

ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Summer, 1983

Vol. 17, No. 3



LUTHER

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A FORE WORD

Dr. Martin Luther . . . Revisited

The ISSUES Editorial Committee could not let this major anniversary of Martin Luther's birth pass without devoting one issue to the great reformer. Dr. Luther's words and ideas are quoted abundantly in this issue and one must marvel anew at both the applicability and relevance of Luther's insights nearly five centuries later.

The titles of two of the major articles in this issue begin with the words, "Lessons from Luther . . ." The third major article, "Lutheran Perspectives on Christian Education," rounds out the trilogy of contributions from members of Concordia, Seward's Theology Department. That these scholars are well acquainted with Luther and steeped in his thought is evidenced by their writing. That Luther can still teach us much about Christian education, worship and the solution of contemporary spiritual problems is also evident as one reads these essays. Luther's enduring wisdom and strength, in turn, lies in the fact that he was so steeped in the Scriptures and cites them so abundantly.

If your reading of these articles, editorials and book reviews affects you as it did me, it will whet your appetite for still more reading of Luther and about Luther. The excellent book reviews will serve to guide you to both old and new scholarly writings about "Saint Martin" and his work.

One of my favorite Luther quotes about schools, however, does not appear elsewhere in this issue so I take the liberty of reproducing it here without elaboration since it speaks for itself so eloquently. It is not only appropriate for this issue but could fittingly be reproduced in the masthead of every issue of *ISSUES . . . in Christian Education*. Luther wrote:

When the schools prosper the church remains righteous and her doctrine pure . . . Young pupils and students are the seed and source of the church . . . For the sake of the church, then, we must have and maintain Christian schools.

M.J. Stelmachowicz

THE JOYOUS MYTH

A new-born myth tells that Roland Bainton, while working on the Aid Association for Lutherans sponsored film, "Where Luther Walked," heard that someone had said, "I certainly hope that the film features Luther and not Bainton." Bainton is supposed to have replied, "A film on Luther will star neither Bainton nor Luther but Jesus Christ."

In celebrating Luther's five hundredth birthday we Lutherans must remember that any proper celebration of a prophet of the Lord must celebrate the Lord Himself, who is the message of the prophet. Lutherans are indeed sometimes accused of confusing their prophet and their Lord. Luther, of course, strenuously objected to the heroic adulation which some of his followers accorded him already during his lifetime even though he did take himself seriously as an instrument which God was using to proclaim the gospel of Jesus in his day.

Nonetheless, in one sense Luther did recognize a justifiable "confusion" of Christ and himself; the blessed "confusion" in the mind of God which saw in the dying Jesus Luther's sinfulness and which fifteen hundred years later saw in the baptized Martin the righteousness of Jesus. Luther called that the "froliche Wechsel," the joyous exchange. This happy trade-off takes place in our baptisms and in the daily repentance which flows from baptism. There Jesus incorporates us into His body, the body in which our sins were taken away from the sight of God and hid forever in Christ's tomb. In that body of our Lord we are then also raised in new life, as God views us righteous for Christ's sake, and sends us forth to live righteous lives in our daily callings in our homes, on our jobs, in our communities and congregations.

In his Galatians commentary of 1535 Luther wrote, "Just as Christ Himself was crucified to the Law, sin, death, and the devil, so that they have no further jurisdiction over Him, so through faith I, having been crucified with Christ, in spirit, am crucified and die to the Law, sin, etc, so that they have no further jurisdiction over me but are now crucified and dead to me . . . Since I am in Him, no evil can harm me." (LW, 26:165) Crucifixion with Christ means that we are freed from evil and the fear

EDITOR'S NOTE

What we enjoy in the church today is in part the result of what God gave us in our past. One of the great gifts was His servant, Martin Luther, and all of those who supported him. God enabled them to succeed to make the study of His Word available once more to the common man, a privilege that had become limited primarily to the clergy.

This number of *Issues* is devoted to featuring a comparative view between Luther's time and ours. The Concordia-Seward faculty commemorates Luther's 500th birthday anniversary in this way with the hope that the materials provide some insights into how to use our Lutheran heritage properly in the church. Reformation history can have meaning for any individual to the extent that he or she applies its lessons to the present. May your reading of the following pages generate many applications.

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which it brings and which turns us in upon ourselves.

Here Luther proclaimed that God's favor means that He is relaxed with me. If God is relaxed with me and sees me as righteous — i.e., restored to my humanity—, then it is blasphemy for me to regard myself as unrighteous and unable to function as a human who no longer needs to be defensive about myself and to protect myself with idols of one kind or another. If I am relaxed with myself because God is relaxed with me, I can proceed to fulfill His design for my humanity by exercising the assignments which He gives me in home, job, community, and congregation. The joyous exchange has traded my sin for Christ's righteousness, my fear and selfishness for joy and peace, my uptightness for the freedom to serve the Lord in my neighbor's life.

We celebrate the gift of Martin Luther to the church and the world this year by celebrating God's incarnate gift of Himself to us. We celebrate Jesus by recognizing that the joyous exchange which He accomplished for us frees us to relax in His presence and to reach out into the lives of others to free them for everlasting relaxation in Him.

Robert Kolb

LUTHER, THE LIBERAL

A member of my congregation recently asked me how she should have answered the question she had been asked regarding whether we at Mount Olive were "Liberal" or "Conservative." I told her that since the pastor who asked the question was a member of the Wisconsin Synod, he probably thought she should have answered that we in the Missouri Synod were "Liberal," but that the vast majority of Christians consider us to be staunchly "Conservative."

One of the sad truths about America today is that the words "liberal" and "conservative" get tossed about as charges so much that they have no real meaning apart from identifying the position of the one using them to describe others.

But in a day when these words still had meaning, the man this writer considers the greatest interpreter of Luther this side of the Atlantic, Dr. C.F.W. Walther, then president of the fledgling Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, addressed the first convention of the Iowa District of that Synod and told them that "our beloved Lutheran Church is a liberal church." Walther used the word "liberal" to mean one who fights for the liberty of the individual from the tyranny of the collective — whether that collective be church or state or any other organization.

According to that definition of a "liberal," Martin Luther was a full-fledged liberal. Walther correctly recognized that the real theme for Luther's life and work was the passage recorded in Galatians 5:1, "For freedom Christ has set us free." It is not accidental that Galatians was Luther's favorite letter or that one of his first essays was titled: "The Freedom of the Christian."

Perhaps the most important statement of Luther's is his assertion as the foundation of that essay: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none"; at the same time "a Christian is the most dutiful servant of all, subject to all." (*Luther's Works*, vol. 31, p. 344)

Luther's reformation was, above all else, a movement to assert the freedom of the individual Christian from all tyranny and bureaucratic control.

It is in this sense that there are no "Conservative" Lutherans. All Lutherans, if they are faithful to the Scripture as Luther understood it, are "Liberals," that is, they are freedom fighters, fighting to preserve for each and every individual the freedom Christ gained on Calvary. Any who forget this are not "Conservative Lutherans"; they are false Lutherans.

There could be no better way for the heirs of Luther to celebrate the 500th anniversary of his birth than to shout aloud the cry of freedom that was Luther's life work. There could be no better way to celebrate this anniversary than by every Lutheran dedicating herself or himself anew to the task of being a committed freedom fighter.

For freedom Christ has set us free. The Christian is the most free of all, subject to none. That is the most precious heritage that Luther left the world and that all Lutherans should strive to remind the world of in this year the world celebrates the anniversary of his birth.

Arnold Krugler

SAY AND ACT LIKE LUTHER . . .

One way to honor Luther's birthday is to follow in his steps and raise some questions germane to the life of the church and say what has to be said even though it hurts.

We might begin by asking, what has happened to scholarship in our church? Luther, Melancthon, and other notable figures of the Reformation found a zest for learning, a respect for scholarship, a confidence in what scholarship might accomplish. It seems that the best we can do is repeat what some venerable of our honorable past has said. Have we forgotten how Luther not only honored the past but was absolutely creative in the present? What are we afraid of anyway — the truth?

Do not Luther's explanations to the Three Articles of our faith not only enrich us spiritually but also unleash us to a lively celebration and investigation of the arts, humanities and sciences?

We might ask a second question, one that smarts, but which nevertheless must be asked. What are we doing in the arena of synodical higher education? Why have we not been willing to face the hard questions and produce the necessary answers? To put it bluntly, we no longer need all our colleges. They served well in the past when there existed a synodical "system" of education. That "system" no longer exists, and it hasn't existed for years. Fortunately, the economic situation is making us face the hard questions of stewardship we should have faced years ago. Rather than dealing with the realities, it seems decisions were made to make no decision except an unspoken "may the best man win." Meanwhile development and recruitment people stumble over each other in the competition for dollars and students. What is happening to our schools in the process? Everyone is being "infected." The stronger schools are being sapped of resources while the "new kids on the block" are suffering from financial and academic malnutrition. Overall, the impact on the body of higher education in our circle is a breakdown of good health and the onslaught of what can at best be described as an influenza of mediocrity.

The hard question that must be raised is: Is our leadership in Synod that produces such fine stewardship programs for our churches ironically leading Synod to be the worst steward of all by not leading and by not making the forthright decisions that need to be made, namely, closing colleges and consolidating faculties and programs? These questions are addressed to all in responsible positions of leadership in our Synod: How long will you allow this to go on? How long will you allow this debilitating "dis-ease" — caused by not practicing what we preach and by the lack of intestinal fortitude to make those painful decisions that so many *know* have to be made? The time has come to be accountable!

Although it is painful to have to say such things, it is said in the spirit of the one from whom we have all learned to celebrate the Gospel and have benefited from a great legacy in Christian education. By the way, happy birthday, Martin!

A. Paul Vasconcellos

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Lutheran Perspectives on Church Education

by Marvin Bergman



That theology has an important role in the educational theory and practice of the church generally has not been explicitly questioned in our circles. What has been debated by some is the relationship between theology and church education. One church educator identified five possible relationships:¹ (1) Theology as the key content to be taught; (2) Theology as the norm in evaluating educational practices of the church; (3) "Doing" theology as education, seen, for example, in a group's study of a contemporary issue in the light of Scriptures; (4) Education in dialog with theology, where theology *with* other disciplines as psychology and sociology shape the educational work of the church; and (5) Theology as irrelevant, a stance evident in the practice of never relating theology to the educational task.²

The importance of exploring these and other possible relationships between theology and education is seen in considering a number of questions, both on the theoretical and practical levels. (1) Is the role of theology only that of identifying key content to be taught? (2) To what extent does theology impact upon the educational models that guide planning and teaching in the church today, such as assertive discipline, teacher effectiveness training, values clarification, and the use of instructional objectives? (3) Does the presence or absence of a Law-Gospel perspective make any difference in a church school teacher's performance? (4) If theology is the basis for identifying essential content, is the role of education one of "greasing the tracks" to communicate such content?

Assuming that such questions underscore the importance of examining the relationship between theology and education in the church, the purpose of this article is to present a case study of the relationship between theology and education by focusing on some of Luther's perspectives on church education. Particular attention will be given to allowing Luther to speak for himself on five selected topics: (1) the aim of church education; (2) the functions of a church school teacher; (3) the role of images in teaching the faith; (4) the status of a teacher; (5) church teachers and the public ministry.

