

# Ministry in Historical Perspective<sup>1</sup>

## Part II. Ministry: Evangelical Reformation

James A. Glasscock

A lecture prepared by use by the  
Students of the Reformation Seminar  
Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Germany  
July, 2002

The ministry in the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century is best known for its biblical preaching.<sup>2</sup> Aptly, Luther's descriptive metaphor for a Church building certainly applies to the Reformation understanding of preaching. A Church building was a *Mundhaus* (mouth or speech house).<sup>3</sup>

However, preaching did not exhaust the possibilities or demands placed on the first generation Reformers. In addition to preaching, the formation and rebuilding of congregations became an urgent matter.

What Church order would be most suitable in a particular locale? That issue became a paramount concern. It was not forgotten that preaching of any sort, Roman Catholic or Protestant, required the gathering of a congregation or a Church and one that had a sense of ordered life.

Indeed, though preaching required a Church or congregation, other distinctive marks of the Churches of the Reformation stretched and broadened the concept of ministry throughout the 16th century Europe in the Reformation lands.

Not infrequently, Churches took on distinctive features in Church order, worship and, of course, preaching. Even music, especially hymns, chant, psalm singing and the like, was not to be neglected or forgotten in the constitution of the Church, a Church that was biblical and evangelical.

Music played an especially important role in the Reformation and certainly in Wittenberg where Luther was a leading advocate of music. But though music was essential in sustaining and educating a congregation in

---

<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm Pauck's essay, "The Ministry in the Time of the Reformation," is found in *The Ministry in Historical Perspective*, edited by H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel Day Williams. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956, pp. 110-148. However, I incorporate other studies from a variety of scholars in order to expand the topic. These sources are appropriately cited in the lecture.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 110. Harold J. Grimm writes, "The Protestant Reformation would not have been possible without the sermon. Regardless of how the reformers gained their new theological insights, they used the sermon to bring their doctrines directly to their followers in the vernacular and to apply these doctrines to the immediate and practical religious needs of the people." Harold J. Grimm, *Archive fur Reformationgeschichte*, Volume 49-50, 1958-59, 50.

The subject of preaching in the Reformation of the 16th century anticipates a comprehensive lecture at some future date. However, parts of the following lecture may be considered part of a prolegomena to a study of Reformation preaching.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 114.

**Bible and theology, other solemn and sobering duties and practical matters clamored for the attention of dedicated pastors and ministers.**

**Living in the 16th century was not for the faint-hearted and it was a perilous experience indeed. The 16th century was an unsettled age: a time of periodic outbreaks of the Black Plague, a rapidly shifting social environment, a restless domestic political situation and compounded by an external threat posed by the Turks!**

**In spite of these formidable obstacles, the Reformers of the 16th century and Reformation-minded Christians tasted "Christian freedom," and liked it. Though the experiment in Christian freedom sometimes went terribly awry, as in the case of Muenzer, Carlstadt and the Anabaptists, the Reformers could not escape their obligations to civil and political authority and abandon themselves or their Churches to license or unrestricted freedom.**

**Given their primary commitment to the Gospel, with all its implications, inevitably, the Reformers unavoidably interacted with the princely authorities and magistrates. Yet the potential for conflict was high, as the history of the 16th century often attests.**

**Yet in spite of major and sometimes minor difficulties and challenges confronting them, the Reformers persisted in the development of often-unique and varied orders and styles of worship, music and preaching.**

**Wisely, the Reformers, fully aware of the great tradition to be found in the writings of the Apostolic Church and the writings of the Greek and Latin Church Fathers. Even theologically substantial developments within the Roman Catholic Tradition were understood and on occasion appropriated by them for use in their Churches.**

**Indeed, the willingness to learn and honor the worthy past of the Christian Tradition is a crowning achievement, and an example to us all.**

**As their successors, our task and duty in the Church of the 21st century is to remember the past! However trite it may sound, it seems useful to write that remembering the past must occur before we can recover any of it. And one cannot recover what one does not first remember is available.<sup>4</sup>**

**Before turning to the subjects of worship and music during the early years of the 16th century Reformation, a matter of ecclesiastical moment is framed in a question, namely, What is the nature of the Church? The answers proposed determine the nature of the Church's ministry.**

## **I. The Nature of the Church.**

---

<sup>4</sup> "It is, indeed, a great mistake to neglect or to look superciliously at the tremendous theological effort of the first Christian centuries. To forget that is, as Karl Barth once said, 'a theological barbarism.' " K.E. Skydsgaard, "The Flaming Center," *Our Common History As Christians: Essays in Honor of Albert C. Outler*. Edited by John Deschner, Leroy T. Howe & Klaus Penzel. New York: Oxford, 1975, 19.

**Ministerial practice of the mainline Reformers (Luther and Melancthon of Wittenberg, Calvin of Geneva, Bucer of Strasbourg, Zwingli of Zurich and many others) -- and Protestantism in general -- varied in form and order, but regardless Protestant ministers and preachers needed a Church, a congregation of the faithful Christians, in which they served as preacher and acquired a wide variety of responsibilities. But the wide variety of responsibilities that were uniquely theirs varied with the Church as institution and organization.**

**What Protestants understood the Church to be and what Roman Catholics meant by Church reveals a deep chasm that separated the Protestants and Roman Catholics.**

**In the 16th century Protestant Reformation, one did not distinguish between members and ministers or clergy.<sup>5</sup> But in the Middle Ages and until Vatican II (1962-63), the RCC view of the Church meant laity were to be passive observers of a drama playing itself out in the chancel and around the Altar.**

**The major figures in performance of the drama of the Mass were the ordained clergy; the congregation, as we saw in the lecture on the Middle Ages, was an audience and not necessarily expected to be involved in the service.**

**On the other hand, attentiveness to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers means that every Protestant, member or clergy, is a minister. This simple sentence is of primary importance in understanding the difference between the Protestants and Roman Catholics.**

**Whatever distinction that exists between clergy and laity in most Protestant Churches is based on the function or office,<sup>6</sup> not on one's standing in an ecclesiastical or social order or holding higher rank, though some prominent Reformers received privileges not ordinarily expected or granted to lesser-known clergy in a princely state.<sup>7</sup>**

---

<sup>5</sup> The most visible sign of this lack of difference was in the sermon. Grimm writes, "The basic difference between Luther's sermons and those of his predecessors stem largely from the fact that he discarded the medieval distinction between clergy and laity and adhered to the doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers." Grimm, op. cit. 51.

<sup>6</sup> The term "office" is seldom used today but it still is a useful word. The word "office" assumes a duty, a responsibility, an authority, and an accountability on the part of the holder of the office. Most generally when one "holds" an office or is "installed" in an office, the act of holding or installing sets the person apart for specific tasks and duties. Edgar M. Carlson observes in an article, "The Doctrine of Ministry in the Confessions," that "the office of the ministry is inherent in the church, but the person who occupies it has already been included in the church by virtue of membership in the congregation. This is the conclusion to which I would have been disposed prior to this study." *Lutheran Quarterly*. 7:1 [Spring 1993], 91.

<sup>7</sup> In 21st century Protestantism and in all denominations in the US, it is true that some "High Steeple" Church and their senior minister enjoy a preeminence and stature in the denomination and community that a small congregation and its minister do not have. It goes to prove the adage, "Some of us are more equal than others."

In striking contrast to the Protestant position, the Roman Catholic Church doctrine of the Church greatly influenced how its hierarchical structure imposed an order on the nature of her ministry and, to a great extent, determined the boundaries, limitations, and outcomes of ministry.<sup>8</sup>

By and large, it is not a misrepresentation to argue that the ministry of the RCC is driven by an elaborate sacramental system.<sup>9</sup> The sacramental system -- from cradle to grave for the laity -- arose over centuries and itself has a unique history, as Jaroslav Pelikan's excellent study demonstrates so clearly.

The conception of the Church in Roman Catholic teaching arose in part by necessity of the times, as the Church of Rome stepped into fill the breach that developed with the passing of the Roman Empire and the Fall of Rome (410).<sup>10</sup>

In a time of transition, the Church of Rome gained power and prestige. Quite naturally, it became easy to think of the Bishop of the Christian Church of Rome as successor to the Caesar. New titles claimed by the Bishop of Rome include *Pontifex Maximus* (the Latin for "Supreme

---

<sup>8</sup> "The basic criticism which the Reformers directed against Roman Catholicism was that, instead of permitting the Word of God to run a free course among men, the Papists confined it to a historical man-made institution, the Church of Rome. Luther especially was persuaded that the Pope was the very Anti-Christ, because he claimed to be the holy authoritative interpreter of the Bible, and thus bound it to his office. Calvin regarded the Roman Church as a victim of superstition and idolatry because, in his judgment, it relied for the order of its practices on human inventions and not on the Bible. In his eyes, the ceremonialism of Roman Catholicism was an evil because it was the practice of an irreligious religion and not that of obedience to the will of God revealed in Christ." Paulk, op. cit. 111.

<sup>9</sup> "The heart of Roman Catholic faith and life is not the authority of the church organization, however formidable that may be, nor the relation of church and state, however complex that may be. Roman Catholic religious life is centered in the seven sacraments of the church." Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Riddle of Roman Catholicism*. New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959, 110. Readers are urged to get a copy of Pelikan's book, as it is a marvelous treatment of the pre-Vatican II RCC. The chapter "Mystery and Magic" treats the seven sacraments in enough detail to give the reader a sense of the sacramental life promised in the RCC. See pages 110-127.

<sup>10</sup> "In the history of the last days of the Western Empire, two points deserve special remark: its continued union with the Eastern branch, and the way in which its ideal dignity was respected while its representatives were despised. Stilicho was the last statesman who could have save it. After his death, and after the City [of Rome] had been captured by Alarich in A.D. 410, the fall of the Western throne, though delayed for two generations by traditional reverence, became practically certain. While one by one the provinces were abandoned by the central government, left either to be occupied by the invading tribes or maintain a precarious independence, like Britain and the Arnotain cities, by means of municipal unions, Italy lay at the mercy of the barbarian auxiliaries and was governed by their leaders."

James Bryce, *The Holy Roman Empire*. New York: Schocken Books, 1961, 24. Lord Bryce's marvelous essay was first published in 1904 and reissued again in 1923. Though new research in the history of the origin and development of the Holy Roman Empire has superceded the work at points, this volume re-presents the change from Roman Empire to Holy Roman Empire and its contemporary residual in fine fashion. I heartily recommend Lord Bryce's book.

Pontiff"). Originally, the title *Pontifex Maximus* was a pagan title conferred on the chief priest of Rome. As Rome fell, it fell to the Christian bishop of Rome to become the chief priest of Rome.

In the 2nd-3rd century African Church Father Tertullian of Carthage (c.160-c. 220) used the term satirically in one of his writings, but by the 5th century onwards, it was a regular title of honor of the Popes, and occasionally used also by other bishops. In later times, the title was confined to the Roman Pontiff.<sup>11</sup>

In keeping with the rank and title of the Bishop of Rome and the Pope, increasing emphasis soon was laid on the Divine Constitution and corporate nature of the Church.<sup>12</sup> The essence of the Church, as understood in RCC teaching, is epitomized in four traditional notes of the Church, namely, unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity.<sup>13</sup>

The four traditional notes of the Church -- unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity -- naturally lead to the following logical and reasonable conclusion. If the Church was the Body of Christ, Her Lord founded her. If Her Lord founded her, then, She was and is of divine origin. If She had a divine origin, then, She must be holy. If She were holy, then, by divine intention, She was universal or catholic. Consequently, She possessed the Apostolic teaching and power of laying on of hands and was custodian of the teaching of Her Lord and the Tradition.

