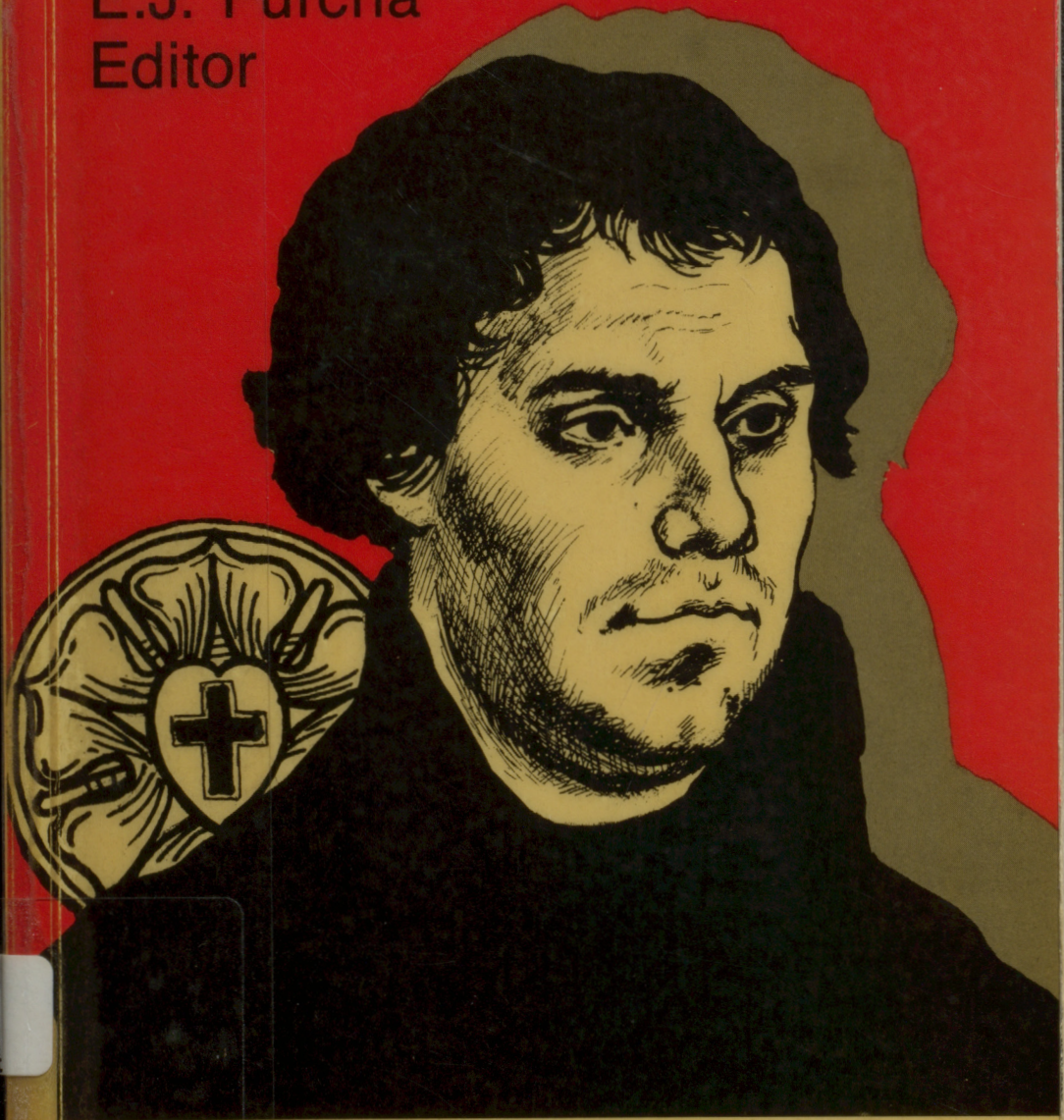
Papers From the
1983 McGill Symposium
E.J. Furcha
Editor



Encounters with Luther

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ENCOUNTERS WITH LUTHER

Papers from the 1983 McGill Luther Symposium

e.j. furcha, editor

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E.J. Furcha

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FOREWORD

This book is the first volume in a projected series in the area of Renaissance and Reformation Studies. Despite the spate of learned publications in our time this field offers considerable challenge as fresh data and new insights occur in our understanding of history and methods of interpretation. We trust that our McGill research and discussion will appeal to others.

The Faculty of Religious Studies and the Renaissance and Reformation Studies Group is grateful to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for support in this venture. The series supplements our Faculty newsletter ARC, now in its twelfth year.

Professor Edward J. Furcha organized the Luther Symposium and edited this volume. I am grateful for his energy and enthusiasm in both activities.

Joseph C. McLelland
Dean, Faculty of Religious Studies
Chairman, Renaissance and
Reformation Studies Group

PREFACE

Rarely does a scholarly symposium draw together different departments and faculties of a modern university. More rarely still is such coming together brought about when the subject of discussion and reflection is a religious person, born 500 years ago.

Yet during the first week of October 1983, academics, clergy, alumni/ae, aspiring students and laypersons gathered in the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill to respond to issues of our time by relating them to questions to which Martin Luther, 1483-1546, responded during his lifetime. Between thirty and two hundred and fifty people participated in the various lectures and seminars during the symposium.

One cannot capture in a few short pages the thrill of living "engagement" on widely divergent topics somehow held together by the mystique of a Christian scholar and reformer of the Church: The sharp repartee of experts, the flash of insight triggered by a casual remark, the careful analysis of documents and viewpoints--Such images will live on in the memory of participants but cannot be conveyed to others. The tone of the Symposium was set by the Renaissance and Reformation scholar, Heiko Oberman of Tübingen and continued with clarity and precision by another German scholar, Dr. Ingetraut Ludolphy. Professor Harry McSorley, a scholar from St. Michael's College, Toronto provided us with a Roman Catholic perspective of "Luther Then and Now". The papers and responses during the rest of the conference focused on topics as divergent as Luther's influence on the growth of modern German, his attitude toward women, the impact he had on politics and the theological questions of justification. A fascinating lecture combined with chorale excerpts

sung by a thirty-two-voice choir focused on the music of Martin Luther and his contemporaries. The music served as the basis of modern protestant hymnology which has been such a vital part of the worshipping community during the last five hundred years within protestant churches.

ARC, an occasional journal, published for the benefit of friends and alumni/ae of the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill has agreed to undertake the publication of some of the papers, read during the Symposium. Thanks to a subsidy from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the generous support of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research at McGill, and a substantial contribution by an anonymous donor we are able to make the following essays available to a wider readership at a very modest price. Similar projects may be undertaken in the near future.

As the variety of contributors and their rather diverse contributions will readily demonstrate, reform in the church has moved a long way in the direction of Christian liberty which enables scholars to be evangelical and protestant without losing sight of the catholicity of the church. It would be folly to suggest that there is unanimity on the significance of Luther or on particular ways in which his contribution to the church, to literature, art, politics and culture may be most fully realized and treasured. However, as he reshaped elements of the Christian tradition in the context of his own situation and of the needs of his people, perceived by him in a particular manner, so we must "transcreate" our past into meaningful responses to the questions of our time.

While each author takes responsibility for the views expressed in his/her paper, the editor

has undertaken to see the manuscripts through the printing process to impede, as much as is possible, the free reign of the printer's devil.

We regret that Professor Heiko Oberman's paper had to be left out of this volume due to difficulties in transcribing his speech from tape and because of a heavy work schedule on his part which made it difficult to prepare the paper in time for publication. Other participants whose papers will be published elsewhere were Professor Fred Stoltzfus, Faculty of Music, McGill and Professor Harry McSorley, St. Michael's, Toronto

Professor Ludolphy's paper was translated from the German original. It appears here with the kind permission of the author and of the Kreuz Verlag, Stuttgart who published it in a slightly different version in LUTHER CONTROVERS, 1983.

D.J. Hall's paper is reprinted with the permission of Fortress Press, Philadelphia.

No single book on Luther can do justice to his wide-ranging interests and to the impact his work has had, especially within Protestantism on ethics, liturgy, doctrine and teaching, literature, church music and hymnody, etc.

Though at one time he was simply judged a heretic or schismatic his influence has been truly universal. Every generation therefore must come to terms with and respond to his legacy.

We offer this collection of selected papers from the McGill Symposium because we are convinced that the papers will stimulate among all who can avail themselves of this booklet continued serious study of Luther's legacy.

Some of the questions posed by Luther are

still with us. Others have taken on new dimensions. Though we may not wish to be imitators in every respect of this significant agent of change we ought, like him, dare to believe and in such daring discover the resources that give us the true freedom to be fully human.

Montreal, Easter 1984 E.J. Furcha

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IMPERIAL POLITICS AND ITS IMPACT ON LUTHER'S MOVEMENT FOR CHURCH REFORM

by: Joseph D. Ban

Numerous reform movements within the western Christian church during the late medieval period either were contained or eradicated. How was it that the reforms emanating from Wittenberg were not rendered null and void? As a student in a graduate seminar phrased the question, "How was it that Luther, though declared an heretic, did not suffer the cruel fate of John Hus?" (1) It certainly is a natural question to ask. In order to deal with such a query, it is necessary to delineate and examine the complex relationships in European politics and religion that influenced the response to Luther's theology of such figures as Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor and the several popes who reigned during that period.

Martin Luther first came to the notice of the German populace in 1517 when the ninety-five theses initially were published. The Curia in Rome was slow to react. It was 1520 when the Papal Bull Exsurge domine was published against Luther. This earliest instrument failed to respond adequately to the serious religious issues raised by the Wittenberg monk. Joseph Lortz aptly described the Roman response: "The curia over-estimated their own, and underestimated the hostile power." (2)

After an expensive contest with the French King, Francis I, for the Holy Roman imperial crown, the Hapsburg candidate was elected Emperor Charles V on 28 June 1519. The youthful Emperor met for the first time with the German governing body, the diet, in the city of Worms in 1521. In March of that year, the Emperor invited Luther to

appear before the diet under an imperial assurance of safe conduct. After a brief hearing in which Luther refused to retract his writings, the Emperor declared the German monk to be an outlaw throughout the empire. Luther now stood under judgment of both the secular and religious powers, for Pope Leo X, who had first threatened the Wittenberg theologian with excommunication in 1520, had officially pronounced Luther to be an heretic in 1521.

A complex pattern of inter-relationships contributed to the fact that this condemned German was to live a full and productive life and was to die of natural causes on February 18, 1546, at the age of 62.

An enigmatic tangle of relationships contributed to the eventual success of the German reformation. Several conditions were essential in order for the decrees against Luther to have been effective. Successful persecution of the Wittenberg reformer would have required that the Emperor be decisive and aggressive and, as well, that the reigning Pope be aware of the real danger to the Church and be consistent in policy. In Germany itself, successful implementation of both Papal condemnation and Imperial ban was conditional upon an elector who was weak and compliant to the dictates of superior authorities, as well as a German people who were either indifferent to Luther or strongly supportive of Papal policies. None of the above conditions was present. As for the intended victim of the edicts, Luther proved to be a formidable foe. He was especially effective in a contest of printed words intended to attract the allegiance of the people of the various Germanic lands and cities.

To untangle this puzzling snarl of history, it is necessary to look closely at several

elements, primarily persons and institutions. The principal actors in this admittedly dramatic history were the Emperor Charles V, a number of popes, a larger number of German princes, the principal reformer Martin Luther and his superb colleagues, and a cast of tens of thousands, the German people. The time frame for this social upheaval was relatively brief. It is not too arbitrary to designate the beginning as 1517, when Luther posted the ninety-five theses inviting a theological disputation that took quite a different form from what he had originally envisioned. By 1546, the year Luther died, the Reformation essentially was secure in most of Europe where the Lutheran reforms had been planted. Almost thirty-eight years after the positing of the controversial theses, and only nine years after Luther's death, the Peace of Augsburg in 1555 ratified the religious schism. The western church would no longer represent, even in theory, a single body with vital connections and allegiances to Rome. (3)

To begin the study of these complicated inter-relationships between imperial and ecclesiastical powers, it is necessary to examine the person and situation of the Holy Roman Emperor. The secular responsibility for dealing with the Lutheran heresy fell into the hands of Emperor Charles V. The matrimonial union of his parents plus a chain of unexpected deaths served to channel much territory and dynastic power to one royal person. Charles, already Duke of Burgundy, at the age of sixteen had become King of Spain upon the death of his maternal grandfather, Ferdinand of Aragon in 1516. On the paternal side, Charles' grandfather Maximilian of Austria died, three years later, in 1519. Charles thus came into possession of the hereditary lands of the Hapsburg dynasty. The young heir now ruled over territory far greater than that held by any

previous sovereign in Western Europe. From the seventeen provinces of the Netherlands, Franche-Comté south to the Kingdoms of Spain, including Aragon, Castile, Navarre as well as Granada, east across the Mediterranean to Sardinia, Sicily, the Kingdom of Naples and the Duchy of Milan, thence north to the Austrian Hapsburg lands, the young Emperor ruled by inheritance. The list is impressive enough without mentioning the vast Spanish possessions in the New World.

Yet it was the crown Charles acquired by election that placed him in the centre of the controversy over Luther's theological writings. The German Empire consisted of some three hundred self-contained political jurisdictions each with a territory, however small, and a ruler, whatever the title. The power to elect the Emperor was vested in seven princes: three ecclesiastical princes - the Archbishops of Mainz, Cologne and Trier; and four secular - the Count Palatine of the Rhine, the Duke of Saxony, the Margrave of Brandenburg, the King of Bohemia.

The election was bought at great cost. In securing the Imperial title and its perquisites for Charles, the Hapsburgs paid out 850,000 florins to the seven electors, the greater part, 543,000 florins, advanced by the Augsburg banker, Jacob Fugger. (4) Significant for our question were the concessions granted by the Emperor to the German princes and people as a condition of his election. These imperial guarantees included the use of German and Latin as the official languages of the empire; no foreign troops were to be stationed on German soil; only Germans were to be appointed to imperial posts. Article 24 of the capitulation of election in particular bears upon our discussion. Charles was sworn to prevent allowing any German, of whatever social station,

to be placed under the ban "without cause" and "without hearing." (5)

The extent of the lands over which Charles ruled as well as the wealth flowing from Spanish America, created both power and problems. King Francis I felt exposed to the neighbour surrounding France on three sides. The ruling pope felt encompassed by the Hapsburg-held Milan to the north of the Papal territories and the Kingdom of Naples to the south.

Joseph Lortz accurately evaluated the character of Charles' "colossal empire."

> Above all it lacked unity.
> The only semblance of unity
> lay in the person of the ruler.
> In Spain, political
> divisions...had begun...
> Burgundy comprised an autonomous
> dukedom in the south and the
> Netherlands in the north;
> Austria -- Northern Italy --
> Southern Italy....The ultimate
> burden...was this: the German
> territories...felt themselves
> at variance with the empire
> and the emperor...himself a
> territorial prince. (6)

What was Charles' view of his role in Empire and Church? Charles' own diary provides evidence that he was a product of the Burgundian Court in which he had been reared. His formal training and education had inculcated an ideal of medieval chivalry merged with Christian devotion and piety. The court of Burgundy, colourful and sensual, had infused Charles' personality with the "cult of dynasty, and the desire for glory gained by meritorious deeds." (7)

Among Charles' tutors, Adrian of Utrecht held eminence as his instructor in spiritual matters. Brandi describes Adrian's influence: "The piety which was Charles' very being had its roots in the teaching of this man." Charles embraced orthodox Catholicism in his thinking, his actions and his belief system. (8) He demonstrated both a loyalty to the Head of the Church in Rome and a capacity to distinguish between the Pope as spiritual head and as a territorial prince. Unfortunately, few popes of the Sixteenth Century were equally rigorous in making that distinction. Charles maintained a consistent effort to preserve the unity of the Catholic church. The unfolding events indicate that his sporadic attempts at reconciling the various interests were frustrated by Wittenberg, Rome, Paris, the various Protestant estates in Germany, the various courts in Spain, not to mention the Turkish sultan.

Charles took opportunity to express his personal views following Luther's bold speech before the Diet of Worms in April 1521. On the previous day (April 18), in the presence of the emperor, Martin Luther courageously had declared:

> Unless I am convinced by the
> testimony of Scripture
> or by clear reason, for I
> do not trust either in the
> pope or in councils alone,
> since it is well known
> that they have often erred
> and contradicted themselves,
> I am bound by the Scriptures
> I have quoted and my
> conscience is captive to the
> Word of God. I cannot
> and will not retract anything,
> for it is neither safe
> nor right to go against

conscience. I cannot do
otherwise, here I stand,
may God help me, Amen. (9)

The Catholic monarch was impelled to express his own convictions in this theological controversy. He wrote out his views, in French, in his own hand. These words were translated into German and then read to the assembled Diet. The words portray the convictions of the young, twenty-one year old Emperor. He declared:

Ye know that I am born of
the most Christian Emperors
of the noble German Nation,
of the Catholic Kings of
Spain, the Archdukes of
Austria, the Dukes of Burgundy,
who were all to the death
true sons of the Roman Church,
defenders of the Catholic Faith,
of the sacred customs,
decrees and uses of its
worship, who have bequeathed
all this to me as a heritage,
and according to whose
example I have hitherto lived.
Thus I am determined
to hold fast by all which has
happened since the Council
of Constance. For it is
certain that a single monk
must err if he stands against
the opinion of all
Christendom. Otherwise
Christendom itself would have
erred for more than a thousand
years. Therefore I am
determined to set my Kingdoms
and dominions, my friends,
my body, my blood, my life,

> my soul upon it. For it were great shame to us and to you, ye members of the noble German Nation, if in our time through our negligence, we were to let even the appearance of heresy and denigration of true religion enter the hearts of men. Ye all heard Luther's speech here yesterday, and now I say unto you that I regret that I have delayed so long to proceed against him. I will not hear him again: he has his safe-conduct. But from now on I regard him as a notorious heretic, and hope that you all, as good Christians, will not be wanting in your duty. (10)

In the following weeks Charles signed an edict that branded Luther "an obstinate schismatic and manifest heretic" and condemned the person and property of any who befriended Luther and his printed works. This Edict and its implementation were to be debated throughout Charles' reign in Germany, but never to be enforced effectively. The Emperor himself left Germany shortly after the Edict of Worms was promulgated. So soon after his election, Charles had to turn his attentions to the affairs of the lands of his Hapsburg inheritance. (11)

The curtain fell swiftly upon the first act of the Reformation. Brandi described it thus: "The Emperor and the Reformer alike withdrew from the open field of German politics. Charles threw himself into the first war, Martin Luther, protected still by his elector, waited, gathering strength for trials to come." (12)

The power of the Hapsburgs was not centred upon Germany. Concern for the dynasty drew Charles' attention away from Germany. These motivations to preserve a dynasty were also present in the policies of the sixteenth century popes. Leo X resided in the see of St. Peter at the time Luther nailed his theses to the Wittenberg Chapel Doors. Leo, the son of Lorenzo Medici the Magnificent, had been appointed a Cardinal at fourteen, and chosen Pope at thirty-seven. Lortz characterized him "as nothing but a politician, and one deeply in nepotism." (13) Leo served as Head of the Church from 1513 to 1521. Bainton pictured Leo "as elegant and as indolent as a Persian cat." (14) Such indolence proved to be costly, a dear price further compounded by papal political intrigue. Lortz attributed to Leo a "fatal lack of interest in dogmatic subjects." (15) The Curia shared the Pope's "carelessness and theological confusion." (16) Luther's controversial views on indulgences were known across Germany in late 1517. It was three years before an aroused Pope, in the Papal Bull, Exsurge domine of 15 June 1520 demanded that Luther recant or be condemned as an heretic. Why such a delayed reaction? Early response had been hindered by the theological indifference of Pope and Curia, especially to events involving an unknown monk in distant Germany. Official action from Rome was also delayed due to political events. The death of Emperor Maximilian in 1519 created a territorial situation that alarmed Pope Leo. Should Charles as King of Spain and heir of the Hapsburg patrimony be elected German emperor, the Papal lands would be bounded north and south by Hapsburg-controlled territories. The Kingdom of Naples on the south was already ruled by Spain, and Maximilian's death now brought Milan under Charles' rule. So Leo sought the election of Francis I to the imperial throne. In order to gain such a goal, the Pope needed the goodwill of

the Elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise. The latter was the founder and patron of the University in Wittenberg where Luther taught in the chair of biblical theology. Leo's efforts to influence the imperial election achieved nothing, except to allow time for popular support of Luther to develop. The futile exercise demonstrated again how incapable the Vatican leadership was of distinguishing between the universal needs of the world church and the political goals of the Italian states. The machinations of the Curia during the contest for the imperial title further eroded the credibility of the Pope in those early years of the Lutheran movement. (17) The distrust between Emperor and Pope over the election did not deter joint adventures. Leo had greater success in his military alliance with Charles against France. From May, 1521 until his death in December of the same year, Leo saw the papal and imperial forces overpower the French across the breadth of northern Italy. (18) The next Pope was Adrian VI who had served as Charles' tutor in Malines, the Netherlands. Adrian's reign was brief, 1522-1523, concluding with no appreciable change in policies and politics from those pursued earlier by Leo. (19) Clement VII, the Medici who served as Pope from 1523-1534 also proved to be a vacillating and uncertain ally to the Emperor. In May, 1526 Clement deserted the Emperor and went over to Charles' enemies. This breach was to widen into the conquest in 1527 of Rome and Clement's capture by unpaid, rebellious Imperial troops. (20)

Despite these vagaries of Papal diplomacy, there is merit in Lortz' judgment that "Clement VII contributed to the strengthening of Protestantism not least by his stubborn resistance to the calling of a council." (21) Whatever the actual possibilities for a council to achieve the reunion of the Christian Church, such

opportunities were likely exhausted after the Protest at Speyer in 1529. Holborn wrote: "Thus exactly eight years after a lonely monk had challenged hierarchical authority before the Diet of Worms, a group of political governors rejected both the hierarchical and the majority principle in religious affairs." (22) Thus "while the Catholic powers - Pope, Emperor, princes and the King of France" had fought with one another in dynastic conflicts, the German Protestants had developed strength. It is appropriate now to turn our attention to yet another significant factor in the equation that made possible the continuation of the Lutheran movement of reform.

The Holy Roman Empire was an aggregation of self-governing cities and autonomous lands held by hereditary princes. These terriotrial rulers held the effective power in the empire. Their allegiances varied with the changing situation. They lacked unity either among themselves or as a common front against the emperor. As Holborn described their condition: "The German estates were too lukewarm in their intention to develop a common policy and too diversified in their interests to achieve such an objective when they made the attempt." (23) Nonetheless, the response to the Edict of Worms did cause a distinctive, and somewhat disciplined coalition to emerge, that of the Protestant princes. Foremost among these was Luther's benefactor, the Elector Duke Frederick of Saxony. E.G. Rupp labelled as "one of the unpredictabilities of history" the fact that Frederick did not abandon this "professor whom he never met." Lortz described Frederick's conduct during the Imperial election campaign "as the one elector who could not be bought." Bainton refers to the blandishments offered to Luther's protector. "Frederick refused to be wooed by the golden rose, the indulgences for the Castle church at Wittenberg, and a benefice for his natural son." (24)

Duke Frederick, or someone authorized by him, helped organize Luther's defence at Worms. The argument made skilful use of three vital points. Heinrich Boehmer states that Fredrick was responsible for the clause sworn to by Charles V in his election capitulation. This clause affirmed that no German subject could be placed under the imperial ban without a trial, exceptions to require the consent of the Estates of the Empire. This was the first point. The second rested upon Luther's frequently stated assertion that he was prepared to allow any irreproachable judge to instruct him "in a better lesson" provided it were founded upon the Bible. The third point attributed to Fredrick's initiative was the appeal to submit Luther's case to the judgment of the Archbishop-Elector of Trier, a friend of the Saxon Elector. (25)

A discussion of the German princes, however abbreviated, would be incomplete without referring to the emergence of a professional class of advisors to these territorial rulers. Lortz, among others, has called attention to "the significance...of the creation of an intelligent and legally informed class of officials." In connection with Luther's survival of both Papal excommunication and Imperial ban, much of the credit surely must go to George Burchard of Spalt, Spalatin, whose friend Luther had become as early as 1513. Spalatin was an influential figure in the Court of Duke Frederick. With Lortz, "we cannot exaggerate Spalatin's importance for the spread of the Reformation." He certainly appears to have been the vital connecting link between the Elector of Saxony and the Wittenberg theologian. (26)

The German princes jealously guarded their

prerogatives within their own lands. The conditions demanded of the Emperor as prerequisite to his election and coronation as well as the political manoeuvering during each of the various Diets all reflect this ever present concern to limit the Imperial power and to enhance the authority of each prince in his own realm. The princes, Lortz wrote, "would not surrender to the empire or the emperor, the absolute juridical power that was rooted solely in their own territories." As a consequence, real power in Germany remained in the hands of the territorial prince. (27)

What of the German people? Where did they stand? The papal emissary, Aleander, in 1520 reported that the whole of Germany was anti-Roman. In his despatches to Rome, the papal legate reported that the Germans were "anti-Italian." The reasons offered for this revulsion against Rome focused upon mandates of the Curia seen by the people as "illegal innovations." Lortz described the attitude of the German public:

> The reception - or rather the rejection - of the bull of excommunication provides an impressive illustration of the situation. It is a historical fact of the first rank that in the middle of a politically peaceful country, not at war with the pope, a bull... concerning the foundations of Church and state, could not be displayed, as regulations required, except on the doors of the merest handful of churches. This shows how closely tied up with Luther's cause were even those ecclesiastical

figures who obviously
would not subscribe to his
doctrines. (28)

Even Charles V felt it necessary to justify his action in publishing the Edict of Worms against Luther so that the German populace would not think the emperor "too quick to carry out the pope's orders." (29) The enthusiastic response of the populace to the monk Luther, as he entered Worms for his hearing as commanded by the Emperor, indicated the public mood. Though a condemned heretic, Luther was afforded a hearing before the most solemn assembly of the Empire. It was quite apparent that the people considered the monk a great hero. The movement for religious reform espoused by Luther had now become a popular cause. The long smoldering antipathy of the Germans toward Rome had been expressed formally in the "Grievances of the German Nation against the Holy See" by many Diets after 1461 including Ausburg in 1518 and Worms, after hearing Luther in 1521. Through his writings Luther had gained a vast number of sympathizers among common and princely persons alike. Not only was the condemnation of Luther without a hearing unacceptable to the people, as the Elector of Saxony had said, but the Edict of Worms could not be enforced. Holborn concluded:

Literal execution of the Edict
of Worms would have wrecked
all the gains that had been
made in a generation toward
suppressing feuds and wars
among members of the Empire.
It would also have brought
on the danger of popular
revolt and revolution, and
the German princes had to admit
that their governments were

ill-equipped for coping with such contingencies. (30)

Luther, of course, is the central component in resolving the question of why this reform movement succeeded where others had failed. In his thinking Luther had caught up the religious feeling and the social discontent of Germany. He was also a compulsive writer, working out his love affair with the German language in numerous writings enthusiastically purchased by the public.

Rupp describes this active writing career and its consequence:

> The proscribed theologian was also a literary genius with unexampled fluency in the vernacular, displayed in a flood of tracts and pamphlets, now shocking in polemical virulence, now shot through with the comic spirit, but also expressed in works of edification, which combined profound intuitions, tender beauty and a limpid simplicity. Thus in an inaccessible corner of the Christian world, protected by a powerful prince, his university enthusiastically behind him, the more learned opinion in Germany sympathetic, with powerful allies articulate on his side among princes, knights, merchants and peasants, Luther was no longer alone, but fast becoming a symbol of national anti-clerical resentment against Rome. (31)

Luther was well aware of the sense of protest

among the German populace. This was acknowledged in the opening of his Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation: Concerning the Reformation of Our Christian Society, printed in June 1520. Here Luther noted "the burdens of pain and oppression weighing on classes in Christendom, and principally on our German lands, which have moved not me alone, but indeed all men, to give vent to cries of outrage and pleas for redress." (32)

It is also important to recognize, as Cochlaeus and Eck did, that Luther was supported in his thinking and augmented in his publishing by an eminent group of colleagues in the University of Wittenberg, including Andreas Carlstadt and Philip Melanchthon who contributed to the leadership of the religious movement.

In summary, Luther owed the fact that he continued to teach and publish to a number of inter-related factors. The Catholic powers neutralized each other, Charles V, Francis I, the Popes, and the German Catholic princes, for dynastic purposes played off against each other and effectively dissipated the very limited power each actually had to deploy. The Emperor, in consequence, was impotent in his efforts to enforce his decree in the lands of the German princes. Fundamental to the breakdown of the Catholic order was the inability of Pope and Emperor to cooperate long enough to resolve to their mutual satisfaction the problems raised by the Wittenberg reformer. In short, Charles V confronted political problems so complex that he was unable to address adequately the social and political forces unleashed by Luther's avalanche of popular writings.

Complications arising from internal and external relations of the Empire effectively

thwarted Charles from resolving the struggle with the Lutheran powers until it was too late to maintain one Christian church. As Steven Ozment wrote: "The emperor's total preoccupation with his enemies made Luther's survival possible; it was the major political factor in the Reformation's success." (33) There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of this conclusion.

NOTES

1. The stimulating discussions of a graduate seminar on the Reformation at McMaster Divinity College provided the genesis of this study. The question asked by David New was akin to one raised by Reformation scholar Steven Ozment, "How did the Protestant Reformation, unlike so many other late medieval reform movements, escape being nipped in the bud or rendered harmless in its course?" Steven Ozment, The Age of Reform 1250-1550 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 246.

2. Joseph Lortz, The Reformation in Germany, translated by Ronald Walls, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1968), Vol. I, p. 285, cf. pp. 286-287. Hereafter designated Lortz.

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J.A. Lalaguna (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1975), p. 15; Karl Brandi, The Emperor Charles V, translated by C.V. Wedgwood (London: Jonathan Cape, 1939), pp. 95f.; H. Koenigsberger, "The Empire of Charles V in Europe" in The New Cambridge Modern History, Vol. II The Reformation 1520-1559, ed. by G.R. Elton (Cambridge: University Press, 1958), pp. 301-303.

5. Hajo Holborn, p. 147; George Mosse, The Reformation (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953), p. 21.

6. Lortz, I, p. 305.

7. Holborn, p. 151; Brandi, p. 304 "For Charles the dignity of the German emperor was always the ruling factor in his thought and action." Cf. Hans Baron, "Religion and Politics in the German Imperial Cities During the Reformation," English Historical Review, 1937, Vol. 52, pp. 405-427, 614-633. Fernand Braudel, The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, Vol. II (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1973). "This notion of Universal Monarchy was the continuous inspiration of Charles' policy...." p. 674.

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10. Brandi, pp. 131-132.

11. Alvarez, p. 45.

12. Brandi, p. 132.

13. Lortz, II, p. 42.

14. Roland H. Bainton, Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther (New York: Mentor, 1950), p. 56.

15. Lortz, I, p. 234.

16. Ibid., I, p. 155.

17. Brandi, pp. 108-109.

18. Koenigsberger, pp. 341-342; Brandi, pp. 201-202.

19. Brandi, pp. 203-208; cf. Holborn, pp. 160-161.

20. Ibid., pp. 252-254.

21. Lortz, II, p. 43. Paul III (1534-1549) and Julius III (1550-1555) were the other popes who reigned during the era under consideration.

22. Holborn, p. 208.

23. Ibid., p. 158.

24. E.G. Rupp, "Luther and the German Reformation to 1529" in G.R. Elton, ed. The New Cambridge Modern History: Vol. II: The Reformation 1520-1559 (Cambridge: University Press, 1958), p. 77; Lortz, p. 300, Bainton, Here I Stand, p. 130.

25. Heinrich Boehmer, Luther and the Reformation in the Light of Modern Research translated by E.S.G. Potter (New York: Dial Press, 1930), p. 122; Bainton, Here I Stand, pp. 77-78, 99, 111.

26. Lortz, I, p. 325; Heinrich Boehmer Martin

Luther: Road to Reformation (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), p. 158; Holborn, p. 138.

27. Lortz, I, p. 313.

28. Ibid., p. 280.

29. Ibid., pp. 276-277.

30. Holborn, p. 159.

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32. Gerald Strauss, Manifestations of Discontent in Germany on the Eve of the Reformation (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), p. ix; cf. Gordon Rupp, Luther's Progess to the Diet of Worms (New York: Harper & Row Torchbooks, 1964), pp. 82-83; Sheldon S. Wolin, Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), pp. 146-164.

33. Ozment, p. 253.

LUTHER ET LA CENSURE CATHOLIQUE

by: J. M. De Bujanda

La bulle "Decet Romanum pontificem" publiee par Léon X le 3 janvier 1521, qui condamnait Martin Luther comme hérétique, et les decrets de la diète de Worms du mois d'avril de la meme année, qui le mettaient au ban de l'"Empire, interdisaient aussi les écrits du Réformateur et les condamnaient au feu.

Il n'est d'ailleurs pas surprenant que les autorités religieuses et civiles interdisent les écrits d'un auteur hérétique car il s'agit d'une pratique qui a eu cours tout au long du Moyen-Age et qui remonte aux premiers siècles du christianisme; quand l'Eglise primitive condamnait quelqu'un comme hérétique, elle interdisait aussi ses ouvrages. (1) Dans le célebre Directorium inquisitorum composé pas Nicolas Eymerich vers 1376, on trouve une important compilation de livres interdits par l'Eglise au cours des siècles. (2) C'est dans les décennies qui suivent l'invention de l'imprimerie, à la fin du XVe siècle et au début du XVIe siecle, qu'on assiste a l'organisation systématique de la censure ecclésiastique. Les papes Innocent VIII et Alexandre VI, à la demande de certain évêques allemands adoptent une série de dispositions qui réglementent l'impression et la circulation des écrits. (3) Ils justifiaient leurs interventions sur le fait que l'imprimerie servait à la diffusion de livres qui contenaient des propositions contraires a la foi catholique. Ces dispositions étaient destinées dans un premier temps aux provinces ecclésiastiques de la région de Mayence, qui passe pour être l'endroit où est née l'imprimerie. Elles sont par la suite promulguées et étendues à l'Eglise universelle par

Léon X en 1515, lors du Cinquième Concile Oecumenique de Latran. (4) Donc deux ans avant que Luther affiche ses 95 thèses à Wittemberg, l'Eglise romaine disposait d'une législation précise pour l'exercice de la censure préalable a l'impression et de la censure répressive des écrits déjà publiés.

On ne peut donc pas affirmer que l'entrée en scène de Martin Luther fut la cause de l'implantation de la censure ecclésiastique proprement dite. Les écrits du Réformateur vont cependant influencer profondément les modalités selon lesquelles est exercée la censure ecclésiastique. Ils sont à notre avis la principale cause qui explique l'établissement de l'index des livres interdits. Nous nous proposons de présenter brièvement la façon selon laquelle la diffusion des écrits de Luther et des réformateurs protestants en général conditionna l'évolution de la censure catholique.

Luther décrit l'imprimerie comme "le plus grand et le plus extrême acte de la Grâce divine par lequel se propage l'influence de l'Evangile". (5) Quelques années plus tard, John Foxe reflétait le point de vue des réformés quand il proclama "l'excellence de cet art de l'imprimerie très heureusement découvert depuis peu ... pour le plus bénéfice de l'Eglise du Christ". (6)

Effectivement, bon nombre d'historiens de Luther et de la Réforme en général, voient dans l'imprimerie la principale explication du succès remporté par le moine allemand et de l'implantation définitive de la Réforme. On estime à plus de 300,000 le nombre d'exemplaires des écrits de Luther vendus entre 1517 et 1520. On a aussi affirmé que les "quartre-vingt-quinze thèses furent connues dans toute l'Allemagne en deux semaines et dans toute l'Europe en un mois".

(7) Josef Benzing dans sa Lutherbibliographie signale quelque 3700 editions des oeuvres du Réformateur publiées dans les trente années (1517-1546) qui séparent sa revolte et sa mort. (8) Ces chiffres impressionnants en soi, deviennent encore beaucoup plus significatifs quand en tient compte que le nombre d'éditions différentes sorties des presses pendant tout le XVIe siècle est estimé entre 150,000 et 200,000 par des historiens comme Lucien Febvre et Henri-Jean Martin. (9) On peut ainsi raisonnablement avancer le chiffre de 50,000 éditions pour les seules années 1517-1546. Luther aurait donc avec ses 3700 éditions accaparé 7.5% de la production imprimée. Et il faut également penser à la pléiade de disciples du professeur de Wittemberg, écrivains féconds qui propagent les idées de leur maître par des écrits nouveaux, des commentaires et des éditions de la Bible et des Pères de l'Eglise.

La diffusion des idées de Luther dans les différents pays d'Europe a été l'objet de nombreuses recherches qui permettent de mieux saisir l'universalité de son message. Le livre de W.G. Moore, qui porte le sous-titre "Recherches sur la notoriété de Luther en France", publié il y a 53 ans, a été suivi de nombreux travaux de valeur qui ont élargi le champ de recherches pour les pays de langue française. (10) A la suite des travaux de Delio Cantimori, la propagation du luthéranisme en Italie a été aussi étudiée par de nombreux érudits. (11) En Espagne, les livres de Marcelino Menendez Pelayo sur les hétérodoxes espagnols et de Marcel Bataillon sur l'influence d'Erasme en Espagne, ont ouvert la voie à d'autres recherches plus centrées sur le message de Luther. (12) Et on pourrait continuer à rappeler beaucoup d'autres pays qui, au cours des dernières décennies, ont entrepris des travaux d'envergure destinés à réévaluer leur dette culturelle à

l'égard du Père de la Réforme.

La réaction du monde catholique contre une telle invasion intellectuelle et religieuse s'exprime de plusieurs façons. Laissant de côté les aspects politiques, militaires et économiques qui expliquent certaines mesures répressives, on peut distinguer trois types de réaction. Premièrement, réaction d'autodéfense qui consiste à vouloir empêcher par tous les moyens l'impression, la vente, la possession et la lecture des ouvrages qui professent la nouvelle doctrine. En deuxième lieu, réaction d'offensive par la composition et la diffusion des écrits polémiques qui combattent les points fondamentaux des réformés. En troisième lieu, réaction par l'organisation de campagnes de propagande et d'endoctrinement qui visent à renforcer la foi traditionnelle des populations restées catholiques et à reconquérir les peuples perdus. Pour évaluer convenablement l'action et les résultats obtenus par l'Eglise catholique, il faut se situer dans la perspective de plusieurs générations en examinant au moins l'évolution jusqu'à la fin du XVIe siècle.

Nous ne traiterons pas ici des polémiques qui ont occupé les meilleurs esprits du temps, (13) ni de l'action d'endoctrinement que canalise le Concile de Trente; (14) nous nous limiterons à examiner la censure catholique qui est en grande partie une réponse à l'agressivité de la propagande reformée. D'autre part la réaction catholique doit être replacée dans le contexte d'intolerance générale dans lequel évoluent les différentes confessions religieuses.

L'offensive contre les livres luthériens vient de la part des universités, des autorités civiles et surtout des autorités ecclésiastiques. Dès la fin de l'année 1519, les universités de

Louvain et de Cologne se prononcent contre les écrits du Réformateur. La Faculté de théologie de l'Université de Paris le fait par sa célèbre determinatio du 15 avril 1521. Nous avons déjà signalé comment Rome avait tranché la question le 3 janvier 1521 par l'excommunication de Luther et la condamnation de ses écrits au feu.