The Aim of Church Education

Luther at various times wrote on the central aim of church education. When writing to ministers of the Word in Lubeck involved in a conflict with the papists, Luther exhorted them to deal first with the center of their teaching. **FIX IN THE PEOPLE'S MINDS WHAT (THEY MUST KNOW) ABOUT OUR JUSTIFICATION; THAT IS, THAT IT IS AN EXTRINSIC RIGHTEOUSNESS — INDEED, IT IS CHRIST'S — GIVEN TO US THROUGH FAITH WHICH COMES BY GRACE TO THOSE WHO**

ARE FIRST TERRIFIED BY THE LAW AND WHO, STRUCK BY THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF (THEIR) SINS, ARDENTLY SEEK REDEMPTION.³ On another occasion, Luther pointed out that we are commanded by Christ **TO MAKE SOULS PREGNANT AND FRUITFUL THROUGH THE GOSPEL.**⁴ In a sermon guide for Christmas Eve, he wrote:

THE MEANING OF THIS IS THAT WITHOUT THE GOSPEL THERE IS NOTHING BUT DESERT ON EARTH AND NO CONFESSION OF GOD AND NO THANKSGIVING. . . . WHAT GREATER JOY MAY A HEART KNOW THAN THAT CHRIST IS GIVEN HIM AS HIS VERY OWN? HE DOES NOT JUST SAY, "CHRIST IS BORN," BUT HE APPROPRIATES CHRIST'S BIRTH FOR US AND SAYS "YOUR SAVIOR." THE GOSPEL DOES NOT MERELY TEACH THE STORY AND ACCOUNTS OF CHRIST, BUT PERSONALIZES THEM AND GIVES THEM TO ALL WHO BELIEVE IN IT.⁵

Two observations can be made. First, the key thrust of one's teaching is nothing else than the Gospel. All facets of teaching the faith, including memorizing Bible passages, learning Bible facts, telling Bible stories, making a study of Bible heroes and heroines, teaching Biblical concepts, discussing Christian doctrine, and reflecting upon moral dilemmas and ethical principles serve one purpose, that of relating the Gospel to the lives of people. As Luther wrote, **THE GOSPEL IS NOT WHAT ONE FINDS IN BOOKS AND WHAT IS WRITTEN IN LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET: IT IS RATHER AN ORAL SERMON AND A LIVING WORD . . . IT ANNOUNCES TO US THE GRACE OF GOD BESTOWED GRATIS AND WITHOUT OUR MERIT.**⁶ A second observation is the emphasis upon teaching the Gospel in ways that personalize this good news for the learner. For Luther, teaching is much more than telling, repeating, or inculcating.⁷ Teaching, instead of being a babbling of words, is to focus on the state of the heart, conscience, and the whole man.⁸ Helping a learner to live under the Gospel and assimilate this good news in the core of one's person is the central aim of church education.

The Functions of a Church Teacher

With teaching the Gospel being the aim of church education, what, then, are the functions of a teacher? What does a teacher do in order to achieve the aim of church education? In Luther's thought, one discovers five functions of a Christian teacher.

One, a Christian teacher clearly recognizes who and what the enemies are. Instead of believing that

the causes of individual and social problems center in a lack of knowledge, confusion in values, inability to reason, or the failure to develop one's potential, church teachers need to zero in on the real enemies. Luther explained: WE SEE THAT CHRISTIAN TEACHING IS THE SORT OF TEACHING THAT DOES NOT DEAL WITH COWLS, TONSURES, ROSARIES, AND SIMILAR USELESS MATTERS BUT WITH THE MOST DIFFICULT AND IMPORTANT ISSUES, NAMELY, HOW WE ARE TO OVERCOME THE FLESH, SIN, DEATH, AND THE DEVIL.⁹ Mankind's enemies are so deadly that they can be exposed only by the X-ray of God's Word.

A second function of a Christian teacher is to help one to hear the Word of God. And what does hearing the Word of God consist of?

NOW WHEN I HEAR MOSES EXHORT ME TO GOOD WORKS, I HEAR HIM AS I WOULD A HERALD WHO BRINGS THE COMMAND AND DECREES OF AN EMPEROR OR PRINCE . . . BUT THAT IS NOT THE SAME AS HEARING GOD HIMSELF. FOR WHEN GOD HIMSELF SPEAKS TO MEN, THEY HEAR ONLY SHEER GRACE, MERCY, AND GOODNESS . . . THIS WORD I CANNOT COMPREHEND, BUT I HEAR IT FROM THE MOUTH OF CHRIST. I CANNOT UNDERSTAND, HEAR, LEARN OR BELIEVE IT UNLESS HE PUTS IT INTO MY HEART AND UNLESS THE FATHER DRAWS ME . . . THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE TAUGHT BY GOD AND TO COME TO CHRIST, NAMELY, TO BE CONVINCED THAT IT IS GOD'S WORD . . . BUT IT IS NECESSARY TO HEAR GOD HIMSELF, NAMELY, THROUGH HIS SON, FROM THE MOUTH OF CHRIST AND TO BELIEVE HIS WORD. THEN IT ENTERS YOUR EARS, AND HE CONVINCES YOU THAT IS HIS WORD.¹⁰

Here, one can see the relationship between hearing the Word and the *heart*. Luther located faith in the *heart, not the intellect*. LISTENING TO SERMONS OR READING WHAT HAS BEEN WRITTEN IN BOOKS ARE NOT ENOUGH. THE SCRIPTURES WHICH WE TEACH HAVE TO BE DRIVEN HOME TO THE HEART.¹¹

In Luther's writings, a third function of a church teacher is to teach faith. Contrary to assertions often made today that "the faith" or faith cannot be taught, Luther accented the importance of both teaching the faith and teaching faith. In discussing the nature and purpose of the church, Luther

explained that ONE SHOULD PREACH CHRIST ALONE AND ESTABLISH HIM AS FOUNDATION, AND TEACH THE FAITH AND THOSE MATTERS WHICH ARE RELATED TO THE FAITH.¹² At various times, Luther emphasized that we are to do even more than teach the faith; we are to teach faith! For example, Luther once pointed out that he had not attacked the vices of the clergy of the Roman church and the worldly estate because of an absence of faith and faithfulness to God's Word. For this reason, the need of the day was to TEACH FAITH AND THE WORD OF GOD AGAINST HUMAN LAW AND SUPERSTITION.¹³ Luther called Paul a very good teacher of faith because of his emphasis on "through faith, in faith, and on the basis of faith" in Christ Jesus.¹⁴ His own approach to teaching faith was described in this way: I HAVE TAUGHT IN SUCH A WAY THAT MY TEACHING WOULD LEAD FIRST AND FOREMOST TO A KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST, THAT IS, TO PURE AND PROPER FAITH AND GENUINE LOVE, AND THEREBY TO FREEDOM IN ALL MATTERS OF EXTERNAL CONDUCT SUCH AS EATING, DRINKING, CLOTHES, PRAYING, FASTING . . .¹⁵

Being an instructor of conscience was seen by Luther as a fourth function of a Christian teacher. While he acknowledged the foolishness of tackling matters of conscience and morality where faith was absent, he repeatedly directed attention to the link between faith and conscience as well as morality. In his *Commentary on Galatians* (1533), Luther exhorted that one instruct consciences, both one's own and others, by consoling and taking them from the Law to grace, from active righteousness to passive righteousness, in short, from Moses to Christ.¹⁶ His reply to *The Twelve Articles* of the peasants in Swabia (1525) included an explanation that it was not appropriate for him as an evangelist to judge or make decisions in relation to such matters as the amount of rents and taxes, hunting game, or using wood from a forest. Rather, his purpose was to instruct and teach men's consciences in things that concern divine and Christian matters.¹⁷ He also noted that the apostles made it a habit, after the teaching of faith and the instruction of conscience, to introduce some commandments about morals, by which they exhorted the believers to practice the duties of godliness toward one another.¹⁸

A fifth function of a church teacher is that of linking teaching and exhortation. Again, Paul was seen as a model teacher, a true teacher, because he both taught and exhorted. BY HIS TEACHING HE SETS DOWN WHAT IS TO BE BELIEVED BY FAITH, AND BY HIS EXHORTATION HE SETS DOWN WHAT IS TO BE DONE.¹⁹ Paul was seen to

build up faith through doctrinal instruction and to build up life through exhortation. For Luther, the epistle which demonstrated the way to link doctrine with exhortation was Paul's letter to Titus. Instead of separating doctrine and deeds, Luther repeatedly linked believing to doing, and doing to believing. He was critical of indolent Christians who had the Word and pure doctrine, but who did not live according to it.²⁰ IN THE WHOLE GOSPEL NOTHING IS MORE CLEARLY EMPHASIZED THAN FAITH AND LOVE.²¹

The Role of Images in Teaching the Faith

In discussing his approach to teaching, Luther identified a simple and basic approach, that of explaining, memorizing, and recitation.

THE SCHOOLMASTER SHALL HAVE THE WHOLE DIVISION COME UP FOR RECITATION, ASKING EACH PUPIL IN TURN TO REPEAT THE LORD'S PRAYER, THE CREED, AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS . . . IN ONE PERIOD THE SCHOOLMASTER SHOULD EXPLAIN SIMPLY AND CORRECTLY THE MEANING OF THE LORD'S PRAYER, AT ANOTHER TIME, THE CREED, AT ANOTHER, THE TEN COMMANDMENTS. HE SHOULD EMPHASIZE WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR LIVING A GOOD LIFE, NAMELY, THE FEAR OF GOD, FAITH, GOOD WORKS . . . THE TEACHER SHOULD ASK THE PUPILS TO MEMORIZE A NUMBER OF EASY PSALMS THAT CONTAIN A SUMMARY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND SPEAK ABOUT THE FEAR OF GOD, FAITH, AND GOOD WORKS.²²

However, Luther never restricted his teaching methodology to this approach. He, for example, was keenly aware of the power of images in the formation of faith, and, at times, expressed amazement when discussing imagery in Scripture. I DON'T KNOW WHAT SORT OF POWER IMAGES HAVE THAT THEY CAN SO FORCEFULLY ENTER AND AFFECT ONE, AND MAKE EVERY MAN BY NATURE LONG TO HEAR AND SPEAK IN IMAGERY. ISN'T IT TRUE THAT "THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD" SOUNDS MUCH SWEETER THAN "THE APOSTLES PREACH GOD'S GLORY?"²³ He observed that figurative speech is more effective than crude and simple speech.²⁴

For Luther, the clue to recognizing the power of imagery centered in both Scripture and in reflecting upon the Scriptures. He pointed out the Scripture is crammed with figurative language.²⁵ Through reflection, he realized that

GOD DESIRES TO HAVE HIS WORDS



Lucas Cranach, "Martin Luther." Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago.

