

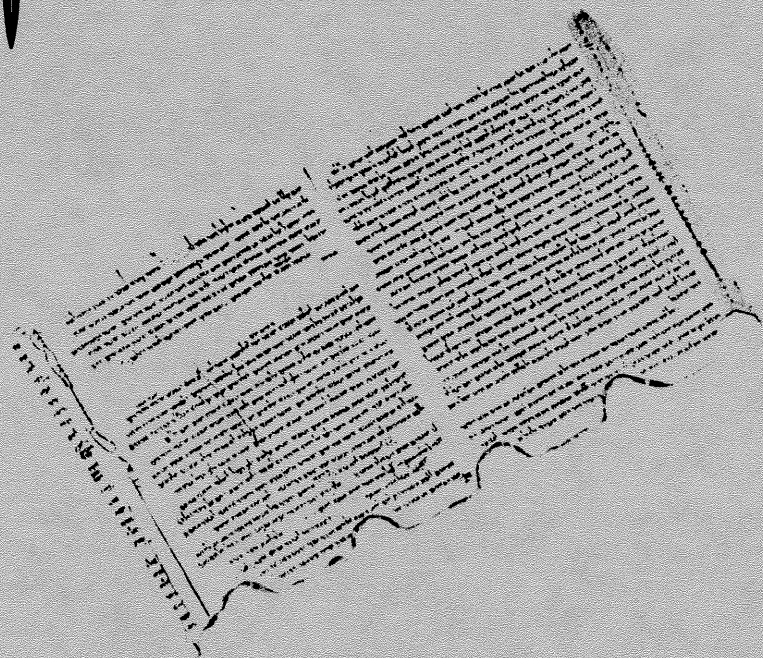
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LUTHER'S REPLY TO THE HUMANISTS:

THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL

by Rev. Craig A. Ferkenstad

"The epoch-making dialogue between Luther and Erasmus is a prelude to the problems which have plagued modern man since the time of the Reformation."¹ These words well summarize the conflict of both the 1950's and the 1900's. The conflict centers in the nature of man.

Martin Luther and Desiderius Erasmus dialogued about man's ability to apply himself unto his eternal salvation. Today the dialogue continues as it centers on man's ability to determine his own future and destiny. At issue is the topic of "secular humanism" and Luther's reply to the humanists.

Humanism is a word with a broad meaning. It carries with it a positive connotation. As a movement, humanism was the "new learning" which was developing in fourteenth century Renaissance Italy. It was a reaction to the Middle Ages. In Luther's day a humanist was primarily a scholar of the classics. We, today, would equate this with a liberal arts education including foreign language, history, literature, and fine arts. Humanism, in this sense, is a study of humanity.

By studying the Greek and Roman world the humanists hoped to restore much of what had been lost during the Middle Ages. In northern Europe (outside of Italy and France) this movement was known as "Christian humanism."

When it was transported northward across the Alps into Germany and the Netherlands, the New Learning was often employed more in the interests of ecclesiastical goals than in the interest of secular pursuits. It was viewed particularly as an instrument useful for reform of the church. Northern scholars were more interested in the study of Christian antiquity than in the study of classical Greek antiquity. A new interest developed in the study of Hebrew as well as Greek, accounting for the fact that the leaders of the Reformation were at home in both Biblical languages.²

Humanism, then, played an important role in the Reformation. "In fact, one could even say that without it there would have been no reformation as we know it."³

This was the humanism of Erasmus. He, like Luther, had lived a monastic life and was ordained a priest (although later being released from his vow). He too sought the reform of the church. He was comfortable in Greek and Latin. His interest in returning to the original texts led to his publication of the Greek New Testament which was used by Luther.

Humanism (the movement) began as something good. It was not intended to be anti-religious or anti-Christian. But it changed. Today the dialogue continues with the humanists of "secular humanism." The title "secular" is added to show that this represents not the humanities, but the negative secularizing trend of this branch of humanism. It is best defined by the official statements of the Humanist Manifesto I (1933) and the Humanist Manifesto II (1973):

While this age does owe a vast debt to the traditional religion, it is none the less obvious that any religion that can hope to be a synthesizing and dynamic force for today must be shaped for the needs of this age. (Humanist Manifesto I)

Though we consider the religious forms and ideas of our fathers no longer adequate, the quest for the good life is still the central task for mankind. Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams, that he has within himself the power for its achievement. (Humanist Manifesto I)

We believe, however, that the traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual or creed above human need and experience do a disservice to the human species. (Humanist Manifesto II)

Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful.... There is no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body. (Humanist Manifesto II)

We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction. (Humanist Manifesto II)

The intention of this historical paper is twofold: to show that Luther's confrontation with Erasmus and his humanism is parallel to the present day conflict between the Bible and "secular" humanism. The Reformer answered the humanists. We shall here look only at Erasmus, the "father" of the humanists, as the development of his thought into the twentieth century already has been traced

elsewhere (Cf. "A Survey of Two Contrasting World Views," Edward L. Bryant, ELS General Pastoral Conference, 1984). Then it is the intention also to see how Luther dealt with the spirit of humanism in a historical (as opposed to a theological) sense. With such we shall approach The Bondage of the Will, which was Luther's response to the humanist Erasmus.

Erasmus' training in humanism goes back to the early part of his life. He was about fifteen years older than Luther, born as the illegitimate son of a man who later was to become a Roman Catholic priest. At the age of nine years he was sent to school at Deventer, Netherlands. This school was directed by the Brethren of the Common Life. Here Erasmus became introduced to the fledgling humanism of his day. The school at Deventer was an intellectual center. One of the occupations of the Brethren was the copying and circulating of useful books. More books were published here than in any other place in the Low Countries, England, France, or Spain.

His passion for humanism grew as he later was to become a monk. Even though he disliked monasticism, this life granted him the opportunity to pursue his studies of the classics (especially Jerome and Lorenzo Valla). A fortunate event freed him from his life at the monastery.

Eventually Erasmus' path led him to England where he first met Thomas More, John Colet, and Hugh Latimer. Here he was shown how to reconcile Christianity and humanism by replacing the scholastic method of interpretation with a thorough study of the Scriptures. Erasmus never lost this love for humanism. He continued to further it throughout his life.

The reputation of this man grew unto the point that he was one of the best-known scholars of his day. Luther did not confront an unknown man. Philip Schaff has described him as:

...the king among scholarism in the early part of the sixteenth century.... He was the most cultivated man of his age, and the admired leader of scholastic Europe from Germany to Italy and Spain, from England to Hungary.... No man before or since acquired such undisputed sovereignty in the republic of letters.⁴

His personal friends included: Philip Malanchthon (co-worker with Luther), Justus Jonas (co-worker with Luther), Heironymus Aleandar (papal legate), Georg Spalatin (friend of Luther), Duke George of Saxony (Luther opponent), Johan Froben (famous publisher), Cuthbert Tunstall (Bishop of London), Henry VIII (king of England), Pope Leo X ([1521-1523] with whom he was a long-time friend), Pope Adrian VI ([1523-1534] who was from the Netherlands and was a school-friend of Erasmus). His contacts included Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. He received invitations from the King of France to live in Paris, from Archduke Ferdinand to come to Vienna, from the King of England to reside there, from the Regent of the Netherlands to live there. He lectured for a time at the University of Cambridge (England). He spent several years at the University of Louvain (Belgium) where he corresponded with humanistic scholars all over the world and became perhaps the leading figure in the northern Renaissance. He was offered a chair at the new University of Alcala -- which he declined. Archduke Charles ([Netherlands] later Emperor Charles V) considered making him a bishop. He received his fixed salary from his position as an advisor for Emperor Charles V of

the Holy Roman Empire. Pope Leo X formally invited him to come to Rome as his advisor in 1516.*

As an author and scholar, Erasmus was recognized wherever he went. For example, in 1506 he journeyed to Italy. At the cities of Bologna, Padua, and Venice (academic centers) he was welcomed with enthusiasm and spent time at each of these cities. On the same journey he received the Doctor of Divinity degree at Turin.

Many writings came from his pen which gave him the reputation of an outspoken scholar. He also was known as a religious reformer ever since he published the Dagger of the Christian Soldier [Enchiridion] in 1503. "Its wider popularity, however, was deferred until 1518, when penance, indulgences, and related issues became subjects of public debate."⁶ In 1524 he published his Discourse Concerning Free Choice (Freedom of the Will) which placed him and Luther on a collision course. He was very outspoken in calling for reform within the church. This led many to feel that "Erasmus laid the egg which Luther hatched."⁷ It even led the famous painter Albrecht Dürer to record in his diary in about 1521: "O God, if Luther is dead, who will so clearly teach us the gospel? O Erasmus of Rotterdam where are you staying? Ride forth, you knight of Christ. Defend the truth and win the martyr's crown."⁸ On the other side, his notoriety led Pope Adrian VI to write:

*"One cannot but wonder what the blessed feet of his Holiness might have done or left undone had Erasmus been at his side, instead of Prierias and Eck, after Martin Luther on the 31st of October, 1517, posted his Theses on the door of the Castle church at Wittenberg."⁵

Beloved Son, you are a man of great learning. You are the one to refute the heresies of Martin Luther by which innumerable souls are being taken to damnation. Rise up to the defense of the Church. How much better that the Lutherans should be reclaimed by your eloquence than by our thunders to which, as you know, we are averse.⁹

Martin Luther confronted a leading figure of his day!

While not espousing nearly all of the ideals set forth by contemporary secular humanism, this "movement" and Erasmus share a common foundation. This printed discussion will be limited to the items to which Luther responds in The Bondage of the Will, as Luther saw in Erasmus' Freedom of the Will an attack on a number of basic teachings of the Bible.

RELIGION AS A HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Contemporary humanism boldly states:

Humanism recognizes that man's religious culture, and civilization... are the product of a gradual development due to his interaction with his natural environment and with his social heritage. (Humanist Manifesto I)

Whereas today an evolution of religion is spoken of, Erasmus spoke of religion as determined on the basis of human authority and numbers. There is little difference. In either, religion is based in human development. Luther paraphrases Erasmus:

YOU ARE MUCH INFLUENCED (YOU TELL US) BY THE GREAT ARRAY OF LEARNED MEN, OBJECTS OF MANY CENTURIES' UNANIMOUS ACCLAIM, SOME

*OF THEM EXPERT BIBLICAL SCHOLARS, SOME OF THEM GREAT SAINTS, SOME MARTYRS, MANY RENOWNED FOR MIRACLES, PLUS THE THEOLOGIAN OF MORE RECENT TIMES AND AN ABUNDANCE OF SCHOOLS, COUNCILS, BISHOPS, AND POPES BESIDES. IN SHORT (YOU SAY) THERE STANDS ON YOUR SIDE SCHOLARSHIP, ABILITY, NUMBERS, DIGNITY, DISTINCTION, COURAGE, HOLINESS, MIRACLES AND WHAT NOT ELSE. (page 109)**

Erasmus would repeatedly place his confidence in the weight of majority opinion. This was the first half of Erasmus' two-fold argument against Luther: his opponent was not in accord with majority opinion, which gives credence to free-will. It was humans who ultimately shaped Erasmus' view of Christianity.

How greatly this is seen is evidenced in Erasmus' view of the Redeemer. John William Aldridge states: "It is interesting to note that as whereas today we speak of the person and work of Christ, Erasmus speaks of Christ's actions and ethics; where we speak of Christology, Erasmus speaks of the philosophy of Christ; where we speak of the humanity of Christ, Erasmus speaks of his divinity."¹⁰ In Christ, Erasmus found a personification of love and purity which was to be emulated. The philosophy of Christ was love, and in His divinity this love was manifested. Luther saw this lack of correct Christology in Erasmus' theology. He says Erasmus has given us:

...A LIST OF WHAT YOU CONSIDER TO BE SUFFICIENT FOR CHRISTIAN PIETY--A DRAFT, INDEED, WHICH A JEW OR GENTILE WHO KNEW NOTHING OF CHRIST, COULD EASILY DRAW UP; FOR YOU DO

*All references to Martin Luther's The Bondage of the Will will be noted directly in the text.

