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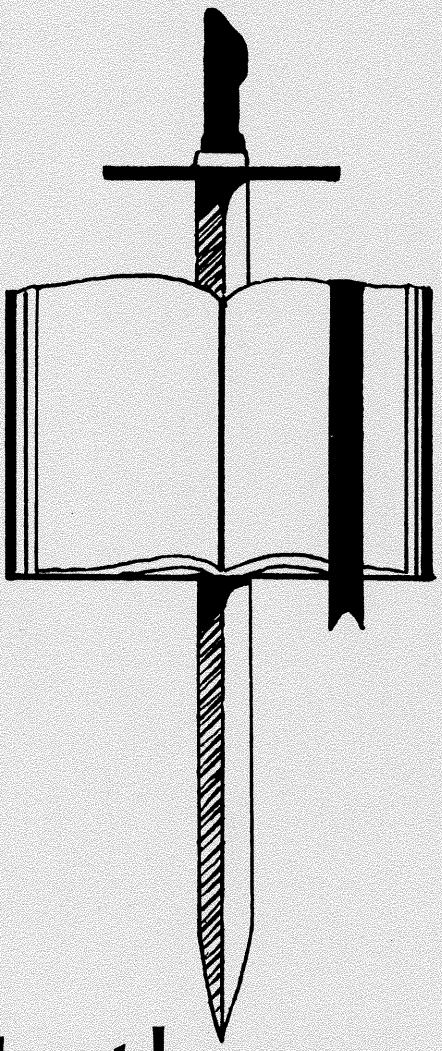

Lutheran Synod Quarterly

LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY

Theological Journal of the
Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Edited by the faculty of
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FOREWORD

This issue of the Quarterly begins with a sermon by the Reverend George Orvick, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, delivered on the occasion of the dedication of the S. C. Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center on September 16, 1900. Dr. Ylvisaker was president of Bethany Lutheran College from 1930-1950. He also served as the first president of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. The new fine arts center was named in his memory.

We are also pleased to share with our readers the twenty-third annual Reformation Lectures which were delivered in the theater of the fine arts center on October 24-25, 1990. The lectures centered around the intellectual life of Luther. The first lecture is entitled Luther the University Man; the second, Luther the Humanist; and the third, Luther and Learning.

The lecturer was Dr. James Kittelson, professor of history at The Ohio State University. Dr. Kittelson has done intensive Luther research and has written extensively on the Reformer. His latest book is entitled Luther the Reformer, considered to be "the best complete biography of Luther for our times" and "thoroughly up to date."

The reactors were Professor Edward Fredrich, professor of Church History at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, and Pastor Mark Bartels, associate pastor of King of Grace Lutheran Church, Golden Valley, Minnesota. Their reactions are included in this issue.

We also take this opportunity to wish our readers a blessed Epiphany and a truly happy and healthy New Year in the precious Name of the Christ-Child in Whom alone we have lasting peace and joy.

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SERMON FOR DEDICATION
OF THE
S. C. YLVISAKER FINE ARTS CENTER

President George M. Orvick

September 16, 1990

Text: "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."
(Philippians 4,8)

Fellow Redeemed, Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

A dream has come true! A prayer has been answered! A fervent hope has been fulfilled! Bethany has at last a new center for the fine arts. A building that is entirely in keeping with the basic philosophy of the school. A facility that will be a blessing to students and faculty and many others for years to come.

How did it come about that such an addition to our campus could be built? How did it happen that this school, which was taken over with such trembling hands by a little synod in 1927, could make such progress? We shall let someone else answer the question, namely the one for whom this art center is named. He writes, "What success may be recorded during these years is due solely and alone to the guiding hand and the loving grace of Him Who holds also the destiny of Bethany in his hand. You may

point to feverish activity, loyal devotion, faithful service on the part of individuals or the general membership of our synod, to special friends within and without our synod, to faithful teachers and loyal students--neither these nor what they have done would have been there but for the blessing of the Lord of the church...Today we gladly extend the hand to thank all these for their encouragement. But we shall not forget that these were all a part of that blessing that God sent from On High and an answer to the prayer of faith offered by many a friend of our school."

In those beautiful words Dr. Ylvisaker, writing on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of our school, points us in the right direction. It is to our gracious God that we lift up our hearts and voices in songs of praise and thanksgiving on this tremendous day.

As we now proceed to dedicate this building to the glory of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, our hearts and minds are flooded with thoughts and emotions. We cannot help but think of the laborers of our forefathers as they struggled to keep Bethany going. We remember in particular Dr. S. C. Ylvisaker and his total devotion to this school. We think of the high and lofty goals that he had for the institution. We recall our own student days and the impression Bethany made upon our lives and values. Oh, yes, I am certain that such a day as this thrills the hearts of all who love Bethany.

But while we offer up praise and thanks to God for the blessings of the years past, let us turn our thoughts to the present and the future. Why do we have a fine arts center on our campus? What is the philosophy behind it? How shall we use it? What effect will it have upon the students? Let us

bear all of these things in mind and on the basis of our text consider as our theme:

WHAT IS AT THE CENTER OF OUR FINE ARTS CENTER?

The words of our text are very fitting for this occasion. The Apostle Paul is giving directions to his beloved Philippians as to their life of sanctification. It is interesting to note that the Apostle wrote this letter while he was in a Roman prison. He could have been chained to a Roman guard and possibly even standing in water. And yet it is the most joyous epistle that he wrote, mentioning the word joy or rejoice some seventeen times. He was undoubtedly surrounded by those things which are base, filthy, obscene, irreverent, and, blasphemous. How amazing then, that in such confinement he would be thinking about these things which are true, honest, just, pure, and lovely. He encourages the Philippians to concentrate their hearts and minds on these things.

And is this not what Bethany seeks to accomplish? Yes, it was Dr. Ylvisaker who wrote way back in 1933, "Bethany seeks to prepare the student at least to appreciate and love the beautiful and that which edifies and enriches life." Again in 1941 he describes Bethany as a school "where our young men and women are encouraged to study and appreciate what is noble and pure and beautiful, where they are exercised in habits of Christian culture, where they learn to express through the medium of song or other forms of art that which is beautiful and noble, and in general develop that sense of refinement which enriches our whole life." (BLC Bulletin, April 1941) It is almost as if he chose this text for us.

In accordance with our theme, then, what shall we

list as number one of what is at the center of our Fine Arts Center?

We can do nothing else but place as number one that which is the most beautiful, the most lovely, the most pure; namely, the blessed Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Is there anything more beautiful than that message that came into this sin-filled world than the glad tidings of great joy that God in His mercy sent His Son to be our Saviour? This is at the center of Bethany's whole existence with its motto, "ONE THING IS NEEDFUL." Can we build and dedicate a fine arts center which does not also have this as its purpose, aim and goal, namely to exalt the name of our dear Saviour? What is more noble, just and pure than the message that we are so loved by God that he gave His best and dearest to rescue us from eternal death and destruction?

Or is there something in the heart of man that is by nature good and noble and lovely? Not as God sees it. Christ describes the natural human heart as being filled with sin and evil lusts. He doesn't talk about how good and noble it is by nature. No, he says, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, thefts, and blasphemies." (Mark 7,21)

It is Christ that is pure and lovely. He took our place, assumed our wretchedness, and went to the cross to pay for our sins. In doing this he has made us also beautiful and lovely. Now his beauty covers our ugliness. His purity hides our impurity. Isn't that what the Bible says? "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow? Though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool?" (Isaiah 1,18) Do we not sing "Jesus Thy blood and righteousness, My beauty are, my glorious dress?" Our Saviour invites us to

believe this blessed Gospel and to find in Him eternal salvation.

Yes, He IS AT THE CENTER OF OUR FINE ARTS CENTER! He is "Fairer than the Children of Men!" He is the "Rose of Sharon!" He is the "Loveliest Flower on Jesse's stem!" He is the one of Whom the disciples said, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." (John 1,14)

As we dedicate this lovely building, we are reminded that there is an indissoluble relationship that exists between religion and culture. One author referring to the founding fathers of our country, states that, "They understood that without religion, democracy lost its moral underpinnings, and culture devolved into license." And again he writes, "Politics is in the largest part an expression of culture and that at the heart of culture lie beliefs and practices that are religious in nature." YES, WITHOUT RELIGION CULTURE TURNS INTO LICENSE. RELIGION IS AT THE HEART AND CENTER OF CULTURE. And at Bethany, Christ is at the heart and center of our school and our fine arts building!

Some years ago a professor at Yale University carried out an interesting study. A minute analysis of 300 prominent men who were born after 1450 was conducted. All possible information concerning these men was assembled and scrutinized. The purpose was to find out which of these men was the most highly cultured, which had the highest intelligence level. When all the research had been completed it was discovered that the German dramatist and poet, Wolfgang von Goethe, had received the highest possibly rating. What a remarkable man he was--in literature, arts, science, and law. His achievements were the most notable of his age. In intellectual stature he topped all of his fellows.

If you visit the Goethe museum in Weimar, you can get a glimpse of his many talents.

And yet, by his own admission, he was a very unhappy man. Why? Because with all of his culture he lacked faith in God. On a hill outside of Weimer a very impressive monolith has been erected on the spot where Goethe and his fellow philosophers used to meet for their discussions It is quite inspiring until one realizes that one is standing in the middle of Buchenwald.

Goethe wrote his last letter on March 17, 1832. Here he states the hopeless philosophy, "The world is ruled by bewildered theories of bewildering operations." There is a painting of the closing moments of his life. It shows the dying poet half reclining in an old arm chair. His wife kneels sobbing at his side, but he doesn't see her. His eyes stare into space. Uncertainty and fear are on all his features. His hand is raised as if to ward off an invisible enemy and his lips are open to voice his last words, "Mehr Licht," "more light."

Culture is not enough! WITHOUT HIM WHO IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD THE MOST CULTURED WALK IN DARKNESS. CHRIST IS AT THE CENTER OF OUR FINE ARTS CENTER!

What is at the center of our Fine Arts Center?

In the second place we would point to a strong desire on the part of our faculty and administration to do what our text tells us; namely, to direct young minds to focus on what is true, honest, just, pure and lovely.

Permit me to quote again our sainted forefather whose name graces this building. "Side by side

with the general, the specific, and the Christian training goes the cultural, the indefinable something which adds richness, beauty, mellowness, and refinement. The source and wellspring of all true refinement is Christian faith, and no one is truly refined who does not own this faith. Christian education is therefore not true to itself if it does not include in its training some way to provide a mode of expression for this culture and appreciation of it in others."

There is so much in this world which is called by the name of art, which is not art at all, but obscenity. The works of Andres Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe will not be displayed in our arts center. Even though in some places they are funded by the National Endowment for the Arts with taxpayers' money, they are so obscene that we blush to mention them. Likewise, the music of 2 Live Crew will not be featured in music appreciation class.

In the midst of such obscenity and filth which washes like a tidal wave across our land, how essential it is that Bethany focus on what is true, honest, just, pure and lovely.

There are three areas where we shall endeavor to direct young minds, as Dr. Ylvisaker put it, "to that indefinable something which adds richness, beauty, mellowness and refinement." And our new fine arts center will greatly enhance our ability to do this.

The one area is that of art. What a beautiful world we live in! Consider the artistic beauty of all creation. Who can paint like our heavenly Father? Behold the colors of the glowing sunset, the blue sky, the stars in the heaven, the snow-capped peaks, the cattle upon a thousand hills.

Now this gracious God has also given wonderful gifts to many men and women throughout the ages to produce spectacular works of art. How enriching it is to study those works! And to give our students the opportunity to try their own hand at creating what is pure and lovely.

Another area is that of verbal communication--speech and drama. What important works have been produced that set forth the meaning of life, the joys and sorrows of life, the humor that amuses us, the depth and feelings of the human soul! The Apostle Paul says, "Think on these things." Think upon the words of the Master Communicator. Think of Him of Whom they said, "No man spake like this man." (John 7,46) Consider the sermon on the mount, the prodigal son, the good samaritan, the lost sheep, and the house built on the rock. That is communication! Students at our Bethany will now have a better opportunity to learn to appreciate this area of culture.