The Church was conceived as a visible body. Her membership, as accepted rather passively by the members, Her orders of ministers, and Her unity are all connected and concerned by participation in the visible sacraments. At first, these were baptism and the Lord's Supper or Eucharist, but in time the number of sacraments increased to seven in number.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast to the visible Church, there is an invisible Church. While the visible Church is "the Church militant here on earth," there is an invisible Church of the faithful departed, who are divided into the Church Expectant (undergoing purification in purgatory) and the Church Triumphant (already enjoying the beatific vision<sup>15</sup> in heaven).

But Protestants of any stripe need a congregation, too. While not in agreement at some points with the RCC interpretation or understanding of the Church, the marks of the Church among most Protestant reformers and

---

<sup>11</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1089.

<sup>12</sup> F.W. Dillistone, *The Structure of the Divine Society*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951, 147. Dillistone identifies six types of Churches. (1) The Monastic, (2) The Imperial, (3) The Organic, (4) The Coventantal, (5) The Contractual and (6) The Sectarian.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 284.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 284.

<sup>15</sup> The Beatific Vision is the vision of the Divine Being in heaven, which is the final destination of the redeemed. During the late Middle Ages, there was dispute about the nature of the Beatific Vision (BV) until Pope Benedict XII (1336) formally defined the Divine Essence. BV would be seen by direct intuition and face to face. Examples of those who in this life beheld the Divine Essence, according to Thomas Aquinas, included Moses (Exodus 34:28-35) and Paul the Apostle (2 Corinthians 12:2-4). *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 145.

bodies include major emphasis on preaching, Scripture, Word (Jesus Christ) and two Sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper). These are or may be considered distinguishing marks of the Church.

A high doctrine of the Church is found in the second generation of Reformers, but this doctrine contains ideas that most of the Continental Reformers in Germany, Switzerland and elsewhere would have agreed upon. A high concept of the Church and its ministry is still held officially in the Anglican Church or the Church of England, though in some practices one thinks otherwise.

The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England remains a remarkable doctrinal statement when one is asked to define the Church.

#### **Article XIX. *Of the Church***

**The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments [of baptism and the Lord's Supper] be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.<sup>16</sup>**

But there quickly arose a dissenting group during the early days of the Reformation in Europe, whose idea of the Church is not generally considered as holding a high doctrine of the Church.

The Anabaptists appeared in Zurich. In the city where Zwingli contributed significantly to the Reformed Church (in distinction from the Lutheran Churches in Germany), Conrad Grebel (c. 1498-1526) and Felix Manz, young scions of prominent families, led a radical movement that went far beyond Zwingli's program of reform.

In his youthful days, Grebel was in Basel, Vienna and Paris, and drank deeply of the humanism that was popular. When Grebel returned to Zurich and acquainted with the humanism that was spreading rapidly, naturally came in contact with Zwingli, a humanist and a Reformer himself. Grebel's conversion came in 1522-1523, but of the details little or nothing is known.

At the outset, Grebel was a warm friend and earnest follower of Zwingli, but almost immediately and by the autumn of 1523, he began to part with Zwingli. The latter would move no faster in abolishing the Mass or the use of images than the Zurich City Council would permit, while Grebel believed the civil authorities should not control the Church or determine

---

<sup>16</sup>Quoted from Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, Volume III The Evangelical Protestant Creeds*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877, 1905, 1919, p. 499. I used Schaff's American rather than the English version.

her faith and practice. Others believed as Grebel and joined together to become known as the Swiss Brethren.<sup>17</sup>

In retrospect, the Anabaptist movement represents one of three approaches to a doctrine of the ministry and a doctrine of the Church. Therefore, it is important to examine in some detail the emergence of the Anabaptist doctrine of ministry and the Church.<sup>18</sup>

Grebel and Manz desired an accelerated cleansing of the Church and a more thoroughgoing Reformation than Zwingli was prepared to undertake. They contacted Carlstadt, who advocated rapid change in Wittenberg, and Thomas Muenzer. Grebel wrote Luther encouraging him to apply the Scriptures with less compromise than the Great Luther was doing.

By the autumn of 1524, Grebel and his associates rejected infant baptism, and opposed the civil authorities' collection of tithes for the support of ministers. They called the practice "usury." But it was over baptism that brought the Zurich authorities into conflict with them, for in spite of the City Council's wishes, Grebel and company gave baptism only to those who were adult believers. The Swiss Brethren also observed the Lord's Supper with simple rites.<sup>19</sup>

Paulk summarizes the position of some of the early and leading Anabaptists like this:

They advocated . . . the idea that a Church truly reformed according to the Bible could not be anything else but a community of believers, who, having been awakened and reborn by the Holy Spirit, were resolved to follow Christ and to practice a life of uncompromising religion, declining to rely on political power for the maintenance of religion and refusing to bear arms, to use physical coercion of any sort, to appeal to the courts, to swear oaths, et cetera. The issue between them and Zwingli became joined, when they neglected to present their children for baptism, convinced only that

---

<sup>17</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, New York: Harper and Row, 1953, 780. Hereafter cited as Latourette. It is interesting to note The *Oxford History of the Christian Church* contains no entry for Conrad Grebel or the Swiss Brethren. I find both omissions curious, considering the rise of the Anabaptists during the early days of the Reformation.

<sup>18</sup> In the United States, the influence of the 16th century Anabaptist movement manifests itself most clearly in the positions taken by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). One remembers each congregation is autonomous, as position advocated, indirectly, by Grebel's claim that the civil authorities had no standing in determining Church faith and practice. The SBC is not alone in this claim, however, as it appears that almost every other Christian denomination in the US adheres to this understanding of Church-State relations to some degree.

<sup>19</sup> Latourette, op. cit., 781.

believer's baptism was the true sign of entrance into the membership of the Church.<sup>20</sup>

With this description of the Church and its ministry in hand, the Anabaptists joined the other Reformers in preaching doctrine to the extent that "only among the Anabaptist did Christian awakenings and revivals occur under the influence of Biblical preaching, Bible readings, and hymn singing."<sup>21</sup>

But one asks, "Didn't the Reformers who were not Anabaptists preach doctrine, read scripture and create singing congregations? Why did they not have awakenings and revivals like the Anabaptists did?"

The distinctive trademark of the mainstream Protestant Reformers was centered on doctrine preaching, too, but also a heavy emphasis on the teaching minister.

As Paulk notes,

In Wittenberg, it became the practice (which was instituted elsewhere) to hold, four times a year, preaching services on the Catechism. For two weeks, the Catechism was explained seriatim in daily sermons. Practices of this sort made it inevitable for preaching to assume a catechetical character. The ministers directed their sermons to the end of stimulating a right faith on the basis of a correct knowledge of evangelical doctrines. [Unlike the Anabaptists], they did not try to arouse conversion experiences in their listeners nor did they cultivate emotions or sentiments [in their hearers].

.....

The movement of the Reformation at large was not a "great awakening." It was the goal of the Reformers and of the early Protestant ministry to inculcate right Christian teaching and "pure doctrine" in the minds of men. This is why as preachers they were primarily teachers.<sup>22</sup>

Definition of the teaching ministry and the role of preaching in most Protestant bodies may be more clearly seen if one examines doctrinal statements of the Reformers.

---

<sup>20</sup> Paulk, op. cit. 119. Emphasis mine.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 135.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 135.



For example, in the Lutheran Church, Philip Melanchthon, author of the Augsburg Confession (1530) in Article VII (The Church), writes:

It is also taught among us that the only holy Christian Church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian Church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with the pure understanding of it [the Gospel] and that the sacraments be administered for the true unity of the Christian Church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places. It is as Paul says in Ephesians 4:4, 5: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism."<sup>23</sup>

Surveying the 16th century Reformation as a Lutheran, Edgar M. Carlson, investigates "The Doctrine of Ministry in the Confessions"<sup>24</sup> of the Lutheran Church, and reaches a surprising conclusion.

He observes that "there is surprisingly little about the office of ministry in the Confessions, and where they [the writers of the Confessions] do treat of it, the discussion of the subject is almost always incidental to the main theme."<sup>25</sup>

A case in point is Article V of the Augsburg Confession, which reads like this:

#### V. [The Office of Ministry]

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleased, in those who hear the Gospel. And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this.

---

<sup>23</sup>*The Augsburg Confession*. Fortress Press, 1959, 13. The Augsburg Confession is part of the Book of Concord, the confessions of faith of early Lutheranism.

<sup>24</sup> Edgar M. Carlson, "The Doctrine of the Ministry in the Confessions," Lutheran Quarterly 7:1 [Spring 1993], 79-91.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 79.

Condemned are the Anabaptists and others<sup>26</sup> who teach that the Holy Spirit comes to us through our own preparations, thoughts, and works without the external word of the Gospel.<sup>27</sup>

Carlson continues by pointing to the major issue Melancthon identifies in the Confessions of the Lutheran Church. Carlson claims the controversy to which the Confessions speak is, on the one hand, about "the Word versus the ministry," that is the RCC hierarchy. In the Confessions, he suggests, that, in the Church, the hierarchical ministry of the RCC occupied and dominated "the central place in the life of the Church which properly belonged to the Word, or the Gospel."<sup>28</sup>

On the other hand, the Reformation understanding of the Word meant the Word presided over the ministry. "In Rome the Word was an instrument through which the ministry functioned; in Luther the ministry was instrumental to the Word. [The Reformers] were servants of the Word."<sup>29</sup>

The Reformers' understanding of the role of the Word in the Church asserts that the Word is of living, vital and dynamic character. Thus, when the Reformers speak of abuses in the Confessions, they speak negatively of the abuses and false practices of the RCC hierarchical clergy, and they speak in specific terms to identify the abuses and false practices. Such acts as "monastic vows," "[denying] the marriage of priests," abuse of "ecclesiastical power" in the seduction of nuns and married women in the confessional, "the power and primacy of the Pope," and the list can be extended if one wishes,<sup>30</sup> but there is no need in this lecture.

At the time of the Reformation, one recalls from the presentation on the Ministry in the Middle Ages and your reading in sources there was a distinctive vocation that elevated the priestly caste of the RCC above the laity and their ordinary and worldly vocations.

The issue of vocations, all vocations, drew Luther's attention in the *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. Karlfried Froehlich quotes a relevant passage from the *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*:

. . . I advise no one to enter any religious order or the priesthood, indeed, I advise everyone against it -- unless he is forearmed with this knowledge and understands that the works of monks and priests, however holy and arduous they may be, do not differ one whit in the sight of God from the

---

<sup>26</sup> "For example, Sebastian Franck and Caspar Schwenfeld taught in the sixteenth century that the Spirit comes to men without means [of grace]. "

<sup>27</sup> *The Augsburg Confession*, 11-12.

<sup>28</sup> Carlson, op. cit., 80.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 80.

<sup>30</sup> Carlson, op. cit. 81.

works of the rustic laborer in the field or the woman going about her household tasks, but that all works are measured before God by faith alone.<sup>31</sup>

In a treatise *On Monastic Vows* of October 1521, Luther wrote from Wartburg Castle. Word had reached Luther that some of his Wittenberg colleagues were getting married and confreres were leaving the monastery. With pastoral intent of strengthening and instructing the consciences of people, Luther speaks not against the monastic choice, but he views the issue from the standpoint of vows. Luther states the problem in this manner.