*NOT MENTION CHRIST IN A SINGLE LETTER--
AS IF YOU THINK THAT CHRISTIAN PIETY IS
POSSIBLE WITHOUT CHRIST, SO LONG AS
CHRIST....IS WHOLE-HEARTEDLY SERVED. (page 74)*

Erasmus did confess a salvation through faith in Christ alone.¹¹ Yet he believed that there were many ways to find the teachings of Christ. He could be found through piety (love, simplicity, and purity), through man's own powers of reasoning, or through the classical writings of the past. Here stands the great contrast between Luther and Erasmus. It has been summarized, in regard to the texts of the Bible, that Luther is concerned with the message while Erasmus is concerned with the style.¹² This is what prompted Luther to respond: *"YOU GROVEL ON THE GROUND AND CANNOT CONCEIVE OF ANYTHING THAT IS ABOVE MAN'S UNDERSTANDING."* (page 93) And again: *"...YOU ARE TAKING THE VIEW THAT THE TRUTH AND USEFULNESS OF SCRIPTURE SHOULD BE MEASURED AND DECIDED ACCORDING TO THE FEELINGS OF MEN."* (page 98)

In dealing with the topical issue of free-will, Luther attempts to show his opponent that he cannot argue from human reasoning. Erasmus argues that God would not damn anyone because no human can fulfill God's commands to change himself. Luther sees this argument as based in human reasoning, apart from Scriptural support. Luther's understanding of such a view is:

*AT THIS POINT THEY DEMAND THAT GOD SHOULD
ACT ACCORDING TO MAN'S IDEA OF RIGHT AND
DO WHAT SEEMS PROPER TO THEMSELVES--OR
ELSE THAT HE SHOULD CEASE TO BE GOD!...
RULES MUST BE LAID DOWN FOR HIM, AND HE
IS NOT TO DAMN ANY BUT THOSE WHO HAVE
DESERVED IT BY OUR RECKONING! (pages 232-233)*

Erasmus found the basis of his religion in human opinion. His thinking is just as contemporary "secular humanism" which says: "...we begin with humans not God, nature not diety." (Humanist Manifesto II)

NO ABSOLUTES IN THE RELIGIOUS FAITH

The other half of the dual argument used by Erasmus was that the Scriptures support the free will. However, there was a problem in Erasmus' view of the Scriptures themselves. Erasmus did voice a high opinion of the Holy Writings. He felt that the Bible was the only source of God's revelation and that it was divinely inspired.¹³

Although Erasmus argued by referring to over two hundred texts, his use of the Scripture fell short in Luther's estimation. The reason being that Erasmus found more than God's inspiration in the Bible. Erasmus found much which he considered to be unclear. In doing so he revealed a divergent view of the Scriptures.

The stated occasion for Erasmus' attack was the publication in November of 1520 of Luther's response to The Bull of Excommunication. In the thirty-sixth article Luther stated that "free will....is really an empty name" and free will is really a fiction and a label without reality, because it is in no man's power to plan any evil or good."¹⁴ Here Luther made many assertions [positive declarations] on the basis of Scripture. Erasmus did not feel that any assertions from Scripture were possible. He was so certain of this that he carefully worded the title of his own work Discourse Concerning Free Choice, lest it also appear to be an assertion. He felt that nothing more than a discussion was ever Scripturally

permissible--assertions were not possible on the basis of the Bible.

In his writing Erasmus even states: "...so great is my dislike of assertions that I prefer the view of the skeptics wherever the inviolable authority of Scripture and the decision of the Church permit--a Church to which at all times I willingly submit my own views, whether I attain what she prescribes or not." (Cf. page 66)¹⁵ Erasmus felt this way because he believed that not everything in the Bible was clear but that some things were "*RECONDITE*" (page 70). His argument then runs something like this: You assert that the Scriptures say the human will is inclined only to commit sin, but there are many places where the Bible seems to say the opposite. Therefore, this is an unclear teaching which we are not to know. To Erasmus the whole issue was a subject of speculation, while to Luther it was a matter of life and death.¹⁶

To Erasmus the inspired Scriptures were so unclear that he was ready to "willingly submit my own views [to the church], whether I attain what she prescribes or not." When a person has an unclear Scripture, then an additional source of interpretation is needed. Erasmus found this source in the Roman Catholic Church. He found Luther's contradictory assertions to be undesirable.

Erasmus, while espousing a high view of the Scriptures, reveals himself to be a skeptic of them instead. Only certain teachings are important. Other things are unclear and, as we shall see, should be suppressed. This is the spirit of "secular humanism"--which claims: "...the way to determine the existence and value of any and all realities is by means of intelligent inquiry and

by the assessment of their relations to human needs." (Humanist Manifesto I)

THE CHURCH IS AN OBSTACLE

Erasmus, however, was critical of the church, its institutions, and its leaders. He longed for a reformation from within--but would never endorse a break with the mother church. He needed its tradition to point him back to the true Christ of the first century.

Erasmus' objection in his dialogue with Luther centered about the doctrines of the true Church. His views were prophetic of "secular humanism": "We believe...that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species." (Humanist Manifesto II)

Remember, Erasmus felt that there were many unclarities in God's Revelation. He likewise felt that there were teachings of that Revelation which should not be taught in the church on earth. Luther quotes Erasmus: *"'SOME THINGS' (YOU SAY) 'ARE SUCH A KIND THAT, EVEN IF THEY WERE TRUE AND COULD BE KNOWN, IT WOULD BE IMPRUDENT TO EXPOSE THEM TO EVERYONE'S HEARING.... THERE ARE DISEASES' (YOU SAY) 'WHICH CAN BE BORNE WITH LESS EVIL THAN THEY CAN BE CURED, LIKE LEPROSY.'"* (pages 86 & 89) Erasmus felt that the matter of the will was such a teaching. For, he argues, if Luther's view of an enslaved will were to be taught, what person would try to correct his life? He says:

What a loophole the publication of this opinion would open to godlessness among innumerable people? In particular: mankind

is lazy, indolent, malicious, and in addition incorrigibly prone to every impious outrage. How many weak ones would continue in their perpetual and laborious battle against their own flesh? What wicked fellow would henceforth try to better his conduct? Who would love with all his heart a God who fires a hell with eternal pain, in order to punish there poor mankind for his own evil deeds, as if God enjoyed human distress? Most people are universally ignorant and carnal-minded. They tend towards unbelief, wickedness and blasphemy. There is no sense in pouring oil upon the fire.¹⁸

Furthermore, Luther says to Erasmus: *"YOU CALL THOSE WHO ARE CONCERNED TO ACQUIRE THE KNOWLEDGE IN QUESTION GODLESS, IDLE AND EMPTY, AND THOSE WHO CARE NOTHING FOR IT YOU CALL GODLY, PIOUS AND SOBER. WHAT DO YOU IMPLY BY THESE WORDS, BUT THAT CHRISTIANS ARE IDLE, EMPTY AND GODLESS FELLOWS? AND THAT CHRISTIANITY IS A TRIVIAL, EMPTY, STUPID AND DOWNRIGHT GODLESS THING?"* (pages 84-85)

INDIFFERENT TOLERANCE

Erasmus quires: "How many quarrels have arisen from investigations into the distinction of persons in the Holy Trinity, the manner of procession of the Holy Spirit, the virgin birth? What disturbances have been caused in the world by the fierce contentions concerning the conception of the virgin mother of God?"¹⁹ Because, Erasmus feels, we have both a limited mentality and a Revelation which, at times, may be unclear--it becomes necessary for compromise to reign in the church on earth. This becomes a recurring theme for the Dutch Reformer as it is for "secular humanism." (Cf. Humanist Manifesto II)

It is this theme which also surfaces in his writing under consideration. To Luther, as to many others, it appears that Erasmus did not wish to alienate anyone but wanted to remain both reformer and faithful Roman Catholic at the same time. (Cf. *Bondage* - page 88) The truth of Erasmus' thinking, however, was that when open conflict arose, then all hope of compromise was gone and the reformation of the church was lost.

In practice this compromise translates into a tolerance of false religious teachings and practices. Erasmus even writes: "If I were certain that a wrong decision or definition had been reached at a synod, it would be permissible but not expedient to speak the truth concerning it."²⁰ Erasmus also says: "'...THE PAPAL LAWS SHOULD STILL IN CHARITY BE BORNE WITH AND KEPT, FOR IT MAY BE THAT ETERNAL SALVATION THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD WILL YET PROVE COMPATIBLE WITH THE WORLD'S PEACE WITHOUT ANY DISTURBANCE.'" (page 93)

Luther responds to such an indifferent tolerance in The Bondage of the Will. There he says of Erasmus: "...YOU DO NOT THINK IT MATTERS A SCRAP WHAT ANYONE BELIEVES ANYWHERE, SO LONG AS THE WORLD IS AT PEACE...SO YOU INTERVENE TO STOP OUR BATTLES; YOU CALL A HALT TO BOTH SIDES, AND URGE US NOT TO FIGHT ANY MORE OVER ISSUES THAT ARE SO STUPID AND STERILE." (pages 69-70) Luther also recognizes this spirit of tolerance as he says: "YOU MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THIS CARNAL PEACE AND QUIET SEEMS TO YOU FAR MORE IMPORTANT THAN FAITH, CONSCIENCE, SALVATION, THE WORD OF GOD, THE GLORY OF CHRIST, AND GOD HIMSELF." (page 90)

FREEDOM OF CHOICE

We finally come to the stated topic of the

debate: the freedom/bondage of choice which Luther calls "*THE ESSENTIAL ISSUE.*" (page 319) Throughout his writing, Erasmus has attempted to show that the human will has some ability by which "*A MAN MAY APPLY HIMSELF TO THOSE THINGS THAT LEAD TO ETERNAL SALVATION, OR TURN AWAY FROM THE SAME.*" (page 137) Erasmus agreed with Luther that no one can be perfect. Yet Erasmus wanted to do justice to the many passages of Scripture which would at first appear to give credence to human ability. (Cf. Jeremiah 15:19, Ezekiel 18:23, etc.)

Erasmus finds the answer in this: "Although the free will has been wounded through sin, it is not extinct; though it has contracted a paralysis, making us before the reception of grace more readily inclined towards evil than good, free will has not been destroyed."²¹ Luther addresses this attack by saying: "*INDEED, LET ME TELL YOU, THIS IS THE HINGE ON WHICH OUR DISCUSSION TURNS, THE CRUCIAL ISSUE BETWEEN US: OUR AIM IS, SIMPLY TO INVESTIGATE WHAT ABILITY 'FREE-WILL' HAS, IN WHAT RESPECT IT IS THE SUBJECT OF DIVINE ACTION, AND HOW IT STANDS RELATED TO THE GRACE OF GOD.*" (page 78)

Here, most clearly of all, Erasmus is aligned with contemporary "secular humanism." Note the comparison:

Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams, that he has within himself the power for its achievement.
(Humanist Manifesto I)

But we reject those features of traditional religious morality that deny humans a full appreciation of their own potentialities and responsibilities....No deity can save us; we must save ourselves. (Humanist Manifesto II)

Truly, Erasmus would join in the chorus of the 1980's saying:

"...there's a choice we're makin,' we're saving our own lives; it's true we'll make a brighter day, just you and me."

