

LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY



VOLUME 52 • NUMBER 1

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2011 Reformation Lectures

Laymen and Women of the Reformation

Taming the Leviathan: Selected Civil Leaders in
the German Lands during the Reformation

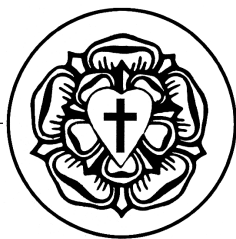
Articles and Sermons

Christ and Jewish Sects

Sermon on Psalm 16

Book Reviews

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The theological journal of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary

LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY

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FACULTY..... Adolph L. Harstad, Thomas A. Kuster, Dennis W. Marzolf,
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Foreword

LSQ Vol. 52, No. 1 (March 2012)

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE *Quarterly* we are pleased to share with our readers the 2011 annual Reformation Lectures, delivered October 27–28, 2011, in Mankato, Minnesota. These lectures are sponsored jointly by Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. This was the forty-fourth in the series of annual Reformation Lectures which began in 1967. The format of the Reformation Lectures has always been that of a free conference and thus participation in these lectures is outside the framework of fellowship.

This year there were two presenters. The first lecture was given by Rev. Jerome Gernander, pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church in Princeton, Minnesota. Pastor Gernander was born on August 6, 1966 in San Antonio, Texas. He graduated from the University of Texas in 1989 with a bachelor's degree in journalism and followed the vocation of sports reporter before studying for the holy ministry. Pastor Gernander graduated from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in 1996, receiving his Master of Divinity degree. In July of that year he was ordained at Richland Lutheran Church, Thornton, Iowa, where he served as pastor for nine years. In 2005 he was called to serve as pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church in Princeton, Minnesota, where he presently serves. Pastor Gernander is on the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and served for six years on the ELS Board for Education and Youth. He has developed a deep interest in the various figures of the Lutheran Reformation, as well as Lutheran liturgics

and hymnody. He has produced a number of scholarly papers for the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and for the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*. Jerry and his wife, Susan (nee Rank), were married on August 29, 1998, and have been blessed with two daughters, Sophia and Caroline.

The second presenter was Dr. David Schroeder, a professor of history at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. Dr. Schroeder was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, and attended Dr. Martin Luther College, earning a bachelor's degree in education in 1985. He then attended the University of Minnesota, completing his master's degree in 1986. His studies have taken him to Harvard University in 2001, Stanford University in 2006, and Marquette University Law School. He completed his doctorate in history at Marquette in 2009. Dr. Schroeder served as a teacher and principal of St. Mark's Lutheran School, Citrus Heights, California, from 1986-1998. He then took a call as teacher and department chair at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, from 1998-2008. He has served as professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, since 2008. He was president of the Arizona-California Teachers' Conference, and a member of the US Army Reserve from 1983-1986. Prof. Schroeder has authored contributions to *African American National Biography* (Oxford University Press); "Paddling their own canoe: Wisconsin Synod Lutherans in Milwaukee during the Bennett Law Contest," in *Milwaukee History* (26:3-4), winner of the Marion G. Ogden Prize; and "Joining the Court: Pierce Butler," in *Journal of Supreme Court History* (35:2). He and his wife, Karen, live in New Ulm, and were blessed with two sons, Carl and Jeff, who were both taken to their eternal home in their youth due to a rare genetic disease.

The theme of the lectures was "Lessons from the Laypeople of the Reformation." The first lecture, given by Rev. Gernander, was entitled "Laymen and Women of the Reformation." The second lecture, presented by Dr. Schroeder, was entitled "Taming the Leviathan: Selected Civil Leaders in the German Lands during the Reformation."

The Reformation Lectures were a study of contributions by Christian laypeople in the Reformation era. The history of the men and women around Luther and the Reformation presents a fascinating picture. Throughout his life Luther not only associated with theologians and churchmen but also with many laypeople from all walks of life. There were relatives and friends in Mansfeld and Eisenach, associates and fellow citizens in Erfurt and Wittenburg, and individuals from other parts of Saxony and the empire. Many of them became ambassadors of the good news who spread the Gospel throughout the land. Each one

furthered the Gospel in his own way, in government, in business, and in society, through art and literature, or by various other means.

During our Lord's earthly ministry there were a number of sects or religious groups among the Jewish people that tended to be antagonistic toward Christ's message. Jesus answered and confronted these antagonists, often in no uncertain terms. More significantly, however, Jesus focused His attention on the common people unaffiliated with the sects. He had come to "seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). Dr. William Kessel gives an overview of these religious groups in his essay, "Christ and Jewish Sects." Dr. Kessel is a professor at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota.

The inspired writer of Psalm 16 declares that God's Holy One, the Messiah, would not be abandoned to the grave but would arise triumphant, the victor over sin, death, and the devil. The Rev. Joel Willitz offers a comforting and edifying sermon based on this text with the theme, "God Will Not Abandon His Holy One to the Grave." The Rev. Willitz is the pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Frankenmuth, Michigan.

Also included in this issue are two book reviews. The book *Because of Christ: Memoirs of the Lutheran Theologian*, by Carl E. Braaten, was reviewed by the Rev. John Moldstad, who is president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The book *The Great Works of God*, written by Valerius Herberger and translated by Matthew Carver, was reviewed by the Rev. Gaylin Schmeling, who is president of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mankato, Minnesota.

– GRS

Laymen and Women of the Reformation

Jerome T. Gernander
Pastor, Bethany Lutheran Church
Princeton, Minnesota

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THE GREAT ARTIST ALBRECHT DÜRER *is bent over a table in his living quarters in the city of Nuremberg, in January 1518. He is not drawing but reading a hastily printed “bootleg” copy of Martin Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses On the Power of Indulgences. Known to despair over the human condition, Dürer is astonished by what he reads. He sends Luther a gift of thanks. Two years later, in 1520 again he is not drawing, but writing a letter to Luther’s friend Spalatin: “If God helps me to see Dr. Martin Luther, I shall diligently make his portrait and engrave it as a lasting memorial of the Christian man who has helped me out of great anxiety.” These are private scenes from his life. But he also made his thoughts public, not in words but in his art. On his gravestone was printed, for everyone to read: Emigravit—not dead but “emigrated” to the heavenly country, through faith that finally found confidence in grace.*¹

Now we turn to another private scene. Behind closed convent walls in the city of Treptow on the Rega in 1521, a young woman named Elisabeth von Meseritz has heard the clear message of the Gospel, with her fellow nuns. They received teaching from Johannes Bugenhagen, a priest who had read the 1521 pamphlet, “The Judgment of Martin Luther on Vows,” and declared, “This will bring about a public change in the church!” Bugenhagen would soon become the pastor of the City Church in Wittenberg and a close

¹ Summarized from Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 99; Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation*, 204, 350, 473; Lewis Spitz, *The Renaissance and Reformation Movements*, Vol. II, 325–326, 574. Henry W. Longfellow’s poem “Nuremberg” speaks of his tombstone inscription: Longfellow, *Collected Works*, 104–106.

co-worker with Luther. In 1523, the same year that Katharina von Bora (the future Mrs. Luther) escaped from a convent, Elisabeth also escapes from her convent. She renounces her vows and declares her faith in Christ alone in a hymn which she writes, "The Only Son From Heaven" (Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary 224).² Later to be married to Caspar Cruciger, at this time she was only 23, and recently escaped from a convent, but her hymn was included in the first Lutheran hymnbooks.³

Luther and the Laity: "A Simple Layman Armed With Scripture..."

We begin this study of contributions by lay people in the Reformation with two people who heard the Gospel in quiet ways, in private settings. By the "hearing of the Gospel" we do not mean simply that they heard the Word; they were hearing the Gospel *in contrast* to the preaching of the Law and a salvation that depends on man's works. Dürer needed to be freed from the condemnation of his conscience, and young Elisabeth needed to be freed from the burden that the performance of her vows determined her standing before God. They do not easily fit today's concept of a "lay leader," dominated by the modern church's restless preoccupation with "motivating" parishioners into being more than "pew-sitters," and by modern church life requirements of endless activity, boards and committees, filling out of surveys and "spiritual gifts inventories."

People like Albrecht Dürer and Elisabeth Cruciger did not need to seek a "ministry" to have an important place. Instead Luther emphasized vocation: that people already have an important place in all the stations in life to which God Himself calls them to serve Him. We will examine the impact of this. Not only was this preached and written about, it was lived.

The term *layman* is used in our society to refer to those who are untrained in a more specialized art or vocation; in this context technical language or complex concepts must be simplified for the "layman." At the time of the Reformation, layman often was a term used in a derogatory way. Luther objected to this practice,⁴ and actually appealed

² This hymn drew upon the medieval hymn we know by the title *Of the Father's Love Begotten*. Her first stanza is almost a paraphrase of that hymn; but the first stanza ends "He, our Morning Star," from which Philip Nicolai likely took inspiration for his hymn, "How Lovely Shines the Morning Star" (ELH #167).

³ Summarized from Johannes Bergsma/Dennis Marzolf, *Johannes Bugenhagen and the Reformation of the Liturgy of the Mass*, 1, 8; and Rudolf and Marilyn Markwald, *Katharina von Bora*, 152-153.

⁴ Paul A. Russell, *Lay Theology in the Reformation*, 58.

to the important role of the laity. For our purposes, *layman* refers (in the language of Luther's Small Catechism) to the hearers of the Word in contrast to the preachers or clergy. It does not simply mean unordained; although Philip Melancthon was not ordained and technically might have layman status, for our purposes he is not a layman because he is among the ranks of the professional theologians, indeed one of the "chief theologians."

Luther appealed to the layperson almost from the beginning of the Reformation. In a pastoral way he began to publish works directed at developing piety for the common person. In the year 1519, his publications included the *Meditation on Christ's Passion*, the *Exposition of the Lord's Prayer*, and *A Sermon on Preparing to Die*. In 1520, among his published writings were the *Treatise on Good Works* (in which he introduced the activity of a housewife as producing more good works than those of the monks),⁵ and, most important and perhaps the most influential, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, in which Luther highlights the "priesthood of believers." Luther did not address this solely to rulers but to the emperor and, significantly, the "German [lay] nobility."⁶ Luther quickly became the most popular author in Germany; by March 1521, he was keeping three printing presses busy with his works alone.⁷

Luther actually used the word *layman*, singling out the laity in discussing his objections to wrongly conceived divisions between laypeople and the clergy. His *Exposition of the Lord's Prayer* of 1519, he said, was for "the simple laypeople... who seldom understand the arguments of sophisticated theology, certainly not the subtle arguments of scholastic theologians." He prepared the *Betbuechlein* (Little Prayer Book) the same year, since (he said) "one could not demonstrate the word and words of God to the common man either too much or too often." He also said, "God willing, if I have served to improve the lot of one layman with my capacities throughout my entire life, I would be satisfied, give thanks to God, and allow all my books to be destroyed." Luther's translation of the Bible was consistent with this: "Laymen must understand holy scripture in order to recognize their own sinfulness, repent and turn to God."⁸ ... "A simple layman armed with Scripture is to be believed above a pope or a council without it."⁹

⁵ Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation*, 365–366.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 369.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 413.

⁸ Russell, 60.

⁹ Luther at the Leipzig Debate of 1519, quoted in Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 90.

While Luther directed his appeal using the humanly constructed terms *layman* and *common man*, he did not neglect to use the Bible's words. In his 1520 tract *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, he grounded his appeal in 1 Peter 2:9: "All Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office. We are all consecrated priests through baptism, as St. Peter says in 1 Peter 2, 'You are a royal priesthood and a priestly realm.' ... A cobbler, a smith, a peasant—each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests."¹⁰ This is the oft-cited "universal priesthood" or "priesthood of believers" doctrine. At this point Luther is declaring that there is no hierarchy before God. He is not proposing a new church governance structure, in which there is no distinction between offices;¹¹ instead he is addressing their equal standing before God as redeemed sinners. In faith and good works, they have equality, as Luther sniffs in *To the Christian Nobility*: "... as though the laity were not also as spiritual and as good Christians as [the clergy], or did not also belong to the church...."¹² Luther does not assign the layman a specific role; he simply sees great potential in an educated laity, as shown by his writings for the development of their piety in 1519, and by his translations of the Bible and the liturgy into the vernacular.

Luther did not need to make specific recommendations for laypeople; they followed his lead. Between 1518 and 1525, there was a flood of Lutheran pamphlets, many by laypeople.

Lazarus Spengler

The first to be noticed is Lazarus Spengler.¹³ At the early date of 1519, he published his *Defense and Christian Answer of an Honorable Lover of the Divine Truth of the Holy Scriptures*, reprinted five times to accommodate demand, which says less about Spengler than it does about the vast audience for such writings and how the common people were inwardly digesting the message of the Reformation.¹⁴ In

¹⁰ Martin Luther, *Three Treatises*, 12, 15.

¹¹ Russell, 62.

¹² Luther, 17.

¹³ Nuremberg City Council Secretary from 1507 until his death in 1534. Spengler associated with all the leading citizens of Nuremberg, including artist Albrecht Dürer, whom he called his "brotherly friend." Spengler was part of the circle who gathered around Johann von Staupitz ("*sodalitas staupitziana*") in 1516–17, then was part of the "Martinians" in 1517–18, meeting first Melancthon and then Luther in 1518.

¹⁴ Spengler's *Defense and Christian Reply*... was written in 1518 and appeared in print in 1519 against his wishes. In this writing Spengler refers to a personal meeting with Luther in Nuremberg in 1518, when Luther told him that "if his teachings are of

this writing Spengler gave his reasons for believing that Luther was a confessor of the true faith,¹⁵ recommending how other laymen should think of Luther's teaching. For this—and for how it spread among the multitudes—Spengler was included in the papal bull that threatened Luther with excommunication.¹⁶

Spengler also confessed this faith in a famous hymn, "By Adam's Fall Is All Forlorn" (ELH 430). Through the years this hymn has come under criticism for being coldly doctrinal. But the importance of a hymn such as this one cannot be overestimated, not only because it is one of only two hymns quoted in the Lutheran Confessions,¹⁷ but because it gave everyone memorized doctrine. This is how Spengler's confession of faith became everyone's confession of faith, and part of the confession to which every Lutheran subscribed.

In 1522 and 1523 Spengler wrote and published two more defenses of Luther, stressing that he did not follow Luther or any person, but only the Gospel and the Word of God. More significant was his 1522 pamphlet, *The Main Articles Through Which Christendom Has Been Misled*, based on Melanchthon's 1521 *Loci Communes* (Chief Topics) and Luther's 1520 *Freedom of a Christian*. Spengler took the lead in 1525 in the establishment of a new school, traveling to Wittenberg to meet with Luther and Melanchthon; Luther dedicated his 1530 *Sermon on Keeping Children in School* to Spengler. Also in 1530 (July 8), it was Spengler to whom Luther sent a letter (from Coburg) with his famous explanation of his seal.¹⁸

Spengler also wrote a personal confession of faith (his *Ratio fidei mei*) included in his "Last Will and Testament," which Luther published in 1535 with an introduction written by Luther, the year after Spengler's death. This confession of faith (originally written in 1527, before any of the Lutheran confessions) begins each doctrinal point with the words "I believe and confess." In publishing this writing, Luther himself was recommending by Spengler's example that other individual laypeople similarly confess their personal faith. Luther said that next to the Bible, God and from God, he has no doubt that God will further and protect them; but if they are only human, they will in time and without any opposition crash in ruins."

¹⁵ Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation*, 335.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 400–401.

¹⁷ Formula of Concord, Article I, "Original Sin": "One party contended that because 'through Adam's fall the whole human nature and essence is corrupted, ...'"—making Spengler's poetic words not only a hymn to sing but part of the church's confession. Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, ed. *The Book of Concord*, 531.

¹⁸ Summarized from William Grimm, *Lazarus Spengler: A Lay Leader of the Reformation*.

such confessions of faith are the most useful guides for Christians. Luther highly praised the faith of “the admirable, worthy man, Lazarus Spengler,” not hiding the contributions of this layman.¹⁹

Argula von Grumbach

Argula von Grumbach has been called “perhaps the first woman publicist ever.”²⁰ She came into the public arena in reaction to the 1523 case of Arsacius Seehofer, an 18-year-old instructor at the University of Ingolstadt. Seehofer’s teaching had turned Lutheran through his contact with Philip Melanchthon, and certainly did not please the Ingolstadt professor Johann Eck (Luther’s adversary at the 1519 Leipzig Debate). Seehofer was imprisoned three times, and finally was forced to recant publicly in a show trial in which he was threatened with death by burning and reduced to tears; he then was imprisoned in isolated quarters even after his recantation and sent to the cloister at Ettal. The university theologians managed the controversy this created until they received a letter of protest from a Bavarian noblewoman challenging the faculty to a debate.²¹ Here is a sample:

How in God’s name can you and your university expect to prevail when you deploy such foolish violence against the Word of God; when you force someone to hold the holy Gospel in their hands for the very purpose of denying it, as you did in the case of Arsacius Seehofer? What do Luther and Melanchthon teach you but the Word of God? You condemn them without having refuted them. ... But where the Word of God is concerned neither pope, emperor nor princes — as Acts 4 and 5 make so clear — have any jurisdiction. For my part, I have to confess, in the name of God and by my soul’s salvation, that if I were to deny Luther’s and Melanchthon’s writing I would be denying God and His Word

You have forgotten one thing: that [Seehofer] is only 18 years old, and still a child. From the way in which the news has come to me from other places in such a short time, you will surely be notorious throughout the entire world. ... Have no doubt about this: God looks mercifully on Arsacius, just as He did on Peter, who denied the Lord three times. I trust that God

¹⁹ Grimm, 178–180.

²⁰ Peter Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach: A Woman’s Voice in the Reformation*, 2.

²¹ Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 97–104; Matheson, 10–23; and Kirsi Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 72–79.

will yet see much from this young man. Just as Peter, too, did much good work later, after his denial of the Lord [though], unlike this man, he was still free, and did not suffer such lengthy imprisonment, or the threat of the stake. A disputation is easily won when one argues with force, not Scripture.

What I have written to you is no woman's chit-chat, but the Word of God; and I write as a member of the Christian Church, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. Against the Roman, however, they do prevail. Just look at that church! How is it to prevail against the gates of hell? God give us His grace, that we all may be saved, and may God rule us according to His will. Now may His grace carry the day. Amen.²²

The author of the letter, Argula von Grumbach (nee Stauffen), was born of nobility, orphaned at age 5, and eventually married a nobleman. She had no family members whom this event touched, and had never met Seehofer. However, she did not simply attend to her children and leave it to others to protest. Nor did she just let the pastors handle it (although—with her three small children in tow—she visited the pastor in Nuremberg, Andreas Osiander, who acknowledged the injustice but did not speak up in any public way). She spoke to the Ingolstadt theologians as an equal—as if she had read Luther's *To the Christian Nobility* and took it seriously; which, of course, she probably had. She had read as much Luther as possible, having been put in touch with Luther's friend Spalatin.²³

She had not only read Luther; she had read the Bible. She had probably read Luther's published Christmas sermon of 1521 ("A great deal has been published in German, and I've read it all," she said in her letter to the Ingolstadt faculty), in which Luther said, "Would that God would let my interpretation and that of all the other teachers disappear, so that every Christian could read the simple Scripture and the pure Word of God for themselves."²⁴ Her publications are filled with biblical references and show a woman who knew her Bible. In her letter to the Ingolstadt faculty she said:

²² Argula von Grumbach/Matheson, 76–77, 82–84, 90. This book is invaluable because Matheson as an editor and translator allows us to read Argula von Grumbach's actual letters so that she herself speaks.

²³ Stjerna, 74, 76.

²⁴ AvG/Matheson, 86.

I have always wanted to find out the truth. Although of late I have not been reading any, for I have been occupied with the Bible, to which all of [Luther's] work is directed anyway—to bring us to read it. My dear father insisted on me reading it, giving it to me when I was ten years old. Unfortunately I did not obey him, being seduced by the clerics, especially the Observants, who said that I would be led astray. Ah, but what a joy it is when the Spirit of God teaches us and gives us understanding, flitting from one text to the next—God be praised—so that I came to see the true, genuine light shining out.²⁵

In fact, it appears that by the time she sent her letter to the Ingolstadt faculty on September 20, 1523, she already had read Luther's German edition of the New Testament (which had been published 363 days earlier), or at least she was aware of it:

Are you not ashamed that [Seehofer] had to deny all the writings of Martin, who put the New Testament into German, simply following the text? That means that the holy Gospel and the Epistles and the story of the apostles and so on are all dismissed by you as heresy²⁶

Von Grumbach also sent letters to the ruling duke and the city magistrates. She was officially ignored. Privately, the duke gave her husband permission to punish and do violence to her. But the public response of the reading public was overwhelming. Her letter was published and went through 14 editions in only two months. A woodcut was published, picturing Argula and her four children, the Bible in her hand as she confronted a team of scornful theologians, tomes of canon law lying discarded on the ground. The debate may not have taken place, but in the minds of her readers she won.²⁷ She made certain the debate took place in another way: she published seven more pamphlets in 1523 and 1524.

Luther's response was to take up Seehofer's cause himself, and also to send the letters he himself had received from her on to Spalatin, calling her "*discipula Christi*" over whom "the angels rejoice," and "a singular instrument of Christ." She was included in Rabus' *History of the Martyrs of 1572*, not because she died a violent death but because

²⁵ Ibid., 87–88.

²⁶ Ibid., 85.

²⁷ Matheson, *The Imaginative World of the Reformation*, 39.

as a faithful witness to God's Word and Luther's doctrine she was a "confessor" and a "Bavarian Judith."²⁸

Hans Sachs

In 1523, a lengthy poem called "The Nightingale of Wittenberg" passed throughout Germany. Written by a member of the cobblers' guild in Nuremberg, Hans Sachs, it described the state of Christendom by picturing a poor flock of sheep which was being fleeced by a lion (Pope Leo X), who had deceptively undertaken to "defend" them. Suddenly they hear the clear notes of a nightingale: "Sleepers awake! A new day is dawning." The sheep who follow this voice are led into the lovely sunny, safe meadow of the pure Gospel. In his poem, Sachs spells out for the reader that the nightingale is Luther:

First Luther tells us that we all
Inherit sin from Adam's fall . . .

In our hearts we know this state,
Feel burdened with a dreadful weight
Of anguish, fear, bewilderment
That we should be so impotent.

Sure of man's inability
We change pride to humility
And then, and only then, we see
The Gospel, sent to make us free,

For in it we find Christ, God's Son
Who for us men has so much done,
Fulfilled the law, wiped clean the stain
And won God's grace for us again. . .²⁹

This was not Sachs' first literary production; but it was his first work in defense of Luther and his teaching. Between 1520 and 1523, Sachs had come under the direct influence of the Nuremberg pastor Osiander, and read the pamphlets of Luther. While Sachs did not have an extensive education, he was a good listener. It has been shown that the content of Osiander's preaching is reflected in the pamphlets of Sachs.³⁰

²⁸ Stjerna, 84.

²⁹ Translated by Gerald Strauss in *Nuremberg in the Sixteenth Century*, 167.

³⁰ Russell, 171, 173-174.

While he worked sometimes as a shoemaker, more often he composed literary works: a total of more than 6,000 poems and master-songs, prose dialogues, dramas, carnival plays and farces, and short stories. His poems, mostly on important topics of the day, circulated on single-sheet “broadsheets” as quickly as they were written.³¹ Particularly influential were his prose dialogues. In 1524 he wrote a series of seven dialogues that carried forward a theological argument in dramatic form. In the following excerpt (*Dispute Between a Shoemaker and a Canon*, Dialogue 1), the reader receives a good summary of Law vs. Gospel, the righteousness of faith vs. righteousness by works:

Shoemaker: Paul tells us, in Romans 5, that man is justified by faith without any works of the law, and told the Romans that they will be judged according to the way they live their faith.

Canon: Yet James says, in the second chapter, that faith without works is dead.

Shoemaker: A genuine godly faith does not need to be demonstrated, since by its own virtue it yields good fruit, as in Matthew 7: “A good tree cannot produce bad fruit.” However, such good works are not done out of desire to earn salvation, which Christ has already earned for us, nor are they done out of fear of hell, since Christ has freed us from that, nor are they done because we must offer them to God. They are done out of godly love as a thanksgiving and to benefit our neighbor. Well, how do you like Luther’s fruits?³²

Sachs constantly found inventive ways to dramatize and popularize Lutheran doctrines, especially *sola fide* (faith alone) and *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone). As a dedicated Lutheran from 1520 onward, he played a large part in winning people for the Reformation.

The examples of pamphleteers like Argula von Grumbach and Hans Sachs illustrate the triumph of Luther’s appeal to the laypeople and defense of their rights and privileges as members of the universal priesthood. They could read the Bible for themselves and bring forth the praises of Christ in confession of their faith. As Argula von Grumbach experienced, persecution of the truth especially would bring this out. Once she spoke up in defense of Seehofer she was persecuted too, denounced from pulpits as a “female devil,” a “shameless whore,” and other names. Also the duke who had pledged himself years before to be

³¹ Alfred Bates, ed., “Hans Sachs” in *The Drama: Its History*, 17.

³² Russell, 173.

her protector gave her husband permission to punish her with physical violence if necessary.³³

Sachs and von Grumbach both defended their actions on the basis of their baptism and as members of the universal priesthood; it almost sounds as if they had memorized passages from Luther's *On the Freedom of a Christian*. In one of his dialogues, Sachs has the canon issue the challenge that laypeople are too ignorant to understand the gospel; the shoemaker (Sachs' alter ego) replies, "At what great university did John, who wrote so impressively, study? He was only a simple fisherman."³⁴ Von Grumbach, in a poem she wrote summarizing her challenge to the Ingolstadt faculty, said:

Who were the apostles – after all
 What higher learning could they recall?
 Though John was but a fisherman
 So profound yet clear is no other man;
 And Peter was of identical breed,
 A fisherman, as we can read.³⁵

They defended the right of the laity to a faith informed by the ability to hear and read the Bible. In dialogue, Sachs does it this way:

Shoemaker: And with what holy scripture can you deny the right of baptized Christians to research, read, and write about scripture? ... as Paul teaches us in Ephesians 6, "Oppose the temptations of the devil with the word of God," which he calls a sword. Sir, how might we stand before God if we knew nothing of the Scriptures?

Canon: Like a goose in a storm!

Shoemaker: You mock us! Jews know their law and prophets by heart. Should we Christians not also know the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the power of God by which we shall all be saved?³⁶

The constant presence of phrases from the text of the Bible only strengthens their point, and Luther's, about "a simple layman armed with Scripture."

³³ Stjerna, 74, 79.

³⁴ Russell, 177.

³⁵ Argula von Grumbach/Matheson, 177.

³⁶ Russell, 176–177.

Hearers of the Word ... and Singers of the Word

*Praise God the Lord, ye sons of men,
 Before His highest throne,
 Today He opens heav'n again
 And gives us His own Son.
 He leaves His heav'nly Father's throne,
 Is born an infant small,
 And in a manger, poor and lone,
 Lies in a humble stall.
 He veils in flesh His pow'r divine
 A servant's form to take;
 In want and loneliness must pine
 Whom heav'n and earth did make.
 (ELH 148:1-3)*

A new Lutheran hymn is being taught. Verse by verse, it confesses the great mystery of the incarnation, the deep theology that God became man, the humiliation of the Son of God out of great love for the human race. It is not written by the great Luther. It is not premiered by a university choir. Children are the first to learn this hymn. Are they children of notable people? No, they are children of rustic miners. This Christmas, they will teach this hymn to the congregation in this out-of-the-way mining town of Joachimsthal in the mountains of the present-day Czech Republic. They will not only sing it in church. They will take this hymn home and sing it over and over in the family circle, teaching it to their parents and their younger brothers and sisters. These mining families do this with all the hymns written by the town cantor and the schools' music teacher, Nikolaus Herman. Then this hymn will be part of the collection of hymns they sing, when they come to church an hour before the service every Sunday for the sole purpose of singing the hymns which continue to teach them the faith.