Dans le but d'empêcher la diffusion de l'hérésie protestante dans les Pays-Bas, Charles Quint ordonne d'afficher tout au long de son règne de nombreux placards dans lesquels on interdit les écrits de Luther et de ses adeptes. Celui du 14 octobre 1529 prescrit que:

> nul de quelque sexe, nation, estat ou condition, ne s'advance dorénavant imprimer ou escrir, faire imprimer ou escrir, vendre, achetter, distribuer, lire, garder, tenir soubz soi ou recepvoir, prescher, instruir, soustenir ou defendre, communiquer ou disputer, publiquement ou secretement, ou tenir conventicles ou assemblées des livres, escriptures ou doctrines ou alcunes d'icelles, qu'on faict ou faire pourroyent ledict Martin Luther, Joannes Wiccleff, Joannes Hus, Marcillius de Padua, Ecolampadius, Ulrichus Zwinglius, Philippe Melanchthon, Franciscus Lambertus, Joannes Pomeranus, Otto Brunfelsius, Justus Jonas, Joannes Puperis et Garcianus, ou aultres aucteurs de leur secte, heretiques, erroniques ou abusives

reprouvés de l'église; ni aussy
des doctrines de leurs
adherents, fauteurs et complices. (15)

Nombreuses sont aussi les dispositions des autorités ecclésiastiques et civiles locales qui interdisent l'impression et la circulation des oeuvres de Luther et des autres réformés. Erarde de la Marck, prince-évêque de Liège, suit le chemin tracé par l'empereur avec la publication de placards qui interdisent les ouvrages hérétiques. (16) Un mandement de l'Archevêque de Canterbury du 3 novembre 1526 interdit 110 titres parmi lesquels figurent 21 écrits de Luther. (17)

Déjà en mars 1523, le duc de Milan, Francesco II Sforza, ordonnait que tous ceux qui possédaient des écrits de Luther devaient les remettre aux autorités dans un délai de quatre jours sous peine de confiscation des biens. (18) De nombreux édits sont publiés par l'inquisition espagnole à partir du moment où l'Inquisiteur général Adrien d'Utrech, le futur Adrien VI, ordonne le 1er septembre 1521 de réquisitionner toutes les oeuvres de Luther en latin et en langue vulgaire. (19) Le décret du 17 aout 1530 qui précise que ceux qui ont connaissance des ouvrages de Luther et de ses disciples doivent les dénoncer aux inquisiteurs, révèle les stratagèmes des hérétiques qui font passer leurs écrits sous le nom d'auteurs catholiques, ou ajoutent des passages ou des commentaires qui altèrent le sens original des écrits orthodoxes. (20)

En France, la Faculté de théologie de l'Université de Paris, soutenue par le Parlement de Paris, devient le bastion d'une théologie réactionnaire qui censure et condamne de nombreux ouvrages réformés sans épargner des auteurs humanistes comme Erasme, Lefèvre d'Etaples et Rabelais. Profitant de "l'affaire des placards"

de l'année 1534, la Sorbonne obtient de Francois ler la publication d'un édit, resté d'ailleurs sans effet, qui ordonne de ne rien imprimer. Dans les années suivantes, la Faculté de théologie affiche de nombreux arrêts contre des ouvrages suspects d'hérésie.

En 1544 fut publié un catalogue des ouvrages qui avaient été examinés et censurés par la Faculté de théologie et de nouvelles listes s'ajoutent en 1547, 1549, 1551 et 1556 totalisant au-delà de 600 condamnations. Luther figure en 1544 avec 23 titres en latin auxquels il faut ajouter cinq autres ouvrages en français donnés comme anonymes. La liste de 1547 ajoute six autres condamnations de Luther en latin et une en français. Deux autres titres en latin et un en français s'additionnent en 1551. A cette liste s'ajoute en 1556 la condamnation des six tomes déjà parus de l'édition latine des opera omnia de Luther. (21)

L'Université de Louvain de son côté publie trois catalogues en 1546, 1550 et 1558 avec un total de 700 condamnations. A Venise, le nonce du pape, Giovanni della Casa, fait publier un catalogue en 1549, et les inquisiteurs en sortent un autre en 1554 totalisant 650 condamnations. L'Inquisition espagnole publie les listes de 1551 et 1559 regroupant au-delà de 700 interdictions. Un nombre équivalent d'ouvrages se trouvent dans les index de l'inquisition portugaise de 1547, 1551, 1559 et 1561. (22) Dans tous ces catalogues, Martin Luther figure comme auteur dont toutes les oeuvres sont condamnées. Son nom réapparait aussi à plusieurs reprises comme étant l'auteur de préfaces ou l'objet de volumes interdits. Certains ouvrages qui figurent comme anonymes sont aussi de Luther.

Mais ces dispositions qui sont édictées par

les autorités locales et qui ne sont pas sanctionnées par Rome obtiennent des résultats très limités. Dès le début de la révolte de Luther, la Curie romaine est convaincue du besoin d'exercer une surveillance plus étroite de la presse en faisant respecter les dispositions promulguées en 1515 par le Concile de Latran qui prévoyaient une censure préventive. Dans leur correspondance avec les princes chrétiens, les papes insistent pour qu'on empêche l'impression et la circulation des oeuvres des réformateurs. Mais c'est surtout à partir du moment où se produit l'échec de la politique de conciliation représentée par les colloques de religion, que s'organise d'une façon systématique la répression de la littérature réformée.

La création de l'Inquisition romaine par Paul III en 1542 ouvre la voie vers une politique de répression qui provoque l'exil des principaux partisans de la Réforme en Italie. Le 12 juillet 1543, le Sainte-Office promulgue un décret pour les Etats pontificaux qui prévoit des peines pecuniaires importantes, la perte d'emploi et l'excommunication pour les imprimeurs, libraires et officiers de douanes qui manqueraient à leurs obligations en imprimants, vendant, possédant ou permettant l'entrée des livres hérétiques. (23)

Avec l'accession au trône pontifical en 1555 de l'ancien Inquisiteur général, le cardinal Caraffa, s'intensifie considérablement la censure répressive contre les idées nouvelles et leur moyens de diffusion. Paul IV, qui déjà en 1532 avait réclamé des mesures énergiques contre la littérature réformée, nomma au début de son pontificat une commission chargée de rédiger un catalogue de livres interdits. Les travaux aboutirent au début de l'année 1559 à la publication du premier index romain, qui au cours de la même année connut d'autres éditions à Rome,

Bologne, Gênes, Naples, Novare, Rimini, Venise et en dehors de l'Italie dans la ville portugaise de Coimbre. (24)

L'index romain de Paul IV divise les interdictions en trois classes: la première classe comprend les auteurs qui se sont écartés de la foi catholique d'une façon expresse et dont on interdit tous les écrits, même s'ils ne contiennent rien contre la religion ou sur la religion; dans la deuxième classe se trouvent les auteurs dont certains livres sont interdits parce qu'ils conduisent a l'hérésie, à l'impiété, ou à des erreurs; la troisième classe est réservée aux ouvrages anonymes, écrits dans la majorité des cas par des hérétiques, qui contiennent une doctrine malsaine et contagieuse. Par la suite, on interdit de nombreuses éditions de la Bible et du Nouveau Testament. Suit une liste noire de 61 imprimeurs dont on interdit toute publication sur n'importe quel sujet parce qu'ils sont responsables de l'impression de certain écrits hérétiques.

Si on ne tient pas compte des répétitions, le nombre total de condamnations des trois classes qui est de 963 se divise de la façon suivante:

529 auteurs interdits ou condamnations de premiere classe;

119 ouvrages avec nom d'auteur ou condamnations de deuxième classe;

313 ouvrages anonymes ou condamnations de troisième classe. De ces 963 condamnations la moitié approximativement figuraient dans les catalogues antérieurs et l'autre moitié étaient introduites par l'index romain.

On sait que l'index de Paul IV provoqua une

véritable panique dans la monde des libraires et des imprimeurs et sema la confusion parmi les intellectuels et les enseignants. Citons à titre d'exemple le témoignage du jésuite Saint Pierre Canisius qui souhaitait l'adoucissement de la rigueur du catalogue et exprimait le sentiment général en affirmant que ceux qui travaillent pour rendre plus supportable l'intransigeance de la censure font une bonne action. (25) A côté de nombreux auteurs réformés, l'index romain placait plusieurs humanistes et intellectuels parmi lesquels figuraient Erasme, Rabelais et Machiavel. Mais la rigueur et l'intransigeance de l'index romain apparaissent encore plus dans les dispositions générales intercalées entre les condamnations particulières qui énoncent une véritable politique de répression culturelle.

Par rapport aux catalogues publiés antérieurement, l'index romain de 1559 présente des caracteristiques importante qu'il convient de rappeler:

-plus de la moitié de ses interdictions ne figurent pas dans les catalogues précédents et proviennent de l'initiative des censeurs romains:

-il introduit un classement de degré de condamnation;

-il retient presque exclusivement des titres en latin tandis que les autres catalogues contiennent de nombreuses interdictions dans les langues vulgaires;

-plus de la moitié de ses interdictions se réfèrent à des auteurs qui sont en majorité des réformés alors que les autres catalogues visaient principalement des titres précis;

-un tiers des interdictions se rapportent à des ouvrages présentés anonymes qui sont des

écrits des réformateurs; ainsi on trouve dans cette section onze écrits de Martin Luther. (26) D'un examen attentif du catalogue romain de 1559, il ressort que l'Inquisition romaine s'attaque premièrement et directement aux auteurs et aux doctrines réformées; elle vise aussi le mouvement humaniste dans la mesure où celui-ci prône des idées chères à la Réforme et prêche un pluralisme religieux; en interdisant toutes les impressions d'une soixantaine d'éditeurs, elle attire l'attention sur les principaux foyers de diffusion de l'hérésie.

Au mois de janvier et de fevrier 1562, le Pape Pie IV demand par l'intermédiaire de ses légats à l'assemblée conciliaire de Trente, de réviser l'index et les dispositions publiés par son prédécesseur Paul IV. Au cours de la session XVIII célébrée le 26 fevrier, le Concile formait une commission chargée d'examiner et d'établir les listes des livres interdits et de soumettre ces travaux aux Pères conciliaires. Mais les travaux réalisés par la commission ne furent jamais examinés par l'assemblée conciliaire. Au cours de la dernière session du Concile, le 4 decembre 1563, l'assemblée conciliaire confie la question au Pape. Pie IV approuve les travaux de la commission conciliaire et ordonne sa publication par la bulle "Dominici gregis" du 24 mars 1564. (27)

L'index de 1564, appelé index du Concile de Trente, présente une législation cohérente et assez complète sur l'impression et la censure des livres qui, avec certaines modifications, restera en vigueur pendant plus de trois siècles. Mais la législation romaine, sensible surtout aux mesures répressives, met l'accent sur l'interdiction des livres qui ont échappé à la censure préventive. Le but premier du catalogue romain est de combattre les écrits hérétiques. Non content de

proscrire tous les ouvrages hérétiques, ceux qui contiennent des choses obscènes et les écrits d'astrologie ou de divination, l'index défend la lecture de la Bible en langue vulgaire à quiconque n'a pas obtenu une permission spéciale de l'ordinaire.

On a souvent affirmé que l'index de 1564 est beaucoup plus modéré que celui de Paul IV. Telle n'est pas notre conclusion qui se base sur un examen détaillé du contenu des deux catalogues et qui concorde avec le témoignage du dominicain Francesco Foreri, secrétaire de la commission tridentine chargée de la préparation de l'index, qui affirme que les Pères du Concile de Trente ont retenu le catalogue de Paul IV, "paucis tantum demptis atque etiam additis". (28)

C'est en 1571 que Pie V institutionalisa l'index avec la création de la Congrégation romaine de l'Index à laquelle il accorda la faculté d'interdire de nouveaux écrits, d'expurger certains ouvrages suspects, de permettre la circulation des écrits qui ne sont plus nocifs et d'exercer une vigilance sur les écrits jugés dangereux. L'index ainsi institutionalisé survivra jusqu'à la fin du Concile Vatican II.

L'index romain est une des institutions de l'Eglise de la Contre-Réforme. Mais l'action de l'Eglise romaine n'étant pas exclusivement antiprotestant, il y a certains aspects de la censure catholique qui ne sont pas uniquement dirigés contre la Réforme, ni contre le Père du Protestantisme. On peut trouver même quelques points de convergence entre la censure catholique et la censure protestante, comme c'est par exemple le cas de la condamnation de l'antitrinitarisme de Michel Servet ou de la lutte contre la superstition.

Fondé premièrement pour enrayer l'influence des thèses de Luther et de la Réforme, l'index devient, dans la stratégie du catholicisme, une arme importante contre les ennemis extérieurs et intérieurs pour empêcher de nouveau l'effritement de l'unité catholique; il devient aussi un moyen efficace pour conditionner l'évolution mentale des populations catholiques.

NOTES

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3. Carlos J. Pinto de Oliveira, La premier document pontifical sur la presse. La constitution "Intermultiplices" d'Innocent VIII (17 november 1478), dans Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques, vol. L (1966), pp. 628-643.

4. Rudolf Hirsh, Bulla Super Impressione librorum, 1515, dans Gutenberg-Jahrbuch, (1973), pp. 248-251.

5. Cité par Elizabeth Eisenstein, L'avènement de l'imprimerie et la Réforme. Une nouvelle approche au problème du démembrement de la chrétienté occidentale, dans Annales, XXVI (1971), pp. 1355-1382, p. 1356.

6. Cité par E. Eisenstien, ibidem, p. 1356.

7. Margaret Aston, The Fifteenth Century: The Prospect of Europe, London, 1968, p. 76. Cité par E. Eisenstein, ibidem, p. 1359.

8. Josef Benzing, Lutherbibliographie. Verzeichnis der Gedruckten Schriften Martin Luthers bis zu dessen Tod, Verlag, Baden-Baden, 1966.

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Luther's Understanding of Justification

by: Lowell C. Green

It is regarded as a commonplace that the doctrine of justification by faith was the central teaching of Luther and the foundation of the Protestant Reformation. But there is little agreement among scholars and churchmen over what Luther taught in regard to this doctrine. In the past, many researchers have failed to listen to Luther on his own terms. Instead, they have tried to put Luther into a box. But Luther simply will not fit into a box or a system of someone else's making. His statements on justification are characteristically paradoxical and dynamic and very different from those of later Protestant dogmatics.

This paper shall investigate Luther's understanding of justification, that is, of how the sinner is made right with God. It assumes that most previous attempts have suffered from the failure to listen to Luther on his own terms. It shall seek to grasp justification within the context of his thinking as a whole.

I. A Reinterpretation of Luther's Understanding of Justification is Needful Today Because of the Failure of Luther Interpretations of Yesterday and of Today.

A. The Hardening of Luther's Doctrine of Justification under the Pupils of Melanchthon and under Protestant Orthodoxy.

As I established in my recent book, Luther's colleague, Philipp Melanchthon, developed a

doctrine of justification which was essentially in accord with Luther, but was more systematic in nature and used a more scholastic type of terminology. (1) Like Luther, he held that God does not justify the righteous but only sinners. But such important components of Luther's understanding of justification as the close link with the person and work of Christ became isolated in separate doctrines on how God has made himself known to man, on Law and Gospel, and on Christology. (2) Whereas Melanchthon himself did not lose sight of these fundamental connections, the followers of Melanchthon actually did. Under subsequent Protestant Orthodoxy, elements of Luther's teaching became increasingly compartmentalized into separate doctrines of revelation, Christology, justification, and the distinction of Law and Gospel. In fact, Law and Gospel tended to be relegated to the third chief part of the dogmatics system, separated by many chapters from revelation and justification. Thereby, Luther's dynamic teaching of how God justifies the sinner lost much of its distinctiveness and was subjected to currents of legalism and rationalism. (3)

For example, Luther's teaching that Christ in his death on the cross bore the guilt of all mankind and thereby achieved forgiveness of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. This was not in itself wrong. But when a subsequent generation divided justification into two successive actions or steps, forgiveness of sins and imputation of righteousness, a subtle change had taken place. When Christ's atoning work was described under the Law rather than the Gospel, that is, when it was reduced to Christ's satisfying a legal code rather than as bringing about the reconciliation of God and man, the distance from Luther was widening. (4) When a distinction was made between Christ's

righteousness as active obedience (his life of holiness) and his passive obedience (his atoning death), and when the attempt was made to show quantitatively that either the active or passive obedience or both were equivalent to the deficit of fallen man, this legalism and rationalism had almost nothing in common with Luther's teaching on justification. (5) Nevertheless, these legalistic and rationalistic reconstructions of Luther's thought, as presented by both Lutheran and Reformed dogmaticians during the seventeenth century, have been widely regarded until the present day as authentic expositions of Luther. This is an error.

Nevertheless, there were several important points where Protestant Orthodoxy transmitted Luther's genuine thinking. The old dogmaticians taught that the change of justification takes place not in man but in God, and, that God justifies only sinners. In other words, justification is distinct from any good works in the one who is justified. However, this brought serious conflicts within their systematic constructions. Since the old dogmaticians followed Neo-Platonism in denying the possibility that God could change (the "attribute" of immutability of God), they were unable satisfactorily to account for the act of God's Son becoming man (the so-called incarnation; really, the Menschwerdung) or for the change that took place in reconciliation when God replaced his wrath with his mercy. At this point, they stood in great tension with Luther's paradoxes in justification. When they overcame the problem of a change in God by asserting that God tempered his wrath with mercy, the distinction of Law and Gospel had been violated as well as the freedom of God to act freely or even to change his mind or actions. Instead, they bound God to the requirements of a legal code or a rational concept of immutability. (6)

B. The Opposition of the Socinians.

Protestant teachings on justification were soon to be attacked at several crucial points. A massive onslaught came from some Antitrinitarians in Poland, led by Socinus or Fausto Sozzini (1539-1604). Socinus rejected the traditional doctrine of total depravity and inherited lust ("original sin"), together with the doctrine of satisfaction by the substitutionary death of Christ. He said that to forgive and to demand satisfaction were mutually exclusive ideas; it would be wrong of God to forgive and then subsequently to demand payment; God can forgive without satisfaction being paid. Socinus thought it was a contradiction to hold that the divine nature might pay satisfaction to the divine nature through Christ. The transferral of alien sin upon the innocent Christ he called "absurd" and "unreasonable." The imputation of a passive righteousness was senseless. The whole concept of satisfaction, according to Socinus, conflicted with grace, for grace could no longer be grace if payment had to be made. From here, Socinus moved on to the concepts of quantity, the finite and the infinite. How could the temporal or finite suffering of one man outweigh the infinite and eternal punishment of all mankind? Furthermore, Christ as man was himself obligated to keep the Law; in keeping it, he incurred no extra merit. How could he, as finite man, render an infinite satisfaction for others? For God to forgive mankind on the basis of such a contrived imputed righteousness would be basely dishonest and therefore totally unworthy of God. (7)

The reaction of the Orthodox scholars left much to be desired. They should have attacked

Socinianism at its weak point, which was Rationalism. Unfortunately, Protestant Orthodoxy by this time had become imbued with a moderate rationalism of its own. The attacks from Rationalism were met by rationalistic counter-attacks and rationalistic defences. The defenders of Orthodoxy had committed the blunder of accepting the statement of the question and the terms of their opponents. Therefore, both sides overlooked Luther's paradoxical understanding of justification and fell into the clutches of Rationalism.

C. Luther Interpretation Since the Enlightenment.

During the past two hundred years, ideas drawn from a number of intellectual movements have questioned the validity of Luther's doctrine of justification. These ideas have come out of movements so varied and yet inter-related as Neo-Platonism and German Idealism, Cartesianism and Empiricism, Rationalism and Romanticism.

It has been very difficult for post-Kantian thinkers to avoid the concept of Idealism that God cannot change, and that therefore, in justification, the change which takes place is within man rather than God. Accordingly, some of the Germans have demanded that justification must be effektiv, that is, that justification "makes good." Although scholars offering such a formulation generally protest that they are not thereby basing justification upon good works, their interpretations seem to veer in that direction. In this context, it is hard to comprehend Luther's emphasis on justification as a change in the heart of God, whereby God sets aside his wrath and regards the sinner with favour. The dialectic of Law and Gospel seems out of place, according to which God regards the sinner as

righteous because he has accepted God's judgment in the Law and has believed God gracious in the Gospel. In Luther's thought, justification means that the sinner "lets God be God" and lets man be man; not the righteous but only sinners are justified. We have seen that later Protestant Orthodoxy, in claiming that God was unable to change, had found it difficult to explain how God could become man, forgive sin, and replace wrath with mercy. Albrecht Ritschl also rejected the concept of the wrath of God. In post-Ritschlian liberalism, which was strongly influenced by German Idealism, Melanchthon's doctrine of a "synthetic" justification, achieved by the "arbitrary" decision of God to "declare the sinner righteous," was called a "self-deception by God." (8) Karl Holl replaced Luther's understanding of justification as a change in the attitude of God into a thing that God worked with man, which, when God anticipated the final righteousness still lying in the remote future, God, in a proleptic declaration, pronounced the believer already righteous, although he was actually still only a sinner. Here, Holl overlooked the paradoxical character of the Simul justus et peccator in the later Luther. (9) This paradox had a somewhat different content during the several stages of Luther's development. In the Early Luther, man was a sinner in fact but a righteous one in hope of future merit; or, man was a sinner in the present, but proleptically righteous in view of future sanctification (thus Holl). In the Later Luther, man was a sinner in regard to his active righteousness but just according to the imputed righteousness of Christ. Another aspect of the paradox was that he was a sinner in the eyes of the world but righteous in the eyes of God; put differently, he was a sinner under the Law, but righteous by grace through faith under the Gospel.

II. The Doctrine of Justification Under Luther's Thinking as a Whole: De Servo Arbitrio.

Before we can speak of the doctrine of justification in Martin Luther, we must first of all be clear that he seldom mentioned the term, justification, and that what he had to say informally was more revealing than what he said formally. It was not Luther but Melanchthon who formulated the doctrine of justification in the Lutheran Confessions. To speak of justification in Luther does not mean to deny the teachings of the later Lutheran Church, but it does mean to study her chief theologian on the basis of his own writings rather than of later formulations. To speak of justification in Luther is to speak paradoxically rather than in terms of the Aristotelian logic of Melanchthon and later Lutherans. To speak of justification in Luther is to follow the distinction of Law and Gospel, of the flesh and the spirit in man, and of God hidden in wrath and revealed in Christ. It means clearly to distinguish the work of God and the work of man, together with the problem of free choice (servum arbitrium), under which man has freedom in temporal but not in eternal matters. This means further that we clearly distinguish the two separate realms of civil and spiritual power and jurisdiction. Luther's understanding of what takes place when God justifies the sinner is further identical with his distinction of the Theologia crucis versus a Theologia gloriae (Theology of the Cross versus a Theology of Glory).

Martin Luther himself said that his greatest theological work was his treatise against Erasmus, De servo arbitrio (1525), commonly translated "Bondage of the Will" but more accurately as "Concerning the Servitude of Choice." This work has been generally overlooked or misinterpreted.

Contrary to the prevailing assumption, it was not written as a treatise on predestination; indeed, Luther used that term only three times in several hundred pages. He did not go into the doctrine of predestination in the attempt to probe God's eternal and hidden counsels, but instead he excoriated such as procedure. He admonished instead to ponder God's revealed message to the world in Jesus Christ, Deus revelatus.

In De servo arbitrio, under the distinction of Law and Gospel and of God hidden in wrath and revealed in Christ (Deus absconditus seu revelatus), Luther gave some of his profoundest statements on justification. Luther was not a subjectivist. Not the sinner but God was central. Perhaps the most profound formulation he ever wrote on this subject was the place where he described the strange and the proper work of God. There, he contrasted the hidden will, "the will of Majesty," with the revealed will, the will of God Incarnate. God in his Majesty works death and damnation and wills the destruction of the sinner; but God in Christ does not will the death of the sinner but his forgiveness and eternal salvation (WA 18:685). We must not debate the secret will of divine Majesty, for God has not willed to tell us about this aspect of his being. Luther places us before this paradox: "It belongs to the same God Incarnate to weep, lament, and groan at the perdition of the ungodly, although his will of Majesty abandons and rejects some, according to his purpose, so that they perish" (WA 18:689-90). God conceals his mercy when he speaks in the Law which uncovers sins and shows his wrath. In those who persist in unbelief (Luther does not explain why they remain ungodly), this Law, the message of the God of Majesty, has the effect of working perdition. But in those who are godly, it is the preparation for the word of acquital and forgiveness. In the ungodly, the Law serves only

to condemn, but in the godly, it prepares for the Gospel by showing the person his culpability and making him long for the Gospel with its word of pardon. And so the Law stands in the service of the Gospel. The Hidden God gives way before God Revealed in Christ. Luther declares: "And so his eternal kindness and mercy is hidden under eternal wrath, and righteousness under culpability. This is the highest level of faith, to believe him to be kind who saves so few and damns so many, to believe him to be just who by his will makes us unavoidably damnable... If I could by any powers of reason comprehend how this God can be merciful and just who shows such wrath and harshness, there would be no need for faith" (WA 18:633). Luther expressed the paradoxical character of God's working in the immediate context: "Faith deals with things not seen (Hebr. 11,1). If there is to be a locus of faith, it is necessary that all things which are believed have been hidden. But nothing is more effectively hidden than when it is under a contrary manifestation, sense, or experience. Accordingly, when God makes alive, he does so by killing. When he justifies, he does so by making guilty. When he draws someone to heaven, he does it by bringing down to hell" (WA 18:633).

Dum iustificat, facit illud reos faciendo. When he justifies, he does that by making guilty ones. First the Law and then the Gospel. Here is the nerve of Luther's understanding of justification. It is an understanding of God rather than of man, of revelation rather than of reason, of a divine work rather than a human accomplishment, and it exists only as a paradox. God does not justify just people but only the unjust.

This was a point that Luther frequently elaborated upon in his preaching, and never more

eloquently than when dealing with the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican in Luke 18.9-14. The man who went into the temple to tell God how just he was received nothing but the echo of his own hollow words. But the man who was beaten low by the accusations of his conscience, who prayed, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," went down to his house justified, rather than the other. To human reason or unbelief, sin and grace did not rhyme, but only sin and wrath. But faith brought together sin and grace and made them rhyme. Luther preached on August 20, 1531:

> Therefore, this is the art:
> if your conscience is heavy laden,
> do not take much of your learning
> from the Law, but instead
> deal with grace, and say: "I am
> a sinner, but I rhyme with
> this word 'grace.'" This is
> the greatest art of all--to
> divorce from each other sin
> and Law, and to rhyme together
> sin and grace (WA 34/II: 145-46).

III. Justification Fully Developed in the Late Luther.

We have noted that Luther's most important statements on justification frequently occur in unexpected places. We have seen that De servo arbitrio offers a classical presentation of how he understood justification, and we observed a striking parallel in his sermons. Now, why can we not verify our findings from Luther's treatises on justification? The answer is that there are none. He never carried out his promise to write a treatise on justification. The closest thing to that is the sketch on justification which was transmitted to us through the hand of Veit

Dietrich (Rhapsodia seu concepta in librum de loco iustificiationis..., 1530. WA 30/II: 657-70). Unfortunately, Dietrich's readiness to alter texts is well established. This is why we must look beyond any formal treatise to his collected works as a whole. Although there are many interesting statements dealing with justification from the time of the so-called tower-experience (1518) and shortly thereafter, the great commentaries on Galatians and Genesis from his later years give a more definitive picture. Therefore, we shall concentrate upon these in the final part of the paper.

The insight that God works under contraries was presented with special power in the Lectures on Genesis of his last years. In expounding Genesis 28 with the story of how Jacob had first been given the birthright and then had had to flee from home and leave his brother, Esau, in possession of the birthright, Luther said that it is characteristic of God to make his children wait for the blessing and to need to go on as though they were deprived and the wicked were privileged. It is the same way with the manner in which God saves the sinner. In this discussion, Luther does not follow the distinction of later dogmatics between justification and sanctification, but uses the term sanctification to describe how God saves the sinner, a usage established in the Small Catechism of 1529. There are two ways in which the sinner is endowed with holiness (sanctitas): the first sanctification is completely in the Word of God who declares the sinner just, contrary to every outward appearance. This seems to coincide with what Melanchthon would call justification. The second sanctification follows the first, and consists in the godly life of the believer who follows the Ten Commandments (WA 43:576,29). "The first and completely pure sanctity is the Word, in which there is no fault, blemish, or sin... I

have the word: I am sanctified, righteous, and pure, quite apart from every evil deed and accusation, insofar as I have the Word. Thus Christ himself said it: 'You are clean on account of the Word which I have spoken to you'" (WA 43:575). To have this Word is to be holy. "Such sanctity is imputed to those who have the Word. And the person is simply reputed sanctified. And this is not on our account or because of our works, but on account of the Word. and thus the entire person is appointed just," atque ita constituitur tota persona justa (WA 43:576,8). Undoubtedly, Luther here teaches justification but he used a different vocabulary. Melanchthon would have said: "Such righteousness (of Christ) is imputed to those who have faith"; Luther said, "Such sanctity is imputed to those who have the Word." When we reflect upon the two statements, we see that they are dealing with the same basic act of soteriology but in different terms. In other words, one cannot confine Luther within the strictures of a dogmatics.

Moreover, when we compare statements from the Commentary on Galatians, we find this reflection confirmed. There Luther says: "This most excellent righteousness, the righteousness of faith, which God imputes to us through Christ, aside from works, is neither political nor ceremonial nor a righteousness of the divine Law nor is it interwoven with our works, but it is completely different from these. It is purely passive righteousness (just as the aforementioned are active). Here, indeed, we do not work or bring anything back to God, but we merely receive something and permit someone else to work within us, namely, God" (WA 40/I:41,15).

In the Commentary on Genesis, Luther took up again a thought which he had expressed both in De libero arbitrio and in the Commentary on

Galatians: the principle that God in his innermost being can be known only in the Son become man. In his early years, Luther had been something of a Neo-Platonist (as I have demonstrated elsewhere). (11) But Luther had long left such dualism far behind him. The account of Jacob's Ladder in Genesis 28 would have given Luther much opportunity for developing such an interpretation, for he would have been following a medieval precedent. In that case, he might have stressed the great gap between material and spiritual things, and said that only through mystic contemplation could the gap be breached. Instead, Luther held that the gap between the material and the spiritual has been bridged in the act of God becoming man, and that gap is still bridged through the sacraments, where earthly elements become means of imparting the heavenly gift. Luther remarked while commenting on Genesis 28:12-14: "...This dream signifies that infinite, ineffable and remarkable mystery of the incarnation of Christ, who was descended from the patriarch Jacob" (WA 43:578,29). And he added these words:

> These things must be regarded with astonishment, to see a man and lowliest of creatures, humbled beyond all others, and the very same one seated at the right hand of the Father, lifted above all the angels, to see him in the bosom of the Father and the next moment to see him subjected to the Devil.... This is the marvellous ascent and descent of the angels: to see the highest and the lowest in the closest of all unity: to see the highest God

> lying in the manger. This is why the angels adored him, rejoiced, and sang: 'Glory to God in the highest.' And when they contemplated the humbleness of his human nature they came down and sang: 'And peace on earth' (WA 43:579,20).

In his exposition of Isaiah 9 (Christmas 1543-44), he said that God did not want to be seen and found in heaven, and therefore had left heaven and come down to us. He thereby set up a ladder by which we might ascend to God-- the Child of Bethlehem and the Man of Calvary, as made known in the Gospel. It is a grave sin to reject this ladder and seek God out by means of philosophical reasoning or to reject God in his humiliation and contemplate instead God in his majesty and his transcendental glory, because this would be rejecting his true self-revelation in Christ for something else (WA 40/III:656). One must not "drag in" God in his majesty, as was done in Moses and the Law (WA 40/I:77,11). And Luther brought this out notably in the large Commentary on Galatians where he stressed the difference between the Neo-Platonic technique of contemplation and the attitude of a humble faith which relies upon the revelation of God in Bethlehem's manger and upon Calvary's cross. He counselled his hearers to shun speculations about the divine majesty, good works, human traditions, philosophy, and the Law. Instead:

> Rush to the manger and the bosom of the Mother and pick up that little baby, the tiny Son of the Virgin. Watch him being born, suckling, growing, moving among men, teaching, dying, rising again, held up

> above the heavens, having power over all things. As the clouds are scattered by the sun, in this way you will be able to scatter all terrors and to avoid all errors. And this sight will keep you in the right way so that you may follow where Christ has gone before you (WA 40/I:79-80).

In his interpretation of Genesis 28, Luther also related Jacob's ladder to Mount Calvary where Jesus was crucified. "This place is Mount Calvary itself, if not literally, at least for pious meditation: the place where the Lord himself slept. And it is said that the tree of forbidden wood stood in the same place. For God willed that it should be there that Christ should be crucified and should die. And the place where Jacob saw the ladder would be the same place where Christ, the true Jacob, slept in the tomb, and came forth in the resurrection, even where the angels descended and ascended" (WA 43:596,25). That spot Jacob named Bethel, meaning the "House of God." And this House of God was also the Church. Luther held that it was the House of God, because God was present there in the Means of Grace, that is, in the preaching of the word and in the sacraments. "It is the spoken Word of God (sermo Dei) which constitutes the Church. He is Lord of all places; wherever the word is heard, wherever there is a Baptism, the Sacrament of the Altar, or the Absolution is administered, there you should decide and conclude: This is certainly the House of God; here heaven is opened.... Wherever God speaks, there is Jacob's ladder, wherever angels ascend and descend, there is the Church, there the Kingdom of Heaven is being laid open" (WA 43:597,3).

Where the preached Word and the sacraments are present, as in the House of God, there the justification of the sinner is taking place. Luther now drew this together with the story of how Jacob took the stone which he had used for his pillow and set it up, and drew from it the analogy that justification is the rock or cornerstone of our faith.

> And so we are able to refute (the papists). First of all this rule must be diligently held, that justification, the forgiveness of sins, grace or mercy is first, like a cornerstone. And this is simply gratuitious and obtained with no works. We must always keep this rule in our view, that we are neither justified by works nor out of the Law, but freely, prevenient grace before all our works and merits. Thus it is said in Isaiah: 'I will be sought by those who have not asked for me.' Here is the cornerstone and God is the beginning of our salvation, who has manifested and revealed himself to us, in order that we might know him. This is the head and the foundation which is put forth in all the Scripture. The Word of God itself is first of all things, so that its creation is the preached Word, by which all nations know God. Rom. 1. There has to be something whether it be a word or a deed which goes before and moves us; this first movement has

> to be from God. This much is certain: the person must first be made agreeable, I say, by justifying grace and the gift of the Holy Ghost, by which man knows God as a Saviour. And this is truly the first grace, where we do nothing, but merely suffer. We hear God speaking the Word and we experience his working through the spoken Word and sacraments by which he arouses the knowledge of himself within us" (WA 43:606,25).

Traditional Protestant interpreters have made Luther sound too much like Melanchthon. Recent interpreters have brought the two reformers into an erroneous dissonance. Melanchthon tended to use a more scholastic vocabulary. He spoke of the imputation of the passive righteousness of Christ to the believer. Luther often expressed his agreement with Melanchthon, and the same terminology can occasionally be seen in his own writing, but Luther tended to teach justification from a different perspective. He relished the paradoxes of God Hidden and Revealed, the Judge and the Saviour, the wrathful One and the gracious One, the giver of the Law and the Gospel. A specific factor in Luther's thought was his strong emphasis upon the goodness and soundness of God's creation. At the same time, he rejected the dualism of Neo-Platonism and other forms of philosophy which made a gulf between the material and the spiritual. It is true that there had once been such a gulf, but the gap had been bridged when God's Son became man and saved the world as the Child of Bethlehem and the Man of Calvary. God becoming man meant man becoming God. Christ taking on sin meant man taking on righteousness. This radical at-one-ness has not been suspended by

the Ascension of Christ into heaven; but Christ remains the ubiquitous Saviour and Intercessor. Luther did not see Christ between the Ascension and the Second Coming as the giver of a new Law, as mighty Judge, or as a majestic King. Rather, he placed Christ during the interim as under the Gospel, as the Saviour and Intercessor in heaven. His presence is mediated through the preached Word and the sacraments. In the preaching of the Word, the Law attacks the conscience of the sinner, shows him divine wrath and his own lost condition, and drives him to the mercy of God. This mercy of God is given out in the Gospel, and actually bestows salvation.

It was of great importance for Luther to show that the Word and the sacraments were present in the external created things, and that through these created things, God was fully and really present. This all adds up to the conclusion that for Luther, there was no real line between Christology and justification. In his comment on Gal. 2.16 he stated: "Faith justifies because it grasps and possesses this treasure, Christ who is present.... Therefore, where there is true trust within the heart, there Christ is present, in that same cloud and faith.... Therefore, the Christ who is apprehended by faith and dwells in the heart is Christian righteousness, on account of which God reckons us righteous and gives eternal life (WA 40/I:229,22).

CONCLUSION

For Luther, good theological method meant that one eschewed the Theology of Glory and built upon the Theology of the Cross. If there is a message from him for today, five hundred years after his birth, that message must be a warning against the Theology of Glory. It comprehends his

warning against confounding the work of God and the work of man, of delving into what God has kept hidden rather than into what he has made known, and of emphasizing the majestic attributes of God over the gracious qualities, or, in other words, of preferring the Law to the Gospel. These practices of confounding Deus absconditus (God hidden) and Deus revelatus (God revealed) appear under various guises of legalism, antinomianism which breeds false tolerance and then intolerance, triumphalism in the church, the mixing of the secular and spiritual realms, and the replacements of the Gospel of Christ with the social gospel.

In his proclaiming of the Gospel, Luther emphasized that God does not justify saints but only sinners. Man must be man and let God be God. In the work of atonement and reconciliation, the decisive step takes place not in man but in God, for God lays his wrath aside and regards the sinner as righteous and saintly for the sake of Christ.

In a table conversation during January 1533, Luther startled his wife, Katie, by asking her: "Do you believe that you are a saint?" Katie hedged a bit, saying that she knew she was a sinner. Her husband went on to reassure her that she was indeed a saint, because Baptism makes one a saint, and she had been baptized. It was an error to think that justification meant being made right. Justification does not deal with a quality within us but with the judgment of God concerning us. (12) It consists in this: that God maintains that we are good and righteous. When God the righteous Judge declares us just and righteous, then we have been forensically justified. We have become new creatures. We are saints.

NOTES

1. Lowell C. Green, How Melanchthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel (Fallbrook, Calif.: Verdict Publications, 1980), pp. 213-36 and 253-67.

2. Luther held that, without Christ, man can only deal with God Hidden (Deus absconditus). Whatever is learned from reason, from nature, or from history can only bring man before God in his majestic attributes; here is judgment and death for the sinner. This is the God of the Law, who, in faith, must be replaced with the God of the Gospel, God in Christ, God in his merciful attributes. This is the God who is different from all other gods, because he has made himself known in Jesus Christ (Deus revelatus); the most important thing about God is not his majesty but his love. --This understanding of God is a central point in Luther's De servo arbitrio; unfortunately, his pupils in subsequent generations failed to grasp it entirely.

3. Luther's dynamic understanding of revelation was lost by the seventeenth century. In the dogmatics of Protestant Orthodoxy, there was the return to the medieval doctrine, based upon the Neo-Platonism of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, that God can be grasped through three "ways" aside from his self-revelation in Christ: the way of eminence (via eminentiae) in which God is grasped by assigning superlatives to all good qualities (most wise, most beautiful, most powerful), the way of negation (via negationis) in which God is described by denying evil qualities (without sin, without change, without weakness), and the way of causality (via causalitatis), the existence and nature of God proved from creation as his

handiwork. This procedure led to long lists of "attributes" of God, a procedure subject to a double error: 1) an attribute is something we do, a good work, a not letting God be God, a creation of God ex machina, and 2) these attributes did not distinguish between the majestic and the merciful attributes of God and therefore tended to confound Law and Gospel. In other words, they obscured God revealed in Christ.

