-9.

⁵⁶ Pethő thinks the same when he says: „...imagination lags behind the reality of (historical, human made) civilization”/translation is mine/ Pethő Bertalan, *A posztmodern*, Ibid., p. 36. See also pp. 31-36. For Giddens's opinion on Habermas's idea see: Antony Giddens, *Modernism and Postmodernism* in: *Postmodernism: reader*, (ed). Patricia Waugh, (NY: St. Martins Press, 1992), pp. 11-13.

II.2.4. Text - deconstructed⁵⁷

As we have seen, the idea that lies behind postmodernity is to achieve fragmentation at every possible level of life. This is the point of questioning all traditional ways of understanding human reality. The purpose of this is to generate instability. To attain this, there is a certain way of doing it. As I have mentioned, the term postmodernity as such first appears in literature-critical context. It is precisely this to which the method of deconstruction applies since this method appears in the same context as well. The most prominent representative of deconstruction was Jacques Derrida, who used the method as a means of grammatology in contrast to logocentrism.⁵⁸ It is evident what the task of deconstruction was in developing the idea of postmodernity. Deconstruction, as the term suggests, is the method of taking apart a certain text in order to put it together again so as to construct a new text. Thus it presupposes a given text, which the reader when he/she rereads it reconstructs in a new way. At the end, as the result of deconstruction and the reconstruction of the text, a specific new understanding of the original text results. It is in this way of rereading that someone's text can be read. So whenever it comes to deconstruction, it needs to be kept in mind that reading a deconstructed text is not reading the text itself. We only read the way the person who deconstructed the text read it. The understanding of the text becomes very contingent so that a set and an 'absolute' meaning is impossible as one which itself consists of three steps as Pethő presents the method.⁵⁹ The first step is to focus on what the text means in itself, letter by letter. The next is to show those layers which appear to be in contrast to the letter by letter meaning. This is mostly metaphorical. The third is the collision of these two understood as textuality.

⁵⁷ I am aware of the broad question of postmodernity and hermeneutics, postmodern hermeneutics. However, this cannot be fully dealt with here.

⁵⁸Pethő, *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45. Logocentrism means the Logos centered existence in biblical sense, and Logos centered meaning of existence. One good example of Derrida's method is to be found: Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, (Chicago&London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995)

⁵⁹ Pethő, *Ibid.*, p.43.

The intention of this method is clear. The core of it is to raise questions persistently about texts no matter if it is written by us or by others. It can be any text, even religious texts, such as the Bible. The point is to undermine the settled or stable meanings of the text, so that texts reveal themselves to be relative. Even the whole of the language, by which the rereading is done, is uncertain, since words may have all too many meaning. On the one hand, this underlies the idea of ‘no need for metanarratives’. However, if language is uncertain because of the many possible readings of texts, how it is possible that real meaning may be found in the language games and subnarratives as the substitutes for metanarrative. This seems to be contradiction in the idea itself. I think so because by deconstructing a text one does not take into account what sort of reference system language has in which the text is written, and the context in which it is written. In fact, the point is that even the center of the reference system is the reader. This suggests by this that “the ‘authors of texts’ – any cultural artifacts – cannot impose their own meanings on their texts when they are clearly not their sole products.”⁶⁰ But at the same time deconstruction does exactly this to the text. This is why meaning cannot with certainty traced back. Deconstruction provides the narrative of the trace which leads from one trace to another, from a signifier to a signified. This is supposed to be the reality of the text, which is expressed by interpretation, and which does not claim to grasp the full meaning of the text as modernity would.⁶¹ Through deconstruction one can feel liberated from the confining forces of metanarrative. Even in this sense, the various readings of texts remain interpretations, and interpretations are not reality.⁶²

⁶⁰ David Lyon, *Postmodernity*. Second Edition, *Ibid.*, p. 18. Not only Derrida, but Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard as well are suspicious of the fixed meaning of language.

⁶¹ This was precisely the problem of Derrida with logocentric thinking. See: David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1987), p. 57.

⁶² For more see: David Tracy, *Ibid.*, Chapter 3. ‘Radical Plurality: The Question of Language. pp. 47-65.

II.2.5. Feminism and postmodernity

Taking postmodernity as something, which is eager to dismiss a common metanarrative provides a good basis for those who are against any form of superiority or dominance inherent in reality. Here are many examples (oppression of minorities, distinction by race or color etc.), but the most significant with regard to our topic is feminism.

Feminism arises in opposition to male dominance, which was, according to feminist thinkers, present throughout the entire history of humankind. The crucial crisis for feminist thinkers is the patriarchal gender paradigm as it characterizes males to be superior to females by having reason and through this, the power. The same picture, on the other hand, identifies females as inferior who rely on presentiment and at the same time are very passive. So the point of opposing male dominance is accepting women equally human. For feminism the question is not simply how to leave behind this paradigm, but, how to abandon all those presuppositions which include women in all events of life and relate these presuppositions to the idea of male dominance. It is for this reason that feminism has become an integral part of intellectual life, even of theology. Feminism perceived this way wants to find a way to prove that what females offer is not identical with what the males do, so if there is such a thing as intrinsically male values there should be intrinsically female values, too. This is why feminism raises serious questions about development in time, which is so important for modernity. Julia Kristeva puts it this way:

“...female subjectivity poses a problem with respect to a certain conception of time, that of time of planning, as teleology, as linear and prospective development-the time of departure, of transport and arrival, that is, the time of history.”⁶³

It appears clearly in this statement that feminism is not satisfied at all with what the history of Modern Europe means in its intrinsically progressive manner. What

⁶³ Kristeva, Julia, *Women's Time in: Kelly Oliver (ed.) The Portable Kristeva*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 347-369. 353.

Kristeva seems to propose as an aim of feminism, is to break out of this linear temporality and produce its own history. Actually, this seems to be the most distinguishing point of feminism. However, what makes this interesting is that Kristeva, as an existential feminist at least, remains in her thinking within the linear time of history.⁶⁴ In my view it looks as if feminism was and is interested mainly in one thing: it rejects the fact of being part of a grand narrative maintained by power, and wants to break out of the dominance of male superiority. It seems to me, however that precisely because of adhering to autonomy, individuality, equality this breaking out shows a leaning towards the idea of modernity, i.e. towards the relevance of a grand narrative.

Feminist thinking goes further. Soon, the thirst for breaking out of linear time concept was not sufficient in the fight for female equality. This drive stems from the necessity to formulate the ideas of how to break the chains of history. This ended in turning to the specific area of feminine psychology “seeking language for their (women’s) corporeal and intersubjective experiences, which have been silenced by the cultures of the past” – insists Kristeva.⁶⁵ So the number of feminist demands as the signposts of breaking out has grown: it is not only the question of economic, political or professional equality which is not secured by the linear time concept of modernity but gender equality as well. Feminism’s insistence on the specific gender quality of females seems to express how unreliable modernity is for them. Thus feminisms fervent desire is to express the unique character of gender. One of the possible aspects of this unique gender character is parenthood, which means that even if the intention is to eliminate patriarchal, male dominance as a basis for understanding female gender it bears the significance of being related to some grand narrative because it emphasizes the relevance of such gender uniqueness. This suggests to me the idea that feminism, in trying to abandon the linear understanding of history in order

⁶⁴ „...is sought to stake out its time in the linear time of planning and history” Kristeva, *Ibid.*, p. 354.

⁶⁵ Kristeva, *Ibid.*, p. 355.

to be able to answer questions such as above, should return to some source which can provide the legitimacy of feminist demands. I even consider it to be the question of how females can find their place in a linear concept of time,⁶⁶ even if feminist discourse is based on questioning the universal categories of modernity such as reason, justice or autonomous subjectivity.

This is why feminism seems to apply the method of postmodern discourse to define its stance on the idea of modernity. The feminist idea seeks the way in which equality and recognition could be attained. This would create gender identity in itself through the same cultural framework which they call into question. Since the cultural framework, because of its crisis, cannot legitimate feminine identity, the feminist intent is to secure the difference of being feminine in order to obtain legitimacy for feminine uniqueness. In creating a 'sub-context', feminists want to be independent of reference frameworks such as the reference to history, traditional values or even God.⁶⁷ This is in a way, a radical fragmentation, which is one of the most obvious characters of postmodernity. Fragmentation is also a means to create the possibility of continuously changing identity as an attack on modernity's fight for an identity which even if it is not fixed at least has a constant. According to Patricia Waugh this creates a historical connection between Postmodernism and Feminism. She puts it this way:

"Each (postmodernity and feminism) assaults Enlightenment discourses which universalize white, Western, middle-class male experience. Both recognize the need for a new ethics responsive to technological changes and shifts in knowledge and power. Each has offered

⁶⁶ „...It is a protest which consist in demanding the attention be paid to the subjective particularity which an individual represents, *in the social order* (my emphasis), of course, but also and above all in relation to what essentially differentiates that individual, which is the individual's sexual difference." Interview with Elaine Hoffman Baruch on Feminism in the United States and France in: Kelly Oliver (ed.) *The Portable Kristeva*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 369-380. 370. Also: *Luce Irigaray*, who is concerned with the question of woman and language, takes the issue of sexuality as she tries to find the place of woman in communal reality, and as one means to it, she turns to the Eastern religious tradition. See: *Luce Irigaray, Between East and West: from singularity to community*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002)

⁶⁷ Patricia Waugh, *From Modernism, Postmodernism, Feminism: Gender and Autonomy Theory in: Postmodernism: reader*, (ed). Patricia Waugh, (NY: St. Martins Press 1992), pp. 189-204. 190.

critiques of foundationalist thinking: gender is not a consequence of autonomy nor do social institutions so much reflect universal truths as construct historical and provisional ones. Post-modernism too, is 'grounded' in the epistemological problem of grounding itself, of the idea of identity as essential or truth as absolute."⁶⁸

Feminists seem convinced that by creating their own narrative in order to give legitimacy to feminine subjectivity, they will find all that has been lost in the deep darkness of the metanarrative of modernity. In my view it seems to be the case that feminism, by creating its own narrative in order to express its female uniqueness, at the same time leads to tremendous indifference as well, which it originally wanted to eliminate. This practice serves as a possibility for exclusivity which in principle it is against.⁶⁹ In my view, feminism in this process actually defines itself through others by saying that it is necessary to create its own identity by giving legitimacy to female uniqueness and subjectivity and withstand any sort of dominance. This is also a reason for similarity with postmodernity, since being defined through others is essential to both. Since for feminism relationship as such is crucial for having a genuine gender identity, it is in relation to others that this can be achieved. Here the question arises: how to prevent feminism from creating a grand narrative from this attempt.⁷⁰ In my view it is very difficult to keep feminism from turning into a grand narrative because, by being identified through others results in such identity that is linked to a great extent to others. This then cries for a relation by which identity can be expressed. Being relational means being signified and identified through others, and at the same time means the relocation of the subject into another context which enables the identification. The identity then is sought through relations, so identity consists of the idea "being related to". So even if feminist attempts do not turn into a grand narrative, they become at least part of another metanarrative. This way feminism chal-

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 195

⁶⁹ I see it to be the problem with the argument of Judith Butler See: Judith Butler, *Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of Postmodernism* in: Darlene M. Juschka (ed) *Feminism in the Study of Religion: a reader*, (London and New York: Continuum, 2001), pp. 629-647. 634-635. 638.

⁷⁰ Patricia Waugh, *From Modernism, Postmodernism, Feminism*, Ibid., p. 199.

lenges the metanarrative of male dominance and the metanarrative of power through a relational concept. In this way female subjectivity achieves true identity.

Chapter Three

Theology in postmodern context

III.1 Postmodernity and theology

We have seen so far that postmodernity wants to express its opposition to modernity. We have also seen in our discussion of deconstruction and feminism that postmodernity basically wants either to deconstruct a text and give emphasis to the linguistic meaning of the text, or opposes the linear understanding of history and operates with the more valid reality of experience through which a certain development can be achieved. The latter can be considered as constructive postmodernism. But both of these attempts appear in relation to the idea of modernity. Postmodernity, if there is such a thing, is a result of a position taken in relation to modernity. In terms of the development in theology, it is in the 1700s when at same time with the Enlightenment theology takes a great step forward. The agenda of western theological thinking reaches places beyond Europe, such as America. It has, of course, meant that the idea of the Enlightenment did have an effect on theological thinking, which proved to be quite significant in the hectic time of the Reformation.

Modern⁷¹ protestant theological thinking is the result of struggling with the cultural and scientific condition of that time. In this struggle two major trains of thought can be marked out: one which is for building up a synthesis with modernity, the other which is opposed to and tries to preserve the uniqueness of theological thinking.⁷² This era is characterized by different theological understandings: pietism focuses on the relationship between the renewed human being and God, as well as experience in separating the “believers” from the church as a whole; rationalism believed that the

⁷¹ Modernism in theological context was first used in the case of a specific Roman Catholic theological context. See: Alister E. McGrath, *Bevezetés a keresztyén teológiába* (Christian Theology: An Introduction), (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 1995), p. 102.

⁷² Kocsis Elemér, *Bevezetés a teológiába* (Introduction into theology), *A Debreceni Református Theológiai Akadémia Theológiai Szemináriumának Tanulmányi Füzetek*, Debrecen, 1979, p. 90. He describes this as synthesis and diasthesis.

truth of faith could be known through reason, with its two main directions (rationalist philosophy and mysticism). The most eloquent representative of rationalism is Immanuel Kant, who associates reason with autonomy. Reason makes the differentiation as to what makes and does not make any sense. It is also human reason which is able to follow the *maxim* to which any human action is measured. A maxim does not force human being to act evil,⁷³ nor to legitimate evil action by saying that the maxim is evil. He believes that there is some sort of universal truth to which human action is oriented in producing the right conduct. This is also the case with the existence of God. Even if it cannot rationally be proved, nevertheless we must *a priori* reckon with God. So the reality of God is not to be proved *a posteriori*, but reason must admit that God exists, so God's existence is *a priori*. With this Kant creates precisely the context of a 'universal reference point' which is at the heart of modernity.

It is only in romanticism that an answer to the question of the permanent role of rationality is given. The powerful personality who first tried to make a synthesis between reason and emotion was Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834). The first step to the synthesis was the new definition of religion as "a feeling of total dependence" (*das Gefühl schlechthinniger Abhängigkeit*). He tries to take advantage of the disappointment at rationality by transferring the question of religion from the world of rationality to the world of experience. This, however, means that through experience Schleiermacher reckons with historical reality, but this does not mean that for Schleiermacher experience would take the place of rationality.

In this connection, we now must turn our attention to a philosophical idea, which does not have a direct but rather an indirect relation to theological thinking. This is Marxism. In contrast to Schleiermacher, Marx thought that religion did not have a positive effect whatsoever on the human condition, on human life. He thought this

⁷³ Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the limits of reason alone*, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1960), p. 27. „...Man (sic) is evil, can mean only, he is conscious of the moral law but has nevertheless adopted into his maxim the (occasional) deviation therefrom.”

was only a symptom through which the alienation of human being was intensified. Thus his basic principle of thought was materialism, which provided the proper foundation for understanding human existence. The main goal of the human condition was to satisfy the material needs. Every idea that appears, even religion, was only a reflection on this effort. This way religion is the product of human endeavor in the quest for his/her lost identity. As a result of this, religion hinders human beings from striving for change and the realization of their own condition.⁷⁴ Religion alienates human beings from the recognition of their true human condition, which, if alienation of this kind is not present, would not be necessary at all. It is religion, which supports alienation, and unjust social conditions. This is an attempt to dissolve the synthesis which pertains to the understanding of human life and the human condition. From a different direction a similar approach was made by Nietzsche. For him the idea of “God is dead” (that God is dead in the human mind) means that the traditional values are lost as well. This is replaced by the autonomy of the self. At the end of the 19th century the modern culture, history and theology started to diverge from each other. Theologians have made an effort to keep the relevance of the grand narrative of God’s essential involvement in shaping human situations alive: Karl Barth in his Christocentric theology, Paul Tillich by correlational method or Reinhold Niebuhr in his Christian realism. In any case, the theological work through the centuries of modernity has preserved the principles of the Reformation: *sola scriptura, solus Christus, sola gratia, sola fide*. In fact, preserving these principles has provided the basis to the development of various theological ideas in modernity, and served as a basis to which they could return whenever necessary.

Postmodern theology has developed by and large at the same time as postmodernity. One might think that feminism is among those movements which were the first

⁷⁴Alister E. McGrath, *Bevezetés a keresztyén teológiába*, (Christian Theology: An Introduction), (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 1995), pp. 97-99. 98.

in line. This is right to the extent that feminist theology is also concerned with reconstructing basic theological symbols of God, humanity, and other theological ideas. But the other reason of the rise of feminist theological thinking is the struggle to take part in theological education and through this in ordained ministerial and academic work.⁷⁵ The example of feminism shows that what comes to the fore in postmodern debate and as a result of this in theology is the question of the 'other'. The other is not considered in the grand narratives so it is nothing but an attack on the 'same'. David Tracy insists on this when he formulates:

“...both event language and revelation language returned into theology. Both now return not so much to retrieve some aspects of premodernity (although that too becomes a real possibility) but rather to disrupt or interrupt the continuities and similarities masking the increasingly deadening sameness of the modern worldview. Event is that which cannot be accounted for in the present order but disrupts it by simply happening. Gift transgresses the present economy and calls it into question. Revelation is the vent-gift of the Other's self-manifestation. Revelation disrupts the continuities, the similarities, the communalities of modern religion.”⁷⁶

The theme of the 'Other' referring to God and the 'other' referring to human beings, have both become one of the central motifs of theology. The events of the 20th century provide a good basis to foster such ideas. It is enough to think of Emmanuel Levinas, the native Lithuanian thinker, who has made great impact with his idea of the other on both Roman Catholic and protestant theology. His major concern is that the real face of postmodernity is the face of the other as it does not want to be reduced to the grand narrative of yours.⁷⁷ This, however, does not seem to eliminate

⁷⁵ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *The emergence of Christian Feminist Theology in: The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology* (ed.) Susan Frank Parson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 3-22. 7. She refers especially to USA but I think it is true for the whole of the feminist movement.

⁷⁶ David Tracy, *Theology and the Many Faces of Postmodernity in: Theology Today* Vol. 51. No. 1. April 1994. pp. 104-114. 109. For him the form of theological reflection is also central. He distinguishes between the prophetic and the meditative (wisdom) forms. See: *Ibid.*, pp. 111-113.

⁷⁷ In the last few years there was a great interest in theological thinking about Levinas especially in relation to the theology of Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. For Levinas' position see: Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1981). *Entre Nous On-Thinking-of-the-Other*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). For a

the necessity of the presence of the 'one' in relation to which the other can define its reality, which in this way serves as a reference point in human-human relationships. The 'one' for the 'other' is also an 'other'. For this reason, in my view, one must be careful in applying the argument based on the subjective narrative of the 'other'. In form and content this argument is postmodern and conceals an amount of bias. In fact, this is what seems to fix the 'other' as there is no way to overcome or to avoid discrimination.

Postmodern theology has emerged in this way and was elaborated in many distinct forms. John B. Cobb insists that in talking about postmodern theology we meet two main currents, namely, deconstruction and process.⁷⁸ The emergence of postmodern theologies underlines that even if it is considered in terms of these two categories, basically both share the view that people cannot find the principles of modernity convincing any more. This is so because theology also takes the term deconstruction as the expression for deconstructing the whole program of modernity. Even in theological thinking to call into question modern views is vital. This underlines everything which was regarded certain, and, at the same time, does not provide anything new in place of what was torn down. However, postmodernity shows how problematic it is to create such a supposedly certain ground for human reality. It does not only do so for the individual self but for the communities as well. It feels the need to construct something but just does not have the capability to do so. For this reason it is not by accident that we find another idea, the idea of process or constructivism. Postmodern theological thinking provides examples for both to which we turn our attention now.

French Catholic theological sensibility to the question of God see: Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being: Horse Text*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁷⁸ John B. Cobb, *Two Types of Postmodernism: Deconstruction and Process in: Theology Today*, Vol. 47. No2. July. pp. 149-158.

One of the prominent figures of constructive postmodernism in theological thinking is *David Ray Griffin*, whose work is connected closely with the process philosophy of Whitehead. Griffin himself identifies his train of thought as being different from deconstruction as the main feature of postmodernity, and also from liberation and restoration. His concern as a postmodern thinker is for the crisis in nature as a place for human beings to live. He is ready to return to naturalism by which he wants to accentuate that the human individual is to be seen in community with nature, and that this “means that the categories needed to describe it (this community) should be generalized to other human unities.”⁷⁹ This has a twofold meaning. First, claiming that the categories which describe the reality of human individual in relation to nature so that these should be generalized, means that an inward feeling of the individual can be regarded as an intrinsic value. By this Griffin posits the center of values in the individual’s inner life as one which produces values. Second, he tries to rediscover nature as something that is part of internal relations. His main problem with modernity is precisely that modernity only thinks in terms of external relations.⁸⁰ In my view Griffin arrives at a romantic vision of postmodern community and of communal life, which, according to him, is the most viable way in building up a new worldview and spirituality for the world. In this way Griffin envisions postmodernity as a way of finding communal meaning of life, and life orders. By placing the center of values into the individual, and by giving emphasis to the local setting of the individual, he fulfils the aim of postmodernity.

⁷⁹ Craig Westman, *David Ray Griffin and Constructive Postmodern Communalism in: Postmodern Theologies* (ed) Terrence W. Tilley, (Orbis Books: New York, 1995), pp. 17-28. 22. Westman quotes Griffin, *David Ray Griffin, Mind in Nature: Essays on the Interface of Science and Philosophy*, (Washington DC.: University Press of America, 1977), p. 100.

⁸⁰ „the modern worldview was dualistic, distinguishing the human soul radically from „nature”, and supernaturalistic, thinking of nature and human souls as having been created ex nihilo by an omnipotent deity, who imposed motion and order on nature and implanted moral, religious, and aesthetic values in the human soul” David Ray Griffin, *Archetypal Process: Self and Divine in Whitehead, Jung, and Hillman*, (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press. 1990), p. 5. Quoted by Westman, *Ibid.*, p. 23.

The other prominent figure who can be associated with postmodern thinking is *David Tracy* earlier mentioned a main figure of the so-called critical revisionist theology. In his writings and his lectures he turns out to be in opposition and in concord with postmodernity. He has lectured at many places. However, the place that influenced his method and thinking the most was the University of Chicago Divinity School. Here he was the colleague of Paul Tillich. This is the source of Tracy's method,⁸¹ because he thinks that theology is real theology if it is in correlation with reality. The key to his method is gathering information from both sources (reality, world, context, on the one hand, and theology, its message on the other), and trying to relate them to each other. Through this he affirms the relevance of pluralism and ambiguity in Christian religious thinking.⁸² Pluralism is central in his thinking as he believes that in this we can find new ways to understand each other. This comes true as we learn to listen to each other. It is worth quoting him in length:

“We should, above all, learn to listen to the narratives of others, especially those “others” who have had to suffer our otherness imposed upon their interpretations of their own history and classics.”⁸³

It is the collision of narratives through which the real experience of the other can be obtained. This central experience is decisive in how we relate to each other in the future. To him this central experience is not only valid in human-human relations but in the human-divine relation as well. He insists that this central experience must be true for the divine Other alike.⁸⁴ The experience of the Ultimate Hidden or Revealed,

⁸¹ David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology*, (New York: Crossroads, 1975)

⁸² David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1987)

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁸⁴ For instance, this is why for Tracy the naming of God is very important. See: David Tracy, *The Recovery of the Hidden and Incomprehensible God in: Reflections CTI*, Princeton, New Jersey, Autumn 2000, Vol 3. pp.62-88. Also: Younhee Kim, *David Tracy's Postmodern reflection on God: Towards God's Incomprehensible and Hidden Infinity*, in: *Lovain Studies: A Quaterly Review of the Faculty of Theology Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven*, Fall 2005. No.3.Vol.30. pp. 159-180.

or even Incomprehensible is an essential part of the relational experience. This, in my view, serves Tracy as the basis for accentuating the central experience. By this he envisions an understanding of human life as one which is in relation to at least one central value and truth, through which it relates to the world. This to me implies two things: one is that Tracy is concerned about presenting central experiences to others, i.e. he presents a positive apologetics; secondly, even if narratives of others are important they only get validity in relation to one's own narratives. This is why one could not really say that David Tracy is a typical postmodern thinker. From my point of view his thinking resembles modernity more than postmodernity.

Otherness is essential in Tracy's thinking. In his view otherness is so radical that we realize it not only in others but in ourselves as well. He thinks that the way to experience this is possible through language since "all experience and all understanding is hermeneutical".⁸⁵ Thus our reality in the world around us, and our knowledge of it are very much linked to the language by which we express ourselves. The issue of language and intertextuality is essential for Tracy as it is for the postmodern thinkers. In my view, David Tracy is keen on listening to postmodern thinkers as he is committed to pluralism. Nevertheless, he takes the road of modernity as he is concerned about a central experience from which every human being receives orientation in action, belief, and values. This reveals his leaning towards the project of modernity, even if it seems to be finding a way between modernity and postmodernity.

In contrast to David Tracy another theologian, *Thomas J. J. Altizer*, interprets the idea of the 'death of God' so radically that he believes Christianity put so much emphasis on the otherness of God that it created a rift between the Other and the experi-

⁸⁵ David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1987), p. 77. Also: „Otherness has entered and it is no longer outside us among the „others“. The most radical otherness is within. Unless we acknowledge that, it will be impossible for us to responsibly participate in, or meaningfully belong to, our history.” *Ibid.*, p. 78.

ence of the Other.⁸⁶ He even believes that the notion of ‘God without us is not God at all’ cannot really be understood.⁸⁷ *Edith Wyschogrod* is the one who takes up the idea of the other presented in the work of Emmanuel Levinas most original way.