Luther knew that nothing would have so great an effect on the spread of the Gospel among the common people as would the singing of Christian hymns that taught Lutheran doctrine. What was needed was a multitude of convinced Lutherans who would hold to the true faith *en masse*, even in quiet. The Gospel must reach the layman in the corporate assembly, the congregation, first in the church service and also in the schools: through the means of grace of Word and Sacrament, but also through the teaching and imparting of Law and Gospel by means of memorized doctrine in the hymns, the liturgy and the catechism.

Luther wanted the hymns and hymnals “to promote and popularize the Gospel.”³⁷ He made his corrections to the Mass, the liturgical service, not only to purge it of the doctrine of works, but also so that the congregation would actively participate in the service. A chief Lutheran use of the divine service in church, as the Augsburg Confession says, is “for the instruction of the people,” and the means for this is not the sermon alone, but “German hymns” and also the liturgy: “For after all, all ceremonies should serve the purpose of teaching the people what they need to know about Christ.”³⁸ Luther himself made this obvious in his *Deutsche Messe* (“German Mass”) of 1526, which put the service into the people’s own language, when he included instructions for teaching the catechism.

In pursuit of these goals, Luther needed the assistance of a trained musician who was not a professional theologian, but whom he could trust theologically:

Johann Walther

In October 1524, Luther invited into his home a 28-year-old named Johann Walther, to assist him with the preparation of the German liturgical service. (We can never stop marveling at the ease with which Luther placed trust in the young, even in the early days of the Reformation with so much at stake!) The *Deutsche Messe* would bear Luther’s name, and he would take the blame or receive the credit. But he wanted the melodies to be (a) musically correct, and (b) simple enough for congregations to sing.

Luther called upon Walther because earlier that year Walther had published a hymnal, the *Geistliches Gesangbüchlein* (Little Book of Spiritual Hymns). Four other Lutheran hymnals were published that year, but Walther’s did not get lost in the crowd. His hymnal was not for congregational singing in church; it contained arrangements for 38 hymns, to be sung in three-, four-, or five-part harmony.³⁹ This obviously made it a book for choirs and those devoted to serious musical effort. But while our culture might respond to such a thing as if it excluded those who did not sing in the choir, it was different in Luther’s time; the purpose of the choir not only was to beautify the service, but by example

³⁷ Christopher Boyd Brown, *Singing the Gospel*, 9–10.

³⁸ Kolb/Wengert, *The Book of Concord* (Augsburg Confession, Article 24, Paragraphs 2–3), 68–69.

³⁹ Walter Buszin, “Johann Walther: Composer, Pioneer, and Luther’s Musical Consultant,” in *The Musical Heritage of the Church, Vol. III*; as this is an online version, no page numbers are given.

to teach the members of the congregation how to sing the “new song” of the Gospel.

Walther’s hymnal was subtitled “for church, school *and home*” (emphasis added). In some places, this hymnal was viewed not as a “choir hymnal” but as a school hymnal.⁴⁰ Through Walther’s hymnbook, he was encouraging the first Lutherans to sing hymns in parts, a goal Luther shared. Luther could recognize that here was the universal priesthood doctrine put into practice: giving people the tools with which to “declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). Luther also recognized that not only text but music was important. At this critical point when Luther was about to introduce a church service in the people’s own language, his consultation with Walther urges the conclusion that Luther intended to provide not merely the choristers and clergy, but every member of the congregation with the best quality of church music. Inferior music was not an option for equipping the least person with what was needed for glorifying God and “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.”⁴¹

In Luther’s home, Walther and Luther discussed the musical settings of the Sanctus and the Words of Institution, and the chants for the Sunday gospels and epistles; Luther gave his chorale tunes to Walther for improvement; and Walther composed the music for the congregational responses while Luther was responsible for the pastor’s part.⁴² One year later, this liturgy was introduced in Wittenberg. Because it was new, it is unlikely that the congregation sang very much at first. It is documented that it took years before the congregations in the cities participated in the services as much as Luther wanted.⁴³ But, as seen in Walther’s 1524 hymnal, the church service was to be the beginning point, not the end.

It is important to note the simple fact that Luther leaned upon this educated layman so much. He spoke up on Walther’s behalf more than

⁴⁰ Brown, 37.

⁴¹ Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16, NKJV.

⁴² Carl Schalk, *Music in Early Lutheranism*, 36; Charles K. Moss, “The Musical Reforms of Martin Luther,” online article: www.carolinaclassical.com/articles/luther. In recollecting forty years later his fortnight with Luther in Wittenberg, Walter shows that at a young age he possessed self-confidence as a trained musician, enough to recognize Luther’s gifts: “Herr Luther himself has invented most of the poetry and melody of the German chants. I, at the time, was tempted to ask His Reverence from where he had these pieces and his knowledge; whereupon the dear man laughed at my simplicity.” Schalk, 36.

⁴³ Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism*, 14.

once. In 1525, Saxon Elector Frederick the Wise died, and there were consequences for Walther, who was chief composer of church music for the Torgau *Hofkapelle*, the choir that served the prince. Frederick's successor, his brother John, disbanded the group. Both Luther and Melanchthon appealed to the new Elector that the Church needed composers; it was unwise to discourage trained professional musicians who dedicated their considerable talent and creative output to the church. The Elector did not reverse his decision, but did establish a new choir, the *Kantorei*—which served not the royal court but the church. He also gave Walther a lifetime salary.⁴⁴

Walther became the first cantor of the Lutheran church, a position that required not only technical prowess but theological knowledge and wisdom. Luther testified to Walther's importance when he sent his son Hans to Torgau in 1542, in part to study music under Walther. He wrote to the school's superintendent, "Wish Johann Walther well for me and ask him to provide my son with instruction in music. I indeed must develop theologians, but I desire that also grammarians and musicians be trained among our people."⁴⁵

In spite of these wonderful preparations by Luther in consultation with the younger layman and highly qualified musician Johann Walther, they were still only preparations. As we picture them figuratively holding their breath, listening for full-throated singing of liberated congregations, we might hear in our minds their sighs of disappointment. But we do not have to wonder about Luther's disappointment; as usual he expressed it openly, on the First Sunday in Advent 1526, one year after introducing the German liturgy:

When we initiated the German mass, everyone wanted it; now it is all the same to you whether it is in German or Latin. You say "I have bought five yoke of oxen." The songs have been composed and are sung for your sake so that you can sing them here and at home, but you sit here like blocks of wood. Therefore I beg you, teach these songs to your children and sing them yourselves....⁴⁶

In 1529 Luther still was chastising people for the same failure to sing the hymns: "For nearly two years now you have had no interest whatsoever in those enduring songs of the schoolboys." Even in

⁴⁴ Buszin; Schalk, 37–38.

⁴⁵ Buszin.

⁴⁶ Herl, 14.

Wittenberg there seemed to be no improvement; in 1533 a new regulation for the liturgy stipulated that the schoolboys leave the choir area when the liturgy required something to be sung by the people, and sit among them in the congregation for that part. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the congregation in Wittenberg just did not sing well without help.⁴⁷ (Parish pastors today may find this strangely comforting.)

Beyond Luther and Wittenberg, there were other disappointing signs as time went on. There are numerous reports from the church visitations in Saxony (reports of overseeing pastors who made in-person examinations of parish life in various places) that the people simply did not attend church, or attended rarely. There are complaints that many people came only for the middle part of the service, arriving just before the sermon and leaving before the Lord's Supper. And these reports are from the 1550s to the 1590s!⁴⁸

This might be a rather gloomy picture of the "freedom of the Christian" and how the universal priesthood would "declare His praises." But the public worship services do not tell the entire story. The hymnals often were not intended for use in church; especially in the beginning of the Reformation era, in the pews they sang from memory. Hymns were sold in pamphlets and on broadsheets, distributed mainly for personal use. Therefore, the schools and the home devotional life were extremely important for the success of the Gospel among the common people. To tell this part of the story, we must travel to an out-of-the-way place and meet someone who needed others to publicize his contributions:

Nikolaus Herman and the Village of Joachimsthal

One of the most impressive legacies of the Reformation belongs to the village of Joachimsthal on the Bohemia/Germany border, in the mountains called Erzegebirge in German and Krushne Hory in Czech ("Ore Mountains"). It was founded only in the year 1516 when silver was discovered in the mountains. Four years later it was given the status of a free royal mining town, and grew from 5,000 miners and villagers to 18,000 citizens within a 13-year span.⁴⁹ Considering the education level of the adults, the out-of-the-way location, and the lack of diversity in the local economy, it would not be given much consideration by a modern-day mission board. Yet consider these achievements:

⁴⁷ Ibid., 15.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 70–72, 76–78.

⁴⁹ Brown, *Singing the Gospel*, 26.

- A love for singing Lutheran hymns took hold. In warm weather, and when services included more singing in Latin, the people took it upon themselves to gather in the church one hour before the service to sing their beloved hymns in German.⁵⁰
- The town councilmen, craftsmen, and miners so made Lutheran spirituality their own that their pastor could speak from the pulpit of how “many fathers have [God’s word] in their houses and hearts, and talk and sing about it with their children.” The city’s leading men resisted the emperor’s will in their insistence on issuing a divine call to a Lutheran pastor in 1545, and the men of a later generation accepted imprisonment as a consequence of their resistance to Roman Catholicism.⁵¹
- After Lutheran clergy were forcibly removed from Joachimsthal during the Thirty Years’ War, the townspeople resisted the enforcement of Catholicism for another 25 years even without the presence of a single Lutheran pastor.⁵²

These impressive accomplishments were set into motion by someone who was himself a layman, Nikolaus Herman, the church’s cantor and the schools’ music teacher. He came to Joachimsthal in 1520, but in 1524 there was nothing too impressive about the state of the reformation there, to the extent that Herman wrote to Luther and asked if he should leave the city and seek a place more favorable to the Gospel. Luther counseled patience and said, “Who knows what God may plan to accomplish through you.”⁵³

What Herman began doing says much about the quiet way the Reformation succeeded. That year he published a translation of Erasmus’ *On the Freedom of the Will*, annotating the work with passages from Luther’s *On the Bondage of the Will*. He also published an exhortation to parents. This was the year Luther’s first hymns were published. One year later (1525) Herman began using Walther’s hymnal to introduce Luther’s hymns into public use in the Latin boys’ school and in the church. Over the next five years, Herman steadily made use of German hymns so that it became all the people knew.⁵⁴ He began to compose his own Latin verses based on the gospels for the boys’ school. He gave equal attention to the girls’ school; for them he composed

⁵⁰ Ibid., 64, 82.

⁵¹ Ibid., 40, 49, 103–104, 107, 137.

⁵² Ibid., 133–136.

⁵³ Ibid., 27–37.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 36–38.

simple German doctrinal hymns and songs that retold Bible history. He composed hymns on the Sunday gospels. He instructed the children to take the songs and hymns home to share with their parents and younger siblings. Most of his hymns were written initially for the children. They participated in numerous singing processions through city streets, notably in the mid-Lent procession in which their song symbolically drove away the Pope.⁵⁵

Two years before Herman died, his hymnal *The Sunday Gospels*—which he stated in a preface was for “Christian housefathers and their children”—was prepared for publication with the help of Wittenberg pastor Paul Eber. Eber’s preface to the hymnal⁵⁶ tells Herman’s legacy as he discusses how hymns are to be used in the home: Fathers and mothers should give the hymns a primary place in family devotions, not only singing the hymns and teaching the words but occasionally going through the hymn stanza by stanza and explaining its meaning. “Such household sermons are without doubt of great benefit, so that many a simple, uneducated man can often remember and comfort himself better from such a hymn than from a long and well-ordered sermon.”⁵⁷ At the end of the *Sunday Gospels* hymnal, Herman included a verse dedication “To Christian Fathers”:

A Christian is not satisfied
 To see his larder well supplied;
 Instead it is his foremost thought
 How his children may be taught
 To know aright their God and Lord
 And keep before their eyes His Word.
 Therefore for them he spares no pains,
 But ever teaches and explains.
 And on Sunday especially,
 When all from daily work are free,
 He sits with them, and they repeat
 What they have learned at school that week;
 He has them say their Catechism
 In answer to the questions given,
 And listens to them as they tell
 What of the sermon they recall,
 And then he sings a thankful hymn

⁵⁵ Ibid., 58, 64.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 108–109.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 250 (note 13).

To Christ the Lord, to honor Him,
And thus he ends the day of rest;
Who does likewise, keeps Sunday best.⁵⁸

Eber insisted in his preface that the hymns allowed laypeople to “comfort, instruct, and greatly encourage themselves and others in time of need, without a clergyman.”⁵⁹

This, finally, was Herman’s greatest legacy. It was not his legacy alone. He worked together with the pastor, Johannes Mathesius, who himself had begun his career in the city as a layman, serving as schoolmaster in Joachimsthal. Mathesius decided to study for the ministry and went to Wittenberg, even living in Luther’s home. Mathesius is the Lutheran pastor whom the town council insisted upon calling to Joachimsthal as pastor. From Mathesius’ sermons, Herman created hymns that helped the sermons live on as memorized doctrine. Mathesius so valued this that he even spoke to the people candidly of how a woman “is her own preacher” through continual meditation on God’s Word at home through the Bible, the catechism and the hymns.⁶⁰ While preachers today may be too timid to preach this way, thinking that it might make people too self-sufficient and keep them away from church, this is really just taking Luther’s doctrine of the universal priesthood seriously. (This was not unique to Joachimsthal; the Augsburg preacher Urbanus Rhegius urged women to make the home “a seminary for the church.”⁶¹)

When the Roman Catholic counter-reformation came to Joachimsthal and the Lutheran clergy were deposed and exiled in 1623, instead of capitulation the next 25 years saw a firm refusal by the city’s people to compromise. They stayed away from Roman Catholic services, even when they were the only services offered. Although they had attended Lutheran private confession for nearly a century (catechized by Herman’s hymn “So Truly As I Live, God Saith,” ELH 417), they stayed away from the Catholic confessional. The absence of Lutheran clergy was not the impossible situation for the people that the Catholics expected it to be. The people sustained their Lutheran faith by reading the Bible, singing hymns, and conducting devotional services in their homes.⁶²

⁵⁸ Ibid., 107–108.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 110.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 129.

⁶¹ Merry Wiesner, “Women’s Response to the Reformation,” 165.

⁶² Brown, 138–139.

This is what Herman had taught through his simple hymns, especially in the girls' school. Song after song urged them to reject false teaching and be prepared to confess the truth in the face of persecution. This work was still bearing fruit more than 60 years after his death. When force finally was exerted upon the populace by the Catholic officials, a grand total of nine people capitulated.⁶³ The girls had grown up to be mothers and grandmothers who trained their own children so well that the laypeople were able to resist false doctrine and persecution even without pastors present. This was a triumph of Luther's belief in what a layperson armed with Scripture could do, and how the royal priesthood could declare the praises of Christ. It is a reminder of the quiet, unnoticed victories of the Gospel through the means of grace, not only in the church service, but also in catechetical instruction, the singing of hymns and family devotions.

Daily Life: Little Victories in Vocation

She looked out to the horizon, away from Hannover to which she had been exiled, toward where her home in Münden must be. Her son was against her – the son she had groomed to rule the province of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. So many things had changed in her life!

At age 15, Duchess Elisabeth had been married to a man 40 years older. Dutifully she followed his faith even as her own mother became Lutheran. But by her mother's influence she heard the preaching of Lutheran pastor Antonius Corvinus at age 28, and gradually she came to believe that she was saved by faith alone. Her husband refused to change his faith. But she was not only his wife; she lived in the ruling household for the province. His subjects were like children to her. She wanted them to believe the pure Gospel. Two years later, when she was 30, her husband died. Because her eldest son was only 12, too young to rule, she received another vocation: to rule as regent for six years. She brought Pastor Corvinus back to her lands to introduce Lutheran catechesis and worship. Often she accompanied him.

She was still a mother; she knew what she was called to do, although it changed as her children grew older. She worked to keep them in the faith. She taught them the catechism. She found a Lutheran wife for her son and a Lutheran husband for her daughter. She wrote long treatises to them, one on ruling for Erich and one on marriage for Anna Maria.

There were more changes for her: When Erich began to rule (in 1548) he renounced the Lutheran faith after being courted for his allegiance by Roman Catholic emperor Charles V. He returned home determined to restore Roman

⁶³ Ibid., 134–140, 147.

Catholic faith and worship. He cast aside his wife who refused to renounce her Lutheran faith. He imprisoned Corvinus and other Lutheran pastors in his lands. Elisabeth was her son's subject, but also his mother. She denounced his actions and wrote to him about the danger of his soul.

How have you fallen into such insane raving and raging against God, against His Word, His servants, His churches and against me, your dear mother, against the whole country and the poor, oppressed subjects? God have mercy on you. If you do not turn about, God will smite you as He has always smitten those who would pull Christ from His throne. Woe, woe, woe and again woe to you if you do not change. You have made me so sick and weak from weeping that I have not strength to write and I have had to dictate. I must say this or my heart will break. If I do not speak the stones will cry out. I beg you as your mother that you desist from your godless abuses and abominations invented by men and not commanded in Holy Scripture but rather forbidden on pain of damnation. Stop. Release the prisoners.

She was not only a mother. She was also a friend and former benefactress. She found places for the exiled Lutheran pastors to serve. Finally on the battlefield, in 1552, the Lutherans prevailed. Erich, her disappointing son, repented to his mother and released the prisoners. What was she called to do? Forgive! She returned home. But then, another change: One year later Erich was on the losing side of a battle. He gained his freedom by banishing his mother.

Now she was 43. She had a new calling and knew what she was to do. She took up a quill:

*Joyful will I be
And bless His holy name.
He is my help and stay
And comfort in my shame. ...⁶⁴*

Duchess Elisabeth of Braunschweig learned the Lutheran doctrine of vocation: God calls a person to various stations in life in order to serve the neighbor in love. She learned this from the school of experience. She learned that sometimes the calling changes (from wife to widow, from mother of a young child to mother of a willful grown child,

⁶⁴ Summarized from Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 125–142; and Stjerna, 96–108.

from subject to ruler, from citizen to exile). She learned that sometimes the vocations can be in conflict.

The doctrine of vocation was an important contribution of the Lutherans. It is taught in the founding documents of the Lutheran church, the Lutheran Confessions contained in the 1580 Book of Concord, especially in the Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession.

The Small Catechism teaches vocation with its first words, in the heading for each of the chief parts. Each part begins, "As the Head of the Family Should Teach It in a Simple Way to His Household." Head of the household is a vocation. Under *Confession*, the answer to "What sins should we confess?" and "Which are these?" begins with vocation. *Here consider your own situation [German: Stand, "standing-place" or "station"] according to the Ten Commandments, whether you are a father, mother, son, daughter...* The catechism provides a section just for vocation: the Table of Duties, a collection of Bible verses categorized by vocation (preachers, hearers of the Word, citizens, government, husbands and wives, parents, children, etc.). In the later part of the Augsburg Confession (the "various abuses that have been corrected"), the doctrine of vocation is a familiar guest (emphases added):

Scripture clearly proclaims that *the married state* was instituted by God....⁶⁵

These traditions obscured the precepts of God.... Meanwhile the commands of God *pertaining to one's calling* were not praised: that the head of the household should rear the children, that a mother should bear them, that a prince should govern his country. These were considered as "worldly" and "imperfect" works, far inferior...[1 Corinthians 9:27] shows that mortification should not serve the purpose of earning grace but of keeping the body in a condition that does not prevent performing *the duties required by one's calling*.⁶⁶

It was said that one could obtain more merit through the monastic life than through *all other walks of life, which had been ordered by God*, such as the office of pastor or preacher, the office

⁶⁵ Kolb/Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, (Augsburg Confession, Article 23, Paragraph 3, "Concerning the Marriage of Priests," German text), 62.

⁶⁶ Kolb/Wengert (AC 26:8-11, "The Distinction of Meats," German text), 77.

of ruler, prince, lord, and the like. (These all *serve in their vocations according to God's command*, word, and mandate without any contrived spiritual status. ... Indeed, they pretend that monasticism is a state of perfection, far above *all walks of life instituted by God*. ... God's creation and order direct all to *the state of marriage* who are not blessed with the gift of virginity....⁶⁷

Some might say the Reformation “elevated” some vocations such as parent, spouse, and employee to a higher place. In truth, Luther’s teaching just *restored* such callings in people’s consciousness to their true glory as stations instituted by God Himself, the places where He calls individual Christians to be of benefit to the people God wills to be helped by them. These vocations existed already. What happened in the Reformation is that people became aware these were avenues for works of faith, especially from Luther’s teaching that the religious orders were not higher callings, where monks, priests and nuns performed holier works. The primacy of the doctrine of justification by faith – and its application in this area – took the point further. Since performance of vows in the cloister meant a person did his works to earn God’s favor by human merit, these works do not even exist as good works in God’s eyes; and because monasticism involved withdrawing from the world and the needs of others, effectively taking one out of the path of his neighbors, the calling itself is sinful.

Through some prominent Lutherans, we can examine a few of these vocations that are still highlighted in some of the prayers we use in church: the home and family, the arts, and science.⁶⁸ We also look at the calling that exists simultaneous with these individual avenues of service: confessing Christ in the circumstances of the vocation.

Vocation in the Home: Marriage and Family

Katharina Luther serves as a living example of Luther’s teaching on the importance of vocation. Much of what we can know about how the vocations in the home were lived out during the Reformation is through the lens of how Luther’s wife is portrayed in his letters, *Table*

⁶⁷ Kolb/Wengert, (AC 27:13, 16, 20; “Concerning Monastic Vows,” German text), 82, 84.

⁶⁸ Prayer of the Church, ELH, 96: “Let the light of Your Word shine continually in our homes. ... Let your blessing rest on seed time and harvest, on commerce and industry, on medicine and science; sanctify the arts and culture, the rest and leisure of Your people”; also the Prayer of the Church, *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 13: “Protect and prosper everyone in his appropriate calling, and cause all useful arts to flourish among us.”

Talk, and other documentation of her activities. She deserves admiration and sympathy for the public way in which she had to live this out. She was under intense scrutiny and endured public scorn. (At the time of her wedding to Luther, Erasmus declared their offspring might be the antichrist!) It took time for the public to accept married clergy, so even some of Luther's closest friends and co-workers accepted her grudgingly.⁶⁹

From age 5 to 23, Katharina von Bora lived in the Cistercian convent of Marienthron in Nimbschen; she took her vows as a nun at age 16. On the night before Easter in 1523, she was smuggled out of the convent by night in a fish wagon with 11 others (in a plan hatched by Luther). Two years after leaving the convent, Katharina had still not found a husband, although it does not appear that this distressed her: she was patient enough to reject a proposed match to a pastor. Katharina did not sit idle during this time, but as she lived at the home of Lucas Cranach the painter (one of the wealthiest citizens of Wittenberg) she was learning basic skills for managing a household. She finally requested an end to the matchmaking by Luther and his friend Nicholas von Amsdorf but said she would accept if Luther proposed. On June 13, 1525, she became his wife. Two weeks later the marriage was celebrated with a large feast that included a procession to the church for blessing.⁷⁰

There are some who believe marriage by these former nuns was "a step down in social scale," from the cloistered life that gave women "opportunities" for religious leadership and engagement in theological activity, into a life that enslaved them to "hazardous childbirths and domineering husbands."⁷¹ Such thinking wonders why Luther did not encourage Katie to express herself theologically in a public way or give her a "ministry." This is a misunderstanding of the Gospel and of freedom. In the convent she lived under the burden of the Law; in the home she lived the Gospel by serving in love, with a clear conscience, her closest neighbors: her husband, children, and (in Katie's case) the residents of the "Black Cloister," the former Augustinian monastery which she remodeled to lodge people in 30-plus rooms.

To provide for the needs of the large household, first Katie curbed Luther's carelessness with money. She also worked tirelessly: she herded, milked, and slaughtered cows; made butter and cheese; raised pigs and chickens; harvested from her vegetable garden peas, beans, turnips,

⁶⁹ Stjerna, 56.

⁷⁰ Summarizes Stjerna, 53–56; Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 23–27; and Dallmann, *Katie Luther*, 6–25.

⁷¹ Stjerna, 54, 57. The author is quite insistent and exercised on this point.

cabbage, lettuce, cucumber, and melons; grew cherries, pears, apples, peaches, nuts, grapes, mulberries, and figs in an orchard; caught fish; repaired the brewery and made beer. She inherited her family's farm in Zühlsdorf and worked it herself. Because her day began at 4 a.m., Luther called her the "Morning Star of Wittenberg."⁷²

She also was a busy mother. The Luthers had six children in eight years (between 1526 and 1534), two of whom died, Elizabeth at 10 months and Magdalena at age 13. Unlike the normal practice, the Luthers ate meals with their children rather than assigning them to the care of servants and nannies.⁷³ Besides the many student boarders who lived with them were Katie's nephew and niece, 11 of Luther's nephews and nieces, and Katie's aunt Magdalena who had been with her in the convent. Katie pleaded with Luther's parents to come live with them during their last years. In Lutheran doctrine, this *is* expressing oneself theologically: to glorify God in your vocation by not neglecting a neighbor.

Luther did not exclude his wife from his theological concerns. He reported to her in letters on the progress of his theological discussions. It is obvious from the recorded *Table Talk* that often she was in the room participating. He praised her knowledge of the Psalms and encouraged her to read the Bible, even promising a monetary reward if she read through the entire Bible. But (perhaps due to her busy schedule) she responded by saying she had read enough and heard enough; "Would to God I lived it!"⁷⁴ Jerome Weller, who lived with the Luthers for eight years as their children's tutor, said, "I often wondered why Dr. Martin Luther had his wife, Kate, memorize the 31st Psalm when she was still young, alert, and carefree. Her husband knew that after his death she would be a sorrowful and pitiable woman, very much in need of the comfort that the 31st Psalm had to offer."⁷⁵

This leads into a discussion not only of how her vocation changed after Luther died, but that an understanding of vocation trains Lutherans in bearing crosses. Where do the crosses come but in vocation? Avoiding one's vocation is avoiding crosses. If she had remained in the convent, Katharina would not have known the joys of motherhood; she also would not have known the pain of burying a child. Speaking for them both after their daughter Magdalena died at age 13 in 1542,

⁷² Bainton, 29–34; Dallmann, 35–37.

⁷³ N.S. Tjernagel, "Luther Still Lives – In the Concept of the Home," *Lutheran Sentinel*, May 1983.

⁷⁴ Bainton, 37; Stjerna, 61.

⁷⁵ Markwald, 177.

Luther wrote, “True, my wife and I should do nothing but give thanks and rejoice at such a happy end and blessed death. But the power of natural love is so great that we cannot do so without sobbing and sighing.”⁷⁶

After Luther died in 1546, her vocation changed from wife to widow, and this brought new crosses. Led by Wittenberg chancellor Gregor Brück, lawyers contested Luther’s will and attempted to take from her all her property (including the farm in Zühlsdorf), most of her earthly wealth, and even the children from her care (ignoring Luther’s explanation of the Ninth Commandment about the “show of right”). All her children were allowed to remain with her, but much of the property was sold. Except for her children and a few faithful friends (chiefly Melancthon, Jonas, Amsdorf and Bugenhagen, and their wives, and Prince John Frederick and King Christian III of Denmark/Norway), she was abandoned. Only Luther’s foresight in making her full beneficiary (“heir of everything”) in his will, contrary to normal practice, saved her interests.⁷⁷ The crosses continued to come, not only from false friends but from outright enemies. In 1547, the emperor waged war on the Lutherans. Three times Katie and her children had to flee Wittenberg. Twice she returned to ruined crops, trees, barns, stables and livestock, worked to rebuild everything, and had to beg acquaintances for money.⁷⁸ The third time, in 1552, she did not return home. Driving the wagon near Torgau, she suffered a fall and did not recover. With her children by her bedside for 3 months, she kept saying, “I will cling to Christ like a burr to a dress,” still carrying out her vocation of mother as she taught her children how to face death with faith.⁷⁹

The importance of Katharina Luther’s example in establishing the importance of the vocations in the home cannot be overestimated. In

⁷⁶ Dallmann, 90; Stjerna, 58–59.

