

5-1-1992

# The Theology of Spiritual Gifts in Luther and Calvin: A Comparison

Robert Wetmore

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, robertwetmore@fccollege.edu.pk

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholar.csl.edu/thd>



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Wetmore, Robert, "The Theology of Spiritual Gifts in Luther and Calvin: A Comparison" (1992). *Doctor of Theology Dissertation*. 7.  
<http://scholar.csl.edu/thd/7>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia Seminary Scholarship at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Theology Dissertation by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact [seitzw@csl.edu](mailto:seitzw@csl.edu).

THE THEOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS  
IN LUTHER AND CALVIN:  
A COMPARISON

---

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Systematic Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Theology

---

by

Robert Kingston Wetmore

May 1992

Approved by: Thomas Manteful

George Robbert <sup>Advisor</sup>

Charles Knippel <sup>Reader</sup>

Reader

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Paul sometimes describes his calling with the phrase "the grace which was given me" (Galatians 2:9). That is an apt description of this dissertation, which is certainly a gift given to me by the grace of God in many different ways, often through very caring people. I would like to thank the library of Concordia Seminary for its assistance, often at a long distance. I am especially appreciative of receiving a private room for three weeks when using the library of Princeton Theological Seminary, a privilege rarely granted even to their own students. I cannot express enough gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Thomas Manteufel, whose wisdom, criticism, advice, perseverance, encouragement, and direction led me to grow tremendously through out this process. Dr. Wayne Schmidt, director of the graduate school at Concordia, gave much support and assistance to bring this project to a conclusion.

On the more personal side, I would like to express my thanks to my mother, Mrs. Janice Wetmore, who has continually encouraged me to continue when progress seemed to be stalled, and my father, Mr. George Wetmore, who gave good advice along the way and exhorted me not to give up. I wish that I could in some way repay the generosity and love of our beloved congregation which I pastor, Bellevue Community Church. When it looked as if the heavy demands of pastoring this wonderful church simply would not allow me to complete the dissertation, our board

rejected my resignation in favor of a paid leave of absence. One board member commented, "Pastor, we see this as our contribution to the kingdom of God." May God richly reward them for their kindness and faithfulness.

Finally, I wish to express my profoundest respect and thanks to my wife of almost seventeen years who has stood with me through thick and thin in the production of this dissertation. Joyce Evelyn Wetmore has sacrificed, encourage, consoled, stood up, and most of all prayed to see this thesis completed. It is a joy to be married to a woman of God.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ii
INTRODUCTION .....	ix
 Chapter	
1. LUTHER'S CONCEPT OF THE MEANS OF GRACE .....	1
The Spirit and the Means of Grace .....	2
Introduction .....	2
The Foundation: Justification .....	3
Scholastic Approach to Salvation Opposed by Luther .....	3
Luther: Justification by Faith .....	5
God's Activity in Justification: Spirit and Word .....	9
The Hammer of the Law. ....	9
The Word: External and Internal. ....	10
The Work of the Spirit. ....	12
The Ministry of Preaching. ....	13
Faith in Christ. ....	14
Sanctification: Good Works Stirred by Faith .....	17
Simul Justus et Peccator .....	17
The Life of Good Works .....	18
Luther's View of Miracles .....	22
Introduction .....	22
The Nature of Miracles .....	22
The Miracles of the Bible .....	24
The Possibility of Present-Day Miracles .....	25
The Purpose of Miracles .....	27
The Danger of Present-Day Miracles .....	28
Present-Day Miracles and the Pastoral Office .....	29
Summary and Conclusions .....	30
 2. LUTHER'S CONCEPT OF PASTORAL OFFICE AND MINISTRY ...	 33
The Medieval Pastoral Office .....	33
The Levels of Service within the Church .....	35
The Priesthood of All Believers .....	35
The Office of Public Teaching .....	37
The Equality between Layperson and Minister .....	37
The Source and Authority of the Office of Ministry .....	38
The Divine Establishment of the Office .....	39

The Divine Authority of the Word . . . . .	42
The Divine Appointment through the Call . . . . .	46
Giftedness for the Pastoral Office . . . . .	52
The Importance of Education for the Ministry . . . . .	53
The Decline of Education in Germany . . . . .	53
Preparation for the Ministry . . . . .	55
The Importance of Giftedness for the Ministry . . . . .	58
The Focus of Giftedness . . . . .	58
The Relative Importance of Giftedness . . . . .	59
Summary . . . . .	61
3. LUTHER'S THEOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS . . . . .	64
Introduction . . . . .	64
The Recipients of Spiritual Gifts . . . . .	65
Spiritual Gifts as Enhancements to Ministerial Office . . . . .	65
Why Gifts Are First of All Related to Ministerial Office . . . . .	69
The Purpose for Miracles . . . . .	69
The Office as God's Chosen Channel of His Word . . . . .	70
Empowerment in the Office of Preaching . . . . .	72
Application of Spiritual Gifts Passages to the Laity . . . . .	73
Descriptions of Individual Spiritual Gifts . . . . .	78
Prophecy . . . . .	78
Teaching . . . . .	80
Tongues and Interpretation . . . . .	81
Words of Wisdom and Knowledge . . . . .	82
Gift of Faith . . . . .	83
The Bestowals of Powers and the Office . . . . .	84
Summary and Conclusions . . . . .	86
4. CALVIN'S THEOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS . . . . .	88
Introduction . . . . .	88
The Focus of Calvin's Teachings on Spiritual Gifts. . . . .	89
Permanent and Temporary Offices and Gifts . . . . .	89
Gifts as Related to the Office of Ministry . . . . .	91
Individual Descriptions of Spiritual Gifts . . . . .	94
Prophecy . . . . .	94
Teaching . . . . .	97
Tongues and Interpretation . . . . .	98
Words of Wisdom and Knowledge . . . . .	100
Gift of Faith . . . . .	101
Bestowal of Powers and Offices . . . . .	101
A Summary of Similarities and Differences . . . . .	103

Chart Describing Similarities and Differences . . . . .	104
Patterns of Concord and Discord . . . . .	105
<b>5. ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LUTHER AND CALVIN</b>	<b>106</b>
Introduction . . . . .	106
Calvin's View of the Miraculous . . . . .	106
The Purpose of Miracles . . . . .	107
The Primacy of God's Word . . . . .	109
The Possibility of Miracles . . . . .	112
Gifts and the Office of Ministry . . . . .	114
The Priesthood of All Believers . . . . .	114
The Office of Public Teaching . . . . .	116
Its Source and Authority . . . . .	116
The Divine Establishment of the Office . . . . .	117
Giftedness for the Pastoral Office . . . . .	120
The Importance of Theological Education . . . . .	121
The Importance of Giftedness for the Ministry . . . . .	122
Understanding the Disagreement Concerning Gifts . . . . .	125
The Relationship of the Spirit to the Means of Grace . . . . .	126
Seeming Agreement: The Means of Grace . . . . .	126
Actual Disagreement: The Means of Grace . . . . .	128
Disagreement: The Third Use of the Law . . . . .	130
Calvin's Understanding . . . . .	130
Luther's Understanding . . . . .	135
The Theology of Means of Grace As It Impacts Ministry . . . . .	141
Practical Theology and the Addition of Law . . . . .	141
Example #1: The Sacraments . . . . .	142
Example #2: Church Discipline . . . . .	143
The Impact on the Theology of Spiritual Gifts . . . . .	145
Summary and Conclusions . . . . .	151
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b> . . . . .	<b>153</b>
<b>WORKS CITED</b> . . . . .	<b>159</b>

To Joyce Evelyn Wetmore



ἕκαστος καθὼς ἔλαβεν χάρισμα, εἰς ἑαυτοὺς αὐτὸ διακονοῦτε  
ὡς καλοὶ οἰκονόμοι ποικίλης χάριτος θεοῦ

1 Peter 4:10

## INTRODUCTION

In a recent conversation concerning Luther's and Calvin's views of spiritual gifts, a professor of theology exclaimed, "I didn't even know that they *had* a theology of spiritual gifts!" He is not alone in being unaware of how the two reformers understood the doctrine. Their interpretations were largely unknown for most of the past five centuries since they were not needed, because the topic of spiritual gifts remained generally undiscussed until the late 1950s. At that point, the Pentecostal/charismatic movement began to make inroads into the mainline Lutheran, Episcopal, and Reformed denominations, and the need arose to know what Luther and Calvin had to say about the subject.

The current emphasis on spiritual gifts makes a comparison of the two Reformers valuable because the theological descendants of both are today seeking to understand spiritual gifts in light of their own heritages. There are present-day charismatics who wish to find in Luther or Calvin support for their own views, evidenced by such writers as Theodore Jungkuntz<sup>1</sup> and Paul Elbert.<sup>2</sup> Other scholars

---

<sup>1</sup>Theodore Jungkuntz, *A Charismatic Catechism* (Howard City, MI: Bread of Life Ministries, 1979).

<sup>2</sup>Paul Elbert, "Calvin and the Spiritual Gifts," in *Essays on Apostolic Themes: Studies in Honor of Howard M. Ervin, Presented to him by Colleagues and Friends on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Paul Elbert (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985), p. 115-43.

have competently demonstrated the weaknesses of such attempts to label Luther<sup>3</sup> and Calvin<sup>4</sup> as incipient charismatics or compatible with Charismatic theology.

Although work has been done on the two reformers concerning their doctrine of spiritual gifts, no one has yet *compared* their views on gifts, a task which is undertaken in the present work. This dissertation does not examine either man's theology in light of the theology of modern-day charismatics (with whom neither reformer was acquainted), attempting to answer questions unfamiliar to the sixteenth century. Without focussing attention on current controversies, each reformer is examined thoroughly concerning his own particular views on spiritual gifts and the theological foundations which have contributed to those views. Their positions are then compared and contrasted. A chart in Chapter 4 demonstrates that the two reformers sometimes agree, far more often evidence variations between themselves (i.e., a mix of verbal agreement and practical divergence), and sometimes have actual disagreements on their interpretations of the gifts.

This dissertation asserts that the cause of the disagreements between Calvin and Luther when they discuss spiritual gifts stems from their broad theological structures which serve as foundations of each man's doctrine of spiritual gifts. Those theological structures include the subjects of ministry, universal priesthood, and miracles, as well

---

<sup>3</sup>Carter Lindberg, *The Third Reformation: Charismatic Movements and the Lutheran Traditions* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1983).

<sup>4</sup>Peter F. Jensen, "Calvin, Charismatics, and Miracles," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 51 (July-September 1979):131-44.

as justification and sanctification. The rationale for examining these topics is based upon the fact that the theology of each Reformer is so unified within itself that one cannot understand their views on any one topic apart from a comprehension of the larger theological fabric.

This dissertation compares and contrasts Luther's and Calvin's theology of ministry because spiritual gifts are in some sense ministry gifts (using the broad definition of ministry as "every form of preaching the Gospel or administering the means of grace" as carried out by Christians in general)<sup>5</sup> which are exercised by believers. Because spiritual gifts are not limited to the priests, this dissertation examines the understandings of both reformers concerning the priesthood of all believers. In turn, because spiritual gifts have often been understood as miraculous, so that it is necessary to explain what Luther and Calvin taught on the miraculous. Also, since spiritual gifts are somehow involved in sanctification, it is necessary to understand what both men believed about that topic. Yet one cannot understand Luther's theology of sanctification apart from his doctrine of justification, so that a comparison of both reformers on this critical subject is necessary in order to understand their views on sanctification.

---

<sup>5</sup>To explain the difference between the broad and narrow definition of the word "ministry, it is helpful to quote Francis Pieper. "The term 'ministry' is used both in Scripture and by the Church in a general, or wider, and in a special, or narrower, sense. In the wider sense it embraces every form of preaching the Gospel or administering the means of grace, whether by Christians in general, as originally entrusted with the means of grace and commissioned to apply them, or by chosen public servants (*ministri ecclesiae*) in the name and at the command of Christians." Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 3:439.

It is well known that Lutheranism and Calvinism are sharply divided, although not all are convinced that the division should not be attributed to personality rather than to theological differences. Indeed, this present writer well remembers how forcefully a Calvinist professor in seminary argued that the only true separation between Luther and Calvin was Luther's stubbornness. This dissertation, however, will demonstrate that even on the subject of spiritual gifts, there is much more dividing the two traditions than personality and nationality.

Indeed, the heart of this dissertation lies in its examination of the underlying reasons for Luther and Calvin to have so much *verbal* agreement when discussing spiritual gifts, yet consistently to evidence differences in *emphasis* and *practice*. It will be demonstrated that the source of the differences between Luther's and Calvin's doctrine of spiritual gifts can be found in their understanding of the means of grace, especially as that understanding relates to the use of the Law. The seemingly minor verbal disagreements in their views of spiritual gifts are manifestations of a deep rift between Lutheran and Calvinist theology. Therefore this study of spiritual gifts will afford the reader the opportunity to gain an insight into the difference in ethos between Calvinism and Lutheranism by focussing on one specific area where that difference is manifested.

Pertinent primary sources of Luther and Calvin have been utilized in the original German, Latin, and French. The sources of English translations have been indicated in the footnotes. When there is no such indication, the translation is the work of the author of the present work. The present author has also used the

following principle in notations: the modern spelling of German words has been used for the discursive text and the older spelling in order to indicate in a quotation what the original was. Whenever a footnote includes the phrase "emphasis added," this indicates an emphasis added by the present author to call attention to a key point in the quote. Also, it should be noted that this dissertation does not compare the two reformers on the gifts of healings and giving because these two gifts are to a large degree left undiscussed by them in their sermons and writings. Finally, even though faced with the fact that using the words "man" and "men" to include both men *and* women generically has become increasingly controversial, the present writer has chosen to continue that practice in this dissertation. Stylistically, the use of other words or phrases (i.e., "people", "persons", "he or she", etc.) often sounds forced and interrupts the natural flow of the sentence. The fact that English has no generic pronoun makes this especially problematic.

## CHAPTER 1

### LUTHER'S CONCEPT OF THE MEANS OF GRACE

#### Introduction

Because the goal of this chapter is to describe the theological foundations which support Martin Luther's theology of spiritual gifts, it will seek to answer questions regarding the nature of the Christian life where they impact Luther's theology of spiritual gifts. In light of the fact that spiritual gifts are, according to Luther, in some way involved in the work of ministry<sup>1</sup>, Chapter 1 will answer the

---

<sup>1</sup>Confusion may arise with the use of the terms *minister* or *ministry*, which can be taken in a more general sense as a translation of the New Testament word  $\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\omicron\nu\iota\alpha$  or in the narrower sense of the preaching office (*predigtamt*). Luther uses the word to refer to this more limited sense throughout his writings. He writes: "Listen, brother: God the creator of heaven and earth speaks to you through his preachers; baptizing, teaching, forgiving you through the sacraments by his ministers." Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Tischreden* [Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1912-21 (hereafter referred to as *WA TR*)], 4:531, #4812, (Table Talk). Luther writes elsewhere: "When a minister preaches or baptizes, this is nothing but a miracle, inasmuch he lets the Gospel and Baptism remain valid regardless of whether he is pious or wicked." Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, vol. 1-63 [Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883—1987 (hereafter referred to as *WA*)], 32:532; *Luther's Works*, 55 vols., gen. eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955-1986 (hereafter cited as *LW*)], 21:280 ("Sermon on the Mount, 1532). For this reason, this dissertation will refer to the more general meaning of  $\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\omicron\nu\iota\alpha$  as "service" and use the word "ministry" for discussions regarding the office of ministry.

questions: What dynamics are involved in ministry? How does God work in Christians? What does He use to accomplish that work? In what ways does He limit Himself? How do miracles fit into God's work among men? The answers to these questions will prepare the way for an examination in Chapter 2 of Luther's theology of the office of ministry.

Therefore, to reach this chapter's goal, it will be necessary briefly to examine Luther's views concerning justification, the work of the Spirit, the means of grace, the ministry of the Word of God, and miracles. These are significant subjects, each of which could be extensively treated by itself. The aim of this chapter, however, limits its examination of these doctrines specifically to how they impact Luther's theology of spiritual gifts. To go beyond this would go beyond the stated goal of this dissertation.

## **The Spirit and the Means of Grace**

### **Introduction**

How can we understand God's work in the life of an individual? This question can be taken in several different ways. A first track might interpret the question to concern what *motivates* God to work in men. His love? His justice? His sovereignty? His divine purposes? There is a second approach to answering the query as well, which deals with the *means* God may make use of when He operates in someone's life. Does He act apart from any means or through feelings, dreams, rational thought, circumstances, nature, people, messengers, miracles, Scripture or any combination thereof? A third approach concerns the works God may do to, for, and against a human being. What does God wish to *result* from His relationship with



men? What kinds of actions does He perform in men? Before one can discuss the work of ministry in the church, one must have some idea of how God operates in the lives of individuals. Luther certainly uses all three approaches, but it is through his understanding of the means by which God interacts with human beings that Luther's theology of ministry becomes most apparent. For this reason, this dissertation will present Luther's teachings concerning the means of grace.

#### The Foundation: Justification

While it is important to understand Luther's theology of the work of the Spirit, the means of grace, the ministry of the Word of God, and miracles, all of these topics cannot be understood apart from Luther's theology of justification. Indeed, justification is the foundation of all of Luther's theology. For this reason, it is necessary to understand Luther's doctrine here, and by doing so the other questions will be far more accessible.

#### Scholastic Approach to Salvation Opposed by Luther

The scholastic approach to salvation against which Luther fired his first reformation salvos saw grace as a transforming power given by God to enable man to reach God through the imitation of Christ. Sanctification was the imitation of Christ, as man grew up to God.<sup>2</sup> The goal of the scholastic was to grow in spirituality so that he might be found worthy of heaven.

---

<sup>2</sup>Regin Prenter, *Spiritus Creatus*, trans. John M. Jensen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1953), pp. 24-6.

Scholastics saw two natures in man, a lower carnal nature which was to be rejected and the higher spiritual nature into which God poured His transforming grace to achieve sanctification. "Medieval theology, under the influence of Hellenistic dualism, inclined so to combine these two distinctions that flesh was equated with man's physical being: Man is 'flesh' insofar as he participates in his physical desires which are opposed to the spirit, which is called reason."<sup>3</sup> The higher nature, the starting point for sanctification, was already less corrupted than the lower fleshly nature. God infused man's spirit with grace, which ennobled him and began to move him closer and closer to Himself. Thus the scholastic would suggest that the means God uses when He works in man is the spirit of man as it is empowered by His grace. As long as man concentrated on his lower nature, that is, his flesh, he would be unable to reach God. It was only as man strengthened his spiritual side that he would grow towards God. "The . . . basic supposition by which the whole scholastic synthesis of metaphysics and faith, idealism and Bible, stands or falls is that both God's Spirit and the spirit of man are spirit, that there is in man's own spirit an urge toward the spiritual, and that it is the task of grace to sublimate this urge and guide it to its high goal."<sup>4</sup>

The lower nature of man slowly was replaced by the higher nature, as grace brought about the transformation of the man, so that he began in his behavior to

---

<sup>3</sup>Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 154.

<sup>4</sup>Prenter, pp. 22-23.

imitate Christ through a life of love. The scholastic saw that higher part of himself as transformed, as a new creature, and he sought to intensify that part of himself while diminishing the fleshly aspect, so that he might become more spiritual and thus more acceptable to God. Karl Holl describes this process as being "lifted above oneself, transplanted to a higher level where one was now acceptable to God."<sup>5</sup>

The imitation of Christ was the Law of the Christian, who sought to become sanctified through loving his Creator with a truly pure love. The Christian's goal was to love God as Christ did, with a pure and selfless love, so that practices such as monasticism were seen as acts of selfless love which could merit heavenly reward. Thus the scholastic's answer to the question: *How does God work in man?* would be: through the spiritual nature, empowered by grace, growing in love, becoming transformed to be acceptable to God, through imitating Christ, in spirituality, from earth to heaven, from man to God.

#### Luther: Justification by Faith

Luther's break with the scholastic approach to salvation is complete, because he stresses that man is utterly unable to be saved by his own efforts, even if they are empowered by grace. Luther rejects the possibility that any man could be found worthy of God's salvation, no matter how supposedly pure his love might be or his spirituality might appear.

---

<sup>5</sup>Karl Holl, *What Did Luther Understand by Religion?*, ed. James Luther Adams and Walter F. Bense, trans. Fred W. Meuser and Walter R. Wietzke (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 23.

For Luther, man is wholly flesh in his body, mind, and spirit, and thus is powerless to please God.<sup>6</sup> He denies the distinction between lower and upper natures within man, saying that ". . . whatever is best and most outstanding in man Paul calls 'flesh', namely, the highest wisdom of reason and the very righteousness of the Law."<sup>7</sup> Luther does not divide man into new and old natures, that is, partially righteous and partially sinful. The man as a whole is entirely sinful, i.e., fleshly.<sup>8</sup> A man is fleshly because his father Adam gave him the inheritance of a body of sin, so that in spirit, soul, and flesh he continues to commit sins against the living God.<sup>9</sup> Although scholastics would suggest that a man might become spiritual through the emphasis of so-called spiritual behavior (reason and love) and de-emphasis of so-called unspiritual behavior (eating, drinking, marriage, etc.), Luther rejects this totally. Man's so-called spiritual activities, when done by his own powers and abilities, are not spiritual at all, but remain as fruit of the flesh. Thus it is impossible to move towards God by means of a supposed progression of the upper nature of man, for Luther sees man as a whole to be flesh and therefore mired in sin.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup>Holl comments: "But Luther refused to regard this higher element as a sphere untouched by the other impulses of the soul; this would be to dissect a person in Scholastic fashion into 'parts.'" Karl Holl, *What Did Luther Understand by Religion?*, 70.

<sup>7</sup>WA 40<sup>l</sup>:347; LW 26:216 (Galatians, 1535).

<sup>8</sup>". . . it is not as though he were partially righteous and partially a sinner, but rather he is completely a sinner and completely righteous." Althaus, *Theology*, p. 243.

<sup>9</sup>Prenter, p. 61.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

If man is to be saved, therefore, he must be declared righteous before God apart from his own efforts or abilities. The scholastic view of salvation as grace-enabled man reaching up to God is contradicted by the Lutheran view, where God reaches down to man, giving him righteousness in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. For Luther, salvation begins in the mystery of God's love, who in spite of the utter unworthiness of man, reaches down from heaven in His Son, not out of necessity or self-gratification, but simply out of infinite love. God saves man because He wants to, out of His own good pleasure. Man cannot earn it or deserve it. Luther stresses this in his lectures on Galatians.

As the earth itself does not produce rain and is unable to acquire it by its own strength, worship, and power but receives it only by a heavenly gift from above, so this heavenly righteousness is given to us by God without our work or merit. As much as the dry earth of itself is able to accomplish in obtaining the right and blessed rain, that much can we men accomplish by our own strength and works to obtain that divine, heavenly, and eternal righteousness. Thus we can obtain it only through the free imputation and indescribable gift of God.<sup>11</sup>

God bestows upon the Christian a righteousness which is not his own but is an alien righteousness, the righteousness of Christ.

Through the only-begotten Son and through the Gospel one learns to look directly into God's face. And when this happens, then everything in man dies; man must then confess that he is a blind and ignorant sinner who must forthwith appeal to Christ. When a monk clearly realizes that *an alien righteousness, the righteousness accorded us by grace for Christ's sake, must save him*, he will ask: "What am I to do now with my cowl, my monastic order, my rule?"<sup>12</sup>

The very things which offered heaven to the scholastic become of no value when the

---

<sup>11</sup>WA 40<sup>l</sup>:43; LW 26:6 (Galatians, 1535). See also WA 31<sup>u</sup>:459-60; LW 17:257 (Isaiah, 1528).

<sup>12</sup>WA 46:673; LW 22:157-8 (Gospel of John, 1537) (emphasis added).

sinner recognizes that he will never be able to produce sufficient righteousness to be saved, even with help from grace. Salvation can come only through being accepted as righteous on the basis of the righteousness of another. Thus God gives His Son to the lost, so that through Christ's righteousness the sinner might be saved.<sup>13</sup> When God looks upon the believer He sees His own Son's righteousness rather than anything inherently good or noble within the Christian. Indeed, there is no inherent righteousness in the believer. He has not been changed in his spirit or psyche, that is, there is no "renewed" portion of him which is in some way divine or truly righteous. In reality he will not be experientially righteous until the resurrection. Until that time, his only true righteousness before God is "alien", not his own, from the outside, belonging to Christ.<sup>14</sup>

Thus in contrast to the scholastic's portrait of salvation as an increasingly righteous man progressing up towards God, the Lutheran picture is of the ever-loving Father reaching down to spiritually impotent man and giving him the righteousness of His Son. Luther's approach always begins with God, who is the Giver. Man is only the receiver. This *monergistic* approach to salvation lies at the heart of Lutheran theology. Luther answers the question: *How does God work in the unbeliever?*

---

<sup>13</sup>"A man lives before God throughout his whole life on the basis of this 'alien' and 'passive' righteousness--not only at the moment when he begins to be a Christian in baptism." Althaus, *Theology*, pp. 228-9.

<sup>14</sup>Prenter, pp. 41-3. Althaus comments, "This means that passive righteousness is not more and more replaced and limited by an active righteousness, the alien righteousness is not more and more replaced by man's own." Althaus, *Theology*, p. 229.

through his doctrine of justification by faith. God works entirely by His unconditional love, solely by grace, apart from works, apart from man's efforts, from heaven to earth, through the gift of His Son.

God's Activity in Justification: Spirit and Word

The Hammer of the Law.

How does the Holy Spirit work that man might receive this gift of righteousness? God first speaks to sinful man through the Law, through which He breaks him of his pride, and brings him to a point where he is ready to hear the Word of promise. Man needs the Law because he refuses to see himself as in need of the Gospel.

For as long as the presumption of righteousness remains in a man, there remain immense pride, self-trust, smugness, hate of God, contempt of grace and mercy, ignorance of the promises and of Christ. The proclamation of free grace and the forgiveness of sins does not enter his heart and understanding, because that huge rock and solid wall, namely, the presumption of righteousness by which the heart itself is surrounded, prevents this from happening.

Therefore this presumption is a huge and a horrible monster. To break it and crush it, God needs a large and powerful hammer, that is, the Law, which is the hammer of death, the thunder of hell, and the lightning of divine wrath.<sup>15</sup>

For Luther, this "hammer of God" always precedes the promise of grace. It is a "minister and a preparation for grace."<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup>WA 40<sup>1</sup>:482-83; LW 26:310 (Galatians, 1535).

<sup>16</sup>WA 40<sup>1</sup>:488; LW 26:314 (Galatians, 1535).

### Christ in the Gospel.

Having been prepared by the Law, man encounters the person of Christ as He comes to him in the Gospel.

But it takes work and labor for someone who has been terrified and bruised by the Law to be able to raise himself up and to say: 'Now I have been crushed and troubled enough. The time of the Law has caused me enough misery. Now it is time for grace and for listening to Christ, from whose mouth there come messages of grace. Now it is time to see, not the smoking and burning Mt. Sinai, but Mt. Moriah, where the seat, the temple, and the mercy seat of God are, that is, Christ. . . .'<sup>17</sup>

The Gospel "is a light that illumines hearts and makes them alive. It discloses what grace and the mercy of God are; what the forgiveness of sins, blessing, righteousness, life, and eternal salvation are; and how we are to attain to these."<sup>18</sup> While the Law cannot make alive but can only kill, when it has prepared the heart, one is ready to look for mercy and help, and the Gospel comes to bring that help to the soul in the person of Christ.

### The Word: External and Internal.

The Gospel always comes by means of the Word, which is either the written Word of Scripture, the spoken Word, or the visible Word of the sacrament. God has chosen to work among men through humble means which hide His glory in the manger, in words, in bread, wine, and water.

He did not want to give us His divinity unconcealed; this was impossible. For God said (Ex. 33:20): "Man shall not see Me and live." Therefore it was necessary

---

<sup>17</sup>WA 40<sup>1</sup>:488-89; LW 26:315 (Galatians, 1535).

<sup>18</sup>WA 40<sup>1</sup>:486; LW 26:313 (Galatians, 1535).



for God to hide, cover, and conceal Himself, thus enabling us to touch and apprehend Him. *He must disguise Himself in flesh and blood, in the Word, in the external ministry, in Baptism, in the Sacrament and Lord's Supper*, where He gives us His body in the bread and His blood in the wine, to eat and to drink. . . . God is not to be sought or found outside the Person born of Mary, the Person endowed with real flesh and blood, and crucified. God is to be apprehended and found in the flesh and blood of Christ solely by faith.<sup>19</sup>

For Luther, God meets man in the Word and that Word always precedes anything God may do within the human being. Without the Word, there is no encounter with Christ.

It is in Scripture and nowhere else, that He permits Himself to be found. He who despises Scripture and sets it aside, will never find him. We heard earlier that the angel gave a sign to the shepherds; but to Mary or Joseph or to any other man, however pious they may have been, he gave no sign except the swaddling clothes in which he was wrapped and the cradle into which he was laid, that is, the Scripture of the prophets and the law. In these he is enclosed, they possess Him, they speak of Him alone and witness to him and are his sure sign, as He says Himself, in John 5: "Search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me."<sup>20</sup>

It is necessary that man meet with God, but man can never meet with God until first he encounters the Word itself. God has chosen that the Word will always precede the Spirit.

This sort of doctrine, which reveals the Son of God, is not taught, learned, or judged by any human wisdom or by the Law itself; it is revealed by God, *first by the external Word and then inwardly through the Spirit*. Therefore the Gospel is a divine Word that came down from heaven and is revealed by the Holy Spirit who was sent for this very purpose. Yet this happens in such a way that the external Word must come first. For Paul himself did not have an inward revelation until he had heard the outward Word from heaven, namely, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" (Acts 9:4) Thus he heard the outward Word first; only then did there follow revelations, the knowledge of the Word, faith, and the gifts of the

---

<sup>19</sup>WA 33:189-90; LW 23:123 (Gospel of John, 1537).

<sup>20</sup>WA 10<sup>1</sup>:576-7; LW 52:171-2 (Gospel for the Festival of the Epiphany, 1522).

Spirit.<sup>21</sup>

Regin Prenter writes that "the Spirit does not come before the Word has preceded it. It is always first the outward Word and then--soon--the Spirit with the inner Word, which brings life into the heart."<sup>22</sup> Luther does not accept the possibility that the Holy Spirit might work in man in some divinely independent way, although He is certainly able and free to do so. Nevertheless, He has chosen to limit the manner and ways in which He comes to man, speaks to man, and brings Christ to man by confining Himself to work through the Word.

#### The Work of the Spirit.

The Spirit has so closely tied Himself to the means of the Word that man cannot have one without the other.<sup>23</sup> The outward Word is the letters and words written on the pages of Scripture,<sup>24</sup> but there is also an inward Word, Christ, the living Word of God.

Now when God sends forth His holy gospel, He deals with us in a twofold manner, first outwardly, then inwardly. Outwardly he deals with us through the oral word of the gospel and through material signs, that is, baptism and the sacrament of the altar. Inwardly he deals with us through the Holy Spirit, faith, and other gifts. But whatever their measure or order the outward factors should and must precede. God has determined to give the inward to no one except

---

<sup>21</sup>WA 40<sup>1</sup>:142; LW 26:73 (Galatians, 1535, emphasis added).

<sup>22</sup>Prenter, p. 104.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 102-104.

<sup>24</sup>Althaus comments, "Both Scripture and the spoken word however are external words; that is, they are not primarily a direct mystical communication from God's Spirit to man's spirit, but a word which comes to men from the outside and is brought and mediated to them by other men." Althaus, *Theology*, pp. 35-6.

through the outward. For He wants to give no one the Spirit or faith outside of the outward Word and sign instituted by Him. . . .<sup>25</sup>

### The Ministry of Preaching.

Luther taught that the Word of God comes to man through means of grace, that is, the sacraments and the Word. When he discusses the ministry of the Word, he puts special emphasis on the "oral word of the Gospel." For Luther, preaching is central to the ministry of the Word.