The third area is that of music. It certainly wouldn't be a Bethany Fine Arts Center without the study and performance of music! In fact, we are told that Dr. Ylvisaker at one time thought of giving up the study of theology for that of music. He must have agreed with Luther that next to theology he considered music the highest gift. Now there is music that entertains and lightens the burden of life and thus drives away a gloomy spirit. But what kind of music takes first place? Why, that music that is inspired by Him of Whom the angels sang and who sing around His throne in heaven. The greatest works that have endured through the centuries came from those who wanted to praise and glorify God. And so we want our young people to learn to appreciate and take part in the field of music, to enjoy God's gifts in this regard.

And so what do we desire to do with our new fine arts center? To do as the Apostle said, "to think on these things." And to do as Dr. Ylvisaker said, "to include in the training of young people some way to provide a mode of expression for this culture and appreciation of it in others." THUS WE DEDICATE THIS FINE ARTS CENTER TO THE GLORY OF THE TRIUNE GOD. Christ is at the center accompanied by our strong desire to set before our students that which is true, honest, just, pure and lovely.

Amen.

A GREETING FROM BETHANY LUTHERAN SEMINARY
TO BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE ON THE OCCASION OF THE
DEDICATION OF THE FINE ARTS CENTER

The seminary is pleased to bring this greeting on this historic day since Dr. Sigurd Ylvisaker played an important role in the establishment and development of the seminary. He served as its first president and taught for a number of years until his retirement. Those of us who were privileged to sit at his feet will long remember the quality of instruction which we received from him.

It is indeed fitting that this beautiful and spacious fine arts center is named in his memory. The Lord used Dr. Ylvisaker to provide the necessary leadership during some trying years, the depression years of the 1930s and the war years of the 1940s, not exactly ideal times to lead a small, fledgling college. But despite difficulties and obstacles he dared to dream about a fine arts center and today, by the grace of God, that dream is a reality and I believe it is fair to say that this building would have exceeded his fondest expectations. But that's the kind of God we have, One who "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Eph. 3:20)

Dr. Ylvisaker had a deep appreciation of the fine arts. He regarded the fine arts as special blessings of God which add a pleasant dimension to the quality of life. He would agree with Luther who said, "Next to theology I give to music the highest place and honor" and that music "soothes, quickens, and refreshes the heart."

Our prayer with you is that the Lord will bless this fine arts center so that it will be a place where talents are developed to the glory of God and to the enjoyment of His people, and to that end may we continue to pray as we do in the General Prayer that God would "cause all useful arts to flourish among us."

TO GOD ALONE THE GLORY
Wilhelm W. Petersen,
President

REFORMATION LECTURE I

LUTHER THE UNIVERSITY MAN

The very best luncheon address I have ever heard came from my former colleague at the University of Iowa, George Forell. On the occasion of the 16th-Century Studies Conference's one and only meeting in Terre Haute, Indiana, he told the assembled professors and scholars--most of whom were about my age at the time, that is, just over 30--that Luther became the historical giant we all know for the very simple reason that he did his work as a professor. Insofar as my memory over 15-odd years is correct, George was telling us that Luther not only agreed (albeit under duress) to become a professor--and therefore a university man--but also made a job out of it. I thought then that Professor Forell was correct and I think so to this day.

On the other hand, I am more than willing to grant that our speaker was not telling the whole story, nor, I think, did he intend to do so. Instead, he was looking at over 100 professors of Reformation history who were near Luther's age when he became a professor, and he was urging us to do our jobs. He by no means suggested that in doing so we would come to anything like the insights that Dr. Martin Luther received. Rather, he strongly implied that if we did our work we would come to understand that Luther was correct, and that we might play a role in helping others to attain to this truth.

There are other ways in which George was not telling the whole story on that October day nearly 20 years ago, nor did he--or I--have the time to

do so. He did not tell how furiously Luther resisted the idea that he should become a professor. "But it will be the death of me," was the reformer's initial reply to the suggestion of Staupitz that he do so. Luther was right. It was the death of him, at least in the sense that he remained a professor to the end of his life. Moreover, to say that Luther was a university man is by no means to say that he was a "teacher" or, what is worse, a mere "intellectual." One can of course be the one without being the other. But Luther filled his teaching and his intellect with far more than mere duty or knowledge. Toward the end of his life he himself remarked that he became a theologian--that is, a professor of theology--not just by reading and thinking but by following "where my temptations led me." To put it differently, Luther was engaged, heart and soul, in what he soon termed his "calling." He was not just a university man; he was a man in a university.

There is still more to the story, at least if we will be true to the real Luther. He also said of himself--and this very self-consciously in words that are part of the partial autobiography he wrote for the preface to his Latin works of 1545 --that "I did not learn my theology all at once but ....like St. Augustine through much teaching and writing." Here, at last, is what I intend with the title to this essay, that is, "Luther the University Man." To put the matter simply, any effort to take Luther out of the university or to ignore that he was in it amounts to falsifying his life. The tendency to refer to him as a religious genius or to explain his career by saying that he was driven by apocalyptic premonitions amounts to romantic nonsense and directly contradicts what Luther said of himself. To be sure, Luther was convinced that he had been led "as if with blinders on, able to see neither to

the right nor to the left," but he was led through his teaching and writing. This is to say he was led through his calling as a professor or university man. "I did not seek this office on my own," he once remarked, "but was compelled to it against my will." Having once submitted, he was then loyal to his calling to the point of almost always signing his letters, "D Martinus Lutherus," or "Doctor Martin Luther."

Teaching and writing constitute the life of the university man or woman, and without these two activities we remain teachers or writers but not university people. Please note: being either a teacher or a writer is a perfectly honorable and Godly calling. But it is not the same thing as being a professor. The central issue is in fact very close to the oath that Luther took when he became a professor. He swore to teach the truth and to attack falsehood. This oath assumed as a matter of course that he was capable of distinguishing between the two. In sum, he was not simply to report the truth as he was taught it, which is the calling of a teacher, or to imagine it, which is the work of a writer. He was to learn it or to discover it and then to teach it both in the classroom and in print. As he himself said, all these activities occurred at once. Nor did he ever come to the end of teaching and writing. Shortly before his death, he scribbled himself a note that said, "We are all beggars. This is true." He was referring there to the process of learning that is necessary in all walks of life but especially in that of a professor. How deeply Luther took his peculiar responsibilities is well expressed in his commonly repeated but not well understood remark, "One must not only teach but also defend--Man musz nicht nur lehren sondern auch wehren." For the many who know German, it is perhaps worth pointing out that the word wehren means more than "defend"

in the passive sense. It can also mean "attack." In addition, it was part of the oath that Luther took when he became a professor.

As we all know, Luther attacked too. But, thankfully, his work as defender of the faith is not at issue here. Instead we are talking about Luther the university man, the professor, the scholar. The central question before us is whether we are to take Luther seriously when he said that he learned his theology by teaching and writing. Or are we to cling to the attractive, romantic notion that he had a sudden "evangelical breakthrough," the exact date of which it is very important--for reasons I don't understand--to establish?

The evidence is simply overwhelming. Luther was telling the truth about himself when he said that he learned his theology through writing and teaching; that is, in the life and calling of a professor. Anyone who has followed Luther through his early lectures up to the famous series on Romans and beyond knows that Luther began his career as a professor teaching the theology that he was taught and then torturously uncovered a completely different understanding of how God deals with his people. It did not come in a flash of insight or the much vaunted "moment" of inspiration. It came through hard work, through, as George Forell put it, doing his job.

To make the matter perfectly compelling requires taking three steps. We must first understand what Luther was taught; we must then compare it with what he came to teach; finally, we must trace his steps from the one to the other. In the process it will become very clear just how deeply Luther, that is, the Luther who remains historically important, was a university man.

We begin, then, with Luther the student. Save for a bow toward them at this very moment, I will say nothing about the thunderstorm, the vow to become a monk, Luther's spiritual struggles, or any of the things that make for great drama. It is not that these things are untrue. Insofar as we can know, they all happened, and there can be no question that Luther himself could be and was eloquent about them. His struggles to obtain some sort of personal assurance--and he never attained it fully--should stand as a lesson to all of us who think that we are fully aware of God's gracious will for us and that we can happily lead our lives in the delusion that we will be forever after free of guilt and doubt. Luther was not and, to the extent that we are honest with ourselves, neither are we. In fact, we are taught daily--and sometimes by the church--precisely the view of God that led Luther, and will surely lead us, nearly to the point of despair.

Before plunging into the understanding of these matters that have become so evident during the last generation of scholarship, two observations are in order. First, the theology that Luther was taught is not unbiblical in the sense that it paid no attention to the apparently straightforward message of the Bible. Frequently enough we Lutherans happily dismiss the theology of the late Middle Ages as mere "works righteousness" and are then done with it. We throw a piece of Romans 1:17 at our Roman Catholic neighbors and assume that the issue is settled. But we need to understand first that the study of the Bible was the heart and core of the medievel theological curriculum, and that it was in just this study that Luther began. In this regard the fact that the Bible was commonly chained to a lectern is not evidence that people were discouraged from reading it but quite the contrary. After all, in

those days Bibles were very expensive--as were most books--and they had a habit of growing legs and feet and taking a walk if they were not chained down. For students to read one required making certain it was available, above all. Hence, the issue is not whether someone--say, Luther the student--read the Bible but, instead, how he read it. I take Romans 1:17, the great Reformation passage, as an example: "The righteous shall live by faith." But what does this passage mean? Let us put it this way: Who shall live by faith? The answer should be obvious. It is "the righteous." Simple common sense dictates that the converse is also true. If one is not righteous, then one cannot live by faith.

Certainly--and here I am merely referring to Luther's teaching and to the early Luther himself--one can have partial faith. Given a little hard reasoning of the kind that went on late at night at least when I was an undergraduate, most anyone can be compelled to the conclusion that there is a God who created everything and who retains the right to judge human behavior. We've all been reminded often enough to be a "good boy" or a "good girl" to acknowledge that some sort of judgment is coming even though deep down inside we really enjoy being at least a little naughty. In sum, we know that we are not "righteous," save perhaps now and then, and the conclusion is obvious. We therefore cannot live by the sort of saving faith that led Abraham to be willing to sacrifice Isaac, the one who literally embodied God's promise to him. After all, is not Abraham's righteousness evident in the fact that he was prepared to do God's apparent bidding, that he trusted God, and that God therefore acknowledged Abraham as truly righteous?

Let me be clear that I no more regard this

as the proper reading of the text before us than the mature Luther did. I nonetheless submit to you that it is not an obviously false or wrong-headed reading of the text. Luther's teachers, and Luther himself at least initially, read it in just this way, and they went on to note the part of the text that refers to proceeding "from faith to faith" as evidence that one was obliged to "grow in faith," to use some more biblical language that has been turned into contemporary Christian jargon in some circles.

In any event it should be clear that even the core text can be read in a way to require works in order to achieve salvation. In this case the "work" envisioned is a work of faith; that is, being faithful no matter what the circumstances. In this regard Luther's teachers and Luther himself distinguished between "partial" faith and faith "perfected in Christ." Partial faith was the faith that humans could summon up when all else had failed. What this means is that this faith was their own possession, something they had, and something they could show to God as evidence of their own partial righteousness. Then God would give them something more. Here was what it meant to go "from faith to faith." It was pretty poverty stricken, but it was at least something. One need only imagine what could be done in this way with the story of the "widow's mite" without at the same time doing obvious violence to that text.

This was the university theology that Luther was taught and that Luther himself taught, at least initially. 'Lest the point be lost, it should be clear that the same way of understanding the text could and was in operation with respect to most if not all of the common texts of the New Testament. Perhaps the most obvious of them are the passages

that have to do with love. In this regard I am perfectly aware that I Cor. 13 is commonly used for weddings. Having been married to the same woman for almost 30 years, I am also perfectly aware that I do not measure up to it. But I point instead to the way in which the Beatitudes can be and are commonly understood. Let us try "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." So, what is necessary in order to inherit the earth? It is necessary to be "meek," that is humble. Being humble is a virtue and therefore something for which we should strive. When we are sufficiently humble we can claim our inheritance, and we can do so by right. But then there's that great line in the musical "Camelot," according to which "it's not the earth the meek inherit; it's the dirt." I suggest that no amount of spiritualizing this text will make this fact go away. It is not easy to be proud of being humble.