⁷⁷ In his will, Luther left to her all property, money and valuables, plus custodianship of the children; however, since he did not consult Brück or another lawyer, Brück contested the will as lawyers could. In his will Luther said, “I do this, first because as a gentle, faithful, lawful wife she has always treated me lovingly, respectfully, and beautifully.... I hold that a mother will be the best guardian of her own children.... I ask all my good friends to be Kate’s witness....” Markwald, 178–179; Dallmann, 87.

⁷⁸ The day after she died, Melancthon and Paul Eber included the following in a poster inviting university students to the funeral service: “After she had been deeply saddened by the death of her husband, she wandered about with her children because of all the wars. Besides the trials of widowhood, she also experienced much ingratitude by many people of whom she should expect help and support for the sake of her husband’s public merits in the service to the Church, but was often disgracefully disappointed.” Markwald, 193.

⁷⁹ Markwald, 192–193; Stjerna, 66–67; Bainton, 40–42.

many ways Luther showed that he considered her a true partner in their endeavors, his “partner in calamities.” In so doing, he lived out his teaching that the highest and holiest works are done by Christians in the home when husband and wife each love and honor the other, and nurture their children.

Other women in Katie’s circle were examples of this as well. Katie’s close friend Elisabeth Cruciger, who also had escaped from a convent and wrote the hymn “The Only Son From Heaven,” was known less as a hymn writer than as an affectionate wife, devoted mother, and generous friend, whose death at age 35 was a great loss to everyone around her.⁸⁰ Katie and the wives of Luther’s friends and co-workers, Katherine Melanchthon, Katherine Jonas, and especially Walpurga Bugenhagen, commiserated with and helped each other during times of hardship, suffering and sadness, such as the deaths of children. When the plague came to Wittenberg in 1527 and the populace fled the city, Luther and Bugenhagen stayed behind and their wives cared for the sick and helped each other (and Katie seven months pregnant with their second child).⁸¹ This was the reverse of withdrawing from the world. The home became the setting for living out the faith in works of love and charity.

For those who might think “housewife” was the only vocation for women during the Reformation, a few words about the vocation of midwife are in order. This vocation came under suspicion with the increase of university-trained physicians. In 1556 the Joachimsthal pastor, Mathesius, preached that midwives “should know that they are in a blessed office and calling, and that they serve the Lord God in their office in the preservation of His creation, for which end He employs them as means ... and should consider that their office is a blessed and Christian one, well pleasing to God, which He will not leave unrewarded.”⁸²

Lutheran church orders established midwives as officials who offered help to women regardless of their social or economic standing; in return they were guaranteed a pension when they were no longer able to practice. The church orders also laid out the spiritual aspect of the vocation. The midwives were expected to use God’s Word and Lutheran hymns to comfort and instruct mothers who were giving birth, and

⁸⁰ Markwald, 152–153.

⁸¹ Stjerna, 58–59; Dallmann, 41–42.

⁸² All of the quotations and citations in this section are from Brown, “Early Modern Midwives and the Lutheran Doctrine of Vocation,” *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, Vol. 4, Issue 2, online edition.

to offer prayers at the bedside for the woman and see to it that other women and the household prayed for her too.

It was also proper, indeed required, for the women to perform emergency baptisms of newborn babies. The Lutheran clergy defended this. This may be a source of the “Emergency Baptism” instructions in the back of hymnals. The spiritual need of the mother was equally important, however. Lutheran church orders gave the midwives the duty, if a mother’s life was in danger, to hear confession and pronounce absolution in language very similar to that used by ordained pastors, and yet preserved their status as laypeople:

Dear sister, our dear Lord Jesus Christ has given us Christians this power here on earth, that each should and may, in necessity, absolve and remit the sins of another who confesses her sins, believes in Christ, and desires the grace of God, and that the same is then absolved in heaven. For He says, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted unto them,” and again, “If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven,” Matt. 18. And since you have made such a confession before me, and in true faith desire the grace of God and the forgiveness of your sins, I therefore, in the stead and by the command of Christ, hereby release and pronounce you free of all your sins, in the Name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

At least one of Bugenhagen’s church orders says the midwives’ right to baptize and absolve is a clear application of the universal priesthood of believers, lay or clergy, male or female.

Vocation in the Arts: “Sanctify the Arts and Culture, the Rest and Leisure of Your People”

Art was important from the very beginning of the Reformation. As we have seen, the event that kick-started the Reformation, Luther’s 95 Theses, reached the famous Nuremberg artist Albrecht Dürer, who immediately expressed his approval by sending Luther a gift. He declared his admiration for Luther privately several more times between 1518 and 1521 (in a letter to Spalatin and in his own diary), apparently without meeting Luther.⁸³

Dürer did not enter into an artistic partnership with the Reformer. But Dürer’s faith did inform his art. By the time of Luther’s 95 Theses,

⁸³ Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation*, 473.

Dürer had established himself as the great artist of his time and the master of the woodcut. His “Great Passion” series of engravings had appeared in 1511. After 1520, he forsook secular subjects and became even more devoted to the subject of Christ’s Passion. During his life he portrayed the Passion in no less than five series of woodcuts, and was working on the sixth when he died in 1528. Luther said that Dürer’s death was a blessing, so that he would not have to suffer the coming “calamity” that Luther foresaw.⁸⁴ This comment by Luther shows not only a presumption of Dürer’s Lutheran faith, but that the artist had made his confession of faith in his works of art so pronounced that he could be seen as an eventual target by the enemies of the Gospel.

Dürer is a serious figure. He was serious about the Gospel and he was serious about art. He published several studies of human proportion.⁸⁵ His serious consideration of the portrayal of the human body and of other creatures and objects—even publishing his conclusions for the benefit of other artists in the future—shows his vocation of glorifying the Creator in his art and serving his neighbor. Dürer could worship God and glorify Him in a woodcut of a rhinoceros or in a self-portrait. One does not need to produce an overtly Christian work of art to follow the Christian vocation of an artist.

While Dürer did not use his art in direct partnership with Luther, Lucas Cranach did. His successful workshop was put at Luther’s disposal beginning in 1520, when Luther sat for his portrait by Cranach two times. Cranach also made Luther’s portrait at Worms in 1521; the famous painting of the bearded Luther in 1522, during the Reformer’s year of hiding out at the Wartburg Castle; and on at least four other occasions. He also made engravings or paintings of Katharina Luther, Melancthon, Spalatin, Luther’s parents, the Electors Frederick the Wise, John the Steadfast, and John Frederick, and many other leading figures of the Reformation. Often it is only Cranach’s art that allows us to recognize them.⁸⁶

More important than the portraits were Cranach’s illustrations that accompanied Luther’s texts. Luther enlisted Cranach to popularize the teachings of the Reformation. In 1521, Cranach provided illustrations for *Passional Christi und Antichristi*, the first pamphlet of the Reformation. It was a series of 13 pairs of woodcuts which contrast the holy life of Christ with the Pope as the antichrist, mocking the church

⁸⁴ Brecht, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation*, 352.

⁸⁵ For instance, *Instruction on Measuring with the Compass and the Ruler* (1525), and *Four Books on Human Proportion* (1528), published the year he died. Strauss, 277–280.

⁸⁶ Werner Schade, *Cranach: A Family of Master Painters*, 52–54.

of false doctrine and exalting the church of true doctrine (however nascent, persecuted, and struggling might be its condition in 1521!). This pamphlet was the first of many examples of Luther's use of art to preach.⁸⁷

Cranach especially preached his pictorial sermons in his many Lutheran altarpieces. He received commissions for altarpieces long before 1517; but after he became connected with Luther, Cranach's altarpieces became clear sermons about grace. The most famous is the Weimar altarpiece, completed by his son after his death. Dominating the painting is Christ in agony on the cross, but most interesting is the placement of John the Baptist, Cranach, and Luther beneath the cross to Jesus' left. Cranach pictures Luther pointing in the Bible to Hebrews 4:16 ("Let us come boldly to the throne of grace"); above it on the page is 1 John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"; and on the right-hand page of the Bible is St. John 3:14–15, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."⁸⁸ John the Baptist points Cranach to Christ. From Jesus' side a stream of blood splashes onto the head of Cranach himself, the artist representing all people and looking directly at the person viewing the painting. There could hardly be a sermon that preached more clearly the atonement by Christ, justification by grace, the "for-you" Gospel, and the central importance of Word and Sacrament for faith and salvation.

Cranach's paintings covered many of the essential biblical subjects: Adam and Eve and the tree of temptation; the Last Supper; the Lamb of God; John the Baptist pointing to Christ; Christ and the children, etc. He also provided woodcuts for Luther's New Testament in 1522 (especially striking are his pictures for Revelation), and contributed woodcuts for the Old Testament prior to Luther's publication of the entire Bible in German in 1534.⁸⁹ None of this would have been as effective if Cranach had not been the excellent artist he was. He was Elector Frederick's chosen artist as early as 1506. He developed his workshop because his commissions were so numerous from 1509 forward. He was praised for his realistic, lifelike paintings. Once his painting of grapes on

⁸⁷ Ibid., 72.

⁸⁸ Information on the Scripture verses from Peter Manns, *Martin Luther: An Illustrated Biography*, 177.

⁸⁹ Schade, 72–73; also see Eamon Duffy's review of *The Reformation of the Image* by Joseph Leo Koerner.

a plate tricked a passing bird into thinking they were real.⁹⁰ The influential Nuremberg humanist Christoph Scheurl said of him, “To paint people and to paint them in such a way that they can be recognized by everybody and seem to be alive” merited “the highest praise, not attained by many mortals.”⁹¹

Art was an important partner with theology during the Reformation as it was used to preach Christ. But even in artwork that did not picture religious subjects, artists like Dürer and Cranach followed their Christian vocation by glorifying God in the subjects they painted or drew. Art can be used for quite contrary purposes; it is possible to use the arts in sinful ways. Therefore the prayer to “*sanctify* the arts and culture” is necessary.

Hans Sachs reminds us of this. We meet him again, not as one who expressed his faith in pamphlets of prose dialogue that preached Lutheran doctrine, but as a key member of the “arts community.” He learned the art of mastersinging,⁹² which opera audiences know from

⁹⁰ Gerald Strauss, *Nuremberg in the Sixteenth Century*, 272; Schade, 26.

⁹¹ Schade, 55.

⁹² Described by Strauss, p. 263–268:

... This brotherhood of artisans, brought together by a taste for rhyming and singing, endeavored to practice poetry and music as a craft, with rules and conventions like every other trade. ... The Nuremberg mastersingers met in the church of St. Catherine’s convent, usually on holiday afternoons and sometimes on Sundays. The first part of their sessions was ordinarily given to “free singing,” where any member could step forward and perform on any subject he chose. Only one person sang at a time, and all singing was unaccompanied. There followed the “main singing,” which differed from “free singing” in several respects. Only experienced masters could sing. Subjects were limited to the Bible. The singer sat in a great chair in the center of the room, and opposite him, behind a curtained partition, sat four “markers,” seasoned members of the craft who examined the singer on obedience to the rules and marked his mistakes on a slate. Each marker had his stated duties. One listened for fidelity to the mode, the second referred to the chosen verse in Luther’s German Bible to ensure that everything was said correctly, the third wrote down end syllables to check the rhymes, and the fourth kept his eye on the Tablatur, the tablet on which the masters’ rules were written. The day’s prize went to the singer who had made the fewest mistakes. ... With so many do’s and don’ts to observe, winning the prize must have been like running an obstacle course. Nevertheless, an occasional master with a strong mind and a streak of independence in him might wrench the system a bit. This is what Hans Sachs did in the 1550s and 1560s. A prolific popular verse maker and playwright and a man well read and conversant with many fields, Sachs was too full of the day’s news and the world’s stories to accommodate himself to the approved subjects. He had a good ear, and as an inventor of tunes he was head and shoulders above his colleagues. His skits and rhymes

19th-century composer Richard Wagner's opera "Die Meistersinger von Nuernberg" (in which Sachs is a central character, and his poem about Luther, The Wittenberg Nightingale, appears). Of his more than 6,000 literary works, more than 200 were dramas, carnival plays, and farces; and many of his 4,000 mastersongs were non-theological.

He aimed his creative productions at Nuremberg's artisan community, and drew not only upon the Bible, but also the "high culture" of the Roman classics, history, and the Italian Renaissance. His style is criticized as overly didactic because he stresses moral lessons to be learned, such as fairness, moderation, temperateness, and the rejection of self-interest, envy, greed and oppression.⁹³ But Sachs is a great example of sanctifying the arts. He displays an awareness of the audience and his responsibility before God as an artist: that his artistic creations should produce virtue, not vice. Sachs shows that a Christian makes a confession both by what he does with the arts, entertainment, and leisure; and what he does not do with them or scrupulously avoids doing. The American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow paid tribute not only to what these vocations can accomplish, but what actual Lutherans carrying them out have accomplished, in his poem "Nuremberg," which concludes as he addresses the city he is visiting:

Not thy Councils, not thy Kaisers, win for thee the world's regard
But thy painter, Albrecht Dürer, and Hans Sachs thy cobbler-bard.⁹⁴

Vocation in Science: "Let Your Blessing Rest On Medicine and Science"

It is timely in these days when science is often put into conflict with Christian faith to be reminded that the vocation of scientist can (and should) be a Christian vocation. Like the artist, the scientist finds the beginning of his vocation in the words of Psalm 111:2: "The works of the Lord are great, Studied by all who have pleasure in them." The person who exemplifies this is Johannes Kepler (1571–1630), who was

had made him popular in town; he could afford to speak out. Sachs did not set out to reform anything; he merely expressed his superior talent.

⁹³ Bates.

⁹⁴ Longfellow, *Collected Works*, 104–105. This poem includes wonderful lines about Dürer and Sachs, calling Dürer "the Evangelist of art" and saying of Sachs, "Here Hans Sachs...in huge folios sang and laughed." The very last line of the poem pays homage not only to their artistic creations but how they carried out their craft daily when the poet praises "The nobility of labor – the long pedigree of toil."

part of the first generation to grow up with the Formula of Concord and the complete Lutheran Book of Concord.

Kepler is one of the fathers of modern astronomy. When he began his career, Copernicus' theory (chiefly that not the earth but the sun is the center of the created universe) was condemned. Lutherans were the first public supporters of this theory,⁹⁵ and Kepler became the most important early supporter of the theory. Typically for him, he did not support it just because he was Lutheran, but as a result of empirical study which was never divorced from his Christian faith. He was not afraid to argue in favor of the Copernican theory with the influential, older and more experienced Danish Lutheran astronomer Tycho Brahe. He knew that Galileo Galilei believed Copernicus to be correct and chided him to make his agreement public. Kepler is famous for his Laws of Planetary Motion, which explained the elliptical orbits of the planets.⁹⁶ He published the findings at age 33, only 10 years after beginning his professional teaching career. Nor was he satisfied, but continued to study these results throughout his life, adding a Third Law of Planetary Motion at age 48 (11 years before his death), which defined the shape of the planets' orbits. These laws created a new foundation for astronomical calculations and paved the way for Newton's law of gravity.

Kepler's uniqueness is seen in how he lived in the worldview of Christian vocation and used the "universal priesthood" doctrine to describe his work.⁹⁷ In his mid-twenties, while arguing with Brahe

⁹⁵ In 1538 Philip Melanchthon gave Wittenberg mathematics professor Georg Rheticus a leave of absence to visit astronomers abroad, chiefly Copernicus, of whom Rheticus knew that he was circulating the idea of a solar system centered around a stationary sun. Rheticus spent more than two years with Copernicus convincing him to publish his theory and returned to Wittenberg in 1541 with the manuscript. It was published under the title *Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium*, "On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres," in 1543, the year Copernicus died. See *The First Copernican: Georg Joachim Rheticus and the Rise of the Copernican Revolution* (Walker & Company, 2006); and J.R. Christianson, "Copernicus and the Lutherans," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (October 1973): 1-10.

⁹⁶ Max Caspar, *Kepler*, 125-134; James A. Connor, *Kepler's Witch*, 172-177.

⁹⁷ The prayer Kepler wrote for his published work "Harmony of the World" in 1618 at age 47 shows this: "O Thou, who by the light of nature increases in us the desire for the light of Thy mercy in order to be led by this to Thy glory, to Thee I offer thanks, Creator, God, because Thou hast given me pleasure in what Thou hast created and I rejoice in Thy handiwork. See, I have now completed *that work to which I was summoned*. In doing so I have utilized *all those powers of my mind which Thou hast loaned me*. I have shown man the glory of Thy works, as much as their unending wealth as my feeble intellect was able to grasp. My mind has been ready to correct the path and be punctilious about true research. If I have let myself be led astray by the astounding beauty of Thy work and become audacious, or if I have found pleasure in my own fame among men

about the Copernican theory, he said, “Since we astronomers are priests of the highest God in regard to the book of nature, it befits us to be thoughtful not of the glory of our minds but rather, above all else, of the glory of God. He who is convinced of it, does not lightly publish something other than what he himself believes in, and does not boldly change something in the hypothesis unless the phenomenon can thereby be explained in a more certain manner.”⁹⁸ He maintained this approach, ten years before his death calling himself in a published work a “priest of God at the book of nature.”⁹⁹

One sees this attitude in all his dealings with Galileo, with whom he carried on a friendly rivalry. He urged Galileo to publish his agreement with the heliocentric theory (because it was Kepler’s duty to God and to truth to build support for it). In 1610, Galileo asked Kepler’s opinion of his *The Starry Messenger*, in which he published discovery of four new planets using the first dual-lens telescope. Kepler promptly responded with *Conversation With the Starry Messenger* (only 11 days later!) in which he praised highly Galileo’s findings. Galileo later thanked him for being virtually the only one with intellectual authority to give credence to his claims.¹⁰⁰ In response to friends’ urging him to be more sparing in his praise of his chief competitor, Kepler said, “Never do I scorn or conceal other people’s knowledge when I lack my own. Never do I feel servile to others or forget myself when I have done something better or discovered it sooner with my own power.”¹⁰¹ Kepler asked Galileo to let him look through the telescope, but Galileo guardedly resisted. After Kepler gained permission to look through a telescope owned by a Lutheran prince and saw the planet Jupiter with his own eyes, he published the results, again helping Galileo’s credibility.

Kepler was engaged in something too important to worry about credit for this or that discovery; he let the discoveries gained by telescope take him in another direction: He developed theoretical laws by which the telescope worked (laws of magnification and reduction, refraction of light, etc.), and thus became a father of modern optics. He was always following his curiosity to learn more about God’s creation. In 1613 he published *A New Stereometry of Wine Casks*: spurred by his curiosity about the measurement of wine casks, he worked at the

because of the successful progress of my work, which is destined for Thy fame, forgive me in Thy kindness and mercy.” Caspar, 375 (emphases added).

⁹⁸ Max Caspar, *Kepler*, 88–89.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 298.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 189–193.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 194–196.

problem of measuring curved surfaces, and his conclusions paved the way for integral calculus.¹⁰² Curious about the Bethlehem star and the time of Christ's birth, he worked on chronology, and concluded that Jesus was born in 5 B.C. He supported the Gregorian calendar publicly when few did (until 1700).¹⁰³

Kepler did not do any of this in peace and quiet. He lived in the time of the counter-reformation and the events leading up to the Thirty Years' War, which caused him to be exiled more than once; in his last years the Thirty Year's War did begin eight days after he published "Harmony of the World," the result of a lifelong study and his conviction that there is harmony in astronomy, music, and geometry which reflects the image of God. At this time his mother was accused with false evidence of witchcraft in her old age, causing Kepler to undertake her defense by himself and win the case. His first wife died of a fever brought by foreign soldiers. He had 11 children from two marriages, but five of them died in infancy or early childhood.

In the midst of all this (between 1612 and 1618), his Lutheran pastor and the consistory excommunicated him for a refusal to agree with the technical term "ubiquity" used to describe Christ's presence in the Formula of Concord, a term he considered an innovation and consequently should not be required. Kepler was singled out in opposition to all other laity in the congregation for his opinions. He continued to appeal the decision and enter into discussions with the Lutheran clergy. He continued to study, even publishing in 1623 a "profession of belief" which clarified his beliefs against "various unkind rumors."¹⁰⁴

Even in theological discussion, Kepler proceeded within the worldview of the universal priesthood and freedom of conscience. He finally declared, "I have no right to be hypocritical in matters of conscience. I am ready to sign [the Formula of Concord], if the reservations I have already presented are accepted. I want no share in the anger of the theologians. I shall not judge a brother; for whether they stand or fall, they are my brothers and those of the Lord. ... I do not hold this exclusion in contempt, nor do I rejoice over it. But I ask God to support me with His Holy Ghost, so that I never make myself guilty of anything by which I would earn the exclusion."¹⁰⁵ He rejected Calvinism completely. He refused every overture by the Jesuits. During the Thirty Years' War he even sent consoling letters to the Lutheran pastor who had

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 196–199; Connor, 220–221.

¹⁰³ Caspar, 227–233.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 264.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 214–219, 259–260.

excommunicated him. In his last moments he declared that he wanted to testify resolutely that all his refuge, solace, and welfare rested only on Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁶

In many ways, Kepler personifies Luther's doctrine of the universal priesthood: He gained his Lutheran faith through the means of grace and the study of God's Word, and for the rest of his life extolled the gifts of his baptism; he found his vocation in studying the works of God for the benefit of his fellow man; as a scientist he considered himself a steward of God's gifts which God had called him to use in a particular way (see footnote 96); he risked being ostracized and alienated by what he spoke; he could do nothing against the truth but only for the truth (2 Corinthians 13:8), refusing to speak even one word he did not believe (whether in theology or science) even if everyone else believed otherwise; he continued to reach out to his neighbors in love, and endured every cross.

Conclusion: Called to Confess

Regardless of the vocation, every Christian is called to confess his faith in carrying it out. It looks most dramatic in the cases of such people as Argula von Grumbach and other pamphleteers who (literally) published their faith and inspired others to steadfastness. But the unadvertised faithfulness in daily callings contains no less courageous of a confession of faith. Then there are the unexpected occasions for confession of faith. When we have examined the lives of these people and think we know them, just then comes a surprise.

There is the painter Lucas Cranach, who left his studio and everything else behind to stay with Elector John Frederick in captivity, after he was taken captive by Emperor Charles V. That silent confession spoke loudly. We see something similar in the later years of Johann Walther, Katie Luther, and Elisabeth of Braunschweig. Walther refused to be a creative part of a city that left strict Lutheranism behind. Katie Luther never gave up in the face of opposition, for the sake of her children. Duchess Elisabeth refused to take the easy way out and show tolerance for her own son's departures from the faith; eventually all Braunschweig embraced the Augsburg Confession, in large part due to her steadfastness.

These stalwart Lutherans found that their voices were still needed. They had to confess their faith in old age. This should be an encouragement not to think that the time for boldly speaking up for the truth is

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 358.

ever over or less needed. It is never “somebody else’s turn.” The church needs to hear the voices of the aged as well as of the young.

There are other examples of this stubborn confessing of faith:

- Duchess Elisabeth of Brandenburg (1485–1545), mother of Elisabeth of Braunschweig (and sister of the Electors Frederick the Wise and John the Steadfast, Luther’s protectors) defied her husband’s demand that she receive holy communion according to the Roman Catholic rite (in one kind), and fled to Torgau. She braved poverty and loneliness until her sons (after her husband’s death) restored tolerance for Lutheran doctrine worship to the region.¹⁰⁷
- King Christian III of Denmark (1503–1559) had Lutheran faith and practice introduced into his lands of Denmark and Norway by his official sanction, bringing Bugenhagen to introduce the Lutheran church order and ordain Lutheran bishops. Christian opposed a Catholic majority and even won a civil war to accomplish this. By his order the Bible, the Augsburg Confession, and the liturgy were put into his people’s language, ensuring that the laypeople would have their faith fed.¹⁰⁸
- Anna of Prussia saw her grandfather energetically make Brandenburg Lutheran but was disappointed in her marriage to John Sigismund; in 1613 he turned Calvinist and aggressively tried to turn his people to the Calvinist confession of faith, deposing Lutheran pastors. Anna was allowed to have a private Lutheran chaplain, and did much to help her people resist the Calvinist reforms so that her husband’s Calvinist “reformation” remained limited to the court and did not take hold among the people.¹⁰⁹

This survey of the contributions of laymen and women in the Reformation era shows us concretely, through the example of some notable individuals, what Luther only saw in dim outline as the possibilities emanating from laity armed with Scripture. Chiefly we have seen what people did in their vocations. Whether it was a churchly vocation, as in the cases of Johann Walther and Nikolaus Herman, or the various callings of daily life and work in the examples of Katharina

¹⁰⁷ Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 112–123.

¹⁰⁸ Bergsma/Marzolf, 46–49; Ole Peter Grell, “Scandinavia” in *The Early Reformation in Europe*, 110–111.

¹⁰⁹ Bodo Nischan, *Prince, People, Confession: The Second Reformation in Brandenburg*, 92–94, 106–108, 185–188, 217–218.

Luther, Duchess Elisabeth of Braunschweig, Lucas Cranach, Albrecht Dürer, Hans Sachs, and Johannes Kepler, what we learn is that a layman armed with Scripture accomplishes great things by confessing his faith in word and in deed.

Often the most powerful sermons are the quiet ones: Christian fathers, mothers, children, teachers, laborers, craftsmen, artists, and musicians doing their work selflessly and faithfully, to the glory of God and for the good of the neighbor. We remember these Lutheran saints not as those whose merits obtain anything for us but as examples of steadfast confession and godly living. They inspire those not only of their generation but future generations, down to us, our children and our grandchildren. [LSQ](#)

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Taming the Leviathan: Selected Civil Leaders in the German Lands during the Reformation

David W. Schroeder
Professor, Martin Lutheran College
New Ulm, Minnesota

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EVEN A *SURVEY* OF “CIVIL Leaders of the Reformation,” the topic assigned for this paper, is a herculean and daunting task. The constraints I have imposed on the topic may disappoint some, but constraints there must be: I cannot, in a modest paper, convey the breadth and depth of the dozens of men who exercised civil leadership during the reformations in Europe in the sixteenth century. But studying a cross section of civil leadership in the German lands may prove instructive and representative of the wide variety of men who were participants at the creation and unfolding of the Lutheran Reformation. A look at these men—their beliefs and passions, their goals and strategies, their strengths and foibles—colors and textures our understanding of the Reformation and gives meaningful context to Martin Luther and other religious leaders of the 1500s. Indeed, the religious reformations could not and would not have blossomed as they did had civil leaders and a protective legal environment not provided a congenial context for ecclesiastical reform.