Christ has two witnesses to His birth and His realm. The one is Scripture, the word comprehended in the letters of the alphabet. The other is the voice or the words proclaimed by mouth. St. Paul and St. Peter call this same word a light and a lamp. We cannot understand Scripture unless the light shines. For by the gospel the prophets are illuminated, so that star must rise first and be seen. In the New Testament, preaching must be done orally and publicly, with the living voice, to produce in speech and hearing what prior to this lay hidden in the letter and in secret vision.<sup>26</sup>

Just as he was convinced that God meets man through the external Word, so also Luther was convinced that God clothes His Word in the humble voice of the pastor. When God encounters man He is covered in the weakness of the preacher's message rather than overwhelming glory. This is contrary to the expectations of humans, who take offense at His humble and weak humanity. When God wants to speak and deal with us, He does not avail Himself of an angel but of parents, of the pastor, or of my neighbor. This puzzles and blinds me so that I fail to recognize God, who is conversing with me through the person of the pastor or father.<sup>27</sup>

Faith is necessary both to believe that God the Son could have concealed His glory

---

<sup>25</sup>WA 18:136; LW 40:146 (Against the Heavenly Prophets, 1535).

<sup>26</sup>WA 10<sup>l1</sup>:628; LW 52:207 (Gospel for the Festival of the Epiphany, 1522).

<sup>27</sup>WA 47:226-7; LW 22:527 (Gospel of John, 1537).

within a manger and that God can cloak His own glorious voice with a human voice.

Thus when Luther discusses the ministry of the Word as a means of grace, he is especially (although not exclusively)<sup>28</sup> describing the *spoken* Word.

The Word is to be spoken. Infinite and ineffable is the majesty of the word of God, for which we cannot give enough thanks to God. For thus the reasoning of man thinks: If I wish to hear the Lord, creator of heaven and earth, I would have to run to the ends of the world! Listen, brother: God the creator of heaven and earth speaks to you through his preachers; baptizing, teaching, forgiving you through the sacraments by his ministers. The words of God are not of Plato or Aristotle, but God Himself is speaking.<sup>29</sup>

Faith in Christ.

For Luther, the Word, outward and inward, exists solely to bring us to Christ. Christ is the content of the Word, for ". . . the Gospel teaches nothing but Christ, and therefore Scripture contains nothing but Christ."<sup>30</sup> The two are joined together in the plan of God so that "in Scripture there is the mixed wine of the letter and the spirit."<sup>31</sup> The Bible brings Jesus Christ to man, not apart from the inerrant words of Scripture, but through them. This thrust negates the current attempt to separate the letters of the

---

<sup>28</sup>"At whatever time God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read, or pondered, there the person, the day, and the work are sanctified by it, not on account of the external work but on account of the Word which makes us all saints." Large Catechism, Part 1, 92 [*Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche: herausgegeben im Gedenkjahr der Augsburger Konfession 1930* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), p. 583 (referred to hereafter as *Bekenntnisschriften*; Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), p. 377].

<sup>29</sup>WA TR 4:531, #4812 (Table Talk). See also WA 47:227-8; LW 22:526-7 (Gospel of John, 1537).

<sup>30</sup>WA 10<sup>L1</sup>; LW 52:205 (Gospel for the Festival of the Epiphany, 1522).

<sup>31</sup>WA 3:518-19; LW 10:464 (Lectures on the Psalms, 1515).

Word from the experience of Christ they bring, thus allowing critical scholars to deny the veracity of the human words while affirming the encounter with a divine Word.

For Luther, it is the very humility of the letters which clothes the Word.<sup>32</sup>

When the Word comes to man, the Spirit creates the faith to apprehend the Son of God. One receives the Spirit through the hearing of the Word. "Through the hearing of the Word the Holy Spirit is given; by faith He purifies the heart."<sup>33</sup> The faith itself is a product of the Spirit coming through the Word. "In this Word the Spirit comes and gives faith where and to whom he wills."<sup>34</sup> Man is utterly unable to create faith within himself. It must be the Spirit who does this work, enabling him to apprehend and hold to Christ.

As I have said, faith grasps and embraces Christ, the Son of God, who was given for us, as Paul teaches here. When He has been grasped by faith, we have righteousness and life. For Christ is the Son of God, who gave Himself out of sheer love to redeem me.<sup>35</sup>

When man believes on the living Christ whom he meets through the Word of the Gospel, he is justified by God. That is, God declares that man to be righteous. The righteousness he receives is not a change within his being, as if something new is

---

<sup>32</sup>Luther certainly held that the written Word, the Scriptures, were without error because they were God's Words. Consult William M. Landeen, *Martin Luther's Religious Thought* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1973), pp. 91-6. Consult as well M. Reu, *Luther and the Scriptures* (Columbus, OH: The Wartburg Press, 1944). For those who deny that Luther held to the words of Scripture being inerrant, consult R. E. Davies, *The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers* (London: The Epworth Press, 1946), p. 54.

<sup>33</sup>WA 14:681; LW 9:184 (Deuteronomy, 1525).

<sup>34</sup>WA 18:139; LW 40:149 (Against the Heavenly Prophets, 1525).

<sup>35</sup>WA 40<sup>1</sup>:297; LW 26:177 (Galatians, 1535).

inside of him which is now righteous before God. God instead bestows upon him Christ, who now becomes his own righteousness before God. Through this the man is justified and thus is without sin before the judgment seat of the Lord. Thus the proper order in Luther's picture of justification begins with the Law, followed by the Word of promise, through which the Spirit brings the person of Christ to man, creating faith by which that man may then take hold of the living Christ and believe.

Before all other works and acts you hear the Word of God, through which the Spirit convinces the world of its sin (John 16). When we acknowledge our sin, we hear of the grace of Christ. In this Word the Spirit comes and gives faith where and to whom he wills. Then you proceed to mortification and the cross and the works of love. Whoever wants to propose to you another order, you can be sure, is of the devil.<sup>36</sup>

This order is not an arbitrary assignment by the reformer but a necessary outgrowth of his doctrine of justification, for changing the order alters the utter dependance upon grace, which transforms justification from a *monergistic* work of God to a *synergistic* work of man and God. For this reason, Luther labels those who suggest a different order of justification with the strongest of epithets, because he believes they attack the faith at its heart.

---

<sup>36</sup>WA 18:139; LW 40:149 (Against the Heavenly Prophets).

## Sanctification: Good Works Stirred by Faith

*Simul Justus et Peccator*

The man who is justified stands before God in righteousness, yet as he lives out his life here on earth he continues in the flesh (i.e., what he is as a descendent of Adam) and thus sins. Even more frustratingly, the true life, his life in Christ, is a hidden one which must be acknowledged through faith.

I do indeed live in the flesh; but this life that is being led within me, whatever it is, I do not regard as a life. For actually it is not a true life but only a mask of life, under which there lives another One, namely, Christ, who is truly my Life. This life you do not see; you only hear it as 'you hear the sound of the wind, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes' (John 3:8). . . . For the time of life that I am living I do indeed live in the flesh, but not on the basis of the flesh and according to the flesh, but in faith, on the basis of faith, and according to faith.<sup>37</sup>

Thus man has two relationships while he remains on earth, the first being his relationship before God (*coram deo*), the second being his relationship within the world (*coram mundo*). Before God (*coram deo*) man is righteous through Christ, a child of God, and a new creature, but before the world (*coram mundo*) he shares the weaknesses and desires which plague all descendants of Adam. He is *simul justus et peccator*, simultaneously righteous and sinner. This is not the scholastic doctrine of inner transformation, as if man were progressively becoming more *justus* and less *peccator*. The opposite is true. In himself he always remains sinful and in Christ he always remains righteous. How, then, does man in this double life do good works?

---

<sup>37</sup>WA 40<sup>1</sup>:288; LW 26:170 (Galatians, 1535).

The Life of Good Works

Luther teaches two sides of good works, first that the evil desires of the flesh must be restrained, and second that when God's love itself is poured into the life of the Christian, it produces the fruit of Christian love for others. The scholastics believed that the old man, the lower nature, was gradually dislodged by the ever-growing higher nature through grace and through this grace-infused higher nature the Christian was able to love with a pure love. But for Luther, it was not a question of eradicating the old man, but of holding him down. Paraphrasing Paul, Luther explains:

Moreover, when I say that you should walk by the Spirit and should not obey the flesh or gratify the desires of the flesh, I am not requiring of you that you strip off the flesh completely or kill it, but that you restrain it. God wants the world to endure until the Last Day. This cannot happen unless men are born and reared; and this, in turn, requires that the flesh continue, and consequently also that sin continue, since the flesh cannot be without sin. And so if we look at the flesh, we are sinners; if we look at the Spirit, we are righteous.<sup>38</sup>

Hence the Christian battles the flesh to hold in check those evil desires which are naturally a part of the flesh. Luther's approach to curbing the flesh includes both the Law, which reveals the sin of the flesh, and especially the Spirit of God, who bridles the flesh and alone produces good works. When the Christian walks by the Spirit, that is, walks by faith in Christ, he overcomes the flesh. Luther paraphrases Paul in Galatians 5:17:

Here it is sufficient if you resist the flesh and do not gratify its desires, that is, if you follow the Spirit rather than the flesh, which is easily disturbed by impatience, which seeks revenge, grumbles, hates, bites back, etc." When someone becomes

---

<sup>38</sup>WA 40<sup>II</sup>:85-6; LW 27:68 (Galatians, 1535).



aware of this battle of the flesh, he should not lose heart on this account; but by the Spirit he should fight back and say: "I am a sinner and I am aware of my sin; for I have not yet put off my flesh, to which sin will cling as long as it lives. But I will obey the Spirit rather than the flesh. That is, by faith and hope I will take hold of Christ. I will fortify myself with His Word, and thus fortified I will refuse to gratify the desires of the flesh."<sup>39</sup>

When the Christian *by faith* gazes upon Christ and God's own love which has been poured into his heart through this gift of grace, he begins to do works which are an outflow of that divine love. Love does not perform the work of God, for faith alone can do that. Faith works, using love as its tool to serve others. In his comments on Galatians 5:6, Luther responds to those who made love a justifying work.

He does not say: "Love is effective." No, he says: "Faith works." He makes love the tool through which faith works. Now who does not know that a tool has its power, movement, and action, not from itself but from the artisan who works with it or uses it? For who would say that an axe gives the power and motion of cutting to a carpenter, or that a ship gives the power and motion of sailing to a sailor? Or, to cite an example used by Isaiah, who would say: "The saw wields the carpenter, and the staff lifts the hand"? It is no different when they say that love is the form of faith or that it grants power and movement to faith, that is, that it justifies.<sup>40</sup>

Good works cannot be produced by the flesh, but can only come by faith through the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>41</sup>

The word "sanctification" deals with these good works which come from the Christian as a result of his faith in Christ. Sanctification in Lutheran doctrine is not the gradual transformation of the character to reflect God's image, as it is seen in

---

<sup>39</sup>WA 40<sup>m</sup>:91; LW 27:8 (Galatians, 1535).

<sup>40</sup>WA 40<sup>m</sup>:36; LW 27:29 (Galatians, 1535).

<sup>41</sup>WA 40<sup>m</sup>:81-2; LW 27:65-6 (Galatians, 1535).

Calvin's theology. Instead, it is the life of good works which the Christian does *coram mundo*, works which do not earn salvation but are produced by God's Holy Spirit within the life of the believer. Good works flow from hearts which continue to know by faith, ever more deeply, God's love in Christ.

Christians continue to know and deepen their faith through the means of grace, that is, the Word and sacrament, and that faith results in good works. The Christian must therefore dedicate himself to growing in the strength and confidence of his faith through the means which God has designated.

The Word of God is the true holy thing above all holy things. Indeed, it is the only one we Christians acknowledge and have. Though we had all the bones of the saints or all the holy and consecrated vestments gathered together in one heap, they would not help us in the slightest degree, for they are all dead things that can sanctify no one. But God's Word is the treasure that sanctifies all things. By it all the saints themselves have been sanctified. *At whatever time God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read, or pondered, there the person, the day, and the work are sanctified by it*, not on account of the external work but on account of the Word which makes us all saints. Accordingly, I constantly repeat that all our life and work must be guided by God's Word if they are to be God-pleasing or holy.<sup>42</sup>

God's Word is encountered in the literal letters of the Scriptures, and in the visible words of the sacraments, where the Christian must also seek to reinforce his faith.

Nothing good which comes out of the Christian comes apart from faith, and that faith is always centered in Christ.

Hence Luther's entire theology of sanctification is grounded in his doctrine of justification. Man is impotent before God. God comes to man first through the Law

---

<sup>42</sup>Large Catechism, Part 1, 91 (*Bekennnisschriften*, p. 583; Tappert, p. 377, emphasis added).

to hammer him down to the point of recognizing his need for the Gospel. Then Christ comes to man through the Word, the Spirit creating faith to apprehend the living Son of God and believe. In response to that belief God bestows upon him Christ as his righteousness, so that *coram deo* he is righteous. All of this is God's work.<sup>43</sup> Good works are not an addition to this event but are founded upon it. The firmer the Christian's faith in Christ, the more confident he is in God's love towards him, and this love then produces good works. Just as justification is utterly dependent upon God, so also is sanctification, the life of good works, utterly dependent upon God and is itself grounded in justification.<sup>44</sup>

Luther's conviction that the Spirit does not work apart from grace is therefore built upon the foundation of his theology, the doctrine of justification by faith, making everything that is good in the Christian life utterly dependent upon the grace of God which comes through His chosen means.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, when asking the question *How does God work in the believer?* the answer is much the same as it was concerning how God works in the unbeliever. His work flows out of His

---

<sup>43</sup>Althaus comments: "For justification and salvation depend only on God's mercy; and this can be received only in an act of faith. Man's ethical activity and 'works' have no place here. They can neither cause nor preserve salvation for us. It is only through faith that we are preserved to eternal life." (Althaus, p. 245-46).

<sup>44</sup>"The certainty of God's forgiving mercy makes me glad in God, and brings the slavish service under the law to an end, works a new, free, and joyful obedience to God's will, places me in the line of battle against the sin of the old man, creates the readiness to serve someone else in love and to suffer 'in love and praise of God.'" Ibid., p. 235.

<sup>45</sup>Althaus writes: "The doctrine of justification is not simply one doctrine among others but--as Luther declares--the basic and chief article of faith with which the church stands or falls, and on which its entire doctrine depends." Ibid., p. 224.

unconditional love, solely by grace, apart from works, apart from man's efforts, from heaven to earth, through the gift of His Son.

### Luther's View of Miracles<sup>46</sup>

#### Introduction

How is Luther's doctrine of the means of grace reflected in his convictions concerning contemporary miracles? The question is certainly appropriate in a dissertation written about his theology of spiritual gifts, which many today understand as miraculous. Since Luther's understanding is that God has chosen to work with man exclusively through the means of grace, how will that impact his view of miraculous events and ministry? The remainder of this chapter will proceed to examine Luther's teachings on miracles.

#### The Nature of Miracles

Luther speaks to the nature of miracles in his lectures on Genesis when he explains how God could work in creation in a way which seems contrary to the laws of nature as then understood.

---

<sup>46</sup>Paul Althaus has treated the development of Luther's understanding of miracles extensively in the first appendix to his *The Theology of Martin Luther*, pp. 429-45. If a miracle is an event where God intervenes in life (even if He chooses to do so through mundane means), then there are many different kinds of miracles. Althaus comments: "God's miracles are done everywhere in the ordinary course of nature rather than only in extraordinary events." (Althaus, p. 110). As will be demonstrated below, God works miracles through answering prayers as well. Luther does not express any negative comments about these kinds of miracles. When Luther criticizes miracles, he is especially speaking about miracles related to the office of ministry within the context of the church.

Therefore theology has added to the arts this rule, which is not adequately known to the philosophers: that even if by His Word God has established and created all these things, nevertheless He is not bound to those rules in such a way that He cannot alter them according to His will. We see that neither grammar nor the other arts are so bound to rules that they do not have their exceptions. In the same way fairness moderates the law of states. How much more can this happen in the instance of God's actions!<sup>47</sup>

This definition of a miracle then would be something God does which is an exception to the rules of nature. Luther acknowledges other kinds of miracles as well, however, such as the miracles of natural birth and physical growth and development in day-to-day life which far too often are taken for granted. Answers to prayer are real to Luther as well.<sup>48</sup>

Even greater miracles, however, occur outside of the realm of nature, miracles which happen in the heart of man when Christ enters in to dwell within the new creation. It is a miracle that one man can proclaim the gospel and "with my bodily voice bring Christ into your heart, so that you may form Him within yourself."<sup>49</sup> The greatest miracle of all, according to Luther, was neither biblical plague nor rescue from Pharaoh's bondage, but rather Christ's birth, death, resurrection, and ascension.<sup>50</sup> In light of these miracles, signs and wonders are far less astonishing.

---

<sup>47</sup>WA 42:21; LW 1:27.

<sup>48</sup>On this, see below, pp. 24-5.

<sup>49</sup>WA 19:488; LW 36:340 (The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ--Against the Fanatics, 1526).

<sup>50</sup>Martin Luther, *Dr. Martin Luther sämtliche Schriften* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1880-1910), vol. 14:1160.

## The Miracles of the Bible

Luther firmly held the Biblical accounts of miracles as historical. Luther believed that each miraculous event recorded in the Scriptures was historical. One only has to read his accounts to realize that Luther affirmed the creation of Eve from the rib of Adam, the parting of the Red Sea, and the works of Christ recorded in the Gospels. Humanism later on led many biblical scholars to deny the miraculous in the Scriptures, but not Luther. For him miracles are as much a part of the biblical reality as the promises of life through Christ.

Luther does not, however, put great stock in the *importance* of the biblical miracles for *faith*. It is not the unusual event of the miracle which creates faith within. Faith comes through the Word of Christ and not through the excitement of unusual events. Thus he considers the gospel to be more strongly presented in the writings of Paul, Peter, and John than in Matthew, Mark, and Luke because the first three gospels put more emphasis on the miracles than do the epistles and the fourth gospel, which emphasize the Word of Christ.

From this you can now judge all the books and decide among them which are the best. John's Gospel and St. Paul's Epistles, especially that to the Romans, and St. Peter's first Epistle are the true kernel and marrow of all the books. . . . *If I had to do without one or the other--either the works or preaching of Christ --I would rather do without His works than His preaching; for the works do not help me, but His words give life, as He Himself says.* Now John writes very little about the works of Christ, but very much about His preaching, while the other Evangelists write much about His works and little of His preaching. Therefore John's Gospel is the one, fine, true, and chief Gospel, and far, far is to be preferred to the other three and placed high above them. So, too, the Epistles of St. Paul and St. Peter far surpass the other three Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and

Luke.<sup>51</sup>

Thus Luther sees the biblical miracles as real events but not as means to faith and therefore not central in importance. Althaus comments: "The Christian is less concerned with the report of the historical miracles of Jesus than with the witness of the word which creates faith and the saving power of this faith."<sup>52</sup>

### The Possibility of Present-Day Miracles

Luther does not see miracles as functionally different from God's daily continued work in His creation. Those who question the historicity of the creation of Adam and Eve do not recognize the miracles which surround them, such as the birth of a child and the wonders of nature.

All these developments afford the fullest occasion for wonderment and are wholly beyond our understanding, but because of their continued recurrence they have come to be regarded as commonplace, and we have verily become deaf to this lovely music of nature.

But if we regarded these wonders in true faith and appraise them for what they actually are, they surely would not be inferior to what Moses says here: that a rib was taken from the side of Adam as he slept and that Eve was created from it. If it had pleased the Lord to create us by the same method by which Adam was created from the clay, by now this, too, would have ceased to hold the position of a miracle for us; we would marvel more at the method of procreation through the semen of a man. The crude doggerel is right, and there is certainly good reason for composing it: "Everything that is rare is appreciated, but what is an everyday occurrence comes to be regarded as commonplace."<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup>Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe: Die Deutsche Bibel* (Weimar: Hermann Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1906), vol. 6:10 (hereafter cited as *WA DB*); *LW*:35:361-62 (Preface to the New Testament, 1522, emphasis added).

<sup>52</sup>Althaus, *Theology*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>53</sup>*WA* 42:95; *LW* 1:126-7 (Genesis, 1536).

In reality, daily existence is filled with the miracles of God.

Luther believes that God intervenes in the Christian's life in response to prayer, sometimes in such "miraculous" events as healing. Luther affirmed and regularly practiced prayer, and exhorted Christians to pray as an important part of their daily lives. He shared with others some of the results of his own prayer life. "Our Lord God gives to all much more when we pray. If we ask properly for a piece of bread he gives us a whole acre. I prayed God to let my Katy live, and he gives her a good year in addition!"<sup>54</sup> Luther shared on another occasion: "This I know, as often as I have prayed with earnestness so that it was a real concern for me, so often I have been answered in abundant measure and I received more than I prayed."<sup>55</sup> Accordingly, when Luther voices misgivings concerning the validity of miracles he was not doubting whether they were *possible*, that is, questioning whether or not God could and did intervene in the lives of men.<sup>56</sup> On the contrary, he affirmed regularly that the biblical record and God's answers to prayer both testified that God can and does work in unusual ways among men. The source of his reservations about miracles must be found elsewhere.

---

<sup>54</sup>WA TR 4:568, #4885; LW 54:369 (Table Talk).

<sup>55</sup>WA TR 1:442, #886 (Table Talk).

<sup>56</sup>Martin E. Lehmann, *Luther and Prayer* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1985), pp. 81-134.



## The Purpose of Miracles

Luther taught that miracles have a specific purpose in the plan of God, to confirm the Word.

. . . at that time the disciples did not even always exercise them [i.e., the powers to perform miracles], *but only to prove the Word of God, to confirm it by miracles*; as is written here in the text; 'And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word by the signs that followed.'<sup>57</sup>

Because God does not come to man through the miraculous event but only through the means of His Word, Luther taught that miracles have value only if they lead people to the Word, through which come life and good works.

Although during the apostolic days there was much need for such confirmation, Luther is convinced that there is no need today because the Word is already established. "But now since the Gospel has been sent out and is known to all the world, it has not been necessary to do miracles since the apostolic times."<sup>58</sup> Because of the fact that the Word has gone forth with power throughout the world, it is unnecessary for miracles to continue. Luther makes this same evaluation in his commentary on Joel 2:28.

This was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. When the Gospel had been revealed, therefore, and made well known by the apostles to all the territories of the earth--for thus it had been prophesied in the Psalms--*these signs ceased. You see, there is now no doubt about the verity of the Gospel, when it was confirmed by such clear and visible signs at a time when there was a need for it, when the preaching of it was still a new thing.* We, therefore, must no longer look for signs to confirm the Word, which has already before been clearly confirmed and shown to

---

<sup>57</sup>WA 10<sup>III</sup>:146 (Sermon on the Ascension Day, 1522, emphasis added).

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

the world.<sup>59</sup>

### The Danger of Present-Day Miracles

Luther realizes that the common people desired and were greatly excited by the miraculous. People would be readily attracted to the miraculous. The allure was often magnetic, seldom (if ever) positive.

I am convinced that if someone were to arise here today and perform just one sign, whole crowds would fall for it. That is how the crazy mob behaves. If someone pulls out something new in front of them and makes them stare, they forsake everything, the Word, and the doctrine, and go gaping after that.<sup>60</sup>

Luther warns very solemnly that the miraculous often leads astray from the truth of the Gospel. A miracle is only valuable in that it is intimately and utterly tied into confirming the Word of God.<sup>61</sup> Speaking concerning Matthew 7:22,23 Luther warns that there are different kinds of miracles which occur in the church today. Most are clever tricks of the devil to mislead the saints into false doctrine or practice.<sup>62</sup>

The greatest miracle is the ministry of the Word through the Scriptures, especially preaching, and the sacraments, making the need for observing miracles

---

<sup>59</sup>WA 13:109; LW 18:107 (Lectures on Joel, 1524, emphasis added).

<sup>60</sup>WA 32:532; LW 21:280 (Sermon on the Mount, 1532).

<sup>61</sup>This is the error so consistently presented in Bengt Runn Hoffman's *Luther and the Mystics* (Minneapolis, MI: Augsburg, 1976). Hoffman seems to be bent on turning Luther into a present-day psychic without understanding the context of Luther's world, which saw the angelic and demonic realms influencing daily life. The simplest way to evaluate Hoffman's treatise is to look up his references in Luther. Althaus has added an excellent appendix in his *Theology* (pp. 429-445) which presents a reliable evaluation of Luther's understanding of the miraculous.

<sup>62</sup>WA 32:352; LW 21:280 (Sermon on the Mount, 1532).

irrelevant at best, dangerous at worst. How can the Christian protect himself against the claims of those who professed to possess miraculous powers which seemed so impressive? The Christian is to defend himself by hearing Christ saying,

Hold on to My Word, pulpit, and Sacrament. Where these are you will find Me. Stay there, for you do not need to go running or looking any farther. *I will never come any nearer to you than where My Gospel, Baptism, and ministry are;* through them I come into your heart and talk to you.<sup>63</sup>

What possible purpose can there be for the miraculous when one comes so close to Christ through the means of grace?

#### Present-Day Miracles and the Pastoral Office

Luther teaches that it is possible for miracles to occur through the office, that the ministry of the Word might receive proper attention. Luther does accept the possibility of miracles occurring through those in particular office, regardless of their own personal lifestyles. "As we have said, when a minister preaches or baptizes, this is nothing but a miracle, inasmuch he lets the Gospel and Baptism remain valid regardless of whether he is pious or wicked."<sup>64</sup> The miracle that God works through a pastor occurs not because of the piety of the man, but because God desires "to make His office and ministry more productive and powerful."<sup>65</sup> Althaus comments, "The authority to carry out these deeds is not given to them because of their person but because of their office. This office is not something which is at their disposal, but is a

---

<sup>63</sup>WA 32:526; LW 21:274 (Sermon on the Mount, 1532).

<sup>64</sup>WA 32:530; LW 21:278 (Sermon on the Mount, 1532).

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

tool which God uses to carry out his works just as he uses these as officials."<sup>66</sup>

Luther did not describe what kind of miraculous activity he was suggesting, but it is certainly not the kind of sensational marvels which characterize the Pentecostal and charismatic movements. It is most likely that the miraculous activity to which Luther refers is nothing else than the ministry of the Word and the life-giving miracles which God performs through the proclamation and administration of God's Word in preaching and sacrament.

### Summary and Conclusions

The goal of this chapter was to describe the theological foundations which support Luther's theology of spiritual gifts, and certain questions were raised at its beginning to help focus attention on those issues which would be most important to understand. The first question concerned the processes involved in ministry. Even though Chapter 1 has hardly dealt with that subject, nevertheless, certain observations about the operations of ministry can be made on the basis of the data examined so far. From the divine perspective, ministry for Luther is totally grounded in God. That is, God is the source of the Christian's justification, for He bestows upon man the gift of alien righteousness, which is received by faith. Whatever good works are done by the Christian are the fruit of the Holy Spirit, who works these things in the lives of Christians. Luther's convictions are founded upon his doctrine of justification, which denies man's cooperation in salvation. Thus, any discussion of ministry must begin by

---

<sup>66</sup>Althaus, *Theology*, p. 438.

understanding the fact that justification is the center of Luther's theology and is integrally related to the way ministry is carried out.

Another inquiry considered the dynamics of ministry: that is, how does God work in Christians? This question was answered by Luther's theology of the means of grace. God always deals with man first through the hammer of the Law, which brings man down low. Christ then comes to man through the Word of Christ, which is the Gospel, and the Spirit creates faith that man might apprehend Christ and believe. God bestows upon man the righteousness of Christ, so that he is justified with an alien righteousness, apart from works and his own efforts. Sanctification, the life of good works, flows out of man as a result of his faith in Christ, so that it is God who produces good works and not man. Man remains *simul justus et peccator*, so that *coram deo* he is righteous with an alien righteousness, but *coram mundo* he remains of the flesh and thus continues to struggle. This means that the Christian must restrain his flesh through the Law and the Spirit. The dynamic of sanctification is the ministry of the Word through the means of grace, for it is here that one's faith is strengthened to believe in Christ alone. Consequently, this principle will shed light on Chapter 2's analysis of the dynamics of ministry and will be helpful in answering questions which may arise from that chapter's examination of Luther's theology of ministry.

Finally, the question of miracles has been addressed. Luther believes in miracles as they occurred in the Bible. He also believes that God answers prayer, even sometimes in healing the sick. Luther does express caution, however, concerning contemporary miracles. His wariness is based upon his conviction that God has

ordained specific means of working among men, through the Word and the sacraments. Although God performed miracles through the apostles and others at the inception of the gospel to confirm His Word, such confirmation is no longer necessary. What possible use would God have in continuing miracles, especially in light of the fact that by them many would be led away from the very means (the Word and sacraments) through which God has chosen to work today? Even when Luther suggests that miracles can occur through the office of the church he is probably thinking of the miracle of forgiveness and new life which comes through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacrament. It is here that man meets with God.

The applications of Luther's evaluation of miracles to his theology of ministry and spiritual gifts are very important, for if Luther denies the miraculous element, certainly he will regard spiritual gifts much differently than they are being commonly understood in Pentecostal and charismatic circles today. Furthermore, the central focus will not be on manifestations and miracles, but upon the humble means of the Word and sacrament.

These observations are written primarily to prepare the reader for the following two chapters. They will continue to have significance throughout the remainder of this dissertation, however, for in comparing Luther and Calvin, it will be found that their theological foundations are very significant for their descriptions of spiritual gifts.

## CHAPTER 2

### LUTHER'S CONCEPT OF PASTORAL OFFICE AND MINISTRY

Chapter 1 has investigated Luther's view of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the means of grace, especially as that relationship impacts his theology of the ministry of the Word. Such an understanding can lead to a specific application, namely, to the pastoral office of the church. Just as Luther's theology of the means of grace lays the foundation of his theology of ministry, so also his theology of spiritual gifts is built upon his understanding of the pastoral office. Thus it is highly beneficial to understand Luther on ministry.

#### The Medieval Pastoral Office

R.W. Scribner describes the deposition of a local parish priest in Worms in 1524 by the parish of St. Michael. When asked to explain why they had taken such an action, they replied that his life had been scandalous, that he had been living in sin with a woman, had a child by her, and had installed her as his sexton. In addition, the priest misused parish funds and demanded payment to administer the Sacrament, even in one case from a woman who was gravely ill.<sup>1</sup> Certainly not all priests misused

---

<sup>1</sup>Robert W. Scribner, *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany* (London: Hambledon Press, 1987), p. 123.

their offices in such an arrogant fashion, but there was nevertheless much abuse among the clergy during Luther's time.

Luther does not hold back in pointing out these examples of moral laxity.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Luther attacks the bishops of his own day because they did not preach to the people, but left that ministry to others. "Thus it becomes evident that our present-day bishops are spiritual idols and not bishops. For they leave the highest office of the word, which should be their own, in the hands of the very lowest, namely, chaplains, monks, and mendicants."<sup>3</sup> The most important function of the priest was to preside over the sacrifice of the mass, while the least was to preach from the Bible.<sup>4</sup> Because the Roman church did not put much emphasis on preaching during Luther's day, the Word seldom was proclaimed among the people. Luther bemoaned the paucity of the preaching of the Word in his treatise entitled "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church."

See how far the glory of the church has departed. The whole earth is filled with priests, bishops, cardinals, and clergy; yet not one of them preaches so far as his official duty is concerned, unless he is called to do so by a different call over and

---

<sup>2</sup>See, for example *WA TR* 2:39; 3:399,452; *LW* 54:135,229,243 (Table Talk #1316,3547,3609B)

<sup>3</sup>*WA* 11:416; *LW* 39:314 (That a Christian Assembly or Congregation Has the Right and Power to Judge All Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proven by Scripture, 1523). Pelikan argues that the real difference between Luther and Roman theology of the priesthood was one of Spirit (Luther) versus structure (Roman theology), especially as that was expressed in the sacrifice of the mass and Luther's principle that Christ was sacrificed once and for all. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Spirit Versus Structure: Luther and the Institutions of the Church* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), pp. 32-49.