Here was Luther's problem, and this was the contradiction that he saw. It was far more than a logical contradiction, but it was that too. It was a contradiction that he saw in his own life. The more he tried to be humble and the closer he came to this goal, the more he exalted himself. Here is what he intended when he said, "If anyone could have achieved heaven by the work of a monk, it was I." The classic example of this life-related contradiction that also holds theological contradictions is the problem of confession. Luther was famous or (with his confessors) infamous for the zeal with which he confessed his sins. He himself once remarked that if you would confess all your sins in a timely manner, you would have to "carry a confessor around in your pocket." Staupitz in fact once told him to go out and commit a real sin and then come confess it, but above all to stop bothering him with "petty, artificial" sins.

As an example of a real sin, Staupitz had in mind something rather like rape or murdering one's parents. In this regard it should be noted that Luther continued for the remainder of his life to confess his sins daily, and that they never became "real" sins in the sense that Staupitz intended.

There is a theological problem here, too, and once again it is not a matter of whether one reads the Bible, but how one reads it. The theme of repentance is common in the Scriptures, but what does it mean? Luther was taught (and, I think, correctly) that what God demands is full contrition; that is, a complete regret for our sins and one that is regret for the harm we have done the person against whom we have sinned. But the only thing of which we are normally capable (and one hears it from the television and radio evangelists daily) is fear for saving our own necks from a righteous God who will not abide our behavior. Confession thus becomes the ultimate selfish act and the ultimate sin. Can there be any wonder that the mature Luther could remark, "Even when we are at our most spiritual, we turn God Himself into an idol"? That is, God becomes the cosmic bellhop whose sole function is to meet my needs on more or less my terms.

Perhaps too much space has been expended on Luther the student. There are nonetheless many people today (and I am one of them) who are rather like him in the sense that they have never stopped going to school. We all (and Luther was no exception) spend our entire lives working from what we were taught as students. What he did as a professor cannot therefore be understood without a thorough comprehension of what he was taught. Luther's special gift was that in his calling as a professor he was able to unlearn practically everything he was taught; that is, to put it on its head, and to

teach something very different. That something is of course the unmerited and wholly sufficient grace of God in Christ.

In his early work as a professor and in particular in his early lectures, we find him slowly, slowly--just as he himself said--working a theological and ultimately a religious revolution. It can be no surprise that in his first extant lectures--those of 1513-1515 on the Psalms--he began by repeating the things that he was taught. He even once said, "When I became a Doctor (that is, professor), I did not know that we cannot make propitiation for our sins;" or, to put it differently, that we cannot in any way earn salvation or contribute anything to it. But this was the late Luther. How did he get there? As noted earlier, he got there by teaching and writing.

The most striking example of this process comes, to my mind, from his lectures to his students on Psalm 71 with its repeated refrain, "In thy righteousness deliver me and rescue me; Incline thine ear to me, and save me. Be Thou to me a rock of habitation, to which I may continually come; Thou hast given commandment to save me, For Thou art my rock and my fortress."

Luther himself declared very near the end of his life that "I hated that word, 'the righteousness of God,'" and for reasons we have already seen. And here it was, with Luther facing the one problem that most professors face at some point in most courses they teach: they have got to give their students a coherent lecture on a subject they hate. For me as an historian, that subject is the industrial revolution; for Luther it was the righteousness of God. He found it absolutely terrifying, because he knew that if God judged him according to

His righteousness, he--Martin Luther--was finished.

But the psalmist was saying something different. He said, and he said it repeatedly, "In thy righteousness deliver me and rescue me," while saying nothing about his own righteousness. He made no claims on God and indeed later called himself a feeble, gray-haired old man with nothing to offer. So, what did Luther tell his students about this Psalm?

One can only imagine these things, but it would seem that Luther was seized by this text, because here is where the revolution began. Here the harried professor told his students, "This is the righteousness of God, that by which he makes us righteous, wise, and strong, or that by which he judges us." His best students must have been astounded at what they heard, and one may only guess what his poorer students thought. If they were anything like many of mine, they were just plain annoyed. Here the course was going along just fine and everything was in neat order. Now the worst of all possible things had happened: the professor had introduced an element of ambiguity into things. What, after all, is an assiduous note-taker to do with this awful word, "or"? As I commonly suggest to my students, now is the time to pay attention. And I tell my graduate students that when they encounter something in the sources that is odd, out-of-place, or apparently crazy, this is just the thing to investigate more closely. So, too, it is with Luther.

In the first place, what he was saying <u>was</u> odd for the times. He had been taught and he had been teaching that the righteousness of God was one of God's qualities. It was not, as the old generic protestant hymn has it, that "God is good and

therefore King," but quite the contrary. God is king and therefore whatever God is is good. According to this view, God's righteousness was a standard that everyone must meet, and--as St. Paul has it--"all have fallen short of the glory of God." Therefore God in his righteousness rightly judged all fallen creatures. Whatever else one might say of him (and Thomas Aquinas and others said a good deal), God was right and there was simply no sense in discussing the matter. God was also merciful, but that was another matter and one to be worked out in this world so that God would be merciful to me.

In the second place, what Luther was saying was confusing. Please note that in our citation Luther did not even use the words "mercy" or "merciful," and neither does Psalm 71. Instead Luther seemed to be saying that God's righteousness saved and condemned at the same time. Here a little historical imagination is necessary. If some Lutherans, who have presumably been taught this theology since they were children, can find this connection a little confusing, we must consider the reactions of students who were taught in the traditional way in Luther's time. The keenest and most advanced among them must have walked out of class muttering to themselves, "What on earth is Professor Luther up to now?"

One must admit that all of the preceding contains some speculation, perhaps even a bit of fancy, but there is good evidence to support the idea that this teaching was innovative in Wittenberg's theological faculty. In the first place it was innovative for Luther, so innovative that he did not even realize what he had done until later in life. But it made so much sense to him that in a later lecture, also on Psalms, he simply discarded the late medieval

understanding of the righteousness of God and substituted for it what he came to call "passive righteousness." In this instance he concluded the gloss on the text and presumably his lecture by saying, "Therefore, whoever wants to understand the Scriptures wisely needs to understand all these things as they pertain to life--truth, wisdom, salvation, justice, namely with which He makes us strong, saved, just, and wise. So also the works of God and the way of God, all of which things Christ is in the literal sense, while morally all these things are faith in him." The professor at work, and under the pressures of teaching his students, had undergone a revolution in his understanding of the Scriptures.

As noted earlier, all teachers spend their entire lives working from what they were taught. Most never leave it behind them. To be sure, they elaborate on it and refine it in the light of new information, but they don't change its basic structure and content. Luther did, but it took him time and more work. The famous lectures on Romans followed those on Psalms and continued from 1515 to 1517. These show that now Luther was working from what he himself had learned in his struggles to understand the Scriptures and teach them to his students.

With the problem of the righteousness of God settled to his satisfaction, he now moved to another issue in late medieval theology: the synteresis or the spark of goodness and of the divine that was supposedly left in humankind after the fall. For the scholastic theologians this spark was at least the urge to save one's own neck, the instinct for self-preservation or the ability to love one's self. For the mystics it was a deep yearning for the divine or what we would probably call the meaning of life itself. Moreover, all agreed that

it was to be found in human reason or the conscience, and that if it were fanned it would become a flame that would at least begin to consume the evil that lay in human hearts. The synteresis was thus medi- evil foundation for the notion of free will and the keystone for a religion in which works played a prominent part.

There can be no question that Luther began his work by agreeing that there was such a thing as a spark of goodness. In the Psalms lectures he declared, "And there is such a natural desire in human nature indeed, because the synteresis and desire of good is inextinguishable in man, though it is hindered in many." A little later he told his students, "For there is nobody so bad as not to feel the murmuring of reason and the synteresis." In summary, he insisted that "the remnant (that is, reason and the synteresis) always cry to the Lord, even if, forced by sin, the will should sin." In the Romans lecture--even after passing the famous "Reformation passage," Romans 1:17--he should say, "For we are not wholly inclined to evil, since a portion is left to us, which is affected toward good things, as is evident in the synteresis."

Once again, this was all standard stuff, but Luther soon changed his mind and gave his students one more shock. Commenting on Romans 4:7, he repeated the standard teaching on the subject, stopped, and shouted, "Fools! Pig-theologians! This tiny motion towards God which a man can perform by nature they dream to be an act of loving God above all things. But behold, the whole man is filled with sinful desires, this tiny movement notwithstanding." By the time he had worked his way further through Romans, the spark of goodness had gone the way of his teachers' understanding of the righteousness of God. "It is said that human nature has a general

notion of knowing and willing good but that it goes wrong in particulars. It would be more accurate to say that it knows and wills the good in particular things, but that in general it neither knows nor wills the good." Luther the professor tossed the synteresis onto the theological trash heap -- not even to be recycled.

But what about the "evangelical breakthrough" or the "tower experience" of which so much is made in what can only be called more romantic treatments of Luther's development? There can be no doubt that Luther himself wrote that there was one. He described a rush of understanding about the righteousness of God, which must be dated in 1519, and declared, "I felt as if I had been reborn, and the gates of Paradise swung open for me."

This is heady stuff. To this day it is used in some circles to undergrid notions about sudden conversions. One particularly enthusiastic Luther scholar even explained the "tower experience" by writing that "God laid his hand on Martin Luther's head." Others have tried to explain it away by pointing out that Luther wrote this remark in 1545, long after the fact; perhaps his memory was failing or perhaps, like many old men, he was romanticizing his youth. In fact, it probably happened. But what was it? Taking all the evidence into account, this "moment" was the sudden realization that he had solved the problem. It was as if he said, "Aha! Now I know!" In fact, he had known for some time. He just hadn't known that he knew.

If space permitted, enormous quantities of evidence could be brought forth in support of the assertion that Luther was a university man as well as a tortured conscience and that the university man is of far more historical significance than

the tortured conscience. After all, he was by no means the only person in the 16th century to have real doubts about the eternal status of his soul. To put the matter quite simply, Elector Frederick the Wise--Luther's prince--had a relic collection in the building on whose door Luther posted the 95 Theses from which the faithful could earn well over a million years off their time in purgatory. The Elector made so much money from the indulgences "sold" there that from it he could and did pay for all the public works construction--roads, fortifications, and the like--in all of Electoral Saxony. The dictim still holds: "You can't sell refrigerators to Eskimos." The laity wanted the spiritual benefits that supposedly came with indulgences, pilgrimages, the veneration of relics, and the like, just as today many will whore after the likes of Jimmy Bakker or a Swaggert. That world, and perhaps ours, was filled with tortured consciences. Luther was one of them. But Luther was also a professor and an extraordinarily gifted one.

Above all, he was a university man in an intentional way. By this I mean that he worked within the university and thought that what happened in the university world was crucial. It is common knowledge that the 95 Theses were written in Latin for academic disputation. What is less well acknowledged is that the first converts to Luther's side were his own colleagues in Wittenberg's faculty of theology. Indeed, the "Reformation" was initially known as "the Wittenberg theology," that is, the theology that was taught at Wittenberg. The term "Lutherans" was first used to denote those theologians elsewhere who agreed with Luther, much as one could be called an Augustinian, Occamist, Thomist, or Scotist. In 1518 Luther in fact wrote a letter in which he declared, "I am convinced that there will be no reform unless the

universities are reformed first." In the Address to the Christian Nobility in 1520, he declared, "The universities need a thorough reformation. I say this, no matter whom it offends.

The picture of Luther as a university man also has a touching side story to it. After the Heidelberg Disputation of 1518 he was riding home with one of his former professors. Here it is important to understand that one of the closest relationships any professor has is to his or her own professor. We even call such people our "Doctor Father;" it is as if they have adopted us. Spending some time with this person is always a special moment, one that most of us use, at least in part, to get caught up on what we're thinking now. Luther did just this on that long wagon ride home, but he had no success. Of his former professor he wrote, "All the old man did was to become confused, and shake his head in disbelief."

