

1958

## 2. The Lutheran Affirmation

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Bloom, Robert L. et al. "2. The Lutheran Affirmation. Pt. VII: The Protestant Movement." Ideas and Institutions of Western Man (Gettysburg College, 1958), 7-31.

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## 2. The Lutheran Affirmation

### Abstract

The individual who first brought the Reformation into full focus was Martin Luther (1483-1546). There are few more controversial personalities in history and few about whom it is less possible to get an unbiased estimate. He has been portrayed as a genial conversationalist fond of good living, as a sensualist who condoned immorality, as a patriotic and courageous prophet, as a moody neurotic, and as a man for whom the encounter with God was overwhelming. The abundant literature from many camps makes clear that Luther was both a giant figure in history and a very complex personality. [excerpt]

### Keywords

Contemporary Civilization, Martin Luther, Lutheran, Christianity

### Disciplines

History | History of Christianity | History of Religion | Religion

### Comments

This is a part of [Section VII: The Protestant Movement](#). The [Contemporary Civilization](#) page lists all additional sections of *Ideas and Institutions of Western Man*, as well as the [Table of Contents](#) for both volumes.

### More About Contemporary Civilization:

From 1947 through 1969, all first-year Gettysburg College students took a two-semester course called Contemporary Civilization. The course was developed at President Henry W.A. Hanson's request with the goal of "introducing the student to the backgrounds of contemporary social problems through the major concepts, ideals, hopes and motivations of western culture since the Middle Ages."

Gettysburg College professors from the history, philosophy, and religion departments developed a textbook for the course. The first edition, published in 1955, was called *An Introduction to Contemporary Civilization and Its Problems*. A second edition, retitled *Ideas and Institutions of Western Man*, was published in 1958 and 1960. It is this second edition that we include here. The copy we digitized is from the Gary T. Hawbaker '66 Collection and the marginalia are his.

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## 2. The Lutheran Affirmation

The individual who first brought the Reformation into full focus was Martin Luther (1483-1546). There are few more controversial personalities in history and few about whom it is less possible to get an unbiased estimate. He has been portrayed as a genial conversationalist fond of good living, as a sensualist who condoned immorality, as a patriotic and courageous prophet, as a moody neurotic, and as a man for whom the encounter with God was overwhelming. The abundant literature from many camps makes clear that Luther was both a giant figure in history and a very complex personality.

But why should the Reformation have started in Luther's native Germany? It has been suggested that in fragmented Germany, not strong enough to wrest concessions from the papacy as had Spain, France, and England, the abuses of the Church were more obvious and widespread and the sentiment for reform more urgent. Germany bore the brunt of indulgence vending and was steadily drained for papal revenues. The fact that ecclesiastical lords were frequently as powerful in political affairs as were the lay princes helped to undercut the possibility of correcting these abuses. Again, it has been indicated that economic conditions in Germany were disturbed and depressed. Among other things, a series of crop failures contributed to the widespread distress. As a third suggestion, Luther has been identified as the type of personality who would exert an exceptional influence upon his fellow-countrymen. In him we see the mingling of keen sensitivity with peasant or burgher coarseness, and a combination of dogged striving with warm congeniality. Thus, he and his personality spoke directly to his fellow-Germans; what he experienced and what he affirmed about that experience appealed directly to his compatriots.

There was nothing particularly unusual in Luther's background and education which might offer an indication of the forthcoming break with the past or a clue to his later convictions. His parents were typical examples of the rigid discipline and superstitions of late medieval peasant piety. It is to be noted, however, that Luther's father had become a miner who attained a degree of prosperity and exhibited some bourgeois aspirations for his family. A medieval atmosphere prevailed during his early education and also at the University of Erfurt where, at the express wish of his father, Luther enrolled to prepare for a legal career. A dramatic event in 1505, when Luther was felled by a bolt of lightning and in terror vowed to become a monk, thrust him into even more predominantly medieval patterns of thought and piety. And when he chose a monastic order with which to affiliate, it was one of the strictest -- the Augustinians. This order, while not adhering completely to the teaching of the illustrious saint whose name it bore, was noted in this century both for its austere piety and for its careful scholarship. It was an order well chosen to help a determined

*National state had made the least progress. (Germany)*



young man "excel in his monkery," as Luther later described it.

But the strenuousness of the Augustinian Rule did not bring Luther the assurance he sought. He went through a long and harrowing struggle in the monastery, centered around the basic question: How can I satisfy God's justice and gain assurance of my salvation? For a while he pressed on within his medieval framework, hoping that either the sacramental system or extreme asceticism could provide his answer. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1507, but according to his own later statement he was gravely perturbed when he celebrated his first mass. This act brought him terror at the thought that he, a desperate sinner, was presuming to address Almighty God. Thus, doubts were induced; doubts produced fears; and fears which could not be overcome by works of merit brought a torment of despair. Even the guidance of the kindly vicar general of the Augustinian Order, Staupitz, pointing out that God was not angry with him but that Luther was angry with God, did little but inspire a deep affection between the two men. The young priest-monk, acting on the teaching he had received and seeking to follow the requirements of the Church's higher path of good works, was failing miserably to get the assurance of forgiveness he desired. Luther wanted assurance directly from God; his counselors replied that he had his assurance in the Church's answers. They advised him to relax and rely upon these answers.

Within the decade between 1507 and 1517, however, there developed an inner transformation in Luther which did not ignore the past but which brought new convictions that were decisive for the rest of his life. He turned to an intensive study of the Bible which gradually brought him a new and total illumination. In 1512, at the request of Staupitz who was still seeking to guide his confused spiritual son, Luther became professor of Bible at the newly established University of Wittenberg. Although in his concentration on the study of Scripture he followed his Occamist scholastic training, his conclusions departed widely from those of the schoolmen. As Luther worked over his lectures on the Psalms and probed Paul's Epistles, an illumination came to him. Christianity, he saw, must focus on Jesus Christ as God's own free gift of His Loving Self. The Christian life is, therefore, confident trust or faith in that love. It is not man's attempt to earn his own salvation. Luther later referred to this discovery as "the true gates of paradise" and it entirely changed his outlook concerning the crucial religious issues of grace, faith, and justification. Increasingly, he was to interpret the entire Bible from the Johannine and Pauline concepts of life in Christ and justification by faith alone. *not faith & works*

Grace now came to have for Luther a meaning other than the one it had in either the medieval Augustinian or the Thomist tradition. To earlier Augustinianism, grace meant a divine illumination by the Holy Spirit and through the sacraments which reconstitutes man's nature by making him conscious of misdirection in sin and turning him to his source and goal -- God. The Thomists viewed grace as a metaphysical substance infused into

*need faith & good works to be saved. (before Luther)*



the person by the sacraments which thereby produced a new attitude conducive to proper works of love. But Luther could not now accept any view of grace as a means to achieve works acceptable to God. He saw it as God's love toward man exemplified in Jesus Christ who gives himself to man in mercy without any strings attached.

Faith for Luther was now no longer assent to the doctrines of the Church. It was not centered in the Church at all. Faith meant total surrender of the whole person in response to God's revelation. At one and the same time man can confidently trust God to accept him even though he is a sinner. Faith, in short, was taking God at His word.