A half-century ago, Reformation scholar Gerald Strauss described the German lands in the 1500s as a “Leviathan without bones,” with several dozen secular princes, fifty church lords, 3000 cities and towns, and lesser nobility and imperial knights vying for varying degrees of

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power and influence.¹ More recently, historian Thomas Brady (among others) suggested the leviathan's lack of rigid structure was a strength: German "particularism," or parcellized sovereignty, rather than being an impediment to political unification and the growth of the Reformation, fostered a vibrant "dispersed governance."² That dispersed governance—a slice of Strauss' Leviathan—shows a rich jumble of men who competed for and demanded the obedience, if not the loyalty, of the German people within their spheres, political leaders trying to fulfill their visions and meet their duties as they understood them. The civil leaders in this cross section advanced the Protestant Reformation in the German lands as they exercised political leadership and moral influence over the subjects within their jurisdictions. The electors of Saxony—Frederick the Wise, John the Steadfast, and John Frederick the Magnanimous; Philip, Landgrave of Hesse; the government of the imperial city of Nuremberg; and the knights Ulrich von Hutten and Franz von Sickingen, contributed to the success of the Reformation in the German lands in the sixteenth century. Additionally, the growing systemization of law and its use by civil leaders created an atmosphere in which religious reforms could more quickly and firmly take hold.

Luther's understanding of secular rule and his stance toward civil leadership are anchored in his teachings of the two kingdoms. Luther built on a traditional understanding of the two kingdoms—articulated in the New Testament and in Augustine—of *regnum* and *sacerdotium*, but his concern was theological rather than political. Luther believed and taught that a Christian belongs to sacred and secular realms and that God instituted two rules, the spiritual and the secular. In the former, Christ is sovereign, and the Holy Spirit works to bring people to faith; in the latter, the civil leader prevents non-Christians from harming the pious and creating chaos.³ In Luther's scheme, a Christian must be subordinate to the secular rule, yet realizing that it can have no authority over souls:

¹ Gerald Strauss, *Nuremberg in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966), 2.

² Thomas Brady, Jr., *The Politics of the Reformation in Germany: Jacob Sturm (1489–1553) of Strasbourg* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997), 1–5.

³ Eric Gritsch, in "Luther and the State: Post-Reformation Ramifications," stated that Luther "knew that if one is called to be a little Christ to the neighbor, one also has to be a little Caesar to the neighbor in need of justice." James Tracy (ed.), *Luther and the Modern State in Germany* (Kirksville, Missouri: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1986), 45–59 (quote at 59).

It is my duty to obey you [the secular ruler] with life and property. Command me as far as your authority extends on earth, and I will obey. But if you command me in matters of faith, or order me to dispose of my books, then I will not obey because you have now gone too far and become a tyrant issuing demands in areas where you have neither right nor authority.⁴

But while Luther encouraged a Godly respect for civil leaders, he routinely expressed disappointment in them:

[S]ince the creation of the world, an astute prince has been a rare being, and a pious and just ruler even rarer. Usually they are the greatest idiots and the worst scoundrels on earth. One must therefore always expect the worst from them, and not hope for anything particularly good, above all in spiritual matters....⁵

[Rulers] are too busy going on sleigh rides, attending drinking parties and masquerades, and burdened with the great, important matters of cellar, kitchen and bedroom!⁶

One “astute prince,” “a pious and just ruler” whose rule coincided with Luther’s life and work, was Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony (1463–1525, ruled from 1486). Indeed, Luther held Frederick in an especially high regard, writing the elector, “I assure you with all my heart that I have always had a perfect and unaffected love for your Grace above all other princes and rulers.”⁷ Luther biographer Heiko Oberman is effusive in his praise of Frederick, calling him “the complete Christian prince [who] act[ed] in the interests of his subjects’ welfare and salvation,” a “statesman thoroughly praiseworthy.”⁸ In *Luther: A Biography*, Richard Marius describes Frederick as a “confusion of shadows,” a pious leader with a “stupendous collection of relics.”⁹ The elector gathered

⁴ Martin Lausten, “Lutherus: Luther and the Princes,” in Peter Newman Brooks (ed.), *Seven-Headed Luther: Essays in Commemoration of a Quincentenary, 1483–1983* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 51–76 (quote at 56).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Luther to Elector Frederick, March 5, 1522, in Preserved Smith and Charles Jacobs (eds.), *Luther’s Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters—volume 2* (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publication Society, 1918), #529.

⁸ Heiko Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 20, 32.

⁹ Richard Marius, *Luther: A Biography* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1974), 36, 66.

relics throughout Europe and the Near East; his collection numbered about 20,000 pieces, and among his prizes were the corpse of an innocent killed by King Herod, a piece of the burning bush and some soot from the fiery furnace, some of Mary's milk and a strand of her hair, and straw from the stable where Jesus was born.¹⁰

Frederick's Saxony had no university—Ducal Saxony's university was at Leipzig—and the elector founded one in 1502 at Wittenberg, a city of 2500 people. In the university's charter, Frederick stated that he and people from neighboring lands would go to his new university "so that, when we have come full of doubt, we may, after receiving the sentence, depart in certainty."¹¹ More practically, Frederick's university created an educated and legally informed coterie of officials and advisers, men who would, over time, help the elector consolidate his power in Saxony and within the empire. One of Frederick's most influential advisers—and the one most significant for Luther and the Reformation—was George Burkhardt. A year older than Luther, Burkhardt was born in Spalt, near Nuremberg; following the humanist practice he renamed himself *Spalatinus*, "the man from Spalt." As court chaplain and secretary to the elector, Spalatin was the sympathetic link between Frederick and Luther.

Luther joined Frederick's university in 1508; the odd relationship between prince and professor, and the elector's dedication and commitment to his university, were foundational to the Reformation. Frederick's ongoing protection of Luther was part of the elector's strategy to expand his power in Saxony at the expense of the administrative authority of the pope. "We have never undertaken," Frederick wrote his agent in Rome, "and do not now undertake to protect and defend by our patronage the doctrine and writings of Dr. Martin Luther, for we do not presume to give judgment." Frederick understood the dangers to his lands and subjects should he yield to the demands of pope and emperor regarding Luther: "[If Luther] is not refuted by reason and Scripture, but is only proceeded against by the terror of ecclesiastical power, it looks as if much trouble and a horrible and fatal rebellion would take place in Germany."¹² Luther appreciated the elector's kindnesses and efforts on

¹⁰ Steven Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 139.

¹¹ Leopold von Ranke, *History of the Reformation* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1905), 142.

¹² Frederick to Valentine von Teutleben, September 1520, in Preserved Smith (ed.), *Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters*—volume 1 (Philadelphia:

his behalf, writing Spalatin, “I pray you permit me to thank our prince for his favor.... For I am not worthy that any man should speak of me, still less that a prince should do so and least of all that such a prince should do so.”¹³ At Frederick’s death, Luther shared high praise for the elector:

When the genius of a financier, a statesman, and a hero concur in the same prince, it is a gift of God. Such a one was Frederick. He was, indeed, very wise. He took care of the administration himself and did not leave everything to a pack of fools, for he said: “While I am alive I will be the ruler.”¹⁴

Frederick’s wise rule permitted Luther and the Reformation to flourish in Electoral Saxony, but John the Steadfast’s leadership (ruled 1525–1532) solidified the Reformation in his lands. A Lutheran service replaced the Catholic mass, evangelical preachers displaced Catholic clergy, the state appropriated church wealth, and territorial governance replaced church rule. Luther persuaded Elector John to begin a program of parish visitation in Saxony. The program of parish visitation, begun in 1528, laid the foundation for unity in faith and doctrine and secular control of the church. Luther had communicated the problem and suggested the solution to John: “The first thing is that the parishes everywhere are in such miserable condition.... There are enough monasteries, foundations, benefices, charitable endowments and the like if only your Grace will interest himself sufficiently to command that they be inspected, reckoned up and organized.”¹⁵ When the situation was no better a year later, Luther again approached John with more “supplications”:

[B]ecause all of us, and especially the rulers, are commanded to care for the poor children who are born every day and are growing up, and to keep them in the fear of God and under discipline, we must have schools and pastors and preachers. If the older people do not want them, they may go to the devil; but if the young people are neglected and are not trained, it

The Lutheran Publication Society, 1913), #292.

¹³ Luther to Spalatin, December 14, 1516, in Smith, #23.

¹⁴ Luther to John Rühel, May 23, 1525, in Preserved Smith, *The Life and Letters of Martin Luther* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968 [first published in 1911]), 220.

¹⁵ Luther to Elector John, October 31, 1525, in Smith and Jacobs, #709.

is the fault of the rulers, and the land will be filled with wild, loose-living people.¹⁶

Luther and Philip Melanchthon prepared *Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors of Electoral Saxony* (1528), which both limited and empowered the prince. Neither Luther nor Melanchthon favored unlimited princely authority; rather, the elector was to conduct the visitation—as a temporary and emergency measure—because the clergy were unwilling, and “out of Christian love” and for the welfare of “the wretched Christians in his territory.” The *Instructions* authorized the elector, acting as sovereign in his land, to call and ordain parish visitors; if any pastor refused to accept the common order the visitors prescribed, the elector had the authority to take action against the pastor.¹⁷

The Elector John and other princes initiated visitations of churches in their lands and assumed control of reforming the parishes. Luther and reformers in Saxony stated that all public religion that deviated from the teaching of Wittenberg was blasphemy and a threat to civil peace, and it was the princes’ duty to silence the heresy. That belief and practice materialized in Hans Mohr, captain of the castle at Coburg. Local authorities sent details about Mohr, a supposed sacramentarian, to Elector John, who asked Luther for advice on how to resolve the problem. Luther counseled that Mohr’s “mouth should be stopped”; when Mohr refused to remain silent, local secular authorities relieved Mohr of his post at Coburg and imprisoned him.¹⁸ When John the Steadfast died in 1532, his son, John Frederick the Magnanimous, became elector (ruled 1532–1547). When he was in his teens, John Frederick had had a positive and trusting relationship with Luther, and, as a young man, the prince actively supported the Reformation during his father’s reign, both within Saxony and at imperial diets. As elector,

¹⁶ Luther to Elector John, November 22, 1526, in Smith and Jacobs, #743.

¹⁷ James Estes notes the fine line Luther was taking: “The task of maintaining the distinction between the prince as prince and the prince as Christian brother, when in practice he had to be both at once, had become impossibly difficult. To say that it exceeded the authority of the prince as prince to establish a visitation and thereby assume responsibility for the establishment of true doctrine and worship, but that it was well within the authority of that same prince to abolish false or schismatic doctrine or worship, was to exceed the limits of common sense.” *Peace, Order and the Glory of God: Secular Authority and the Church in the Thought of Luther and Melanchthon, 1518–1559* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 52.

¹⁸ C. Scott Dixon, “The Politics of Law and Gospel: The Protestant Prince and the Holy Roman Empire,” in Bridget Heal and Ole Peter Grell (eds.), *The Impact of the European Reformation: Princes, Clergy and People* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 37–62.

John Frederick reinvigorated parish visitations and organization of the church in Saxony.

In contrast to the reserved, cautious, and taciturn Frederick the Wise, Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, was, according to Hans Hillerbrand, “exuberant, driving, rambunctious,” a religiously shallow person whose decision for Protestantism in 1524 “was immature and impulsive.”¹⁹ In 1518, when Philip was fourteen years old, Emperor Maximilian declared the youth to be of age and named the teenager Landgrave of Hesse. Philip’s assumption of power resolved the struggle among the Estates, the Dukes of Saxony, and the Landgravine Anna, all of whom had contended for power in Hesse since Philip’s father’s death about a decade earlier. Young Philip and the experienced advisors he relied on had in common the goal of concentrating power in the sovereign.

Philip met Luther at the Diet of Worms in 1521; while the landgrave had an openness toward Luther, nothing indicates that he had accepted the new teaching. Within the first couple years of Philip’s rule, the Reformation appeared in the Hessian cities of Alsfeld, Kassel, and Marburg; in 1523, the landgrave forced Tilemann Schnabel, an Augustinian, to leave Hesse because Schnabel refused to stop preaching in the spirit of the Reformation. But in the summer of 1524, Philip crossed paths with Philip Melanchthon, who some months later sent the landgrave a written explanation of justification and grace. Melanchthon also explained that the role of the prince was to keep order in his land, thereby permitting the preaching of the Gospel. Luther’s German translation of the New Testament and other writings enabled Philip to make theological judgments consistent with Scripture.²⁰ The young ruler announced his conversion at the beginning of 1525, and several months later he wrote his mother: “If anyone would harm me because of the

¹⁹ Hans Hillerbrand, *Landgrave Philipp of Hesse, 1504–1567: Religion and Politics in the Reformation* (St. Louis: Foundation for Reformation Research, 1967), 7.

²⁰ Gury Schneider-Ludorff, “Philipp of Hesse as an Example of Princely Reformation: A Contribution to Reformation Studies,” *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 8:3 (2006), 301–319. Schneider-Ludorff disagrees with Hillerbrand’s characterization of Philip’s conversion as “immature and impulsive”: “The degree of consistency, vehemence and relentlessness with which [Philip] adhered to the principle of scriptural primacy, the particular criterion of Reformation insight which he had chosen as his personal supreme standard, is indeed striking. He even defended his own Biblical insights against theological authorities among his contemporaries, or accused them of inconsistency on the basis of his own Biblical studies” (306).

Word of God, then will I gladly suffer it for the sake of God.”²¹ By mid-summer 1525, after putting down a peasants’ uprising in Hesse and another, with the dukes of Saxony and Brunswick, at Frankenhause, Philip created the Gotha-Torgau League, an evangelical defensive alliance formed in response to the short-lived anti-evangelical Dessau League.

In 1526 the princes called an imperial council, and the resultant Diet of Speyer and its recess became a turning point in the growth of the Reformation in Hesse. The consensus that the Edict of Worms would not be enforced in the empire, together with the charge that each prince would “live, govern, and carry himself as he hopes and trusts to answer it to God and his Imperial Majesty,” effectively nationalized the Reformation. The *ius reformandi* permitted Philip and other evangelical princes to implement ecclesiastical changes in their lands.

In the wake of the Diet of Speyer, the landgrave called a special meeting of his estates at Homberg. As the local ruler, Philip assumed quasi-episcopal duties, and his intentions regarding the meeting reflected his political and theological concerns for Hesse. Any settlement coming from the Homberg Synod had to satisfy his political plans and his relatively new religious posture, putting the new Lutheran teachings into practice and establishing an evangelical church in Hesse. In September 1526 Philip consulted Luther and Melancthon regarding his political plans as articulated in the Homberg Synod’s *Reformation*: he intended to appoint governors to oversee monastic houses; he planned to assume responsibility for social matters such as morality, education, and care of the poor; and he planned to establish a university and a secondary preparatory school.

Philip envisioned a two-front fight: a theological reformation and a political restructuring, one in which regional powers would unite to nurture and protect Protestantism and to defend their lands from Emperor Charles V and his Catholic princes. Philip founded his university at Marburg in 1527 as part of his arsenal; he recognized the need for native theologians and lawyers whose energies and talents he would use to develop Hesse into a formidable Protestant state. Founding his university was also Philip’s way of asserting his sovereignty and demonstrating equality with electors and princes in German lands. But Marburg University’s theological distinctiveness from Wittenberg’s—Philip did not require uniform confessional commitment in his

²¹ Alton Hancock, “Philipp of Hesse’s View of the Relationship of Prince and Church,” *Church History* 35:2 (June 1966), 162.

professors—fostered doctrinal variety and an independence from Luther. Indeed, while Philip had great respect for Luther, the landgrave did not embrace the theologian's position on fellowship, nor did he welcome Luther's consistent unwillingness to compromise with reformers not in agreement with him.

Following the Diet of Speyer, Philip secured Francis Lambert of Avignon as a theologian who could assist him in setting up the church in Hesse. Lambert prepared the *Paradoxa*, in which he articulated Philip's understanding of the relationship between state and church: "The church is responsible to decide on things involving faith according to God's Word, because they have the Key, [but it] is the duty of the Princes and powers of the faithful, to see to it, that the decisions of the church are obeyed." "Everyone," Lambert asserted, "is subject to the princes and authorities, even the bishops and the entire clergy."²² Philip's views on church and state were not inconsistent with ideas Luther expressed in *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, but Luther urged Philip not to publish and implement the *Reformation*, the church order produced at the Homberg Synod. "I humbly and faithfully advise you," Luther wrote, "not to allow it to be printed at this time, for I have never had, and have not now, sufficient courage to pass so many radical laws at once." Luther encouraged Philip to be cautious, because "laws passed prematurely are seldom well obeyed, as the people are not used to them nor ready for them.... By this Ordinance you would change much arbitrarily."²³ Better, Luther suggested, that Philip would "provide the schools with good teachers and the parishes with good pastors...and let the innovations be gradual." Philip heeded Luther's advice: he did not publish the *Reformation*, and he appointed pastors in key towns in his lands. Further, Philip used parish visitors to inventory monastic properties and to investigate "the learning, life and behavior" of each minister, removing pastors who were not capable and requiring churches to imitate the ceremonies practiced in Marburg.

The Pack Affair of 1528–1529 highlights the comingling of politics and theology in Philip of Hesse. In February 1528, Otto von Pack, former Vice-Chancellor to Duke George of Saxony, told Philip of a secret alliance of Catholic princes, formed at Breslau in May of the previous year, whose purpose was to suppress the Reformation with

²² William Wright, "The Homberg Synod and Philip of Hesse's Plan for a New Church-State Settlement," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 4:2 (October 1973), 29. Wright's thesis is that Philip, rather than Lambert, was the mind and heart of the Homberg Synod, the *Reformation* that the synod produced, and the *Paradoxa*.

²³ Luther to Philip of Hesse, January 7, 1527, in Smith and Jacobs, #750.

force, including the capture of “the arch-heretic Martin Luther along with all the heretical preachers, priests, apostate monks [and] nuns, and other clergy who had changed their habit, religion, and spiritual character.”²⁴ When Pack showed Philip an alleged copy of the agreement (with a promise to produce the original in return for a payment), the landgrave consulted Elector John and his son, John Frederick, and the three rulers formed a Protestant counter-alliance and contemplated a preemptive attack on the Catholic princes. Luther counseled the elector and landgrave to wait for the Catholic princes to attack first:

[T]o attack these princes and to anticipate them in the war, is not at all to be advised, but rather most of all to be avoided.... They would gain from it not only the advantage of appearing to be wronged, but they would actually get the right to defend themselves as of necessity.... No greater shame could be put on the Gospel, for out of it would come not a Peasants’ War, but a Princes’ War, which would utterly destroy Germany; and this Satan would be glad to see.²⁵

But Philip was not interested in Luther’s caution and advice, and he offered an apocalyptic prediction should the Catholic princes attack first:

I am moved thereto by God’s Word, which I would not willingly see quenched, for if their plans are carried out it will not only be quenched, but suppressed; all good people, too, would be hanged for it, drowned, driven out of the country; their property would be taken, the books would be destroyed, the preachers would be displaced.... Wives and children would be put to shame, idolatry and the devil’s preaching re-established, the poor-funds robbed, maids and matrons ruined.... But I would kindly inquire of Martin whether it is better that we let the house catch fire and then put it out, or prevent the fire and keep it from burning.²⁶

In the middle of May, when Philip confronted Duke George of Saxony (one of the alleged conspirators and Philip’s father-in-law),

²⁴ Mark Edwards, Jr., *Luther’s Last Battles: Politics and Polemics, 1531–46* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 42.

²⁵ Luther to Gregory Brück (Chancellor of Electoral Saxony), March 28, 1528, in Smith and Jacobs, #793.

²⁶ Philip to Brück, April 11, 1528, in Smith and Jacobs, #794.

Pack's story unraveled and the forgery was exposed. Ironically, while Philip, who had been certain that the Catholic princes were planning mischief, let the matter rest, Luther, who had questioned the veracity of Pack's story and his document, fired another salvo:

You see what a commotion this confederacy of wicked princes has caused. They deny it, to be sure, but I consider Duke George's extremely cool denial as equivalent to a confession.... I know what I know; that confederacy is no mere chimera, though it is a most monstrous monster.... May God confound that worst of fools [Duke George] who, like Moab, boasts more than he can do and waxes proud beyond his power.... [I]f they try anything again we shall pray God and exhort our princes to make them perish without quarter, inasmuch as those insatiable blood-suckers will not rest until they make Germany reek with gore.

A slogan—a confessional battle cry—concatenated Philip and his contemporary Protestant princes. As early as 1526, the princes of Saxony and Hesse appeared together at meetings of the imperial estates with the slogan *Verbum Domini manet in aeternum*—the Word of God is eternal—sewn onto their clothes. Frederick the Wise adopted the phrase in 1522 and had it stitched onto court clothes and minted on a series of Saxon coins, and Philip of Hesse had the motto inscribed on cannon as early as 1524. At the 1526 Diet of Speyer, Elector John of Saxony displayed his arms—with the slogan—outside the inn where he was staying; he and Philip had the initials VDMIE on their sleeves. Display of the initials was no mere sartorial flourish: the princes were giving clear evidence of their roles as civil leaders of the Reformation.²⁷

While the electors and Philip of Hesse personify the *princely* Reformation, the imperial city of Nuremberg embodies the *urban*

²⁷ See F.J. Stopp, "*Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum*: The Dissemination of a Reformation Slogan, 1522–1904," in Siegbert Praver et al. (eds.), *Essays in German Language, Culture and Society* (London: The Institute of Germanic Studies, 1969), 123–135. Stopp's essay outlines the uses and parodies of the slogan, from its birth in the 1520s until after "the seventeenth century [when] the slogan was as good as unknown." Dixon, in "The Politics of Law and Gospel," says the slogan appeared "in a variety of media (clothes, banners, coins, swords, powder flasks, horse muzzles, cannon bores and halberds), and it was clearly meant to distinguish the community of the godly from the rest of the Catholic lands" (56).

Reformation. Luther remarked on the importance of Nuremberg, calling it “almost the very eyes and ears of Germany, seeing and hearing everything.”²⁸ And Luther thought highly of the city’s people, calling them “delicate, discerning souls.”²⁹ Nuremberg was one of 65 imperial cities, which meant it was independent, except for a few obligations it owed the emperor, duties such as taxes, hospitality, and allegiance. The city was home to the empire’s central legal and administrative institutions in the early 1520s, and Nuremberg, like all the imperial cities, gradually earned the right to participate in imperial diets, including, after 1489, forming their own chamber. Historian Bernd Moeller has called the late medieval city a “sacred society,” a community where people’s spiritual and material welfare coincided, “a miniature *corpus Christianum*.”³⁰ For defensive purposes, Nuremberg and other imperial cities strengthened and asserted their municipal governments, and many annexed surrounding lands.³¹ Because they were weak relative to the empire, imperial cities consolidated city government; Nuremberg’s became more bureaucratic, administrative, professional, legal, and complex. Nuremberg was independent in religious matters, as well: it had cut ties with its bishop, whose cathedral was in Bamberg, and, by the 1480s, it acted in ways that provoked the bishop to complain that Nuremberg no longer saw him as their spiritual overseer. Nuremberg’s city fathers installed its own guardians over the monasteries and nunneries, and they procured the patronage of two churches for the city. Before Nurembergers became familiar with Luther’s name and reforming work, their city was largely in charge of its own ecclesiastical affairs.³²

Nuremberg’s growing affinity for the Reformation came from members of the city’s social and political elite, men who were attracted to the ideas emanating from Wittenberg. Johann Staupitz, as vicar general of the Augustinians, passed through Nuremberg and occasionally preached in the city’s Augustinian church. Staupitz attracted about a dozen citizens—the group constituted itself the *Sodalitas Staupitziana*—who discussed his sermons and other pressing religious issues. Among

²⁸ Luther to Eoban Hess, Spring 1528, in Smith and Jacobs, #796.

²⁹ Luther to Christoph Scheurl, May 6, 1515, in Smith, #35.

³⁰ Bernd Moeller, *Imperial Cities and the Reformation: Three Essays* (Durham, North Carolina: The Labyrinth Press, 1982 [first published in 1972]), 46, 49.

³¹ Gerald Strauss estimated that Nuremberg’s “cushioning ring of rural and forest land” measured 25 square miles. Strauss, *Nuremberg*, 7.

³² Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Viking, 2003), 48. See also Strauss, *Nuremberg*, 47.

the conferees were Anton Tucher and Hieronymus Ebner, the city's two *losunger* at the time; the jurist Christoph Scheurl; and Lazarus Spengler, secretary to the city council. Another connection to Wittenberg, and another member of the *Sodalitas*, was Wenzel Link, a colleague of Luther's whom Staupitz dispatched to preach at Nuremberg. Scheurl initiated contact with Luther in early 1517: "[Y]our splendid virtue and great fame have so made me your subject that I greatly desire to be your friend, and to be inscribed in the catalogue of your intimates." Even though Luther's response was rather off-putting (and perhaps tainted with false modesty), their correspondence continued throughout the year.³³ Scheurl obtained a copy of Luther's *Ninety-five Theses* and circulated them in Nuremberg, and another member of the *Sodalitas* translated them into German. After Luther briefly visited Nuremberg toward the end of 1518, Scheurl cooled to Luther: Scheurl and others respected John Eck and were put off by some of Luther's statements during the Leipzig debate. But as Scheurl distanced himself from Luther, Lazarus Spengler, the long-serving city clerk, positioned himself in the center of the Nuremberg reformers. Spengler absorbed the confessional literature Luther and Melanchthon wrote, and, in 1519, he authored *Defense and Christian Reply of a Lover of Divine Truth as Contained in Sacred Scripture, Against Several Opponents*, his apology of Luther's teachings. Eck reacted to Spengler's *Defense* by including his name on the bull of excommunication against Luther; Eck also included Willibald Pirckheimer, a Nuremberger whom Eck suspected of being the author of a satire on him.

Nuremberg, despite being home to the imperial government in the early 1520s, leaned closer to Luther and the Reformation. Not only did the city fathers ignore the Edict of Worms (which they had posted at the town hall), the city council named four Wittenberg men—two as priors and two as preachers in the city's two parish churches. Nuremberg was similar to the majority of imperial cities: Luther's teachings took hold steadily and firmly. But Nuremberg was unique: as host to the empire's Governing Council and Chamber Court, the city was forced to acknowledge—if not exactly respond to—papal and imperial demands that the Lutheran heresy be stifled. Reformation scholar Gerald Strauss suggested the popularity and acceptance of Hans Sachs' *The Wittenberg Nightingale*, "a long paean to the Reformer" published in 1523, are evidence of "enormous interest in Luther and the Lutheran cause" in

³³ Scheurl to Luther, and Luther to Scheurl, January 2 and 27, 1517, in Smith, #27 and #28.

Nuremberg. Sachs wrote his *Nightingale*, as he did most of his works, to fill a popular demand, putting, according to Strauss, into “easy doggerel what the preachers in most of the city’s pulpits had been saying several times each week for at least a year.”³⁴

The year after Sachs published his tribute to Luther, the imperial diet met in Nuremberg. In April 1524, imperial cities’ representatives—including Nuremberg’s—at the diet protested the princes’ decision that the estates should enforce the Edict of Worms against Luther and his sympathizers. Charles V responded specifically to Nuremberg, sharing his displeasure with city leaders: “[Y]ou and the other estates support Luther so much,” the emperor wrote; he cautioned the city to abandon Luther and his teachings, “since most of the others in the Holy Roman Empire will follow your example.”³⁵ When, some months later, Charles V called for the enforcement of the Edict of Worms, the cities’ envoys met at Ulm, and, in a letter to the emperor, they both affirmed their loyalty to Charles V and proclaimed they would adhere to the Gospel. The cities’ representatives cited Luther’s Two Kingdoms doctrine: they promised obedience to the emperor in temporal matters, but in spiritual matters they vowed to defend Luther and the Reformation in their cities.³⁶

As Nuremberg became the first imperial city to declare for Luther and his reforms, Lazarus Spengler, the secretary of the city council, wrote a pamphlet defending the religious changes Nuremberg was experiencing. Spengler’s themes echoed what Luther was writing and preaching: the clarity and completeness of Scripture; salvation by faith in Christ, not reliance on the writings of the church fathers or decrees of church councils; truth in God’s Word rather than in tradition and papal edicts. To those who lamented that the evangelical reforms caused more distress than stability, Spengler offered this encouragement:

I will concede that the Word of God has not yet brought forth any fruit or improvement. Still, everyone must admit that we are

³⁴ Strauss, *Nuremberg*, 168.