Thus the real Luther, the Luther of historical significance, was the university man first, and many other things second. But what is that to us? We have now come full circle, back to George Forell's homily in his after-dinner talk years ago to a bunch of young professors and his admonition to us to do our work. Luther said much the same. After recounting his struggles to understand the righteousness of God, he described how the great moment of realization came to him: "At last, meditating day and night and by the mercy of God, I gave heed to the context of the words, 'In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" One can almost picture the scholar in his study, laboring away. Finally it comes, and the professor gives thanks to God. We could all do worse, no matter our calling.

REFORMATION LECTURE II

LUTHER THE HUMANIST

Martin Luther was of course by no means a humanist in the contemporary sense of the term. He did not believe that human beings were the measure of all things, nor did he ever entertain the thought that our reason, will, or inclination to the good could merit much in the realm of the divine besides eternal damnation. He was, after all, the man who said that "Reason is the Devil's whore" as well as the professor who removed Aristotle from the curriculum of his own university. He is also the one who accused Erasmus of being no Christian at all, because Erasmus had defended the freedom of the human will on the grounds that such mighty questions were finally unanswerable.

There is, however, also some solid truth to the title I have chosen for this essay. To find it requires taking three steps: 1) something must be said about the word "humanism" and what it meant in the early 16th century; 2) we have to know what Luther owed to this particular humanism; 3) we have to know the grounds on which he broke from it too. Only then can Luther have something to say to us in our circumstances.

Everyone knows about the conflict between Luther and Erasmus on the question of the freedom of the human will. Many have regarded and continue to regard this debate as the division between Renaissance and Reformation and between Humanism and Luther. Here was Erasmus "defending the freedom of the will and here was Luther denying it. On the other hand, even Erasmus would by no means have

claimed to be or even have recognized what we today call a humanist or humanism. He had no doubts about the absolute necessity of divine grace. Instead, his query was whether grace was sufficient for salvation. In his last words he even reverted from the Latin tongue to his maternal language, Dutch, and said, "Liebe God" or "Love God." Erasmus, too, was not a 20th-century humanist who would never say such a thing.

Just as with late medieval theology and religion, so too with respect to humanism: we must get it straight in its 16th-century context before we can understand Luther as a "humanist." In the first place, this humanism was by no means a philosophical or theological set of convictions about the abilities of human beings over and against God. Lorenzo Valla, one of the best known Italian humanists of a half-century earlier, wrote a dialogue amongst a Christian, a Muslin, and a Jew in which the Christian declared that he was completely dependent on the grace of God and could accomplish nothing for his salvation on his own. He also composed a set of Notes on the New Testament from which Erasmus worked in composing his own Adnotations in Novum Testamentum. Luther used both and chided Erasmus for following Valla in all ways except his views on the bondage of the will. "Humanism" was not--at least in the Renaissance--a set view on the capabilities of human beings in the presence of God.

What was it, then? It was an insistence that the studia humanitatis or "the humanities," as we call them, were far more important for the conduct of life than what we might call logic, philosophy, or systematic theology, to say nothing of advanced mathematics, the social sciences, or theoretical physics. They might add--to someone who lives in our world--that how one actually conducts life is

far more important than what one thinks about life. They firmly maintained that the studies they recommended prepared one actually to live life in a productive and even God pleasing way.

It is very easy for us to think of this matter in the sort of flabby "life skills" manner that is all too common in high schools, colleges, and universities these days. The humanists had nothing of the kind in mind. To them, the conduct of life was not the acquisition of certain skills that might allow one to manage one's life in the sense of balancing one's check book, but the gentle intrusion of the wisdom that will never fail. After all, knowing how to manipulate my family, business, and political circumstances is one thing; being able to live within it is yet another. The humanists wanted to provide--or lead to--the wisdom that would enable people to live within this world and to make a contribution to it.

How, then, was one to meet this goal? It was not easy. Above all, it required learning how human beings had lived in a better time than the humanists' own. To do so required skipping over the Middle Ages and going back to classical and Christian antiquity. Accomplishing this feat naturally required, in addition, learning the ancient languages and learning them the way the ancients wrote them. Initially, someone like Petrarch limited this undertaking to correct Latin and even wrote a long, boring epic poem, Africa. Later, Lorenzo Valla extended the task to Greek, in particular with his Notes on the New Testament, and finally a German, Reuchlin, added Hebrew with his studies of the Cabbalah. Please note that this program of study contains no real concern for Christian doctrine as such any more than it does for political theory or philosophy. Thus, Valla could observe that the

Greek which Jerome rendered as "do penance" really meant "repent," but could draw none of the theological implications that this emendation suggests, while Erasmus could warn against becoming involved in doctrinal debates, because they would draw attention away from the necessary reform of life and morals. One of his followers observed in an index to his edition of Jerome, that the index was not to be used to search out Jerome's teachings on this or that dogmatic issue but for the purpose of "distinguishing fine phrases." In sum, the humanists were interested in education for the conduct of life, whether it be in business, politics, or the family. They wished to inculcate enlightened piety rather than to teach true doctrine; that is, they aimed to impart the wisdom that would guide a person to live life well and usefully.

There can be no question that Luther drew upon this tradition in many ways. Our concern here is specifically with how he grew upon it for his own work as a professor. When he succeeded to Staupitz's position as Professor of the Bible at Wittenberg University, he agreed to take responsibility for these lectures for the rest of his life. He did so in spite of the fact that he never liked Wittenberg and even tried while he was at the Wartburg (1521-1522) to arrange a call to Erfurt. Yet, and as noted previously, he fulfilled his duties faithfully.

The best evidence for this fact comes from two little incidents in his life. The first concerns a man named Paul Lange, who, although by no means successful in his own academic career, nevertheless thought he could make something of a name for himself by writing a book about other German professors who either were already famous for their

learning or who could be counted upon to become famous. Inexplicably he included "little Wittenberg," as Luther called it, on his life of places at which to hold interviews. Even more inexplicably, he did not include Dr. Martin Luther among the people he interviewed. No one knows why he did not interview Dr. Luther, but the year was 1513 and I suspect that the reason is that Dr. Luther was simply unavailable. Luther was not only lecturing on the Psalms to his students, along with his other duties, but also doing his best to teach himself Hebrew. There is indeed evidence that he used the Masoretic texts of the Psalms for these lectures.

The second incident comes from a single letter of Luther's, this time in early 1518 to his friend Johannes Lang. Luther had apparently heard that Lang was going to visit the spring Frankfurt book fair, and Luther was up on his bibliography if not on his reading. He asked Lang to buy him three books, and promised that he was good for whatever Lang would have to pay for them. Luther had heard of the publication of the following: More's Utopia, Erasmus's In Praise of Folly, and Wolfgang Capito's Hebrew Grammar. He wanted all three. In and of itself, this request shows just how well Luther was integrated into the writings and the circles of humanist scholarship. In sum, he knew what was going on! But the odd fact is that he added that, if Lang could not acquire all three for him, he must get the Hebrew grammar above all. This book Luther needed for his work as a professor. There were a few other people in Europe who were equally keen on learning both Greek and Hebrew, but not many who were professors of theology. In sum, Luther was taking everything he could from any place and anyone.

One person in particular was important for

Luther's early development. He was the French humanist, Jacques Lefevre d'Etaples. It is apparent that Luther adopted much of Lefevre's exegetical methods during the course of his own early lectures on Psalms. Simply put, in place of sometimes fanciful four-fold method of exegesis so popular in the Middle Ages--the so-called Quadriga --Lefevre substituted a two-fold method, according to which the Scriptures had a literal sense and a spiritual sense, but then conflated both into the prophetic sense. In this way the Scriptures spoke directly to the believer, both condemning and saving at the same time. There can be no question that Luther both knew Lefevre's own commentary on the Psalms and his method, and that he at the very least took them into account in his own book.

It is important now to pause for a moment and ask where we are in our consideration of the theme, "Luther the Humanist." One thing should be clear: Luther took the humanists and humanist scholarship seriously. In addition, he knew it intimately. One need simply add that for a time he courted the humanists even to the point of Hellenizing his own name into "Eleutherios"; that is, "the free one" or "the freed one." Just as with respect to late medieval theology, so, too, with humanism, Luther was a man of his times. He appears once again as the university man and in particular as the young university man; that is, someone who is open to the most recent and the best of scholarly work and, above all, someone who is willing to strike out on new paths for the sake of both teaching and defending the truth.

Naturally enough, these borrowings from the humanists showed themselves most prominently in his work as a practicing exegete as well as in his ideas about education in general, about which there

will be more to report in the following article. Of the ancient languages he once said that they were "the sheath in which this sword of the spirit is contained, the casket in which we carry this jewel, the vessel in which we hold this wine." According to Luther, God chose to speak in the ancient languages, and we must therefore learn them.

But Luther had an even more profound debt to the humanists in his hermeneutic--that is, his basic understanding of the Scriptures--and this is the best that contemporary Christians, and even Lutherans, commonly fail to acknowledge in their own work. This debt has to do with a fundamental understanding about the nature of the text itself and therefore about how one approaches it. The question is this: are the Scriptures first and foremost a sourcebook for doctrine or are they something else? For Luther the answer was that they were something else. To put it differently, the authors of the Scriptures had a point of view and to understand each passage correctly required understanding the Scriptures as a whole from the authors' point(s) of view. Luther himself once remarked, "I am the first to place primary emphasis on the importance of laying hold upon the meaning of the book, that which it wants to say, the essential viewpoint of the author. If we do not know this central fact, it is impossible to understand a book." He put it a little differently when he said, "He who confronts the mysteries of Holy Scripture with the mind of a horse or an ass will never understand them."

What this means, very simply (and it is simple), is that we must conform our minds to the texts of the Scriptures; that is, to the intentions of their authors. I said that this is a simple matter, and I can illustrate it simply. My wife is an avid

researcher of, among other things, cook books and gardening/landscaping books, and we are both avid practitioners of these arts. As you might guess, these are not beginner's books on either of these subjects but instead books that talk about how you do, for example, Japanese cooking or Japanese landscaping. To be sure, these books contain recipes and descriptions of individual plants and how to care for them. But their point is how to cook or to landscape in the Japanese manner.

Now and then, Margaret will loan one or another of her books to a neighbor or a friend who has some interest in the subject. All too often the following occurs when the book is returned--if it is returned. My wife will say something like, "Well, what did you think of that book?" And the reply will be something like, "I found the most marvelous recipe for sushi" or "Isn't that whatever-it-is shrub just lovely?"

The point is quite simple, and the reader missed it. Whoever borrowed a book found all kinds of little-bitty details, but if they had to cook or to lanscape in the Japanese mode with whatever they had at hand, they wouldn't have a clue as to how to go about it. My wife's cookbooks and landscaping books are not collections of recipes and they are not a listing of shrubs. Instead, the recipes and the shrubs are there to illustrate the Japanese way of doing these things. Because she knows how to read--in just the manner Luther and the humanists recommended--she can cook and landscape in the Japanese manner without even reconsulting the books and above all without having the proper ingredients or shrubs at hand. So, too, was it for Luther with respect to the Scriptures. This way of understanding them, which he got from the humanists, was what allowed him to declare

flatly that the letter of James was an "epistle of straw" and did not belong in the canon and that Revelation was probably composed by a "mad Syrian monk." Why? They did not fit with the whole.

I am perfectly aware that I may be treading on some toes here; but, rather than tread on them, I would prefer to stomp on them. You see, here is also the point at which Luther departed from the humanists. He thought--nay, was convinced--that he knew the essential point of view of the authors of the Scriptures and therefore knew what the Scriptures had to say. It was, quite simply, Christ alone and him crucified. Christ was the point of view of both the Old and New Testaments. To be sure, Christ was predicted in the Old Testament in all the passages we commonly use during the season of advent. But, more importantly, He was prefigured in the entire history of the people of Israel, as God repeatedly called His people to Him, chastized them, and drove them back to Him. "Understand this clearly," Luther once wrote, "that the Israelites are not [in their writing] concerned with a foreshadowing or image but with an example." The Old Testament is thus first and foremost filled with examples of the final atonement that would come in Christ. Here was why Jesus on the road to Emmaus could expound all the law and the prophets and show that it pointed to Him.

In the New Testament one then meets Christ personally and has the opportunity to hear Him speak directly. But once again Luther was far more concerned with the speaking than with the acting. He wrote that he far preferred the Gospel of John to the other Gospels because in the others one learns much about what Jesus did but in John one hears much of what he had to say. And, as Luther had it, what

Jesus did by way of miracles, healings, and the like "do me no good. But His words are life itself."