A genuine deconstructive postmodern theologian is *Mark C. Taylor*. Adapting Derrida’s method he describes his theological endeavours as follows:

“The erring a/theologian is driven to consider and reconsider errant notions...This strangely permeable membrane form a border where fixed boundaries disintegrate. Along this boundless boundary the traditional polarities between which Western theology has been suspended are inverted and subverted...For the a/theologian, however, heresy and aimlessness are unavoidable”⁸⁸

For Taylor, a/theology is a way through which we try to think about notions which are described by opposing concepts such as religious and secular, believing and non believing. Correspondingly, a/theologian is a person whose working method tends to differ from the commonly accepted. This way a/theologian asks questions differently and answers them differently, in such a way that questions and answers are considered errant.

He believes that deconstruction calls into question the traditional presuppositions of systematic theological endeavour. He tries to challenge this by looking at the boundaries, which he calls erring. Adopting the method of Derrida he is obviously seeking something that is behind appearance. He is eager to find something in terms of meaning behind what he wants to deconstruct. In this, going beyond the set system is necessary. By adopting the method of deconstruction, it is clear from its intention

⁸⁶David C. Lamberth is also convinced that the existence of God should be considered as finite. See: David C. Lamberth, *Intimations of the Finite: Thinking Pragmatically at the End of Modernity in: Harvard Theological Review*, 90:2. 1997. pp. 205-223. 222.

⁸⁷ Altizer, Thomas J. J., *The Descent into Hell: A Study of the Radical Reversal of the Christian Consciousness*, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), pp. 36-37. Quoted by: Bruce Richey, Thomas J. J.: *Altizer and the Death of God in: Postmodern Theologies* (ed) Terrence W. Tilley, (Orbis Books, New York, 1995), pp.45-57. 51. I debate this statement, but understand as the expression of the disappearance of the metanarrative in postmodern context. However, Altizer thinks we do not have to do postmodern theology but fully modern as we take seriously the eschatological orientation again.

⁸⁸ Mark C. Taylor, *Erring A Postmodern A/theology*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 12-13.

that he is moving towards what is on the margin, namely, what is between the poles of Western tradition. It is a sort of neither-nor dealing with tradition just to show that there is no need for certainty. Rather, even without foundations there is still a place for religious understanding. He recognizes four independent sources in Western theological tradition. These are: God, self, history and book. His endeavour is to deconstruct these foundations so that through this he can reach those who are on the margin.⁸⁹ Taylor's goal is to point out that the time of grand narratives is gone. Because of this, he interprets God to be writing, self to be trace, history to be erring, and finally the book to be text. In his understanding each of these loses their identity. Trace instead of the self means the loss of identity, loss of stability, loss of hope for fullness. Book, by becoming text, turns to be an open text which cannot have a fixed meaning. Thus a text affects other texts as the reader becomes a writer. The solution is to be searched between these contrasts which is for Taylor the 'divine milieu'. In my view, it is an example of how the project of postmodernity can be taken to an extreme end. The evident goal is to develop a scheme of the necessary atomization as the only means to take a stand against individualism. He perceives human life as a journey in which people can err. Thus living in itself is a journey. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see what Taylor really wants to express by this. His whole idea becomes even more confused when he admits that stories are useful, and those can be narratives which serve to understand self-identity.⁹⁰ It seems that, even in finding a way between the contrasts, he cannot fully abandon the notion of narratives, but he grasps only the very personal aspects of it.

⁸⁹ „Suspended between the loss of old certainties and the discovery of new beliefs, these marginal people constantly live on the border (...) They look yet not find, search but do not discover.” Ibid., p. 5.

⁹⁰ For instance, he takes the case of Augustine's autobiography. Ibid., p. 45.

III.2. Postmodern theology in practice

It is no doubt about the fact that we live in a so called “post era”. One might describe this as a radical break with the past. However, the radical reality we experience is not that the past is a hindrance of what would be superseded, but that a wide variety of terminologies and opinions are emerging which try to grasp the reality of this “post” situation. The feminist protest against the patriarchal understanding of women is a very vivid articulation of the problem. To many, modernity’s achievement seems to be very problematic as it opts for universally accepted rules as the basis for consensus in describing the human condition. Modernity is seen as paradoxical as it is to be most advanced, most up-to-date, most current, and contemporary. The theological response to modernity may be called liberal and mirrored the current cultural situation, as Schleiermacher exemplifies. The break with medievalism, the appearance of secularization, humanism, individualism, and belief in progress are all signs of modernity’s program. All this has come under scrutiny either by the changing historical context, or by a shift in the development of culture. This is what we refer to as postmodern. In this project there is no place for God, for the holy or divine reality. What makes all this even more acute is that in the experienced past there has been no place for God, for the holy and divine reality. By many to appeal to such an authority is considered questionable, irrelevant, and in many respects unacceptable. Theological insights often meet with prejudice even if these insights are in the public interest. Theology has the very difficult task of rejecting the view that it wants to impose on the multi cultured, pluralistic society an opinion only held by a small group. Theology should be able to articulate the relevance of the Christ-event for the public.

In order to achieve this, a very interesting approach is taken by the American theologian John B. Cobb, Jr. He claims that his work is in the tradition of Whitehead’s process philosophy. Cobb is considered to be a theologian who does not simply deconstruct but constructs as well. So he calls the tradition in which he works the

voice of constructive postmodernism. His intention is to formulate a constructive understanding of the central message of Christianity for the public. His concern is to develop a theological method that would be of use in this process. Let me briefly introduce here his most relevant theses as how we are to understand Christianity in the postmodern context. He elaborates this idea in his well-known book “Postmodernism and Public Policy”.⁹¹

III.3. Christianity in the Postmodern context

Cobb’s basic assumption is that Christianity in the Western world no longer has the public role it once had. Relying on religion in decision making is not so influential any more. Despite the fact that the Christian tradition is not so influential today, he claims that the Christian message is far from being dead. In many cases when we refer to our rational capacity in defending our truths we just simply do not realize our adherence to religion. This way our religious convictions are a hindrance to expressing our belief. Cobb is convinced that nonetheless this there is a way to understand Christianity as constructive.

The importance of the two-world schema in premodern thinking, according to him, has shifted in modernity to the importance of thinking in terms of this world. Later, as modernity developed, Christianity’s predominant role was to create unity in diversity. This is not acceptable for postmodern thinkers. Postmodern understanding rejects the idea of looking at the Christian tradition as one to which all others are to be compared. In this understanding there is no other way to reality than language, because the world we live in is a linguistic world. That is to say, Christian doctrines provide a set of symbols, which give meaning to life and provide understanding to

⁹¹ John B. Cobb, Jr. *Postmodernism and Public Policy: Reframing Religion, Culture, Education, Sexuality, Class, Race, Politics, and the Economy*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002)

the human condition. This is the cultural-linguistic approach. Cobb's criticism sounds clear: he cannot see how a community which is deeply rooted in a set of symbols could contribute to forming public life, as its main goal is to be faithful to the church's tradition. In contrast to this, he introduces another understanding the Christian tradition, which he calls *sociohistorical movement*. The core of this idea is: "to be a Christian is to locate oneself in the Christian community", whose historical ground is the Jesus-event.⁹² So what he suggests is that in order to find the meaning of the Christian message one needs to be embedded in the Christian community. We can agree with this basic assumption by realizing that we are called to be in community. However, one question should be raised, namely, how should we deal with all the other influences that act on us? Cobb himself realizes this problem, and his idea is that being part of the sociohistorical movement does not mean that one would have to think about all issues from this one point of view. According to him, the only task is to spread light on the disagreements and stand up against them. His main concern is not to impose a Christian understanding on others, but to leave space for self-definition, even for religious communities. We can agree with that, but in my view, this comprizes two problems. First, it weakens the reality of the Christian community. Second, if it leaves space for self-definition, then how can we determine which has more and which has less importance?

Cobb thinks that the problem which we face is that the atoning work of Jesus has lost its significant power as it is especially true for the Protestant tradition. For this reason Cobb believes that it makes more sense to talk about Christ as referring to the continuous work of God in the world than to talk about Jesus as a historical figure of the past. At the same time he admits that Jesus and Christ cannot be separated. The central idea connected with the "*Christ-emphasis*", is *metanoia* which he calls

⁹² Ibid., pp. 15-16.

“creative transformation”. For Cobb this is the essential element of the sociohistorical movement, the idea of transformation, which can contribute to the public.⁹³ The key word for him is *metanoia* which is future-oriented. Cobb’s intention is to work out a method which does not simply focus on the pure state of affairs and find if there is a need to replace them. His interest is in introducing possible ways of showing the solution to the specific problems. As *metanoia* is a transformation, by taking a totally different direction, Cobb thinks it is possible to incorporate new ideas while remaining faithful to the inherited truths of Christ the Redeemer.

In trying to draw the conclusion from what Cobb is saying, I realize that his understanding of Christianity rests on two pillars. One pillar is the rediscovery of tradition, which however does not imply that the role of Christianity is simply to hide behind a reformulated set of symbols. The other pillar is the embeddedness in the Christ-event as it transforms human understanding. In my view this is the key to Cobb’s constructive understanding, because it prevents his way of thinking from turning into a merely cultural approach in which criticism has no validity. His main point is that it is only possible through the idea of transformation that Christian theology from its own source could provide answers to challenges. But it seems that *metanoia* as the source of understanding human reality is actually a sort of metanarrative, at least for those who tend to express their lives in these terms. Cobb, for obvious reason does not touch upon this question.

For the same reason, Cobb thinks that religious pluralism⁹⁴ is good in so far as the different religious traditions are complementary. To put it differently, complementarity is the answer to religious pluralism. Even in the Christian tradition he un-

⁹³ Ibid., p. 31.

⁹⁴ David Tracy, John B. Cobb, *Talking about God: doing theology in the context of modern pluralism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1983)

derstands the two covenants to be supplementary. He argues that even Christology is something that is shaped by the particular community's relation to God.⁹⁵

Précis

As we have seen, postmodernity attacks our understanding of human reality based on the Enlightenment whose project was to find truth in terms of reason, foundations and narratives. This skepticism towards modernity about our sound basis for knowledge, for being and thinking has by no means been reduced to the sphere of philosophy or sociology but it has appeared in theology as well. It is rationality itself being challenged by the idea of the postmodernity. The linear understanding of history is questioned, too, which means that we experience a rupture between history and its events. This accentuates the radical character of the rupture, which makes us aware of the deficiencies of modernity. This might be the reason for the present interest in the meaning of revelation. This also means a radical challenge to Christianity which defines itself by the coherence of the event (the person and work of Jesus Christ based on the Scripture) and tradition (history) entitled.⁹⁶ The postmodern criticism of modernity, as it wants to control human life through the grand narratives (metanarratives), means the fostering of discontinuity and fragmentation and thus questions very much the possibility for Protestants to adhere to the notion of the principles *sola scriptura*, *solus Christus*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide*. The loss of these principles

⁹⁵ John B. Cobb, Jr. *Postmodernism and Public Policy*, *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁹⁶ J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, *Tradition and the Task of Theology* in: *Theology Today*, July 1998, Vol. 55, No.2. pp. 213-229. 217. For more on the question of postmodernity and Christian tradition see: Kathryn Tanner, *Postmodern Challenges to 'Tradition'*, in: *Louvain Studies* Vol. 28, Fall 2003, No.3. pp. 175-193.; Miroslav Volf, William Katerberg eds. *The future of hope: Christian tradition amid modernity and postmodernity*, (Grand Rapids: W.B.Eerdman Pub.& Co, 2004); James K.A. Smith believes that the postmodern writers are often misunderstood in the Church. See: James K.A. Smith, *Who's afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006); Grenz believes that in this context theology has two options: either to take what postmodernity offers or to adhere to tradition. See: Stanely J. Grenz, John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: shaping theology in a postmodern context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001)

means the loss of the ability to assess other traditions so that absolute relativity prevails. However, our aim is to forestall our inability to converse, because relativism must not be so radical that we would not be able to have discussions and achieve a common assessment. This way we might avoid and prevent that reference points to be considered only as the question of emotive selection of locally shaped narratives.

Postmodernity is present in the life of the communities not only in theory but in practice as well. We observe that elements of postmodern thinking are increasingly influential. The argument for deconstruction, the relevance of subnarratives as opposed to metanarratives in understanding human reality has been growing stronger in human relations. Public life is all concerned about ad hoc actions at present. Even politics is a series of spectacles to amuse the public. Public life wants to gain its legitimacy in itself without taking any broader context seriously. This means the lack of openness to admit internal contradictions. The broader context is replaced in the public by symbolic ideas, i.e. by simulacrum. It seems as if the main concern would be to deal only with symbols which refer to another symbol.

For Christian theology it is not the question whether or not to say anything, because from a postmodern point of view since the irrelevance of the grand narrative, theology cannot add any significant insight to understand human reality. However, I think that our grand narrative is present in the work and person of Jesus Christ, and this continuously compels us to show the importance of being connected with one value center. It is necessary to turn our attention to this, specifically to the question of the doctrine of justification, as the next step in raising the voice of Christian thinking in the Public life.

Chapter Four

The doctrine of justification revisited

Our picture of ourselves and of others has always been in the center of human interest.⁹⁷ Postmodernity has stressed very much this need of finding the most appropriate definitions in order to describe human reality, relations and communities. As human understanding is broadening, this picture has revealed more and more details so that it has become even more difficult to find the best approach for an understanding of what it means to be human. In many cases, as history has proved, misconceived ideas were born. As the result of this, these definitions were not really applicable, and instead of the most fitting they privileged “the possible” interpretation.

It is clear that the cultural context has shaped this very much as well. The idea of modernity, its belief in the relevance of a universal framework has deeply shaped our understanding of the entire problem. In evaluating the situation the Christian church and Christian theology have always played an important role. There were and still are many who think that theology is for the sake of the Church that it has no public relevance, so that opinions formulated on theological foundations should remain within the church. As it is often said, the church should keep its attitude apolitical.

However, thinking theologically about the public is neither for the sake of identifying theology with politics, nor turning theology into religious fundamentalism. The importance of this endeavour is to take seriously the biblical witness of human reality, the necessity of human relatedness whose integrating power makes us substantial witnesses of this relational scheme. In this we are to look for a starting point in our theological thinking, which for us is the central tenet of Reformation theology, formulated in the doctrine of justification. For our purposes, it is necessary to refer to

⁹⁷ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* Vol. I. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p. 1.

the distinction which Alister E. McGrath makes as he distinguishes between the concept of justification and the doctrine of justification.⁹⁸ In his view the concept describes God's saving act as witnessed in the Bible, the doctrine concerns the means through which the relationship of human beings to God is established. In other words the first deals with what God has done for human beings, the second how human beings ought to respond in return, which also includes what humans ought to be in relation to the other. The latter is what we should turn our attention to now.

IV.1 The Biblical Background

IV.1.1. The Old Testament

The biblical narrative starts with the creating act of God. The world with all its inhabitants stands before God. As part of this, human beings are called to accept God's gift: to rule over the world. Human beings have limited but enough power over the world in which they are situated in order to fulfil the mandate given by God. Its limits are not the ones we set, but the ones, which are set for. These limits are not the ones we possess but the ones into which we are incorporated, they are not the ones which are made by us but the ones, which are made for us, they are not the ones, which broaden the conceptions of gods but the ones, which narrow them to the One God with a definite future.

This situation describes at the very beginning of human history a relational scheme in which human beings must understand themselves to be. The relational scheme is set in relation to God and in relation to other human beings with whom the created reality needs to be shared. The given mandate does not legitimate power dominance but is the fulfilment of relational communion as the expression of responsibility ordered by God. It is not only the creation which needs to be preserved but

⁹⁸ Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei Vol. I: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.2.

the relational scheme alike. This even increases human responsibility as it pertains to everyday life. This requires faithfulness to God and the observance of the Law of God. The person who is in this position is *רַחֵם*, the person who does not adhere to the law of God is *עֲשֵׂה* as it is reflected in the Old Testament. If one does not respect the created order the security of the relational scheme is endangered.⁹⁹ It is precisely this scheme that breaks up through sin by which the situation of human beings changes (Gen 3-4). For this reason no one is righteous before God (Ps 143,2). It is only God who is righteous (Ps 119,137; 145,17), so it is God who gives righteousness to human beings, in which the law of God plays an essential role. This is not an objective fact for Israel but it is at the core of its history and its relational life (Ex 9,27; Neh 9,33). The Ten Commandments is the way through which the justice of God and the right fellowship with the other became real.

IV.1.2. The New Testament

IV.1.2.1 The Gospels

Human beings have become decentered, which is their condition before God in the New Testament. Consequently, this broken relationship with God and through this with others is what has to be changed. This is not possible only by keeping the law, but through Christ as the one who fulfills the law. It is through the work of Christ that we are forgiven. The term which denotes this act is *δικαιοσύνη*. This originates from legal terminology and means an acquitting judgment. It meant the innocence of human beings which was to be maintained. It also meant a concept which differentiates between human beings' orientation and animal orientation, as it is also denoted an immanent order in the world. This *δίκη* is the order of the *πόλις*, which

⁹⁹ Claus Westermann, *Gerechtigkeit im Alten Testament*, in: *Christliche Glaube in Moderner Gesellschaft*, (Herder-Freiburg-Basel, 1981), Teilband 17. pp. 12-16. 12.; Ferdinand Hahn, *Gerechtigkeit Gottes und Rechtfertigung des Menschen nach dem Zeugnis des Neuen Testament* in: *Evangelische Theologie* 59.Jg.99-5. pp.335-347. 336.

is in contradiction to the νόμος as the order of nature. However, δικαιοσύνη should be distinguished from ἀλήθεια which ought to be regarded as something matching reality in everyway, and this way is real.¹⁰⁰ The term, δικαιοσύνη, refers to how God's truth makes its way to human beings. In this God does not accept the truth of human beings. It is only God who is able to give righteousness to human beings. This creates the tension of "simul justus et peccator".

Life in this tension is one theme of the Gospels. However, there is a difference in relation to Paul's concept of justification. While Paul considers the human condition by using the legal term of δικαιοσύνη, the Gospels do not employ this legal term. The term ἄνθρωπος in itself means that human beings are different from animals (Mt 12,12) and different from God (Mk 11,30). Human beings appear as those who, in relation to God and to God's revelation, are limited since neither of these is in their power. Human life marked by limits is expressed in ψυχή, σάρξ, σῶμα.¹⁰¹

In relation to this three insights are of great importance.

1. *The Gospels do not allow us to understand the justified human being as one who is detached from the world.* This is clearly expressed in the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus explains the content of the law (Mt 5,17-48). Similarly, Mt 5,13-16;6,16-21 emphasizes that life lived in apprehension of the gospel is not the life turned off from the world. This is what Jesus clearly asks in Jn 17. It is the consequence of the work of Jesus, the directedness of the work of Christ as something that concerns

¹⁰⁰ Balázs Károly, *Újszövetségi Szómutató Szótár*, (Budapest: Logos Kiadó, 1998), pp. 28. 128. „ἀλήθεια” and „δικαιοσύνη”

¹⁰¹ ψυχή in the Gospels means one's own physical reality as it denotes personality. It is in the Gospel of Matthew where the idea of the necessity of facing God at the Last Judgement explicitly appears. However, as opposed to the Greek understanding, where peace is found only by the separation of body and soul, the Gospels affirm that body and soul belong together. The meaning of σάρξ in the Gospels refers to a relational understanding of human beings. It is always in relation to God that one is to realize the true content of the word σάρξ. As Mt 16, 17 says, one cannot attain the knowledge of God by oneself. It also emphasizes that turning from the state of bodily existence into the existence without the body is not the same as salvation. The term σῶμα has a traditional meaning as it refers to the human body (Mk 15,43). See: TDNT Vol. IX. „ψυχή”; TDNT Vol. VII. „σάρξ and σῶμα”; Also: Dr. Herczeg Pál, A test és lélek kifejezései az Újszövetségben (The expressions of body and soul in the New Testament) in: *Református Egyház XLV. Évf. 12.sz. 1993.* pp. 274-276.

others.¹⁰² Healing, community with sinners and tax collectors express how Jesus turns the 'impossible' situation of human beings into the possibility of a life of good will. Jesus calls faith, which is little to be enough as it results in turning to the saving act of God. This implies community between Jesus and those to whom Jesus turns. As Jesus turns to the sinners and tax collectors and arouses faith and gives righteousness, it becomes the clear expression of community with them. This spreads light on Rom 3,23, according to which we are all sinners. In relation to God's grace this is definitely true. However, in relation to Jesus when he enters into community with sinners this has a more complex meaning.¹⁰³ God's approach to the world in this way is not exclusive but inclusive, which compels us to have the same attitude in relation to others.

2. *The Gospels do not allow the justified human being to have a self-understanding independent of others.* In this respect the healing stories are communicative. The center of attention now should not be the beginning of the healing stories, even if they are of great importance, but the closing conversations or monologues (Mk 1,40-45, and parallel; Mk 1,32-39; 2,1-12; 5,1-20). In the introduction we understand that the patient and the relatives are waiting for healing no matter whether they had information or not about Jesus' ministry. At the end of the encounter *with a call or without a call upon returning to the community*, it is an unavoidable result of the healing that the healed person should return to the community. The goal of this is that everything that happened should be made known to others, too. Self-understanding, self-definition is not complete without fulfilling the demand of returning to the community. Special attention should be paid in this respect to the parable of the Good Samaritan since the person who is lying on the road is an essential part

¹⁰² Jürgen Moltmann, Isten megigazítása és egy új kezdethez való jogunk (The Righteousness of God and our right to have a new beginning) in: *Theológiai Szemle* XLV. 2002/2. p. 97.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

of the samaritan's self-understanding while for those who pass them by this is not the case.

3. *The Gospels do not allow the justified person to have a self-understanding independent of the necessity of participating in Christ.* God pronounces human beings to be just based on the work of Christ. Through this, the sinner is justified and starts to be in community with God. This means that one admits God as the source of justice and confesses God to be righteous, since experiencing God's justice one can only confess that God is righteous. To confess that God as righteous means not simply confessing by words but also acting in accordance with the empowering message of the Cross and Resurrection as these define our hope in the future. Even for the disciples, this is the most difficult part in the community of life with Christ. This is where the ability to give (Mt 5,42), the readiness to help (Mk 10,42-45), the endeavour to forgive the other (Lk 17,4) become real. This involves the motivation to act.¹⁰⁴

It is apparent in remarks outlined above that the human reality is conditioned by the context as it is presented in the Gospels. I would like to underline this by the use of a theological reading of four passages from the Gospels.

A. Jn 15,1-8.

"1I am the true vine, and my Father us the vinegrower.2He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. 3You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. 4Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unkes it abides in the vine, neither can you unless abide in me. 5I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. 6Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples." (NRSV)

This story is part of the series in which Jesus identifies himself by the definite term „I am“. Here Jesus says „I am the true vine“. The image Jesus uses is not alien since it already appears in Is 5,1-7. In general, here Jesus is talking about himself as the source of the life of the community, where the Father stands in the background as

¹⁰⁴ Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, Vol I. (London: SCM press Ltd, 1971), p. 215.

the Inaugurator of Jesus' ministry. The story contains three essential motifs with regard to the question of justification:

1. The "I am" saying of Jesus,
2. The Father prunes those who have fruits so that they will bear even more,
3. The disciples have already been cleaned.

Jesus defined as "I am" is the revelation of God as the true source of life sought by human beings. The term ἀληθινός, in addition to meaning the truth, the real, denotes that one thing which is from God, the life which can be received from God.¹⁰⁵ For this reason, the realization of such a life brings about the change as we relate to the things of our world. It is only through Christ that grace can be received. Christ is the only mediator who calls for faith in him. The disciples are clean so their task is not to settle the relationship between God and them. This cannot be the result of human effort. Human beings cannot bear fruitful lives without Jesus, that is, human action receives its meaning in relation to Christ.¹⁰⁶ It is clear that the disciples are clean through the words of Jesus since justification is not the question of human effort. Human effort is the result of being in community with the one God who justifies. Thus, the source of the disciples' cleanness is outside of them, which is neither the church, nor any institution, but the Word of God.¹⁰⁷ The justifying truth comes from outside and calls for faith and for the confession of sins. This way, human self-definition is constituted in relation to the Other and to others. Existence is not for somebody but from Someone.

B. Lk 10,25-37.

"25Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"26He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" 27He answered, "You shall love the lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." 28And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." 29But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" 30Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the

¹⁰⁵ Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), p. 531.

¹⁰⁶ Mátyás Ernő, *János evangéliuma*, (*The Gospel of John*), (Sárospatak, 1950), p. 208.