Erasmus first learned of the existence of Martin Luther when the 95 Theses were spread throughout Germany. Luther, however, already knew of Erasmus. In 1515 and 1516, Luther had been lecturing on the letter to the Romans. He was basing his exegesis on the Latin Vulgate. In 1516 Erasmus published his Greek edition of the New Testament. Luther "eagerly used Erasmus' Greek Testament from the moment it appeared."²²

The New Testament, however, was more than just Greek words. It also included Erasmus' annotations on the passages. It was this New Testament which introduced Luther to Erasmus' theology.²³ Luther used this text even though it was not well received by the faculty of Wittenberg who even considered it to be superflous and open to suspicion.²⁴ Luther was aware that he and Erasmus were not of one mind. Already in October of 1516 he expressed his opinion as he wrote a letter to his friend Johann Lang:

I am reading our Erasmus but daily I dislike him more and more.... Human things weigh more on him than the divine. Although I pass judgment upon him reluctantly, nevertheless I do it to warn you not to read everything, or rather, not to accept it without scrutiny.²⁵

Erasmus' humanistic views were so well known that even Johann Eck sent the warning to Rome that Erasmus was more dangerous to the church than even Luther.²⁶

The above words of Luther are of great importance. Luther did not urge a "boycott" of Erasmus' works. He rather urged discretion in their use. This is further seen in their continuing relationship. Luther, in 1520, was rejecting any implication that he "disliked or was averse" to Erasmus. He expressed the desire that he and Erasmus would "remain together."²⁷ This is four years after he had expressed misgivings about Erasmus' theology. Luther did not misunderstand the humanists' position. Even after Erasmus published the Freedom of the Will in 1524, Luther did not become vocal in his response. Luther did not like the work, but he also was "disinclined to waste time answering it."²⁸

Luther was not inclined publicly to speak against the humanist. He wrote to Johann Lang (1517): "I definitely wish to keep this opinion [above] a secret so that I do not strengthen the conspiracy of his [Erasmus'] enemies."²⁹ Luther did not seek an open conflict. In 1519 he wrote: "...my Erasmus, amiable man, if it seems acceptable to you, acknowledge also this little brother in Christ. He is certainly most devoted to you and has the greatest affection for you."³⁰ Luther still was expressing such thoughts of harmony in 1524, just before the Freedom of the Will was published. Again he wrote to Erasmus:

Although I myself am easily provoked, and have often been prodded into writing sharply, yet I have done this only against those who are obstinate and without restraint.... So I thus held back my pen whenever you have neddled me. I have even written letters to friends--which you too have read--that I would restrain myself until you attack me in public. For although you do not side with us and

condemn most of the main teachings of piety either in an ungodly or deceitful way, or take no definite stand, I still cannot charge you with obstinacy, nor do I want to.... If you absolutely cannot and dare not join our cause, then leave it alone and stay with your own things.... Above all, do not publish booklets against me, as I shall publish nothing against you.³¹

Luther wished to avoid an open confrontation with the humanist. But he did issue a warning. "In those days letters among the learned--open letters really--were a form of press release. Publishers grabbed them up unscrupulously, with no intention of asking the writer's permission. They were copied by hand or printed and quickly reached those interested in literary controversy."³² In such a way a warning fell into the hands of Erasmus in 1522. There Luther firmly warned:

Erasmus is not to be feared either in this [predestination] or in almost any other really important subject that pertains to Christian doctrine.... I shall not challenge Erasmus; if challenged myself once or twice, I shall not hurry to strike back.. But if he casts the die, he will see that Christ fears neither the gates of hell nor the powers of the air. Poor stammerer that I am, I shall parry the eloquent Erasmus with all confidence, caring nothing for his authority, reputation, or good will. I know what is in this man just as I know the plots of Satan.³³

This attitude of Luther is peculiar indeed. The man who wrote with vehemence against Zwingli, Carlstadt, the anabaptists and at the time of the peasant revolt did not choose to write against the

humanist spirit. Even after Erasmus made his open attack with the Freedom of the Will and wrote with his cover letter to King Henry VIII, "I expect to be stoned" -- Luther's response still was over one year in coming.³⁴ At that, "...he was at first disinclined to waste time answering it.... and Luther's supporters persuaded him that he really must take issue with it."³⁵ Why did he react this way? What was the difference?

The answer lies in the nature of the attack. Until the core of the Gospel was clearly attacked --Luther did not wish to become involved in a debate. He rather wished to continue with a positive movement of the Gospel. However, as Herman Preus says: "The Luther who could show himself so perfectly open to everything great and important that humanism had produced shut himself off from the humanist world at the point where he saw the gospel of the glory and grace of God impugned by it. At the crucial point neither a capitulation to humanism nor a compromise with it was possible for him."³⁶ Luther's only "official" response to humanism was penned in The Bondage of the Will which was published in 1525, over one year after Erasmus had written. Erasmus would, quite likely, not recognize himself from the work. Luther sought to show his opponent exactly where his humanism was taking him--and so he overstated Erasmus' views in the hope that he might "*GAIN A BELOVED BROTHER.*" (page 64)

Luther, further, does not develop his own thoughts in a systematic form. He rather strictly follows Erasmus' outline as he responds point by point. That response is available to us individually in Luther's own words. Here we shall look for the principles behind that response and view it as it relates to the humanists of Luther's day and our own day. Throughout his writing,

Luther always returns to one of two recurring thoughts:

AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

Who is to contradict the authorities ("fathers") of 1300 years, Erasmus asks? Luther, however, sees to the heart of such a query. It is not a matter of the "fathers," but of the Scriptures. Our religious faith and life does not begin with the "humanism" of man but in the revelation of God in His inspired Scriptures. Erasmus must return to the correct, and only infallible source. That Scripture must then be allowed to speak for itself. Luther states:

I FOUGHT LAST YEAR, AND AM STILL FIGHTING, A PRETTY FIERCE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THOSE FANATICS WHO SUBJECT THE SCRIPTURES TO THE INTERPRETATION OF THEIR OWN SPIRIT. ON THE SAME ACCOUNT I HAVE THUS FAR HOUNDED THE POPE, IN WHOSE KINGDOM NOTHING IS MORE COMMONLY SAID OR MORE WISELY ACCEPTED THAN THIS DICTUM: 'THE SCRIPTURES ARE OBSCURE AND EQUIVOCAL: WE MUST SEEK THE INTERPRETING SPIRIT FROM THE APOSTOLIC SEE OF ROME!' NO MORE DISASTROUS WORDS COULD BE SPOKEN, FOR BY THIS MEANS UNGODLY MEN HAVE EXALTED THEMSELVES ABOVE THE SCRIPTURES. (page 124)

As for the authority of the "fathers," Luther reminds that they too were sinners and as such *"IT IS NO WONDER THAT IN SO MANY AGES MEN OF SUPERIOR ABILITY SHOULD BE BLIND CONCERNING THE THINGS OF GOD."* (page 132)

In these Scriptures it is God who has chosen what to reveal about Himself. No person can be the judge of what is appropriate for teaching and doctrine. Not even the church on earth can

determine that which has not been settled by the Holy Scripture (Cf. Bondage, page 69). No person has the right to tamper with the Sacred Text. Luther writes: "...WHEN WE SHOW OURSELVES DISPOSED TO TRIFLE EVEN A LITTLE AND CEASE TO HOLD THE SACRED SCRIPTURES IN SUFFICIENT REFERENCE, WE ARE SOON INVOLVED IN IMPIETIES AND OVERWHELMED WITH BLASPHEMIES." (page 85) Again, he says: "...IT IS NOT LEFT TO OUR DISCRETION...TO FASHION AND REFASHION THE WORDS OF GOD AS WE PLEASE: ELSE NOTHING IS LEFT IN THE ENTIRE SCRIPTURE THAT WILL NOT REVERT TO THE PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION..... 'ANYTHING MAY COME OUT OF ANYTHING!'" (page 194) Repeatedly Luther affirms that the Scriptures are the only authority for the Christian's life. He says "I STILL WANT, THEREFORE, FOR SOME PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE TO SHOW ME THAT YOUR EXPLANATION IS RIGHT. I GIVE NO CREDENCE TO THOSE WHO DEVISE IT OUT OF THEIR OWN HEAD." (page 235)

Furthermore, there is no uncertainty or unclarity in these Scriptures that would relegate them to any position other than that of supreme authority. The only point of unclarity is our own heads. (Cf. Bondage, page 192), and in our own human blindness. (Cf. Bondage, page 72) Luther says "...SCRIPTURE EVERYWHERE PROCLAIMS CHRIST." (page 312) In demonstrating the clarity of the Bible, Luther states his two hermeneutical rules: 1) all Scripture points to Christ ("*TAKE CHRIST FROM THE SCRIPTURES--AND WHAT MORE WILL YOU FIND IN THEM.*" [page 71]) and 2) Scripture interprets Scripture [itself] ("*IF WORDS ARE OBSCURE IN ONE PLACE, THEY ARE CLEAR IN ANOTHER.*" ([page 71])

Assertions then not only can be made, but must be made from God's Word. No one, Luther says, can be allowed "...TO LABOUR UNDER A FALSE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION" (page 95) Where God has spoken

we too must speak. (Cf. Bondage, page 95) The source can be nothing else than the Word of God.

LAW AND GOSPEL

As Erasmus spoke of "freedom of choice," he also marshaled many pieces of Scriptural evidence. Erasmus would take passages such as Jeremiah 15:19 ("If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve Me...") as support that a person has the freedom and the ability to fulfill the Lord's command. Luther saw in this a confusion of the Law and the Gospel. He wrote: "*[YOU ARE] AGAIN MAKING NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN WORDS OF LAW AND WORDS OF PROMISE.*" (page 167) In response to this confusion he said: "*PAUL HERE [ROMANS 3:9ff] GIVES THE ANSWER: 'BY THE LAW IS THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN.' HIS ANSWER TO THE QUESTION IS FAR DIFFERENT FROM THE IDEAS OF MAN, OR OF 'FREE-WILL.' HE DOES NOT SAY THAT 'FREE-WILL' IS PROVED BY THE LAW, NOR THAT IT CO-OPERATES UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS; FOR BY THE LAW COMES NOT RIGHTEOUSNESS, BUT KNOWLEDGE OF SIN.*" (page 287)

Luther provides a response which speaks of the law and the gospel in order to refute the humanistic power of man. He says that we are powerless to do anything to merit salvation by ourselves. Even our best works are nothing. (Cf. Bondage, pages 219 and 286) Luther explains it thus:

NOW, SATAN AND MAN, BEING FALLEN AND ABANDONED BY GOD, CANNOT WILL GOOD (THAT IS, THINGS THAT PLEASE GOD, OR THAT GOD WILLS), BUT ARE EVER TURNED IN THE DIRECTION OF THEIR OWN DESIRES, SO THAT THEY CANNOT BUT SEEK THEIR OWN.... THE UNGODLY MAN CANNOT BUT ERR AND SIN ALWAYS, BECAUSE

UNDER THE IMPULSE OF DIVINE POWER HE IS NOT ALLOWED TO BE IDLE, BUT WILLS, DESIRES, AND ACTS ACCORDING TO HIS NATURE.... AS A RESULT HE SINS AND ERRS INCESSANTLY AND INEVITABLY UNTIL HE IS SET RIGHT BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.... HE CAN NO MORE STOP HIS SELF-SEEKING THAN HE CAN STOP EXISTING. (pages 204-205)

This is the situation of all people, apart from God the Holy Spirit. It is the bondage of the will which we do not have the ability to change. (Cf. Bondage, page 103)

Central to such a discussion of the Law and Gospel is the Biblical doctrine of original sin. "This concept was the first point criticized by the Enlightenment, and its rejection is one of the last points defended by contemporary humanism."³⁷ Luther does not miss the point.