And now, for Luther, justification was nothing like a physical miracle in which sin in man is driven out by a supernatural infusion. Justification now meant that, prior to any action on man's part, God in Christ reaches out with his love to cover the sin of man, and invites him into fellowship. Thus it is God alone who accepts him while he is yet guilty.

As Luther continued to lecture at Wittenberg, he gradually discovered his views on grace, faith, and justification in all Scripture and increasingly applied them to the origin and function of the church. In this development there were still periods of depressing doubt, such periods as were to continue to interrupt the buoyant faith of the reformer throughout his life. But when there were issues to challenge his interpretation, Luther could repress his doubts as he sprang to action. Such an issue emerged in 1517.

It was trafficking in indulgences which first forced Luther to defy Rome. The indulgence depended upon two doctrines of the Church pertaining to the sacrament of penance. First, there was the teaching that the temporal, as distinct from the eternal, penalties for sin could be remitted by the Church upon the performance of proper satisfaction. Such remission might make possible for the living the avoidance of purgatory, and might shorten the length of time necessary for those already there. Second, the Church taught that there was a treasury of merit accumulated by the righteousness of Christ and the saints over and above what was necessary for their own salvation. The Church held that it could dispense from this treasury for those who were in need of additional merit whether in this life or in purgatory. This merit was provided by means of indulgences which were proclaimed by the pope, circulated through the Church, and certified to the individual by means of a written statement which he received. During the Crusades popes had declared indulgences for those engaged in that meritorious effort. Later, indulgences were granted for a cash contribution instead of rendered service. It was very easy for the layman to assume that indulgences could be bought and sold. Although the Church never claimed that this was possible, not until the Counter-Reformation did it disclaim the term "sale." Meanwhile indulgences were widely used to secure large revenues by those who

*Good work - charity, pilgrimages, prayer, fasting.*  
*Sale of indulgences started during the Crusades - Treasury of merit.*  
*Could not free from eternal consequences, but from temporal consequences*  
*i.e. purgatory & penance. Originally given later bought & sold.*



were quite content to have laymen confused.

Luther had not hesitated to criticize his own elector of Saxony for trafficking in indulgences. But now in 1517, a much more lurid abuse of this system was affecting most of Germany. Albert of Brandenburg (1490-1545), who already held two bishoprics, had made an arrangement with Pope Leo X (1513-1521) to pay a huge sum to secure a third office, that of archbishop of Mainz, and thereby the primacy of Germany (1514). Thus he was committing simony and pluralism, both condemned by canon law; but, since the pope who was then building St. Peter's cathedral in Rome needed money, the matter was glossed over. Albert paid the pope 10,000 ducats, a sum which he borrowed from the Fuggers. To repay this loan, Albert secured permission from the papacy to benefit financially from an indulgence which made broader promises than most that had preceded it. The Dominican Order was to furnish the personnel for circulating the indulgence. The chief salesman in the vicinity of Wittenberg was John Tetzel (c. 1465-1519), who was probably responsible for the ditty: "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul out of purgatory springs." Luther's elector refused to allow Tetzel to enter Saxony, but it was only a short distance from Wittenberg to the border, and Luther had wrathfully witnessed his fellow-townsmen and parishioners flocking to the indulgence seller. His protest against this whole system began in the form of ninety-five theses, or propositions, nailed on the most public bulletin board available, the door of the parish church of which he was substitute priest. What Luther did was intended to be a challenge for discussion and debate. But others, much impressed, had the theses printed; and their wide dissemination inflamed Germany and secured a general boycott of indulgences.

When the indulgence market collapsed in Germany, the papacy reluctantly took a hand with this excessively zealous Augustinian monk. Since Luther proved obdurate to making retractions, the pope summoned him to Rome to answer the charge of heresy; but his elector protected him, demanding that any hearing begin in Germany. The delicate political situation occasioned by the forthcoming election of a new emperor made the papacy unwilling to antagonize the German princes. Consequently, for the time being, Luther was treated with unusual leniency. Meanwhile, discussion with Church authorities and a famous public debate at Leipzig (1519) led him to conclude that neither pope nor council but God's Word alone was infallible.

Matters came to a head in the crucial year 1520. Charles V (1519-1556) was now emperor and the papacy could gain nothing further by appeasing German electors. The pope took belated action with a bull which began, "Arise, O Lord, a wild boar is loose in Thy vineyard," and went on to declare Luther a heretic and to require that he recant within sixty days after receiving the notice or be excommunicated. It took four months for this document to reach Wittenberg, and then Luther's impulsive response was to burn the copy of the bull delivered to him, together with a copy of the canon law.

*Popes didn't immediately condemn Luther. Luther didn't intend to break from the Church.*



During the same year Luther penned a number of treatises which are generally regarded to be the most convincing statement of his Reformation ideas concerning individual salvation and the reform of the Church and the social order. The first of these was a Treatise on Good Works (1520) in which he contended that obedience to God's commandments had nothing to do with winning favor in God's sight, but rather was an expression of gratitude arising out of faith. This theme was further elaborated in an even better known work, A Treatise on Christian Liberty (1520). In it Luther affirmed that through faith the Christian man is freed from what he regarded as the slavery of good works. Nevertheless, this freedom finds its center in loving obedience to God and in "faith active in love" toward one's neighbor:

Many have thought Christian faith to be an easy thing, and not a few have given it a place among the virtues. This they do because they have had no experience of it, and have never tasted what great virtue there is in faith. For it is impossible that anyone should write well of it or well understand what is correctly written of it, unless he has at some time tasted the courage faith gives a man when trials oppress him. But he who has had even a faint taste of it can never write, speak, meditate, or hear enough concerning it. For it is a living fountain springing up into life everlasting, as Christ calls it in John 4. For my part, although I have no wealth of faith to boast of and know how scant my store is, yet I hope that, driven about by great and various temptations, I have attained to a little faith, and that I can speak of it, if not more elegantly, certainly more to the point, than those literalists and all too subtle disputants have hitherto done, who have not even understood what they have written.

That I may make the way easier for the unlearned -- for only such do I serve -- I set down first these two propositions concerning the liberty and the bondage of the spirit:

A Christian man is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.

A Christian man is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.

Although these two theses seem to contradict each other, yet, if they should be found to fit together they would serve our purpose beautifully....

Let us start,...with something more remote from our subject, but more obvious. Man has a twofold nature, a spiritual and a bodily. According to the spiritual nature, which men call the soul, he is called a spiritual, or inner, or new man; according to the bodily nature, which men call the flesh, he is called a carnal, or outward, or old man, of whom the Apostle writes, in 2 Corinthians 4, "Though our outward man is corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." Because of this diversity of

*Pamphlets - disputes are carried outside of the learned circles to the common people. Printed in German. Good works have nothing to do with salvation. But, if saved, he will have a good life.*



nature the Scriptures assert contradictory things of the same man, since these two men in the same man contradict each other, since the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh (Galations 5).