<sup>4</sup>Lennart Pinomaa, *Faith Victorious: An Introduction to Luther's Theology*, trans. Werner Soderstrom (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), p. 123.



above his sacramental ordination.<sup>5</sup>

To make matters worse, even when they preached, the pope and his bishops and priests presented "their own law, canon law, and nothing but human teaching-- consecrated salt, water, vigils, masses and whatever other tomfoolery like this you can name."<sup>6</sup> This is a terrible travesty to Luther. To preach law without the comfort of the gospel, and to preach the inventions of man are utterly contrary to the clear teachings of Scripture. Luther's own theology of ministry and pastoral office is significantly different from that of his day.<sup>7</sup>

### The Levels of Service within the Church

#### The Priesthood of All Believers

Luther understood the concept of functions of service on two distinct (but significant) levels. First of all, Luther laid down the reformation principle of the "priesthood of all believers" as a foundational truth of the Church.<sup>8</sup> For him, the

---

<sup>5</sup>WA 6:564-5; LW 36:113-14 (On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church, 1520).

<sup>6</sup>WA 7:660; LW 39:190 (Answer to the Hyperchristian Book, 1521).

<sup>7</sup>Harry S. Wilson, *The Speaking God: Luther's Theology of Preaching*. Madras, India: United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India, 1983, 27-37.

<sup>8</sup>Cyril Eastwood follows the doctrine of the priesthood from Old Testament theology through the dawn of the Reformation in his book *Royal Priesthood of the Faithful: An Investigation of the Doctrine From Biblical Times to the Reformation* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1963). He argues: "Luther's insight and originality, no less than his courage and resolution, should not be minimized. But Luther himself recognized that the ground had been well prepared long before his day, and that his achievement was due rather to a unique emphasis than to a unique discovery." (p. 225).

priesthood was not an office ordained by the Pope for a specialized clergy, but the possession of all Christians simply on the basis of their new birth.<sup>9</sup> "Every baptized Christian is, and ought to be, called a priest, just as much as St. Peter or St. Paul."<sup>10</sup> This doctrine brought about a tremendous leveling in the ministry of the Church.<sup>11</sup> There could be no spiritual elite if the priestly office was called "common property"<sup>12</sup> and was a "common possession."<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, because all Christians were priests, they had received "the right and power of teaching and confessing before others God's Word which we have obtained from Him."<sup>14</sup> The universal priesthood of Christians meant that each believer was set apart to minister the gospel and had "the duty to teach, instruct, admonish, comfort, and rebuke his neighbor with the Word of God at every opportunity and whenever necessary."<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>Julius Köstlin, *The Theology of Luther in Its Historical Development and Inner Harmony* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1897), vol. 2, p. 86.

<sup>10</sup>WA 41:207; LW 13:330 (Commentary on Psalm 110, 1535).

<sup>11</sup>This is not to say, as will be seen below, that Luther rejected in any way the office of the ministry. "There is no sense of negating the office of priest, properly so called, even as there is no sense of apology about his own continuing position as a minister of the church." George W. Hoyer, "Christianhood, Priesthood, and Brotherhood" in *Accents in Luther's Theology*, ed. Heino O. Kadai, (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1967), p. 171.

<sup>12</sup>WA 41:207; LW 13:331 (Commentary on Psalm 110, 1535).

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>WA 41:211; LW 13:333 (Commentary on Psalm 110, 1535).

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. In addition, Luther taught that the priest had the privilege "to offer spiritual sacrifices, to pray for the congregation, and to preach." WA 12:309; LW

Paul Althaus comments on this universal priesthood.

The priesthood means: We stand before God, pray for others, intercede with and sacrifice ourselves to God and proclaim the word to one another. Luther never understands the priesthood of all believers merely in the "Protestant" sense of the Christian's freedom to stand in a direct relationship to God without a human mediator. Rather he constantly emphasizes the Christian's evangelical authority to come before God on behalf of the brethren and also of the world.<sup>16</sup>

If all Christians are priests, they are priests both in their approach to God and also in their proclamation of the Word to their neighbors and family. "The privileges here described are indeed possessed by the free Christian man, but they are privileges to be exercised within the brotherhood, priestly obligations to be performed for the sake of the brother. Anything less than this understanding means that the Christian is a profane man and a slave."<sup>17</sup>

### The Office of Public Teaching

#### The Equality between Layperson and Minister

This first level of the priesthood, that is, its universal nature, is important in understanding Luther's doctrine of the pastoral office,<sup>18</sup> for he also taught that there was a second "level" of role of service in the Church--the "communal office of public

---

30:55 (1 Peter, 1522).

<sup>16</sup>Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 314.

<sup>17</sup>Hoyer, p. 176.

<sup>18</sup>Althaus writes that "he proceeds from the priesthood of all the baptized. By the power of the priesthood they are authorized and called to serve through the Word and sacrament." Althaus, *Theology*, p. 323.

teaching."<sup>19</sup> This "level" was in reality only relative, for all were equally priests toward one another, since the priesthood extended to all believers. "Thus there is only an external difference because of the office to which one is called by the congregation. Before God, however, there is no distinction. . ." <sup>20</sup>

Yet even among priests there must be those upon whom the specific calling to teach and serve is bestowed. "For although we are all priests, this does not mean that all of us can preach, teach, and rule. Certain ones of the multitude must be selected and separated for such an office."<sup>21</sup> The selection comes from among equals, from fellow priests who realize that there must be a "second level" of functions of service, to maintain, if nothing else, the orderly procedure of the church in fulfilling its mission. "Otherwise, what would happen if everyone wanted to speak or administer, and no one wanted to give way to the other?" <sup>22</sup> This "second level" of functions of service is the office of ministry, where some individuals serve in the role of ministers for the sake of order in the church, yet all remain equal before God.

### The Source and Authority of the Office of Ministry

The fact that both pastor and layperson are in reality on the same level in God's eyes poses a question for Luther's doctrine of ministry within the church. What authority does the pastoral office hold within the workings of the church? Does not the

---

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 334.

<sup>20</sup>WA 12:309; LW 30:55 (First Peter, 1522).

<sup>21</sup>WA 41:210; LW 13:332 (Commentary on Psalm 110, 1535).

<sup>22</sup>WA 50:633; LW 41:154 (On Councils and the Church, 1539).

great equalizing which takes place through the theology of the priesthood of all believers make the ministers impotent in their work? Luther answers this question with a clear "No!" in several different ways. He describes the divine establishment of the office, the divine authority of the Word, and the divine selection of the man for the ministry through the mediate call by the individual congregation.<sup>23</sup>

### The Divine Establishment of the Office

Luther had much to say about the Roman office of ministry, and very little of it was positive. In preaching on 1 Corinthians 4:1-5 he ridiculed the practice of clerical orders which had turned the office of the ministry into "merely devised works and words . . ." <sup>24</sup> Luther described the core of the problem:

What language is forcible enough to serve me in the attempt to eradicate from the hearts of all Christians that error so deeply impressed of Popery wherein they interpret the ministry of Christ--or the service of God--in no other light than as their own works, performed to Christ without any authority to do them? Mark you, beloved, to serve Christ, or to serve God is defined by Paul himself as to fulfil a Christ-ordained office, the office of preaching. This office is

---

<sup>23</sup>Lowell Green, in "Change in Luther's Doctrine of the Ministry", *Lutheran Quarterly* 18 (1966), pp. 173-183, argues that Luther began the third decade teaching that the universal priesthood is the foundation of the office of ministry, but in reaction to enthusiasm changed his view in the second half of the decade to seeing "two different estates." (Green, p. 181). Green has mistakenly assumed that priesthood in Luther refers to individual rights in the earthly kingdom. Instead, as will be argued below, the priesthood in Luther refers to the privileges of approaching God in prayer on behalf of ourselves and especially others, and in the privilege and responsibility of proclaiming God's Word to family and neighbors. Thus the selection of some priests from among the many to have responsibility for teaching the community of priests is an expression of this very priesthood. For a responsible reply to Green, see Robert Fischer, "Another Look at Luther's Doctrine of the Ministry," *Lutheran Quarterly* 18 (1966), pp. 260-71.

<sup>24</sup>WA 10<sup>1,2</sup>: (1 Corinthians 4:1-5, 1522).

a service or ministry proceeding from Christ to us, and not from us to Christ.<sup>25</sup>

The most condemning accusation Luther could level at the Roman clergy was that they were using the office of the ministry to practice the devices of men,<sup>26</sup> a charge which was particularly incriminating because the office of the ministry "proceeded from Christ to us and not from us to Christ." Men could not determine the nature and structure of the office, for God alone was Lord over the office.<sup>27</sup> And the office which God had ordained was the office of preaching the Word.<sup>28</sup>

The fact that God has established the office means that He will also empower it, sometimes for the sake of the office and not the man who holds it. Luther teaches that

the power which such office produces and works is not derived from human ability, but rather is God's work and power. That is, it is not valuable or productive through what I say or do, but rather through the power of the command and ordinance of God, for whom also the office was given and distributed. For He is the one who commands, and through that office which is obedient to His

---

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>"Luther's basic complaint about the Roman Catholic clergy was that they had replaced the true office of the ministry, which is the office of the Word, by a humanly-invented 'office of sacrifice.'" Richard Walter Schoenleber, "The Sovereign Word: The Office of Ministry and Ordination in the Theology of Martin Luther," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Iowa, 1983, p. 50.

<sup>27</sup>It is possible that Luther held the ministerial office to be the fifth mark of the church, according to *WA* 50:633; *LW* 41:154 (On the Councils and the Church, 1539), This certainly underlies the divine establishment of the preaching office.

<sup>28</sup>Richard Schoenleber discusses the significance of the word "office" in Luther's writings. The office is a special position conferred by God for the ministry of the Word (p. 47-9). It is not just a ministry but is divinely appointed to be the "vehicle for the preached Word of God." (p. 50).

commands He works and empowers His will.<sup>29</sup>

The pastor is anointed by the Spirit in his proclamation of God's Word because God has established the office of preaching and honors that office.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Luther goes to great lengths to make sure his listeners understand that the office and the man are quite separate in the eyes of God.

It is necessary here to distinguish between the two things, the office and the person. . . There are also many bishops, preachers, and others in office who imagine that this entitles them to God's special favor personally. As I have said above, this is a mistake. It will not help on the Last Day for them to boast and say: "Lord, we did many mighty works in Your name." God did not give them the power to do this on account of their person but on account of their office; He did not do these things for their sakes personally but for the sake of validating their office.<sup>31</sup>

The office of ministry, moreover, is not the personal possession of the pastor, but of the God who sends the pastor.

It is as when a prince or a lord gives a command to a servant or sends out his representatives, you listen to them and honor them, though they may be rascals, not for their own sakes, but for the sake of their lord, whose office and command they bring along with them. Now if God does this in the secular sphere, He will lay even more emphasis upon it in the spiritual sphere, to make His office and ministry productive and powerful.<sup>32</sup>

God Himself will work to make His office "productive and powerful." Thus the anointing of the Holy Spirit will come through the office and not the man. And God has ordained that the ministry's central concern will always be "primarily in the office

---

<sup>29</sup>WA 21:422; (Sunday after Ascension Day, 1539).

<sup>30</sup>Of course, the Spirit anoints no message which does not proclaim God's Word.

<sup>31</sup>WA 32:530; LW 21:278 (Sermon on the Mount, 1534).

<sup>32</sup>WA 32:529-30; LW 21:278 (Sermon on the Mount, 1534).

of the Word."<sup>33</sup> Thus the office itself is ordained by Christ and thereby empowered to be used for His own purposes.

### The Divine Authority of the Word

Having recognized the divine establishment of the office, one might thus derive from that establishment the absolute authority of pastors in the administration of the church and the teaching of doctrine. Of course, the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, which emphasizes the right and privilege of every Christian to judge the rightness of doctrine from the Word, implies that such authority should be limited at best.<sup>34</sup> In reality, however, for Luther true authority does not lie in the office per se but in its proclamation of God's Word.<sup>35</sup> By this he means several things. First of all, the office has no authority to teach doctrines which do not flow from the Word.

It must be that one who is a servant of Christ, and Christ's message is not also a presenter of his own message. This cannot be at the same time: how can he serve Christ and his own particular message? How can he be a servant of Christ, yet not teach out of Christ's Word? Or how can he teach his own individual message

---

<sup>33</sup>Pinomaa, p. 125.

<sup>34</sup>Brian Gerrish, in his article "Priesthood and Ministry in the Theology of Luther," *Church History* 34 (1963), pp. 404-22, argues that Luther's understanding of authority here is actually under theological tension because he holds two somewhat incompatible ideas (priesthood of all believers and divine institution of the ministry) without satisfactorily reconciling them. Although Gerrish's definition of priesthood is in line with Luther's, his misunderstanding may be due to the fact that he wrongly sees the ministry as existing beside the priesthood rather than within it. In reality, the ministry is simply an extension by God of the priesthood within the body of priests to maintain order. See Fischer, p. 270-71, for an evaluation of Gerrish's article, and Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. by Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), pp. 241-47, for a fuller discussion of this issue in light of the Lutheran Confessions.

<sup>35</sup>WA 47:191-92; LW 22:483 (Gospel of John, 1539).



when he should be teaching Christ's message? If he teaches his own word, then he is his own master and not the servant of Christ, but he cannot be his own lord if he teaches Christ's word.<sup>36</sup>

The preacher cannot depart from the Word. To do so is to depart from the lordship of Christ Himself. "One should note very well that no one should preach anything unless he is sure that it is God's Word."<sup>37</sup>

Secondly, the pastor has authority to confront the world only through the Word.<sup>38</sup> Luther strongly opposed the attempts of the noblemen to force people to turn to the gospel, because in the end such misguided efforts would never succeed. "The noblemen are insane and dangerous when they drive the people to believe by means of the sword and fire. Thus the people should have Christ as a product of their own coming and knowing His voice."<sup>39</sup>

Thirdly, as has already been demonstrated above in Chapter 1, only the Word can produce change in the hearts of the church. Therefore preachers should recognize that the only power for change invested in their office comes through the proper preaching of God's Word.<sup>40</sup> Pastors must recognize this and understand that their calling alone is not sufficient, but the ministry of the Word must be joined together with the particular call of God.

---

<sup>36</sup>WA 10<sup>L2</sup>:124; (1 Corinthians 4:1-5, 1522).

<sup>37</sup>WA 12:379; LW 30:125 (1 Peter, 1522).

<sup>38</sup>On this issue, consult Schlink, pp. 259-263.

<sup>39</sup>WA 10<sup>L2</sup>:291; (John 10:1-11, 1522).

<sup>40</sup>Schoenleber notes: "Whoever has the Word and preaches the apostolic gospel has leadership in the church based on the authority of the Word." (p. 53)

Peter also emphasized these two facts: 'Whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God; whoever renders service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies,' so that he may be sure that both the Word and the office are divine and commanded by God."<sup>41</sup>

Thus the office of the ministry is divinely ordained but finds its authority in the preaching of the divine Word, the only message which can be proclaimed and the only means of producing life in the hearts of the world and the church.<sup>42</sup> A good illustration of the nature of the office of the ministry is demonstrated by the controversy surrounding the validity of baptisms performed by men who were unworthy or, in the case of the Anabaptists, whether infant baptisms can be valid in any case. Anabaptists rejected infant baptism and taught that their converts must be rebaptized in response to their new faith in Christ. For Luther the question always remains the same: What is the source of salvation, our own works or the Word of God? In this way he answers the Anabaptist in his tract "Concerning Rebaptism."

Assume that the first baptism is without faith. Tell me which is the greater and more important in the second baptism, the Word of God or faith? Is it not true that the Word of God is greater and more important than faith, since faith builds and is founded on the Word of God rather than God's Word on faith? Furthermore faith may waver and change, but God's Word remains forever. Then too, tell me, if one of these two should be otherwise, which should it rather be: the immutable Word or changeable faith? Would it not more reasonably be the faith that should be subject to change rather than the Word of God? . . . Why then do they not concern themselves rather with a change of faith and let the Word remain unaltered?<sup>43</sup>

As always, Luther brings the ministry of the Word to the fore. It is the

---

<sup>41</sup>WA 19:233; LW 19:83 (Jonah, 1525).

<sup>42</sup>Schoenleber, p. 52.

<sup>43</sup>WA 26:172; LW 40:260-61 (Concerning Rebaptism, 1528).

unchangeable Word which in its external form meets the heart and creates faith within. This assurance speaks not only to Anabaptists but also to those who had questioned the validity of their own baptism, done at the hands of unbelieving priests. If the priest's life was unfit and his heart unregenerate, how could baptism at his hands be valid? Again, Luther answers the question with his theology of the Word of God. "The holiness of the Word and the purity of doctrine are powerful and sure, so that even if Judas, Caiaphas, Pilate, the pope, Harry, or the devil himself preached it, or baptized truly (purely, without addition), they would still receive the true, pure Word and the true, holy baptism. . ." <sup>44</sup>

It is the Word which transforms, not the man. The power of baptism does not rest with the pastor; while the pastor should be properly called, even this is not necessary to the efficacy of the baptism. Nevertheless, the pastor himself does not create anything in the one being baptized, except that he proclaims the Word, and the Word itself creates the faith in the heart of the hearer. In this sense, the pastor does not have any authority over baptism, but rather has the proper privilege of proclaiming the Word and thus giving opportunity for the Word to work.

This example should be instructive concerning the nature of the pastoral office, for what is true of baptism is true of all ministry. Whereas the Roman priest believed he had authority invested in him through ordination, so that he was given the power to consecrate and offer the body and blood of Christ in the mass, Luther taught that the Word itself gives the authority. The office is divinely established, but its authority

---

<sup>44</sup>WA 51:521; LW 41:218 (Against Hanswurst, 1541).

always rests upon the Word which is proclaimed.

Luther does not take away the right to teach from the bishops, scholars, and councils. He is not opposing the office of ministry. Instead he is transferring the right to judge doctrine from the authority of the church to the authority of the Word as it speaks to hearts which know the voice of their Master. This reminds one of the controversy with Karlstadt, which, as was noted above, some scholars have mistakenly understood as mostly a matter of timing rather than theology. For Luther the authority for change lies fundamentally in the Word, for change begins with the heart and then proceeds out to the actions. The fact that the church authoritatively declares, "It is so" does not make it so in the heart of the hearer unless the Word itself brings about the change which only God can perform. Thus the Word has authority in and of itself; the office allows that Word to retain its authority by faithfully proclaiming God's Word.

#### The Divine Appointment through the Mediate Call

If all Christians are equally priests before God, and if the authority of the pastoral office rests in the Word and not ordination, why then is there a need for pastors at all? Could not the saints in the church carry on the preaching of the gospel as they saw fit, since all are priests? Luther's first answer is that God Himself has established the office of the ministry of the Word. Therefore the office of the ministry of the Word is valid and important. Secondly, unless particular Christians are called to preach the Word to the congregation, there will be confusion and division within

the body.<sup>45</sup>

But the community rights demand that one, or as many as the community chooses, shall be chosen or approved who, in the name of all with these rights, shall perform these functions publicly. Otherwise, there might be shameful confusion among the people of God, and a kind of Babylon in the church, where everything should be done in order, as the Apostle teaches.<sup>46</sup>

The fact that the office is divine yet is established among equals leads to another question: Is God's call to the ministry specific (i.e., does God select specific individuals?) or general (i.e., does God give a general call to all and some respond?), and, if specific, how is that call brought about? Luther's answer is that the call is both divine and yet mediated through the community of believers. Luther believed very firmly that pastors were individually selected by God. It was much more than a matter of education and desire. They had to be chosen by God for the ministry. It was critically important that a preacher be assured of God's call upon his life.

Let each one, then, know that in his calling he is a servant of Christ, let not a wavering conscience cause doubts whether he is a servant of God. Therefore he must above all determine that he can say with a firm conscience that he is a servant of God, although he is a weak sinner. Because of the Holy Spirit's work and help we are nevertheless servants of God, and therefore it is necessary for all, especially for those who wanted to be the teachers of others, to believe firmly that they are servants of God and to expel every feeling of uncertainty.<sup>47</sup>

Although Luther believed that God called specific individuals, he did not teach

---

<sup>45</sup>Schoenleber points out that even this consideration of bringing order into a confused situation is not a practical matter, but a command of God, based upon 1 Corinthians 14:40. "Since the Apostle Paul teaches the necessity of order in the church, order has the status of a divine commandment." *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>46</sup>WA 12:189; LW 40:34 (Concerning the Ministry, 1523).

<sup>47</sup>WA 31<sup>II</sup>:291; LW 17:39-40 (Isaiah, 1527-1530).

that those individuals received their call as a direct revelation.<sup>48</sup> Many of the Anabaptists' preachers were convinced that God had revealed to them their call to preach, but Luther rejected their claims completely.<sup>49</sup> He writes concerning this problem:

There is worry and work enough to maintain the right kind of preaching and true doctrine in the case of those who have an undoubted call and commission from God himself or those acting on his behalf. What then is preaching without the commandment of God, indeed against his will and prohibition, in consequence of the prodding and agitation of the devil?<sup>50</sup>

On what basis could Luther justify his denial of the calling of these preachers? He argued that they did not evidence a call either through a bishop, a prince, or a congregation and thus were not called.<sup>51</sup> "If the interloper can prove that he is a prophet or a teacher of the church to which he comes, and can show who has authorized him, then let him be heard as St. Paul prescribes."<sup>52</sup> In his blast against the "Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers," Luther defends his own call to the great task

---

<sup>48</sup>Schoenleber, p. 128.

<sup>49</sup>" . . . the factious spirits and heretics, on the other hand, run into it, but they do not have the call. When the call is present, genuine doctrine should also be present, so that one can teach, etc. The call is as significant as the doctrine." *WA* 26:4; *LW* 28:217 (1 Timothy, 1528).

<sup>50</sup>*WA* 30<sup>III</sup>:521; *LW* 40:387 (Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers, 1532).

<sup>51</sup>Schoenleber argues that Luther moved more and more into institutionalism of the call of the pastor as the third decade progressed. Although one obvious reason for this drift was the Enthusiast problem, the other subtler cause was the fact that Luther's theology of ministry and call was always founded in the Word, and as Germany began to respond to the Word, and evangelical response began to overtake the land, the need for a more institutionally derived call, still based upon the Word, arose. See Schoenleber pp. 132-60.

<sup>52</sup>*WA* 30<sup>III</sup>:522; *LW* 40:388 (Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers, 1532).

of the reformation by pointing out that he himself was awarded the doctor's degree.

"But God and the whole world bears me testimony that I entered into this work publicly and by virtue of my office as teacher and preacher, and have carried it on hitherto by the grace and help of God."<sup>53</sup>

From these examples it becomes clear that Luther believed that God selected His ministers individually but that His selection was mediated through others.

Now we have either a divine call or a human one. Our calling today, unlike that of the apostles, does not come directly from heaven. Rather, the state calls, or I do it myself. Also there are fraternal calls through men. Yet they also come from Christ, because I am called in this way the same as if Christ were calling. After all, we must be subject to each other in love.<sup>54</sup>

The community's role in the call is especially important, as is demonstrated in Luther's letter to the town of Leisnig. In this letter he answers their request for a biblical basis explaining why they were right to call a pastor apart from the approval of the local Abbot by explaining the foundation of the call. Luther begins, not surprisingly, by emphasizing the "sure mark by which the Christian congregation can be recognized is that the pure gospel is preached there."<sup>55</sup> He goes on to urge them not to follow the traditions of men but to judge "according to Scripture and God's Word; for God's Word and human teaching inevitably oppose each other when the

---

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>WA 26:5; LW 28:218 (1 Timothy, 1528).

<sup>55</sup>WA 11:408; LW 39:305 (That a Christian Assembly or Congregation Has the Right and Power to Judge All Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proven by Scripture, 1523).

latter tries to rule the soul."<sup>56</sup> In light of the sure mark of the church being the preaching of the gospel and the primacy of God's Word, it thus follows that the church "must have teachers and preachers who administer the Word."<sup>57</sup>

How then does God provide the preacher? Luther says that when a community lacks a teacher, the entire assembly has "the right to call someone into this office when there is a need. . . ." <sup>58</sup> This right rests with the community first. It is proper that a godly bishop present a man to the community as a preacher, but the right to approve him still rests with the assembly and not with the bishop.<sup>59</sup> Luther writes that ". . . no bishop should institute anyone without the election, will, and call of the congregation. Rather, he should confirm the one whom the congregation chose and called; if he does not do it, he is confirmed anyway by virtue of the congregation's call."<sup>60</sup>

This might seem to suggest an inconsistency on Luther's part, that he proposed two different sources of calling. On the one hand, Luther clearly laid out the office as God's possession, so that the call must originate with God. On the other hand, no

---

<sup>56</sup>WA 11:409; LW 39:306.

<sup>57</sup>WA 11:411; LW 39:309.

<sup>58</sup>WA 11:413; LW 39:311.

<sup>59</sup>WA 11:414; LW 39:311-12.

<sup>60</sup>WA 11:414; LW 39:312.



pastor should be installed into a church without the call of the local congregation.<sup>61</sup> In reality, there is no conflict between the two, for Luther saw call of the community as God's mediate call. "Even though God resorts to our aid and to human agency, it is He Himself who sends laborers into His vineyard."<sup>62</sup> God uses the agency of the assembly to issue the call, but he still remains the true source of the preacher. Althaus understands Luther here as seeing the office as a place where God's purposes are fulfilled in man's decision. He interprets Luther's view as having two derivations.

Luther without hesitation co-ordinates these two derivations of the office of the ministry--the one from "below" and the other from "above." He sees no contradiction in them. There are, however, two different lines of development. In the first, he bases the office on the presupposition of the universal priesthood and thus describes it as a mediated office. In the second, he derives it directly from its institution by Christ without reference to the universal priesthood.<sup>63</sup>

God's role in the call does not suggest, however, that the pastor is now dictator over the congregation.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the minister cares for the flock with love and caring, and is "the minister of the family."<sup>65</sup> This means that he should care for his flock with a very brotherly, concerned heart. Thus the office is not for power or wealth but to serve the flock. Moreover, the pastor who is called is not by reason of that call installed for life. "No, one person must be chosen from the whole group and

---

<sup>61</sup>See Gert Haendler, *Luther on Ministerial Office and Congregational Function*, translated by Ruth C. Gritsch and edited by Eric W. Gritsch (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), pp. 77-90.

<sup>62</sup>WA 47:192; LW 22:482 (Gospel of John, 1539).

<sup>63</sup>Althaus, *Theology*, p. 324.

<sup>64</sup>WA 12:390; LW 30:136 (1 Peter, 1522).

<sup>65</sup>WA 25:21; LW 29:22 (Titus, 1527).

appointed. If desired, he may be deposed."<sup>66</sup> Just as the mediate call comes from the congregation, so also the dismissal may come from that congregation.<sup>67</sup>

The ministry of the Word remains the dynamic of life in the church, for the Word must be preached for faith to be created and for the Christian to be nourished. All Christians are by baptism priests, given the privilege of entrance before God and the responsibility of proclaiming God's Word to friend and family. God chooses some to fulfill a special level of ministry of the Word, firstly because He established the office, and secondly to maintain order within the congregation. The call to pastoral ministry is a dual one, beginning with God's choice but expressed through the mediate choice of the congregation. Those so called are not different from their brothers and sisters in the church except in role, although all Christians are called upon to submit to and seek the ministry of God's Word through His servant.

#### Giftedness for the Pastoral Office

The church is blessed with those men who have been called by God through the congregation to the ministry of preaching the Word. In a study of Luther's theology of spiritual gifts, one must ask the question: How does giftedness, both natural and spiritual, fit in with the pastoral ministry? Since the Word is both the authority and the power in ministry, does this not negate the need for preachers to

---

<sup>66</sup>WA 12:309; LW 30:55 (1 Peter, 1522).

<sup>67</sup>Pelikan notes about 'Concerning the Ministry': "Repeatedly throughout the treatise the qualification stressed by the pastoral epistles, that the minister be 'worthy,' is used to warn against the ministry of impious men." Pelikan, *Spirit*, p. 44.

have any giftedness at all? Moreover, since the Word itself is the agent of transformation, what purpose would there be in education? Would not preaching the vernacular Word be sufficient ministry? In order to answer these questions, Luther's teachings on education and his comments on giftedness will be examined in light of what has already been presented on the nature of spiritual ministry in general.

### The Importance of Education for the Ministry

#### The Decline of Education in Germany

Preserved Smith writes concerning German education: "During the first quarter of the sixteenth century learning had fallen into contempt for a variety of causes."<sup>68</sup> Adding to a common distrust of education among the lower classes was the new theology of the Reformation, which proclaimed that all true Christians were priests and entitled to read and interpret their Scriptures without the authoritative word of the church. Luther himself spoke very critically of contemporary educational institutions and recommended that none be sent to those which did not espouse firm biblical principles.

Moreover, even if the universities were diligent in the study of the Holy Scripture, we need not send everybody there. . . . I would advise no one to send his child where the Holy Scriptures are not supreme. . . . I greatly fear that the universities, unless they teach the Holy Scriptures diligently and impress them on the young students, are wide gates to hell.<sup>69</sup>

Luther's commitment to the supremacy of the Scriptures encouraged Germans

---

<sup>68</sup>Preserved Smith, *The Life and Letters of Martin Luther* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), p. 185.

<sup>69</sup>WA 6:461-2; LW 44:206-207 (An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility, 1520).

to rethink how they should go about educating their children. As a result, there was a significant decline in attendance at the universities. Moreover, so many monks had embraced Reformation principles that "the monasteries were being emptied."<sup>70</sup> This meant that one of the major sources of educators was being cut off. Luther saw this as a serious situation for Germany, for without educated adults not only the spiritual life but the civil life of the nation as well was greatly threatened. As Frank Graves writes in *A History of Education During the Middle Ages and the Transition to Modern Times*: "The school systems had been so closely connected with the Church that it seemed during the first few years of the German revolt as if all higher training would be destroyed. . . ."<sup>71</sup>

The quick rise of enthusiast theology also contributed to the drop in attendance at the universities. "Then came Carlstadt and the mystics, who taught that as God had revealed to babes and sucklings what he had concealed from the wise and prudent, it was better to preserve innocence and ignorance together."<sup>72</sup> These factors and others brought the universities into serious decline during the third decade of the sixteenth century and Luther produced two major works specifically written to correct the problem. The first, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish

---

<sup>70</sup>E. G. Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times: The Reformation from a New Perspective* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950), p. 677.

<sup>71</sup>Frank Pierrepont Graves, *A History of Education During the Middle Ages and the Transition to Modern Times* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), p. 184.

<sup>72</sup>Preserved Smith, p. 186.

and Maintain Christian Schools" (1524),<sup>73</sup> was directed to those in authority who could set up institutions of learning which were in line with evangelical principles. The other, "A Sermon on Keeping Children in School" (1530),<sup>74</sup> was a sometimes stern message to parents to prepare their children properly through education for either the ministry or service to the state.

### Preparation for the Ministry

Contrary to the theology of many enthusiasts, Luther teaches in the two treatises mentioned above that the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers does not remove the necessity that men be prepared for the work of the ministry. Luther goes to great lengths to demonstrate that the gospel comes in the form of human languages, specifically in Greek and Hebrew, and that these human languages must be understood. He urges that Christians not abandon study of the original languages of the Bible. "In proportion then as we value the gospel, let us zealously hold to the languages. For it was not without purpose that God caused His Scriptures to be set down in these two languages alone--the Old Testament in Hebrew, the New in Greek."<sup>75</sup> Luther continues that these languages are important because they are the external carriers of the Spirit of God, the "sheath in which this sword of the Spirit is

---

<sup>73</sup>WA 15:27-53; LW 45:347-378 (To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools, 1524).

<sup>74</sup>WA 30<sup>H</sup>:517-588; LW 46:213-258 (A Sermon on Keeping Children in School, 1530).