¹⁰⁷ Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, *Ibid.*, p. 534.

hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. 31Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. 34He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35The next day he took out two denari, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' 36Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' 37He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." (NRSV)

The parable of the Good Samaritan is one of the best known passages. It is often cited as the model of good discipleship. However, the goal of the story is to reflect on the question which is asked earlier in the conversation: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Both questions of the lawyer concern this. The lawyer, who in order to attain eternal life sticks to every letter of the law, wants to know from Jesus if this is really the only requirement. The answer is, of course, surprising. But both question and answer are right at the core of the problem of justification. The lawyer does receive an answer to this first and partly principal question. It is partly principal as from Jesus' answer it is clear that keeping the law demands a sort of actions. This is the case with Jesus' relation to the law as Jesus does not diminish the law but shows the way to it through the Gospel. For this Jesus refers to the *Sma*. The lawyer is not satisfied with one part of the answer so he asks who the neighbor is. Here comes the parable of the Good Samaritan in which the questions of eternal life and of who the neighbor is are connected. The intention of the lawyer's question is to get a description of the neighbor which provides the possibility of fulfilling the requirements of inheriting eternal life by human effort. This would mean that eternal life, justification is to be attained through human action. But such a definition of the neighbor, of the other is far from Jesus. This reinforces the fact that the self-understanding of the justified human being is not separable from God and the other. To understand God's intention is to understand the purpose of our life in the world. This means that it is not only about receiving justification but acting it out at the same time. If one incorporates God's saving act in Christ, incorporating the other and being incorporated by

the other is part of being made righteous in Christ. Justification conceived this way is full of social relations, which means that social relation is part of being properly related to Christ. One relation must not be played off against the other but be experienced in unity.

The meaning of 'neighbor' is broader even in the Old Testament. According to the Halakah this term is used for everybody who is in close relationship with the other, and mostly meant the people of Israel.¹⁰⁸ One would think that in Jesus' answer it is the Samaritan who needs help. Jesus' reply happens to be very different. Jesus stretches boundaries by employing the well known, the most actual religious and ethnic/racial tension. In itself this becomes the expression of grace given to those who accept it. Obviously, the lawyer does not receive an exact answer of who the neighbor is, because in this way love would be placed between barriers. This way Jesus is broadening the understanding of the law in such a way that it cannot be fulfilled by one's own efforts. It refers to the fact that in order to participate in the Kingdom of God we must embrace God's saving act in faith. At the end, it turns out who the neighbor is: once you are in the same situation you know who your neighbor is. It places the understanding of human life into a relational scheme.

C. Lk 18,9-14.

"9He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: 10"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' 13But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, sinner!' 14I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.'" (NRSV)

Behind the contrast of the prayer of the Pharisee and the tax collector is the question of justification. In Jn 15,1-8 the cleansing act of the Father, in Lk 10,25-37 stretching the boundaries of love as it cannot be fulfilled by human deeds, in this story

¹⁰⁸ A.R.C. Leany, *A Commentary on The Gospel According to St. Luke*, (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1958), p. 182.

the confession of sins is at the core. The tax collector's prayer is said with regard to himself but the source of justification is God. Justification comes not as the result of acting before God, but as the result of confessing sins. So this is not the human act that makes him righteous, but the acceptance of the confession of sins by God. The relationship between God and the human being is put in order through God. The Pharisee cannot be merciful to the other because he does not know God's love, since the knowledge of God's mercy basically identifies one's place in the world, in the community of disciples, and even the place of the community of disciples in the world.

D. Mk 10,17-27.

"17As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 19You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.'" 20He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." 21Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." 22When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. 23Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" 24And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." 26They greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" 27Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible." (NRSV)

This story, in line with the first two, unfolds the question of how one can enter the Kingdom of God. Two motifs dominate the locus: the question of eternal life and the idea of discipleship. The wealthy man inquires about how to inherit eternal life. He is convinced that he must give a personal contribution, and this is the reason why he asks. In his answer Jesus asks for more than what the law demands. In this way Jesus wants to know what is really at stake for the wealthy man. If he is able to give up, then it is possible to abandon the idea of having to make a personal contribution. The one thing which is missing is not anything from the range of good deeds, but calls into question the root of all of those. The key to the understanding of human relatedness is Jesus' reply (v 26), which presents the possibility of the impossible for the

human condition, relationships and discipleship. This is a reminder even for the Twelve. Peter is thinking in an exclusive way about discipleship – exclusive of his relation to others – while Jesus' thinking is more inclusive.¹⁰⁹ This inclusiveness is at the heart of justification.

IV.1.2.2 Justification in Paul's thinking

For Paul δικαιοσύνη is the key word for justification. In Paul's thinking God acts in order to make human beings righteous, which means that this cannot be perceived by being observant of the law. Justification and salvation is by the mercy of God. We are incorporated into the righteousness of God which contains judgement and mercy at the same time. God's action in which he gives righteousness is not only for one individual, but it happens for the whole world in Christ (Rom 10,4). This way, it centers in the Cross (1 Cor 1,18), where the saving act takes place. This forgiveness, as it contains judgment, says indisputably no to sin and brings human beings back to the covenantal relationship with God as was the original intention of God for human beings. Thus human existence is not in a vacuum any more. Justification for Paul is outside of human beings, it is credited to them. In this way it is constitutive of who God is: justification is the power of God for salvation. This can only be attained by faith. Faith is the individual side of grasping God's grace but does not make one individualistic. Instead, it makes the individual the member of one body (Ef 2,1-10).¹¹⁰ This faith gives hope for the future (Gal 5,5; Phil 3,9-11; 2Cor 5,21; Gal 3,6-22).¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Fiedrich Gustav Lang, *Sola gratia im Markusevangelium*, in: (Hrg.) Johannes Friedrich, Wolfgang Pöhlmann, Peter Stuhlmacher *Rechtfertigung, Festschrift Für Ernst Käsemann Zum 70. Geburtstag*, (J.C.B. Mohr Tübingen, Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), pp. 321-337. 333.

¹¹⁰ Ulrich Luz, *Rechtfertigung bei den Paulusschülern* in: *Rechtfertigung, Festschrift Für Ernst Käsemann Zum 70. Geburtstag*. *Ibid.*, pp. 365-383. 373. „...die „ekklesiologische Dimensionen der Rechtfertigungslehre“ verhindern eine Reduktion der Gnadelehre zu privaten Pneumatismus“.

¹¹¹ „δικαιοσύνη“ in: *TDNT Abridged in One Volume*, Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich (eds.) (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, MI, 1985), pp. 171-175. 174.

Justification and *πνεῦμα* are linked in the understanding of Paul. In turning to Jesus one directs oneself to the new covenant and into communion with the Spirit (1 Cor 12,13; 2Cor 3,17). This way, the Spirit is the life forming power.¹¹² For Paul, justification cannot be attained by the power of human action. However, as the consequence of God's justifying act one has to bear fruit.

The expression *δικαιοσύνη* is a relational term. It is always real in relation to 'the Other'. God announces human being to be just, which is the liberation from the power of sin.¹¹³ This is the total grace of God through Christ for the human race. Similarly, in Tit 3,3-7 Paul stresses the idea that it is by *sola gratia* that one is justified and saved. This is the message for which the individual and the community of believers exist (2Tim 1,9-11). This constitutes the character of the new life in Christ.¹¹⁴ This is also the key to an understanding of how baptism and justification belong together in Paul's thinking (1Cor 6,11).¹¹⁵

The question of justification is especially present in the Epistle to the Galatians. In this Christ is the witness to God as Christ's self-sacrifice is the sign of God's grace. This self-sacrifice is the source of one's justification which must be attained through faith in Christ and not by meeting the requirements of the law (Gal 2,16). To

¹¹² God's righteousness is working not only in the individual but in the community as well through the Spirit. See: Walter Klaiber, *Rechtfertigung und Gemeinde: Eine Untersuchung zum paulinischen Kirchenverständnis*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), p. 187. For a recent study from Klaiber on the question is: Walter Klaiber, *Gerecht vor Gott. Rechtfertigung in der Bibel und heute*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2000)

¹¹³ Rudolf Bultmann, *Az újszövetség teológiája - Theologie des Neuen Testaments – (Osiris Kiadó, Budapest: 1998) p. 234.* According to Bultmann this is the reason why we need to be careful with the expression of *μετάνοια*, because when we think of God's justifying act we tend to render it as the forgiveness of sins previously committed.

¹¹⁴ The emphasis on the life in Christ is the unmistakable point of Hebrews as well. „Existenz durch die Tat Gottes in Christus“, Erich Gräber, *Rechtfertigung im Hebräerbrief in: Rechtfertigung, Festschrift Für Ernst Käsemann Zum 70. Geburtstag*, Ibid., pp. 79-93. 90. See especially footnote 40.

¹¹⁵ Ulrich Luz thinks that „Rechtfertigung ist ein Interpretament der Taufe“ Ulrich Luz, *Rechtfertigung bei den Paulusschülern*, Ibid., p. 371. Peter Stuhlmacher thinks it is deeply connected to Paul's *theologia crucis*. Peter Stuhlmacher, *Achtzehn Thesen zur paulinischen Kreuzestheologie*. in: *Rechtfertigung, Festschrift Für Ernst Käsemann Zum 70. Geburtstag*. Ibid., pp. 509-527. 517. Jürgen Roloff believes that justification is the interpretation of christology. See: Jürgen Roloff, *Christologie und Rechtfertigung bei Paulus in: Fuldaer Hefte. Zur Bleibenden Aktualität des Augsburger Bekenntnisses* (Hamburg: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1981), pp. 10-28.

apprehend justification is only possible in the work of Christ. Understanding of faith at the same time means readiness for confession through which one can be connected with the community and this way to the world (Gal 5,6).¹¹⁶ This denotes life lived in Christ - ἐν Χριστῷ (1Thess 4,16) πνεύματι (Gal 5,25). In this Paul radicalizes the understanding of justification as it reaches to the center of human past, present and future.¹¹⁷

The locus classicus of justification is **Rom 3,21-31**. This is at the heart of understanding justification. The passage like a nutshell contains the logic of justification as it places the human question in the context of God's relation to human beings. It declares that it is not possible to become righteous by doing the works of law. The righteousness of God appeared in Christ in whom we can participate through faith. In order to be justified human contribution is excluded. This refers to the radical difference which lies between the works of law and faith. The difference is in the peculiar quality of faith, which cannot be compared to anything that would focus on the possibilities of human beings. Faith does not concentrate on human beings but on God. The peculiar character of faith is the fact that it always requires trust in God, and the observance of our obligation in relation to the other. Faith means the total surrender of personal interest, while works suggest placing oneself above grace. Faith captures what God does, but works intend to qualify what a human does. It is because of this that without Christ even the law cannot be fulfilled. Through Christ we can be part of that sanctification which leads us on the way of meeting the requirements of the law.¹¹⁸ This creates a tension between Paul and James as the latter is eager to empha-

¹¹⁶ Karl Barth makes an important point in relation to our topic in his exposition on the Galatians: „The point at issue is the attachment of the Christian community to the great continuity of religious history...” Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* Vol. IV/1. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1965), p. 640.

¹¹⁷ Georg Strecker, *Befreiung und Rechtfertigung* in: *Rechtfertigung, Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann* Zum 70. Geburtstag, *Ibid.*, pp. 479-508. 507.

¹¹⁸ The term *πίστευω* is essential in Paul's thinking. While in the classical sense it denotes simply the trust entitled to the gods and is not a relational term, already in the Old Testament, and even more so in the New Testament, it refers strongly to one's relationship to God. Faith covers all fields of life as it seeks understanding. Faith marks out the way of justification and sanctification. *Χάρις* and *πίστις*

size the connectedness of faith and act in order to put the accent on the consequences of faith (James 3,18).

IV.2. Historical overview

IV.2.1. Augustine

The question of justification as the central teaching of the church was not in the focus in the first centuries of the Christian church since it was agreed that justification was the act of God which could be accepted by faith even if the accent was different in the east and west.¹¹⁹ The first substantial reflection on the question of justification was Augustine's. His own journey to faith¹²⁰ made him understand that it was sin at the center of the problem. Humanity is *massa peccati*. The problem of the human race started with Adam's attempt to become like God (Gen 3,5). God had created Adam as one who could not sin (*posse non peccare*). God as the source of

together are the antitheses of νόμος. The grace of God appeared in Christ through which we are saved. This is the only way by which one is able to capture the meaning of ἁμαρτία. For Paul this reigns among human beings and it is only faith that enables us to judge sinful human conditions. Christ came to save us from the power of sin, so our responsibility is to eliminate sinful human conditions. Being free from the power of sin is the beginning of a new relationship with Christ and with others. This is what Christ has suffered for. Christ does the atoning work as the term ἱλαστήριον shows. It is God who acts, which results in justification. To be under curse at the same time means to be under God's grace. See: TDNT Abridged in One Volume, Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich (eds.), (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans MI: 1985). Max Lackmann, Sola Fide. Eine exegetische Studie über Jakobus 2 zur reformatorischen Rechtfertigungslehre, in: Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie, Band 50. (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1949); For Lackmann as a critique see: Paul Althaus, Die lutherische Rechtfertigungslehre und ihre heutigen Kritiker, (Berlin: Evangelische Verlag, 1951), pp. 13-15.; Karl Friedrich Ulrichs, Christusglaube: Studien zum Syntagma πίστις Χριστοῦ und zum paulinischen Verständnis von Glaube und Rechtfertigung (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007)

¹¹⁹ Gerhard Müller, Die Rechtfertigungslehre, Geschichte und Probleme, in: Studienbücher Theologie: Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, (Hrg.) Gerhard Müller, Gerhard Ruhbach, (Gerd Mohn: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1977). „Überhaupt liegt das Heilsinteresse in den östlichen Kirchen an anderer Stelle als in der abendländischen: Es geht nicht so sehr um Schuld, Sünde und Strafe als um Vergottung, Heil und Erlösung. Deswegen konnte die Frage nach der <Gerechtigkeit Gottes> dort nicht so zentral werden“ p. 16; Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics Vol. IV/1. Eds. G.W.Bromiley, T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), pp. 524-525.

¹²⁰ According to McGrath, Augustine's idea underwent several changes, especially as the result of his observation of Romans 9, 10-29. McGrath identifies three stages: 1. Augustine modifies the idea that temporal election is prior to eternal election in such a way that election is based on predestination; 2. He modifies the idea that response to God's grace is from free will in such a way that the response itself is a gift of God; 3. He thinks that free will is not capable of liberating human being from sin unless it is first liberated by grace. See: Alister E. McGrath, Iustitia Dei I.(1986), p. 25.

life secured the life of human beings in the created world. However, by Adam's pride and desire to be like God, humans wanted to relocate the source of life from God to themselves and hold it up by concupiscentia. This is what Augustine called *superbia*.¹²¹ As the result of this it was not possible for human beings to remain sinless, which created the state of '*non posse non peccare*'. This resulted in the misuse of free will. This is the cornerstone where Augustine occurs to be in contradiction with Pelagianism. Pelagius taught that human beings were good by nature.¹²² By virtue of being good human beings could do the good even if they did not have to. The point is that human beings have the possibility to will and to do the good as Adam had. Thus sin is part of us not by nature, but as the result of the free will. This had strong consequences with regard to the understanding of sin. According to Pelagius, there is no connection between the sin of Adam and the sin of the human race. Sin is in the world only through imitation of the disobedience of Adam. Pelagian denied the idea of original sin since people were responsible for their own sin, and because sin results from wrong action they resided not in the body but in the soul. Grace only simplified what the free will did anyway in terms of right action. In connection with baptism this meant that infants did not have sin.¹²³ It is free will which helped that when doing the good one did not sin. In other words, it was within human being's potential to be sinless and justified. This, in my view, gives priority to the law since being sinless, according to this, is the question of human ability. The salient is the question whether one is capable of keeping the law or is not. This view nurtures the idea that

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 25.

¹²² Bernhard Lohse, *Epochen der Dogmengeschichte*, (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1963), pp. 111-114, 121-130.

¹²³ Athanasius, Origen and Chrysostom had a view of all human being involvement in Fall. This was an affirmation against the Manichaean deterministic train of thought which argued that sin is part of human nature. „The idea of an inheritance of actual guilt is expressly repudiated through the assertion that infants are born free from sin. The freedom of the will is strongly affirmed against Manichaeism, and the Fall and its continuing consequences was the result of man's free choice of evil. All men are involved in these consequences, which include moral infirmity and bias toward sin, and the progressive disintegration of mankind, individually and socially” See: G.W.H. Lampe, *Salvation, Sin and Grace in: A History of Christian Doctrine*, In succession to the Earlier Work of G. P. Fisher, Ed. Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd.,1980), p. 157.

human reality should be viewed positively to which the work of Christ has nothing to add.

Augustine could not accept that baptism was not for the forgiveness of sins but for receiving sanctification in Christ. He strongly holds the idea of original sin. Through Adam we are all sinners. So in baptism guilt is forgiven but concupiscentia remains. It is God's grace in Jesus Christ that sin is forgiven. Freedom can only come through grace which is the "internal operation of the Holy Spirit".¹²⁴ This makes it possible for the human will to do good deeds. This way "free will is not lost, nor is it non-existent: it is merely incapacitated, and may be healed by grace".¹²⁵ Free will, for Augustine is not abolished for the sake of grace, but they both exist since free will only needs healing to be able to be practiced.

Grace for Augustine is *gratia praeveniens* by which human being are renewed. He distinguished between *gratia operans* and *gratia cooperans*. God initiates the justification of the human being (operates- this is the irresistible will of God – *gratia irresistibilis*) and human will becomes the instrument of God's will (cooperates with God's will to do the good). This is the rhythm of the prevenient grace in which merit as the gift of God can be attained.¹²⁶ Yet, for Augustine, love is the power which really brings about the change in one's life, so much so that even faith must be accompanied by love.¹²⁷ In this, one experiences the righteousness of God, which, for Augustine, is part of the human being.¹²⁸ This is participation in the grace of God, in the work of Christ.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 167.

¹²⁵ Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei I*. Ibid., pp. 26-27.

¹²⁶ Gerhard Müller, *Die Rechtfertigungslehre*, Ibid., pp. 26-27., For Augustine baptism and prevenient grace are in connection.

¹²⁷ Augustine distinguished between two kinds of faith: the intellectual one and the justifying one. The latter accompanied by love is the true one. This covers the idea of „faith working through love“ /*fides quae per dilectionem operatur*/. See: Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei I*. Ibid., pp. 29-30.; Also: „Augustinus „theologia gratiae hat ihr Ziel in seiner theologia caritatis““, A reference to Anders Nygren in: Gerhard Müller, *Die Rechtfertigungslehre* Ibid., p. 28.

¹²⁸ This raises the question whether Augustine was influenced by Neoplatonism. Since grace is part of the human being it can be seen as the restoration of human nature. See: Vittorio Subilla, *Die Rechtfertigung aus Glauben, Gestalt und Wirkung vom Neuen Testament bis heute*. (Göttingen:

Augustine's political work is *De civitate Dei*¹²⁹ (413-426) in which he describes the tension between the the city of God (*civitas Dei*) and the city of the world (*civitas terrena*). For him in the city of God the source of social justice is divine justice, the divine will of making human beings just. The order of things should be in accordance with how God is ordering the world, with the will of God. Here one can observe a shift in Augustine's thinking, namely, while the righteousness of God in connection with God's grace is a participatory idea, it is relational in terms of social conditions. However, both refer to the possibility of considering Augustine's city of God as metanarrativ. This is why, I think, in Augustine's view a just society cannot exist without making all human relationships be in harmony with the divine will. This is the basic element of the *res publica*. It is the divine purpose that brings people together to "sharing common humanity, have interests in common".¹³⁰ By purely understanding all human rights as being based on the divine initiative, Augustine was able to orient human life towards the idea that those who are made just should live in compliance with God's intention in every field of life.

IV.2.2. From Augustine to Luther

The work of Augustine strongly influenced the theological debate over the question of justification. In fact, the basis of all theological endeavours was the idea that Augustine had formulated. The result of Augustine's reasoning was that since in

Vandenhoeck& Ruprecht 1981), pp. 51.53.; Also as McGrath states it: „For Augustine, man's righteousness in justification is something that is wrought by God within man, a *iustitia inhaerens* located within man and which can be said to be part of his being. Augustine interprets *iustificari* as *iustum facere*, understanding – *faciri* to be the unstressed form of *facere*.” See: Alister E. McGrath, Forerunners of the Reformation? A critical examination of the evidence for precursors of the reformation doctrine of justification in: Harvard Theological Review, 1982 April 75:2. pp. 219-243. 230.

¹²⁹ Augustinus, Aurelius, Isten városáról ford. Földváry Antal (Budapest: Kairosz, 2005)

¹³⁰ Miikka Roukanen, Theology of Social life in Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, in: Forschung zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, Adolf Martin Ritter (Hrsg.) Band 53. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1993), pp. 142-156. 150. Also: David C. Snyder, Augustine's Concept of Justice and Civil Government, in: Christian Scholar's Review 1985. Vol. XIV. No. 3. pp. 244-258. 253.;

Adam humanity has been sinful, justification is the act in which human beings are made righteous in the eyes of God, and which results in a fundamental change in human nature. On this basis justification was seen as a movement from sin to grace. The early Dominican school thought that this process had four stages¹³¹ in a rather intellectual sense. The early Franciscan school, however, i.e. Bonaventura, developed their understanding of this movement in a psychological manner.¹³² But this was only a methodological distinction. The righteousness of God was interpreted twofoldly: subjective righteousness (God is righteous, the general framework of revelation) and the objective righteousness (its source is God). This described the way God was dealing with human being. The first systematic consideration of the problem came from *Anselm of Canterbury*. The expression of *fides quaerens intellectum* describes his whole program. Anselm's intention was to provide an intellectual explanation of how God was at work as God gave righteousness to human beings. With this attempt speculative theology was launched. In two of his major works he tried to give meaning to God's justifying act: the *Proslogion*¹³³ (1079), and the *Cur Deus homo?*¹³⁴ (1098). The former is the ontological argument of Anselm for the existence of God, while the latter is the elaboration of the so-called satisfaction theory – *satisfaction*– of Anselm. His question of why it was necessary for God to become human is the key to understand God's righteousness. According to him, human beings were created in original justice, in which the will of God (*iustitia*) was prevalent. But human beings have sinned (state of *iniustitia*) so satisfaction must be given to God. However, being a sinner, one is not able to give that satisfaction to God. For this reason

¹³¹ processus iustificationis: infusio gratiae, motus liberi arbitrii, contritio, peccatorum remissio. See: Vittorio Subilla, *Die Rechtfertigung aus Glauben*, Ibid., pp. 58-59.

¹³² The work of grace in justification: purification, illumination and perfection of the soul. See: Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei I*. Ibid., p. 47.

¹³³ Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*, in: *A scholastic miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, The Library of Christian Classics ed. Eugene R. Fairweather (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, first published MCMLVI), pp. 69-94.

¹³⁴ Ansel of Canterbury, *Cur Deus Homo?* Ibid., pp. 100-184.

God had to give this satisfaction, because God was the only one who was able to do so. Since it should have been given by a human, the one who did give the satisfaction had to be a God-man. This is the reason why God became human in Jesus Christ by the incarnation. This act of God is the only possibility for human beings to be justified. This is the act of divine justice by which human *iniustitia* is put an end to.¹³⁵

Peter Abelard did not follow Anselm on this way. He could not accept the interpretation of the need for incarnation as either ransom or satisfaction. He thought that incarnation was only an exemplar as “necessary to instruct and stimulate mankind in the perfect love of God”.¹³⁶ In this grace obviously had a lesser role, and the individual capability and consciousness had more to add. This view was later reinforced by *Petrus Lombardus* in the *Sentences*.¹³⁷

In this period intellect began to gain central importance in trying to define how God’s grace was at work for human beings. The most influential figure in this thinking was *Thomas Aquinas*. His teaching – “*Gratia non tollit naturam sed supponit et perficit*”¹³⁸ – underlines that reason and Revelation, knowledge and faith belong together. For Aquinas the starting point is Adam as he stood before God after creation. In this state he possessed the *iustitia originalis* as a *donum supperadditum* by God to his nature, which through intelligence directed his life towards God. Adam lost this in the Fall so that human desire (*concupiscentia*) began to rule over human life so much that reason reached its limits by acting *contra naturam*.¹³⁹ This sin against na-

¹³⁵ Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei I*. Ibid., pp. 59. 75. Free will for Anselm is *potestat* which cannot be actualised only by God (*concursus simultaneous*).

¹³⁶ David Knowles, *The Age of Revival and Reform in: A History of Christian Doctrine*, In succession to the Earlier Work of G. P. Fisher, Ed. Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1980), p. 250.

¹³⁷ Peter Lombard, *The Four Books of Sentences (Selection)*, in: *A scholastic miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, Ibid., pp. 334-352.

¹³⁸ *Summa Theologica Iq. Ia. 8 ad 2*. Die deutsche Thomas Ausgabe: Vollständige, ungekürzte deutsch-lateinische Ausgabe des *Summa theologica*, hrsg. Vom Katholischen Akedemikerverband, Salzburg-Heidelberg-München, 1957.

¹³⁹ Walter Koehler, *Dogmengeschichte als Geschichte des Christlichen Selbstbewußtseins Von den Anfängen bis zur Reformation*, Dritte, unveränderte Auflage, (Zürich: Max Niehans Verlag 1951), p. 333. Human being also received the *lex naturalis* which is for ordering civil life.

ture is the source of original sin of which he thought the same as Augustine had, namely, that we are all sinners by being incorporated into Adam's sin. As the result of original sin, human beings had the inclination to sin.¹⁴⁰ In this way through Adam's will the *peccatum originale* actualizes in the *peccatum actualia* either as *mortalia* or *venialia*. In other words, *peccatum naturale* is actualized in *peccatum personale*. The solution to the problem is grace. For Aquinas it was important to understand how God's grace reaches the human being. According to him there are two kinds of grace: the *gratia increata*, which alters the human soul and comes from God, and makes the difference between sinner and justified; the *gratia creata* is the capability of the human soul to receive the *gratia increata*. This idea, however, does not make it clear if the *gratia creata* is the result of receiving the *gratia increata* or its condition. This is even more clearly presented in his terms *gratia habitualis* and *gratia gratis faciens*,¹⁴¹ which expresses that a 'mediated state' is needed in order to make God accept the sinner. This theory was harshly criticized later by William of Ockham.