³⁵ C. Scott Dixon, *The Reformation in Germany* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 129.

³⁶ In “The Urban Reformation in the Holy Roman Empire,” Berndt Hamm characterizes this letter to Charles V as “the Reformation’s first public confession on the Imperial level,” and he credits the Nurembergers as leaders among the envoys of the imperial cities. In Thomas Brady, Jr., et al. (eds.), *Handbook of European History, 1400–1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation*—volume 2: *Visions, Programs, and Outcomes* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 207.

better off having been shown the true path to salvation through the preaching of the clear Word of God than we would be if we remained forever in the old error and ignorance of doing many external works and believing them to be good.³⁷

The city council of Nuremberg responded to the messiness and uncertainties of ecclesiastical reform by issuing a church order, a secular law describing and mandating uniform doctrine and practice in all the churches in the city and its surrounding ring of rural and forest land. By 1530, the council required clergy and laity to adhere to the new church forms, and city leaders tolerated no dissent from Anabaptists, Jews, or others who refused to conform.³⁸ But dissent arose within the city government itself when George Frölich, a clerk in the city chancellery, wrote Lazarus Spengler a letter of protest, arguing that the city council—as a secular government—had no authority in matters of faith, including stifling of religious dissent. Frölich was challenging two widely-held premises (both of which Melancthon had asserted). The first was that the Christian ruler was responsible for the religious *and* secular welfare of his subjects, including protection from false doctrine and worship practices. The second premise was that the government must maintain true religion to prevent the civil strife that results when citizens are exposed to false doctrine and worship. In Spengler's view, Frölich's challenges undermined the theological justification of the magisterial Reformation and threatened the return of Catholicism to Nuremberg. Additionally, other Nurembergers, including jurist Christoph Scheurl, were speaking against the church order, and Spengler feared that a wider circulation of Frölich's views might prevent the city council from successfully implementing their plans. Three of Spengler's confessional intimates—thought to be John Brenz, Andreas Osiander, and Wenzel Link—wrote refutations of Frölich's arguments. In 1533, following a visitation of Nuremberg's churches, the council issued a general church order that established a centralized clerical bureaucracy and uniform worship practices. The civil leaders of Nuremberg had reached their

³⁷ Steven Ozment, *Protestants: The Birth of a Revolution* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 66. Ozment includes this quote in "The Revolution of the Pamphleteers" (chapter 3), in which he explores the importance of pamphlets in the unfolding of the Protestant Reformation.

³⁸ In 1528 the city council published *Basic Instruction on How Pastors and Preachers Are to Admonish and Teach the People Concerning the Perverting and Corrupting Doctrines of the Anabaptists*.

objective: in internal religious matters, Nuremberg was autonomous, guided by an active and responsible civil government.³⁹

Nuremberg's civil leaders also were active in education. The city council responded favorably to Philip Melanchthon's encouragement to establish a gymnasium, and they adopted Luther's *Small Catechism* (1529) as the basic textbook for the schools in the city, expecting "when children become habituated [to it] they will grow up in the right Christian religion."⁴⁰ As catechisms proliferated, as many as a dozen were in use in Nuremberg's schools, including Andreas Osiander's *Catechism or Children's Sermons* (1533).⁴¹ Osiander wrote short sermons that elaborated Luther's *Small Catechism* for young people who were preparing for their first communion.⁴² But civil leaders recognized the secular value of the catechism as well, a tool in the civic and political education of children and youth. The obedient citizen was the complement to the faithful Christian—two roles in one person—and the catechism molded hearts and minds to accept the government's ideal of social order.⁴³ Nuremberg offered inducements to students to motivate them to master their catechisms, and students were rewarded with a penny or two when they succeeded.⁴⁴ Nuremberg played a part in the "Observantine reformation," encouraging the elimination of external interference in religious and educational matters and making its Observant Augustinian monastery a seedbed for the Reformation.⁴⁵ Despite their consistent efforts to educate the young, civil and religious leaders in Nuremberg—and in other imperial cities—were disappointed with the results.

Civil leaders in Nuremberg, motivated by political expediency and religious beliefs, advanced the Reformation in that imperial city. The consequences of the confluence of civil leadership and the Reformation in Nuremberg were mixed. That civic governance co-opted religious

³⁹ Estes, 101–111.

⁴⁰ Gerald Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 152, 155.

⁴¹ Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning*, 164.

⁴² Ozment, *Protestants*, 105.

⁴³ Strauss, in *Luther's House of Learning* (page 169), imagined "a kind of communal declaration of loyalty...a cultic affirmation and rededication of the entire community to the established order." In *Protestants: The Birth of a Revolution* (pages 109–110), Steven Ozment writes, "With the exposition of the seventh commandment ('You shall not steal'), the Nuremberg *Catechism* becomes a true civics lesson," discussing taxation, public spending, civil servants, self-interested judges, and ethics in business.

⁴⁴ Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning*, 174.

⁴⁵ Oberman, 52–53.

developments led to a communalization of the urban Protestant church. In turn, the evangelical message authenticated and legitimized the civic authorities' actions.

While princes and imperial cities took their turns at center stage during the Reformation—often competing with one another, at times sharing the spotlight—others acted their parts and enlivened the drama on the periphery of the action. Two actors who longed to be the centers of attention were Ulrich von Hutten and Franz von Sickingen. Hajo Holborn, Hutten's biographer, described Sickingen as "of extraordinary political significance," a man with a "great reputation" and "ready cash," "a meteor on the political horizon."⁴⁶ Hutten, perhaps the best-known syphilitic in history, identified himself as a courtier, a humanist, a knight, and a syphilitic.⁴⁷

Franz von Sickingen was born in 1481 and became a free imperial knight. He joined the unfolding of the Reformation in its early years, when, in 1520, he offered Luther support and sanctuary in one of his castles that were strewn across the German lands. Richard Marius, Luther's acerbic biographer, says Sickingen "for a time was a man to be feared," a knight of substantial military power.⁴⁸ In a letter to humanist Willibald Pirckheimer in 1521, Hutten related how Lutheran tracts were read at Sickingen's table and that the knight had absorbed them. Early in the Reformation a Lutheran congregation met at the Ebernburg, one of Sickingen's castles,⁴⁹ and, in 1521, Luther dedicated *On Confession* to the knight as "heartfelt thanks for much comfort and readiness to help."⁵⁰ In a letter to Melanchthon, Hutten had communicated that readiness to help, saying, "If Luther is in trouble, and can get help nowhere else, here is safety. Here he can mock his detractors

⁴⁶ Hajo Holborn, *Ulrich von Hutten and the German Reformation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), 110.

⁴⁷ Lewis Jillings, "The Aggression of the Cured Syphilitic: Ulrich von Hutten's Projection of His Disease as Metaphor," *The German Quarterly* 68:1 (Winter 1995), 1, 2.

⁴⁸ Richard Marius, *Martin Luther: The Christian between God and Death* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 220. Marius suggests that Sickingen's offer of protection for Luther was done "[i]n what seems to have been a nationalist impulse." See also Joseph Lortz, *The Reformation in Germany*—two volumes (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1968 [first published in 1939 and 1949]), I:360.

⁴⁹ Holborn, 177–178. Diarmaid MacCulloch described the Ebernburg as "a refuge for Lutheran sympathizers and a center of printed propaganda production"—in MacCulloch, 132.

⁵⁰ Luther to Sickingen, June 1, 1521, in Smith and Jacobs, #493.

in perfect security.”⁵¹ And Hutten played a role in keeping Sickingen firmly in the Reformer’s camp, writing Luther at some length:

I accomplished this by reading your writings, which he had only glanced at hastily before. In the first place, I at once made him as docile as I could; then this affair began to interest and please him. A little later, when he saw what a fort you built and on what foundation, he said: “Who dares attack this, or if any one dares, who can overthrow it?”⁵²

While Sickingen’s life was a meteoric flash during the Reformation—alarmed princes killed the knight and crushed his and other knights’ armed attack on churchmen with territorial claims—Ulrich von Hutten’s contributions burned longer and more brightly. Hutten’s *image*—the picture that has traversed history—has been glowing and dull by turns. The “Hutten legend” is a more attractive image: an early biographer characterized the knight as one of Luther’s most important allies and the personification of German idealism and nationhood. A later writer claimed Hutten was “a noisy agitator, a self-seeker, [a man] lacking original ideas, and a man of words rather than of intellectual substance.”⁵³ The Catholic historian Joseph Lortz grudgingly acknowledged Hutten’s “stirring literary polemics” and that his “management of the knights [afforded him] tremendous influence over emergent public opinion.”⁵⁴ Hutten’s early opinions of Luther—probably during the middle of 1518—were not flattering: Hutten had heard about two factions in Wittenberg, one supporting and one opposing the sale of indulgences. Hutten thought little of both arguments and hoped the two ideas would neutralize each other. A year later, following the Leipzig debate, Hutten’s estimation of Luther had risen, and he realized the reformer was a champion of Scripture rather than the pope. By early 1520, Hutten saw commonalities between his causes and Luther’s, and it was then that he persuaded Sickingen to protect Luther should Elector Frederick no longer do so. Hutten communicated Sickingen’s offer to Luther through Melanchthon:

Now the same hero bids me write to Luther, that if he suffers any mischance in the present affair and has no better alternative,

⁵¹ Hutten to Melanchthon, February 28, 1520, in Smith, #232.

⁵² Hutten to Luther, December 9, 1520, in Smith, #354.

⁵³ Paul Kalkoff, in Richard Salomon, “An Unpublished Letter of Ulrich von Hutten,” *Journal of the Wartburg and Courtauld Institutes* 12 (1949), 192.

⁵⁴ Lortz, I:359.

he should come to him and that *he* will do what he can.... I write...to tell Luther what a protector he has, who with such kindness offers his assistance.... Believe me, there is no better chance of safety anywhere.⁵⁵

In February 1520, Luther received a copy of Hutten's newly-published edition of Laurentius Valla's proof that showed that the Donation of Constantine was a forgery. "Good heavens! what darkness and wickedness is at Rome!" Luther wrote Spalatin:

You wonder at the judgment of God, that such unauthentic, crass, impudent lies not only lived, but prevailed for so many centuries and were incorporated into Canon Law, and (that no degree of horror might be wanting), became as articles of faith. I am in such a passion that I hardly doubt that the Pope is the Antichrist....⁵⁶

"The time for silence is past, and the time to speak has come." With those words Luther opened his *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*. Wittenberg publisher Melchior Lotter printed early editions in the summer and fall of 1520, and soon printers in Leipzig, Strasbourg, and Basel were disseminating copies widely in the German lands. The Elector Frederick spoke of Luther's *Address* approvingly, writing his brother, Duke John, that he would find "many wonderful things" in it,⁵⁷ and the elector sent Luther "a splendid piece of game" to show his pleasure.⁵⁸ A bit reproachingly, the Augustinian friar John Lang called Luther's latest work a trumpet-blast, and Luther acknowledged it to be "very sharp and vehement," "a necessary attack on the tyranny of the Roman Antichrist who destroys the souls of the whole world."⁵⁹ In Luther's *Address*, Hutten did not hear what the reformer intended but rather what the nationalism-inspired knight desired. "Long live liberty!" Hutten exclaimed to Luther. "If anything hinders you from completing what you have begun I shall mourn as a spiritual kinsman and friend Let us defend the common freedom and liberty of our long enslaved fatherland! We have God on our side; who can

⁵⁵ Hutten to Melanchthon, January 20, 1520, in Smith, #218.

⁵⁶ Luther to Spalatin, February 24, 1520, in Smith, #230.

⁵⁷ Elector Frederick to Duke John, August 25, 1520, in Smith, #288.

⁵⁸ Oberman, 41.

⁵⁹ Luther to Spalatin, August 5, 1520, in Smith, #283, and Luther to John Lang, August 18, 1520, in Smith's *Life*, 86.

be against us?”⁶⁰ Hieronymus Aleander, the papal legate, understood that Hutten conflated and confused Luther’s theology with the knight’s nationalism: “Against us,” Aleander wrote, “are a host of poor German nobles, who have banded under Hutten’s leadership, and, thirsting after the blood of priests, would like to fall on us at once.”⁶¹ Luther repudiated Hutten’s zealous embrace of German nationhood, writing Spalatin, “You see what Hutten wants. I would not fight for the gospel with force and slaughter. The world is overcome by the Word, the Church is saved, and will even be reformed, by the Word, and Antichrist also will hereafter, as formerly, be restrained without violence by the Word.”⁶² Luther’s ideological aloofness frustrated Hutten, who inquired of Spalatin why Luther did not write to him, particularly when Hutten had sent letters and pamphlets to the theologian. “Does Luther not think,” Hutten asked, “there is any reason for writing to me in such a revolution?”⁶³

Ulrich von Hutten envisioned a double-edged revolution: his words would stir princes and peasants alike, and his sword would defeat the enemies of an emerging German nation. Hutten had published *Fever the First* in February 1519; it was his first satirical dialogue directed at the Catholic Church. The following year—as Hutten warmed to Luther’s theology—the knight began to write in German and to translate his Latin works into German. The opening pages of Hutten’s 1521 *Conversation Piece* display pictures of Luther and Hutten side by side, and the accompanying captions exclaim (albeit in Latin), “Now we’ve had enough! Now we shall break through!” Hutten was the personification of pamphleteering, one of the period’s most effective weapons. In his preface to his edition of the bull *Exsurge Domine*, Hutten mixed ideas temporal and eternal as he tried to rouse the Germans:

Behold, men of Germany, the bull of Leo X, by which he tries to suppress the rising truth of Christianity, which he opposes to our liberty.... Shall we not resist him in this attempt...? Luther is not touched in this, but all of us; nor is the sword drawn against one only, but we are all threatened.... Remember to act like Germans.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Hutten to Luther, June 4, 1520, in Smith’s *Life*, 73–74.

⁶¹ Aleander to Cardinal de Medici, December 1520, in Smith, #359.

⁶² Luther to Spalatin, January 16, 1521, in Smith, #378. Several weeks later, Spalatin wrote Elector Frederick and assured him of Luther’s thoughts: “Dr. Martin has written to Hutten, that he does not want men to fight for the gospel with force and murder”—in Smith, #388.

⁶³ Hutten to Spalatin, January 16, 1521, in Smith, #379.

⁶⁴ Hutten’s letter to “all Germans,” August 1520, in Smith, #291.

Luther told Spalatin of Hutten's spiritual and political passions: "Hutten sent me a letter boiling over with great indignation at the Pope, writing that now he is rushing on the priestly tyranny with pen and sword." Luther's light-hearted comment that "Hutten cannot warn me enough against poison" echoes the knight's imaginings that the pope planned to assassinate him. Hutten expressed the same fears to Elector Frederick: "Have you not heard that they have ordered me sent bound to Rome?"⁶⁵

Hutten did not reserve his vitriol for the papists and the Catholic Church alone. As the imperial knights lost their position of leadership in the German lands, Hutten attacked a group that was assuming leadership and consolidating power during the Reformation: lawyers. In *Robbers*, written in 1521, Hutten complained that legal experts "are the soul of all that goes on in the world now [and] no state can be governed without them." Hutten blamed lawyers for Charles V's edict against Luther, but the knight's hatred for the legal class was much deeper and broader than its nexus with Luther and the Reformation. Lawyers were men without conscience, their practice a mere bag of tricks. Hutten called lawyers "Germany's misfortune," and he suggested following the practice of Germans in former times—cutting out lawyers' tongues and sewing shut their lips.⁶⁶ Hutten's lament against lawyers was an iteration of a frustration much broader and deeper than a single knight's; indeed, the imperial knights resented and feared lawyers for supplanting them in state service.

In the decades before the Reformation, the "Reception of Roman Law" in the German lands permanently changed the ways Germans thought about law and governed, and these changes affected public and private life, including the unfolding of the Reformation. Gerald Strauss has argued that the "process of Romanization in Germany became irresistible" by 1500 and "[took] its place as the dominant legal culture" from 1500 to 1550.⁶⁷ Christoph Scheurl, the Nuremberg jurist,

⁶⁵ Luther to Spalatin and Hutten to Frederick, both September 11, 1520, in Smith, #295 and #296. Richard Salomon described Hutten's "campaign of letters and manifestoes in which he harped on the monstrosity of this order to extradite a German nobleman in fetters to the Roman curia." Regarding the alleged plot to assassinate the knight, Salomon noted Hutten's admission: "I do not say who it is that lies in ambush for me, not even that anybody really is lying in ambush; I only say that I have been warned by my friends that danger is threatening my head"—in Salomon, 195.

⁶⁶ Gerald Strauss, *Law, Resistance, and the State: The Opposition to Roman Law in Reformation Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 27–28.

⁶⁷ Strauss, *Law*, 56. Volker Press, in "Constitutional Development and Political Thought in the Holy Roman Empire," acknowledges that "learned jurists had

admired Roman law's clarity and its self-evident timelessness: "The *fundamenta iuris* need little defense, especially when they are laid before a learned judge. Nor do they admit contradiction. Let the opposing party dispute...[and] the judge has the text before his eyes and rests his verdict on it."⁶⁸ The early modern state with its growing bureaucracy—personified both in lands ruled by princes and imperial cities governed by councils—increasingly depended on legal mechanisms for efficient administration. As jurists proliferated, their class underwent a professionalization that yielded judicial technicians of supposed moral neutrality. But rulers and churchmen perceived a shift from a naturalism in law to a set of arbitrary standards created by the new class of lawyers. In a religious sense, the perceived evils outweighed the alleged benefits: law as conceived by jurists depended on compulsion rather than an evangelical voluntarism, and lawyerly manipulations alienated people from society and disrupted naturally-occurring associations. Lawyers and churchmen found themselves in contention, "vigorously, sometimes bitterly," according to Strauss, "competing to be heard" as lawyers asserted their "claim to a priestly office in secular affairs."⁶⁹ Not surprisingly, Luther saw law and conscience as opposites, because law lacked an inherent moral force.

The reception of Roman law in German lands also created tension between lower courts and upper courts, between a local court where a suit was heard and a higher court where an appeal was decided. An example of that tension played out in Saxony, where the long-observed territorial code gave way to formalized, written law. In Saxony and other territories, law practiced in superior courts, by university-trained jurists, steadily replaced law and local tradition in local courts, customarily applied by lay judges. In the decades before the Reformation, princes and civil leaders in imperial cities increasingly consulted university law faculties for authoritative opinions. Charles V's *Carolina*, the emperor's 1532 imperial criminal code, directed judges who were "not learned, experienced, or practiced in our imperial laws...to seek counsel...at

increasingly moved in by the side of the nobility" and "[t]heir training in the law they had received at the universities...had become an important adjunct to territorial dominion," but he cautions "not to overestimate the importance of the so-called Reception of the law of Rome" (513). In G.R. Elton (ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History: The Reformation, 1520–1559*—volume II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990 [second edition]), 505–525.

⁶⁸ Strauss, *Law*, 60.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

the nearest university, city, or other source of legal knowledge.”⁷⁰ As religious reformers clarified God’s Law and Gospel, jurists simplified and codified Roman law and, in doing so, exercised secular leadership and civil reform. Germans who experienced religious reform also felt the reception, adaptation, and transformation of civil law, replacing old and often contradictory rules with a clear and uniform single code. Common people—at least those who felt the touch of civil law on their lives—resisted jurists’ codification and indeed preferred the legal diversity of local legal practices. Rulers, however, sought a jural uniformity, as constitutional, social, and religious issues increasingly turned on legal questions,⁷¹ and by the time of the Reformation, the union of lawyers and the state was a defining characteristic of political life.

Martin Luther acknowledged the melding of law and politics—the powerful confluence of lawyers and civil leaders—writing in 1530 that “chancellors, syndics, and jurists are sitting on top.”⁷² But Luther had clearly expressed his displeasure with lawyers’ prominent position among secular rulers, writing in his *Address to the Christian Nobility* (1520) that ecclesiastical law should be abolished and imperial law curtailed:

[N]o finer worldly government is found anywhere than among the Turks, a nation without either church law or worldly law; they have only their Koran. But we, for our part, are forced to admit that, because of our canon and imperial laws, there is no more disgraceful government on earth than ours, so that no estate nowadays behaves in accordance with natural reason, not to mention Holy Scripture.⁷³

Luther’s contempt embraced the law and those who practiced it: “Many of them are enemies of Christ. As the saying goes, ‘A good jurist is a wicked Christian,’ for they all extol and praise justification by works.” “They rule the world with opinions and suppositions,” Luther charged, “not with the principles of right and wrong.” Luther decried the influence of jurists on the civil leaders of the day, criticizing rulers for “bowing to their commands and obeying them to the letter. Whatever they call right, no matter how wrong it really is, is accepted because the jurists say it is so.” While Luther did maintain a steady

⁷⁰ Ibid., *Law*, 83.

⁷¹ Gerald Strauss contrasts rulers’ and commoners’ thoughts on legal diversity: the former saw it as a “wilderness to be cleared,” while the latter saw the variety as a “hospitable milieu.” In *Law*, 97.

⁷² Strauss, *Law*, 166.

⁷³ Ibid., *Law*, 200.

and often venomous barrage of criticism against lawyers, he softened his speech on a number of occasions. When Luther encouraged better schooling, he said, “As our government in these German lands shall and must adhere to the Roman imperial law, which is the wisdom and reason inherent in all politics, and a gift of God, it follows that such a government cannot survive...if the law were not upheld.” In a sermon in 1544 Luther apologized to his congregation for his “outrage against the jurists.... I don’t hate the profession; it’s what they do to confuse and befuddle the Christian conscience that I cannot bear.”⁷⁴ Despite Luther’s cautions and criticisms, lawyers’ roles as civil leaders grew as the Reformation progressed, and lawyers’ influence on church reform increased as a consequence. In Nuremberg, Johann Müller, a legal advisor to the city, counseled that “[t]hrough frequent preaching subjects can be effectively persuaded to obey their government, and the common people, always impertinent and uncouth, will thereby be made more mannerly and docile.” Christoph Scheurl, the admirer of Roman law and intimate of Nuremberg’s city council, advised caution: “Innovate as little as possible,” he said. Those “to whom God has entrusted worldly government” should not issue decrees on disputed theological points, because “[n]o one will be persuaded or forced to believe by these articles [and they] will remain a piece of paper.”⁷⁵

An interesting distinction regarding a fundamental point of law showed itself in the princely lands following the emperor’s defeat of Elector John Frederick at the Battle of Mühlberg in 1547. The underlying political ideology had taken shape in 1531 at the formation of the Schmalkaldic League, the Protestant defensive alliance against a possible attack by the emperor and Catholic princes. Saxon jurists saw private law as foundational, formulating a legal theory that claimed when a ruler exceeded the bounds of his office, he was merely a private citizen and no longer a lawful magistrate. Jurists in Hesse viewed the constitutional role of the emperor differently, arguing that he did not rule as a monarch, but rather that he shared sovereignty with the imperial estates. Although they made different legal arguments, the lands of Saxony and Hesse arrived at the same ideology of resistance, one which

⁷⁴ See chapter 7, “Law and Religion: The Reformation,” in Strauss, *Law*, 191–239, for a quite-thorough study of Luther and his relationship with law and lawyers, as well as a discussion of the solidification of Roman law in the German lands during the years of the Reformation.

⁷⁵ Strauss, *Law*, 235. Strauss points out that Nuremberg’s city council did not follow Scheurl’s advice in this instance, which suggests—perhaps—that jurists’ voices contributed to civil leadership while not always being persuasive.

emboldened their sense of justice, political order, and preservation of the Protestant faith within their lands.

A scramble of men tussled for political power and prestige in the “Leviathan without bones.” As territorial princes, leaders in imperial cities, fading knights, and a growing cadre of jurists exerted their authority in civil matters, they manipulated the leviathan—not always intentionally—in ways that often permitted the Reformation to flourish and expand. Assertive civil leadership and a protective legal environment enabled Martin Luther’s Reformation to attain levels of success that would have been impossible without the political and social climates they created. [LSQ](#)

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Christ and Jewish Sects

William B. Kessel
Professor, Bethany Lutheran College
Mankato, Minnesota

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JESUS SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES, “Be careful... Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matthew 16:6).¹ Jesus said to His antagonists, “Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean” (Matthew 23:27). And Jesus predicted, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again” (Mark 8:31).

In this paper we will focus primarily on the principal religious groups at the time of Jesus. We will first consider the context of life in Israel in the 1st century A.D. Then, against this backdrop we will consider the opposing religious factions, especially those antagonistic toward Jesus.

Context: Regional and Historical Dynamics

The eminent 19th-century Bible scholar, Alfred Edersheim, warns against making a “not unnatural mistake.”² This would be to assume that during Christ’s time substantial ethnic, linguistic, political, economic, and religious unity existed in Palestine. Nothing could be further from

¹ All Scripture references are from the NIV.

² Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976 [1876]), 20.

the truth. Diversity was everywhere present and was accompanied by constant tensions and deep-seated animosities.

Perhaps on Earth no more valuable slice of real estate exists than Palestine.³ Although it measures only 100 miles north to south and 50 miles east to west it holds a unique location. Like the narrow waist of an hourglass it connects Africa to the south and Europe and Asia to the north. Bounded by a sea to the west and inhospitable desert to the east, traversing and conquering armies and merchants pounded out roads through the gauntlet. Phoenician, Babylonian, Assyrian, Egyptian, Hittite, Persian, and other nations with imperialistic intent recognized the strategic value of Palestine. Closer to the time of Christ, the Greeks claimed the Holy Land for their empire as early as the 4th century B.C., and by 63 B.C. Rome seized the strip of land. As nations annexed and released Israel, they left their monuments and scars on the land and their ideas, languages, philosophies, and cultures with the people.

As Jesus and the disciples walked the dusty roads of Israel, everywhere they saw heathen images. To the north there was Baniyas named after the Greek god Pan. The Bible calls the site Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:13) where Herod the Great had constructed a white temple where Caesar could be worshiped. Likewise in Samaria Herod built a magnificent temple to Augustus. To the West was Caesarea Maritima, an iconic seaport built by Herod to showcase his allegiance to Rome.⁴ Within eyesight of Nazareth was the massive Roman city of Beit She'an or Scythopolis with its variety of pagan temples. Decadent Tiberias was to the north near Capernaum. Meanwhile, to the East the district of the Decapolis (Matthew 4:25; Mark 5:20, 7:31) was essentially Greek in "constitution, language, and worship."⁵ In Jerusalem, Roman art, architecture, and culture were everywhere present. In the capital city Herod had built a grand theater, a massive amphitheater for gladiatorial games, and a hippodrome for horse races—all antithetical to Jewish religion and custom.⁶ Of course, the Roman garrison was housed in Antonia fortress overlooking the Temple. Finally, throughout the land, at major crossroads and towns, tax collectors exacted tribute destined for the Roman potentate.

³ Denis Baly, *Basic Biblical Geography* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979).

⁴ Kenneth G. Holum, Robert L. Hohlfelder, Robert J. Bull, and Avner Raban, *King Herod's Dream: Caesarea on the Sea* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988).

⁵ Edersheim, 22.

⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities* xv. 8, 1.

The Israel Jesus knew was marked by linguistic diversity as well. Greek, Latin, Aramaic, and Hebrew, with various dialects and other tongues, were heard everywhere.