<sup>75</sup>WA 15:37; LW 45:359 (To the Councilmen of all Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools, 1524).

contained; they are the casket in which this jewel is enshrined . . ."<sup>76</sup> Luther here is consistent in applying his doctrine of the external Word to the study of the original languages. As always, the Spirit meets us through the humble letters and words of the Bible. Some might believe that the languages are no longer necessary, that now Christians can simply rely on the Spirit to direct them into truth. Luther replies: "I know full well that while it is the Spirit alone who accomplishes everything, I would surely have never flushed a covey if the languages had not helped me and given me a sure and certain knowledge of Scripture."<sup>77</sup>

Nevertheless, did not the fact that the Bible had been published throughout Germany in the vernacular mean that pastors had no need to be schooled in Hebrew and Greek? Luther's reply touches on a theme, the pastor as prophet, which will be developed more fully in the next chapter.

There is a vast difference therefore between a simple preacher of the faith and a person who expounds Scripture, or, as St. Paul puts it, a prophet. A simple preacher (it is true) has so many clear passages and texts available through translations that he can know and teach Christ, lead a holy life, and preach to others. But when it comes to interpreting Scripture, and working with it on your own, and disputing with those who cite it incorrectly, he is unequal to the task; that cannot be done without languages. Now there must always be such prophets in the Christian church who can dig into Scripture, expound it, and carry on disputations. A saintly life and right doctrine are not enough. Hence, languages are absolutely and altogether necessary in the Christian church, as are the prophets or interpreters; although it is not necessary that every Christian or every preacher be such a prophet, as St. Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4.<sup>78</sup>

Luther does not claim that a man must not be called unless he is educated.

---

<sup>76</sup>WA 15:38; LW 45:360.

<sup>77</sup>WA 15:42-3; LW 45:366.

<sup>78</sup>WA 15:40; LW 45:363.

Indeed, such a statement would go against much of his argument in his letter "That a Christian Assembly or Congregation Has the Right and Power to Judge all Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proven by Scripture" (1523). There Luther makes it clear that it is proper for an assembly to appoint a man within the congregation to preach, if there are no other teachers, and makes no reference to his learnedness in the original languages.<sup>79</sup> In fact, even in the above quote Luther assures his readers that it is not necessary that every pastor be a prophet, that is, interpret from the original languages. Nevertheless, this is the ideal towards which the leaders in the municipalities in Germany should strive, by instituting schools which will help prepare men for the ministry of preaching through training in Greek and Hebrew.

Thus Luther's theology of the ministry of the Word is evidenced in the practical matter of the training of pastors. The Word came to us originally in Hebrew and Greek letters. We meet the ministry of the Spirit as He comes to us through His external Word. Therefore those who are committed to preaching should be able to understand those humble letters and words as they originally came, so that they will be able in their own humble ways to proclaim God's truth to their people, prophetically unfolding the written Word.<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup>WA 11:408-16; LW 39:310-14 (That a Christian Assembly or Congregation Has the Right and Power to Judge All Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proven by Scripture, 1523).

<sup>80</sup>R.W. Scribner studied the status of 176 German Lutheran preachers active during the years between 1520 and 1550. He comes to the conclusion that almost all were former clerics, a few university teachers, and very few lay people. He concludes:

### The Importance of Giftedness for the Ministry

One final query remains for this chapter on Luther's theology of ministry as it relates to spiritual gifts: how can or should a preacher be gifted for the pastoral office? The answer might actually be expected to deal with the question of the relationship between natural and spiritual abilities in the ministry of the Word, a topic which will be addressed in the following chapter. In light of the later discussion, this section will deal specifically with the focus of giftedness, and whether Luther saw giftedness as prerequisite to the ministry of the Word.

#### The Focus of Giftedness

That Luther believed the pastor should be gifted is clear from several of his comments about ministers. The man must be chosen by God and should be graced to teach. "For it is not enough to be learned and intelligent, but the gift of grace to teach is also required, in order that a person be chosen by God for teaching."<sup>81</sup> Luther did not deny that there were men in the pulpit who were not gifted; he wrote ". . . not every minister has the gift to plumb all the depths of Scripture."<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, he saw giftedness to be important. "We have heard that a bishop ought to have this gift, that he teach well and cheerfully."<sup>83</sup> The giftedness of which Luther spoke is always

---

"The Lutheran Reformation thus had a clerical stamp on it from the beginning." (Scribner, pp. 125-26). For whatever other reasons this may be, Luther's emphasis on education certainly contributed to the lack of Lutheran lay preachers.

<sup>81</sup>WA 56:454; LW 25:446 (Romans, 1515-16).

<sup>82</sup>WA 13:588; LW 20:45 (Zechariah, 1526).

<sup>83</sup>WA 26:52; LW 28:286 (1 Timothy, 1528).



the same: the ability to be able to interpret and proclaim God's Word. Commenting on Paul's exhortation to Timothy not to neglect his gift, Luther says:

This is a free gift. What kind of gift it is he does not say, but I think it is a power in doctrine and exhortation. We say that it is a singular gift to interpret Scripture soundly. What another person cannot interpret in Scripture he must do. "The Lord has bestowed on you an outstanding gift which another person cannot have. See to it that you attend to, etc., that you do not let this gift lie idle. After all, it was not given you to waste but to train and enrich the brethren."<sup>84</sup>

Luther here describes something which is commonly understood as a spiritual gift, perhaps the gift of teaching, or, more likely in Luther's case, the gift of prophecy. It is the ability to understand the Scriptures in a way in which ordinary men are unable. By this Luther is not suggesting an ability to find mystical realities hidden within the pages of the Scriptures, but the objective truths of the Gospel which can be applied to the lives of one's hearers. As always, the feast of the inward Word is served upon the common platter of the outward.

#### The Relative Importance of Giftedness

Even though Luther taught that giftedness is very important for ministry, he did not teach that it was a prerequisite for the office of preaching. Indeed, more important than the gift is one's depth in knowledge of the Scriptures. True effectiveness in preaching comes through those who know and understand God's Word.

The reason he ought to be provided for by the church is that he ought to tend to reading and stay with it not only for others, but that he ought to meditate constantly for himself, that is, ought to immerse himself completely in Scripture. . . Even though you know Holy Scripture, nevertheless it must be read over and

---

<sup>84</sup>WA 26:82-3; LW 28:330 (1 Timothy, 1528).

over again, because this Word has the power to stimulate you at all times. . . . Holy Scripture is well-founded and is "according to doctrine," that is, it avails for instruction. Whoever knows something well can teach it well. Words will not follow upon the wrong content. Eloquence is enjoined to wisdom.<sup>85</sup>

Luther teaches here that good preaching flows from a good understanding of God's Word, an understanding which comes through being immersed in the Word, continually returning for deepening stimulation. The power of a preacher lies not in his persuasiveness, but in the Word itself; thus he must put all of his effort into knowing that Word and presenting it openly and truthfully.

In Luther's day, as in our own, it was all too easy to put a greater emphasis on the attractiveness of the presentation rather than the content of the message. "In fact, we do not enjoy listening to any preacher unless he is gifted with a good and clear voice. . . . whether he has good diction and articulates distinctly."<sup>86</sup> But Luther's theology of the Word will not allow for such an evaluation. In the end, it is up to the listener to hear God's Word no matter how humble the preacher. "For a poor speaker may speak the Word of God just as well as he who is endowed with eloquence. A father speaks the Word of God as well as God does, and your neighbor speaks it as well as the angel Gabriel."<sup>87</sup>

Thus scholarship was very important, for one was enabled to probe more deeply into the Word through a good knowledge of the original languages, but scholarship was not necessary. The spiritual gift of prophecy, being enabled to

---

<sup>85</sup>WA 25:26-7; LW 29:30-1 (Titus, 1527).

<sup>86</sup>WA 47:229; LW 22:528 (Gospel of John, 1540).

<sup>87</sup>WA 47:230; LW 22:238-29 (Gospel of John, 1540).

interpret God's Word in an unusual manner, was also important, but not necessary either.<sup>88</sup> What was necessary was God's Word, for through the Word alone came the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Thus the minister, whether highly educated and gifted (which was preferable) or less educated and ungifted, was forced in the end to rely upon the Spirit's ministry through the Word to bring transformation in his listeners.

He wants me to know Scripture and be mighty in it; otherwise I am not to preach. Yet He does not want me to rely on my attainments. Paul exhorts Timothy to study without ceasing. Similarly, Christ wants us to possess a wealth of Scripture knowledge in order to defeat the sects. He wants learned men to preach, men who are equipped with Scripture and are able chivalrously to contend for God; yet they are not to rely on their skill and wisdom, but the Holy Spirit is to teach them in the faith.<sup>89</sup>

Luther presents what he sees as the necessary requirements for good preaching, summing up much of what has been discussed in this chapter.

These are the three things, so to speak, that every good preacher should do: First, he takes his place; second, he opens his mouth and says something; third, he knows when to stop. "Take his place" means that he presents himself as a master, a preacher with both the ability and the responsibility, one who comes with a call and not on his own, one to whom it is a matter of duty and obedience. Then he can say: "I am not coming because my own purpose and preference impel me, but I must do so because it is my office."<sup>90</sup>

### Summary

Luther's break with the Roman Church's understanding of ministry was founded upon his theology of the Word. Whereas Roman clergy saw their primary

---

<sup>88</sup>Luther comments in a message on Romans 12: "I must reckon the gifts to be more important than scholarship, which are effective even though I am incapable." *WA* 47:781 (Trinity Sunday, 1539).

<sup>89</sup>*WA* 17<sup>1</sup>:143 (1 Timothy 1:18-20 - 2:12, 1525).

<sup>90</sup>*WA* 32:302; *LW* 21:7 (Sermon on the Mount, 1532).

function as sacrificers of the body and blood of Christ, Luther saw the minister's calling to be the proclamation of the Word of God. Because all Christians by baptism are priests and have the privilege of proclaiming God's Word to family and neighbors, there is absolute equality before God among all members of the congregation.

Within that community of believers, however, God has instituted the office of the ministry of the Word, one or more priests among many, called by God to proclaim the Word to the community. Since the Word is given to be spoken, the office of the ministry is the heart of God's work in the world, for God comes to the world and the community of believers through the preaching of His Word. The office is appointed by God for ministry and God often separates the office from the man, blessing and empowering the office sometimes in spite of the man. The power of the office is always the preaching of the Word, for the Word alone has the authority to condemn sin and preach the promise of life. Thus the pastor has no true authority apart from the Word: it is through proclamation that he effects change and transformation.

God calls specific men into His ministry, but that call is always mediated through the community, although the community can be represented by the bishop or prince. No man may claim a call to preach without the call mediated through the community.

As should be expected, Luther puts great stress on educational preparation for the ministry of the Word. Exactly because the Word is external, the preacher must learn to be able to understand the letters and words in a way which enables him to interpret effectively for the people. Education is not necessary for the pastor, but it is

very important, and in practice, the majority of Lutheran pastors in Luther's day were indeed well-educated.

Giftedness is also highly desirable for the pastor, though again, not required. Just as men should be educated, but it is not absolutely necessary, so also the pastor should be gifted in an unusual ability to interpret the Word. Luther did not expect every pastor to be a prophet, that is, a gifted interpreter of the Word. He did expect every pastor to be immersed in the Word, so that all would preach the Word according to a deepened understanding.

Already Luther has been seen suggesting that the spiritual gift of prophecy is the unusual ability to probe the Scriptures in order to interpret the Word in preaching. Based upon the observations made in this chapter, several conclusions are in order. First of all, the only significant *official* ministry (i.e., the divinely appointed office) in the church will be that which promotes the ministry of the Word. The Word is the central focus of ministry for Luther; indeed, it is the only focus of real ministry. What implications will that have for spiritual gifts? If Luther rejects unmediated calls to ministry, how does that correlate with the fact that God distributes the gifts as He wills? The study of Chapter 1 on the means of grace and the ministry of the Word was worked out in practical ways in this chapter's examination of pastoral office and ministry. The following chapter will describe how Luther's theology of ministry was manifested in his understanding of spiritual gifts themselves.

## CHAPTER 3

### LUTHER'S THEOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

#### Introduction

Luther's theology of ministry centers on the work of the Word, which God has chosen to be the sole vehicle for the work of the Holy Spirit today. All ministry in the broad definition of the word, whether brought to neighbors and family or within the congregation, brings the Word of God to man, and the Word does God's work within the heart. Christians through their baptism have the privilege and responsibility to proclaim the Word to family and neighbors and to intercede on their behalf before God; this is their duty as priests. Yet from within the body and through the mediate call of the community God ordains specific men to the office of the ministry of the Word among the congregation. God has ordained that it is through this office that the Holy Spirit touches the needs of the saints through the Word proclaimed by the ministers.

How does Luther's doctrine of ministry impact his theology of spiritual gifts? What will Luther's conviction that the Spirit of God ministers solely through the Word as expressed through preaching and the sacraments mean for his approach to the gifts mentioned in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4? What bearing do education and preparation for ministry have on the matter of spiritual gifts?

Finally, how might pastoral giftedness relate to the question of spiritual gifts in general?

This chapter will discuss how Luther's doctrine of ministry is realized in his theology of spiritual gifts, by explicating for whom the gifts are intended and why Luther may have limited gifts in this way. Individual spiritual gifts will be examined, and the patterns discerned will be evaluated with a view to observing how Luther's theology of ministry is worked out in the ministry of the church. Once these observations have been made, this dissertation will apply them in the following chapter in evaluating John Calvin's theology of spiritual gifts.

### The Recipients of Spiritual Gifts

#### Spiritual Gifts Are Given to Enhance the Ministerial Office

When Luther interprets the passages which describe spiritual gifts, he understands those gifts as belonging to the office of ministry. He discusses the subject of spiritual gifts in his postilles and sermons on a number of occasions.<sup>1</sup> In these sermons, he either directly classifies the gifts as pastoral enablements, or else indirectly refers to them as allocated for the ministerial office.

---

<sup>1</sup>Relevant messages which include extensive treatment of 1 Corinthians 12 are WA 15:602-9 (Saturday before Boniface' Day, 1524); WA 41:391-98 (Ninth Sunday after Trinity, 1535); WA 41:398-404 (Eleventh Sunday after Trinity, 1535); WA 22:170-87 (Tenth Sunday after Trinity, 1535). Relevant messages which include extensive treatment of Romans 12:6-8 are WA 17<sup>u</sup>:32-60 (Second Sunday in Epiphany, 1525); WA 41:507-11 (Second Sunday in Epiphany, 1536); WA 45:1-5 (Second Sunday in Epiphany, 1537); WA 45:5-8 (Third Sunday in Epiphany, 1537). Relevant messages which include extensive treatment of 1 Peter 4:10-11 are WA 12:259-399; LW 30:123-261 (Commentary on 1 Peter, 1523); WA 21:511-23 (Sunday after Ascension Day, 1539); WA 47:779-84 (Trinity Sunday, 1539).

The most complete discussion by Luther on the subject of spiritual gifts is an undated sermon on 1 Corinthians 12, a passage understood by him as characterizing gifts belonging to the office of ministry. Luther opens his comments by saying:

This epistle selection deals with spiritual matters, which mostly concern the preaching office (*Predigtampt*) and those who have authority over the churches. It is instructing how each in his office (*Ampt*)<sup>2</sup> should use his gifts for others and thus serve the unity and edification of the churches.<sup>3</sup>

Note how summarily Luther assumes that 1 Corinthians 12 is addressing pastoral gifts, even though much of it describes the nature and definitions of the specific spiritual gifts depicted in the passage, an emphasis reflected in Luther's own comments in his sermon. One reason that Luther is able to do this is that for him spiritual gifts were given first of all for the guidance of the church by the pastoral office.

Luther understood 1 Corinthians 12 this way in other sermons as well, as in a sermon preached in 1525. He introduces the discussion by saying: "He apportions beautiful gifts, spiritual gifts, offices from the Lord. He grants apportionments of the working of God. Indeed, he is talking about the gifts, offices, powers, which are within Christianity, the offices (*Ampter*) that are the deacons and the bishops."<sup>4</sup>

Luther here again describes the gifts as given first of all to offices of deacons and bishops within the church. The fact that he sees the gifts as related to the office of

---

<sup>2</sup>Luther uses the word *Ampt* or *Amt* consistently to describe an office such as minister or public ruler. Below it will be seen how he can apply it to a father's ministry to his own children as well as to an office in the church. See Richard Walter Schoenleber, "The Sovereign Word: The Office of Ministry and Ordination in the Theology of Martin Luther," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Iowa, 1983, pp. 41-44.

<sup>3</sup>WA 22:170 (Tenth Sunday After Trinity, 1 Corinthians 12:1 ff., n.d.)

<sup>4</sup>WA 15:606 (Tenth Sunday After Trinity, 1 Corinthians 12, 1524).



ministry in this second sermon on the same passage is further evidence that Luther understands the gifts as being bestowed by God first of all for the guidance of the church by the ministerial office.

Luther draws the same conclusions from 1 Peter 4:8-11, in a sermon recorded in 1522. He comments:

Accordingly, God has poured out varied gifts among the people. They should be directed to only one end, namely, that one person should serve the other person with them, especially those who are in authority, whether with preaching or with another office.<sup>5</sup>

Here again the emphasis is on those who are in authority rather than the general populace of the congregation. Fifteen years later Luther interprets the passage in a similar fashion.

The apostle continues how God divides out his gifts in differing ways, and he speaks of sundry gifts, as Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 also says, that each one is given a special apportionment and is given a special office (*Ampf*), to the end that he should practice the gift and stay in this until he is called to another.<sup>6</sup>

A few sentences later Luther explains the division of the gifts in the church. "But he divides the church government into two divisions, teaching (or bearing the Word) and having an office (*Ampf*) by which one rules according to the teaching of the Word. . . ."<sup>7</sup> The fact that he consistently sees Peter here in this passage discussing the office of the ministry over such a long period of time is further proof that Luther interpreted spiritual gifts as given first of all for the ministerial office.

---

<sup>5</sup>WA 12:379; LW 30:124-25 (Commentary on 1 Peter, 1523).

<sup>6</sup>WA 21:419 (Sunday after Ascension Day, 1 Peter 4:8-11, 1539).

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 420.

In translating Romans 12:7, Luther rendered the word *διακονία* as *Ampt*, ("if service, in his serving" as "*hat jemand ein Ampt, so warte er des Ampts*").<sup>8</sup>

This is one more indication that Luther sees the gifts as given first of all for the guidance of the church by the pastoral office, especially since in expounding that passage Luther explains this particular gift as the office of ministry carried on by Stephen in Acts 6.<sup>9</sup> In that same sermon he describes prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhorting, giving, and administration as office of ministry in the church. When he comes to Paul's statement "Let him who shows mercy, do so with cheerfulness" (12:7), Luther groups this with the exhortations which follow, as being the responsibility of all Christians.<sup>10</sup> The above passages demonstrate that Luther consistently regarded the first purpose of spiritual gifts to be the empowering of the office of ministry. He regularly uses the biblical passages on spiritual gifts as pertaining first of all to the office of ministry.<sup>11</sup> The variety of Scriptures expounded and the wide period of time separating these statements is confirmation of this observation. What led him into this conclusion?

---

<sup>8</sup>WA DB 7:67. Luther's translation here corresponds to the Vulgate's "*sive ministerium, in ministrando*" (WA DB 5:645).

<sup>9</sup>WA 17<sup>II</sup>:40 (Second Sunday after Trinity, 1525).

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>11</sup>See, for example, WA 45:5-6 (Third Sunday after Epiphany, 1537).

Reasons Why Luther Saw the Gifts First of All  
Related to the Ministerial Office

The Purpose for Miracles

Luther's evaluation of the purpose for miracles helps to explain his view of spiritual gifts, which are, at least to some degree, miraculous.<sup>12</sup> It was demonstrated in Chapter 1 that Luther wrote that miracles existed solely to confirm the Word of God, pointing people to Christ and the gospel. Since the Word has already been confirmed in all of the civilized world, Luther did not see any need for miracles to continue in our own day.<sup>13</sup> Thus the gifts are going to be Word-oriented rather than wonder-oriented. Miraculous gifts are unlikely in any case, because God has chosen to work the true miracles in His church through the Word itself as it transforms the heart.

---

<sup>12</sup>Karlfried Froelich has not examined Luther in sufficient depth when he asserts that "there can hardly be any doubt that Luther upheld and reckoned with the presence of charism, not only in the form of ordinary offices and services among Christians, but also in the form of extraordinary charismatic manifestations." [Karlfried Froelich, "Charismatic Manifestations" in *The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church*, edited by Paul D. Opsahl (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978), p. 150]. The evidence in Luther demonstrates that Luther did not see "extraordinary charismatic manifestations" to be a part of the life of the church. Even the fact that Luther believed that there are special gifts given through the office does not support Froelich's thesis.

<sup>13</sup>See Carter Lindberg, *The Third Reformation?* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1983), pp. 277-78.

The Office as God's Chosen Channel of His Word

Luther's theology of ministry saw the office of preaching to be instituted by God as His chosen means of working in His church. When God works *in His church* he does so through the office of the Word.<sup>14</sup> The humble voice of the pastor brings the Word of God, which is the swaddling clothes of Christ Himself. Thus when the minister brings the sermon he is bringing Christ.<sup>15</sup> In the community of Christians God has instituted the office of preaching to be His chosen means of maintaining order and bringing the Word of God. He has chosen to hide His voice in the humble voice of the preacher of the Word of God.

In his letter titled "Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers," written in 1532, Luther explains that there is a distinction between the pastor who brings God's Word *to the congregation because of his call*, and the Christian who is called to bring God's Word *to his family and neighbors because of his faith in Christ*. An example would be where Luther contrasts the prophetic *office* (i.e. preaching God's Word) with the *ability* to prophecy. After listing several women who gave prophecies, Luther states:

---

<sup>14</sup>Karlfried Froelich speaks to this in his evaluation of the Lutheran charismatic movement, noting that the Confessions leave little room for charismatic manifestations, because of Luther's strong stance on the "indissoluble bond between external Word and Spirit . . ." Froelich, p. 147.

<sup>15</sup>Lindberg critiques from Luther's perspective the charismatic movement's assumption that the Spirit is present through the manifestations, such as tongues, by writing: "The Holy Spirit comes by the Word which is heard and which is Jesus Christ (WA 27:153,14). Thus Spirit, Word, and Christ belong together. The Holy Spirit is active where the Word is purely preached even if by an impious preacher (WA 41:605,30)." Lindberg, p. 273.

We shall for the present not be concerned about the right of these women of the Old Testament to teach and to rule. But surely they did not act as the infiltrators do, unauthorized, and out of superior piety and wisdom. For then God would not have confirmed their ministry and worked by miracles and great deeds. But in the New Testament the Holy Spirit, speaking through St. Paul, ordained that women should be silent in the churches and assemblies, and said that this is the Lord's commandment. *Yet he knew that previously Joel had proclaimed that God would pour out his Spirit on handmaidens.* Furthermore, the four daughters of Philip prophesied. *But in the congregations or churches where there is a ministry women are to be silent and not preach. Otherwise they may pray, sing, praise, and say "Amen," and read at home, teach each other, exhort, comfort, and interpret the Scripture as best they can.*<sup>16</sup>

Luther does not deny that handmaidens would be *able* to prophecy, the four daughters of Philip being a case in point. What Luther does deny is that handmaidens would be allowed to prophecy or even speak *to the congregation*. They are free to do so at home, free even to teach each other. But within the congregation, they must remain silent.

Luther is not here singling out women, for he speaks of any who would speak to the congregation without a call to office as being inspired of the devil.<sup>17</sup> God has chosen the office of the ministry as His chosen means of bringing the Word to the congregation, and no one may presume to possess this office without a proper call. Therefore the gifts, which the discussion below will demonstrate to be primarily devoted to the ministry of the Word, will be given first of all to those who are ministers of the Word. Furthermore, while Luther does not deny the possibility of someone possessing gifts apart from the office (the daughters of Philip being a case in

---

<sup>16</sup>WA 30<sup>m</sup>:524, LW 40:390-91 (emphasis added).

<sup>17</sup>WA 30<sup>m</sup>:521; LW 40:387.

point), nevertheless, the privilege of using those gifts *within the context of the congregation* is limited to those who have received a proper call.

### Empowerment in the Office of Preaching

Just as he taught that God empowers the office of ministry because it is His chosen instrument of presenting His Word, and taught as well that God gives spiritual gifts to the office, Luther also saw spiritual gifts as one of the ways in which God goes about empowering the preaching office. Luther believed that God would do exceptional works through the office itself, sometimes regardless of the man in the office, in order to establish the ministry of the Word to make it productive and powerful. It is not the man whom God empowers, but rather it is the office. Luther put great emphasis on giftedness for those in the office of the ministry, admitting that it was not a prerequisite but greatly desirable. He often specifically mentions prophecy as important for the preaching office, as will be discussed below. Not all had the same gifts, but the possession of ability and the possession of a spiritual gift are in some way closely related, if not synonymous.

Thus Luther saw the spiritual gifts of the New Testament first of all as ministerial gifts because he saw God's chosen means of working in the church to be through the office of the ministry. This chapter will soon examine his descriptions of the various spiritual gifts and those definitions will demonstrate that Luther indeed was convinced on this point. When he makes such assertions, he does so without apology or detailed explanation, taking their relationship to the office of the church to be self-evident. Luther does not see the need to make in-depth explanations or defenses

of his conclusion that spiritual gifts are given first for the office: this is an expression of his theology of ministry, and in the end, his doctrine of the Word.

Luther saw diversity in the gifts as they are manifested among different pastors. The multiplicity of gifts recorded in Scripture is explained by the fact that pastors can be quite different from one another in their gifts and abilities in their service to the church. Different ministers have different gifts, as Luther teaches in his commentary on Zechariah: "Equipped with various gifts of the Holy Spirit, they promote the ministry of the Word, for each minister does not have all those gifts."<sup>18</sup> Not every pastor will have the ability to preach from the original languages, and not every pastor will be able to plumb all of the depths of truth in the Scriptures. Different pastors will be gifted differently, which makes up the variety in the church of God.

Application of Spiritual Gifts  
Passages to the Laity

While Luther does not suggest that spiritual gifts are given to be used by the laity to shepherd congregations, he does often use passages concerning spiritual gifts to exhort lay people concerning their vocation. On 1 Peter 4:10-11 he comments:

Up to this point he has been speaking of being patient and bearing with our neighbor. He now goes on to speak of whoever receives a gift. If you speak, do so as one who speaks the Word of God. If you have an office, perform it as one who knows that it is of God. There is no nobler work than that of being a parent, a preacher, or a magistrate. If you are a husband, a preacher, or a magistrate, learn not to say: Oh, if I were that fellow; he has the silver chain. Rather, look to the station to which you have been called. If you are a preacher, a husband, a

---

<sup>18</sup>WA 13:587-88; LW 20:45 (Lectures on Zechariah, 1526).

magistrate, you do not do what you do as a human work.<sup>19</sup>

Luther directly applies a passage about spiritual gifts to the parent, husband, preacher, or magistrate. He warns those who have been called to one particular role in life to take care not to desire someone else's calling. Luther echoes this thought in his commentary on 1 Peter 4:10 when he writes:

. . . we should serve one another. With what? With the gifts of God which everyone has received. The Gospel wants everyone to be the other person's servant, and in addition, *to see that he remains in the gift which he has received, which God has given him, that is, in the position (Stand)<sup>20</sup> to which he has been called.*<sup>21</sup>

The first section of this chapter demonstrated that Luther applied the gifts of 1 Peter 4:10-11 to the office of the ministry. Yet here he uses this same passage to describe callings of individual Christians, callings which involve family roles, civic duties, and occupations rather than the ministry of the church. Luther's theology of vocation leads him to use this passage to discuss what are often seen as "secular" occupations.<sup>22</sup>

Luther's theology of vocation concerns the relationships through which each individual Christian serves those in the world around him. Luther's theology of vocation appears throughout his works. He teaches that each individual Christian has

---

<sup>19</sup>WA 47:771; LW 51:298-99 (On Soberness and Moderation, 1539).

<sup>20</sup>Luther generally uses the word *Stand* to describe one's social position or estate. It is occasionally used to describe the preaching office, but much more commonly in the social realm. See Schoenleber, p. 46.

<sup>21</sup>WA 12:378; LW 30:123-24 (Commentary on 1 Peter, 1523).

<sup>22</sup>Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, translated by Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1957), especially pp. 1-10. This section owes much to Wingren's analysis.



callings in life, which must be followed.

Then you may reply: But what if I am not called (*berufen*), what shall I do then? Answer: How is it possible that you are not called? You have always been in some station (*Stand*); you have always been a husband or wife, or son or daughter, or servant. . . . Are you a husband, and you think, you have not enough to do in that sphere to govern . . . and you do no one any wrong? Indeed, if you had five heads and ten hands, even then you would be too weak for your task . . . <sup>23</sup>

The Christian finds himself in many stations in life, often running concurrently.<sup>24</sup>

Thus he is a husband and a father and a worker and a member of the community all at the same time. As long as these states are right (i.e., not a thief or a pope, for example), they are a Christian's calling, or his *Beruf*. God has called him to all of these--to serve his neighbor in love and live out the Gospel in his life.<sup>25</sup>

In his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Luther makes the statement:

"Thus you are your own Bible, your own teacher, your own theologian, and your own preacher."<sup>26</sup> He then illustrates the statement.

To take a crude example again: If you are a manual laborer, you find that the Bible has been put into your workshop, into your hand, into your heart. It teaches and preaches how you should treat your neighbor. Just look at your tools--at your needle or thimble, your beer barrel, your goods, your scales or yardstick or measure--and you will read this statement inscribed on them. Everywhere you look, it stares at you. Nothing that you handle every day is so tiny that it does not continually tell you this, if you will only listen. Indeed, there is no shortage of preaching. You have as many preachers as you have transactions, goods, tools, and other equipment in your house and home. All this is continually crying out to you: "Friend, use me in your relations with your neighbor just as you would want

---

<sup>23</sup>WA 10<sup>1</sup>:308 (Day of St. John the Evangelist, John 21:19-24, 1522).

<sup>24</sup>"From this it is clear that every Christian occupies a multitude of offices at the same time, not just one . . ." Wingren, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>26</sup>WA 32:495; LW 21:236-37 (Sermon on the Mount, 1532).

your neighbor to use his property in his relations with you."<sup>27</sup>

Gustaf Wingren comments on this passage that:

The incomparably clearest sign in God's providence is the fact that we have the neighbor we actually have. In that fact lies the law, an evidence of a definite vocation. . . . In reality we are always bound up in relations with other people; and these relations with our neighbors actually effect our vocation, since these external ties are made by God's hands.<sup>28</sup>

Luther saw the Christian's callings in life to be expressed through the workplace, neighborhood, and family. This gives the key to understanding how Luther can use passages such as 1 Peter 4:10-11 as exhortations to fulfill one's calling.

Luther uses the word *Beruf*, which is often translated as "vocation," to describe both the ministerial office and "secular" occupations.<sup>29</sup> Both are equal before God, but before men the ministry of the Word is by far the more important, because it is through this that men can come to faith. Luther does not equate *χαρισματα* with vocation, nor does his use of 1 Peter 4:10-11 imply empowerment for vocation, but rather he is teaching that one's *Beruf* is every bit as much an expression of the priesthood of all believers as is the pastoral office. The last chapter demonstrated that, for Luther, the priesthood of all believers meant that each believer was set apart to minister the gospel and had "the duty to teach, instruct, admonish, comfort, and rebuke

---

<sup>27</sup>WA 32:495; LW 21:237.

<sup>28</sup>Wingren, p. 72.

<sup>29</sup>Wingren notes that *Beruf* is used of the work of the ministry by Luther, but more commonly describes the Christian's vocation. "As far as we can determine, Luther does not use *Beruf* or *vocatio* in reference to the work of a non-Christian. All have station (*Stand*) and office; but *Beruf* is the Christian's earthly or spiritual work." Wingren, p. 2.

his neighbor with the Word of God at every opportunity and whenever necessary."<sup>30</sup>

The fact that all believers are priests is epitomized by the calling of pastors, who are priests called from among priests. "For although we are all priests, this does not mean that all of us can preach, teach, and rule. Certain ones of the multitude must be selected and separated for such an office."<sup>31</sup> The pastoral office is not a spiritual elevation of one man above others, but is rather an expression of the priesthood of all believers.