First, let us contemplate the inward man, to see how a righteous, free, and truly Christian man, that is, a new, spiritual, inward man, comes into being. It is evident that no external thing, whatsoever it be, has an influence whatever in producing Christian righteousness or liberty, nor in producing unrighteousness or bondage. A simple argument will furnish the proof. What can it profit the soul if the body fare well, be free and active, eat, drink, and do as it pleases? For in these things even the most godless slaves of all the vices fare well. On the other hand, how will ill health or imprisonment or hunger or thirst or any other external misfortune hurt the soul? With these things even the most godly men are afflicted, and those who because of a clear conscience are most free. None of these things touch either the liberty or the bondage of the soul. The soul receives no benefit if the body is adorned with the sacred robes of the priesthood, or dwells in sacred places, or is occupied with sacred duties, or prays, fasts, abstains from certain kinds of food, or does any work whatsoever that can be done by the body and in the body. The righteousness and the freedom of the soul demand something far different, since the things which have been mentioned could be done by any wicked man, and such works produce nothing but hypocrites. On the other hand, it will not hurt the soul if the body is clothed in secular dress, dwells in unconsecrated places, eats and drinks as others do, does not pray aloud, and neglects to do all the things mentioned above, which hypocrites can do.

Further, to put aside all manner of works, even contemplation, meditation, and all that the soul can do, avail nothing. One thing and one only is necessary for Christian life, righteousness, and liberty. That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the Gospel of Christ, as he says, John 11, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me shall not die forever"; and John 8, "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed"; and Matthew 4, "Not in bread alone doth man live; but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." Let us then consider it certain and conclusively established that the soul can do without all things except the Word of God, and that where this is not there is no help for the soul in anything else whatever. But if it has the Word it is rich and lacks nothing, since this Word is the Word of life, of truth, of light, of peace, of righteousness, of salvation, of joy, of liberty, of wisdom, of power, of grace, of glory, and of every blessing beyond our power to estimate. This is why the prophet in the entire One Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm, and in many other places of Scripture, with so many sighs yearns after the Word of God and applies so many names to it. On the other



hand, there is no more terrible plague with which the wrath of God can smite men than a famine of the hearing of His Word, as He says in Amos, just as there is no greater mercy than when He sends forth His Word, as we read in Psalm 107, "He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." Nor was Christ sent into the world for any other ministry but that of the Word, and the whole spiritual estate, apostles, bishops and all the priests, has been called and instituted only for the ministry of the Word.

You ask, "What then is this Word of God, and how shall it be used, since there are so many words of God?" I answer, the Apostle explains that in Romans 1. The Word is the Gospel of God concerning His Son, who was made flesh, suffered, rose from the dead, and was glorified through the Spirit who sanctifies. For to preach Christ means to feed the soul, to make it righteous, to set it free, and to save it, if it believe the preaching. For faith alone is the saving and efficacious use of the Word of God, Romans 10, "If thou confess with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe with thy heart that God hath raised Him up from the dead, thou shalt be saved"; and again, "The end of the law is Christ, unto righteousness to everyone that believeth"; and, in Romans 1, "The just shall live by his faith." The Word of God cannot be received and cherished by any works whatever, but only by faith. Hence it is clear that, as the soul needs only the Word for its life and righteousness, so it is justified by faith alone and not by any works; for if it could be justified by anything else, it would not need the Word, and therefore it would not need faith. But this faith cannot at all exist in connection with works, that is to say, if you at the same time claim to be justified by works, whatever their character; for that would be to halt between two sides, to worship Baal and to kiss the hand, which, as Job says, is a very great iniquity. Therefore the moment you begin to believe, you learn that all things in you are altogether blameworthy, sinful, and damnable, as Romans 3 says, "For all have sinned and lack the glory of God"; and again, "There is none just, there is none that doeth good, all have turned out of the way: they are become unprofitable together." When you have learned this, you will know that you need Christ, who suffered and rose again for you, that, believing in Him, you may through this faith become a new man, in that all your sins are forgiven, and you are justified by the merits of another, namely, of Christ alone....

From what has been said it is easily seen whence faith has such great power, and why no good work nor all good works together can equal it: no work can cling to the Word of God nor be in the soul; in the soul faith alone and the Word have sway. As the Word is, so it makes the soul, as heated iron glows like fire because of the union of fire with it. It is clear then that a Christian man has in his faith all that he needs, and needs no works to



justify him. And if he has no need of works, neither does he need the law; and if he has no need of the law, surely he is free from the law, and it is true, "the law is not made for a righteous man." And this is that Christian liberty, even our faith, which does not indeed cause us to live in idleness or in wickedness, but makes the law and works unnecessary for any man's righteousness and salvation.

This is the first power of faith. Let us now examine the second also. For it is a further function of faith, that whom it trusts it also honors with the most reverent and high regard, since it considers him truthful and trustworthy. For there is no other honor equal to the estimate of truthfulness and righteousness with which we honor him whom we trust. Or could we ascribe to a man anything greater than truthfulness, and righteousness, and perfect goodness? On the other hand, there is no way in which we can show greater contempt for a man than to regard him as false and wicked and to suspect him, as we do when we do not trust him. So when the soul firmly trusts God's promises, it regards Him as truthful and righteous, than which nothing more excellent can be ascribed to God. This is the very highest worship of God, that we ascribe to Him truthfulness, righteousness, and whatever else ought to be ascribed to one who is trusted. Then the soul consents to all His will, then it hallows His name and suffers itself to be dealt with according to God's good pleasure, because, clinging to God's promises, it does not doubt that He, who is true, just and wise, will do, dispose, and provide all things well. And is not such a soul, by this faith, in all things most obedient to God? What commandment is there that such obedience has not abundantly fulfilled? What more complete fulfillment is there than obedience in all things? But this obedience is not rendered by works, but by faith alone....

Now let us turn to the second part, to the outward man. Here we shall answer all those who, misled by the word "faith" and by all that has been said, now say: "If faith does all things and is alone sufficient unto righteousness, why then are good works commanded? We will take our ease and do no works, and be content with faith." I answer, Not so, ye wicked men, not so. That would indeed be proper, if we were wholly inward and perfectly spiritual men; but such we shall be only at the last day, the day of the resurrection of the dead. As long as we live in the flesh we only begin and make some progress in that which shall be perfected in the future life. For this reason the Apostle, in Romans 8, calls all that we attain in this life "the first fruits" of the spirit, because, forsooth, we shall receive the greater portion, even the fullness of the spirit, in the future. This is the place for that which was said above, that a Christian man is the servant of all and made subject to all. For in so far as he is free he does no works, but in so far as he is a servant he does all manner of works. How this is possible we shall see.



Although, as I have said, a man is abundantly justified by faith inwardly, in his spirit, and so has all that he ought to have, except in so far as this faith and riches must grow from day to day even unto the future life: yet he remains in this mortal life on earth, and in this life he must needs govern his own body and have dealings with men. Here the works begin; here a man cannot take his ease; here he must, indeed, take care to discipline his body by fastings, watchings, labors, and other reasonable discipline, and to make it subject to the spirit so that it will obey and conform to the inward man and to faith, and not revolt against faith and hinder the inward man, as it is the body's nature to do if it be not held in check. For the inward man, who by faith is created in the likeness of God, is both joyful and happy because of Christ in whom so many benefits are conferred upon him, and therefore it is his one occupation to serve God joyfully and for naught, in love that is not constrained....