IF THE MOST EXCELLENT THING IN MAN IS NOT UNGODLY, NOR RUINED AND DAMNED, BUT ONLY 'THE FLESH' (THAT IS, THE GROSSER LOWER AFFECTIONS), WHAT SORT OF REDEEMER, I ASK, SHALL WE MAKE CHRIST TO BE? SHALL WE MAKE THE RANSOM PRICE OF HIS BLOOD TO BE OF SO LITTLE WORTH THAT IT REDEEMED ONLY THE LEAST VALUABLE PART OF MAN, MAN'S MOST EXCELLENT PART BEING SELF-SUFFICIENT, AND NOT NEEDING CHRIST? SO FROM NOW ON I MUST PREACH THAT CHRIST IS THE REDEEMER, NOT OF THE WHOLE MAN, BUT ONLY OF HIS LEAST VALUABLE PART (THAT IS, HIS FLESH, AND THAT MAN IS HIS OWN REDEEMER IN RESPECT OF HIS BETTER PART!" (page 253)

Luther presented the Law, but he did not fail also to present the precious Gospel. He sought to show that our salvation is completely the work

of God in Christ. "THERE IS NOTHING ELSE THAT LEADS TO THE GRACE OF GOD, OR ETERNAL SALVATION, BUT THE WORD AND WORK OF GOD." (page 139) Luther explains how:

GOD HAS TAKEN MY SALVATION OUT OF THE CONTROL OF MY OWN WILL, AND PUT IT UNDER THE CONTROL OF HIS, AND PROMISED TO SAVE ME, NOT ACCORDING TO MY WORKING OR RUNNING, BUT ACCORDING TO HIS OWN GRACE AND MERCY, I HAVE THE COMFORTABLE CERTAINTY THAT HE IS FAITHFUL AND WILL NOT LIE TO ME, AND THAT HE IS ALSO SO GREAT AND POWERFUL, SO THAT NO DEVILS OR OPPOSITION CAN BREAK HIM OR PLUCK ME FROM HIM. (page 314)

Anything less than the redeeming Gospel sets aside the Savior Jesus Christ.

....IN SETTING UP 'FREE-WILL' YOU SET ASIDE CHRIST, AND MAKE HAVOC OF THE ENTIRE SCRIPTURES. THOUGH WITH YOUR LIPS YOU PRETEND TO CONFESS CHRIST, YOU REALLY DENY HIM IN YOUR HEART. FOR IF THE POWER OF 'FREE-WILL' IS NOT WHOLLY AND DAMNABLY ASTRAY, BUT SEES AND WILLS WHAT IS GOOD AND UPRIGHT AND PERTAINS TO SALVATION, THEN IT IS IN SOUND HEALTH. IT DOES NOT NEED CHRIST THE PHYSICIAN, NOR DID CHRIST REDEEM THAT PART OF MAN: FOR WHAT NEED IS THERE OF LIGHT AND LIFE, WHERE LIGHT AND LIFE EXIST ALREADY? (page 308)

The response made to the humanist was one of the authority of the Scriptures together with the Law and the Gospel. Luther made such a response because "...he is at all times aware that he is dealing with a humanist who believes he can find the solution to the mystery of conversion in man and in his 'free-will.'"³⁸ Luther's response was carefully formulated to allow the Gospel of

Christ to stand forth in brilliance. Luther's reply to the humanists was simply the Gospel. Anything else, he aptly shows, either denies the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit (Cf. Bondage, page 179) or compromisingly places us under the Papal laws. (Cf. Bondage, page 89) Neither is acceptable. Only the Gospel of Christ sets consciences free and grants eternal salvation to all who believe. (Cf. Bondage, page 96) Luther's response was completely a response that sought to elevate the completed redemption of Jesus the Christ.

SO IF WE BELIEVE THAT SATAN IS THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD, EVER ENSNARING AND OPPOSING THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST WITH ALL HIS STRENGTH, AND THAT HE DOES NOT LET HIS PRISONERS GO UNLESS HE IS DRIVEN OUT BY THE POWER OF THE DIVINE SPIRIT, IT IS AGAIN APPARENT THAT THERE CAN BE NO 'FREE-WILL.'

SO, IF WE BELIEVE THAT ORIGINAL SIN HAS RUINED US TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT EVEN THE GODLY, WHO ARE LED BY THE SPIRIT, IT CAUSES ABUNDANCE OF TROUBLE BY STRIVING AGAINST GOOD, IT IS CLEAR THAT IN A MAN WHO LACKS THE SPIRIT NOTHING IS LEFT THAT CAN TURN ITSELF TO GOOD, BUT ONLY TO EVIL....

AND, FINALLY, IF WE BELIEVE THAT CHRIST REDEEMED MEN BY HIS BLOOD, WE ARE FORCED TO CONFESS THAT ALL OF MAN WAS LOST; OTHERWISE, WE MAKE CRHIST EITHER WHOLLY SUPERFLUOUS, OR ELSE THE REDEEMER OF THE LEAST VALUABLE PART OF MAN ONLY: WHICH IS BLASPHEMY, AND SACRILEGE. (pages 317-318)

With such Luther ended The Bondage of the Will. He also ended his reply to the humanists. Erasmus claimed that he was deeply hurt by the tone of

Luther's reply. He himself began a second round of the debate the following year when he issued the first part of his work A Defense of the Discourse. The second part was issued in 1527. Luther, however, did not provide any official response. Luther had stated the Biblical truth, and any further discussion was useless. Yet a third exchange between these men occurred in 1533. Erasmus then again expressed his ideas about the reunification of the church. Luther chose to respond "amiably, but in no uncertain terms." In that single letter he made it clear that union must exist on the basis of Scriptural truth.³⁹

Luther's reply to the humanists was one of moderation. Luther sought no confrontation, although he knew of the humanist's teachings. He was familiar with the humanist's writings and used the humanist's material. Until there was an open, direct attack made on the central Gospel of justification, Luther's public formal reply was nonexistent. He replied and then moved onward with the Gospel. He could use the good parts of humanism, while setting aside the bad as not affecting him.

Those actions are in conformity to the written response. Luther's reply was a positive exposition of the Gospel. He did not wring his hands in despair, but neither did he allow himself to be drawn into a negative debate.

It is such a negative battle that Christians today are often urged to undertake. We are told to do such things as be involved in society against humanism, stand together in opposition to humanism, and to take individual and collective action against humanism. We are urged to do so, among other ways,

through battling against pornography in our communities, objecting to anti-Christian television programming or writing to our congressmen about legislation which we favor or oppose. A Christian is to be an active citizen and there is nothing wrong with these things. However, we must also recognize that historically the above was not the Reformation reply to humanism. The Reformer was aware of humanism and did warn people of its ills; however, the response was not a negative objection but a positive presentation of the Gospel. Here seems to be the key to Luther's reaction. He sought a positive proclamation of the Grace of Christ in the Gospel, rather than a negative attack on humanism. He sought to be "for" Christ rather than "against" humanism. We may question the appropriateness of the reply. We may question its duplication today. However, such was the historical Reformation reply to humanism. It does seem as though it was the correct reply at the time, because in 1536 "Erasmus at the end of his life felt that his lamps had been blown out by the Lutheran gust."⁴⁰

TO GOD ALONE BE THE GLORY

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ENDNOTES

- ¹Bornkamm, "Faith and Reason in the thought of Erasmus and Luther," p. 133.
- ²Gerlach, p. 1038 ³Gerlach, p. 1038
- ⁴Schaff, pp. 401-402 ⁵Bainton, p. 147
- ⁶Bornkamm, Luther in Mid-Career, p. 337
- ⁷Bainton, p. 158 ⁸Bainton, p. 167
- ⁹Bainton, p. 178 ¹⁰Aldridge, p. 38
- ¹¹Bainton, p. 188 ¹²Aldridge, p. 38
- ¹³Siirala, p. 28 ¹⁴Winter, p. 45
- ¹⁵Erasmus, p. 6 ¹⁶Preus, p. 85
- ¹⁸Erasmus, p. 11 ¹⁹Erasmus, p. 10
- ²⁰Erasmus, p. 11 ²¹Erasmus, p. 26
- ²²Luther, Career of the Reformer, p. 6
- ²³Luther, Letters I, p. 23
- ²⁴Friedenthal, p. 172
- ²⁵Luther, Letters I, p. 40
- ²⁶Preus, p. 85
- ²⁷Bornkamm, Luther in Mid-Career, p. 340
- ²⁸Watson, p. 10
- ²⁹Luther, Letters I, p. 40
- ³⁰Luther, Letters I, p. 119
- ³¹Luther, Letters II, pp. 79-80
- ³²Bornkamm, Luther in Mid-Career, p. 343
- ³³Luther, Letters II, pp. 7-8

34Schwiebert, p. 688

35Watson, p. 10

36Preus, p. 86

37Preus, p. 76

38Preus, p. 93

39Bornkamm, "Faith and Reason in the thought of Erasmus and Luther," p. 137

40Bainton, p. 227

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THE SALIGER CONTROVERSY

by

Rev. Gaylin Schmeling

I. The Lübeck Phase

One of the best known and most often misunderstood controversies concerning the Lord's Supper is that which centered around the Lutheran pastor, John Saliger. He is also known by his latinized name, Beatus. Concerning his early years and theological training little is known. His home city was most likely Lübeck in northern Germany. In the early 1560's, Saliger was called as pastor in the town of Wörden in present-day Netherlands, and in 1566 was called to a newly founded Lutheran congregation in Antwerp.

(J. Wiggers, "Der Saliger'sche Abendmahlsstreit," Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie, Vol. 18, 4, p. 614.)

Although Saliger was very intelligent, he was also characterized as being restless, stubborn, and unable to control his temper. Besides being a part of the eucharistic controversy, Saliger also became involved in the controversy concerning original sin and in the course of time sided with Flacius, whose views were rejected in the Formula. This did not in any way help his reputation.

Saliger stayed less than two years in Antwerp. Because of disagreements over the doctrine of original sin, he returned to his home city of Lübeck in 1568. Here he was called as one of the pastors of St. Mary's Church. Soon Saliger raised objections to what he declared to be the current

Lübeck practice of failing to consecrate new elements if they were needed during the distribution. The clergy of Lübeck at times mixed unconsecrated wine with the consecrated wine assuming that the consecrated would mix with the unconsecrated as the Early Church used wine mixed with water in the Sacrament. They also assumed that those hosts not set aside for use in the Supper but enclosed in a ciborium on the altar were nevertheless Christ's body by virtue of the first consecration and did not need to be consecrated if they were used. It was in this controversy that Saliger first became acquainted with his ardent supporter, Heinrich Fredeland, curate at St. Jakobi Church in Lübeck.

The debate over the second consecration led to the question as to when Christ's body and blood were present in the Supper. Saliger taught that by virtue of the Words of Institution, Christ is present the moment the consecration is said. Some, such as the historian Caspar Starck, also assume that at this point Saliger believed the presence would continue even though the reception was delayed days or months. (*J. Schöne, Um Christi Sakramentale Gegenwart, p. 11.*) He furthermore asserted that those who did not believe this were Sacramentarians. It's obvious that it didn't take long before the Lübeckers were enraged.