In light of this, Luther can easily use passages such as 1 Peter 4:10-11 to illustrate his teachings concerning a man's occupation. He is speaking to the man who complains that he has no call, a grievance which Luther denies. Since all are priests, all have a call to serve, some within the congregation through the pastoral office and others outside of the congregation through their *Berufen* to family and community. One's *Beruf* to be a bricklayer may not be the spiritual gift of prophecy, nevertheless it is still a calling to serve one's community, and thus is an expression of priesthood. Luther in this way uses Peter's emphasis on service here as a helpful illustration of vocation in general, without suggesting that it is referring specifically to the general topic of *Berufen*.

In spiritual gifts, we far surpass others; but because we acknowledge these as gifts of God, not our own, granted to us for the building up of the body of Christ, we do not become proud on their account. For we know that more is required of him

---

<sup>30</sup>Ibid. In addition, Luther taught that the priest had the privilege "to offer spiritual sacrifices, to pray for the congregation, and to preach. WA 12:309; LW 30:55 (1 Peter, 1522).

<sup>31</sup>WA 41:210; LW 13:332 (Commentary on the Psalms, 1535).

to whom much is given than of him to whom little is given. In addition, we know that God shows no partiality. Therefore a faithful sexton is no less pleasing to God with his gift than is a preacher of the Word, for he serves God in the same faith and spirit. And so we should not honor the lowest Christians any less than they honor us. In this way we remain free of the poison of vainglory and walk by the Spirit.<sup>32</sup>

### Descriptions of Individual Spiritual Gifts

The theological foundations of Luther's understanding of spiritual gifts have been presented in order to facilitate examining the various individual gifts themselves. In doing so, it will become apparent how completely Luther considered these to be gifts of the office of ministry. The simplest procedure is to list the gifts and summarize what Luther says about each one. After each gift has been discussed, some overall observations and conclusions will be made.

### Prophecy

Luther describes two kinds of prophecy: prediction and interpreting the Scriptures, though apart from the predictions included in the Scriptures<sup>33</sup> he has little positive to say about the former.

For such prophecies, though they may satisfy men's curiosity concerning kings, princes and other high standing people in the world, are also unnecessary prophecies in the New Testament era. They neither teach nor advance the

---

<sup>32</sup>WA 40<sup>II</sup>:132-33; LW 27:103; (Commentary on Galatians, 1535).

<sup>33</sup>Luther saw the prophecies of the Scripture as purposeful and utterly reliable, even on minor points of prophecy. For example, in his "Exposition of the Last Words of David" (WA 54: 28ff.), he comments on 1 Chronicles 19:10-14: "The Holy Ghost is not a fool or a drunkard, who should speak a tittle, let alone a word, in vain." (WA 54:38; LW 15:280). In this passage, Luther places repeated emphasis on the Old Testament predictive prophecies as being ultimately Christ-centered.

Christian faith. Therefore this is the most trifling of God's gifts, and also often comes from the devil.<sup>34</sup>

His reasoning is clear: if they do not lead to faith in Christ, they are of little use to the Christian.

Luther understands the gift of prophecy for this present age to be an uncommon ability to be able to interpret and communicate the Scriptures. In the gift of prophecy as interpreting the Scriptures, we come to the heart of Luther's theology of ministry. "But the ability to explain the Scriptures is the noblest, the best prophetic gift."<sup>35</sup> Prophecy as the interpretation of God's Word is the epitome of ministerial gifts.

Prophecy is that one rightly interprets and can explain the Scriptures, and thus powerfully prove the doctrines of the faith and overturn false teaching. This includes, further, through them encouraging the people, reproving, strengthening and comforting by informing them of future wrath, punishment, and vengeance for those who are unbelieving and unlistening, and on the other hand, the divine help and reward to be given to those who believe and are pious. This is how the prophets dealt with the Word of God in both its Law and promises.<sup>36</sup>

Luther has high praise for the prophetic preaching of God's Word, and he obviously sees those who are gifted in this way as invaluable to the life of the church. The most important aspect of the gift of prophecy is in the unusual ability given to comprehend the depths of God's Word. The rest of the church, including the pastors

---

<sup>34</sup>WA 17<sup>II</sup>:39 (Second Sunday after Epiphany, 1525). See also WA 41:510 (Second Sunday after Epiphany, 1536). For a remarkable and extended evaluation of predictive prophecy, both Scriptural and apart from the Scriptures, consult WA 56:60-65; LW 24:365-71 (Gospel of John, 1537).

<sup>35</sup>WA 17<sup>II</sup>:39.

<sup>36</sup>WA 22:182; (Tenth Sunday after Trinity, 1 Corinthians 12:1 ff., n.d.).

who are not gifted with this ability, depends upon the prophet for their ministry of preaching and teaching. "But prophecy supplies the medium needed by teachers and exhorters. . . . That prophecy may be the fountain and source of all doctrine and exhortation."<sup>37</sup> Luther by no means is suggesting a mystical intuition to see under the text or to gain insights apart from the text. On the contrary, he is describing the ability to see the text as it is, understanding the message intended in the words of the written Word, and knowing how to communicate that to others. This is why Luther so highly prizes the use of the original languages in study, which suggests a possible tie-in between education and spiritual gifts. Luther identifies the ministry of a man who is able to expound God's Word using the original languages as a prophetic ministry.<sup>38</sup>

### Teaching

Luther views the gift of teaching as an exceptional skill to apply the truths of God's Word in an understandable fashion. "Teaching is when one instructs the people who do not yet know the faith and the Christian life. . . ."<sup>39</sup> Luther gives a description of a teacher in his commentary on 1 Timothy 3:2.

But a man teaches when his hearers understand what he is saying. Paul wrote to Titus 'so that he may be able to give instruction.' He teaches what they must

---

<sup>37</sup>WA 17<sup>II</sup>:41; (Second Sunday after Epiphany, Romans 12:6 ff., 1525).

<sup>38</sup>Luther himself would certainly have to be classified as the supreme example of the prophet. His command of the languages, his remarkable insights (especially in light of the world from which he came), and his superb communicative skills have rarely been matched in any age or language.

<sup>39</sup>WA 17<sup>II</sup>:41 (Second Sunday after Epiphany, Romans 12:6 ff., 1525)

learn. At the same time, he instructs them in doctrine. Then he 'refutes those who contradict.'<sup>40</sup>

Always the teacher relies on the Word, presents the Word, and points to Christ.

Luther has seen far too much public speaking which cannot be classified as teaching, for teaching always brings the Word to the people in a way that can be understood.

### Tongues and Interpretation

Luther treats the gift of tongues described in 1 Corinthians 12-14 differently from that described in the event of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. The tongues of Pentecost are supernatural gifts which enabled the apostles to speak in foreign languages heretofore unknown to themselves.<sup>41</sup> The tongues of 1 Corinthians 12-14, however, are not a miraculously received ability to speak in an unknown language, but are instead an uncommon proficiency in comprehending a foreign language. His definition of tongues flows from his theology of ministry. In replying to Karlstadt's rejection of Latin for the Mass, Luther writes:

Also the fool doesn't understand St. Paul's words correctly when he writes of speaking with tongues (1 Corinthians 14). For St. Paul writes of the office of preaching in the congregation, to which it is to listen and from which it is to learn, when he says: Whoever comes forward, and wants to read, teach, or preach, and yet speaks with tongues, that is, speaks Latin instead of German, or some unknown language, he is to be silent and preach to himself alone. For no one can hear it or understand it, and no one can get any benefit from it. Or if he should speak with tongues, he ought, in addition, put what he says into German, or interpret it in one way or another, so that the congregation may understand him. Thus St. Paul is not as stubborn in forbidding speaking with tongues as this sin-spirit is, but says it is

---

<sup>40</sup>WA 26:52; LW 28:285-86 (1 Timothy, 1528).

<sup>41</sup>WA 34<sup>1</sup>:478-79 (Pentecost Monday, 1531).

not to be forbidden when along with it interpretation takes place.<sup>42</sup>

Speaking in tongues for Luther is not what is commonly understood today but simply speaking God's Word in another language, Latin, for example. As always, the purpose focusses on the communication of the Word.

Luther explains the gift of interpreting tongues as an unusual facility in translation. "'Interpretation,' I believe, is meant by this. It is a gift when one language is translated into another."<sup>43</sup> Luther emphasizes the fact that some men have this aptitude for languages more than do others, and that this is a gift from God. Surely after years of teaching the Scriptures at Wittenburg, Luther would have observed how some students seem to have a ready capability to translate Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and use them well, whereas others struggled to gain mastery even of the basics.

### Words of Wisdom and Knowledge

The word of wisdom pertains to teaching the foundations of theology.

Concerning the 'Word of wisdom': This describes teaching, such as the doctrine of the knowledge of God, and demonstrations of what are His will, counsel, and plan. It comprehends all of the articles that one should believe, how one can be justified before God, etc. The world knows nothing of these things, and it is the most exalted and highest gift of the Spirit.<sup>44</sup>

The word of knowledge pertains to teaching the foundations of practical living.

Luther describes the word of knowledge as "teaching, such as that which is said

---

<sup>42</sup>WA 18:124; LW 40:142 (Against the Heavenly Prophets, 1525).

<sup>43</sup>WA 15:609 (Sermon on Saturday before Boniface' Day, 1524).

<sup>44</sup>WA 22:182 (Tenth Sunday after Trinity, 1 Corinthians 12:1 ff., n.d.).



concerning the outward life and conduct of the Christian, how one is to conduct himself towards one another, that one use doctrine rightly, as it is necessary or useful according to each time and person, and how to handle wisely the weak and strong, timid and stubborn, etc."<sup>45</sup>

### Gift of Faith

Luther understood the gift of faith described in 1 Corinthians 12 as the strength to believe God for great things, carefully distinguishing between this gift and that of justifying faith. "Therefore faith here means not the common faith in Christ by which one finds righteousness before God and forgiveness of sin. This is the necessary possession of every Christian, even if they do not possess the special gifts mentioned here."<sup>46</sup> Yet there is a different kind of faith which Luther describes, a gift which comes from the Spirit of God for use in the church.

But he is speaking concerning a special quality or ability of the Spirit, who works in the church, so that some can do great and admirable things through great and unflinching courage, as when Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13: If I had faith so that I could move mountains, etc.<sup>47</sup>

Luther assumes that this faith belongs to the office of ministry. Although every Christian possesses faith in Christ, the gift described here is reserved for a few. It is a faith which has the courage to believe God for unusual things. The faith needed must be "greater, more robust, surer faith" to do "something special in the

---

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

name and power of Christ."<sup>48</sup> While the gift of faith might sound at first like a *χαρισμα* which is substantially different from those already discussed, Luther still reserves his discussion concerning this gift to its relevance to the office, since again the gifts are first of all given for the guidance of the church through the office of ministry. The gift of faith can even be possessed by a minister who is a false Christian, so that he can perform miracles. If some were to ask how this is possible, Luther replies:

. . . these things do not come from the person, but are of the office or working of the Spirit, which is given to the church. Thus through the office and for the sake of the church they do many great things, not for themselves but for the sake of others.<sup>49</sup>

#### The Bestowals of Powers and the Office

In addition to the gifts already listed, Luther also discusses powers (*Kreffte*) and offices (*Empter*). He treats these two "gifts" differently than he does other particular gifts. Luther translates the word *ενεργηματος* as *Kreffte*, or *powers*, and interprets it as God's work of providing remarkable fruit through an individual.

Powers are the works which God remarkably raises up through individuals so that they do and produce something great that does not happen through others. For example, he grants to St. Paul that he go much farther with his preaching office. Many more people are converted, he does more miracles and accomplishes more than the other apostles, etc. He himself says that through God's grace he labored

---

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 183. Although Luther's statement here could be taken two ways and allow for the laity to possess this gift, nevertheless, the fact that he began the entire discourse on 1 Corinthians 12 with the statement that these gifts belong to the office of ministry demonstrates that the more likely interpretation is the one suggested here.

more than all of the other apostles (1 Corinthians 15).<sup>50</sup>

These powers are not the same as the individual gifts listed, being manifestations of an unusual empowering of an office or gift.

Luther sees the office as "easy to understand, an office means an ordained and essential part of every government."<sup>51</sup> He goes on to give a mini-theology of the preaching office, comparing the office of the ministry to the office of government. He stresses the fact that God ordained the ministerial office in the church in apostolic times "and similarly today there are ordained and specific offices. . . ."<sup>52</sup> The office to which Luther refers is not an ability or power given by God, but is instead the calling to serve within the church as a minister of the gospel. The very nature of office limits this bestowal to the church. It is therefore something which cannot be possessed apart from a divine call through the mediation of the congregation. Luther cautions that the office "cannot and should not be for all those who are Christians to bear and use in common, but only for those to whom it is committed."<sup>53</sup> Luther continues: "There have always been those in Christianity in the past who possessed the Holy Spirit *but did not have such an office* . . . [and] did many miracles and had other gifts."<sup>54</sup> The implication is clear: the ministerial office is different from gifts or powers. Others

---

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid. (emphasis added).

may do miracles at different times and there may be remarkable events which occur in the name of Christ. The abilities to perform such feats, however, do not guarantee that a man is indeed set apart for the office of the ministry. Theologically the difference is clear, for the office is established for the orderly proclamation of the Word. So there may be miracles which occur apart from the office and God may do great things through individuals who do not have an office. Nevertheless, the office remains reserved for congregational ministry through a specific call.

Even though here Luther suggests that powers can be exercised by those who are not in the office, nevertheless he quickly goes on to emphasize that: ". . . it is true that first of all the gifts and powers [kreffte] are given for the sake of the offices in Christendom."<sup>55</sup> The distinction between spiritual gifts, office, and powers centers on how each is related to the ministry of the church. Office comes through the divine call which is mediated through the faithful community. Powers are *manifested* through the office while the gifts are given primarily *to enhance* the office. Even though both gifts and powers are given to the laity, they cannot be exercised for congregational ministry by the laity. In church ministry they are limited to the ministerial office.

#### Summary and Conclusions

Martin Luther never presented a carefully ordered theology of spiritual gifts. He never wrote a book on the subject nor did he preach much about spiritual gifts over the years. Luther did not need to present such a doctrine, for his theology of the

---

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

Word and ministry laid the foundations so completely that little more needed to be said. Because the ministry of the Word is primary in Luther's theology, he saw gifts primarily as aids for the minister in rightly interpreting and proclaiming the Word of God. There was nothing mysterious or spectacular about such gifts: they were special abilities given to the office to enhance and promote the proclamation of the Word.

Luther related the gifts first and foremost to the office of preaching. Luther accepted the inevitable reality that false pastors would invade the flocks, but did not deny that God still would work spiritual gifts through their ministry because of the office. Miracles of some sort could occur, as long as they pointed to the Word. Exactly what these might be Luther does not say. One can guess that more likely than not the overwhelming majority (perhaps all) of the miracles would be those performed through the preaching of the Word in the sermon, baptism, and the eucharist.

Now that Luther has been examined at length concerning his theology of spiritual gifts, the next step is to compare Calvin's teachings on the subject. The goal of the first half of this dissertation has been to understand Luther's theology of spiritual gifts so that a comparison can be made. It has become clear that any such evaluation must be based upon the foundational doctrines of ministry rather than making surface comparisons. Attention now turns to John Calvin in order to compare and contrast the two great reformers on the question of their theology of spiritual gifts.

## CHAPTER 4

### CALVIN'S THEOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

#### Introduction

The goal of Chapters 1 through 3 has been to clarify Luther's theology of the spiritual gifts (Chapter 3). It will be helpful to summarize this dissertation up to the present point. Because according to Luther spiritual gifts are by biblical definition ministry gifts, before anything could be written on the χαρισμα, his theology of ministry needed to be examined in depth (Chapter 2). Luther's concept of ministry, however, is so intricately tied into his doctrine concerning the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the means of grace that this dissertation had to begin with that (Chapter 1).

In order to reach the goal of this dissertation, the present chapter will examine what Calvin taught specifically concerning spiritual gifts, so that the following chapter may provide an analysis of why Luther and Calvin agree or disagree at certain points in their descriptions of gifts. After examining Calvin's descriptions of spiritual gifts, a summary will be presented which will point out agreements and disagreements between Luther and Calvin, as well as areas of variation. These comparisons and contrasts will generate questions which the following chapter will then answer.

The Focus of Calvin's Teachings  
on Spiritual Gifts.

Calvin's discussions on spiritual gifts focus on two areas of concern: first, on whether or not they still function in the church and second, on their relationship to ministerial office. Calvin's views on the first subject are clearly and emphatically stated. In regard to the second topic, he does not specifically limit spiritual gifts to the office of ministry, but speaks of the office when commenting on those scriptural passages which describe gifts. The first issue is central to Calvin's theology of spiritual gifts.

Permanent and Temporary Offices and Gifts

Calvin did not believe all gifts to be operative in this present age of the Church, but distinguished between what he called temporary and permanent gifts and offices. Apostles, prophets, and evangelists were temporary offices: "The Lord raised up the first three at the beginning of his Kingdom, and now and again revives them as the need of the times demands."<sup>1</sup> Calvin explains that he sees them as temporary because "these three functions were not established in the church as permanent ones, but only for that time during which the church was to be erected where none existed

---

<sup>1</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 20-21, *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960, hereafter cited as *Institutes*), IV.3.4 (p. 1056). The Latin edition of all Calvin's works cited hereafter, *Joannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, volumes 29-87 in *Corpus Reformatorum*, ed. Guilielmus Baum, Eduardus Cunitz, Eduardus Reuss (Brunsvigae: C. A. Schwetschke, 1863-1900, hereafter cited as *CR*), vol. 30, p. 779.

before, or where they were to be carried over from Moses to Christ."<sup>2</sup> He did not reject the possibility that these functions in substance at least could be revived as need might have it. "Still, I do not deny that the Lord has sometimes at a later period raised up apostles, or at least evangelists in their place, as has happened in our own day. For there was need for such persons to lead the church back from the rebellion of Antichrist."<sup>3</sup> The difference, however, between Calvin's interpretation and that which is held by so-called "apostolic" churches is wide indeed, for present-day "apostolic" churches believe they are restoring the New Testament churches *because* they have apostles whereas Calvin believed that men who would have service of great impact upon the church as a whole might be raised up to restore the church, but even then would not fill a specific office of apostleship. "Nonetheless, I call this office 'extraordinary,' because in duly constituted churches it has no place."<sup>4</sup> Thus men like Luther and Calvin himself were extraordinary in that God raised them up for a short time, yet this kind of unusual leader found no place in the permanent structure of the church.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., (p. 1057); *CR* 30, p. 780.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Calvin in his commentary on Acts, however, makes it clear that those who were truly apostles were required to have seen the Lord after His resurrection. "I grant that Peter doth here require such a witness as saw the Lord after His resurrection, of which sort John professeth himself to be one, when he saith, 'He which saw it beareth witness,' (John 19:35)." John Calvin, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. and trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 19, *Calvin's Commentaries* [Calvin Translation Society, 1844-56; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989, hereafter cited as *Acts* (CTS)], 19:66-7 (Acts 1:21.); *CR* 76, p. 21.



Calvin parallels Luther in his conviction that the spectacular gifts were unneeded in the overall plans of God after the initial phase of the gospel ministry had been accomplished.

Though Christ does not expressly state whether he intends this gift to be temporary, or to remain perpetually in his church, yet it is more probable that miracles were promised only for a time, in order to give lustre to the gospel, while it was new and in state of obscurity. It is possible, no doubt, that the world may have been deprived of this honor through the guilt of its own ingratitude; *but I think that the true design for which miracles were appointed was, that nothing which was necessary for proving the doctrine of the gospel should be wanting at its commencement.* And certainly we see that the use of them ceased not long afterwards, or, at least, that instances of them were so rare as to entitle us to conclude that they would not be equally common in all ages.<sup>6</sup>

Calvin believed that the miraculous gifts had passed away once they fulfilled their original purpose of "adding lustre to the gospel," because they now filled no purpose in God's order.

#### Gifts as Related to the Office of Ministry

When Calvin discusses the passages in Scripture which focus on spiritual gifts, he does so in reference to the office of ministry. Calvin, along with Luther, holds that ministry in the church should be carried out by those who have received a public call, a subject which will be discussed in Chapter 5. Calvin did not relate gifts to the laity in his discussion, because, regardless of whether or not he thought it possible for laymen to receive and use such gifts privately, his understanding of the focus of the

---

<sup>6</sup>Calvin, John, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, ed. Henry Beveridge, trans. William Pringle, vol. 17, *Calvin's Commentaries* [Calvin Translation Society, 1844-56; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989, hereafter referred to as *Gospels (CTS)*], 17:389 (Mark 16:17, emphasis added); CR 73, p. 825.

scriptural passages was on ministry within the congregation. Thus his discussions focus on the office of ministry rather than general practice of spiritual gifts.<sup>7</sup>

Calvin interprets Romans 12:3-8 as a description of the functions of the members of the body of Christ.<sup>8</sup> The point of the passage, writes Calvin, is to maintain order within the church.

By this distinction He has determined the order which He desired us to maintain, so that each should regulate himself according to the measure of his ability, and not thrust himself into the duties which belong to others. No one should seek to have all things at one time, but should be content with his lot, and willingly refrain from usurping the offices of others.<sup>9</sup>

The gifts Paul enumerates here (prophecy, service, teaching, exhorting, giving, leading, and showing mercy) are not of the spectacular type described in the book of Acts, but are rather those which in some way promote the Word and the encouragement of the saints. "It is not clear that he intended here to consider only those wonderful graces by which Christ adorned His Gospel at the beginning. We see rather that he is referring simply to ordinary gifts which remain perpetually in the Church."<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>Calvin consistently demonstrates this approach to passages concerning spiritual gifts. See, for example, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and First and Second Epistles of St. Peter*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. William B. Johnston, in *Calvin's Commentaries* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1963, hereafter cited as *First Peter* (Johnston)], pp. 304-6 (1 Peter 4:10-11); CR 83, pp. 276-7.

<sup>8</sup>John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, trans. Ross MacKenzie, in *Calvin's Commentaries* [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1960, hereafter referred to as *Romans* (McKensie)], p. 267 (Romans 12:4), CR 77; pp. 237-8.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 267-8 (Romans 12:4-6); CR 77, p.237-38.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 269 (Romans 12:6); CR 77, pp. 238-9.

Calvin deals with the discussions about gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 in reference to the office as well. The apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, gifts of healings, tongues, and interpretations are all explained as they relate to the office of ministry. Calvin begins his interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12:28-31 by explaining the purpose of the gifts listed in these verses.

At the beginning of the chapter Paul had spoken about 'powers'; now he takes up the discussion of offices. We ought to pay particular attention to this order of things. For the Lord only appointed ministers after first providing them with the requisite gifts, and making them fit for the duties they had to carry out.<sup>11</sup>

Not all of these gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 are permanent. Some were given to give credibility to the early preaching of the church but no longer are needed to serve that function.

As far as the verse before us is concerned, we must note that some of the offices, to which Paul is referring, are permanent, while others are temporary. The permanent offices are those which are necessary for the government of the church. The temporary ones, on the other hand, are those which were designed, at the beginning, for the founding of the church and the setting up of the Kingdom of Christ; and which ceased to exist after a while.<sup>12</sup>

Whether temporary or permanent, however, the gifts are always related to the office of the church.

Calvin strongly argues that gifts are also necessary for the minister of the gospel. Only those who are gifted for the ministry should be called as pastors.

---

<sup>11</sup>John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. John W. Fraser, in *Calvin's Commentaries*, [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1960, hereafter referred to as *First Corinthians* (Fraser)], p. 270 (1 Corinthians 12:28); *CR 77*, p. 505-6.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

For, to be sure, learning joined with piety and the other gifts of the good pastor are a sort of preparation for it. Those whom the Lord has destined for such high office, he first supplies with the arms required to fulfill it, that they may not come empty-handed and unprepared. Accordingly, Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, when he undertook to discuss these offices, first reviewed the gifts in which those who perform the offices ought to excel.<sup>13</sup>

Calvin's interpretation here of the gifts of 1 Corinthians suggests that those who were to hold the office of ministry should be gifted to perform that ministry with spiritual gifts.

### Individual Descriptions of Spiritual Gifts

#### Prophecy

Calvin holds that there are two different gifts of prophecy, one temporary, and one permanent, and interprets the gift differently in Romans 12 than he does in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. It has been demonstrated that Luther understands prophecy either as predictive prophecy or as an unusual ability to be able to understand and communicate God's Word. Calvin parallels Luther on several points, but also diverges from him in other areas as well.

Calvin views Romans 12:6 in the context of permanent ministerial office, seeing prophecy there as an endowment of the pastoral ministry.<sup>14</sup>

In the Christian Church, therefore, *prophecy at the present day* is simply the right understanding of Scripture and the particular gift of expounding it, since all the ancient prophecies and all the oracles of God have been concluded in Christ and His Gospel. Paul understood it in this sense when he said, 'I would have you all speak in tongues, but rather that ye should prophesy' (1 Corinthians 14:5), and

---

<sup>13</sup>*Institutes* IV.3.11 (p. 1063); *CR* 30, p. 784.

<sup>14</sup>*Romans* (MacKensie), p. 269 (Romans 12:6); *CR* 77, p. 238-9.

'We know in part and we prophesy in part' (1 Corinthians 13:9).<sup>15</sup>

Here Calvin sees the gift of prophecy in exactly the same light as does Luther, as one of the permanent gifts which do not pass away. It is a gift which is evidenced in preaching, the ability to expound God's Word to His people.

When he interprets the descriptions of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 12, Calvin sees here a depiction of the *temporary* office of prophecy.<sup>16</sup> The gift of prophecy described in this passage is "that unique and outstanding gift of revealing what is the secret will of God, so that the prophet is, so to speak, God's messenger to men."<sup>17</sup>

The prophets were

not those who were endowed with the gift of foretelling, but those who were blessed with the unique gift of dealing with Scripture, not only by interpreting it, but also by the wisdom they showed in making it meet the needs of the hour.<sup>18</sup>

Prophecy goes beyond the exposition of the Word to include application of

"prophecies, threats, promises, and all the teaching of the Scriptures to the current needs of the Church."<sup>19</sup> Calvin suggests that the special insight needed to do this

---

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. (emphasis added).

<sup>16</sup>"In a word my view is that the prophets referred to here are those who are skilful and experienced in making known the will of God, by applying prophecies, threats, promises, and all the teaching of Scripture to the current needs of the Church. Should anyone be of a different opinion, I am willing to acknowledge that there is room for it, and will not pick a quarrel with him because of it. For it is difficult to make up one's mind as to gifts and offices of *which the Church has been deprived for so long*, except former traces, or shades of them which are still to be found. *First Corinthians* (Fraser), p. 271 (1 Corinthians 12:28, emphasis added); *CR* 77, p. 507.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 263 (1 Corinthians 12:10); *CR* 77, p. 500.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 271 (1 Corinthians 12:28); *CR* 77, p. 506.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

"can only be obtained by revelation and the special influence of God."<sup>20</sup>

Calvin is forced to distinguish between the gift of prophecy depicted in Romans 12 and that pictured in 1 Corinthians because of the very exact kind of description given to the gift in the latter passage. The prophecy of 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 involves revelation (14:30) which comes directly from God.<sup>21</sup> Yet the context of Romans 12 suggests to Calvin the current situation of the church ("We see rather that he is referring simply to ordinary gifts which remain perpetually in the church.")<sup>22</sup> There is no need to interpret prophecy as revelation in a list of gifts which are clearly present today (those ordained as ministers, the teacher [*doctor*] of the church, the one who exhorts, the one who gives, and the elders).<sup>23</sup> In light of his interpretation of the two contexts as significantly different, Calvin discerns two different gifts, one present today, and one limited to apostolic times.

In comparing Calvin's and Luther's descriptions of the gift of prophecy, there is some verbal agreement, but a distinct dissimilarity also appears between the two. Luther exalts the prophetic gift often, and sees it as a wonderful ability for pastors to possess. He interprets the prophetic office to be the pastoral office, an especially

---

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 288 (1 Corinthians 14:6); *CR 77*, p. 519.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 302 (1 Corinthians 14:30). The language of Calvin's description of the ministry of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14:29-33 makes it clear that he sees prophecy as a revelational gift. *First Corinthians* (Fraser), pp. 301-5; *CR 77*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>22</sup>*Romans* (MacKenzie), p. 269 (Romans 12:6); *CR 77*, p. 237-8.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 269-70 (Romans 12:6-8); *CR 77*, p. 239.

endowed pastor who interprets and presents God's Word in an unusually revealing manner. Calvin, on the other hand, is not so effusive in his praise of prophecy thus defined. The current gift does not seem to have the same status of importance as it does for Luther. Whereas Calvin simply mentions the gift and goes on, Luther in several places speaks concerning prophecy effusively. The difference points to a deeper division between the two reformers than immediately appears on the surface.<sup>24</sup>

### Teaching

Calvin extols the gift of teaching with the highest of tribute because it is devoted to instructing others in the doctrines which have been received from God. While Calvin does not say much about the gift of prophecy, he describes teaching with glowing praise. Calvin wrote that "the task of teachers consists in preserving and propagating sound doctrines so that purity of religion may remain in the church."<sup>25</sup> His appreciation of the gift is almost as high as Luther's esteem for prophecy.

As he had spoken of the right and faithful use of gifts, he specifies two things as examples, and he has chosen those which are the most excellent or the most renowned. The office of teaching in the Church is a remarkable instance of God's favor. . . For how great a thing is this, that in teaching the oracles of God they are representatives of Christ!<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup>The root causes of this division will be explained in Chapter 5.

<sup>25</sup>*First Corinthians* (Fraser), p. 271 (1 Corinthians 12:28); *CR* 77, pp. 506-7.

<sup>26</sup>*First Peter* (Johnston), pp. 304-5 (1 Peter 4:10,11); *CR* 83, p. 276.

## Tongues and Interpretation

Calvin differs from Luther when he interprets tongues as an ability to speak in a foreign tongue, for a careful study of Calvin's comments on the subject demonstrates that he means by this an ability to speak in a foreign tongue apart from prior knowledge. He compares Paul's ability to speak in tongues to that which occurred in Acts 2.

But we must first note that the disciples spake indeed with strange tongues; otherwise the miracle had not been wrought in them, but in the hearers. So that the similitude should have been false whereof he made mention before; neither should the Spirit have been given so much to them as to others. Again, we hear how Paul giveth thanks to God, that he speaketh with divers tongues, (1 Cor. 14:18). Truly he challengeth to himself both the understanding, and also the use thereof. Neither did he attain to this skill by his own study and industry, but he had it by the gift of the Spirit.<sup>27</sup>

The ability to speak in tongues was of critical importance for the spread of the gospel.

"For Paul is referring to all languages, without distinction, which were such a great help in proclaiming the Gospel among all the nations."<sup>28</sup>

Interpretation of tongues is likewise described as a miraculous endowment which enables one to understand a foreign language without prior knowledge.

"Interpreters translated the foreign languages into the native speech. *They did not at that time acquire these gifts by hard work or studying; but they were theirs by a wonderful revelation of the Spirit.*"<sup>29</sup> It might happen that a man with a gift of tongues might come to a congregation but might be unable to speak in the tongue of

---

<sup>27</sup>Acts (CTS), 19:77, (Acts 2:4); CR 76, p. 28.

<sup>28</sup>First Corinthians (Fraser), p. 287 (1 Corinthians 14:5); CR 77, p., 518.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 263 (Corinthians 12:10, emphasis added); CR 77, p. 500.



that particular group. In that case, "interpreters made up for such a deficiency."<sup>30</sup>

If a man might have a tongue and receive a message from God without understanding that message, he would be free to speak it *if an interpreter were present*. If no interpreter could translate the word from God, the speaker should remain silent and request that God give the gift of interpretation as well.<sup>31</sup> Calvin saw the point of Paul's detailed explanations in 1 Corinthians 14 to be a warning against allowing men to speak out in the congregational meetings in uninterpreted foreign languages. This behavior would be totally unacceptable.