HEARD AND READ, ESPECIALLY THE PASSION OF OUR LORD. BUT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO HEAR AND BEAR IT IN MIND WITHOUT MENTAL IMAGES OF IT IN MY HEART. FOR WHETHER I WILL OR NOT, WHEN I HEAR OF CHRIST, AN IMAGE OR A MAN HANGING ON A CROSS TAKES FORM IN MY HEART, JUST AS THE RELECTION OF MY FACE NATURALLY APPEARS IN THE WATER WHEN I LOOK INTO IT.²⁶

As an experienced teacher, Luther pointed out that children and simple people are most apt to retain the divine stories when they are taught by picture and parable than merely by words of instruction. AS ST. MARK TESTIFIED, CHRIST ALSO PREACHED IN ORDINARY PARABLES FOR THE SAKE OF SIMPLE-MINDED FOLKS.²⁷ His enthusiasm for teaching through images became apparent when he stated that

IT IS TO BE SURE BETTER TO PAINT PICTURES ON WALLS OF HOW GOD CREATED THE WORLD, HOW NOAH BUILT THE ARK, AND WHATEVER OTHER GOOD STORIES THERE MAY BE THAN TO PAINT SHAMELESS WORLDLY THINGS. YES, WOULD TO GOD THAT I COULD PERSUADE THE RICH AND MIGHTY THAT THEY WOULD PERMIT THE WHOLE BIBLE TO BE PAINTED ON HOUSES, ON THE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE, SO THAT ALL CAN SEE IT. THAT WOULD BE A CHRISTIAN WORK.²⁸

The purpose of painting Bible stories along with the verses on the walls of rooms and chambers was that one might have God's words and deeds in view and thus encourage fear and faith toward God.²⁹

The Status of Teachers

For Luther, the status of teachers is linked to their role in the life of the church. Their essential role is that of educating persons for competent service in both the church and state.³⁰ Luther also pointed out that sound teaching brings the Holy Spirit and His gifts.³¹ Among the things that can be learned, one can learn no greater thing on earth than faith and love.³² The work of teaching is so important that A DILIGENT AND UPRIGHT SCHOOLMASTER OR TEACHER, OR ANYONE WHO FAITHFULLY TRAINS AND TEACHES BOYS, CAN NEVER BE ADEQUATELY REWARDED OR REPAYED WITH ANY AMOUNT OF MONEY.³³

The status of teachers was further clarified when he stated:

IF I COULD LEAVE THE PREACHING OFFICE AND MY OTHER DUTIES, OR HAD TO DO SO, THERE IS NO OTHER OFFICE I

WOULD RATHER HAVE THAN THAT OF SCHOOLMASTER OR TEACHER OF BOYS; FOR I KNOW THAT NEXT TO THAT OF PREACHING, THIS IS THE BEST, GREATEST, AND MOST USEFUL OFFICE THERE IS. INDEED, I SCARCELY KNOW WHICH OF THE TWO IS THE BETTER. FOR IT IS HARD TO MAKE OLD DOGS OBEDIENT AND OLD RASCALS PIOUS; YET THAT IS THE WORK AT WHICH THE PASTOR MUST LABOR, AND OFTEN IN VAIN. YOUNG SAPLINGS ARE MORE EASILY BENT AND TRAINED, EVEN THOUGH SOME MAY BREAK IN THE PROCESS. IT SURELY HAS TO BE ONE OF THE SUPREME VIRTUES ON EARTH FAITHFULLY TO TRAIN OTHER PEOPLE'S CHILDREN; FOR THERE ARE VERY FEW PEOPLE, IN FACT, ALMOST NONE, WHO WILL DO THIS FOR THEIR OWN.³⁴

In another context, Luther wrote that pastor and schoolteachers plant and cultivate young trees and useful shrubs in the garden. OH, THEY HAVE A PRECIOUS OFFICE AND TASK, AND THEY ARE THE CHURCH'S RICHEST JEWELS: THEY PRESERVE THE CHURCH.³⁵

However, Luther also complained that the work of teaching was shamefully despised as if it amounted to nothing at all.³⁶ Sensitive to the difficult role of teachers and the ease of overlooking their importance, he observed: WHO LOVES A SCHOOLMASTER? DID THE JEWS LOVE MOSES WARMLY AND WILLINGLY DO WHAT HE COMMANDED? AT TIMES, THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN WILLING TO STONE HIM. HOW CAN ONE LOVE THE ONE BY WHOM HE IS BEING FORBIDDEN TO DO WHAT HE WOULD LIKE TO DO?³⁷ Luther's comment that pastors of his day were supported about as well as Lazarus was supported by the rich man also applied to teachers.³⁸

Despite the lack of recognition and support of teachers, their status rested upon the significant contributions which they made. Christian teaching was seen as the greatest possible help in encouraging consciences.³⁹ Good teaching brings together A PURE HEART, A GOOD CONSCIENCE, AND A SINCERE FAITH, AND OUT OF THEM ALL OUR LIFE SHOULD FLOW AND CONTINUE.⁴⁰ Instead of social status being the determinant of one's motivation, Luther stressed that one is to be confident and happy in carrying out the office into which God has placed one. WHEN WE DO THIS, WE DO NOT CARE AT ALL WHETHER THE WORLD LIKES US OR DISLIKES US. FOR WHEN WE KNOW THAT OUR WORK HAS BEEN DONE PROPERLY, AND WHEN WE HAVE A GOOD

CONSCIENCE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD, WE GO RIGHT AHEAD.⁴¹

Teachers and Public Ministry

Luther's discussions of the public ministry are illuminating in many ways. In considering the relationship between teachers and the public ministry, space allows making six points. First it is important to recognize the origin of the public ministry. EVERY BELIEVER KNOWS VERY WELL THAT THE SPIRITUAL ESTATE (DER GEISTLICHE STAND) HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED BY GOD, NOT WITH GOLD OR SILVER, BUT WITH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD AND BITTER DEATH OF HIS ONLY SON.⁴² Second, the authority to do public ministry also has been identified in the Scriptures.

ON THIS ACCOUNT I THINK IT FOLLOWS THAT WE NEITHER CAN NOR OUGHT TO GIVE THE NAME PRIEST TO THOSE WHO ARE IN CHARGE OF WORD AND SACRAMENT AMONG THE PEOPLE . . . ACCORDING TO THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES BETTER NAMES WOULD BE MINISTERS, DEACONS, BISHOPS, STEWARDS, PRESBYTERS (A NAME OFTEN USED AND INDICATING THE OLDER MEMBERS). FOR THUS, PAUL WRITES IN I COR. 4:(1), "THIS IS HOW ONE SHOULD REGARD US, AS SERVANTS OF CHRIST AND STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD." HE DOES NOT SAY, "AS PRIESTS OF CHRIST," BECAUSE HE KNEW THAT THE NAME AND OFFICE OF PRIEST BELONG TO ALL. PAUL'S FREQUENT USE OF THE WORD "STEWARDSHIP" OR "HOUSEHOLD," "MINISTRY," "MINISTER," "SERVANT," "ONE SERVING THE GOSPEL," ETC. EMPHASIZES THAT IT IS NOT THE ESTATE, OR ORDER, OR ANY AUTHORITY OR DIGNITY THAT HE WANTS TO UPHOLD, BUT ONLY THE OFFICE AND THE FUNCTION. THE AUTHORITY AND THE DIGNITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD RESIDED IN THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS.⁴³

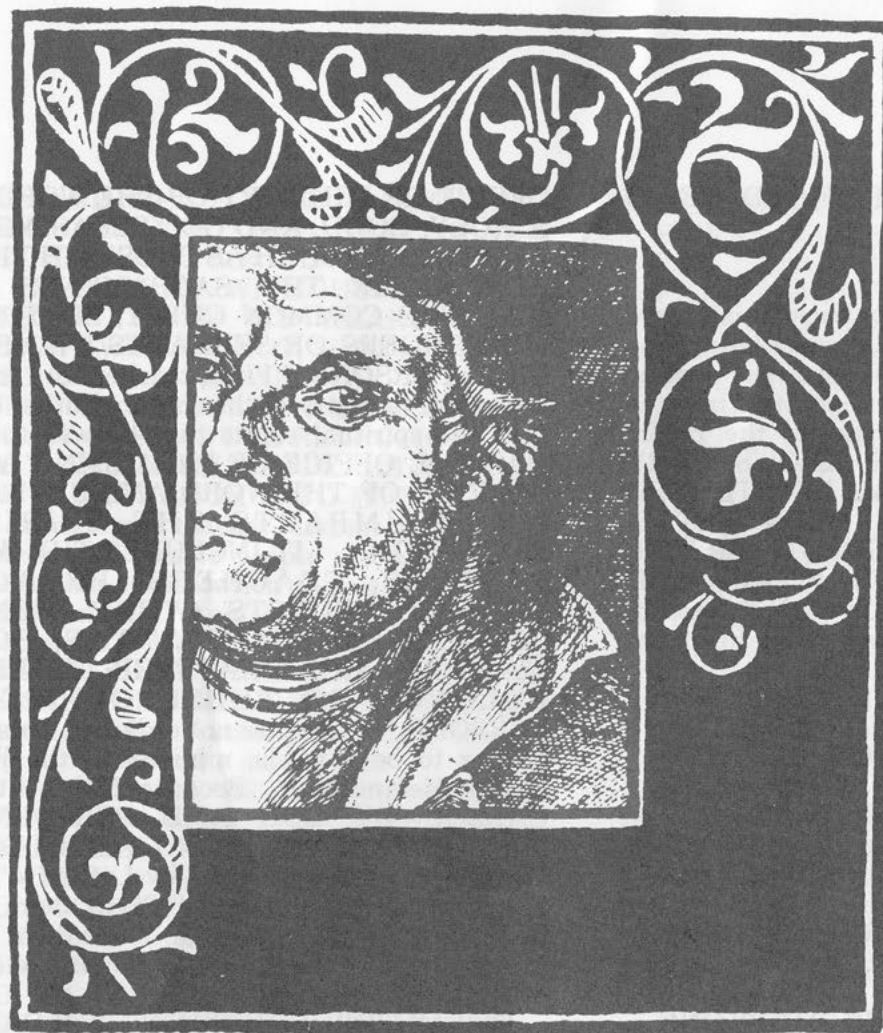
Third, the community has the right and responsibility to call public ministers of the Word. THE COMMUNITY RIGHTS DEMAND THAT ONE, OR AS MANY AS THE COMMUNITY CHOOSES, SHALL BE CHOSEN OR APPROVED WHO, IN THE NAME OF ALL WITH THESE RIGHTS, SHALL PERFORM THESE FUNCTIONS PUBLICLY.⁴⁴ Fourth, the office of the public ministry is broader than the role of a pastor. ALL WHO ARE ENGAGED IN THE CLERICAL

OFFICE OR MINISTRY OF THE WORD ARE IN A HOLY, GOOD, AND GOD-PLEASING ORDER AND ESTATE, SUCH AS THOSE WHO PREACH, ADMINISTER THE SACRAMENTS, SUPERVISE THE COMMON CHEST, SEXTONS AND MESSENGERS OR SERVANTS WHO SERVICE SUCH PERSONS.⁴⁵ Fifth, teachers are engaged in the public ministry of the church. Luther explained that the spiritual estate that he was thinking of HAS THE OFFICE OF PREACHING AND THE SERVICE OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENTS WHICH IMPARTS THE SPIRIT AND SALVATION . . . IT INCLUDES THE WORK OF PASTORS, TEACHERS, PREACHERS, LECTORS, PRIESTS (WHOM MEN CALL CHAPLAINS), SACRISTANS, SCHOOLMASTERS, AND WHATEVER OTHER WORK BELONGS TO THESE OFFICES AND PERSONS.⁴⁶ A teacher not ordained considered by Luther to be a public minister of the Word was Philip Melancthon. Because Melancthon was CALLED BY GOD AND PERFORMS THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD, AS NO ONE CAN DENY, he was encouraged by Luther to preach to the people on festival days.⁴⁷ Sixth, there is need to be aware of the traps of clericalism and the exaggeration of the importance of any one function of the public ministry.