In doing these works, however, we must not think that a man is justified before God by them: for that erroneous opinion faith, which alone is righteousness before God, cannot endure; but we must think that these works reduce the body to subjection and purify it of its evil lusts, and our whole purpose is to be directed only toward the driving out of lusts. For since by faith the soul is cleansed and made a lover of God, it desires that all things, and especially its own body, shall be as pure as itself, so that all things may join with it in loving and praising God. Hence a man cannot be idle, because the need of his body drives him and he is compelled to do many good works to reduce it to subjection. Nevertheless the works themselves do not justify him before God, but he does the works out of spontaneous love in obedience to God, and considers nothing except the approval of God, whom he would in all things most scrupulously obey....

Let this suffice concerning works in general, and at the same time concerning the works which a Christian does for his own body. Lastly, we will also speak of the things which he does toward his neighbor. A man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body, so as to work for it alone, but he lives also for all men on earth, nay, rather, he lives only for others and not for himself. And to this end he brings his body into subjection, that he may the more sincerely and freely serve others, as Paul says in Romans 14, "No one lives to himself, and no man dies to himself. For he that liveth, liveth unto the Lord, and he that dieth, dieth unto the Lord." Therefore, it is impossible that he should ever in this life be idle and without works toward his neighbors....

Lo, thus from faith flow forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a joyful, willing and free mind that serves one's neighbor willingly and takes no account of gratitude or ingratitude, of praise or blame, of gain or loss. For a man does not serve that he may put men under obligations, he does not distinguish between friends and

*Good works wasn't a teaching of the Medieval Church.*



enemies, nor does he anticipate their thankfulness or unthankfulness; but most freely and most willingly he spends himself and all that he has, whether he waste all on the thankless or whether he gain a reward. For as his Father does, distributing all things to all men richly and freely, causing His sun to rise upon the good and upon the evil, so also the son does all things and suffers all things with that freely bestowing joy which is his delight when through Christ he sees it in God, the dispenser of such great benefits.

Therefore, if we recognize the great and precious things which are given us, as Paul says, there will be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost the love which makes us free, joyful, almighty workers and conquerors over all tribulations, servants of our neighbors and yet lords of all. But for those who do not recognize the gifts bestowed upon them through Christ, Christ has been born in vain; they go their way with their works, and shall never come to taste or to feel those things. Just as our neighbor is in need and lacks that in which we abound, so we also have been in need before God and have lacked His mercy. Hence, as our heavenly Father has in Christ freely come to our help, we also ought freely to help our neighbor through our body and its works, and each should become as it were a Christ to the other, that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all; that is, that we may be truly Christians.... \*

The reconstituting of the individual, for Luther, did not eliminate the need for the church. However, this church was to be seen as centered not in papal power, but in the power of faith in God's Word expressed by an association of Christians. The church was now a community of Christian believers rather than an organic structure headed by the pope. This concept, frequently referred to as the universal priesthood of all believers, is clearly stated in some initial paragraphs of the treatise, An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate (1520): *(Wycliffe Church state relation)*

It is pure invention that pope, bishops, priests and monks are to be called the "spiritual estate"; princes, lords, artisans, and farmers the "temporal estate." That is indeed a fine bit of lying and hypocrisy. Yet no one should be frightened by it and for this reason -- viz., that all Christians are truly of the "spiritual estate," and there is among them no difference at all but that of office, as Paul says in I Corinthians 12. We are all one body, yet every member has its own work, whereby it serves every other, all because we have one baptism, one

\* Reprinted in Three Treatises by Martin Luther (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1943), pp. 251-255, 258-260, 267-269, 275, 278-279. Used with permission.

*Nobility used to reform the Church.*



Gospel, one faith, and are all alike Christians; for baptism, Gospel, and faith alone make us "spiritual" and a Christian people....

To make it still clearer. If a little group of pious Christian laymen were taken captive and set down in a wilderness, and had among them no priest consecrated by a bishop, and if there in the wilderness they were to agree in choosing one of themselves, married or unmarried, and were to charge him with the office of baptizing, saying mass, absolving and preaching, such a man would be as truly a priest as though all bishops and popes had consecrated him. That is why in cases of necessity anyone can baptize and give absolution, which would be impossible unless we were all priests. This great grace and power of baptism and of the Christian Estate they have well-nigh destroyed and caused us to forget through the canon law. It was in the manner aforesaid that Christians in olden days chose from their number bishops and priests, who were afterwards confirmed by other bishops, without all the show which now obtains. It was thus that Sts. Augustine, Ambrose, and Cyprian became bishops....

From all this it follows that there is really no difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, "spirituals" and "temporals," as they call them, except that of office and work, but not of "estate"; for they are all of the same estate -- true priests, bishops and popes -- though they are not all engaged in the same work, just as all priests and monks have not the same work. This is the teaching of St. Paul in Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12, and of St. Peter in I Peter 2, as I have said above, viz., that we are all one body of Christ, the Head, all members one of another. Christ has not two different bodies, one "temporal," the other "spiritual." He is one Head, and He has one body.

Therefore, just as those who are now called "spiritual" -- priests, bishops, or popes -- are neither different from other Christians nor superior to them, except that they are charged with the administration of the Word of God and the sacraments, which is their work and office, so it is with the temporal authorities -- they bear sword and rod with which to punish the evil and to protect the good. A cobbler, a smith, a farmer, each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops, and everyone by means of his own work or office must benefit and serve every other, that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, even as all the members of the body serve one another.... \*

In A Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church (1520), Luther scrutinized the sacramental system on the basis of which the Church had claimed to control society. But if the Church's

\* Ibid., pp. 14-17.

*Individual must interpret God's Word (under God's guidance)  
∴ will not come up a conflicting opinion. God's Word in the  
scripture and there you find his will.*



central mission was not to hold the keys to the kingdom of Heaven and dispense the means of grace, but rather to express God's gracious gospel, then the whole view of sacraments had to be rethought. All ideas of manipulating man's salvation through meritorious works and sacrifices had to be abandoned. It is God's gracious Word that brings the sacrament into being and, with the believer's faith, makes it effectual. Although Luther in this work treats all the seven sacraments of the Church's tradition, discarding all but baptism, penance, and communion, our selection deals with the crucial one -- The Lord's Supper:

### The Sacrament of the Bread

The first captivity of this sacrament, ... concerns its substance or completeness, of which we have been deprived by the despotism of Rome. Not that they sin against Christ, who use the one kind, for Christ did not command the use of either kind, but left it to everyone's free will, when He said: "As oft as ye do this, do it in remembrance of me." But they sin who forbid the giving of both kinds to such as desire to exercise this free will. The fault lies not with the laity, but with the priests. The sacrament does not belong to the priests, but to all, and the priests are not lords but ministers, in duty bound to administer both kinds to those who desire them, and as oft as they desire them. If they wrest this right from the laity and forcibly withhold it, they are tyrants; but the laity are without fault, whether they lack one kind or both kinds; they must meanwhile be sustained by their faith and by their desire for the complete sacrament....

The second captivity of this sacrament is less grievous so far as the conscience is concerned, yet the very gravest danger threatens the man who would attack it, to say nothing of condemning it. Here I shall be called a Wyclifite and a heretic a thousand times over. But what of that? Since the Roman bishop has ceased to be a bishop and become a tyrant, I fear none of his decrees, for I know that it is not in his power, nor even in that of a general council, to make new articles of faith.