Aquinas makes it more complex, in his description of faith. The source of faith for Aquinas is not the intellect but the human will in the form of love (*fides caritate formata*). At this point we come to an interesting synthesis of grace, faith and love as the source of justification. Aquinas was not really able to synthesize the contradictory elements of his theory but went even further. On an Augustinian basis (*gratia operans-gratia cooperans*) he raised the question whether human effort – *meritum* – is *condigno* or *congruo*. The *meritum de condigno*, in Aquinas' view was a merit which

¹⁴⁰ The original sin is the „verdorbener Habitus“ and the inclination consist of weakness, lack of knowledge, wickedness and yearning. This is where Aquinas' idea of baptism plays an important role. Since nature is under the influence of the Fall, so in baptism it is not liberated from desire but after someone has been baptised *concupiscentia* has less impact on his/her life. This obviously attributes a positive role to human will. See: Gerhard Müller, *Die Rechtfertigungslehre*, Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁴¹ Aquinas distinguished *gratia gratis data* as the series of God's act on human nature from the *gratia gratis faciens* as a state of grace in the human soul. According to Gaál, Aquinas developed a system in which it is difficult to identify the beginning and the end. See: Botond Gaál, *The truth of reason and the reality of the world*, (Debrecen: Fábíán Nyomdaipari Bt., 2002), p. 72.

one can refer to before God, and the *meritum de congruo* was a merit which is acknowledged only by mercy before God. For him both are at work in receiving grace as the sign of the *iustitia Dei*.¹⁴² Practicing the new life results from grasping and understanding the gospel as the *lex nova*.

Thus grace for Aquinas is not only God's work of justification alone but God's work together with the human will. This human readiness is basically a disposition for justification which is well summed up in the term '*facienti quod in se est Deus non denegat gratiam*'. By this term Aquinas indicates that both God and human beings have a role in justification. It is an obligation for humans to do what is in them so that God may do his part. This means that the disposition for receiving grace is helped by God as long as human beings do what is within since human effort in itself is not capable of capturing grace. Aquinas clarifies this by saying that God does not deny grace to those who do what is within them as long as it is moved by God.¹⁴³ Aquinas believes that the human situation is as such which is enabled by nature to be prepared for receiving justification. It is only later that Aquinas, as the representative of the Dominican school hold that justification meriting *de congruo* was not tenable, thus giving priority to God's grace, while for the Franciscan school it was possible. This idea of Aquinas was later, under the influence of the *via moderna*, modified so that God was understood to be under compulsion to give the first hints of grace. This means that it is not by human nature as such but by the act of God that one is able to hope for justification. The prominent representative of this is Gabriel Biel and his theology of *pactum*.¹⁴⁴ According to this there is a difference between the value of an act and the value which one attributes to that act. The source of the former is human

¹⁴² Aquinas believes that the *iustitia Dei* is in close connection with the intellect, which means that salvation can be based on rational grounds. In this he makes a clear distinction from the voluntarist understanding in which God's justice demands the necessary satisfaction for sin by Christ. This idea distinguishes him from Anselm, too. See: Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei I*. Ibid., pp. 63-64. Walter Koehler, *Dogmengeschichte*, Ibid., p. 334.

¹⁴³ McGrath, Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁴⁴ McGrath, Ibid., p. 89.

morals the source of the latter is God, more precisely the covenant that God made with humanity. This view, inevitably, supports the function of congruent merit.

As Thomas Aquinas developed his system based on the connection between reason and faith *Duns Scotus* worked out how these two could be separated from each other.¹⁴⁵ He was interested in the question of will, especially with regard to God, who, according to him, was not hindered in doing what God wanted to do. He thought God had the *potentia absoluta*, which pertains to possibilities of God open to actualization, and the *potentia ordinata* which is the set of chosen possibilities actualized. Through these one can know what God's plan is with regard to the world. In contrast to Aquinas, Duns Scotus argued for the primacy of the will of God. This may be referred to as *voluntarism*. For Scotus, human beings only have an inclination to sin, but the human will has remained free, so it has the potential to change the state of things. This is a rather optimistic view of human beings in which grace appears in the form of charity. All this, however, can be viewed as rather neo-pelagian.

In allowing positive role to human capacity in justification Duns Scotus was not the only one to have an optimistic view of human nature. *Nominalism*¹⁴⁶ or the *via moderna* was of the same opinion. One of the most prominent figures of this train of thought was *William of Ockham*. The distinction between God's absolute and or-

¹⁴⁵In W. Koehler's opinion Aquinas made the synthesis of reason and faith on an Aristotelian base, while Duns Scotus made a diasthesis. Walter Koehler, *Dogmengeschichte*, Ibid., pp. 342-343.

¹⁴⁶Nominalism was first used to take an anti-realist position against terminism, on the question of universals. Nominalism claimed that there was no objective reality as such but only abstractions. As a conclusion, in Ockhamist understanding being a sinner is not a reality but only a nomen. For Ockham it is not possible for reason to understand what is beyond reason. According to nominalism the will of God is the principle of all justice. See: Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei I*. Ibid., pp. 167-168
Here we are to notice that the teaching about justification is in relation to the understanding of predestination as it was always the concern of medieval theology. It was first Augustine who considered the question with the idea that human being's temporal election is the result of God's eternal election in which God's wisdom plays special part as to differentiate predestination and fatalism. However, Augustine did not make the conclusion which was in special interest later that some determined for eternal life and some for damnation. In relation to justification, as Oberman argues, nominalism rejected that "the predestination of the elect in God's eternal council precedes the foreseen good works of the elect...and transformed into a doctrine of "prescientia", the doctrine of foreknowledge of God of the future behavior of both the elect and the damned". Heiko A. Oberman, "Iustitia Christi" and "Iustitia Dei": Luther and the Scholastic Doctrines of Justification in: *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 59. 1966 January, Number 1. pp. 1-26. 4-5.

dered power was the great breakthrough of Ockham. For him the *potentia Dei ordinata* and *potentia Dei absoluta* are not contradictions and nor do they make a dual system in order to divide the power of God into two. Partly this distinction was only the recognition of what God is able to do, and what God does in justification.

For Ockham original sin is the imputation of the first sin to all generations.¹⁴⁷ This is the reason why God refuses to accept sinful human beings (*non-acceptatio divina*). This is however not the scholastic view of *caecitas iustitiae originalis*. For individuals it is the act of will that causes one to be a sinner. On this basis sin has no reality, but is only a concept, a *nomen*. As the result of this humans are able to fulfil God's command. When it does not happen it is in God's power to refuse the acceptance. This idea is very much connected to what the term *meritum de condigno* expresses. The result is that grace is nothing but acceptance of the human being, the *acceptatio divina* which one can grasp as *gratia infusa*. This theory of acceptance, however, reinforces two points that are important in reformation theology: justification is God's free acceptance of the sinner, and the priority of the Word of God.

IV.2.3. Martin Luther

IV.2.3.1 Church and Society: a historical embeddedness

By the 16th century the historical circumstances had become very different from what we see in the earlier centuries. Evidence of this is the growing influence of theologians of the time. Changes and questions in the life of the church influenced this period as well, especially the ecclesiastical and civic problems of the German nation, the still present conciliarism and the significant intellectual enterprise of humanism. These factors openly necessitated a change in the life of the church as inten-

¹⁴⁷ Bernhard Lohse argues that in Ockham's understanding original sin is not a biological term but a divine decision of the will. See: Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), pp. 19-20. 55.

tions were made to implement amendments through the struggle against the corruption of the Church and the general estrangement from God. As part of this we see the intentions pertaining to reform the lifestyle of friars.¹⁴⁸ However, not only the spiritual life of the church was in focus but the church hierarchy as well as the work of Wycliff and Hus show, who said that it was God, who has to be served instead of Rome. They were both concerned with the moral status of the Church while, as we will see later, Luther was more concerned with theological questions.¹⁴⁹

Even if we take into account that Luther was not primarily concerned with social problems, he as well as Wyclif and Hus, attacked Church morality and teaching. The difference between them, as Luther spelled out, was more in purpose.

As we consider the struggle for reform, we face a strong eschatological understanding, which Luther himself regarded as very influential in his thinking important about the approaching of the Kingdom of God. This resulted in a movement in which the direction was clear: Luther was moving from past to the future. It is at this point that the question discussed so long arises, namely, what the relationship between the Middle Ages and modernity is, or, rather between Luther and modernity. There are some who argue that the Middle Ages ended with Luther and modernity had started at that point. Nevertheless, it is hard to draw the line so sharply. Instead, we must say that Luther was standing on both sides as he was presenting the inner connection between the Middle Ages and modernity.

The state of the German nation was also decisive when Luther worked out his ideas. 1518 was the date for ending its conflict with Venice which had political and

¹⁴⁸ Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*. (Doubleday: Image Books 1992), pp. 50-53.

¹⁴⁹ WAT I. no. 624.; 294, 19-23; Oberman refers to it. Oberman, *ibid.* p. 54. "Life is as evil among us as among the papists, thus we do not argue about life but about doctrine. Whereas Wyclif and Hus attacked the immoral lifestyle of the papacy, I challenge primarily its doctrine." However, others argue that in the life of the public Luther was more concerned with the moral failings of than with social needs. See: W.D.J. Cargill Thompson, *The Political Thought of Martin Luther*, Ed. Dr. Philip Broadhead. (Sussex: The Harvester Press 1948). Chapter X. Luther's attitude to social questions. pp. 163-169. 164.

economical aspects, and the fight for controlling the seas. So the main concern of the Augsburg Reichstag 1518 summoned by Maximilian I was whether taxes should be spend on protecting Venice from the Turks. The papal delegation could not exert sufficient pressure on the other delegates since many were experiencing the misuse of their money. They were more eager to ease the burden put on them by the Church, which Frederich the Wise himself fought for, too. He was not keen on attacking the Turks either, so he refused to support Cajetan's suggestion¹⁵⁰ to divide the income into equal parts between the Pope and the Duke. This was a strong stand in support of Luther's intention, which Frederich the Wise strengthened by his religious convictions and his serious military power.¹⁵¹ With the death of Maximilian the circumstances changed for both Rome and the Dukes. Charles I became the king of the German Empire and the unification of the church turned to be impossible.

Luther's personal journey was also a significant historical fact as far as the historical background is concerned. Luther grew up in a family where the parents were paying lot of attention to their child's spiritual and intellectual growth, which later very much influenced his life. They wanted the best possible education for their child and the best profession to live by. It was to the greatest disappointment that Luther joined the monastery instead of studying law. The Erfurt years were also influential in Luther's life as he was introduced to nominalism and humanism. The latter had a great impetus on the movement towards reformation as it emphasized the reading of the Bible in the original language. However, Luther was not able to accept the legitimacy of humanism as such, and worked out his own argument¹⁵² by using known traditions.¹⁵³ In addition to these Luther's relation to mysticism was also very influ-

¹⁵⁰ Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, *Ibid.*, pp. 110-115.

¹⁵¹ This placed Frederich the Wise into the position to protect Luther after the papal excommunication in Worms, 1521.

¹⁵² Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*, *Ibid.*, pp. 123-124.

¹⁵³ According to Lohse these were: Occamism, Augustine (sin and grace), Staupitz (discipleship and salvation), humanism, mysticism, Bernard of Clairvaux. See: B. Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, *Ibid.*, pp. 22-27.

ential¹⁵⁴ and powerful in his entire work. The mysticism, since Bernard of Clairvoux had been advocating the need for being in the deepest possible connection with God and the need for receiving illumination by staying away from the ways of the world. This need did not have speculative connotations but it was understood in the context of *fides qua creditur* and *fides quae creditur*, connecting the experience and the confession of faith. Nonetheless, mysticism was not same as mystical theology which distinguished between true and false mysticism.¹⁵⁵

These three factors, the state of the Church, the socio-political situation and Luther's personal journey induced the process which we usually refer to as the Reformation. The situation of the church, the transformation of theological thinking, geopolitical concerns and the effect of humanism cried for resolution. Luther started to work in this line since he has foreseen that certain changes had to result in the life of the church.¹⁵⁶ This is the reason why Luther was not enthusiastic about those theological ideas which by overemphasizing certain elements wanted to engender social change, such as the eschatologically stressed initiation of Thomas Müntzer. Luther's main purpose was to defend his theses and defending them made them known all over Europe. Since Luther was aware of the fact that the moral restitution of the Church was possible only if guidelines were laid down, he chose the way of clarifying theological questions which result from the concerns of the whole church. Luther was devoted to formulate the basis of an existential change both for the life of the Church and of the society. In this respect Luther can surely be considered as the beginner of modernity, since his theological clarification created a sound basis for un-

¹⁵⁴ To investigate the relationship between Luther and mysticism is of special interest in the Finnish Luther research.

¹⁵⁵ See: Heiko A. Oberman, *The Reformation – Roots and Ramifications*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), pp. 77-90.

¹⁵⁶ In Oberman's view the fact that Luther's usage of the word 'reformer' expresses agreement or disagreement underlines this. See: *Ibid.*, p. 57. footnote.

derstanding human life not in uniformity but in unity with others, as they all agree on the relevance of that basis for human life.

IV.2.3.2 Luther on justification

In this context Luther believed that the teaching about justification was the central theme of Christian thinking.¹⁵⁷ Luther claimed that this was the central theological reflection of all kind. He realized the deep need for recapturing the meaning of justification as early as he dealt with the Book of Psalms and began to understand the traditional terms coming from the Middle Ages in a new way. In his lectures on the Psalms he gave a radical definition of sin.¹⁵⁸ Sin to him was always *coram Deo* which is a very severe burden for a human being and compels one to confess it to God. From this follows that in contradistinction to Ockhamism, nobody is able to keep the commandments of God by nature. Thus sin is not weakness or deficiency, but a human condition, a perversion of the created condition. This is the reason why for Luther the reality of sin is radical and *concupiscentia* denotes not simply a desire but it is the *peccatum radicale*.¹⁵⁹ This radicality of sin, however, is not only a condition in relation to God but is a condition in relation to other human beings as well – *coram mundo*. Thus sin as a relation conditioning human life, is the subject of change. This change is not in the human potential, not even by keeping the com-

¹⁵⁷ WA 39 I. 205. 1-5. „Articulus iustificationis est magister et princeps, dominus, rector et iudex super omnia genera doctrinarum, qui conservat et gubernat omnem doctrinam ecclesiasticam et erigit conscientiam nostram coram Deo.”

¹⁵⁸ WA 56. 277. 12. LW Vol. 25. 265.

¹⁵⁹ WA 56. 356. 5-6. As we have already seen earlier for scholasticism original sin is the weakness of human nature, lack of original righteousness, which becomes real in the actual sin of the individual. For Luther original sin is being a sinner, which expresses the continuous desire of human to be in God's place. Sin as a result of this, is *amor sui*, self-love, expressed in other term as *homo incurvatus in seipsum*. WA 56,304,25-29; WA 56,305,1; WA18,504,10f „Original sin which is inborn and evil continually cleaves to us, making us guilty of eternal death (...) for original sin is a root and inborn evil (...) a kind of continuous motion or entelechy producing its own effects” LW Vol. 34. pp. 164-165. 181. „The disputation concerning righteousness.” This way Luther rejected the idea that baptism was for the eradication of original sin. Original sin for Luther is a condition so that „sin is removed so that it is not imputed”. This is an Augustinian understanding of original sin. Also see: Lohse, Martin Luther's Theology, Ibid., pp. 248-251. Obviously, Luther also rejected the belief that will would have any effect in justification. LW Vol. 34. 184.

mandments.¹⁶⁰ The only help comes from God who removes sin through Christ – *solus Christus*,¹⁶¹ so that humankind receives the justifying grace. This grace, justifying grace, is the source of alien righteousness, the righteousness from ‘outside’ – *iustitia aliena*¹⁶² – which makes one righteous. Luther thought that this *iustitia* does not eliminate sin. As long as one lives one remains a justified sinner, as Luther formulates “*simul iustus, simul peccator*”.¹⁶³ In order to express the same dialectic of the human life Luther employs Augustine’s distinction of *in re/in spe*.¹⁶⁴ Thus Luther makes human life future oriented in the sense that the real fruit of justification can only be attained as one hopes for it.¹⁶⁵ In this view human life is one in motion, in a process.¹⁶⁶ Justification is by *sola gratia* as the beginning of knowing God’s way for us. Luther follows the argument that as one confronts God in his judgment, one must justify God in his word so that acceptance of what happens is to be realized through faith. In other words, “unter iustitia Dei ist nicht die iustitia Dei activa zu verstehen, durch die Gott fordert und straft, sondern die iustitia Dei passiva, durch die er ver-

¹⁶⁰ WA 56, 252, 20-23.; LW 25, p. 239. This marks clearly that law and gospel are different but does not promote antinomianism. “Idcirco tanquam opera nostra sint opera legis estimemus, et humiliter peccatores simus in sola misericordia eius iustificari cupientes.” Also: Steven E. Ozment, *Homo Spiritualis: A comparative study of the anthropology of Johannes Tauler, Jean Gerson and Martin Luther (1509-16) in the context of their theological thought in: Studies In Medieval And Reformation Thought* ed. Heiko A. Oberman Vol. VI. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), pp.121-130.

¹⁶¹ WA 3, 174, 13. „Ergo Nemo ex se, sed per solum Christum salvus erit”

¹⁶² With this definition Luther eliminated the scholastic term of *habitus*, which referred to human quality as a means to justification. „Now it is certain that Christ or the righteousness of Christ, since it is outside of us and foreign to us, cannot be laid hold of by our works.” LW Vol. 34. 153. 27. „To be outside of us means not to be out of our power” LW Vol. 34. 178.

¹⁶³ Martin Luther, *Vorlesung über den Römerbrief 1515/1516*, (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1935), p. 169. Rom 4,7. „Therefore, whoever is justified is still sinner; and yet he is considered fully and perfectly righteous by God who pardons and is merciful.” LW Vol. 34. p.153. 24.

¹⁶⁴ WA 39, I, 298, 5-11. „Nos sumus regenerati in spem, non in rem vitae, non vitam, ut ait Petrus, sed postea erit in re vita perfecta, non in spe, sed interim, quia credimus in filium, sumus iusti in spe, non sumus re ipsa salvi, sed in spe tantum.”

¹⁶⁵ In Lohse’s view this was the main point of Luther’s understanding of justification. „...Luther’s statements on justification are to be seen against the horizon of the last judgment. He had no interest in reflecting on a psychological event within the person being justified, and non in the question as to how, if the will is bound, the person participates in it. What concerned him is how one may appear before God in the judgment.” Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, *Ibid.*, p. 259.

¹⁶⁶ WA 39 I, 83, 16-17. „Iustificari enim hominem sentimus, hominem nondum esse iustum, sed esse in ipso motu seu cursu ad iustitiam” LW 34, p. 152. „For we perceive that a man who is justified is not yet a righteous man, but is in the very movement or journey toward righteousness.” This can be considered as a reference to sanctification.

gibt“.¹⁶⁷ Therefore justification for Luther is the state of being declared righteous by God.

With this awareness, Luther clearly declared that justification cannot be attained through works but only in faith – *sola fide*. Faith for Luther is also a means by which righteousness, that is *extra nos* and not *in nobis* (Augustine), is imputed to the human being. Faith is not one of the human works but the expression of one’s trust in God. Faith excludes good works as the means of justification so that, works can only and must follow true faith. In this sense faith is deeply connected with God’s promise to which Luther refers as *iustitia in spe*. Faith is the response of gratitude to the divine act in Christ.¹⁶⁸ Thus, in faith one entrusts human life to God, and faith sums up the human condition in its new relation to God and to others. Faith is not the end of all things, but the road which leads, to the experience of promise fulfilled,¹⁶⁹ and which signals *Christus in nobis*, and *Christus pro nobis* as it is attested in the Bible.¹⁷⁰ This obviously meant that Luther could not accept the idea that there was any potential in the human will for the attainment of those things which lead towards justification. As Erasmus advocated the freedom of the will in his work titled *De libero arbitrio* (1524), Luther denied this in his work *De servo arbitrio* (1525).

The importance of Scripture for Luther is undeniable. It is true especially in relation to Rome, where the interpretation of the Scripture was due to the “teaching of-fice”. Luther was more of the opinion that Scripture provided the possibility of a critical examination of tradition, dogmas and teaching since it contained the Word of God. Thus Scripture is a critical source, from which God’s gracious act in Christ

¹⁶⁷ Gerhard Müller, *Die Rechtfertigungslehre*, Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁶⁸ WA 4, 172, 37; 173, 1. „Et fides eius est tunc confessio et decor, quem ipse spiritualiter induit. Quia per fidem eum confitemur et honoramus atque decoramus”. LW Vol. 11. p. 317.

¹⁶⁹ LW Vol. 34, 160. „There are two teachings, law and promise; and law and work are correlatives, just as promise and faith are. Therefore, we ought not to call faith works, but faith the faith of promise.”

¹⁷⁰ WA 18, 606, 11-12.; LW 33, p. 26; Luther asks in the *Boundage of the Will*, „Tolle Christum e scripturis, quid amplius in illis invenies?” Christ is the decisive content of the Scriptures.

could be known. Since this nurtures faith it is *sola scriptura*, alone the Bible that is to be maintained as the source of the knowledge of who God is for us and, therefore, it is in faith that the authority of the Scripture is expressed.¹⁷¹

Earlier a reference was made to Luther's rejection of justification attained via the works of the law.¹⁷² This closely relates to how Luther considered the role of the law in Christian life. For Luther it was important to see the difference between the gospel and law without failing to see the connection between them. As he argued for the need of the law in his controversy with the antinomians, he gave a clear view on the function of the law. The fact that considering the task of the law is connected to justification was shown earlier by Augustine in his *De Spiritu et Littera*, in which he dealt with the relationship between the law and grace. For Luther the distinction between law and gospel was also crucial in discussing justification. He meant that the law was significant. While maintaining that through law none is able to receive justification, he believed that the law could not be separated from the gospel¹⁷³ since what the gospel declared to be the grace of God was at the same time a judgment on human sin. Luther distinguished between two uses of the law (*duplex usus legis*). One was the *usus politicus* to order human, civic life, the other is the *usus theologicus* which makes us aware of our sins. Luther basically argued that although the law does not lead us to justification it is still necessary.

In this context Luther's opinion on secular authority has far reaching consequences. This theory later became known as the *Two Kingdoms Doctrine*.¹⁷⁴ Consid-

¹⁷¹ Karl Barth had a similar approach to the question. See: Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1978), pp. 28-51. 'The strange New world Within The Bible'.

¹⁷² WA 39 I, 559, 11-14. "...se non posse huic legi satisfacere, incipit desperare, odisse Deum, blasphemare Deum"

¹⁷³ WA 39 I, 416, 8-14. „Lex et Evangelium non possunt nec debent separari, sicut nec poenitentia et remissio peccatorum.”

¹⁷⁴ This terminology was first used by Karl Barth in 1922. Karl Barth, *Das Neue Werk 4*. (1922) This is a review of Althaus' book titled *Religiöser Sozialismus: Grundfragen der christlichen Sozialethik* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1921)

ering the question of both civil/political and religious authority Luther draws the conclusion that these forces have different orientations. In reflecting on the state of the Church he notes that the accent should be put on the reign of the Redeemer through faith, love and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believers. In the civic order, according to Luther, the Creator reigns over the world through the emperor and the law maintains political order. Thus the political world and the community of Jesus Christ are different in terms of relations.¹⁷⁵ Nonetheless, the Creator and the Redeemer is at the same time Lord over both realms and the Christians are members of both. Therefore, if Christians hold worldly power they do not live for themselves but for others. They act as the well-being of the others requires.¹⁷⁶ For one who is justified it is not only the Christian community but the everyday community with others in the world which demands acts in accordance with the glory of God to the advantage of one's fellow human beings. This calls for the very sensible social direction in Luther's thinking. This perception led to Luther's fight against both religious and civil extremist tendencies.¹⁷⁷

As we can see, for Luther living under the sign of the cross means taking the implications of the cross seriously – *CRUX sola est nostra theologia (WA 5,176,32.)*. The reality of the cross is just as radical as sin but is in sharp contrast to it. A theologian of the cross cannot be overwhelmed by resignation, but is supposed to live a life

¹⁷⁵ The two kingdoms have a strong relational character. As Nestingen argues: "Thus...the two kingdoms are not two institutions or organizations but two different relations, correlated to law and gospel." James Arne Nestingen, *The Two Kingdoms Distinction: An Analysis with Suggestion*. in: *World&World*, Volume XIX, Number 3. Summer 1999. pp. 268-275. 270. See also: David C. Steinmetz, *Luther in context*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p.118.

¹⁷⁶ *WA 7, 38, 6-10. LW Vol. 45, pp.81-129; Temporal Authority: To What extent it Should Be Obeyed*. See also: Edward F. Cranz, *An essay on the Development of Luther's Thought on Justice, Law and Society*, (Mifflintown, PA: Siegler Press, 1998); Especially pp. 374-375.; Thomas A. Brady, *Luther's Social Teaching and The Social Order of His Age* in: *The Martin Luther Quincentennial*, Ed. Gerhard Dünnhaupt (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985), pp. 270-290. Also: Brent W. Sockness, *Luther's Two Kingdoms Revisited. A response to Reinhold Niebuhr's criticism of Luther* in: *The Journal of Religious Ethics*. 1991:7. pp. 93-110. 98.