IT WAS THROUGH THE POPE'S DAMNED LAW AND RULE THAT THE PRECIOUS, CUSTOMARY TERMS "CHURCH," "PRIEST," "SPIRITUAL," AND THE LIKE WERE TAKEN AWAY FROM THE COMMUNITY AND APPLIED ONLY TO THE SMALLEST GROUP, WHICH WE NOW CALL THE SPIRITUAL AND PRIESTLY ESTATE AND WHOSE AFFAIRS WE CALL THE AFFAIRS OF THE CHURCH YET ALL OF US ARE IN A COMMON CHURCH; WE ARE ALL SPIRITUAL AND PRIESTS, TO THE EXTENT THAT WE BELIEVE IN CHRIST. THEY ARE ONLY STEWARDS, SERVANTS, OFFICIALS, CARETAKERS, SHEPHERDS, GUARDIANS, AND WATCHMEN. THEREFORE, I THINK THAT GOAT EMSER'S DREAM OF TWO KINDS OF PRIESTHOOD LIES IN SAND AND MIRE.⁴⁸

What can Luther's perspectives teach us about the relationship between theology and education? By responding to the questions posed earlier, the relationship becomes more clear. (1) Theology does identify key content to be taught by church educators, such as the Scriptures, the creeds, worship, and ethics. However, its role is much larger. A theological perspective identifies a gospel

(Continued on page 24)



✦ Lessons from Luther Concerning Current Spiritual Problems

by James H. Pragman

The title of this article was devised by the editor and his associates on the Editorial Committee of this journal. The devising of the title may have been relatively easy, but the writing of any essay on the theme suggested by this title is not. The problem lies precisely in the fact that Luther is not "current"; he lived 500 years ago, and the problems of the 20th century are not the problems of Martin Luther's century.

Any listing of the problems confronting Christians in the late 20th century will demonstrate very easily the disparity between the 16th and 20th centuries. Luther may have been vaguely aware of

the discovery of the New World, but his theologizing was not altered to any significant degree by that reality. Therefore, how can we ask Luther to provide us with lessons relevant to issues of the 20th century such as nuclear war and disarmament, the right to life and abortion, communism and the free enterprise system, etc.? Shall we invite Luther to step forward into the 20th century? If so, how can Luther do that? Shall we carry ourselves back to the 16th century? If so, how can we do that? The real danger in this essay is twofold: we may fail to take ourselves seriously as people living in a different age than Luther did. How do we get Luther to lay any lessons at all before us in such a way that we take both Luther and ourselves seriously?

One response to this dilemma is to throw up our hands in despair and move on to other interests. Or

another response is to study Luther as he was, in the context of his times, and attempt to isolate the principles he adhered to as he carried out his life's work. After determining what those principles are, we could then move on to the second step: taking those principles and determining how they can be established and exercised in our own lives. We shall try the second option.

This essayist has consciously limited his scope to a review of Luther's *Table Talk*¹ on several selected topics. After reviewing Luther's comments on those topics, Luther's principles should be more clearly visible to us. Maybe Luther can thus help us handle our spiritual problems, but he will not and cannot handle those problems for us. That is our responsibility!

Luther expended himself for the reform of the church. It is not surprising, therefore, that he expressed opinions and judgments on the church and the doing of theology in his conversations around the dinner table in his home. Students, visiting dignitaries, theologians, clergymen from various parts of Europe, and — of course — the members of his immediate family circle were treated to his straightforward pronouncements on topics of the moment. A study of those comments produces various reactions in those who read what Luther said and how he said it, but such a study also demonstrates the practical way in which Luther applied his understanding of the church's faith to the issues of his time. To be sure, some of his comments are very polemical and perhaps even offensive to sensitive 20th century Christians, but those comments give reality to Luther the man struggling with the call of God to be His man in that age. That is a call which all of us share with Luther: God has called us to be His people in this time, living and dealing with the problems of this age (not another age!). This call is what we will give an account of in the great Day of the Lord.

Church and Theology

Luther's life and career, of course, were bounded by the reality of the church. The church had called him to be its teacher when it conferred the doctorate in theology on him. But his high calling and his high view of that calling did not dissolve into a romantic notion about the holiness or purity of the church. Luther noted at one point toward the end of his public career that he had differences with some of his colleagues on the Wittenberg University faculty. For example, Jerome Schurff who was a professor of law at Wittenberg differed from Luther in his conception of the church. Schurff was disgusted with the form of the church. The church, said Schurff, was scandalized by sects and divisions, but God wanted it to be holy, pure,

unspotted, and the "dove of God." Luther responded to these views by saying that in the eyes of God the church is everything Schurff wanted it to be, but in the eyes of the world the church is hacked to pieces, marked with scratches and other disfigurements, crucified, and vilified; thus the church is exactly like Christ, the church's bridegroom. Luther was a realist, facing and accepting the church as it was, knowing also that the church is beautiful in the eyes of God. Luther did not abandon the church God gave in this world for some idealized conception which could not be actualized in this world of gritty reality. Schurff's conception is a picture of the church as it should be in this world, but God had called Luther to work in and with the church as it was in this world.²

Perhaps part of the reason Luther could express himself as he did is that he viewed doctrine, and not life, as the central issue in the church. Luther criticized some of the pre-reformers such as Wycliffe and Huss because they failed to realize that the crucial point, the most sensitive point, is doctrine. We cannot scold ourselves into becoming good: focusing on life apart from doctrine changes nothing. Luther's calling, he said, was to attack the false and erroneous doctrine of the Roman church because doctrine determines the life of the church. If doctrine is correct, if the Word is preached in its truth and purity, then life can be molded properly.³ Luther is not saying that the living of the Christian life is unimportant, but he is saying that life cannot be reformed apart from the correct doctrine which the church has received in the Word of God. Luther put it succinctly: "Everything depends on the Word. . ."⁴ The life of the church is the life of the Word, free and unfettered, coursing through the church, verifying and correcting its doctrine and thus shaping and directing its life in God for the glory of God and the welfare of the neighbor.

Of course, if doctrine must be dealt with before life can be transformed, the crucial issue is how does one "do" doctrine or theology. Theology and doctrine are more than collections of true statements drawn from the content of Holy Scripture. Luther expressed some views on these matters in the *Table Talk*.

Luther knew what the center of theology and doctrine is. The mature Luther once told his dinner companions that his problem as a member of the papal church was that he lacked faith. Faith, he said, is a circle, and straying from the circle makes doctrine and theology impossible. Furthermore, that circle has a focus: "The center is Christ."⁵ Luther was unabashedly Christocentric. He declared also that the principal lesson of theology and doctrine is that Christ can be known. Human systems of thought, however, cast doubts on the truth of the assertion that Christ can be known as

Lord and gracious Savior. What theology and doctrine must teach the church is that Christ is to be trusted above any and all other objects of trust and confidence.⁶

That focus on the center, Christ Himself, helps us understand Luther when he declares that God can be known only in and through Jesus Christ.⁷ Jesus is the God-revealer who shows mankind that God is love, that God forgives, and that God gives life instead of death to all those who live in faith and receive the center, Christ Himself.

Focusing on and receiving the center of theology and doctrine is not a simple or easy task. Luther noted that the doing of theology is hard and difficult work. Theology is not quickly learned. Luther insisted that theology deserved the best intellectual efforts of the church and its churchmen. Nevertheless, on the other hand — and simultaneously — Luther could make the task seem so easy:

There is only one article and one rule of theology, and this is true faith or trust in Christ. Who doesn't hold this article and this rule is no theologian. All other articles flow into and out of this one; without it the others are meaningless.⁸

All one has to do, according to Luther, is divide rightly the Word of God into Law and Gospel and all theology will be done rightly. In comments he made about translating Holy Scripture, Luther said very simply that he studied obscure passages to see if they treat of grace or law, if they speak of wrath or forgiveness. The distinction between Law and Gospel has made difficult passages meaningful to him, because God Himself divides His Word and teaching into Law and Gospel.⁹ At the same time, Luther acknowledged that no man living on earth knows how to divide the Word rightly between Law and Gospel. We may think we understand how to do it, but we really do not. Only God knows how to divide His Word rightly according to Law and Gospel.¹⁰

Thus, the doing of theology and the formulation of Scriptural doctrine for human understanding is both simple and difficult. The center is Christ in the circle of faith, and the tool is the dividing of Scripture according to Law and Gospel. But that involves hard work, serious work. It means analyzing passages and opening them up to human understanding with the Law/Gospel tool while focusing on Christ. On another occasion, Luther put it this way: "To be sure, the Holy Scriptures are sufficient in themselves, but God grant that I find the right text."¹¹

Luther labored over the Word of God: That was his work as a professor on the theological faculty of the University of Wittenberg. He lectured to

students at the university, and he preached the Word regularly to worshipers at the City Church and the Castle Church in Wittenberg. His study of the Scriptures was scholarly and learned as well as practical: he preached on a regular basis several times a week throughout most of his career. He confessed in 1531 that if he had known beforehand what was involved in the ministry to which God had called him, God would have had to work harder to get Luther to accept the call into the ministry. On the other hand, now that he was in the church's ministry, he would not exchange the whole world for that ministry.¹²

The burdens and responsibilities of the ministry in the church can be awesome, but Luther consoled himself with the thought that authority for ministry did not rest in himself but in God. The ministry belongs to God, not to the minister. Luther would not assume for himself what belonged to God alone. Thus Luther separated the office of the ministry from the person of the minister. The pope, like Luther, occupies the ministerial office of the Word within the church; but the difference is that the pope abuses that ministry, that valid, God-given ministry.¹³ Furthermore, Luther asserted that Christ gives the Spirit to the public office and not to the private person who occupies the office. Pastors preach and administer the sacraments and forgive sins not because they personally have been specifically blessed as persons for those activities but because they occupy the office which has been authorized to perform those activities and functions.¹⁴ Therefore, a minister is none other than "... one who is placed in the church for preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments."¹⁵

The paradox of public ministry in the church was plainly evident to Luther. He noted at one point that God had determined to rule the hearts of men through the office of preaching the Word, although preachers cannot open and see into those hearts. And yet, said Luther, God tells the preacher to preach because God knows the hearts of men and He will give the increase.¹⁶ The human impossibility of public ministry becomes the divine possibility.