Years ago, when I was delving into scholastic theology, the Cardinal of Cambray gave me food for thought, in his comments on the fourth book of the Sentences, where he argues with great acumen that to hold that real bread and real wine, and not their accidents only, are present on the altar, is much more probable and requires fewer unnecessary miracles -- if only the Church had not decreed otherwise. When I learned later what church it was that had decreed this -- namely, the Church of Thomas, i.e., of Aristotle -- I waxed bolder, and after floating in a sea of doubt, at last found rest for my conscience in the above view -- namely, that it is real bread and real wine, in which Christ's real flesh and blood are present, not otherwise and not less really than they assume to be the case under their accidents. I reached this conclusion

*Broke with the concept of transubstantiation.  
Church administered only the wafers. (This is my body & blood)  
Reformed churches - symbolizes the Last Supper.*



because I saw that the opinions of the Thomists, though approved by pope and council, remain but opinions and do not become articles of faith, even though an angel from heaven were to decree otherwise. For what is asserted without Scripture or an approved revelation may be held as an opinion, but need not be believed. But this opinion of Thomas hangs so completely in the air, devoid of Scripture and reason, that he seems here to have forgotten both his philosophy and his logic. For Aristotle treats so very differently from St. Thomas of subject and accidents, that methinks this great man is to be pitied, not only for drawing his opinions in matters of faith from Aristotle, but for attempting to base them on him without understanding his meaning -- an unfortunate superstructure upon an unfortunate foundation....

But there are good grounds for my view, and this above all -- no violence is to be done to the words of God, whether by man or angel; but they are to be retained in their simplest meaning wherever possible, and to be understood in their grammatical and literal sense unless the context plainly forbids; lest we give our adversaries occasion to make a mockery of all the Scriptures.... when the Evangelists plainly write that Christ took bread and brake it, and the book of Acts and Paul, in their turn, call it bread, we have to think of real bread, and real wine, just as we do of a real cup; for even they do not maintain that the cup is transubstantiated. (But since it is not necessary to assume a transubstantiation wrought by Divine power, it is to be regarded as a figment of the human mind, for its rests neither on Scripture nor on reason, as we shall see.)

...it is with the sacrament even as it is with Christ. In order that the Godhead may dwell in Him, it is not necessary that the human nature be transubstantiated and the Godhead be contained under its accidents; but both natures are there in their entirety, and it is truly said, "This man is God," and "This God is man." Even though philosophy cannot grasp this, faith grasps it, and the authority of God's Word is greater than the grasp of our intellect. Even so, in order that the real body and the real blood of Christ may be present in the sacrament, it is not necessary that the bread and wine be transubstantiated and Christ be contained under their accidents; but both remain there together, and it is truly said, "This bread is my body, this wine is my blood," and vice versa. Thus I will for the nonce understand it, for the honor of the holy words of God, which I will not suffer any petty human arguments to override or wrest to meanings foreign to them. At the same time, I permit other men to follow the other opinion, which is laid down in the decree Firmiter; only let them not press us to accept their opinions as articles of faith, as I said above.

The third captivity of this sacrament is that most wicked abuse of all, in consequence of which there is to-day no more generally accepted and firmly believed opinion

*Christ was there in, through, & under the sacrament,*



in the Church than this, that the mass is a good work and a sacrifice. And this abuse has brought an endless host of others in its train, so that the faith of this sacrament has become utterly extinct and the holy sacrament has been turned into a veritable fair, tavern, and place of merchandise. Hence participations, brotherhoods, intercessions, merits, anniversaries, memorial days, and the like wares are bought and sold, traded and bartered in the Church, and from this priests and monks derive their whole living....

Therefore let this stand at the outset as our infallibly certain proposition: The mass, or sacrament of the altar, is Christ's testament which He left behind Him at His death, to be distributed among His believers. For that is the meaning of His word, "This is the chalice, the new testament in my blood." Let this truth stand, I say, as the immovable foundation on which we shall base all that we have to say, for we are going to overthrow, as you will see, all the godless opinions of men imported into this most precious sacrament. Christ, who is the Truth, says truly that this is the new testament in His blood, which is shed for us. Not without reason do I dwell on this sentence; the matter is of no small moment, and must be most deeply impressed upon us....

From the above it will at once be seen what is the right and what the wrong use of the mass, what is the worthy and what the unworthy preparation for it. If the mass is a promise, as has been said, it is to be approached, not with any work or strength or merit, but with faith alone. For where there is the word of God who makes the promise, there must be the faith of man who takes it. It is plain, therefore, that the first step in our salvation is faith, which clings to the word of the promise made by God, who without any effort on our part, in free and unmerited mercy, makes a beginning and offers us the word of His promise. For He sent His Word, and by it healed them. He did not accept our work and thus heal us. God's Word is the beginning of all; on it follows faith, and on faith charity; then charity works every good work, for it worketh no ill, nay, it is the fulfilling of the law. In no other way can man come to God and deal with Him than through faith; that is, not man, by any work of his, but God, by His promise, is the author of salvation, so that all things depend on the word of His power, and are upheld and preserved by it, with which word He begat us, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures....

Let us take an illustration of this from everyday life. If a thousand gulden were bequeathed by a rich lord to a beggar or an unworthy and wicked servant, it is certain that he would boldly claim and take them regardless of his unworthiness and the greatness of the bequest. And if anyone should seek to oppose him by casting in his teeth his unworthiness and the large amount of the legacy, what do you suppose he would say? He would say, forsooth:



"What is that to you? What I accept, I accept not on my merits or by any right that I may personally have to it; I know that I am unworthy and receive more than I have deserved, nay, I have deserved the very opposite. But I claim it because it is so written in the will, and on the score of another's goodness. If it was not an unworthy thing for him to bequeath so great a sum to an unworthy person, why should I refuse to accept it because of my unworthiness? Nay, the more unworthy I am, the more reason have I to accept this other man's gracious gift." (With such thoughts we need to fortify the consciences of men against all qualms and scruples, that they may lay hold on the promise of Christ with unwavering faith, and take the greatest care to approach the sacrament, not trusting in their confession, prayer and preparation, but rather despairing of these and with a proud confidence in Christ who gives the promise. For, as we have said again and again, the word of promise must here reign supreme in a pure and unalloyed faith, and such faith is the one and all-sufficient preparation.)

Hence we see how angry God is with us, in that he has permitted godless teachers to conceal the words of this testament from us, and thereby, as much as in them lay, to extinguish faith. And the inevitable result of this extinguishing of faith is even now plainly to be seen, namely, the most godless superstition of works. For when faith dies and the word of faith is silent, works and the traditions of works immediately crowd into their place. By them we have been carried away out of our own land, as in a Babylonian captivity, and despoiled of all our precious possessions. This has been the fate of the mass; it has been converted by the teaching of godless men into a good work, which they themselves call an opus operatum and by which they presumptuously imagine themselves all-powerful with God. Thereupon they proceeded to the very height of madness, and having invented the lie that the mass works ex opere operato, they asserted further that it is none the less profitable to others, even if it be harmful to the wicked priests celebrating it. On such a foundation of sand they base their applications, participations, sodalities, anniversaries, and numberless other money-making schemes.... \*

But how were the far-reaching reforms of the church and the sacraments which Luther suggested to be effected? Certainly the late medieval Church had given small evidence of zeal for such work. In The Open Letter to the Christian Nobility (1520), Luther turned to the secular rulers to institute the needed changes in the Christian estate. This treatise began by analyzing why reform had not succeeded in the past, and concluded by appealing to the rulers as responsible Christians, part of the

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\* Ibid., pp. 135-139, 143-144, 145-146, 147, 155-157.



universal priesthood of believers, to take up the task in the many areas of society requiring attention. Luther proposed some twenty-seven desirable reforms, including abolition of the annates paid to Rome, prohibition of papal appointments in Germany, restoration of local church rights, permission of the clergy to marry, eliminating the interdict, and the abolition of endowed masses, indulgences, and the like. He acknowledges himself to be too small a man to have the full answer "in this dreadful state of things" but proceeds nonetheless to make his sweeping recommendations. Our selections include Luther's opening statement and his suggestions for reform of the universities and of law:

### 1. The Three Walls of the Romanists

The Romanists, with great adroitness, have built three walls about them, behind which they have hitherto defended themselves in such wise that no one has been able to reform them and this has been the cause of terrible corruption throughout all Christendom.