4. The emphasis upon justification as satisfying a legal code seems to have been characteristic among many follers of Calvin; it also passed into Lutheran theology. The division of the divine work into justification and sanctification, likely begun under Calvin, was taken into the Lutheran Formula of Concord. Its advantage was that it helped to distinguish between the work of God and man; its disadvantage was that it tended to separate being declared righteous and being made righteous, a problem which has still not been completely solved.

5. Discussed in Hans Emil Weber, Reformation, Orthodoxie und Rationalismus, vol. 1, part 1 (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1937), pp. 299-306.

6. On "wrath tempered with mercy" as a confounding of Law and Gospel, see Weber, vol. 2 (ibid., 1951), pp. 204-8. Robert C. Schultz described a nineteenth-century variation of this, heilige Liebe, in Gesetz und Evangelium (in der lutherischen Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts), no. 4 in Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Luthertums (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1958), pp. 64-90.

7. On Socinianism in relationship to the theology of Luther, Melanchthon, and Orthodoxy, see the

presentation in Weber, loc. cit., pp. 184-204. An older discussion is in Christoph Ernst Luthardt, Kompendium der Dogmatik, 9th ed. (Leipzig: Dörffling and Franke, 1893), pp. 240-42.

8. Karl Holl, Gesammelte Aufsätze zür Kirchengeschichte, vol. 3 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1928), pp. 535-36.

9. Karl Holl, ibid., vol. 1 (ib., 1948), pp. 122-23.

10. The rest of the paper will consist largely in the analysis of texts from Luther. Scholarly principles demand that we not content ourselves with translations but that we consult the texts in their original languages. We shall cite the "Weimar Edition" with the initials WA. The tabletalk will be cited TR. D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar: Hermann Bohlau and successors, 1883ff).

11. Green, op. cit. in note 1, pp. 70-76, and works cited there.

12. TR 2933b. Luther's remark: "Nos autem volumus manere in iustitia praedicamento relationis, non qualitatis, scilicent das vns Gott vor frum vnd gerecht halde: dauor kunnen wir vns selbst nicht halden, quia iudicamus (F.: iudicatur) secundum sensum" (TR 3:97,24). Given in TR 3:97, this tabletalk was updated in WA 48:527. It comes from Farrago literum etc. (Gotha Bibl. A 402), one of the most important and reliable early collections. Transmission was through Veit Dietrich and Hieronymus Besold.

SOTERIOLOGY AND ETHICS IN MARTIN LUTHER (1)

by: Antonio R. Gualtieri

I. Introduction

The term 'soteriology' may be understood in a wide or narrow sense. In the narrow sense, it signifies the process of redemption; the agency or mechanism by which humans are transformed from plight (the body of sin and death, in the Christian context) to salvation (obedient and loving relation of the children of God to their Father, again in the Christian case). This is probably the dominant meaning in Christian thought, evidenced, for example, by the presence on my shelves of the old systematic theologies of Hodge and Strong where Vol. I treats of Theology, Vol. II of Anthropology and Vol. III of Soteriology.

Soteriology may be used in a wider sense, however, in which it signifies the devotees' internalization of the sacred cosmos in place of the chaos of the routine, profane world. This meaning is more widely used in religious studies and anthropology, reflecting the influence of Weber, Geertz, Eliade, and Berger, among others.

The committed appropriation of the sacred reality, transforms the religious participant; he now inhabits the real world, truly understanding the character of ultimacy, humans, history, and nature. In other words, soteriology entails the internalization of a cosmology. But not only this; along with the religiously disclosed cosmology goes an axiology, a set of values and priorities implicit in the vision of the real world.

The entailment for morality follows: even in the absence of explicit moral rules, moral direction and action guides can be extrapolated from the symbolically mediated vision of reality and its implicit valuations.

2. A Sketch of Luther's Worldview

Applying this methodology (2) to Luther and morality, the question becomes: what moral values, possibilities, and action guides may be inferred from Luther's sacred cosmos, from the ontological perspectives mediated by his pivotal religious symbol of justification by faith? The perspectives that are immediately pertinent are those on God, humans, and history.

In highly condensed fashion, the justification by faith formula conveys to the faithful the conviction that the ultimate reality and power is characterized by holy wrath and forgiving grace. It is the holiness of God's character that ultimately lies behind human estrangement and the need for justification. The holiness and moral righteousness of God lay upon the creature a moral demand. The human moral enterprise is set in motion by the divine requirement that his human creatures embody his moral will. Moreover, the divine will has a specific and enduring character; morality acquires not only its initial impetus but also its specific direction from the understanding of God's nature. To be truly human in the light of Christian perspectives on ultimacy is to be moral as this is defined by biblical disclosures of God's character.

This moral demand God has implanted in natural human consciousness, revealed in the decalogue of Moses and clarified in the commands

of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. It is interesting to note that Luther does not restrict the love command to the Gospel commands; love undergirds the law -- expanding and clarifying the meaning of the decalogue and of the natural law.

God's character, however, is dialectical; not only is he moral righteousness and wrath, he is also mercy and grace.

There is some evidence that a decisive moment of illumination occurred for Luther around 1512 (3) while meditating on the phrase "The righteousness of God" in the cloaca or privy of the tower. In any case, the convergence of his personal experience of despair and deliverance, and his analysis of the meaning of scripture, established his conviction about justification by God's grace in Christ as the heart of the Christian revelation.

The significance of Luther's exegesis of the Psalms in arriving at the pivotal conviction of justification by faith may be seen by noting the difference between the Authorized and Revised Standard Versions in their translations of Psalm 22:31 and Psalm 24:5. Where the King James version uses 'righteousness', the RSV translates as follows:

"Proclaim his deliverance ('righteousness': Jerusalem Bible) to a people yet unborn, that he has wrought it."

Psalm 22:31 RSV

"He will receive blessing
from the Lord and
vindication
(also Jerusalem)
from the God of
his salvation."

Psalm 24:5 RSV

The righteousness of God is thereby disclosed as not only his moral character expressed in his will for humanity (and certainly not only his wrathful judgment upon the moral failure of his subjects), but also that vital quality by which he initiates the deliverance of those who are the victims of unrighteousness so that they may enjoy a transformed relation to the righteous Lord. The concept of the righteousness of God is expanded to include God's redemptive initiative.

This perception of God's nature as grace, rather than diminishing the moral demand of God, heightens it. Luther, through the spectacles of his personal discovery of the liberating and transformative reality of grace, correctly perceives the discontinuous, transcendent nature of the divine demand of love. If love amongst humans means anything like the overwhelmingly gracious love he experienced in Christ, then it is an astonishing, even miraculous, quality.

We turn now to Luther's basic anthropological perspective. For Luther, drawing on the theological inheritance of original sin and his subjective experience of unworth and despondency, humans are abject sinners. Human nature is dung; the sin of humans by which they are utterly alienated from their loving source causes them to stink with degradation. In consequence, that which by their created nature they must be -- moral -- they are unable to be. True, they may manifest a certain external conformity to accepted moral rules, but truly righteous -- in a moral sense -- they cannot be said to be in the absence of the inward motivation of these external acts by a spirit of self-sacrificing love.

But note that this is not an unqualified

negativity. Humans retain a limited capacity to exercise moral judgment because God has written the law on the minds of all persons who come into the world. This natural moral activity allows even the societies of pagans to attain an acceptable degree of external social order and peace. This is seen in Luther's commendation of the civil polity of antiquity and of the Turks. The logic is that the positive civil or secular law at its best reflects the natural law implanted by God. But we should not be deceived about the value of this minimal 'civil righteousness'. According to the all-important criterion of salvation, it is worthless.

A third constituent of a comprehensive cosmology is the meaning of the historical process. For Luther, the soteriological process begun in justification, remains incomplete within history. Professor H. Oberman has reminded us that Luther remains resolutely apocalyptical. Christians await the completion of the drama of redemption. True, faith should and can do all moral things. But discipleship is imperfect; Christians are not "wholly inner and perfectly spiritual men". Accordingly, the moral life remains also marred and defective, awaiting the second coming of Christ for its perfecting.

3. Cosmology and Law

Now let us apply the preceding brief comments about Luther's cosmology more directly to his discussion of law.

Before the fall and after the eschaton, the law expressed in nature, decalogue and Gospel command, conveying God's will of love, was joyfully obeyed and will be once again. Before the fall it was not really experienced as 'law',

that is, as external and impossible demand, and will not be after the consummation. Even within history, however, the law has an enduring value; here there can be neither antinomianism nor defiant leaps beyond good and evil. Why not? Because the law is rooted in the eternal moral righteousness and holiness of God with its concomitant wrath revealed against disobedient sinners.

After the fall, however, humans are incapable of fully keeping the law which is constituted, in its full and ideal sense, not only by external prescriptions and prohibitions but also by 'a clean heart', that is, by unqualified loving intention. This inference about the human failure to implement moral law derives, we have noted, from Luther's pessimistic anthropology.

Nevertheless, the law continues to serve the divine economy within historical existence in several ways:

First, the law continues to function within the world of the unredeemed in a 'political' or 'civil' way to restrain egotistic drives and to create a minimal social order and peace. Sinners who are unwilling and, in any case, unable to fulfill the law's full and perfect inward demands of love, may, nevertheless, be commanded and coerced to obey its external requirements. This restraining and coercing function of the law and its correlative sword is a manifestation of God's mercy that refuses to abandon his human creation to a rapacious and anarchical destiny even within the historical process.

The second use of the law is the 'theological' or 'spiritual' function in which the law serves as praeparatio evangelica. We need only mention this because it does not fall

directly within the purview of this discussion of morality, though it is undoubtedly the most important function of the law from the point of view of salvation. The impossible demands of God's law accuse and condemn the human creature; they induce the experience of God's wrath and drive the inevitably disobedient to despair. In this condition they are ready to hear and heed the Gospel's summons to repentance and its promise of justification before God through his unconditional grace.

The conclusion to be drawn may be pointed by asking: Can the moral law be kept by non-Christians, by the unredeemed? In one sense, yes. It is only the demands of the law that enable any sort of civilized life in a sinful and unfaithful world. Were it impossible to fulfil the law in important measure, civil life itself, in the absence of faith, would be utterly impossible. In another sense, the law cannot be kept -- at least not in its deepest intent and scope. For the demands of the law are radical; they include the inner intention to fulfil the loving aims of the law, and not only external performance of the law's prescriptions and prohibitions. It is, we have noted, precisely because of this human impossibility to meet the deep and comprehensive demands of the law, that it accuses sinful humans and induces despair if they expect a legal righteousness to save them.

So far we have considered the function of law among the unredeemed. Even within the life of the Christian, however, the law continues to serve God's purposes in the two preceding senses and in one additional one.

First, it guides Christians in their sanctification by informing them of the content of God's will which in their justified nature, they

do not experience as coercive demand but now delight in performing in joyful obedience. Though Christians do not need the law to motivate them to good works of obedience in love (since they are now compelled by the indwelling Holy Spirit), they, nevertheless, still need the law to disclose to them knowledge of God's will which it is now their joyous desire to do.

The question arises whether Luther thought that true Christians could actually and fully implement this obedient life. Did he, like some of the Anabaptist communitarians, hold to the perfectibility of man? There are suggestions in Secular Authority: To What Extent It Should be Obeyed (1523) that this is the case; that Christians can actualize the form of life commanded by Christ's moral sayings taken literally.

> And if all the world were
> composed of real Christians,
> that is, true believers,
> no prince, king, lord, sword,
> or law would be needed.
> For what were the use of them,
> since Christians have in
> their hearts the Holy Spirit,
> who instructs them and causes
> them to wrong no one, to
> love every one, willingly and
> cheerfully to suffer in-
> justice and even death from
> every one. Where every
> wrong is suffered and every
> right is done, no quarrel,
> strife, trial, judge,
> penalty, law or sword
> is needed. Therefore,
> it is not possible for the
> secular sword and law to

> find any work to do among Christians, since of themselves they do much more than its laws and doctrines can demand. Just as Paul says in I Timothy 1:19, 'The law is not given for the righteous, but for the unrighteous.' Why is this? Because the righteous does of himself all and more than all that all the law demands.... If the whole world were Christians, all these words of Christ in Matthew ch. 5 would apply to it and it would keep them.

This is to say that the divine moral law is to be fulfilled even though -- in the present argument -- it can be realized only by those with transformative, empowering faith. This logic as it is presented in Christian Liberty (1520) may be schematized as follows:

Law Sin Despair Faith Obedience to Law.

> Now when a man has learned through the commandments to recognize his helplessness and is distressed about how he might satisfy the law--since the law must be fulfilled so that not a jot or tittle shall be lost, otherwise man will be condemned without hope--then, being truly humbled and reduced to nothing in his own eyes, he finds in

himself nothing whereby he may be justified and saved. Here the second part of Scripture comes to our aid, namely, the promises of God which declare the glory of God, saying, "If you wish to fulfil the law and not covet, as the law demands, come, believe in Christ in whom grace, righteousness, peace, liberty, and all things are promised you. If you believe, you shall have all things; if you do not believe, you shall lack all things." That which is impossible for you to accomplish by trying to fulfil all the works of the law--many and useless as they all are--you will accomplish quickly and easily through faith....Thus the promises of God give what the commandments of God demand and fulfil what the law prescribes so that all things may be God's alone, both the commandments and the fulfilling of the commandments. He alone commands, he alone fulfils.

Although Luther may at one point have held that the righteousness of God enabled an actual and perfect moral righteousness in the disciple, this cannot be accepted as his normative view. Numerous passages provide evidence that assertions like the one above cannot be interpreted in a

perfectionist way. They may be read as conveying an ideal, an intention, a direction, a beginning of the life of the saved. Disciples hunger and thirst to do the will of their Father in heaven, even though during their earthly pilgrimage, while they are still in the body, they never do fully realize it.

The Preface to the Epistle to the Romans (1522) points to the dialectical co-existence of sin (including the dimension of moral failure) and faith in the life of the Christian. The difference between the Christian and the non-Christian is that the person of faith enjoys a changed relation to sin: it is not something he wills to do and it no longer counts against him in the sight of God.

> He (the apostle Paul) teaches
> us that by faith we
> are not so freed from sin
> that we can be idle, slack,
> and careless, as though there
> were no longer any sin
> in us. There is sin; but it
> is no longer counted for
> condemnation, because of
> the faith that strives against
> it. Therefore, we have enough
> to do all our life long
> in taming the body, slaying
> its lust, and compelling
> its members to obey the
> spirit and not the lusts, thus
> making our lives like the
> death and resurrection of
> Christ and completing our
> baptism -- which signifies
> the death of sin and the
> new life of grace -- until
> we are entirely pure of sin

and even our bodies rise
again with Christ and live forever.

This passage (which I take to be normative of Luther's ethical position) points to a radical ethic of grace but not a perfectionist one this side of the grave. This interpretation is consistent with Luther's understanding of the paradoxical nature of Christian life: the Christian is simul justus et peccator. A pertinent passage occurs in the Table Talk:

> When we finally stop lying,
> deceiving, stealing,
> murdering, robbing,
> committing adultery, we shall
> have become pious, that
> is, when they use the
> shovel to put us under
> ground. For Paul says:
> 'He that is dead is
> freed from sin.' (Romans 6:7)

In consequence of this acknowledgement of imperfection in Christian moral obedience, the law continues to serve Christians, in the second place, by reminding them of their sinful poverty before God and their ongoing need of repentance and faith.

Thirdly, the moral and civil law restrains the dimension of the old creature of sin which continues to co-exist in via with the new creature in Christ. It is important to keep in mind that the law which restrains the residual egoity of the Christian is not just the moral law expressed in paradigmatic form in the decalogue; it includes also the secular or temporal legislation. In effect, part of a Christian's moral duty is to obey the secular law (within certain limits). This secular obedience is motivated by, first, the

Christian's love for his unredeemed neighbour whom he knows to need political control and punishments for his temporal well-being; second, by the Christian's penitent acknowledgement that, while in the body, he, too, needs external inducements to order and cooperation; and, third, by his recognition that the secular ordinances within their proper sphere reflect the natural law inscribed in creation. What may seem surprising is Luther's readiness to assimilate the positive law of the secular authority to the divine moral law. The explanation for this is the continuing role played by natural law theory in Luther's system of thought on the basis of Romans 2:14-15.

So far we have seen that salvation in Christ makes the ethic of love possible, though not perfectly so because of the continued co-existence of the old man along with the new Christian man of grace and love. Luther's fundamentally pessimistic anthropological premises prevent a facile extension of this eschatological morality either in the life of the individual Christian or in the social order. Luther's refusal to relinquish either his biblically grounded convictions about the sanctified possibility of love, on the one hand, or his pessimism -- reinforced by biblical passages sanctioning law and coercion -- about the sinful character of humans that stultifies that love within history, on the other, presents a problem. This seeming contradiction imposes the necessity of some sort of circumscription on love that will preserve an area for it in the face of sin's recalcitrance and, at the same time, stipulate an alternative form of social regulation that restrains the egoity of the faithless.

4. Luther's Circumscription of Love

It is somewhat misleading to speak (as I do now) of the circumscription of love, for what is intended here is the determination of the limits placed upon love that finds peculiar expression in the performance of Jesus' hard sayings in the Sermon on the Mount. For performance of the law of the decalogue and nature and even the civil power -- when done by a truly justified Christian in the power of the Spirit -- can be a deed of love.

Luther disdains the Catholic resolution of this dilemma which consists of dividing Christians into two classes. On this view, the majority of lay Christians are bound by law (praecepta evangelica) and subject to the sword, that is, civil sanctions. They are not bound by the extraordinary demands of the Sermon on the Mount. The other group consists of the religious orders, who desiring to be perfect, take upon themselves the supererogatory works of the Sermon as counsels of perfection (consiglia evangelica). In this manner, the authority of Jesus' words is maintained, while the obvious difficulties they pose are resolved by limiting their application to those who have spiritually withdrawn from the world. The words of Jesus, in Luther's contrary interpretation, apply to all Christians; they are not restricted to the role of counsels of perfection for religious orders.

Nor can a solution be obtained by falling back on a distinction between the empirical church and the civil society for there are, Luther insists, more non-Christians than real, faith-filled Christians in the observable church. Accordingly, it is not possible to declare for the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount when acting within the fellowship of the church, and opt for a coercive ethic of law when acting outside it. Moreover, such a move would truncate the scope of

Jesus' moral sayings by restricting them only to a church milieu.

How then does Luther resolve this problem of preserving Jesus' hard commands of love while at the same time recognizing their frequent temporal impossibility and inapplicability given the continuing sway of sin? Luther achieves this circumscription of love by the theological formula of two realms and governments. The substance of this teaching is set out in the treatise on Secular Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed of 1523, though it continues to undergo modification in his work.

The basic proposition of Secular Authority is the assertion of two forms of divine governance: "God ordered two governments: the spiritual government, which makes Christians and pious men through the Holy Spirit under Christ, and the worldly government, which controls the wicked, so that they must keep peace outwardly and be quiet whether they will or not."

The kingdom of the world -- by far the larger -- is governed by law symbolized by the sword. Christians, who live under the grace of Christ, need neither the law nor the sword's coercive sanctions. The indwelling Holy Spirit spontaneously moves them to love the neighbour. But that very same love of neighbour demands that Christians defend the law of the secular authority. For without the external restraints of the state (and other institutions), non-Christians would destroy each other as the big fish eat the little fish. Out of regard for the need of his ungodly neighbour to live in an ordered society relatively free of the predations of the wicked, the Christian must assume responsibility for the state and be prepared to serve as magistrate or soldier within it. By failing to assume this

worldly, political vocation, the Christian, in effect, consents to the chaos, anarchy, and violence which must of necessity erupt among sinful men in the absence of coercive restraints.

The spiritual realm is ruled by God through the Word which has been appropriated by faith. It is amongst this elect minority that the way of life promulgated in the Gospel and particularly the Sermon on the Mount applies. They are bound in obedience to Christ to resist not evil, to turn the other cheek, to go the second mile, to abjure all access to law courts and oaths. They are ruled by the Holy Spirit who renders the hard moral sayings of Jesus a practicable program in the appropriate context. But it is totally unrealistic about human nature to suppose that this eschatological ethic of God's Kingdom can apply beyond the bounds of the justified. To do so is to doom humans to a lesser rather than higher possibility for social life; lesser because without the restraining law and the sanctioning sword humans would sink to the level of 'ravenous beasts'.

Thus the integrity of God's word in the Bible is maintained: the hard moral sayings of Jesus are addressed only to true Christians; the endorsement of civil institutions and sanctions which entail coercion applies to non-Christians. But inasmuch as disciples of Jesus are under obligation to love their non-Christian neighbours, Christians must also work to protect and serve the state which is necessary for the well-being of those living without the grace of Christ. This loving responsibility of the Christian towards government also means that in the appropriate circumstances -- to be indicated below -- Christians will take upon themselves the morality of secular law and its correlative sword. The authority of God's commands in the Bible is thus vindicated:

Christians must obey both the law and the gospel ethic; non-Christians are capable only of a legal morality backed up by the sword.

There are, however, restrictions upon the authority of the state. The state cannot coerce conscience or impose belief; it cannot oblige the citizen to participate in an unjust war, for example. It must limit itself to its divinely ordained role of preserving life and property. The hegemony of the worldly kingdom is restricted to "body and goods and what is outward on earth."

There are considerable difficulties, which by now should be evident, in trying to extrapolate a systematic ethical formulation from Luther's diverse deliverances on moral matters.

Does the existence of two governments mean the existence of two laws: one for Christians, one for the non-Christian world? Clearly this is not the case, on one level, for the revealed law of the decalogue is a summary statement of the natural moral law which is available to the reason of pagans for the just regulation of worldly society by secular law. Indeed, Paul Althaus tells us that, "Luther considers all the rules of the Sermon on The Mount (suffering injustice and not taking revenge, for example) (as) part of natural law." (Ethics, 1972:29). Moreover, since law is that which expresses God's demand for our lives and accuses us of sin, Jesus and his apostles also may be said to promulgate law no less than Moses.

The differentiation between the two governments must lie, to begin with, in a different point. This point of distinction may be found in the different attitudes and motivations with which the law is approached. Christians keep God's moral law spontaneously through the internal

operation of the Holy Spirit without any sense of its burdensomeness as 'law', and certainly without any need of external sanctions, rewards or punishments, to inspire obedience to it. Non-Christians, by contrast, have the law laid upon them by God's providentially instituted secular authority as an external restraint which they flout at their peril, given the temporal sovereign's possession of the retributive sword. In short, the same moral law is operative amongst citizens of the kingdom of God and those of the kingdom of the world, though in crucially different attitudinal ways.

Even here, though, some reservations must be introduced. The law is experienced as joyful obedience and is spontaneously performed insofar as the Christian functions as a citizen of God's kingdom of the justified. However, because of the Christian's simultaneous participation in the kingdom of the world (for he is, in part, really such because of the coexistence of the old man of sin and death) the law will, at times, be experienced even by him as an external constraint. Indeed, viewed from this perspective, the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the world turn out to be not two distinct sociological groups--one affiliated to Christ, the other with Salem, but, rather, two functional qualities of faith and unfaith which divide not only Christians from non-Christians, but also divide Christian life within itself until the eschaton.

Another respect in which the various forms of law, revealed and natural, are alike is in their 'theological' function of condemning conscience and inducing repentance. Further, they all may suffer perversion into that self-justifying law which stands in contradiction to Christ's promise of grace in the gospel. Jesus' hard sayings in The Sermon on the Mount may be twisted into

devices of works righteousness just as may be the Law of Moses. If one turns the other cheek without love in one's heart towards the aggressor, then one has not kept God's law in its true intent and deep demand. One has only an external, unfaithful legal righteousness.

In spite of these similarities, it is necessary to distinguish laws like the Mosaic tablet which can be adapted to the temporal authority's obligation to restrain evil and create order and peace, from those, like Jesus' hard sayings, which cannot. Clearly, not all law is reducible to natural law or civil law. Though Mosaic injunctions against murder, falsehood, theft and adultery may be readily converted to temporal regulations for the world, the same is not true of Jesus' commands to resist not evil, turn the other cheek, go the second mile, and abjure oaths.

It seems we are obliged to discriminate amongst divine laws, recognizing that they are not all of a piece in every respect. The great antitheses of Jesus' self-sacrificing directives cannot be seriously assimilated to the rational, prudential and reciprocal considerations of natural law and justice. The moral requirements of the Sermon on the Mount remain a truly eschatological ethic which can be appropriated only by the justified, Spirit-led Christian, and even then, only fallibly.

Though I am scarcely in a position to quarrel with the conclusions of Althaus' life-long Luther research, I may be permitted to take exception to his confident assessment that, "There is no doubt that Luther has interpreted Jesus' statement (in the Sermon on the Mount) as the Master himself intended it" (Ethics, 1972:66).

The main grounds for the view that Luther's moral dualism correctly grasps Jesus' intention, is the existence within the scriptures themselves of injunctions that would count against any attempt to interpret Jesus' rigorous commands to non-resistance and non-violence as universally and absolutely binding moral legislation for Christians; most notably Romans 13 ("Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God."), and the divine commands to wield the sword in the Old Testament.

Paul Althaus' evolutionary interpretation of Luther's teaching in The Ethics of Martin Luther sets the worldly government so firmly within a pre-lapsarian creation that its function as a divinum remedium peccati -- so strongly stressed in Secular Authority -- comes close to being obscured. So positive is Althaus' evaluation of Luther's secular authority (God's rule with his left hand) it is no wonder that there is little need to ascribe a distinct qualitative superiority to the Sermon on the Mount. After 1523, according to Althaus, the role of the worldly government as the divine regulation of humanity's created bodily, physical and temporal life is increasingly stressed, rather than its role as a coercive restraint upon otherwise unbridled sin, though this rule of wrath is not abandoned. The divine government (God's rule with his right hand) becomes mainly Christ's direct and exclusive control of the Christian's inner life of faith and conscience -- a work scarcely distinguishable from the process of justification.

Clearly, the normative Christian ethical stance pushes us beyond Luther to the Gospels themselves, and though we cannot pursue such a line of enquiry now, we may at least raise the

question whether the apostolic church itself had already begun the distortion of the Master's message.

In the light of what we have already said about the life of the Christian as simul justus et peccator, it should be clear that the two-realm formula deals with our problem in only a formal way. Because the Christian is subject to both divine rules, living simultaneously in the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world, he is governed -- as we have seen -- by the moral norms of both realms. Indications in Secular Authority to the contrary notwithstanding, Luther's developed position on love is neither perfectionist nor universal. Accordingly, the question still remains open: How is the individual Christian to classify himself in any specific moral situation? When is he acting as a member of the kingdom of God, and when as a citizen in the kingdom of the world? When is the Christian intended (in contrast to unintended lapses) to act in accord with unconditioned love and non-violence, and when in accord with justice and retribution of the sword?

Luther in one way universalizes the radical ethic of the kingdom of God by contending that the Christian should always act in a submissive, suffering, non-retaliatory way when the threats affect himself. A Christian always adopts Christ's way of the cross, the way of innocent suffering, when, to use Mill's language, the effects of aggressive actions are self-regarding. But when they are other-regarding, when they touch upon the well-being, peace and security of others, then the Christian must take up the sword to resist evil. (In this interpretation, Luther is in continuity with his Augustinian tradition.) This point is thus expressed in Secular Authority:

> No Christian shall wield or involve the sword for himself and his cause. In behalf of another, however he may and should wield it and invoke it to restrain wickedness and to defend godliness."

Again:

> For in the one case you consider yourself and what is yours, in the other you consider your neighbour and what is his. In what concerns you and yours, you govern yourself by the Gospel and suffer injustice for yourself as a true Christian; in what concerns others and belongs to them, you govern yourself according to love and suffer no injustice for your neighbour's sake:

The difficulty with this construction is that I (in the company of Bonhoeffer) find it very difficult to know when the consequences of an evil deed impinge only upon me (in which case, acquiescent non-violence would be called for) and when I am functioning as a representative person so that the consequences of oppression devolve also upon those for whom I am responsible (thus calling forth a policy of coercive restraint of the evil-doer). When am I not acting in a representative office as father, husband, teacher, citizen? The distinction between person and office seems artificial and useless -- at least as moral guide.

The inevitable result seems to me that the division between the kingdom of the world and the

kingdom of God with its correlative regiments of coercion and non-retaliation dissolves in the effective hegemony of the worldly, temporal rule.

This conclusion is reinforced by the acknowledgement that sin continues to exercise its power even in true Christians, thus requiring that they too be subject to law and the sword.

All this appears to lead to the emasculation of the radical Gospel ethic and the espousal of the ethic of law and sword whose effect is a conservative stance and a de facto endorsement of the prevailing political authority. Luther's view of vocation appears to corroborate this conclusion.

5. Conclusion

It seems that the symbol of justification by faith conveyed to Luther a conception of God as unsurpassable gracious love that yielded a Christian moral paradigm of heightened quality. Luther's life-transforming vision of the unconditioned love of God so radicalized his understanding of human love which ought to emulate that divine love as to render moral perfectionism untenable. This moral 'realism' was reinforced by a correlative perspective on humans as sinners, and on history as conflict between Christ and Satan resolvable only by apocalyptic intervention. At the same time, God's holy character and moral demand, his salvation in Christ, and the reality of sanctification pointed to the possibility of genuine realization of Christly love within history. The irony, however, is that the unwarranted stress on the theological legitimacy of the secular law and government leads, in effect, to the betrayal of the radical vision of Christly love as a moral demand, and results in

the domestication of unconditional love into the reciprocities of natural law.

We have noted that the attempt to reconcile this conflicting polarity by the two-realm doctrine is unsatisfactory, chiefly because of the domination of the moral modality of the kingdom of the world over that of the kingdom of God. While commendable for its attempt to encompass the ambivalent dimensions of Christian experience, the two realm teaching does not translate into correct Christian moral practice because of the seemingly inevitable capitulation of the distinctive agapeistic demands of Christ to the temporal exigencies of the secular authority.

In spite of the foregoing, critical difficulty in Luther's ethical perspective, there is a compelling honesty in Luther's insistent and salutary denunciation of the confusion of the two kingdoms. A blurring of the distinction between the spiritual realm and the secular realm may mask a superficial, even ludicrous, devaluation of the Gospel's radical moral entailments, a danger exemplified, in Luther's judgement, by the sectarians. The pretentious utopian inclination to over-estimate and distort the reality, extent and depth of Christian transformation and love within history, is challenged by Luther's vigorous underscoring of the radical qualitative difference between the spiritual realm ruled by God's gracious love, and the secular realm characterized by laws and restraint.

The insistent call to distinguish and not confuse the two kingdoms is at heart an appeal for radical honesty in evaluating our moral achievements. It is a bulwark against presumptuous absolutizing of our temporal policies that invests them with an exaggerated transcendent endorsement (as, for example, did the peasants in

Luther's mind). God does have a providential concern and moral command for temporal existence, for economic and political dimensions of human striving. But Luther's percipient grasp of the inexpungable dualities and ambiguities of human existence forbade him elevating the human response to this divine moral summons to the status of perfect obedience. The morality of suffering, crucified love -- though a genuine divine demand and a partial attainment for the sanctified Christian within history -- remains also an eschatological promise.

NOTES

1. Some of the material in the essay appeared in my article "Luther's Political Ethics" in the Dalhousie Review, Vol. 62, No. 3, Autumn 1982. It has, however, been set within quite a different theoretical framework, and has, moreoever, undergone considerable revision of interpretation.

2. A word of warning -- undoubtedly unnecessary -- is that I approach my topic not as a 'Luther scholar' but as a comparative religious ethicist.

3. This essay does not attempt to trace the chronological development of Luther's moral thought. This is done by F. Edward Cranz, in An Essay On The Development Of Luther's Thought On Justice, Law and Society, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964). My purpose here is to set out certain aspects of Luther's ethics in a systematic rather than historical way.

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THE DIVERSITY OF CHRISTIAN WITNESSING IN THE TENSION BETWEEN SUBJECTION TO THE WORD AND RELATION TO THE CONTEXT*

by: Douglas J. Hall

THE TRUTH PROBLEMATIQUE IN CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THEOLOGY

There is a rudimentary problem lurking behind the rather complex title of this essay, and perhaps the most expeditious way of establishing contact with our subject is by identifying it straightway. The fact that it is rudimentary does not of course imply that it is a simple problem. Indeed it is not a problem at all but a whole cluster of problems subtly intermingled one with another; for this reason I prefer to allude to it through the use of the more cumbersome but also more descriptive word "problematique."

The problematique, then, into whose intricacies we are propelled by the terms of our title, expressed in its most elemental form, is Pilate's question. "What is truth?" What is truth? We are not being asked merely (!) what is true, or what is the truth, but what is the nature of truth. How does Christian faith conceive of "the truth"? Assuming that that to which the Christian community is called to bear its witness is the truth, how in the first place are we to conceive of this truth? Is it something eternal, immutable, always and everywhere the same, expressible in verbal forms which do not lose their essential validity with the passage of time? Then our testimony to it will certainly bear the marks of such permanency and homogeneity. Is the truth on the contrary something moving and alive, forever seeking expression in new forms but also

transcending every form, defying containment, struggling to insert itself into the changing process of world history, and so forth? Then our witness to it will undoubtedly betray a similar quality of struggle--the struggle both to comprehend and to communicate this elusive thing that is no "thing."

Throughout the greater share of its history, the Christian Church has inclined towards the assumption that the truth with which it had to do is of the first type. I do not of course mean that Christianity has suffered under a completely static conception of truth. The genuinely wise and pious have always understood that truth is larger than our grasp of it, and that error is the constant companion of all who try to understand what is. Whoever takes seriously even the first Commandment, not to mention the second, knows that the truth of God eludes our theology and that in consequence theology can only be "the most modest science." (1) Nevertheless, until the modern period most Christians could take for granted that doctrinal formulations such as those of Nicaea or Chalcedon themselves not only contained truth but did so in language which, adequately translated and elucidated, was valid for every age and clime. Beyond that, current statistical data concerning the make-up of the Christian Church causes one to suspect that a majority even of contemporary Christians share this same preconception concerning the character of Christian truth. (2)

Modernity, however, discovered history: that is, from the Renaissance onwards Western peoples have all become far more aware than were our forebears of the influence of the particularities of the age upon the formulation of ideas. It belongs to contemporary consciousness, not so much as a matter of deliberate reflection as of an unconscious assumption, to suppose that the

beliefs and behaviour of persons in the past were conditioned, as are ours, by the concrete situations in which they found themselves; that different socio-economic circumstances produce different accounts of reality; that given new scientific information, new technologies, new hopes and anxieties, new or at least altered expressions of truth are called for.

In the nineteenth century, this consciousness of the time-conditioned character of truth already introduced what was for many Christians the vexing problem of doctrinal relativity. What can be true, and what in consequence, could have any vital authority for religious faith, if everything-- every doctrine, every theory and creed, every hymn, every translation of the Bible--is steeped in temporality? Against what was felt to be a slide towards "relativism," therefore, there emerged in the churches and elsewhere movements inspired by the need to return to fixed traditions. These were sometimes profound--I think there may be profundity behind the strong plea for "orthodoxy" expressed in these words of Cardinal Newman: "The Gospel faith is a definite deposit, a treasure common to all, one and the same in every age, conceived in set words, and such as admits of being received, preserved, transmitted." (3) One knows at least that such a polemic (for it is a polemic) was born of a deep-felt anxiety concerning the religious and social chaos being courted by those who were ready to let go of every anchor in the tradition. More often, however, such polemics were (and still are) merely reactionary: like biblical fundamentalism, they purchase the tranquillity of the absolute at the expense of losing touch with the ongoing and always unpredictable processes of life itself. (4)

Far from abating, the truth problematique of Christian faith and theology has been further

compounded during the past decades by the growing recognition of many Christians that the historical character of the truth to which we bear witness means that our testimony must be not only timely, that is, addressed to the general character of the age, but also explicit with respect to place. Especially has this insight made itself felt within the increasingly "independent" churches of the Third World. This is not accidental; for it has been in the Third World most dramatically that Christian conceptualization derived from the historical experiences of particular peoples (namely, the peoples of the First World) has played a very dubious role, not to say an oppressive one. Again and again, according to the critical analysis of theologians in these "younger" churches, what has been given off as "Christian Truth" ("one and the same in every age"!) has not only contained ideas and language totally alien to the experiences of Third World peoples, but has served to sustain social and political infrastructures that have prevented the majority from discovering the real liberty of the gospel. The struggle for what has come to be called contextuality in theology begins with the sense of inappropriateness and incongruity. (5)

Out of the search initiated by such a discovery has come some of the most exciting theology of our time. But it has also of course produced a further complication of the old problem. If what is true for West European Christians is not true for African or Latin American Christians but perhaps misleading, perhaps even demonic, then are we not teetering on the brink of ecumenical disaster? Are we not at very least evoking a situation in which truth, far from being "one," must eventually seem so fragmented that the church is in danger of becoming a veritable Tower of Babel, in which no "province" of Christendom really understands what the others are confessing.

One of the greatest contributions of Martin Luther to Christian understanding relates specifically to this "problematique of truth." Luther was a remarkable Christian in countless respects; but I doubt that he was anywhere more insightful than in connection precisely with this issue, and I suspect that much of our interest in him today stems from the fact that he-- alone, I think, amongst the Reformers--anticipated in his own theological struggle the problematique which has become ours in the sense outlined above. Moreover, Luther not only faced this many-headed monster, but put forward an approach to living with it from which we can learn a great deal. Having said that, I hasten to add that in the following statement I shall regard it as my mandate not to exegete Luther but, using some of his ideas more or less illustratively, to address the problem as it seems to me to confront ecumenical Christianity today.

FALSE RESOLUTIONS

Within the categories of Christian faith and theology, the truth problematique quite naturally and regularly "resolves itself" in two characteristic ways. On the one hand, faced by the prospect of the diversity (Vielgestaltigkeit) of Christian witnessing, and made nervous by this prospect, Christian groups and persons throughout the ages have found themselves turning towards the absolute, some absolute, and clinging to it in the face of every challenge. On the other hand, there have been movements within and alongside "official" Christianity which could apparently embrace diversity, and sometimes even delight in the seeming anarchy of ecstatic religious immediacy which had no thought for the morrow or

for yesterday. We shall consider these in turn, for they clarify further the nature of the problematique, and can establish *via negativa* the parameters of our own handling of it.

Scripture and the Search for Absolutes

The history of the church could be written from the standpoint of its fevered search for absolutes. But when it came to the Protestant chapters of this long story one special object of that ancient conquest for finality would stand out: the Bible! The sacred scriptures have been regarded by all Protestants as the supreme witness to truth, and, given the historical basis of our faith, the rationale for such a high regard is manifest. But there is only a fine, razor's edge of a line between thinking the scriptures the supreme *witness* to the truth and construing them as if *they were* as such that truth; and as is demonstrated not only by the modern phenomenon of biblicalism but also by its classical Protestant antecedents, the psychic demand for absolutes is powerful enough, apparently, to overlook and transgress this fine line with awesome regularity! The Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* has never been entirely free of peril in this respect.