No one can deny that the command to offer vows was instituted by divine authority. Scriptures says, 'Make your vows and keep them' [Psalm 76:11], so there is no disputing whether a vow may be offered. What we are trying to show is how to distinguish one vow from another and recognize which vows are godly, good, and pleasing to God. Only these must be considered as vows. They are named and demanded by Scripture. Further, we are trying to show how we may distinguish which vows are ungodly, evil, and displeasing to God, vows which would not otherwise be regarded as vows.<sup>32</sup>

Luther interprets the vows that are godly, good and pleasing to God Vows that follow the will of God, based on Scripture. The vows related to the godly, good and pleasing to God deal with "the universality of God's promise of salvation, salvation by faith alone, Christian freedom, reason (monastic vows demanded what no young person could reasonably promise), and finally the Ten Commandments, especially the Fourth: 'Honor your father and mother.'"<sup>33</sup>

Interestingly and in passing, Luther dedicated this treatise to his father, Hans Luther, who strongly opposed young Luther's decision to become a monk. Martin asked for forgiveness for his willful violation of the Fourth Commandment.<sup>34</sup>

In a Christmas sermon, Luther spoke to the congregation when reflected on the vocation of the shepherds in the Nativity story. Luther declared:

Christian liberty is not tied to any specific work. On the contrary, all works are the same to a Christian, no matter what they are. These shepherds do not run away into the desert, they do not don monk's garb, they do not shave

---

<sup>31</sup> Karlfried Froehlich, "Luther on Vocation," *Lutheran Quarterly*. XIII (1999), 195.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 199. The Luther quotation is LW 44:252.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 199.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 199-200.

their heads, neither do they change their clothing, schedule, food, drink, nor any external work. They return to their place in the fields to serve God there.<sup>35</sup>

Luther expanded his argument to include the vocation of every Christian, influenced on his exegesis of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.<sup>36</sup> In Scripture, Luther could not discover the two-tiered Christianity of monastics and non-monastics that the RCC taught. It was a distinction not supported by Scripture, so in a Reformation tract of 1520, Luther wrote an *Appeal to the Ruling Class of German Nationality*<sup>37</sup> to press his argument.

Grounding the argument in Paul's First Letter to the Corinthian Church, Luther writes:

It is pure invention that pope, bishop, priests, and monks are called the spiritual estate while princes, lords, artisans and farmers are called the temporal estate. This is indeed a piece of deceit and hypocrisy. Yet no one need be intimidated by I, for this reason: all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office. Paul says in I Corinthians 12 [:12-13] that we are all one body, yet every member has its own work by which it serves the others. This is because we are all Christians alike; for baptism, gospel, and faith alone make us spiritual and a Christian people.<sup>38</sup>

But what role does a pastor and minister have in Luther's conception of the Church and Her ministry? There is a call that involves two parts: an external call from the Church and an internal call from God.

Because Luther and Calvin, too, understand the ministry as the ministry of Word and Sacrament, then, it is reasonable to assume the pastoral ministry is God's external means of grace.

In this respect, perhaps reacting to the Anabaptist phenomenon, Luther would doubt my own call to the Gospel ministry, for the great Reformer distrusted any person who claimed to have a personal call by God to the vocation of ministry.

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 200. LW 52:37.

<sup>36</sup> It is appropriate to link the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers with Scripture, as Luther did. Luther regarded the doctrine as thoroughly biblical, taught in the New Testament as well as the Old. "Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God through Jesus Christ," is the phrasing found in a baptismal homily on I Peter 2:5. See Ibid. 201.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 201. Quoted from *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 69 vols. Eds. J.F.K. Knaake et al. (Weimar: Boehlau, 1883ff.), 10 I/1:307.9-12.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 201.LW 44:127.

What Luther advocates, however, is starting with a trouble conscience. Does one have the "right" to inflict one's own foibles and warped nature on an unsuspecting congregation?<sup>39</sup> Luther suggests that one seek counsel and ask for the discernment of your brothers and sisters in the greater and smaller Church.

Froehlich observes that seeking the ministry of discernment among the brothers and sisters is found in article 5 of the *Augsburg Catechism*.<sup>40</sup> Later in the same document and in article 14, "Order in the Church," that "It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments of the church without a regular call."<sup>41</sup>

This call is not believed to be directly from God as many of the several Confessions of the Churches stated. But what the Confessions have in mind is a call by God and involves human authority. The catchword is "regularly" and means that established procedures of communal discernment and prearranged agreement as to process is applied and scrupulously followed.

Because in the Reformation understanding, the vocation of the Christian and the minister or pastor are alike and the vocation of all applies to every confessing Christian. Luther says,

We have a double vocation, a spiritual and an external. The spiritual vocation is that we have all been called through the Gospel to baptism and the Christian faith . . . this calling is common and similar for all . . . The other contains a differentiation: It earthly, though also divine.<sup>42</sup>

It is important to pause and assess the role learning plays in the work of the pastor or minister. If in Luther's understanding that the vocation involves God's call in every laudable work or profession, then, for the pastor or minister there should be an academic component included. The academic component supports Luther's concern for "God-speech," theological study and the science of God. These cannot be neglected without doing irreparable harm to the Church.

One is reminded, also, that it was during the Middle Ages or in the 12th and 13th centuries that the great universities of Europe were organized. Certainly the establishment of a university in Wittenberg by

---

<sup>39</sup> Wayne T. Oates, *Behind the Masks: Personality Disorders in Religious Behavior*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985. I commend this book to your attention as a substantive contribution to understanding how personality disorders, masked as Christian concern, disrupt the fellowship and life of many congregations. Though out of print, it can be obtained by going to on-line book sources or browsing in used bookstores. Get a copy by all means.

<sup>40</sup> See footnote 22 of this paper for the entire quotation.

<sup>41</sup> See earlier citation on the Augsburg Confession. This quotation is found on page 15.

<sup>42</sup> WA 34:II:300, 306.

Frederick the Wise was a wise move, affirming the importance of learning and especially theological learning.

The foundational document of Christian faith, the Bible, was never diminished with establishment of new schools and universities of the 12th and 13th centuries, but though the curriculum expanded to include "secular" subjects, the Bible remained the lodestone of Protestant academic development, theology and learning.

Quite fortuitously and in service of advancing the Reformers' agenda, many of the Reformers expanded their range of learning to include humanist studies, too. Indeed, they were scholars of the first order and rank.

In summation of this section, one can write the Reformation of the 16th century reoriented the nature of the Church's ministry by tying the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers to the call to be a minister and pastor.

Furthermore, the Reformation of the 16th century raised the status of the pastor by permitting him to become a husband and father, as most of the Reformers married and had children.<sup>43</sup>

A generation later after Luther, John Calvin could define the Church in this masterful definition and remain true to the evangelical tradition of the Reformation when he writes:

Where the Word is heard with reverence  
and the sacraments are not neglected  
there we discover . . . an appearance  
of the Church.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup>"Protestants broke down the medieval distinction between clergy and laity not only by permitting the clergy to enter the estate of marriage, but also by having them assume many of the duties of citizens. The Protestant 'priesthood of all believers,' which enhanced the importance of secular life and vocations, also had a reverse effect. If it 'sanctified' the laity, it also worked to 'secularize' the clergy. If lay Christians were not be a 'priesthood,' clerics [of the Protestant variety] were expected to enter certain estates of the laity." Steven E. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to the Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975, 84.

Ozment explains what clerical freedom and citizen involvement means. "Clerical freedom from responsibilities of citizenship is characterized as living off the sweat of others, burdening rather than serving the community. Work is a mode of brotherly love . . . [And] the clergy especially should know that Christians are servants of others, not lord to be waited on hand and foot." Ibid. 88-89.

Clerical praise of the lay estate, so common among the Reformers, became a "flattering of secular life," so Ozment maintains. "It was not without insight that contemporary Protestants, among them the late Karl Barth, have spied in the Reformation's attack on clerical vows the seeds of what they critically call 'cultural Protestantism' -- a modern Protestant infatuation with the secular world to the point of uncritically accepting it." Ibid. 88.

<sup>44</sup>Quoted in Paulk from Calvin's *Institutes*, IV.1.10.

In order to ensure the Word is heard (preached and taught) and the sacraments are not neglected, Calvin states what scriptural offices, identified in Paul, describe the nature of the Reformed ministry of the 16th century in Geneva and elsewhere.

Those who preside over the government of the church in accordance with Christ's institution are called by Paul as follows: first apostles, then prophets, thirdly evangelists, fourthly pastors, and finally teachers [Ephesians 4:11]. Of these only the last two [pastors and teachers] have an ordinary office in the church; the Lord raised up the first three at the beginning of his Kingdom, and now and again revives them as the need of the times demands.<sup>45</sup>

In the same section of the *Institutes*, Calvin elucidates his high conception of the ministry when he writes,

Pastors and teachers, whom the church can never go without [are essential]. There is, I believe, this difference between them: teachers are not put in charge of discipline, or administering the sacraments, or warnings or exhortations, but only of Scriptural interpretation -- to keep doctrine whole and pure among believers.<sup>46</sup> But the pastoral office includes all these functions within itself.<sup>47</sup>

Without belaboring the points of this section, the major Reformers in Germany and Switzerland, the pastoral office is one of training and function in service of the Church and Her ministry to the congregation.

---

<sup>45</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Church*, Book IV.iii.4. Edited by John T. McNeill and translated by Ford Lewis Battles. In the Library of Christian Classics series. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960, 1056.

<sup>46</sup> In a footnote in this edition of Calvin's *Institutes*, Calvin refers to the office of the teacher a "doctor" of the Church. See *The Ecclesiastical Ordinances of Geneva* (1541).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 1057. The connection between the teaching elder (minister) and the professor is found in the garb most Reformation clergy wore. Paulk notes, "A telling symbol of the new religious and social status of the Christian minister of the Age of the Reformation was his manner of dress. The gown of the secular scholar, commonly worn by men of learning among the burghers and the called *Schaube*, became the outward sign of minister vocation and social status. Zwingli was the first to introduce it in Zurich, during the Autumn of 1523. It in the Afternoon of October 9, 1524, Luther began to wear it. Clothed in the *Schaube*, he then preached from the pulpit which he had occupied in the morning for the last time wearing the monk's cowl.

"Henceforth, the scholar's gown was the garment of the Protestant minister. It symbolizes all the changes that were wrought by the Reformation in the nature and work of the ministry." Paulk, *op. cit.*, 147.

## II. Church Orders in the Princely German Territories

Because the Reformation in Germany surfaced so unpredictably and without any prior preparation on how to organize the new Churches, there was no established pattern of organization.

Paulk describes the situation in Germany during the 1520's this way:

[Church visitations] in 1526 in the electorates of Saxony and Hesse [were first instituted]. Under the authority of the prince, commissions of theologians and of public officials trained in law inspected the conditions of the churches in various parts of the territories in order to lay the ground for their reorganization. They found widespread confusion. The old order had collapsed. They and the common people showed little interest in the church and had ceased to support it. They no longer paid tithes and fees and made no gifts of goods or money. After the tragic suppression of the Peasants' Revolt of 1525, the peasants were largely alienated from the Reformation and they resented and passively resisted the actions of the Reformers and the lords as well. The worst feature of the situation was there was little adequate lay leadership. Monasteries had been forsaken, and whole parishes were without ecclesiastical leadership. Many priests who had turned to the Reformation and had become evangelical preachers were incapable either of preaching or of rebuilding congregations. There was no common ways about which the Reformation was to be realized. Confession prevailed in the celebration of the worship services and sacraments. The changes there were made were often arbitrary and inspired by whims of individuals. Ecclesiastical discipline and Christian morality were no longer maintained. The jurisdictional and administrative power which the Roman Catholic bishops had exercised, either directly or through episcopal officials, had disappeared -- with dire results, particularly upon the institutions and the practices of marriage.<sup>48</sup>

In Germany, the ministry in the context of evangelical church orders in Germany, early on found former priests and monks, who had become

---

<sup>48</sup> Paulk, op. cit. 118.



evangelical preachers, took the initiative in developing ministry, they were met with a host of difficulties. The Roman Catholic Church had so long been established in the common life of a village, town or city that even with the support of princes and magistrates, the new preachers could not proceed with establishing a new order. The reason the new preachers could not proceed is the innumerable ties that linked the Roman Church to the political and social order, to economics and law, to mores and customs. New church orders could not come into being except by a transition in the course of which much that was old and traditional had to be preserved.