The pastors at Lübeck defended themselves with a confession concerning the Lord's Supper in 1569. It stated that in the Sacrament under the bread and wine, Christ's true body and blood are offered with the hand and received by the mouth of both the believing and the unbelieving. The effecting cause (*causa efficiens*) of the Sacrament was declared to be "not papish murmuring but Jesus' almighty Words of Institution." This is compared

with God's creative word in Genesis 1. The material cause (*causa materialis*) was defined as the elements and the formal cause (*causa formalis*) as the total action with the command or use that we should eat or drink it. Also, the Lübeck Confession said that the proper number of host should be counted out for the communicants and the same care should be taken with the wine. If elements were brought to the altar after the original consecration they should indeed be consecrated before being used. When elements remained after the distribution they were not considered Christ's body and blood for nothing has the character of a Sacrament outside its intended use. Concerning this they said they had the "witness of Luther, Melanchthon, Chytraeus, Chemnitz, Hesshusius, and Wigand." (*J. Schöne, Um Christi Sakramentale Gegenwart, pp. 33-34.*)

The city council of Lübeck tried a number of things to bring peace to their fair city torn by the wrath of theologians. One of these was to ask the city of Braunschweig to send their Superintendent, Martin Chemnitz, to Lübeck to settle the dispute. This Chemnitz consented to do. On the way home from Rostock where he received a doctor of theology degree, he spent eight days in Lübeck trying to bring peace. Little is known about this visit but Chemnitz had already considered some of the issues which arose here in his Examen:

But the men of Trent speak only of the eating, and because before that eating, Christ, the man, is present in the action of the Supper when the bread is blessed, divided, and received, giving to those who eat, together with the bread and wine, His body and blood, the men of Trent

attempted to construct from this that Christ, God and man, is present in the Eucharist in such a way with His body and blood, also before its use, that once the words of institution have been spoken over the bread and wine, even if the remaining action which is prescribed and commanded in the institution; namely, that it be divided, received, and eaten, does not follow for a number of days, yes, for some months or even years, Christ is nevertheless compelled meanwhile to remain in the bread and wine with His body and blood in an enduring union, and this in such a way that it can meanwhile be handled in the sacrifice of the Mass, reserved, carried about, displayed, adored, and whatever is connected with these things. These are the things which are not in harmony with the institution, yes, which militate against it. For the institution of the Supper prescribed the action thus: To take bread and wine, bless, divide, offer, receive, eat, and add this word of Christ: 'this is My body; this is My blood,' and to do all this in remembrance of Him. (*M. Chemnitz, "The Examination of the Council of Trent, Part III, p. 249.*)

Notice that Chemnitz rejected the idea that the presence continued even though the reception was delayed days or months. Also, he opposed the idea that there was a Sacrament before the use which Saliger later defended at Rostock.

The visit of Chemnitz seems to have brought no immediate result and the council later had to threaten Saliger and Fredeland with dismissal.

In order to settle the controversy the city council of Lübeck finally decided that Saliger and Fredeland should go elsewhere. Saliger had been in Lübeck for six months. It seems that neither of the parties were accused of false doctrine by Chemnitz or anyone else. (*J. Wiggers, "Der Saliger'sche Abendmahlsstreit," Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie, Vol. 18, 4, pp. 615-616.*)

II. The Rostock Phase

Salinger went next to Schwerin and there won the favor of the Mecklenberg Dukes, Johann Albrecht I and Ulrich. They directed him to the vacant pastorate of St. Nicolai in Rostock. Because many in Rostock had heard about the troubles he caused in Lübeck, the ministerium was opposed to him. He, however, was given the position after he appeared before a commission consisting of Chytraeus, Wigand, Superintendent of Wismar, Simon Pauli, Superintendent of Rostock, and two other councilmen. Here he promised that he would not revive the Lübeck controversy in his new parish.

Before being formally admitted at Rostock, Saliger had to appear before the ministerium. Here the question concerning the reliquiae was brought up. Saliger said that only the proper amount should be consecrated so that nothing remained after the distribution. When asked about mishaps with the Sacrament, such as spillage, he replied that the spilled element was not to be considered the Sacrament. It should be noticed that if Saliger previously taught that the remaining elements were the body and blood of Christ he is very careful not to say that now. He only advocated care so that amounts of the

element do not remain. (*J. Schöne, Um Christi Sakramentale Gegenwart, p. 13*)

Although Saliger had promised not to revive the eucharistic controversy when he received his position in Rostock, he was soon preaching against the Lübeck pastors from his pulpit. This caused confusion and divisions among the people of Rostock. At this point the controversy centered around the phrase "sacramentum esse ante usum," that there is a Sacrament also before the use. Saliger was advocating the presence of Christ's body and blood before the use and whoever taught otherwise was a Sacramentarian. What he most likely meant was that the presence was there before the eating. His terminology, however, was very confusing. He accused the Rostock clergy of teaching that the bread and wine in the Sacrament were not a Sacrament until they touched the tongue and the lips, that their faith made the Sacrament. This they firmly denied and challenged Saliger to prove it. But in spite of all attempts to make him see reason, Saliger was not to be silenced.

In February 1569 the situation came to a head. With the approval of Duke Ulrich, a commission of local theologians was appointed to deal with the matter. At the formal hearing on February 15, Simon Paul, Superintendent of Rostock, spoke on behalf of the Rostock clergy. He confessed, "We believe and confess with heart and mouth before God in heaven, who alone knows the heart, that the blessed bread and the blessed wine in the Supper of the Lord are His natural body and blood, which were received and partaken of here on earth with the mouth, not only by Judas and the other godless people but also by Peter and other saints of God." (*J. Wiggers, "Der Saliger'sche Abendmahlsstreit," Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie, Vol. 18,*

4, p. 527.) In the same confession, Pauli listed the grievances which were being brought against Saliger: (1) that he had revived the Lübeck controversy; (2) that he had made use of unusual terminology in referring to the Sacrament "before the use"; (3) that he had taught this doctrine not only in sermons, but had also distributed it among the people in print; (4) that he had pictured his colleagues as Neosacramentarians; (5) that he had taught that whoever believes and teaches otherwise about the Sacrament, teaches and believes falsely, and whoever receives the Sacrament with another point of view receives the Sacrament unworthily; (6) that he had called the rule "Nothing has the character of a Sacrament outside of its divinely instituted use" satanic and yet it was highly regarded by Chemnitz and Heshusius; (7) that he had brought all kinds of private matters into the pulpit; (8) that he had taken six or seven books with him into the pulpit, to prove his own teaching and to bring the other pastors into disrepute as "Sacramentarians"; (9) that he had refused to accept the admonition of the ministerium; (10) that he had ignored and refused to follow the dukes' written admonition; (11) that he had caused great confusion in the churches and in the University and had put the ministerium under suspicion. (E. F. Peters, *"Nothing Has the Character of a Sacrament outside the Use"* pp. 347-348; J. Wiggers, *"Der Saliger'sche Abendmahlsstreit," Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie*, Vol. 18, 4, pp. 627-628.)

In answer to these accusations Saliger denied that he had ever used the words "before the use" in an unclear manner. He later gave the following confession, part of which is recorded here:

I, John Saliger, believe from the heart and

confess openly before God and men that when the bread which is set aside for an actual Lord's Supper celebration, according to the number of communicants, by the command of the Lord Christ, is blessed with His commanded, divine, powerful Word of Institution, which He Himself has spoken through the minister, and is blessed for the use that it be distributed by the minister and is corporeally eaten by those who come to the Lord's Table; then such blessed bread I believe through and according to the divine blessing in the Holy Supper is the true, essential, natural, present body of our Lord Jesus Christ in the sacramental union also for the use of eating, which however should follow in order in this Supper according to the command: take and eat, this do in remembrance of me. Therefore, in taking with the blessed bread the true body of Christ corporeally, although invisibly into his hand; and whoever distributes the blessed bread with his hand, distributes with his hand to the people the holy body of the Lord under the bread so that the honorable Sacrament is received; and the communicants who so corporeally eat of the blessed bread, eat at the same time with their physical mouth, in or under the bread, the true, natural, present body of Jesus Christ our Lord, whether they are worthy or unworthy; the worthy for the forgiveness of sin and for the remembrance of Christ, but the unworthy to their judgment for they do not discern the body of the Lord. (J. Wiggers, "Der Saliger'sche Abendmahlsstreit," Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie, Vol. 18, 4, p. 630; E. F. Peters, "Nothing Has the Character of a Sacrament

outside the Use," pp. 348-349: The same confession is made concerning the blessed wine.)

Further meetings of this commission did not bring any solution to the controversy and it was finally decided to appeal to John Wigand, former superintendent in Wismar and at the time professor in Jena. Eventually Wigand replied and gave his Gutachten. His position is summarized with these eight points:

1. Christ said that the bread and wine were His body and blood before the elements touched the mouths of the Apostles.
2. St. Paul says the same thing in I Cor. 10:16 when he speaks about the cup "which we bless," and so forth.
3. According to the ordinance which Christ instituted, it is necessary that what is to be eaten and drunk be there present before this eating and drinking can be done.
4. It is of great comfort to know that what is being offered to us in the Sacrament is not mere bread and wine, but the true body and blood of Christ.
5. If it is not taught that the body and blood of Christ are there "before the reception," according to Christ's Words; that is, if the material cause of the Supper is not defended, this not only causes confusion and error among Christians but it also serves as an encouragement to the Sacramentarians, who in their books speak disparagingly about the material cause.

6. Following Luther's Small Catechism and Large Catechism, children ought to be asked before they go to the Lord's Table: "What do you want to receive and eat and drink?" They ought to answer: "The true body and blood of Christ." Therefore, according to and by the power of Christ's Words, the body and blood are there before they are received, although they should then be received immediately. With this position the "beautiful Confessions" and the books of Luther, "our dear teacher and the last Elijah of the world, agree, in opposition to the Sacramentarians.
7. The Augsburg Confession and its Apology defend the same position.
8. It is clear that the teachers of the ancient Church taught the same thing.
(E. F. Peters, "Nothing Has the Character of a Sacrament outside the Use" pp. 351-352; J. Wiggers, "Der Saliger'sche Abendmahlsstreit," Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie, Vol. 18, 4, pp. 633-635; J. Schöne, Um Christi Sakramentale Gegenwart, pp. 50-54.)

In his Gutachen, Wigand emphasizes that Christ's body and blood are present before eating but he rejects the confusing terminology that there is a Sacrament before the use. Concerning the moment of the presence he declares, "One does not dispute concerning the moment; that is, at which minute such things happen but on the basis of Christ's word, who declares, who speaks, who relates, thus it is so and not otherwise." (*J. Schöne, Um Sakramentale Gegenwart, p. 53.*)

Around the same time David Chytraeus sent a

letter concerning the conflict in Rostock. He had been teaching in Rostock but at this time was momentarily in Austria organizing the Reformation there. In his letter he rebuked Saliger for his conduct and then asked, "Since it is sufficient for the pious heart to know from the Words of Institution that the bread which is presented to me by the minister is the true body of Christ, of what use is it to dispute about the bread that lies on the paten or is left after the reception. Cum pia e menti satis sit e verbis institutionis discere, panem, qui mihi a ministro exhibetur, verum Christi corpus esse, quid opus est de pane in patella jacente aut post sumptionem reliquo disputare?" (*J. Schöne Um Christi Sakramentale Gegenwart*, p. 55.) Here Chytraeus shows that there should be no arguments about the exact beginning and end of the presence. This is not spelled out in Holy Scriptures. He is not concerned about what remains after the worship service for it is outside the use and therefore no Sacrament.

III. The Wismar Recess

The controversy was brought to a close in October 1569, when Der Abschied der Mecklenburgischen Herzöge, also known as the Wismar Recess, was issued in the name of dukes Johann Albrecht I and Ulrich of Mecklenburg. Chytraeus was the main author of the Abschied. It reads as follows:

1. The Dukes...order...all preachers and deputies in...the churches and University at Rostock not to stir up and incite unnecessary, vehement, and confused debates and arguments. Included among these is the question, "how and when and in what manner the bread in the Lord's Supper is the body of Christ. The three disputed points concern the presence

of Christ's body and blood, the consecration, and the rule that nothing is a Sacrament outside the intended use. These main points are to be taught thus:

2. In the Holy Supper where the same is observed according to the order, institution and command of Jesus Christ, it is by virtue of the institution of Christ not only simple bread and wine but also the true essential natural body of Jesus Christ which He gave into death for us and His true, essential, natural blood poured out for our sins. These are present with the blessed, visible, and unchanged bread and wine. The body is not just figurative, representative, or absent, nor is it there only in it's power, effect, and benefit, but the body and blood are truly present given to us by Christ Himself through the hand of His servant. They are received not only spiritually with faith, but also corporeally with the mouth. The body and blood are distributed to and received not only by the believers but also by the unbelievers.