¹⁷⁷ Paul P. Kuennening, *Luther and Müntzer: Contrasting Theologies Regard to Secular Authority within the context of the German Peasant Revolt*, *Journal of Church and State*, Spring 1987., Vol 29. See also: Iserloh, Erwin, *Geschichte und Theologie der Reformation im Grundriß*, (Verlag Bonifatius-Druckerei Paderborn:1982), pp. 52-70.

of endurance with adhearance to the radical message of the cross.¹⁷⁸ Christian life is hidden in Christ through faith which shines over its own reality.¹⁷⁹ The one who acts is not determined by his/her own deeds but by being called by God in Christ. The consequence is deeds in accordance with God's call. Luther's understanding of justification points to faith that works through love and not faith formed by love as he makes a distinction between the power of God and the human effort on the one hand, and God's deeds and ours on the other. Understanding sin as non-relation means that justification by grace through faith denotes a relation. The primary place where this is to be carried out is the church, which is the community of faith through the gospel. This is the place where people are together to hear the Word of God. This act binds them together as the community of love. As the Word of God is in the center of the church it means a common point of orientation in human life as Luther's view on justification shows. By saying that new life, community with God, honest fellowship with others is present only through Christ as the sinner is justified, Luther places emphasis on the common story and the need of the commonly accepted story of salvation in Christ. While in the time before Luther justification was perceived as one thing, which was centered around the capabilities of human being, Luther decentered this by giving primacy to the Word of God, and what God had done in Christ. Decentering at the same time meant to be centered to the one appropriate solution to questions of the human condition. Thus God's revelation in Christ instructs our compre-

¹⁷⁸ See: Hermann Dembowski, Martin Luther. Heino Falcke zum sechzigsten Geburtstag. in: *Neu Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 31. Band 1989. pp. 125-140. 137-138. „die theologia crucis die Theologie der Liebe Gottes, die Mensch und Welt bestimmen.“ For a good elaboration of Luther's opinion on theologia crucis and good works in the Heidelberg Disputation (1518) see: Gerhard O. Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Refelections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation 1518*, (Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge UK: W.B. Eerdmans, 1997)

¹⁷⁹ As Oswald Bayer formulates: „Justifying faith is to be perceived according to its ontological significance. Faith is not something that is added to the human being. Rather, the human being's itself in faith. Faith is the utter reliance and dependence on the giver of my life – and all that is necessary for it. Faith is the posture of both waiting for (Ps. 104: 27 f; Ps. 145: 15 f) and stretching out towards that which grants and preserves life. This posture is simultaneously my being: reliance and dependence on protection. Created out of pure goodness and preserved out of pure mercy, my being continues to be protected against danger.“ in: Oswald Bayer, *The Doctrine of Justification and Ontology*, NZSTh, 43. Bd. pp. 44-53. 46.

hension of human reality as a reference point. In this view, Luther gave a new interpretation of justification in accentuating a God-centered awareness as the source of human renewal instead of trusting in specific and different human abilities, even if those are ready to accept God. Thus for Luther the solution is not so much in the power of personal endeavour but in the relation set anew in Christ. This is the *vita passiva* nurtured from *iustitia passiva*.¹⁸⁰

IV.2.3.3 Towards the reformed doctrine

Luther's conception gained a wide acceptance in a short time. The considerable theological discussion over the question of justification received much attention among contemporary scholars. In his *Loci communes* (1521) Philip Melancthon deals with the question of justification in which he incorporated Luther's view. However, for Melancthon it was important to distinguish between the act of pronouncing someone righteous *forensically*¹⁸¹ (justification) and what followed (the internal process), which described sanctification,¹⁸² as it was fully developed in the *Apologia* (1530). Thus Melancthon emphasizes more than Luther does the forensic character of justification. For Augustine it is non-imputation of sin, for Luther it is alien righteousness in addition and for Melancthon it is "radical" imputation that covers the content of justification. Hence, faith for him has a very strong intellectual charac-

¹⁸⁰ For a well elaborated treatment of *vita passiva* in Luther's thinking see: Christian Link, *Vita Passiva. Rectfertigung als Lebensvorgang*; in: *EvTh* 44, 1984, pp. 315-351. Also: *Handbuch Systematischer Theologie* (Hrsg. Calr Heinz Rechtschaw) Band 1. Oswald Bayer, *Theologie*, (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1994), pp. 42-49.

¹⁸¹ „...sed gratis iustificentur propter Christum per fidem, cum credunt se in gratiam recipi et peccata remitti propter Christum...” *Confessio Augustana*, 1530, Artikel IV: De iustificatione in: *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht 1982), p. 56.; „Iustificatio significat remissionem peccatorum et reconciliationem seu acceptationem personae as vitam aeternam”. Philip Melancthon, *De gratia et iustificatione* in: *Loci praecipui theologici*, 1559. Melancthon's Werke in Auswahl, (Studienausgabe) Hrsg. von Robert Stupperich, Bd. II/2, hg. von Hans Engelland, (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1980), p. 359, 10.

¹⁸² Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: a history of the Christian doctrine of justification Vol II. From 1500 to the present day*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 22-23. 25. „*propter Christum per fidem*”. Also: Alister McGrath, *Forerunners of the Reformation? A critical examination of the evidence for precursors of the reformation doctrine of justification* in: *Harvard Theological Review*, 1982 April 75:2. pp. 219-243. 227.

ter,¹⁸³ which highlights knowledge. Melancton has a rather positive view of the law as his idea of *tertius usus legis* implies, while the Finnish reformator Agricola, i.e. believed in the antinomian view that “repentance was a consequence of the gospel, not the law.”¹⁸⁴ Osiander, however, did not accept Melancton’s view but said that Christ’s righteousness must be attained as it arises from Christ’s divinity and not from humanity. Melancton did not share Luther’s opinion concerning the role of free will as something which has no power to dispose a human being for receiving God’s righteousness. Melancton surely believed that one is in connection with Christ if she/he wishes to be. Thus human will is in cooperation with God and the Holy Spirit in order to attain justification.¹⁸⁵

IV.2.3.4 Huldrych Zwingli and John Calvin

IV.2.3.4.1 Zwingli¹⁸⁶

Zwingli is one of the distinguished representatives of the reformed thought. His work was strongly influenced by his illness during the time of the plague at Zurich. According to him, one person cannot attain proper knowledge of the other. One expresses himself/herself in the desires which make him/her act. This is mostly obvious in *selfishness, egotism* and becomes real in the act of Adam.¹⁸⁷ For him original sin has a very strong relational and moral character and as such it is full of immorality. For Zwingli, what motivates human action is *self-love*, which conditions human life

¹⁸³ Albrecht Peters, *Rechtfertigung*, Handbuch Systematischer Theologie (Hrsg. Carl Heinz Ratschow) Band 12. (Gerd Mohn: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1990), pp. 67-70.

¹⁸⁴ Alister E. McGrath. *Iustitia Dei II*. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁸⁵ Gerhard Müller, *Die Rechtfertigungslehre*, *Ibid.*, p. 61. See also: Oswald Bayer, *Freedom? The Anthropological Concepts in Luther and Melancthon Compared in: Harvard Theological Review* 91: 4 (1998), pp. 373-387. See especially pp. 379-381.

¹⁸⁶ For an introduction to Zwingli’s work see: Neuser, Wilhelm H., *Die Reformatorische Wende bei Zwingli* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977); Walter Köhler, *Huldrych Zwingli*, (Zürich: Benziger, 1984)

¹⁸⁷ Zwingli Ulrik, *COMMENTARIUS vagyis Az Igaz És A Hamis Vallás Magyarázata*, (Budapest: Hornyánszky Viktor és cs. És Kir. Udvari Könyvnyomdája, 1905) *Újranyomva*: (Budapest: Kálvin János Társaság, 1999), p. 41.

as long as it does not change.¹⁸⁸ This condition is the reason why in such a human life every action is determined by personal interest.¹⁸⁹ Zwingli distinguishes two kinds of sin: *sin as sickness*, which is the original sin realized in selfishness, and *sin as trespassing the law*. From this definition, which obviously points toward a moral understanding of sin, it is clear, that Zwingli is not advocating antinomianism. He believes that what needs to be done in relation to the other is only possible by keeping the law which is freed by love through the gracious act of Christ on the cross.¹⁹⁰ At the same time, this compels us to respond by abandoning self-love and taking on the love of the other. Hence, it marks a new life that is just as relational as sin. Zwingli understands the law to be very useful. He stresses its use by saying that law is not what appears to be the cause of sin, but it is what makes us conscious of our sinful condition.¹⁹¹ Zwingli holds the view that human life is a continuous struggle between living a life of sin and living a life of love.

The life of sin is characterized by the incapability of attaining proper self-knowledge. However, it is necessary to have self-knowledge in order to live the life of love. Zwingli also holds the idea of *solus Christus* by saying that it is only Christ, who initiates repentance, through which one can attain self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is conditioned by sensing God's mercy and by the fear of God's justice. Here, in the tension between these two feelings emerges Christ as the solution.¹⁹² The source of knowing Christ as the solution is the Bible and the way to it is to accept it

¹⁸⁸ Commentarius, p. 49. „...az ember minden tetteinek indító oka az önszeretet s míg ember meg nem változik, így is lesz az mindig.”

¹⁸⁹ Commentarius, p. 47. „Szilárd, megingathatatlan igazság: hogy az embernek minden gondolatja bűn mindaddig, a míg mint ember gondolkozik, mert az ember mindent magára vonatkoztat, egyedül a maga érdekében buzgólkodik, magáról előnyösebben gondolkozik, mint más felől. Még akkor is, midőn látja, hogy őt mások sok tekintetben fölülmulják, még akkor is olyan tulajdonságokat fedez fel magában, a melyeknél fogva bizonyos elsőséget tulajdonít magának, hogy ne legyen dicsőség nélkül”

¹⁹⁰ Commentarius, pp. 96-99. „A törvénytől nem úgy szabadítatunk meg, hogy nem tartozunk azokat cselekedni, a melyeket a törvény akar (...) a szeretet a törvénynek feloldása”

¹⁹¹ Commentarius, p. 101. „...nehogy valaki abban a véleményben legyen, mintha a törvény rontana, mérgezne meg mindent (...) a törvény előbbi állapotomra tett figyelmessé engem”.

¹⁹² Commentarius, p. 82.

in faith and with hope as the essence of Christianity.¹⁹³ Thus righteousness received in faith is the opposite of righteousness arising from the self. Zwingli did not accept the view that merits are justifying as preparation for being disposed to receive grace. Nonetheless, Zwingli places merit in the context of providence. According to him, God's providence dismisses both free will and merit.¹⁹⁴ Hence, the human will has no role in justification. However, it is remarkable that he attributes priority to providence, because in this way he claims that Christian life is to be understood in a grand context applicable to everybody.

It is by the grace of God that one is justified. Zwingli does not neglect good works as the result of life lived by love. However, it does not turn into mere moralism. The way to live a life by love is to identify faith with love.¹⁹⁵ Moral integrity created by the saving act of God calls for seeking the well-being of the other. This is the right order of believing.

This view is closely connected with what Zwingli thought about public life. He asked the question what the difference between state and church was. He explained that a member of the church could not be a person who did not believe in Christ, while everybody, even the nonbelievers were members of the state. Another difference Zwingli points out is that state and church are ruled over by different powers. In the state it is the coercive force of the law (the so-called second use), while in the church it is the love of Christ, on which the health of the state depends as well.¹⁹⁶ He

¹⁹³ Commentarius, pp. 87. 151. „A keresztyén kegyesség lényege nem bölcsekedés, tudomány, okoskodás, hanem a hit(...)A keresztyén hit pedig valóságos, érezhető dolog, melyet a hívők lelkükben úgy éreznek, mint az egészséget (...) a hit nem tudomány, nem vélemény, avagy képzelődés, hanem valóság, melyet az ember szívében érez, s mely akkor keletkezik, midőn az ember a maga ereje felett kétségbeesve, az Istenbe veti bizodalját, növekedik pedig és abszolut erőre akkor tesz szert a hit, midőn az ember magát megvetve, teljesen az Isten könyörületességére bízva s abban a Krisztus érdemeiért feltétlenül bízunk.” Also p. 244.

¹⁹⁴ Commentarius, p. 239. „Az isteni gondviselés a szabad akaratot, de egyszersmind az érdemet is eltörli...”

¹⁹⁵ Commentarius, p. 244. „A hitnek és a szeretetnek egy ugyanazon dolognak kell lennie.” This can be summed up: the righteousness of God is our righteousness.

¹⁹⁶ Commentarius, p. 263. To this believers should make themselves ready, too. As Zwingli states: „a hívő nem követeli a hívőtől, hogy javait vele megoszssa, de azért minden hívő úgy rendezí javait, hogy szükség esetén a segélyre képes legyen.” Ibid., p. 264. „Miután pedig az evangéliom képes

sees the same problem in the life of the public as he described by the term sin-sickness which is self-love. According to him, nothing gives more courage to live out self-love than the knowledge that it will not have any consequences.

As one can see, in Zwingli's thought, justification and the consequences of justification are at the core of understanding human reality as one is changed through the act of Jesus Christ. He regards the human self as something that concern is to live in moral integrity. Zwingli points to the necessity of discovering the new self whose self-understanding is always expressed in relation to the same center. This is not a simple moralism for Zwingli but the essence of human life.¹⁹⁷

IV.2.3.4.2. John Calvin

IV.2.3.4.2.1. Calvin in context¹⁹⁸

Calvin is the most prominent figure of the second generation of the reformation period. Through his father he was also closely affiliated with ecclesiastical life. As Luther, Calvin had an encounter with humanism in his years in Paris.¹⁹⁹ As it was in the case of Luther, too, humanism influenced Calvin's thinking deeply. However, by the middle of 1500s the situation in the course of the Reformation has changed. With the beginning of 1517 for Luther the course of the Reformation was a dispute with scholastic theology mostly in an academic setting and it included the clarification of the teaching of justification. By the 1520's the Reformation turned its attention to church life and to society. This meant in theological terms a shift from sote-

szertetet ébreszteni, következik, hogy az az állam a legerősebb, a melyben nemcsak a törvények jók, hanem a polgárok is jószívűek, nemeslelkűek."

¹⁹⁷ Heinrich Bullinger presents a similar understanding as he emphasizes the need of confirmation of justification in action. Along this line, Bucer also focuses on the ethical dimension of justification in pointing out the distinction between the *iustificatio impii* and *iustificatio pii*. More in: McGrath, *Iustitia Dei II*. Ibid., pp. 34-36.

¹⁹⁸ Neuser, Wilhelm, Calvin (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1971)

¹⁹⁹ A. G. Dickens, *Reformation and Society in the Sixteenth Century Europe*, (Thames and Hudson Ltd: 1966), pp. 165-188.

riological questions to ecclesiological questions,²⁰⁰ and can be seen in Calvin's later work, as he emphasizes not only justification but sanctification, in relation to each other. His study of law had a great impact on his work through what mainly characterized the French education of law, the term *ad fontes*. Calvin's method of reading the Bible is closely related to these two, namely, to humanism and to the notion of *ad fontes*, so that building a connection between the Bible as a text and its listeners became one of the most urgent concerns for him.²⁰¹ This genuinely influenced his teaching on justification.

Calvin was very much concerned with finding solutions for the inner problems of the church. This is the reason why it is important for him to define the *vera religio*,²⁰² which was certainly connected with the personal religious experience. As a result, his life in Geneva and Strasbourg became very influential. As the theological adviser of Farel, he indirectly became involved in the dispute between Farel and Viret in 1536 over the question of the Lord's Supper,²⁰³ in which the focus was made on understanding the token of the Lord's Supper as an order of life. Calvin's emphasis on the four fields of necessary service in the life of the church (pastor, teacher, presbyter, social work), points out the essential consequences of justification not only for ecclesiastical life but as well as for the life of the society. This may be regarded as a dialogue between the doctrine of justification and the need of society since the social act follows the teaching which verifies the teaching itself in the life of the society.

An important event in relation to Calvin's teaching on justification is his return to Geneva. In Geneva life had become more and more chaotic since Calvin left. This

²⁰⁰ Alister E. McGrath, *Kálvin*, (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 1996), pp. 52-53.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

²⁰² Erwin Iserloh, Joseph Glazik, Hubert Jedin, *Reformation and Counter Reformation in: History of the Church Vol V*. Eds. Hubert Jedin, John Dolan (London: Burns&Oates, 1980), p. 363. Calvin already in 1536 got to know Zwingli's 'Commentarius de vera et falsa religione'.

²⁰³ Jean Cadier, *Kálvin*, (Budapest: Kálvin Kiadó, 1994), pp. 74-75.

was even ascebat by Sadoleto's letter to the Genevian citizens in which he was urging them to return to the Catholic Church since reformation led them astray. In this letter Sadoleto, among other things, was dealing with the question of justification stating that what provides eternal life is nothing else than belonging to the church. It was Calvin who answered this letter in 1539²⁰⁴ and said that the foundation of the church and thus justification was the Word of God.

For Calvin the work of the Holy Spirit becomes central as his teaching of sanctification shows. He leaves a wide space for the work of the Holy Spirit through which the grace of God grows to be real in human life. Thus Calvin holds that grace comes from outside and becomes part of human life through the work of the Holy Spirit. This turns to be most central in Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper, excluding this way the possibility of work righteousness.

IV.2.3.4.2.2. Calvin: justification and sanctification

At the very beginning of his treatment of justification Calvin describes the frame of his train of thought as it is expressed by the term "double grace" (*duplex gratia*), which consists of accepting Christ through whom the broken relationship between God and humans is mended, and a new life made possible through the Holy Spirit on the other.²⁰⁵ In this Calvin accentuates the need of divine acceptance of the sinner as righteous in order for him as how to be righteous.²⁰⁶ Also, participation in Christ is important for Calvin, which refers to a personal relationship with Christ. Thus per-

²⁰⁴ Tjarko Stadtland, Rechtfertigung und Heiligung bei Calvin, in: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Lehre der Reformierten Kirche, Hrsg. Hannelore Erhart, Walter Kreck, Gottfried W. Locher, Jürgen Moltmann, XXXII. Band (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), pp. 74-79. The 1536's version of the Institutio did not contain a special teaching on justification. It is only later that the doctrine of justification appears to be a systematic part of the Institutio. See: Albrecht Peters, Rechtfertigung, Handbuch Systematischer Theologie, Hrsg. Carl Heinz Ratschow Band 12. (Gerd Mohn: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1990), pp. 91-92.

²⁰⁵ Inst. III. 11. 1.

²⁰⁶ Inst. III. 11. 2.

sonal incorporation into Christ and this way a union with Christ²⁰⁷ is the essential part of justification. In this way Calvin gives a strong relational character of his perception right at the beginning.

Calvin is in line with Melancton in understanding of justification as forensic. The source of justification is not within human potential but in Christ alone as *iustitia extra nos*.²⁰⁸ This *iustitia extra nos* is in us through faith²⁰⁹ by which participation and incorporation in Christ is made real. Faith in Calvin's thinking is characterized by attaining knowledge and putting trust in God. Faith for Calvin is deeply connected with reason,²¹⁰ and is in close relation to the Word of God,²¹¹ and built on the firm basis of God's free promise. Faith is the source of repentance, which is for Calvin a

²⁰⁷ See: Tjarko Stadtland, *Rechtfertigung und Heiligung bei Calvin*, Ibid., pp. 118-124.

²⁰⁸ Inst. III. 11. 5-13. Calvin could not agree with Osiander on this question. Osiander taught that justification in essence is one with God as God's attributes are poured into human beings. This means that one is justified if one is substantially unified with God in Christ. Thus it is God's indwelling in human being that creates the state of being justified. So Christ is our righteousness not according to His human but divine nature. Calvin did not deny that, even if righteousness was *iustitia extra nos*, we were participating in Christ, but through the Holy Spirit. This is most important for Calvin. As he states it: „Mi tehát a fejnek és tagoknak ismeretes összeköttetését, Krisztusnak a mi sziveinkben való lakozását, egyszóval titokzatos egyesülést tartjuk a legfontosabbnak azért, hogy Krisztus, miután a miénk lett, azokban az adományokban részesítsen bennünket, amikkel ő van felruházva” Inst. III. 11. 10. We can surely agree with McGrath when he says: „Calvin's polemic against Osiander concerns the nature, rather than the existence, of the union of Christ and the believer; Osiander understands the union to be physical, where Calvin regards it as purely spiritual”. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei II*. Ibid., p. 37. For the difference between the Lutheran and Reformed understanding of *communicatio idiomatum* see: McGrath, *Iustitia Dei II*. Ibid., p. 46. See also: Tjarko Stadtland, *Rechtfertigung und Heiligung bei Calvin*, Ibid., pp. 99-106.; Mark A. Garcia, *Imputation and the Christology of union with Christ: Calvin, Osiander, and the contemporary quest for a reformed model* in: *WJT* 68 (2006), pp. 219-251. 226-236.

²⁰⁹ Inst. 11. 7. Faith for Calvin is a mean by which righteousness can be grasped. „Szivesen helyt adok azon ellenvetésének, hogy a megigazulás ereje a hitnek nem önmagától való tulajdonsága, hanem csak annyiban, amennyiben Krisztust befogadja. Ha ugyanis a hit önmagában, vagy – amint mondják – belső ereje által igazítana meg bennünket, ezt, mivel a hit mindig gyarló és tökéletlen, csak részben tehetné meg.(...) Szerintem tehát a hitet, amely csak eszköze az igazság elnyerésének, botolul elegyíti össze Krisztussal”. As Ebenhard Busch remarks it: „Christus ist wie der Grund unsere Rechtfertigung (...) Und ist es Christus selbst, der uns durch die Predigt des Evangeliums unsere Rechtfertigung zuspricht, so entspricht dem allein der Glaube. Der Glaube gehört so eng mit dem Zuspruch zusammen, dass er mit zur Rechtfertigung gehört. Aber nur als deren Instrument!” in: Ebenhard Busch, *Gotteserkenntnis und Menschlichkeit: Einsichten in die Theologie Johannes Calvins* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2005), p. 44.

²¹⁰ Inst. III. 2. 2. „Nem a nemtudásban, hanem a megismerésben gyökerezik a hit, mégpedig nemcsak Istennek, hanem az isteni akaratnak a megismerésében” Inst. III. 2. 3. „...az értelem össze van kötve a hittal.” It is worth noting here that according to Calvin reason and will are not destroyed but perverted by sin. However, reason and will only have the capacity to deal with earthly matters. See: Inst. II. 2. 18.

²¹¹ Inst. III. 2. 6. „...a hitnek ígéhez való viszonya örök(...)ha tehát eltörlőd az ígét, a hit sem marad meg többé (...)az ige, bármiképpen is kerül hozzánk, tükröz gyanánt szolgál, amelyben a hit Istent szemléli.”

turning to God for conversion that the broken image of God in us may be restored.²¹² This is, as in Luther's thinking, an ongoing fight against the power of sin.²¹³

All this has two consequences: justification and sanctification.²¹⁴ For Calvin these two are not inseparable²¹⁵ even if they are distinct. These are aspects of Christian life. Participation in Christ (*unio cum Christo by the Holy Spirit*) means receiving sanctification as well. The continuous connectedness is crucial for Calvin because it makes it possible to point out that righteousness before God is not achieved by works but *per fidem propter Christum*. Nevertheless, works must be present as the fruit of participation in Christ.²¹⁶ This does not mean a simple imitation of Christ which would have external appearances, but in essence it is an internal relationship by which the external one is shaped. Hence, Calvin is able to accentuate the result of justification as our relation to the other is subjected to change, which includes even the proper expression of social relatedness.²¹⁷ This clearly pictures a life which is ordered in a way that it would be able to serve the other whenever necessary. This is why Calvin treats sanctification in a more detailed way than justification. Similarly, there is a connection between the third use of the law and sanctification since what the third use of the law refers to is the same that sanctification means. The first two

²¹² Inst. III. 3. 5; 9. „az én véleményem szerint, a bűnbánat helyesen úgy határozható meg, hogy az nem egyéb, mint életünknek Istenhez való igaz megtérése, mely az Isten iránt való őszinte és komoly félelemből ered, mely testünknek és a régi embernek megökléséből és a lélek megelevenítéséből áll(...) újjászületés, melynek az a célja, hogy Istennek képe, melyet Ádám bűnbeesése megromtott és majdnem eltörölt, bennünk visszaállítsék.”

²¹³ Inst. III. 3. 20. „Ezért, amíg a test börtönében lakozunk, állandóan a mi romlott természetünk bűneivel, sőt magával a mi természeti lelkünkkel kell viaskodnunk.”

²¹⁴ „Es bedeutet (das Wort „Heiligung“), daß wir der Welt die Gefolgschaft aufkündigen, die Lüste des Fleisches abstreifen und uns so Gott gleichsam zum Opfer darbringen sollen, denn Gott nimmt nur reine und heilige Opfer an.” Calvin, Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift, 1 Thess 4, 3. Kálvin at other place views sanctification as the promise of nature. See: Kálvin Magyarázata az Apostolok Cselekedeteihez, Ap. Csel. 20,32.

²¹⁵ Calvin, Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift, 1. Korinther 1,30; 6,11.

²¹⁶ Inst. III. 16. 1. „Bár e kettő között különbséget teszünk, mindazonáltal Krisztus ezt a két dolgot elválaszthatatlanul egyesíti önmagában.” Also: Inst. III.15.5.