The peril is a real one for reflective Protestantism. For, as Paul Tillich insisted, the very *essence* of the Protestant spirit lies in the "*protest*" against the substititon of finite, conditioned realities for the absolute. (6) If the *living God* is the one to whom ultimate trust and *obedience* are due, then to behave towards anything less than God as though it were worthy of unconditioned trust is to invite idolatry. Bibliolatry is no less idolatry than the worship of any other "thing" or creature. It is moreover an ironic form of idolatry, because when the Bible

itself is listened to it always points away from itself towards the source to which it testifies and cannot contain. Too often, un-Protestant Protestantism has treated the Bible in a manner analogous to the treatment of the writings of Marx and Lenin by doctrinaire communists. It becomes for them a once-for-all statement of the truth, and so functions not merely as an authority for faith, but as ideology: that is, "a system of propositional truths independent of the situation, a superstructure no longer relevant to praxis, to the situation, to the real questions of life." (7) This is to resolve the truth problematique falsely, because to attribute ultimacy to the Bible as such is to violate the ultimate, to which the Bible itself bears witness.

Ecstatic Religion and Abandonment to the Moment

The other characteristic way in which Christians from the earliest times have thought to resolve the truth problematique inherent in the faith is in a real sense the antithesis of the above; indeed, the two ways have frequently companioned each other historically, each driving the other to reactionary extremes in what we would now describe as the process of polarization. Over against the tendency to search for absolutes which can supposedly shelter us from the winds of uncertitude and disunity, this second posture throws itself upon the present, begging or wrestling from the moment whatever truth it needs.

If the Bible has been the typical object of Protestant searchers after absolutes, those who have pursued truth in the moment have most frequently attributed their "resolution" of the truth problematique to ... "the Spirit"! From the spiritualizers whom the author of the First Epistle of John had in mind when he cautioned his

readers to "test the spirits" to the present-day charismatics, the promise of Jesus to send a "comforter" who would "lead you into all truth" has excited the souls of Christian enthusiasts. Revelation, insist the advocates of this path to certain truth, is after all not a thing of the past but an ongoing process. It is occurring now! The voice that addressed the prophets and apostles still speaks, and those who are open to the transcendent will know, when it is needful, what they are to believe, say and do!

The falseness of this stance, however impressively pious it may be in "great spirits," is of course the one that the church already noticed with Montanism, that the Western Church feared when it insisted upon the filioque-clause at Toledo, and that has been felt acutely by many contemporary congregations whose (no doubt half-hearted!) unity has been shattered by the in breaking of factions possessed by "the Spirit." It is false, namely, because it only "resolves" the Christian truth problematique by eliminating one side of its dialectic, that is, the past and consistency with the past. Or rather, to speak more concretely, it virtually eliminates--by rendering secondary--the historical revelation given in Jesus as the Christ. Whatever our tradition has meant by the "finality" or "supremacy" of the revelation in and through Jesus of Nazareth, that is to say, always tends to be superceded in spiritualistic religion by "new truths" reputedly vouchsafed by the Spirit. Who can read the Scriptures intelligently and not discover that it is indeed "the voice" that faith is called to listen for? And yet, there are many voices; and amongst them all the voice of the Good Shepherd may be "still and small" indeed! In fact, reading the history of Christianity under the impact of the theologia crucis, one might well conclude that the "hirelings" and the "demons"

normally speak with greater authority and influence than does the crucified Lord of the church! A Christian community that has lost touch with any hint of the "absolute" to which St. Paul referred when he cried, "I preach Jesus Christ and him crucified!," which must move about in the world chartless and rudderless, may indeed be driven by a lively wind, but who is to say that it will be the ruach of God? The demons too breed ecstacy and certitude, and "No bad idea can be anything but worse when divine sanction is claimed for it!" (8)

LUTHER ON WORD AND SPIRIT

The reference to the "theology of the cross" brings us immediately to Luther's approach to this "problematique of Christian Truth"; for, in my opinion, it was precisely the spirit and method of reflection that Luther indicated through this peculiar nomenclature (theologia crucis/theologia gloriae) that provided the Saxon Reformer with his frame of reference for the question under discussion. For what it means that all our theology is done in the shadow of the cross (crux sola nostra theologia) is that the truth is given us, but always under the aspect of its apparent antithesis; it is given, but not impressively; it is given, but not to be possessed; it is given, but not as that which we ourselves entirely desired; it is given, but not to be used by us complacently or to achieve power over others; it is given, but never in such a form that it could permanently alter our condition as those who must beg for what we do not have. Wir sind Bettler! The lust to have the truth, as distinct from always receiving it as gift, is in fact born of "the theology of glory." The very attempt to resolve the problematique of truth is of the essence of Christian triumphalism. Luther's counsel is not to try to resolve it, but to live

between and in the tension between what has been given and what is being given, what is and what is becoming, what is fixed and what is fluid ... and so forth. (The terms zwischen and Spannungsfeld may thus be the most significant words of our title!) Faith is neither seeking refuge in what we have, what is fixed--the temptation of Lot's wife--nor thinking to possess already what we do not yet have--taking heaven by storm! Faith places itself willingly and with trust in the present, between past and future.

But we may state all this quite concretely along the lines of the foregoing discussion, because for Luther this "living between" means first of all living between the Word and the Spirit.

The Indispensability of the Word

There is no need to belabour the point that for Luther the Bible was of enormous importance, as it was for the other Reformers too. "Abandon scripture," warns Luther, "and God abandons us to the lies of men." (9) On occasion, sentences stolen out of Luther's writings may even sound like the rantings of present-day television evangelists! But the larger context of Luther's thought reveals a mind extremely different from the spirit of biblicism. In my view it is a mind significantly different, even, from the minds of his fellow-Reformers, Calvin, Zwingli, and Philip Melanchthon. It is for one thing a still-medieval mind, that is to say, a mind capable of entertaining mystery, or, to state the matter more explicitly, a mind which in the tradition of late medieval mysticism (not of scholasticism) finds it essentially strange to think of truth as being capturable in propositions! Unlike the genuinely "modern" men who were his reforming co-workers,

especially Zwingli, whose inability to comprehend Luther's view of the Eucharist must be traced to this same distinction, (10) it was not the prospect of having "the original source" (the motivating drive of all the humanists!) that made Luther cherish the Scriptures so much as it was the (essentially mystical) belief that ineffable truth could breathe through these sometimes clearly inspired but nonetheless altogether human words. Since, in distinction from the modern spirit which from the outset tended to make history one-dimensional, Luther was still able to find the dimension of depth in the finite (finitum capax infiniti), he did not have to resort to Erasmus's philological purism or Calvin's doctrine of plenary inspiration in order to consider the Bible indispensable. These documents had been for the church--and above all for himself!-- the medium of God's own address; one could therefore trust that they would again and again and again become the vehicles of communication between God and humanity. (11)

All the same, Luther did not believe either that the Scriptures necessarily communicated truth (i.e., that their capacity for the infinite was inherent), or that what the church yesterday heard in and through the pages of this book would be obviously continuous with what the church today might have to hear! God himself remains the Lord of the Scriptures, and he will cause them to announce what must be announced, just as he caused Baalam's ass to speak, though it had no natural capacity for speech--and certainly not for that speech!

In short, for Luther the Bible cannot be called unambiguously "the Word of God." This betrays no disrespect for the Bible; what it demonstrates rather is Luther's very high respect for what the Bible itself calls "the logos of

God": Jesus Christ, crucified, risen. If Luther permits himself to speak of God's Word in Scripture and also in preaching (which he does), then it is in a strictly dependent and derivative sense. That is, in the sense that here and there, now and then, the Spirit of God causes the words of the Bible and of the preacher to be bearers of the ultimate, convicting us of our sin, assuring us of our justification. What must be heard by us is "the Word," not just "the Bible." There is even a sense in which "the Bible" can get in the way of our hearing of "the Word"--not because the Bible itself is a barrier (though in some of its parts it is, for Luther, almost that!) so much as on account of our too close attention to it, our desire to "have" the Word in black and white! But "The Holy spirit doesn't let himself be bound by words but makes the content known." (12) This same thought is sometimes expressed by Luther in terms of the Augustinian distinction between "the outward Word and the inward Word":

> The outward Word is the Word of Scripture (or verbum vocale), of the sacrament), the inward Word is God's own voice by his Spirit. Without this inner Word of God the outward Word remains a letter, the word of man. Luther often uses 1 Cor. 3:7 in this connection. God alone can give increase to the Word. The outward Word is only the means which God uses when he writes his own living Word into the heart. Man is able to bring the Word to the ear, but not into the heart. This work belongs to God. (13)

There is here a parallel between Luther's concept of the Eucharist and his view of hearing the

gospel; as the elements are only bread and wine, so the biblical words are only words; both become bearers of the Infinite only when they are visited and changed pro nobis by the presence and indwelling of the divine Spirit.

This is contrary to every propensity, open or covert, to assign to the Bible itself the colour of the absolute. God's lordship of the Scriptures means, as is well known, that Luther can be wonderfully playful or nonchalant with respect to the Bible (biblicists would say "disrespectful"!). This is because, unlike literalism of every variety, Luther does not consider it an insult to the infinite to think the Apocalypse of John confusing or the Epistle of James shallow. It is after all not the Bible as such that must prove itself "holy"; its holiness is borrowed from "the voice" that can and does use it. (14)

The Grounding of the Spirit

At the same time, it is hardly necessary to remind the reader that Luther was by no means prepared to cast in his lot with those contemporaries of his who regarded themselves as the great adherents of "the voice," those "prophetic" and "inspired" souls who were so carried away by their own religious experiences that they were ready to abandon every external authority and cling to the Spirit alone. It is against these interpreters (and here too we can discern Luther's essentially contextual approach to theological discourse) that he most often addressed the sola scriptura dogma. In his reaction to these evangelical "radicals" we hear again the grave warning of 1 John: "Test the spirits to see whether they be of God. Not every spirit is of God, but only that spirit which confesses Jesus as the Christ...." John's formula

seems an almost precise statement of Luther's pneumatology. The Reformer was convinced of the indispensability of the Spirit--no spiritualist could be more convinced! At the same time, he was well aware of the pitfalls of Spirit-religion: its tendency towards erratic and unreasoned enthusiasm; its division of the church; its vulnerability to "every wind of doctrine," and so forth. In Luther's theology, therefore, the Spirit is carefully, almost painstakingly tied to the Word.

Now the Word, as we have seen, means first of all "the Word made flesh"; and therefore let no one leap to the conclusion on the basis of this affirmation of the Spirit's "grounding" that Luther was after all biblicistic! The Scriptures are nonetheless a normative witness to the Word made flesh, and therefore the kerygma that only the Holy Spirit can cause the church to hear must also always seek authentication by reference to the Scriptures. Against biblicism Luther warns that the letter kills; against spiritism he warns that the voice does not speak independently of the letter. (15)

The Significance of the Context in the Hearing of the Word

In sum, what Luther was about in this methodological reflection which occurred continuously throughout his ministry was the enucleation of a theological hermeneutic in which there is and must be a continuing, unresolved dialogue between the (relatively!) (16) fixed source of theological truth and authority (the Scriptures) and the ongoing, existential-spiritual authority of the triune God. Faith exists between Word and Spirit. But neither category-- and this applies especially to "the Spirit" on account of

the almost inevitable "mystification" of this third person of the Trinity!--should be understood in a merely religious, otherworldly manner, if we are to be true to Luther. To listen for the voice and Spirit of God did not mean for him what it meant and still means for pietistic spiritualism--the cultivation of a life of religious devotion far from the noise and bluster of the world, and so forth. Luther's pneumatology pictures a divine Spirit still brooding over the creation, disturbing the course of events, penetrating the chaos and darkness of history. Living between the testimony of the Bible and the witness of the Holy Spirit then means at the same time living between Scripture and world, between the tradition of Jerusalem and the ongoing, changing, never-easily-decipherable situation in which the koinonia must make its present witness. Karl Barth's metaphor is entirely appropriate here: it means having "the Bible in one hand, the newspaper in the other." There can be no genuine discernment of the truth which is not simultaneously a struggle to "discern the signs of the times." As Gerhard Ebeling has written, "This striving for a true understanding of the scripture, with its concern for the Spirit, is of necessity concerned with the present existential situation." And he continues:

> For the Holy Spirit is a present and life-giving Spirit, by contrast to the letter, which owes everything to the past. Thus in (an) early lecture, does Luther not merely sharply criticize the historical understanding of the Psalms as practised, for example, by Nicholas of Lyra in the fourteenth century, following rabbinic exegesis. The

> hermeneutic principle from which Luther starts, with its antithesis between the letter and the Spirit, also leads him to the realization that the understanding of Scripture is a continuous task which can never be brought to a conclusion. For there is a constant threat that an understanding once achieved will cease to be the Spirit, and return to being the mere letter, unless it is constantly attained anew and made one's own. Thus unceasing progress is necessary in understanding the Scripture. The Spirit turns into the letter; but the letter must in its turn constantly become the Spirit once again. One stage of understanding is always the letter from which the Spirit comes in the next stage. This reveals an astonishing insight into the historical limitations of our understanding. (17)

It also, I should say, reveals an equally "astonishing insight" into the nature of truth in the prophetic tradition! Living in the Spannungsfeld between Word and Spirit, which is at the same time the tension between tradition and world, faith through grace discerns in the moment the truth that it requires for its prophetic witness. The truth is dialogical, and therefore unresolved. That is, it never comes to the point where the community of faith or the individual believer (acting let us say the part of systematic theologian!) can decree once and for all that such-and-such is "the truth." It is not accidental that Luther, unlike Calvin, did not

become a systematizer. Even if he had had the leisure to do so I am convinced that he would have found the approach incompatible. Whilst Calvin worked for twenty-six years polishing and rounding out his impeccable Institutes, Luther moved from issue to issue--not without consistency, but certainly without the systematizer's compulsive need to weave a seamless robe! The reason for this should not be attributed simply to Luther's preoccupation with the affairs of church and society. It is a concomitant of his deepest theological understanding. For him, God is alive and the world is "in process," of changing and being changed. True theology has to do with the meeting of these two dynamic centers, creator and creation; and therefore to devise a "permanently true" theology is to substitute for the living God and his living creation an artificial construct. There may be comfort in such constructs, but there cannot be truth in them, for truth lives. Truth, finally, is for Luther nothing more and nothing less than the one who declares "I am the truth."

Thus for Luther, the important thing for theology is not to be "correct" but to be "obedient" --to achieve consistency, not with what has been regarded at this or that juncture as "orthodoxy," but to be consistent with the living truth who is Lord. Amongst historic theologians he is first in applying the ethical category of "obedience" to the dimension of thought, specifically to theology. This constitutes his permanent offence to Protestant Orthodoxy, which, try as it might, was never able to contain Martin Luther in its systems! To state the same thing in different words, theology for Luther is first of all confession. Confession cannot be reduced to doctrine, nor can it be all worked out a priori. It must occur as the appropriate witness, as "the Word," "the Word from the Lord." It is faith's witness to the truth that is struggling to be born

at that time, in that place. Hence theology is always, as we may say, strategic theology. But Luther himself, as usual, puts the matter more concretely than any of his commentators:

> If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at the moment attacking I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing him. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point. (19)

CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY

There could scarcely be a more precise definition of the spirit of contextuality in theology than is contained in the foregoing quotation. Let me use it, together with other aspects of the previous discussion, to elaborate briefly the principal points of contextual theology as these are expressing themselves in a great variety of contemporary theological moods and movements.

Theology as Confession

Contextual theology means theology as confession. the act of confession presupposes the coming together of the two realities which are kept apart in the false resolutions of the truth problematique: on the one hand, the reality of the

Christian tradition, especially, though not exclusively, in its biblical expression, and, on the other hand, the reality of the historical situation of the confessing community. Without the remembrance of the tradition the church has nothing to confess, and may end by doing nothing more than offering stained-glass versions of contemporary "values." (Much present-day charismatic spiritualism is plainly a religious version of the same escapist and narcissistic inwardness that Christopher Lasch has identified as the Zeitgeist of a society "in an age of diminishing expectations.") (19) But without immersion in the situation, what the church says and does, though it may be very correct according to this or that form of "orthodoxy," can never make itself felt as gospel. Gospel is discovered by the church, not possessed by it. It is discovered, always anew, in the confluence of these two realities. For the gospel is not a formula or manifesto or list of "fundamentals"; it is not theologia eterna. Gospel is the Word of God which the church is enabled to hear only as it permits itself to enter with sufficient courage the darkness peculiar to its own historical moment. Only in that darkness can it expect to receive the light of the gospel. (20) Recalling Luther's metaphor, what the church hears is only gospel if it enables it to join battle with the world at that "little point" where the battle rages. The task of all theology, including "professional" theology, is to assist the witnessing community to discern that little point and thus to position itself for the hearing of the appropriate Word.

Openness to Word and World

The condition without which this confessional theology cannot occur is, accordingly, a twofold

openness: openness, on the one hand, to the tradition (especially the biblical beginnings), and, on the other hand, openness to the human situation. We need to consider carefully what is meant here by openness.

With respect to the tradition, to be open means that the theological community is and must continually become a community of disciplined and meditative reflection upon scripture and the church's historic confessions, creeds, theological statements, and so forth. Wortgebundenheit graphically describes such openness, with its suggestion of the church's being at the same time free for the Word and constrained by it. In this connection we should notice that Luther's critical allusion to "profession" does not constitute a rejection of the activity signified by that term; on the contrary, on the basis of his own vocation as "professor," one must certainly assume that he takes it for granted that the Christian community will also be a professing community.

But he rightly declares that such profession of faith is not to be confused with the end to which the church is called. It is not the business of this community to pursue historical theology or the history of doctrine or even scriptural exegesis as ends in themselves. They are, at most, means. The end towards which the whole disciplined life of theological scholarship is directed and without which it is an exercise in pride and futility is the ongoing discovery of the appropriate Word. Not every word that could be uttered out of the rich, perhaps too rich, Christian tradition is appropriate ... ever! The church has indeed found no better way of avoiding the appropriate word than by attempting to say everything all at once-- "the whole gospel," as it is sometimes euphemistically called! Gospel is perhaps never--or only seldom--"whole." Normally

it is intensely partial. At very least, the kerygma is never a matter of everything being said at once--judgement, reconciliation, cross, resurrection, Pentecost, guilt, redemption, the kingdom of heaven, and so forth, and so forth! For as Qoheleth wisely stated it long ago, "There is a time ... and a time ..." (Ecclesiastes 3). The "gospel"of everything-at-once is no gospel but an ideology which keeps the church from discovering the "little point." The gospel truth that ought to have been proclaimed in Europe in the 1930's (said a perceptive German theologian), was "Jesus Christ was a Jew!" No doubt other things should eventually have to be said about the identity of the Christ; but to say "all," always to announce "everything," is in fact to proclaim nothing. "The whole" becomes a convenient ideological fence upon which Christians may sit so as to avoid participation in the world's battles. The point of knowing, studying, and "professing" the whole tradition is to be able, under the changing conditions of historical existence, to discern what PART of the whole requires emphasis. Profession serves confession, not vice versa.

But, secondly, such a confession cannot occur, no matter how "professional" one may be with respect to Christian scripture and tradition, unless the theological community is also OPEN TO THE SITUATION. This, it seems to me, is where historic christendom must be taken to task most severely. For too frequently the very "wholeness" of the tradition has provided the church with the illusion that it could discover nothing new in the world's marketplace; that it already knows beforehand what human and earthly wickedness is capable of; that in any case all of that is passing, transient, and a matter of tentatio. Unlike the prophetic tradition of Israel (which is certainly the locus classicus for Luther's conception of the lively "Word of God"),

Christianity has too consistently acted as if it professed the truth and too seldom assumed the ongoing cost of receiving it. Paraphrasing Bonhoeffer, one may say that the Christian religion in its major historical manifestations has been built upon "cheap truth": truth without suffering. The suffering upon which the church has prided itself, when it has not been frankly enjoying its privileged position in society, has been that of a body thinking itself in possession of the truth and suffering on account of its possession. We have known very little of the suffering entailed in the hearing and discernment of God's truth! (21) Openness to the human situation means experiencing the suffering of those who not only do not have the truth and can only hunger and thirst for it, but who for the most part actually prefer to live the lie. The Spirit imparts its truth only in the wilderness. For the theological community this means that it must again and again be exposed to the lie that it, too, harbours; again and again denied the certitude and comfort of false absolutes; again and again thrust into the wilderness of the present, historical moment (sometimes a very arid wilderness indeed).

In the Introduction to the second volume of his Systematic Theology, Tillich offers a poignant statement of the meaning of openness to one's context (Kontextbezogenheit) and of the suffering that is entailed in this openness. The theologian, he says, must always work at the formulation of "the question" to which the Christian message then may speak as "answer":

> In order to do so, he must participate in the human predicament, not only actually--as he always does--but also in conscious identification. He must participate

> in man's finitude, which is also his own, and in its anxiety as though he had never received the revelatory answer of "eternity." He must participate in man's estrangement, which is also his own, and show the anxiety of guilt as though he had never received the revelatory answer of "forgiveness". The theologian does not rest on the theological answer which he announces. He can give it in a convincing way only if he participates with the whole being in the situation of the question, namely, the human predicament. In the light of this demand, the method of correlation (Tillich's own theological method) protects the theologian from the arrogant claim of having revelatory answers at his disposal. In formulating the answer, he must struggle for it. (22)

This, I judge, is a methodological and existential statement in the tradition of Luther's theologia crucis. Behind its more technical language, one can hear of the same struggle that Luther--the victim of Anfechtungen --frequently experienced. Whether all this is adequately captured in the German word Kontextbezogenheit I am not competent to say. I do not know precisely what colouring this word takes on for those whose native tongue is German; in translation it seems to me too weak. To be "open to the context," in order to find out where the "little point" of

fiercest battle is located, means not only to allow oneself to think about one's society at the level of academic or pragmatic reflection ("How can we best understand this moment in order to devise a persuasive apologetic?"). It is rather to "participate" in one's sociological context existentially, to be oneself a child of the age, to be tempted by its temptations and its despair, to dream its dreams, to believe its story. Theology which is confession and not just the reiteration of doctrina is what happens when God's story of the world meets and does battle with humanity's story--the one that is current then and there. And the theological community, if it is genuine, is the place where that meeting occurs. It cannot occur without suffering. This too is what it means to do theology under the sign of the cross.

THE DANGERS OF CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY AND THEIR ENGAGEMENT

Every faith-posture and the theological method belonging to it contains its peculiar dangers. There is no danger-free theology. The dangers of contextuality in theology are easily stated: that the social context may play a too decisive role; that the search for apologetic engagement (not to say "relevancy"!) may lead the Christian community to neglect the opposition to dominant social structures and values which is part of the prophetic tradition; and that the unity of the church will be threatened by the emergence of increasingly divergent interpretations of the meaning of the Christian message. The existence of such dangers ought, however, not to deter us. To "do theology" has in any case always been to "rush in where angels fear to tread"! Besides, the recognition of the dangers is always the first step towards meeting

them. Beyond that, there are certain checks and balances which may be brought to bear against the three dangers named above:

1. Against the danger that the context may play too determinative a role in the discernment of theological truth, contextual theology which learns from the tradition of Luther (not to mention the Scriptures, Augustine, and others from whom Luther himself learned!) will realize that the search for the genuinely contextual statement of Christian truth entails an equally serious and disciplined commitment to Bible and tradition (Wortgebundenheit). It is a misrepresentation of responsible contextual thought to claim that attention to the context will necessarily end in neglect of the text. Certain popular types of "situationalism," particularly in the area of Christian ethics, (23) have undoubtedly erred in this direction; but the error is by no means inevitable. As even the language (in English) suggests, "text" and "context" belong together; the text is intended for the context, and the context evokes the text.

2. With respect to the danger of missing the prophetic critique on account of a too-rapt devotion to communication, this can become a real danger only where one makes the (quite unnecessary) assumption that contextual theology wants by definition to commend itself to its social context--that is, wishes to appeal to its host society by affirming what the society itself affirms, and so forth. This is an entirely erroneous assumption--as even a cursory glance at the course of Liberation Theology makes very clear. One may indeed say that contextual theology is a type of apologetic theology. Contrary to Barthian opinion, however, not all apologetic theology is merely commendatory! The kerygmatic element is very conspicuous in most

contemporary forms of contextual theology. Indeed, Liberation and other types of theological witness concentrating upon the social context today have much in common with that intensely kerygmatic theology of the early part of this century which in its initial phases was called "dialectical theology" and "the theology of crisis." (24) The point is not to confirm one's society but to engage it. The Tillichian "method of correlation," to which allusion has already been made, would state the matter in this way: the context (Tillich uses the term "situation") does not determine the content of the Christian message, but it does determine the form. The confession of faith must meet that "little point" where the battle is fiercest. This means that the "little point" is decisive for the character, emphasis, wording--in short the form taken by the Christian Zeugniss. If a man is dying of cancer I do not speak to him about the opportunities of youth; analogously, if a society is full of anxiety about its future (as ours is!) I do not address it as though it were bursting with nineteenth-century industrial optimism! In neither case does this mean that what I do say (to the sick man, or to the society) will be what my hearer wants to hear!

3. The third danger--that of a diversification (Vielgestaltigkeit) of witness which may be destructive to Christian unity--requires a somewhat fuller commentary than the first two. Let me begin by suggesting that a certain amount of demythologization needs to inform our reflection upon this point. What passes for Christian "unity" is frequently a highly theoretical thing, and one which is by no means harmless. In the past, the unity of the church has been sustained by many factors which, upon closer scrutiny, are quite extraneous to the gospel. Here I do not refer only to the

structures of ecclesiastical government, which have sometimes been airtight enough to prevent any sort of diversification of witness; I refer also to the more subtle types of inauthentic unity created by the imposition of the theological struggles of a particular people upon the whole church.

Imposition is perhaps an imprecise word, for until rather recently the churches of the non-European world have gladly accepted the European experience and the theological conclusions wrested from that experience as if they were universally applicable. But they are not. They represent in fact an intensely contextual expression of the Christian message, but one that is hardly ever acknowledged as contextual. That is, they are derived from and addressed to the particularities of various European experiences over the centuries. The habit of considering these theological expressions (creeds, confessions, catechisms, liturgical forms, theological systems, etc.) normative is due entirely to mundane factors such as the long duration of Christianity in Europe, the contrasting brevity of the Christian experiences of people on other continents, and the general spread and influence of European culture throughout the Western world. I do not say that these "mundane factors" are wholly devoid of a providential dimension; but of this I feel quite certain--that the domination of European theological thought must not continue and will not continue in the church of the future.

It must not continue because when a people (such as the Christian community of Japan) allows, for example, German theologians an inordinate influence in the interpretation of the gospel, the Japanese church is not only asking for a reputation as a "Western" religion but it is

avoiding what we identified in the discussion of Luther as "obedience." That is, it is failing to become a genuinely theological community; for it has accepted the struggles of another people, and the theological "answers" that have been derived from these struggles, instead of allowing the Spirit to lead it into its own wilderness. (25) Such a Christian community may be rich enough in "doctrine," but it will not be engaging in theology.

If this European dominance must not continue, however, it is also important to add that it will not. For all over the globe today, Christians have begun to be aware of the need to enter into their own darkness, and to discover whatever light there may be in the tradition of Jerusalem for that darkness. This is one of the salutary effects of "the end of the Constantinian era."

Even in North America something like a process of indigenization is beginning to occur: I say "even" in North America because, more than any other continental province of the church, the North American church has been content for a very long time to accept its theology "ready-made" from the European mother- and fatherlands. Given our relatively long history (the first formal concert of classical music was given in my city of Montreal in 1535), we have produced very few indigenous expressions of theology. (26) We have been content to copy the parental culture at this as at almost every other level excepting technology, always looking to Europe for precedents, confirmation, and approval! As the Canadian political philosopher George Grant has expressed it ironically: "In a field as un-American as theology, the continually changing ripples of thought, by which the professionals hope to revive a dying faith, originate from some stone dropped by a European thinker." (27)

A personal statement may help to concretize the point, and at the same time further illustrate the nature of contextuality in theology. The realization of our North American theological dependency status came to me forcibly in the 1960's when, after a series of "theologies of," Jürgen Moltmann's Theology of Hope made its impact. I must insert here that I have no greater respect for any present-day Christian thinker than for Moltmann; furthermore, I am quite sure that, had I been attempting to elaborate a theology in the West German situation of the post-war period I should have devised something very similar in emphasis, though not in brilliance, to his "theology of hope" in order to combat the fatalism and "Nordic melancholy" (Barth) present in that context. But that context is not the North American context--as the fate of Moltmann's work in the United States and Canada proceeded to make abundantly plain. Moltmann's book was taken up by countless ministers and teachers of theology and journals on our side of the Atlantic and ... I shall not say "read," because few were prepared to subject themselves to such heavy prose, but sloganized! The "Theology of Hope" became almost a byword, the title of thousands of sermons, seminars, talk-shows, youth rallies, and so forth, from coast to coast. The reason for this phenomenon was obvious to anyone who knew even a little of our continent's "spiritual" history as a European satellite. We were after all the continent of hope! The "New World"! Here, according to enlightened Europeans of the eighteenth century and the huddled masses of Europe over many centuries, the sins of the fathers would be set aside and a new day would dawn! But with Viet Nam, the environmental crisis, and the failure of our institutions (to mention only the external problems which surfaced in the 1960's), this New World hope was growing very thin (some think that it has since

disappeared altogether!), and Moltmann's emphasis, lightly handled, was received with open arms. In Europe, especially in Germany, Moltmann's witness acted as a prophetic catalyst to waken many Christians from their "dogmatic slumbers." In North America it served the official religion in precisely Marx's sense, as an opiate. It did not make us more honest but less. It did not give us courage to face our truth, but provided us with yet another postponement. It became, in short, another, rather "catchy" statement of the official optimism that was our heritage from the European Enlightenment--that innocently positive outlook which, in the hands of a powerful people lacking in self-knowledge, can be devastating for the total world situation! Far from helping the North American middle class churches to discern the real signs of their times, this theology, simplistically interpreted, functioned as a comforting and repressive balm, giving us one more reason not to look for light for "our own darkness" (Eric Lincoln). Explicitly as it identified the target in Europe, it did not address the "little point" where our battle was raging. For our problem was not a lack of hope, but a surfeit of false hope! (28)

It may be that in the next decades, Christian theology in Europe and North America will find expression in increasingly divergent forms. Europe, too, is changing, becoming conscious of itself as a sociological unit, and shaking off the vestiges of its economic and military dependence upon the United States. North Americans in the meantime are experiencing a Götterdämmerung of increasingly ubiquitous proportions: the "American Dream" is scarcely credible even to the alleged Silent Majority now. A consequence of these changing sociological factors may well be a growing cleavage between European and North American theology, because each of us has to deal

with the specifics of our own situation. Meantime, this kind of diversification is happening even more dramatically in the churches whose context is the Third World, as well as in the churches of the Marxist bloc.

Does this mean a real division of the unity of the church and its gospel? Is it already questionable to speak of the unity of Christian truth, and may we expect Babel rather than Pentecost to characterize the church of the future?

Not necessarily. These currents may in fact lead to the working out of a genuine unity--a unity that is no longer merely formal, maintained by the power of ecclesiastical hierarchies, the weight of the Constantinian past, the imposition of doctrinal uniformity, or sheer inertia. Diversity there must be and will be. The truth for us in North America today must take the form of a critique of power such as we have never dreamt of in our Christian past on that continent. Meantime, the truth for many of our Third World Christian colleagues may well include the discovery and use of power, the throwing-off of the shackles of oppression, the taking of responsibility for their own destiny. Would this mean that we and they are therefore thrown into a state of alienation? It may well mean that we are alienated as citizens of this or that nation state. Professor Miguez Bonino and I find ourselves today on differing sides of a dispute that may take on very serious proportions. This "worldly" dividedness does not necessarily mean alienation as members of the body of Christ, however; for I understand perfectly well that for Professor Bonino and his people the gospel must mean a struggle against forms of oppression created, in part, by me and my people. I trust that he also can understand why my role within my

own society may be quite different--in terms of its content, goals, and methods--from his. Similarly, the analysis of socio-economic conditions in one part of the world church may be more profitably undertaken with the help of Marxist categories than in other parts. Ecological concerns may dominate here, the distribution of wealth there, race relations in another arena, and the struggle against nuclear warfare in yet another. We are, to be sure, "one world," and therefore nothing that occurs here is irrelevant there. Yet as a member of a society that is only six percent of the globe's human population but consumes more than forty percent of its raw materials; a society whose leadership is making the threat of a nuclear confrontation daily more probable, I know that

> I am a man of unclean lips,
> and I dwell in the midst of
> a people of unclean lips;

I know this in a way that I do not expect my fellow Christians in India or El Salvador to know this!

What it comes to then is surely this; that faithfulness to the Scriptures (Wortgebundenheit) and responsible participation in one's social context (Kontextbezogenheit) necessarily produces diversity (Vielgestaltigkeit) of Christian witness. In order for the ecumenical church to be faithful to its one Lord, its various parts must engage in different sorts of witness. Our Lord does not have the same tasks for each disciple-community any more than he had the same task for each of the original twelve (See John 21:2Øff.!). He is a living Lord, not a dead one--a lively truth, not a doctrinal ideology. To confess him here is to say this and do this; to confess him there is something else again. What

this diversity does mean, of course, is that there is today an even greater reason than there was in the earlier decades of this century for ecumenical dialogue, communication, and fellowship. It is no longer for the sake of creating denominational unity, but for the sake of comprehending each other's witness to the one truth, and therefore of keeping alive in a dangerously divided world the vision of a uniting truth which both transcends and informs our particularities.

NOTES

* Since reference will be made occasionally to terms employed in the German title of this paper, of which the English title is only an approximation, it should be recorded here as well: "Die Vielgestaltigkeit christlichen Zeugnisses im Spannungsfeld zwischen Wortgebundenheit und Kontextbezogenheit." This article is reprinted with kind permission of Fortress Press, Philadelphia. It appears in Peter Manns and Harding Meyer, eds., Luther's Ecumencial Significance. Fortress Press, 1984.

1. Karl Barth, Evangelical Theology: An Introduction, trans. Grover Foley (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1963), 7.

2. According to the newly-published World Christian Encyclopaedia, the so-called "Evangelicals," most of whom accept the literal inerrancy of the Scriptures and/or cling to doctrinal absolutes, "command a healthy majority of Protestants in the world (157 million) as well as in the U.S. 59 million" (Time Magazine, 3 May 1982, 43). In short, Christianity in at least its "Protestant"

expression is today in danger of being defined by those who use this concept of truth as a bulwark against Modernity.

3. Cardinal Newman, Parochial and Plain Sermons, 8 vols. (London, 1937), 2:22, 356.

4. Ironically, it is the strong psychic urge to escape precisely the "unpredictable processes of life" that has lent power to such absolutist forms of religion today. The uncertain and even apocalyptic character of our era has created a climate in which many otherwise "realistic" people are willing to purchase "peace" at any price. But this is ironic when it occurs under the aegis of a religion of incarnation, i.e., a religion which desires the salvation of the world.

5. "Liberation Theology" is first and foremost a theology of contextual concern and reflection. One of the best, brief descriptions of the theology of liberation draws this out: "Instead of starting from eternal truths, which are then applied to the 'world-life situation,' the liberation theologians start with the reality in which the people are. This initial point illustrates the need for collaboration between the theologian and the social scientist." Lawrence A. Egan, in the Foreword to Ignacio Ellacuria, Freedom Made Flesh (New York: Orbis Books, 1976), vii.

6. Tillich in fact names this "The Protestant Principle." "Protestant theology protests in the name of the Protestant principle ... against the identification of our ultimate concern with any creation of the church, including the biblical writings insofar as their witness to what is really ultimate is also a conditioned expression of their own

spirituality." Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 2:37.

7. Dorothee Sölle, Political Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 23.

8. Robert McAfee Brown, Issue, No. 24 (1980): 13 (Toronto, United Church of Canada).

9. LW 35:116.

10. The famous Marburg discussions of 1529 constitute one of the most notorious examples in history of parties talking past one another. It was the meeting of two ages, with some real but much merely superficial overlapping of concerns and presuppositions. It "contrasted two types of religious experience, the one (Luther) a mystical interpretation of the sacrament, the other (Zwingli) an intellectual interpretation." Paul Tillich, A History of Christian Thought, ed. Carl Braaten (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967), 260.

11. Of course Luther believed in the inspiration of the Bible; and of course he was concerned about precision in translation--as his painstaking work of biblical translation readily demonstrates. But because his primary reverence for the Scriptures was grounded neither in an after all rather bizarre idea of unusual spiritual authorship nor in the humanist's notion of truth tied to "the original" but in the existential experience of "conviction by the Word," he neither struggled (as Calvin did) with the problem of verbal inspiration nor did he manifest Erasmus's kind of linguistic preciousness.

12. LW 54:353.

13. Regin Prenter, Spiritus Creator: Luther's Concept of the Holy Spirit, trans. J.M. Jensen (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1953), 102. "It is God who has the Scripture in his hand. If God does not infuse his Spirit the hearer of the Word is not different from the deaf man. No one can rightly understand the Word of God unless he receives it directly from the Holy Spirit. The sermon and the sacrament are here placed together with the Word of Scripture. They are all outward words which must necessarily wait upon the inward Word of God." Idem., 103.

14. It is important in this connection to note that for Luther the oral dimension of the Word is the most important; so much so that he regards the description of the New Testament as "gospel" to be erroneous, for the gospel is not something written. "The gospel should really not be something written, but a spoken word which brought forth the scriptures...." LW 35:123.

15. "The Spirit is not bound in the Word. The Spirit is God's own high majesty and he has his own existence in God's eternal glory.... But as the revealing Spirit ... he cannot be without the Word." Prenter, Spiritius Creator, 122.

16. I say "relatively" because quite clearly not even the Scriptures are static for Luther. Of course there is a "givenness" about the Bible, but its meaning is never permanently fixed. This is demonstrated by Luther's never-ending struggle to find just the right German words in his biblical translations. He did this, not out of academic, philological interest,

but from the preacher's concern (the contextual concern!) to speak to the situation. Cf. Roland Bainton, Here I Stand (New York: Abingdon, 1950), ch. 19.

17. The examples Ebeling provides from Luther's own work are worth repeating here: "When the Psalmist prays: 'I am thy servant, give me understanding that I may know thy testimonies!' Luther's interpretation is as follows: 'The Psalmist prays for an understanding against the mere letter, for the Spirit is understanding. For as the years have passed on, so has the relationship grown closer between the letter and the Spirit. For what was a sufficient understanding in times past, has now become the letter to us. Thus at the present time, as we have said, the letter itself is more subtle in nature than before. And this is because of the progress of time. For everyone who travels, what he has left behind and forgotten is the letter, and what he is reaching forward to is the Spirit. For what one already possesses is always the letter, by comparison with what has to be achieved....' And Luther is sufficiently bold to draw an example of this from traditional dogma: 'Thus the doctrine of the Trinity, when it was explicitly formulated at the time of Arius, was the Spirit, and only understood by a few; but today it is the letter, because it is something publicly known--unless we add something to it, that is, a living faith in it. Consequently we must always pray for understanding, in order not to be frozen by the letter that kills." Gerhard Ebeling, Luther: An Introduction to his Thought, trans. R.A. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 99-100.

18. Martin Luther, Church Postil, trans. and ed.

John N. Lenker (Minneapolis: Lutherans In All Lands Co., 1903ff). Exact reference lost.

19. Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1978).

20. Cf. Douglas J. Hall, Lighten Our Darkness: Towards an Indigenous Theology of the Cross (Philadelphia: Westminister Press, 1976).

21. "Because we live in a lie, the truth, when it shall come to us, must appear adversaria specie." Prenter, Spiritus Creator, 118-119.