3. The blessing, as some name it, or the recitation of Christ's Words of Institution by itself, where the whole action of the Supper as Christ ordained it is not observed, as when the blessed bread is not distributed, received and eaten but is locked up, sacrificed or carried about, does not make a Sacrament. Rather, the command of Christ, "do this," which includes the whole action or administration of this Sacrament (namely, that in a Christian assembly bread and wine are taken, consecrated, distributed, received, eaten and drunk and thereby the Lord's death is proclaimed), must be kept unseparated and

inviolable, as also St. Paul sets before our eyes the whole action of the breaking of bread or of distribution and reception. I Cor. 10:16.

4. To maintain this true Christian doctrine concerning the Holy Supper and to avoid and abolish many kinds of idolatrous abuses and papistic perversions of this testament, this useful rule and guide has been derived from the Words of Institution: Nothing has the character of a Sacrament outside of the use instituted by Christ, or outside of the divinely instituted action. That is: if the institution of Christ is not observed as He ordained it, there is no Sacrament. This rule should by no means be rejected but it can and should be profitably urged and maintained in the church of God. Also "use" or "action" here does not mean chiefly faith, nor the oral partaking alone, but the whole external visible action of the Supper ordained by Christ with all of the parts belonging to it, included in Christ's institution.

5. Although now in this complete inseparable action of the Holy Supper which indeed is properly named the Sacrament of the Holy Supper, Christ is truly and essentially present, and distributes and delivers His true body and blood with the bread and wine, since the true presence of Christ's body and blood is not to be denied for the reception, but in this church confessed with customary and useful statements; nevertheless the following strange statements which are not customary in our church and which are doubtful, obscure, and offensive should not be used in the schools and churches of this land. These

statements are nowhere found in God's Word or the writings of Dr. Luther but are very commonly used among the Papists to confirm their magical blessing and the permanent inclusion of Christ's body under the form of the bread before and after the reception (Niessung). The following are such statements: That there is a Sacrament also before the use, sacramentum esse ante usum; again, that in St. Paul's words, 'The bread which we break is a participation in the body of Christ,' the word participation is to be understood as the joining or unifying of the bread and body before the reception and not as referring to the eating by the communicants; again, that after the spoken blessing the bread and wine are a complete Sacrament also before the distribution (Austheilung) (which might not take place until several days or months later), and the opposite statement (which is held by no one in our church on the basis of the action) that the body and blood of Christ are not present in the Supper before the blessed bread and wine are touched with the lips or enclosed in the mouth; again, the body of Christ is not in the bread but in the eating, etc. 'For we prescribe no moment or time to God,' says Luther, 'but are satisfied thus, that we simply believe that what God says certainly happens that it happens or should occur.' (*J. Schöne, Um Christi Sakramentale Gegenwart, pp. 67-69.*)

The writers of the Abschied wanted no part in useless arguments concerning the how and the when of Christ's presence in the Sacrament. Paragraph two boldly confesses that Christ's body and blood are present in the Sacrament and received by both believers and hypocrites. Paragraph three shows

that the whole action (consecration, distribution, reception) must occur otherwise there is no Sacrament. Yet it is Christ's almighty Word alone which effects the presence. Here too the question concerning the reliquiae is put aside. What is not distributed is not a Sacrament. Paragraph four defends the "Nihil" rule which Saliger at times seemed to question.

In paragraph five certain improper statements are rejected. Notice that the "ante usum" terminology of Saliger is disavowed. The subsequent history of this decision is interesting. The "ante usum" terminology was not accepted because it was confusing. The "usus" as explained by the writers of the Formula included consecration, distribution, and reception. Then to say that the Sacrament was there before the use meant that the presence occurred before the Words of Institution were said. This, however, is not what Saliger meant. By the term "usus" he meant "the eating." He wanted to say that the body and blood were present before the eating. Now because this term was rejected in the Abschied, certain later theologians who also understood the "usus" here as "the eating" took this statement as a condemnation of the view that the body and blood were present before the reception. This was not the original intent. The Abschied is rejecting confusing terminology that could imply that there is a Sacrament before the consecration. During this period of time the term "usus" is used both in the way it would later be defined in the Formula and as only referring to the "eating."

Also, the two extremes in pinpointing time (holding Christ is present the moment the consecration is said or holding His body and blood are not present until the eating) are avoided when the

Abschied rejects the statement "that after the spoken blessing the bread and wine are a complete Sacrament also before the distribution and the opposite statement that the body and blood of Christ are not present in the Supper before the blessed bread and wine are touched with the lips or enclosed in the mouth." This position is then supported by what Luther says about moment and time in the Carlstadt letter. At the close of the Abschied it was stated that the Rostock clergy were not guilty of any false doctrine and Saliger was rebuked for his contentious spirit. Notice that paragraphs three and four of the Abschied are taken almost verbatim into the Formula. (SD VII 83-85)

Saliger was to be forgiven if he agreed that the pastors of Rostock were not teaching falsely and if he carried the controversy no further. This he would not do and was dismissed from office on October 16, 1569. After leaving Rostock, he stayed a short time in Wismar. Later he returned to Wörden, where he had once been minister. As far as can be determined, Saliger remained there until his death.

The result of the Saliger Controversy was that Christ's Almighty Word was declared to be the effecting cause of the real presence in the Sacrament as the Scriptures teach and Luther confessed. Nothing we do, whether it be our eating or faith, causes Christ's body and blood to be present in the Supper, but alone the Words of Institution which are still efficacious today by virtue of His original command and institution. This indeed agrees with the central article of our teaching, justification by faith alone. At the same time these Lutheran fathers refused to fix chronologically the exact beginning and end of the real

presence in the Supper. To do this would have been to speak where the Holy Scripture does not speak. The Bible does not answer these questions concerning time as Dr. Sasse aptly summarizes, "We cannot determine the moment of the beginning and the end of the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar with watch in hand, just as we cannot fix temporally the presence of Christ when two or three are fathered together in His name and therefore the promise of Matt. 18:20 is fulfilled for them. We may never forget that the presence of Christ, His divine and human nature, is always an eschatological miracle in which time and eternity meet. (*H. Sasse, We Confess the Sacraments, p. 137.*) The main concern of these father was to emphasize the absolute certainty of the real presence and its wonderful benefits for poor lost sinners.

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Classical Rhetoric and Our Preaching:
Formalization, Anathematization, Utilization

by

Prof. Steven L. Reagles

Paul Tillich, a preeminent example of liberal theology in our era, once stated that:

no minister should proclaim more than his intention to speak the Word when he preaches. He never should assert that he has spoken it or that he will be able to speak it in the future, for since he possesses no power over the revelatory constellation, he possesses no power to preach the Word. (qtd. in H. Preus 648)

A recent review in Homiletic of a preaching text by James W. Cox similarly echoes this sentiment. Thomas E. Ridenhour, Sr., of Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, criticizes Cox's text, stating that:

There is a major difficulty in Cox's book.... He speaks of "communicating God's truth" in preaching, but he is not at all clear as to what he intends by this phrase. Is there a "truth of God" that can be communicated from one person to another? What is such? How does one communicate "truth"? It appears that "God's truth" is a substance that can be transferred from one person to another. In certain contemporary theories of human communication such a view of truth and its communication is highly questionable. (11)

While there are, indeed, many useful insights, from modern communication theory which may be applied

to our preaching, from the previous statements we see a major shortcoming in the epistemology (theory of knowledge) behind much modern writing on communication. Governed by a predisposition that there is no absolute truth, many communication theorists, today, carry on a never-ending dialogue about incomprehensibles and uncertainties.

Contrasted with this view of truth in preaching is the one which Confessional Lutheranism subscribes to:

Our preaching and teaching, applied as it is to our own day, although it departs markedly from the so-called materia, the very words, of Scripture, conforms nevertheless to the content of the divine Word. This fact should be of great comfort to us. What we proclaim is nothing less than the Word of God. (R. Preus, "The Power of God's Word" 457)

Despite the unscriptural world-view of the Greeks and Romans, we at least find among some of their writings on rhetoric and communication a belief in absolutes. While homiletics texts have been abandoning insights from classical rhetoric for some time now, I think Lloyd Perry is right when he says: "It is unfortunate that we have not made more of an attempt to correlate the best of classical rhetoric with homiletical theory (25). While we are currently seeing in the writing field examples of militant anti-classicalism (Knoblauch for example), this paper takes the position that much may be gained from a study of past rhetoricians of Greece and Rome. This article, then, looks at the classical tradition, at the formalization of rhetoric into a system, its anathematization by the Church, and finally,

its utilization. Because this discourse takes the form of a survey, an overview, it makes no claims to completeness. If the article generates discussion in our midst, further study, and especially the desire to improve our preaching of the Gospel, it will have accomplished its purpose. Preaching ought to be the top priority on our list of pastoral duties. Our confessions recognize it by stating that "There is nothing that attaches people to the church as does good preaching" (Triglot 401, 51).

I. CLASSICAL RHETORIC: FORMALIZED AND RECOGNIZED

While the purpose of this article is not to provide a detailed survey of the tradition of ancient rhetoric, it is crucial to our discussion to mention a few key people and ideas. Rhetoric has a long tradition and so we first look to Greece especially, and Rome, because there rhetoric was first formalized. For our purposes, "rhetoric" is "the art of effective communication." As George Kennedy points out, "most subsequent rhetoric all over the world has been influenced by Greek ideas on the subject" (Classical Rhetoric 7). It is significant, I think, that Christianity grew out of a Greco-Roman culture and not, let's say, an Indian-Chinese culture. While Lutherans regularly use the legacies of western tradition, logic and dialectic, classification, definition, clarity of thought, etc., these are "far less favored in traditional literature of India and China...." (Oliver 10-11). It was the Greeks and Romans who, preeminently, sought to analyze, identify, and formally order the concepts of communication.

Classical Rhetoric: Formalized

Homer's Illiad speaks of "the winged words of

good speakers," and features Nestor "the orator-king."

Nestor is an elder who possesses both wisdom and rhetorical skill to express his wisdom effectively. It is this combination of wisdom and good speech that is admired, not just excellence in speech alone. Nestor illustrates the continuous concern of the Greeks for the logos, which might be defined as "thought-plus expressions." (Murphy, A Synoptic History 4)

While the seed ideas of formalized rhetoric are expressed already in Homer, Corax the Sicilian (ca. 476 B.C.) is credited as the inventor of rhetoric. Tisias, his pupil, transmitted rhetoric to the mainland of Greece. With rhetoric came the Sophists. While the Sophists are traditionally thought of as rhetoricians guilty of ornamental excess in their oratory, expression-without-substantial-thought, not all the Sophists were guilty of unethical rhetoric as the term seems to imply today.

Gorgias (485-380 B.C.) "believed that certain stylistic features--notably alliteration, assonance, antithesis, and parallelism--would make his prose persuasive" (Murphy, A Synoptic History 10). Isocrates (436-338 B.C.), John Milton's "Old Man Eloquent," is chiefly quoted because of two of his works. In "Against the Sophists" he wrote:

The Gods have given us speech--the power which has civilized human life; shall we not strive to make the best use of it?
(Murphy 12)

In his "Antidosis" Isocrates names the three things needed to make a great speaker: natural ability, practice or experience, and education (Murphy 12).

Isocrates encouraged his students to read the eloquent writers of the time and to practice "imitation" of their style. Isocrates, as well, contributed the periodic sentence to rhetoric.

Plato (427-347 B.C.), who was highly critical of rhetoric in his earlier works, contributed insights to rhetoric through the so-called "Socratic Method." In a typical dialogue of Plato one sees: 1) key terms defined, 2) a proposition stated, 3) possible contradictions identified, 4) ideas applied. In the Phaedrus, Plato lauds rhetoric as "the art of winning the soul by discourse." He further states that a discourse ought to have a beginning (preamble), middle (argument), and end (conclusion). It ought to display "unity" of thought and be "neither long nor short, but of reasonable length."