First, when pressed by the temporal power, they have made decrees and said that the temporal power has no jurisdiction over them, but, on the other hand, that the spiritual is above the temporal power. Second, when the attempt is made to reprove them out of the Scriptures, they raise the objection that the interpretation of the Scriptures belongs to no one except the pope. Third, if threatened with a council, they answer with the fable that no one can call a council but the pope.

In this wise they have slyly stolen from us our three rods, that they may go unpunished, and have ensconced themselves within the safe stronghold of these three walls, that they may practice all the knavery and wickedness which we now see. Even when they have been compelled to hold a council they have weakened its power in advance by previously binding the princes with an oath to let them remain as they are. Moreover, they have given the pope full authority over all the decisions of the council, so that it is all one whether there are many councils or no councils -- except that they deceive us with puppet-shows and sham battles. So terribly do they fear for their skin in a really free council! And they have intimidated kings and princes by making them believe it would be an offense against God not to obey them in all these knavish, crafty deceptions.

Now God help us, and give us one of the trumpets with which the walls of Jericho were overthrown, that we may blow down these walls of straw and paper, and may set free the Christian rods for the punishment of sin, bringing to light the craft and deceit of the devil, to the end that through punishment we may reform ourselves, and once more attain God's favor.....



## III. Proposals for Reform

25. The universities also need a good, thorough reformation -- I must say it no matter whom it vexes -- for everything which the papacy has instituted and ordered is directed only towards the increasing of sin and error. What else are the universities, if their present condition remains unchanged, than as the book of Maccabees says, "Places for training youths in Greek glory," in which loose living prevails, the Holy Scriptures and the Christian faith are little taught, and the blind, heathen master Aristotle rules alone, even more than Christ? In this regard my advice would be that Aristotle's Physics, Metaphysics, On the Soul, Ethics, which have hitherto been thought his best books, should be altogether discarded, together with all the rest of his books which boast of treating the things of nature, although nothing can be learned from them either of the things of nature or the things of the Spirit. Moreover no one has so far understood his meaning, and many souls have been burdened with profitless labor and study, at the cost of much precious time. I venture to say that any potter has more knowledge of nature than is written in these books. It grieves me to the heart that this damned, conceited, rascally heathen has with his false words deluded and made fools of so many of the best Christians. God has sent him as a plague upon us for our sins.

Why, this wretched man, in his best book, On the Soul, teaches that the soul dies with the body, although many have tried with vain words to save his reputation. As though we had not the Holy Scriptures, in which we are abundantly instructed about all things, and of them Aristotle had not the faintest inkling! And yet this dead heathen has conquered and obstructed and almost suppressed the books of the living God, so that when I think of this miserable business I can believe nothing else than that the evil spirit has introduced the study of Aristotle.

Again, his book on Ethics is the worst of all books. It flatly opposes divine grace and all Christian virtues, and yet it is considered one of his best works. Away with such books! Keep them away from all Christians! Let no one accuse me of exaggeration, or of condemning what I do not understand! My dear friend, I know well whereof I speak. I know my Aristotle as well as you or the likes of you. I have lectured on him and heard lectures on him, and I understand him better than do St. Thomas or Scotus. This I can say without pride, and if necessary I can prove it. I care not that so many great minds have wearied themselves over him for so many hundred years. Such objections do not disturb me as once they did; for it is plain as day that other errors have remained for even more centuries in the world and in the universities.

I should be glad to see Aristotle's books on Logic, Rhetoric, and Poetics retained or used in an abridged

*opposed Aristotle who didn't believe in after-life.  
would accept Logic, Rhetoric, + Poetics.*



form; as textbooks for the profitable training of young people in speaking and preaching. But the commentaries and notes should be abolished, and as Cicero's Rhetoric is read without commentaries and notes, so Aristotle's Logic should be read as it is, without such a mass of comments. But now neither speaking nor preaching is learned from it, and it has become nothing but a disputing and a weariness to the flesh.

Besides this there are the languages -- Latin, Greek, and Hebrew -- the mathematical disciplines and history. But all this I give over to the specialists, and, indeed, the reform would come of itself, if we were only seriously bent upon it. In truth, much depends upon it; for it is here that the Christian youth and the best of our people, with whom the future of Christendom lies, are to be educated and trained. Therefore I consider that there is no work more worthy of pope or emperor than a thorough reformation of the universities, and there is nothing worse or more worthy of the devil than unreformed universities.

The medical men I leave to reform their own faculties; the jurists and theologians I take as my share, and I say, in the first place, that it were well if the canon law, from the first letter to the last, and especially the decretals, were utterly blotted out. The Bible contains more than enough directions for all our living, and so the study of the canon law only stands in the way of the study of the Holy Scriptures; moreover, it smacks for the most part of mere avarice and pride. Even though there were much in it that is good, it might as well be destroyed, for the pope has taken the whole canon law captive and imprisoned it in the "chamber of his heart," so that the study of it is henceforth a waste of time and a farce. At present the canon law is not what is in the books, but what is in the sweet will of the pope and his flatterers. Your cause may be thoroughly established in the canon law; still the pope has his scrinium pectoris, and all law and the whole world must be guided by that. Now it is oftentimes a knave, and even the devil himself, who rules this scrinium, and they boast that it is ruled by the Holy Spirit! Thus they deal with Christ's unfortunate people. They give them many laws and themselves keep none of them, but others they compel either to keep them or else to buy release.

Since, then, the pope and his followers have suspended the whole canon law, and since they pay no heed to it, but regard their own wanton will as a law exalting them above all the world, we should follow their example and for our part also reject these books. Why should we waste our time studying them? We could never discover the whole arbitrary will of the pope, which has now become the canon law. The canon law has arisen in the devil's name, let it fall in the name of God, and let there be no more doctores decretorum in the world, but only doctores scrinii papalis, that is, "hypocrites of the pope"! It is said that there is no better temporal rule anywhere than among the Turks,

*Canon law*



who have neither spiritual nor temporal law, but only their Koran; and we must confess that there is no more shameful rule than among us, with our spiritual and temporal law, so that there is no estate which lives according to the light of nature, still less according to Holy Scripture.