Moreover, Luther, who had been outlawed by the Papacy and in the approval of Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and everything he represented was officially condemned together with his person. Only in 1526, did the evangelical minority among the princes and estates of the German Empire risk cautious introduction of the Reformation into their territories.<sup>49</sup>

Facing almost insurmountable disadvantages and facing formidable obstacles that bared the way to a successful change, a change that had simply not been envisioned or planned, it is apparent, in retrospect, that the Reformers, and especially Luther, did not have a plan for organizing and building evangelical church congregations. There was no strategic plan of action. This is of little surprise, as in the beginning, Luther

himself thought that, if the worst abuses of the Roman Church could be undone and room was given in the world to the preaching of the Word of God, true Christians would arise who

---

<sup>49</sup> In this connection, on the date of January 21, 1530, Emperor Charles V summoned the imperial diet to meet the following April in Augsburg, Germany. The Holy Roman Emperor desires to present a united front against the militant Turks, what we call Muslim today, with the modern term only of recent origin. Desirous to gain the support and military might of the German nobles and urging the end of religious disunity, he invited the princes and representative of the free cities to discuss the differences between the religious factions.

The elector of Saxony asked his theologians in Wittenberg to prepare an account of the beliefs and practices of the churches of his land. Since a statement of doctrines, known as the Schwabach Articles, had already been prepared in the summer of 1529, all that seemed to be needed in 1530 was an additional statement concerning the changes in practices which had been made in the churches in Saxony. The Wittenberg theologians dutifully prepared such a statement, and since it was approved at a meeting in Torgau at the end of March, 1530, it was thereafter known as the Torgau Articles.

Together with other documents, the Schwabach Articles and the Torgau Articles were taken to Augsburg. These documents became a common statement of the Lutheran position rather than being merely a Saxon statement. This document was presented to Charles V. Taken from the Introduction of the *Augsburg Confession*, edited by Theodore G. Tappert and from the 1980 Edition of *The Book of Concord*. Fortress Press, 1959, 3-4. (Presumably the original book was published in 1959 and the copy used for this presentation shows that the Augsburg Confession publication in 1980 is a reprint of the latter edition, not the earlier or 1959 book.)

would gradually form new congregation and proceed to build a new church order.<sup>50</sup>

Paulk contends that throughout his life Luther thought that preaching the Word faithfully would achieve a reformation in the Churches but it soon became apparent that any reformation had to pass through the courts and chambers of the princes and magistrates of the state.

By 1520, however, Luther appealed to the German and Christian nobility to act as "emergency-bishops" of the Church because, in his estimation, the regular or RCC bishops had failed to care properly for the Church.

As time passed and the princes and estates rose to the occasion, new evangelical orders developed. One must distinguish between (A) territorial Churches and (B) those of towns.<sup>51</sup>

A. The Church orders of the princely territories of Germany were of three types.

1. In Saxony, the ministers were held responsible for preaching, catechetical teaching, and the administration of sacraments. They were relieved of all responsibility for external organization and the Church administration.

Superintendents, the successors of the deans and archdeacons of the Roman Church and appointed by the ruler, supervised these evangelical ministers. Often the Superintendents were ministers in a district town. Their responsibility was to examine the ministers before the minister was called to a congregation, to ordain them, and to supervise their ministry and advise them in the conduct of their ministry.

Furthermore, the Superintendents convened the ministers of their districts in synods, which permitted oversight of the congregations and to deal with issues and problems in the Churches and ministry.

Everything else was in the hands of the Consistories, which consisted of two theologically trained and two juristically trained counselors as well as minor officials. Some of the minor officials, quite appropriately, were skilled in financial administration. The Consistories were responsible to the prince and regulated all of the external and internal affairs of the Church, except they lacked the power of ordination and had to respect the office of preaching as it related to the Word of God.

However, the Consistories controlled the training of the ministry, the observance of the creeds and the orders of divine worship. They also administered the finances and properties of the Churches and exercised all

---

<sup>50</sup> Paulk, op. cit. 117.

<sup>51</sup> See Ozment's *The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland* for a more modern and useful interpretation of the rise of the evangelical Church and its ministry in towns and cities.

jurisdictional authority, especially with respect to marriage laws and customs.<sup>52</sup>

In this type of system, the congregations had no status for active responsibility in the Church. The laity were on the receiving end of the ecclesiastical chain of command. Some orders of this general type, however, when it came to the appointment of ministers gave representatives of a particular congregation veto power but, by and large, congregations were the objects of ministerial and pastoral labors and consistorial administration. As for the ministers in this type of order, they, too, were guided by extensive regulations and in some ways the solo voice for a congregation before the higher authorities.

2. In Hesse (first introduced in 1531) and revised in 1537, 1539 and 1566, according to Paulk, the highest ecclesiastical authority lay in the hands of the prince. But it was less bureaucratic and more representative in character than the first type, the type in Saxony.

In the order of Hesse, a local congregation was given voice through the elders who were selected from their midst. Unfortunately though, this office declined after 1539 when it was first instituted. In its place was established an order that made Superintendents the governing body of the Church. The office of Superintendent exercised full episcopal authority in districts, supervising ministers and congregations, administering Church property and dispensing discipline on members and exercising jurisdiction, presumably over the members of a congregation.

The Landgrave appointed the first Superintendents, who increased in numbers from four initially to six a bit later, and their successors were named in the following manner.

The ministers of a district proposed three of their number as candidates for the office of the Superintendents who then elected one of them, proposing his name to the prince who had the right either to confirm or to veto the election.

The ministers of each district were convened annually by their Superintendent. Every other year there was a meeting of a General Synod

---

<sup>52</sup> Paulk, op. cit. 122. In connection with marriage laws, refer to Steven Ozment's *The Buregermeister's Daughter: Scandal in a Sixteenth-Century German Town*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. Ozment's investigation of tragic story of Anna Bueschler, a rebellious daughter to fought her father (the Burgermeister of Swaebisch Hall) on even terms and was an embarrassment to him is a masterful reconstruction of the terms of social life in the closing years of the Middle Ages and the 16th century.

She was chained to her father's table for six months after she ran away from home in her 20s. Earlier, Ann was banished from her father's house after she was caught in secret and simultaneous love affairs with two men, a member of the nobility and a cavalryman. She brought suit to her father, escaped from her chains, brought suit again, fought disinheritance and defied all standards of behavior. Always, she was the subject of gossip because her dress was garish, and she definitely had a flirtatious behavior.

attended by the Superintendents, one minister from each district elected by his synod, and the official representatives of the prince.<sup>53</sup>

3. The third type of Church order was in Wuerttemberg. It was completed in 1533, and it too was of bureaucratic nature. A commission of councilors acting on ducal authority governed the Church. The councilors engaged a number of Visitators or Visitors, theologians and lawyers, under a director, the Church councilor. His duty as Church councilor was to inspect the Church regularly with regard to external affairs.

In their purely spiritual work, Superintendents who presided in the district towns led the ministers. The highest spiritual officials were four General Superintendents who were set over the other Superintendents and were appointed by the prince.

If one examines closely these three Church orders, it appears the object of them was to establish standards of the Reformers! The prince of the realm as *praecipuum membrum ecclesiae* (chief member of the Church) assumed the authority, which formerly had belonged to the bishops of the RCC. Only preaching and the administration of the sacraments were exempt from his power. But he himself was subject to the Word of God, the highest authority.

On the other hand, the bureaucracy through whom the prince exercised *landesherrliche Kirchenregiment* turned out to be a patriarchal government. Commendably, the prince generally took a personal interest in the affairs of the Churches in his domain. The personal interest of the sovereign of the realm is demonstrated in the records and documents of the 16th century Reformation archives of administration. The records and documents are strewn with innumerable details, which were submitted to the prince for his personal decision.

Exercising the prerogatives of a bishop in the discarded RCC system of Church governance, the prince was responsible for the punishment of wayward ministers, the settlement of quarrels in synods, the discipline of Church members who objected to their ministers or refused to observe Church rules and so forth.<sup>54</sup>

In his own way, the prince of the realm acted as a patriarch of his people who through his personal government in Church and society led them in Christian ways of behaving. For his success in this endeavor, the prince relied not only upon administrative officials but also on ministers and the heads of prominent families. Each of these, in his own sphere of authority and influence, was a patriarch in his realm as was the prince over the whole realm. There is nuance that is important to note in all of this: The local ministers occupied a position in between the rulers and the families.

---

<sup>53</sup>Paulk, op. cit. 122-123. The wording, only with minor editing, is lifted directly from Paulk's essay and the original may be consulted for verification.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid. 123-124.

**B. Our eyes now turn to consider Church order in free towns, primarily because these communities had a social character of their own and they were governed by a oligarical-republican government. Not unimportant also is the fact the free towns were engaged in commerce.**

**Given these social and commercial conditions, public affairs were managed and administered through person-to-person relationships and certainly not patriarchal in nature as in the case of the princes in Saxony, Hesse and Wuettemberg, as was shown earlier.**

**The town councils and their administrative officers assumed control of the evangelical Church, and it was their decision that the Roman Catholic order was overthrown and the Reformation introduced. Consequently, the structure of the Church government was less bureaucratic than in most German Churches or in RCC congregations.**

**Not surprisingly, however, the political magistrates jealously guarded their turf: They were intent on not having their control of the common life of "their" town restricted or curtailed by the preachers. Moreover, they insisted that clergy as leaders of the Churches should be subjected to their guidance - laymen instructing learned clergy no less!**

**In spite of this restriction, compared to clergy in monarchical lands, the clergy in free town congregations were able to exercise their own initiative. Of no small importance to the exercise of initiative by Reformation clergy was the introduction of the Reformation as a Christian commonwealth (*respublica Christiana* or *civitas Christiana*). Of course, even Church leaders in princely territories found less restrictions on their work than others. Not unmindful of the limitations of their initiatives and prerogatives, nevertheless, certain ministers exercised great power and had considerable influence with princes and town leaders in free towns.**

**The list of influential Reformers reads like a Reformation Hall of Fame. In the princely estates one discovers a special list:**

**Luther and Melanchthon in Saxony.**

**Bugenhagen in Pomerania and Denmark.**

**Krafft in Hesse.**

**Brenz in Wuerttemberg.**

**In the free towns, the preachers pressed their demands for regulation of Church life much more forcefully upon their magistrates as in the cases of Bucer and his colleagues Hedio, Zell and Capito in Strasbourg; Rhegius in Augsburg; the brothers Blaurer in Konstanz; Zwingli in Zurich; Oecolampadius in Basle; and of course Calvin in Geneva.<sup>55</sup>**

**Regardless of their influence and power, this impressive list of Reformers did not dominate the town or intimidate the town council. Both ministers and councils agreed the great issue was the institution of Christian discipline, lest the social fabric fray and injury come to the town and ultimately the state.**

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 125.

In matters of Christian discipline, that is, the subjection of all phases of life, personal, private, social and public, to the moral-religious demands of the Gospel, the established authorities were in agreement. However, in the territorial Church, represented by Church order in the A category, the concern was not acute, because the prince was the trendsetter and all trusted him to exercise Christian responsibility in his rule.

In this connection, Luther doubted whether public life and government could be "Christianized." On the other hand, in the town, introduction of Christian discipline, at least commonly understood by the ministers, amounted to regulation of the common life by laws designed to render the Church omnipotent. To modern ears, the intense regulation sounds oppressive but even before the advent of the Reformation, citizens in medieval towns lived under strict and amazingly detailed regulations issued and executed by their governments.

Nevertheless, the citizens of towns, living in a new time, were not entirely friendly toward the plans of the preachers. Even the town councils, though rightly desirous of creating a favorable climate of discipline in and among the population, were loathe to exercise or institute Church discipline on the wayward, because they feared that sooner or later the preachers might usurp the town council's authority and constitute themselves as a second legislative and governmental body.