22. Tillich, Systematic Theology, 2:15.

23. There is a world of difference, however, between Joseph Fletcher's "situation ethics" and Paul Lehmann's ethical contextualism.

24. In fact if one were looking for the modern historical antecedents of theological contextualism one would certainly have to pay close attention to the early Barth--the Barth before his "positivism of revelation" (Bonhoeffer) became dominant.

25. I do not single out Japan, of course. At the same time that country offers a very instructive illustration of the problem under discussion. The Christianity first imposed upon Japan by Spanish and Portuguese Jesuits simply did not "take root" in that "swamp" (cf. the novel Silence by the Japanese Catholic author, Shusaku Endo). In the post-World War II period, Barth and Brunner became "interesting" to some Japanese Christians. But if Christianity survives in

that culture, and can expect a future, it is because in the meantime an indigenous theological dialogue has sprung up in both Protestant and Catholic circles, one which seeks to engage Buddhism and other religious and secular influences native to the culture, and is assuming a colour rather different from traditional Western Christian triumphalism, as the works of Endo, amongst many others, indicate.

26. The great exception is Reinhold Niebuhr.

27. George Grant, Technology and Empire (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1969), 16.

28. I discussed this subject at the time in "The Theology of Hope in the Officially Optimistic Society," Religion in Life, 40/3 (1971):376ff.

THE 'INDIVIDUALISM' OF LUTHER VERSUS THE PERSONALISM OF POPE JOHN-PAUL II.

by: John Hellman

Martin Luther has been a scapegoat in a certain kind of thinking about what is wrong with the modern world. This paper will be concerned with understanding how and why Luther has come to be the archetypal individualist for his modern critics -- including the chief intellectual mentors of the present Pope, John-Paul II. This paper, then, will be less centred on Luther than on his 'Enduring Legacy'. We shall examine what Luther came to represent -- the 'perceived Luther' -- in some of our own century's most important social and political, or philosophical, thinking. In this exercise we may learn more about Luther's modern critics than about the historical Luther. But, perhaps, we might also come to see Luther, or rather Luther's legacy, in a new light.

We shall begin by discussing the role of 'the legacy of Luther' in the formulation of the new philosophy of personalism by the French Catholic 'Thomist' philosophers Jacques Maritain and Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, two of the most important intellectual mentors of Jean-Paul II. We shall see how Maritain consciously formulated his 'philosophy of the person' over against the 'Luther legacy' he imagined in the modern world and how Luther figured in the background to the phenomenological philosophy of Pope John-Paul's subsequent great philosophical interest, Max Scheler. Then, briefly, we shall suggest how current research by historians in the histoire des mentalities may shed some light upon the validity of this philosophical juxtaposition of a 'personalist' current in Western religiosity over against the 'individualism'-- real or imagined -- of Luther's 'enduring legacy'.

Rarely in history has a trained professional philosopher been in a situation in which he was able to spread the influence of his personal thinking as is Karol Wojtyla (become John-Paul II). This Pope may not, as Hans Küng quickly pointed out, have had much theological training (1) but he has worked out his own, distinctive philosophical synthesis by combining a solid intellectual formation in the thought of Thomas Aquinas with what was most imaginative and innovative in twentieth century phenomenology. The result is an 'Existential' or 'Thomist' Personalism, a philosophy which is premised on the need to find a compromise between the 'individualism' of the capitalist West on the one had and the 'communalism' of the Marxist-Leninist East on the other. (2) Karol Wojtyla comes to an 'anti-individualist' (and hence, I would argue, 'anti-Lutheran') philosophy from both of the philosophical traditions — Thomism and phenomenology-- which he joins. We will consider the positions on Luther of his Thomist mentors, and then of the phenomenologist most important for him, to illustrate this.

Father Wojtyla's best known and most rigorous teacher was the director of his first doctorate, Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange of the Angelicum in Rome, who was considered at the time the world's most distinguished authority on Thomas Aquinas. Father Garrigou, nicknamed 'Réginald the rigid' by his students, or 'the sacred monster of Thomism' by François Mauriac, was a follower of Cardinal Cajetan (who died in 1534) — the principle proponent of Thomism in the course of controversies with Luther and the Protestants. (3) While Father Wojtyla was studying under Garrigou-Lagrange he also came under the influence of the Dominican's close friend, a distinguished

layman become French ambassador to the Vatican, Jacques Maritain. Maritain, who also shared a Cajetan approach to Luther and Protestantism, has often been described as the most influential Catholic philosopher and Christian Democratic political theorist of this century. (4) At this time he published his short book The Person and the Common Good, his most complete exposition of a 'Thomist Personalism'. In this work Maritain cited Father Garrigou-Lagrange as the first to show the vital importance of St. Thomas Aquinas' distinction between individuality and personality ('in relation to the most prominent moral and social problems of our time'). (5) It is not surprising, then, that when Wojtyla returned to Poland his first major published article was on 'Thomist personalism' -- very much in the intellectual lineage of Maritain and Garrigou-Lagrange. (6)

Where, then, did this personalism come from? And what did or does it have to do with Luther or Luther's legacy? Jacques Maritain later made a credible claim to having invented this philosophy. When we search his earlier writings we find he first used 'personalist' terms after he converted to Catholicism, when he was heatedly rejecting his Protestant heritage in general, and attacking Martin Luther in particular. In the book in which he first distinguishes between the 'person' and the 'individual', Maritain, generously citing Garrigou-Lagrange, paints a vivid, brutal, scandalous portrait of the archetypal, tragically influential, 'individual': Martin Luther. Maritain's analysis of Luther, which he illustrated with unflattering portraits intended to suggest a steady process of moral degeneration, was an important element in his view of the direction of Western European history. For Maritain, Luther was the archetypal aberrant individualist, a man of whom it could be said that

from the very beginning his inner life was disoriented. The human subject became in fact for him of more concern than God. (7) And, tragically, the 'subjectivism' of Luther caught on in his age:

> What first impresses us in Luther's character is egocentrism: something much subtler, much deeper, and much more serious, than egoism; ...Luther's self becomes practically the centre of gravity of everything.... And Luther's self is not only his passing quarrels and passions, it has a representative value.... The Reformation unbridled the human self in the spiritual and religious order... (8)

The Lutheran must "work his own redemption by driving himself to a desperate trust in Christ", "and thus in the person of Luther and his doctrine we are present ... at the Advent of Self." (9) This was what Maritain loathed in Luther and in Protestantism, and what was most antithetical to the Roman Catholic Church in the sixteenth century. Maritain saw Luther at the origin of a Culture of Narcissism not unlike that recently denounced by Christopher Lasch. (10)

In Maritain's view this 'individualism', this 'subjectivity' in Luther's life, in Luther's milieu, quickly led to failings in the area of sexual comportment: '"What is needed to live in continence is not in me"', Luther admitted. Thus, according to Maritain:

> Submerged by ... what he thinks

to be sin, he let himself
go with the tide. And hecomes
to the practical solution:
concupiscence cannot be
conquered. (11)

This led to Luther's doctrine "born chiefly of his own inward experience": Pecca fortiter et crede firmius. "Sin courageously, believe more firmly than ever and you will be saved." Here, according to Maritain, we approach the cause for "that immense disaster for humanity, the Protestant Reformation." Much of mankind suffered disastrous consequences from an "interior trial which turned out badly in a religious who lacked humility." (12)

For Maritain, Luther's 'subjectivism' encouraged radical change in his attitude toward sexual morality and toward women. Maritain charged that Luther endorsed the liturgical timing of a rape of nuns which took place on the night of Holy Saturday 1523, that he enjoyed surrounding himself with nuns 'thus restored to nature', and would cite Scripture telling us that "women must be used for marriage or prostitution". For Maritain, Luther's "base contempt for womanhood" came from that "war against Christian virginity: rooted in the subjective, individualistic wellsprings of Luther's inner life":

It is really the mystical fall...
which is at the origin
of Luther's polemic against
celibacy. ...It is always...
evangelical deliverance which
he seeks; but now he puts
as a condition the accomplishment
of carnal desire, which
the soul... could not always
constrain without insurmountable

> torments of conscience... That is why he is such a terrible mixture of cynicism and candour, of prayer and lewdness.... His hatred of virginity was essentially metaphysical and theological; that is what made it so pernicious. (13)

In Martin Luther's individualistic doctrine Maritain found not only a disoriented interior life encouraging moral failings but also the advent of that selfishness, that narcissism, of the modern world. Here Maritain's historical perspective on Luther's legacy echoed the nineteenth century pronouncements of anti-modernists such as Charles Maurras, Pius IX or Joseph De Maistre as well as twentieth century social critics like Lasch:

> ...Luther's case shows us precisely one of the problems against which modern man struggles in vain. It is the problem of individualism and personality. Look at the Kantian shrivelled up in his autonomy, the Protestant tormented by concern for his inward liberty, the Nietzschean giving himself curvature of the spine in his effort to jump beyond good and evil, the Freudian cultivating his complexes and sublimating his libido, the thinker preparing an unpublished conception of the world for the next philosophical congress, the "surrealist" hero throwing himself into a trance and plunging into the abyss of dreams,

> the disciple of M. Gide
> viewing himself with gloomy
> enthusiasm in the mirror of his
> freedom: all those unhappy
> people are looking for their
> personalities; and contrary
> to the Gospel promise, they
> seek and do not find. (14)

> ... the modern world confounds ...
> individuality and personality.

How should the relationship between individuality and personality, the individual and the person, be understood? Maritain argued that in Christian philosophy 'the word person is reserved for substances which possess that divine thing, the spirit', '... for substances which, choosing their end, are capable themselves of deciding on the means!' ...'And what makes their dignity, what makes their personality, is just exactly the substance of the spiritual ... and its supreme independence in regard to all fleeting imagery and all ... sensible phenomena. ...St. Thomas teaches that the word person signifies the noblest and highest thing in all nature: "Persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura."' (15) Maritain juxtaposed this Thomist definition of the person over against the modern 'individual' as prefigured in the vivid character of Luther. Maritain also transposed the blemished individual of Reformation days, so aptly illustrated by Martin Luther's sliding into degeneracy surrounded by spoiled nuns, into the European cities of the roaring twenties, which he saw as part of 'the enduring legacy of Martin Luther':

> ...the modern city sacrifices the
> person to the individual
> and delivers the person, isolated,

> naked with no social
> framework to support and
> protect it ... and it says
> to each of the poor children
> of men set in the midst
> of this turmoil: "You are
> a free individual; defend
> yourself, save yourself,
> all by yourself." It is
> a homicidal civilization. (16)

The stridency of Maritain's condemnation of the modern bourgeois or capitalist society was as intense as that of Engels, Lenin or Marx. But the modern philosopher whose distinctions between individuality and personality Maritain found most useful was Garrigou-Lagrange and he cited him at length. According to Father Garrigou:

> "To develop one's individuality is
> to live the egoistical life of the
> passions, to make oneself the center
> of everything, ... a slave of
> a thousand passing goods..."
>
> "Personality, on the contrary,
> increases as the soul rises above
> the sensible world and by intelligence
> and will binds itself more closely
> to ... the life of the spirit."
>
> "...the saints especially have
> understood that the full development
> of our poor personality consists
> in losing it in some way in that of
> God, Who alone possesses personality
> in the perfect sense of the word,
> for He alone is absolutely
> independent in His being and
> action." (17)

Maritain concluded, then, that as a result '...truly perfect personality is only found in the saints.' (18)

In sum, the best-known spokesman of Thomist Personalism insisted that the authentic path to 'personhood', to a truly Christian personality, was through the annihilation of precisely that sort of 'individuality' which he imagined Luther to have invented and fostered.

As if the 'anti-Lutheranism' of the Catholic Neo-Thomists were not enough, Karol Wojtyla met a complementary intellectual influence in working on his second doctoral dissertation: An Assessment of the Possibility of Building a Christian Ethic on the Principles of the System of Max Scheler (Lublin, 1959). Max Scheler (1874-1928) like Maritain and Garrigou-Lagrange was a convert to Catholicism who turned violently against the individualism of his Protestant background. In Scheler's case, hositility to the Lutheranism of his father was encouraged by his own fascination for the communitarian aspects of the liturgical feasts of the Catholic Church, his idealization of the Middle Ages, and his obvious contempt for the materialistic entrepreneurial class of his own day who embodied a spirit which he, like Jacques Maritain, like Max Weber, linked to Protestantism. Scheler preserved a vision of a purified Europe, cleansed of Eastern autocratic and Western Anglo-American influences, a twentieth century restitution of the Carolingian spiritual unity of the Continent through the revitalization of the Universal Church. As Professor George Williams has pointed out, Scheler's hopes for the purification of Europe may be compared with the Polish Messianism in the background of Karol Wojtyla. (19)

In his 'Catholic phase' Scheler wrote Der

Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik, Part I (1913) and II (1916), eventually subtitled, "A new attempt at the foundation of an ethical Personalism"-- a large and difficult work, which helped lead to the common designation 'personalism' for the whole of Scheler's philosophy, and which Father Wojtyla translated into Polish. Certainly Wojtyla's thesis demonstrates a nuanced, critical reading of Scheler, but there is also considerable evidence of Scheler's phenomenological methodology in Wojtyla's subsequent writings. (20)

In sum, when you explore the Catholic philosophical background of John-Paul II you discover that 'the enduring legacy' of Martin Luther figures largely in it. But was this distinction between Luther's 'individualism' and the 'personalism' of a true christian culture anything more than a play on words formulated by one group of Christians to discredit the other? The great sociologist and historian Max Weber, we recall, pointed out that the theological notion of 'calling' in Luther was a useful way to designate an aspect of the Lutheran legacy which had an immense historical impact on the rise of capitalism and the restless, neurotic work ethic he discerned in the modern Western world. (21) Contemporary historians, following Weber's example, might well find that distinguishing John-Paul II's 'personalism' from the 'individualism' of Luther is useful for clarifying significant differences in mentality between important religious cultures which theological language cannot easily express. If the doctrinal differences which separated Christians in the sixteenth century now seem less relevant, the changes which grew out of them--in the notions of community and authority, sexuality, the place of women, sorcery and possession -- are of great interest...as are the mutations in 'popular

culture' or 'popular religion' which separated peoples of the different regions in the sixteenth century from one another, from their ancestors in the Middle Ages, and from us. (22) For example, contemporary scholars such as Philippe Ariès, Jacques Le Goff, John McManners, Michel Vovelle and, of course, Lionel Rothkrug have insisted upon the differences between our perceptions of the dead and those of earlier times. (23) Professor Rothkrug has contrasted the relationship between the living and the dead in the Lutheran from that of the Catholic regions of Europe. On the surface of things Luther's conception of death seems more 'individualistic' than was that of pre-Reformation Christian culture with its 'communal' rites such as priests carrying the sacrament of extreme unction to the dying person, the Requiem Mass, and the presence of Mary, the angels and the saints at the final agony. Before Luther there was a relationship with the souls in Purgatory, between the drastic alternatives of heaven and hell, the Communion of Saints. The Lutheran sense of God left the dying person 'relatively' alone. This Lutheran confrontation with death can be seen as more 'scriptural', but also as more 'individualizing' than had been the case in a cosmos in which there were 'personal' relationships with the Virgin Mary and with all of those with whom one was united in the Communion of Saints. Was not this 'loneliness in the universe' one of the reasons behind this tarring of Luther as an individualist, and 'Protestantism' as a force encouraging 'individualism' in Western society?

So as contemporary theologians tend to stress the similarities between the Catholic and the Lutheran traditions, practitioners of the nouvelle histoire have been emphasizing differences between religious traditions which, up until recently, cultural anthropologists were studying only in

non-Western societies. (24) 'Mentalitarians' are expanding some of the analyses of Max Weber regarding the cultural and historical consequences of doctrines whose theological importance seems to have faded. If Luther's perceptions of death and the dead could be seen as leading toward that anguishing discovery of 'one's own death' described by Ariès, it is also possible that current research in the history of sexual comportment by scholars such as Jean-Louis Flandrin will find Luther representing important shifts in the perception of sexuality, asceticism, virginity, celibacy, chastity. (25) In sum, this new philosophy of personalism which Luther's legacy (however caricatured) has helped provoke may aid us to recall and clarify significant cultural differences in popular religious mentality, which current theological and religious language in North America tends to ignore. An appreciation of these factors, can, in turn, help us to appreciate that remarkable mixture of popular appeal and sophistication in the religious mentality of John-Paul II, as well as some of the aspects of the 'enduring legacy of Martin Luther' which remain of great importance for us.

NOTES

1. Hans Küng, 'Jean-Paul II: une interrogation', Le Devoir, (Montreal), 24 Octobre 1979.

2. On the 'Personalism' of John-Paul II see John Hellman, 'John-Paul II and the Personalist Movement', Cross Currents, XXX, No. 4 (winter 1980-1981); 'The Prophets of Solidarity', America, 147, No. 14 (November 6, 1982), 266-269. The best study of the Pope's intellectual background is G.H. Williams, The

Mind of John-Paul II: Origins of his Thought and Action (New-York, 1981). Other useful works are Paul Johnson, Pope John-Paul II and the Catholic Restoration (London, 1982); Mieczyslaw Malinski, Pope John-Paul II: The life of Karol Wojtyla, translated by P.S. Falla (New York, 1979); and John Hellman, Emmanuel Mounier and the New Catholic Left, 1930-1950 (Toronto, 1981).

3. For Garrigou-Lagrange's influence on John-Paul II see Williams, John-Paul II.

4. On Maritain see Bernard Doering, Jacques Maritain and the French Catholic Intellectuals (Notre Dame, 1983).

5. La personne et le bien commun (Paris, 1947), p. 9.

6. 'Personalizm Tomistyczny', Znak No. 83 (1961). A special Sunday edition of Osservatore Romano, 12 November 1978, devoted wholly to the mind of the Pope, with two pieces by him as Cardinal Wojtyla, included a major exposition of Jacques Maritain's influence on Polish philosophy. (Cf. Williams, John-Paul II, p. 371.

7. Three Reformers (New York, 1929), p. 7.

8. Ibid., p. 14.

9. Ibid., p. 18.

10. cf. Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations (New York, 1979).

11. Maritain, Reformers, p. 9.

12. Ibid., p. 13.

13. Ibid., p. 184-186.

14. Ibid., p. 19.

15. Ibid., p. 19-20.

16. Ibid., p. 21.

17. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, Le sens commun (2nd ed.), pp. 332-333, cited in ibid., pp. 24-25.

18. Reformers, p. 25.

19. John-Paul II, p. 121.

20. See John-Paul II, The Acting Person (Dodrecht, 1979) in which only Aristotle and Kant are cited as often as Scheler, and Williams, John-Paul II, John-Paul II, p. 125-140.

21. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (New York, 1976), p. 79-81.

22. On 'popular religion' see Bernard Plongeron and Robert Pannet, Le Christianisme populaire, (Paris, 1976); C.N.R.S., La religion populaire (Paris, 1977).

23. E.g. Philippe Ariès, The Hour of our Death (New York, 1981).
Jacques Le Goff, La naissance du purgatoire (Paris, 1981).
John McManners, Changing attitudes toward death among Christians and Unbelievers in 18th century France (Oxford, 1982).
Michel Vovelle, Piété Baroque et Déchristianisation: Les attitudes devant la mort en Provence au XVIII siècle (Paris, 1973).
Lionel Rothkrug, 'Religious practices and collective perceptions: Hidden homologues in

the Renaissance and Reformation', Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historiques 7; 1 (1980).

24. For an excellent introduction to many concerns see Jacques Le Goff, ed. La nouvelle histoire (Paris, 1978).

25. E.g. Jean-Louis Flandrin, Le sexe et l'Occident. Evolution des attitudes et des comportements (Paris, 1981).

LUTHER'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS WOMEN

by: Ingetraut Ludolphy

Let me begin with two excerpts from Luther. The first is from his Order of Marriage (1522) "...(W)e...see how weak and unhealthy unfertile women are but those who are fertile are healthier, cleaner, and merrier. It does not matter if they are worn out and finally die from bearing children. Let them bear unto death for they are made for this. A short but healthy life is better than a long unhealthy one". The second quotation is found in one of his later letters. "Indeed, if you were not a woman, for the sake of this work you should wish to be one, and to suffer and die preciously doing God's work and his will."

To be offended or turned off by this seemingly heartless attitude would not get us very far. We must try, instead, to understand such sentences in Luther's own context. Three things must be noted at the outset.

First, Luther was by no means alone with such views. According to the then prevailing understanding, the primary task of a wife was to guarantee the continuation of the species. This view could easily be defended biblically by referring to Genesis where God commanded his people to, "Be fruitful and multiply". Theologians of the ancient and medieval church - like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas - had sanctioned this notion. Half a century before Luther, the Nuremberg minstrel, Hans Rosenplut praised the fruitful woman who served to multiply humankind as the most worthy of God's creatures.

Second, we must consider the general condition of life at the beginning of the 16th

century. Apart from certain exceptions, to be mentioned later, it was a matter of course for a woman to end up in marriage, to bear children--many children--if she survived long enough. A man's children were indeed frequently borne by more than one wife because of the high death rate of women in childbirth. Further, a man depended on female help in the house and at work. Accordingly, pictures of donors and the tombstones of the period often show the father with his sons on the left side of the piece and the successive wives with their daughters on the right side.

Since in the eyes of God all were family members, the dead infants of these larger families were included, wearing their death shirts. The people of Luther's time were surrounded by such pictures and understood the messages they were intended to convey. They did not know anything else. Everyone, it would seem, was familiar with and accepted the fate of women, and everyone was less individualistically inclined than people are today.

Third, Luther's seemingly harsh statements concerning the woman's tasks are a consequence of his rejection of monasticism. The highest form of a woman's existence was not to be that of a nun but that which was in accordance with her female nature. In some instances such ideas can be found even before Luther. The aforementioned Hans Rosenplut has a priest admonish women in a poem to be proud of the trials of childbirth because these are harder and more dangerous than martyrdom. Luther never tired in his effort to hammer in these notions. Why did he do so? Not because of any esteem for natural facts; not in order to liberate women from some restrictions. He did so because as a Christian theologian he recognized a danger for true "evangelical" Christian living in the type of justification by faith then manifest

in monasticism. (1) Luther thus saw - and we are quoting from the same writing mentioned above - "...how wretched the spiritual state of monks and nuns is, ...where there is neither God's Word nor his good pleasure where all works, virtues and sufferings are unchristian, in vain and harmful, as Christ says, 'In vain they are serving me with human commandments'". (WA 10/11 p. 297f). Indeed Luther was so vehemently opposed to this unnatural state which "has no Word of God backing it up" that he felt even the state of the unwed mother should be held up in preference to this situation.

After this threefold exposition let us listen once more to Luther's words quoted at the beginning. Although today we could hardly agree with them they nevertheless should sound less offensive: "...we...see how weak and unhealthy unfertile women are but those who are fertile are healthier, cleaner and merrier. It does not matter if they are worn out and finally die from bearing children. Let them bear unto death for they are made for this. A short but healthy life is better than a long unhealthy one." "Indeed, if you were not a woman, for the sake of this work you should wish to be one, and to suffer and die preciously doing God's work and his will."

But Luther did not think of the preservation of the human species as women's only task. Like theologians centuries before him he considered it the duty of the wife to help her husband in the practical as well as in the spiritual aspects of married life. Whatever he had to say about the practical work of the wife does sound rather quaint and homely to modern ears. When seen from the vantage point of his wife Kate's activities we see that the horizon of the 16th century's housewife was not all that limited. She not only managed her various properties independently but also oversaw the affairs of the boarding school at

the Black Monastery. Its operation helped her to finance the household of her large family. Beyond this Luther shared his professional problems with his wife. In his letters he talks about difficult theological questions- sometimes even in simple Latin. He describes for example the arguments of Zwingli and Oecolampadius during the Eucharistic Debate in 1529 at Marburg. He also shares ecclesiastical-political questions with her, like the events at the Imperial Diet at Augsburg, 1530. He suggested to her to have the extensive reports by his table fellows and co-workers (sent along with the mail) translated from the Latin, perhaps with explanations. He asked her to deal with his printers during his absence from Wittenberg. We may be surprised to hear that he did not disdain her advice - the advice of a "clever woman and doctor" -- concerning official appointments. Luther's ideas regarding a woman's theoretical and practical tasks may have been rather quaint and theoretical, but what he had to say about a wife's spiritual support sounds very modern indeed. He stated that men without female partners are exposed not only to emotional imbalance and depressions but, worse yet, to temptations of fornication or perverse sexual behaviour. Positively expressed, he could say that God bestows his favour on a man through his wife. It is as if God himself were hiding behind the respective wife. Luther here presents one of his favourite images: a creature serving as "mask of God" (larva dei). A woman, he feels, is especially suited for this amiable task because it is part of her nature to care, to nourish and to sympatheize, to be kind and compassionate. Women therefore console and alleviate pain (suffering). Luther even accepted the possibility that a woman filled with the Holy Spirit could admonish a man and comfort him in times of great distress by bringing to him the Word of God.

Luther said that because of the benefits a man receives from his wife, everyone should consider his partner as given to him personally by God. He did not, of course, espouse the romantic notion that two people were born for each other; Luther and his contemporaries were much too prosaic for that in matters concerning love and matrimony. He rather aimed at rooting the value and dignity of matrimony in God. The lovemaking aspects of marriage were much less important to him than fidelity, which he repeatedly praised. He thus said eight days after his own marriage that he loved his wife not out of passion but out of respect. Yet in spite of many positive statements Luther knew very well that even in marriage all that glitters is not gold. A wife's vices can be a burden. Some women are driven by their moods, others are easily enraged or cantankerous while some others are arrogant. There are wives who are unable to oversee the household, and there are those who neglect the education of their children. Too often they are just running around snooping or they are idling in the doorways, eager for news and gossip. Moral laxity, talkativeness and curiosity in females are to be censored. Obstinacy, disobedience and tardiness or the blackmailing of men with unfair means like pestering or tears should be rebuked. It is unlikely that Luther used his own wife, whom he so highly praised, as an example. If we were looking for sources behind the reformer's appraisal of female nature we will find ample material in the general literature of the time; diatribes nearly constituted a special form of literature at that time. Luther himself cited Terence as one of his sources of his statements about wives. Yet in spite of all the real trouble and distress of matrimony Luther could say "it is a noble thing" when someone has "entered this state (of matrimony) ordained by God", because it is through God that "all works...and sufferings of

this state become holy, divine and precious". Luther here speaks out of a wisdom to a large extent lost today, namely that suffering - here meant in the context of marriage - could become "a way to heaven". Harsh as it sounds, Luther feels that a bad partner might exercise the devil's function of sweeping clean a person who could recognize and bear it.

What we have heard thus far of Luther's view concerning a woman's task shows that he barely knew of any life suitable for women apart from that of wife and mother. He seldom touched upon the question of unmarried women, an important issue in the middle ages as well as in Luther's own time where it became even more complex due to the Reformation. Even when making a remark like ..."as things are with us now so that many will have to remain without husbands and children" he immediately adds that this should not be too difficult "because the state of spinster--and widowhood-- even while they have to live without the fruits of their wombs-- is neither despised nor unworthy but well-esteemed according to the Gospel". That is the theoretical theologian speaking. Luther did not recognize the economical and sociological difficulties the women of his time had to face. The reason might be that the small university town of Wittenberg with the university's many male members suffered little from the usual surplus of women that probably amounted to more than 10%. Or did these questions simply not occur to Luther? He certainly wanted women to be occupied with teaching, but not primarily as means for their livelihood. On the one hand he wanted to offer girls a substitute for monastery schools, and, on the other hand, to provide the necessary educational basis for their understanding of the Gospel.

We must next investigate Luther's valuation

of women in general. The degree to which he broke down prejudices is surprising. Although he held men to be ill suited for tending small children he did not grant them the privilege of being spared these tasks. He thought it would please God just as well if "a man were to go and wash diapers or to do some other demeaning work for the child" as long as it was done in obedience to God. No patriarchial relationship within the domestic situation can be detected here. Neither do we hear anything about a preference of the man as a parent. Nor are females excluded from any dignity of human nature. In saying "any person is worthy of the other if both desire and love each other", Luther stresses the equality of men and women. Accordingly, a woman has the same right to punish and leave an unfaithful spouse as a husband has when faced with an adulterous wife. Luther here drew the consequences of changes in the German legal conception which had been going on under the influence of the church since the 13th century. In contrast to some strange traditions - transmitted from antiquity - Luther thought men and women equally to be God's most splendid creatures. The creation of the first woman - Eve - was a miracle just like the creation of Adam, the first man. Like Adam, Eve had full knowledge of God and was preordained to the coming life. He conceived of both ancestral parents as masters of the earth, the sea and the air, of the entire natural world. God does not favour the works of a woman less than those of a man. Luther indeed knew how much faith women can have, how steadfast they can be in the confession of Christ as well as in martyrdom. He was infuriated by the customary "abuse of women" - meaning the despising of women - since God himself saw the woman as his good creation. Luther accused a writer thus "abusing" women of lecherously gathering everything evil that the devil had ever uttered about women or accomplished through them. In response to the

proverb quoted by a certain writer, "Just blow out the light and all women are alike", Luther admonished him, saying: "Though you have truly forgotten all the holy women and virgins, should you not at least remember your own mother or your own wife and be ashamed in the very depth of your heart...? Are not all men alike, too, when the lights are put out?"

Since Luther was aware of the fact that such contempt of women had to come from either a lack of faith or wrong belief he continues: "This I know well, he who will read 'this' book with pleasure, cannot have a gracious God; indeed, his own conscience will have no peace. He rather had one or all devils as his 'gracious' Lord". His own Christian faith turns Luther into a women's advocate when he unmasks those "filthy celibates" who, out of ascetic anxiety, are saying about marriage: "It is good not to touch a woman", and also those others, who are obliged to prove their masculinity by the oppression of women. He says to them: "Verily, you shall gain exceptional honours by burdening your conscience with unjust severity against your sister and co-inheritor of God's kingdom who is a member of the same baptismal community, of the same church, and who equally shares all of God's favours. Consider what a woman is and who you are. Or, if you prefer to quarrel, why don't you pick on someone of your own kind?" Luther knew and respected the sensitivity of women who, instead of being ridiculed and despised, wanted to appeal to men's chivalry. He rebuked any married man eager to act as tyrant over his wife. A husband was not to give orders to his mate nor should he demand her obedience. He should, instead, treat his wife as Abraham treated Sarah, approaching her respectfully as if she were a person of higher rank. He should ask her for anything, hoping she will respond to him with pleasure and love.

Luther's own actions conformed to this basic attitude. Very touching is the personal tone of his comforting letters to the sick, the suffering, and the tempted women. The unimportance of gender is most noticeable when he is dealing with women for the sake of the Gospel. Less significant is the fact that Luther dedicated some theological literature to women. The dedication of one's works to high-ranking persons, women included, was common practice. More decisive is what Luther wrote in order to console or defend women in trouble for reasons of their faith.

Besides these encouraging insights Luther, of course, was also very much a child of his time. Though he objected to the woman being excluded from any noble aspect of human nature, he, nonetheless, made a distinction: in respect to honour and standing he found woman unequal to man. Man is like the sun while woman resembles the moon. Luther's idea of females being by nature the weaker ones with less self-confidence could be overlooked. But it is disturbing to hear him say that although women might react to pressing circumstances with sudden insights, they cannot measure up to men's general aptitude. He also thought a woman's or maiden's "desire to be clever" to be a least becoming garment for her. Eloquence in women should not be praised, since it is more fitting for them to stammer. That Luther shared his period's belief in witches cannot be interpreted as disdain of women because he was equally convinced of the existence of sorcerers, who are male. But his statements concerning the Fall sound very strange, indeed. The woman here is clearly shown to be the weaker who is more easily tempted. 1. Tim. 2, 13f offered a basis for his view: "For Adam was created first and Eve afterwards; and it was not Adam who was deceived; it was woman who, yielding to temptation, fell into sin". Luther furthermore could - as he

himself said - refer to "nearly all" exegetes. But as if 'by luck' he also blamed Adam for the Fall when referring to Rom. 5, 12 ff. But the conclusion Luther drew from all this was that woman now had to obey man. Eph. 5, 22 ff here served as proof and as explanation for why a woman takes her husband's name in marriage, why she follows him to different domiciles, why her activities are restricted to overseeing the household, and why it is only man who is to govern in the realms of state and church. Luther in this context quotes the proverb "Petticoat government seldom leads to a happy ending." Yet Luther's actions were not in complete agreement with his theories. On July 28, 1539, as well as during the following year he, for example, asked the duchess Catherine of Saxony to look after the visitation in the duchy since her husband was "too old and weak" for this demanding task. The woman here is asked to take the man's place of looking after the affairs of state and church.

On June 24, 1531, the reformer asked Catherina Zell in Strasbourg to help secure in this city a lasting agreement between the theologians of Wittenberg and Strasbourg. He thus assigned to her a very important task concerning matters of theology and church policy. According to his letter of January 15, 1534, to the Abbess of Herford he quite naturally granted her absolute power to rule. Even if Luther here only allowed for exceptions in case of emergency - in spite of being a traditionalist - he obviously did not follow any inflexible principle nor did he presuppose any unchangeable conditions.

The restraint Luther imposed upon women regarding their work in the parish corresponded to their limited role in the affairs of state and church government. Universal priesthood here reached a limit. Women should not preach. That

would have been wild growth. Yet for Luther everything "should be proper". Any public role for women during divine service would have been not just "unsuitable", as it was for Paul, it would have been shameless. But when men are not available the case is different: the "...a woman may get up and preach to the others as well as she is able to. The Word of God has to proceed and in emergencies it does not matter who says it or who arranges for its proclamation. This is another example of Luther's practical attitude. When the Table Talks of April 3, 1538, turned to the subject of the Bishop of Meissen who by referring to Paul's injunction that women should be silent (1 Cor. 14, 34) tried to keep Elizabeth of Rochlitz from introducing the reformation to her ecclesiastical office at Rochlitz, Luther responded: "If they don't want to listen to women and allow children to speak". This obviously put Melanchton, the humanist, into a state of panic because he called out: "The end of the world seems to be near". Luther corrected factually: "We have to fight Satan Today". There is some correspondence perhaps between the rebuke I just mentioned and the fact that Luther did not disapprove of Catherine Zell doing much work for the Gospel with her "body and mouth". In fact, he displayed much kindness to her. The same applies to Argula of Grumbach who in Southern Germany championed Protestant belief in words and writing. In 1530 he received her at Coburg castle. Similarly, if extreme conditions prevailed he was ready to permit women to administer the sacrament of baptism. Emergency baptism had long been practised by midwives although this tradition did not remain uncontested.

When trying to evaluate Luther's ideas we notice that they were highly conditioned by contemporary views as well as by the theological literature of the Middle Ages. The reason is not

only that he had little time and effort to spare for issues not burning under his nails; it also shows he did not in principle deviate from tradition. Only in cases where the rediscovered Gospel and tradition stood in opposition to each other was the reformer stirred to action. Though he continued to adhere to certain theoretical points he was willing, in practice, to break the rules in response to specific demands.

Our present situation is different from Luther's. Some of our conclusions will therefore be different from those drawn by the sixteenth century reformer. And we certainly should not accept anything he repeated with scholastic one-sidedness because he was unmoved by the problem at hand. Anti-monasticism is no longer an issue. On the contrary, we currently see some protestant movements gaining the experience that living in celibacy can liberatingly affect the work for God and neighbour. The sixteenth century model of the man-woman relationship no longer serves us. We have to find another one. A few decades ago the Lutheran theologian Werner Elert, of Erlangen, put it like this: "If we refrain from viewing Luther's household as timeless model for the normal realization of the Lutheran ideal we will avoid the temptation of looking upon the patriarchial condition of the reformation period...as the essential feature of the Lutheran family... It would be a highly questionable service to Luther if someone today, for example, were to discover a piece of 'genuine Lutheranism' in a parsonage where patriarchial conditions and customs are well conserved. Lutheranism is thereby shackled to its mode of appearance at a particular moment in history. But all modes of appearance are mortal."

Elert here speaks about the parsonage. But during the last ten to twenty years much has

changed, whether for better or worse remains to be seen. The highly praised 'self-realization' may yet turn out to be much worse than the medieval work-orientation that at least had as its focus the Other, which means God and neighbour, and not one's own self.

But there are other problems besides those of the parsonage. Concerns for justice, quite different from those of legality, are still prevalent in the mainly male-dominated churches. Given the reality of our power struggles, the ethic of the gospel is frequently lost sight of where women are concerned. How could this situation be changed.

In my opinion it should be changed by calling in question the whole power basis of this struggle. As a woman who has lived for most of her life under very oppressive conditions--conditions which would justify using power--I still find it unpleasant to watch certain women fighting for women's rights. It seems to me that Christian women are called upon to behave in a different manner. Jesus Christ did not fight for his own interests, and Christians, both male and female, are called to follow that Way.

Perhaps it would be helpful in this connection to remember Paul's instructions to family members in Ephesians chapters 5 and 6. To children, Paul writes: "Obey your parents." To fathers, he says: "Do not goad your children to resentment." These admonitions would be badly misunderstood if the children applied to themselves the instructions meant for the fathers, and vice versa. What is said to the children is meant for the children, and what is said to the fathers is meant precisely for the fathers. If the fathers, to justify their own hardness of heart, relied on the biblical teaching that

children should be obedient to their parents, they would miss the point of Paul's word to them: namely, that they should have concern for the feelings of their children. Neither should the children excuse their disobedience by pointing to the admonition intended for their fathers.

This might be a model for our thinking about the quest for justice and equality for women in the Church. For the sake of the credibility of the church and its message today, serious changes are required in the valuation and status of women. But for women themselves to take up arms, so to speak, and try to enforce such changes contradicts the ethic of the gospel, which requires love rather than power, and which presupposes that we are (after all!) a fellowship of women and men. It would be more in keeping with the ethic of that gospel, then, if the changes that are needed in the valuation and status of women were initiated by Christian men, following, in its essence, the example of Luther's Christian attitude . . . If only women could hope for that!

NOTES

1. "Evangelical" here means, "according to the Gospel as proclaimed in the New Testament."

THE EARLIEST AND LATEST LUTHER ON THE FIRST MATTER OF CREATION: LUTHER AND SCHOLASTICISM

by: Lawrence Murphy

Desiderius Erasmus in The Praise of Folly of 1509, has the following criticism to offer of the labours of the theologians of his day:

> Furthermore, they (theologians)
> explain as pleases them
> the most arcane matters, such
> as by what method the world
> was founded and set in order,
> through what conduits original
> sin has been passed down along
> the generations, by what mass,
> in what measure and how long
> the Christ was in the Virgin's
> womb, and how accidents subsist
> in the Eucharist without
> their subject.

Erasmus, obviously did not think much of the theologians' attempts to understand the origin of the world -- to leave aside other questions.

Martin Luther also in 1509 did not think much of the theologians' efforts to grasp the matter of first creation, as this marginal note indicates:

> But do thou, my reader, whoever
> you will be, observe what is
> said to you as it were by a kind
> of fool: that the smoke from
> the earth has never been observed
> to shed light on the heaven
> but rather it has kept the light
> from the earth. What I meant
> to say is that theology is the

heaven, indeed the kingdom of the
heavens, but man is the earth
and his speculations are smoke.
Do thou grasp the rest and what
is the reason for the vast
differences among the doctors.
Note also that the swine has
never been able to teach Minerva,
even if occasionally it presumed
to do so. Fierce lions and
bears, and fish and birds
also, cannot be captured with
spiders' weapons. Because I am
a fool, I have spoken thus foolishly.
My rashness and irreverence
will readily merit forgiveness.
For the rejection of physical
interpretation applied to theology,
even one handed down from
saints, does not prove guilt
of high treason.