The temporal law -- God help us! what a wilderness it has become! Though it is much better, wiser and more rational than the "spiritual law" which has nothing good about it except the name, still there is far too much of it. Surely the Holy Scriptures and good rulers would be law enough; as St. Paul says in I Corinthians 6, "Is there no one among you can judge his neighbor's cause, that ye must go to law before heathen courts?" It seems just to me that territorial laws and territorial customs should take precedence of the general imperial laws, and the imperial laws be used only in case of necessity. Would to God that as every land has its own peculiar character, so it were ruled by its own brief laws, as the lands were ruled before these imperial laws were invented, and many lands are still ruled without them! These diffuse and far-fetched laws are only a burden to the people, and hinder causes more than they help them. I hope, however, that others have given this matter more thought and attention than I am able to do.... \*

One of the most significant and far reaching of Luther's contributions appears in his idea of "vocatio," or call. Throughout many of his works he insists that a true calling is not to serve God through monastic vows, apart from the world, but rather in the variety of worthy activities in the world. Vocation belongs to all Christians; everyone is called to serve God and his neighbor in his daily tasks. Part of a Luther sermon concisely presents this attitude together with the reformer's other-worldly concern.

So should Christians in all stations of life -- lords and ladies, servants and maids -- conduct themselves as guests on earth. Let them, in that capacity eat and drink, and make use of clothing and shoes, houses and lands, as long as God wills, yet be prepared to take up their journey when these things pass, and to move on out of this life as the guest moves on out of the house or the city which is not his home. Let them conduct themselves as does the guest, with civility toward those with whom they come in contact, not infringing on the rights of any. For a visitor may not unrestrainedly follow his own pleasure and inclinations in the house of a stranger. The saying is: "If you would be a guest, you must behave civilly; otherwise you may promptly be shown the door or the dungeon." Christians should be aware of their citizen-

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\* Ibid., pp. 12-13, 92-97.



ship in a better country, that they may rightly adapt themselves to this world. Let them not occupy the present life as if intending to remain in it; nor as do the monks, who flee responsibility, avoiding civil office and trying to run out of the world. For Peter says rather that we are not to escape our fellows and live each for himself, but to remain in our several callings, united with other mortals as God has bound us and serving one another. *don't live this life as if it is the only one, but to remain. away from it.*

At the same time, we are to regard this life as a journey through a country where we have no citizenship -- where we are not at home; to think of ourselves as travelers or pilgrims occupying for a night the same inn, eating and drinking there and then leaving the place....

Let not the occupants of the humbler stations -- servants and subjects -- grumble, "Why should I vex myself with unpleasant household tasks, with farm work, or heavy labor? This life is not my home anyway, and I may as well have it better. Therefore, I will abandon my stations and enjoy myself; the monks and priests have in their stations withdrawn themselves from the world and yet drunk deeply, satisfying fleshly lusts." No, this is not the right way. If you are unwilling to put up with your lot, as the guest in the tavern and among strangers must do, you also may not eat and drink. Similarly, they who are favored with loftier positions in life may not upon this authority, abandon themselves to the idea of living in the sheer idleness and lustful pleasure their more favored station permits, as if they were to be here always. Let them reason thus: "This life, it is true, is transitory -- a voyage, a pilgrimage, leading to our actual fatherland. But since it is God's will that everyone should serve his fellows here in his respective calling, in the office committed to him, we will do whatever is enjoined upon us. We will serve our subjects, our neighbors, our wives, and children so long as we can; we would not relax our service even if we knew we had to depart this very hour and leave all earthly things. For, God be praised, had we to die now we would know where we belong, where our home is. While we are here, however, on the way, it is ours to fulfill the obligations of our earthly citizenship. Therefore, we will live with our fellows in obedience to the law of our abiding place, even unto the hour wherein we must cross the threshold, that we may depart in honor, leaving no occasion for complaint." \*

In April 1521 Luther was put to the climactic test of whether he would stand by his expressed convictions. He had been summoned to a hearing before the imperial Diet then meeting at the city of Worms. The emperor had respected the

\* Reprinted from George W. Forell, Faith Active in Love ... (New York: The American Press, 1954), pp. 182-185. Used with permission.



sensitivity of the German princes about having their subjects tried on native soil and so had not moved summarily to condemn Luther. Although he was already branded a heretic and was dubious whether a pledge of safe conduct would be respected, Luther did appear before the Diet. When pressed to repudiate all his books and acknowledge errors contained in them, he replied:

Unless I am convinced by the evidence of Scripture or plain reason -- I do not accept the authority of popes or councils, for they have contradicted each other -- my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. [Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise.] God help me. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

Luther was condemned and placed under the ban of the empire, but his heroic stand won the admiration and support of many of the German nobility and much of its peasantry.

Worms was a dividing point in Luther's career. Earlier he appears chiefly as one who was coming to and affirming a faith; after this he seems mainly to be organizing and directing a movement. To put it concisely, Luther now became a Lutheran, and it becomes appropriate to speak of a Lutheran church.

The friendly elector of Saxony had spirited Luther away to protective custody in the secluded Wartburg castle. Though depressed at being removed from the battleground at this crucial moment, Luther threw himself into writing. Now began the translation of the New Testament from the Greek into a fresh German destined to become a model for that language. He completed this work in the amazingly short time of three months. It took about a decade until Luther completed the translation of the entire Bible, and because he was never quite satisfied with his work, he continued to revise it until his death. Through the recently introduced printing presses the Scriptures were now made generally available to the laity for the first time. Not only were they made available but they were eagerly read for devotional and other purposes. Thus the formal principle of the Protestant movement became operative: Scripture interpreted by the individual enlightened by the Holy Spirit as the only norm for faith and practice. Protestants were to become recognizable everywhere as "a people of the Book."

Despite obvious personal danger, Luther was back in Wittenberg by 1522 at his parish and university posts to guide the infant movement. Fanatics had to be curbed, distortions in the gospel corrected, and the people calmed from iconoclastic frenzy.

1 - The earliest printed account of Luther's defense included the words in brackets. They were not part of the official record of the Diet, but according to numerous authorities may nonetheless be genuine.

*Luther kept the organization (didn't matter)*



Guidance in many areas was imperative if the protests against papism were not to become anarchy. The conduct of the clergy needed attention especially in regard to their sexual morality. Luther was convinced that clerical celibacy was an unscriptural and unrealistic demand and that the married state was at least of equal worthiness. Many of the religious who had followed Luther had already married with his blessing. In 1525, he himself married an ex-nun, Katherine von Bora, as he put it "to spite the devil and show the pope." Luther's home, with its busy housewife and eventually six children, became a veritable open-house for all those associated with Lutheranism. The Protestant parsonage was thus introduced as a guide and example for proper Christian home life.

The congregations in the states and free cities which had broken away from Rome were also in desperate need of guidance and organization. Someone or some group had to replace the bishops who generally remained loyal to Rome. Luther looked to the princes as the best situated persons to carry on the work which they had helped to begin. Accordingly, guided by the reformer, they appointed visitation committees composed of theologians and state officials to visit congregations and draw up articles setting norms of doctrine, discipline, theological education, catechetical instruction, and worship. Though a temporary expedient for Luther, who held that no one polity was ordained by God, the idea of the princes' serving as emergency bishops became an established custom and started a large segment of Protestantism toward what is known as the territorial church. Actually, the affairs of Lutheran churches have been administered by a superintendent chosen by the political authority (as in many German states) by a bishop (as in Scandinavia), or by the congregation itself or the synod (as in America). But, generally speaking, in the sixteenth century authority in the temporal affairs of the church was finally lodged in the prince. Furthermore, many of these rulers, though in jeopardy of both life and sovereignty, stood stalwartly for the Reformation.