It is reported that the council and presumably the people were not willing to submit to a new Papal authority, the Protestant clergy, and certainly they were not willing to submit to a Puritan regime of the preachers!

Furthermore, in Strasbourg or Strasbourg, it was said: "One must let the world be the world, at least a little! [*Man muss dennoch die Welt ein Wenig die Welt sin lassen*]."<sup>56</sup>

But Bucer is a model of the persistence and advocacy. Bucer was spokesman for the evangelical cause in Strasbourg and introduced a set of new practices that had succeeded elsewhere.

As the town council yielded to evangelical preaching, they permitted several congregations to elect their own pastors and preachers, reorganized Church property, assigning its income to the maintenance of Church buildings, the payment of ministers' salaries, education, and poor relief.

Furthermore, in 1529, the town council issued a detailed mandate of morals, and then established a marriage court. Unlike Zurich where minister were "judges," in Strasbourg, they had no judicial function. A system of Church wardens, appointed by the town council, made an attempt to govern and supervise Churches and especially the ministers "in their life, teaching and preaching," and to attend the synods, which met twice a year "in order that they might further the gradual building up of a real Christian congregation."

---

<sup>56</sup>Ibid. 126. W. Koehler, *Zuricher Ehegericht*, II (Zurich, 1951), 503. This work, Paulk explains, contains a very full discussion of all these issues.

Sometime in the late 1530's, the idea of a Churchwarden was abandoned because the office could not serve in an ecclesiastical and political capacity. But in the ensuing vacuum, Bucer offered a proposal.

Bucer had a high sense of the Church as a moral community. In memorandum after memorandum, he lobbied the town council to permit the Church to exercise Church discipline.

In 1539, he argued the Church, according to the law of the New Testament, such be constituted with these following offices: preachers, elders (responsible for discipline and for the religious and moral supervision of the Church members), teachers and deacons (responsible for poor-relief).<sup>57</sup>

For whatever reason, the town council did not adopt Bucer's proposal. In 1546 or 1547, however, he proposed the formation of fellowships (*Gemeinschaften*) of earnest Christians in each parish. Such fellowships, voluntary and formed by members, had the responsibility to an appeal from the minister, but no one was permitted to join without a clear profession of faith. Youth became members only after a period of thorough instruction in the Christian religion and on the basis of a solemn profession of faith before joining the whole fellowship.

In this connection, one notes, as Paulk does, that the first pattern of the Protestant practice of Confirmation class, later introduced into Lutheranism under the influence of the Spencer the Pietist had its origin.

The fellowship was to elect elders who with the minister exercised discipline according to Matthew 18:16ff.

The minister and the elders should have the right to supervise the life of the members of the fellowship, to admonish, and, if necessary, to excommunicate them by excluding them from prayer and the Lord's Table and, in certain cases, from the preaching service. The fellowship was to manifest itself chiefly in the common celebration of the Lord's Supper, for which all members would be expected to make themselves ready by attending a special preparatory service of penance, confession and absolution.<sup>58</sup>

This plan received minority support among the ministers. The majority of the ministers, so Paulk writes, feared the building of a Church within the Church (*ecclesiola in ecclesia*) that might disrupt the established

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 127. Somewhere in my past reading through the years, I recall vividly that Luther organized the first "community chest" campaign to care for the poor and indigent and needy. It seems the Reformers, taking scripture with utter seriousness, managed to develop practical applications of their lessons to the cares and daily needs of those for whom Christ died.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 127-128.

Church and, most importantly, disturb the unity of the commonwealth. In short order, the magistrate rejected these proposals.

Bucer had labored long and hard to bring this plan to fruition. At one time, Luther proposed a similar scheme but rejected the idea at the beginning of the Reformation in Germany. Bucer's ideal of the Church of pure people was a desperate effort to obtain for a minority in the Church what he and they hoped would be the ideal for society at large.

Bucer masterfully presents the ideal of this Church order in his tract *On the True Care of Souls*. Bucer writes movingly:

The secular sword and power must be under the spiritual sword and power. And this spiritual sword is the Word of God . . . When the pastors rightly handle this spiritual sword, namely the Word of God, . . . all men must with complete obedience be subject to them, i.e. to the Word of God and of Christ which they teach and according to which they pass judgments. They must now let themselves be judged and governed not by men who happen to be ministers, but by Christ, the heavenly King, who by 'his Word [rules] in and through his ministers.'"<sup>59</sup>

These words anticipate the conception of the Christian commonwealth that not only guided Bucer in his career and inspired the leaders of other Reformed city-states. This ideal of the Christian commonwealth hovered over the Church orders of all towns in which the Reformation in the Reformed Tradition played out its role. But it was John Calvin in Geneva who finally instituted the necessary reforms to make it work (after a fashion).

Calvin, who finally carried the day in the formation of the Reformed Church, compromised with the officials of the civic government in Geneva in order to create the foundation for a Christian commonwealth.

The most enduring feature of Calvin's proposal, the *Ordonnances Ecclesiastiques* (Ecclesiastical Ordinances) is found in the draft of September and October 1541.

There are four orders of office instituted by our Lord for the government of the Church.

First, pastors; then doctors; next elders; and fourth, deacons.

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 128.



Hence if we have a Church well ordered and maintained we ought to observe this form of government.<sup>60</sup>

This form of government is the most prominent feature of Reformed and Presbyterian Church order.<sup>61</sup> There were lesser offices to be found in the New Testament, offices, such as, apostles, prophets and the like (Romans 12; I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4), but these were not accorded the same standing as the essential offices Calvin delineated in his writings.

In Geneva, the body of preachers constituted the *Compagnie Venerable* (Venerable Company). The Venerable Company examined new ministers and recommended them to the congregation to be called and elected by the congregation. The city council had the right to approve the election. Until his death in 1564, Calvin was the president of the Venerable Company.

The function of the pastors was to preach, teach, administer the sacraments and enforce Church discipline. The elders, all twelve of whom were also members of the city government, joined enforcement of Church discipline, the ministers.

In the exercise of Church discipline, Paulk observes:

Pastors and elders were charged to supervise the religious and moral life of the people of their districts (the city was divided into twelve districts). If criminals were discovered in connection with the administration of church discipline, the persons involved were handed over to the secular government for trial and punishment. The Consistory [composed of ministers and appointed members by the magistrate but not responsible to the city council

---

<sup>60</sup> *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, edited and translated by J.S.K. Reid, *Library of Christian Classics*, Volume XXII. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954, 58. Of passing interest is the statement used perhaps more frequently in the past but still much revered in the PC (USA) that speaks of the action of representative bodies doing things "decently and in order." Presbyterians abhor disorder and unruly and illegitimate actions, though we do not forget the nature and persistence of original sin manifesting itself in Church gatherings.

<sup>61</sup> In the U.S.A., the Presbyterian Church (PC(USA)) calls its document of order the Book of Order (BO), a name Calvin would likely recognize. The BO consists of the Constitution of the Church, the Form of Government, and the Directory for Worship and the Discipline of the Church, terms familiar to Calvin and others of Reformed and Presbyterian persuasion.

And though the four orders identified by Calvin have been reduced to three in number -- pastors (Ministers of Word and Sacrament), elders and deacons, the contemporary interpretation and function of these offices are remarkably similar to what Calvin advocated during the second generation of the Reformation of the 16th century.

for their decisions] was entitled to hear all marriage cases but it could not make legal decisions concerning them. This was the duty of a civil marriage court to which one of the ministers was attached as a consultant. Despite the fact the Consistory was a partnership between the church and the secular government, Calvin saw to it that it operated as the disciplinary body of the church (this did also entail the civil ban) without sanction and approval of civil government was challenged, but Calvin succeeded in maintaining the freedom of ecclesiastical function of the Consistory. Gradually, it imposed, under his guidance, a strict and very minute discipline upon the people.<sup>62</sup>

Regrettably, time and space do not permit a full or complete description of Church order in the Anglican Church or Church of England. But Edward Rochie Hardy, Jr., notes in his essay on "Priestly Ministries in the Modern Church"<sup>63</sup> that the robed Bishop takes his seat near the Holy Table or Altar. Near the Holy Table and in fully view of the gathered, using the impressive rhetorical phrases in vogue in Tudor England, the Bishop speaks "of what dignity, and of how great importance this Office us, whereunto you are called."

Priests are called

to be Messengers, Watchmen, and Stewards of the Lord; to teach, and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family; to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they might be saved through Christ forever.<sup>64</sup>

The treasure of Christ is committed to their charge and keeping

for they [the Church and congregation] are the sheep of Christ, which he bought with his death, and for whom he shed his blood. The Church and Congregation whom you must serve is his Spouse, and his Body. And if it shall happen that

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 130.

<sup>63</sup> Hardy's essay may be found in *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*. Edited by H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel Day Williams. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956, 149-179. While our interest is on the 16th century Reformation and its working out in the what came to be known as the Church of England, the ordination of young men for the office of priest is regarded as serious.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 149.

the same Church, or any Member thereof, do take any hurt or hindrance by reason of your negligence, you know the greatness of the fault, and also the horrible punishment that will ensure. Wherefore . . . see that you never cease your labour, your care and diligence, until ye have done all that lieth in you, according to your bounden duty, to bring all such as are and shall be committed to your charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you, either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life.

To aspire to such a high ideal of ministry in the Church of England, one must employ and deploy earnest prayer and daily meditation on the Holy Scriptures. Candidates are then reminded

how ye ought to forsake and set aside, as much as ye may, all worldly cares and studies . . . to give yourselves wholly to this Office, whereunto it hath pleased God to call you . . . and draw all your cares and studies this way that so, by prayer for the assistance of the Holy Ghost, and by daily reading and weighing the Scriptures, ye may wax riper and stronger in your Ministry; and that ye may so endeavour yourselves . . . to sanctify the lives of your and yours, and to fashion them after the Rule and Doctrine of Christ, that ye may be wholesome and godly examples and patterns for the people to follow.<sup>65</sup>

Then after solemn prayer, the Carolingian hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*,<sup>66</sup> the Bishop and assisting priests lay hands on the ordinands, with words based on the commission given to the apostles in John 20:22-23:

Receive the Holy Ghost (for the Office and Work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. 149-150. Archbishop Thomas Cramner, a Roman Catholic Reformer and the Archbishop of Canterbury, is generally regarded as the author of this powerful liturgy. Some scholars claim Martin Bucer is the author of the Anglican liturgy, but Bucer's *De ordinatione legitima* is not the source of this Ordinal.

<sup>66</sup> See the green booklet "Praying with the Reformers" or the blue booklet "Hymns of the Reformation, Woodcuts and Church Architecture" back covers for the first stanza of this hymn. A copy of the hymn will be distributed for singing during our time together in Wittenberg.

unto thee by the Imposition of our hands). Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful Dispenser of the Word of God, and of his Holy Sacraments; In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.<sup>67</sup>

### III. Melanchthon on Worship - "To move the Heart" And Rhetorical Theology.

The Reformation of the 16th century not only recreated the fabric of ministry but the Reformation reformed worship and how worship was conducted and understood.

No less a "reformer" of worship than Philip Melanchthon joined Word and Sacrament in a marvelous Renaissance metaphor -- "To move the heart" -- as he wrote:

Through the Word and the rite God simultaneously moves the heart to believe and take hold of faith . . . As the Word enters the ears to strike the heart [*un feriat corda*], so the rite itself enters through the eyes to move the heart [*ut moveat corda*].<sup>68</sup>

Melanchthon's "forgotten truth" is valuable enough to recover from the dustbin of history, because Master Philip made a contribution to understanding Christian worship that not only served his time well, but is desperately needed and salutary in the early years of the 21st century.