Heiko Oberman sees great importance in this note of Luther for the determination of Luther's earliest theological positions. On the basis of Luther's statement "Theology is heaven ... man is earth and his speculations are smoke" Oberman argues thus:

...If nominalism operates on the
presupposition of an essential
harmony between reason and revelation,
it is possible to suggest
that Luther at least on this
basic point has, in 1509, as
sententarius at Erfurt, already
broken with the nominalism of his
philosophy and theology professors ...

Oberman sees Luther rejecting the "facere quod in se est" of nominalism in the area of

intellect in 1509, as he does that "facere quod in se est" in the will in 1515 and following.

Our aim in this paper is to examine the note in its context by studying it against the text of Peter Lombard, to see what conclusions we can reach as to Luther's theological positions at this time.

In distinction twelve of the second book of the Sentences, Peter Lombard, the master of the Sentences, having treated the angels (d. 11), takes up "the creation of other things and especially the distinction of the works of the six days." He makes this statement:

> When God in his wisdom established the angelic spirits, he also made other creatures, as the aforementioned Scripture from Genesis shows, which says IN THE BEGINNING GOD created HEAVEN, that is the angels, AND EARTH, namely the matter of the four elements still confused and without form, which was named chaos by the Greeks; and this was done before every day. Next he separated the elements and gave all creatures their own distinct species according to their kind. And not all at once as some of the holy Fathers thought, but through intervals of time and six volumes of days, as others thought, he formed them.

At the heart of Peter Lombard's concern lies the opening verse of Scripture and its interpretation. But from the very beginning two distinct elements are closely joined in the

Master's interpretation: the biblical, and the philosophical (the four elements of Greek philosophy i.e., fire, air, earth, and water). The Master provides an answer rooted in tradition: heaven means the angels, while earth is "the matter of the four elements still confused and without form." Where biblical exegesis today would understand God's creation of "heaven and earth" as equivalent to everything that exists in the physical universe, the medievals, following the earliest theological tradition would not. Here lies the nub of the problem: this "earth" is distinct from but related to what was created in the six days. The central question then will be the nature of this "earth", which existed before time, made up of those four elements, and the relation of the "earth" to the creatures formed during the six days. And the Master indicates, rather briefly, that a dispute existed among the "Holy Fathers" as to when this distinction of the elements took place.

Next Peter Lombard explains more clearly what this dispute involved:

> For some of the holy Fathers, who examined the words and mysteries of God in an excellent fashion, appear to have written in a contradictory fashion on this topic. Some indeed have taught that all creatures were made at once in matter and form; this view Augustine seems to have held. But others have favoured and asserted another view that at first rude and unformed matter was created containing a confused mixture of four elements; but later over the interval

> of six days from that matter were formed the varieties of corporeal beings in their own species. Gregory, Jerome, Bede, and several others commend and prefer this opinion. It also seems to fit better with scripture of Genesis by which our first knowledge of this fact has come to us.

The marginal note of Luther which we are studying fits this passage but we will return to it later. This section clarifies the nature of the dispute among the "Holy Fathers": either all material creatures were made at once in matter and form (Augustine); or unformed matter was made first consisting of a confused mixture of four elements from which over six days individual beings were formed in their own forms. The Master can be seen to favour the second view. Hence, he proceeds to investigate the order and manner of the creation and formation of creatures "according to this teaching." We note that he rejects or ignores Augustine.

He next discusses the different terms used by Moses in Genesis, verse two about this "confused matter":

> Moses used this name EARTH, as Augustine says in AGAINST THE MANICHEES, for this reason "because earth is the least beautiful of all elements" and it was EMPTY AND UNCOMPOSED, "because of the mixture of all the elements." He also calls it ABYSS when he says: AND DARKNESS WAS OVER THE FACE OF THE ABYSS, because it was confused

and thoroughly mixed, lacking distinct species. "This same unformed matter was called WATER over which THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD WAS BORNE, as a craftsman's will rests on his productions"; because what he had begun to form and complete was subject to the good will of the Creator, "who" as lord and creator presided over fluid and confused matter to distinguish it through various species when he wished "and as he wished." It is called WATER for this reason, because everything which is born on earth, whether animals, trees, herbs, etc., begin to be formed and nourished by moisture.

The Master then provides a reason for the use of these unusual terms:

This unformed matter was called by all these terms "that something unknown might be intimated to the less educated in clear terms; and not by one term only, for were it described in one term only, it would be thought to be what everyone ordinarily understood by that term. Therefore under these words that unseen and unformed matter was indicated which could be discerned or treated by no species", that is "by the names of visible things yet to be, because of the weakness of the little ones who are less able to

understand things that are
invisible."

This passage is significant for our study because it shows that the difficulty of understanding the "earth" is clearly recognized in the patristic age by Augustine and in the biblical tradition of the Glossae used by Peter Lombard. A new element is mentioned here: the "earth" created in the beginning was invisible, because, of course, light was created only on the first day.

The Master next takes up this question of the "darkness".

However, Peter Lombard feels the topic of darkness must be set aside for the moment because two other questions are more urgent. First, why was that matter called confused and without form? Because it lacked all form? Or for another reason? Second, where did it come into existence and how high did it climb?

The Master's brief reply to the first question is important for it will be the occasion of two marginal notes of Luther:

> ...we say that first matter will be called without form not for this reason that it will have no form whatsoever, because some such corporeal being cannot exist that has no form. But for this reason we answer that without absurdity it can be called without form because, while existing in a kind of confusion and mixture, it had not yet received the beautiful, open, and distinct form which we now behold. That matter was

made, therefore, in a form of confusion before a form of disposition. First, in a form of confusion all corporeal things were created materially at the same time together; later in six days they were ordered in a form of disposition.

In this way the Master thinks he has answered the first question. We observe that this passage adds an important clarification to the understanding of "earth". The relation of "earth", created formless before time, to the creatures of six days is not one of no form to clear form, but one of indistinct form to clearly distinct form. An important development!

We are now in a position to consider the marginal notes of Luther in their context. Peter Lombard at the beginning of the distinction mentioned the disagreement among the Holy Fathers:

For some of the Holy Fathers, who examined the words and mysteries of God in an excellent fashion, appear to have written in a contradictory fashion on this topic. Some indeed have taught that all creatures were made at once in matter and form; this view Augustine seems to have held.

Luther's marginal note, quoted earlier in part, fits the clause "This view Augustine seems to have held." Luther says:

Augustine book 1 of Genesis c. 5 and in many places. But he never asserted it. Hence he says

> in book 7 last chapter near
> the end: If these can be better
> stated, not only do I not
> resist but I am in favour: he
> speaks of the origin of the
> soul. But in the book of Retracta-
> tions more clearly about
> these same books. But do
> thou, my reader, (etc.) ...

The context then of Luther's long marginal on theology, alluded to by Oberman, is the disagreement between the Holy Fathers: Augustine asserts that everything was created at once in matter and form; Gregory, Jerome, and Bede assert that first confused matter without form was created, distinguished later over six days into specific form.

Luther, in the first part of his note, manifests concern over the opinion of Augustine. He agrees that Augustine does seem to teach the view ascribed to him. Yet Luther points out that Augustine never "asserted" such a doctrine. Luther's note insists that Augustine's statements were capable of revision, or correction and hesitant even at the end (Retractations). It seems that Luther is disturbed by the fact that Augustine's position is in discord with that of the other fathers and perhaps by the fact that the Master does not accept it.

Although the texts of Augustine to which Luther refers have a bearing on the interpretation of the second and longer part of his note on theological method, we will omit their study to save time.

But Luther was correct. Portalie, Gilson, and other authorities on Augustine agree that Augustine did teach but only hesitantly and never

dogmatically his opinion of simultaneous creation. Portalie concludes thus:

> Augustine presented his theory
> with great reserve and without
> condemning other interpretations.
> "denying no one the liberty
> of understanding the passage better."
> "In ignorance we hazard
> a guess." On the other hand,
> he energetically demanded freedom
> to defend his own system.
> Never perhaps was he so severe to
> Catholics as he was here towards
> those involved in contradictions
> because they had raised their
> solution to the status of a dogma
> --and this in the most pious and
> humble of his books, the CONFESSIONS.
> He says in particular: "Because they
> are proud ...they love their own
> opinion -- not because it is true,
> but because it is their own ... Its
> source is not understanding but pride."

Luther sees Augustine (and the whole Catholic tradition against the Greek philosophers) asserting the creation by God of the universe out of nothing as a doctrine of faith. Augustine's idea of simultaneous creation Luther would consider of another order of certainty and perhaps as speculation. This much seems clear, Luther's note indicates he is concerned about the teaching of Augustine.

With this background, we can approach the remainder of Luther's note on the nature of theology:

> But do thou, my reader, whoever
> you will be, observe what

> is said to you as it were by a kind of fool: that the smoke from the earth has never been observed to shed light on the heaven but rather it has kept the light from the earth. What I meant to say is that theology is the heaven, indeed the kingdom of the heavens, but man is the earth and his speculations are smoke. Do thou grasp the rest and what is the reason for the vast differences among the doctors. Note also that the swine has never been able to teach Minerva, even if occasionally it presumed to do so. Fierce lions and bears, and fish and birds also, cannot be captured with spiders' weapons. Because I am a fool, I have spoken thus foolishly. My rashness and irreverence will readily merit forgiveness. For the rejection of a physical interpretation applied to theology, even one handed down from saints, does not prove guilt of high treason.

If one interprets this text literally, it seems quite clear that Luther places a tremendous gap between Revelation and reason, or philosophy. He identifies theology with heaven and with the kingdom of God, by which he means, surely, God and truths revealed by God and contained in Scripture. We observe how Luther corrects the expression 'heaven' to which he adds, "Indeed the kingdom of heaven" in which he seems to approximate the same distinction as Augustine between heaven, the firmament of day two, and heaven, "That spiritual or intellectual creation which always beholds the face of God" and God Himself in eternity.

However, Luther uses a Matthean Gospel expression when he says "kingdom of the heavens."

To this kingdom of heaven or theology Luther contrasts human speculation. Just as smoke obscures the sky, so human speculations block the light of revelation. If this statement is taken literally, it would seem to include a complete rejection of all the human attempts to understand sacred Scripture through analogies or insights drawn from human reason or experience. This condemnation would cover Augustine and the other Fathers, Peter Lombard, the Medievals, and the late Medievals, and not just the Nominalists among them. Luther seems to think that the Word of God is perfectly clear, at least to God. Whether it is perfectly clear to humans also, at least in certain passages, Luther does not say. It could be simply human reason. Or the passage could be construed as meaning that philosophical speculation obscures the simple word of God. He does not define "speculation" but he could mean simply investigation into obscure passages.

The remaining comparisons also indicate the futility and indeed the impossibility of understanding God's revelation through human comparisons. The swine never taught Minerva, the Greek goddess of wisdom. Implied is the identification of revelation and wisdom. If this statement be probed in its implications, is Luther saying that man has sunk so low through sin that he is reduced to bestiality and is incapable of understanding truth or appreciating goodness? The theme of revelation as Wisdom is biblical, Augustinian, and medieval. For Augustine wisdom is essentially related to happiness and as such is opposed to speculation. As Gilson says:

> Saint Augustine's interest in
> the philosophical life was

awakened by his reading of the HORTENSIUS, a dialogue of Cicero which has since been lost. From that day on, he was consumed with the love of wisdom, and as time went on he thought of this discovery as his first step on the way of sorrows which was to lead him to God. This is a point of prime importance if we are to understand Augustine, for in his doctrine, wisdom, the object of philosophy, is always identified with happiness. He wants to find the kind of good whose possession will satisfy every desire and ensure peace. Such thorough-going Eudaemonism can be explained by the fact that Augustine always regarded philosophy as something quite different from the speculative pursuit of a knowledge of nature. He was concerned most of all with the problem of his own destiny. For him, the important thing was to strive for self-knowledge and to learn what must be done in order to be better and, if possible, to be happy.

Speculation abounds in Augustine but its aims are always practical and its term of reference is always man. The knowledge of truth is pursued only because truth alone can make man happy, and it is pursued only to the extent that it can make him so.

It is quite unusual for Luther in marginals to use poetic images or images from Greek religion -- a suggestion possibly of humanistic influence -- but they give the same message: lions, bears, birds, and fish cannot be trapped by the webs (weapons) of spiders. This again indicates on the surface the impossiblity for human speculation to illuminate divine truth.

It is important to note the occasion of Luther's note. It is caused by the "vast differences between the doctors." Furthermore, Luther blames these differences on "human speculations." What else should the intelligent reader expect! Now who are these doctors? The term "doctor" was introduced into Western theology in the Middle Ages as a technical term, equivalent to Master, for a university professor with an officially recognized competence to teach. Throughout the scholastic period honorific titles were given to outstanding masters by contemporaries (e.g., Doctor Subtilis, John Duns Scotus, O.F.M.) and theologians were referred to by these names.

But the term or title "Doctor of the Church" was also applied by the Church to certain ecclesiastical writers among whom Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Jerome, declared doctors in 1298, were the original four Western doctors while John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus and Athanasius were the original four Eastern doctors. Since one of the requirements of being a doctor of the Church was great sanctity and canonization, we have a suggestion as to the meaning of "by saints" in Luther's last sentence. While the possibility of Luther referring to the doctors of his day (e.g., Scotus or William of Ockham) cannot be ruled out, it seems likely that Luther means by doctors and saints the opinions of the "Holy Fathers" whom

Peter Lombard names: Augustine, Gregory (the Great), Jerome, among others. Luther is upset at division among the Doctors and Fathers and this is the source of his marginal note.

If the first sections of the marginal note involve obscurity, the last two sentences are even more obscure. Luther clearly feels that in his folly his criticisms are rash and irreverent. He recognizes that his attack on the use of speculation will be considered outrageous and criminal, but feels it is justified, at least before God! The justification he provides is that it is not treason to reject a doctrine in theology, even one taught by the "Holy Fathers", when it is based on a "physical interpretation." Now it is not unusual for Luther to be concerned about reconciling conflicting patristic opinions. After all, Peter Lombard engages in this process throughout the Sentences, as do later theologians.

But what interpretation is Luther rejecting? That of Augustine? That of all the Fathers together about "matter without form" in general, leaving aside their differences over creation at once (Augustine) or over six days (Gregory, Jerome)? Or is he annoyed that Augustine takes the six days in a symbolic sense and not literally? We noted that from the very beginning the Fathers presume the doctrine of Greek philosophy about the four basic elements. Is that his concern?

Now "interpretatio physica" could mean "an intepretation from physics" and then Luther is thinking of the Physics of Aristotle and Aristotle's notion of prime matter. Does Luther read the text of the Master in terms of the clear Aristotelian distinction between matter and form? If that is the case, then Luther is asserting that the disagreement among the Fathers is based on the

use of Aristotle's notion of matter, which hardly seems to fit the facts. Or is Luther moving toward a biblical fundamentalism which wants to take the words of scripture without trying to understand them? Or is the passage an irritable outburst against questions in theology that involve speculation about nature and do not directly relate to human happiness and salvation. The text and context do not provide sufficient evidence to allow a certain decision.

One last point should be made. We observe that three times Luther refers to his foolishness. This is probably a reference to St. Paul's famous passage in I Corinthians on the folly of the cross, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (RSV). But Luther does not explain his thought. However, as Oberman argues, and Congar would surely agree, this reference by Luther to his foolishness anticipates the anti-scholastic reaction of his famous Disputatio contra Scholasticam Theologiam of 1517 where Luther says, Prop. 20: "But rather he understands who has seen the visible and secondary things of God through sufferings and the Cross." Prop. 29: "He who wishes to Philosophize in Aristotle without danger, must first be stultified in Christ."

Now, Luther has two substantial notes on a later passage of Peter Lombard. Perhaps they will help in understanding this central note. Both the notes fit the passage of the Master, cited earlier, where he insists that first matter must have some form.

Luther's notes are the following:

> Presently. With this that passage 8 City of God 6 is in agreement: If they could lack all species, they would be completely nonexistent. And above bk I dis. 3 from the words of 6 Trin. the last chapter. Therefore all these things which were made by divine art possess both unity and species and forms etc. as to future forms. And thus it is with nature of all matter.
>
> Hence blessed Augustine bk 1 Gen. 15 openly asserts that matter was not created without form, but formed, although he wishes it to have been without form first in origin and not in time, just as the word is from the voice although voice and word yet exist at the same time. And this opinion pleases me because then the unformedness of matter cannot be understood except in respect to future form. And this is true. And it is nothing else than the beginning of form as he clearly states in the book On True Religion fol. 4.

In both these notes Luther states clearly that matter must have some form. He quotes three passages of Augustine to prove that Augustine also teaches this doctrine of matter.

Luther's second note refers to the De Vera Religione of St. Augustine. At this time Luther annotated this work and two of his marginals are on this very subject.

Here is Luther's first note:

> Behold here can be understood what is the opinion of blessed Augustine about first matter that it is nothing else than that being begun or becoming, that it is now moving towards being and Aristotle says this about potency that is matter moves to act i.e. form.

Luther sees Augustine teaching that "first matter" actually had some kind of minimal form and that it is called "without form" only in comparison with "perfect things." He also sees that matter "without form" develops from its own resources into these "perfect things." It is surely significant that Luther here introduces Aristotle into the argument and tries to maintain that Aristotle teaches the same doctrine about matter moving toward form.

Luther's next note makes the issue clearer:

> STILL IT WAS AT LEAST CAPABLE OF RECEIVING FORM:
> He does not say indeed that in it something could be formed as our contemporaries (nostri) quibble, but that it itself is able to be formed.

Luther seems to be rejecting the idea that form can be brought in from outside by the agent (the view of Aristotle) and favours the view that

the development of forms comes from within (Augustine's seminal reasons).

We have pursued the interpretation of Luther's marginal note over many a theological hill and dale. When all is said and done, the evidence seems to show fairly clearly that the fundamental issue is a dispute between two philosophies or theologies using philosophy. An essential element of St. Augustine's interpretation of Genesis was his doctrine of seminal reasons. This doctrine, dear to Augustine himself and to his followers, was designed to exalt the divine causality at the expense of that of creatures, and, as Frederick Copleston states, has its roots in philosophy (Plotinus and Stoicism).

In the high Middle Ages the doctrine was defended by St. Bonaventure. St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle, however, rejected it. Seminal reasons became a central issue in the dispute between the schools and the doctrinal condemnations of 1277.

Through John Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, and Gabriel Biel the topics of the potency of matter came down to Martin Luther. But, whereas Bonaventure and Aquinas both held that matter never existed by itself apart from form, Scotus, Ockham, and Biel (Luther's teacher) argued that first matter, really distinct from form, is something existing, real and a positive entity.

Furthermore -- and very significantly -- Biel states that prime matter is what God created at the beginning. He defends this opinion from Augustine. Here is Biel's text:

> Conclusion four. Prime matter is the term of creation. This is

clear through blessed Augustine
in the authority mentioned above
and through the Master in the text.
For this is what is named in
Genesis I by different terms,
"In the beginning God created heaven
and earth etc." as is clear in the text.

Yet, Biel later, having cited all the opinions, concludes, "All of these were possible to God. What he actually did, only He knows who did it." So Biel too does not assert his opinion.

Who then are the opponents of Luther whom he calls "our contemporaries"? It seems fairly certain that they are defenders of Aristotle like Biel, who posit prime matter without form as the first matter of creation.

What conclusions can we draw about the marginal note of Luther which is the topic of this paper? A literal interpretation would seem to yield the conclusion that Luther is adopting a viewpoint (which could be described as Barthian): there is no analogy between creation and revelation. However, the other texts indicate this is not the whole story. What Luther is saying, we feel, is this. You want to know why the doctors are divided! I will tell you why! It is the introduction of this cursed philosophy of Aristotle which insists that Augustine taught an Aristotelian view of matter without form at creation. Luther seems to feel that, if Augustine is seen as teaching matter with some kind of form, the doctors are reconciled -- as they should be! The use of Aristotle in theology is a waste of time, even dangerous, a lack of true Christian humility, and destroys the literal sense of scripture.

Against this interpretation is the strength

of the separation Luther makes and a remarkable inconsistency in Luther. Why is Luther so opposed to the use of Aristotle and not to that of Plato or the Stoics by Augustine? In favour of this interpretation is the fact that Luther acts as a theologian, using and defending a philosophical interpretation of Genesis. Secondly, the bitter hostility to Aristotle is simply a fact that runs through all the 1509 marginals of Luther. This hostility to Aristotle, perhaps learnt from his teachers (Trutvetter, Usingen, Nathin), is simply a datum of the theological attitude of the earliest Luther. The marginal note we studied offers another example of this and of Luther's devotion to Augustine. Some further observations. Luther does not show concern over the traditionally divisive question of the literal or figurative interpretation of the days of creation. Nor is there any evidence in Luther's notes to show more than a general knowledge of Biel.

Heiko Oberman is surely correct in pointing out the importance of this marginal note for understanding the earliest Luther's attitude to theology. But does it prove a break with nominalism? What a break with nominalism means is an extremely complicated question which we are not going to investigate now. But, as Oberman points out, Luther claims to be "of Ockham's faction" in 1520 and even in 1533. Indeed, Oberman admits that this claim applies unambiguously to the epistemology of Ockham and his school. As in October, 1516, Luther writes to Lang from Wittenberg:

> I know what Gabriel says. He says everything well, except when he talks about grace, charity, hope, faith, and the virtues. On these topics it is impossible for me now to explain by

letter how much of a Pelagian
he is with his friend Scotus.

It is on the question of grace that the break occurs. We see in the texts studied no evidence of the "Facienti quod in se" argument in the area of the intellect. The authors are all men who accept the revelation of God expressed through Moses. The problematic is not whether or not "the man who does what is in him" acquires all information necessary for salvation. "Rather, Luther's note indicates that he is close to Biel in expressing doubt about the possibility of understanding what Genesis I:1 means.

In conclusion, Luther's marginal note can be seen as a good example of what Vignaux calls Luther's "terminism":

> Let us guard the formula of
> revelation without seeking to
> comprehend it: a metaphysician
> like Scotus, who by the
> notion of being holds something
> about every essence, even
> the infinite Being, will try
> to reflect on the object of
> faith; for Luther the intuition
> which would give a meaning
> to the trinitarian formulas
> belongs to God alone, not his
> creatures. God alone knows the
> meaning of the terms he has
> chosen in order to reveal himself.
> It is enough that he has
> chosen them: we cannot justify
> them, much less discuss them.

Vignaux, in his excellent study of Luther's marginals to Book I of the Sentences, sees them all as an attack on the theology of Duns Scotus.

It seems reasonable to conclude that the marginal note which we have studied is another example of the same type and that Luther's real opponent is Scotus, as mediated by Gabriel Biel.

The topic of this paper was "The Earliest and Latest Luther on the First Matter of Creation: Luther and Scholasticism." Time permits us only a momentary glance at Luther's great commentary on Genesis of 1536. I will make only a few points.

First, Luther dismisses the Rabbis and then the commentators. He says:

> The commentators with their sundry, different and countless questions have so confused everything in the chapter as to make it clear enough that God has reserved this exalted wisdom and the correct understanding of this chapter for Himself alone, although he has left with us this general knowledge that the world had a beginning and that it was created by God out of nothing. (LW 1,3)

About particulars there are countless questions and opinions.

Secondly, philosophers like Aristotle cannot attain this knowledge of creation.

Thirdly, Luther dismisses as "extraordinary trifling" Augustine's treatment of the six days. Moses wants to teach us about real creatures, a visible world, and real days. Luther says, "If we do not comprehend the reason for this, let us remain pupils and leave the job of teacher to the Holy Spirit."

Fourthly, Luther dismisses Lyra's belief that knowledge of the philosophers' opinions concerning matter is essential to understanding the activity of the six days. They are useless. Moses is the better teacher. He denies that Aristotle called the crude chaos matter, as did Ovid.

Finally, Luther in his own explanation of the crude mass of earth, dismisses the idea of pure potentially. He says:

> With Lyra's contention that matter is pure potentiality and can take on form by its own power; likewise, with Augustine's saying in the Confession -- that matter is almost nothing, so close to nothing that there is no intermediate reality -- I disagree entirely. (LW I.8)

For Luther "earth" is a real substance. This doctrine, we feel, he was also defending in the note of 1509.

MARTIN LUTHER AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GERMAN LANGUAGE

by: Horst Richter

In a conference commemorating the achievements of the great German reformer Martin Luther one important aspect should not be forgotten, and that is Luther's contribution to the evolving German literary language, the so-called Early New High German. Although it might be of less concern to theologians and church historians, and particularly to those outside of Germany, we should not forget that the reformation movement, which Luther had started in Wittenberg, might not have maintained its momentum if Luther had not begun translating the New Testament into his native German during the idle weeks of his protective imprisonment as squire Jörg at Wartburg Castle. Upon its completion, this textual corpus came to be regarded as the core of the reformation movement. As this text was of immense concern to every supporter of the reformation, it also gained many new followers for Luther, particularly among the many lesser educated, who were unable to follow the religious argument. Each of them, however, understood that Luther had given them the Bible. The 'Luther Bibel', as it is still referred to in Germany, became the symbol of the reformation, and it made Luther a folk hero of the protestants.

Luther had begun his translation of the New Testament in December 1521 and he completed it in the almost incredibly short time of eleven weeks. It was published directly after his return to public life in Wittenberg in March 1522. He then continued with the translation of the Old Testament, which he published in sections beginning with the five books of Moses in 1523.

The OT took much longer to complete. It should, however, be kept in mind that translating was an activity that accompanied all the other duties and obligations of the reformer during these years. The enormous task was accomplished in 1534, when the first printing of the complete Bible, or to give it the German name that is still in use, "Die Bibel oder die ganze Heilige Schrift des Alten und Neuen Testaments" was issued by the printing house of Hans Lufft in Wittenberg.

But Luther did not stop there. He continued to work on revision after revision for most of the remaining twelve years of his life, either alone or with a committee, a group of specialists, he had assembled to assist him and which included such well-known humanist scholars as Philipp Melanchton. He had embarked upon this task of revision in 1522 immediately after the first publication of the New Testament, the so-called September Testament, named after the month of the publication of this first edition. Within a few weeks he came up with more than 500 corrections and changes for the 2nd edition of the NT, the so-called December Testament of 1522. Luther never regarded his translations as completed. During his lifetime ten editions of the complete Bible were published, and each was a revised version of the earlier edition, corrected either by himself or in consultation with others. Only the 10th edition of 1545 is considered as Luther's final edition, the "Ausgabe letzter Hand". But when one year later, in 1546, the folio edition came out in Wittenberg, it again incorporated more than one hundred changes from Luther's hand. These changes and corrections, representing Luther's continuing work on his German versions of the holy texts, allow us today a remarkable, indeed unique insight into his "workshop," and into the development of his linguistic skills. Moreover, it can show the importance he attributed

to this part of his work as a reformer. He reflected on his task, setting out his principles in his letter on translation, entitled "Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen." (1)

Let us for a moment reflect on the significance of this part of Luther's achievement. When Luther had finally translated all the Holy Scriptures and completed the task to his satisfaction, he had created and published a vast amount of text, a corpus unified by his voice and by his understanding of how the translation of such a text of the highest relevance should be rendered. He had produced a great textual corpus that reflected his creative linguistical skills. Carried by the success of the reformation, the sheer bulk of the text, created by the founder of that movement, was bound to have an impact on the German language, which had not yet evolved beyond regional dialects, and which had certainly not reached a commonly accepted form. Later generations would be able to draw on this vast storehouse of words and concepts, expressions and ideas.

But more importantly, Luther had created a text of concern, to adapt a phrase of Northrop Frye's who spoke of the 'myth of concern' (2) - a text of far greater concern than any author of secular literature could hope to produce. With his translation Luther had rendered the 'Christian myth,' to use another term of Northrop Frye (3), into German, or perhaps I should say, into a vernacular tongue, and that released great energies. Luther's translation was itself immediately translated into other vernacular languages, and later on it was followed by other independent translations from the Latin original, as for example the King James version in English.

Northrop Frye has shown in his studies, how

human societies place such myths of concern at the centre of their cultures, thus defining themselves and their purpose while creating a meaning for their society (4). By rendering the Holy Scriptures into the vernacular, Luther had placed them within the reach of everyone at a time, when after a long period of growing distrust in the keepers of the Roman Catholic text, there was a great desire to read and to understand for oneself. Through his translation Luther had done instinctively what according to another contemporary literary critic - Terry Eagleton - has to be at the heart of every revolutionary movement that wants to be successful: it must create cultural changes, new symbols, signs and meanings. Eagleton shows that literature plays an important role in that process. (5)

Luther created such a text of concern, a centre around which his reformation movement could group itself, a text of the highest significance as well as of substantial length to be of consequence.

After this excursion into the significance of Luther's undertaking, I wish to present some facts and figures about the printing history of his translation of the Bible. As mentioned earlier, Luther's translation of the NT was published in September, 1522. This folio edition appeared without his name. It sold so quickly that a second edition, still anonymous, became necessary only three months later in December of the same year. Each of the three thousand copies -- the estimated number of copies of one edition of a large folio format (6) -- had found a buyer within three months, and at a time when books were not a common commodity, when few people owned a book, when the majority of the people could not even read, and were not expected to be able to do so.

Besides these two editions authorized by Luther an unauthorized reprint was published in the same year by Adam Petri in Basle. This reveals how quickly Luther's translation became known everywhere in Germany, where Luther's language was understood. For those functioning in a different German dialect, or in a neighbouring language, translations were produced immediately. In the following year 1523, two translations in the Low German dialect were published, three translations in Netherlandic - a language which at that time was closer to the neighbouring Lower Saxon or Low German dialects than today; there was also a translation into Danish.

In 1524, a third edition of Luther's text became necessary. This time it carried Luther's name and it came out as an octavo volume printed again in Wittenberg by Melchior Lotter. A Swedish translation appeared in 1525, the same year in which Tyndale produced an independent English translation that was strongly influenced by Luther's text. Thus the anonymous translation of the Bible had spread all over Germany and beyond from Basle to Copenhagen and from Amsterdam to Wittenberg. During the following twelve years, that is up to 1534 when the complete Bible became available, eighty seven High German and nineteen Low German editions were published. This is an astounding number even by today's standards. It has been calculated that by 1533 about every seventieth German speaking person, or every tenth German household must have owned one of Luther's New Testaments. (7)

And from 1523 on Luther began to publish individual books of the Old Testament. They were received with the same enthusiasm. Of the five books of Moses some twenty nine High German and five Low German editions were published by 1534; there were twenty three High German and five Low German editions of the Psalms.

By Luther's death in 1546 four hundred and thirty editions, complete or partial, of Luther's translation of the Holy Scriptures had appeared. This adds up to seventeen editions per year during his lifetime. Of the complete Bible, first published in 1534 by Hans Lufft in Wittenberg, twenty three High and Low German editions were published in the remaining twelve years of Luther's life.

This was and still is an almost unbelievable, a staggering success. It can only be expressed in superlatives, particularly given the circumstances of the times. We must recall that up to then the book market was limited, there was no educational system for the general public, and the invention of the printing press was barely one hundred years old at the time of Luther's death. And those are only some of the facts that deserve a specific treatment. Here I can only allude to Luther's other literary productions: his translation of Aesop's fables and the thirty six chorales he wrote in connection with his reform of the church service. They were to be the core of the protestant hymn-book. Thirty of them still are part of the modern "Evangelisches Kirchen-Gesangbuch", published since 1950. Luther himself either composed or adapted the melodies for nineteen or twenty of them. Then there are his two catechisms, the large one for the devotional instruction in the home, and the small one specifically written for the religious instruction of children and youngsters. They were immensely popular, especially the small catechism, and they were to be found in every protestant household up to our times. They presented the basic facts of the protestant creed with Luther's comments in a very effective arrangement and in a simple German that was both very clear and good.

Since they were to be known by heart by every protestant candidate for confirmation, Luther's language had a direct impact on every protestant youngster. Luther had first assigned the work to a commission, but when the results proved to be unsatisfactory he undertook the task himself. The small catechism was published in 1529 and by Luther's death there is proof of seventy eight editions. (8) His numerous reformatory pamphlets also deserve mention here, the first one, the "Sermon von Ablass und Gnade" (9) had twenty five editions between 1518 and 1520. The famous "An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation"(10) saw thirteen editions in its year of publication 1520. And Luther wrote three more in the same year, all of them only marginally less successful. They created the breakthrough for the reformation. Thus in 1521, one year before the translation of the New Testament, the papal nuntius Alexander reports from Worms back to Rome that in Worms only Luther's writings were available, to which new ones were added almost every day. I think all these facts will underscore my earlier remarks about the "text of concern" as a core for the reformation movement. Luther, a great man of words, knew very well by instinct, how to turn spoken into written word by using the new means of communication, the printing press, with phenomenal success.

A few remarks about prices may be permitted here: three pamphlets of eight pages each for example were sold in 1521 for three pennies and this equalled one seventh of the daily wage of a worker in the building trade. These pamphlets were cheaply printed wholesale articles, but they helped the printing presses everywhere to be great successes. Vastly more expensive were the books, although their prices varied considerably depending on the binding. The September-Testament, a volume of four hundred and

forty four pages folio with twenty one full page woodcuts, was sold depending on its binding for from one half to two guilders, and one half guilder represented about the weekly wages of a carpenter. The complete Bible translation consisting of 1816 pages folio with one hundred and seventeen page size woodcuts was available - not bound - for two guilders eight groschen - an amount for which a master mason had to work for three weeks. (11)

Given these prices and the vast number of editions, the printing houses made great fortunes on Luther alone, for example, Adam Petri in Basle with the unauthorized version. Many new print shops sprang up because of the reformation. In its centre, Wittenberg, there had been only one print shop in 1518. In 1525 there existed seven and Luther, who knew very well his importance for them, reported himself that they had six hundred people in their employ. It is known that Hans Lufft's printing shop in Wittenberg alone produced forty four editions of the complete Bible in the fifty years between 1534 and 1584 with an estimated one hundred thousand copies.

It should, however, be mentioned that Luther steadfastly refused to benefit materially from his work, despite the fortunes made around him. He never took an honorarium, and he even refused to sell the printing rights for four hundred guilders annually. He felt that he was not entitled to sell God's gift of grace, as he put it. The only thing he accepted were some free copies from the printers to distribute to his friends. I think this is well worth mentioning because the humanists of that time were notoriously greedy!

It is difficult to refrain from presenting further facts and figures attesting to Luther's success. They document what can be truly called

an information explosion, one that happened on account of Luther's Bible translation and other writings and the interest and concern they created. I think the quantum leap in information should not only be ascribed to the invention of the printing press, but more to the use Luther made of it for his reformation movement. And there is another important aspect: Luther's literary activities had secured an important share of the market for works printed in the vernacular, the German language, whereas previously Latin texts had dominated almost entirely.

This brings me to my next point; Luther's relation to language and translation. Luther valued the knowledge of languages very highly, and recommended the study of foreign languages. This, however, did not mean our modern foreign languages, as none of them had yet achieved a unified literary form. They were viewed still as languages for spoken communication. Although poets and writers increasingly used the vernacular, each of them had given it his own, often very personal form. Since vernacular languages had no standardized form, they were hard to teach and were best learned by exposure to them. The study of languages thus meant the old languages, and Luther taught himself Greek and Hebrew, languages not widely known at his time. In a short while he was capable of using them for his translation. His command of Latin was excellent, although it was more the Latin of the church, the well worn and torn 'lingua franca' of the clergy, not the highly polished classical Latin of the humanists. Luther used it often in a strange mix with German, as e.g. in his table talks. While this is unacceptable to every language-conscious individual today, it was quite common then with the clergy. Since the 12th and 13th century, sermons to the general public would often be presented in a language that mixed Latin

and German. Luther thought highly of translation from these old languages into his native German, as it helped him to express himself better in German. It should not be forgotten that the German of his time was quite different from the German of today, and not only in its appearance and form. It was a far less developed tool in almost every aspect of vocabulary, style, orthography, grammar and syntax. It appeared in many often quite different dialects, and it was not held in high regard by educated people as useful for the expression of advanced ideas, philosophical, literary or others. It was in a word rather crude. Translation was therefore a very different task from what it is today. To a considerable extent Luther had to create the language he was to use - or, to be more specific, he had to distil from the many existing forms of spoken German a literary form that could express adequately the complex ideas and concepts of the higher developed literary languages of the Biblical Latin, Greek and Hebrew. This was a formidable task. We have reports that he could be elated, indeed proud of his achievements, and at other times deeply depressed and deflated about his capabilities, particularly when it came to rendering the Old Testament Hebrew into adequate German.

Luther was able to overcome these formidable problems only because his interest in language and his task of translation was rooted in a religious conception of language rather than in merely a linguistical one as today. In the view of theology language was not just a means of communication between human beings, it was also, and much more importantly, a means of communication from God to man. God's works are made known to us through His words, indeed as Luther put it in his psalm lectures: "God's works are his words." (12) Man received the gift of

language from God in order to understand God, and to communicate with him. It is for this reason - namely that every Christian should have the means to communicate with God and thus find the reason for his existence - that Luther strove so hard for clear and adequate expression in German. It is the religious understanding of his task, that spurred him on and released the necessary energies to carry through his work.

That his contemporaries regarded his work as a complete success is well documented. There is a chorus of admirers for his linguistic achievements, and he is, indeed, to be credited with the emancipation of German in areas where Latin had dominated until then. Some of the comments follow in English translation. Thus Albrecht Dürer praises him in his travelogue already in 1521, that is with respect to his reformation pamphlets, "because he has written more clearly than anyone in the last one hundred and forty years." (13) After the completion of the entire Bible there are numerous voices of praise. The humanist Johannes Sleidanus writes in Latin: "Germanicam linguam et exornavit plurimum et locupletavit, et primam in ea laudem obtinet" - "He has embellished as well as enriched the German language to the highest degree, and he obtains the highest praise in it." Erasmus Alberus, another humanist, calls him repeatedly a "Teüttscher Cicero," a German Cicero, who has also reformed the German language: "As long as this world stands nobody has ever spoken and written a better German" and changing over to Latin "Lutherus linguae Germanicae parens, sicut Cicero Latinae" - "Luther is the father of German as Cicero is of Latin." Others, even from the camp of his adversaries commended him on his eloquence and for the fact that he was able to plant the art of "rhetorica" into German, and thus to bring forth its innate beauties. Johannes Clajus, an

important grammarian, feels that the Holy Ghost spoke through him in German, because it would have been impossible otherwise for anyone to express himself so perfectly in our "difficult, unregulated, unruly German language." Justus Jonas, a collaborator of Luther offered a calmer evaluation; in his sermon on Luther's death Jonas observed that Luther brought German to the fore, "so that it is possible to speak and write good German again."