²¹⁷ Inst. III. 7. 6-7. „Isten képét kell mindenki szem előtt tartanunk, mely iránt pedig teljes tisztelettel és szeretettel tartozunk viseltetni.(...)Először is bele kell magukat élniök annak helyzetébe, akiről látják, hogy segítségükre szorul s annak sorsán éppúgy szánakozniuk kell, mintha azt ők maguk éreznék és viselnék, úgy, hogy a könyörületesség és részvét indítsa őket a segélyadásra olymértékben, mintha azt maguknak adnák.”

uses of the law are similar to Luther's understanding,²¹⁸ while the third use provides an outline by teaching one in one's new life how to bear fruit in the state of being justified *propter Christum*.²¹⁹

The uniqueness of Calvin's treatment of justification and sanctification is that he describes the relationship between God and human beings in such a way that faith is an essential element. In fact, it culminates in faith. As Béla Vasady formulates it:

“In the present era of secular totalitarian tendencies, we shall do well if we direct our attention, through the mirror of Calvin's theology, to the fact that the totalitarian element is a marked trait of genuine Christian faith. What we mean is that (according to Calvin, too) in all that we do, we have to make fully evident in every direction that the whole dependency of the whole man and the whole world upon the whole God, and that in this total dependency man's whole existence is resolved into being ‘of God, through God and unto God’ ”.²²⁰

Calvin's whole idea presents a certain process²²¹ which is expressed in highlighting the relevance of sanctification by which Calvin, as other Reformers, left behind the idea that justification would only be connected with the sacramental system of the church. God's declaration, as one is justified by grace through faith, is the beginning of a journey in which relations are reconciled. As part of this reconciled relation we find Calvin's view of Christian liberty, as the appendix *iustificatio*, which is not libertinism, but wholehearted faithfulness to God's freeing grace.²²²

²¹⁸ See: Edward A. Dowey, *Law in Luther and Calvin*, in: *Theology Today*, Vol. 41. No. 2. pp.146-153.

²¹⁹ *Inst.* III. 6. 1-3.

²²⁰ Vasady Béla, *The Main Traits of Calvin's Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: WM B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1951), pp. 23-24. Vasady calls it Calvin's *Belief-ful Totalitarianism*.

²²¹ Such as sin is an internal movement, sanctification refers not to a static reality of human life but an internal process initiated from outside. See: *Inst.* II.3. 5.

²²² *Inst.* III. 19. 4-5. T. H. L. Parker argues: „The justified sinner has liberty from the curse of the law (...), from the moral threatenings of the law (...) and from rigorism in the use of things indifferent.” T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin*, in: *A History of Christian Doctrine*, In succession to the Earlier Work of G. P. Fisher, Ed. Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1980), p. 396.

IV. 2. 3. 5. From Calvin to the 20th century

The unique grasp of the Reformation soon evoked the criticism of the Roman Catholic Church. The Council of Trent (first period 1545-1547) basically reinforced the traditional understandings, namely, that human disposition is necessary in order to receive God's justifying grace in which the scholastic view comes into focus again.²²³ Trying to balance it, Protestant Orthodoxy underlined with a theocentric orientation that justification is by the work of Christ being incorporated through faith which has three characters: *notitia, fiducia, assensus*.²²⁴ In this way Protestant Orthodoxy took a step towards moralism. Similarly the protestant confessional literature at that time mirrored the discovery of the Reformation,²²⁵ even as harshly as the Synod of Dort (1619) did. It is worth mentioning that the reformation turnover was of special importance in the life of the Church of England as the work of Thomas Cranmer and his successors attest.²²⁶ Pietism, with John Wesley,²²⁷ insisted that personal piety (conversion theory), that is to be born anew, is the essential content of the God-human relationship if human beings are to gain holiness, while the Puritans were more concerned with faith as the basis of the community with God and the assurance of election, both based on the covenant.²²⁸

²²³ Creeds & Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition, Vol. III. Part Four: Creeds and Confessions of the Reformation Era, Eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), 821-839. „Hier werden nämlich scholastische Begriffe aufgenommen, wenn als 'causa formalis' die Verherrlichung Gottes und Christi, als 'causa efficiens' die Barmherzigkeit Gottes, als 'causa meritoria' das Leiden Christi, als 'causa instrumentalis' die Taufe und als 'causa formalis' die Gerechtigkeit Gottes bezeichnet werden." Gerhard Müller, Die Rechtfertigungslehre, *Ibid.*, p. 72.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

²²⁵ Heidelberg Catechism. The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism. Reproduction of the Second American Edition, (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company), pp.324-341; 464-488; 612-618. Question: 60-64; 86-87; 91; Ursinus was concerned with describing the relationship of God and human beings by using the term covenant which was later elaborated on by Cocceius. See: McGrath, *Iustitia Dei II*. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-43. See also: Ebenhard Busch, *Der Freiheit zugetan. Christlicher Glaube heute - im Gespräch mit dem Heidelberger Katechismus (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1998)*, pp. 219-226.

²²⁶ Peter Toon, *Justification and Sanctification*, (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1983). Chapter 9. The Anglican Approach, pp. 89-101.

²²⁷ Peter Toon, *ibid.* Chapter 10. The Wesleyan View, pp. 102-108.

²²⁸ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei II*. *Ibid.*, pp. 111-121.

The autonomy of the self as the program of Enlightenment penetrated the idea of justification as well. The self as the source of all meaning had to gain knowledge in order to attain justification. This requires a moral consciousness which leads to pursue the right action guided by the moral imperative agreed on as an end in itself. Hence, this moral consciousness that knows what is good and what is not, prevents the misuse of human freedom by pointing into the direction of highlighting personal responsibility for justification.²²⁹ This view of the Enlightenment is rather optimistic of the ability of human discernment and thus makes justification to rest too much on a human basis. In the theology at that time, Schleiermacher's definition of religion as 'the feeling of total dependence' is constitutive in describing justification. The feeling of total dependence obviously means a certain awareness of God which is basically an awareness of Christ's redemptive work as it initiates community with God. This perception necessary opts for the realization of the community with God as it relates to justification. The focus on the "feeling" versus rationalism was obviously different from the moralism of the Enlightenment.²³⁰

IV. 2. 3. 6. Karl Barth

In the 20th century one of the most invigorating rethinking of the doctrine of justification was done by Karl Barth. The well-known representative of "dialektische Theologie" believed that correct understanding of Christian teaching comes only from the revelation of God, the revelation of who God is in Jesus Christ, giving by this a Christological orientation to Barth's entire work. This reference point is of special interest with regard to the doctrine of justification, and is also central in

²²⁹ McGrath argues that this is significant in Kant's thinking, which we can agree is significant in respect to us, too. Referring to Kant he states: „No individual can be good on behalf of another, nor can the goodness of a morally outstanding individual permitted to remove the guilt of another. The basis of Kant's rejection of the concept of vicarious satisfaction (stellvertretende Genugthung) is the principle that guilt, like merit, is strictly non-transferable." *Ibid.*, p. 153.

²³⁰ Gerhard Müller, *Die Rechtfertigungslehre*, *Ibid.*, pp. 89-93.

Barth's teaching. In fact, he believes that this is by which "Christianity is distinguished from all other religions".²³¹ However, Barth goes further than Luther in saying that it is not the doctrine of justification as such that is at the center but our "confession of Jesus Christ"²³² in connection with this. The confession of Christ obviously evokes a certain relationship with God which needs to be restored through and in Christ.

For Barth sin has a special character. Defining sin in harmony with the previous understanding as pride, Barth takes a specific stance by saying that the origin of sin is the desire to be our own judge,²³³ while God became human in Christ, so that Christ would take upon himself God's judgement for our sin. Wanting to be our own judge is basically the sign of a distorted community with God, where human beings make their own rules over human life. This is at the core of the human condition which cannot be recognized until it is not seen to be in contradiction to the divine action in Christ.²³⁴ Here Barth sides with Calvin as he makes the connection between the knowledge of sin and the knowledge of God in Christ. Sin is thus a state of existence which is not only an abstraction of human life. A human situation such as this has no future therefore it needs to be altered. This for Barth takes place in the act of Christ which changes the direction of human life as it becomes part of the history that God has initiated. Justification is not a static correspondence for Barth but the common journey of God and man in which God's revelation in Christ is the basis of

²³¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV/1. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1965), pp. 521-522. (Further referred as CD) Here Barth refers to Luther in this respect.

²³² Karl Barth, CD IV/1. Ibid., p. 527. As Barth defines it: "the knowledge of His being and activity for us and to us and with us."

²³³ „All sin has its being and origin in the fact that man wants to be his own judge. And wanting to be that, and thinking and acting accordingly, he and his whole world is in conflict with God." CD IV/1. p. 220. Barth in this respect criticizes Ritschl who according to Barth did not have the consciousness about „man in sin", only speaks about the development of sin as an inclination in human being, which sides with Kant's understanding of radical evil which situated in the human will. See: CD IV/1. Ibid., p. 382. „Also to „sin as pride" Ibid., p. 142.

²³⁴ „Sin is reality.(...) But it is not autonomous reality. As the No which opposes the divine Yes, it is only a reality related to and contradicting that Yes. Therefore it can be known (...) only in the light of that Yes." CD IV/1. Ibid., p. 144.

the renewing of life.²³⁵ It means two things: justification is a movement in history, specifically in the history of the human being with God, and it is through the same basis for all human life that the proper community between God and human beings is established. It appears to be the frame, one may say narrative, of justification. Consequently, this means that justification is not the result of human action, of good works any kind. It is not by the works of the law but only in faith that justification can be apprehended.²³⁶ This history of God with us is the establishment of our true humanity. It is grace revealed in Christ as the only source of the true knowledge of God.²³⁷

Barth pays special attention to the question of sanctification.²³⁸ Just as Calvin he thinks that this is different from justification but cannot be separated. He does not consider it to be self-sanctification but views it as something which is also incorporated to the history of God with human beings in Christ. Sanctification is the expression of the freedom gained in Christ.²³⁹ Thus sanctification is the expression of the proper relationship with God and with others.

Faith is the vessel to achieve this ‘*in Christ existence*’. By virtue of faith, human existence is grounded not in the self but in the act of God. This is, at the same time a ‘*frontier-existence*’ in the sense that there is a continuous interaction between those who are part of the new life and those who are not yet part of it²⁴⁰ in order to say no to what God negated. Nonetheless, it is not a simple existence but the reaffirmation of the goodness of human beings created by God as it is to be recognized through

²³⁵ CD IV/1., Ibid., p.545. Worth noting that for Barth it is not the matter of subjective experience, that is to say, there is not such a thing as „personal understanding”. See: Ibid., p. 549.

²³⁶ For Barth’s idea of law and gospel see: Karl Barth, *Gesetz und Evangelium* in: *Theologische Existenz heute*, N. F. Nr. 50. 1956.

²³⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics Vol. I/1*. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), p. 227. „...the knowledge of God’s Word is no other than the reality of the grace of God coming to man..”

²³⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics Vol. IV/2*. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958) 66.§.

²³⁹ „It is nothing other than the basic presupposition of all Christian ethics. Sanctification is the claiming of all human life and being and activity by the will of God for the active fulfilment of that will” Barth, CD IV/1. p. 101.

²⁴⁰ Karl Barth, CD II/2. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), p. 266.

God in Christ,²⁴¹ as it is made real in the death and resurrection of Christ.²⁴² It is in this ‘No and Yes’ (death and resurrection) that God turns human beings back to their center of orientation, which at the same time entails and provides hope in the future.

IV. 2. 3. 7. Paul Tillich

A very distinct consideration of the 20th century comes from Paul Tillich. In his work *Systematic Theology* he deals with this topic twice. In his view justification is ultimately related to the Incarnation as it serves a basis for Christology. Incarnation is a paradox that involves God’s acceptance of human beings by which Christ participates in human existence²⁴³ which is being characterized by *estrangement*. The marks of estrangement are: unbelief, hubris and concupiscence. This estrangement is what Christ’s work overcomes. Estrangement (estrangement from God and from the other) is the general term to describe sin in human life. For this reason Tillich’s intention is not to talk about *sins* but about *sin* which refers to a state of existence as *separation*.²⁴⁴ This way Tillich makes a distinction between sin as precondition of human life and sin realized in acts. Nevertheless, these are in connection. The innermost character of sin is the disruption of the essential unity of God with human beings. The lack of faith is ultimately identical with the lack of love so much so that the human being becomes the center for himself/herself.

This divine presence intends to transform sinful human life. Since humans are not able to do so by themselves, transformation can only come through faith which is

²⁴¹ Karl Barth, CD III/1. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), pp. 366-415. Creation as Justification. Also: Albrecht Peters, *Rechtfertigung*, Ibid., pp. 133-134.

²⁴² Karl Barth CD IV/1. p. 96. „As faith in Jesus Christ who is risen from the dead it believes in a sentence which is absolutely effective, so that man is not merely *called* righteous before God, but is righteous before God” Ibid., p. 95.

²⁴³ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 149-150. „As Protestantism asserts the justification of the sinner, so it demands a Christology of the participation of the Christ in the sinful existence, including, at the same time, its conquest.”

²⁴⁴ Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of The Foundations* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1948), pp. 154-155. Sermon titled: You Are Accepted. Also: Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. III. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 225.

not human work but “the work of the divine Spirit, the power which creates the New Being”.²⁴⁵

Tillich is very much aware of the Reformation’s term: “justification by grace through faith”. Faith for him is only a vessel by which grace reaches one. That is why grace is the fundament of justification. It is God who initiates justification.²⁴⁶

Through faith it is grace that comes to us and encompasses human life more than sin does. Tillich uses the term *reunion* to describe grace.²⁴⁷ By grace, it is possible through faith for human life to accept God’s acceptance of human life.²⁴⁸ Thus justification and new life belong together. It is only grace that is able to overcome estrangement.²⁴⁹

The new life in progress is sanctification. By showing the difference between sanctification as conceived by Calvin and Luther, Tillich defines four principles that describe sanctification: increasing awareness, freedom, relatedness, self-transcendence.²⁵⁰ Sanctification considered in this way, is an onward movement towards the fullness of the new being.

²⁴⁵ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

²⁴⁶ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II. *Ibid.*, p. 179. Also: Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. III. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

²⁴⁷ „Grace is the reunion of life with life, the reconciliation of the self with itself. Grace is the acceptance of that which is rejected. Grace transforms fate into a meaningful destiny; it changes guilt into confidence and courage.” Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of The Foundations*, *Ibid.*, p. 156.

²⁴⁸ „He must accept that he is accepted; he must accept acceptance (...) It means that one is drawn into the power of New Being in Christ, which makes faith possible; that it is the state of unity between God and man, no matter how fragmentarily realized.” Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II. *Ibid.*, p. 179. Also: *The Shaking of The Foundations*, *Ibid.*, pp. 162-163. „We experience the grace which is able to overcome the tragic separation of sexes, of the generations, of the nations, of the races, and even the utter strangeness between man and nature.” But „grace does not mean simply that we are making progress in our moral self-control, in our fight against special faults, and in our relationship to men and to society. Moral progress may be the fruit of grace.” p. 161.

²⁴⁹ „Grace, as the infusion of love is the power which overcomes estrangement.” Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

²⁵⁰ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. III. *Ibid.*, pp. 231-237.

Summary

Both theological and non-theological thinking has made great efforts to describe the human condition. Among these we find the protestant doctrine of justification as being of central importance for theological thinking. From the first systematic consideration in the West until the 20th century the doctrine went through several stages of its development, but the reconsideration of the reformation period meant a new grasp of the question. This is especially true of Luther and Calvin. They both were keen on emphasizing God's redeeming act and the proper human response to it.

The *first* crucial point of this totally new protestant understanding of justification in contradistinction to the Catholic one is that the right human answer should not be considered as the precondition for God's act. Thus, experiencing God's liberating act calls for a *re-action* instead of action as a precursor of God's act. The human being must respond to the revelation of God in Christ. This means a radical shift from anthropocentric thinking to theocentric thinking as it is expressed by grace. The shift from anthropocentric thinking to theocentric thinking brought about the radical *Christ-centeredness of life*. Since it is not within the human potential to bring into being a new life, this must happen in relation to God. This new life ceases to have an interest in self-centered human life and at the same time is re-centers human life towards God. In this way the appropriate response to the divine act is in relation to the one center, namely, to God, which is also the center of the human-human encounter.

The fact that the center of the human-human encounter is the knowledge of who God is in Christ constitutes the *second* element of the protestant doctrine of justification. The human beings in their totality stand before God to receive his forgiveness. God demands the total human being to participate in God's redeeming work. This is a total command of human life. However, it is precisely this total command of human that rejects all kind of 'total human command' over other human life. It requires

responsiveness to the other's life in order to be entirely human. Thus, even if justification is a frame for understanding human life in its fullness, it *negates all totalitarian attempts*.

The *third* essential point is that in this view human capability in itself could not be the source of a new life, which was not only true in relation to God, but was true in relation to 'the other' as well. It defines justification as something that has a highly *relational character*. It is the single human being who is before God. However, it is not the individual who is brought into light but the *person* in relation to God who is made alive in the God-human encounter.

With these three points of orientation we now turn our attention to the question: postmodernity versus justification?!

Chapter Five

Postmodernity and justification: an appeal for “Public Theology”

Postmodernity and the doctrine of justification are two seemingly very different issues which arise from different sources, touch upon different aspects of life and consider different realities. However, theological reflection which tries to implement dialogue between postmodernity and justification is of great help in articulating the public theological relevance of the core of the Christian message. This is true even if theological deliberations are often misunderstood and provoke the old reflex that theology should remain the intellectual enterprise of the religious community.²⁵¹ Yet, reference to the prophetic voice was all the more powerful, so that theology has been considering specific or less specific issues and public matters by sometimes taking a harsh stand against certain ideas. At the same time, experiencing the increasing influence of postmodernity on human life means that the reference to the prophetic voice has been suppressed, which this way has created a tension. This tension may be resolved by public theology, which offers a distinct route to the public as it tries to be unique in its perspective on human life and community. This unique perspective could be approached in the following way.

First, it is, ‘*positive apologetics*’, i.e. responding to human conditions is not a ‘response to’ but a ‘response from’. The theological reflection serves as the articulation of our belief on a strong basis with the conviction that it has a universal meaning and relevance even if it is not considered to be universally significant. Nonetheless, this is not a striving for religious hegemony but a strong theological commitment to human reality. As W. de Gruchy formulates it:

²⁵¹ Thiemann, Ronald, F. *Religion in Public Life: a dilemma for democracy*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996), p. 75.

Public theology is „...a form of Christian witness in the secular world that arises out of theological reflection and the life and worship of the church (...)Public theology as Christian witness does not seek to preference Christianity but to witness to values that we believe are important for the common good.”²⁵²

Marion Maddox takes almost the same approach in formulating the task of public theology:

„The question is how to participate without seeming to invoke the 'Christendom assumptions' that normative judgements will be, or should be, accepted automatically, including by those who do not share their theological premises.”²⁵³

Similarly Max L. Stackhouse suggests:

„Theology, when it is serious, is a public matter, accessible to any and pertinent to all areas of common life.”²⁵⁴

This feature inherently has a critical character that might be associated with the prophetic voice.

Second, it is grounded in the biblical witness to the human reality. The God-human relationship, as it became real in the Christ-event, reveals how God approaches human life, and how this should condition human-human relationship. In this way, theological endeavour focuses on those implications for human life that arise out of God's concern for human life and which are “accessible to any”. This presupposes more than a strong reliance on tradition. It is not enough to repeat tradition, because we need to go beyond tradition in order to that it may be accessible for non-believers as well, which is the process of opening up tradition for others. Since this theological enterprise is based on tradition it holds the same reference system for all the issues. It does not overlook the embeddedness of certain questions in the surroundings. This is to which we often refer as contextuality. However, contextuality is often only concerned with the current state of affairs. Since public theology, on account of the same reference system it often has such as the biblical witness to the

²⁵² J. W. de Gruchy, *Public Theology as Christian Witness: Exploring the Genre* in: *International Journal of Public Theology* 1. (2007). 26-41. pp. 28. 30. W. de Gruchy's definition handles with great sensibility the idea of public theology. Nevertheless, it is not clear why Christian witness would not give preference to the Christian message.

²⁵³ Marion Maddox, *Religion, Secularism and the Promise of Public Theology*, In: *IJPT* Ibid., pp. 82-100. 86.

²⁵⁴ Max L. Stackhouse, *Public Theology and the Future of Democratic Society* in: *The Church's Public Role*, Ed. Dieter T. Hessel, (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Co., 1993), pp. 63-84. 67.

human reality, should be able to place the local concern within the context of the general concern,²⁵⁵ which could be called ‘cross-contextuality’.

Keeping these appeals in mind we must explore possible ways of implementing dialogue between such schemes of human life as postmodernity and the doctrine of justification in order to show the common meaning and relevance of God’s grace mediated through faith in Christ for building democratic communities.

V.1. Christ-centered life in contradistinction to human-centered fragmentation

One of the main problems of postmodernity is that the interpretation of human life cannot be conveyed through a grand narrative. This is especially claimed by those who are against oppressing power structures and are eager to articulate the need for respect for convictions held by others. This is particularly true of feminist thinking as feminists are very sensitive to dominating power structures. This is a shared concern of both non-theological and theological thinkers.²⁵⁶ Their worry proved to be real in many cases and it raised the question of legitimation. The dismissal of grand narratives with its distrust of a universally accepted ground for the understanding of the human condition caused a shift in the question of legitimacy. The center of reference was transferred from the larger context of the common interest to the smaller context of individual interest. The aim was to secure individual uniqueness in the large context of the community through individual narratives since it was not possible through the grand narratives. This analysis of human reality did not see any future in what modernity could offer, and articulated skepticism of thinking in terms of linear time concept. Theological understanding of the human condi-

²⁵⁵ Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, *Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State*, in: *Teologiese Tydskrif*, Deel 48. Nommers 1 & 2 Maart & Junie 2007. pp. 25-41. In his thinking public theology has five elements: it is grounded in tradition, bilingual, inter-disciplinary, critical and universally oriented.

²⁵⁶ For feminist theological consideration of this question, specifically its relation to the question of justification see: Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *Gibt es eine feministische Rechtfertigungslehre?* In: *EvTh*. 60. Jahrgang, 5-2000. pp. 348-360.

tion as viewed through God's purpose in Christ for and with the world, and with human beings in the world, was part of this skepticism.

The other extreme approach taken to understand the human reality was the false evaluation of communism and its specific counter reaction to human estrangement. While the western dismissal of grand narratives aimed at the recognition of otherness in human beings, communism was eager to eliminate differences especially of a social kind. Yet, communism did not dismiss a certain grand narrative but was keen to maintain a special kind which was the precise example of power dominance in order to create a 'sameness' in which the autonomous individual and the social content of the community did not have anything in common. In response to this we see the common concern of both West and East: the unbridled pursuit of self-centeredness. The result of self-centeredness, as we have already noticed earlier is the fragmentation of the self. The more these attempts tried to secure individual uniqueness the more they became distanced from the recognition of it, since individual uniqueness would have needed a commonly accepted understanding of human reality. Christian theology finds a fruitful ground in the doctrine of justification to develop orientation which can give guidance to people of good will.

V.1.1 Tradition revisited

In the center of attaining real self-knowledge is Christ. This is to which we refer as *solus Christus*. The saving act of Christ as the revelation and source of justification has definite consequences on human life. This self-disclosure of God prepares a possible way for human beings to interpret human reality correctly and to inherit eternal life. The gospel of justification as it is disclosed in Christ means an ultimate Christ-centeredness. This Christ-centeredness is the prerequisite of justification as it is initiated by God and summed up in grace – *sola gratia*. This grace of God embraces-

the fullness of human life. As Michael Beintker argues: “So errinert uns der articulus iustificationis an Gottes Gnade als die gründende und alles bestimmende Dimension des menschlichen Lebens.”²⁵⁷ That God’s grace in Christ embraces all dimensions of human life means that it is grace in which sin, disbelief, and egotism are received and transformed. Grace, as it comes to the human being, incorporates human life in its turning away from God, and in its striving to locate the future in human power and peel human life off from God’s history with the world. As a consequence, as we observed in the doctrine of justification, sin results in self-centeredness and, as the expression of it, in disbelief in God’s intention for human life. The source of knowledge about the world and its reality becomes a human attempt to rule over the world without regard to God, which thus develops into an occasion for acting out injustice. As a consequence, justification cannot be realized in work-righteousness, only through faith – *sola fide*. This is the history of human life without God in which human beings can only be understood as being separated from other human beings. Nevertheless, it is not the end of the human encounter with God and with the other. This is precisely what is accepted in grace in order to be changed. The source of it is Christ’s work as human life is made righteous so that such a life may be justified. This constitutes the *radical character of grace*.

God’s act in justification embraces human reality in all its dimensions. It creates the context of attaining real knowledge of human life. The indication of justification is that it contextualizes human life, namely, that it points out the inner contradiction of human life in its tension between human self-realization and God’s decision for human beings in Christ. The purpose of God’s act is to achieve proper self-evaluation through which one can overcome the state of seclusion from God. The more human beings try to attain this by human efforts the more they are entrapped by

²⁵⁷ Michael Beintker, *Rechtfertigung in der neuzeitlichen Lebenswelt*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), p. 4.

the deceitful idea of self-centeredness.²⁵⁸ Thus, human endeavour engaged in such a process only means mending the current condition but does not include a future oriented response. It is clear that God's intention in justification is not simply to repair but to create one anew. The intention of God is not to leave human reality in a state of self-deception but to bring it into connection with the ultimate center of life, the one God. So it is not the reaffirmation of human capacity in order to complete self-evaluation that justification nurtures but placing of the human being into the grand narrative of God's act in Christ as the meaningful, future-oriented context. However, self-centeredness, as the mere fragmentation of human life, is never simply a personal encounter. It captures the contradiction between self-interest and the common good. God's intention is not simply to repair the human condition in order to lessen its burden but to make it anew. Thus it creates the only possibility of correcting self-knowledge,²⁵⁹ which is a judgment on the inhuman condition.