But how should the preacher carry out the preaching task? Luther had some advice to offer in that regard. He insisted that sermons should be relevant. In that connection, Luther took note of one irrelevant preacher whose sermon in praise of marriage was addressed to some elderly and aged women confined to an infirmary.¹⁷ The sermon has to meet the needs of the audience. And, furthermore, sermons should not be too long. Luther noted that his friend and colleague John Bugenhagen sacrificed his hearers with his long sermons so that

they became Bugenhagen's victims. Luther then commented that Bugenhagen had today — on the Third Sunday after Epiphany — "... sacrificed us in a singular manner."¹⁸ On another occasion, Luther admonished Cyriacus Gericke, a former monk who was visiting in Wittenberg, that he (and all preachers) should stop speaking when they had nothing more to say.¹⁹ As far as Luther was concerned, the best preacher is the one who teaches in a plain, childlike, popular, and simple manner.²⁰

Luther's views on the work of the public ministry are down-to-earth and straightforward. He was not impressed with human erudition or human authority. Nor was he impressed with theories about the conduct of the public ministry. Luther was impressed with the Word only. The Word gave substance to church and theology and preachers and their preaching.

Some Personal Matters

Luther's views on church and ministry and the doing of theology are relatively well known. But the *Table Talk* also contains Luther's comments on a variety of personal matters. Some of the things that elicited Luther's comments are the very things that touch our personal and individual lives.

Luther's family was very important to him. The *Table Talk* anecdotes show Luther teasing and chiding his good wife, Katy, but they also demonstrate his profound love for her. Without Katy, Luther did not know how he could carry out his various official functions and activities.²¹ While he had to adjust to the idea of sharing his life with a wife — he was almost forty-years old when he was married, and he had been a monk for almost twenty years — he rejoiced in what Katy brought him. Luther said that he was rich because God had given him a nun and three children. But, in a sentence that must have caused Katy a twinge or two, Luther said that he did not worry about his debts "... for when my Katy has paid them there will be more."²²

Wealth did not impress Luther, even though Katy found herself burdened with insufficient resources to meet the financial needs of her large household. Luther's somewhat impertinent views on wealth bear repeating here precisely because this age of ours sees wealth as a barometer of success.

Riches are the most insignificant things on earth, the smallest gift that God can give a man. What are they in comparison with the Word of God? In fact, what are they in comparison with gifts of the mind? And yet we act as if this were not so! The matter, form, effect, and goal of riches are worthless. That's why our Lord God generally gives riches to crude asses to whom he doesn't give anything else.²³

Some Concluding Thoughts

To summarize Luther and lay before others what kinds of spiritual directions Luther provides for people in this 20th century of God's grace and mercy is difficult. We study Luther and we consider him, weighing what he said at one point in his life compared with what he said or wrote at another point on the same subject. At times, the contradiction of his comments astounds and disturbs. And we find ourselves wondering why this man is so significant in his own age and then, still yet, in ours. But Luther did not focus on himself, and he did not let inconsistency and paradox and contradiction bother him. He focused on God and His Word — that alone mattered. Just as the human condition varies from circumstance to circumstance, so the application of God's Word produces creative change in the human condition. The Word is the key — in church and theology, in family and marriage, in wealth and in want. On the day before he died, Luther jotted this down: "We are beggars. That is true."²⁴ Yes, that is what we are. But we beggars — all of us in all centuries — are sons and daughters of God who live by God and His Word. That is the lesson!

NOTES

¹Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, edited and translated by Theodore G. Tappert, Vol. LIV in *Luther's Works*, edited by Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, c. 1967). Since all the notes in this essay are citations from this volume, subsequent notes will provide only the page and item numbers from this volume, followed by the date of the specific citation.

²p. 262 (#3709), 17 January 1538.

³p. 110 (#624), Fall of 1533.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵p. 45 (#327), Summer or Fall of 1532.

⁶p. 143 (#1353), between 8 January and 23 March 1532.

⁷p. 155 (1543), 20 May 1532.

⁸p. 157 (#1583), between 20 and 27 May 1532.

⁹pp. 42f. (#312), Summer or Fall of 1532.

¹⁰p. 127 (#1234), before 14 December 1531.

¹¹p. 41 (#352), Fall of 1532.

¹²pp. 12f. (#113), between 9 and 30 November 1531.

¹³pp. 47f. (#342), Summer or Fall of 1532.

¹⁴p. 90 (#512), Spring of 1533.

¹⁵p. 100 (#574), Summer or Fall of 1533.

¹⁶p. 213 (#3492), between 27 October and 4 December 1536.

¹⁷p. 138 (#1322), between 8 January and 23 March 1532.

¹⁸p. 179 (#2898), 26 January 1533.

¹⁹p. 292 (#3910), 7 July 1538.

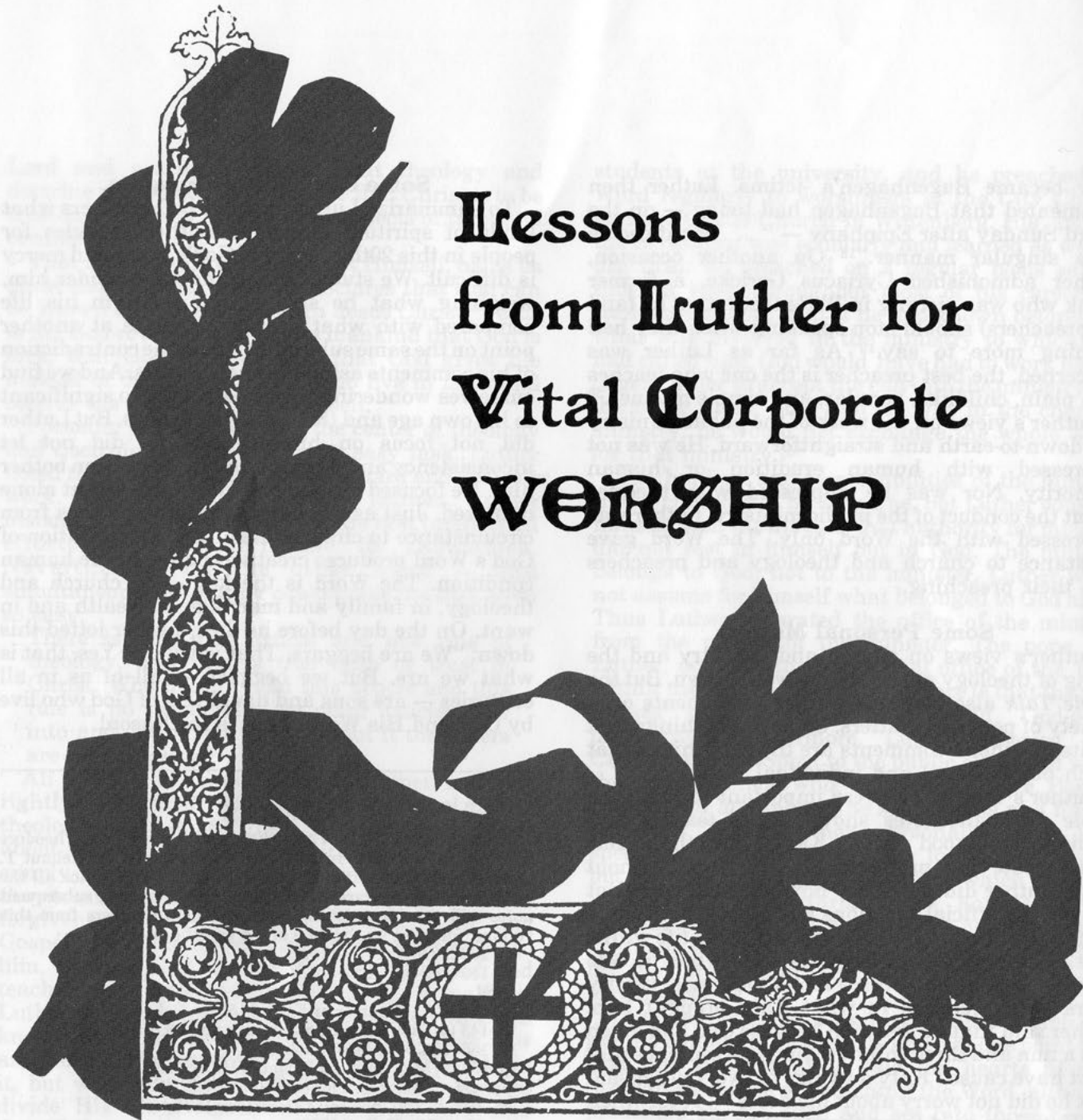
²⁰p. 384 (#5047), between 21 May and 11 June 1540.

²¹pp. 22f. (#154), between 14 December 1531 and 22 January 1532.

²²p. 153 (#1457), between 7 April and 1 May 1532. At this time, Katy and Martin had three living children: John, Magdalene, and Martin.

²³p. 452 (#5559), Winter of 1542-1543.

²⁴p. 476 (#5677); the date of record is 16 February 1546.



Lessons from Luther for Vital Corporate WORSHIP

by Norbert Streufert

For those who are concerned about the health of the church, the anniversary topic of Luther and worship is apt to evoke ambivalent thoughts. On the one hand, a person recalls some of Luther's achievements in liturgy and hymnody; on the other hand, this person wonders whether significant renewal of a congregation will result from singing Luther's hymns more frequently, or from using the order of worship outlined in the *German Mass*. To

leaders in the parish, such a revitalizing effort might seem like Barney Clark's heart operation: courageous but artificial, and in the end, not able to sustain life in a weakened patient.

The Barney Clark analogy is deficient on several counts. For one thing, it implies too much pessimism about the condition of the "patient," the Christians in our congregations. More fundamentally, the analogy errs by assuming that the main way to honor Luther and recover the vitality of the Reformation era is to transplant Luther's liturgical works into the worship life of today. There are a number of Luther's worship

materials which remain alive and effective. Some of them will be mentioned in later portions of the paper. The premise of this essay, however, is that the most valuable heritage which we have received from Martin Luther in the area of worship consists of the *principles* which he followed in his ministry. These are essentially theological principles, rooted in the Scriptures and implemented in various policies and worship forms for the church of his day. Luther's gift, in other words, is not so much a set of worship mechanisms to be hooked up to Twentieth Century Christians from the outside; it is a set of God-given insights concerning what makes for good health in the body of Christ in every age, and what enables the number one sign of vigorous health, a response of living worship.

This essay will examine a number of worship principles which appear in the teaching and practice of Martin Luther. As each principle is discussed, we shall consider its relevance for corporate worship today, either in the major services of the congregation or in the worship which takes place in educational agencies or church organizations.

I. Christian worshipers have a special identity: They are the community of saints, the people of God.

To know who we are is foundational for meaningful corporate worship. Luther's view is that Christians are people who have been uniquely connected with God and with one another by His saving work in Christ Jesus and by the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit. That concept of the church sounds quite traditional and correct. Why ponder it seriously in 1983?