Calvin parallels Luther in describing tongues as a foreign language. There is no hint anywhere that he recognizes a humanly spoken heavenly language promoted by charismatics today. Calvin differs from Luther by seeing the tongues of Pentecost and the tongues of 1 Corinthians as the same phenomenon. Luther saw the tongues of 1 Corinthians as an ability given by God to be able to learn a foreign speech, especially the biblical languages, while construing the tongues of Acts 2 differently, as a divinely given ability to speak a foreign language heretofore unknown to the speaker. Thus the gift of tongues for Calvin is obsolete, while Luther regards it as a valuable asset to the present-day church.

---

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 272 (1 Corinthians 12:28); CR 77, p. 507.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 290-1 (1 Corinthians 14:13); CR 77, p. 521.

### Words of Wisdom and Knowledge

The words of wisdom and knowledge deal with different areas, the former centering more on things revealed and the latter suggesting facts and information.

As far as the difference between these gifts is concerned, knowledge or comprehension and wisdom are used in various ways in the Scriptures, but here I understand them as expressing a difference of degree, as in Col. 2.3, where they are also in conjunction, and where Paul teaches that 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ.' Accordingly I take knowledge to mean an understanding of holy things; but wisdom a thorough-going grasp of them. Prudence is sometimes given a kind of intermediate position between them, and then it means skill in turning knowledge to some practical purpose. . . . Let knowledge therefore be understood as the ordinary grasp of things, but wisdom as including an insight, by their unveiling, into things of a more secret and lofty nature.<sup>32</sup>

Calvin does not clearly state that these two gifts belong to the temporary category. Nevertheless, it is possible that he regarded wisdom as having passed away because he portrays this gift as a revelational ability. Whereas knowledge gives only an ordinary grasp, wisdom unveils things more secret and lofty. Calvin contrasts teachers with prophets along this very line. Teachers present sound doctrine, whereas prophets are men endowed with extraordinary wisdom, bringing news to the church of the will of God.<sup>33</sup> Since this kind of prophecy has passed away because its revelational character is no longer needed, wisdom could be obsolete as well. Nevertheless, he does not specifically label either the word of wisdom or the word of knowledge as temporary, so that no final judgment can be made.

There is a real difference between the two reformers on this gift, for Luther

---

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 262 (1 Corinthians 12:8); *CR* 77, pp. 499-500.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. p. 271 (1 Corinthians 12:28); *CR* 77, pp. 506-7.

praises both very highly, especially wisdom, for this is where much of the material to be used in teaching is derived. Calvin speaks well of the gift but does not recommend it, possibly because it is irrelevant to the church today (having passed away).

### Gift of Faith

Calvin parallels Luther in understanding the gift of faith as the strength to believe God for great things, also distinguishing it from justifying faith.

This is a type of faith, which does not lay hold of Christ in His wholeness for redemption, justification, and sanctification, but only in so far as miracles are performed in His name. Judas had a faith like that, and even he carried out miracles by it.<sup>34</sup>

Both also point out that it is possible for someone to have this faith who is not indeed a true Christian, Luther explaining this in light of office.

While Luther places the gift of faith in the contemporary pastoral office, Calvin assigns it to the temporary gifts which have passed away. Luther does not, however, explain how the gift of faith is manifested in the pastoral office. Nevertheless, the two reformers share about an equal amount of agreement and disagreement on the gift of faith.

### Bestowal of Powers and Offices

Like Luther, Calvin regards powers and offices in a different manner than the other spiritual gifts.

The Greek for the word which is rendered *facultates* (powers, faculties) by me is ενεργηματα, a word which is connected with the verb 'to work' (ενεργειν):

---

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 262 (1 Corinthians 12:8); CR 77, pp. 499-500.

operare); just as in Latin the noun 'effect' corresponds to the verb 'to effect'. Paul means that even if believers are well equipped with different powers, yet all these powers have their source in the single power of God.<sup>35</sup>

These are powers which different believers can enjoy in service. They are especially appointed, however, to enable the Christian to battle Satan's kingdom as that confronts the church.

I am, however, inclined to think that it is the power which is exercised against demons, and also hypocrites. Thus when Christ and the apostles authoritatively subdued demons or put them to flight, that was ἐνεργήμα, effective working . . . . Therefore the gifts of healing and miracles are both channels of God's goodness to us; but *in His severity He uses miracles for the destruction of Satan.*<sup>36</sup>

Calvin's understanding of powers as miraculous abilities differs to a degree from Luther's, which is that these powers may be miraculous at times, but can also be manifested in more mundane manners, such as in fruitfulness of ministry. Although Calvin does not actually list powers as temporary bestowals, his consistent pattern of regarding miraculous abilities as obsolete suggests that he does the same for these as well. This contrasts to Luther, who sees these bestowals of power at work through the office of ministry during the present age.

Calvin does not directly address the meaning of διακονία in his comments on 1 Corinthians 12:5. He does so, however, in his treatment of Romans 12:7, taking the passage to be describing ordained ministers.

Let him who is ordained as a minister, he says, exercise his office in ministering, and let him not imagine he was admitted to that honour for himself, but for others. Paul is saying, 'Let him fulfil his office by ministering aright, that he may answer

---

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 261 (1 Corinthians 12:6); CR Cr. 77, p. 498.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 262-3 (1 Corinthians 12:10, emphasis added); CR 77, p. 500.

to his name.<sup>37</sup>

Calvin, like Luther, sees the office as distinct from the spiritual gifts. Both agree that those in office require certain spiritual gifts to be effective in their work. The office is the proper place for the practice of spiritual gifts within the context of the church. Calvin differs from Luther in the number and nature of the gifts used through the office, but nevertheless parallels Luther's conviction that those who minister in the church have great need of gifts.

#### A Summary of Similarities and Differences

Before proceeding to the following chapter, which will describe the theological sources of both points of contact and divergence between Luther's and Calvin's view of spiritual gifts, it will be helpful to summarize where the two reformers agree and disagree, and to detect any patterns which suggest areas which should be examined more completely. Whereas Calvin and modern-day Pentecostalism have clear-cut areas of disagreement, one might even say black and white areas, Luther and Calvin often differ by degrees on their views of spiritual gifts. Nevertheless, there is a clear division between the two reformers. Based upon the above survey of Calvin's theology of spiritual gifts, the following chart will delineate those areas of agreement, variation, and disagreement.

---

<sup>37</sup>*Romans* (MacKensie), p. 269 (Romans 12:7); *CR* 77, p. 239.

**A SUMMARY OF SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES  
BETWEEN CALVIN'S AND LUTHER'S THEOLOGIES OF GIFTS**

SUBJECT	AGREEMENT	VARIATION	DISAGREEMENT
<i>Relating Gifts to the office of ministry.</i>	Complete.		
<i>Miraculous gifts have passed away.</i>	Miraculous ministries are no longer a part of God's program for the church.	<b>Calvin:</b> passed away. <b>Luther:</b> remain as contemporary pastoral gifts	<b>Calvin:</b> most temporary & miraculous <b>Luther:</b> most remain as unusual pastoral gifts
<i>Gift of prophecy</i>	The gift described in Romans 12 does refer to an unusual ability to interpret and proclaim the Scriptures. Prediction is no longer important in God's plan.	<b>Calvin:</b> de-emphasizes the gift for use today. <b>Luther:</b> considers interpretive prophecy the highest pastoral gift.	<b>Calvin:</b> gift in 1 Corinthians obsolete and different from Romans 12. <b>Luther:</b> gift in 1 Corinthians and Romans the same and in use today.
<i>Gift of teaching</i>	Teaching is understandable presentation of doctrine.	<b>Calvin:</b> extols this gift as the highest. <b>Luther:</b> describes as the gift which teaches what interpretive prophecy uncovers.	
<i>Gift of tongues and interpretation of tongues</i>	Ability to speak foreign language.	<b>Calvin:</b> The gift of Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians has passed away. <b>Luther:</b> The gift of Acts 2 is different from the gift of 1 Corinthians. Acts 2 has passed away but not 1 Corinthians.	<b>Calvin:</b> wholly miraculous ability to learn language. <b>Luther:</b> not miraculous, just unusual ability to learn foreign language.
<i>Words of wisdom and knowledge</i>			<b>Calvin:</b> wisdom was a temporary gift, revelational teaching, while knowledge is facts and information. <b>Luther:</b> wisdom is contemporary gift, understanding of comprehensive doctrine, and knowledge is application to practical living.
<i>Gift of faith</i>	Strength to believe God for great things. Not referring to justifying faith.	Calvin seems to view this as a more miraculous gift than Luther.	<b>Calvin:</b> temporary gift which has passed away. <b>Luther:</b> gift continuing in pastoral office, although probably not in a miraculous form.
<i>Powers</i>	Powers which relate to the enabling of ministry.		<b>Calvin:</b> temporary miraculous power <b>Luther:</b> contemporary pastoral powers which are manifested through the office.
<i>Offices</i>	Refers to present day church government.		

### Patterns of Concord and Discord

Here are the questions which arise from these comparisons. Why do Calvin and Luther agree that the gifts listed in the New Testament are reserved for those in the office of ministry? Does this suggest that Luther and Calvin agree not only on this point, but have a similar view of the office of ministry?

Are the theological foundations which lead Calvin to agree with Luther that the age of miraculous ministry has passed the same for both? Luther's conviction that miracles are unnecessary because of the nature of the ministry of the Word has been studied in detail, and Calvin's conclusions should be examined to see if they indeed compare to Luther's.

Why does Luther put so much more emphasis on gifts being actively expressed in the office, and see as contemporary pastoral gifts many of the gifts Calvin assigns to the apostolic age? Why does Luther put so much more emphasis on gifts being actively expressed in the office? This may simply be a matter of style or convenience, but it may also indicate subtle, perhaps significant, divergences between the two theologians.

These thoughts shall be addressed in the following chapter. The answers, it will be seen, point to some of the real differences which exist between Luther and Calvin. It is easy to assume that Calvin and Luther hold the same views of spiritual gifts because their words concerning them are often similar. The above examination has demonstrated that, while there is certainly overlap, Calvin and Luther do not in fact share the same view of gifts, the cause of which will be examined in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5

### ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LUTHER AND CALVIN

#### Introduction

The conclusion of Chapter 4 raised several questions which must be answered by this chapter, concerning the two reformers' views of miracles and miraculous ministries, regarding their apparently similar views of the gifts belonging to the office, and pertaining to the difference of emphasis between Luther and Calvin on the importance of spiritual gifts for pastors today. This chapter will begin by comparing Calvin's view of the miraculous with that of Luther. It will proceed then to compare Luther and Calvin concerning the gifts and the office of ministry, covering much of the same ground which was examined in Chapter 2 for Luther. It will conclude by interpreting the differences between the reformers by comparing their views of the relationship of the Spirit to the means of grace, especially as that is evidenced in Calvin's doctrine of the third use of the Law.

#### Calvin's View of the Miraculous

It has been demonstrated that for this present age Luther by and large rejects the kind of miraculous ministries we find in the Gospels and the Book of Acts. He founds his reasoning upon his doctrine of the work of the Spirit through the Word.



He denies the possibility of the Spirit working in the heart of the Christian apart from the Word of God, allowing that miracles are true only if they point directly to the Word. Luther does not consider predictive prophecy outside of the Scriptures in a positive light and warns that miracles can be dangerous for the Christian.

Luther does make it clear that God continues to work in miraculous ways, especially through the office of the Word and through prayer, but cautions that those miracles are not sensational or exciting, and are thus different from the kinds of wonders which are recorded in the Bible. He affirms that God still answers prayer, but believes that the real wonders of this age are the transformations which occur when God reaches sinful human beings through His Word and gives new life. Luther has much to say about pastoral giftedness, and believes that God works through the office in unusual ways, probably understanding spiritual gifts as the source of abilities which may be bestowed upon the minister of the Word. Much of Calvin's writing appears for the most part to agree with Luther's assessments.

### The Purpose of Miracles

Calvin, like Luther, teaches that miracles occurred only to point to the Word of God in order that the apostolic ministry might be established, and thus sees this kind of miracle having passed away at the end of the lifetime of the apostles.

Though Christ does not expressly state whether he intends this gift to be temporary, or to remain perpetually in his church, yet it is more probable that miracles were promised only for a time, in order to give lustre to the gospel, while

it was new and in state of obscurity.<sup>1</sup>

In his Prefatory Address to King Francis at the beginning of the *Institutes*, Calvin defends his theology against the charge that it has not been confirmed with miracles (such as were claimed for the Jesuits and other Roman movements).

In demanding miracles of us, they act dishonestly. For we are not forging some new gospel, but are retaining that very gospel whose truth all the miracles that Jesus Christ and his disciples ever wrought serve to confirm. . . . Perhaps this false hue could have been more dazzling if Scripture had not warned us concerning the legitimate purpose and use of miracles. For Mark teaches that those signs which attended the apostles' preaching were set forth to confirm it. . . . Very much like this is that word of the apostle: that the salvation proclaimed by the gospel had been confirmed in the fact that "the Lord has attested to it with signs and wonders and various mighty works." When we hear that these are the seals of the gospel, shall we turn them to the destruction of faith in the gospel?<sup>2</sup>

Calvin, like Luther, tied the purpose of miracles so firmly into the ministry of the Word, that he could not accept the possibility of miracles happening which did not point directly to the Word.

---

<sup>1</sup>John Calvin, *Commentaries*, vol. 17: *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, trans. William Pringle, reprint of the 1844-56 edition by the Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989), 389; *CR* 73, p. 825 (Mark 16:17).

<sup>2</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 20-21, *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960, hereafter cited as *Institutes*), Prefatory Address:3 (p. 16); *CR* 30, pp. 15-16.

### The Primacy of God's Word

Calvin's argument that the miraculous gifts have ceased likewise proceeds from his theology of the work of the Spirit through the Word of God. When Peter Jensen evaluates Calvin's view of the cessation of the miraculous, he concludes that Calvin rejects the continuation of the miraculous because there is no need for miracles. "But so certain is Calvin that the Scriptures are the sufficient revelation of God, that he cannot conceive how further miracles need occur."<sup>3</sup> Like Luther, Calvin believes that God limits the means of the Holy Spirit's work to that which flows through the Word of God. There is no need to display the power of God beyond the preaching of His Word. "The gospel, the preached word, is power, the real power. The seat of power is word not deed."<sup>4</sup>

In comparing Calvin's theology of the Word of God with that of Luther, one is struck by the remarkable degree of similarity in approach and concept because he, as does Luther, so firmly ties the work of the Spirit to the Word.<sup>5</sup> For Calvin, the Spirit does not work apart from the Word of God.<sup>6</sup> Dowey writes:

The word is the Scripture, the oracles of God objectified--previously inspired and recorded. The Spirit's testimony is the present subjective illumination by which alone the Scripture is recognized for what it is. . . . These two elements are not to be separated from one another. They are functionally one term. . . Calvin is

---

<sup>3</sup>Peter Jensen, "Calvin, Charismatics, and Miracles" in *The Evangelical Quarterly* 51 (1979):142.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>5</sup>Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacraments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), pp. 128-9.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

unwilling to make them an autonomous authority apart from the living witness of the Spirit, and granting the living witness of the Spirit, Calvin is unashamed to call the Spirit to an "examination" (*examen*) and hold him to the "letter" (*litera*) of what he formerly revealed.<sup>7</sup>

Calvin is as suspicious as Luther is of Enthusiast claims that they are led or inspired apart from the Word.<sup>8</sup> "It is the spirit of Satan that is separated from the Word, to which the Spirit of God is continually joined."<sup>9</sup> On Christ's promise in John 16 of the coming comforter he says: "It should be observed that here Christ is not speaking of secret revelations, but of the power of the Spirit, which appears in the outward teaching of the Gospel, and in the voice of men."<sup>10</sup>

Because Calvin is committed to this joining of the Spirit and the Word, it is difficult for him to imagine the Spirit needing to work in the present day through miracles at all. After all, he is arguing, the Word works by the Spirit and the Spirit

---

<sup>7</sup>Edward A. Dowey, Jr., *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (New York: Columbia University, 1952), p. 117.

<sup>8</sup>Richard Gamble describes Calvin's dispute with the Anabaptists in terms which are reminiscent of Luther. "It is clear that the Anabaptists represent for Calvin a false extreme in their analysis of the relationship between the word and the Spirit. Instead of seeing that the Holy Spirit is united to the word, meaning the Bible, the spiritualists 'despise' the word. They put emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit apart from his work in the Bible." Richard C. Gamble, "Calvin's Theological Method: Word and Spirit, a Case Study" in *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin*, ed. Robert V. Schnucker, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, vol. 10 (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1988), p. 72.

<sup>9</sup>John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, trans. William Pringle, [Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1850; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1948, hereafter cited as *Isaiah* (CTS)], pp. 270-72 (*Isaiah* 59:21), CR 65, p. 352.

<sup>10</sup>John Calvin, *The Gospel According to St. John*, trans. T. H. L. Parker, vol. 4, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1959, hereafter cited as *John* (Parker)], p. 117 (*John* 16:8), CR 75, p. 359.

by the Word.<sup>11</sup> And that work is accomplished through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments.<sup>12</sup> What need would there be for anything to be added to this plan of God?

Christ means that the Spirit's testimony will not be such that the apostles will have it privately, or that they alone will enjoy it, but that it will be widely spread abroad by them because they will be instruments of the Spirit, as if He spoke by their mouth. We now see how faith is by hearing and yet derives its certainty from the seal and earnest of the Spirit. Those who are not sufficiently aware of the darkness of the human mind think that faith is formed naturally by preaching alone. On the other hand, there are many fanatics who disdain outward preaching and sublimely breathe secret revelations and inspirations. But we see that Christ joins these two things together. *Therefore, although there is no faith until God's Spirit enlightens our minds and seals our hearts, yet we must not seek after visions and oracles from the clouds; but the Word, which is near us, in our mouth and heart, must keep all our senses bound and fixed on itself.*<sup>13</sup>

Not surprisingly, Calvin sounds like Luther in calling miracles dangerous and destructive, and for this reason he rejects current-day miraculous activity. He levels this charge especially at the Roman Catholic claims of saintly wonders. "Thus Calvin dismisses the Catholic claims, not because they are all completely untrue, but on the grounds that they contradict the corpus of revelation. . . . But, he goes further and discounts all miracles on the score that they would disturb the completeness of a faith now delivered in its entirety and sealed at the time by miracles enough."<sup>14</sup> If miracles disturb the faith, they also attract the attention of the faithless. For this reason, Calvin

---

<sup>11</sup>"The Spirit in creating faith works alongside of the Word and not apart from it." Wallace, *Word*, p. 129.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 82-93.

<sup>13</sup>*John* (Parker), pp. 110-11 (John 15:27, emphasis added); *CR* 75, pp. 354-5.

<sup>14</sup>Jensen, p. 142.

taught that God removed miracles from the scene as quickly as possible.

Hence come such gross dotings of superstitions in Popery, because catching rashly at miracles, they take no heed to doctrine. For which cause we must take the better heed, and be the more sober, lest we happen with the sense of the flesh to corrupt (whereunto we are so bent) the power of God, which shines and appears to us for our salvation. *And no marvel if the Lord would have only a few miracles wrought, and that for a short time, lest through the lust of men they should be drawn into a far contrary end. . .*<sup>15</sup>

Luther and Calvin certainly agree on this point.

### The Possibility of Miracles

That is not to say, however, that Calvin denied the *possibility* of the God's direct intervention in the affairs of men, if by this we mean the historical events in the biblical record or God's providential care and responsiveness to prayer. Calvin could never be categorized as a rationalist in the sense of the nineteenth or twentieth century critics of the Bible. He accepted as utterly reliable the accounts of miracles in the Bible, Old Testament and New alike, because he received the Bible as literally true without any errors.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, Calvin believed very deeply in the providential care of God for the

---

<sup>15</sup>*Acts* (CTS) 19:9 (Acts 14:11, emphasis added); *CR* 76, p. 322.

<sup>16</sup>See, for example, *Institutes* I.8.5-6 (p. 86); *CR* 30, p. 63-4, where Calvin describes the certainty of the miracles in Moses' confrontation of Pharaoh. In response to attempts by some to Barthianize Calvin (who surely would have repulsed such efforts quite vigorously), Forstman argues that "insofar as the wider knowledge is concerned, Calvin both needs and is forced to use scripture in such a way as to emphasize its literal inerrancy." H. Jackson Forstman, *Word and Spirit: Calvin's Doctrine of Biblical Authority* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1962), p. 65. For an opposing evaluation of Calvin's doctrine of the Scriptures, consult Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), pp. 89-116.

most intimate details of life. "From this we declare that not only heaven and earth and the inanimate creatures, but also the plans and intentions of men, are so governed by his providence that they are borne by it straight to their appointed end."<sup>17</sup> Calvin certainly believed in prayer as well. His lengthy exhortation to prayer in Book III of the *Institutes* remains one of the classic treatments of the subject.<sup>18</sup> Here he reminds believers that their prayers are answered by the mercy of God and that those answers come to the undeserving freely and immersed with divine love. "Especially let that noble title of God come to our minds, relying upon which we shall without trouble overcome all obstacles. 'Oh God . . . thou who hearest prayer! To thee shall all flesh come.' For what is more lovely or agreeable than for God to bear this title, which assures us that nothing is more to his nature than to assent to the prayers of suppliants?"<sup>19</sup> Calvin does not deny the miracles of the Bible nor does he question that God continues to work in the lives of men or to answer prayers. What he doubts is whether God at this time works through miraculous ministries as He did in Christ and the ministries of the apostles. Thus Calvin and Luther are in agreement in their deep distrust of present-day miraculous ministries. Even more importantly, both base

---

<sup>17</sup>*Institutes* 1.16.8 (p. 207); *CR* 30, p. 151. It is profitable to study *Institutes* 1.16 in its entirety to see, according to Calvin, how intimately God truly does involve Himself in the affairs of men.

<sup>18</sup>Scaer notes, however, that there is a difference between Calvin's and Luther's emphasis on prayer. Certainly the Genevan believes that prayer is answered by God, but the majority of his exhortations to prayer concern bringing glory to God rather than seeking for God's mercy in response to humble need. David P. Scaer, "Sanctification in Lutheran Theology," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 40 (1985): 191.

<sup>19</sup>*Institutes* 3.20.13 (p. 867); *CR* 30; p. 638.

their aversion to the miraculous on their doctrine of the Spirit's work through the Word. Neither denies God's faithfulness to answer prayers, yet neither accepts the kinds of miraculous ministries which characterize the Gospels and Acts.

### Gifts and the Office of Ministry

#### The Priesthood of All Believers

Calvin and Luther both hold to the universal priesthood of all believers but the Genevan clearly puts a different emphasis on the topic. He does not stress the priesthood, not even including it as a formal subject in his *Institutes* and his comments on the subject are rare. He does certainly make occasional statements which demonstrate that he holds the tenets of the doctrine while not actively and systematically promoting it. He writes in the *Institutes*: "For we who are defiled in ourselves, yet are priests in him, offer ourselves and our all to God, and freely enter the heavenly sanctuary that the sacrifices of prayers and praise that we bring may be acceptable and sweet-smelling before God."<sup>20</sup> A subtle difference between Calvin's and Luther's approach to the universal priesthood may be evidenced by the way he represents the Christian's priesthood.<sup>21</sup> Calvin's view appears to center more on the priesthood as

---

<sup>20</sup>*Institutes* 2.15.6. (p. 502); CR 30, p. 367.

<sup>21</sup>John R. Crawford affirms this evaluation of Calvin. "Thus we see that Calvin drew from the scriptural passages on the priesthood of God's people the following principles for Christian life. First Christians are by their calling in Christ consecrated to God. The Christian is in turn called upon to dedicate his personality to God. To fulfil this, the believer will devote himself, his talent, his property, his all, as a 'living sacrifice', in those areas of life in which he can best serve God." John R. Crawford, "Calvin and the Priesthood of All Believers," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 21 (1968): pp. 147,48.



the right "to offer praises and thanksgiving, in short, to offer ourselves and ours to God."<sup>22</sup> Luther, on the other hand, recognizes that right but still more fundamentally emphasizes the priesthood as a privilege to intercede for and share the gospel with one's neighbors and family.<sup>23</sup> Calvin's seeming reluctance to present a strong theology of the priesthood of believers may stem from his own view of the church and ministry. Wilhelm Niesel concludes from the rarity of discussion on this subject that Calvin avoids the doctrine because of his theology of church polity. "For Calvin's doctrine of orders the New Testament vision of the church as the body of Christ is fundamental, while the thought of the priesthood of all believers, which only too easily can be understood as a common possession of all the necessary gifts, plays no part in his doctrine."<sup>24</sup> This does not deny that Calvin held the basic theological view that all are priests, a view he clearly taught. Nevertheless, the dogma is not demonstrably central to his theology of ministry within the church.

---

<sup>22</sup>*Institutes* 4.19.28 (p. 1476); *CR* 30, p. 1086.

<sup>23</sup>This difference between Luther and Calvin is another instance demonstrating that they can use similar words to express different meanings. Luther's emphasis is the privilege of proclamation and prayer on behalf of others [see Paul Althaus, *Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), pp. 313-18], while Calvin's emphasis centers on offering one's life and work to God (see Crawford, pp. 145-56).

<sup>24</sup>Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956), p. 203.

## The Office of Public Teaching

Its Source and Authority

Since it has been established that Calvin's theology, like Luther's, joined the Word and the Spirit together, the last chapter's discovery that both men limited their discussion of spiritual gifts to the office of ministry should not be at all surprising. Calvin is dedicated to the spoken ministry of the Word, because he believes that even though it comes through human pastors, it is a true work of God. "Calvin's sacramental doctrine of preaching enabled him on the one hand to understand preaching as a very human work and, on the other hand, as the work of God."<sup>25</sup>

Calvin and Luther both saw the authority of the ministry to center on God's Word.<sup>26</sup> Calvin's answer to the question: "From where does the pastor gain authority?" is founded in his conviction that God's Word holds absolute authority, so that upon that Word, and in that Word, and through that Word, the pastor could stand and work.

Accordingly, we must here remember that whatever authority and dignity the Spirit in Scripture accords to either priests or prophets, or apostles, or successors of

---

<sup>25</sup>John H. Leith, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and its Significance for Today in the Light of Recent Research" in *Calvin Studies II: Presented at a Colloquium on Calvin Studies at Davidson College Presbyterian Church and Davidson College* (Davidson, VA: Davidson College, 1984), p. 64. Leith sees Calvin and Luther as the same in this regard.

<sup>26</sup>Milner points out that for Calvin "the church has the task of judging 'whether it is his word that is set before them or human inventions.'" This points out that, in contrast with Roman authority of interpretation, the pastor is not infallible in his preaching of the Word, yet the Word itself remains infallible. Benjamin Charles Milner, Jr., *Calvin's Doctrine of the Church*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought Series, ed. Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), p. 104.

apostles, it is wholly given not to the men personally, but to the ministry to which they have been appointed; or (to speak more briefly) to the Word, whose ministry is entrusted to them. For if we examine them all in order, we shall not find that they have been endowed with any authority to teach or to answer, except in the name and Word of the Lord. For, where they are called to office, it is at the same time enjoined upon them not to bring anything of themselves, but to speak from the Lord's mouth.<sup>27</sup>

The office of ministry does not have any intrinsic authority. It cannot say: "Thus says the Lord" unless the Lord has really said so in the Scriptures. But when the Word is proclaimed truly, in that Word God meets with His people, and therein lies power to transform hearts and lives. Thus the pastor places his trust in the ministry of God's Word and seeks for his authority in the proper preaching of the Scriptures. With this Luther would certainly agree.

#### The Divine Establishment of the Office

Calvin agrees with Luther that the office of ministry are divinely instituted by God both because God has specifically chosen to minister to His people through the means of preachers in office, and also because He calls particular individuals to serve Him in that office. The fact that the minister of the Word finds his power and authority in the Word and not in himself does not in any way diminish the divine nature of the office itself. First of all, God has established the preaching office as His divinely chosen means of transforming men.

It is therefore a mode of speaking which ought to be carefully marked, when we hear that the voice of God and the words of Haggai were reverently attended by the people. Why? Inasmuch, he says, as God had sent him, as though he had said, that God was heard when he spoke by the mouth of man. . . . But the Holy

---

<sup>27</sup>*Institutes* 4.8.2 (pp. 1150-51); *CR* 30, p. 847.

Spirit most easily reconciles these two things--that the voice of God is heard when the people embrace what they hear from the mouth of the Prophet. Why so? Because it pleases God thus to try the obedience of our faith, while he commits to man this office. . . . We may then conclude from these words that the glory of God so shines in his Word, that we ought to be so much affected by it whenever he speaks by his servants, as though He were nigh to us, face to face.<sup>28</sup>

Though Luther's style is different, the above quote would fit well into many of his discourses on God's choice to work through preachers. Both men put great emphasis on the humility of the means (the preacher) to bring Christ to men through the proclamation of the Word. Calvin and Luther share the conviction that this is the divinely appointed method of transformation. As Wallace comments: "Calvin has such an exalted view of the importance of preaching in the Church and world that he regards the Word of God as always mighty in power to effect what God promises or commands, even though that Word may be uttered through the frail human words of the preacher."<sup>29</sup> For Calvin and Luther both, God has specifically instituted the office of ministry.

Secondly, God calls particular individuals to the office of ministry. Luther and Calvin both agree that the call will come through mediate means, but differ on exactly what those means would be. Luther leaves the means within the general rubric of the community, which can be expressed through a prince, bishop, or congregation. Even here, of course, Luther strongly emphasizes the congregation's own approval of that

---

<sup>28</sup>John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, trans. John Owen, vol. 4, *Haggai* [Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1848, hereafter cited as *Haggai* (CTS)], p. 342 (Haggai 1:12); CR 72; pp. 94-5.

<sup>29</sup>Wallace, *Word*, pp. 88-89.

call. Calvin, on the other hand, is more specific, standing with the call of a pastor through congregational election. Niesel writes:

This calling is decided by election. . . . It does not mean that by the will of a majority is to be decided what person is to hold any particular office in the church, whilst the intent of the individual wishing to hold such office must be repressed. The choice does indeed take place through agency of men; but it is not they who properly speaking decide anything in the matter. . . . The decision concerns the Lord of the church in that He distributes the gifts which are requisite for the offices in question.<sup>30</sup>

Calvin and Luther also place a very high honor upon the office of the ministry. They both speak in glowing terms of the grace which God has bestowed upon the church that congregations may have the ministry of His Word through the voices of His chosen minister. Both join the minister's authority through the Word with the fact that the office is God's instituted means to minister to His body through those whom He has individually chosen by the election of the church. With the exception of Calvin's limiting the selection to the congregational election, Luther would have no problem endorsing this formulation concerning the divine establishment of the office of ministry.

Thus it is clear that Luther and Calvin describe in a similar fashion the nature of miracles and miraculous ministry, the authority of the Word in the office and their divine establishment, and the honor which is due pastors and teachers within the body of Christ. They both reject miraculous ministries in this age because of their conviction that God has chosen to work solely through His Word in the heart of the believer. They share the same basis of understanding the importance of the pastoral office, and

---

<sup>30</sup>Niesel, pp. 203-204.

recognize the centrality of God's Word in preaching and in ministry. They together identify the Word as the basis of authority and understand that each pastor must be called by God, believing that such a call comes through the medium of the community (while differing on the details). It is therefore not at all surprising that Luther and Calvin both limit the spiritual gifts to the office of ministry. They do so out of a common theological understanding which put its greatest emphasis on the efficacy of the Word of God working through the humble voice of the preacher.

#### Giftedness for the Pastoral Office

While Calvin and Luther are in basic verbal agreement concerning the above topics, a subtle difference surfaces when the question of giftedness in ministry is broached. That a difference exists between the two reformers is demonstrated by the deviations from one another evidenced even in their formulations of the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the Word. It is important to study the reason for this divergence because only then will one be able to comprehend the theological underpinnings of their views on the spiritual gifts. To understand why they differ, it is necessary briefly to touch upon education and preparations for the ministry, and to contrast their beliefs on the importance of giftedness. After this, Luther's and Calvin's theologies of the means of grace will be compared.