Meanwhile, Jewish identity was constantly challenged and changing. Jesus and the disciples followed the Roman custom of reclining to eat while celebrating the Jewish Passover (Luke 22:14). Coins pictured Caesar. Everything from bathing to hairstyles to sports reflected the influx of foreign notions. And, at the same time, the majority of the Jews, especially Galileans, despised their Roman overlords. Edersheim concludes, “The Holy Land itself was a country of mixed and hostile races, of divided interest, where close by the side of the narrowest and most punctilious Pharisaism heathen temples rose, and heathen rites and customs openly prevailed.”⁷

Tensions existed not only between Israel and outside influences, but Jewish society was beset by internal stress factors as well. While not quite ripe for civil war, northerners of Galilee and southerners of Judea were divided. Arrogant rabbis quipped, “If any one wishes to be rich, let him go north; if he wants to be wise, let him come south.”⁸ Nathanael’s question, “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” (John 1:46); sarcastic words addressed to Nicodemus, “Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee” (John 7:52); Peter on Good Friday, found guilty by association with “Jesus of Galilee” (Matthew 26:69) the “Nazarene” (Mark 14:67) betrayed by his Galilean accent (Matthew 26:73)—these hint at regional tensions in a country scarcely 100 miles in length.

In addition to this rivalry, other social stress factors were present. Distinctions were made between city and country people, residents of Jerusalem and those residing elsewhere, and people with the pure blood line over against those of mixed pedigree. Social classes existed, and the rich aristocracy seldom condescended to mingle with the hoi polloi.

Religious Groups at the Time of Christ

Sadly, nowhere was diversity and disunity more prevalent on Jewish soil than in the area of religion. Religious parties, sects, and even cults arose in the name of Jehovah. In the Jewish nation, church and state merged. The religious groups chose sides and allied themselves with the nationalists or the Romans, with the rich or the poor, with the Temple

⁷ Edersheim, 20.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

precinct or the Synagogue. We now turn to the major groups extant at the time of Jesus.

Josephus, the 1st-century A. D. historian (himself a Pharisee), identified the major religious groups.

At this time there were three sects among the Jews, who had different opinions concerning human actions; the one was called the sect of the Pharisees, another the sect of the Sadducees, and the other the sect of the Essenes.⁹

To this Josephus added, “But the fourth sect [Zealots] of the Jewish philosophy, Judas the Galilean was the author.”¹⁰ We will now consider these four groups and their affiliates in turn.

The Pharisees

Brief History

The Pharisees had a noble enough beginning, with roots reaching back to about 450 B.C. When Ezra and the exiles returned from the Babylonian captivity they soon realized that religion in Israel had reached low ebb. People were unfamiliar with or indifferent to God’s Word. Soon Ezra and the scribes rallied the people together around the Law or teaching of Moses. After Ezra died, the scribes (see Appendix A) continued proclaiming the Law. In time, however, they carried their zeal too far. They became engrossed in very detailed matters, counting the very letters of the Torah. Also, in an attempt to apply the Law of Moses to everyday life, they found it necessary to construct their own laws. The former became known as the “Written Law” and the latter the “Oral Law” or “Unwritten Law.” These precursors of the Pharisees came to regard both the Torah and the traditions as equally inspired and binding.¹¹

Following 333 B.C. the Greeks overwhelmed Palestine. Some Jews, the so-called Hellenists, became enamored with Greek world view, culture, and language. The Chasidim arose as a counter measure to the Hellenists. They promoted Jewish identity as defined in the Law and

⁹ *Antiquities* 13:171 quoted in James C. Martin, *The Gospels in Context* (Gaithersburg: Preserving Bible Times, 2002), 92.

¹⁰ *Antiquities* 18:23 quoted in Martin, 92.

¹¹ Carleton Toppe, “A Time-Honored Warning Against Present Dangers to the Church from Pharisaism” (Essay delivered to the Convention of the Western Wisconsin District, 1948).

supported the Maccabean revolt against the Greeks. By 135 B.C. the Pharisees had emerged as a separate named group. They had distanced themselves from the Chasidim to concentrate on religion, not on politics.¹²

They were called “The Pharisees” meaning “the separated ones,” for they separated themselves from impurity and defilement. Their term for themselves, however, was *haberim* which means “the associates.” In fact, they were a party or, more accurately, a fraternity.

Sources

Fortunately much is known of the Pharisees during the time of Christ. First and foremost, the Bible contains nearly 100 references to Pharisees. Next, Flavius Josephus (A.D. 37–c. 100), himself a Pharisee, provided a wealth of information in his voluminous works, *The Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*.¹³ Finally a corpus of rabbinic literature details the teachings of the Pharisees. From these primary sources, excellent articles and comments have been written in Bible dictionaries and other popular and scholarly writings.¹⁴

1st Century Pharisees

At the time of Jesus there were three chief Jewish religious sects (Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes). Clearly the Pharisees were the strictest (Acts 26:5), largest, and most influential of the three. They were also the group which most often and most strongly opposed Jesus.

¹² Raymond F. Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), 53–57.

¹³ See Paul L. Maier, *Josephus: The Essential Works* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1988); Martin, *The Gospels in Context*; and William Winston, tr., *The Works of Josephus: New Updated Edition Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publisher, 2001).

¹⁴ See Peter Connolly, *Living in the Time of Jesus of Nazareth* (Israel: Steimatzky LTD, 1995), 30; John D. Davis, *Davis Dictionary of the Bible*, 4th Revised Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978); Edersheim; Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* (Philadelphia: Henry T. Coates & Co., 1874); Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975); Steve Mason, “Pharisees,” *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 782–787; Anthony J. Saldarini, “Pharisees,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 289–303; Surburg; Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), 854–856; Kaari Ward, ed., *Jesus and His Times* (Pleasantville: Reader’s Digest, 1987); S. Westerholm, “Pharisees,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 609–614; Joh. Ylvisaker, *The Gospels: A Synoptic Presentation of the Text in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1977).

Josephus notes that there were about 6,000 Pharisees spread throughout Israel.¹⁵ While their rivals, the Sadducees, represented the upper class or priestly aristocracy, the Pharisees were more middle class. They drew their numbers from various elements of society—scribes, a few priests, teachers, and manual laborers. To join the “fraternity,” each had to meet a significant set of requirements. A. Tricot, former Professor of Sacred Scripture at Catholic Institute of Paris, explains:

It is necessary to have an exact knowledge of the commandments and traditions, to adhere to the teachings of the Doctors of the party, and to distinguish one’s self by the exact performance of all the precepts relating to the Sabbath rest, to ritual purification, and to Levitical tithes.¹⁶

Beliefs

In many ways the “entrance requirements” summarize the basic theology and practice of the Pharisees. They placed much emphasis on a study of the Law rather than Temple worship (the jurisdiction of the Sadducees). First, there was the Written Law as found in the Old Testament Scriptures, all of which they accepted as the inspired Word of God. Recall that many of the Pharisees were scribes who had an intimate knowledge of the Scriptures. Next the Pharisees accepted the oral “traditions” handed down from one generation to the next. As Josephus notes, in so doing they attempted “to set a fence about the Law” lest even accidentally they should violate it.¹⁷ Ironically, since the Oral Law was seen as living and was constantly modified to keep up with Jewish culture, it often superseded the Written Law.¹⁸ Regardless, the Pharisees were convinced that when the Laws were obeyed perfectly, then the Messiah would appear. He would free the Jews from their enemies—in Jesus’ day, the Romans.

From the Written Law and oral traditions the Pharisees extracted their doctrines. First, they believed in the immortality of the soul, heaven and hell, and angels and demons (Acts 23:8). They reasoned that every person had a soul which was imperishable.¹⁹ If a person lived a virtuous

¹⁵ *Antiquities* XVII: 2, 4 cited in Edersheim, 226.

¹⁶ A. Tricot, “The Jewish World at the Time of Our Lord,” *Guide to the Bible* II, ed. A. Robert and A. Tricot (Paris: Desclee & Co., 1955), 288.

¹⁷ *Antiquities* XIII, x, 6 quoted in Surburg, 56.

¹⁸ Martin, 93.

¹⁹ *Wars* 2:163; *Antiquities* 18:14, cited in Martin, 95.

life, then he/she would be rewarded with another body in the life to come.²⁰ On the other hand, if a person lived a vile or sinful life, then that person's soul would be confined to eternal punishment in a prison under the earth.²¹ Since people had spirits or souls, therefore other spirits must exist as well, even apart from God. Angels were thought of as good spirits, demons as evil spirits.

Next, Pharisees walked a fine line between God's sovereignty and preordination on the one hand and man's free will or self-determination on the other. God was the creator, deliverer, and redeemer of Israel; events happened according to His will. On the other hand, people had a free will to do good or evil.²² In order to overcome the pull of these opposites, the Pharisees merged the two forces by maintaining that God's grace was for doers of the Law. There was a cooperation of the human with the divine.

Practices

From their emphasis on doing good and currying God's grace, the Pharisees focused their entire energy on an external keeping of the Law and maintaining an appearance of piety. Indeed, the Pharisees held their fraternity to their own highest standards which set them apart from the common Jew. First, they practiced tithing on all their possessions, even more than the Old Testament Law prescribed. Second, they avoided spiritual pollution at all costs. They emphatically and obviously distanced themselves from anyone who had touched the carcass of a dead animal, or from a woman on her period, or from anyone who was in any way defiled. In that connection they had nothing to do with Gentiles, who were, of course, impure. The marriage of a Pharisee to a Gentile was strictly prohibited. Pharisees went so far as to avoid unnecessary contact with ordinary Jews. "The Associates" clearly distinguished between themselves and the *am-ha-aretz* (people of the land, country people). These common people did not follow the prescribed procedures regarding ritual purity in their daily lives. Because they were generally poor, they did not tithe their food and earnings as did the Pharisees. They were to be avoided.

In order to hold themselves apart from non-Pharisees and to set an example for the community, the Pharisees distinguished themselves from others by the way they dressed and in their preferences. Phylacteries

²⁰ *Wars* 2:163, cited in Martin, 95.

²¹ *Antiquities* 18:14, cited in Martin, 95.

²² *Antiquities* 13:172; *Wars* 2:162-163, cited in Martin, 96.

and tassels were commanded in the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:8; Deuteronomy 22:12; Numbers 13:38), but, as Matthew (23:5) notes, “They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long.” They remained socially visible but aloof. “They love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi’” (Matthew 23:6–7). Characteristically, the Pharisees relished the opportunity to make long prayers in prominent places where their piety and exhortations would be evident to all (Matthew 6:5).

Not surprisingly, the Pharisees made enemies and friends among the Jews. Upper class Jews despised them. The Sadducees were their greatest opponents, and for good reason. They differed in terms of power, prestige, and wealth. While the Sadducees were from the upper class and held the wealth, the common Jews resented them.²³ Meanwhile, the middle class Pharisees had the multitudes on their side.²⁴ First, unlike the Sadducees, the Pharisees refrained from in-fighting.²⁵ Second, they lived lives the people wished to emulate. Josephus wrote of the Pharisees:

They are able to greatly persuade the body of the people, and whatsoever they do about divine worship, prayer, and sacrifices, they perform them according to their direction; insomuch as the cities gave great attestations to them on account of their entire virtuous conduct, both in the actions of their lives and their discourses also.²⁶

Finally, the Pharisees represented Jewish nationalism and identity in a country under the thumb of Rome. This resonated well with those on the verge of poverty who were burdened by taxation imposed by their foreign overlords.

Pharisees and Jesus

As self-ordained watchdogs of religious purity, Pharisees ventured to the Jordan River to investigate the man called John the Baptist. John immediately hammered the “keepers of the Law” with the Law, calling them a brood of vipers and calling them to repentance (Matthew 3:7). As John’s popularity eclipsed and Jesus became a noted figure, the Pharisees closely observed Jesus and his disciples. Initially they tried to drive a

²³ *Antiquities* 13:298, cited in Martin, 97.

²⁴ *Antiquities* 13:298, cited in Martin, 97.

²⁵ *Wars* 2:166, cited in Martin, 97.

²⁶ *Antiquities* 18:15, quoted in Martin, 97.

wedge between John and his disciples (Matthew 9:14) and between Jesus and His disciples (Matthew 9:11; 12:2). When that failed, they earnestly “were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus” so they scrutinized His every movement (Luke 6:7) and plotted His death (Mark 3:6).

In their minds the evidence they marshaled against Jesus was damning. Jesus broke their Sabbath laws by healing on the Sabbath (John 5); He allowed His disciples to pluck some grain from a field through which they were walking one Sabbath day (Luke 6:1–5); He healed a man in a synagogue on the Sabbath (Luke 6:6–11) and a blind man on another Sabbath (John 9:13–16). In addition, the Pharisees indicted Jesus for the polluted and defiled company He kept—namely, with tax collectors and sinners (Mark 2:16; Luke 7:36–39, 15:1). Pharisees labeled Jesus a blasphemer for He claimed to forgive sins (Luke 5:21). They ruled that Jesus’ miraculous powers, including those used in exorcisms, came from Satan (Matthew 12:24; Matthew 9:34). Pharisees (themselves sticklers for ritual purity as seen in their ceremonial washings of hands, pots, pans, and couches) condemned Jesus for tolerating the disciples’ apparent disregard for such traditions (Mark 7:1–5).

In defense of Himself, Jesus declared that He was the “Lord of the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:8). His rules, not the Sabbath traditions of the Pharisees, were binding. Indeed, He came in contact with tax collectors and sinners, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). True, only God can forgive sins, but Jesus, as the Son of Man (God), had that authority (Luke 5:24). It was, of course, ludicrous for anyone to think that Jesus was in league with Satan, for “Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall” (Luke 11:17). And, no, Jesus did not observe the Pharisee-imposed washing rituals. Why should he? “You [Pharisees] have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men” (Mark 7:8).

If the Pharisees were virulently opposed to Jesus, Jesus was unrelenting in his criticism of the Pharisees. More than that, Jesus set Himself to the task of deprogramming the Jewish people who had basically accepted the Pharisees as God’s spokesmen and examples of righteousness. Time after time after time, Jesus fearlessly announced to the Pharisees and the *am-ha-aretz* that the Pharisees were conceited, covetous, legalistic, ostentatious, self-righteous, and, above all, hypocritical (e.g. Luke 11:38–44, 18:9–14). Jesus exposed the Pharisees in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:1–18) and as the elder son

in the Parable of the Prodigal (Luke 15:11–31). He referred to their teaching as corrupting yeast (Mark 8:15). These images were not lost on the common people. The Pharisees' theology was mortally flawed, their piety was a sham, and they were leading people to perdition. Jesus handed them a scathing and public reproach for their hypocrisy in Matthew 23.

The Sadducees

Brief History

The second most important religious party among the Jews in the centuries leading up to the Christian era was the Sadducees. They existed on the opposite end of the spectrum from the Pharisees.

During the 2nd century B.C., Judaism split into the two factions. Pharisees opposed Hellenism, but the Sadducees embraced it. For the Greeks, their culture and their politics formed an unbreakable unit. If any subjugated people wanted to curry the favor of the Greek government, they had to adopt Greek customs and ideas. The higher ranks of the priesthood and the wealthiest Jews were willing to make such accommodations in order to maintain their favored positions and statuses. In so doing, however, they alienated themselves from the common Jews. The time of Greek rule of Israel was turbulent for the Sadducees. As Gentile pretenders vied for position and power, the Sadducees backed those most likely to come out on top. Sometimes their judgment was correct and they were rewarded. In other instances they were stripped of their power and influence.

When the Romans annexed Judea, the Sadducees found themselves in an enviable position. Rome regarded the high priest as the official representative of the Jews, and the high priests were Sadducees.

Sources

We know far less about the Sadducees than the Pharisees. The primary sources are the Bible (the Gospels and Acts), Josephus, and some rabbinic texts.²⁷ As Talmudic authority, Gary Porton, points out, "Because we do not have any Sadducean documents, all of our information comes from texts written by people who were not Sadducees and

²⁷ Gary Porton, "Sadducees," *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

some of whom actively opposed them.”²⁸ Josephus, for example, was a Pharisee.

1st-Century Sadducees

The Sadducees can best be described as the aristocrats of their day. While comparatively few in number, they were well-educated, wealthy, and held top-level positions. The Sadducee drew their membership from the families of the higher priests, Levites, and elders (see Appendix B), and from rich landowners, courtiers, and merchants. They dominated the Sanhedrin, the supreme council and court of the Jews, and the head of the council was the high priest, a Sadducee (see Appendix C).

The Sadducees maintained their wealth, high status, and privilege by staying on friendly terms with the Romans. While the Sadducees showed proper deference toward the Romans, the Romans, in turn, regarded the high priest as the official representative of the Jews and, for the most part, left the Temple (the chief Sadducee stronghold) alone.

Meanwhile, for a variety of reasons, the Sadducees were not popular with the common Jews. First, they were constantly vying for position amongst themselves.²⁹ Second, they were few in number, about 400, and kept their numbers small to insure their aristocratic position.³⁰ Finally, their “oppressive leadership, pro-Roman tendencies, loose theological positions and preoccupation with power and financial gain” aroused contempt and resentment.³¹

Beliefs

Both Josephus and the Bible provide insights into the doctrines espoused by the Sadducees. The Sadducees focused their attention almost exclusively on the five Books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), also known as the Torah or Pentateuch.³² Meanwhile, they considered the rest of the Old Testament books to be less sacred and less valid, and they completely disregarded oral traditions and interpretations.

From the “Written Law” (Torah) they drew their creed and doctrines which they considered absolutely binding. They paid particularly close attention to Levitical purity including matters of cleanness

²⁸ Porton, 1050.

²⁹ *Wars* 2:166, cited in Martin, 166.

³⁰ *Antiquities* 13:298, cited in Martin, 97.

³¹ Martin, 97; also see *Antiquities* 18:17.

³² *Antiquities* 13:297, cited in Martin, 92.

and purity. They preferred literal interpretations and rigid judgments.³³ For example, when Exodus (21:23) calls for an “eye for an eye” it meant just that to the Sadducees. Or, when Deuteronomy (25:9) says a woman should spit in a man’s face, the Sadducees rejected the more genteel interpretation of spitting before his face.

Even though the Sadducees had a rigid and literal interpretation of their limited Scripture, they found no inconsistency in being rationalists at the same time. They built their doctrines on reason and observation as much as anything. Thus, they tended to deny the existence of what they could not see or that which seemed inconsistent with ordinary life.

Closely related to this was the Sadducees’ defense of free will. While some, like the Pharisees, believe that God preordained virtually everything, the Sadducees saw people as free agents who determined their own futures.³⁴ Thus, people choose to do good or to do evil and had to accept the earthly consequences of their actions. God, meanwhile, was essentially unconcerned with man’s choices.

Perhaps the best-known teaching of the Sadducees was their doctrine of the here-and-now. Their reasoning went something like this. People have a body and soul which is for this one life. When the body dies, the soul dies as well.³⁵ So, there is no immortality of the soul.³⁶ If there is no immortality of the soul then there is no resurrection or after-life, no heaven or hell.³⁷ If, apart from God, there is no spiritual reality which exists apart from the body, there can be no angels or demons either (Acts 23:8).

Practices

The Sadducees enjoyed their opulent and ostentatious lifestyle which included being served meals in vessels of gold and silver, in demanding double dowry for every young girl married to a priest, and by conspicuous consumption. Indeed they enjoyed the lifestyle of the rich and famous but endured the glances of the common people who considered them quite boorish and heartless.

³³ *Antiquities* 20:199, cited in Martin, 100.

³⁴ *Antiquities* 13:174; *Wars* 2:164–165, cited in Martin, 96.

³⁵ *Antiquities* 18:16, Martin, 94.

³⁶ *Wars* 2:165, Martin, 94.

³⁷ *Wars* 2:165, Martin, 94.

Sadducees and Jesus

When we turn to the Gospels, John the Baptist, not Jesus, first confronted the Sadducees. This passage from Matthew 3:7–10 is illustrative.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

John’s words sliced to the heart of the Sadducees’ false belief system. First, if a man were entirely responsible for his own good or evil (as the Sadducees insisted), why did he need to repent? Or, better stated, to whom did he need to repent—to himself or God? Next the Sadducees certainly traced their pedigree back to Abraham since Genesis tells the story of the patriarch. John argued that a biological connection to a historical figure was no security before God. Finally, John’s reference to the fire, as in the fire of hell, struck no positive chord with the Sadducees who denied the afterlife entirely.

Since the Sadducees generally confined themselves to their stronghold in Jerusalem, and the Temple in particular, Jesus had only limited interaction with them. The few scriptural accounts we do have, however, are very telling (see Appendix D for a listing of Gospel passages pertaining to the groups outlined in this paper).

Matthew (16:1–6) summarizes Jesus’ first confrontation with the Sadducees.³⁸ When Jesus was in Galilee He was approached by Sadducees. We can suggest two possible reasons why the Sadducees ventured so far from Jerusalem to confront Jesus. First, these Sadducees may have been members of the Sanhedrin whose job it was to review the credentials of prophets. “The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested Him by asking Him to show them a sign from heaven” (Matthew 16:1). They were calling on Jesus to prove, with divine actions, that He was who He said He was. Yet, this was a trap. Sadducees, who believed in free will, contended that Yahweh was not concerned with

³⁸ Walter Wegner, “The Leaven of the Sadducees” (essay delivered at the Convention of the Western Wisconsin District, 1950).

the everyday life of people and left mankind to solve its own problems. Therefore, the chances of Jesus displaying a sign from heaven were very remote.

There is a second possible explanation for the Sadducees' presence, however. Word of Jesus' resurrections of the widow's son at Nain and of Jairus' daughter had circulated freely by this time. This would have raised questions about the Sadducees' insistence that there was no resurrection or afterlife. Now in a public setting they were calling on Jesus to produce a miracle which would validate or nullify the rumors. Incidentally, the word "sign" used here is "semeion." It denotes a miracle that is an indication of God's presence and working.

Jesus' response to the Sadducees may provide a clue as to which of the possible explanations is more to the point. Jesus replied, "A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah" (Matthew 16:4). Jonah, of course was swallowed by a great fish and was as good as dead. Yet, on the third day he was spit out on shore, alive. In other words, Jesus was predicting His own resurrection, a possibility which the Sadducees denied.

This confrontation occurred about six months before Jesus' crucifixion. The second confrontation occurred just days before Good Friday. Clearly the point of conflict here was the resurrection. Armed with their preconceived notions, the Sadducees laid a trap for Jesus. Matthew (22:23–33), Mark (12:18–27), and Luke (20:27–40) all chronicle the Sadducees' question and Jesus' response. The Sadducees described a situation in which a man died without leaving children. According to the Old Testament levirate law (Deuteronomy 25:5–6), his brother then married the widow, but he too died without producing offspring. This was repeated six times. Finally the woman died. Since she was married to all seven, who would be her husband in heaven?

The Sadducees were playing to their strengths as experts on the Books of Moses, and on the "logical fallacy" of believing in the resurrection. Sadducees had debated each nuance of levirate marriage as defined in Deuteronomy 25:5–10. Some of their party went to the extreme of arguing that levirate marriage could only take place if the widow was a virgin, otherwise the brother of the deceased would be committing incest.

But that really wasn't at issue. The point for Jesus was clear. Do earthly relations spill over into an "imagined" afterlife?

In response, Jesus gave the Sadducees a crash course in resurrection theology. He affirmed that there is a resurrection and that there are

angels. He, then, showed that heavenly relationships transcend earthly ones. “Jesus replied, ‘You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven’” (Matthew 22:29–30).

Then, however, Jesus turned the tables on the Sadducees. Jesus could have turned to any number of clear Old Testament passages to show and discuss the resurrection—Isaiah 26:19, Daniel 12:2, Job 19:26, etc. But since the Sadducees regarded these portions of Scripture as less sacred and less reliable than the Torah, Jesus, instead, turned to Exodus 3:6. Jesus said, “But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but of the living’” (Matthew 22:31–32). Here, from words God spoke to Moses, Jesus proved the resurrection.

With this, Jesus publicly humiliated and silenced the Sadducees (Matthew 22:34), but soon they would rid themselves of Jesus once and for all (or so they thought). The chief priests (Sadducees and leaders of the Sanhedrin) and scribes were chiefly responsible for condemning Jesus to death (Matthew 21:15; Mark 11:18; Luke 19:47).

Essenes

Brief History

According to Josephus, the third prominent religious sect at the time of Jesus was that of the Essenes. Like the Pharisees and Sadducees, they too trace their origins to the 2nd century B.C. While the origins of the Essenes are somewhat obscure at this time, archaeological excavations at Qumran may shed light on early developments.

Sources

Principal sources on the Essenes come from the writings of Philo (20 B.C. to A.D. 50): *Judaeus Quod Omnis Probus Liber*; Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23–79): *Historia Naturalis*; Josephus; and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Dead Sea Scrolls are thought to have been a part of the Essene library. Martin has identified key manuscripts which describe Essene practices and beliefs, namely, “The Temple Scroll,” “The War Scroll of the Sons of Light vs. The Sons of Darkness,” “Community Rule” (“The Manual of Discipline”), “Damascus Rule,” “Messianic Rule,”

and “Sabbath Lights.”³⁹ To this list we would add “The Commentary of Habakkuk.” The contemporary scholarship of Todd Beall and John Collins on the Essenes is particularly illuminating.⁴⁰

1st-Century Essenes

It is not surprising that the Bible does not mention the Essenes, a major Jewish sect at the time of Christ. Although they numbered about 4,000,⁴¹ they lived in self-contained communities, practiced rather severe asceticism, and only occasionally interacted with other Jews.⁴²

While Essene communities could be found in Jerusalem and throughout Judea,⁴³ the greatest number lived along the western edge of the Dead Sea in the harsh wilderness near Engedi.⁴⁴ A number of scholars have identified the Qumran community, made famous by the Dead Sea scrolls, as an Essene commune.

Essene communities were essentially monasteries. Each location had its own synagogue, common dining hall for meals and assemblies, and provision for daily baths in running water. A man who wanted to join the Essene sect had to complete a probationary period lasting for three years. During this time he learned the doctrines and practices of the order and purified himself. He also took an oath binding himself to full openness to his brethren, and to doctrinal secrecy when it came to those outside the order.

Essene life was austere and routine. Members gave all they owned to the commune⁴⁵ and donned sandals and a white linen garment. Both would be worn until they had completely worn out before being replaced.⁴⁶

The daily routine began at dawn. Members would rise, pray, and then go to work usually in the fields. About noon they would return to the commune, take a purificatory bath, and then eat a common meal. They then would return to the fields and work until evening, followed by another ritual bath and a second meal. The Sabbath day broke the daily

³⁹ Martin, 93.

⁴⁰ Todd Beall, “Essenes,” *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 342–348; John J. Collins, “Essenes,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 2. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 619–626.

⁴¹ *Judaicus*.

⁴² *Antiquities* 18:20, cited in Martin, 98; Edersheim, 244–248.

⁴³ *Wars* 2:124, cited in Martin, 97.

⁴⁴ *Historia Naturalis* v, 73, cited in Martin, 102.

⁴⁵ *Antiquities* 18:20, cited in Martin, 98.

⁴⁶ *Antiquities* 2:126, cited in Martin, 98.

routine through very strict observances. It is said they did not remove a vessel or answer the call of nature to keep from desecrating the holy day.

Not all members of the community were farmers. Some labored as scribes, others made crafts, and a few were beekeepers. While the commune was essentially egalitarian, there was a division of labor with a commune president demanding absolute obedience along with various stewards and priests.

Beliefs

In some ways Essene doctrines resembled the beliefs of the Pharisees. They held a strong belief in God's preordination of all things,⁴⁷ considered blasphemy as a heinous sin worthy of death, and tried to regulate their lives according to the law of Moses (whom they regarded as second only to God). They believed in angels and demons and in the afterlife.