Before examining some details of Luther's teaching concerning worship and the church, consider how cultural patterns in the United States have been challenging the basic idea of religious community. Martin Marty, in his book, *Public Church*, observes that in recent decades more and more people have been viewing religion as an essentially private, inner experience.¹ There is the pervasive notion that individuals may draw strength from their personal belief, "but can never share this strength, only live off it."² Marty notes a number of specific strategies by which individualism is attacking and undermining the local congregation. One is the *consumer* pattern by which a person approaches church life expecting to pay for services rendered or goods acquired (a spiritual high, an experience of healing, promise of personal gain); another is the *clientele* phenomenon — people gathering around a charismatic leader or celebrity (some religious TV personalities come to mind) who provides them with an identity or supplies help for

their needs of the moment.³ In such an atmosphere of individualism, Luther's teachings concerning the church and its worship are radical indeed, pointing to our roots in God. In his treatise, *On the Councils and the Church*, 1539, Luther makes the point that what is usually called "church" is more properly designed "God's people," or "Christian holy people," those whom God has sanctified by His Holy Spirit, providing forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ, and renewal of life.⁴ This people of God, says Luther, can be clearly recognized⁵ — by their use of word and sacraments, by absolution, by the office of the public ministry, and by their public worship.

... the holy Christian people are externally recognized by prayer, public praise, and thanksgiving to God. Where you see and hear the Lord's Prayer prayed and taught; or psalms or other spiritual songs sung, in accordance with the word of God and the true faith; also the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the catechism used in public, you may rest assured that a holy Christian people of God are present.⁶

The public service of worship, instead of being a "vending machine" for pragmatic consumers (you put in 55 minutes, and you get the good feeling), is an event in which God shows a glimpse of the hidden, saving work which He has been accomplishing through His Word. To participate in the public service of worship is to affirm this gracious, ongoing work of God in a particular place. Such an approach to worship is decidedly God-centered, yet it does not degrade or obliterate the worshipers, for they are, according to Luther, God's special *community* (Gemeine). In the Large Catechism discussion of the Third Article he explains,

I believe that there is on earth a little holy flock or community of pure saints under one head, Christ. It is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind, and understanding. It possesses a variety of gifts, yet is united without sect or schism. Of this community I also am a part and member, a participant and co-partner in all the blessings it possesses.⁹

Sometimes members of a local congregation do not fully appreciate that privilege and partnership. What is going on, for instance, when a member frequently leaves the Sunday service or worship before the Communion? A number of factors might be involved; we need to avoid quick judging of motives. In a Bible class discussion of this issue several weeks ago, someone suggested, "Maybe it's just a personal habit. The kind of person who likes to leave all meetings early, even football games where he has paid a lot of money for the stadium seat." Well, maybe. But unless there are special physical/psychological factors causing a person habitually to leave early, we need to be concerned

about what is lacking in this Christian. In the light of Luther's teachings, based on major themes of the New Testament Scriptures, we have concern not only about his or her perception of the Lord's Supper but also about the understanding of Baptism as incorporation into the community of believers. Perhaps the rather visible problem of leaving Communion Services early raises the large issue of an individualistic approach to all services of worship. Luther has a very down to earth view of how one participates in the community, and his comments in connection with Lord's Supper in I Cor. 10:17 are helpful:

So it is true that we Christians are the spiritual body of Christ and collectively one loaf, one drink, one spirit. All this is achieved by Christ, who through his own body makes us all to be one spiritual body; so that all of us partake equally of his body, and are therefore equal and united with one another. Likewise, the fact that we consume one bread and drink makes us to be one bread and drink . . . For the many grains that are ground together become a single loaf; each grain loses its own form and becomes the flour of another. Likewise, many grapes become one wine; each grape too loses its own form, and becomes the juice of the others. Likewise Christ has become all things to us; and we, if we are Christians, have become all things among ourselves, each to the other.¹⁰

One of the encouraging signs of life in Lutheran congregations during the last decade has been increased participation in Bible study and prayer groups. The net effect of these small groups seems to be positive and edifying. What needs to be watched, however (Satan has had experience in working evil results out of good things), is that the face-to-face relationships of the more intimate groups do not supplant the primary group, the congregation at worship. Unconsciously perhaps, the smaller groups tend to filter out the full diversity of the membership, resulting in a more comfortable gathering of "my kind of people." Luther's comments on the community of saints remind us that the whole congregation at worship, especially in its use of Baptism and Lord's Supper, is the clearest model of what it means to be the people of God. When the small groups are functioning effectively, they point the members toward the public worship of the congregation and equip them to participate in it with full insight.

What is it, then, that causes good worship to happen, moving people to respond? What moves worshipers on Sunday at 8:00 a.m. Matins? Or the members of the Ladies Guild in their opening devotion on Tuesday afternoon? Or teen-agers on a weekend retreat, closing the day with prayer? Many

factors are involved — previous experience, physical setting, skill of the leader. For Luther, there is at work in and through all of these factors a central, energizing power, the dynamic for vital worship.

II. God works true worship through the Gospel, proclaimed in Word and Sacraments.

Over against a tradition which had burdened consciences, and had frequently failed to deliver the full, free gift of God's love in Christ, Luther centers worship in the Gospel. This is Luther's unwearied refrain as he makes exegetical comments on the Psalms and other portions of the Scriptures. Commenting on Ps. 118:19 ("Open to me the gates of righteousness . . ."), Luther sees the prayer of the psalmist fulfilled in the Christian community:

This verse of the psalm is a heartfelt prayer for the Gospel and the kingdom of Christ . . . Accordingly, the gates of righteousness are nothing else than the parish or bishopric where the ministry of the church — preaching, praising God, thanksgiving, singing, baptizing, distributing and receiving the Sacrament, admonishing, comforting, praying, and whatever else pertains to salvation — is publicly exercised.¹¹

In his Large Catechism discussion of the Third Article, Luther devotes several paragraphs to the Gospel-centered function of the church. He stresses the continuing need for forgiveness, due to our sinful flesh:

Therefore everything in the Christian church is so ordered that we may daily obtain full forgiveness of sins through the Word and through signs (sacraments) appointed to revive our consciences as long as we live.¹²

The statement, "Therefore everything is so ordered . . ." is both a declaration of fact concerning God's design for the church as well as a challenging agenda for those who lead and teach God's people. It is a principle worth pondering in connection with the whole range of parish activities, but in particular, how does it apply to corporate worship? How can you see to it that a classroom devotion with fourth graders, or a midweek Advent service of the congregation actually delivers the Gospel of God's redeeming love toward us through the crucified and risen Christ?

Luther's comments on Ps. 51:19 ("Then wilt Thou accept the sacrifice of righteousness, offerings and burnt offerings.") include some helpful insights concerning the Gospel in worship. There are two kinds of sacrifice, says Luther, which we bring to God:

The first is what he (the psalmist) calls "a contrite heart," that is, when we feel a humbled

heart which battles with thoughts of God's wrath and judgment. Here be careful not to add despair, but trust and believe in hope against hope (Rom. 4:18). Christ is the physician of the contrite, who wants to lift up the fallen and "not to quench the dimly burning wick" (Is. 42:3), but to cherish it. . . . Then, when you have thus acknowledged God to be the Justifier of sinners, if you sing God even one song of thanks, you add another sacrifice, namely, a sacrifice of recompense or thanksgiving for the gift you have received. This sacrifice is not merit but a confession and testimony of the grace which your God has bestowed upon you out of sheer mercy.¹³

In Luther's view, the Christian worshiper is in touch not only with a God of love, but also with a God of wrath. To imagine anything less is for Luther an illusion. Note, however, that the contrite heart is a heart which is humbled and trusting in Christ. The pastoral insight here is that the message concerning God's wrath, while quite distinct from the Gospel, is not to be detached from it. Such detachment can occur, for instance, in a portion of preaching which pretends that for the time being the hearers have no saving relationship with God; or it can occur in a responsive prayer worked out by the worship leader, consisting of a detailed confession of faults without reference to the basis and context for praying, God's mercy in Christ.

The second sacrifice is a response to the gracious action of God. Luther emphasizes that our thanksgiving is similar to the Old Testament offering of animals in this respect, that it praises God's mercy by means of an overt, concrete action.¹⁴ A cue for worship leaders: Take the time to search carefully for hymns which declare what God has done for us in Christ Jesus, hymns with tunes through which your worshipers, with their level of experience, can respond.

Luther's handling of the text from Psalm 41 suggests another way to improve the Gospel content of worship — rededicating ourselves to a Christocentric application of Scripture. Commenting on Jn. 16:23-24 (" . . . if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name. . . ."), Luther lays down the principle that

Anything that is to qualify as true prayer and worship must be stamped with the simple words, "in my name" . . . Everything becomes new in this Christ, even the prayers of the dear patriarchs, because they called upon this very same Christ, who has now come and has fulfilled what they believed and looked for. Now Scripture and the Psalms ring just as new on our lips, if we believe in Christ, as they did when David first sang them.¹⁵

While it is true that Luther sometimes may be straining to find Christ "under every bush," or may allegorize Him into the text, his connecting of Old Covenant and New Covenant themes is a helpful reminder to use all of Scripture, applying all of it in relation to Christ.

The sacraments are another source of applied Gospel in services of worship. In Luther's view, this takes place not only in the act of administering Baptism and the Lord's Supper, where they are indeed effective vehicles of the Word,¹⁶ but also in preaching which interprets the sacraments and applies their benefits to the hearers. Luther preached frequently on Biblical texts dealing with Baptism, and his approach to this aspect of edification is instructive. Martin Ferrel has examined the Baptism sermons of Luther,¹⁷ and summarizes their contents as follows:

1. Baptism is not an isolated sacramental rite; it is a sign which effectively bestows what it is signifying.
2. The baptized believer participates in the eschatological tension of a victory already won and a battle still being fought.
3. While maintaining a solid Trinitarian foundation for Baptism, Luther's presentation of this sacrament is primarily Christological. The New Life is not abstract, but involves the believer here and now, providing release from the enslaving power of sin.
4. Preaching about Baptism is proclaiming Justification of the sinner, and the baptized person needs to learn to understand the gift of Baptism, grasping it again and again in relation to the decisions of life.¹⁸

To learn first-hand how Luther preached the sacraments, leaders and lay people can easily turn to the Large Catechism discussions of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, since these documents were presented originally as sermons.¹⁹ They are excellent resources for Gospel proclamation today.

What is vital worship? The samples of Luther's thought presented above indicate that it is worship empowered by the multi-channeled Gospel, reminiscent of "the river whose streams make glad the city of God." Ps. 46:4. Through Christ God's people have learned to sing.

III. The leading theme of worship is doxology, the song of praise.

Would you agree or disagree with the following statement? The quality of a congregation's worship is directly proportional to the quality of its singing.

That statement makes a better discussion starter than a True/False item. It is difficult to evaluate, partly because we wonder what is meant by quality, and partly because it raises the issue of how music is

related to worship. We live within American culture where music is mostly piped in to people while they are relaxing or driving or doing homework or jogging. Generally speaking, we are not accustomed to *making* music. One result is that music in connection with worship appears to be an optional, extra ingredient brought in merely to beautify it or to provide the right mood ("music to worship by").