### The Importance of Theological Education

Calvin stresses the importance of education for those who would be pastors, because they must be established in their knowledge of doctrine. In addition to demonstrating the kind of life which befits a minister, they must also have been adequately prepared theologically. "For, to be sure, learning joined with piety and the other gifts of the good pastor are a sort of preparation for it."<sup>31</sup> Theological training is given because pastors must be doctrinally correct, for "only those are to be chosen who are of sound doctrine and of holy life, not notorious in any fault which might both deprive them of authority and disgrace the ministry. . . . We must always see to it that they be adequate and fit to bear the burden imposed upon them, that is, that they be instructed in those skills necessary for the discharge of their office."<sup>32</sup> Calvin at one point calls theological schools "nurseries of pastors," for it is here where they learn "to apply their knowledge of doctrine to the edification of the Church."<sup>33</sup> Doctrinal purity is the motivating force which drives him to see men properly prepared for the ministry through education.

The depth of Calvin's views on the education of ministers is revealed by an examination of the requirements for ordination in Geneva during the years of Calvin's influence there. The candidates were interviewed by a board "to test both the doctrine

---

<sup>31</sup>*Institutes* 4.3.11 (p. 1063); *CR* 30, p. 784.

<sup>32</sup>*Institutes* 4.3.12 (p. 1063); *CR* 30, 784.

<sup>33</sup>*The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. T. A. Smail, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964, hereafter cited as *1 Timothy*, (Smail)], pp. 222 (1 Timothy 3:1); *CR* 80; p. 280.

and life of the candidate as well as his academic proficiency. . . ."<sup>34</sup> Prospective ministers were required to demonstrate ability in "breadth and depth of Scriptural knowledge."<sup>35</sup> Calvin established the Geneva Academy, opened in 1559. John T. McNeile describes Calvin's contributions to that institution. "We remember what zeal and labor Calvin expended in the establishment in Geneva of that famous Academy, which soon became an international institution of high renown for its work of supplying ministerial leadership to the Reformed congregations in many lands."<sup>36</sup> Calvin, like Luther, believed that a clergy well-educated in the Word of God was essential to the establishment of the church.

#### The Importance of Giftedness for the Ministry

Calvin gives a fairly clear description of what abilities prospective pastors in his commentary on 1 Timothy 3:2.

It is not enough for a man to be eminent in profound learning if it is not accompanied by a talent for teaching.<sup>37</sup> There are many who, either because of defective utterance or insufficient mental ability, or because they are not sufficiently in touch with ordinary people, keep their knowledge shut up within themselves. . . . Those who are charged with governing the people should be qualified to teach.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup>Robert W. Henderson, *The Teaching Office in the Reformed Tradition: A History of the Doctoral Ministry* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), p. 33.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>John T. McNeill, "John Calvin: Doctor Ecclesiae" in *Readings in Calvin's Theology*, ed. Donald McKim (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984); p. 17.

<sup>37</sup>"*docendi gratia*" (1 Timothy), *CR* 80:282.

<sup>38</sup>*1 Timothy* (Smail), pp. 225 (1 Timothy 3:2); *CR* 80; p. 282.



A person who has the "talent for teaching" is one who is not hampered by speech impediments, bad mental abilities, or a difficulty in expressing doctrine in the language of the common people.<sup>39</sup> Fluency of speech or loquaciousness is not important, because the loveliness of the sermon is not at issue, but rather "wisdom in knowing how to apply God's Word to the profit of His people."<sup>40</sup> Luther would certainly agree that the focus of ability should always be on the understanding and presentation of the Word.

Calvin did believe that giftedness was above the common abilities of men. Those who were to be approved for ordination had to show forth evidence of abilities which would have caused others to recognize that this indeed was one set aside for the ministry. Niesel argues that when a man was under examination for a call, his giftedness would be one of the two most important factors to be considered. "Of course it must be said that office may not arbitrarily be accumulated in the hands of one person. The pre-requisite for the bestowal of an office is that the person concerned shall have the necessary capabilities."<sup>41</sup> B. C. Milner joins this opinion. "Only if he has the gifts are we to assume that he has been ordained to the office. . . ."<sup>42</sup> Both suggest that giftedness is the outward evidence of God's inward call upon the

---

<sup>39</sup>Henderson notes that in Geneva candidates for pastoral ministry had to be expert not only in their Bible knowledge, but also in their ability to communicate that knowledge to the common people. Henderson, p. 33.

<sup>40</sup>*1 Timothy* (Smail), pp. 225-6 (1 Timothy 3:2); *CR* 80, p. 282.

<sup>41</sup>Niesel, p. 202.

<sup>42</sup>Milner, p. 140.

life of the individual, and it is because of this that they conclude that Calvin's call was not democratic but mediated. By this they mean that God's selection of the man is made evident in the gifts given to him which are united with godliness, so that the church's call simply confirms what God has already manifested. Whether or not Niesel has accurately understood Calvin in his analysis of the mediation of God's sovereign call, certainly Niesel is correct in arguing that Calvin stressed giftedness as a pre-requisite for ministry.<sup>43</sup>

On the question of giftedness in ministry, there is, however, a difference between Luther and Calvin, for Luther is far more emphatic than Calvin when discussing the desirability of giftedness for pastors. Calvin shows little of Luther's delight in uncommon abilities which enable a person to gain profound insights into the Word (prophecy), to be able to know and teach those things which pertain to the outward life (word of knowledge), to comprehend and communicate the central doctrines of the faith (word of wisdom), or to have a special faculty in learning a language which would enable better proclamation of the Gospel. Calvin's descriptions of pastoral giftedness do not leave the same impression of unusual abilities that is suggested by the German reformer's interpretations of Corinthians 12 or Romans 12.

---

<sup>43</sup>For example, Calvin writes, "For the Lord did not appoint ministers without first endowing them with the requisite gifts, and qualifying them for discharging their duty." *1 Corinthians* (Fraser), p. 270 (1 Corinthians 12:28); *CR* 77, p. 505. "Those who are sent by God to preach the gospel are previously furnished with the necessary gifts." John Calvin, *A Commentary on the Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke*, trans. A.W. Morrison, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1972, hereafter cited as *Harmony*, (Morrison)], p. 148 (Luke 4:18); *CR* 73, p. 141.

Luther differs sufficiently from Calvin to cause one to suspect that these two emphases are manifesting a deeper theological divergence between the two.<sup>44</sup> This divergence is very noticeably exhibited in the dissimilarity of their views on what gifts continue to be manifested in the present, as well as in the disparity between their verbal agreements on the nature of ministry and the actual practice of those ministries.

### Understanding the Disagreement Concerning Gifts

The question must be asked: What is it that separates Calvin and Luther concerning their understanding of spiritual gifts in the pastoral office? The remainder of this chapter will answer this query by comparing the Lutheran theology of the means of grace already discussed with that which we find in Calvin. By going back to the basic theological foundations of Calvin's doctrine on this point, one can discover the answer to the question. The goal is to explain why Calvin and Luther can sound so similar regarding ministry and giftedness, and yet evidence such a difference in emphasis. This chapter will discuss only those features of Calvin's theology which will contribute to solving this problem.

---

<sup>44</sup>It is all too easy to assume that, because Luther and Calvin describe these things with similar theological concepts, they believe the same thing. What one discovers in comparing the two reformers is that when one suspects differing emphases, these more often than not indicate different theological foundations. As Dowey says concerning their views on the Law, "Calvin agrees with Luther, but does not 'sound' like him. *This may be a clue to a quite different connotative frame of reference in Calvin from what we find in Luther.*" Edward Dowey, "Law in Luther and Calvin," *Theology Today* 41 (July 1984): 152 (emphasis mine).

## The Relationship of the Spirit to the Means of Grace

Seeming Agreement: The Means of Grace

Calvin and Luther both agree that justification is by grace alone.<sup>45</sup> Man can be righteous before God only if he receives an alien righteousness--the righteousness of Christ, so that Calvin affirms that ". . . we are reckoned righteous before God in Christ and apart from ourselves."<sup>46</sup> Neither reformer accepted the scholastic view that God infuses man with grace to enable him to earn salvation, being reckoned righteous before God on the basis of our transformed selves.<sup>47</sup> Calvin is clear: only the alien righteousness of Christ is sufficient to justify the sinner.

Calvin and Luther also both manifest verbal similarity in their views regarding the centrality of the Holy Spirit's work through the Word of God. Calvin teaches that God confronts sinners through the external Word.<sup>48</sup> He writes that sinners come to a faith within their hearts which is created by the Spirit-indwelt Word<sup>49</sup> as it is proclaimed to them,<sup>50</sup> a faith founded upon Jesus Christ. Ministry is always the

---

<sup>45</sup>For an analysis of Calvin's doctrine of justification, consult Francois Wendel, "Justification and Predestination in Calvin," in *Readings in Calvin's Theology*, ed. Donald McKim (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), pp. 153-78.

<sup>46</sup>*Institutes* 3.11.4 (p. 729); *CR* 30, p. 536.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.2.31 (p. 576-77); *CR* 30, pp. 422-23.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.2.33-35 (pp. 580-83); *CR* 30, pp. 425-27.

<sup>50</sup>*The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. T. A. Smail, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964, hereafter cited as *2 Corinthians* (Smail)], pp. 222 (2 Corinthians 10:8); *CR* 80; pp. 132-33.

ministry of the Word because, as has already been demonstrated above, God has chosen to work solely through His Word among mankind. The Word does not work apart from the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit does not work apart from His Word. Thus God, who needs no means, has decided to work exclusively through the means of His Word in bringing to men the benefits of the work of Christ. This leads the discussion to the question of the means of grace, a phrase which is not a regular part of Calvin's theology but remains a helpful category to compare his doctrine with Luther's.

Luther holds that God has ordained only the Word (especially as it is proclaimed through the Gospel) and the sacraments (the visible Word) as His means of grace. Thus God brings to the human heart the blessings of the work of Christ through the ministry of the external Word as that is expressed in the letters of the Scriptures, in the voice of the preacher, in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, and in the water of baptism. All of this is the work of the Spirit through the Word.

Luther's convictions concerning the means of grace appear to be shared by Calvin at least verbally, but in reality there are substantial differences. The areas of agreement seem indeed to be numerous. Calvin in his writings echoes Luther in promoting preaching the Word as the place where God meets with man through the external means of the spoken Word. Calvin sees his own views on the sacraments to be close to Luther's. Thus Niesel argues concerning Calvin's doctrine of the sacraments: "This teaching discloses the roots of the whole theology of Calvin. If anyone suppose that he expounded such a sequence of ideas only in order to achieve

unity with the Lutherans, then he has understood nothing of Calvin."<sup>51</sup> Wallace, in his exhaustive study of Calvin's doctrine of the sacraments, agrees wholeheartedly with this judgment.<sup>52</sup> Regardless of such glowing testimonies of Calvin's and Luther's compatibility, however, there is a chasm separating the two reformers which goes to the heart of their theologies. Against Wallace's and Neisel's assurance to the contrary, the fact remains that Calvin's view of the means of grace differs substantially from Luther's, and is the source of their differences in many areas, including spiritual gifts.

#### Actual Disagreement: The Means of Grace

It has been demonstrated at great length that in Lutheran theology God encounters man through the means of His Word, as it is read, taught, preached, and made visible through the sacraments. There is no immediate grace, that is, a direct line of grace between God and man. Grace must come through the ministry of the Word. This assertion is fundamental for understanding Lutheran theology. Calvin, on the other hand, posits the necessity of the immediate work of the Holy Spirit upon the believer.

Paul shows the Spirit to be the inner teacher by whose effort the promise of salvation penetrates into our minds, a promise that would only strike the air or beat upon our ears. . . . For light would be given the sightless in vain had that Spirit of discernment not opened the eyes of the mind. Consequently, he may rightly be called the key that unlocks for us the treasures of the Kingdom of Heaven; and his illumination, the keenness of our sight.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup>Niesel, p. 222.

<sup>52</sup>Wallace, *Word*, pp. 234-47.

<sup>53</sup>*Institutes*, 3.2.4 (p. 542); *CR* 30, pp. 396-97.

In this illustration, the promise of salvation (in Lutheran theology, the Gospel) cannot penetrate the blinded eyes apart from the work of the Spirit. That promise is like light shining on a blindman. It is the Spirit, not the means, who opens the eyes to be able to see the light.

Calvin's understanding of the means of grace is especially clear in his discussion of the sacraments. The sacraments themselves, says Calvin, do not confer the graces of the Holy Spirit. Instead,

. . . the only function divinely imparted to them is to attest and ratify for us God's good will toward us. And they are of no further benefit unless the Holy Spirit accompanies them. For he it is who opens our minds and hearts and makes us receptive to this testimony. . . . *They do not bestow any grace of themselves*, but announce and tell us, and (as they are guarantees and tokens) ratify among us, those things given us by divine bounty.<sup>54</sup>

The point of difference between Luther and Calvin is this: Luther insists that God has chosen to bring His grace to man exclusively through common things such as words, voices, bread, wine, and water. Calvin replies that "the inner grace of the Spirit, *as distinct from the outward ministry*, ought to be considered and pondered *separately*."<sup>55</sup>

It is through this ministry that grace is conferred. The elements simply "attest and ratify for us God's good will toward us."<sup>56</sup> Even though Calvin did not use the phrase "immediate grace," the way he describes the dynamics involved in the Lord's Supper argues that he did indeed regard grace as coming immediately, through the direct work of the Holy Spirit. The sacraments testify of God's good will, but they

---

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 4.14.17 (p. 1293); CR 30, p. 494.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid. (emphasis added).

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

cannot confer grace. In Luther's understanding, grace must come through means, which are the necessary tools to confer life to man. Thus, even though Luther and Calvin *sound* similar in their doctrine of the means of grace, in reality they are fundamentally opposed in their actual understanding.

#### Disagreement: The Third Use of the Law as a Means of Grace

Calvin's distance from Luther is evidenced in his understanding of the third use of the Law. The gap between Calvin and Luther concerning the function of the Law, especially in its third use, is significant not only because of its breadth (that is, how far it actually separates them), but also because of its depth (that is, how deeply rooted the differences actually are). This issue becomes one of the major sources of separation (if not *the* major source of separation) between Lutheran and Reformed doctrine. It is here that one can understand why Luther and Calvin can say the same words but mean significantly different concepts.<sup>57</sup>

#### Calvin's Understanding

In order to understand his third use of the Law, one must understand the goal of sanctification for Calvin. Calvin views sanctification as the process founded in justification which repairs and restores the badly tarnished image of God so that it will

---

<sup>57</sup>While this chapter argues that Calvin included the use of the Law as a means of grace, it is not suggesting that Calvin specifically labeled it as such. The phrase "means of grace" is not a common part of Calvin's vocabulary in the *Institutes* in any case. While Calvin may not have formally included the Law in his discussion of the means, he describes the Law in such a way that it is functionally a means of grace, a point which is argued below.



again bring glory to God. Calvin puts much emphasis in the *Institutes* on the topic of the image of God, before the Fall, after the Fall, in the person of Christ, in the Christian now, and in the resurrection.

In the beginning God fashioned us after his image that he might arouse our minds both to zeal for virtue and to meditation upon eternal life. Thus, in order that the great nobility of our race (which distinguishes us from brute beasts) may not be buried beneath our own dullness of wit, it behooves us to recognize that we have been endowed with reason and understanding so that, by leading a holy and upright life, we may press on to the appointed goal of blessed immortality.

But that primal worthiness cannot come to mind without the sorry spectacle of our foulness and dishonor presenting itself by way of contrast, since in the person of the first man we have fallen from our original condition. From this source arise abhorrence and displeasure with ourselves, as well as true humility; and thence is kindled a new zeal to seek God, *in whom each of us may recover those good things which we have utterly and completely lost.*<sup>58</sup>

The fall has so disfigured the image of God within man that only through Christ's death and resurrection can it be restored. Thus Calvin writes:

But Paul, calling Christ the 'Second Adam,' sets the Fall, from which arose the necessity of restoring nature to its former condition, between man's first origin and the restoration that we obtain through Christ. It follows, then, that it was for this same cause that the Son of God was born to become man."<sup>59</sup>

Christ was born as a man that He might restore to those who receive Him the image of God which was lost in the Fall. The full restoration will occur at the coming resurrection of believers.

Yet Christ's work on the cross brings an additional benefit, for the Christian may even in this life begin to see that restoration of God's image in practical

---

<sup>58</sup>*Institutes* 2.1.1 (p. 242, emphasis added); *CR* 30, p. 176.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.12.7 (p. 472); *CR* 30, p. 346.

experience. This process of restoration is called sanctification. Justification is the foundation upon which sanctification is laid. No human being can be renewed apart from faith in Christ, receiving the righteousness of Christ as a gift through faith. Once a Christian is justified, God brings about sanctification, which in no way contributes to the Christian's standing before God, but rather is an evidence of such a standing.

God desires that the Christian seek to imitate His Son in order that he might reflect Christ's character in daily life. "And to wake us more effectively, Scripture shows us that God the Father, as he has reconciled us to himself in his Christ, has in him stamped for us the likeness to which he would have us conform."<sup>60</sup> How can the Christian know this likeness? Through the revelation of the Scriptures the Christian discovers the character of Christ to be followed.

It [the Scripture] not only enjoins us to refer our life to God, its author, to whom it is bound; but after it has taught that we have degenerated from the true origin and condition of our creation, it also adds that Christ, through whom we return into favor with God, has been set before us an example, whose pattern we ought to express in our life. . . . For we have been adopted as sons by the Lord with this one condition: that our life express Christ, the bond of our adoption.<sup>61</sup>

The Law reflects the moral character of God in its very essence. Therefore, the Law becomes the Christian's textbook on the practical manner in which he is able to imitate Christ.

Now it will not be difficult to decide the purpose of the whole law: the fulfillment of righteousness to form human life to the archetype of divine purity. For God has so depicted his character in the law that *if any man carries out in deeds whatever*

---

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 3.6.3 (p. 686); CR 30, p. 503.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 3.6.4 (p. 686); CR 30, p. 504.

*is enjoined there, he will express the image of God, as it were, in his own life.*"<sup>62</sup>

Note that "the purpose of the whole law" is "to form human life to the archetype of divine purity." The law, according to Calvin, is given to enable man to reflect God's character, his image within our own characters. Elsewhere Calvin writes: "The law of God contains *in itself that newness by which his image can be restored in us.*"<sup>63</sup> This is the heart of Calvin's theology of sanctification, the process of being transformed, especially through the Law, to restore our fallen image. Thus the Christian is to use the Law as a positive tool to promote sanctification, the restoration of the sin-tarnished image of God that man might live to glorify his Creator.<sup>64</sup>

This is not the only use of the Law for Calvin, who promotes three uses of the Law. The first is the convicting use of the Law, which confronts sinners with their depravity, and leads them to seek for grace.<sup>65</sup> The second use is the civil use, which keeps order on earth and leads to peace.<sup>66</sup> It is the third use of the Law which concerns the sanctification of the believer. This third use is the primary purpose for

---

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 2.8.51 (p. 415, emphasis added); CR 30, p. 303.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 3.6.1. (p. 684, underlining as well as italic emphasis added); CR 30, p. 501.

<sup>64</sup>Merwyn S. Johnson argues that Calvin suggests that there are two dynamics involved in the process of sanctification, first that of revealing the character and will of God, and secondly of exhorting. These two activities of the Law are then realized by the Christian through the power of the Holy Spirit. Merwyn S. Johnson, "Calvin's Handling of the Third Use of the Law and Its Problems," in *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin*, ed. Robert V. Schnucker, Sixteenth Century Essays and studies, vol. 10 (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1988), pp. 38-50.

<sup>65</sup>*Institutes* 2.7.6-9 (pp. 354-58); CR 30, pp. 257-60.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 2.7.10-11 (pp. 358-60); CR 30, pp. 260-61.

the Law.

The third and principal use, which pertains more closely to the *proper purpose of the law*, finds its place among believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already lives and reigns. For even though they have the law written and engraved upon their hearts by the finger of God, that is, have been so moved and quickened through the directing of the Spirit that they long to obey God, they still profit by the law in two ways.

Here is the best instrument for them to learn more thoroughly each day the nature of the Lord's will to which they aspire, and to confirm them in the understanding of it . . .

Again, because we need not only teaching but also exhortation, the servant of God will also avail himself of this benefit of the law: by frequent meditation upon it to be aroused to obedience, be strengthened in it, and be drawn back from the slippery path of transgression. . . . The law is to the flesh like a whip to an idle and balky ass, to arouse it to work.<sup>67</sup>

This purpose for the Law ultimately leads it to become a means of grace in Calvin's theology. The purpose of the work of Christ is to restore to man the glory of the original image of God. Sanctification is the process in this present life where the Christian begins to see God's image renewed through Christ in his daily life. The Law is one of the means by which the Christian is enabled to accomplish this restoration. Calvin has clearly taught that God works in Christians only through a limited number of means, what in Lutheran theology are commonly referred to as the means of grace. In reality, then, Calvin is including the Law as a means of grace. All of this flows from his view that the goal of sanctification is a progressive restoration of the tarnished image of God in the believer through the application of the Law.

---

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 2.7.12 (pp. 360-61, emphasis added); CR 30, 261-62.

## Luther's Understanding

Whereas Calvin's goal of sanctification is the restoration of the tarnished image of God, Luther's goal is good works in this life.<sup>68</sup> The difference should not be overlooked. Philip Watson explains this important distinction in terms of vocation.

We find that, corresponding to the two forms of divine activity in the world, there are two vocations. Through the Gospel in the Church God calls men into His kingdom of grace, into the *christlicher Stand*. Here all men are equal. High and low, rich and poor, laity and clergy, wise and foolish, all appear before God simply as sinners to receive, each for himself by faith, the forgiveness of sins, life and blessedness, as God's free gift of love. Through the Law, on the other hand, embodied in the manifold stations and offices of our earthly life, God calls us, not to receive, but to give and serve, not simply to believe, but to do.<sup>69</sup>

Luther makes a distinction between earthly and heavenly vocations, between our stand before God (*coram deo*) and our stand before the world (*coram mundo*). Before God we are seen in Christ and are under no Law. Before men we exist in varying relationships, are under the natural laws, civil laws, and the revealed Law, all of which maintain order and are an expression of the will of God. Before God we exist to receive grace through the means of grace, that is, the spoken Word and the visible Word. Before men, however, we exist to serve, contribute, help, and strengthen.

This distinction requires that the Law speak to humans in two different ways-- in our *coram deo* and in our *coram mundo* relationships. In the world, our flesh presses and strives to control us and cause us to live in selfishness and willfulness.

---

<sup>68</sup>David P. Scaer, "Sanctification in Lutheran Theology," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 49 (1985): 182.

<sup>69</sup>Philip S. Watson, "Luther's Doctrine of Vocation," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 2 (1949): pp. 368-69.

The first way that the Law speaks to us is to ". . . restrain the wicked. For the devil reigns in the whole world and drives men to all sorts of shameful deeds. This is why God has ordained magistrates, parents, teachers, laws, shackles, and all civic ordinances. . . ."70 All men, believers or unbelievers, must follow this law so that order can be maintained in the earthly kingdom, as much as that is possible. Luther calls this the first use of the Law.

But all men have the second far more important relationship, the *coram deo* relationship before God. To that relationship the Law also speaks, revealing and condemning our sin, hammering down the pride of man so that he comes to the point of utter lostness in sin, despair of works salvation, and in need of Christ alone. This function of the Law is not to bring order but to kill so that Christ may make alive through the Gospel. Luther calls this the second use of the Law.

It is this second use, or better yet, function,<sup>71</sup> which deals with man in his relationship to God. The second function of the Law is "the theological or spiritual one, which serves to increase transgressions. This is the primary purpose of the Law of Moses, that through it sin might grow and be multiplied, especially in the conscience."<sup>72</sup> Note that the second use of the Law is the most important, and for obvious

---

<sup>70</sup>WA 40<sup>1</sup>:478-79; LW 26:308-309 (Galatians, 1535).

<sup>71</sup>Werner Elert makes this distinction between **function** and **realm of use**. The **function** is that purpose for which God bestowed the Law for which it is created. The **realm of use** concerns those areas in which the Law may be used, yet these realms of use do not change its basic function. Werner Elert, *Law and Gospel*, trans. Edward H. Schroeder (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), pp. 42-43.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

reasons. It is only through this that man is brought low enough to be ready to receive the gift of life in Christ. The first function speaks to the earthly kingdom, bringing order within the civil realm. The second function speaks to the spiritual life within, increasing sin, condemning the sinner, so that in the end he is forced to admit his own depravity, thus is prepared to receive the promise of life through Christ.

Therefore the proper function of the Law is to make us guilty, to humble us, to kill us, to lead us down to hell, and to take everything away from us, but all with the purpose that we may be justified, exalted, made alive, lifted up to heaven, and endowed with all things. Therefore it does not merely kill, but it kills for the sake of life.<sup>73</sup>

Through justification, the believer is righteous *coram deo*, because he possesses Christ as his alien righteousness. Yet *coram mundo* the believer continues to struggle with sin and selfishness. Thus the Law in its principal use, its spiritual use, has no authority over the Christian, because *coram deo*, he is righteous. The Law in this function can serve the Christian only continually to force him back to Christ that he might receive God's grace in Christ as manifested through the means of grace.

The Christian, however, continues to live *coram mundo*. There he still has children to feed, a wife to love, neighbors to serve, his trade to perform, employers to obey, princes to follow. All of these relationships, vocations, are before the world, and are meant to be expressions of love. Yet the Christian still struggles with the flesh here, so that he does not love the way he knows he ought. Thus God speaks to him through the first use of the Law.

But the Law . . . meets us and brings its pressure to bear upon us precisely in the

---

<sup>73</sup>WA 40<sup>1</sup>:528-29; LW 26:345 (Galatians, 1535).

concrete circumstances of our station and duties, our vocation. Our vocation, with all that it does to curb our self-will and self-seeking by compelling us to serve others, with all the burdens of toil and trouble it lays upon our bodies and minds, and with the problems and conflicts of conscience that it cause us--our vocation is the means that God employs for the crucifixion of the 'old man'; it is the Law in action in its two-fold function.<sup>74</sup>

The Law destroys the old man, the Old Adam, but cannot bring the fruit of the new life. The Law must be preached so "that they may be admonished to crucify their flesh with its lusts and evil desires, lest they become secure."<sup>75</sup> The Law curbs the flesh and brings discipline upon the desires which seek to fulfill only selfish interests, but the Law cannot produce the love of God. This can only happen through the Gospel.

In that moment we receive God's gift of love whereby we ourselves are enabled, according to the measure of our faith, to love and to fulfil with willingness and pleasure the tasks of our vocation. . . . Freely we have received and freely we give, and to the extent that we do so, we are indeed 'new men.'<sup>76</sup>

Thus even though man is no longer under the Law *coram deo*, the Law still speaks to him about his relations in the world, that he will do good works in his many vocations.

The Law is not to be discarded because of the promise of grace. It is rather to be taught, that discipline and the doctrine of good works may be retained and we may be taught to recognize and humble ourselves after we have sinned. This is the true and necessary use of the Law."<sup>77</sup>

Luther gives a lengthy discourse on this subject in a sermon on 1 Timothy 1:8-10.

---

<sup>74</sup>Watson, "Vocation", p. 376.

<sup>75</sup>WA 39<sup>1</sup>:356 (Theses Against the Antinomians, 1538).

<sup>76</sup>Watson, p. 377.

<sup>77</sup>WA 44:703 (Genesis, 1535).



The proper use of the Law depends on this, that we do not introduce it where it ought to be expelled. In order properly to understand this use, you must divide man into two parts and distinguish well between them, namely, into the old and the new man, as St. Paul has divided him. Leave the new man entirely undisturbed by laws; drive the old one unceasingly by laws, and be sure not to grant him any rest from them. Then you have used the Law aright and well. There is simply no helping the new man with works. He needs something higher, that is, Christ. . . .

But the old man, who is without faith, who has no clean heart and lacks Christ, must have the Law and must constantly be driven on with works. . . . Nor can he be inclined to anything that is good, much less actually do what is good; rather he will lead a life of immorality and wickedness. Consequently the Law must come to check this wickedness. This is its sole purpose.<sup>78</sup>

When properly used, the Law speaks to the Christian concerning his relationships with the world, and the Gospel pours God's love into his heart through the means of grace, enabling him to love his neighbor and thus do good works. This is the goal of sanctification, the production of good works *coram mundo*.

In addition to these first two uses, Luther also presents the Law in a third fashion, although it is argued whether or not at one time Luther himself used that phrase he was referring to a bona fide third use of the Law. Regardless of whether or not he used the phrase, *theologically* he certainly promoted a third use. He taught that Christians must be careful to use the Law as a guide to protect themselves against deluding themselves into sinful lifestyles.<sup>79</sup> Since the Law reflects the character of God it is a reliable guide to the will of God.

The first thing to know is that there are no good works except those works which God has commanded, just as there is no sin except that which God has forbidden. Therefore, whoever wants to know what good works are as well as

---

<sup>78</sup>WA 17<sup>1</sup>:122 ff. (1 Timothy 1:8-10, 1525).

<sup>79</sup>Eugene F. Klug, "Luther on Law, Gospel, and the Third Use of the Law," *Springfielder* 38 (September, 1974):163.

doing them needs to know nothing more than God's commandments. . . . Accordingly, *we have to learn to recognize good works from the commandments of God*, and not from the appearance, size, or number of the works themselves, nor from the opinion of men or of human law or custom, as we see has happened and still happens because of our blindness and disregard of the divine commandments.<sup>80</sup>

This use of the Law is different than the first, which is to bring civil order, and the second, which is to condemn the sinner in order to prepare him for the coming of the gospel. The third way Luther uses the Law is to reveal to the Christian true righteousness and the will of God. The third use of the Law is necessary, because it informs Christians of the kind of works which are the fruit of their life in Christ, and even the redeemed can sometimes be blinded to the true nature and will of God.

Luther employs this idea of a third use of the Law differently than does Calvin, because he has a significantly different goal for sanctification. Calvin sees sanctification as the progressive restoration of the crippled image of God. Luther desires that men in their relationship with the world do good works motivated by love.<sup>81</sup> For Calvin, the third use of the Law is its primary function, to restore the image of God in man. For Calvin, the Law becomes a means of grace, through which God brings about this restoration. Luther's theology sees the second use, the spiritual hammer, to

---

<sup>80</sup>WA 6:206; LW 44:23 (Treatise on Good Works, 1520, emphasis added).

<sup>81</sup>Scaer argues that Calvin's use of the Law in sanctification is its principal use and points to one of the foundational principles of his entire theology--the purpose of man and salvation. "In Calvin's theology sanctification or regeneration is discussed before justification. This is simply not a matter of order, but reveals a different theology. . . . If in Lutheran theology, sanctification is the manifestation of the life of Christ in the world, in Calvin's theology the sinner is justified chiefly in order that he may be enabled to honor God through the activity which springs from regeneration." Scaer, p. 190-91.

be the true purpose of the Law, and rejects the possibility that Law could produce such a renewal of the image of God. Indeed, sanctification for Luther deals with man in his earthly relationships, that he might do good works through his vocations. The two vastly different emphases come from two vastly different goals for sanctification and understandings of the purpose and work of the Law.<sup>82</sup>

### The Theology of Means of Grace As It Impacts Ministry

#### Practical Theology as Affected by the Addition of Law

Luther and Calvin understand sanctification and the proper use of the Law so differently that one must expect that their theologies of ministry and ultimately their theologies of spiritual gifts will be as divergent. This is why Luther and Calvin can speak almost the same words yet sound so different. Edward Dowey, in an article which compares Calvin's and Luther's understanding of the third use of the Law, comes up with the conclusion that:

Despite agreement between them on many denotations and designations for law, and upon a doctrine of justification by faith alone to the exclusion of all merit, Luther and Calvin do differ profoundly on the role, function, or use of the law for the Christian. . . . Granting that Luther can praise the law in as high terms as Calvin, and Calvin can condemn legal righteousness in terms almost as scathing as Luther, we can maintain that the connotative and apperceptive use is very different between the two, and between their two traditions. This must have a lot to do with

---

<sup>82</sup>It is here that Merwyn S. Johnson's attempt to harmonize Luther's and Calvin's understanding of the third use of the Law totally fails. Johnson demonstrates that Luther and Calvin *say* the same things about justification and law, and because of this concludes that the two reformers believe the same things. Johnson neglects to address the real problem, which is the heart of the matter: what is the purpose of sanctification and how does the Law relate to this? Johnson, pp. 46-8.

the well known contrasts between the ethos of each of the two traditions.<sup>83</sup>

Could it be that the agreement shared by Calvin and Luther concerning the foundations of spiritual ministry in such matters as the means of grace, the primacy of the Word, the cessation of the gifts, and the restriction of spiritual gifts to the ministry office is merely formal? With such deviation in their deeper foundations it is doubtful that Calvin and Luther could agree on how ministry should be done, for their goals in ministry are so significantly different it is hard to imagine that their theologies would be the same. The following two examples will demonstrate how much this dissimilarity impacts their practical theology.