---

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 150. Hardy notes that clause in the parentheses was added in 1662 for clarification. The intention of the service remained in order and served the Church of England or the Protestant Episcopal Church in America for four centuries.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted by Michael B. Aune, "A Heart Moved": Philip Melanchthon's Forgotten Truth about Worship," *Lutheran Quarterly*. XII.4 Winter 1998, 395-418. The above quotation is taken from page 396. The "heart" by Melanchthon's definition is fairly close to what we mean by "self," Aune says. In terms of the heart, as the Old Testament defines it, I have thought of the heart as the "center of what we are, think and do." Out of the heart come the issues of life, so the Book of Proverbs reminds us. In that regard then, perhaps Aune is correct in his definition.

Lewis W. Spitz, "Humanism and the Protestant Reformation," *Reformation History*, 3:194: "The Gospel . . . moves the heart, for the reformers as for humanist rhetoricians, speaking with synecdoche, the heart stands for the whole man including his emotions." Quoted from Michael B. Aune, "*To Move the Heart*" *Rhetoric and Ritual in the Theology of Philip Melanchthon*. San Francisco: Christian Universities Press, 1994, 68.

Synecdoche (pronounced si-nek-dea-ke) is a figure of speech by which a more inclusive term is used for a less inclusive term or vice versa. Examples include: head for cattle or law for policeman. Synecdoche means to take up or understand with another.

Aune's succinct summation of Melanchthon's vision of what worship ought to be for us straightforward: "God is apprehended by the lips, the ears, the limbs in order to move the heart."<sup>69</sup>

What is seen, said and done is memorable, and in terms of ritual or rite, then our worship becomes and is simultaneously the work of God in the human heart, and worship is also a human event. How is this so?

The expression "'to move the heart'" is drawn from an intellectual framework and vocabulary from one of earliest Lutheran Reformation intellectual resources -- the *theologia rhetorica* or "rhetorical theology" of Renaissance humanism.<sup>70</sup>

The use of rhetorical theology in the hands of a skilled practitioner as Melanchthon should reassure us that we are in capable and loving hands of a master scholar and a pious, committed and dedicated Christian scholar. Unlike 19th century atheistic<sup>71</sup> humanism or the modern secular humanism that speaks of "life organized without reference to God,"<sup>72</sup> Christian humanism<sup>73</sup> of the 16th century variety had no comprehensive philosophy to teach, defend or to offer. What the Christian humanism offered to the Reformers, including Melanchthon, was a set of tools, methods of discourse, the arts of language, and the process of human communication.

The process of human communication involves dialectic and rhetoric. Dialectic "has to do with the discovery of knowledge that is lively, immediate, practical." And rhetoric "has to do with the organization and

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 396. For Melanchthon, the heart involves emotion, too, and therefore he can speak of "certain emotions which are to characterize the response of faith: tranquility, joy, prayer, delight, love, freedom, hope" (411).

<sup>70</sup> The source of this term may be found in Charles Trinkaus, *In our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2 vols. (London: Constable and Co., 1970), I:126-128, 141-142, 305-307. Quotation cited in Ibid. 397.

<sup>71</sup> Readers are invited to consult Henri de Lubac's *The Drama of Atheistic Humanism* for a useful introduction to the 19th century opponents of Christianity.

<sup>72</sup> See Edmund Perry's *The Gospel in Dispute*, especially the first chapter for a stirring account of the challenges facing the Gospel in the world of the 20th century. Perry speaks of the challenges presented by the non-Christian religions when he wrote in the 1950's. Today, it is fashionable to speak of the non-Christian religions as world religions.

The other challenge facing Christianity in the West is secular humanism with all of its ramifications. For an bold and energetic assessment of the pervasiveness of secular humanism in Western Culture, its misleading and destructive vocabulary and the consequences of the ideas of modern secular humanism on all institutions in the West, see Harold O.J. Brown, *The Sensate Culture: Western Civilization Between Chaos and Transformation*. Dallas, London, Vancouver, Melbourne: Word Publishing, 1996.

The influence of secular thought and vocabulary seeks to empty words of their original meaning and definition and replace biblical categories with secular vocabulary in the rites and rituals of Christian Churches and in the broader society. Professor Brown does not discuss the implications of his study on worship. But it takes little imagination, an attentive ear, thoughtful attention to the uses of language, vocabulary and ideas that are commonplace and pervasive in our culture in order to recognize how biblical terms are casually replaced by secular meanings in the use of Christian vocabulary and language. This is especially true in worship, Christian music, prayers and sermon.

<sup>73</sup> Consult J.Maritian, *True Humanism*.

presentation of knowledge in a fashion that would be truly useful and directly relevant for human life."<sup>74</sup> Mere rhetoric is not what was needed. It is practice that defines a way of life. Dialectic and rhetoric together provide a powerful instrument for communication.

Dialectic and rhetoric provide

a bridge between the word and the world, connecting problems of style to the role of emotion and imagination in the mind's journey to God, to the relation between thought and feeling, to the Christian conception of selfhood.<sup>75</sup>

Melanchthon and others of like mind sought to develop the skills to think clearly and to write and speak well, the marriage of dialectic and rhetoric.<sup>76</sup>

The collective interest in dialectic and rhetoric aroused Luther.<sup>77</sup>  
Dialectic and rhetoric

involved the acquisition of skills in the arts of written and spoken language to convince, to elicit an affective or ethical response -- in short, rhetoric. To be so skilled was a practical rather than a solely speculative concern, for the goal was to change not only minds but also lives as a concept of the "duties of the orator [*officia oratoris*] makes abundantly clear. It involved a combination of *teaching - delighting - moving* in a complex knot that cannot be undone or cut."<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> Aune, op. cit. 400.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 400.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 399.

<sup>77</sup> Hot off the Concordia Academic press is Neil R. Leroux's *Luther's Rhetoric: Strategies and Style from the Invocavit Sermons*. St. Louis: Concordia, 2002.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 399. Italics are in the original. Quotation is taken from Renato Barilli, *Rhetoric*, tr. Giuliana Menozzi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989) 30.

"In 1521 *Theological Commonplaces [Loci Communes]*, Melanchthon had presented an understanding of the human personality with the heart at the center. Over against the faulty psychology and anthropology of classical and scholastic thought, which postulated a tripartite person comprised of sensual appetite, intellect and will, Melanchthon struggled to develop a radically different point of view. At the outset of the *Loci*, Melanchthon divides the human being into two parts: cognitive - our capacity to know, perceive, understand, and reason -- and the will, or the affections -- the source of our feelings, drives, desires, and passions. But unlike classical and scholastic thought which regarded the intellect as supreme and depicted the will as its servant, Melanchthon argued that 'cognition serves the will' because he was 'convinced by experience and practice that the will can not bring forth love, hate, and similar affections by its own power.'" Ibid. 407.

A combination of teaching - delighting - moving requires a commitment to the "pursuit of excellence" on the part of the worship leader and the congregational participants. But this potent and potentially rich and combustible combination must engage some anthropological assumptions, and Melanchthon was a master of that as discussion of ritual and worship and preaching come into view a bit later.

But for now, consideration of the contribution of the humanists who were also Protestant Christians draws our attention. Most prominent of these was Melanchthon, who was trained to get back to the Greek and Latin sources (*ad fontes*).

In order to get back to the sources, however, tidy knowledge had to be discarded. Among the discards was the reigning Scholastic notion that mankind lives in compartments. On the other hand, Melanchthon came to see human beings as whole persons,<sup>79</sup> and whole persons include a person's emotions.

Perhaps the recovery of the idea of the whole person strikes modern ears as rather commonplace, even pedestrian, but it should not given the fact that more often than not, we "feel" everything, but do not appear to "think" too much about the same thing we "feel".

And I am not too sure we are whole persons if "feeling" is paramount and "thinking" is subsumed or discarded. Melanchthon would not know what to make of our cavalier attitude toward thinking and feeling.

But in the 16th century, the idea of the whole person, interpreted by Melanchthon as the "heart," proved astounding and worked a revolution in rhetorical theory and practice, in poetics, music, painting and theology!<sup>80</sup> And, of course, worship as well.<sup>81</sup>

In theology and worship and preaching, where our interests lie, Melanchthon recognized that knowledge and passion move through the heart of man and should not be divorced from each other. If knowledge and passion were split asunder, he immediately recognized the consequences of the split, and they were enormous.

Knowledge without passion produced a barren Scholasticism, the flaw in Roman Catholic teaching and, in turn, it produced a defective worship for the people. The laity, as a congregation, were not essential or needed to conduct a Mass. In the RCC scheme, the laity were reduced to passive pawns on an ecclesiastical chessboard.

On the other hand, if passion did not have knowledge, it tended to produce fanaticism, a charge for which the Anabaptists were liable and open.

Between the RCC position and the fanatic Anabaptists, Melanchthon sought to avoid the extremes of either movement because that could sidetrack the Lutheran Reformation. Melanchthon walked a fine line

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. 403.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. 401.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 401.

between the perceived "an anti-intellectual spiritualism [Anabaptists]" and "a solely philosophical, speculative, and abstract understanding of the Christian faith [Scholasticism]." <sup>82</sup> The use of *theologia rhetorica* of Renaissance humanism was a tool that enabled Master Philip to sort the theological deck and deal the Lutheran Reformation a winning hand.

The *theologia rhetorica* of Renaissance humanism described an understanding of elements of Christian theology that were embedded in the feelings and emotions and experiences of living human beings. The recognition of this fact alone reorganized the understanding of human consciousness when human beings began to think differently about themselves, about God, and about the world. <sup>83</sup>

What did the *theologia rhetorica* achieve in Melanchthon's life work? How did it influence his theological method? Biblical interpretation? Design of theological documents, understanding of worship, sermons, lectures, letters and so forth?

Finally, his theology was at once powerful, simple, direct, affective and practical. What practical consequences for the people -- the healing, comfort, trust -- did he promise and fulfill?

Consider this impressive summary:

- A reform theology, more rhetorical than systematic.
- A Christocentric theology.
- A critical theology (over against "Tradition").
- A scriptural theology focused on revelation.
- A practical theology (proclamation concerned with Christian life.)
- An affective theology that occurs in the dynamic of the spirit of Christ.
- An existential theology that is both doctrinal and psychological. <sup>84</sup>

When Melanchthon came to Wittenberg in 1518, as a "teenage" professor of humanistic studies, he called for university reform along the lines of the *theologia rhetorica* of Renaissance humanism. At first, Luther was skeptical of the young man's learning, but almost at once while the lecture was in progress, Luther began to favor to the younger man, who, in time, proved a trusted colleague, a confidant, a compatriot and a friend for life.

---

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 401.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 402.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 403. Aune's summary of the contribution of humanist method to the work of Melanchthon is useful if for no other reason than he offers a fresh set of lens for reading Melanchthon's contribution to theology.

"It is interesting . . . that one of the terms contained in the Latin title of 1521 *Loci*, namely *hypotyposis*, is a particularly key rhetorical strategy, in which the orator or writer so narrates an event that it seems to be going on before our very eyes. The strategy is employed to bring things forcefully, vividly to the sight or mind that there is no doubt whatsoever that their import and significance is clear." Michael B. Aune, *To Move the Heart" Rhetoric and Ritual in the Theology of Philip Melanchthon*. San Francisco: Christian Universities Press, 1994, 69.



What Melanchthon proposed in his inaugural lecture was underway among some Wittenberg faculty and the theologians before Melanchthon began his teaching duties in Wittenberg. He brought affirmation and extended the boundaries of learning which justifiably made Duke Frederick the Wise's little Wittenberg University (1502) a magnet and center of learning in Northern Europe.

In his inaugural lecture, he proposed the recovery and rediscovery of "pure sources [*ad fontes*] of Christian doctrine."