The role of music in Germany in the late Fifteenth Century was different. In his youth Luther experienced music as a significant part of everyday living. It was not a mere decoration tacked on to church festivals, but was an active ingredient of family life, school, and recreation.²⁰ In addition to this practical participation in music, Luther received thorough musical training in the schools of his youth and at the University of Erfurt. He had the ability, for example, to compose a four-part motet.²¹ Luther's approach to music was strongly participatory, both in its broader, daily use in praise to the Creator and in its more specific, liturgical functions. Luther valued music (vocal spiritual music especially) as a means of driving away Satan and preparing the worshiper to grasp God's Word.²² True music, says Luther, praises God, Christ, and the Gospel. It is the sound of a person actually *making music*, a worshiper "whose song arises out of the fullness of the rejoicing heart."²³ The song of praise, as Luther understands it, brings together words and music in an uncanny blend, a combination which is greater than the sum of its parts, because the music itself is an expression of praise. That insight directed Luther's practical work in hymnody and liturgy for the people of his time. It is an insight, too, which helps us to deal with the quality question in worship today. Whatever else is said and done concerning worship forms, the essential function of words and music must remain: opportunities for worshipers to "make music," expressing their praise to God and with this song edifying one another.

In order to facilitate better praise and edification, Luther undertook major efforts in hymnody and in orders of worship. He took the lead within the Reformation movement in composing hymns, revising and adapting hymns, and encouraging others to write hymns.²⁴ His own output was remarkable. In less than a year's time he prepared twenty-four chorales for the hymnal published in 1524 by his friend and musical adviser, Johann Walter.²⁵ The settings in Walter's *Spiritual Hymn Booklet* (thirty-eight chorales in all) were for choirs, who were to teach these hymns to the congregations.²⁶ In his *Formulae Missae* revisions of the liturgy, Luther urged that many more hymns be composed in German for use by the congregation at various points in the Mass.²⁷ The style of Luther's hymns reflects their corporate function. They were

designed, as Leupold observes, "not to create a mood but to convey a message," presenting their subject vividly but without ornate poetry. They were made to be sung by an entire congregation.²⁸ These lines, for instance, from the Easter hymn, "Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands," fairly cry out for a full assembly of voices:

Here the true Paschal Lamb we see,
Whom God so freely gave us,
He died on the accursed tree —
So strong His love — to save us.
See, his blood now marks our door;
Faith points to it; death passes o'er,
And Satan cannot harm us. Alleluia!

So let us keep the festival
To which the Lord invites us;
Christ is himself the joy of all,
The sun that warms and lights us.
Now his grace to us imparts
Eternal sunshine to our hearts;
The night of sin is ended. Alleluia!²⁹

Fortunate are the congregations who have discovered the life and power of hymns from the pen of Martin Luther. The emphasis on congregational singing, however, does not imply a disparaging of church choirs and organists and instrumentalists.³⁰ Rather, one of the strong patterns emerging from the early years of the Reformation is that those who are committed to vital corporate worship give it high priority in energy, trained personnel, and resources. Teaching people to worship was an ongoing task, beyond the introducing of new hymns and liturgies.³¹ Skilled musicians such as Johann Walter and Conrad Rupsch served as Luther's consultants and co-workers,³² and Lutheran congregations used a variety of musical instruments in their services of worship.³³ The lesson is clear: worship that is an effective expression of praise requires skilled people to teach and lead the worshipers. We need, for example, organists and choir directors who combine musical skill with an understanding of the principles of Christian worship, because music functions as a part of worship and is not just pinned to it like a lace doily.

Capable leaders help Christians to maintain worship which truly is doxology, praising God, rather than slipping back into various self-centered patterns. Well known, for instance, is Luther's removal of portions of the Mass because they led people to trust in their acts of worship as a means of gaining favor with God.³⁴ Not as well known are the following, general comments he made concerning . . . those who indeed sing with a cheerful and devout heart but are still enjoying it more in a carnal way, as for example, taking pleasure in the voice, the sound, the staging, and the

harmony. They act as boys usually do, not concerned about the meaning or the fruit of the spirit that is to be raised up to God.³⁵

There are so many ways by which we can turn worship back in upon ourselves: the officiant whose extemporaneous, personal comments take over a larger and larger portion of the service, in the style of a genial toastmaster; the organist more interested in impressing the congregation than leading it in worship; soloists and choirs concerned about the amount of excitement they are generating by their "performance."³⁶ At the same time, meaningful worship normally includes visual stimuli and ritual actions. How did Luther feel about those? Over against a tradition which sometimes had placed a distorted emphasis on ceremonies Luther says, "We have the highest worship in that we do not make it highly ceremonial but use ceremonies only in the service of Christ."³⁷ The issue is not the ritual actions in themselves,³⁸ but whether the ceremonies are meaningful in proclaiming Christ. Luther once remarked that the Israelites remembered the Passover with psalms and instruments and singing, "with all manner of pomp and splendor," while Christians tend to approach the Lord's Supper, which embodies the fulfillment of God's redeeming work, with sluggish, cold indifference.³⁹ So Luther urges us to celebrate the Lord's Supper: "We are to publish, praise, preach, and confess the indescribable wonders God has done for us in Christ."⁴⁰

How does this kind of worship work out with an inner city congregation in Rochester, New York, or among Native Americans in Neah Bay, Washington? The implementing of praise may vary from place to place, whenever God's people are gathered. Yet it is the same song, led by God the Spirit, and Luther helps us to sing it.

Footnotes

¹Martin E. Marty, *The Public Church. Mainline — Evangelical — Catholic* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981), p. 46.

²*Ibid.*, p. 47.

³*Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁴*Luther's Works* (55 vols.; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, and Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 41, 143-46. Further references to *Luther's Works* in this essay will use the abbreviation, LW.

⁵LW, 41, 148-54.

⁶LW, 41, 164.

⁷The Large Catechism II, 42, in *The Book of Concord*, ed. by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 416. Further references to the *Book of Concord* will use the abbreviation, Tappert.

⁸The Large Catechism IV, 2, Tappert, p. 436: ". . . Baptism, through which we are first received into the Christian community."

⁹The Large Catechism II, 51, 52, Tappert, p. 417.

¹⁰Luther's treatise, *The Adoration of the Sacrament*, 1523, LW, 36, 286-87. Similar comments are expressed in a sermon first published in 1528, "Eine schone Predigt von Empfangung des Heiligen Sacraments," found together with a number of sermons of the Easter season in *Dr. Martin Luthers sammtliche Schriften*, ed. by Joh. G. Walch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1882), XI, 616-19.

¹¹LW, 14, 90-91.

¹²The Large Catechism II, 55, Tappert, p. 418.

¹³LW, 12, 409. It is a portion of lectures presented by Luther in 1532 (see LW, 12, vii).

¹⁴LW, 12, 409-10.

¹⁵LW, 24, 397.

¹⁶Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther's World of Thought*, trans. by Martin Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), pp. 94-100.

¹⁷Martin Farel, *Gepredigte Taufe. Eine Homiletische Untersuchung zur Taufpredigt bei Luther* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1969), particularly pp. 192-249.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 217.

¹⁹Tappert, p. 357. Baptism and Lord's Supper are presented on pp. 436-57.

²⁰Friedrich Blume and Ludwig Finscher, "Das Zeitalter der Reformation," in Friedrich Blume, et al., *Geschichte der Evangelischen Kirchenmusik*, rev. 2d ed. (Kassel: Barenreiter-Verlag, 1965), p. 5.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 6. The motet, "I Shall Not Die, but Live," is included in LW, 63, 337-41.

²²Blume and Finscher, *Geschichte der Evangelischen Kirchenmusik*, p. 9.

²³*Ibid.*, quoting Weimarer Luther-Ausgabe III, 253: "cantus ex abundantia gaudentis cordis oritur."

²⁴Blume and Finscher, p. 9.

²⁵Ulrich S. Leupold, in his introduction to Luther's hymns, LW, 53, 193.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*, 36.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 197.

²⁹*Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), Hymn 124, stanzas 3 and 4.

³⁰See *ISSUES in Christian Education* 16:3 (Summer, 1982) for a number of stimulating articles and editorials concerning Music in the Church.

³¹Luther's extended comments on liturgical matters in connection with Psalm 111, published in 1530, reflect the concern for equipping the people: "Therefore I have undertaken to interpret this psalm for the sake of those who do not know it very well, in order that we might intelligently sing this hymn at Mass. . . " LW, 13, 356.

³²For the musical setting of the German Mass, LW, 53, 55.

³³Blume and Finscher, *Geschichte der Evangelischen Kirchenmusik*, pp. 63-68.

³⁴Especially the offertory and canon. See his *Formulae Missae* discussion of the problem, LW, 53, 21-22, and 24.

³⁵Handwritten comments on the back of the title page of his printed Psalm lectures, 1513, LW, 10, 3.

³⁶Carl Schalk has called attention to some trends which need to be resisted, such as the emphasis on big, elaborate productions, and church music as entertainment, listened to passively. "Thoughts on Smashing Idols: Church Music in the '80s," *Christian Century* 98 (September 30, 1981): 960-63.

³⁷Comments on Is. 42:11, LW, 17, 73.

³⁸In matters of ceremonial detail, Luther stressed that there is freedom, but freedom which is tempered with love. See his sermons at Wittenberg, 1522, LW, 51, 69-100.

³⁹Comments on Ps. 111:7 (published 1530), LW, 13, 372.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*



Daniel Hoyer, "Martin Luther." Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Of the making of books on SAINT MARTIN

Of the writing of books on Martin Luther there seems to be no end, and of course, the celebration of the five hundredth anniversary of Luther's birth has not slowed the flow of ink on the great reformer. There is too much for a busy synodical college professor to keep up with in the field of Reformation studies these days; the following essay is no more than a bit of bookish gossip about what has attracted my eye in recent months, seasoned with some comments on some old favorites on my shelves.

Concordia Publishing House has welcomed the Luther Year with several new publications which in differing ways acquaint the reader with Luther's thought. Hilton C. Oswald, retired editor of *Luther's Works*, and George S. Robert of Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, have gathered together fourteen excerpts from Luther's exegetical writings, sermons and lectures, in *Luther as Interpreter of Scripture*. The volume provides a chronological and a topical overview of Luther as student of the Bible and is a useful tool for personal study or for Bible classes. With David Lumpp I have edited essays from eight pastors, who have provided glimpses of Luther's thought on topics ranging from righteousness through Baptism and the Lord's Supper to Christian living. Written in the pastor's study, on the basis of Luther's writings,

these essays present *Martin Luther, Companion to the Contemporary Christian*.

Five years ago Concordia published the biographical study, *The Trial of Luther*, by French Roman Catholic scholar, Daniel Olivier. Last year it issued *Luther's Faith, The Cause of the Gospel in the Church*, in which Father Olivier surveys Luther's Evangelical Breakthrough from a doctrinal standpoint and finally speaks to his own church from his stance as a Luther scholar. The volume illustrates contemporary Roman Catholic Luther scholarship at its best.