Later generations continue in this vein. Justus Georg Schottel, e.g. himself a linguist of great consequence in the development of standard German in the late 17th century, as well as Johann Gottfried Herder, the originator of the romantic theory of language, studied Luther's writings carefully and praised his creative powers: "he awakened and unbound the German language, a sleeping giant" (Herder). Others remarked on the naturalness of Luther's German, and that he made it into an instrument for the subjective expression of temperament and feeling (Klopstock). Ludwig Tieck, Heinrich Heine and other romantic poets and writers saw him simply as the creator of the German language, or they regarded him as the first popular writer ("Volksschriftsteller"). One of Jakob Grimm's statements was of considerable consequence, because of his authority as the founding father of modern historical linguistics. He recognized the enormous influence of Luther's German that made it into the core and basis of New High German. And then he went on to call this New High German, a "protestant dialect," that had long since overwhelmed the catholic authors and poets because of its spirit of liberty. This he wrote in the introduction of his famous and fundamental "German Grammar," published 1819, a work that for a long time was of considerable influence on subsequent works in this field. Later on J. Grimm corrected this remark by a much more carefully

worded statement in another fundamental work of his, the first volume of his German dictionary, the "Deutsches Wörterbuch" of 1854. But his earlier statement was often repeated on both the protestant and the catholic side in the confessional dissensions of the 19th century. It is, however, not possible to characterize the New High German as an idiom with confessional roots, or as a protestant language. Unfortunately, it can still be heard at times and especially in the context of uncritical praise of Luther. It is also incorrect to regard Luther as the creator of the German language, an opinion that also lives on tenaciously. J. Grimm and the romantic poets repeated uncritically such evaluations of the early reformation. It is more correct, to regard Luther as a dominant influence on written German, i.e. the literary language that was emerging, but he is certainly not its founder or creator. The widely accepted opinion today is that Luther lived at the right time and in the right place to procure a breakthrough for one German dialect, the Eastern Middle German of Meissen, with his translation of the Bible. While his creative achievements for the literary German language are still as highly acclaimed as before, research on Luther is more concerned with detailed philological and linguistical studies of the various aspects of his language.

The following paragraphs will present some of the circumstances that helped Luther's success, and made him the right person at the right time and place. If Luther's ideas contained in the ninety five theses and his early essays were almost immediately known all over the German-speaking countries, then this was, of course, due to the printing press. Without it his argument, no matter how powerful, could never have been as effective. Much of the success of the early reformation movement has to do with the

rapidity with which Luther's theses and opinions were disseminated. To some degree people were overwhelmed by the new medium, the printed pamphlet, that voiced concerns, expressed criticisms, and raised questions that had for quite a time been latent. At that time, that is in 1520, Johann Gutenberg's invention was a little more than seventy years old; and it had achieved the right appreciation and also the necessary distribution to be of good use for Luther. Although the poetic and possibly fictitious image of Luther hammering his 95 theses to the portal of the church of All Saints in Wittenberg is still vividly imprinted in many a protestant's mind, Luther very quickly moved away from such medieval means of communication. He himself was probably overwhelmed by a response he had not anticipated. The 95 theses had originally been written in Latin. They were translated into German without Luther's intention, then printed and reprinted everywhere in Germany. They created the greatest stir. Thus Luther himself got embroiled in the rapid spread of the reformation movement. He was, however, not the man to shy away from what he had set in motion, and later on made shrewd use of a publication medium that he had found so effective, one that had thrust him into a role, which he had not sought and perhaps had not wanted.

Thereafter Luther was quite aware of the value of the printing press. He supervised the printing of his writings very carefully - especially his German Bible. He had the ability to express his ideas very quickly and succinctly in writing, and always saw them quickly into press. He constantly urged his printers to make haste. After his initial success he must have recognized the momentum the printing press could gain for his movement. The many proud remarks about how he overwhelmed his enemies show that Luther had understood the effectiveness of the press. And,

as I mentioned earlier, fortunes were made by the printers. Luther contributed to the success and the expansion of this new industry. Printing presses are, indeed, the first examples of mass production - as we know it today in our capitalist system. They also had the effect of creating a demand.

But then again, the printing presses would have never gained their influence had it not been for the many new urban centres, however small compared to today, that had developed during the previous two hundred years all over Germany. A printing press does not make much sense in a far away castle on a mountain top, that has walled itself off against the outer world. Luther himself left such a walled castle, the Wartburg, immediately after his lonely task of translating the NT was completed and returned to the urban bustle of Wittenberg, by now the dynamic centre of the reformation. In his times cities had gained the right density of population to generate energies; also a new breed of people had assembled or grown up in these towns who were different from the landed gentry as well as the peasantry. And these small and medium-sized cities were all part of a network of commerce, trade and common interest. A certain infrastructure within the cities, as well as within the countries and provinces of Germany had developed, which was favourable to such endeavours as the printing press and to the ideas and energies produced by it.

Luther did not only live at the right time, he also lived at the right place in Germany as far as the language is concerned. Luther grew up and lived for most of his life in an area, where the two distinctive forms of the German language had their border line. Wittenberg lies in a region where the spoken language was Low German

(Niederdeutsch), which in his time was slowly receding before the expanding High German (Hochdeutsch). This High German was commonly spoken only a few miles south of Wittenberg, and Luther had gone to school in Eisenach, later attended university in Erfurt, two cities clearly situated in an area of High German. Actually, Luther was born in Low German territory and his parents came from places where Low German was spoken, but the area where High German was spoken was close by. Luther was, then, aware of both languages, knew them and used his knowledge later on for his translation.

At Luther's time the differences between High and Low German were quite distinct, and Low German was not only a spoken idiom as it is today. It was a well established language of communication within the towns of the Hanseatic League in the north. A written form of it existed and was used by the merchant class. More highly developed literary forms, however, did not exist. But much the same can also be said of the High German at Luther's time. It will help to explain briefly the differences between the two languages. Since the time of Charlemagne and even earlier certain distinctive features of speech had developed in the southern parts, that is, in the regions roughly south of the river Main. These changes had never taken hold in the northern parts, the territories of the old Saxon tribes. Their language retained - as a dialect down to the present day - its old Germanic form. In this it is linked to English, and the ancient relation of Anglo-Saxon to mainland Saxon can still be traced. To give a few examples: German 'Apfel' had earlier been Germanic 'appel,' as it still is in English and in Low German. 'Katze' is still 'katt' in the north, as it still is in English. High German 'machen' goes back to Germanic 'makon', and the 'k' is retained in English as

well as in Low German 'maken'. One might say, that in the strict sense the dialect of the north, the Low German, should not be called 'deutsch' or 'German'. It is an earlier form and until very recently considerable differences in vocabulary existed as well. In Luther's time the two languages were clearly perceived as distinctively different. As I mentioned earlier, Luther's translation of the NT had to be translated into Low German.

High German, however, existed also in a number of regional variants, there were High German dialects of southern Germany different from those in the middle parts of Germany, and within that there existed eastern and western variants, and many smaller local variations. Where Luther was educated and lived the eastern version of Middle German was spoken, the so-called "Ostmitteldeutsch," a variant of High German. Eastern Middle German was the language of the territories of Saxony (14) and Meissen. With the colonization of Slavic territories to the east - that is, east of the Elbe and Saale rivers - in the preceding centuries, the idiom of this area had incorporated the many various dialects of the new settlers, who had arrived from all regions of the empire. Eastern Middle German had thus evolved as a distinctive dialect. At Luther's time it was different from the older languages of south and north in that they had clearly defined tribal or national roots, as e.g. Bavarian in the south, Saxon in the north.

In Luther's days and in the preceding century the East Middle German dialect of the Saxon principalities had gained in influence in Germany through the chancery of the Elector of Saxony. There existed various other chanceries and they were administrative and bureaucratic centres, set up by the territorial princes to administer to

their often widely dispersed domains. To do so effectively these chanceries had developed distinctive written languages based on their principal areas, and this had been done at various points in time. There was, for example, a Bohemian chancery in Prague to serve Emperor Charles IV, or in the south the Habsburgian chancery of Maximilian I in Vienna. The languages of these chanceries had however only an administrative purpose; they served lawyers, bureaucrats and state officials for their documents, letters and edicts that had to be understood in the various territories belonging to their domain. While they had thus to be supra-regional, they were scarcely concerned with furthering literary culture. At the time of Luther the Saxon chancery had gained a certain predominance, because of its geographical situation in the middle of Germany, and also because of its language. It was understood in more regions than the other chancery languages. All this has to be mentioned here, because Luther based his language, or better the way he would write it, on the writing traditions of the Saxon chancery. He himself was quite aware of this, and explained his reasons in one of his table talks:

> I do not follow a specific
> German language, but a common
> one, so that I may be understood
> in Upper and Lower Germany.
> I talk according to the Saxon
> chancery, which is imitated by
> all dukes and princes of Germany.
> All cities and courts
> write according to the Saxon
> chancery of our Elector.
> Therefore it is the most common
> language in Germany. (15)

Subsequent philological research concluded that

Luther had overstated the case. It is the impact of his own Bible translation that later led to the general understanding of the language of Saxony. Luther's remark was made later in his life, and he might not have been aware that he himself had been the cause of the pre-eminence of his Eastern Middle German dialect over the others. What his remark makes clear, however, is that he used this language purposely in order to be more generally understood.

East Middle German as a literary language is largely a creation of Luther's writing, but it is based on the earlier forms. It would be false to suggest that Luther created a new language. Recent linguistic research has shown that Luther created relatively little in the way of new vocabulary. But he used new compound forms, and took vocabulary from the various German dialects, in the south and north, from High and Low German dialects, and also from every stratum of German language and speech. Luther's achievement is that he welded all these various elements together into a coherent literary form.

Luther expounds on the principles of his translation in one of his essays. (16) One of his remarks has become famous all over Germany, namely that a translator, when looking for adequate expressions should "dem gemeinen Mann aufs Maul sehen" - that he should look at the mouth of the common man. The roughness of Luther's expression is not quite translatable into English: "mouth" is better rendered as "trap," although in Luther's time 'Maul' did not sound quite as coarse as it does today.

This phrase has led to the argument that Luther used the vulgar speech of the streets for his translation, and that he advocated, and aimed at, a language spoken and understood by the lower,

indeed, the lowest stratum of the German population. (17) But this unduly famous remark is always quoted out of context and is, moreover, misunderstood: "common man" does not mean vulgar folk, but rather an uneducated person, a person without a higher Latin education, the "man on the street." Luther advocated here a normal, direct and natural way of speech as opposed to the high rhetorical style of the educated upper classes. And he did not mention only the "common man" but spoke also of the "mother in the house, the children in the streets" to which the translator should listen. Luther recommended this approach in order to avoid the mistake of translating Latin literally, word by word into an artificial German that was not understood by ordinary people.

In short Luther argued for a language of mass communication not of rhetorics and high style. He wanted to be understood, more specifically -- this deserves emphasis -- he wanted the texts of the Holy Scriptures to be understood by everyone, which was to include ordinary, uneducated Christians.

Such a language did not exist, i.e. it did not exist in a written form sufficiently cultivated and literary for the formidable task of presenting adequately in German the great body of concepts, thoughts, and ideas that make up the vast text of the Bible. When Luther set out to forge a written language suited for the purpose he had to keep in mind the demands of a Holy text as well as his German audience. God's Word is not just another literary text. We have to remind ourselves that Luther's intention was not simply to produce a translation of a Latin text, his purpose was to create a German Bible, God's Word in German; protestant Christians were to encounter God in German. Therein lies the boldness of his attempt.

We know how admirably Luther succeeded in this task. In creating a German Bible he also created a literary prose of high standard that was unique in syntax, style and vocabulary, with a beautiful flow of rhythm and sound. This was immediately acknowledged by his contemporaries who praised him in the highest tones, however, almost always for the religious reason that Luther had given them the German Bible. If posterity continued that praise, it was for a different reason, one that would not have impelled Luther to his task, namely that he had created a literary language that was to provide the basis for a national language, the High German of the great German poets and writers.

The East Middle German dialect, Luther's linguistic raw material, thus transformed, gained immediately in pre-eminence everywhere; in the northern parts of Germany to such a degree that it wiped out the beginnings of a written Low German language, thus reducing it to a number of spoken regional dialects. But however deplorable it is for the Low German languages it provided Luther's German with an even bigger territory and a broader base in the north of Germany. Later on that base would be of importance to the modern literature and civilization that would arise in the protestant north since the 18th century.

This is not the place to present a more detailed discussion of Luther's language which would require copious examples. I can only suggest some of the aspects that merit consideration: for example how Luther worked assiduously from edition to edition, to give his written German a more unified and a more modern form, the influence of the language of mysticism, the incorporation of linguistic material from different geographic regions, the use of the 'Modalwörter'. The modifiers "ja," "doch,"

"schon," "denn," "nur" are typical of German speech and give Luther's German the liveliness of a spoken language, and he is the first to use them expressly. "Allein" is one of these words, and with it Luther created quite a storm, when he added it to his version of Rom. 3,28 "Arbitramur enim justificari hominem per fidem sine operibus legis," and presented "per fidem" by "allein durch den Glauben." Here the modifier became a religious statement of protestant faith. The German practice of writing all nouns with a capital letter was begun by Luther and then expanded by his later editors.

Luther's criteria for his translation deserve fuller discussion. One of the effects of his translation was to conclude the discussion among humanists about literal translation (verbum e verbo) or free translation (sensum de sensu) in favour of Luther's free translation. Quite a number of humanists had shared the view of Nyclas von Wyle, a chancellor of Wűrttenberg, who had argued in an essay of 1478 that all German deriving from a literal translation from good, polished Latin would also be good and polished German. Luther discussed his principles in his influential essay "Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen", his "Letter on Translating" of 1530. (16) The examples presented and discussed show that he was guided by principles that are still valid to-day. He tried to comprehend fully the conceptual, emotional and intellectual content of the original Hebrew or Greek and to render it adequately in German, stay as close as possible to the original, but providing a free translation if necessary. When it came to important religious concepts, statements or passages, Luther favoured a closer or more literal translation. On the other hand, he was careful to avoid inadequately familiar phrases. He reported for example himself how he could have rendered the angelical salute to Mary,

the Annunciation (Luke 1,28), in normal German as "Gott grüsse dich, du liebe Maria" - "may God greet you, dear Mary." While this, however, sounded too informal, he also wanted to get away from the traditional devotional formulae, the "Ave Maria," fashioned by the catholic veneration of the Virgin Mary. (18) In general Luther was guided in an almost modern way by considerations of the target language, and his target audience.

I wish to end this account with some peculiar facts concerning Luther's reception. The success of Luther's translation of the Bible did not stop in front of the camp of his catholic adversaries, although it took a somewhat ironic twist there. To counter Luther's Bible and its hold over the German-speaking public, catholic translations were quickly produced: A New Testament was published by Hieronymus Emser in 1527. But although Emser claimed that this was a new translation which followed the correct texts as acknowledged by the Christian Church, it was nothing short of plagiarism, and a mere reprint of Luther's text. Later on Johannes Dietenberger published his complete "Biblia" in 1534, and repeated the claim that he had provided a new translation. He, however, followed Emser's earlier edition closely with but a few revisions in the NT, while his OT followed Luther's again very closely. The same may be said of Johannes Eck's version, published in 1537. He, however, also took into account the versions of the earlier pre-Lutheran translation, the so-called Bible of the Middle Ages. But its German had by now become completely outdated and obsolete. While it had been of some influence before Luther, it was never printed again after Luther's translation.

Luther was well aware of these catholic "translations"; he stated explicitly in his "Letter on Translating" that Emser had copied him

word for word, and that he had only replaced Luther's introduction with his own, before selling it under his name.(19) Rather than complain Luther only remarked on the irony that his work was thus being furthered even by his enemies who were unwittingly reading his book.

Another effect of the wide distribution of Luther's translation was the increased demand for schooling in protestant areas. Many more protestants wanted to be able to read the Bible after Luther had given them the opportunity to do so in German. Luther himself took an interest in the education of the general public in the German language, and there were soon many protestant pedagogues who started teaching the basic skills of reading and writing. For them Luther's Bible and catechisms were the basic texts. In essence they taught the reading of Luther and the writing of Luther's German vocabulary; his style and his orthography were the example and prototype. That is well demonstrated by Johannes Clajus' "Grammar of the German Language," that was designed to teach German on a higher, secondary level. It was published in 1578 with the Latin title "Grammatica Germanicae linguae ... ex bibliis Lutheri Germanicis et aliis libris collecta." (20) Clajus stated explicitly that this instructional handbook of German was based on the example of Luther's Bible and his other writings. We should recall that 'grammar' meant at that time all the aspects of written language, including not only orthography and grammar, but also style and the interpretation and understanding of literature. The reference to Luther was dropped from the second edition on, in order to increase sales in non-protestant areas. Indeed, Clajus' text book was in its day the most widely used handbook for the instruction of German. Its last edition, the 11th, was published in 1720! It is obvious, that apart from the direct influence of Luther's texts,

books like this did their share to spread Luther's language, the East Middle German, into all protestant areas of Germany.

The University of Wittenberg contributed its share. Founded only in 1502 as the university for the electorate of Saxony, it was modern in spirit and open to the ideas of humanism. Since 1511 Luther had taught there as professor for Biblical theology, also since 1518 the well known humanist Philipp Melanchton, who later on became Luther's collaborator in the translation of the Bible. He taught ancient Greek at Wittenberg. In the wake of Luther's fame Wittenberg quickly became a famous protestant university, which was attended by great numbers of students particularly from the middle and northern German regions. Later on it attracted students from all the northern protestant regions, particularly Scandinavians, among them Hamlet and Horatio. At times the uncommonly high number of four thousand students crowded Wittenberg, a small town of only about two thousand five hundred inhabitants.

Perhaps I may be permitted to conclude on a humorous note, which is nonetheless pertinent, with respect to the influence and effect of Luther's literary language.

The fact is that Luther married Katharina von Bora in 1525 and together they produced six children. There are, indeed, later on hundreds and thousands of Germans - as well as many protestants in other countries - that owe their existence to Luther's courageous break with the celibacy of priests. The protestant clergy normally followed, and indeed was encouraged by the protestant church to follow Luther's example and marry. The German protestant pastors always had large families, ten to twelve children being quite usual. Their numbers in fact contributed

greatly to the formation of an educated, often academic, middle class. They rarely became farmers, merchants or craftsmen, but tended towards academic professions. They took up university studies and became professors, teachers, clerks, clergymen as their fathers had been. In growing numbers since the 18th century they also became writers, poets and authors of consequence in the development of German literature: Lessing, Herder, Wieland, Lenz, Klopstock, the Schlegels - to name only the better known - were sons of protestant pastors and thus had been raised on Luther's Bible. Now they turned to secular writing and they were the influential founding fathers of the rising German literature. With this I refer to an important study of the German germanist Albrecht Schöne who - himself a son of a protestant pastor - investigated this aspect in a study on secularization as an agency in the formation of language. (21)

Indeed, it is well worth pondering for a moment on the consequences of this marriage for the development of the German language and literary culture.

Acknowledgements:

This paper in a way results from the surprise I have frequently encountered with students of my course on the "History of the German Language" when confronted with a substantial chapter on the reformer Martin Luther. Indeed, every handbook on this subject discusses at some length Luther's role in the evolution of German as a literary language. It was my intention to summarize in this paper what is known on this subject and to present it as a contribution to a conference that was largely concerned with other aspects of Luther's work.

It is thus only appropriate to acknowledge the earlier studies on Luther's influence on the German language. I am directly indebted to chapters on Luther, the chancery languages, the printing press etc. in the books of Adolf Bach, Hans Eggers, Fritz Tschirch and also to Johannes Erben's book-length contribution in the "Deutsche Wortgeschichte". One work deserves special mention: the recent publication by Herbert Wolf, which contains such a wealth of information, that it would be impossible to list all the facts and figures I have gleaned from his invaluable little encyclopedia.

Adolf Bach, Geschichte der deutschen Sprache, 8. Aufl. (Heidelberg 1965).

Johannes Erben, 'Luther und die neuhochdeutsche Schriftsprache' in Deutsche Wortgeschichte. Bd. 1, hrsg. von F. Maurer und H. Rupp, 3. Aufl. (Berlin 1974) S. 509-581.

Hans Eggers, Deutsche Sprachgeschichte III. Das Frühneuhochdeutsche, rowohlts deutsche enzyklopädie 270, 271. (Reinbek 1969).

Fritz Tschirch, Geschichte der deutschen Sprache II. Entwicklung der deutschen Sprachgestalt vom Hochmittelalter bis zur Gegenwart. Grundlagen der Germanistik 9, 2. Aufl. (Berlin 1975).

Herbert Wolf, Martin Luther. Eine Einführung in germanistische Luther-Studien, Sammlung Metzler, Realien zur Literatur 193. (Stuttgart 1980).

For Martin Luther's works I refer to the critical Weimar edition, which is still incomplete, of which however 114 vols. have been published up to

now (quoted as Luther W.A.):

D. Martin Luther, Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimarer Ausgabe), Weimar 1883 ff.

NOTES

1. Luther W.A. 30, II p. 632-646.

2. Northrop Frye, The Critical Path. An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism. 2nd printing (Bloomington, London: Indiana University Press, 1973) p. 38.

3. ----------, The Secular Scripture. A Study of the Structure of Romance. Fourth Printing. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978) p. 14.

4. ----------, The Secular Scripture, p. 1-31 "The Word and World of Man." See especially p. 6.

5. Terry Eagleton, The Rape of Clarissa. Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1982). See especially the introduction p. 1-39. Eagleton uses a model of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci and applies and develops it for Richardson's writings.

6. Wolf p. 152; Tschirch p. 105 speaks of three thousand to five thousand copies per edition.

7. Tschirch p. 105-106.

8. Wolf p. 152.

9. Luther W.A. I p. 243 ff.

10. Luther W.A. 6 p. 404ff.

11. These facts and figures according to Wolf p. 139-140, 153.

12. Luther W.A. 3 p. 152: opera dei sunt verba eius.

13. For this and the following quotations see Wolf 86-90.

14. These Saxon territories, that are roughly situated around Dresden and Leipzig in the GDR, should not be mistaken for the old Saxon territories in the north, the Lower Saxony ("Niedersachsen") that is today a province in the FRG.

15. Luther W.A., section "Tischreden" 2, 2758b.

16. "Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen." Luther W.A. 30, II p. 632-646.

17. Arnold Schirokaner expressed this point of view in his contribution to the influential Deutsche Philologie im Aufriss, 2. Aufl. (Berlin 1957) 855-930. It is being refuted by Fritz Tschirch, 'Die Sprache der Bibelübersetzung Luthers damals - Eine notwendige Auseinandersetzung mit den Thesen Arno Schirokauers.' In Spiegelungen. Untersuchungen vom Grenzrain zwischen Germanistik und Theologie. (Berlin 1969) p. 53-67.

18. Luther W.A. 30, II p. 638.

19. Luther W.A. 30, II p. 633; see also Eggers p. 185-186 on this aspect.

20. See Wolf p. 74, Tschirch p. 116.

21. Albrecht Schöne, Säkularisation als sprachbildende Kraft. Studien zur Dichtung deutscher Pfarrersöhne, 2. Aufl. (Göttingen 1968), especially his introduction p. 7-36.

RELIGION AND REVOLT IN THE ORIGINS OF THE GREAT PEASANT WAR

by: Lionel Rothkrug

The great Peasants' War in 1524-1525 was the mightiest insurrection in Europe before 1789. Its relation to Luther's call for reform of the church, issued in numerous tracts from 1517-20, has often been stated. Yet, in his harsh pamphlet, "Against the Thieving and Murderous Bands of Peasants" Luther denied any connection between his public assault on Rome and the widespread pillage of monasteries and other church establishments. Today scholars continue to disagree about the extent to which Luther may unwittingly have incited ordinary people, both rural and urban, to rise up against a jumble of duodecimo dominions-- lay and clerical--that dominated the countryside from Thuringia to the Tyrol and from Alsace to Salzburg.

This paper argues that where people laboured for monasteries, chapters, princely prelates and other clerical landlords insurrectionaries understood Luther's call to salvation "by faith alone" to mean a demand for a plenary indulgence without penitential obligation. Luther unintentionally inspired entire populations to take arms against the hated penitential authority of clerical landlords. But a division separates insurgents resident in areas of weak relic veneration from those in regions rich in traditions of saint worship: the former assimilated revolution with conversion; the latter stormed the monasteries without abandoning their Catholic beliefs. In short, the relation between Reformation and Revolution is an issue entirely distinct from the question of how many rebels supported the Protestant cause.

Henry J. Cohn recently reminded us that a fierce anti-clericalism animated recurrent rural uprisings in South Germany throughout the fifteenth century. (1) After 1470 rebellions grew progressively in size and in intensity, largely because demographic, fiscal and political factors intensified constraints--here in one way, there in another--on ordinary people throughout south Germany and beyond. But Cohn also shows that clerical landlords, sometimes hard pressed, regularly resorted to weapons unavailable to their lay counterparts. To exploit more effectively people to whom they owed pastoral care, landowning abbots and prelates had routine recourse to papal privileges, ecclesiastical courts, excommunication, denial of sacraments, refusal of marriage, refusal of last rites or denial of burial in sacred ground, onerous penances and the like. Practices that encouraged many south Germans to think that Lutheran, Zwinglian and Bucerian strictures against a parasitic, money gouging and tyrannical clergy gave them a right to call upon divine law and Holy Writ to launch a general war against--in their eyes--the material and spiritual oppression of the Church.

Cohn accepts, as do most scholars, Gunther Franz's classic distinction between rebels who, throughout the fifteenth century, continued to invoke the "old law" or custom and those who called upon "godly law" or "godly justice." (2) An appeal to custom confirmed the very arrangements against which people rebelled. To apostrophize divine law and scripture, however, permitted insurgents to universalize their claim and to radicalize their demands. One manifesto of revolution, drafted in 1525, The Twelve Articles of the Peasants, went through twenty editions in two months and appeared at widely distant points throughout the regions affected by rebellion. Consider the following lines from article 3:

> Up to now it has been customary to regard us as bondmen; this is shameful, for Christ shed His precious blood to redeem and to purchase all of us without exception, the shepherd as well as the highest born. It is found in Holy Scripture that we are freemen and therefore we will be freemen.

Since the great year of Jubilee, in 1300, ordinary people had had access to the plenary indulgence, and every penitent knew that its remissionary powers originated in the Lord's blood--the price paid by Christ to redeem mankind. The first sentence containing the phrase "Christ shed His precious blood to redeem and purchase all of us without exception," merely proclaims, therefore, a teaching universally known among the insurgents. Only the second sentence, the inference that they were freemen required a reference to Scripture; their equal right to redemption was stated as a matter of fact with no appeal to authority.

The notion that personal rights originated in Christ's blood was not confined to Germany. In 1549 at Mousehold heath, outside Norwich, Robert Kett and his small army of followers presented twenty-nine demands to government officials. Article 16 declares:

> Thatt all bonde men may be made ffre for God. made all ffre wt his precious blood sheddying. (3)

Since bondmen had virtually disappeared from Norwich in Kett's day, the insurrectionary appeal

to the grand manumission at Calvary, dissociated as it was from any institutional specificity, must also have expressed a widespread belief in the transpersonal origins of private rights. In Germany bondage was a reality in several regions shaken by revolt, and Peter Blickle shows that German bondmen demanded emancipation from servile status. But in declaring their intention many said nothing about the grand manumission. (4)

Meanwhile, in May 1525, the city of Freiburg capitulated to rural insurrectionists. The victorious peasants told the citizens that they could keep their customs and rights "so far as Holy Gospel permits and until the awaited reformation of these usages shall have taken place. At the same time, however, the peasants still kept their Catholic beliefs...the treaty with Freiburg was in fact concluded with an oath to God and the Saints." (5) On the one hand, the distinction between rebels who did and those who did not appeal to the grand manumission suggests that dissimilar notions of personal rights justified armed rebellion. On the other hand, the peasant treaty with Freiburg-- the oath to God and the saints--shows that to apostrophize divine law and scripture in the midst of insurrection was one thing; it was quite another, to abandon beliefs associated with powerful traditions of saint worship. That is why historical maps show little correspondence between the theatres of insurrection in south Germany and Protestant jurisdictions in the same region. Only a map indicating areas of strong and weak relic worship-- to be determined from the distribution of pre-Reformation pilgrimage sites dedicated to saints--reveals whether local practices made it easy or difficult for people to accept Reformation teachings. (6) And all these considerations are utterly distinct from questions about how Luther may have incited a vast revolution.

We face the task, therefore, of explaining how different types of appeals to personal rights are related to the distinction between rebels who did and those who did not assimilate revolution with an espousal of the Protestant cause. Popular perceptions of the plenary indulgence stand at the heart of this issue. Most people thought the remission legitimated both spiritual and territorial authority; therefore they interpreted "salvation by faith alone" to mean a repudiation of these two dimensions of clerical competence. To explain this development requires, however, a very brief digression into the earlier history of indulgence, especially in France.

Beginning in the early Middle Ages, particularly in France, people advanced from simple to more complex levels of devotion according to the expansion in space and in time of interpersonal loyalties, a phenomenon largely revealed by shifting patterns of peregrination. (7) Slow, successive increments in the geographical and temporal range of social bonds caused the faithful to enhance the dignity of the supernatural personages to whose powers of protection they accorded continuous territorial extensions. A persistent expansion in the geography of social, political and religious obligation, contributing to a progressive differentiation of people's concept of the sacred, had by the fifteenth century effected an upward displacement in both supernatural ascription and in the compass of political authority so vast as to expand people's notions about the Church and society beyond the limits of mere personifiable representation.

By repeatedly projecting outward their bonds of fidelity and, at the same time, by progressively enhancing the dignity of the celestial patrons who protected the inhabitants of

newly integrated space, people regularly imputed a religious value to their expanding webs of distant affiliation; and in the course of time they ultimately confounded divine will with their sense of solidarity with others far away. Thus by a series of ascriptive displacements people not only advanced from primitive to more sophisticated perceptions of the sacred, but the means whereby they proceeded piecemeal from local to trans-regional loyalties also caused them to confuse celestial volition with the common purposes of a society whose members were unknown to one another.

In the course of this protracted conquest of space the faithful registered their early advances by supplanting the relics of local saints with those of ancient martyrs. There followed a period of further hierarchization among Europe's vast collection of relics until the twelfth century when, outside of Germany, west of the Rhine, they all yielded first to Mary and then to Jesus, celestial personages who, having left no bones, that is, living in no location, were therefore conceived to reside in a realm situated outside spatial and temporal processes. The passages from relics of neighbourhood thaumaturges to the cult of the Virgin and, finally, in 1215, to the doctrine of transubstantiation diminished the efficacy of relics, and, at the same time, also took the faithful further and further away from their dead. In the course of this progressive desacralization of relics--manifested above all by an indifference to being in their physical proximity--people sought less protection from the dead. The dead, in turn, increasingly assumed the role of grateful supplicants for the prayers of the living.

Ultimately, after the Great Year of Jubilee in 1300, when perhaps two million pilgrims

received plenary indulgences, (8) the cult of purgatory gradually transferred responsibility for spiritual care of the dead from corporate bodies to the penitential initiative of individual Christians. By the later fifteenth century private access to general and limited remissions for penalites for sin had become well nigh universal. In principle, therefore, every Christian could acquire for his own or for specified--indeed, even for unspecified--souls in purgatory qualified powers of redemption that had been previously a prerogative of monasteries and of other primarily penitential institutions. Probably all, certainly most, penitents knew that these remissionary powers came from the infinite merits purchased by the Lord's blood--one drop would suffice "to redeem the entire human race", declared Clement VI, in 1343. (9) Since every penitent should be able to procure indulgences it followed, as German peasants later explained in The Twelve Articles, that "Christ shed His precious blood to redeem and to purchase all of us without exception, the shepherd as well as the highest born."

Early notions of personal rights, therefore, proceeded directly out of a long established practice, peculiar to the cult of purgatory, to make the instruments of salvation available to everyone. Thus the plenary indulgence, more than any other factor, explains why insurgent rustics in Germany and in England invoked the grand manumission to justify armed rebellion against economic, social and political injustice.

In insurrectionary Germany, as Cohn has so persuasively explained, anti-clericalism prevailed among all categories of rebels--even among those who did not appeal to the grand manumission. We noted further that people indifferent to relics tended both to rebel and to convert to the

Reformation. Those long accustomed to relic veneration, however, called upon divine law to justify insurrection without joining the Protestant cause. These insurgents attacked only the territorial, not the penitential, authority of clerical landlords. In contrast, those who appealed to the grand manumission propounded a slogan conceived to be the direct antithesis of the plenary indulgence. Protestants and Catholics alike all believed that redemption came from the Lord's sacrifical blood. But in the early years of the Reformation only the educated understood Luther's theological invalidation of indulgences. What could rebellious rustics who repudiated penance have understood from the Reformer's clarion call to salvation "by faith alone"? Knowing nothing of theology and having always understood the plenary indulgence to be the chief instrument of salvation through Christ's blood the insurgents who insisted that Jesus shed His blood for everyone --no hint of predestination here--must have conceived sola fides to mean a plenary indulgence without penitential obligations.

After all, a controversy about indulgences thrust Luther--as it had Hus a century earlier (1Ø)--on the public scene. The Reformer's widely publicized contempt for "good works" had a special resonance in regions where penitential authority permitted priestly landlords to exercise oppressive, sometimes even terrifying powers. Luther's protest that his attack on Rome's theology of indulgences had provided no warrant for peasant uprisings did not, even in Luther's own eyes, diminish the Reformation's scorn for the penitential system. Both Luther and the insurgents who appealed to the grand manumission agreed that routine recourse to the infinite merits earned by the Saviour's blood distorted the central Christian mystery. The issue Luther

failed to consider is that peasants who laboured for priestly potentates could not peacefully repudiate the penitential authority of governors whose right to rule proceeded from their ecclesiastical status. Under these conditions Luther's public demand for wholesale abrogation of indulgences was nothing less than a full blooded call to revolution--a fact of course unknown to the great Reformer and ignored by most people who lived far away from warrior prelates. That is probably why the ideological content of insurrectionary calls to the grand manumission have remained hidden from scholarly attention. Revolutionary rustics simply assumed that freedom from penitential obligations also released them from seigneurial tyranny. Probably few if any of them understood the contradiction between the predestinarian content of Luther's sola fides and their own claim that Jesus' blood redeemed everyone--a notion that they may have also projected into Luther's early pronouncement of the "priesthood of all believers." Thus their appeal to the grand manumission as a universal redemption transformed sola fides into a doctrine of indulgence removed or abstracted from its penitential context.

Before the common access to plenary indulgences, monks had assumed much of the penitential responsibility for a layman's sins. The corporate character of expiation had assured the unity of mankind in that the "communion of saints"--the faithful on earth, the souls in purgatory and the saints in heaven-- all worked for the entry of mankind as a whole into the Kingdom of Heaven at the Last Judgment. Subsequently, after 1300, when Everyman sought increasingly to enter paradise without monastic assistance, he also took up the penitential burdens previously expiated by the regular clergy. As responsibility for spiritual care of the dead

shifted gradually from the monastery to the private penitent, people everywhere sought to help each other enter paradise before the Last Judgment.

The faithful enrolled their own dead into sodalities and confraternities that, by offering a maximum of penitential assistance, minimized the purgatorial ordeals reserved for each living and departed member. These penitential cooperatives proliferated throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, vastly diversifying practices associated with penance. Previously corporate and cenobitic forms of expiation united all souls throughout time--the Feast of All Souls (998), following that of All Saints, embraced all souls from the beginning to the end of time. People sought the proximity of the dead and the presence of their saints. For the routine asceticism of monks and the exceptional mortifications performed by saints sanctified the dead and invested relics--perceived to be the living persons of the saints--with thaumaturgical powers; and because God held the dead in special esteem, cemeteries--virtually the sole sites of miracles until about 1100--were holy places frequented by all sections of the population. But after 1300 the growing ubiquity of full pardons and a parallel multiplication of societies for penitential self-help reversed earlier relationships. For to make departed souls depend more and more on lay forms of expiation was to deprive the dead of the sanctifying powers of institutionalized asceticism, on the one hand, and to deny that ascetic accomplishments communicated a divine potency to saintly relics, on the other.

In sum, from 1300 to 1500 European religious life showed (i) progressive intensification of regional differences in penitential practices; (ii) a decline of confidence in the monastic

vocation; (iii) a diminished holiness of the dead and a corresponding desacralization of relics. Also, since laymen increasingly took over penitential responsibilities from the regular clergy one can speak of a secularization and a democratization of these responsibilties as well as an intensified religious activity among laymen. All of these developments, associated as they were with progressively easier access to full pardons, especially in the fifteenth century, prompted ordinary people to claim that their equal right of entry into paradise entitled them to more esteem and to better treatment from their social superiors.

Moreover, popular claims to greater personal respect received support from the extraordinary record of military success by low born soldiers and archers in the fourteenth and, more spectacularly, in the fifteenth centuries. Even today school children are familiar with the myth of William Tell, the battle of Agincourt and tales of Hussite valour. But the common man's new importance, occasionally his prominence, contributed to social radicalism only when, as Rodney Hilton points out, (11) the lower clergy helped to lead their flock into rebellion, as in the English uprising of 1381 and in the Taborite insurrection of the 1420s. These clerical revolutionaries gave a new urgency to the problem of the "common man". That is probably why Piers the Plowman (1363-1386) and the Plowman from Bohemia (1400), masterpieces of world literature, emanate from the only two societies in the late Middle Ages where Christian social radicalism had assumed revolutionary or at least major insurrectionary proportions. Both texts, each in its own way, insist that the religious destiny of Everyman is inseparable from profound social transformations that, in the one view, will precede and, in the other, will follow man's entry

into the Kingdom of God. The two works make Everyman's enjoyment of social justice a condition essential to his participation in the unfolding of God's plan in the world.

Throughout the late Middle Ages, therefore, insurgents who were led by priests seem to have been most able to formulate demands that, going beyond simple statements of grievance, invoked some general principle of justification. To be sure those German rebels who, from about 1430, appealed episodically to a higher or divine "law" in order to radicalize and to universalize their revendications may have had few or no priests to assist them. But these insurgents remained a minority among their fellows until, in 1525, religious reformers drafted The Twelve Articles to justify insurrection throughout the Empire.

Most insurgents failed to find higher justification for insurrection because the intensely local character of penitential practices in fifteenth-century Germany conflicted directly with federative or transregional associations among rebel bands. In a study based upon analyses of 1,036 places of pilgrimage founded in Germany before the Reformation I show that relic cults never took firm root where people had been converted by the sword, chiefly in non-Romanized Germany. Charlemagne's repeated campaigns, against the Saxons began a long history of forcible conversions, Heidenmissionen, that, down to the eve of the Reformation, divorced pagan people from their past and separated them from their dead. Subjugation and conversion rendered them incapable of perceiving saints either among their conquerors or among their own communities of unwilling proselytes. (12)

Saint veneration flourished most in Upper and Lower Bavaria, the Innviertel, the Upper

Palatinate, in Franconia, in the farrago of fragmented Hapsburg possessions called "nearer Austria" (Vorderösterreich) --situated largely in lands lying immediately west, south and east of the Duchy of Württemberg--and in parts of Baden as well as in all ecclesiastical territories. But the multitude of saints who worked their miracles in these regions were, so to speak, imported from abroad. The notorious scarcity of native German holy men prompted clerics elsewhere in Europe to regard the idea of a German Saint as anomalous; to discover any at all would be a miracle, they argued. (13)

Never having had indigenous reserves of sanctity to transfer to overarching structures, Germans could sustain the emotional force of religious life at only the very local level. This severance of the emotionally bonding aspects of religion from its public or constitutional dimensions, therefore, had to some extent always marked German patterns of worship. But first the Interregnum (1254-1273) and then, much more decisively, the Great Year of Jubilee began two centuries of descent into progressively more intense forms of cultic regionaliztion. For the inflation of indulgences and the corresponding decline in monastic supervision of spiritual care for the dead encouraged, in Germany, a proliferation of authorized and unauthorized sodalities and sworn associations that, unlike France and England, did not find legitimation within a wider framework of transregional institutions. This may explain why accounts of commotions, demonstrations, conflicts over unlawful forms of expiation--flagellant processions, mass pilgrimages of children and those of adults etc--as well as reports of open rebellion--fill the pages of local religious histories of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Ultimately Luther's appearance on the public scene polarized the sundry forces that contended here and there for control of local penitential practices. Each region responded to his message largely on its own, according to patterns of authority and piety established long before the great Reformer's birth.