Here we see Luther taking the humanist understanding of a text to its radical conclusion. By claiming to know what the point of view of the author was, he declares that he knows what the text means. It means, as Paul had it, "Christ and Him crucified." Now, when it is preached, it engages the hearer and finally the reader. As Luther once remarks, "It is a divine miracle when it is made possible for us to hear and to read the words of the Scriptures as though every man hears them spoken to himself personally by God Himself." In another place he concluded his discussion by declaring, "So, every word of the Scriptures that has Christ and His salvation as its subject is directed personally to the hearer as well." Indeed, what could be more personal than the message that God loves you?

Here of course is also where Luther parted company from the humanists of his time, even if they were not humanists in our understanding of the term. Here is the core of his conflict with Erasmus. Luther claimed to know and Erasmus--who was being in this regard perfectly true to himself--insisted that this doctrinal point was unknowable from the Scriptures. In truth, Erasmus thought, of course, that all doctrines were finally unknowable and, what is more, useless.

This classic confrontation--one that still appears in Western Civilization textbooks, however badly it is misunderstood--had its moments of poignancy. On Erasmus's side, it is apparent that he spent some time looking for an issue on which to indicate to all concerned that he and Luther were

not in agreement. He went to the point of writing several friends for advice on what topic he should choose to signal their disagreement. Thomas More finally provided the answer--the freedom of the will. Even so, in On the Freedom of the Will Erasmus did not argue that human beings had free will; instead he insisted that the issue was moot, that is, unknowable.

On Luther's side, it is undeniable that he was playing a double game with Erasmus for reasons that are completely understandable, given the desperate situation in which he earlier found himself. In 1517 he wrote his friend, John Long, "I am reading Erasmus and my esteem for him diminishes daily. It pleases me that he constantly and eruditely condemns both monks and priests for their inveterate and stupid ignorance; but I fear that he does not promote Christ nor the grace of God, of which he is more ignorant than is Lefevre d'Etaples. With him the human is more prevalent than the divine. Though I prefer not to judge him, I admonish you not to read all his works, or rather, not to receive them indiscrimininately." Yet, two years later he could write Erasmus himself, "Who is there whose innermost being Erasmus has not penetrated, whom Erasmus does not reach, in whom Erasmus does not reign? Wherefore, dear Erasmus, learn to know this little brother in Christ also. . . ." But in between these two letters, Luther had also written, "I find much in Erasmus which seems strange and unhelpful to the knowledge of Christ, if I speak as a theologian rather than as a grammarian."

Erasmus finally started the fight in 1523 with his Diatribe on the Freedom of the Will, and Luther ignored it. He would have continued to ignore it if it hadn't been for his colleague, Melanchthon, and his wife, Katie, who insisted that he must reply.

Finally he did, in 1525, but painfully so. As he wrote a friend while in the midst of composing On the Bondage of the Will, "I cannot tell you how difficult it is to respond to such an unlearned book from such a learned man."

Erasmus drew the line between the two, and Luther complimented him for it. Others, he said, had troubled him with trifles, but Erasmus went for the jugular. And where was it? Not really on the subject of the freedom or bondage of the will. The real point was whether one could know the answer to the question. Spiritus sanctus non scepticus est [The Holy Spirit is not a sceptic] was Luther's reply. To Erasmus's admission that he was not really a theologian, Luther replied, "Is that ever the truth!" By refusing to make assertions on this critical matter Erasmus raised real questions as to whether he was a Christian at all. The Scriptural authors were absolutely clear on this central issue for salvation: human beings could contribute nothing, and it was entirely the work of God through Christ. All Christians could do was to trust the promises of God and the merits of Christ, and this trust was itself a gift of God.

Here is the true dividing line between Erasmus and Luther and the true point at which Luther was not a humanist even in 16th-century terms. He used all the tools of the humanists, but he used them to seek out and to teach true doctrine, life-giving doctrine. But it must be added that this doctrine did not consist of the Spitzfindigkeiten, the small points, of the Scriptures, but the main issue: are human beings responsible for their own salvation or did Christ really do it, once and for all? For Luther, there was only one answer to this question, and it was based on the Scriptures themselves: "A Word shall quickly slay him!"

Hence, the answer to the question of whether Luther was a humanist is both yes and no, as is the answer to any question of some serious historical significance. Yes he was, when it came to the methods and the goal of penetrating to the meaning of a text, in this case the texts of the Scriptures. No he wasn't, when it comes to the matter of knowing what the doctrinal import of those texts might be. We therefore come, inevitably and finally, to Luther's understanding of human reason. As surprising as it might seem, we also come almost full circle to the question of the "autonomy" of human reason in the contemporary understanding of what the word, "humanism," might mean.

This is not an easy subject. It is particularly not easy to explain in the brief compass that remains. The canonical three headings will have to suffice: 1) reason before the fall; 2) reason after the fall, under two sub-categories--with respect to the world in which we life, and with respect to things divine; 3) illumined reason.

The first is easy. Before the fall (and this is a purely hypothetical category), human reason was such that "Adam had an illumined reason, true acknowledgement of God, and a will properly directed to God and the neighbor." But then came the fall.

After the fall reason is pictured in two ways. With respect to the world in which we live, Luther regarded reason as "the most important and the highest in rank among all things and, in comparison with other things in this life, the best and something divine. It is the inventor and mentor of all the arts, medicine, law, and of whatever wisdom, power, virtue, and glory men possess in this life. By virtue of this fact it ought to be named the essential difference by which man is distinguished

from the animals and other things. Nor did God after the fall of Adam take away this majesty of reason, but rather confirmed it." The last sentence has particular importance: "Nor did God after the fall of Adam take away this majesty of reason, but rather confirmed it." Very simply, Luther is saying that if humans exercise their God-given talents, they can manage their affairs here on earth. We might, in passing, very well ask ourselves how good a job we have done of it. When God gave us dominion over the earth, he did not tell us to be stupid about it.

There are, however, two problems yet to challenge us. In the first place--and perhaps most importantly--there is the problem of reason after the fall as it addresses the question of human capabilities coram Deo, in the presence of God. Here, and only here, is where "reason is the devil's whore." As Luther remarked in the commentary on Genesis, "The knowledge of God is twofold, one general and the other proper. In general, all humans have a knowledge of God; that is, that God is, that he created heaven and earth, that he is just, that he punishes the impious, and so forth." Luther thus had a "natural theology" according to which everyone can know that there is an omnipotent God.

But for Luther, at least, this is not an important question and the answer to it is therefore perfectly trivial. The critical issue has instead to do with this omnipotent God's intentions regarding humankind. Here human reason has nothing to offer. To demonstrate his point, Luther picked a common theme of the time; namely, whether honorable figures from ancient Greece and Rome had anything to say on this subject. His answer was unequivocal. "Cicero is invincibly ignorant about God. For with him you

see nothing about Him Himself in the disputations concerning the nature of the gods, and the ends of good and bad laws, because by virtue of human reason . . . he is ignorant of what God wills, of what might be his intentions concerning us."

Here is true ignorance, but for Luther the problem went far deeper than mere ignorance. When it played with things divine, reason was not only ignorant but also profoundly wrong-headed. As he put it in a different place, "Our reason knows that God is. But who and what He is, who actually is God, that reason does not know. Reason plays blind-man's bluff with God and always makes mistakes, and misses every time, calling that God which is not God, and again not calling him God who is really God. Therefore, in trying so hard, reason gives God's name and honor to whatever it considers is God, but never finds Him who is really God, but always the devil or its own vanity, which is ruled by the devil." In this respect, we might simply ask ourselves how often we have preferred our own rules or our own doctrines over the love of God in Christ.

There was for Luther, however, another kind of reason, the illumined reason, the ratio illuminata. This was not the sort of reason that understood the Law, "Because [naked] reason knows nothing except the law, according to which it necessarily attributes righteousness as occurring through the Law." Indeed, it did not even really know the law, for "no one knows the Law or can explain it as such; this is the work of the Gospel."

Reason that has been enlightened by the Gospel is an entirely different matter. Indeed, it sees the entire world in a new light. One clue to the truly revolutionary character of this reason comes from an apparently odd source. How, one might ask,

could Luther compose "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" in the midst of one of his own deepest depressions? And why should he give such apparently odd pastoral advice, such as that to a man who was concerned about predestination? He told the man to rejoice that he was being attacked by Satan on this subject. All by themselves such doubts and fears were evidence that this man, suffering though he was, belonged to Christ. After all, Luther said, "Satan does not bother those, like Erasmus, that he already has in his grasp." Luther thus, with his illumined reason, could wring assurance out of despair.

My favorite--and I think the most telling--illustration of this use of illumined reason by Luther is the following. On one occasion a student had managed--as students sometimes do--to impregnate a young woman from Wittenberg. The student wrote Luther about it, and informed him that although he was inclined, as a matter of honor and doing the right thing, to marry her. But his mother opposed this move on the grounds that the young lady was beneath her son's station. The student should give up his studies, come home, flee the situation, and go to work in the family business. A suitable marriage would be arranged.

There are all sorts of obvious pastoral responses to this situation. The student suggested one of them: the honorable thing would be to marry the woman he had made pregnant. Another was to invoke the law by saying that it was his obligation to do so; after all, they had committed adultery and the only way to atone for it was with a marriage. Yet another was to say that he should not add sin to sin by failing to honor his mother and her wishes; hence, he should not marry the young woman, because his mother was forbidding it. Still one more would

suggest that he was in love with the young lady, so why not marry her?

I cannot believe that very many people would second-guess Luther if he had chosen any one of these options, with the possible exception of the last. I certainly wouldn't. But Luther took none of them. To be sure, he urged the young man to marry the girl even in defiance of his mother's wishes. But the question is, "Why or on what grounds did he give this advice?" Here is illumined reason, that is, reason informed by the Gospel, at work. Luther wrote back, "If you don't marry her, you will have a wounded conscience. And you know what a worm the conscience can be."

Here was reason that was captive in obedience to Christ. Luther was concerned not with the law, with the mother's advice, or with custom. He was concerned for the young man's conscience and in particular with his experience of the grace of God in Christ. Do the honorable thing, to be sure, he said in essence, but above all do not let Satan start to work on your conscience.

To my mind this was good pastoral advice. But it is far away from either the humanism we know or the humanism that Luther knew. The simple fact of the matter is this: Luther could use all the tools of the humanists of his time, and use them to understand the Gospel. But humanists then and humanists now come mightily armed with the Law but, as Luther put it, are "invincibly ignorant" of the Gospel. Thus, regenerated reason is not a reason that believes all sorts of things that it knows are not so; it is instead a reason that is "captive to Christ" and Him alone.

REFORMATION LECTURE III

LUTHER AND LEARNING

The lecture on "Luther the Humanist" contained the obligatory citation from Luther on these matters, according to which "reason is the devil's whore." Even so, it became apparent that there were nonetheless certain areas of life and certain circumstances under which reason was quite a different animal all together. Luther thus reserved a high place for reason within this world and for illumined reason (ratio illuminata) in the realm of faith itself. At the very least, these remarks should have provided any who are students or have ever been students a certain reassurance that they have not been wasting their time--or worse!

The present topic requires beginning with a different quotation from Luther. This one should convince all students not only that they are not wasting their time but also that they are in fact spending it in one of the most important activities imaginable: "Learning, wisdom, and writers must rule the world. . . . If God out of his wrath would take away from the world all the learned, people would become beasts and wild animals. Then there would be no wisdom, religion, or law, but only robbery, stealing, murder, and the doing of all kinds of evil. . . ." What Luther intended with this assertion is well illustrated by a view that my colleagues and I who teach freshman Western Civilization at the Ohio State University share. When one of us is on the way to teach this particular course and is asked what he is up to, the common reply is, "I am going to push back the

frontiers of barbarism!" Here attention goes first to Luther's general view of learning and education, secondly to its place in the Reformation, and finally to how Luther would have us view learning, education, and culture in our own time. There will be some surprises along the way.