There are relatively few North American scholars practicing the trade of Luther study at this time. In the field of biography nothing has appeared to replace Ronald H. Bainton's *Here I Stand, A Life of Martin Luther* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1950) for sheer readability; it remains the best introduction to Luther's life available. Nor is there a substitute for Ernest G. Schwiebert's *Luther and his times* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950) as a catalog of late 19th and early 20th century scholarship on Luther's life. But a new twist to Luther biography has been offered recently by Harry G. Haile of the University of Illinois. Neither a historian nor a theologian, but a scholar in the field of German literature, he has published *Luther, An Experiment in Biography* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1980),

an anecdotal and thematic analysis of Luther's later years. This delightful telling of the tale of Luther's days acquaints the reader with the flavor of the reformer's struggles and concerns.

Just off the press this past winter is another study of the older Luther, among the very best North American studies to appear in the field of Reformation studies, *Luther's Last Battles, Politics and Polemics, 1531-46* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983). Author Mark U. Edwards, Jr., of Purdue University had already produced *Luther and the False Brethren* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), which I found extremely useful in two ways. The book discusses Luther's conflicts with "radicals" of all kinds from sacramentarians and Anabaptists to peasant revolutionaries and ecclesiastical antinomians, in a clear way which assists understanding how Luther dealt with problems which remain acute for contemporary Christendom. Edwards here also demonstrated that Luther understood his own role in human history as that of a prophet of the Lord, consciously comparing himself to Old Testament prophets and to Saint Paul, and from this conception of his assignment from God he boldly asserted his understanding of the Gospel.

Luther's Last Battles contains the same sensitive analysis of Luther's mind and what went into his decision making during the last years of his life. Edward announces his "conviction that much modern scholarship on Luther effectively diminishes both his humanity and the context in which he wrote." The book concludes with the judgment that the older Luther, fully as worthy of study as the young reformer, "remained involved and productive to his death. . . . He was vulgar and abusive when he wishes to be, moderate and calmly persuasive when it suited his purposes. And all the treatises of his old age, even the most crude and abusive, contained some exposition of the Protestant faith. Luther could never just attack. He always had to profess and confess as well."

In pursuit of his profile of the aging reformer Edwards examines Luther's polemical writings by focusing both on the personal factors, his anger and his illnesses, and on the pressures which events and enemies exerted upon the reformer. For instance, in his carefully tuned analysis of Luther's shifting attitudes toward the right of German princes to resist the emperor with force of arms, Edwards observes the contradiction between Luther's theological conviction that such resistance was wrong and his visceral feelings toward the papal forces in church and state which threatened, in both senses, to eradicate his movement and his faith. Edwards' survey of Luther's running feud with Duke Georg of Saxony and his theologians reveals the reformer's blunt and fearless criticism of

the ducal government's policies and actions and also his skill as a polemicist, who played to the home folks with fiery attacks on foes to which he knew the foes would not listen. Edwards skillfully demonstrates how Luther's apocalyptic beliefs and his attitudes toward the Jews arise out of the shifting scenes of German life which he was addressing; these chapters are relevant to our understanding of the Lutheran tradition at points of tension and dispute today. Edwards' book is a fine example of good, readable, useful scholarship.

The same can be said about a recent theological study, *Luther and the Papacy, Stages in a Reformation Conflict*, by Scott H. Hendrix of Lutheran Southern Seminary in Columbia South Carolina (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981). Hendrix analyzes seven stages in Luther's attitude toward the pope, beginning with the ambivalence of the years before 1517. The controversy surrounding indulgences and Luther's theses on the subject led him from protest and then resistance against the papacy to outright challenge of the medieval doctrine of papal authority, and finally to opposition to its tyranny and ignorance. From 1522 on Luther's view of the papacy as Antichrist did not change appreciably. The strength of Hendrix's analysis lies (1) in his careful setting of the context of Luther's view of the papacy during his deepening frustrations with the papal party's refusal to recognize abuses within the church and its commitment to eradicate Luther's gospel and (2) in his explanation that Luther's rejection of papal authority sprang largely from his pastoral sensitivity, his concern for the consciences of the faithful.

Lutheran educators will be particularly concerned with the conclusions of Gerald Strauss of Indiana University in his *Luther's House of Learning, Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978). On the basis of an extensive survey of printed and manuscript sources of various kinds, Strauss has analyzed both the theoretical side of Lutheran pedagogy in its first century and its practical impact on popular religion. Among this book's controversial conclusions is Strauss's conviction that Lutheran preachers and teachers produced chiefly resentment and opposition, boredom and apathy in their parishioners: "A century of Protestantism brought little or no change in the common religious conscience and in the ways in which ordinary men and women conducted their lives." No amount of pious protests from Lutherans will make Strauss's conclusions go away, for they marshal much documentary evidence.

However, historians began assaulting Strauss's house almost immediately with methodological reconsiderations. For instance, can you really trust pastors and church officials to give accurate reports on

parishioners' sins, or do clergy have a certain inevitable tendency, if not vested interest, in reporting impiety in their parishes. Strauss takes at face value the reports of parish visitations which record the persistence of serious sin and neglect of catechetical instruction and worship, and from these reports he concludes that people practiced the same impieties in the same measure in 1600 that they had in 1500. Others suggest taking such reports with a realistic measure of salt.

In addition to methodological challenges, one study has just appeared which challenges Strauss on the basis of documentary evidence. In a case study of the situation in the territory of the imperial city of Strassburg, James M. Kittelson of The Ohio State University has used Strauss's questions and framework, and he has found just the opposite of what Strauss found. He concludes on the basis of intensive study of this one area that "efforts at religious indoctrination in the environs of Strassburg were successful, and without reliance upon measures much more strenuous than moral suasion. People did attend services, and on time, they did attend catechism, and learn it, and they did present themselves at the Lord's Supper, and partake of it," in the latter half of the sixteenth century. "In the environs of Strassburg the Reformation did in fact arouse 'wide-spread, meaningful, and lasting response to its message.'" ("Successes and Failures in the German Reformation: The Report from Strassburg," *Archivfur Reformationsgeschichte* 73 [1983]: 153-175.) The battle over our estimate of Luther's pedagogical success is just beginning.

Other battles rage on. The attempt to date Luther's Evangelical Breakthrough is not an issue of the proportions it once was in Luther studies. I find the work of Lowell G. Green of Concordia Seminary, Saint Catharines, Ontario, *How Melancthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel* (Fallbrook, CA: Verdict, 1980) convincing and helpful in its analysis of Luther's development of his doctrine of justification and of his formulation of the proper distinction of law and gospel. Green approaches Luther in the broader context of the relationship of his understanding of the sinner's righteousness in God's sight to that of the Lutheran confessions, specifically the Formula of Concord.

The heart of Luther's faith, of course, lay in his understanding not of grace, nor of faith, nor of Scripture, nor even of justification, but in that which gives each of these its specific Lutheran definition, Jesus of Nazareth, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Ian D. Kingston Siggins' *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970) provides the reader with a refreshing overview of Luther's doctrinal and devotional

descriptions of God in the flesh. Siggins relies heavily on Luther's use of the Biblical titles of Jesus, and he reminds us that Luther focused much of his Biblical study on the Gospel of John, not just on Paul's letters. This book examines Luther's teaching on the incarnation and the atonement, and it offers teachers and preachers a wealth of illustrations and approaches for their tasks, not just in presenting Luther but also in conveying the Biblical message to their people.

Among the least understood aspects of Luther's thought in our day is the reformer's conviction that the medieval concept of what anthropologists label the sacred and the profane perverted a Biblical understanding of Christian piety. Two good remedies for this deficiency in our theology lie at hand in Gustaf Wingren's *Luther on Vocation* (1957; recently republished in the Concordia Heritage series) and George W. Forell's *Faith Active in Love, An Investigation of the Principles Underlying Luther's Social Ethics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1954). No single book has ever so greatly expanded my understanding at one time as did Wingren's when I first read it fifteen years ago. It enlightens the reader on the intricate interconnections of various aspects of Luther's theology as well as on the structure for Christian living which Luther found in the Scriptures. Forell's excellent introduction to the Christian life would prove an effective tool for a Bible study group.

I find reading about Luther both fun and profitable, but reading Luther himself can be even more exciting. I believe that he was at his best in his 1532/1535 Galatians Commentary (volumes 26 and 27 in *Luther's Works*, published by Concordia and Fortress), but among my other favorites are items in the two volumes (42 and 43) of devotional writings in this American Edition, his sermons on John's Gospels (volumes 22-24), his "On the Freedom of the Christian" (in volume 31) and "On Good Works" (in volume 44).

Melancthon admonished us that we remember the saints "so that our faith may be strengthened when we see what grace they received and how they were sustained by faith. Moreover, their good works are to be an example for us, each of us in his own calling." (Augsburg Confession XXI) This anniversary year provides good incentive for taking some time to remember Saint Martin of Wittenberg through the reading of books, not just for historical reasons but so that our faith may be strengthened and encouraged by his words and his example.

Robert Kolb

II

Route to: _____

(Continued from page 11)

dynamic that is totally unique among all disciplines. This motivation is the one power that leads to significant change in the lives of learners. Where there is an absence of gospel, one is relying on some form of law. Without a Law-Gospel lens, one simply cannot function as a teacher of the church. (2) Theology is a much needed norm in evaluating the models that guide planning and teaching in the church today. Values clarification technique can be useful to church educators when this model is critiqued on the basis of Christian theology. Educational models that focus only on the intellectual, the attitudinal, or skill domains fall short when assessed in the light of the central aim of church education, that of developing faith and life. Luther's view on the relationship between faith and the heart suggests to church educators today that they need not pay so much attention to cognitive goals such as memorizing and storing information. Rather, we can focus on faith and on ways in which faith is expressed, as in attitudes, values, commitments, and action patterns.

(3) Theology, however, does not warrant any effort that leads to a "theological imperialism" which consigns other disciplines to the trash can. Luther did not make that mistake. Instead, he drew extensively upon such disciplines as philology and history in his teaching. Unable to tap the resources of psychology, he employed the powers of observation, suggesting, for example, that there is a need for the Word of God throughout the life span. Each age, he asserted, brings unique temptations, such as sexual desires in young adulthood, ambition in middle-age, and greed in the older years.⁴⁹ Today, church teachers are able to tap education and other disciplines, such as history, developmental

psychology, and philosophy of education as powerful resources in their ministries. With theology serving as a norm, church educators can engage in dialogue with other disciplines. In pursuing this task, we have discovered a model in Luther, theologian and educator.

FOOTNOTES

¹Sara Little, "Theology and Religious Education" in *Foundation for Christian Education in an Era of Change*, Marvin Taylor, ed. (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1976), pp. 31-33.

²For additional discussions, see Norma Thompson, *Religious Education and Theology* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1982).

³Martin Luther, "To Some Pastors of the City of Lubeck, Wittenberg, January 12, 1530," Letters II, edited and translated by Gottfried Krodel, in *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 49, 263. (Subsequent references cite volume and page.)

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