The "pure sources" or original sources include the Greek and Latin texts of the Church Fathers, the Bible in its original languages, study of mathematics and rhetoric. Melanchthon also taught courses on astronomy and, much to our surprise, imbibed in astrology.<sup>85</sup>

The range of knowledge and the scope of his studies indeed threw wide the doors of the world of learning, a world of learning that was opened by this method. The curriculum and faculty of this small school brought an endless line of students from across Northern Europe. They flocked to the small town of Wittenberg to sit at the feet of learned scholars, who spoke with "authority," not as the scribes and Pharisees of Roman Catholic learning spoke.

#### IV. Luther on Worship

Luther hesitated to publish a German Mass until 1526. Meanwhile certain impatient pastors ventured to produce their own vernacular service; and among these who anticipated Luther in this respect was Diobald Schwarz, an assistant to Matthew Zell, the first reformer in Strassburg. On February 16, 1524, in a chapel in the cathedral, Schwarz read his own *Teutsche Messe*, a conservative adaptation of the Roman rite, which marked the beginning of the Strassburg liturgical tradition.<sup>86</sup>

"The reform of worship that Luther set in motion and that culminated in Wittenberg in 1525 is principally an event in the history of liturgy at the beginning of the Reformation in the sixteenth century," Helmar Junghans notes.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Clyde L. Manschreck, *The Quiet Reformer*. New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958, 29, 30, 102-112, 163-164.

<sup>86</sup> "Bucer," *Liturgies of the Western Church*. Selected and edited by Bard Thompson. Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Company, 1961, 159.

<sup>87</sup> Helmar Junghans, "Luther on the Reform of Worship," *Lutheran Quarterly*. XXX (1999), 315. The authors in *Luther Speaks* take a similar view. London and Redhill: Lutterworth Press, 1947, 47.

The Reformation in Wittenberg and in Saxony was conservative in pace and movement toward reform. "The Word and the Sacrament" were placed on equal footing and balanced the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Sacrament. Both Word and Sacrament constitutes the whole of the Church's ministry,<sup>88</sup> and Word and Sacrament (Lord's Supper and Baptism) are the standard by which Lutherans undergo self-criticism when evaluating the role of worship in the life of the Church.<sup>89</sup>

To establish and affirm the mutual relationship and close connection shared by the Word and the Sacraments and the role both play in the life of grace extended in the life of the Church and through the fellowship of the Church, three essential points need to be made.

First, the relationship between the sacred ministry of the Church and the divine Word follows Christ's example and commission to the apostles. Therefore, there is a close relationship between the sacred ministry's preaching and the forms of worship that relationship takes.

The sermon becomes so essential an element in the service that the principle is almost universally accepted by Lutherans that no service of any kind can be held without a sermon. It is by means of preaching that the Church of God exercises throughout the ages her prophetic office, her apostolic authority, and to quote Luther: 'It is through the sermon that Christ cometh to you and you will be drawn to him; for the preaching of the divine Word is not our word but God's.' 'Where the preaching of the Word is not practiced, the Christian faith is exterminated by the devil' and that means the ultimate victory of the devil becomes inevitable. Luther never tires of singing the praises of God's Word, which, he says, 'is the victory against the devil, the world, sin and death.' 'Without the same there is no life or condition pleasing to God.'<sup>90</sup>

Second, in Lutheran worship, the point of gravity in worship lies with the action of God, not the work of man or mankind in offering worship.<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> *Luther Speaks*, op. cit. 50.

<sup>89</sup> Ronald Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953, 234. Wallace acknowledges his study is not a detailed study of the development of Calvin's thought amid the sacramental controversies of his time (Preface, v). However, because Calvin was a biblical scholar first and foremost, it is important to understand that he too claims the connection between Word and Sacrament is essential in the practice of and for the life of the Church.

Calvin strongly "held the view that the Word of God is normally heard by the individual through the preaching of the minister of the Word exercising his function in the fellowship of the Church." 234.

<sup>90</sup> *Luther Speaks*, op. cit. 50.

<sup>91</sup> "The main thing [in sermon and in Sacrament] is God and His Gift in Jesus Christ; through the Sacrament we are united with the risen Lord; indeed, He comes to us

Illustrative of this principle, Luther writes, "There three kinds of divine service or mass." He continues,

The first is the one in Latin which we have published under the title *Formula Missae*.<sup>92</sup> It is not my intention to abrogate or to change this service. It shall not be affected in the form which we have followed so far; but we shall continue to use it when and where we are pleased and prompted to do so. For in no wise would I want to discontinue the service in the Latin language, because the young are my chief concern. And if we could bring it to pass, and Greek and Hebrew were as familiar to us as Latin and had as many fine melodies and songs, we would hold mass, sing, and read on successive Sundays in all four languages, German, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. I do not at all agree with those who cling to one language and despise all others. I would rather train such youth and folk who could also be of service to Christ in foreign lands and be able to converse with the natives there, lest we become like the Waldenses in Bohemia,<sup>93</sup> who have so ensconced their faith in their own language that they cannot speak plainly and clearly to anyone, unless he first learns their language. The Holy Spirit did not act like that in the beginning. He did not wait until the world came to Jerusalem and studied Hebrew, but gave manifold tongues for the office of ministry, so that the apostles could preach wherever

---

and dwells in us. The Sacrament also unites us in bonds of Christian love with our fellow worshippers. The blessed Sacrament of the Altar is the sacred means of union between the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant; or, to quote the present Finnish Liturgy: 'Make us also, together with all thing elect saints, partakers of Thine eternal honour and glory.

"This is why in a truly Lutheran Church the Altar and the Sacrament are an intimate connection with the spirit of adoration and praise. Both the Word of God and the celebration of the Holy Sacrament represent, above all, the divine side of worship. What is characteristic and decisive in Lutheran worship is not, in the first instance, that we approach God, but that He comes to us, serves us, and draws us unto Him. **For Us** is Luther's headline both for the sermon and for the Sacrament. The very heart and soul of the Reformation was a new and vigorous proclamation of the apostolic truth and order; that is the manifestation of God's gift and loving-kindness in Christ Jesus. Thus, accordingly, the most significant feature of Lutheran worship is that it is sacramental and not sacrificial. This means a Christo-centric reorientation of worship, as contrasted with the [Roman] Catholic cult." *Luther Speaks*, 52-53.

<sup>92</sup> This service is known as *An Order of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg*, and is found in *Luther's Works: Liturgy and Hymns*. Edited by Ulrich S. Leupold. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965, 15-40.

<sup>93</sup> "The Bohemian Brethren, a party that resulted from the movement started by John Huss. They had received Episcopal ordination through the Waldenses and were dubbed 'Waldenses' by their enemies." Footnote, p. 63.

they might. I prefer to follow this example. It is also reasonable that the young should be trained in many languages; for who know how God may use them in times to come? For this purpose our schools were founded.<sup>94</sup>

Second, the service is the *German Mass and Order of Service*. It is arranged for "unlearned lay folk." They are a concern of Luther's. These two orders, in Latin and in German, must be used in the Churches, for all people, believers and those who are not yet Christian. "Most of them," Luther observes with a sense of humor, "stand around and ape, hoping to see something new, just as if we were holding a service among the Turks or the heathen in a public square or out in a field."<sup>95</sup>

Third, there is an evangelical order, which should not be held in "a public place for all sorts of people."

But those who want to be Christians in earnest and who profess the gospel with hand and mouth should sign their names and meet alone in a house somewhere to pray, to read, to baptism, to receive the sacrament [of the Lord's Supper], and to do Christian works. According to this order, those who do not lead Christian lives could be known, reproved, corrected, cast out, or excommunicated, according to the rule of Christ, Matthew 18 [:15-17]. He one could also solicit benevolent gifts to be willingly given and distributed to the poor, according to St. Paul's example, II Corinthians 9. Here one would need a good short catechism on the [Apostles'] Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Our Father [the Lord's Prayer].<sup>96</sup>

But there appears to be a fourth point that characterizes worship in the Lutheran tradition, though not exclusively but significantly, because Luther was himself a musician.<sup>97</sup> Firmly lodged on the people's wide of

---

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 63.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 63.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 63-64. The *Small Catechism* assumes a new role in the life of the Church fellowship, as it becomes a means of instruction of the heathen or those who want to come to Christ. At all points, Luther emphasizes the pattern of catechism he advocates and to which we drew attention in the lecture on "Praying with the Reformers."

<sup>97</sup>"The jubilant faith of Luther, by his joyful experience of God, his teaching of salvation by grace, caused him to break out in exultation before his God, and his feelings could find expression only in music." Paul Nettl, *Luther and Music*. Translated by Frida Best and Ralph Wood. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948, 2.

In a more recent work by Carl Schalk, *Music in Early Lutheranism: Shaping the Tradition (1524-1672)*, he notes appreciatively the thought of Paul Henry Lang's *Music in Western Civilization*. "In the center of the new musical movement which accompanied the

worship is the "good tidings" of congregational singing. In the preface of his hymnbook of 1545, a year before he died, Luther explains the purpose of congregational singing of hymns and beautiful words.

God has gladdened our hearts and souls through His beloved Son, whom He has given for us to be our redemption from sin, death and the devil. Whosoever steadfastly believes therein cannot but sing and speak of the same with joy and delight. 'This Christ's will to hear the multitude, not thee or me, nor the isolated Pharisee. Wherefore if though sings with a multitude, thou sings well; but if thou sings alone, thou shall not escape judgment.<sup>98</sup>

Luther's idea of Church music "was essentially limited to vocal polyphony, Gregorian chant, and Latin and vernacular hymnody."<sup>99</sup> The organ, which comes to be a powerful voice for all sorts of music in the Church, did not play a significant role in early Lutheran worship. "The organ provided intonations and alternate verses for such portions of the liturgy as the Introit,<sup>100</sup> Gloria in Excelsis, sequences hymns, responsories, and for such canticles as the Magnificat [Luke 2:29-35] and the *Te Deum*.<sup>101</sup>

Instructions for singing the *Te Deum* prescribe that two groups ("choirs") are to sing the hymn. The term choirs does not mean two actual

---

Reformation stand the great figures of Martin Luther . . . who, as a student in Eisenach singing all sorts of merry student songs, and as a celebrant priest familiar with the gradual and polyphonic Masses and motets, living with music ringing in his ears . . ." Schalk, op. cit., 15. The Lang quotation may be found in *Music in Western Civilization* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1941), 207.

<sup>98</sup> *Luther Speaks*, 53-54. Most of the verb forms in the text are converted into modern English for ease of reading.

<sup>99</sup> Schalk, op. cit. 22.

<sup>100</sup> An Introit is the opening act of the Mass or Eucharist and is sung while the celebrant says the preparation. An Introit may be a verse of the Psalm of the day (taken from the Lectionary), or it may be an Antiphon. In its earliest form the Antiphon appears to be a single verse of a Psalm before the recitation of a Psalm or canticle with the idea of bringing to attention some special idea associated with the Psalm. A Canticle is a song or chant that is taken directly from words of the Bible. The Gloria is sometimes called the angelic hymn, recalling the part sung by the angels at the birth of our Lord. The words of the Gloria are found in Luke 2:14 and read as follows: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased." Sources for these definitions include John S. Bumpas, *A Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Terms*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippencott, 1875, and Canon J.S. Purvis, *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Terms*. London, Edinburgh, Paris, Melbourne, Johannesburg, Toronto and London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1962.