Aristotle (394-322 B.C.), who studied under Plato and served as tutor to Alexander the Great, spoke of three kinds of persuasive proofs in his Rhetoric. One persuades a listener by appealing to his rational faculties (logos), his emotional faculties (pathos), or, by building one's own credibility through the speech (ethos). Audience analysis was an important part of Aristotle's system. One must speak to be understood. That put clarity at the top of communicative priorities, for "...a good style is, first of all, clear" (Rhetoric 185). In speaking clearly to one's audience, holds Aristotle, one must shape the speaking in the light of the particular audience addressed.

Cicero, in his De Inventione, establishes the well-known "canons" of rhetoric thereafter. How does one go about creating rhetoric? Cicero says that first, we must find out what we are going to say: Invention (Inventio); second, arrange

arrange or structure the material: Arrangement (Dispositio); third, find the appropriate language, the best word or expression: Style (Elocutio); fourth, memorize the speech: Memory (Memoria); last, deliver the speech: Delivery (Pronuntiatio), which involves voice and use of the body. According to Cicero, each speech ought to have six parts. Cicero's six-part structure reflects the legal setting in which the speech is delivered. There is the beginning, where you seek to capture the audience's attention and good will (Exordium); next, the speaker gives background (Narratio); third, the speaker establishes matters agreed upon with opponents and the plan or method for tackling the ensuing matters (Partitio); fourth, the arguments proceed (Confirmatio); fifth, the counter-arguments (Reprehensio); last, the summary and conclusion finish the oration (Peroratio). In Cicero's estimation, the orator should possess a liberal arts background in all subjects and should be able to use all the ornaments of style. Three styles emerge from Cicero's theory: the plain, moderate, and grand styles.

Quintilian (ca. 40-95 A.D.), in his Institutio Oratoria, establishes an educational program to produce the ideal orator, based on Cicero. The Institutio has great implications for the church's later history.

In the classical period, his precepts furnished the model for Roman provincial schools, which were later attended by some of the early fathers of the Christian Church (Murphy Rhetoric 22).

The list includes Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory of Caesarea, Eusebius of Caesarea, John of Antioch (Chrysostom) and Basil of Caesarea. In the Reformation, Quintilian (and thus Cicero)

would have been known thoroughly by theological graduates at Wittenberg University. As Schwiebert has noted:

Before entering the School of Theology, the student was required to obtain a master's degree in Liberal Arts. The textbook in rhetoric was the large work by the Roman Quintilian which, Melanchthon claimed, would provide complete mastery of dialectics and rhetoric. ("The Reformation ..." 25)

It was Quintilian's opinion that students should read the best writers. Above all, the highest ideal of rhetoric was for the speaker to be a "vir bonus dicendi peritus" (a good man speaking well).

Classical Rhetoric: Recognized

As the curriculum at Wittenberg shows, the influence of classical rhetoric, obviously, did not die out, but came to play a critical part in the program of education spearheaded by Melanchthon. Classical rhetoric became the recognized approach for teaching communication. Melanchthon's rhetoric, Elementorum Rhetorices Libri Duo was used widely in Europe. The first English rhetoric by Leonard Cox was based on Melanchthon's rhetoric (LaFontaine 71). In 1535, when the curriculum was revised at Cambridge, both Aristotle and Melanchthon were required reading (Meyer 534, citing Porter). Luther himself, while purging Wittenberg of Aristotle's philosophical works, nevertheless recommended Aristotle's Logic, Rhetoric, and Poetry, because of their useful insights for preachers (Schwiebert Luther 299; Becker 78). Graebner, in describing the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's genesis, during the last century, indicates the enduring influence of classical rhetoric to

pastors in the parish.

Who were those men that in the swamps and clayey hills of Perry County, Mo., laid the foundations of a confessional Lutheranism? The fathers of our church were scholars.... In that malarial frontier solitude one could hear men converse in Latin, Hebrew and Chaldean lexicon, Luther, Calovius, Loescher, Aristotle, and Quintilian, and many another pig-skin-covered tome looked down from shelves made of hewn oak boards.... (My emphasis, The Pastor 37)

We need not go beyond Bethany to discover the recognition afforded classical rhetoric. Pastors of this synod who attended Bethany experienced its influence. Bethany's Freshman English Communication courses combining speech and writing are indirectly traceable to Cicero and Quintilian (Golden 89; Lindemann 42).

After rhetoric had been systematized and formalized, it became recognized and established as a useful tool for communication.

Unfortunately, some apotheosized, glorified rhetoric in an unnatural way. Some made eloquence to be only a matter of style, ornamentation without concern for substance. Others ascribed to rhetoric an unsavory means of power, power which rested in style. Truth became less important; the substance behind the words mattered not so much as winning men over by clever words.

The classical ideal of humanism, which centered on eloquence, sought to create a super man, who needed no one but himself, ultimately, so that, "once the mind had been trained it was pure power,

completely free, ready for any demands that might be made on it" (Marrou 305-06).

Centuries later, rhetoric in the hands of unconscionable men, men operating apart from grace, would be used as a power to move the masses to suit the chimeras of a grotesque Hellenism. The moving speeches of Hitler are witness enough to the evil heights to which eloquence might ascend. "Der Fuehrer" drunk on the ideal of his own Dorean myth (Marrou 36) spewed forth an eloquence which enthralled thousands. In his Mein Kampf he wrote: "I know that one is able to win people far more by the spoken than by the written word, and that every great movement in the globe owes its rise to the great speakers and not to the great writers: (qtd. in Kennedy, His Word 17).

Of course, Hitler would have been condemned by Plato, Aristotle, Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian. Rhetoric, they would have claimed, is a natural thing; it is simply the art of communication. It can be used by evil or ethical men. The Sophists gave up the substance for the sake of style or ornamentation in order to gain "results." In the hands of a Gorgias, rhetoric could work like magic, to make anything seem tantalizingly like truth, whether or not it actually was in reality. It was Gorgias who had said in his "Helen" that "the very principle of the art of speech was to stir passions, and thereby to deceive" (de Romilly 25). Plato banished poets from his Republic. With their rhetorical embellishments, their poetic speech, they could, like Sirens, work spells upon men so that whatever was preached in elegant style, became truth. There was no substance, just skilled rhetoricians of the word, masters of verbal necromancy, masked actors manipulating myths until they seemed

glorious truth. Not only Plato, but Quintilian would have thrown Hitler out of his kingdom. An orator must be a "good man speaking well." Dieterich Bonhoeffer would have pointed to Churchill in his own time as an example of proper rhetoric. Recognizing the positive value of classical rhetoric (while Hitler moved the crowds) Bonhoeffer lectured on preaching at the so-called "Confessing Church seminary at Finkenwalde, citing Cicero's rhetoric" (Fant 161).

II. CLASSICAL RHETORIC: ANATHEMATIZED

God's people have always been cautious about the world's wisdom, because often the world's wisdom issues from an antithetical Weltanschauung with an agenda actively contrary to God's will. Daniel and his three scholar friends thrust into Babylon ("In every matter of wisdom and understanding . . . ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters," Dan 1:20), and Moses, washed onto the shore of Egypt ("...educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians . . . powerful in speech and action"), knew that the worldly wisdom that they had been allowed to possess must bow before God and his wisdom. Luther, who said, "as we prize the Gospel, let us sustain classical studies," (qtd. in Graebner The Pastor 38) would have also agreed with Martin Franzmann:

Before the Cross, vast sections of our libraries, huge areas of our civilization, recede into insignificance and irrelevance. (83)

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians that the message of the cross was foolishness, but wisdom at the same time, the power of God for salvation unto fallen mankind, he spoke in a way which seemed to anathematize the entire system of

classical rhetoric. He discounted in I Cor. 1: 18-25 the scholarship and scholars, intelligence and the intelligentia, wisdom and the wise of the world. In ink the stylus penned those words which elevate God to the preeminent position in matters of salvation over against speech or eloquence as a thing in itself.

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to the testimony about God.... My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power. (NIV I Cor. 2: 1,4,5)

The criticism after Paul seems to increase. James J. Murphy in his Rhetoric in the Middle Ages lists the voices who dissented against the Greek system of rhetoric and thought. Numbered among them are Lactantius, Cyprian, Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Gregory Nazianzen, Basil of Caesarea, Ambrose, and Jerome (48-55). To Lactantius, the Greek and Roman works were "sweets which contain poison" (49). Tertullian's reply is perhaps best known:

What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretic Christians? (49)

Gregory Nazianzen criticized Gregory of Nyssa for becoming a rhetorician; Basil of Caesarea scorned the idea of "polishing periods" and the "laws of the encomium" as "sophistic vanities" (51). St. James, sounding like Tertullian, asked:

What communion hath light with darkness?

What concord hath Christ with Belial?
What has Horace to do with the Psalter
....and Cicero with Apostle [Paul]?
.... we ought not to drink the cup of
Christ and the cup of devils at the same
time (53).

Cyprian in comparing pagan eloquence and preaching says:

In courts of law, in public meetings, in political discussions, a full eloquence may be the pride of vocal ambition, but in speaking of the Lord God, a pure simplicity of expression (vocis pura sinceritas non eloquentiae) which is convincing depends upon the substance of the argument rather than upon the forcefulness of eloquence (51).

Thus went the "rhetoric" against rhetoric in the first centuries.

And yet, during the Reformation we find the same kinds of things said. The issue of "substance" versus "expression" continues on. Luther contrasting himself with Melanchthon, Karlstadt, and Erasmus and "their capacity for substantial thought, res, and expression, verba," stated that Melanchthon had res et verba; Erasmus, verba sine re; Luther, res sine verbis; Karlstadt, nec res nec verba (Caemmerer The Melanchthon Blight 322). If Luther would have lived longer to experience Melanchthon's defection, to evaluate not just the "capacity for substantial thought and expression," but the actual, sustained use, he would probably have classified Philip, his close friend, as verba sine re, like Erasmus. Luther's dealings with Erasmus reveal his antipathy to rhetoric--style without substance. In The Bondage of the Free Will, Luther says about Erasmus:

.... he avails himself of a rhetorical device for changing the subject, and tries to drag with him us, who know nothing of rhetoric.... no rhetoric can cheat an honest conscience. The arrow of conscience is proof against all the forces and figures of eloquence. I shall not allow our rhetorician thus to dissimulate and change the subject (221).

Norman Madson, Sr., seems to depreciate the use of rhetoric in his article, "The Power of The Word," reprinted recently in The Lutheran Synod Quarterly.

But God's Word does not operate in a natural way, which would mean that it appeals to man's reason; nor does it operate through what we call rhetorical eloquence, appealing to men's emotions. No, it operates in a supernatural way (54).

H. Grady Davis warns the preacher about being a technician rather than a preacher of the Gospel. Such a person "may become a rhetorician, an attractive speaker, but he will turn out to be something less than a preacher of the Gospel" (9).

Of course, this is a fairly depressing point to be at in a paper which proposes to offer "Insights from Classical Rhetoric for Our Preaching." With all the evidence against classical rhetoric perhaps it would be better to offer "Alternate Insights from Non-classical Christian Rhetoric for Our Preaching." Is there any way to escape the conclusion that classical rhetoric is harmful or dishonest, a method to be avoided? The last part of this paper searches for a baptized classical rhetoric, captive to Christ and sanctified for the sake of Gospel.