The significant notion in this is the *radicality of sin* as Luther argued. As it is seen in the biblical picture, self-centeredness means the radicality of sin. The human turn against God's intention in creation has the consequence of continuous misconception of human life which is more than a mere desire or self-love. It is an approach taken to human life which basically distances human beings from God, and from the other and eventually from ourselves. This is the occasion of placing sin into an independent realm as if it had life without human engagement. However, sin can never be placed into an independent realm since it always results in one way or another from the human desire to be like God. Trying to make sin an independent reality of human life was the simplest solution of many non-political and political thinkers of the last decades while they were stressing common responsibility just in order to hide behind

²⁵⁸ The protestant doctrine of justification took a clear stand against it. As Beintker points out: „Werkgerechtigkeit basiert auf der Isolierung der Gnade von der Gerechtigkeit Gottes.“ Michael Beintker, *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁵⁹ Inst. I. 1-2.

it,²⁶⁰ concentrating on the context and not paying any attention to one single sin. Yet, we have to agree with Karl Barth that sin is not an abstraction of human life, but depicts the full existence of human life.²⁶¹ If the radicality of sin introduces a specific kind of existence into the life of the community, it must be healed by the grace of God through the community which helps to interpret God's grace and does not overlook the personal dimension of sin. In this respect it is definitely common responsibility that is regarded as one arising not from self-protective moral obligations but from sensing the common ground of the entirely different existence in Christ. This radical character of sin is very much recognized by feminism. Its aim is to abolish power dominance as the most prevailing utterance of sin that is a total human claim over other human life. Along this path, feminism composes a serious concern, namely, how can one bring into fruitful connection the internal and the external reality of human life. We can equate this with the idea of justification as a *relational model*.

As we saw both in the biblical witness and in the historical overview, the doctrine of justification, both in form and content with the legal sense, is particularly relational. In the account of the Gospels and, stemming from this, in Luther's, Calvin's and Zwingli's thinking justification is the restoration of proper relationships. Sin, disbelief, turning against God, <<*homo incurvatus in seipsum*>>, all describe such a relational web, which represents knowledge about human life disconnected from God. Contrary to this, grace, faith, hope and freedom show how this condition of disconnectedness is altered by the act of God in Christ by creating a new system of relation as the source of proper knowledge about God and about us. This means that eve-

²⁶⁰ Zwingli refers to this point, as we saw it, by saying that sin is most dangerous when it is done without consequences.

²⁶¹ Karl Barth CD IV/1. Ibid., p. 220ff. Eberhard Jüngel interprets Barth's idea as „Lebenstat“ in: Eberhard Jüngel, *Das Evangelium von der Rechtfertigung des Gottlosen als Zentrum der christlichen Glaubens: eine theologische Studie in ökumenischer Absicht* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), pp. 106-108.

rything is in relation in so far as the triangle of *Christ-one-the other* is concerned. In this relational web personal and communal values can be recognized not because of being simply human even if its value cannot be denied. Yet, it is through and in this relational model with Christ in the center that values in relation to each other, such as human dignity, appear. Thus personal values can only develop in relation to the other human being, so that values are the result of a communicative process. This clearly pictures a metanarrative over human life and condition out of which self-knowledge arises. It is by no accident that postmodernity, and especially feminism is in favor of the restoration of relationships in society as the only source of common understanding of human life. Its emphasis on this point is the core question of life even if feminist thinking advocates the disappearance of the metanarratives. The relational scheme is against unjust human conditions whose purpose is not to nurture an integrity that is confined to self-centeredness but to create integrity of human life by celebrating relationship in which fake relativism is excluded so that human life would become an end in itself. This relational scheme is the ground for a discourse over the question of justification so that it would have public relevance. It conceives of a life against atomization, and warns that it cannot be viewed as personal management. Instead, it is an expression of a discourse in which legitimacy of human life is given in Christ and in relation to the other. These are in an inseparable connection so that the unique character of human life (created in the image of God and restored through Christ) may appear. However, this uniqueness of both personal life and communal life becomes visible only in this relational context as the relationship between the external history of Christ with the world as the source of our knowledge and the internal history of us can be experienced.

V.1.2. External history and internal history in harmony: the basis of life lived in integrity

The idea of external and internal history with relation to Revelation was introduced by H. Richard Niebuhr in his book titled *The Meaning of Revelation*.²⁶² For H. R. Niebuhr revelation in Christ has a fundamental role in Christian theology as it is the source of all our knowledge. It provides a specific understanding of human life and defines the special task of theology with a specific way of reasoning that is focused on the act of Christ.²⁶³ For H. R. Niebuhr this act forms a historical basis for analysing the human condition which is at the same time also a criticism of universalism.²⁶⁴ However, this criticism does not mean the total dismissal of a narrative for Christian theology. It is rather the story of Christ that is the only impetus for assessing the role of Christian ideas in human life, so that present and future lie in the past.²⁶⁵ Thus it is in the context of this history that we can talk about the meaning of revelation which at the same time provides the basis for the dismissal of natural theology. This way H. R. Niebuhr places the understanding of human life into the context of revelation that is of who God is in Christ. Speaking of revelation H. R. Niebuhr means that we either talk about a history identified as the outsider's view or history identified as the insider's view. These signify the external history and the internal history.

One of the most important distinctions between the external and internal history is that the external history is impersonal in character while the internal history is personal.²⁶⁶ To emphasize this H. R. Niebuhr refers to Martin Buber's well-known

²⁶² H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation*, (Publisher and date are unknown) (Further referred as TMR)

²⁶³ H.R.Niebuhr, TMR, p. 37.

²⁶⁴ As Niebuhr argues: „Metaphysical systems have not been able to maintain the intellectual life of our community and abstract systems of morality have not conveyed devotion and the power of obedience with their ideals and imperatives.” TMR, p. 47.

²⁶⁵ „Religious and moral experience are always in some history and in some social setting that derives from the past. They also offer us no way of avoiding the use of our history in saying what we mean.” TMR, p. 53.

²⁶⁶ „It appears first of all, that the data of external history are all impersonal.(...) Even when such history deals with human individuals it seeks to reduce them to impersonal parts. (...) Internal history,

scheme of “I-Thou”. Nonetheless, this differentiation involves the rejection of such relations in which superiority is expressed. The emphasis on the personal character of internal history points into this direction. This means that the knowledge we attain from external history must be incorporated so that it is not impersonal any more. In relation to revelation this means that the life of Jesus Christ as an external history must be integrated so that Jesus Christ becomes part of the internal history of human life as the source of knowledge about it. This is what creates the clear basis of a proper relationship through which values²⁶⁷ are recognized in the community of those who participate in the incorporation of external history, while both remaining what they are. As a result of this, external history should be viewed as a context in which internal history can be acted out. Therefore, external and internal histories are in an inseparable connection.

In this framework of knowledge H. R. Niebuhr refers to what we identified as the problem of postmodernity, namely, that metanarratives are not helpful in considering human life. However, for Niebuhr the solution is not discharging these metanarratives but finding a way in which the impersonal, the strange, the foreign become part of the personal life so that a living dialogue between these two begins to flourish in such a way that the achievement of internal history is always in connection with the incorporation of the content of the external history. Thus the narrative of a person has its meaning in relation to the narrative which he/she shares with others. This operates as a detailed pattern for attaining knowledge of human reality as it is also expressed in the doctrine of justification.

When we look at the doctrine of justification as an informative expression of human reality we are able to connect in it the external and internal history – to use

on the other hand, is not a story of things in juxtaposition or succession; it is personal in character.” TMR, p. 64.

²⁶⁷ As Niebuhr defines: „The valuable here is that which bears on the destiny of the selves; not what is strongest is most important but is most relevant to the lives of ‘I’s’ and ‘Thou’s’. Value here means quality not power.” TMR, p. 68.

Niebuhr's term. It is especially applicable to the doctrine of the Reformation period. Luther's definition of God's righteousness as *iustitia aliena* is a description of the external history. Similarly, the fact that this righteousness comes from outside, *extra nos*, and is not found in the individual is a strong indication of the external history. They both describe the unique character of God's way to the human life. While, the internal history of human life that leads to our knowledge is what the term <<*homo incurvatus in seipsum*>> denotes. Where internal and external history meet is where there is human life as well as community life as *simul iustus et peccator* which makes clear that justification is not possession but an event that happens again and again in relation to Christ.²⁶⁸ Correspondingly, Calvin's perception of justification as *duplex gratia* is the picture of the relational scheme of external and internal history. While *iustitia extra nos* constitutes the external part, *sanctification* is the essence of the internal history in which faith attains knowledge and places trust into God. The event of justification does not remain in isolation but makes the connection with all other events in human life by which it points beyond all human possibilities. It does not prescribe of what we have to do but makes us aware of our need and is initiated by grace and incorporated through faith as the continuous quest for the divine-human-other encounter for the recognition of the common ground. It is precisely in this encounter that sin and disbelief come to light. In this framework with Christ in the center we can describe:

1. *sin as non-relation,*
2. *grace as relation with humanity,*
3. *faith as relation in Christ.*

²⁶⁸ At this point I go beyond Niebuhr because *iustitia aliena*, *homo incurvatus in seipsum*, *simul iustus et peccator* would be entirely a matter of internal history for him.

V.1.3. Sin as non-relation

For Forde the legal terminology of Paul does not help in understanding God's intention for the world and for human beings.²⁶⁹ Similarly, Michael Welker argues that our traditional conception of sin is not understandable any more.²⁷⁰ For our purpose, the radical character of sin can be summed up in the expression of *non-relation*. Human life that turns upon itself as the center of life is still at the heart of our knowledge about who we are. For Luther and Zwingli alike human self-love does not stand in isolation but is always linked to its environment, i.e. to the internal history of human life. In itself, the internal history of human life does not compel one to give up self-love and be oriented towards the 'other' since it is more involved in maintaining the self-centered orientation of life both in relation to God and in relation to the 'other'. Bedford-Strohm identifies it as "Selbstisolierung" when he argues:

*"Die Störung der Gottesbeziehung und die Störung der Beziehung zur Mitkreatur sind je unterschiedliche und eigenständige, aber ebenso aufeinander bezogene Dimensionen menschlicher Selbstisolierung. Keine von beiden kann der anderen vor- oder nachgeordnet werden."*²⁷¹

This isolation is the dynamics of non-relational existence as it forms the basis for giving preference to knowledge gained through the personal initiative of human life which does not take into consideration the relational web. Therefore, it denies relation to be an end in itself and only serves as a means to nurture self-interest. In fact,

²⁶⁹ Gerhard O. Forde is one of those who are sceptical about the use of legal metaphors. He suggests that instead of legal terminology we should use death-life language. As Forde argues: „The difficulty, to large extent, is that the language, the legal metaphor, tends to fail us just at the crucial moment. We set the whole matter up as a legal process, the process of becoming „just“ according to the law, making progress, doing good, and then at the last moment we suddenly turn and say it is impossible by that route to become just and that one is instead justified by faith alone (...) One sets up a scheme and then destroys it by saying we get it all by faith anyway.” Gerhard O. Forde, *Justification by faith*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 9.

²⁷⁰ As Welker argues: „...die Rede von Sünde is unverständlich und funktionslos geworden.” In: Michael Welker, *Der Heilige Geist*, EvTh. 49. Jg. Heft 2. pp. 126-141. 134.

²⁷¹ Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, *Gemeinschaft aus kommunikativer Freiheit. Sozialer Zusammenhalt in der modernen Gesellschaft. Ein theologischer Beitrag.* (Gütersloh: Kaiser, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), p. 230. (Italic is in the original)

the idea of work righteousness supports this non-relational character of the human condition. This non-relation is a rift in the original intention of God and this way a source of distorted narrative. It is the foundation of inhuman relation, the loss of human dignity, the distortion of the unique human integrity, the denial of fundamental human relationships. It alters human being's relation to death and life, safety and insecurity, self and the other. Original sin, as the rejection of life in relation is the beginning of what non-relation means in human life.

This non-relation makes us point out two distinctions. One is the difference between human being and God as the 'Totally Other', which was accentuated throughout Western Christianity, especially in the theology of Karl Barth. Through the severe human break with God, God's otherness is not merely God's being the 'Totally Other', but it is also God's otherness that God does not take part in fostering inhuman conditions. Instead, God works on the healing of the non-relation so that one may live under the condition of God's life transforming presence which involves the acknowledgement of the fallen state of humanity.

Another distinction should be made between *otherness and the other*. Here I only intend to discuss otherness. If we take seriously the radicality of sin, an existence that is against God's intention for human life, we comprehend human life as one which is characterised by otherness. Acting out human life in sin is not what God expects of humankind. Thus, in this sense, otherness may still mean sinful existence in relation to God, to the fellow human beings and to ourselves which does not allow real otherness to be recognized. However, God's forgiving of sin does not mean the creation of sameness, neither in human reality nor in the sense that human beings would become God. Human logic tended to fall for this fallacy as it was the case with communism. The solution to this is not found in human potential but is given in Christ. Otherness' true content is grasped if it is understood as uniqueness restored in

Christ, *otherness expressed in relational existence*. Thus otherness is not the actualization of sinful existence but the negation of otherness that denotes sinful existence.²⁷² *Otherness* understood in this way, means the *acceptance of others*.

In this context, the awareness of the reformed doctrine of justification pertaining to the radicality of sin connects us with the claim of postmodernity. In a postmodern understanding those grand narratives which would interpret the human conditions have lost their validity, and their place is taken by individually determined subnarratives. For the protestant doctrine of justification this subnarrative is expressed in non-relation as the disposition of human life. Yet, what differentiates the postmodern idea of the human condition from what we understand by justification is the resolution postmodernity and justification give to the dilemma of non-relation as I referred to earlier. The postmodern perspective's answer is in securing human self-orientation that is conducted through a local and not universal narrative which, in my view, may tend to turn into non-relation. Justification, on the other hand, considers the solution to be in the narrative of who God is in Christ, as it is summed up in grace, in which the same is secured for all. Therefore, a meaningful interpretation of life and of living together²⁷³ is only possible if it is done in the context of grace revealed to us in Christ, which is in closer proximity to modernity than to postmodernity. The answer which the protestant doctrine of justification gives to the radicality of sin, and which is accessible to anyone, is *the acknowledgment of relationship* which I believe as a value is in the interest of the common good.

²⁷² We can surely agree at this point with Jan Bauke-Ruegg's opinion according to which „Sünde (...) ist die Ausblendung des Anderen.“ in: Jan Bauke-Reugg, *Die Frage nach dem gnädigen Gott. Erinnerungen an einige Implikationen der reformatorischen Rechtfertigungslehre*, EvTh. 57. Jahrgang 6-97. pp. 474-495. 482.

²⁷³ It inevitably let us to think of what position the church's would take. However, it is not my intent to answer this ecclesiological question at this point. Yet, we can remark, that Luther has articulated this question in his Ostersonntag sermon on April 9, 1531. For rethinking of this question see: Istvan Szabo, *Die Kirche – sündig und gerecht zugleich? Einige Bemerkungen zur Problematik der Übertragung einer Formel der Rechtfertigungslehre auf die Ekklesiologie*. in: EvTh 55. Jahrgang, 3-95. pp. 256-259.

V.1.4. Grace as relation with humanity

We have already noted that postmodernity sees the solution to this human situation to be in the self which does not take account of other's internal history. The doctrine of justification is similar in orientation but differs in content. The difference is observably in the fact that the doctrine of justification is a scheme of external and internal history in which external is to be seen as one having universal relevance, while the postmodern answer to the problem is only a proposal for the internal relation. Thus justification is a *triangle of Christ-self-the other*, while the postmodern answer would only reckon with how the other is contextualizing the one. This means that for justification the internal history of the other is not incorporated in itself but through Christ as it is *grace, i.e. the relationship with humanity*. This initiative is freely and completely taken to human life in Christ in order to condition human future. In this God reestablishes the broken relationship with humanity which is valid for every single human being as long as it is received. The future of the human condition is grounded in Christ despite, and precisely because of the self-centeredness of non-relational existence. God's grace remains the foreign source of knowledge of who we are as long as it is not connected with us in faith. Hence, grace becomes the larger context of our life and provides the possibility of changing human life from the state of being turned upon itself to a life that is turned upon to the other. Grace understood this way is not a power given to human beings²⁷⁴ but an event through which one becomes part of God's history with humanity as Karl Barth explained. This is a history that embraces human life and gives future to it, removes the hopeless and futureless heritage of sinful human life unconditionally.²⁷⁵ Since in self-centeredness we are more obsessed with what we are, this unconditional promise of grace is most difficult

²⁷⁴ It is in contradistinction to the idea of „*facere quod in se est*”.

²⁷⁵ Gerhard O. Forde says it this way: „The gospel of justification by faith is such a shocker, such an explosion, because it is an absolute unconditional promise. It is not an 'if-then' kind of statement, but a 'because-therefore' pronouncement.” See: Gerhard O. Forde, *Justification by faith*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 24.

for us to accept. Grace as relationship with humanity is the external history of Christ for us to understand our past, present and future by opening up space for further progress in human life. Grace is the sphere in which what we ought to be is visible.

V.1.5. Faith as relation in Christ

The question still remains: how is all this incorporated into human life? What is the means through which all this happens to human beings? How can one become part of this relational scheme? The postmodern answer is that one should incorporate into one's life the narrative of the other. The aim is to gain knowledge about the other through one's inner history so that the attained insights are not our preconceptions of the other. This claim of postmodernity is relevant for us in the sense that it harshly stands against any sort of preconception in attaining knowledge about the other since understanding the content of the external history, the revelation in Christ, must also be without our fixed idea of who Christ is and what grace should be. It is not possible of justification to consider the incorporation of grace through preset ideas. It is the reason why justification inevitably connects this knowledge with *faith* as it marks the '*relation in Christ*'.

Faith builds up the relation between Christ and the human being. In this process this relation becomes the ground of incorporating the divine gift, God's reality in Christ, into our history and in this way gives human existence a new reality.²⁷⁶ Relation in Christ does not refer to miraculous events, but realizes that something is done for us. It does away with the notion that God is not with us thus healing the non-relational existence by grace. Being in community with God means that human being is ready to receive the unexpected. The parable of the Good Samaritan exemplifies

²⁷⁶See: Eberhard Jüngel, *Das Evangelium von der Rechtfertigung des Gottlosen als Zentrum der christlichen Glaubens: eine theologische Studie in ökumenischer Absicht* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), pp. 204-205.

this challenge to meet the other. To seek eternal life means to be able to accept the unexpected both in relation to God and to the other. At the same time, relation with Christ helps humans to overcome their desire to be master of their own selves, and promotes mastery in relationship. Consequently, it means that through this relation one receives knowledge about the content and meaning of the history of God with humanity so that humans may understand the worldly reality with all its events and experiences and may also understand that we may meet with Christ in all those. It is in this 'relation in Christ' that Christ is present for us in our own world, it is all *in nobis*.

At the same time the 'relation in Christ' is an answer to God's relation to humanity which is expressed in grace. In justification we see the establishment of a new human existence. This new existence is not the legitimation of an amended human life that results from human effort, but a new existence that is an answer, consisting of pursuing otherness. Identify in this way otherness, differs from what we recognized under the condition of non-relation. This otherness is the opposite of what we found otherness to be under the condition of non-relation. It is the restored self through Christ in us. Hence it is the real otherness, which is the climax of relationship by understanding the claim what God in Christ places upon human life, as H. R. Niebuhr says: "...so faith having apprehended the divine self in its own history, can and must look for the manifestation of the same self in all other events."²⁷⁷

V.2 Antitotalitarianism and pluralism

The main project of postmodernity is to formulate a critique of modernity because of the misused concept of universalism. The distrust in universally accepted frameworks for human life is its main drive. This critique of universalism seems to

²⁷⁷ Niebuhr, TMR, pp. 86-87.

be valid since not only in small communities but in large context, in many places, a forcefully applied universalism resulted in torture, annihilation and the misuse of power. All post-war Central-Eastern Europe underwent this experience. To apply H. R. Niebuhr's term, the external history and the internal history were in contradiction. This critique of universalism is eye opening for Christian theology since Christian theology cannot provide a basis for giving legitimacy to false claims. As H. R. Niebuhr puts it strongly:

“A revelation that can be used to undergird the claim of Christian faith to universal empire over souls of men must be something else than the revelation of the God of that Jesus Christ who in faith emptied himself, made himself of no reputation and refused to claim the kingly crown.”²⁷⁸

It seems clear that Christian theology cannot work for a concept of universalism which undergirds uncontrolled power dominance over human lives, as postmodernity warns us. Power dominance as such is not only a manifestation of political reality but if we take seriously the non-relational character of sin, it can be the reality of personal encounters, too.

As we considered above, the history of God with human beings is a common ground which through incorporation is a total claim on human life. God's claim on human life has always been total and unconditional. From the beginning God's promise to be with human beings follows the life of the world as it is reinforced by Christ (Mt 28,18-20). God's promise is that God would renew human life in such way that it may give up its self-orientation and find a way back to be part of God's original intention. As a narrative, God's history with humanity surrounds the wholeness of human life, which means a triangle as far as human relations are concerned. At the top of it, there is always Christ and the two other corners refer to human beings in relationship. The total claim of God as it is seen in justification, as a relational

²⁷⁸ Niebuhr, TMR, p. 40.

scheme is permanently communicated in Christ. These claims are, as we have seen, the overcoming of non-relation through being in relation with and in Christ. This communication consists of three dialogues: *first*, a dialogue between the one and Christ; *second*, a dialogue between the other and Christ; *third*, a dialogue between the two persons with Christ in the center. This model rejects every total human claim over other human life, which also rejects non-relation. The antitotalitarian character of justification lies in the mere fact that it takes a clear stand against any human claim that would intend to place absolute demands on other human life,²⁷⁹ which means the rejection of totalitarianism as the overexaggeration of ‘relations’. The rejection of work righteousness is at the core of this demand. Since human history is bound together with the history of who God is for us in Christ, it is a journey on which grace as the restoration of relationship places total command over the whole person. This total command is a total refusal of universal anthropocentric thinking as the expression of self-fragmentation. Loyalty cannot be placed on different centers as one’s own interest would require. Plurality of such kind is an irrepressible course to self-justification and self-deception. Yet, this is not the goal of the Christ event for us. Its aim is to “understand our present human world in its relations, its actions and sufferings”,²⁸⁰ that is, the total command of Christ over human life makes us all pilgrims with others which does not mean the establishment of a homogenous community, but one which in this way develops into the realm of mutually recognized uniqueness understood as pluralism. We examined the strong emphasis of pluralism in postmodernity. We also found that this is not the acceptance of the notion that anything goes. Yet, in order to see how justification and the postmodern claim for pluralism are reconcilable we must understand what the term postmodern pluralism covers.

²⁷⁹ Eberhard Jüngel, *Das Evangelium von der Rechtfertigung des Gottlosen als Zentrum der christlichen Glaubens*, Ibid., p. 225. The rejection of work righteousness is at the core of this demand.

²⁸⁰ H. R. Niebuhr, *TMR*, p. 127.

V.2.1. Postmodern pluralism

The term itself indicates that it is a kind of pluralism that has its own concerns, which means that it must be distinguished from other kinds of pluralism. Bedford-Strohm identifies three different concepts of pluralism.²⁸¹ One of these is what he calls postmodern pluralism. Postmodernity as the deconstruction of Enlightenment philosophy and through this of every other field of human life is suspicious of the idea of universal truth as the source of knowledge, and considers this to be a very intrusive idea of white-male-western Europeans. It questions everything which would refer to a common ground. It is more interested in how one can maintain one's own reality by denying any need even to go beyond one's own origins. This is commonly understood as mutual respect for one another's belief. It evidently advocates a notion of liberty which may be described as "*freedom from*".²⁸² Interaction is only possible if the other shares one's view. Any other occasion for interaction is more open to the rejection of relationship. Relationships that are based on different views are considered intrusive and disruptive that in this perspective inherently means disrespect. This is ultimately the eradication of the need for relationship being expressed in a commonly accepted framework. This is what we can call the radicalization of pluralism and fostering of relativism in postmodernity. Even if these strong convictions receive great support from historical experience, they are not the only possible ways to deal with the idea. The experience of relationship in this way is mostly turning to one's own community of struggle in which the struggle for freedom results in pro-

²⁸¹ Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, *Community and Diversity: Social Ethical Reflections on a Challenge for Church and Society*. in: *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Vol. 49. 1995. Number 3-4. pp.147-168. Also: Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, *Gemeinschaft aus kommunikativer Freiheit. Sozialer Zusammenhalt in der modernen Gesellschaft. Ein theologischer Beitrag*. (Gütersloh: Kaiser, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), pp. 399-420. Beside postmodern pluralism he identifies two others. According to him, one kind is market pluralism, which „judges the value of various ideas and traditions that can be found in an open society according to the law of demand and supply.” This means that value is ultimately related to economic usefulness. However, we must say that there are values that cannot be judged by demand and supply i.e. faithfulness. The other kind of pluralism is what he calls justice pluralism which is the idea of an overlapping consensus as elaborated by John Rawls.

²⁸² For an interesting treatment of the notion of negative freedom see: Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958)

protecting moral relativism in order to reject metanarrative. The notion of justification by centering human life in Christ wants to overcome this moral relativism.