In the first place, Luther was the founder of our systems of public education, if anyone was. In addition to many off-hand remarks, he devoted two separate substantial treaties to the subject. In 1524 he wrote To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany on the Founding of Schools and in 1530 a Sermon on Keeping Children in School. Anyone who reads but a portion of either of these essays can have no doubt that Luther was an advocate of public education.

Just a few quotations will suffice. From the first of the two treatises: "In order outwardly to maintain its temporal estate, the world must have good and skilled men and women. . . . Now such men must come from our boys and such women from our girls. Therefore the thing to do is to train our boys and girls in the proper manner." From the second: "It is the duty of the government to compel its subjects to keep their children in school. . . . If the government can compel citizens fit for military service to carry pike and musket, man the walls, and perform other military services in time of war, how much more can it and ought it compel its subjects to keep their children in school?" One more quotation ought to clinch the matter, should any doubts remain: "We should spend a hundred gulden to educate our children for every gulden we spend on defense, even if the Turks are breathing down our necks!" There cannot be much question about where Luther would have stood with respect to current debates

about federal budgetary priorities! The military would take a seat way back in the rear of the bus.

It is worth noting, at least in passing, that Luther's fundamental point of view about public education became official policy in all Protestant territories with the exception of England. At least on the Continent, when monasteries, convents, and collegiate churches were "secularized," the money did not go into the princes' or city councils' pockets. Instead, it was devoted to a variety of what we would call "social services," among which education was the most common and by far the most expensive. Thus the income that supported a canon at a collegiate church or a monk or a nun was now diverted to provide the salary of a teacher or professor. In addition, several of these prebends plus special monies were set aside to provide for the living expenses of students from families that did not have the means with which to send their children to school. Several of these foundations even outlived the French Revolution and exist to this day. Here I have in mind the Stift in Strasbourg and the one in Tubingen, where students (and visiting scholars such as myself) can live and eat, if not for free, certainly at much less than the prevailing rates in the city. Thus, when in Strasbourg, I have been known to live and eat breakfast at the Stift for about six dollars a day. It is true that rural villages were by no means so well positioned and that education then, as now, had to wrestle with severe financial restraints. A beginning was nonetheless made, and it was made in response to Luther, who even used an old monastic piece of semi-vulgarity to make his point, when he said that "It is a worse sin to leave a young mind untrained than it is to rape a virgin."

The next obvious sub-question is, "What sort of

education did these schools provide?" The answer depends upon where one looks. Generally speaking--and just as today--Protestant Germany featured a two-tiered system of primary and secondary education. For most people the Winkelschulen or "corner schools" were enough. There one learned to read and write German and to do basic arithmatic. The basic texts were the catechism and portions of the Bible, and the teacher was frequently enough the village pastor or assistant pastor. At the other level the gymnasium held sway. In addition to reading the Bible and the catechism in Latin or even Greek, one studied these languages formally, as well as all the other liberal arts. This curriculum was clearly preparatory to university training.

Here there can be absolutely no doubt that Luther favored the humanistic curriculum as he learned it from Erasmus but above all from Melanchthon. Before his marriage he commented, "If I had children and could accomplish it, they would study not only the languages and history, but singing, instrumental music, and all the branches of mathematics." To his mind the liberal arts were "invented and brought to light by learned and outstanding people as serviceable and useful to people in this life, noble and precious gifts of Christ who used the uses them according to His pleasure for the praise, honor, and glory of His holy name." He was especially devoted to history and once remarked that his one regret in life was that he had not spent enough time studying it. Of it he said, "It would be most beneficial to rulers if from youth on they would read . . . history both in sacred and profane books, for in them they would find more examples of the art of ruling than in all the books of law." Of historians themselves, he declared, "The historian must have the heart of a lion."

Above all, Luther was committed to an educational curriculum that was based on rhetoric rather than the dialectic of the schoolmen. Over dinner one night he explained the difference between the two in these words: "Dialectica says, 'Give me something to eat.' Rhetorica says, 'I have had a hard road to go all day long; I am tired, sick, and hungry, and have eaten nothing. Dear fellow, give me a good piece of meat, a good fried chicken, and a good measure of beer to drink!"

All by itself this quotation illustrates why Luther should be so much in favor of rhetoric over dialectic, and it is a point to which this essay will return at its end. The fundamental fact is that the purpose of dialectic or logic is to convince someone of the truth of some proposition or other. I suppose the purest form of it today may be found in certain types of higher mathematics. By contrast, rhetoric seeks to convince someone of something and to move the hearer to a decision and, thence, to action. It is thus by no means "mere rhetoric," as we sometimes hear today, but a form of learning that takes the whole human being, body, mind and soul, into account. It is, in a word, human and rightly the lynch-pin of humanistic education.

It should be added [if only as an aside) that the curriculum Luther recommended--on cue from Melanchthon--was then regarded as the very best education a person could receive. Probably the most famous of the schools that were established on this model was the academy at Strasbourg, under the leadership of Johannes Sturm. But it proved to be the model throughout Europe for similar academies as far away as Rostock, Bratislava, Geneva, and even that cultural backwater of the time, England. Indeed, but a glance at the

Jesuits' Ratio Studiorum shows that they, too, adopted this curriculum. They of course had a different catechism, and their schools, the diocesan seminaries, presented different theological doctrine, but the way it was taught and the way students learned to expound it were identical with what was done in Protestant circles. Luther, and with him an entire age, was very serious about education and learning. They were, after all, engaged in a war for human minds and souls. It can be little wonder that they chose the best weapons they had at hand.

Here, with respect to the second point, the focus needs to be reversed. Rather than treating the impact of the Reformation on learning and education, one might well ask what role(s) learning and education played in the Reformation process. Two courses are important, and one of them a little unlikely. The likely one is Luther's treatise of 1530 in which, faced with a relatively unified and utterly intansigent Catholic party at Augsburg and the march of the Turks up the Danube toward Vienna itself, his views took on real urgency. On this occasion, six years after the first treatise, he emphasized the need to educate pastors, saying "even those of lesser ability [should be trained] for we need not only highly learned doctors and masters of Holy Scripture, but also ordinary pastors who will teach the Gospel and the catechism to the young and the ignorant. . . ." The second, and less likely, source is the Small Catechism itself. In the preface, he concluded, "I therefore beg of you for God's sake, my beloved brethen who are pastors and teachers, that you take the duties of your office seriously, that you have pity on the people who are entrusted to your care, and that you help me teach the catechism to the people, in particular to those who are young."

In sum, the Reformation quickly became a process of education first and foremost. The problem of when this transition occurred is most easily resolved with the tools of biography. For present purposes the matter is a question of individual biography but one could also illustrate the matter by shifting the focus to other reformers and engage in collective biography. But the key individual is naturally Luther himself.

It is common knowledge that the new churches of the Reformation were created first through the device of visitations by which both secular and ecclesiastical authorities assessed the condition of local churches and then decided what actions they would take. It is less commonly observed that in the late 1520s and early 1530s Luther followed the visitations closely, encouraged them, and even served personally as a visitor. Moreover, his comment once he received first word of the visitors' findings clearly reveals the impact they had upon him. "What miseries we see here," he wrote. This was in 1528. Early the following year, after personally serving as a visitor, he wrote a pastor in Braunschweig, "Just now I have turned to preparing a catechism for the sake of the raw pagans." When his old foe, Duke George of Saxony, died, Luther's first recommendation was that "Mad Duke George's" successor should carry out a visitation and then abolish the Mass. Contrary to what some of the older literature at least implies, Luther was keenly interested in the organization of the new church. He was therefore a reformer in the activist sense of the term as well as being the chief ideological standard bearer of the reform movement.

This interest was, however, only part of a self-conscious effort to do all he could to make certain that his vision of the Gospel endured beyond his

own death. It is to be seen in the hymns and catechisms he wrote for the common people, in the care and feeding he gave to young pastors in his charge, and even in an important change at the University of Wittenberg. Earlier he and Melanchthon had put an end to disputations on the grounds that they were too reminiscent of the scholastic theology against which they both struggled. But they reinstituted disputations in 1533 so that Wittenberg could grant the doctorate and thereby create not just pastors but also professors who would carry on their work.

It is in fact almost impossible to overestimate the impact that the visitations had on Luther's later career. As noted above, he followed them with keen interest. He defended them against John Agricola (who thought they might tyrannize consciences) and repeatedly urged that they be carried out expeditiously and simply. He made his objectives very clear in the preface to the Small Catechism, which appeared shortly: "The deplorable conditions which I recently encountered when I was a visitor constrained me to prepare this brief and simple catechism or statement of Christian teaching. Good God, what wretchedness I beheld! The common people, especially those who live in the countryside, have no knowledge whatever of Christian teaching, and unfortunately many pastors are quite incompetent and unfitted for teaching." Luther therefore turned to the task himself. In the same preface he made his sense of urgency clear to all: "I therefore beg of you for God's sake, my beloved brethren who are pastors and preachers, that you take the duties of your office seriously, that you have pity on the people who are entrusted to your care, and that you help me to teach the catechism to the people, especially those who are young."

The Reformation therefore became an educational

process very quickly and it did so at its very core. But the question is, "What were the reformers and Luther in particular trying to teach?" The others, each of whom learned the Reformation from Luther in one way or another, transmitted his new doctrines and practices, as they understood them, by teaching them to yet others. Indeed Luther himself may have realized--and about the same time that he discovered how far he had come in his own theological thinking--that the reform must occur in just this way. As noted in an earlier article, in 1518 while returning from the Heidelberg Disputation he wrote that he was convinced that there would be no reform in the church unless the universities were reformed first. He went so far as to call for abolishing all the old studies and restructuring the entire university curriculum, in theology in particular.

In sum, whenever the reformers, whether Luther or the others, became fully aware of their program, they began to teach it to others. The process commenced in a more-or-less personal way in Luther's own university lectures and in the private lectures, discussions, and correspondence of the others. But then it became an institutional matter. Doctoral disputations were reinstituted at Wittenberg in 1533. Strasbourg's Gymnasium was founded at about the same time, and the same years featured a debate about the future of the University of Basel and the "reform" of the University of Tubingen. If only in passing, it must be added that the first edition of Calvin's Institutes--the quintessential "manual" for the new faith--also dates from the mid-1530s. In sum, by about 1535 the Reformation had become a matter of education and learning in an institutional setting. Luther led the way.

What precisely the reformers were trying to teach

in this phase of the Reformation occurred on two levels. The first, and most obvious, concerns the new corps of pastors. On the one hand it is true that the Protestant clergy received a thorough grounding, just as Luther insisted, in the best tradition of the studia humanitatis. To illustrate, Johannes Pappus, the President of the Company of Pastors in Strasbourg, had a library of well over 6000 volumes. Of these, more than forty percent pertained to languages, literature, history, moral essays, grammars, books of rhetoric and the like. He was of course a highly placed exception among 16th-century Lutheran clergy, but in general these pastors became, as one scholar has put it, "intellectuals . . . close to the people."

On the other hand, there can be even less doubt that Protestant pastors were expected to learn--and be able to teach, expound, and defend--true doctrine. The letters that pastors carried with them--their certificates of ordination, as it were--attest to this central characteristic of their formal education. Johannes Marbach, who became President of the Company of Pastors at Strasbourg in 1552, was one of Luther's own students. He received the doctorate on February 20, 1543, and with it a letter from Luther that he carefully kept among his papers and that was finally published by a collateral heir in 1684. In it Luther noted that the young man had good morals and personal habits. But he emphasized that Marbach had studied at Wittenberg for three years and that he taught "the sum of Christian doctrine and the purity of the Gospel."

It should be added that this emphasis upon doctrinal purity, as taught in the classroom, only increased in the years that followed. For example, Pappus, who was Marbach's successor, achieved his

position specifically because he held the doctorate, which, the city fathers noted, compensated for his youth. Of this man another Lutheran professor and pastor remarked at an earlier date, "At his age, a doctor and an ass cohabit in the same person."