<sup>101</sup> The text and music of "The *Te Deum*" may be found in *Luther's Works: Liturgy and Hymns*. Volume 53. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965, 174-175. A translation composite with explanations of the importance the *Te Deum* had for Luther. Luther loved his hymn. "In his book *The Three Symbols or Creeds of the Christian Faith*, 1538, the Great Reformer named the *Te Deum* in third place after the Apostles' Creed and the Athanasian Creed" (171).

choirs were involved in singing, but in the Wittenberg Church order of 1533 prescribes:

After the hymn let the choir intone the *Te Deum laudamus*, in Dr. Martin Luther's German translation [from the Latin text], and let one of the choristers in the schoolboy's pew [Schuelerstuhl]<sup>102</sup> answer the congregation at half-verses. For the start he may also take a few boys into the pew to help him, until the congregation gets accustomed to singing along in this *Te Deum*. In order way, the first half-verse was to be sung by the choir, and the second by the congregation (enforced by a few choir members).<sup>103</sup>

The *Te Deum* is a canticle. It consists of five stanzas, each stanza with its own melodic pattern. The first stanza, having five verses and a concluding verse for both choirs, is the angelic song of praise.

The second stanza, with six verses, adds praise of the Trinity by the apostles, prophets, martyrs, and all Christians.

The third stanza, with five verses, is a confession of faith in Christ.

The fourth stanza, with four verses, contains a prayer for salvation.

The fifth stanza, again with five verses, returns to the melody of the first and contains petitions for Christian life.

It is observed in the first, third and fifth stanzas have the same number of verses. The first and last stanzas have an additional line to be sung by both choirs together. The fourth stanza begins and the fifth ends with a verse of half notes. The third stanza forms, as it were, the heart of the whole hymn, with its confession of faith in Christ preceded by praise and followed by prayer.<sup>104</sup>

By now, even with this limited introduction to the music of Luther, a reader should be aware that the Great Reformer not only loved music but also was an able amateur musician.

Paul Westermeyer's *Te Deum: The Church and Music*<sup>105</sup> reminds us that the medieval idea of what constituted the liberal arts curriculum included music.

Music, however, as Westermeyer notes, and especially medieval music did not sound like contemporary music with our almost obsessive reliance on lilting melodies, upbeat tempo, and whatever mass of instruments that make the place rock.

---

<sup>102</sup> The German word *Schuelerstuhl* could easily refer to the choir seats in the chancel of the Church. In this context, the editor of the volume seems to refer to the right pew in the nave (body of the building) where the chorister (i.e., one of the old choir members) and the boys would be able to help the singing of the congregation more effectively" (173).

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 173.

<sup>104</sup> The analysis of the structure of the hymn is taken almost entirely from Ibid, 172.

<sup>105</sup> Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.

Rather medieval music owes its "strangeness" to earlier forms of music, and philosophical and theological works that speak of music as one of the seven liberal arts, a Point Westermeyer drives home when discussing *Te Deum* also influenced it.

A Greek Church Father St. John Chrysostom commented that "the divine chant of number" is heavenly. The mention of "number" Chrysostom had in mind refers to number symbolism.

The reference to number symbolism apparently leads to the formation of the medieval speculative musical system that includes "cosmic harmony, the doctrine of ethos, and music as science."<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, the formation of the medieval speculative music system owes some inspiration to Boethius and his writing on the subject.

Earlier, Boethius (c. 480-c. 524), a erudite Roman writer and philosopher, wrote an influential book -- called *De Musica* like Augustine's - - that provides an entry into the medieval mindset, which obviously influenced and shaped Luther's earliest musical memories and his own work as a composer and player of music.

Boethius identified three kinds or types of music:

*Musica mundana*, the music of the spheres;  
*Musica humana*, the music of the body and soul; and  
*musica instrumentalis*, the actual sounds we hear. The central reality was the first category, the music of the spheres.

John echoes Boethius's identification of the three kinds of music. Milton's poem in the 17th century<sup>107</sup> "ring out, ye crystal spheres" echoes Boethius' identification of the three kinds of music.

Furthermore, Boethius's work also reminds us that as earlier in this presentation on Melanchthon's use of the tools of Renaissance humanism opened the treasures of the Bible and the Church Fathers for reforming the Church, so knowledge and emotion -- "To move the heart" in Melanchthon's sense suggests that

music was tied to knowledge and intellect, not to emotions, for many people in the medieval period. Such a perspective may be harder for us to understand than the primacy of universal 'sound' not heard by human ears. We tend to reverse the medieval view. We are apt to related music only to the emotions and erase the intellect, whereas the medieval view . . . was likely

---

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. 116.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. 116-117.

to relate music only to the intellect and erase the emotions.<sup>108</sup>

Westermeyer demonstrates Luther's deep appreciation, enjoyment and performance of good music, especially Church music, and lifelong pursuit of collaborators -- composers especially -- who could assist him in the development of music worthy of the Reformation use.<sup>109</sup> Drawing from a variety of primary sources, Westermeyer identifies six important issues that drew Luther's attention when it comes to music.

1. Luther sought the advice and counsel of able musicians. Johann Walter, it is reported, assisted Luther in the preparation of his *Deutsche Messe*. Luther wanted Conrad Ruff and Walter himself to come to Wittenberg to discuss the nature of the eight Gregorian psalm tones with him. Furthermore,

wanting to make sure the musical setting of the German was right and refusing to hurry the process, he prepared the music for the epistles, gospels, and words of institution, asked Walter about his work, and kept Walter

---

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. 119. The contemporary vision of the purpose of music in the Church is based on the 19th century uses of Romanticism. Romanticism influenced music as it did art, poetry and literature. The emotional response to a work, a piece of art, or a gospel song or hymn (even in translation) was given primacy over the intellect. An analysis of many gospel songs and hymns and modern praise music in the Church will sustain the argument that a disparity between the 16th century understanding of Church music and the 21st century is great and grave. It is great and grave, because if music teaches the theology of the Church, one asks, what theology are we teaching in contemporary Church music?

<sup>109</sup> Luther's enduring influence on Church music extended well beyond his creative years in Wittenberg. Though the Great Reformer died in 1546, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) became, as Karl Barth once wrote, "the greatest interpreter of the works of Luther." Bach was born in Eisenach and became a German organist and composer early in life. At the age of 18, he was organist at Arnstadt (1703), at Muehlausen (1707), court organist and chamber musician at Weimar (1708), musical director (1714), musical director at Coethen (1717); cantor at Leipzig (1723) until his death in 1750. A great man is seldom honored in his lifetime, and that is true for Bach, as many of his compositions were not published while he was alive. Yet his music productivity of organ works began at Arnstadt and Muelhausen, which culminated in some great works associated with the Weimar period -- the *Passacaglia* and *Fugue in C minor*, and the 45 chorale-preludes of *Das Orgelbuechlein*. The list of his musical compositions is extensive and impressive, including secular works, but Bach is considered a Church musician. For a brief summary of his works, consult *The Columbia-Viking Desk Encyclopedia*. New York: Viking Press, 1953, 71. For an interpretation of the theological import of Bach, read Jaroslav Pelikan's, *Bach Among the Theologians*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. Pelikan's insights into the uses of theology in the composition of Bach's sacred pieces justifies Barth's claim which introduced this footnote.

In a recent study of Luther and Bach, Friedrich Smend writes, "Both Luther and Bach dedicated their hymns to the exposition of the Catechism as well as the Bible. Luther had written hymns on each parts of the Catechism, and Bach went back to these." "Luther and Bach," *The Lutheran Quarterly*. 1:4, 1949, 409.



in Wittenberg for three weeks discussing how the epistles and gospels might be set in German.<sup>110</sup>

The first "hymnal" prepared under Luther's guidance was edited by Walter and Georg Rhau,<sup>111</sup> the cantor<sup>112</sup> of Leipzig. Rhau came to Wittenberg as a music publisher.

2. Keeping in mind his obligation to civil authority, Luther attempted to enlist their support on behalf of musicians and music. When John the Steadfast dismantled the *Kantorei* of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Luther objected and argued that music was more worth of support than many other endeavors.<sup>113</sup>

3. Luther, a discriminating judge of music, understood polyphony.<sup>114</sup>

4. Luther was an able and gifted amateur musician. In Eisenach, as a boy, he was a *Kurende* singer, enjoyed singing and played the lute. A survey of a just a few of Luther's hymns makes clear, he had a sense of what verse and composition could accomplish if the composer understood the relationship between text and music. His hymns have been proven to have exceptional quality about them.

5. Ever the student and teacher, Luther regarded music as essential to a complete education for children. He stressed that ministers and teachers should be musically literate, as should the schoolmaster. A schoolmaster, Luther said, "must be able to sing; otherwise I do not look at him."<sup>115</sup>

6. Like King Saul in the Old Testament, Luther found music often invigorated him. Once when he fainted, friends found him and revived him by playing music.

In summarizing the role music played in the life and work of Luther, one can say that Luther had a sense of the theology of music. This fact is interesting when one considers that Luther was not a systematic theologian.

---

<sup>110</sup> Westermeyer, op. cit. 142.

<sup>111</sup> In the famous Leipzig Disputation between Luther and Eck in 1519, Rhau attended the proceedings. In anticipation of the Disputation between Luther and Eck and for its opening, Rhau composed a mass for twelve (12) voices. "Preface to Georg Rhau's *Symphoniae incundae* (1538)", Trans. By Ulrich S. Leupold, *Luther's Works: Liturgy and Hymns*. Volume 53. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965, 321.

<sup>112</sup> Rhau, Bach's predecessor in Leipzig's St. Thomas Church by over 100 years, was a cantor. A cantor is the leading singer in German and Protestant Church services and Jewish synagogues.

<sup>113</sup> See Luther's letter to John the Steadfast in the original German edition of *Dr. Martin Luthers Werke, Briefwechsel* (Weimar: Herman Boehlaus Nachfolger, 1933, IV, p. 90. No. 1020.

<sup>114</sup> Polyphony is the combination in harmonious progression of two or more independent melodies, and is the independent treatment of the parts. Counterpoint in the widest sense. *Schirmer Pronouncing Pocket Manual of Musical Terms*. Edited by Theodore Baker and revised by Nicholas Slonimsky. New York: Schirmer Books and London: Collier MacMillan, 4th edition, 1975. The work was first printed in 1905.

<sup>115</sup> Westermeyer, op. cit., 143.

Unlike John Calvin's *Institutes* or Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, Luther, it may be said fairly, few off in many directions. To make him otherwise is unfair to Luther, but it puts limitations on his thought that curtails his freshness and bold brashness.

But his freshness and brashness became a strength when it came to music, for Luther must have had an incredible imagination, which made him, most likely, an unforgettable preacher.<sup>116</sup>

In a future lecture, the preaching of the Evangelical Reformers will be presented.

---

<sup>116</sup> Johann Gerhard called Luther's preaching and sermonizing "'heroic disorder.' Like the scholastics, Luther at first like to enumerate all his points, occasionally running to twenty or more . . . His method was not synthetic as a rule. He usually began with a proposition from which he derived all the rest, generally by way of analysis. He once stated that a preacher should be both a dialectician and a rhetorician, for *dialectic docet, rhetorica movet.*" Quoted in Grimm, op. cit. 53.

Johann Gerhard (1582-1637), a Lutheran theologian who lived after Luther. From 1616 he was a professor at Jena where, with Johann Major and Johann Himmel, he formed the so-called "Trias Johannea". In his *Loci communes theologici* (1610-22), he issued a systematized and detailed exposition of Lutheran theology, which for long remained a standard work. He also wrote popular devotional literature. His book *Meditationes Sacrae ad veram pietatem excitandam* (1606), and R. Winterton submitted an English translation (1631) to a larger audience. Winterton's translation went through several editions. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 530.

Though Gerhard lived after Luther, he must have had access to the massive body of literature generated by the Great Reformer and, quite likely, he visited with those who lived during Luther's lifetime and heard Luther preach. Thus his comment about "heroic disorder" is not generally off the mark. In the 20th century, Roland Bainton offered a composite of Luther's Advent preaching in which the warts and blemishes were made smooth in *The Martin Luther Christmas Book with Celebrated Woodcuts by His Contemporaries*. Arranged and translated by Roland Bainton. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958.