III. CLASSICAL RHETORIC: UTILIZED

No matter what impression of rhetoric one may have, at this point, history reveals that rhetoric, and specifically classical rhetoric, has been used by the church in its preaching and its apologetic. Whether Paul was trained in rhetoric or not, some scholars have claimed that classical rhetorical elements exist in his writing (McLaughlin 40ff); Lane Cooper in his introduction to Aristotle, pp. xxvii-xxix). While, as Lactantius says, Greek and Roman works were "sweets which contain poison," Paul was not against quoting the pagan poets (Epimenides) nor was Luke (Cleantes?, Aratus) to serve the Gospel commission. One may question whether Paul uses classical rhetoric in his Act's speeches, etc., but most will see in some of Paul's writings an eloquence which matches any writer. What can compare with the substantial thought (res) and style (verba) of Romans 8:37-39?

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.
For I am persuaded, that neither death,
nor life, nor angels, nor principalities,
nor powers, nor things present, nor things
to come,
Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,
shall be able to separate us from the
love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our
Lord.

There is not time to read I Cor. 13, or dwell upon the irony that it comes at the end of the very same letter in which Paul says, "When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence..." (I Cor. 2:1).

George Milligan in his introduction to The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament says of these

two epistles, that they are "moved by a heart-felt eloquence which makes them, regarded as literature, as notable as anything ever penned" (Moulton xx).

The key issue, I think, which puts the entire matter of rhetoric in perspective here, is the issue of "substantial-thought," (res) versus "style" (verba). Already among the Greeks, you recall, we find Plato accusing Gorgias of using words, apart from truth, to persuade men to believe this thing or that thing. Paul lived in a day when philosopher preachers still scoured the streets and market places seeking to win over people to their view (Franzmann The Word 67). Although the grandeur of classical Greece was, by now past, yet oratory, eloquence was viewed as a power in itself. But even if these men came with the finest style, beautiful words to match I Cor. 13, even if they displayed the finest content (res), could their speech compare with the power behind Paul's message? Whether Paul's so-called eloquence was waxing or waning, his message of the Gospel possessed the very power of God. The Spirit of Christ in the message of the Gospel made the eloquent words of natural man seem like a Japanese ice sculpture. It was pretty, but ephemeral, and incapable of saving lost mankind from their sins. Paul preached Christ, the power of God, who was himself the incarnate "res" and God's "verba"--God's substantial expression of his grace and mercy, the Word made flesh, God's "verba" without ornament, Christ, unadorned servant. God; Man; God's eloquence, without style. Yet what power there was in his words and work, what power in and through his life, his death, his resurrection.

The problem with rhetoric as an expression of Greco-Roman culture was its ultimate ineffectiveness

to save. Man-made rhetoric could convert man to another philosophical system. It could not turn men's hearts to God. The drunken Polemon, who came breaking into the lecture hall of the philosopher Xenocrates (as the story goes), denounced his life of sin and became a philosopher himself, a highly moral man. Xenocrates' eloquent words had done it. But could rhetoric save him from death and sin? Could Xenocrates guarantee him everlasting life? He could not. He had no real power. Paul came, as do we, preaching the power of the Gospel of Christ, a message with divine content and divine power, because God is behind it and in it.

In the light of this discussion, perhaps we can understand how the church, despite its criticisms of classical rhetoric, came to use some of its insights. The key of resolution came when the church realized that any form of communication used in apologetic or preaching must serve the Gospel and not itself. If the vehicle, language, which bears the king is made to be more important than the king, it has lost its value. It would be an entire paper in itself to demonstrate how the same Fathers of the early church who condemned rhetoric used classical rhetoric to condemn classical rhetoric as well as defend the Christian faith. Tertullian is the classic case in point (Sider 126). Jerome, who renounced rhetoric, did so only for fifteen years (Murphy Rhetoric 54).

St. Augustine, resigning his chair of rhetoric at Milan, following his conversion, spent the rest of his life writing. One of his works was the De Doctrina, the first Christian homiletics textbook. It drew its insights from Cicero. While it addressed itself to the art of hermeneutics and homiletics, it also contributed insights which were used in the church's apologetic. It is in

Book Four that Augustine gives his classical defense of rhetoric as a neutral tool which ought to be put in service to the church.

Who would dare to say that truth should stand in the person of its defenders unarmed against lying, so that they who wish to urge falsehoods may know how to make their listeners benevolent or attentive or docile in their presentation [i.e., in the exordium], while the defenders of truth are ignorant of that art? Should they speak briefly, clearly, and plausibly [in the narration] while the defenders of truth speak so that they tire their listeners, make themselves difficult to understand and what they have to say dubious? Should they oppose the truth with fallacious arguments and assert falsehoods [in the proof] while the defenders of truth have no ability either to defend the truth or to oppose the false? Should they, urging the minds of their listeners into error, ardently exhort them, moving them by speech so that they terrify, sadden, and exhilarate them [in the peroration], while the defenders of truth are sluggish, cold, and somnolent? Who is so foolish as to think this to be wisdom? While the faculty of eloquence, which is of great value in urging either evil or justice, is in itself indifferent, why should it not be obtained for the uses of the good in service of truth if the evil usurp it for the winning of perverse and vain causes in defense of iniquity and error? (qtd. in Kennedy Classical 155)

While the section of De Doctrina above may apply more to apologetic writing, the De Doctrina includes other classical precepts. Augustine, like Cicero

encourages the imitation of models to develop "eloquence." But he says that above eloquence the preacher's ethos, his life, has great bearing upon the effectiveness of his message. Augustine adopts Cicero's three types of oratorical purpose: to teach, to delight, to move.

As the centuries passed by, the imprint of classical rhetoric upon medieval preaching manuals is manifest (Murphy Rhetoric). We have already discussed certain influences upon the curriculum at Wittenberg.

We cannot possibly, in the time allotted, survey the influence of classical rhetoric upon modern homiletics textbooks. There is, however, even in the newest texts, unquestionably, classical influence. The influence may be reflected in the structure of texts, where the five canons of rhetoric are used to structure the major parts. Take as one example from our own midst Gerlach and Balge's Preach the Gospel. Chapters two and three deal with studying and analyzing the text to generate sermon material: *Inventio*. Chapters four through seven deal with structuring the sermon, sermon types, outlining, introductions, and conclusions: *Dispositio* (Chapter six could also be placed under *Inventio*, since it deals with putting meat on the bones of the outline). Chapter eight deals with style: *Elocutio*. Chapter nine deals with memory and delivery: *memoria* and *pronuntiatio*. An examination of the typical homiletics texts used in our circles reveals that the mark of Augustine, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian are very much present. Again, whether directly or indirectly the texts are indebted to the ancients. The list includes Reu's Homiletics, Lenski's The Sermon, Graebner's Inductive Homiletics (Parts III and IV), Fritz's The Preacher's Manual, and The Essentials of

Preaching, Friedrich's The Art of Preaching, Otto's Notes on Preaching, Gerlach and Balge's Preach the Gospel, Caemmerer's Preaching for the Church. Caemmerer seems least indebted to classical rhetoric, Reu the most. Caemmerer ignores Quintilian and Cicero, but cites Aristotle four times. Reu, in his index, lists five citations of Aristotle, nineteen of Cicero, fifteen of Quintilian. Lenski, while not citing the classical rhetoricians, nevertheless assumes the student possesses knowledge of rhetorical precepts.

The Sermon must use the art of rhetoric. While homiletics demands a thorough knowledge of rhetoric,homiletics cannot teach rhetoric, just as it requires, but does not teach logic, psychology, languages, and other branches of learning which every preacher should know. (71)

This article, so far, may seem theoretical, historical, and analytical. Therefore, I will end with a twist of practicality, to see if we can't glean some of the insights from these ancients which are worth taking home with us. Let's let each of the major figures we've encountered give us a few tips. Since I've already typed my bibliography on page [71], we'll have to be extremely brief. We may have to cut them off so there's time for a peroration. It would be a grave injustice not to end in classical style. Since these experts on rhetoric are not Christians, we'll take their comments and modify them as we see fit. Shall we listen to these men, then, for a few moments as they recapitulate? Let's let Plato go first, since he got burned by Gorgias years ago and still can't stand being around rhetoricians for long.

Preacher: Plato, what insights could you leave us with regarding communication?

Plato: In my opinion rhetoricians need to remember always that truth must always, always govern style. People who fall in love with words for words sake, obscure truth just as frost does a pane of glass. Along those lines I would advise every speaker to clarify and define abstract terms, state your propositions or themes clearly. Anticipate the objections of your audience, the contradictions they may see, and deal with them. And don't forget to apply the truths to the lives of your hearers. You know those sophists love to speak in high-sounding terms so that the people never can quite find what's relevant for their lives. Make your speeches neither long nor short, but of a reasonable length. Last, make sure that your discourse has a clear beginning, middle, and end.

Preacher: Thank you Plato, and now Isocrates, do you care to add anything to our discussion of tips for speaking?

Isocrates: Just a couple things. One, I would say that natural ability is very important, but practice and study can do much to improve even old speakers. Especially work on studying the eloquent speakers of your day. And learn everything you can in every imaginable field of knowledge. You'll be amazed how the liberal arts will serve your speaking needs in a way that no "techniques" can.

Preacher: Aristotle, in some ways we Lutherans have a love/hate relationship with you. You are wet when it comes to philosophy and ethics and about three or four other subjects. On the other hand, we have always found your Rhetoric, Logic and Poetics useful for our preaching.

Aristotle: Yes, you're right about those other subjects. I was wrong. I would say that in your speaking, in order to be effective communicators, you must have good arguments, well-thought-through discourse. Please don't forget your audience. So many speakers become subject-oriented and they forget about the people they're supposed to be talking to. Evaluate your audience and then shift the diction so that it matches your audience. Some of you speakers, if you are at all average, sound dry as dust and you forget the emotional needs, biases, opinions of your audience, which affect the way they listen. Don't forget that you must maintain your credibility throughout the speech. The last thing I want to say today I save for last because it's the most important. In my Poetics I discuss this kind of structure as the climactic ordering. What is the climax of my speech? Be clear. Clarity is of all things most important. Use concrete words, not abstract. Paint word pictures with your speech, capturing the sounds, smells, tastes, sights, feelings of life. You will do well if you follow this advice.

Preacher: Cicero, your next. What would you like to add?

Cicero: First of all, I would like to say that an apple tree doesn't become a pear tree, a cow doesn't become an ass; therefore, it's necessary to conclude that the world is ruled by divine providence.

Preacher: Excuse me, Tulli, if I may call you that, but we're running out of time and you have to get to the point, since we still have to hear from Quintilian yet.

Cicero: Yes. Well, so much for attempts at eloquence. I will get to the point. By the way, I would like to point out to you that I'm not using

any ornamentation, because I know that some of you preachers dislike flowery speech. Each of you should spend the greatest amount of time discovering material to use in your speech. Structure helps your hearer remember and you speakers memorize. Why is it that so many speak from a manuscript rather than extemporaneously? Is it not partially that they do not write a speech which lends itself to memory. There is no order, no parts, no unifying theme. I want to say this to those of you who are against style. You all have style whether you want to have it or not. If you are dull, arrogant, pedantic, wishy-washy, that will come across as part of your style. I....

Preacher: Sorry, Tulli, I'm going to cut you off so that Quint can have a moment. Go ahead, Quint.

Quintilian: As you know, little of what I have said is original. So I'll need little time. Guard your life closely. An orator should be a good man speaking well. And last, read! Read the best writers of your time.

Preacher: Thank you, gentlemen, you have been a good group. I only wish that we could have shared eternity together. What a sad thought to close on. Plato, Isocrates, Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, the most gifted speakers in the world, the most eloquent of men and yet they never had the most eloquent message of all, the Gospel. Well, Sunday will soon be here. Time to get going on the text. Let me see if I can remember some of the points... ethos, pathos, logos. Speeches neither too long nor too short. Yes, I will have to remember that one next time. Sorry, Cicero, Luther never used perorations.

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*This extensive bibliography of resources relating to rhetoric and preaching is included to stimulate further reading, study, and conference papers on preaching. It should serve as a beginning for those who wish to read further.

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