The second aspect of the content of education and learning during the Reformation flows from the pastors' actual conduct of their ministries. Pastors were rather like professors. For the most part, they taught as they were taught. There can be no surprise, then, that in the late 16th century they preached to their parishoners a religion that was at least as much a matter of the head as of the heart. They presented this message--that true religion was something knowable and to be expressed in doctrinal statements--not only in sermons and catechetical instruction but also in hymns and devotional literature. Moreover, those pastors with supervisory responsibilities made certain from the initial examination through the practice sermon and during the annual visitation that all the clergy fully exercised their office as teacher. Personal morality certainly played a role, and the visitors were quick to discipline pastors who were also notorious sinners. In Strasbourg, for example, the President of the Company of Pastors granted that the wife of one of his charges was a shrew, but he added that shouting at her and slapping her were unlikely to improve matters. Nonetheless, if the visitation reports are any guide, the chief cause for dismissing a pastor was doctrinal error or even the inability to teach doctrine effectively. To return to Strasbourg, another pastor had become so old and feeble that he could scarcely teach catechism, and he was eventually pensioned off.

The following can therefore come as no surprise. The central thing that was expected of ordinary

parishioners was that they, too, be able to confess true doctrine. The visitation reports are indisputable on this point. Once again, the visitors certainly inquired about problems that may be associated with public morality. They did not favor public drunkenness, brawling in the streets, or (above all) adultery, no matter where it occurred. But first and foremost they sought to discover whether people knew their catechism. Moreover, in this effort pastors all over Germany took their lead from Luther himself and his admonitions to them in the preface to the Small Catechism. Finally, the reports are also quite clear about one other matter. If the visitors found that most people in a particular village could recite the catechism, then they were more or less satisfied. Here again (even if they did not use his catechism but one of their own), Luther's pastors were following the master's lead.

If doctrine was the principal content of teaching and learning in the Reformation, how then did people teach it and learn it? Again, the question must be answered on two levels. Again, just as clergy and laity taught and learned much the same thing, so too they taught and learned it in much the same way.

It was a classical dictum--one stated most forcefully by Aristotle--that the orator's skills were three-fold: memoria, dialectica, and inventio. The entire thrust of Renaissance pedagogy was to emphasize memoria and inventio at the expense of the dialectic that they so despised. Valla's Elegantiae linguae Latinae, Erasmus's Adagiae and De copia verborum, and even many of Shakespeare's most treasured rhymed couplets all attest to the humanists' love for memorization of finely turned phrases that derived from folk wisdom. Erasmus's own hope that the plowman at his plow

and the weaver at her spindle would sing a psalm to the rhythm of their work turned on the ability to anyone--nay, everyone--to memorize. One humanist scholar in a fit of learned enthusiasm even expressed the wish that people would go so far as to memorize the Psalms in Hebrew, for then "the truth will pour into you most literally, and from the purest sources."

The point is simple. The reformers took Renaissance pedagogy--the best that they would find--and turned it to their own purposes. It is certainly true that Valla, who could make the most trenchant textual observations in his Adnotationes in Novum Testamentum, and Erasmus, who could do the same, had little interest in doctrine. Erasmus in fact despised doctrinal arguments on the grounds, at least in part, that they detracted from the necessary reform of learning and morals. Here, as noted, the reformers parted company with their Renaissance forebears. But they continued to regard humanistic methods as essential, even to the point that one of the earliest historians of the Renaissance and Reformation declared that Renaissance humanism was God's divine work to prepare the way for the Reformation.

The reformers adopted Renaissance pedagogy in two ways. As background it must be understood that those who were professors in the new (or nearly) Protestant universities were in the business of training pastors and new professors. For them, therefore, teaching was an intensely practical matter that served immediate needs. It was not an abstract process of passing on general cultural values from one generation to another. They insisted that their charges learn the ancient languages, rhetoric, grammar, history, and the remainder of the liberal arts. But these were preparatory studies. The piece de resistance was

doctrine, and here, too, they chose the methods of Renaissance humanism. They taught the essential doctrine by the loci method, which was based on the techniques of rhetoric rather than dialectic.

Here one critical assumption that underlies the loci method is of special importance. It is this: every good or useful essay or oration in a particular area of learning will treat the principal loci of topoi of the field in question. Naturally, these loci will differ from subject to subject, but within discrete subjects important works will cover all the important topics. The conclusion is again simple: according to the reformers, the Scriptures were authoritative in all matters essential to salvation. Therefore, the authors of the Scriptures treated all the loci of theology. Hence, one not only could and should compose loci communes, as did Melanchthon, Calvin, Beza, Gerhard, and many, many others, but one also could and should find in the biblical texts how the authors of the Scriptures treated these loci. Thus, just as Melanchthon could turn Luther's lectures on Galatians into a treatise on the freedom of the will, so, too, both he and one of his students could turn lectures on the Gospel of John into a disquisition on the subject of predestination.

It must be granted that the loci method, as practiced by the professor, is not quite the same thing as rote memorization. But the process must also be imagined from the point of view of the student. What does someone who wishes to become a pastor or even a professor of theology gather from this method of teaching? By no means is everyone clever enough to discern theological topoi by themselves, just as most people cannot derive differential equations on their own. What then do they do? They do what less able students the world over do. They memorize them.

When seen from this perspective, there is therefore no essential difference between how most pastors and churchmen were taught and how they taught the laity. It is clear that knowledge of true doctrine was central to the training, selection, and placement of the clergy, that they in turn took it as their task to teach true doctrine to their parishioners, and that they did so by using catechisms whose basic content was doctrine. In addition, the main event in the annual visitation was calling the children (and sometimes the adults, too) together and grilling them on the catechism. With respect to the common people, the central issue, therefore, is the pedagogical character of Reformation catechisms.

A successful visitation obviously featured many children and some adults who could repeat the catechism from memory in the presence of the visitors. But the entire process amounted to the humanist curriculum and educational method at the popular level. Moreover, the same assumptions prevailed. Why else should catechisms--at least Protestant catechisms--use as their texts the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed? These were and remain the principal texts of Christianity. Surely, anyone who could explain them had a grasp of the faith and therefore the means with which to persevere unto salvation. As an addendum, memorizing certain Bible verses that treated civic duties would help people live upright lives in the here-and-now.

It should therefore be obvious that catechetical instruction is by no means an example of the obscurantism and pessimism about human nature that some scholars so frequently attribute to the Reformation at the popular level. It is also not quite just the opposite. The reformers were well aware that peasants and day laborers had their intellectual

and spiritual limitations. Luther himself once commented that the workers he knew kept time not by a clock or the movement of the sun but by the number of empty tankards lying about them. Nonetheless, the structure of the catechisms and the enormous effort expended to teach them amount to an affirmation of the power of the gospel message to transform human lives, if it is properly understood. In sum, we hear in this program a ringing declaration that human beings--even the "simple laity" for whom Luther wrote an Explanation of the Lord's Prayer as early as 1519--could comprehend its faith in an effective manner. The reformers' pedagogy had an extraordinary optimism at its base. Learning and education won the day.

I am well aware that our times feature many Christians who disparage learning and education or at least have deep suspicions about the world of the learned and the educated. I am also deeply aware that many of the learned and the educated give many Christians good reason to be suspicious of, if not hostile to, the academic world. Luther nonetheless took it seriously (so, too, did St. Paul, who spoke of the "renewal of the mind"), and I will conclude by suggesting that we should do so as well.

In the first place--and here I refer to the notion of "calling"--Luther spoke of us as "co-creators with God" of our culture, that is, of the ways in which we think and behave. For Luther there was nothing either specifically Christian or unchristian about human culture. It was nonetheless a fact of life from which there was no escaping. Of the ancient languages he wrote, "Although the Gospel came and still comes to us through the Holy Spirit alone, we cannot deny that it came through the medium of languages,

was spread abroad by that means, and must be served by the same means." Looking at his own time, he feared that unless people dedicated themselves to restoring learning and education, "the time will come when we will be unable either to speak or to write a correct Latin or German sentence."

The quotations one could cull from Luther on this matter are almost without number. But rather than continuing on with more, all should consider the following. A number of years ago I gave my standard lecture in our Western Civilization course on Old Testament history. I quite naturally made the point that the Old Testament was written by and large from the point of view of the Exodus; Moses obviously figured prominently. After the hour was over, something truly appalling happened. One faithful and reasonably bright student came up to me and said, "Who's this Moses guy you were talking about?"

Maybe this much is to be expected at an institution like The Ohio State Univeristy that is so secular that it systematically believes absolutely nothing. On the other hand, a colleague and friend who is professor of church history at the University of Heidelberg reports that his theology students (who are what we would call graduate students) have not read the Bible! My experiences in higher education in fact suggest that we find ourselves in a culture addicted to a form of flabby thinking that closes questions before they have even been opened and that certainly refuses to think its way through them. Of course, speaking, writing, or reading correct Latin is by and large out of the question. But we need also to reflect on what has happened to our ability to speak, read, and write correct English. Finally, if it is still not apparent that there is some

work to do, some God-given work, in re-co-creating our culture, this question needs to be answered: Shall the proclaiming of the Gospel and the strengthening of Christian faith be left to the televangelists, to the Bakkers and Swaggerts of this world? If we don't get to work, that's exactly what will happen, and we will end up in a world filled with 20th- and 21st-century indulgence sellers, which is exactly what these people are.

So, the next time anyone becomes weary of study or teaching and starts to think that maybe it doesn't matter anyway, that person should consider the alternative.

Reaction to 1990 Bethany Reformation Lectures

Reaction to Lecture I on "Luther the University Man"

It was with mixed emotions that I traveled from Mequon to Mankato for these Reformation lectures. There was some regret. Had I stayed at Mequon, I could have on Wednesday participated in the committee meeting scheduled to finalize the planning for a larger-than-life bronze Luther statue that will soon enhance the campus of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Obviously I regret my absence at that meeting.

Also, my coming to Mankato this week forced the cancellation of plans to attend next week's Lutheran Historical Conference symposium on Lutheran Pietism at Gettysburg. Both the place and the theme of that meeting next week exert a strong attraction that one finds difficult to resist. But as our eminent lecturer reminds us, and as George Forell reminded him fifteen years ago, the important thing for Reformation history professors is for them to do their job. I can hardly do my job at Mequon by being off campus two weeks in a row. In a difficult dilemma I spurned Luther statues and Lutheran Pietism and opted for these Reformation lectures.

Two factors motivated my choice and made my journey to Mankato a real pleasure. First of all, after a long absence I have a chance to visit the sister synod's seminary campus and the teachers and students there. Over a dozen years ago I had the privilege to be lecturer and reactor at these festivities. It was a pleasure then and I thank you for giving me this opportunity for a repeat visit.

The other reason I looked forward eagerly to this Mankato function was this year's lecturer, Dr. James Kittelson. About six weeks ago a Reformation student of mine stopped by to apologize for lacking the background in the subject that most of his classmates had and then asked what he could do to catch up in a hurry. My reply was, "Read Kittelson's Luther the Reformer this weekend and you will be in good shape for the course." He did and he is. The book is interesting and informative presenting in some 300 pages a picture of the whole, the undivided, the consistent Luther, in contrast to the many biographical servings that offer a slice of the young Luther or the old Luther or the middle-aged Luther. The quality of the book forced the conclusion that the writer would be a lecturer worth hearing.

The first lecture, "Luther the University Man," substantiates the conclusion. Let me highlight just a few of the useful insights provided for us.

The lecture's title alone offers a message. It is easy to forget that it was in the university, in its theological division, in its studies and lectures and debates and writings that God through Luther produced what we call the Reformation. Churches today are in deep trouble. Perhaps a shift of emphasis from planned programs and public image and church growth back to theological concerns would bring about at least a mini-reform in this day.

The lecturer has ably presented the university-based theological development of Dr. Martin Luther. He reminds us that there was a "tower experience" but points out that it was more a culmination, an "enlarging experience"--to use John Cardinal Newman's phrase--that suddenly saw many bits and

pieces fall into place, bits and pieces "he had known for some time "but" just hadn't known that he knew."

Luther's spiritual journey through the Psalms and Romans lectures is presented with insight and interest. The contrast between what Luther was taught and what he eventually did teach is clearly portrayed and so is the pathway that led him from the one to the other. While one could perhaps pick at this or that detail, one would still have to appreciate the total effect.