While Essenes' doctrines and practices have been called "Pharisaism in the superlative degree,"⁴⁸ they did have their own particular interpretations of some religious matters. They believed the world was under the power of the devil.⁴⁹ Jews generally prayed in the direction of the Temple in Jerusalem, Essenes toward the sun. This may be explained by the Essene belief that the Temple was contaminated by the Sadducees.⁵⁰ Essenes taught that the body with its sensual pleasures was like a prison which held the soul. When a good person died his soul was liberated from the body to joyfully soar on high to a place beyond the ocean unencumbered by rain or snow and where a gentle wind softly blew. Bad souls were sentenced to a dark, cold region of unceasing torment.

Practices

Essenes did everything possible to ensure their souls were right for heaven. Thus, they condemned sensual desires, and most Essenes refrained from wedlock.⁵¹ From time to time they would adopt into the group children who had an aptitude for learning. Simplicity was next to godliness. They all wore the same clothes and ate the same simple fare every day. At the common meal they joined in prayers but ate in silence. They had no slaves. They considered swearing worse than perjury. Modesty was observed in all things. For example, when a person had

⁴⁷ *Antiquities* 13:172; 18:18, cited in Martin, 96.

⁴⁸ Unger, 325.

⁴⁹ *Community Rule* II; *Damascus Rule* XIV, cited in Martin, 102.

⁵⁰ *Antiquities* 18:19, cited in Martin, 102.

⁵¹ *Antiquities* 18:21; *Wars* 2:120.

to relieve himself, he would go off by himself, dig a one foot deep hole with his pickax, cover himself with a mantle while he did his business (so as not to offend the brightness of God), and then cover over the hole. Essenes would not spit forward or to the right. When Essenes traveled they would take no money, for they would be hosted in other Essene communities wherever they traveled.⁵²

Interestingly, while Essenes did send incense to be used in the Temple, they did not send sacrificial animals. They felt the sacrifices of their lives were more valuable.

Members who broke the rules faced punishment. The ultimate penalty was excommunication which was tantamount to death, for once they left the community Essenes were not allowed to take food from strangers.⁵³

Essenes and Jesus

While some Bible students have attempted to equate John the Baptist with the Essenes, their efforts have been misdirected. John's food was different, his clothing was different, his location was different, his baptism was a one-time purification and not a daily ritual, and he was not part of a community.

Nevertheless, a few Bible scholars have identified one Gospel reference which may have reference to the Essenes. Matthew 19:11–12 states,

Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."

The connection here would be to the Essene practice of refraining from marriage and sexual relations. This connection, however, is very tenuous.

In conclusion, while the Bible sheds no light on the Essenes, and Essenes did not affect the persons or events of the Gospels. Nevertheless, they were contemporaries. The common people of Jesus' day were very familiar with the Essenes even though, for the most part, the Essenes avoided them.

⁵² Unger, 324.

⁵³ *Community Rule VIII; Wars 2:143–144.*

Zealots

Brief History

The fourth religious group discussed by Josephus was called Zealots. While it too dates to the 2nd century B.C., its roots are much deeper in Jewish history.

“Zealot” was essentially a descriptive term referring to people who emphasized deep piety and zeal for God and His Law.⁵⁴ The Old Testament records the straightforward deeds of men who were zealous for the Law and justice. Phinehas (Numbers 31:6 and Psalm 106:28–31), Simon and Levi (Genesis 34:1–31), Elijah (1 Kings 18:36–40, 19:10–18), and Jehu (2 Kings 10:16–27) are examples. In time, some Jews revered these men and attempted to emulate them. They were willing to suffer pain, and even death, rather than transgress the Law (1 Maccabees 2:50). Furthermore, they were committed to rooting out breakers of the Law so God would not bring down wrath on Israel.

In the centuries prior to Christ’s birth, zealous Jewish individuals willingly took action against those who were idolaters, had sexual relations with heathen women, profaned God’s name, or misused the temple. Zealots chafed under both Greek and Roman rule, and things came to a head in the dawn of the Christian era. Caesar Augustus ordered that a census be taken in Judea for tax purposes. This, of course, took place “while Quirinius was governor of Syria” (Luke 2:2). The Zealots preached that God alone was the ruler of Israel and the Jews owed no allegiance or taxes to Rome. Judas of Galilee (a.k.a. Judas of Gamla) spearheaded the revolt which was brutally crushed and Judas was killed.⁵⁵

Sources

Josephus had much to say about the Zealots and Sicarii. The latter were Jewish urban assassins who targeted Jews who deviated in their loyalty to God and the Law. Ample sources exist on the Zealots and the Sicarii. Josephus outlines the part the Zealots played in the Jewish Revolt of A.D. 66. Meanwhile the Bible provides a few glimpses of the Zealots.

⁵⁴ David Rhoads, “Zealots,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1044.

⁵⁵ Acts 5:37; *Antiquities* 18:1–10; 18:23, *Wars* 2:433.

Beliefs

In many ways, the Zealots closely resembled the Pharisees in their theological opposition to Rome and in their strict adherence to the Law. Their main thrust, however, was retribution for violation of God's law.

Zealots and Jesus

One of Jesus' disciples was Simon the Zealot (Matthew 10:4; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15). The title "Zealot" was apparently attached to his name to distinguish him from Simon Peter, another disciple. Heard and Evans suggest it would probably be more correct to think of him as Simon "the zealous one" rather than Simon the Zealot.⁵⁶ According to their thinking, he likely showed himself to be zealous in keeping the Jewish Law but was not a member of the Zealots' sect. An alternative explanation, however, is compelling. Jesus picked Matthew and Simon as disciples. Matthew, a tax collector, would have favored the Herodian party. Simon as a Zealot would have been a strong Jewish nationalist. Both were brought into the fellowship of Jesus.

Herodians

Brief History

Although Josephus fails to mention the Herodians, they are identified in Scripture. While the term "Herodian" could refer to Herod's household servants or Herod's officers and agents, it more likely identifies influential Jews who were sympathetic to Herod and, therefore, Rome.⁵⁷ Interestingly in parallel accounts, Mark (8:15) speaks of the "yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod" while Matthew (16:6) warns against the "yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Herodians and Sadducees appear to be interchangeable terms in this instance. Professor of New Testament studies, Harold Hoehner, however, sees slight differences between the groups. He concludes that "the Herodians were politically affiliated with the Herodian house, but they were religiously

⁵⁶ Warren J. Heard and Craig A. Evans, "Revolutionary Movements, Jewish," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 945.

⁵⁷ Harold W. Hoehner, "Herodian Dynasty," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 325.

and economically affiliated with the Sadducees.⁵⁸ Unger identifies them as more of a political party than a religious sect.⁵⁹

Herodians and Jesus

A little over a year into His public ministry, Jesus attracted the ire of the Herodians. In yet another case of “strange bedfellows,” the Pharisees and the Herodians plotted together to kill Jesus (Mark 3:6). Then, during Holy Week, they tried to spring their trap.

Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. “Teacher,” they said, “we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” (Matthew 22:15–17)

Conclusion

We started this paper by noting that in the opening decades of the 1st century A. D. Israel was anything but unified and stagnant. It was a tumultuous time during which religion and politics were inseparable. The Jews found themselves caught in the crossfire between Hellenization and Jewish identity and worship. Religious sects, constituted centuries earlier during the Greek occupation, continued during the time of the Romans. Some, like the Sadducees and Herodians, feverishly attempted to maintain their aristocratic position and wealth and “pinched incense to Caesar.” Unwilling to depart entirely from their ethnic roots they combined Judaism with rationalism into a theology which made sense to themselves. Others, especially the Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots, saw no solution to their problems other than removal or eradication of the Romans. Jewish identity to them involved strict adherence to the Law of Moses. If the Sadducees were rationalists, the Pharisees were ritualists.⁶⁰

Not all Jews were members of the competing sects, however. The commoners stood at somewhat of a distance and watched the politics of religion. They selectively revered or reviled the factions and their leaders. While the rich were drawn to the Sadducees, most middle- and

⁵⁸ Hoehner, 325.

⁵⁹ Unger, 479.

⁶⁰ Farrar, 717.

lower-class Jews were more receptive to the message of nationalism and piety as expounded and displayed by the Pharisees.

Yet, even this picture is grossly oversimplified. While the opposing sects squared off against one another, they also converged when convenient and worked in harmony. Such was the situation when Jesus traveled the roads of Palestine proclaiming Himself as the Messiah. Pharisees, found in most cities, towns, and villages, hounded the Lord mercilessly. As Jesus entered the Sadducean stronghold of Jerusalem, they spearheaded the attack. Throughout Palestine each group looked for ways to rob Jesus of His popularity among the people and build a solid case against Him. Pharisees scrutinized His behavior looking for infractions of the Law of Moses or their own oral traditions. Sadducees looked for logical inconsistencies and unreasonable teachings of the Savior. And all, including the Herodians, tried to pit Jesus against both the Jews and the Romans.

During the time of His ministry, Jesus answered and confronted His antagonists, often in no uncertain terms. More significantly, however, Jesus focused His attention on the common people unaffiliated with the sects. He had come to “seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). To do that, He had to reprogram the people—by smiting the smug and cradling the contrite. More than anything, His life, death, and resurrection were the evidence and message the people needed. God had set things right with sinners. LSQ

Appendix A: Scribes (Teachers of the Law)

In Bible times, the scribes (or teachers of the law) had a particularly valuable skill set. They could read and write. Therefore, they could copy and transmit records. As much as anything, they were the source of information for political, economic, and spiritual questions.

The scribes came from various walks of life. Some were from the priestly aristocracy, others were from working class backgrounds. Regardless, their influence among the people can scarcely be overestimated. Their duties and responsibilities were broad-ranging and significant. The New Testament hints

at their tasks by the various titles they bore.⁶¹ They were called *grammateis* (writers) or *nomikoi* (lawyers), and *nomodidaskaloi* (teachers of the law).

First, scribes were expected to interpret and preserve the civil and religious law. To this end they pored over the documents as well as oral laws and traditions and attempted to make applications to daily life. As far as they were concerned, their derived rules of behavior were binding on the people.

The Gospel writer Mark explained to a Gentile audience one of Jesus' encounters with the Jewish teachers of the law.

The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were "unclean," that is, unwashed. (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the traditions of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)

So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the traditions of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?" (Mark 7:1-5)

Second, scribes not only were the experts in the law, they were the teachers of the law as well. The scribe was called "rabbi" (my teacher) and was surrounded by eager students (disciples). Instruction took place in various places including the main buildings of the temple, in the home of the scribe, or elsewhere. Ordinarily the teacher of the law would sit on a raised area with students at his feet. He might give catechetical-type lectures in the law or pose questions to his hearers. The students would try to commit to memory the comments of the teacher. When a bright and attentive student was about 40, he might be ordained as a scribe.

In many ways Jesus replicated this "teacher of the law" (rabbi/disciple) model. Jesus was most commonly referred to as rabbi or master. He taught in the temple courts (Matthew 26:55), in synagogues (John 18:20), in private homes (Luke 10:38-42), and in various outdoor venues. The Savior used the catechetical as well as question-and-answer methods. A good example of the exchange between teachers of the law and Jesus is recorded in Luke 20:19-47. There Sadducees posed a question to Jesus concerning marriage in heaven. Jesus responded and then posed a question of His own.

The third task associated with scribes was to sit in judgment. On the community level, scribes often judged cases. On the national level, some scribes were members of the Sanhedrin. In fact, the Pharisaic party in the Sanhedrin was composed entirely of scribes. In many places in the Gospels, the titles "teachers of the law" and "Pharisees" are used interchangeably.

⁶¹ Unger 1977:981.

One of the most memorable examples of Jesus sitting in judgment is found in John's Gospel.

At dawn he [Jesus] appeared again in the temple court, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" (John 8:1-5)

Jesus responded with the familiar, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7).

Fourth, scribes considered themselves to be theologians. When Herod interviewed the Magi and wanted to find out about the birthplace of the Messiah, he consulted the teachers of the law (Matthew 2:4). Their familiarity with the Scriptures qualified them to speak in the synagogues. Jesus, too, was recognized as an expert of the Old Testament and frequently spoke in synagogue meetings (Luke 4:16; Matthew 13:54).

Because of the important tasks which scribes performed, they were highly regarded by the people, and they relished their status. Teachers of the law, as noted, were given honorific titles such as "rabbi," "father," and "master" (Matthew 23:9). They were venerated like the Old Testament prophets. Their teachings were received with unconditional acceptance and their injunctions with unwavering obedience. They could be recognized by their special flowing robes with long fringes (Matthew 23:5; Luke 20:46). When scribes passed, people would rise out of respect. The teachers were invited to the best feasts and given the seats of honor (Mark 12:38-39).

While Jesus had much in common with the teachers of the law, He and the scribes were clearly antagonists. It did not take the scribes very long to recognize Jesus was not part of their establishment. Jesus' cleansings of the temple aroused their ire (Mark 11:18). Christ's penchant for eating with sinners and tax collectors infuriated them (Mark 2:16), and Jesus' willingness to eat without first ceremonially washing His hands made them contemptuous of Him (Mark 7:5). Jesus recognized both sin and penitence and forgave sin, which they felt was outside of His purview (Luke 5:21). Who, then, was this teacher, Jesus? They questioned His identity and credentials (Mark 2:6, 3:22, 11:27) and rejected Him (Luke 9:22). They condemned Him privately and publicly and judged Him worthy of death (Mark 15:1). They even mocked Him while He hung on the cross (Mark 15:11).

If the scribes or teachers of the law spearheaded the opposition to Jesus, Jesus resoundingly and publicly exposed their hypocrisy. In each duty they performed, they served themselves, not God. Matthew 23 records Jesus' willingness to condemn the scribes publicly.

In short, Jesus questioned their authority, knowledge, motives, and behavior and He condemned them (Luke 20:41–47).

Appendix B: Elders

At the time of Jesus, no clear-cut distinction was made between civic and religious life in Jewish communities. A fellowship of dedicated laymen, known as the “elders” or the “elders of the people,” exercised extensive supervision in synagogue and village affairs.

The “elders” along with the “rulers” (often chosen from the elders) oversaw the synagogues. While the “rulers” controlled the worship, the “elders” sat in the seats of honor during services. They also administered the Law. In breaches of synagogue and civil rules, they decided on appropriate punishment—including flogging, banishment, and excommunication.

Historical sources confirm that elders also formed the lay nobility on the Sanhedrin. There they were overshadowed by the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Elders constituted the town councils wherein they gave advice, sat in judgment, and made decisions regarding a wide variety of matters. Essentially they promoted conformity to the traditions of the people and readily used the threat of punishment or actual punishment to correct dissidents. In a very real sense they controlled the daily life of Jews.⁶²

The Gospel accounts refer to the elders no fewer than two dozen times in 13 separate episodes. The first recorded encounter between Jesus and elders occurred during Jesus’ Great Galilean Ministry. Here a pious centurion had a sick servant. The soldier “sent some elders of the Jews to him [Jesus], asking him to come and heal his servant.” The elders who exercised civil and religious oversight held the centurion in high regard because “he loves our nation and has built our synagogue” (Luke 7:3, 5).

The next mention of the interaction between Jesus and the elders, however, was far less favorable. Members of the Sanhedrin ventured from Jerusalem to Galilee to question Jesus’ orthodoxy. The elders were the guardians of religious traditions; thus, on this occasion, Jesus was grilled, “Why do your disciples break the traditions of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat” (Matthew 15:2).

As Jesus looked into the eyes of the elders and read their hearts, He knew, full well, that they would not rest until they saw Him dead. Matthew (16:21),

⁶² G. R. Osborne, “Elders,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992).

Mark (8:31), and Luke (9:22) record Jesus' prophecy. The Lord would go to Jerusalem and there be rejected by the elders and others, who would punish Him and put Him to death.

The elders chose Tuesday of Holy Week to act. "Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. 'By what authority are you doing these things?' they asked. 'And who gave you this authority?'" (Matthew 21:23). They wanted to expose Jesus' "heresy" in this public setting.

This was just the prelude. The elders continued to hound Jesus throughout Holy Week. They plotted with the chief priests to arrest and kill Jesus (Matthew 26:3–4). They were a part of the crowd that arrested Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:47). In a clandestine meeting of the Sanhedrin they conjured up false evidence against Jesus (Matthew 26:57–59) and soon sentenced Him to death (Matthew 27:1). The elders were complicit in hiring Judas to betray Jesus, and later picked up the blood money (Matthew 27:3). The purpose of the elders was to see Jesus dead. Thus, they leveled accusations again when Jesus was before Pilate (Matthew 27:12) and then persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas (Matthew 27:20). During the crucifixion, elders mocked the Savior (Matthew 27:41) and after Jesus' resurrection they gave the guards money to lie about the empty tomb (Matthew 28:12).

In the final analysis, the elders were the recognized guardians of Jewish traditions. They controlled the civil and religious life of the Jews and relished their honored position. Yet, Jesus correctly diagnosed their spiritual problem. They "have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men" (Mark 7:8). They also let go of God Himself.

Appendix C: The Sanhedrin

Matters of church and state in Judea during the earthly life of Jesus were scrutinized by the priestly nobility and by a lay aristocracy. The two groups came together in the form of the Sanhedrin.⁶³ Also known in the New Testament as "the Council," the group was composed of 71 members. At the top was the presiding high priest. Next in prominence were the chief priests. Their number included the former high priests and members of the priestly aristocracy which

⁶³ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 1, *The Daily Study Bible Series* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 139–140; G. H. Twelftree, "Sanhedrin," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992).

also chose the high priests. The chief priests were members of the Sadducees. Next in prominence to the chief priests were the scribes. Finally, the elders rounded off "the Council." Elders were the leading men of Jerusalem and the people. They wielded considerable power and were held in high regard by the people.

The responsibilities and powers of the Sanhedrin were daunting. The council was the supreme court of justice and the ultimate court of appeals in theological, civil, and criminal matters. The Council maintained its own police force or arresting officers (Matthew 26:47; Mark 14:43).

The Roman government generally allowed the Sanhedrin to decide matters of church and state. The Sanhedrin would hear witnesses both for and against the accused, render a verdict, and acquit or punish offenders. It could not, however, carry out the death sentence unless it was ratified by the leading Roman official (John 18:31).

While the word "Sanhedrin" occurs only five times in the Gospels, this judicial body is also called "the Council" or "council" in four additional places. Together the Scriptures outline six episodes involving Jesus and the Sanhedrin or its members.

Jesus' encounter with a devout member of the Sanhedrin, a Pharisee, came early in the Lord's ministry. His name was Nicodemus (John 3:1) and all generations of believers have been blessed by Jesus' synopsis of the Gospel message proclaimed to him (John 3:16).

Like every Jewish adult, Jesus was familiar with the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus states, "Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin" (Matthew 5:22). "Raca" apparently was a word of utter contempt which defamed a man's intelligence and common sense. More than anything else it describes a tone of voice. This seems to have been Jesus' way of showing the seriousness of the sin of arrogant contempt.

The bulk of the passages which pertain to Jesus and the Sanhedrin relate to events closely related to Holy Week. Jesus resurrected Lazarus from the dead and many put their faith in Him. This was reported to some Pharisees, and the Sanhedrin met to consider the implications of Jesus' popularity (John 11:46-48).

Ultimately the concerns of the Sanhedrin culminated in Jesus' betrayal and arrest. Jesus appeared before both Annas and Caiaphas which is not surprising. Annas, at 70 years of age, was the former high priest. As such he was still associated with the Sanhedrin. His son-in-law, Caiaphas, was the current high priest and head of the Sanhedrin. Together they sought to elicit a response from Jesus which could lead to serious accusations. Soon, a trial was held by the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:57ff), and it reached a verdict (Mark 15:1). They sought the death penalty for blasphemy to which Pontius Pilate reluctantly assented.

Not all the Sanhedrin held Jesus in contempt. The Bible reveals the heart of one member who believed in the Savior. “So as evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body” (Mark 15:42–53). Indeed Jesus’ body was laid in the tomb of Joseph.

Appendix D: Concordance

Occurrences of the Word “Pharisee(s)” in the Harmonized Gospels

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
3:7			
			1:24
			3:1
			4:1
		5:17, 21	
9:11	2:16	5:30	
9:14	2:18	5:33	
12:2	2:24	6:2	
12:14	3:6	6:7	
5:20			
		7:30	
		7:36–37, 39	
12:24			
12:38			
9:34			
15:1	7:1, 3, 5		
15:12			
16:1	8:11		
16:5–6, 11–12	8:15		
			7:32

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
			7:45, 47, 48
			8:3
			8:13
			9:13, 15, 16, 40
		11:37–39, 42–43	
		11:53	
		12:1	
		13:31	
		14:1, 3	
		15:2	
		16:14	
			11:46–47
		17:20	
		18:10–11	
19:3	10:2		
			11:57
		19:39	12:19
			12:42
21:45			
22:15	12:13		
23:34			
22:41			
23:2, 13, 15, 23, 25–27, 29			
			18:3
27:62			

Occurrences of the Word “Sadducee(s)” in the Harmonized Gospels

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
3:7			
16:1, 5, 6, 11, 12			
22:23	12:18	20:27	
22:34			

Occurrences of the Word "Zealot" in the Harmonized Gospels

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
	3:18	6:15	
10:4			

Occurrence of the Word "Herodian(s)" in the Harmonized Gospels

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
	3:6		
22:16	12:13		

Occurrences of the Words "Teachers of the Law" or "Experts in the Law" in the Harmonized Gospels (Referred to as "Scribes" in KJV)

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
2:4			
	1:22		
9:3	2:6	5:17, 21	
	2:16	5:30	
		6:7	
5:20			
7:29			
	3:22		
12:38			
15:1	7:1, 5		
16:21	8:3	9:22	
17:10	9:11		
	9:14		
			8:3
		11:53	
		14:2	
		15:2	
20:18	10:33		
21:15			
	11:18	19:47	

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
	11:27	20:1	
		20:19	
		20:39	
	12:28		
	12:35		
23:2, 13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29	12:38	20:46	
	14:1	22:2	
	14:43		
26:57	14:53		
	15:1	22:66	
		23:10	
27:41	15:31		

Occurrences of the Word "Elder" in the Harmonized Gospels

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>
		7:3
15:2	7:3, 5	
16:21	8:31	9:22
21:23	11:27	20:1
26:3		
26:47	14:43	22:52
26:57	14:53	
27:1	15:1	22:66
27:3		
27:12		
27:20		
27:41		
28:12		

Occurrences of the Words "Sanhedrin" or "Council" in the Harmonized Gospels

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
			3:1

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
5:22			
			11:47
26:59	14:55		
	15:1	22:66	
	15:43	23:50	

Appendix E: Christ and Jewish Sects (Synopsis)

SOCIAL CLASS

Upper Class	Sadducees
Middle Class	Pharisees
Lower Class	Support for Pharisees

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Pro Greco Roman	Sadducees, Herodians
Anti Greco Roman	Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots

GEOGRAPHY

Jerusalem & Temple	Sadducees
Throughout Israel	Pharisees

SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

Wealth, Power	Sadducees
Prestige with Romans	Sadducees
Prestige with Israelites	Pharisees

POLITICS

Pro Rome and change	Sadducees, Herodians
Pro Israel and continuity	Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots

RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION

Rationalism	Sadducees
Legalism	Pharisees

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Sermon on Psalm 16

Joel M. Willitz
Pastor, St. John's Lutheran Church
Frankenmuth, Michigan

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Text: *Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge. I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing." As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight. The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not pour out their libations of blood or take up their names on my lips. LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. (Psalm 16; NIV)*

DEAR FELLOW REDEEMED BY THE Holy One whom God did not abandon to the grave:

On the day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter preached a sermon to the crowd in Jerusalem. How would you have liked to be the preacher that day? No doubt the crowd was far larger than any of us have ever faced. More intimidating than that was the makeup of the group. There were quite a number of people in that crowd who had also been in a Jerusalem crowd just seven weeks earlier when Jesus was on trial, the mob that shouted, "Crucify him!" And those who had

not participated in the activity of that crowd had, by their silence and noninvolvement, consented to Jesus' death. How would you have liked to be the one to tell them that they were wrong for crucifying Jesus, that they were responsible for murdering the Son of God and Savior of the world? That would be like waving a red flag in front of a bull.

But Peter, who such a short time before had been so afraid of a servant girl that he denied even knowing his Lord, now was fearless. With great courage, confidence, and security he told the crowd, "You, with the help of wicked men, put Jesus to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:23–24). Then Peter quoted the last part of our Psalm to show the people that already long ago God's Word had clearly demonstrated that all-important fact: God will not abandon his Holy One to the grave. Where did Peter get such courage, confidence and security to face that crowd? He got it from his resurrected Lord, from God's holy Word, from the Psalm before us this morning: **God Will Not Abandon His Holy One to the Grave.** This meant total security for Jesus. This means total security for you and for me just as it did for Peter.

Do we ever feel less secure than we should? When some difficulty arises or some disaster strikes in our lives and cuts us low, do we feel vulnerable and helpless? Do we find ourselves doubting that the Lord will keep us safe and take care of us? Do we really think that God is that careless with us, his people? Do we ever become disheartened, discouraged, and depressed, as if to say, "What a bad situation the Lord has placed me in! What a crummy deal the Lord has given me this time! What an unfortunate lot I have in life!" I know this pastor suffers from such attitudes, and I believe there is another pastor out there who does, too. You know who you are! Or perhaps there is a pastor's wife who thinks the Lord has given her an unfortunate lot. Do we in our hearts deny our Lord, thinking that he has somehow denied us? Lord, from Psalm 16 drive us from our pathetic lack of trust, and restore to us the peace and joy of your salvation!

King David penned Psalm 16 through inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It's a Messianic Psalm. That means that David wrote first and foremost not about himself, but about Jesus the promised Savior. So 1000 years later when Peter quoted from the Psalm on the Day of Pentecost, he explained, "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he

spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay” (Acts 2:29–31).

The Apostle Paul, on his first missionary journey in Asia Minor, also quoted Psalm 16 when preaching about Christ's resurrection: “You will not let your Holy One see decay.” Paul, too, pointed out, “For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay” (Acts 13:35–37).

Clearly, Psalm 16 is about Jesus. Jesus himself is speaking. He is praying to his heavenly Father. We might do well to picture Jesus praying this Psalm on one of those many times when, we are told, he went away by himself to pray, sometimes spending the entire night in prayer. Have you ever wondered what Jesus prayed all night long? He no doubt prayed the Psalms, or the many other prophetic prayers of the Old Testament written specifically for him to pray. Or we might do better to picture Jesus praying this Psalm in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before he died. There are many parallels between Psalm 16 and Jesus' prayer that night. We may do even better to hear Jesus praying this Psalm from the cross, just as he prayed Psalm 22 which begins, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” This Psalm is one of the many timeless prayers of the Savior of the world!

Jesus begins, “Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge. I said to the LORD, ‘You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.’ As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight. The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not pour out their libations of blood or take up their names on my lips.” We immediately sense that Jesus was in trouble or danger, as he prayed, “Keep me safe, O God.” In his mission as our Savior Jesus was indeed in great trouble and danger from the day of his birth, surrounded by wicked men here on earth who would attempt to kill him, and would finally succeed to torture and crucify him, snuffing out his very life. Yet Jesus did not despair. He remained totally secure in the hands of his loving heavenly Father, come what may, even death. He knew that God would save him, that finally God would not abandon him to the grave. He knew that God is good. Everything good is from God, and apart from God there is no good thing. Therefore Jesus completely entrusted himself to his father's care and dedicated himself to his Father's will, even though that meant suffering and dying. “You are my Lord,” Jesus said to his heavenly Father.