Church worship also needed to be brought into line with the reforming principles. Luther had outlined his preference for retaining the historic order of the mass, but in the vernacular, and with the deletion of any suggestion of sacrifice or of mediation by the saints. The emphasis was to be upon the preaching of the Word and its application in the sacraments. Furthermore, Luther wanted all the people to participate in public worship, and so encouraged congregational singing. He published the first evangelical hymnal in 1524. The best known of his more than two dozen hymns is A Mighty Fortress, composed in 1527. Generally, Luther's ideas on worship were incorporated into the liturgies of Lutheran territories, but here again liberty rather than uniformity prevailed.

Christian education, too, needed cultivation. Luther believed that schools were vital, not only to prepare all to read and apply the Scriptures for their salvation, but also that

*If something isn't stated in the Bible & doesn't go against the church, you can use it.*



political and economic affairs might be carried on in good order. Probably none of his works have had such widespread reading and study as the catechisms he prepared in 1529. In both the Small and the Large Catechism, Luther developed what he regarded as the information a Christian should have regarding the Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments. The Lutheran tendency toward careful indoctrination had begun.

Because he continued under both the imperial ban and Roman excommunication for the rest of his life, Luther could not move about freely. He had to remain in Saxony under the protective care of his elector and call upon a group of faithful followers to make the visitations and appear before important imperial assemblies. Most significant of these followers was Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560), a colleague at Wittenberg University and a humanist scholar. It was Melanchthon who prepared the statement that was presented at the Diet at Augsburg (1530) which put the case of the conservative Reformation most forcefully in regard to justification, the church, and the sacraments. This was the Augsburg Confession, signed by the Lutheran princes and estates and ever since regarded as the chief Lutheran statement of faith.

The term "protestant" had been given to Luther's followers in the year previous to Augsburg at another Diet. There, an ardent Catholic prince had forced through the ruling that in lands then predominantly Lutheran, religious liberty for Catholics had to be observed; but in lands predominantly Catholic, no such liberty would be extended to Lutherans. Against this arrangement all the non-Catholics present protested; hence the origin of the name which has since been applied to all of the Reformation churches.

While the organization of the Lutheran church went on, opposition to Luther appeared from once friendly quarters. There was disaffection among both those who found Luther's procedures too radical and those who felt that they were not radical enough. Many of the humanists, such as Erasmus, found the disruption of the Church and the emphasis upon grace alone, apart from man's moral quest, very disturbing. For about six years after the conflict began, Erasmus maintained a position of neutrality between Luther and Rome, preferring to remain, as he put it, "a spectator of the great tragedy." But by 1524 Erasmus was brought to an open literary clash with the reformer on the crucial topic of free will. Erasmus argued that Scripture teaches, doctors affirm, philosophers prove, and human reason testifies that man's moral will must be free. Luther insisted that in the encompassing light of God's gracious majesty any claim of human cooperation in attaining salvation was blasphemous. Most of the northern humanists were moved by this clash to draw back from support of the Reformation.

On the other hand, much of the peasantry, from which Luther had sprung, also became disillusioned with his leadership.) A



main reason for this disaffection was his attitude during the German Peasants' War of 1524 and 1525. (Although he had counseled the nobles to meet the legitimate grievances of the peasants, he was horrified when large bands of peasants rose in bloody rebellion.) Luther had to make a choice that could not be without its tragic consequences, one on which he felt the success of the movement to which he had committed his life depended. In making the choice, Luther took his stand with those who had protected and stood by him up to this time in his religious revolt. This, coupled with his growing desire for an environment in which the church could carry on its work in good order, induced him to write a bitter tract, Against the Murderous and Thieving Hordes of Peasants (1525). His position, as it turned out, not only lost the support of large elements of the peasantry, but set for Luther and much of subsequent Lutheranism a pattern of deep-seated pessimism about ever creating a just social order.

Luther's creative work of formulating a faith and organizing a movement was largely complete by 1530. While he continued to exert a guiding and stabilizing influence until his death in 1546, the movement no longer depended upon the man. Lutheranism was making significant territorial gains in the decades of the thirties and forties. It spread into Scandinavia where, usually as an act of state, it became the established church. Over one half of all German states adhered to Lutheranism; and it experienced marked success in Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland. Tracts and cartoons produced by the printing presses of northern Europe were the mass media of extending the faith. Songs and hymns became valuable methods of popularizing the cause.

With the rapid spread of Lutheranism there came increasing indication that force might be used by the emperor and the Catholic princes to check its progress. It became necessary for the Protestant rulers and estates following the Diet of Augsburg to form a defensive alliance known as the Smalkaldic League (1531). Strengthened by support from Denmark and England, this league was formidable enough to keep even Charles V from attacking Protestant territories for a decade and a half. Soon after Luther's death, however, the league became divided and the emperor was able to win a short-lived victory. He sought to enforce a Catholic peace on Protestant territories but soon met with failure. It was then that another imperial Diet undertook to solve the religious problems of Germany in accordance with the wishes of the territorial rulers, largely ignoring both pope and emperor. This Diet hammered out the terms of the Peace of Augsburg (1555).

There appear to be two important terminal points for the formative phase of sixteenth century Lutheranism: the Peace of Augsburg as the political terminus, and the Book of Concord as the doctrinal one. The Peace furnished the first indisputable legal recognition of the churches of the Augsburg Confession. Further, it marked a serious consideration of religious toleration by secular powers, and procured a limited form of such

*Because a person is a Christian, he does good works, but they don't help get him grace.*



toleration. By providing for the free movement of persons of Roman or Lutheran faith to a territory in which a prince of their persuasion ruled, the Peace of Augsburg recognized a measure of religious freedom. But there were drawbacks in this compromise which later resulted in serious problems. The standard of "cuius regio, eius religio," which meant that the prince was entitled to determine the church which his subjects must support, promoted the continued political fragmentation of Germany. Also the failure to include the Calvinists and the Anabaptists in the settlement left dissatisfied elements and deprived Germany of the full effect of what might have proved to be dynamic Protestant forces.

*Germany divided religiously*

The other terminal point for Lutheranism, the Book of Concord (1580),<sup>2</sup> represented a truce in the bitter theological battles that had raged in Germany from the decade of Luther's death. The struggle had developed between those who wanted Lutheranism to follow the more moderate and humanistic spirit of Melanchthon and those who demanded that it assert its more exclusive and theological aspect. A group of theologians were called upon to mediate the dispute and to restate the doctrinal position of the Lutheran Reformation. The Formula of Concord (1577) untied few theological knots but did soothe many of the contending parties. It was incorporated into the Book of Concord which has comprised, from this time onward, the authoritative creeds of Lutheranism. Herein may be noted the beginning of a century in which acceptance of correct doctrine became the norm for church practice and faith became virtually intellectual assent to "true teaching." The stage was set for Lutheran scholasticism.

*Grace  
(Faith)  
Erasmus  
man's reaching  
up to God!  
Luther  
need both  
can't have  
either both.*