These considerations explain a great deal about the ideological statements of German rebels in the many insurrections leading to the Revolution of 1525. As we noted earlier, few scholars question Franz's distinction of some insurgents calling on the "old law" and others calling on "godly justice" though some recent studies claim that some uprisings fall in neither category. (14) The majority of rebels undoubtedly continued to invoke the "old law" or custom, even as late as the autumn of 1524. (15) Only in 1525 did The Twelve Articles establish "godly law" as a generally accepted principle of legitimation.

When insurgents invoked the "old law" or custom they confirmed the very arrangement against which they rebelled. From at least the 1430s a minority of rebels did appeal to divine law. According to Franz, these efforts to justify their demands in terms of a general principle helped to prepare a majority of insurgents, in time, to take the same step. (16) Why did an idea comprehensible to some at one date require almost an additional century for others to learn? Does sheer psychological inertia explain why for generations people rose up in the name of a self-defeating principle when they knew that other fellow insurgents appealed all the while to a superior formula of justification?

Franz observes that to invoke "godly law" required rebels to join others from elsewhere in sworn association. He goes on to explain that

these confederated conspirators were plagued repeatedly by premature betrayal of their plans; whereas he knows of no single such betrayal among scores of rebellions made in the name of the "old law" or custom. (17) Late medieval brotherhoods routinely required their members to perform penance and prayer for all the association's dead. Since cultic regionalization attained its apogee only on the eve of the Reformation, it follows that people accustomed to dissimilar penitential practices found it more difficult to accept one another's dead as their "own" at the end of the fifteenth century than at the beginning. This would explain the specificity of betrayals among sworn associations of rebels--the first one occuring in 1493. Local custom, too, derived much of its sanctity from the dead. To recognize a plurality of penitential practices, to renounce thereby a loyalty to one's "own" dead--an act tantamount to burying relatives and friends among strangers (18)--was to withdraw from the dead their power to sanctify custom and, by extension, to suggest that this incapacity also made "meaningless" the notion of "consecrated ground". That is why, I think, most insurgents could not bring themselves to invoke God's name in order to reject "old law" or custom.

Indirect support for this view comes from a bitter pre-Reformation controversy. In 1507 the theological faculty at Cologne--including most of the "Obscure Men" later satirized by Ulrich von Hutten--condemned a distinguished Italian scholar, Peter of Ravenna, then visting Cologne, for his complaints expressed in writing and in teaching about the improper burial of executed criminals in Germany. (19) The issue aroused intense emotions, and public controversy about the subject continued until 1511! At one point the doctors of Cologne even threatened to have Peter burned at the stake. Why? According to Peter, German princes routinely

left executed criminals exposed on the gallows even though they had previously repented of their crimes, shown true contrition and had become reconciled to the Church. The doctors acknowledged this to be the practice. But they were enraged when Peter declared the princes to be guilty, therefore, of mortal sin. To leave repentant criminals exposed on the gallows, argued Peter, was to deny them the spiritual benefits of Christian burial, unjustly prolonging their ordeals in purgatory. Peter especially insisted that since a right to burial in consecrated ground originates exclusively in the sacrament of penance the burial itself has virtually sacramental character.

Thus the controversy divided those who affirmed from those who denied that burial in consecrated ground is an extension of the sacrament of penance. In south Germany we distinguished between insurgents who refused and those who accepted the dead from communities with different penitential practices. We are confronted by parallel divergences that proceeded out of contrary perceptions about the intimacy or the distance of penance from burial. Those who appealed to "old law" or custom and others who invoked the "godly law" may, therefore, have acted according to principles identical with those expounded by the protagonists in Cologne. On both the learned and popular plane people differed in that some associated and others distinguished between true piety and our loyalty to the dead.

Luther's message swept away the hitherto insurmountable barriers that progressive cultic regionalization had raised among scattered groups of insurgents. For by attacking the very notion of penance, by his call for salvation "by faith alone", Luther dissociated rebellion from penance and unwittingly authorized insurgents to rise up

with or without reference to the expiation of sin. But a licence to appeal to "godly law" in rebellion encouraged no agreement among widely dispersed insurgents either to accept as their "own" the dead from elsewhere or to reject entirely the practice of penance. Most regions remained remarkable for the homogeneity of their practices and their piety. Does this explain why the confessional geography of early Reformation Germany conforms so closely to the distribution of medieval pilgrimage sites?

Among Germans, it would appear, people who tended to impute a sacramental value to interpersonal ties and to communal sympathy, the faithful who remained enmeshed in self-contained penitential communities, being rarely inclined to project the affinities they formed in common worship beyond the bounds of social affiliation, could not, like many among Joan of Arc's countrymen, make loyalty to the Crown a feature of their personal piety. The increasing habit of imparting the force of religious precept to neighbourhood allegiances and to parochial stratifications aroused more and more popular resentment during the course of the century. Open protest exploded first in the famous "commotion" at Niklashausen in 1476 -- events associated also with several remarkable victories won by Swiss peasant soldiers against the flower of Burgundian chivalry. Fear of fury from below prompted south German authorities to begin a literary campaign to villify, occasionally even to demonize the "common man." The degree of hatred unleashed against him finds no parallel, so far as I know, in French and English literature of the period. We shall see that this incredibly bad press for the "common man" goes a long way toward explaining the subsequent prominence of the "evangelical peasant" in Lutheran broadsheets during the first years of the Reformation. Further, since Luther rebelled

against the ecclesiastical hierarchy that had long tyrannized and maligned the "comon man" perhaps figures like those of Karsthans--who peopled Lutheran Flugschriften from 1520 to 1525--helped to make respectable a previously despised anti-clerical billingsgate. They may have thereby intensified the social hostility long inherent in German anti-clericalism, even though throughout the Flugschriften the "evangelical peasant" remained always entirely free of social animus.

In 1476 Hans Boheim an adolescent shepherd and drummer (or piper) preached at a Marian pilgrimage shrine at Niklashausen. Despite his extreme youth, despite his illiteracy--even basic elements of the creed may have been unknown to him--the boy attracted common people from all over south Germany. Specialists in the history of the Revolution of 1525 point to Boheim's violently anti-clerical preaching, to his immense popularity, to his arrest and execution by the Bishop of Würzburg, to the popular indignation that followed and to its possible influence in subsequent rebellions. There is agreement that the events at Niklashausen form part of the prelude to the great Peasant War. The piper preached his millenarian, anti-clerical message when Swiss infantry and Swiss peasant archers, simple rustics, had defeated Charles the Bold's splendid cavalry at Héricourt (Nov. 1474), at Grandson (Feb. 1476) and at Murton (June 1476). In their final victory at Nancy (Jan. 1477) they also slew Charles and destroyed the Burgundian state. Ten years later, in 1486, members of the Bundschuh explained that they hoped "at least to be as free as the Swiss and, like the Hussites, to participate in the direction of religious affairs." (20)

This association of the Swiss with heresy will reappear in another context. Meanwhile

especially noteworthy are Boheim's personal attributes: a poor illiterate adolescent who preached at a Marian shrine. Why did common people flock from all points of the compass to hear an illiterate shepherd boy? We shall see that at Niklashausen people wanted their pilgrimage, one undertaken by the common man, to supplant recent mass peregrinations by children to alleviate widespread distress. They sought to transform processions of puerile supplicants into an adult journey to call on God to witness a public protest. They wanted to abolish once and for all practices wherein attributes from juvenile and adult forms of dependency were amalgamated so as to portray collective holiness to be a condition of shared or common minority. In 1457 several thousand children from the Rhineland and Bavaria, travelling in groups of about eight hundred, arrived at irregular intervals at Mont-St.-Michel, in France, among other things, to implore for help to drive the Turk out of Germany. (21) Perhaps they also reminded the Archangel that he had recently assisted Joan of Arc to rid France of her hereditary foe.

One year later new juvenile armies departed from northern Germany to visit St. Michael at Monte Gargano. Contemporaries were struck by the children's poverty, and in the towns along their route enthusiastic spectators often fed and lodged them. Indeed Jonathan Sumption cites from sources to suggest that a restlessness to escape from poverty at home may have motivated some of the youngsters to peregrinate abroad. (22) This certainly seems to have been the case in 1475, one year before the "commotion" at Niklashausen, when several thousand children from Franconia, Hesse and Meissen--many of them bereft of funds--travelled to the shrine of the Bleeding Host at Wilsnack, near Wittenberg in Saxony. The Turk and other symbols of great public causes had vanished

from their attention. In this mass peregrination undertaken for no ostensible purpose, more than one thousand poverty-stricken children perished or disappeared. (23)

The Wilsnack journey in 1475 shows striking parallels in the pilgrimage to Niklashausen. All south Germany seems to have suffered from poor harvests in 1475 and 1476. But distress was more acute in the Prince-Bishopric of Würzburg, a principality remarkable for an unrelieved record of corrupt and incompetent government. (24) Several weeks before Boheim's public appearance Rome had launched a campaign to preach the Jubilee indulgence throughout south Germany. In this time of unusual religious excitement and widespread deprivation the Virgin visited Boheim. She entrusted him with a mission to preach to the world--perhaps in the style of a Jubilee preacher--from her own residence at Niklashausen. The Virgin also promised Boheim that the faithful who followed his instructions would receive a plenary indulgence.

The thousands who peregrinated to Niklashausen--leaving records of prodigious offerings--indicated no more ostensible purpose for their collective quest than did the children who visited Wilsnack. Both journeys originated amidst deprivation and poverty. Boheim's extreme youth, his illiteracy and his poverty made him a representative figure capable of giving voice to the distress of his audience. He was also ready to express their common hatred of the clergy. In sum, thousands of pilgrims converged on a Marian shrine where, secure in the Virgin's promise of a plenary indulgence, they mounted a massive demonstration against the entire ecclesiastical establishment. This extraordinary pilgrimage to listen to a shepherd boy needed no direct sequel. For unable to ignore or to forget the elemental

fury it revealed, the rich and well-born, prelates and lay lords, associated the events at Niklashausen with insurrection, with heresy and with satanic forces.

Their state of mind explains the bestial traits German literature ascribed to the "common man" in the generation before Luther. We saw that in 1486 members of the Bundschuh wanted to be as "free" as the Swiss and they wished to direct their religious life in the manner of the Hussites. The very same year also saw the first printing of the well-known Malleus Maleficarum wherein William Tell exemplifies the archetypical male witch-- described as the leader of "archer-wizards" who spill Christ's blood by shooting arrows at His image on Good Friday. (25) At this time William Tell enthusiasm was at its height in the Swiss cantons. South German insurgents who extolled Swiss republicanism (26) and who admired alleged Swiss religious practices probably participated in the festive mood. Perhaps some of them were among the rural and urban populations who sang the William Tell Lied. They may also have visited William Tell shrines dedicated to Sankt Kümmernis, a legendary figure native to a region, Friesland, known for its popular archery contests as well as for its violent anti-clerical Chambers of Rhetoric. (27)

In the myth William Tell leads a rebellion against the Empire, no mention is made of hostility toward priests. Why then did the prelates who wrote the Malleus portray Tell and his archers as enemies of God? Because they could not dissociate the fury expressed at Niklashausen from the victories of the Swiss peasant soldiers, low-born warriors every bit as fierce as their earliest Hussite counterparts. In fact the "pilgrims" at Niklashausen probably did celebrate the Swiss triumphs as a sign from heaven or a

portent from the apocalyptic Virgin who had visited Boheim, who had promised redemption to all his followers, and whose cryptic message some scholars see in contemporary woodcuts representing the events at the Marian shrine. (28) This would explain the extraordinary measures taken by the authorities to obliterate popular memories of the piper, on the one hand, and the tenacity of these memories, on the other.

After his execution bishops, princes and town councils located in the shrine's vast catchment area coordinated their efforts to stop further pilgrimages to Niklashausen. Meanwhile the authorities confiscated all offerings left at the shrine; they razed the church to the ground, and they laid Niklashausen under interdict. Even Boheim's ashes had been strewed in the Tauber. Leaving no relics, destroying all monuments and other artifacts associated with the piper, the authorities manifestly feared people would perceive Boheim to be a martyr. Had he become a popular saint--possibly among the very first Germans to be viewed as a martyr by his countrymen--Boheim would have been the first saint in history to be venerated for having advocated the removal of the Pope and the Emperor-- an ambition imputed to William Tell in the Malleus!

Despite these efforts popular respect for Boheim's memory proved sufficiently strong to prompt the Bishop of Würzburg, the prelate responsible for the piper's execution, to commission for publication defamatory verses about Boheim. (29) Were the authors of the Malleus inspired by similar motives when they wrote the chapter about male witches? In the absence of an alternative explanation these passages become intelligible only as an attempt to demonize south German insurgents who were portrayed as archers to symbolize their admiration for the Swiss. Their

alleged hatred for Christ points to the anti-clerical passions that continued to nourish popular memories of Boheim and the Swiss.

Fourteen printings of the Malleus appeared in Germany between 1486 and 1520. During these decades south Germany developed into virtually the sole centre for publication of a unique literary genre, called Neithartschwänke. Accompanied by an impressive series of woodcuts, these writings depict the peasant to be a species of Untermensch. His animal physiognomy arouses revulsion among more gentle folk and the rustic's moral viciousness permits his social superiors to delight in applying physical torture to his person. (30) I know of no parallel literary genre in the West at this time. Paying no particular regard to Neithartschwänke, K. Uhrig presents a detailed account of peasant portraits throughout the other literature of the period, most of it south German. (31) The picture is vastly more composite, but features expressive of turpitude and depravity remain massive.

Prior to figures like Karsthans, Fryhans, Flegelhans and others who people the immensely popular Reformation Flugschriften, therefore, champions of the "common man"--who was often represented by the peasant or by his son, as Till Eugenspiegel-- could do little to alter a pervasive propaganda of hate. Nevertheless consider for a moment an apparently trivial item: the time and places where people translated the couplet associated with John Ball and the peasant revolution in 1381:

> When Adam delved and Eve span
> Who was then the gentleman?

Englishmen had read a minor variant almost a century earlier. (32) According to Peter Burke,

the verse was "virtually confined to the Germanic languages;" in the late fifteenth century it was recorded in Swedish, German and Dutch. (33) Perhaps the couplet's "Germanic" diffusion and the time of its translations are attributable less to language affinity and more to its reception in areas of powerful peasant militancy. For example, Swedes took a fancy to the verse on the eve of the battle of Hemmingsted (1500), when Dithmarscher peasants successfully defended their Bauernrepublik against seasoned troops. In Germany the lines, known long before they were published (34) first appear in print in 1493, in Bamberg, (35) the year when Joss Fritz raised the standard of the Bundschuh near Sélestat. Of course the Dutch, especially in Friesland, had always expressed moral support for peasant struggles against their seigneurs.

Nowhere and at no time do the couplet's lines suggest anti-clerical sentiment. Yet in Germany a Bamberg printer, Hans Sporer, first published the proverb as part of a poem that gave voice to both anti-clerical and social animosity. (36) Insertion of the line in an anti-clerical context provides an antithetic parallel to the portrayal of William Tell as an enemy of God. The analogy goes several steps further. For not only did Sporer publish the couplet in the year that Joss Fritz led an insurrection in Alsace, but Fritz also raised the standard of the Bundschuh at the very moment when a papal legate preached a plenary indulgence.

A Jubilee indulgence preached throughout south Germany had also played a role in the events at Niklashausen. Perhaps the immediacy of the full pardon had encouraged Boheim and his audience to appeal to "godly justice." At any rate the "pilgrims" at Niklashausen--coming as they did from the four points of the compass--could scarcely have appealed to an "old law" or custom.

Their voyage to the Marian shrine permitted them, therefore, to break through the constraints imposed by self-contained penitential communities. Would they have travelled so far to hear the piper without the atmosphere of portent created by the Jubilee indulgence-- especially when it was preached amid widespread economic distress? To pose the question is to raise again a fascinating query made recently by François Rapp. (37) He suggests that Joss Fritz may have planned his insurrection to coincide with the preaching of a plenary indulgence in order to give dramatic effect to an invidious contrast between competing appeals to heaven: one to abolish a servitude endured by the common man on earth; the other to remit future suffering in a promised purgatory. If so, Fritz, may have reflected on the meaning of the events at Niklashausen.

NOTES

1. H.J. Cohn, "Anticlericalism in the German Peasants' War 1525", Past and Present (1979), 83: 3-31.

2. Cf. G. Franz, Der deutsche Bauernkrieg (Darmstadt, 1977), app., map 1. Franz notes thirteen such appeals--all in the 15th century.

3. A. Fletcher, Tudor Rebellions (London, 1968), pp. 46-7.

4. P. Blickle, Die Revolution von 1525, 2nd ed. (Munchen, 1981).

5. T. Bergsten, Anabaptist Theologian and Martyr (Valley Forge, 1978), p. 220.

6. L. Rothkrug, "Religious Practices and Collective Perceptions", Historical Reflections, vol. 7, no. 1, 1980.

7. Ibid.

8. R.W. Southern, Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages, (1970), p. 141. See also J. Sumption, Pilgrimage: an Image of Medieval Religion, (London, 1975), p. 235.

9. N. Paulus, Geschichte des Ablasses im Mittelalter, (Paderborn, 1922), ii; 202.

10. M. Spinka, John Hus' Concept of the Church (Princeton, 1966), p. 113.

11. R. Hilton, Bond Men made Free (London, 1977), pp. 124, 207-213.

12. Rothkrug, "Religious Practices."

13. P. Delooz, Sociologie et canonizations (The Hague, 1969), p. 201, note 1.

14. P. Bierbrauer, "Bäuerliche Revolten im alten Reich", in P. Blickle (ed.) Aufruhr und Empörung? (München, 1980), pp. 41-2.

15. Blickle, Die Revolution von 1525, ch. 8.

16. Franz, Der deutsche Bauernkrieg, pp. 41-2.

17. Ibid., p. 43.

18. Rothkrug, "Religious Practices", pp. 73-5.

19. C.G. Nauert, "Peter of Ravenna and the 'Obscure Men' of Cologne: A Case of Pre-Reformation Controversy", in A. Molho and J.A. Tedeschi (eds.) Renaissance Studies in

Honor of Hans Baron (Florence, 1970), pp. 609-40.

20. G.H. Buszello, Der Deutsche Bauernkrieg als politische Bewegung (Berlin, 1969), p. 85.

21. U. Gäbler, "Die Kinderwallfahrten aus Deutschland und der Schweiz zum Mont-Saint-Michel, 1456-1459", Schweizerische Kirchengeschichte, 63 (1969), pp. 221-323.

22. J. Sumption, Pilgrimage: An Image of Medieval Religion. (London, 1975), pp. 282-288.

23. Ibid, 283.

24. Franz, op. cit., p. 47.

25. H. Kramer and J. Sprenger, Malleus Maleficarum, tr. by M. Summers (London, 1971), 323.

26. J. Bak, ed., The German Peasant War of 1525 (London, 1977), pp. 44-45.

27. L. Rothkrug, "'The Odour of Sanctity' and the Hebrew Origins of Christian Relic Veneration", Historical Reflections, 812, pp. 95-142.

28. R. Chadabra, Dürers Apokalypse, (Prague, 1964), p. 55ff.

29. E. Jöst, Bauernfeindlichkeit, Die Historien des Ritters Neithard Fuchs (Goppingen, 1976), p. 274.

30. Ibid.

31. K. Uhrig, "Der Bauer in der Publizistik der Reformation bis zum Ausgang des Bauernkrieges", A.R.G. 33 (1936), pp. 71-125.

32. Hilton, op. cit., p. 211.

33. P. Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe (New York, 1981), p. 53.

34. E. Schubert, "Bauerngeschrey". Zum Problem der öffentlichen Meinung im spätmittel-alterlichen Franken," Jahrbuch für fränkische Landesforschung 34-35 (1975), pp. 883-907; especially 895/896.

35. S. Epperlein, Der Bauer im Bild des Mittelalters (Leipzig, 1975), p. 141.

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37. F. Rapp, Réformes et réformation à Strasbourg: Eglise et société dans le diocèse de Strasbourg, 1450-1525 (Paris, 1974), p. 472.

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THE LITERARY ROOTS OF LUTHER'S INVECTIVES

by: Joseph Schmidt

Martin Luther -- as an individual the single most creative force in the emergence and development of modern German language and literature; translator and interpreter of the most influential social code of that time, the Bible. But also the man who proudly quipped: 'Whenever I fart now, the Pope in Rome wrinkles his nose'; the man who reduced one of his early adversaries' name, Dr. Eck, by means of orthography literally to crap (by decapitalizing the initial, Dr. eck-Dreck): who a year before his death in his treatise Against the Papacy in Rome Founded by the Devil referred to Pope Paul III as 'Her Majesty Paula' or created the pun "His most hellish Majesty" (for allerheiligst/most holy); and who came up with a scatological description of papal "Decraptals" (for "Decretals"). (1) -- Was it his manic-depressive temper, his teutonic furor, his indigestion, his prophet-like pose and conviction, or simply the novelty of the situation when the Gutenberg printing press became a candid-camera and preserved for posterity the more trivial side-effects of the holy war of reformation? I think all these factors did play a role, though a secondary one at best. For invective and its literary roots are not only base but also basic in understanding the reformer's central aims in trying to return to an evangelical Christianity.

I shall develop this concept of intrinsic invective by commenting on the three terms mentioned in the title: literature - roots or tradition - invective. A mixture of interpreting well-known literary landmarks and highlighting lesser-known features of the German Reformation will serve as the method of analysis. (2) I shall

also superimpose three basic categories on the notion of "text" and illustrate all three of them with text-samples and references. A first category concerns the historical dimension in the development of literature in the vernacular; a second category would be Luther's coincidental absorption of certain techniques and stratagems in the course of the early Reformation; a third category will deal with his intentional use of strategies in the battle for justification and freedom of a christian person.

The first point, Luther's position in the history of literature, can be illustrated by his contribution to his culture through the translation of the Bible into the vernacular, his extending of the learned treatise into a propaganda fidei instrument for the Reformation, and his new orientation of preaching. One could expand with other examples, such as the creation of a new type of church hymn, but I shall restrict myself to those three genres.

Luther's Bible translation was, like all good translations, a re-creation and interpretation. It transcended the normal range and impact of a translation in that, as Luther proudly noted in his public letter on translation of 1530, it provided a new kind of language that became, among other things, the battleground of religious controversy for Lutherans and Catholics alike. This is not the place to discuss the inherent theological difficulties of Luther's theology of the word -- that the scriptures were their own interpreters (3) --, suffice it to say that he elevated German to the status of one of the three holy languages by refuting any criticism of his adversaries and justifying "his" translation on the grounds of the intrinsic qualities of the German language. (4) Luther did, however, by means of pictorial caricatures and acerbic marginalia,

provide a clearly visible polemic twist to his translations. His favorite target was, of course, the institution of the papacy. His translation was not just the spreading of the word for Christians, it was simultaneously a propagation of evangelical truth against the perverting powers of an existing institution that had, in the reformer's eyes, led the Church astray. -- Up to Luther's time, the programmatic treatise was a form of expression for learned men. With Luther, the treatise in the vernacular became a public forum, an arena for public controversy. As Harry McSorley recently pointed out in sketching Luther's early proclamations in Wittenberg: 'How do you deal with a professor who dissents by means of writing one bestseller after another?' The Gutenberg Galaxy-situation allowed Luther to become a public issue: (5) and since his understanding and new interpretation of the function and role of a Christian was publicly developed, a public opinion with a multitude of dynamic forces all its own was the result.

Luther's sermons reflect the centre of his theology-- it was one of his offices to be a preacher-- and the development of the Lutheran Reformation is best documented by the various sermon collections that were published during his lifetime. The most obvious change he introduced was the emphasis on the homily that was to replace the so-called thematic sermon -- the exegesis of the biblical text was to become the main function, the sermon identified with scholasticism was to be abandoned. (6) There was a literary problem, however; for the thematic sermon in the vernacular was one of the very few forms in German which had a long tradition. It had developed into a very popular form by the time of the Reformation, containing the flexibility and variety of an established genre. Since Luther was trained as a mendicant monk and preacher, it was impossible for

him to break away from this tradition by taking a theological stand, however justified and well argued, and simply severing the ties by act of will. The best-known issue in this context is his condemnation of allegorical sermonizing. But how can one address the common people with the evangelical truth in their language without the use of allegories, emblems and symbols? How can one capture their souls without resorting to techniques well established, liked and ever so popular? Theology and practice created a dilemma. That this dilemma is rooted in the tradition and became the cause for Luther's polemic invectives will be the main argument for my second point, the reformer's roots in the popular tradition of the vernacular. Let me summarize Luther's role as an innovator and creator: he was the originator of a new social code mainly through his Bible translation. He extended the academic forum into one of public opinion and in integrating his evangelical theology of the word into a new form of liturgy, the service of the word, he created a new significance for the sermon.

The literary historian knows that Luther's individual creations appeared at a time when in all the national literatures of Europe the transition from collective to individual style was emerging. The phenomenon is, of course, a complex one; but there is no doubt that one of the factors explaining Luther's sudden rise to a cultural force of such magnitude was due to causes that had, primarily, not much to do with religion as such. (7) Let me again use specific illustrations in order to touch on central issues in this context.

In 1516, Luther edited a digest of an anonymous mystical treatise, the Theologia Deutsch. (8) In his preface, he erroneously attributes the text to the medieval mystic, John

Tauler. However, when he reissued the full text two years later, his preface had moved towards radicalization in terms of the context that set off the early course of the Reformation. He firstly applauds the simple German style of the Theologia Deutsch, implicitly introducing the notion of treacherous and sophisticated Latin. He then makes a value judgment, calling it the book dearest to him except for the Bible and St. Augustine. And thirdly, he ends with a supplication,

> I thank God that I am able
> to find him in my German
> mother tongue in a way
> unknown to me before in either
> Latin, Greek or Hebrew.
> May God grant us that more
> such booklets see the light
> of day so that we may find
> that the German theologians
> are beyond doubt the best
> theologians, Amen.

This example should demonstrate that in coming to terms with a tradition in the vernacular, Luther also necessarily came, at that time, to an antagonistic position towards the traditional ecclesiastical institution. -- A recent study on Luther's attitude towards Mary and her place in popular veneration stresses the fact that the reformer, throughout his life, had at least one icon of the Virgin painted by his friend Lucas Cranach, hanging in his dwelling. (9) That he did object to certain forms of veneration of the mother of Christ, is a direct function of his Christology; about the iconographic model of the so-called Maria Lactans he remarked,

> They also painted St. Bernard:
> How he prays to Virgin Mary

who feeds her child and shows
her breasts. Alas, what
kisses did we bestow on Mary!
But I want neither her
breasts nor her milk; for she
has neither saved nor
redeemed me.

The peculiar mixture of theological and moral indignation is of secondary importance to my other point: it was, in practical terms, impossible for Luther to free himself by acts of will from a living tradition that he had grown up in, and in which he spent his formative years as an Augustinian friar. (10) Maybe the most telling example of the conflict of trying to grow out of a tradition of the Catholic Church that had to be refuted both on historical and theological grounds is the battle of legends during the 16th century. For here the whole range of popular devotion and theological substance is covered. Luther's Public Letter on Translating (1530) contains a second part that is rarely mentioned in the literature, namely, whether departed saints can intercede on behalf of the living. (11) The question of the veneration of saints was central in Luther's attack on Catholic orthodoxy, and in his attempt to create a new type of evangelical devotional literature. From the early years of the Reformation to the very end the question did not cease to irritate him. In fact, as late as 1544 he encouraged the editing of an expurgated version of the Vitae Patrum. (12) What was the issue? In the eyes of the reformer, the lives of saints had replaced the passion of Christ and the popular tradition had embellished the examples to a point where the miraculous features bordered and blended into the grotesque and blasphemous. But Luther had a pastoral concern: What to read besides the Bible? His various strategies included recommending e.g. the reading of fables: and his

didactic interest in the school theatre also originated in his concern to provide suitable pious entertainment for the moral edification of true Christians. (13) --The influence of German mysticism, of Mariology, and of the legendaries placed Luther in a peculiar position. While they exerted undoubtedly a profound influence on his formation and his teaching, he was eventually forced to reject the Catholic traditions and create substitutes for what he understood to be the true evangelical tradition. It should be evident at this point that the pressure and necessity of distancing himself from the old Church inevitably led to visible forms of repudiation and attack. Luther is the classical case of an historical figure introducing a new paradigm at a time of transition. This meant that he simultaneously had to create while shedding what he very soon saw as the work of Satan and -- what is maybe even more important -- the doings of the Antichrist. Translated into broad literary classifications of style this meant that the initial outbursts of defiance, of ridicule and scorn soon gave way to serious condemnation and intentional curse by means of bestialization and demonizing of customs, persons and institutions that proved for Luther to be the work of Satan.

The third and last point deals with Luther's strategies of using invective. Again, three domains will provide the examples: the emergence of bestial and scatological imagery, the invocation of Satan, and the eschatological invective in the context of the Antichrist. Erik H. Erikson in his famous psychoanalytical study of Young Man Luther provides the rather elegant description of Luther's predilection for bestial language, "porcography" -- the swinish reduction of adversaries of the reformer. (14) While it is true that Luther found for every enemy a fitting animal caricature, Erikson's modern interpretation

is defective insofar as he understands this technique of caricature as an individual hallmark of Luther's style. Bestial language and scatology were undoubtedly the code of invective of the 16th century in all European national cultures. At the beginning of this paper I mentioned a few scatological puns from Luther's pen. An historical illustration might show you how this custom of scatological exchanges was perceived in popular culture. Among the many devious and dirty pamphlets commenting on the reformer's marriage in 1525 was a public letter of one Johann Hasenbergius. (15) Luther ignored it. But the young scholar from Leipzig soon complained in a public letter to Cochlaeus what folkloristic rumour had brought back to him:

> They took my precious
> booklet, went to the toilet
> where there is a terrible
> stench; they illuminated
> it, shat on it, wiped their
> arses with it with no
> respect for the fact that
> it originated from the
> famous university of Leipzig...
> Then they sealed it
> with excrement and sent it
> back to me by messenger
> the same day.

I shall not comment on possible psychological interpretations of this scatological incident nor speculate as to its veracity. What is relevant in our context is that scatology was not just an extraordinary form of invective, it was an accepted cultural code meant to demean and belittle in vituperative exchanges.

19th century scholars used to treat Luther's preoccupation with Satan and demonology with

embarassed condescension, relegating the devil to the realms of superstitition. (16) But in the context of invective, Luther's very frequent use of describing hostile persons with satanic or demonic names had the ritual function of condemnation. From the papacy to lesser institutions and persons his attacks developed, during the early course of the Reformation, at a very fast pace; and they retained their shrillness to the very end of his life. In one of his most famous satirical attacks, the Monkcalf (1523), he ironically divulges both his role as a curser, and the victim's trespassing. With rhetorical skill he introduces his exegesis of this particular prodigy --a miraculous event signifying the evils of the time -- with the sentence, (17)

> "The prophetic exegesis
> of this monkcalf I shall
> leave to the Spirit, for
> I am no prophet."

However, he then proceeds to describe in great detail what God meant to proclaim by sending this monstrosity to earth. The two essential elements of this type of invective are Luther's self-understanding as a biblical prophet, and his condemnation of what he understands to be blasphemy, the perversion of the Gospel. This ultimately is also the reason why he became less and less inhibited in using a categorical canon of epithets which has proved to be so embarassing to audiences of later centuries. --I shall conclude with two examples from the very end of the life of the reformer. In his treatise Against the Papacy in Rome Founded by the Devil (1545) (18) Luther presents a comprehensive condemnation of the Antichrist,his perversion of the Gospel and subsequent realisation in the blasphemous customs of the Catholic Church. Ironically enough, he resorts for the most part to parody, exposing

Catholic liturgical and sacramental texts to his biting and condemning exegesis and unmasking them as the doings of that ultimate adversary of Christ. It is a lengthy and comprehensive treatise where invective has reached the point of irreversible condemnation. At the same time, Luther commissioned from the workshop of Lucas Cranach three depictions of famous woodcuts from the early Reformation, the most famous one being that of the Pope-Donkey (1523). Another one shows the birth of the Antichrist; the devil defecates the pope and the Catholic clergy who are eagerly awaited by Greek mythological figures who take care of them. I shall not present an exegesis at this point of the many emblematic references. Allow me, rather, to give a capsule report of how such an image could become a representation of the papacy and the Antichrist. Only twenty-three years before, in 1522, Thomas Murner's Of the Great Lutheran Fool had shown an illustration in which Luther and his followers left the fool's anus to commit their foolhardy deeds in this world. Almost two and a half decades later such a constellation, originating in the Late Middle Ages, had become an iconographically fixed representation of the Antichrist. Luther's adversaries pounced on his works and started to rip out his invectives, catalogued them and presented concise compilations in order to negate any credibility of the reformer and his mission. The context of Luther's attacks had changed: one institution was battling another, the prophetic curses could be reduced to the ravings and ramblings of a demented heretic. (19) What Luther had raised to eschatological significance, sank back to frozen gestures of vituperation and hate. Later generations often have had a nebulous comprehension of the excesses of that violent age. Reformation invective, however, formed an integral part of the historical controversy. It reached deep down into the roots of popular culture, it

became a significant feature of Luther's message in German culture, and it evolved with a dialectic all its own to fight what Luther saw as the perversion of the Church which he wanted to reform to its evangelical origins.

NOTES

1. I quote/translate here and elsewhere from the Weimarer Ausgabe; cf. WA 54, pp. 195-299. For a telling selection of the more popular puns of this kind, cf. Mark U. Edwards' preface to his monograph Luther's Last Battles, 1531-1546 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press 1983).

2. I shall refrain from providing lengthy references since there are two good and comprehensive bibliographies for both the literary and the theological aspects of the reformer and his work: Herbert Wolf. Martin Luther. Eine Einführung in germanistische Luther-Studien (Stuttgart: Metzler 1980): Bernard Lohse. M.L. Eine Einführung in sein Leben und Werk (Munich: Beck 1981).

3. Cf. Walter Mostert. "Scriptura sacra sui ipsius interpres. Bemerkungen zum Verständnis der Heiligen Schrift durch Luther." In Lutherjahrbuch 46 (1979), pp. 60 - 96.

4. The examples he uses in his Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen are well known and do not need repeating.

5. Cf. Josef Schmidt. "Die Drucksprache als Massenmedium und die deutsche Literatur des 16. Jahrhunderts. Gedanken zu Marshall McLuhans The Gutenberg Galaxy:" in Wirkendes Wort. 18.6

(1968), pp. 389-395. The most recent East-German study on the subject from a Marxist perspective is Gisela Brandt. "Massenkommunikation während der frühbürgerlichen Revolution - stimulierendes Moment im sozialen und territorialen Sprachausgleich im 16. Jh." In Zeitschrift für Phonetik, Sprachwissenschaft und Kommunikationsforschung. 36.3 (1983), pp. 276-286.

6. Cf. James J. Murphy. "The Middle Ages". Winifred Bryan Horner, ed. The Present State of Scholarship in Historical and Contemporary Rhetoric (Columbia/London: University of Missouri Press 1983), pp. 57 ff. where the author points out how little is known about the development and history of the thematic sermon, particularly at the stage of transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance/Reformation.

7. A solid Marxist description of this phenomenon can be found in Tibor Klaniczay. "Die Reformation und die volkssprachlichen Grundlagen der Nationalliteraturen." In Robert Weimann et. al., ed. Renaissance-literatur und frühbürgerliche Revolution. Studien zu den sozial- und ideologiegeschichtlichen Grundlagen europäischer Nationalliteraturen. (Berlin/Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag 1976), pp. 131-144.

8. WA I, p. 153 and pp. 378 f. Cf. the recent commented edition by Alois M. Haas. "Der Franckforter". Theologia Deutsch. (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag 1980). (Christliche Meister, vol. 7).

9. Josef Lieball. Martin Luthers Madonnenbild. Eine ikonographische und mariologische Studie mit 53 Abbildungen (Stein am Rhein: Christiana

1981). The quotation is translated from p. 55.

10. That this feature in the biography of the reformer needs thorough description and analysis beyond confessional polemics has been stated very firmly by Joachim Mehlhausen. "Deutsche Kirchengeschichte (KG): Zweiter Teil.I. Reformation". In Georg Strecker et al., ed., Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert. Stand und Aufgaben (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr 1983), p. 215 et passim. Cf. in this connection also Heinz-Meinolf Stamm, Luthers Stellung zum Ordensleben (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner Verlag 1980). The author has painstakingly collected Luther's statements on monastic life over the years. His tentative findings indicate that Luther moved away from his life as a monk in a far more gradual fashion than has commonly been believed.

11. Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen. Ed. by Karl Bischoff (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer 1965), pp. 29-35. --For the general history of the battle of legends, cf Rudolf Schenda. "Hieronymus Rauscher und die protestantische Legendenpolemik." In Wolfgang Brückner, ed. Volkserzählung und Reformation. Ein Handbuch zur Tradierung und Funktion von Erzählstoffen und Erzählliteratur im Protestantismus. (Berlin: Erich Schmidt 1974). Pp. 178-259. And Josef Schmidt. Lestern, lesen und lesen hören. Kommunikationsstudien zur deutschen Prosasatire der Reformationszeit (Bern/Frankfurt a.Main/Las Vegas: Peter Lang 1977), pp. 239-261. --Lionel Rothkrug's Religious Practices and Collective Perceptions: Hidden Homologies in the Renaissance and Reformation (Waterloo: University of Waterloo Press 1980: Historical Reflections 7.1) offers in chapters 3 - 5 a fascinating intepretation of the broad

cultural context of the question of the veneration of the saints and its impact on the course of the Reformation in terms of regional distribution.

12. Cf. the preface to Georg Major's edition, WA 54. There are numerous attacks on specific legends and legendaries, culminating in Luther's preface to Erasmus Alberus' The Mendicant Monks' Koran (1542) where he concisely outlines his theological objections.

13. Thomas I. Bacon. Martin Luther and the Drama (Amsterdam: Rodopi 1976). (Amsterdamer Publikationen zur Sprache und Literatur 25).

14. (New York: W.W. Norton 1962) (1958).

15. Cf. Neue Zeitung von Leipzig. Eine neue Fabel Äsopi..., WA 26, pp. 534 ff. The quotation following in the text is taken from p. 540. Hasenbergius was the author of a gross Luther-drama (Ludus Ludentem Luderum Ludens, 1530): cf. Josef Schmidt. "Der lautere Luther. Beobachtungen zu einem Reformationstraktat über die Kalauer mit Luthers Namen." In Seminar XI.4 (1975), p. 205.

16. E.g. Erich Klinger. Luther und der deutsche Volksaberglaube (Berlin: Mayer und Muller 1912). (Palaestra LVI).

17. WA 11, p. 380. --A good and concise study on "the profoundly eschatological (medieval) view which seizes on satire as its most appropriate tool of exposition" cf. Donald Wesling. "Eschatology and the Language of Satire." In: Wolfgang Weiss, ed. Die englische Satire. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1982): pp. 89-102.

18. WA 54, pp. 195-299.

19. E.g. Johannes Pistorius. Anatomiae Lutheri, Pars I (Cologne: Arnold Quentel 1595). E.g. on p. 34 of the 'third evil spirit' there is a full listing of all possible combinations of the curse "Papsteselfurz" followed by a short comment that the reader should judge for himself who had suffered the most by Luther's condemnation!

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