As we saw, for many, this relativism is not the purpose of postmodernity. Feminist emphasis on relationship makes it clear that it is really the difference that leads us into a dialogue with each other as the affirmation of gender identity. However, to prevent this from turning into relativism there has to be a universal truth that is agreed upon. For this reason feminism seems to be in closer connection with modernity than they would assume. Thus pluralism that expresses mutually recognized uniqueness is the approval of a common ground, a common history, a metanarrative. It declares that true recognition of diversity is only possible when it is protected by a mutually accepted framework.

As we consider the doctrine of justification, it is clear that this kind of pluralism is encouraged by God's approach in Christ to human life in order to give solution to the most vexing question of non-relation. The work of God through Christ is in contradistinction to a homogeneous mass identity accumulated in non-relation that is created by the isolation of the self. In God's story with us emerges a counter-process with Christ in the center in order to introduce the truth of Christ's message into human history, into the history of the self and of the community so that every human life may be included in this story. This participation is the means to develop the awareness of both our individual and social condition. It begins communication as a crucial moment in human history. According to the original intention of God, being created to the image of God means that we have the possibility of communicating with God and with each other. As non-relation dominates our life this communication is deeply disrupted, and takes an inward orientation and results in the plurality of disconnected individuals. The reestablishment of proper communication is achieved through the self-communication of God with Christ as its center. In this way humans

can understand God's intention and it is also the presentation of the one thing, the truth that is missing and cannot be made relative. It is the root of all those which should be lived. This is what prevents us from holding a fixed view of non-relation that could not be subject to change.²⁸³ The closed human life becomes both vertically and horizontally open which indicates openness to the interpretation of human life, of communal life through the continuous quest for understanding the truth.²⁸⁴ Such openness is the dynamics of human life and social relations.

God's self-communication heals the non-relational state of human life. However, non-relation, as the mark of human life drifting apart, indicates the lack of communication on the horizontal level, too. We saw in God's history in Christ for us, that communication is the reinforcement of otherness, of pluralism that must be recognized in the human-human relationship and through this in community as well. Consequently, what it means for the life of the justified sinner is nothing else but the re-establishment of relation. While on the vertical level it is communication of relation between God and humankind, which conditions human history, on the horizontal level it is *relation in interaction* with other humans that serves as the basis for pluralism in understanding one another. Inheriting eternal life as the gift of God means that we must adopt the perspective of such *pluralism in interaction* as it was the point in the case of the good samaritan.

In his theology of the Holy Spirit Michael Welker²⁸⁵ argues that the work of the Holy Spirit rejects such a diversity that would serve as a basis for the perception of human relations as one that lacks pluralism, since such a perception always seeks a homogeneous unity in community. Instead, the Holy Spirit nurtures a diversity of

²⁸³ Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, *Gemeinschaft aus kommunikativer Freiheit*. Ibid., p. 356.

²⁸⁴ The passion for truth we can all share. As Bedford-Strohm argues: „Kommunikation hält also die Wahrheitsfrage offen.“ Ibid., p. 356.

²⁸⁵ Michael Welker, *Gottes Geist. Theologie des Heiligen Geistes*, (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1992). The english translation: Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994)

“creative differences”. Thus it legitimates only a web of relations in which identity, the human condition, or social setting is constitutive for the self and for the other.²⁸⁶ It provides life with a new order as the expression of social relatedness. The inner reality of human life which participates in Christ, in this relational web eliminates conditions which would give rise to inequality and injustice. That is, God’s righteousness does not allow us to be in community with injustice just as our relationship with Christ does not allow us to be in community with sin. The Holy Spirit wants us to be obedient to the truth of God. If we resist this demand we would renounce the constructive and instructive character of pluralism as the source of creative transformation and sanctification of human life.

V.3. Freedom in relation

Freedom. We now start to talk about one of the most important thing of the individual human life as well as generally in history, not only for the 20th century but for the entire human history. Freedom has always been the main drive and goal of human life. It is one thing what every human life, every community intends to reach. They desire political freedom, religious freedom, economic freedom for rejecting globalization, racial freedom just to mention a few. They all want to be freed from the limitation that is being imposed on them. The first account of moving into this direction, to be free from, is in Gen. 3,1-13; 4,1-8 as the visible sign of how much this desire is a private goal of human life. Life longs for liberation from all those hindrances that it is exposed to. However, it is already at this point visible that what is ‘freedom from’ on the one side is bondage and repression on the other. Thus human life turns out to be the human desire to turn “in any direction”.²⁸⁷ Such an endeavour

²⁸⁶ Calvin, Inst. III. 7.7. , Zwingli, Commentarius, p. 263.

²⁸⁷ Luther, Boundage of the Will, in: Martin Luther. Selections from his writings. Ed. John Dillenberger (Doubleday: New York, 1962), p. 188. Luther talks about free will when he says: „People think it means what the natural force of the phrase would require, namely, a power of freely

leaves us in no doubt about human life not being in favour of such things which, according to the standards of human life itself, do not result in absolute freedom and which human life cannot rule over. This understanding of freedom and of the existence described as non-relation are in deep interaction. *Non-relation* is the result of a one sided human struggle for 'freedom from', and this understanding of freedom is the underpinning of the worsening state of non-relation. This may be an existentially influential condition of human life.

God's history in Christ with humanity makes this existential situation even clearer, since it places human life into a different perspective. It makes obvious that such human life is approached by Christ with the purpose of pointing out that it is not in accordance with God's purpose.²⁸⁸ We might not like this description of human life. Nevertheless, it remains to be the case so it is what we have to deal with. It is clear for justification that human life in itself, from the inside is not able to deal with this question meaningfully. It is rather evident that transformation of the human condition comes from outside as God's history in Christ causes rift in human history so that relational life expressed in the term '*freedom to*' may be recognized as the gift of God. Thus whenever we seek and struggle for freedom we ultimately find ourselves facing the history of God with humanity. This history eventually is a judgment on our life striving for freedom from, a judgment on our potential to alter this orientation. It is the beginning of abolishing our non-relational existence and the assurance that to be human is not a single act but a history carried out in relationships in which 'freedom from' turns out to be the impossibility of human life.²⁸⁹

The sensitivity to gaining the knowledge of truth is fundamental for an understanding of freedom. This sensitivity sets into motion human life that is otherwise

turning in any direction, yielding to none and subject to none." Also Karl Barth, CD III/2. p. 230. See his treatment of the term 'I am'.

²⁸⁸ McGrath calls it inauthentic existence. See: Alister E. McGrath, *Justification by Faith. What it means for us today.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), p. 85.

²⁸⁹ Karl Barth, CD III/2. p.136.

static by being caught up in the state of non-relation. This means a new beginning for human life that is experienced in faith and that is the end of all human enterprise to secure freedom. God's history for us is not the limitation of our freedom but entirely the opposite: it is only in this history that we are granted the possibility of the long awaited '*freedom to*' as the *freedom in relation*.

Human life, especially with regard to the project of the Enlightenment, was described by the term 'autonomous individual'. This definition of the human being, which meets our common conceptions of today, emphasized the human capacity of reasoning to discover the rationale of all events. In this process human life became more and more removed from the level of important encounters and was taken to the level of necessary interactions. The influence of this on human life was enormous since it resulted in human isolation up until now. Even if interactions were meant to be based on a universally accepted truth, the individual broke free from all its relations because of its interest to preserve individual autonomy and freedom. As the result of this the autonomous individual became most alienated from community and from the history of the community and, as we pointed out, ended up in self-isolation. This may be defined as a 'cut off autonomy', which is only one side of the question. However, it is clear that the doctrine of justification is not interested in such an individual even if the acceptance of Christ's righteousness as the source of our life is an individually desired gift. The relational web of justification does not look for the individual but for a *person in relation*.

The relational reality of the individual is the other side of the human condition described as 'autonomous individual'. From this perspective, autonomy can be interpreted as 'freedom in relation' and 'being freely in relation', which entails for autonomy a very strong community aspect. Freedom in this context is liberty that is very conscious of relations.

For human life personal development and personal accomplishment are almost the same importance as the struggle for freedom. However, it is not the privilege of people who live today. The emphasis on the person versus the individual is at the heart of God's story with humanity and through this of our history with each other.²⁹⁰ The biblical witness of justification reflects that God was always interested in personal encounters as maintaining or rebuilding relationships. We saw that in the Old Testament to be righteous was to be committed to preserving God's order that was introduced in the relational scheme. In the New Testament this broken order was renewed in Christ precisely through the personal encounter with Christ focused on the cross and resurrection. The emphasis on Christ as the only mediator, on the awareness that the confession of sins is a personal matter and the fact that grace through faith ought to be incorporated into personal life points to this direction. What is important in this context is not what human life can make of itself but what it would become by means of personal relationships.²⁹¹ This is why justification is interested in the person instead of in the individual, in life lived in the righteousness of God. Internal history understood as revelation in Christ declares that personal relationship is always the initiative of God. Accordingly, proper personal relationship with the other results from participating in God's history with us. Again, we may refer to the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which the encounter is profoundly personal and manifests itself in helping, the sharing of wealth. Understanding the good Samaritan as a person means the reckoning with both the external history of God and the internal history of the 'other'. Therefore, being a person in relation implies that one is ready to put an end to and prevent unjust and inhuman conditions. It pictures a life that is in community with the 'Other' for the benefit of the 'other'. Ideas such as 'I have my life, you have yours' or 'I have nothing to do with you', make no sense any more.

²⁹⁰ H.R.Niebuhr, TMR, p. 143. „...the point of view of faith living in history, is that we must think and speak in terms of persons. In our history we deal with selves, not with concepts.”

²⁹¹ E. Jünger, *Das Evangelium von der Rechtfertigung des Gottlosen*, Ibid., p. 228.

Rather, being in relation makes one to feel the need to confesses, 'I do not want to leave you alone', and the need to stand unmasked before the other. This is the life summed up in integrity, in the integrity of grace, of God's history in Christ; it is a life, which does not turn grace neither into merit nor into the economy of moral relativism. This is a life of a person in which God's history has priority, and integrity is preserved in communication through the Holy Spirit, which shows that self-understanding is always in relation with understanding the reality of the community.

Building up the new reality of the person and the relationship to the other is essentially linked to the work of the Holy Spirit, to which we now refer as sanctification. Living in relationship is the answer given to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. I argued above that pluralism understood in relationship is a productive force of community and that what it can offer is the affirmation of the unique character of human life in the context of God's self-disclosure. It follows, that sanctification effected by the Holy Spirit leads to human being's disclosure of himself/herself to the other which does not mean giving up intimacy. However, in the self-disclosure there is a lot at stake. Through the disclosure of the new awareness given in Christ, life affirms its new reality. This affirmation of the new reality as the disclosure of the self is the source of reciprocity²⁹² and the capability to give meaningful answers to human concerns. Thus, sanctification is always *co-existence with the other in the grace of God revealed in Christ as a narrative* for life. The content of this co-existence is that once internal history incorporates grace in faith, it is neither assimilation nor dominance.²⁹³ Therefore, the other with all needs and concerns is part of the one's

²⁹² Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, *Gemeinschaft aus kommunikativer Freiheit*, Ibid., pp. 281-284. Also as Niebuhr argues: „Knowledge of other selves must be received and responded to. Where there is no response it is evident that there is no knowledge, but our activity is the second and not the first thing.” Niebuhr, TMR, p. 146.

²⁹³ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace. A Theological exploration of the Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), pp. 74-75. 144-147.

justified sanctifying life. It is God's new creation of human belongingness which affirms human life. This is the actualization of created nature,²⁹⁴ of life being justified.

The web of the personal histories constitutes what we can call the *community of solidarity*. Solidarity, today, tends to have strongly emotional connotations. By referring to this term, nowadays, many would imply a meaning like the idea 'I understand your problem but you have to find the solution to it'. However, solidarity as an idea offers a very insightful meaning for theological thinking, which even the etymology of the word suggests. Solidarity in its etymological sense means to take on community with the other, to support his/her issue.²⁹⁵ This can happen into two directions: it is either organized by making personal interests accepted by the community or by recognizing the common interest personally. The former would be more an idea that is in close connection with individualism, and the latter is evidently the proposal linked to the idea of person. For obvious reasons when talking about solidarity the latter concept offers a feasible way for theology. Solidarity conceived this way means that community is not simply a conglomerate of individuals that endure each other, but the outcome of recognition of the common needs. In this respect the story of God in Christ is an image. God decides in Christ to take human being's concern on as to mend non-relational existence. This means that his decision confirms the human need. Therefore, God's decision is not a single act, for a single person, it is not a partial recognition of either people in power or people without power. Rather, it offers freely in grace the same possibility to every human life in order to evoke its relational character. This is God's solidarity with all human beings which indicates,

²⁹⁴ Barth affirms this by saying that theological anthropology „...knows man well enough as the man of sin, but not as the man who actualizes his creaturely nature in his sin.” Karl Barth, CD III/2. Ibid., p. 228.

²⁹⁵ Magyar Értelmező Kéziszótár. Kilencedik változatlan kiadás. L-ZS (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2000) Szolidáris, szolidaritás címszavak.; Émile Durkheim, A társadalmi munkamegosztásról, (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2001) In this book Durkheim makes the distinction between 'mechanic solidarity' based on the likeness of individuals and 'organic solidarity' based on the differences of industrial societies.

that this is not apotheosis, but the reality of dealing with every human's life on the same basis, namely, that it offers the same thing for every human life. It follows that solidarity is a critical concept as it announces judgment on the non-relational existence of human life.²⁹⁶ In this solidarity, as the meeting point of the history of God with the history of human beings, the revelation of God implies a social task in human life.²⁹⁷

The community of solidarity between God and human beings as *analogia relationis* is the model for the community of solidarity in human-human relations. In the context of relational existence which is our personal history with grace, solidarity has the same meaning as we have already said. In our relational life solidarity is not merely the expression of being able to suffer the presence of others. Instead, solidarity means the awareness of other's need as if it were one's own need. That is, as if injustice, poverty, oppression, anti-democratic experiences were for me to suffer. Yet, it is not taking the other's place. Instead, it is the state in which the one and the other complement each other. As Bedford-Strohm argues: "Das Engagement für *andere* und die Sorge für sich *selbst* werden als *komplementär* verstanden."²⁹⁸ This constitutes a "social communication"²⁹⁹ in which people start to have a common history of community as the place and source of regeneration. This, itself, is the beginning of a history, the history of the persons in relation, what we can call the history of the social community which understands freedom as a common need. "...it was to prove at the present time that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom 3, 26) What

²⁹⁶ Earlier I referred to Forde's opinion that legal terminology is not so helpful to understand justification. Yet, in this respect I find the legal terminology of Paul 'to make one righteous' to be very good for the description of community of solidarity in two respects. First, the term reinforces the belief that justification is God's intention for every human being. Second, it affirms that the basis of solidarity is laid by God in Christ and not by human effort.

²⁹⁷ H. R. Niebuhr, TMR, pp. 141-142.

²⁹⁸ Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, *Gemeinschaft aus kommunikativer Freiheit*, Ibid., p. 449. (Italic is in the original)

²⁹⁹ Eberhard Bush, *Gotteserkenntnis und Menschlichkeit*, Ibid., p. 152.

Paul describes in this passage has relevance not only for Christian life in the church but in the life of the society as well.

We introduced the doctrine of justification as a resource for public theology by recognizing that it has an ongoing validity for the public realm, even under the circumstances of secularizing society.³⁰⁰ The justification paradigm could serve as a narrative, which can identify the wholeness and dignity of human life. The identity created by this can be definitive not only for the Christian community but for the public as well. To say it differently: we should find ways to form the life of the public along the line described by this narrative.

³⁰⁰ See: Pfürtner, Stefan, *The Paradigms of Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther: Did Luther's Message of justification mean a paradigm change?* In: *Paradigm Change in Theology* Eds. Hans Küng, David Tracy, (Edinburgh: T& T Clark, 1989)

English Summary

The aim of our work was to spread light on how the doctrine of justification and the idea of postmodernity as it is increasingly influential in our thinking, can be brought into conversation. In order to reach our aim we decided to approach our theme from a special perspective, which led us to observe those insights that helped us in initiating a dialogue between the doctrine of justification and postmodernity. Our first question was to answer: whether there was any relevance to talk about postmodernity and its influence in Hungary? The answer to this question was yes, besides being aware of the different opinions. Some advocate that it is not postmodernity but post-communism that means a more serious concern. The local theological thinking also started in the near past to formulate its opinion regarding postmodernity. It is also convinced that the influence of postmodernity could be experienced in different fields of life. Thus we come to the conclusion that the idea of postmodernity is increasingly influential in Central-Eastern Europe.

The next step was to work with the history and the idea of postmodernity. Some believe that it is already at the end of the 19th century that reference to postmodernity can be identified. However, the phenomenon itself is very young, since the definition itself appeared in a literature-critically context. The only possible way to understand it is if we compare it with modernity. For this reason, we go back to Hegel and Kant. In relation to Christianity we refer to the possible connection between the birth of postmodernity and the loss of influence of the providential thinking. The most influential articulation of the idea of postmodernity is in Lyotard's book, titled *The postmodern condition*. His basic assumption is that the time of metanarratives is already gone. This means that it is not possible any more to attain knowledge about the world based on such narratives. Habermas questions this saying that postmodernity is not arrived yet. For him there is a narrative in which the autonomous individual and the social content of the community have their meeting point. Thus metanarratives do have role in evaluating the human reality. We introduce feminism as one, who is a vivid example of rejecting metanarratives, which for feminism are to legitimate power dominance.

As one step further in our endeavor we introduce postmodern theology. We observe that its appearance coincides with that of postmodernity. We also observed that in postmodern theology there are two main streams: deconstruction and process. Special attention is paid to David Tracy, John B. Cobb whose work leads us to think of the practical implications of postmodern theology. J. B. Cobb is convinced that we have to talk about Christianity as a sociohistorical movement in which the Christ-event is placed in the center.

Having dealt with postmodernity, we turn our attention to the doctrine of justification from a special perspective as we are looking for those significant traces that underline the narrative and relational character of this doctrine. The starting point in this is the biblical witness, which strengthens the idea that the doctrine of justification describes a relational setting. It is even more emphasized in the Gospels. Thus we see that a justified human life is full of social relations. This character is further stressed in the historical revisiting of the doctrine. At the end of our rethinking of the doctrine of justification we come to the conclusion that: it stresses a radical *Christ-centeredness* and turns from anthropocentric thinking to theocentric thinking; as a relational scheme it rejects every total human claim over other human life, and this is its *antitotalitarian* character; in its *relational scheme* the emphasis is on the person instead of the individual.

At the end, we brought the doctrine of justification and postmodernity into dialogue with the intention to give impulses for public theological thinking. It is necessary to introduce the basic idea of public theology. In our view public theology is a positive apologetics on the one hand. On the other hand, it is grounded in the biblical witness to human reality. Thus in the relational scheme we define *sin* as *non-relation*, *grace* as *relation with humanity*, and *faith* as *relation in Christ*. Its antitotalitarian character is stressed through the idea of constructive pluralism as the person comes to the fore. Such a relational scheme is defined as the community of solidarity.

Összefoglalás

E munka sajátos nézőpontból mutatja be a posztmodern eszme és a megigazulás tan kölcsönhatását azzal a szándékkal, hogy a nyilvános teológia számára gondolati alapot teremtsen. E gondolatok a mai társadalmi folyamatok hatása alatt fogalmazódtak, és érlelődtek meg különböző nézőpontokból világlátva rá az emberi élet valóságára. Mindkét téma jól meghatározható okok miatt magyarázatra szorul. Így vált elsősorban megkerülhetetlen feladattá, a nem egyértelmű és még kevésbé egyöntetű értelmezések miatt, a posztmodernitás mibenlétének tisztázása. Leginkább az foglalkoztat bennünket, hogy van-e ma létjogosultsága annak, hogy Magyarországon posztmodernitásról beszéljünk. Az ebben a tekintetben igencsak megoszló vélemények ellenére megállapíthatjuk, hogy lehet ma a hazai gondolkodás tekintetében posztmodern hatásokról beszélni. Természetesen nehéz lenne a Magyarországra sajátosan jellemző vonásokat megrajzolni, de nem is szükséges, hiszen egy általánosan jelentkező világlátással állunk szemben. A hazai teológiai gondolkodás is felismerte mindezt. Így a közelmúltban néhány idevonatkozó gondolattal gazdagodhattunk. A posztmodern egyre nagyobb befolyása arra készít bennünket, hogy az általa támasztott kihívásokra válaszoljunk. Ehhez szükséges magának a posztmodernnek történeti és eszmei bemutatása, melyet elvégeztünk e munka során. Van olyan elképzelés, miszerint a posztmodern kialakulása már a 19. század végén megindult. A jelenség maga azonban igen fiatal, hiszen csak a 20. század második felében kerül be a köztudatba irodalomkritikai fogalomként. Megértésének kulcsa valójában a modernitással való összehasonlításban keresendő. Ezért volt szükséges felelevenítenünk Hegel és Kant gondolatainak történeti szerepét. A keresztyéniséggel összefüggésben pedig utaltunk arra a lehetőségre, hogy a posztmodernitás előretörését a gondviselés keresztyén tanításának befolyásvesztése is elősegítette. A posztmodern eszme legteljesebb kibontását láthatjuk Lyotard, *A posztmodern állapot* című könyvében. Alaptétele, hogy a metanarratívok ideje lejárt. Ez azt eredményezi, hogy az emberi megismerés a 'nagy elbeszéléseken' alapulva lehetetlenné vált. Habermas szerint azonban van lehetőség arra, hogy a metanarratívokat figyelembe vegyük. Ezzel azt állítja, hogy a modernitás kora még nem múlt el. E feszültséget még tovább erősítik a feminista gondolkodók, akikről vizsgálódásunk során szintén esett szó. A posztmodernitással szinte azonos időben jelenik meg a posztmodern teológia is, amelynek ma leginkább két fő csapásvonala ismeretes: dekonstrukció és proceszus. A posztmodernitás mind elméleti, mind gyakorlati vonatkozásban befolyásolta és befolyásolja a teológiai gondolkodást, ahogy ezt David Tracy, vagy John B. Cobb munkássága is egyértelműen jelzi. Cobb megfigyelése szerint a keresztyéniség számára a legnagyobb kihívás, hogy miként tudja visszahelyezni újra a középpontba a Krisztus-eseményt. Így a keresztyéniség kulturális-nyelvi megközelítése helyett annak „sociohistorical movement”-ként történő értelmezését részesíti előnyben.

Így került sor a megigazulás tanának egy sajátos nézőpontból történő megközelítésére azzal a céllal, hogy annak metanarratív jellegére rámutassunk. Már a bibliai háttér vizsgálatánál kiderült, hogy a megigazulás egy kapcsolati rendszert ír le. Az evangéliumok fényében különösen is bizonyítást nyert, hogy a megigazult ember önértelmezésében nem függetlenítheti magát másoktól. Mindez azt a megfigyelést eredményezte, hogy a megigazult emberi élet társas/társadalmi kapcsolatokkal teljes. Ennek nyomait kerestük a megigazulás tanának történeti áttekintése során is. Mindez azt jelentette, hogy a tan boncolgatásánál csak magára a tanra összpontosítottunk, a megigazulás koncepciójára nem. Így vezettük végig a tan történetét az első szisztematikus megfontolástól a 20. század legjelentősebb újragondolásáig, különös tekintettel Luther, Kálvin és Zwingli munkásságára. Vizsgálódásunk végén három konzekvenciát foglalmaztunk meg. **1.** A megigazulás tanának protestáns értelmezése irányváltást jelentett az emberközpontúságtól az istenközpontúság felé. Ez radikális Krisztus-központúságként értelmezhető. **2.** E kapcsolati rendszer elutasít minden, ember általi, a másik ember felett bejelentett totalitáriánus igényt, amelyet antitotalitáriánus karakterként azonosíthatunk. **3.** Kapcsolati jellegéből adódóan a hangsúly inkább a 'személy'-re esik az 'egyén'-nel, 'individuum'-mal szemben. Dolgozatunk végén e három konzekvenciára alapozva kívántunk a „nyilvános teológia” számára gondolatokat megfogalmazni a posztmodern eszme és a megigazulás tanának dialógusa mentén. Így a „nyilvános teológia” leírása természetszerűen vált szükségessé. Két alapvető jellemvonását azonosítottuk. Az egyik szerint a „nyilvános teológia” valójában „pozitív apológiának” tekinthető. A másik szerint a „nyilvános teológia” alapja az ember valóságának bibliai képe, amely egyfajta kritikai hang megszólaltatásának is forrása egyben.

A megfogalmazott három konzekvencia mentén kívántunk tehát gondolati alapot teremteni egy kidolgozásra váró gyakorlati leírás számára. A Krisztus-központúság metanarratívként értelmezve alternatívát nyújt a posztmodern eszme emberközpontú fragmentációjával szemben. A kapcsolati rendszer leírásaként definiáltuk a bűnt mint 'kapcsolatnélküliség'-et, a kegyelmet mint 'az emberrel való kapcsolat'-ot és a hitet mint 'a Krisztusban való kapcsolat'-ot. Mindez így a Krisztus-egyén-másik kapcsolati rendszerét írja le. Ezzel összefüggésben azt a megfigyelést tettük, hogy e kapcsolati rendszer antitotalitáriánus jellege abban áll, hogy elutasítva minden, az emberi élet fölött bejelentett totális igényt a pluralizmus konstruktív és instruktív jellegét erősíti a pluralitással szemben. Mindez az ember szabadságának forrása, melyben a *személy* kerül előtérbe az *egyénnel* szemben. Az így meghatározott kapcsolati rendszert pedig a 'szolidaritás közössége'-ként értelmeztük.

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