#### Example #1: The Sacraments

While many Calvin scholars consider the Lord's Supper to be almost as important for him as for Luther, in practice it was only observed four times a year in Geneva after 1541.<sup>84</sup> If he truly saw the Lord's Supper as a vital and *indispensable* means of grace, it is hardly imaginable that he would have allowed it to be limited to so few occasions. The most likely reason why he did not demand that it be celebrated more frequently is that his doctrine of ministry simply does not view the sacraments as

---

<sup>83</sup>Edward Dowey, "Law in Luther and Calvin," *Theology Today* 41 (July 1984):153.

<sup>84</sup>Wallace, *Word*, p. 253. Wallace defends Calvin here as "[giving] in to the weakness of human nature" in allowing the Supper to be celebrated so seldom. Is it possible to imagine that Calvin would have been so accommodating to "human weakness" concerning the use of the Law in the process of sanctification? Certainly Luther would have used human weakness as all the more reason to practice the Lord's Supper regularly.

*indispensible* for sanctification. Calvin teaches the importance of receiving grace through means, but at the same time stresses the immediacy of God's grace, given through the Holy Spirit as the real instrument of transformation. The dynamic of the Law is present in the preaching of the Word and is able to produce sanctification in the lives of Christians. Calvin's theology of the third use of the Law thus has significant impact on his practice of ministry.

#### Example #2: Church Discipline

A second example, church discipline, may also demonstrate how the change in emphasis due to Calvin's third use of the Law as a means of grace impacted his practical theology.<sup>85</sup> While both Lutheran and Reformed dogmatics consider church discipline to be an important feature of polity, the Reformed view puts far more stress on the practice of discipline in strengthening the church.<sup>86</sup> Calvin himself speaks very highly of church discipline in the *Institutes*:

Accordingly, as the saving doctrine of Christ is the soul of the church, so does discipline serve as its sinews, through which the members of the body hold together, each in its own place. Therefore, all who desire to remove discipline or

---

<sup>85</sup>Scaer, p. 184.

<sup>86</sup>Johannas Haller, a correspondent of Bullinger, wrote concerning the political situation in Geneva: "The more powerful ones all but conspire against Calvin. He sets himself up against the most important men and is prepared to die to maintain the institutions of his church. As I understand it, the primary cause of this entire controversy is the rigor of the ecclesiastical discipline that has been established there, whereby everyone is all but put under the feet of the ministers." Quoted in J. Wayne Baker, "Christian Discipline and the Early Reformed Tradition: Bullinger and Calvin" in *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin*, ed. Robert V. Schnucker, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, vol. 10 (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1988), p. 114.

to hinder its restoration--whether they do this deliberately or out of ignorance--are surely contributing to the ultimate dissolution of the church. For what will happen if each is allowed to do what he pleases? Yet that would happen, if to the preaching doctrine there were not added private admonitions, corrections, and other aids of the sort that sustain doctrine and do not let it remain idle. Therefore discipline is like a bridle to restrain and tame those who rage against the doctrine of Christ; or like a spur to arouse those of little inclination; and also sometimes like a father's rod to chastise mildly and with the gentleness of Christ's Spirit those who have more seriously lapsed.<sup>87</sup>

The discipline described by Calvin is the epitome of using the Law not only to hold back and put to death the flesh, but also to spur the saints on to growth. In the area of church discipline there is a conceptual agreement (that is, that discipline is an important aspect of the ministry of the church) between Lutheranism and Calvinism, but a sharp functional disjunction. Indeed, Calvin's Geneva practiced stringent Christian discipline over all its citizens<sup>88</sup> in a fashion which would not be expected in Lutheranism. In addition, contra Lutheranism, Calvinism understands discipline as a necessary mark of the Church.<sup>89</sup> As in the case of the sacraments, the discord between Calvinism and Lutheranism concerning discipline finds its source in the fact that Calvin's goal for sanctification is restoration of the image of God, and in his use of

---

<sup>87</sup>*Institutes* 4.12.1 (pp. 1229-30); *CR* 30, p. 905.

<sup>88</sup>Baker, pp. 106 ff.

<sup>89</sup>Hermann Sasse cites numerous Calvinist confessions which include church discipline as one of the marks of the Church. He includes *Confessio Scoticana*, Article XVIII [Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York, 1877), III, p. 461-62] and the *Belgic Confession* (Chapter XXIX, in Schaff, III, pp. 419-20). Sasse ties in the heavy Reformed emphasis on church discipline to their convictions concerning the third use of the Law. Hermann Sasse, *Here We Stand: Nature and Character of the Lutheran Faith*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert (New York: Harper & Bros., 1938; reprint, Adelaide, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1979), pp. 132-39 (page references are to the reprint edition).

the Law as a means of grace, neither of which Luther can accept.

### The Impact on the Theology of Spiritual Gifts

It is most to be expected that the differences between Luther's and Calvin's theology of spiritual gifts can be traced to Calvin's doctrine of sanctification and the third use of the Law. It has been observed that Luther puts a far greater stress on the active presence of spiritual gifts in ministry. Chapter 2 described Luther's conviction that the event of preaching is a means of grace, where God meets with man through the message of the Word. Just as Luther could never relegate the sacraments to a minor place in the practice of the churches because he saw their use as indispensable to the strengthening of faith, so also it is likely that Luther emphasizes the gifts in preaching far more than does Calvin, because for him the proclamation of the Word of the Gospel is a vitally essential component of sanctification. Since "faith is the only instrument through which the Holy Spirit performs the [good] works"<sup>90</sup> it is essential for sanctification that faith be strengthened, and that strengthening comes through the preaching of the Word. Small wonder then that Luther saw the gifts of the Spirit to reside still in the preaching office, for these gave power to the preaching of the Word in strengthening faith.

It has already been observed that Luther does not hold to a Charismatic view of spiritual gifts, as extraordinary manifestations of the divine presence with men. His definitions of the various gifts are comparatively mundane compared to the Pentecostal

---

<sup>90</sup>Scaer, p. 183.

movement. Yet Luther consistently demonstrates a theological certainty that because God's Word comes through the preacher, the preacher needs to be empowered through special divinely endowed abilities. Many of the gifts enable the interpretation of the Word while some are evidenced in its communication. The heart of Luther's theology of spiritual gifts, however, lies in the fact that he holds the event of preaching as well as its content to be indispensable, and therefore, God has bestowed certain uncommon abilities upon those in the preaching office that the Word might go forth with power.

Calvin also places the highest priority on preaching the Word. "I have accordingly pointed out above that God often commended the dignity of the ministry by all possible marks of approval in order that it might be held among us in highest honor and esteem, even as the most excellent of all things."<sup>91</sup> The practice of the church stands or falls with the preaching of its ministers.<sup>92</sup> The minister fulfills his duties "by the doctrine of Christ to instruct the people to true godliness, to administer the sacred mysteries, and to keep and exercise upright discipline."<sup>93</sup> Preaching is important because the minister brings the voice of God to His church.<sup>94</sup>

The Holy Spirit's work in preaching is very important for Calvin as well, and

---

<sup>91</sup>*Institutes* 4.3.3 (p. 1054); *CR* 30, p. 778.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.3.6 (p. 1059); *CR* 30, p. 781.

<sup>94</sup>John H. Leith, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and Its Significance for Today in the Light of Recent Research," *Review and Expositor*, 86 (1989), 31-3.



is similar to his evaluation of the ministry of the Lord's supper.<sup>95</sup> Calvin's understanding of the dynamics of preaching focusses on the internal work of the Spirit of God through the humble vessel of the preacher. John Leith argues that Calvin sees preaching in sacramental terms, although he goes on to admit that Calvin "never explicated the meaning."<sup>96</sup> Leith is correct in his analysis to the extent that Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper and his convictions concerning preaching have much in common. In Calvin's view, the means are useful only in their external affirmation of the promises of God. It is the interior work of the Holy Spirit which brings transformation, and this work gives grace in an immediate, rather than mediate, manner.

Added to the internal dynamic of the Spirit's immediate work of grace is Calvin's view of the principal use of the Law, which is to restore in the believer the tarnished image of God.

Here is the best instrument for them to learn more thoroughly each day the nature of the Lord's will to which they aspire, and to confirm them in the understanding of it. . . . And not one of us may escape from this necessity. *For no man has heretofore attained to such wisdom as to be unable, from the daily instruction of the law, to make fresh progress toward a purer knowledge of the divine will.*

Again, because we need not only teaching but also exhortation, the servant of God will also avail himself of this benefit of the law: by frequent meditation upon it *to be aroused to obedience, be strengthened in it, and be drawn back from the*

---

<sup>95</sup>John Leith comments that for Calvin, "The power of preaching as the Word of God does not reside in the sound of the words themselves or even in their meaning. The power of preaching is the act of the Holy Spirit which makes the words, their sound, and their meaning, the occasion of the voice of God." *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>96</sup>Leith, p. 31.

*slippery path of transgression.*<sup>97</sup>

Calvin gives a positive testimony that Christians who are well informed and exhorted by the Law will be aroused to obedience, be strengthened, and be drawn back from sin. Luther recognizes that the Law can be used as a guide to understand the nature of righteous behavior, but does not accept the possibility that the Law could *empower* the Christian to walk in righteousness. In contrast, Calvin sees the Law as a means of Christian growth.

This use of the Law evidences itself in Calvin's own style of preaching. In a series he preached on the Ten Commandments, Calvin puts heavy emphasis on the importance of the third use of the Law.<sup>98</sup> B. W. Farley, the translator and editor of a recent translation of these sermons, comments:

In the sermons, it is this third function that dominates. . . . It is the third use that empowers the series. From beginning to end, Calvin's primary purpose is to demonstrate how God's will for everyday life is revealed in the Ten Commandments; and not only revealed, but published to exhort and strengthen man's witness and confirm his life in obedience to God. In this respect, *the third use of the law constitutes the critical foundation for all sixteen sermons.*<sup>99</sup>

Calvin's conviction that the Law was an effective tool in sanctifying the Christian may in part explain why the great majority of the two thousand sermons he preached at Geneva were from the Old Testament, rather than the New. As Calvin himself explains in his comments on Deuteronomy 6:1:

---

<sup>97</sup>*Institutes*, 2.7.12 (p. 360, emphasis added); *CR* 30, pp. 261-62.

<sup>98</sup>John Calvin, *John Calvin's Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, ed. and trans. Benjamin W. Farley (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980), 26.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.* (emphasis added).

Just as when a horse is difficult to manage, the rider can hardly control it with a single tug. It will only prance about and resist handling. The rider must steady it with persistent control. So likewise God must act toward his people. And thereby he shows that the human mind is full of rebellion, or, better yet, instability, as man cannot hold to the Word of God which simultaneously provides his salvation and well-being. This being true, let us note that in the people of Israel we are admonished that when God set his Word before us, it was not simply recorded for that day alone, but must be put into practice by us every day of our life.<sup>100</sup>

Calvin's commitment to the third use of the Law in practical ministry extends to the administration of church discipline. He explains why the pastor must administer discipline.

*For doctrine obtains force and authority where the minister not only explains to all together what they owe to Christ, but also has the right and means to require that it be kept by those whom he has observed are either disrespectful or languid toward his teaching.*<sup>101</sup>

Doctrine obtains force and authority when accompanied by church discipline.

Although Calvin does not speak of discipline as an extension of the third use of the Law, his conception of discipline mirrors his understanding that the law "is to the flesh like a whip to an idle and balky ass, to arouse it to work."<sup>102</sup>

Once Calvin admits the Law into his means of grace, the balance shifts from grace to Law in sanctification, from Word alone to obedience, from sacrament to sacrifice, from receiving to presenting. This means that the dynamic which dominates Calvin's theology of preaching to Christians shifts from God continually bringing His grace to the Christian through the Word. It now focusses on God bringing His

---

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 290 (Sermon on Deuteronomy 6:1-6); CR 54; p. 420.

<sup>101</sup>*Institutes* 4.12.2 (p. 1230, emphasis added); CR 30, p. 906.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 2.7.12 (p. 361); CR 30, p. 262.

commandments to the Christian, who, through the help of the Holy Spirit, uses those commandments to renew the tarnished image of God within him. The sole dynamic of sanctification is no longer justification, no longer the means of the Word, no longer God and God alone. Because Calvin has included Law as a means of grace, sanctification is still founded in justification, but is empowered by Law.

In light of this, it is not surprising that Calvin stresses spiritual gifts far less than Luther does. For Luther, the sermon is a place of God renewing the Christian. Thus the idea of God Himself empowering that encounter with special gifts makes great sense and is indeed very desirable. For Calvin, the sermon is the place of God commanding the Christian to obedience. The focus is on the hearer's response rather than on the anointing of the Word. Thus Calvin's stress on the importance of giftedness falls behind his stress on the third use of the Law and on church discipline. These become much more the dynamic of ministry. A casual reading of the works of Calvin and Luther might not bring a recognition that a difference exists in their approach to spiritual gifts, and would probably miss the impact that the doctrine of the third use of the Law has upon practical theology. Yet as Dowey puts it, Calvin's doctrine of the third use of the Law "must have a lot to do with the well known contrasts between the ethos of the two traditions."<sup>103</sup> Both are being consistent to their theology, and their consistency manifests itself clearly in their practice of ministry, as has been demonstrated here concerning spiritual gifts.

---

<sup>103</sup>Dowey, "Law in Luther and Calvin", p. 153.

### Summary and Conclusions

Chapter 4 raised questions which have been addressed by the present chapter. This present chapter has demonstrated that there is significant verbal agreement between Luther and Calvin in the areas of miracles and the ministry. Calvin and Luther both agree that the only purpose of miracles was to point to the Word of God, and thus saw the miraculous ministries of the New Testament to have passed away. Both tie the work of the Spirit of God to the Word of God, as that is expressed through preaching and sacrament, so that they were unwilling to consider miracles to be God's will for the present age. Nevertheless, Calvin and Luther emphasized God's providence and responsiveness to prayer.

Calvin and Luther agree on the priesthood of all believers, but in Luther the topic holds a much more central position. They both put great emphasis on the office and each agree that the true authority of the office always lies in the Word of God, and not in the man himself. Neither questions the divine institution of the pastoral office, nor denies that God specifically chooses particular men for ministry, although Calvin insists that God does this exclusively through the congregational vote. Thus it is clear that Luther and Calvin have substantial agreement in principle on the nature of miracles and miraculous ministry, the authority of the Word in the office, its divine establishment, and the honor which is due pastors and teachers within the body of Christ.

While Calvin and Luther were found to be in basic agreement concerning the above topics, a subtle difference surfaced when the question of giftedness in ministry

was considered. Even though both agreed that giftedness was important for pastoral ministry, it was found that Calvin de-emphasized what Luther prized highly. Their views differed enough to suggest that a more thorough evaluation should be made. The key to understanding the difference was found in Calvin's goal for sanctification as the progressive restoration of the image of God in man, and in his use of the Law as a means of grace to accomplish that recovery. Calvin raised up Law as the primary means of sanctification, which in practice caused him to devalue both the event of preaching the Word and the administration of the Lord's Supper. Thus the dynamic of sanctification shifted and the need for empowerment of preaching diminished greatly. Luther, who rejects the Law as a means of sanctification, retains the heavy emphasis upon spiritual gifts as enhancements to the ministry of the Word. For Luther, God has chosen to work through the Word alone. For this reason spiritual gifts, as enhancements to the ministry of the Word, remain valuable endowments to the church.

## CONCLUSIONS

The professor of theology mentioned in the introduction who was unaware of Luther's and Calvin's theology of spiritual gifts had certainly missed a very important aspect of their theology as a whole. He may have grasped the fundamentals of the doctrines of Luther and Calvin, since an understanding of their theologies of spiritual gifts is not necessary to understanding their basic views. Nevertheless a careful examination of their theologies of spiritual gifts would have illuminated deeper issues and would have afforded him the opportunity to understand in part why Lutheranism and Calvinism have such a wide gulf between them.

Calvin viewed spiritual gifts differently than did Luther. The divergence between the two might not be immediately apparent to an uninformed observer because there is sufficient verbal agreement to suggest that the two reformers fundamentally agreed on the subject. Chapters 4 and 5 explored this ostensible harmony and came to the conclusion that what seemed like consensus was in reality often only apparent verbal accord. The truth is that the chasm between the two runs both broad and deep. For those aware of the differences between Calvin and Luther, it should be no surprise that they sound the same but mean something substantially different.

Chapter 4 concluded with a chart which listed the agreements, variations, and disagreements between Luther and Calvin in their understandings of spiritual gifts.

This dissertation has argued that the variations (a mixture of verbal agreement and practical divergence) and disagreements exist because Luther and Calvin established their theologies of spiritual gifts upon disparate doctrinal foundations. The heart of the dissimilarities lies in their convictions concerning justification and sanctification.

In the end, one cannot understand the differences between Luther and Calvin on the subject of spiritual gifts without understanding their contrasting understandings of justification and sanctification. This rift may not always be readily apparent, since there is a great degree of verbal agreement between the two. It is, nevertheless, the source of the well-known difference in ethos between Lutheranism and Calvinism.

The basis for the differences can be found in the fact that Calvin does not fully share Luther's unwavering conviction that God and God alone is the source of the Christian's justification. Luther teaches that God bestows upon man the gift of alien righteousness which is received by faith. God works this miracle by means of the visible and proclaimed Word without any cooperation of man. Luther rejects any suggestion that God works directly in the heart of man apart from His chosen means of the proclaimed Word and the visible Word.

Calvin gives verbal assent to Luther's assertion that God has chosen to work through means, but in reality he presents the work of the Spirit in man as a direct ministry which simply enables faith to turn to the Word. In one famous example, Calvin illustrates how the Word works on the individual by describing how light illumines a blind man. Even though the light is essential for sight, nevertheless until the man is healed, *the light is meaningless to him, because he remains unable to see.*



In the illustration, Calvin is comparing the Word with the light and the Spirit with the source of healing. The conclusion from the example is that the Spirit of God must open the spiritual eyes of man in order for the Word to shine into the heart of man. This is in direct contrast to Luther, who holds that the Spirit has chosen to work exclusively through the Word to do His work in man. For Calvin the Spirit does His work first, independently, and then the Word is able to work.

In addition, while Calvin verbally agrees with Luther that man is justified apart from his own effort, nevertheless, in practice Calvin includes human cooperation in the work of sanctification by suggesting that the Law is a means of grace. For Luther, the idea that the Law could ever function as a means of transformation undermines the doctrine of justification which is the cornerstone of his theology. Luther argues that the only way grace comes to the Christian is through the means of the proclaimed and visible Word of the Gospel. To suggest the Law as a means of growth changes sanctification into a work of man rather than a bestowal of God's favor. Calvin, in contrast to Luther, sees sanctification as the primary function of the Law. The Law is given to aid the Christian in the progressive restoration of the tarnished image of God in man.

Again, because we need not only teaching but also exhortation, the servant of God will also avail himself of this benefit of the law: by frequent meditation upon it to be aroused to obedience, be strengthened in it, and be drawn back from the slippery path of transgression. . . . The law is to the flesh like a whip to an idle and balky ass, to arouse it to work.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill and translated by Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 20-21, *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 2.7.12 (pp. 360-61); John Calvin, *Opera Quae*

If the Law is the primary means of sanctification in the life of the believer, it follows that it is not the event of preaching/teaching/reading of the Word of the Gospel which would occupy the central position in sanctification, but rather the Spirit's direct work in conjunction with the *believer's obedient response* to the Law. On the other hand, if the Word of the Gospel itself is God's chosen means of sanctifying the Christian in an unmediated fashion, then *the event of encountering that Word (or the Word encountering us)* will then occupy the central position in sanctification. The manner of sanctification in Calvin's view makes transformation an unmediated work of the Spirit which is dependent upon the believer's response to the Law. Contrast that belief with Luther's conviction that grace comes to the believer through specific means, that is, the Word of the Gospel, making the event of preaching, teaching, or reading the Word of the Gospel to be the occasion of transformation.

With such differing views on the work of sanctification, it is not surprising that Luther and Calvin are actually far apart in their doctrines of ministry, and this disparity is evidenced in their views on spiritual gifts. Calvin defines most of the New Testament gifts as miraculous workings through specific individuals in the church, interpreting them in much the same way as they are construed today. Because he is convinced that these abilities existed for the confirmation of the apostolic message, he denies that such powers are available to the church today, since the message no longer needs such confirmation. Luther, on the other hand, while agreeing

---

*Supersunt Omnia*, vol. 29-87 in *Corpus Reformatorum*, ed. Guilielmus Baum, Eduardus Cunitz, Eduardus Reuss (Brunsvigae: C.A. Schwetschke, 1863-1900), 30:261-62.

that the apostolic message no longer needs miraculous confirmation, does not disavow the presence of spiritual gifts for the current church, because he consistently relates spiritual gifts to the ministry of the Word. Gifts were not given to *corroborate* the Word, but instead were given to *enhance* its ministry. Generally speaking, spiritual gifts are devoted to enabling the minister to present God's Word with unusual insight and impact. This certainly makes sense when one remembers Luther's unshakable conviction that God has chosen to work through the Word. Calvin's definitions of the gifts suggest that spiritual gifts are direct workings of God's grace in Christians. Luther would deny the possibility that God would manifest His grace outside of the Word. Therefore, since the ministry of the Word is the place where God meets with man, it is reasonable as well that the gifts should concentrate on the ministry of the Word. Such gifts would also be very relevant today, since the means of grace remain the same as they were in the apostolic church.

When reading Luther and Calvin on the gifts, one might not immediately recognize how significant is the disparity between the two, because often surface verbal similarity between the reformers hides underlying discord. Nevertheless the divergence is there and is significant. Lutherans especially should be aware of the differences, since the contemporary gifts movement has much more in common with Calvin's understanding of spiritual gifts than with that of Luther.<sup>2</sup> While it is certainly

---

<sup>2</sup>For a survey and evaluation of the theology of the contemporary gifts movement, consult Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: the Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970); and Carter Lindberg, *The Third Reformation: Charismatic Movements and the Lutheran Traditions* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1983).

possible for a Calvinist to embrace charismatic theology by making a few minor adjustments, it is difficult to imagine one at the same time embracing both Luther's theology and the modern understanding of spiritual gifts.

That is *not* to say that Lutherans should not promote spiritual gifts, because Luther himself did so emphatically. The inconsistency is in attempting to promote spiritual gifts as they are understood today, that is, as channels of the Spirit. This is something Luther would have never accepted and is much more in line with Calvin's understanding of gifts. When Lutherans adopt the Charismatic perception of spiritual gifts they are in essence attempting to join Calvin's and Luther's irreconcilable theologies of ministry. Sooner or later Lutheran charismatics who continue to embrace the modern interpretation of spiritual gifts will have to lose the distinctive Lutheran emphasis on justification and sanctification.

Nevertheless, Lutherans can be assured that Luther taught a very rich theology of spiritual gifts. He emphasized spiritual gifts as important aids to the ministry of God's Word in the life of the church. As the chart at the end of Chapter 4 demonstrates, he saw as extant most of the gifts mentioned in the New Testament, understanding them as enhancements to the ministry of the Word as carried on by the preaching office. This dissertation has demonstrated that it is distinctly Lutheran to emphasize spiritual gifts in the ministry, as long as that emphasis is properly anchored to Luther's doctrine of justification by grace alone.

## WORKS CITED

- Althaus, Paul. *The Theology of Martin Luther*. Translated by Robert C. Schultz. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966.
- Baker, J. Wayne "Christian Discipline and the Early Reformed Tradition: Bullinger and Calvin." In *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin*," ed. Robert V. Schnucker, 107-120. Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, vol. 10. Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1988.
- Bruner, Frederick Dale. *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: the Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970.
- Calvin, John. *Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*. Volumes 29-87 in *Corpus Reformatorum*. Edited by Guilielmus Baum, Eduardus Cunitz, Eduardus Reuss. Brunsvigae: C.A. Schwetschke, 1863-1900.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Commentaries*. Edited by David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, and translated by John W. Fraser, William B. Johnston, Ross MacKenzie, A.W. Morrison, and T. Smail. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1963.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Commentaries*. 45 volumes in 22 volumes. Edited by John Henry Beveridge and translated by John Henry Beveridge, John Owens, and William Pringle. Reprint of the 1844-56 edition by the Calvin Translation Society. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeill and translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Vol. 20-21, *The Library of Christian Classics*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *John Calvin's Sermons on the Ten Commandments*. Edited and translated by Benjamin W. Farley. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980.
- Davies, R. E. *The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers*. London: The Epworth Press, 1946.
- Dowey, Edward A. Jr. *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*. New York: Columbia University, 1952.

- Eastwood, Cyril. *Priesthood of the Faithful: An Investigation of the Doctrine From Biblical Times to the Reformation*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1963.
- Elbert, Paul. "Calvin and the Spiritual Gifts." In *Essays on Apostolic Themes: Studies in Honor of Howard M. Ervin, Presented to him by Colleagues and Friends on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*. Edited by Paul Elbert, 115-43. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985.
- Elert, Werner. *Law and Gospel*. Translated by Edward H. Schroeder. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967.
- Forstman, H. Jackson. *Word and Spirit: Calvin's Doctrine of Biblical Authority*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1962.
- Froelich, Karlfried "Charismatic Manifestations." In *The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church*, ed. Paul D. Opsahl. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978.
- Gamble, Richard C. "Calvin's Theological Method: Word and Spirit, a Case Study." In *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin*, ed. Robert V. Schnucker, 51-62. Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, vol. 10. Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1988.
- Graves, Frank Pierrepont. *A History of Education During the Middle Ages and the Transition to Modern Times*. New York: Macmillan, 1910.
- Haendler, Gert. *Luther on Ministerial Office and Congregational Function*. Translated by Ruth C. Gritsch and edited by Eric W. Gritsch. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981.
- Henderson, Robert W. *The Teaching Office in the Reformed Tradition: A History of the Doctoral Ministry*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962.
- Hoffman, Bengt Runs. *Luther and the Mystics*. Minneapolis, MI: Augsburg, 1976.
- Holl, Karl. *What Did Luther Understand by Religion?* Edited by James Luther Adams and Walter F. Bense and translated by Fred W. Meuser and Walter R. Wietzke. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977.
- Hoyer, George W. "Christianhood, Priesthood, and Brotherhood." In *Accents in Luther's Theology*, ed. Heino O. Kadai. St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1967.
- Johnson, Merwyn S. "Calvin's Handling of the Third Use of the Law and Its Problems." In *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin*, ed. Robert V. Schnucker, 38-50, Sixteenth Century Essays and studies, vol. 10. Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1988.

- Jungkuntz, Theodore. *A Charismatic Catechism*. Howard City, MI: Bread of Life Ministries, 1979.
- Köstlin, Julius. *The Theology of Luther in Its Historical Development and Inner Harmony*. Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1897.
- Landeen, William M. *Martin Luther's Religious Thought*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1973.
- Lehmann, Martin E. *Luther and Prayer*. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1985.
- Leith, John H. "Calvin's Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and its Significance for Today in the Light of Recent Research." In *Calvin Studies II: Presented at a Colloquium on Calvin Studies at Davidson College Presbyterian Church and Davidson College*, ed. John H. Leith and Charles Raynal, 55-78. Davidson, VA: Davidson College, 1984.
- Lietzmann, Hans. *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche: herausgegeben im Gedenkjahr der Augsburger Konfession 1930*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986.
- Lindberg, Carter. *The Third Reformation? Charismatic Movements and the Lutheran Traditions*. Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1983.
- Luther, Martin. *D. Martin Luthers Werke*. Volumes 1-63. Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883—1987,
- \_\_\_\_\_. *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe: Die Deutsche Bibel*. Weimar: Hermann Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1906.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Tischreden*. Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1912-21.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Dr. Martin Luther sämtliche Schriften*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1880-1910.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Luther's Works*, 55 vols., gen. eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955-1986.
- McKim, Donald K. and Jack B. Rogers. *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979.

- McNeill, John T. "John Calvin: Doctor Ecclesiae." In *Readings in Calvin's Theology*, ed. Donald McKim, 11-20. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984.
- Milner, Benjamin Charles, Jr. *Calvin's Doctrine of the Church*. Studies in the History of Christian Thought Series, ed. Heiko A. Oberman. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970.
- Niesel, Wilhelm. *The Theology of Calvin*. Translated by Harold Knight. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956.
- Peiper, Francis. *Christian Dogmatics*. 5 Volumes. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1953.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Spirit Versus Structure: Luther and the Institutions of the Church*. New York: Harper and Row, 1968.
- Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York, 1877).
- Pinomaa, Lennart. *Faith Victorious: An Introduction to Luther's Theology*. Translated by Werner Soderstrom. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963.
- Prenter, Regin. *Spiritus Creatus*. Translated by John M. Jensen. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1953.
- Reu, Martin. *Luther and the Scriptures*. Columbus, OH: The Wartburg Press, 1944.
- Sasse, Hermann. *Here We Stand: Nature and Character of the Lutheran Faith*. Translated by Theodore G. Tappert. New York: Harper & Bros., 1938; reprint, Adelaide, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1979.
- Schlink, Edmund. *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*. Translated by Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961.
- Schoenleber, Richard Walter. "The Sovereign Word: The Office of Ministry and Ordination in the Theology of Martin Luther." Ph.D. thesis, University of Iowa, 1983.
- Schwiebert, E.G. *Luther and His Times: The Reformation from a New Perspective*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1950.
- Scribner, Robert W. *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany*. London: Hambledon Press, 1987.



- Smith, Preserved. *The Life and Letters of Martin Luther*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911.
- Tappert, Theodore G. ed. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959.
- Wallace, Ronald S. *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacraments*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957.
- Wendel, Francois. "Justification and Predestination in Calvin." In *Readings in Calvin's Theology*, ed. Donald McKim, 153-78. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984.
- Wilson, Harry S. *The Speaking God: Luther's Theology of Preaching*. Madras, India: United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India, 1983.
- Wingren, Gustaf. *Luther on Vocation*. Translated by Carl C. Rasmussen. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1957.

#### Journal Articles

- Crawford, John R. "Calvin and the Priesthood of All Believers." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 21 (1968): 145-56.
- Dowey, Edward. "Law in Luther and Calvin." *Theology Today* 41 (July 1984): 146-53.
- Fischer, Robert. "Another Look at Luther's Doctrine of the Ministry." *Lutheran Quarterly* 18 (1966): 260-71.
- Gerrish, Brian. "Priesthood and Ministry in the Theology of Luther." *Church History* 34 (1963): 404-22.
- Green, Lowell. "Change in Luther's Doctrine of the Ministry." *Lutheran Quarterly* 18. (1966): 173-183.
- Jensen, Peter F. "Calvin, Charismatics, and Miracles." *The Evangelical Quarterly* 51 (July-September, 1979): 131-44.
- Klug, Eugene F. "Luther on Law, Gospel, and the Third Use of the Law." *Springfielder* 38 (September, 1974): 155-69.

Leith, John H. "Calvin's Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and Its Significance for Today in the Light of Recent Research." *Review and Expositor*, 86 (1989): 31-3.

Scaer, David P. "Sanctification in Lutheran Theology." *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 49 (1985): 181-97.

Watson, Philip S. "Luther's Doctrine of Vocation." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 2 (1949): 368-69.