Jesus also expressed his great love for God's people. The saints who place their trust in God for the forgiveness and salvation which Jesus

would willingly win for them through his suffering and death—“They are my delight,” Jesus says. On the other hand, Jesus will have nothing to do with those who serve other gods. He will not accept their worship, their “libations of blood,” nor will he even take their names on his lips. “Whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:33), he later said. Satan had once tried to strike a deal with Jesus. He showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, all their splendor and glory, all their idolatry and false worship, and said, “All this I will give you, if you will bow down and worship me.” But Jesus replied, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’” (Matthew 4:9–10). Jesus was totally committed to doing things God’s way, even though that meant for him the cross.

Jesus continues in his prayer: “LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.” When God gave the Israelites the land of Canaan, the land was divided up between the tribes according to God’s design, and then further divided among the tribal clans and families. The boundary lines were set down, and each family received its inheritance, whether it was a good chunk of land or not so good. Jesus was not assigned a chunk of land. Instead he received the inheritance of being the Savior of the world. That was his lot, and he delighted in it.

“The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places.” He said, “Surely I have a delightful inheritance.” “LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup.” In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus also spoke of his God-given assignment as a “cup,” the cup of his suffering and death. He prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). In one sense it was a bitter cup. On Good Friday afternoon following our Tenebrae Service, part of my family watched “The Passion of the Christ,” the movie that came out five or six years ago. Only part of those under my roof watched it because the others did not want to view that gruesome movie again. If you’ve seen it you know what I mean. For me the worst part is the flogging and the flesh flying as those hooks dug into and ripped the flesh from Christ’s back.

Surely Jesus did not enjoy being mocked, whipped, condemned and crucified. Hanging on the cross was not a good time. But in another sense, Jesus was very much content and willing, and even happy to drink that cup. Why? Simply because it was the will of his heavenly Father. And Jesus rejoiced to drink that cup for our sake, to win our forgiveness and salvation. Isn’t that tremendous—Jesus rejoiced to be your Savior!

He looked upon it as a privilege to come to this earth, suffer your woes and die for you.

Isn't it amazing how content Jesus was during his life here on earth? For the times when we have become discouraged and depressed, the times when we have been malcontents, for all those times Jesus was perfectly content and perfectly trusting in his heavenly Father. Here we find our righteousness, our only and total righteousness. Jesus didn't complain. He wasn't gloomy. He didn't struggle against hardships. Instead he willingly accepted them. He was calm, content and filled with a joyous confidence. In Jesus we find security at its best, perfect security. He was content to be arrested, content to be condemned, content to be led like a lamb to the slaughter, content to hang on a cross. In contentment he said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Then he died in the total security that God would not abandon him to the grave.

Notice Jesus' total security in the Psalm: "I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." There the Psalm ends, rather abruptly. But after a climax like that, what more can be said? Eternal joy and pleasures in the presence of the heavenly Father awaited Jesus, because God would not, God could not, abandon his Holy One to the grave.

Jesus' body did not see decay. On that Easter morning the women went to the tomb with their spices and perfumes to anoint Jesus' body to slow down the decaying process. But their spices and perfumes were all for nothing, for Jesus had risen.

The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead assures us that Jesus has carried out our redemption. All of our sins, all the sins of the whole world—everyone who has ever lived and everyone who will ever live—were heaped on Jesus. On that cross he was the guilty one. There he was abandoned by his dear heavenly Father. After three dreadful hours of darkness he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). But on Easter morning Jesus was raised to life as the Holy One, no longer the sin-bearer. All the sins of the world that were placed on him were gone. He had paid the full price for them all. If there were even one sin that Jesus' suffering did not pay for, he would not have risen from the dead. You see how none of us can say that we

have committed a sin that is too great to be forgiven, for if that were true then Jesus must still be in the grave, for then he would not be the Holy One.

Jesus' resurrection proclaims that we are justified before God. "He was raised again for our justification." Through Jesus, we, too, are God's holy ones. There we have the blessed assurance that God will not abandon us to the grave, as Jesus has promised, "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19). God will not abandon his Holy One to the grave; this means total security for us!

People buy life insurance for security, so they have the assurance that if something should happen to them, their loved ones will be provided for. The only problem with life insurance is that you have to die to collect it, and then it doesn't do you personally a whole lot of good. That's the problem with every type of earthly security—it's only good for this life, and totally worthless after you die. And how can we be secure during our life if we're not secure for all eternity after we die?

Jesus' resurrection gives us that security, eternal security. By fulfilling the words of this Psalm as our substitute in our stead, Jesus made it possible for us to make it our own prayer, too. Because of Jesus' resurrection, in every situation in our life, no matter in what difficulty or danger we find ourselves, we can confidently pray to our all-powerful and all-gracious God: "Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge. I said to the LORD, 'You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.'" No matter what our circumstances, in good times and in bad, no matter what grave challenges we face, no matter how great our troubles appear, we know that at bottom is our Lord's salvation. Therefore we can say with contentment, "LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance." Even at death, especially at death, in Christ we remain secure, because he will keep our bodies safe in peaceful rest in the grave until he appears to call them to life again. Psalm 16 is a wonderful prayer for us to pray on our deathbed: "Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave.... You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. Amen. (LSQ)

Book Reviews

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Book Review: Because of Christ: Memoirs of a Lutheran Theologian

Carl E. Braaten. *Because of Christ: Memoirs of a Lutheran Theologian*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010. 210 pages. \$18.00.

Mention the name of Carl Braaten, and what comes to mind? Most in our confessional Lutheran circles know him as co-editor of the liberal ELCA dogmatics text of 1984, *Christian Dogmatics*. Braaten and his friend Robert Jensen left an indelible impression on the liberal Lutheran scene by a rather copious use of citations from scholars not known for adherence to verbal inspiration and inerrancy of holy Scripture. J. Kincaid Smith and Patsy Leppien said back in 1992, “[The dogmatics text] is shaping the theological thinking of

future ELCA pastors and leaders; therefore we cannot overstate its importance” (*What’s Going on Among the Lutherans* [Milwaukee: NPH, 1992], 29). The two-volume Braaten/Jensen dogmatics text today is not utilized in ELCA seminaries to the same extent as two decades ago. Yet it continues to be referenced for the insights provided by six American Lutherans selected to address specific topics for the project.

What some may not know is what prompted Carl and LaVonne Braaten along with their lifelong friends, the Jensens, to begin the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology (1991–2005), a venture that resulted in the production of the journals, *dialog* and *Pro Ecclesia*. Braaten had grown weary of the pro-quota and inclusivity emphases in the administrative development of the ELCA (formed in 1988), a move he deemed detrimental to the theological moorings he was anticipating for the

three-church merger (AELC—the most liberal and progressive; the ALC—the most conservative of the three; and the LCA—moderate in its interpretation of God’s Word). In *Because of Christ* he provides an unfavorable summation of the procedure followed by the new church’s founding task force:

On account of the quota system it became clear from the start that theologians would not have much say in the formation of the new Lutheran Church. The coalition of minorities and feminists would see to that. To them the issue of race and gender was far more important than dotting the i’s and crossing the t’s in matters theological and ecclesiastical... . Why did the commissioners not bother to listen to what the best theologians of the church were saying on these topics? Perhaps it was the perception that the speakers were mostly a bunch of white males spouting their own elitist ideology in the name of theology. (124–125)

Again, the autobiographer writes concerning the early days of formation for the ELCA:

The only really new thing in the new Lutheran church is the commitment to inclusiveness. One pundit suggested that its new name should be the Inclutheran Church.... [T]he commissioners were not interested in theology.

The politically correct word is “inclusiveness.” That is a code word for quotas.... We were promised that with the quota system the new church would number 10 percent of blacks in its congregations by the end of the decade. Blacks would be so impressed with the new quotas that they would pour into our white Lutheran congregations asking to be included. What a farce. After two decades the percentage remains the same. Why? Because the only way to get blacks into a predominantly white Lutheran church is through the hard work of evangelism, not by playing the “black power” game of quotas.... From my perspective theology is no longer considered a life-line but a liability in the church of which I am still a member. (126)

Braaten’s open letter to ELCA Bishop Mark Hansen in 2005 received wide publicity. He includes this in his book (165–171). For many pastors and parishioners, this may have been the first time for them to see a critical and disgruntled side of this Madagascan missionary’s son turned world-renowned theologian. Some probably assumed all was copacetic in Braaten’s evaluation of the ELCA formation. Not so. Nevertheless, he would not abandon his church with his membership. “Though I have witnessed and lament the near collapse of confessional (sic) theology in Lutheran seminary education, the eclipse of catechesis

in Christian education, massive ignorance of doctrine on the part of the laity, and wanton disregard of church discipline among bishops and pastors, such enfeebling problems neither make me less Lutheran nor tempt me to become something else" (ix).

The book, as expected, reviews the entire life of Carl E. Braaten. Mostly it deals with his years as systematic theologian and what ensued in his retirement from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) in 1991. The latter half of the volume piques the interest of any searching for his measured reflections on the origination of the ELCA. Braaten lays at the feet of the ex-Missourians (the Seminex crowd, i.e., the short-lived AELC) the blame for pushing the new Lutheran body "to use the organs of the church to promote its own liberal agendas."

Six deviants are listed by Braaten as ways the ELCA has succumbed to pressures to conform to culture: 1) The triune God's identity of "Father, Son and Holy Spirit," is challenged by radical feminists. 2) The exclusivity of Jesus Christ as the only way for salvation is questioned by those desiring pluralism. 3) Scripture's authority is challenged by "an unchurchly hermeneutic based on post-modern historical relativism." 4) There is threat of losing the proper distinction between law and gospel due to popular American religious culture. 5) The church as the body of Christ is challenged by the alleged benefits of a quota system. And finally, 6) the doctrine of the two kingdoms is challenged because the gospel mission is

confused with involvement in many worthy social causes (140–141).

Since Braaten remains a considerable distance from what we affectionately know as "the old Synodical Conference" position on Scripture, and since he espouses no consistent and confessional doctrine/practice of church fellowship, it is not surprising that in his golden years he reluctantly keeps his membership in a church he views as rudderless. After collaborating in a dogmatics text and system that led many down an unavoidable path resulting in the radical views espoused currently by liberal Lutheranism, one might wonder: Does such a one have right to complain? Thankfully, *Because of Christ* show evidence of faith in Christ alone as justifying. "[F]aith is not an act humans can perform by their own free will. Faith is purely a gift of grace; it is not a prerequisite but a consequence of God's justifying activity" (51).

By the way, this reviewer finds a quip worth noting on page 179. Here, Braaten in reference to sermonizing remarks, "For me the acid test of a good theology is whether it leads to sound preaching." Yes, that is where the rubber hits the road. But—we are quick to add—the age-old axiom still must hold: QUOD NON EST BIBLICUM, NON EST THEOLOGICUM (What is not biblical is not—or ever!—to be regarded as theological)!

— John A. Moldstad

Book Review: The Great Works of God

Valerius Herberger. *The Great Works of God: Parts One and Two: The Mysteries of Christ in the Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–15*. Translated by Matthew Carver. St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 2010. 400 pages. \$44.99.

Valerius Herberger. *The Great Works of God Parts Three and Four: The Mysteries of Christ in the Book of Genesis, Chapters 16–50*. Translated by Matthew Carver. St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 2011. 544 pages. \$44.99.

Valerius Herberger

Among the early Lutheran devotional writers, there were Philipp Nicolai (1556–1608), the author of the king and queen of chorales, and Johann Arndt (1555–1621), the writer of *True Christianity*, in the west and north of Germany; Martin Moller (1547–1606) at Görlitz an der Oder; and far to the east Valerius Herberger (1562–1627) at Fraustadt, Posen,¹ modern-day Wschowa, Poland. Their devotional literature (*Erbauungsliteratur*) was intended to nourish and strengthen believers through the Gospel, encouraging repentance and spiritual renewal and formation. One of the predominant themes of this Lutheran spirituality

is union and communion with God through the life-giving Word and blessed Sacraments.²

Valerius Herberger (1562–1627) was born on April 21, 1562, at Fraustadt, Posen. He studied at Frankfurt an der Oder and at Leipzig. He returned to his hometown where he became a teacher in 1584, deacon in 1590, and finally pastor in 1599. In 1604 his congregation at Fraustadt was compelled to leave its beautiful large church by King Sigismund III to make room for a small group of Roman Catholics. By Christmastime, he had obtained another place of worship, and appropriately called this house of worship “*Kripplein Christi*” (the little manger of Jesus),³ and Herberger became known as the “*Prediger am Kripplein Christi*.” Herberger and his parish suffered many trials and tribulations in the Thirty Years’ War and as a result of various epidemics of the time. He died May 18, 1627.

Herberger was one of the most outstanding preachers in his day. Because of his evangelical sermons he was called “*Jesusprediger*.” The Romanists nicknamed him “The little Luther.” His sermons remind one of the lively comforting style of Luther. Herberger published many writings, predominantly sermon books: *Evangelische Herzpostille*, *Epistolische Herzpostille*, *Geistliche Trauerbinden*,

² Herberger, *The Great Works of God: Parts One and Two*, 63, 230.

³ The WELS church in Iron Ridge, Wisconsin, bears this name, Zum Kripplein Christi. Many of the founders of this congregation were originally from the Fraustadt parish.

¹ Posen was on the southeastern border of Pomerania. Many of the members of our English Lutheran Church in Cottonwood, Minnesota, are descendants of emigrants from Posen.

and *Himmlisches Jerusalem*. One of his largest writings was *Magnalia Dei*, a running commentary on the Scriptures. He also wrote the hymn *Farewell I Gladly Bid Thee (Valet will ich dir geben)*⁴ which is an acrostic on his given name.

Magnalia Dei – The Great Works of God

Matthew Carver has produced an excellent translation of Herberger's *Magnalia Dei*, that is, *The Great Works of God*, which is an edifying commentary on the Scriptures. It was intended to cover the entire Scriptures, but Herberger only got as far as the book of Ruth. Carver's translation includes the entire book of Genesis. Divided into 188 meditations, each headed "Jesus..." the commentary includes a thorough biblical knowledge with comforting application for the life of the reader. It points out that Jesus the Redeemer is present in the life of the Christian with His comfort, counsel, and aid offered in the means of grace. "It was often said that Herberger's sermons came from the heart, and therefore went to the heart."⁵ Herberger takes great pains to portray the Old Testament, and Genesis in particular, as the book of Christ. Christ is the marrow and nucleus of the Old Testament. He finds Christ throughout Genesis—in many places

where Lutherans today have forgotten to look. The commentary breathes the messianic hope.

Genesis 3:15 and the Gospel

Herberger definitely sees Genesis 3:15 as the Protoevangelium, the first Gospel, and indicates its vital importance. Jesus is indeed the Seed of the woman who would crush Satan's power through His death and resurrection, accomplishing salvation for all. The entire Gospel is summarized in Genesis 3:15.

All the writings of the Prophets are simply postils on this text, and the object of their contemplations is the power concealed in these words. That is why St. Peter says that to this Lord Jesus "all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name" (Acts 10:43). How Adam must have preached! "Dear sons, dear daughters, we should have perished eternally for our sins when the serpent deceived us. But for the sake of the woman's Seed, the promised Messiah, we will be saved from all sin and adversity. In Paradise I heard the pledge; in it I take comfort, and in such comfort I will live and die. This is my confession of the Messiah: He is true God and true man; He is mightier than the devil. By His bloody death He will restore everything that was corrupted by my sin and the devil's deceit. Let this be

⁴ *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* (St. Louis, MO: MorningStar Publishers, 1996), 535.

⁵ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church: Volume 4: The Age of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 375.

my last will and testament. I bequeath to you the true faith in Jesus Christ, the promised Serpent-Trampler, Sin-Atoner, and Redeemer, that by Him you may all be saved.”⁶

Herberger, agreeing with Luther, points out that Eve properly understood the Protoevangelium. She indicates this in Genesis 4:1 by naming her first son Cain, for she said, I have begotten the man, the Lord.⁷ She assumed that her first-born son was the promised Messiah, the Savior.

Genesis 2:22 as it Concerns Marriage

The commentary provides counsel and advice for the Christian life and marriage that was applicable in Herberger’s time and also in our time. He explains why God took Eve from the side of Adam. He did not take Eve from a part of man’s head, for woman was not to be man’s boss or rule over him. He did not take a part of man’s foot, for man was not to walk on his wife and treat her like dirt. Rather, He took a rib from man’s side, because she was to be his equal, his companion at his side, next to his heart, and under his arm for protection.

Our Lord Jesus was the preacher here, giving a bridal homily on the nuptial lesson: “It is not good that Adam should be alone.” He addressed the bride and groom with

sincere, comforting, wholesome words: “Adam, dearest Adam, discern and praise the love of My Father. When you were sleeping, He watched and cared for you. Behold, here I entrust to your hand and heart this fair virgin Eve, who was taken from beside your heart. She was taken from your side, for she is to be your companion in your life, nor stray too far from your side. She was fashioned from your rib, not from your feet, for you are not to think of her as a foot-servant, but to show her heartfelt loyalty. Ribs are not as strong and hard as the other bones in the arms and legs. Your Eve is also somewhat more fragile of nature than you, for which reason you would be wise to learn how to deal with her frailty.” Adam kept this all his days. All pious husbands should still heed it today, too, for the faithful pledge is the best.

Likewise, the Lord Jesus also preached to Eve: “Eve, dear Eve, you are to be Adam’s beloved, the comfort of his eyes, and the joy of his house. You were not taken from his head, for you were not meant to be his head. The headship is to remain with Adam. You were taken from his rib, from his side, where Adam supports his clothing, for you are to support Adam’s heart and the livelihood of his house. You are to keep his things in good order

⁶ Herberger, *The Great Works of God: Parts One and Two*, 195.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 225, 233.

and, just like a rib, know how to be fitted, cooperative, and yielding. Oh, make sure that this rib does not go awry! As in the body the rib covers the heart, so you should soothingly cover and keep Adam's heart. As in great distress of the heart the ribs lift to let the air in and out, so you too should soothingly lift Adam's worries with suitable words and cool off his distressed heart."⁸

*Pictures, Shadows, and Types
of Christ and Why We Wear
Clothes*

The commentary of Herberger is full of pictures, shadows, and types of Christ. Following St. Paul's typological interpretation of the tribulation of Israel in the wilderness in 1 Corinthians 10, Herberger makes considerable use of typology. Jesus is the Good Samaritan (90)⁹, the lion of Judah (110), the greater Samson (231), the greater Enoch (263), the greater Methusaleh (268), and the greater Noah (274). Jesus is the greater Melchizedek who provides strengthening and nourishment in the Lord's Supper (374, 378). Jesus is the divine physician (35), the true carpenter (68), the true tree of life (147), the fountain and water of life (152-153), and the good shepherd (247). Herberger designates Jesus as the second Adam who restored all that the first Adam lost (170). He uses

the fish-hook picture for redemption, as did many in the ancient church possibly beginning with Gregory of Nyssa (109, 168). Finally, in his study of Genesis 3:21, Herberger explains that the clothes that we wear each day are a powerful proclamation of Law and Gospel.

Dear Lord Jesus, God honor the trade! You were the first butcher: You slew a lamb. You were the first tanner: You worked the skins with the skill of a master craftsman who has in his hands all that is needed to make a fine garment. When You clothed Adam and Eve, You did not regard showiness, pride, or frivolity, but respectability, suitability, richness, and usefulness. All God-fearing people today would do well to consider these. This clothing reminded Adam and Eve of their sins every day and acted as a salutary repentance-sermon for them. Every morning as they put on their clothes, they talked about their situation thus: "Oh God, what miserable souls we have become! Not only are we forced to walk in shame before all creatures but even before ourselves. Our own bodies are shameful to us. Before, every part of us was beautiful, graceful, and lovely. In those days there was no fear, no weakness in us. We were never ashamed. Oh, what miserable souls we have become since we first committed sin. Oh,

⁸ Ibid., 171-172.

⁹ All the page numbers in this paragraph are references to Herberger, *The Great Works of God: Parts One and Two*.

forgive us our sins and take away our shame and disgrace, for the sake of the promised Virgin's Son!"

We should think such thoughts as these every morning: Dear God, my clothes are "visible signs" that I am a sinner and cannot stand before God. Oh, help me not to boast in or show off my clothing, but let them remind me of my tragic estate. Help me to be constantly clothed in a concern for the salvation of my body and soul. ...

Besides this, the skin garments that God fashioned for the first parents were a beautiful reminder of the means by which the injury of their souls would eventually be healed. The Messiah would let Himself be slaughtered and killed like a lamb, and by this bloody sacrifice on the cross the sins of mankind would be covered and forgiven. This is the jewelry and adornment of all faithful hearts.

Thus the Chaldean text calls these garments "clothes of glory and splendor." Concerning these garments of Jesus Christ's imputed righteousness and innocence, Isaiah 61:10 plainly states, "I rejoice in the Lord, and my soul is joyful in my God; for He has put garments of salvation on me, and clothed me in the robe of righteousness, like a bridegroom decked with priestly ornaments, and

like a bride that is adorned in her jewels." This is the true wedding garment which our Lord Jesus Himself requires of the heavenly wedding guests (Matt. 22:12). Whoever is not clothed with the lambskins of Jesus Christ's innocence will be gagged and bound hand and foot on the Last Day and thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be howling and gnashing of teeth. Of this, St. Paul says, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14); and, "As many of you as were baptized have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). This is furthermore why our Lord Jesus let Himself be nailed to the cross naked and bare, stripped of His clothes, showing the whole world that He was the one who would take away our nakedness, disgrace, and shame and give us the clothes of His holiness, innocence, and merit so that we would not perish. ...

Oh Lord Jesus Christ, preserve me from reckless thoughts that presume themselves sufficient to pass muster by the fanciful appearance of their own piety. This is no different from Adam and Eve's attempt to cover themselves in God's sight by sewing together garments of fig-leaves. For it is only by Your grace and merit that we are kept from the wrath of Your heavenly Father. O Lord Jesus Christ, let Your innocence be my Sunday clothes and my

workday clothes. I cannot wear these out any more than the Israelites wore out their raiment in the desert. Clothe me, cover me, warm me, adorn me, that by You all my sins may be covered, my body and soul concealed from all evil, and myself preserved by Your grace both now and forever. Amen.¹⁰

These are only a few of the pictures and themes found in this splendid commentary.

An interesting aspect of devotional literature is the gathering of Scripture passages. At times the devotional writers like Herberger collect many sections of Scripture into a compact form as a special comfort for the Christian. The Scripture, to be sure, is filled with comfort, but at times it is difficult for the burdened Christian to cull out the pertinent passages. Therefore, Herberger combines consoling passages as a balm to soothe the burdened heart as is seen below.

You are the King of righteousness. You are the royal Fountain full of righteousness. In summer and winter You overflow with the righteousness that avails before God. From Your fullness I receive all that I lack. You are “the LORD, our Righteousness” (Jer. 23:6). You were made to us righteousness from God (1 Cor. 1:30). You are the righteous Servant who by His knowledge makes many to be accounted righteous (Is. 53:11). You are

our “Advocate...who is righteous” (1 John 2:1). “As by the disobedience of one the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one (You) many are made righteous,” [Rom. 5:19]. You are none other than that “Righteous One” whom Righteousness and Mercy look for (in St. Bernard). You died for us poor sinners so that there could be satisfaction between God’s righteousness and mercy. O Lord Jesus, I am unrighteous, for which I am ashamed. But You are righteous, for which I rejoice. You are my righteousness, for what is Yours is mine. Let Your righteousness blot out and cover my unrighteousness. Let Your righteousness be mine, and then my righteousness will exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees [Matt. 5:20], for Yours exceeds that of the holy angels and all creation.¹¹

The Wounded Side Picture

In his pastoral care Herberger makes use of the picture of the wounded side of the Lord. This image is based on John 19:34.¹² This picture was used already by Augustine and it was used throughout church history.¹³

¹¹ Ibid., 375.

¹² See also Zechariah 12:10, 13:1; and 1 John 5:6. For a complete presentation of the wounded side motif see Gaylin Schmeling, “Gerhard—Theologian and Pastor,” *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 44:4 (December 2004): 307–309.

¹³ Augustine, “Tractate on John” CXX:2, ed. Phillip Schaff, *Nicene and*

¹⁰ Ibid., 210–211, 215.

On that first Good Friday after Jesus completed salvation for all men, His side was opened showing how the treasure of salvation is distributed to all people. It flows to us in the water and blood: the water of Baptism, the blood of the Lord's Supper, and in His Word which is spirit and life. These means of grace are the source of the church. The church comes into being through these for one is only brought to faith in the Savior through Word and Sacrament. Thus as the first Adam's bride was formed from his side as he slept in the garden, so the church, the bride of Christ the second Adam, was taken from His side as He slept in death on the cross. At other times, as the devotional writers, he speaks of hiding himself in the wounded side of the Savior until all the stormy blasts of life are over. Here there is rest and peace in the outrageous fortune of life.

God wanted to present Adam with a beautiful bride, so He caused him to fall into a deep sleep; for Adam was not to feel any pain when his side was being opened. In the state of innocence we would have known no days of sorrow or sadness—a blessed state that will be restored to us in eternal life. God took a rib from Adam's side and from it formed the beautiful Eve. No sooner did Adam catch sight of her than his heart burned

with beautiful, bright love and kindness toward her.

Here we have yet another beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Christian Church.

The Lord Jesus, the Second Adam, also fell into a deep sleep of death on the cross. His side, too, was opened; and from it flowed blood and water, which, it is preached in the Gospel, are distributed in the Sacraments. Christian hearts receive this treasure by faith. Thus the Christian Church is built. Thus our hearts are brought to Christ. Thus we are washed of our sins by the Lord Jesus' true holy water, and hallowed by His blood. And just as Adam's heart poured itself out in beautiful love for Eve, so the love of Jesus Christ also burns for our heart.

In the little book of Adam's heart, our Lord Jesus engraved an image of His goodwill toward our hearts. As Adam was attracted to Eve, even so, and to a far greater extent, Christ is attracted to us, and in the same way Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom of our soul, our fairest Treasure, Comfort, and Joy.¹⁴

Yet, Lord Jesus, we are betrothed to Your heart in Holy Baptism and the Holy Supper. There You vow to our heart, "Behold, dearest bride, here I give Myself wholly to

Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VII (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 434-435.

¹⁴ Herberger, *The Great Works of God: Parts One and Two*, 175.

be Your own. My blood shall cleanse you from all your sins. My cleft side shall be your resting place and mighty fortress in every turbulent storm. I have resolved to be faithful to you forever. Amen. This I swear to you by My divine truth. Amen." Oh Lord Jesus, I am not worthy of this great honor, yet I am needful of it, to be sure. This is a love unsought, unexpected, and undeserved. Eternal thanks be to You for Your loving heart!¹⁵

Matthew Carver has produced a splendid, readable translation of this devotional study of Genesis by Valerius Herberger. This translation has made it possible for Herberger to speak to the heart of American Christians as he did to the German Lutherans of the past. As an outstanding example of devotional literature it is filled with comfort, giving needed consolation. Herberger's writing comes from the heart and therefore touches the heart of the Christian. Many typological and devotional themes are employed which are lacking in modern literature. It is hoped that the publication of such Orthodox Lutheran devotional literature will help our generation see more fully that Scripture and the Old Testament in particular is the book of Christ. This translation is an excellent addition to the Lutheran devotional literature available in English, and Matthew Carver is to be thanked for his diligent labors. This translation would be a valuable resource for any

pastor preparing a sermon on Genesis and would be beneficial devotional material for both pastor and congregation alike. *The Great Works of God* is edifying devotional literature for every need.

— Gaylin R. Schmeling

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¹⁵ Ibid., 179.



Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary
6 Browns Court
Mankato MN 56001

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