A big deal--perhaps too big a deal--is made of the "or" in "This is the righteousness of God, that by which he makes us righteous, wise, and strong, or that by which he judges us." Luther is not, it seems to me, setting up an either-or situation between "makes us righteous" and "judges us." Throughout the Psalm 71 lecture Luther rather couples judgment and righteousness and points out to his students in the paragraph following the quoted sentence "that also judgment may sometimes denote the Gospel and the Word of God." Luther's students may have been befuddled but Luther knew what he was saying, even though our essayist seems to have luther close his lecture on Psalm 71 with his conclusion to the lecture on the previous Psalm.

Since most of you read your Luther in the English Luther's Works, it may be well to point out that that edition has the opposite of what the lecturer presents on the synteresis. The LW translated, "For we are so entirely inclined to evil that no portion which is inclined toward the good remains in us, as is clear in the synteresis."

Reaction to Lecture II on "Luther the Humanist"

While the lecturer, tongue in cheek, suggests that the choice of title is a bit of mischief-making and speaker's ploy, he knows, and we should know, that an essential element in a proper understanding of the Reformation is a grasp of this connection and difference between Reformation and Humanism, between Luther and Erasmus. This lecture clarifies the issue for us.

That century's humanism--poles apart from today's version--was occupied with activities that seem to resemble the Reformation; studying ancient languages, criticizing church practices, and the like. Luther gladly used the scholarly findings of the humanists. The up-to-date second edition of Erasmus' New Testament text was the book Luther worked with at the Wartburg.

Doctor Kittelson, however, reminds us also of the great gulf between Luther and Erasmus, noted by the former already in 1517 in his description of the latter as one in whom "the human is more prevalent than the divine." In the inevitable clash between the two on the key question of man's role in his conversion, Luther came down squarely on the side of God's grace, while Erasmus chose to allow some human role to be played.

The lecturer says that Erasmus "spent some time looking for an issue on which to indicate to all concerned that he and Luther were not in agreement." Could not one just as well say that Erasmus spent time looking for a narrow issue, one on which there were authorities on both sides, so that not too great a gulf would be created and not too many followers would be lost? Whatever the intention, a great gulf was created. Erasmus replied but Luther ignored that writing. His reason, as the

lecturer correctly suggests, was that Erasmus by his attempted balancing act had really showed himself to be a nontheologian, one not vitally concerned about the doctrinal issue.

That was for Luther the ultimate concern. In this case it was a doctrine that touched the truths of sin and grace, depravity and justification. Was Luther less concerned about other doctrines? While there are some issues that might be termed Spitzfindigkeiten--open questions for example--I know no Scripture doctrine that Luther would not have been deeply concerned about. I am sure the lecturer is in agreement.

Let my remarks on this second lecture conclude with a word about the section on Luther and reason. All of us should be grateful for the treatment we heard. This "not easy" subject was clearly presented and illustrative example was superbly chosen.

Reaction to Lecture III on "Luther and Learning"

Twice on the section of Luther's curriculum preferences, the lecturer drops hints about Melanchthon's role: "learned...above all from Melanchthon" and "on cue from Melanchthon." There was obviously no time or space to enlarge on this interesting sidelight but this reactor hopes some little time can be found for Dr. Kittelson to elaborate for us on the Luther-Melanchthon relationship in this area and to explain why it was that Melanchthon and not Luther won the accolade of "Germany's schoolmaster."

The paragraphs on visitation lead us into territory that is more or less unknown, at least to most of us. We therefore should appreciate all the more

the lecturer's insights and conclusions. One of the visitation's products was, of course, Luther's Small Catechism.

How refreshing it is to hear that what "was expected of ordinary parishioners was that they, too, be able to confess true doctrine." If there is still time for a twentieth-century reformation of the flounding churches today, it could well begin by a return to this stress of the sixteenth-century Reformation and that could well begin by a generous dose of memoria.

The opening admonition is also the conclusion: "Do the Work" and my special work of the moment is to thank Dr. Kittelson on behalf of all of you for a work well done.

Reaction to 1990 Bethany Reformation Lectures by Pastor Mark Bartels

Professor Kittelson in his paper occasionally made statements about Luther's view of scripture and the early Lutheran church leaders' view of scripture. Those statements were basically of the nature that said that Luther and his predecessors believed that "scripture is authoritave in matters pertaining to salvation." While that is a true statement, I believe it limits Luther's view of the authority of scripture. Not only did Luther and his predecessors believe that scripture was authoritative in matters pertaining to salvation, but it is authoritative in all matters that it speaks on, whether it is speaking on the topic of salvation or on some other topic. Luther once said,

> It is certain that whoever does not rightly believe one article or refuses to accept it (after he has been admonished and instructed), certainly believes none sincerely and in true faith. And whoever is so presumptuous as to dare to contradict God or call Him a liar in one word (of scripture) and does this willfully, persisting in it, though he has been admonished once or twice, he is ready (and he does it, too) to deny God and accuse Him of lying in all His words. There are no two ways about it: either all and everything is believed, truly and fully, or nothing is believed. The Holy Ghost (who wrote all of scripture) cannot be separated or divided, so that we would be free to teach and believe one article as true and another as false."

LUTHER'S FUNDAMENTAL FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION

I believe that the single greatest contribution that Luther made to the world of education was the

clarification of HOW I ARRIVE AT KNOWLEDGE - because without that fundamental understanding, it is impossible for real education to take place; it is impossible for me to learn from scripture. If you look in your dictionary under the definition "education," you will find that education has to do with imparting or attaining knowledge. If I am going to impart or attain knowledge, I need to know how a person arrives at knowledge in the first place. Philosophers have a big word for how a person arrives at knowledge; it's the word "epistomology." So how do I arrive at knowledge?

Luther's struggles led him to answer that question, HOW DO I ARRIVE AT KNOWLEDGE. However, before I can answer the question, HOW DO I ARRIVE AT KNOWLEDGE, I also need to answer two even more basic questions: the questions WHO AM I AND WHAT AM I LIKE and WHO IS GOD AND WHAT IS GOD LIKE. Those two realities have a major impact on how learning can take place. If you can answer those questions, I believe that you can understand how real education takes place.

Occasionally, Professor Kittelson referred to Luther's discussions with the humanist Erasmus. Luther and Erasmus had a fundamental disagreement on HOW I AM AND WHAT I AM LIKE. Luther's book THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL is basically the answer to the questions, Who am I and what am I like spiritually, and Who is God and what is God like. Luther basically told Erasmus that these points were the essential points of difference between his theology and everyone else's theology. So if you want to know how Luther came to his knowledge about spiritual things, or how spiritual education takes place, you have to know what he said about WHO I AM AND WHAT I AM LIKE SPIRITUALLY and WHO IS GOD AND WHAT IS GOD LIKE.

Yesterday Professor Kittelson summarized Luther's answer to WHOM AM I when he discussed Luther's understanding of the bondage of the will. Luther believed that I am so much a sinner that I have absolutely no power to move toward God on my own or please God on my own. I only move away from God and displease God if left to myself. Even my will has no power to move toward God or please God. It only has the power to do the opposite. Professor Kittelson also explained Luther's view that who I am affects the power and ability of my human reason. When it comes to spiritual matters, reason is a whore. It can only go in the wrong direction. He believed that if I am totally sinful, even in my will and reason, it is impossible for me to arrive at spiritual knowledge on my own. I will only come to wrong and mistaken conclusions.

But that is only one half of the puzzle. In order to understand how I am educated spiritually or how I arrive at spiritual knowledge, I do not only need a proper understanding of who I am, I also need to be able to answer the question, WHO IS GOD AND WHAT IS GOD LIKE? Luther believed that God's ways of doing things are absolutely independent from my way of doing things. In fact, not only are God's ways independent of how I would do things, but, because my reason is bound only toward the wrong conclusions, God's ways of doing things will actually seem offensive to me. They will seem backwards; as if God were the opposite of what he should be, as if God were hidden. Luther believed that when you look at scripture and when you look at me, and when you look at the nature of God you will be presented with some very uncomfortable issues that will even seem to contradict each other. How you deal with these apparent contradictions is crucial to your understanding of how you arrive at knowledge. Ultimately, Luther believed that one must come to the conclusion that

we need to understand that not only is my reason corrupted by sin, but actually the way God does things are really offensive to my reason and seem foolish to my sinful human reason.

When you combine these two ingredients, Who am I and what am I like, and Who is God and what is God like, Luther believed he had learned how we arrive at spiritual knowledge; he had arrived at his basic hermenuetical principle, how to interpret the scriptures. Luther called his way of arriving at theological knowledge the theology of the cross. The theology of the cross is simply the understanding that by nature I am spiritually blind, and cannot understand the things of God.... they are foolishness to me. I must take everything God says at face value, and not try to add my own understanding of it, even when it presents me with some very difficult problems, since my sinful human reason is incapable of arriving at spiritual truth, and God's ways are absolutely independent of and even opposed to human thinking The theology of the cross is that simple. It is my way of arriving at spiritual knowledge. All of Luther's hermenuetical principles (his principles on how to interpret scripture) are built upon this simple understanding of how I arrive at spiritual truth. Luther said, "That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invinsible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross. A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is."

Luther's theology of the cross is not a theology ABOUT the cross, it is a WAY of doing theology,

a way of arriving at the answer to what scripture is saying, a system of theological learning. The reason Luther calls this theology the theology of the cross is NOT to say that the only theology of significance in scripture is ABOUT the cross. The reason he calls it the theology of the cross is because in the cross, more than anywhere else, we understand how we arrive at knowledge about God. Because in the cross we see the most offensive thing in human reason. We see one man dying for the sins of all. We see God himself weak and dead. And we see the implications to ourselves. God becomes pleased with us only by putting to death, by bringing down to the grave, not by something we have done. Human reason does not expect any of this from God, and it is foolishness to human reason. It is believed only by faith.

It is with this understanding of God and man and how God operates, this theology of the cross, that we must approach the rest of scripture. We must expect to see God acting in ways offensive and strange, we must humble ourselves before this revelation, before what appear as contradictions to our reason and experience, and simply believe. That is how knowledge of God is arrived at.

This is how all scripture is to be approached. This is how Luther approached the issue of what is present in the Lord's Supper; it is offensive to human reason that God is localized in bread and wine, yet Luther was educated by the word of God to believe it is nevertheless true. This is how we must face the theological issues of today; it is offensive to human reason that God should restrict women from the pastorate. It is offensive to human reason that God, who in spirit should speak of himself in male terms, it is offensive to human reason that God created the world in six days. And we must take a stand.

What is really true concerning these issues? Luther says only a theologian of the cross calls a thing what it really is.

I believe all theological differences between denominations ultimately rest on this issue, namely, how do I do my theology, or how do I arrive at spiritual knowledge? Luther firmly believed that this way of doing theology was what separated his understanding of scripture from others. As Professor Kittelson alluded to yesterday, the point is not if one reads the Bible but HOW one reads the Bible. For Luther, to be a true Bible student, to be truly educated by scripture, you need to be a theologian of the cross.

CONCLUSION

I believe Luther's great forgotten legacy to education for the church is the answer to the question, How do I arrive in spiritual knowledge? Professor Erling Teigen once wrote in a paper, "Educational philosophers, both within and without the church, have all too often sinned against children and older learners by failing to offer concrete quantity of knowledge. But just as often, educational systems, including those in the church, have failed because they have offered a concrete quantity of facts and data, and nothing or little else by way of thinking processes. And so we have often, I fear, thought we were offering a good Christian education to the young and old when we filled them with Bible stories and taught them to play "Bible Trivia," but have failed to teach them to think in Christian categories....the heart of our task in the 1990s as we seek to be faithful to God's inspired and inerrant Word and to our Lutheran Confessions is not just to prove and to

convince the Christians about inerrancy and infallibility, but to teach the believer to think in the basic Christian category of the theology of the cross."

It is critical for you students to be aware of this. There is a great movement going on in the philosophical, educational, and religious branches of our society that is radically different from the Lutheran understanding of how relgious knowledge is arrived at. Society's basic principle is that I arrive at spiritual knowledge in the same way I arrive at any other type of knowledge. All knowledge is ultimately arrived at by my experience and by my reason. I become the authority over scripture, scripture is not the authority over me.

Thank God for educational institutions like Bethany LUTHERAN College, which is more than a place to just get knowledge. It is a place where there is a correct understanding of HOW knowledge is arrived at, and students are taught to think in the basic CHristian category of the theology of the cross!!!